

Chapter 7: Marriage

There is a lot that goes into making a marriage. It is a lot more than just saying 'I Do' and planning a honeymoon. A wedding day can be wonderful, but marriage is for a lifetime – a lifetime of learning to become 'One Flesh'.

Matthew 19:4-6

“Haven't you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ and said ‘for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?’

The 'One Flesh' spoken of in this verse means the blending of body, soul, and spirit. It means letting go and revealing all your love, deepest desires, and dreams to your spouse. You're giving your spouse the greatest gift – YOU! You're communicating “I Love You,” in the most intimate way. God designed sex for the two to become ONE in marriage.

Your Questions

Question 1

How important is sex in a Christian marriage?

Answer 1

Extremely important! Once the gift of sex is opened in marriage, it needs to be nurtured, explored, and satisfied regularly. Friendship alone will not satisfy and sex alone will not satisfy. But great friendship, combined with great sexual intimacy, will build a very strong and satisfying marriage.

Question 2

How often should a married couple make love?

Answer 2

Statistics show 2-3 times a week is very satisfying and nurturing to a couple's relationship. Of course love making is an adventure and each couple needs to work out what works best for them. If one of the two does not feel satisfied with the level of intimacy then they should discuss it. Changing schedules, as well as romantic gestures, can help couples make a priority of this very important aspect of their marriage. Take the time and make the effort. This is very, very important!

NOTE: Romantic gestures are personal and are based on individual preferences. Dr Gary Chapman refers to these expressions of love, as 'Love Languages'. For more information on this subject read 'The Five Love Languages' by Dr Gary Chapman.

Some people might avoid sex in their marriage because they had a confusing or painful sexual experience in the past (childhood/adolescence), such as sexual abuse, molestation, rape, or sexual play with friends and/or siblings. These past sexual experiences can cause sexual confusion and the victims may associate sex with an invasive experience that caused fear and doubt about sex, instead of associating sex with an Amazing Creator who made sex, beautiful, exhilarating, satisfying, and pure to be enjoyed and explored with a loving partner in marriage. The good news is that our amazing Creator can also heal you!

2 Corinthians 5:17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Romans 8:1-2

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.

Question 3

Should we share a bank account?

Answer 3

Absolutely! Marriage is a joining of your incomes and bank accounts, and both (husband and wife) need to have access to bank statements and all financial information.

Question 4

I married a man who didn't share my faith in God or value of marriage. He has walked out on the marriage. Am I free to remarry?

Answer 4

The Bible encourages us to stay married in this case, however if the unbelieving husband or wife leaves, then let him/her go, or if he/she is physically abusing you, or cheating on you – let him/her go.

1 Corinthians 7:15

But if the unbeliever (husband/wife) departs, let him (her) depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace. (NKJV)

If the unbelieving or believing husband/wife is cheating on you (sexual immorality), then you have grounds for divorce.

Matthew 5:32

But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife (husband) for any reason except sexual immorality causes her (he) to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman (man) who is divorced commits adultery. (NKJV)

Of course God loves and upholds marriage, so wherever possible, we need to work on our marriage and be the best that we can be for our spouse.

Tips for Marriage

1. Keep God at the center

Jeremiah 29:11-13

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”

God wants all your heart! You might be thinking a marriage is made up of two individuals but there’s a third party who can give even greater meaning to your marriage – that person is Jesus Christ. He has great plans for you but he wants to be first in your hearts even before your husband/wife. God doesn’t want to take love away from you but he wants to pour love into you, so that you can have love in abundance. and you can share this overflowing love with your spouse.

2. Keep Love as the Foundation for Your Marriage

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

Wow! What a great foundation!

Ephesians 5:25

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Guys, to love a wife means making sacrifices and putting aside selfish desires. This is the kind of love that melts a woman’s heart. If you can develop this kind of love, your wife will always look to you with admiration and respect. If you can’t look to your parents for a great example of marriage, then look at Jesus’ life as a great role model to learn from.

