

Marriage is under fire in the United States of America. The Supreme Court has overstepped its jurisdiction by redefining what the Bible has to say. In Genesis, it clearly teaches that the best way to raise a family, is to have two people committed to each other for a lifetime. The Bible defines these people as Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve. Marriage is to be between one man and one woman. It is to be a lifelong commitment, made public. God's Word is clear. Years ago, the Supreme Court put their stamp of approval on killing millions of unborn children. Their actions have led to a lack of respect for human life in the United States, as mass shootings occur all too often. In addition, the world seems to think that by banning guns, having more government aid and control, things will get better. But America needs to get back to God and the direction he gives in His Word. When you thumb your nose at what God says, you reap what you sow, destruction, the destruction of a nation.

It is not just the government that is putting the torch on marriage. Senior citizens, who have lost their first spouse and are re-entering relationships again, are choosing not to marry, but to live together outside marriage. They are justifying their behavior, by saying that they will lose their first spouses pension, if they marry. They say to others who question their actions, "We are just friends." What a terrible example, these seniors are setting about God-pleasing relationships to the world. Younger couples think if the older generation is doing this, it must be ok. Jesus has made it clear to us, that sometimes, when we follow him, it may be a bit painful. Jesus says, "If any man come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." Are you ready to take up your cross, deny yourself, and follow God's directive for marriage? Or are you going to do as many and reinterpret what God says to accommodate your thinking?

Today, we are going to take a closer look at what makes for a successful marriage. We have couples at Open Bible that have been married for over 60 years. What's the secret? Let's find out. Our theme: Marriage As God Intended It.

When Adam was created, God wanted him to see that there was something missing in his life. It would be difficult to handle life all alone. Every creature had a mate but Adam didn't. By showing Adam he had a need, and then fulfilling that need by creating woman, Adam saw what a special blessing Eve was.

When you think about it, Adam did need a helper. As God said, "I will make a helper suitable for him." As I look at my wife, I guess I need a helper too. My wife is definitely my helper. She has so many gifts that I don't have. She is mechanically inclined. She can put cabinets together. She is great at making sure our finances and bills are taken care of. She knows what looks good. She is constantly checking me out. Seeing if my hair looks right, that I am wearing matching clothing, and whether I have worn the same pants for 3 days straight. When I get disheartened with the stresses of ministry, she gives me good advice and counsel. You might say, she holds up the prophet's hands. What about you? Isn't marriage like a puzzle, where we both contribute our unique pieces to that puzzle to make one beautiful complete picture?

The blessings of marriage that God has given to us are threefold: First, there is a companionship. A best friend we can share life's joys and sorrows with. We don't have to travel this journey alone. Next there is the sexual union. A wonderful way where the two can demonstrate in a physical way of becoming one. In our lesson, we are told that this is reserved for marriage. Adam is told to be united to his wife, not his girlfriend. And finally, marriage is the best environment, for God to bless you with children, if he

determines to bless you in that way. You wonder why our society is in the mess it's in. Men and women are promiscuous, forgo the lifelong commitment in marriage, and have no real connection to the Word of God and the Christian church. We have a new generation that does not see church attendance and spiritual growth important.

So, if one is married, what is the secret to stay married. If you are building a house today in the Villages, Florida, you need a good foundation. A foundation that is built on land not prone to sinkholes. The foundation that your marriage needs to be built on is Jesus Christ. On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.

Adam and Eve ruined a fantastic marriage by eating from a tree they should not have eaten from. Then, they played the blame game. Adam blamed his wife. Eve blamed the devil. No one wanted to admit they had messed up. But in spite of their sinfulness, God told them that one day a Savior would come from Eve's bloodline, who would crush the devil's head and get hurt. Hurt on a cross. That was Jesus. Jesus went to the cross and died for all the times we've blown top our top at our spouse, selfishly done what we want to do, lied to them, or hidden things from them. Christ's selfless spirit motivates us to be kind and caring toward our spouse. If Jesus Christ is at the center of your relationship, all your needs will be met. Everything will be ok. It says in Philippians 4:19, "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

I recently said in a marriage sermon. Jesus is like the Sun. I am the earth. My partner is the moon. The more that I get hit with the selfless rays of Christ, the more I will reflect those rays to my partner in marriage.

