

The Marriage Repair Shop

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It's easy to get married, but staying married requires maintenance. Suppose your car engine starts running rough. Instead of taking it to the repair shop, you ignore the problem. You think, "Well, the car is still running, so I can wait a while before I fix it." Then your transmission starts acting up, but you don't fix it. The "check engine" light comes on, but you ignore it.

Later you notice a trail of black smoke following your car, but you don't fix it. Then you notice that your engine is running hot. By now you realize it's going to cost a lot of money to repair your vehicle. You say to yourself, "This old clunker has too many problems. I'll just get rid of it and get a new one." You think that your problems will be solved by getting another vehicle, never realizing the next car is going to need repairing too.

Maintaining a marriage is like maintaining a car. If we will fix the problems as they arise, it will keep running smoothly and we can enjoy the ride. But if we don't make the needed repairs we might say, "This marriage has too many problems. I'll just get rid of my old clunker and get me new one." God wants us to take our marriages to the Marriage Repair Shop for proper maintenance. A marriage can't be repaired until we first correct the three sources that cause marriage breakdowns.

Causes of Marital Breakdowns

Reason #1: A Selfish Spirit. Selfishness is the source of 99% of marriage conflicts. Adrian Rogers said, "The **best marriage** in the world is two servants married to each other and the **worst marriage** in the world is two bosses married to each other. Every marriage requires two funerals and one wedding. The funerals are for the husband and wife to die to their selfishness."

Reason #2: Unrealistic Expectations. We enter marriage with a picture in our minds of the perfect marriage. But after we get married, we soon discover that we didn't marry a perfect picture but an imperfect person. After we make this discovery, we will **either tear up the picture** or we will **tear up the person**. And that's why husbands and wives fight—they're tearing up the person instead of tearing up the picture. The solution is to tear up the picture of a trouble-free marriage and deal with reality.

Reason #3: Different Upbringings. The husband and wife grew up in completely different nests. Each learns to do things differently and each are programmed to do react a certain way. The differences in the way we were raised can become a source of conflict. However, if we will choose the best ideas from both nests and learn from the mistakes that were made, we can build a better nest—and live happily ever after.

No marriage is problem-free. Every married couple will have to deal with all three sources of conflict. The key to being happily married is not just learning to resolve conflict ("you" versus "me") but to develop an "us" concept of marriage where you see yourselves as a team. God wants to bless your marriage so that it will not only last a lifetime—but that you'll also enjoy being together.

A party was thrown in honor of a couple's 50th wedding anniversary. The husband wanted to honor his wife, who was hard of hearing. In the presence of all, he said, "My dear wife, after fifty years I've found you tried and true!" Everyone clapped but his wife looked bothered. She asked, "WHAT DID YOU SAY?" He spoke louder, "After 50 years, I've found you tried and true!" The upset wife shouted back, "And after 50 years of marriage I'm tired of you, too!"

Here are four things that will keep you from getting tired of your spouse and will insure a happy marriage.

1. Commitment—holds your marriage together. A marriage is only as strong as the husband's and wife's commitment to the Lord. If your spouse is faithful to the Lord, he or she will also be faithful to you. A study on marriage revealed that the divorce rate for a married couple who attended church every week, regularly read the Bible, and prayed together at least once a day was 1 in 1,015.

2. Caring—keeps the love alive. If your marriage has lost its love the Lord can resurrect it because “God is love” (1 John 4:8). He will show you what to do because we are “taught by God to love one another” (1 Thess. 4:9).

3. Compromise—minimizes your differences. Compromise doesn’t mean that you violate your integrity but that you negotiate your differences and come to an agreement. “Do not merely look out for your own interests but also for the interest of others” (Phil. 2:4). My wife and I used to argue about where to set the thermostat in the house. I like it 76 degrees and she wants it 72 degrees. We agreed to set the thermostat at 74 degrees. End of argument. If you are arguing about issues, figure out how to meet in the middle and quit fighting about it.

4. Communication—makes marriage run smoothly.

Communication stops when yelling begins. If a husband and wife don’t enjoy talking to each other, they will drift apart and the marriage will slowly die. Learn to talk positively about what interests your spouse.

It will take both spouses doing these four things to make your marriage work, but **change usually starts with one spouse taking the initiative.** You make the first move and let God deal with your spouse.

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