Say ‘I love you’ daily! This might be difficult at first, especially if you grew up in a family where people never said ‘I love you’ to you. At first it will seem fake, foreign, and uncomfortable but if you persevere, it will become a completely comfortable and sincere part of who you are.

Ephesians 5:22

Wives, (respect) submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.

Girls, it seems that respect speaks (communicates) love to the guys. So, hold your husband in high regard, speaking well of him in front of him, your children and everyone around you. Keep praying and believing in him because he has many decisions to make and needs to look to God for the answers.

3. Keep pure

Hebrews 13:4

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

If you can be pure when you’re single, you can be pure when you’re married too. Purity is for marriage! Purity during your courtship builds trust, security, and faithfulness that extend into your marriage. That means – you believe in each other to maintain good boundaries and have confidence that when your husband/wife is tempted by someone outside the marriage, that he/she will be able to stand and/or find a way out of the temptation.

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

4. Keep Pornography out of Your Marriage!

Proverbs 5:18-19

May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer – may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love.

It does NOT say – “may the breasts you see in a magazine or the internet satisfy you always...” Don’t buy into this world’s sexual images, they promise so much but deliver so little. In the end, pornography will undermine your marriage. No woman wants to come in second place to pornographic images.

5. Keep the Sexual Flame Burning in Your Marriage!

1 Corinthians 7:3,5

(Verse 3)

“The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband ...”

(Verse 5)

“Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command.”

A healthy sex life is a must in marriage. A commitment to regular sexual intimacy is your greatest protection, especially in today’s society where we are surrounded by sexual images. Do not neglect this area of your marriage, even when children come along; recognise that they are a gift from God, but they can never take the place of sexual intimacy in your marriage, neither should video games, social networks, or job (ministry) opportunities that require you to live apart.

6. Keep Working as a Team

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.

Be your spouses’ greatest cheerleader! Celebrate the good times, mourn the sad times, and recognise your mistakes and agree to learn from them.

7. Be Quick to Resolve Problems!

Ephesians 4:26-27 NIV

In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

This scripture encourages us to deal with angry feelings quickly (before the day is finished). It is unacceptable to stay angry day after day. This situation leads to bitterness and unforgiveness. Did you know that being angry is a decision? You can decide not to be angry and you can decide to forgive (you can do it in a day or less). You are not out of control, but if you decide to stay angry this will damage your prospects of building healthy relationships. Choosing not to be angry doesn’t mean you pretend there is no problem. On the contrary, you actually need to deal with the problem. Speaking calmly and intelligently will lead to solutions. Dealing with problems early will prevent them from becoming bigger.

8. Keep Forgiving

Forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling. Regardless of whether you feel like it or not, the Bible encourages us to forgive. Because no one is perfect, we are often faced with the decision to forgive or not, especially in marriage. How often should I forgive, you ask?

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”

Peter thought he was being generous, but in Jesus’ opinion, not generous enough.

1 Corinthians 13:5

It (love) does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

To keep a record (score) of wrongs, means that we go over again and again in our minds (holding in our memory bank), the wrong thing that was done to us, never allowing ourselves to move on and adding any new thing (wrongs) to the list in the bank. The Bible clearly says not to keep a score. But to forgive does not mean we don’t deal with the problem, the issues and the person/persons that wronged us. If our safety is at stake, we need to remove ourselves from any danger and deal with the problem from a safe distance. Most times, when we deal with what was said and done and we talk about how it made us feel, we discover that the other person’s motives were very different to what we thought and the problem is then quickly resolved. And, by the way, if you’re the person that did the wrong thing, saying sorry goes a long way to quickly resolving the problem. Taking responsibility for what we do, especially when we are wrong, is hard but when we do, it completely takes the fire and pain out of the situation.

In conclusion, be generous with forgiveness. It means releasing others, but most importantly we are releasing ourselves to have the best life possible, the kind of life God wants for us, free from anger and bitterness.

Question

Name three things you could do to resolve problems in a relationship.

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