

CHRIST-CENTERED MARRIAGE

ASK: What is a Christ-centered marriage? What does it look like?

Is it an idyllic place where peace and quiet, tranquility and joy continuously reigns?

- Definitely not!

Let's be honest: For the most part, Christian marriages come pitifully short of the Biblical teachings, and we are all aware of it.

- The first and most important fact to remember about a truly Christian home is that *sinners* live there!
- The notion that the Christian home is a perfect or near perfect place is decidedly not Biblical!
- Husbands and wives fail—often miserably fail!
 - They fail one another
 - They fail God
- Husbands and wives quarrel
 - Get irritated with one another
 - Have serious arguments and misunderstandings
- Of course, they have accomplishments too, but the point that I want to make is that conditions frequently are far from ideal.
- That is the realistic picture of a Christian marriage

Rom. 7:15-20 My own behaviour baffles me. For I find myself not doing what I really want to do but doing what I really loathe. Yet surely if I do things that I really don't want to do, I am admitting that I really agree with the Law. But it cannot be said that "I" am doing them at all—it must be sin that has made its home in my nature. (And indeed, I know from experience that the carnal side of my being can scarcely be called the home of good!) I often find that I have the will to do good, but not the power. That is, I don't accomplish the good I set out to do, and the evil I don't really want to do I find I am always doing. Yet if I do

things that I don't really want to do then it is not, I repeat, "I" who do them, but the sin which has made its home within me.

²¹⁻²⁵ When I come up against the Law I want to do good, but in practice I do evil. My conscious mind whole-heartedly endorses the Law, yet I observe an entirely different principle at work in my nature. This is in continual conflict with my conscious attitude, and makes me an unwilling prisoner to the law of sin and death. In my mind I am God's willing servant, but in my own nature I am bound fast, as I say, to the law of sin and death. It is an agonising situation, and who on earth can set me free from the clutches of my sinful nature? I thank God there is a way out through Jesus Christ our Lord.

- Can anybody relate???
- Sometimes it *feels like* I have the will to do good, but not the power
 - Is that *feeling* accurate?
 - No, it isn't
 - We have the power of the HS living inside of us
 - But we can still *feel* like we don't
- Perhaps you're wondering such a description differs from the marriage next door, in which no one is trying to live under the Lordship of Christ?
- You may wonder, "why did Bruce describe a Christian marriage as "not perfect"
 - where we fail one another and we fail God
 - where we disappoint one another
 - where we get irritated with one another
 - where we misunderstand one another
 - where we hurt one another's feelings
- The answer is simple: this is exactly what the Bible gives us reason to expect among saved but imperfect person
- Our salvation is there—we possess it
- But there is something that also needs to happen to us: SANCTIFICATION
- WHAT IS THAT?
- It is where we are being made more and more like JC
 - IT IS A LIFELONG process
 - The final goal is never reached until death

- At death, we are glorified—made completely perfect for the first time
- But during this life, we Christians continue to sin

SO HOW ARE CHRISTIANS DIFFERENT FROM AN UNSAVED COUPLE???

A Christian marriage is a relationship where sinners live, but it is also a relationship where the husbands and wives admit their sinners, understand the problem, know what to do about it, and as a result, grow toward the ideal

There are 3 things that separate a Christian marriage from a non-Christian one:

1. Husbands & Wives admit their sins

- 1 John 1:8-10
- Christians are able to acknowledge they are sinners, they have sinned
- Christians should not be covering up our sins
- For all Christians know that all Christians sin
- Openness and honesty needs to be learned
- We cannot deal with our sins until we tell the truth
- Rather than covering up their sin, Christians can spend their time and energy into replacing sinful patterns with Biblical patterns
 - We can more quickly deal with our sins
- Practice saying: “I am a sinner”
- “I have sinned against you.”
- “Here is how I have sinned against you...”

RW How easy is it to identify sin?

We want to think it's not sin or it's not that bad...so I didn't tell the whole truth

I don't want to do that...He who knows the good he ought to do & doesn't do it, sins

Do everything without grumbling or complaining

In your anger do not sin—lashing out, using words to hurt, silent treatment, feeling sorry for yourself

I'm not prideful, not defensive, but others see it in you...

My definition of pride wasn't complete...

Arrogant/defensive

Do we just look for the actual word in the list of sins or try to understand, ' & the like '....don't be legalistic. Defensiveness is sin when it keeps you from seeing your sin. Defensiveness is usually trying to protect yourself by denying what is being said.

James 3:14

2. Husbands & Wives have a godly sorrow for their sin

- Christians should not rationalize, excuse, minimize, or blameshift their sin
- This has to be the monumental difference between our old life and our new life in Christ:
 - We don't excuse
 - We don't rationalize
 - We refuse to minimize
 - Or shift the blame
- Is this easy????
- No, this is not easy—it's tough—very tough
- Why??
 - Because we are all prideful!
 - We are all defensive, by nature
- Practice saying this: "Honey, I'm so sorry for being defensive, there's no excuse for my sin, will you forgive me?"

RW—saying, "you're right", helps you overcome pride

"Why can't you just be humble"? Why can't I? of course, I can...

Desire to do what it right, not be right

3. Husbands & Wives are transparent with other couples

- James 5:16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

- Our marriage did not really grow until we started allowing other couples to know us and our sins
- Transparency requires humility

RW—walking in the light—what does that mean? You initiate, ideally
But if another sheds the light, don't deny it.

You need others because both of you may be committing the same sin—pride--& you need another to shed that light.

Do not be deceived, your sin will find you out

Pro 28:13, Lk 12:2

Others help you see truth, not just your feelings

4. Husbands & Wives actually progress out of their sinful patterns and attitudes

- A fundamental expectation of God is that as we deal with our sins Biblically, then we will break a lot of sinful patterns and attitudes
- We actually grow into righteousness
- Where there is Bible study, prayer, confession, discipling, there is growth in any marriage
- 2 Peter 1:3, 5-8 His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness...⁵For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸For if you possess these qualities in **increasing** measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.
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- RW It will take a lifetime to see God's results...don't sell Him short, or yourself for that matter.
Do you really believe in the power of God's word????