

## Marriage: 10 Principles for a Better Relationship

This message is for all married people. But in addition to that this message is also for all people who hope to be married someday. In addition to that, this message is for people who were married at one time and if God should allow you to be married again, you want to get it right and you know the pain of marriage not according to God's Word. In addition to that this message is also for people who have anyone in their family who is married. This message is also for people who know how to spell "marriage," and for people who don't. So who is this message for? Everyone.

People who have a great marriage don't just get lucky—they do some things. Here are some practical and biblical principles to apply to your marriage to make it not just tolerable, not just good, but great:

### ***1) Remember that we each have a Master and it is not us.***

This is absolutely at the center of Christian marriage. I am not in charge of my life—my wife is not in charge of her life. We are not in charge of anything. Christ is the head of your home. 1 Corinthians 8:6 says, "*yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.*" That is at the center of the Christian marriage—Jesus Christ is Lord.

### ***2) Have your identity tied up in your marriage.***

There is no success without marriage success. If you build your multi-million dollar business but lose your marriage, you're a loser. As soon as possible, you need to extinguish all thoughts of any life that is successful without your spouse. Hebrews 13:4 says, "*Let marriage be held in honor among all.*" Some of your greatest thoughts and aspirations in this life should be about marriage. Hold up, aspire to, and esteem a great marriage—that's what God

wants for you.

### **3) Have a biblical view of love: you before me.**

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 says, “*Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but it rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.*” Love is not romance, it is not laughter, it is not chemistry (although a great marriage has all of those things). Love is more than a feeling. It begins with a feeling, but it is much more than a feeling. It is a choice to put your spouse’s interests before your own. By having a biblical view of love, love will never fail to take your marriage to a better place.

### **4) Have transparent communication.**

Romans 12:9 says, “*Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.*” This means your marriage should be without hypocrisy. If you are holding onto a secret “something” that you are hiding from your spouse, you are hurting your marriage. “*Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another*” (James 5:16). Talking about our thoughts to our spouses can expose wrongful thinking to the light and can expose areas of slippage in the relationship.

### **5) Make a commitment to healthy conflict.**

There might be some marriages out there that don’t have conflict. But since for most of us that isn’t an option, here are five rules to remember when having a healthy conflict:

- Work it out today. The Bible says in Ephesians 4:26-27, “*Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.*” This might not always mean coming to a resolution the same day, but it does mean making a commitment to resolve the conflict quickly.
- Attack the problem, not the person. When we sin against our spouses, it can be easy to bring up other weaknesses into the discussion. Focus on the problem at hand.

- Do not manipulate your spouse. Men, this means no invasion of personal space, no verbal manipulation. Take a step back and lower your voice. Ladies, this means no tears or emotional manipulation. Both responses are wrong.
- Do not use universals. Using words like “always” or “never” in a conflict does not reflect the biblical view of love: believing and hoping the best.
- Don’t bring up the past. Do not use failures of the past to set your spouse up for failures in the future.

**6) Do not let the relationship lag or flounder.**

Hebrews 12:12-13 says, *“Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.”* After seasons of busyness, adversity, or distraction, work to re-cultivate your eyes for your spouse. Get back to first things first. Prioritize the most important human relationship in your life: your marriage.

**7) Pursue opportunities to evaluate and strengthen your marriage.**

This can range from attending seminars, reading books, and listening to solid biblical teaching on marriage, to pursuing relationships with other couples who have strong marriages. *“Let the wise hear and increase in learning, and the one who understands obtain guidance”* (Proverbs 1:5).

**8) Protect your marriage from intruders.**

Proverbs 4:23 says, *“Keep your heart with all vigilance...”* Intrusions into your marriage can come from all directions—friends, family, work...guard your time and intentionally pursue time alone with your spouse.

**9) Have a long-term view of the power of marriage.**

*“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap...And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up”* (Galatians 6:7-9). God

promises that you will reap what you sow. If you prioritize your marriage, you will not regret it.

**10) Have a mutual commitment to a higher mission.**

1 Corinthians 10:31 says, “*whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.*” Marriage is not just about satisfying ourselves, or even setting a great pattern through legacy-living for our children and our grandchildren. Our marriage is about a commitment to the Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Apply these principles, and no matter how good your marriage is, it will make it better. And no matter how bad it is, it will take things in the right direction. Let’s lift up our marriages to God in prayer right now:

*Father we come before You now in the strong name of Jesus and we thank You that in You we find the grace to love and to keep on loving. Forgive us where the shortcomings of our partner have become our focus and taken our focus off of You.*

*No matter what our marriages look like at this time, I pray that You would give us faith to believe that better days are ahead. Hear our hearts, Lord. You know what we need; we ask You to grant it according to Your mercy. All that we pray, we pray in faith in the strong name of Jesus Christ who is our hope and our strength and all that we need to be what You’ve called us to be. Give us faith to believe and follow. These things we do pray in His precious and holy name. Amen!*

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