The second secret to a lifetime marriage is good communication. Adam and Eve didn't have a lot of distractions in their marriage. They were together a lot. Plenty of time to talk to each other. But today, we have so many distractions. Whether it be a cellphone, spending hours at work, watching TV or being on the internet there is much to take us away from talking to our spouse. Good communication is vital to a marriage.

Newsweek released a statistic that said, "The average couple talks to each other alone four minutes a day. The average couple spends 30 hours a week in front of the television and spends about 30 minutes total in communication per week. It's no wonder we don't communicate. We don't talk with each other.

Communication is a skill you've got to learn through practice. Men and women have very different communication needs. The average man talks about 10,000 words a day. The average woman talks about 30,000 words a day. When the man comes home from work about 5 p.m. he's all used up except maybe 50 words. So he's going to grunt his way through the evening. But the wife, because she has a bigger storage, has ten grand to expand. She's dying to talk! This causes great frustration in a marriage. You've got to learn to communicate.

Listening is vital in communication. When a person speaks, we need to listen, listen, listen and not interrupt. When they are done speaking, we need to clarify what they said or paraphrase back what was said. Like, this is what I heard you say. Then speak slowly, in control. Stay in the moment too. That means if I am lamenting how the Detroit Lions are 1-3, my wife should allow me to talk. Not immediately say, "Could you please put the trash out at the curb". To aid in the communication process, it would be a good idea to set aside a time at least a ½ hour each day when you can talk about the day, who you met, and how you felt about them

The third secret to a successful marriage is Consideration. In Ephesians 4:2 it says, "Be completely humble and gentle: be patient, bearing with one another in love." Consideration simply means paying attention to what they say, showing common courtesy, treating people with respect. Consideration means you go out and bring in the groceries, even if it is the 4th quarter of an NFL football game. Consideration means you wait until she has both legs in the car before you pull out of the driveway! It's amazing how quickly consideration disappears after we are married.

Have you ever heard about the 3 years of a married cold. Year one, Darling, let me call the paramedics to take you immediately to Shand's hospital for a checkup and some tests. I know you don't like hospital food, so I'll bring you up your meals. Year two. You look like you have a fever. Why don't you drive yourself over to Redi-med to get checked out. I'll do the dishes and clean the house while you are gone. Year three. Would you please stop coughing? I can't hear the television program I am watching. Would you mind going in the other room while this show is on. You sound like a barking dog.

So often in marriage there tends to be a tendency that one or the other likes to have things done a certain way. They expect the other person to instantly comply with their way of thinking. That is where compromise is essential in a marriage. It is the 4th secret to a successful marriage. Christian love is not self-seeking. It does not demand its own way. Three facts of life: 1) You will have conflict in marriage. Every marriage has conflict. 2) There are some issues you're never going to agree on. Because you're different. 3) Compromise is the evidence of real love. You meet in the middle. You're flexible. Both of you give your opinion on something. Then you brainstorm solutions that are agreeable to both of you. Then you pick one and go with it. You learn the art of negotiation. You learn to compromise. That's very important to learn this skill if you're going to have a satisfying marriage. You have to compromise on many things:

The fifth secret to a successful marriage is Courtship. If there was more courting in marriage there would be fewer marriages in court. The real problem with many marriages is that what you did to win your mate's love you have not continued to do to keep your mate's love. You've stopped courting.

That means when you are out for a walk, you can still hold hands. You can both dress up when you go out for the evening. Date your mate. Don't be burping or doing other obnoxious things that you would never do when you dated your spouse.

Finally, heed the words of Jesus in Mark 10:9, "What God has joined together, let not man separate. In other words, Commitment. You'll never build a great marriage if divorce is always an option for you. If it's always back there, lurking in the back as a potential option, you will never build a great marriage.

You have to lock the escape hatch on your marriage if you want a great marriage. Throw away the key. You must assume "Til death do us part. I'm stuck with this person. I made a promise to God and I'm going to keep it if it kills me!" If the Chevy is broken, you fix the Chevy, you don't go looking for a new Cadillac. Commitment means being willing to be unhappy for a while until you can work things out.

Good Marriages Just Don't Happen. They take time, commitment, and work. May God bless the United States of America, with more individuals who take to heart God's Words on marriage, and not their own interpretation. May we see more marriages that last a lifetime. Amen.