

5 Ways to Defeat Satan's Attack on Your Marriage

Sometimes even before the honeymoon is over, it seems “the world, the flesh and the devil” are conspiring to destroy your marriage. Contemporary culture seems especially aligned against long-term healthy marriages. So if you want yours to be the exception, you will need to learn to fight *for* your marriage.

Fighting for your marriage is different than fighting your spouse. You and your spouse are both sinners, but seeing your spouse as the enemy will expedite the deterioration of your relationship. Choose to look behind the frustrations and conflict to the true enemy—Satan and his kingdom of darkness. Look behind the obvious and remember who gains if your marriage is troubled or destroyed. Add to that the natural deterioration of anything of value that is not regularly maintained and invested in. You and your spouse have work to do.

Look at your relationship as something you are building together. You're not fighting against your spouse; you're together fighting against the elements that would seek to push you apart.

Here are some ways to effectively fight *for* your marriage and build a lasting relationship.

1. Check your own heart.

Over 95 percent of the messages I get from married men and women are complaining about what their spouse is doing wrong. By demeaning, criticizing or manipulating your spouse, you are cooperating with the enemy in tearing down your marriage. Are you interested in being happier and more satisfied in your relationship? Take your eyes off your spouse's faults and

focus on what you can do something about—your own heart.

This does not mean accepting bad behavior from your spouse such as abuse, addiction or infidelity. It does mean, however, that your singular focus should be on what you can control, and that's your own behavior. Do you need to forgive? Or set up some healthy boundaries? Or get your own soul filled up in healthy ways? Quit tearing down your spouse and focus on what you can do in working toward a solution.

2. Vigorously protect your relationship.

Pornography, intrusive extended family, busyness—these are only a few of the thieves that will destroy your marriage if left unchecked. Your spouse is not the enemy. See yourselves as standing on the same side, shoulder to shoulder, fighting against the things coming against your relationship. That includes things coming against each of you individually as well as whatever impacts your marriage itself.

Talk with your spouse about how you can protect your relationship better. Enlist them in strategizing together with you about what steps may be needed. Do you need to set boundaries with in-laws? Do you need to eliminate some media or entertainment that is drawing your hearts in an ungodly direction? Or do you need to make changes in your schedule so you can invest in your relationship? Notice whatever is stealing your affection and love from each other and take steps together to push back those influences.

3. Invest in your marriage.

Although every marriage gets assaulted, some marriages face bigger struggles than others. Easy or hard, don't ever assume your marriage will get healthier or stronger by doing nothing. Like growing a garden or developing a career, if you want your marriage to be better a year from now, 10 years from now, than it is today, it will take intentional effort. And don't give up just because things get difficult.

Spend time together, and vigorously protect that time. Have fun together. Do something every month to intentionally develop your relationship; read a book on marriage together, go to a marriage conference, get some professional help if needed, take a morning to intentionally communicate about some of the tough stuff, of whatever is needed. Your marriage will deteriorate without intentional and regular investment, but this is something you can do something about.

4. Study your spouse.

As much as you may think you know your spouse when you get married, there's always much more to be discovered. Remain curious. Notice how different circumstances affect your spouse's energy level and mood. Look for clues to parts of your spouse's past or aspects of their worldview that color how they see things around them and respond to life. Pay attention to their wounds, strengths, values, fears, joys and dreams. Learn what depletes them and what fills them up. Study how God is working in their life.

Never stop studying your spouse. Seeking to understand them will keep you alert to important changes and challenges they may be facing, and where you can support what God is doing. It will also be invaluable in nurturing communication and intimacy between you.

5. Stay on your knees.

You can't do this marriage thing on your own. Here are some specific things to pray about individually and together often.

- For God to show you His perspective on your marriage.
- For God to keep your hearts soft, forgiving and growing.
- To plead the blood of Jesus over your own lives, your marriage and your family.
- For God to keep showing you who He needs you to be in your marriage for this season.

If you aren't praying together, start now. If your spouse resists, look for ways to make praying together appealing. And if your spouse is not a believer, don't stop praying for God to work on their heart. Remember that who you are as a person will likely make the biggest difference in how your spouse views Christianity.

God wants your marriage to thrive even more than you do. Don't stop seeking His involvement and intervention in your marriage.

Will these steps always guarantee a long and happy marriage? They will if both you and your spouse give God opportunity to keep doing His work in your individual lives and in your relationship.

May your marriage become an example of what it looks like to learn to love well God's way.

Your turn: *Have you found yourself fighting against your spouse more often than fighting against the enemies of your marriage? How can you change your strategy to be more effective? Leave a comment below.* {eoa}

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