

5 Obstacles to a Great Christian Marriage

I love marriage. I love the idea of marriage and the process of marriage.

But, marriage isn't easy. It's actually hard to have a good marriage.

One of the toughest verses in the Bible to obey is Ephesians 5:31 which says, *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh."*

One flesh.

The process of blending two very different people is what causes stress to many marriages.

In my work with marriages, I've identified five of the major obstacles to making a great ONE out of two very different people. Sometimes simply understanding what obstacles exist and knowing they are common to most marriages—you are not alone—can help us learn to see them not as obstacles, but as God-given opportunities to grow a stronger "one flesh."

5 major obstacles I have seen are:

1. Lack of biblical knowledge about marriage. There is very little premarital training in churches today or even in most homes that are raising children who will one day marry. When my boys got their driver's license we sent them to four Saturdays of classes. How much training do most of us get for marriage? The fact is that most of us are somewhat surprised by marriage and we don't really know how to make it work. We need to do a better job training people for marriage.

2. Differences in men and women. Men and women are designed

differently by God—not just physically, but emotionally. We look at the world differently. We process information differently. We expect different things from relationships. We have wrongly tried to equalize everything when it comes to men and women. I strongly agree we need equality when it comes to things like workplace treatment or educational opportunities, but when it comes to matters of the heart, and especially marriage, we better know that God designed a difference in men and women.

3. Communication styles. Because of our differences, men and women communicate differently. Men tend to communicate thinking to thinking; while women tend to communicate heart to heart. One of the reasons Cheryl and I might have conflict is because I say things I intend for her mind to hear and it's received with her heart. We need to remember that we communicate differently.

4. Outside influences. Every marriage has influences beyond their immediate control, but that have profound and direct impact on the marriage. Some of those influences include:

- Children
- In-laws/other relatives
- Friends
- Pressures of life/stress
- Satan

All of these are normal influences in any marriage. Some of them are even welcome influencers in the marriage. The key is not to let ANY of them distract from the plan God has for the marriage to become one flesh.

5. Differing goals/objectives. Remember every couple is made up of two unique, differently designed individuals. That means each one brings unique qualities, personalities and opinions to the relationship. Again, that's part of God's overall design to make two people one.

Some of the major differences include:

- Outlook on life; usually one is more positive and one is more negative.
- Differences in family backgrounds
- Personality differences Introvert/Extrovert; Thinker/Feeler;
- Organized/Disorganized
- Parenting Objectives

The overall goal of marriage is not to make both parties in the marriage like one of the parties. It's to make ONE new unit out of the two. Discovering how to blend one flesh out of two different people takes years and requires practice, patience and lots of hard work. Remembering that differences are a part of God's plan and can actually help us build stronger marriages.

Remember also God didn't promise this would be easy. In fact, the very next line after the difficult verse I shared in the opening of this post says, *"This is a great mystery"* (Ephesians 5:32).

If you are married, praise God for the mystery He gave you today.

What other obstacles have you seen to having a great marriage? {eoa}

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