

The Top Two Hindrances to Making Marriage Work

How do you make a marriage work? Maybe a better question would be - how do you work to make a marriage? As with any worthwhile endeavor work is the factor that is most vital to success. However, in marriage we often expect success with very little effort. In **Ephesians 5**, Paul instructs husbands to love their wives and wives to submit to and respect their husbands—instructions based on the God given needs of both. Easy words but frequently complicated concepts and applications. Two problems seem to be most prevalent in causing these needs to remain unmet and therefore preventing the marriage from thriving the way God intended.

First, we are ignorant. It sounds harsh but it is true. Have you ever found yourself either thinking or saying, “I never realized you felt that way” or “I didn’t know it meant that much to you”? Ignorance of my spouse’s real needs will almost certainly mean they will largely go unmet. We understand that we are to love our wives and to respect our husbands but how exactly do we do that? Not only are their needs different but also the method of fulfilling those needs. I know what I like, want, and need for fulfillment. That knowledge comes to me naturally with no real effort required, but the needs of my spouse are not nearly so easy to understand. Ignorance may not be easy to admit but it is easily corrected. Whatever I am ignorant about only requires that I put forth effort to study and learn. Marriage is no different. In the seminars we have presented on marriage the last ten years one of the most evident truths is the lack of real effort of husbands and wives to use the resources available to better understand their spouse. There are some wonderful resources based on God’s principles to help us understand our spouse’s perspective. Read, attend classes, and ask your spouse! How much effort are you putting forth to really understand your husband or wife?

Second, we are selfish. Once we know what our spouse truly needs we must be willing to devote ourselves to fulfilling that need. Selfishness is the problem of all mankind including husbands and wives. Jesus taught often, even those who were closest to Him, that we must serve others rather than seeking to be served ourselves (**John 13**). That is never easy. I like me. I like to be comfortable, satisfied, and fulfilled. When I am tired, uncomfortable, aggravated, over stressed, or underappreciated it becomes even more difficult to focus on my spouse. When our thoughts are focused on what our spouse needs to do to fulfill our needs then we have departed from the mindset of Christ. The commands in **Ephesians 5** are independent of one another. Each of us has the same role in marriage. That role is to glorify God by devoting ourselves to fulfilling our spouse’s needs. Where would we be if Christ was only as focused on serving us as we are on serving our spouse? How hard will you work to forget self to fulfill your spouse?

The key to a happy healthy relationship in marriage is to learn each other’s unique needs and strive to meet them to the fullest of your potential. - **Edwin Crozier**