



The Lord is the great healer of hearts and marriages

Genesis 2:24 says, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they shall be one flesh."

In this article I wish to offer some very practical advice from both our own imperfect marriage and the imperfect marriages of others for whom I was involved as a counselor. There are a lot of troubled marriages out there and hopefully something can be offered here which might help a bit. Here are the suggestions.

1. Let the marriage be Christ-centered. This can happen only when he is invited into our hearts as Lord and Savior. Here is the kind of prayer you can pray: "Lord, I am a sinner and I turn from my sin. Please come into my heart and wash away my sins and give me eternal life. I'll serve you all the days of my life. In Jesus name I pray this. Amen." When you pray a prayer like this you instantly have Christ central in your life, your sins are all forgiven, and you have the guarantee of eternal life. (Romans 10:9) He is constantly there with you to see you through every problem you may encounter in your marriage.

2. Learn to say "I'm sorry." In premarital counseling I have the couple practice saying this right there in the counseling session. It may not sound that important, but, it can stem the tide of a lot of hurt and division.

3. Recognize your own faults and begin to work on them. A little game you can play that will aid in this endeavor is what my wife and I call "I wish." My wife may go first and say something she wishes I could improve in my life. It is then my turn to make a similar wish in her life. We then work on those areas and other needs in our own life. Admittedly, it always seems I have the most things to work on. It may be a dominating attitude that one exercises and you know it is negatively impacting the marriage. We then ask the Lord to assist us in altering this behavior. Obviously, it may be something else that needs to be dealt with. The Lord is so faithful in helping us.

4. Frequently have calm, rational discussions. This can be very rewarding. I may have

to turn Fox News off to participate as I should.

5. Establish regular prayer and reading of the Scriptures together. It doesn't have to be lengthy but preferably brief. Prayer can be offered for your marriage, the well-being of

your family members and other concerns. Someone said, "A family that prays together, stays together."

6. Attend regularly a good Bible-teaching church. The preaching and teaching of the Word will edify and the fellowship with other couples will be so beneficial.

7. Develop the utmost trust in one another through careful fidelity. Unfaithfulness will thrash the heart out of marriage. Recovery from such is a long, difficult road. The late Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade, made a statement once that I will never forget. He said, "He prayed to God that if he ever looked like he was going to be unfaithful to his dear wife then let him die." Give us that kind of determination to resist such temptation always.

8. Cover all marital difficul-

ties with prayer. God, who instituted marriage, is very eager to resolve difficulties and make your marriage work. Marital love is like a river. It may not always be at the same level. Pray often for a fresh renewal of that love and watch the Lord produce that increase and cause that river to rise.

9. Avoid unnecessary debts. Learn to save regularly as much as you can and live frugally. Large debt can cause difficulties in your marriage, which can become increasingly serious.

10. Be complimentary and say "I love you" often. Most men can hear that said to them once in a while and they will remember it but women are wired differently and need it said to them much more frequently. These expressions of love might take the form of small notes, always at the end of every phone call, when parting in the morning with a kiss and "I love you." Little gifts of love are another way to express such and the ladies love them.

11. This is another important suggestion. Allow quality time together, but, also, space apart. The wife may want to go shopping with a friend while

the husband remains home and the husband may want to go fishing with a buddy while she remains at home. The one remaining home will so look forward to the other's return and then quality time together begins. Some of that quality time together could include a date night occasionally.

12. There should be discussions of problems and differences but throw out heated argumentation. One dear lady, who just lost her husband recently, shared with me that they often shared their own view of a problem or situation on which they differed but it stopped there and they refused to argue over the matter. Let us learn by that.

May I say something in closing that after 55 years of an imperfect marriage my wife and I are more in love now than we were when we stood before our pastor and said "I do." May the Lord bless your marriage abundantly. If you are separated, then pray about reconciliation. The Lord is the great healer of hearts and marriages. The writer is the pastor emeritus of the Christian Tabernacle.



Your Pastor Speaks
The Rev. Harold McKnight