

3 Key Questions to Ask When You Feel Like Giving Up on Your Marriage

Marriage is not easy. You know that. When things become extra painful, it may seem leaving the marriage would be the only way to stop the pain. What do you do when you feel like giving up on your marriage?

You could keep doing the same things and getting the same results in your relationship. (But that's the definition of insanity!) You could walk away from the marriage and risk taking your problems with you. (If you've been married more than once, this may resonate with you. It's *possible* your spouse is not the primary problem.)

Or you could step back and evaluate the issues your marriage is facing from as prayerful and helpful a position as you can. Acknowledge the pain and dysfunction in your marriage—to yourself, and to God. Then put your feelings on hold as much as you can, and consider these three questions.

1. What is God's perspective on your marriage?

When you're in the middle of a mess, it can seem so difficult to see beyond this moment of suffering. Almost every marriage can be improved by seeking to understand your spouse's point of view. But even more important is to understand God's perspective on your marriage.

God's perspective may not be what you imagine at first. It may be that God is using the challenges in your marriage to grow and mature both of you. Maybe you have tried to control your spouse (consciously or unconsciously) and God needs you to back off to give Him space to work. Perhaps your spouse has an evil heart, and God is releasing you from this marriage. Or

perhaps God sees that your own growth to become more Christlike will over time inspire your spouse to do the same. These are only a few of the possible perspectives God may help you come to understand.

Prayerfully put your own feelings, needs, desires and so forth on hold, as legitimate as they are, and take time to intentionally seek God's perspective on your marriage.

2. Whom does God need you to be to your spouse?

Loving your spouse as Jesus would is always the foundation of how you need to respond. But that doesn't mean you are to be either weak or super-spiritual. God will give you the wisdom, courage and grace to be who He needs you to be in your marriage, not necessarily who you wish you were. This is about learning to love your spouse well—in the way God needs you to love them.

This question follows from the previous one. Perhaps God needs you to be a kind and supportive spouse while He works on your spouse's heart. Perhaps He needs you to set some painful and difficult boundaries for the benefit of your relationship. Perhaps He needs you to learn communication skills so you can have some of those difficult conversations you've been avoiding. Perhaps He needs you to do some deep heart work yourself so you have some clarity and resilience to bring to your marriage.

This question can be a powerful one in moving your focus to the most God-honoring place possible.

3. What step is God asking you to take right now?

At our recent Change(d) Conference, my friends Avery and Zion Montgomery talked about what it looks like to embrace the transformation God wants to bring to you through your marriage. They turned Paul's directions to husbands and wives upside down from the way these Scriptures have often been

used.

To women Paul says, “Wives, be submissive to your own husbands as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22). Rather than using this as a club to demand “submission” from his wife, a husband should ask, “Am I a husband worth submitting to?”

To men Paul says, “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it” (Eph. 5:25). Rather than demanding sacrifice from her husband, a wife should ask, “Am I a wife worth dying for?”

Isn’t that a revolutionary way of seeing things? This does not mean you accept bad behavior from your spouse because you are not perfect. None of us is. But it does mean focusing on what God is asking *you* to do next, instead of focusing on how you wish your spouse would change.

When things seem hopeless, and you feel like giving up on your marriage, prayerfully ask these three questions. Doing so will help you know what to do next.

Your Turn: *Have you asked these questions about your own marriage? What insights have you gained by doing so? Leave a comment below.* {eo}

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