



What Makes a
MARRIAGE
Last?

WHAT MAKES A MARRIAGE LAST?

In Matthew 19:3-6, Jesus answers a question about divorce by referring to God's original plan for marriage. But despite God's clearly stated will, divorce is rampant today, even among Christians! Hence, whenever we hear of a long-lasting marriage, we're duly impressed. So, what will make a marriage last?

When there is real commitment (Matthew 19:4-6)

- The "leave, cleave, one flesh" aspect **MUST** take precedence over every other human tie!
- *This means that **NO ONE** (children, in-laws, friends, job) can be allowed to disrupt this!*
- No matter what happens: better, worse, richer poor, sickness & health, **I'm not leaving!**
- Commitment demands forgiveness, & an ever-growing closeness – *love must mature!*

When there is mutual love (Colossians 3:19; Titus 2:4)

- Not "feelings," but the CHOICE to put the other before self (agape is not feelings-based)
- Right or wrong, feelings change with circumstances & cannot build lasting relationships!
- When "un-loveable" traits develop – you must love them anyway! (See John 3:16)
- This love must ALWAYS be given no matter what (Not withholding to get your way)

When there is respectful speech (Ephesians 4:29-32)

- Consider the value of the above text in a marriage context!
- Respect excludes ragging – by him or her! (Proverbs 27:15-16)
- Respect includes listening as well as talking (James 1:19-20)
- Respect includes trying to understand the other (1 Peter 3:7)

When both spouses do their part (Ephesians 5:22-25)

- If a wife truly "submits to" her husband (vs. rebel), he will happily love her
- If a husband "loves" his wife (vs. unreasonable), she will happily submit to him
- There must be an acceptance of who the other is (neat freak vs. not so neat)
- There must be compromise; and a willingness to help out (without being asked!)

When God is brought into the picture (Ephesians 5:25-27)

MARRIAGE TAKES THREE (Perry Tanksley)

I once thought marriage took Just two to make a go,
But now I am convinced it takes the Lord also.
And not one marriage fails where Christ is asked to enter,
As lovers come together with Jesus at the center.
But marriage seldom thrives, and homes are incomplete,
Till He is welcomed there to help avoid defeat.
In homes where Christ is first, it's obvious to see,
Those unions really work, for marriage still takes three.

There are many other things which we could talk about, but these five things will go a long way toward building a lasting marriage. Know this: those marriages which have reached 30, 40, 50 years and beyond, have endured many heartaches, heartbreaks, setbacks, and disappointments! But the key word here is "endured." If you expect everything to always be 'easy,' think again! Lasting marriages take work!

AFFAIR-PROOFING YOUR MARRIAGE

The prevalence of marital infidelity in our culture is staggering. If this was only a problem for alien sinners, it would be bad enough; *but it is nearly as prevalent among professed believers!* The thoughts which follow are not original with me; but I find them enlightening, and offer them for your consideration. First, we shall note four “steps” which often lead to adultery; then we will point out four things we can do to avoid this sin.

The first step which can lead to adultery is a position of vulnerability. There are a number of things which make us vulnerable: 1. Stress (from our spouse, children, health, work, etc.); 2. Boredom (idle hands are the Devil’s workshop!); 3. Insecurity (Am I still loved? Am I still attractive?); 4. Unfulfilled expectations (This is not the way I thought my life would turn out); & 5. Overconfidence (I would never “cross the line” into adultery).

The second step is an emotional, but non-physical attachment or involvement. Being vulnerable, we discover a new friend or add a new dimension to an old friendship. At first, we would never consider an affair; and if questioned, we reply that *“Nothing is going on; we’re just two friends talking.”* Perhaps it’s someone at work, or a neighbor, or even a fellow-Christian, who is having similar troubles. In the course of your conversations, too much private information is shared (various complaints about your spouse). Your new friend responds with sympathy, & *you like the attention!* Eventually, flirting follows; followed by an increased secrecy with respect to this relationship. After all, you don’t want your spouse trying to dampen this “innocent” friendship!

The third step is when that “line” you said you never cross IS crossed, and an actual affair takes place. All of the talking and sharing has bonded you closely (step two). Shared tears, prolonged hugs, kisses on the cheek, have kindled a fire that is out of control. *Then, the unthinkable happens: you have committed adultery!* The bond is now so strong, and the pleasures so great (including the “tantalizing secrecy” of the whole matter), that it is difficult to break free. But as exciting as “the passing pleasures of sin” may be (Hb.11:25), it is still an affront to a holy God! You have been sinning all along; but now you have expanded that to include sinning against your spouse, against the one with whom you are fornicating, against your own body, against your children, and against the church.

The fourth step is rationalization – you actually try to justify your selfish actions! “My friend understands me better than my spouse;” or the perennial favorite, “God wants me to be happy.” With these four steps now clearly established, let’s consider how we can avoid this sin in the first place...

First of all, we must guard our heart. Know your weaknesses! Solomon said of the potential adulterer, “Do not let your *heart* turn aside to her ways” (Pr.7:25). In the very context of avoiding adultery, Jesus spoke of plucking out an eye or cutting off the hand (Mt.5:27-30). And Job “made a covenant” with his eyes (Job.31:1).

Second, we must watch our step. Not only must you “not let your heart turn aside to her ways;” we also must not “*stray* onto her paths” (Pr.7:25). *Simply put, NEVER be alone with the object of your temptation!* Don’t “chat” with them online; don’t find ways to see them at work; don’t go to their house alone; and don’t invite them to yours! “Make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts” (Rm.13:14).

Third, we must “count the cost” of an affair. The cost is high and immediate (Pr.6:27-29)! Solomon says that the adulteress “has cast down many wounded. All who were slain by her were strong men. *Her house is the way to Hell!*” (Pr.7:26-27). There is also the cost of *shattered trust*; the cost of a *painful divorce* (not to mention *custody battles*); the cost of a *vengeful spouse* (Pr.6:32-35); and the cost of *your own soul* (Mt.16:26; Ga.6:7-8).

Fourth, we must keep those home fires burning! Several passages speak to this (Pr.5:15-20; 1Cor.7:1-5). Your spouse is a gift from God (Pr.18:22); and to despise this gift is to despise the Giver!

-Lanny Smith



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