



What About Marriage?



Marriage was instituted by God (Genesis 2:18-24). Thus God should know how it is supposed to work! The Bible is our instruction manual for all personal relationships, including marriage. A good marriage involves the following basic components.

□ Foundation.

What is your life based on?

Jesus said, "Everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock" (Matthew 7:24-25, NIV).

A good marriage is based on a good foundation. The best foundation is God's truth. Both marriage partners should share this foundation.

□ Direction.

Where are you headed? What are your goals? How will you achieve those goals?

"I want to know Christ ... I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:10a, 14, NIV)

A good marriage is headed in the right direction. The right direction is toward God. The primary goal should be to know and serve God. Marriage partners should have the same goals and agree on the structures and methods to achieve those goals.

Compatibility in General

"Foundation" and "direction" are essential areas of compatibility. Others may include personality, family, background, education, expectations, personal interests, etc. The importance of some of these areas will not be the same for all people. Workbooks are available that address foundation and direction, and help couples evaluate other components of compatibility. (Ask Jay.)



□ Love / Commitment.

What is the most important ingredient in marriage? Who is responsible?

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one" (Mark 10:7-8, NIV).

"Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord ... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her ... each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:22, 25, 33, NIV).

Love is not merely a feeling. It is a choice that involves an active and unceasing care for the other person. Who is responsible? Each of us is responsible for our own actions. But we must remember, the capacity to love comes from God.

Biblical Roles in Marriage

Husbands are to love their wives "just as Christ loved the church." Thus the husband is to love his wife sacrificially and unconditionally. The husband is to nurture, build up, provide, protect, and lead. Wives are also to love their husbands sacrificially and unconditionally. The wife is to submit to her husband, in order to complete, honor, and respect her husband. The common denominators include self-giving, unconditional love; submission to the best interest of others; and lives that are dedicated to God's service for the purpose of his glory.

(See "The Marriage Relationship" for more information and practical guidance. Also see the "Marriage Resource List" for helpful resources.)

What About Problems?

If both husband and wife fulfilled their roles, everything would be fine. But that seems uncommon! The Bible provides guidance for those facing various marital problems, but love remains the key ingredient - God's love for us, and our love for God and others. And we should never underestimate the potentially transforming power of God in our lives and the lives of our spouses. If the words of Scripture (and Bible teachers) seem too simplistic, do not despair! Seek help through prayer and mature Christian counsel! "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).