

## Common Marriage Problems

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Introduction: the numbers related to the failure of marriage, and of Christian marriage, are staggering. There is a deep question of why they fail? Christian marriages are under particular scrutiny, and something great is at stake. We say we believe a Gospel that transform and changes people, helps them to love and forgive and live holy lives. Yet, statistically the professing church is no different. The glory of Christ in the Gospel is at stake.

- We must not underestimate the power of witness in a happy Christian marriage. Not a façade of happiness, but genuine love and unity. This can attract people to Christ, as we “love one another” (our spouse being our closest disciple and neighbor).
- Part of the devil’s plan was to not only affect the relationship of them with God, but also with one another. Satan hates marriage because of what it represents, and his ability to undermine good marriages is a way to rob Christ of the glory He deserves.
- I intend to cover the first four today in a sweeping way, then focus in more on the last four over the coming weeks.

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1.) The problem of misunderstanding – The origin, purpose, obligations (need for maintenance), commitment of marriage (covenant commitment as opposed to “no fault” divorce), love (its meaning). This is one of the reasons for this whole series.

- There are errors which are willful sin, others of ignorance. There could be a lacking of practical examples which contributes to the problem, highlighting all the more need to be around good marriages and seek specific advice as to what it looks like.
- There are problems related to particular failures of husband/wife, not being what God intends.
- Problem of failed expectations – true or false (closely connected to previous point). Spouse, lifestyle, children (how they act, or even having any). Soon after disappointment, one or both may resign themselves. They also may begin the pattern of divorce/remarriage. The problem of unfaithfulness.
- Problem of failure to embrace God’s sovereignty. In providence being married to this particular person, and His intentions to make one like Christ. Ultimately, problems are rooted in the individuals, not the “marriage” itself. They are problems because sinners are involved. Marriage is simply the close contact to exacerbate and expose what is in the heart.

2.) Problem of failure to focus on personal responsibility. Self-justification and blame shifting, wanting the other person to change first, then I will do my duty. There must be the realization that the only person I can for sure change is myself (with God’s help and direction). It may be that the Lord withholds change in the other until God is finished using them as an instrument in our change.

- This is closely connected to self-centeredness – 2Timothy 3:2 (Gk. philautos – self love) which society has institutionalized. This can be fleshed out neglect by obsession (rather than moderation).

3.) Problem of outside influence – parents/family/work associates/culture-media influence (pornography and sex)/church. Failure of cleaving by way of superior relationship and not leaving other influences. Prov13:20 Ps119:63 1Cor15:33

4.) Problems related to sinful living – Life-dominating sins, addiction to drugs, pornography, sexual immorality, gambling. At root of these problems are more fundamental problems in the person’s life related to idolatry and one’s relationship with God and His Word.

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[by way of overview]

5.) Problems related to communication. Different communication styles. One’s unwillingness or lack of understanding of how to communicate. Resolution conflict.

6.) Problems related to children – disagreement if should have, how many, how to raise them. Problems related to the additional difficulties of their sins and consequences (especially as they get older).

7.) Problems related to finances. The lack of money. Pressures of living a certain lifestyle. Frequent change in employment. Misuse or poor use of money. Burdensome debt.

8.) Problems related to sexual intimacy. Sometimes there are problems dealing with physiology or technique, but they are most often the outflow of baggage carried in from other problems. Lack of satisfaction, frequency, attitudes (biblical joy vs. dirty duty).

- With so many potential problems, is it all worth it? Is it worth even trying?
- Everyone has marriage problems, because every marriage has two sinners involved. This is true of the best of marriages. The question is how to they think and respond to those problems.
- When such problems are identified, and they do not get better through the ordinary means of grace and Christian maturity (the first line of attack), what happens?

- 1.) Commitment to seek help. A humble recognition of the place of pastors and the body of Christ.
  - There is a recognition that marriage counseling can be the catalyst for accelerated personal growth.
  - The Bible has solutions to all these problems, and progress can be made, and there can be change for the true disciples of Christ. There is no such a thing as “an old dog” in the church who cannot change, because He has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness.
  - That is what I am privileged to be a part of. In one sense, all the members are a part of this (through oversight). It is when particular problems arise that there may be a series of sessions to work through the problems.
  
- 2.) Refusal to seek help.
  - Some settle in, and are content to “live with it.” They hold on to the commitment that divorce isn’t an option, and live together separately, with a lack of growth in relationship with one another. This is dishonoring to the Lord, and not properly reflective of the portrait of Christ and the church. Rather than having a marriage that sings, it is a marriage that moans.
  - There are couples who “cover up”, not wanting others to know that things are bad. There can be an attempt to diminish the problems (often by the husband who feels it reflects his failures) while they are still increasing.
  - Often there is a crisis which brings things out into the open about how bad things really are. Someone says “I’ve had it”, “I’m filing for divorce”, “I can’t take it anymore.” Some just disappear. Others cultivate other relationships to try to make up for the failure of this one, and have a kind of surrogate spouse (relationally or sexually). This brings about a crisis which, if it had been addressed early, may have kept the marriage from such deep wound and damage.