

How to Stay Married

How can people stay married in this culture? We should try to learn (by the Word and by observation) why some marriages succeed and so many fail.

1. Have a Biblical view of marriage - Gen. 2:18-24, Mal. 2:13-16

- a. Marriage is between one man and one woman
- b. Marriage is a lifelong attachment - Rom. 7:2-3 ("Til death do us part")
- c. Marriage is not a mere social contract, like a job or a mortgage; it is a real union
- d. Marriage is an institution of God, not just a state-licensed ceremony
- e. What is the purpose of marriage?
 - i. A stable, committed relationship of companionship and mutual support
 - ii. Procreation, especially of a 'godly seed'
 - iii. To train and teach the children, and give them a living example of what it means to be a real man or woman
 - iv. To provide the framework for a stable and moral society
 - v. To typify the relationship of Christ and the church - Eph. 5:32
- f. Recognize and accept God's ordained roles - Eph. 5:22-33 (also Col. 3:18-20, Tit. 2:2-8)
 - i. Husband - leader, provider, protector, instructor; love wife, train and discipline children
 - ii. Wife - homemaker, nurturer, instructor; lovingly obey husband, train and discipline children
 - iii. Children - loving obedience to parents
- g. See God as the origin and the sustainer of your marriage - Col. 1:17

2. Have a Biblical view of divorce - Mt. 5:31-32, 19:3-9

- a. God allowed divorce (and polygamy) in the OT because of their hardness of heart
- b. Jesus specified fornication as the only justification for divorce, and even then does not command it. (How is it that most divorcees are 'the innocent party'?)
- c. Divorce is a breaking of your vows before God
- d. Divorce should not be seen as 'the answer' for difficult circumstances
- e. Consider the devastating effects of divorce on children
- f. See it as adultery, and fear God
- g. Other considerations: desertion (1 Cor. 7) or violent threats against lives of spouse or children

3. Recognize cultural obstacles to fidelity, family, and marriage

If you allow these things to be your mold (Rom. 12:2), you cannot have a solid and permanent marriage.

- a. Self-centeredness
- b. "No-fault" divorce (good example of unintended consequences)
- c. Feminism
- d. Abortion
- e. The "dating game", easy relationships, casual sex and promiscuity
- f. The "progressive" media - movies, television, magazines, advertising
- g. Pornography
- h. "Alternate life styles" (civil unions, homosexual 'marriage', homosexual adoptions, mothers with boyfriends, single mother families, shacking up, polygamy, LGBTQXYZ, etc.)

4. Marrying the right person

- a. Be not unequally yoked - 2 Cor. 6:14
 - i. Don't marry an unbeliever (don't even become emotionally involved with an unbeliever)
 - ii. Don't marry a new (unproved, unstable) Christian
 - iii. Don't marry a Christian with whom you have significant theological disagreements
 - iv. But if you ARE married to such, divorce is not the answer. You need to do all in your power to make it work.
- b. Seek God for whom HE wants you to marry. Believe that He has a specific person prepared for you. Be willing to faithfully wait for that person. Pray for them.
- c. Listen to godly counsel
- d. Do not enter marriage considering divorce as a possible option – see marriage as a total commitment
- e. Ask yourself if your potential mate is a problem-solver, or a quitter (that is just one thing that is wrong with the "dating game" – it teaches you to just quit and start over instead of working things out.)
- f. "Good enough" isn't the goal, but neither is perfection.

5. Already married to the “wrong person”?

This is a whole subject to itself, but the abbreviated version is

- a. Just because you married the wrong person doesn't mean you're not really married in God's eyes. It may be unfortunate, but it doesn't mean you can just start over with someone else.
- b. Your task now is to make them the “right person”, starting with yourself. Take the following attitudes and practices, and if you cannot pursue them together, pursue them for yourself. In time it may help bring your spouse around.

6. Attitudes for a good marriage

- a. Put Christ first in your lives, and keep your eyes on Jesus. Eccl. 4:9-12
- b. Be content with what you have - 1 Tim. 6:6-12
- c. Be content with who you have - Ex. 20:17
- d. Don't compare spouse against impossible goals, or other people. NEVER say “Why can't you be like so-and-so?”
- e. Recognize that marriage and family life is a spiritual battleground - Satan hates the family, and wars against it
- f. Believe that "With God, all things are possible". (Mt. 19:26, Lk. 1:37)

7. Practices for a good marriage

- a. Prayer
 - i. Pray together. If spouse is unwilling, then you pray alone. .
 - ii. Pray for spouse (especially if they are difficult, or you are having trouble loving them)
- b. Treat them as you would be treated. Show them respect.
- c. Never speak ill of your spouse in front of others (especially the kids) - if you have a problem, work it out in private. Speak honourably of spouse.
- d. Develop a close relationship with spouse. Spend time with one another. Talk. Listen.
- e. Guard your eyes (don't allow yourself to look at what should not be seen) – Job 31:1
- f. Cultivate the fruit of the Spirit with your spouse (Gal. 5)
- g. See your responsibility to be parents (Gen. 1:27-28)
- h. See your responsibility as parents - not mere procreation, but spiritual training of your children
- i. Be not just willing, but determined to work through all difficulties, even if you didn't marry well