

5 Ways to Devil-Proof Your Marriage

The enemy tries to cause division in three areas of your marriage: communication, intimacy and finances—and communication typically triggers the problems in the other two areas.

Here's the challenge: Men and women communicate very differently, and that is by design. To understand why God created men and women with such different communication styles, we must look to the Garden of Eden. After God created the man, He planted a garden and placed Adam there (Gen. 2:8). God gave Adam a home. Then the Bible says He gave the man a job, which was to tend the garden (Gen. 2:15).

God stepped back from this situation and made a startling comment. In Genesis 2:18, He says, "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make him a helper suitable for him."

We need other people in our lives. Whether married or single, it's not good for anybody to be alone.

Because it wasn't good for the man to be alone, God decided to make him a "helper." Notice that phrase. It does not say God decided to make the man a helpmate. The Darby Translation uses the word "helpmate," but most modern translations use "helper," and the King James Version uses "help meet." The word helpmate implies that the woman was made to be Adam's assistant—that she was there to wait on him and follow him around doing his laundry. In many countries around the world, women are treated as second-class citizens.

But when you see the intent God had for the creation of woman, you will see that nothing could be further from the truth. The definition of the word helper reveals to us how God designed

marriage to work. This is really critical to understand if you are going to build a long, happy marriage that will withstand the devil's attacks. A marriage secret is revealed once again in the Hebrew language.

The term helper actually comes from two different words—*ezer* and *neged*. The Hebrew word for “help” is *ezer*. The book of Ezra has *ezer* as its root. *Neged* is very interesting because it is often translated “suitable,” but it can also mean “opposite” or even “over against.” Put the two words together and they are *ezer neged*, which means “a helper opposite” or even “a helper against.”

Every Woman's Unique Gift

The full thought offers a great deal of insight into the kind of helper God was giving Adam. Together, the Hebrew letters that make up *ezer neged* create a word picture that actually means “the strong military ally that sees the enemy.”

The woman was created to be strong. Yes, 1 Peter 3:7 calls woman “the weaker vessel,” and that may be true physically, but when it comes to mental and spiritual strength, women stand toe to toe with men. God has invested a great inner strength in women.

The wife is not just a military ally, but she “sees the enemy.” Women have a God-given ability to see things, both physically and spiritually, that men often don't see. Women just seem to be wired to take in details that men often miss. This is the gift God gave Adam the day He made Eve—a strong military ally, a partner with different gifts than he had. God endowed women with a unique ability to “see the enemy”—to recognize things men don't innately see.

What Men Really Want

Men are headliners. Men like you to get to the point. For the most part, they don't need as many details as the woman. When

discussing something with your husband, try to cut through the clutter. Get to the point of what you want to discuss and don't expect your husband to communicate like a woman.

Men are fixers. When a woman talks, it de-stresses her. When a man hears a problem from his wife, it has the opposite effect. He gets stirred up and goes into "fixer mode." And if his wife starts to cry, which may make her feel better, he really gets worked up. This is because he cares about his wife and doesn't want her to hurt.

If you just need to talk to your husband and you are not looking for him to fix the problem, just tell him up front: "I need to talk to you about something, but I don't want you to fix anything. I just need you to listen." One other critical aspect of good communication is listening well.

Here are a few tips for becoming a better listener.

1. You can't listen and do something else at the same time. Shut out all distractions (TV, computer, phone) and concentrate on your spouse and what that person is saying.
2. Make eye contact. The eyes are the window to the soul. Looking into your spouse's eyes will connect you on a deeper level.
3. Listen to how your spouse feels. For the most part, when men and women communicate, women will often say, "This is how I feel about what you are saying," while men will say, "This is what I think about what you are saying." Women, don't dismiss what your husband says because he doesn't seem to be sharing his feelings.

5 Ways to Fight Fair

No matter how well you master these communication skills, the truth is that there will still be conflict from time to time. Consider these practical tips on how to deal with conflict

when it arises so your passion doesn't burn your house down.

1. Realize that conflict is not bad. Getting things out in the open will bring clarity and understanding to your relationship. Don't allow things to fester and time to pass without communicating about the issues that hurt you. Hurt turns into bitterness that has the power to destroy your life. Ephesians 4:27 says, "Do not give place to the devil." We give the devil a place in our lives when we don't deal with things and instead let them fester and produce death.

2. Don't attack the person; attack the issue. The goal when you disagree is not to determine who is right or wrong. The goal is to resolve the issue. The devil wants to get in the middle of your disagreement and paint your spouse as your enemy. Remember, your spouse is your ally. Deal with the issue you are disagreeing about without turning against your spouse.

3. Discipline the way you disagree. Don't belittle your mate or use cutting remarks, negative body language (rolling eyes), emotional threats or obscenities. The Holy Spirit is there to help you argue without being ugly toward each other. You can stop ugly behavior by the power of the Holy Spirit.

4. Stick to the subject. Keep the past in the past. Avoid phrases like "You always do this." Don't be a history buff. Remember Philippians 3:13, which says, "But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead."

5. When you can't come to a place of resolution, take a time-out. It may take 30 minutes or it may take a few hours, but it can be good to get alone and process. Let God speak to you about the situation. He may cause you to see the situation differently, or He may help you better understand your spouse's point of view. Even if you need some alone time, always come back together. Don't let walls build that separate you.

Even when you've done everything you know to do to argue constructively, some disagreements will leave you feeling hurt and angry. In those times, you must choose to forgive. Jesus forgave us when we didn't deserve it. As Christians, we must do the same. We have to be willing to let things go. Not understanding our differences is probably the core reason the enemy is able to get in our house.

Ken and Trudi Blount have more than 30 years' experience in ministry, traveling and speaking in churches across the country and overseas. They have produced a multitude of resources, including the monthly CD partner resource, *Relative*.

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