

5 Reasons Christian Marriages Fail—and the Anointed Fix for Each One

Some people love to point to reported statistics that say 50 percent of even Christian marriages fail. Others find faith an indispensable aspect of learning to love well in marriage. The various statistics may be in dispute, but it's undeniable that too many marriages fail, even when those involved are Christians.

Supporting the bad news, the Barna Group reported in 2008 that the percentage of adults who were divorced did not differ significantly between Christians and non-Christians. However, the same group showed recently that the number of adults who are currently married is much higher among Christians than among non-Christians.

Some news is encouraging. The National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia has produced an ongoing body of research showing that faith fosters family. Says Dr. Bradford Wilcox, "In simple terms, the old slogan—"the family that prays together, stays together"—still holds in 2017." In addition, those who make intentional decisions about their relationship do better than those who "slide" into marriage, and that intentionality is frequently encouraged by faith communities.

All these data can be and have been disputed. But what is clear is that being a Christian does not automatically mean your marriage will be successful. The percentages matter less than how your own marriage is doing.

Here are some critical reasons some Christian marriages fail. Make sure these mistakes aren't happening in *your* marriage.

Failure to Keep Growing

Whatever your age, you don't enter marriage knowing everything you need to know. The message some in the church have promoted is, "just save yourself sexually until marriage, and you'll be rewarded with happiness and fulfillment." That's a sad distortion of the truth. While it's true that full intimacy can only be enjoyed within the commitment of marriage, every relationship will need to continue growing and developing.

Loving well is not something you're born with, and it doesn't drop into you when you say "I do." Learning to love well takes time and intentional effort. It involves ongoing investment in your relationship, learning skills including healthy communication and healthy forgiveness, and continually discovering things about yourself and your spouse. Like a tree, whenever your marriage stops growing, it begins to die.

Guilt, Shame and Blame

Marriage is the union of two sinners, two broken people. Thankfully, the message of the gospel is that you don't have to stay there. God has promised you—and your spouse—a way out. But the enemy is only too eager to take your own failings as well as your spouse's failings and use them to beat you up, separate you from your spouse and destroy your relationship.

You will make mistakes. Your spouse will make mistakes. You will hurt each other. Focusing on the mistakes and the wounds will doom your marriage to failure. The healthy alternative is to quickly acknowledge what is wrong, but then focus on the solution. Deal with it, do whatever it takes to grow and change, and then move on.

Control and Manipulation

This can be a destructive force in marriage regardless of your faith. But I've seen too many marriages where God-talk or biblical pronouncements are used as a weapon to control and

manipulate one's spouse. That's when Christianity becomes a destructive force. Mind you, this is not true Christianity, but it too often gets caricatured as such. When you use your superior spirituality to lord it over your spouse, to demean and control, to drive them away, you make it exponentially harder for your marriage to survive. And you also make it much harder for any intervention God might have available.

You cannot change your spouse. That's God's job, not yours. Take your grubby hands off and let God have a chance. You do not have permission to play Junior Holy Spirit with your spouse. Your spouse is responsible for their own behavior before God (See John 21:22). You pay attention to your own heart.

Keeping Stuff Hidden

Hiding is human. We all do it. But in marriage it's usually the hidden things that bite you. The termites of a wandering heart, indifference, building resentment, private addictions and more will destroy your marriage from within. There is no human being who does not have large measures of weaknesses, brokenness, vulnerabilities, unmet needs, sins, fears, bad habits and more. None of those things need destroy your marriage if you consistently bring them into the light.

Marriage as God intended it is a place of safety, a place where you and your spouse can find healing. No marriage does that perfectly. But if you continually work on keeping the light on in all the potentially dark places of your soul, your spouse's soul, and your relationship, your love and intimacy will grow.

Keeping God and Marriage Separate

If your Christianity is comprised of going to church an hour (or more) each week, prayer before meals, and a few Bible verses occasionally, your marriage is not likely to be any different than that of a non-believer. "God in a box" will not

help your marriage.

Bringing God into your marriage involves praying for and with your spouse, but that's only a very small beginning. You must invite God to deal with every aspect of you and your relationship; your anger, your busyness, your intimacy, how you treat your spouse, your communication, your time, your money, your plans for the future. It's a 24/7 investment. It's a way of life.

And if you do that, **your marriage will not fail!**

Your Turn: In which of these areas is your marriage most vulnerable? What steps are you going to take this week to preserve the marriage God gave you? Leave a comment below.
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