

You Cannot Have Peace in Your Marriage

Do you want a sweet, peaceful marriage? Is your marriage sweet and peaceful? What comes to your mind when I use the words “peace” and “marriage” in one sentence? Is your response “yes, this is natural.” Or is your response “not in my lifetime.” The truth is the best marriages are not always sweet and peaceful. The best marriages might have a few emotional skirmishes and small battles, but not all out war. The goal of this article is to keep couples from having war or to help stop the war in a couple’s marriage.

The truth is many Christians have unrealistic expectations about marriage, what I call “myths.” One of them is “**Christian couples don't fight.**” One husband said “I thought "peace" meant no “fighting” and so I denied my negative feelings. I'd let things build until I exploded over something trivial. Here's the truth: its okay to fight. In the Bible it says, "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" (Ephesians 4:26–27).

Psychologist Marty Friedman in his book “The Peaceful Marriage Fantasy” writes: “Unfortunately, the more you believe in this fantasy of the "perfectly peaceful marriage" the more pain you will experience, because the fantasy runs counter to the cold, hard reality. Upon reflection, we often find a pattern: When their wives brought issues to them, the men blamed and resented them for disturbing their fantasy of the peaceful marriage. The men often say, "Why can't she just leave it alone? Why is she always complaining and looking for trouble?" What these men don't realize is if they listened to the criticisms they would have a lot more peace!”

Dr. Friedman goes on to explain that “another consequence of the peaceful marriage fantasy is the wish not to rock the boat. Men or women may avoid conflict altogether, explaining differences away or leaving the room when arguments or criticisms break out. Belief in the peaceful marriage fantasy causes good people to believe that keeping the peace is more important than having an open and honest exchange with the people they love.” A secret to having peace in your marriage is learning to handle the battles and not to avoid them.

Here is another myth Christian has about marriage. “**Our marriage will be divorce-proof if we're both Christians.**” The truth is: Being a Christian doesn't guarantee you won't get divorced. Christian therapist Roy Austin calls this "magical thinking" and believes many Christian couples struggle with it. He says, "'Magical thinking' leaves couples less prepared for the rigors of marriage." This may explain why Christian pollster George Barna has found that the divorce rate among born-again Christians is now the same as for non-Christians

Being a Christian and truly living as one can seriously reduce the risk of getting a divorce but it will not remove the possibility. There are important habits and practices that will divorce-proof your marriage. When these habits and practices are absent divorce is possible, even for the Christian.

IMPORTANT INGREDIENTS

Perhaps a main ingredient in “divorce-proofing” your marriage is humility. Humility is the willingness to say “I am sorry,” to admit that you are wrong, to listen with an open mind, to be

flexible and change, to be able to lead together. This is a powerful ingredient that can truly work miracles in marriage. It is my view that the lack of humility is the primary reason for most divorces. I have observed that it is not any particular wrong action that is the final cause of divorce. It is pride and selfishness. When there is an unwillingness to look deep inside one's own heart and examine one's own faults, divorce is inevitable.

Another important ingredient to “divorce-proof” your marriage is “**avoiding a judgmental attitude.**” Dr. Brent J. Atkinson in his article “Habits of People Who Know How to Get Their Partners to Treat Them Well: Dealing with Difference” he states “A hallmark of people who are good at getting their partners to treat them well is that they know that when they get upset with their partners, it doesn't necessarily mean that their partners have done anything wrong. It's normal to be upset when you're at cross-purposes. Nobody has to be right or wrong. . . . Researchers have discovered that the majority of the time when people believe their partners have done something wrong, they really haven't. They just have legitimately different wants, needs, priorities or expectations at the moment. Neither partners' priorities nor actions are wrong.” Dr. Atkinson elaborates more by stating “Studies suggest that concluding that one's partner is wrong when he's really not is a mistake you do not want to make. It's one of the most damaging things that people do in relationships. If you make this mistake, it will lower the odds that your partner will be able to see your needs or expectations as legitimate, will care about how you feel, and will be willing to make changes.

Another important ingredient or habit to “divorce-proof” your marriage is “**finding the understandable part.**” Dr. Atkinson states that “When disagreements arise, most of us tend to think of our own position as reasonable and the other person's as unreasonable. However, at some point in the argument, those who know how to get their partners to treat them well manage to find something understandable about what their partners are saying or wanting, even if they can't agree overall. They seem to understand an important principle: **If you want to receive understanding, first give understanding.** If you fail to acknowledge anything about your partner's viewpoint as reasonable, it will be very difficult for him to truly care about your viewpoint, regardless of how legitimate it is. If you want to make it as difficult as possible for your partner to see and acknowledge the legitimate reasons why you feel the way you do, just counter or criticize each and every point he makes during a discussion.”

Dear reader, the only way you can have peace in your marriage is to develop habits that will strengthen the bonds and by admitting that pain will come in the marriage. It is not the absence of pain that will bring the peace. It is how we handle the pain. Go and have peace in your marriage

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