

5 Truths About Your Most Important Human Relationship

Recently I talked about the 3 biggest false beliefs people hold onto when it comes to marriage. What you believe about marriage will affect how you approach the challenges that come to every couple. So it's time to look at the things you should believe about marriage.

Uniting two broken people to be as one takes a big investment of time and energy, divine intervention and a lot of prayer, patience and practice. These beliefs will help give you a foundation that makes your investment successful.

1. God can do anything. God can restore anything. There's nothing too hard for the Lord. That includes growing, saving or restoring your marriage.

I know people who experienced God restoring their marriage after infidelity, violence, addiction and more. I know marriages that have survived loss and grief, infertility, chronic illness, financial hardship, disability and other obstacles. My own marriage with Al was strong and successful in spite of a super-sized helping of suffering.

As the old gospel song says, "What He's done for others, He will do for you." It doesn't matter how traumatic, broken, disconnected, unhappy or hopeless your marriage may seem, God has an answer. Nothing is impossible with Him (Luke 1:37).

God can. Although you may struggle a little with this belief, you probably hold it to be true. The bigger question you probably wrestle with is this: Will He? And that's where the following four beliefs come in.

2. My choices and behavior affect the outcome. You are not powerless. The health, happiness and success of your marriage

depend in part on you.

How you treat your spouse, how you take care of yourself, the quality of your character (good or bad), your willingness to learn and grow and forgive, the degree of investment you make in your relationship and your openness to risk challenging conversations with both sharing and listening—these and more will make a real and lasting difference in your marriage.

Some people become immobilized when facing marriage misery, begging God to change things while taking no action. You can always do something. You always have choices. You cannot control everything, but you can control yourself. You can choose to confront or let it go, forgive or become bitter, leave or stay, clam up or risk being vulnerable.

Will your choices or behavior save your marriage? No—God does that. But He will not do it without you.

3. Tomorrow can be different than today. Walls, apathy and conflict can feel never-ending. Marriage misery can feel like a prison you have no way out of. But that doesn't have to be your future.

Psychologically, we humans get overwhelmed and paralyzed when we feel there is no hope of a different future. But that's simply not the case, especially when you have choices, your spouse has choices—and God is with you.

There is no guarantee of what tomorrow will look like, but change is possible. Other marriages have been transformed; why not yours? You or your spouse can overcome an addiction. You can together learn about communication, intimacy and friendship. You can learn to love well in the middle of suffering. As the Scripture says so often, “But God ...”

Do your part, especially in working on your own character. And give God a chance.

4. My spouse's choices and behavior affect the outcome. This is perhaps the hardest of all beliefs to live with. Marriage is truly about two people. While your behavior and choices do affect the outcome, so do your spouse's. Trying to either control or ignore this reality will leave you frustrated, disappointed and probably angry.

Your behavior affects your spouse, but they still have the choice about how they respond. They can choose to invest or not invest in the relationship, to allow the Holy Spirit to change them where He needs to—or not, to learn to love well or walk away.

Loving means making yourself vulnerable to another person. And that's always a risk. You cannot remove all risk and still love.

That's why you must develop and maintain your own reliance on God. He's the only one who will never change, never let you down, never disappoint you. From that place of security, you can look at your spouse honestly, choose to love well and make decisions you will not later regret.

5. The benefits of marriage are worth the investment. If marriage is such a risk, why would anyone want to jump in? It's no wonder many people choose to remain single or settle for "friends with benefits" or living together. It feels safer. You can always leave, right? You don't want to get hurt.

I can tell you without reservation that the benefits of a godly marriage far outweigh any suffering or risk involved. Yes, you will be hurt and disappointed. But the satisfaction, growth and fulfillment you can experience through loving well are priceless.

Those benefits can only come from a permanent commitment. Nothing short of an eternal "I do—till death do us part" can make such fulfillment possible. Truly knowing and being known,

being vulnerable and having someone else make themselves vulnerable to you, seeing God come through when you didn't see any future for your relationship—nothing less than a permanent commitment in marriage can even come close.

Will your marriage be saved, restored? I don't know. Remember, your vote—and your spouse's vote—counts.

But what I do know is that God can. And it's worth investing everything you have and are in the process.

Question: What do you believe about God, yourself and your spouse when it comes to marriage? {eoa}

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