

When Marriages Succeed

Introduction. Between 1970 and 2005, the number of children living in two-parent homes dropped from 85 percent to 68 percent. Essentially, one third of all U.S. children are now born outside of wedlock. Evidence continues to show that divorce and unwed childbearing leads to higher rates of crime, drug abuse, education failure, domestic violence, and poverty. Broken marriages incur a high cost to society.

Success in marriage is not automatic. The fact that a man and a woman are both Christians is no guarantee that their marriage will succeed. We will look at some reasons why marriages succeed among Christians. Categories such as unfaithfulness, alcohol, drugs, and gambling, although reasons for failure, will not be discussed because we will assume that all Christians already know better than to get involved in these.

I. ***When The Husband And Wife Demonstrate The Proper Level Of Maturity***

- A. Marriage absolutely requires maturity.
 - 1. Marriage is for adults, not for emotional children.
 - 2. Marriage is not a plaything to be cast aside with boredom as some toy.
 - 3. Marriage is real, not a live “dream world.”
- B. No marriage can survive selfish participants.
 - 1. Men and women have to consider one another (Philippians 2:4; Ephesians 5:21-29).
 - a) Every individual is different when it comes to temperament, and we each bring those temperaments into our marriages.
 - b) Sometimes temperaments clash and we have to be mature in working through differences.
 - 2. Remembering Matthew 7:12 will go far in creating a happy marriage.
 - a) Helping one another around the house with small chores shows great maturity.
 - b) Sharing recreational activities, giving and taking with each other’s personal preferences demonstrates maturity as well.
- C. Marriage is a lifetime commitment.
 - 1. This requires couples to work through difficult times “till death do us part.”
 - 2. One of the reasons we have such high divorce rates is because too many say “I do” when they really mean “I don’t.”
- D. Men and women must maturely accept the proper roles of husband and wife.

1. God has a definite arrangement for couples (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-24).
2. But some wives insist on being boss and husbands refuse to fulfill their proper role.
 - a) You cannot always blame a wife for acting as "head" if the husband refuses.
 - b) Husbands should nourish and cherish their wives (Ephesians 5:29; cf. Acts 7:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 2:7). If you love her you will not allow her to usurp authority nor will you push her into being head.
 - c) Wives must submit and not sin themselves by assuming headship and tempt their husbands to sin by removing them from their role.
- E. If men lovingly fulfill their role, a conscientious Christian wife will fulfill hers.

II. ***When The Husband And Wife Are United In Christ***

- A. Religious differences are not to be taken lightly. Many situation comedies are designed to be funny when two very different people are put together in a situation (i.e., Andy Griffith and Barney Fife).
 1. But it is not funny or fun to be a part of an "odd couple." We all know, and scientific research has confirmed, that opposites will attract. What we don't know until it is too late is that living with someone's opposite can be extremely trying.
 2. What first attracted a couple together can become annoying, then exasperating, and finally, intolerable. Marriage only amplifies good traits and bad traits.
- B. Some say that marrying a non-Christian is a sin (2 Corinthians 6:14). The Bible does not say that marrying a non-Christian is sinful (Hebrews 13:4). However, it is a risky proposition. A lot of Christians date a non-Christian and believe that they can convert them, and sometimes this works (1 Peter 3:1-7). Most of the time, the Christian's morality is lowered to the level of the non-Christian rather than the non-Christian's morality rising to the level to the Christian.
 1. A Christian and a non-Christian immediately have a lot of conflicts. What do you do about prayer in the home together? What do you do about devotions with the children in the home together? What do you do about giving? What do you do when the spouse interferes with your dedication and service to God? These conflicts are usually settled when one marries a Christian.
 2. A lot of heartache can be avoided by looking for a Christian to date. There is absolutely no need to put yourself through the trouble of having a "one-sided" marriage (1 Corinthians 7:12-15).

III. *When The Husband And Wife Are Kind To One Another*

- A. Husbands and wives would do well to remember how love acts (1 Corinthians 13:4-8; cf. Colossians 3:19).
- B. Constant nagging has no place in the marriage relationship.
 - 1. If the front steps need fixing, tell him; but not every few minutes of every day.
 - 2. If she burns the bread, don't remind her every morning for four months.
- C. Compliments and appreciation is needed by all.
 - 1. If compliments can add to happiness while courting, why not after marriage?
 - a) How long has it been since you told your wife you love her? Not, "I told her I loved her on our wedding day and when I change my mind I will let her know."
 - b) How long has it been since you complimented her on her cooking, dress, hair, and housekeeping?
 - c) How long has it been since you complimented him for opening the door for you, carrying the packages, or taking out the trash?
 - d) Do not starve one another for appreciation. A prominent reason for affairs is when the husband and wife go looking for appreciation and affection elsewhere.
 - 2. On the other hand, unfair or harsh criticism cause nothing but resentment and hurt feelings. Criticism should be constructive; that is, done in private with love and understanding and with a desire to make what is lacking better.

IV. *When The Husband And Wife Show One Another Physical Intimacy*

- A. The Lord God knew that it was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). Therefore, His creation of woman was for the purpose of companionship and the enjoyment of a sexual relationship in its proper time and place with a view to rearing children.
- B. The Song of Solomon is one long wonderful "snapshot" of the way love and intimacy needs to be between a married man and woman (4:1-3, 9-10).
- C. The rightful place of sexual intimacy, within marriage only, is clearly established and honored. In fact, God said that couples should have this relationship and not having it is a sin (1 Corinthians 7:1-5). Withholding can produce great temptation. Different schedules and children can make intimacy difficult, so couples must be very attuned to this fact and make sure that they spend intimate time together.

V. ***When The Husband And Wife Resolve Conflicts Properly***

- A. Couples with the best of temperaments are going to have their disagreements. Differing desires create virtually all conflict in marriage.
- B. God made us with emotion, and He knows there are times when you and I are going to get angry. That is especially true in a marriage relationship where our feelings and our emotions are most vulnerable (Ephesians 4:24-27, 31-32; Galatians 5:23).
- C. Couples need to learn how to conquer conflict.
 - 1. We must be truthful and respectful with each other when we have arguments. In fact, if lies pervade a marriage, there is virtually no genuine peace between a man and woman. There is a constant uneasiness because there is no trust. When there is no trust, there is no meaningful relationship.
 - 2. We must not bring up the past and hold grudges when we argue. Bitterness is a sour taste left over from the past. Do not bring the past into current conflicts. If we are dealing with a conflict, deal with the current conflict, not a past one.
 - 3. We must not resort to violence or verbal attacks or yelling when we argue. The worst communication in a marriage takes place when somebody is yelling. It amazes me that some people will treat their mates in a way that they would not treat anybody else on earth. You do not need to be talking to your spouse in a hateful, obscene way. It takes a little man to belittle his wife and vice versa.
 - 4. Never bring your argument into the open.
 - a) A public place is no place to publish your conflicts. Do you criticize your spouse in front of others (1 Peter 4:8)?
 - b) Would you appreciate the same being done to you (cf. Matthew 7:12)? True love demands consideration for the feelings of your spouse.

Conclusion. God knows our needs. He instituted marriage and gave the laws to regulate it. Children deserve a happy, contented atmosphere of love in which to grow up. A child's increase in knowledge and wisdom is tremendous if there is security at home (Luke 2:52). To fail in marriage is to fail to apply the biblical principles that God has set forth.