

Asking This One Powerful Question Can Help Your Marriage Become a Miracle

The fact that any two sinful human beings ever make it through decades of living together can seem like a miracle. And when that marriage is characterized by respect, intimacy and true love, it truly *is* a miracle! You may have a long list of things your husband or wife should do differently, and you're likely right. But you can't change them. So the question that can transform your marriage is not, "How do I get my spouse to change?"

The more powerful question to ask, and one you *can* do something about, is: **What's it like to be married to me?**

Now before you either dissolve in self-pity and shame over what that question brings up in your soul or sit a little taller on your high horse imagining you have no faults, remember that both you and your spouse married sinners. None of us starts out knowing how to love well, and marriage is one of God's best tools to teach us how to do that.

As you contemplate that question, let me suggest a few sub-questions that will help you focus your self-reflection in ways that will help you move forward.

1. What effect do I have on my spouse?

Think of all the various people in your life. Some of them sprout spines and hurt you the moment you come anywhere close. Others are distant and cold, rebuffing any attempt you make to connect. Still others lift you up just by being in their presence, making you seek out opportunities to be around them.

Which one are you to your spouse? How does it feel to be

around you? Are you prickly and critical, letting your spouse feel they can never measure up? Do you stonewall the attempts your spouse does make at communication or intimacy when something isn't exactly perfect? Or do you see first and most whatever is best in your spouse, calling that out?

People love being around people who lift them up. Your spouse does too.

2. Does my spouse know me?

Intimacy means knowing. Some people are easier to know than others. How high are the walls you've erected between you? There's something appealing about someone being real and authentic. That's the exact opposite of expecting your spouse to read your mind, or pretending things are one way when you feel something very different.

Being real and authentic does not mean being mean or moody or selfish. You may need to allow your spouse to see some places in your heart that you wish would be kept hidden. It may mean you come to know yourself in ways you find unattractive. But intimacy means bringing your whole self to your spouse—your whole *best* self.

And it means being willing to grow and change when there are places in you that are hurtful to your spouse.

3. Is my spouse safe with me?

If you want a chance to truly know your spouse, you will have to create a safe place for them to be real and authentic with you too. No one enjoys being around someone who is critical, demanding, uncommunicative or always right. Your spouse does not want another parent, and you're not Junior Holy Spirit!

That doesn't mean you accept bad behavior or abuse. But it means you focus most on the best parts of who your spouse is. You invite them to be real with you. You're curious,

accepting, inviting, appealing. Your presence and love become a place they want to be, a place where they can find support and encouragement.

While you cannot be everything to your spouse, you should be someone your spouse knows they can share the truest part of themselves with.

4. Am I growing as a spouse?

God is not asking you to be a perfect husband or wife. But He is asking you to be a spouse who is continually learning to love better.

Learning to love well does not mean being squishy or weak, refusing to deal with reality. It does not mean living in a warm-and-fuzzy feeling all the time. Loving well does mean being all in, doing whatever it takes, refusing to quit or settle for mediocrity.

You cannot choose for your spouse, and they get a vote. But you can choose for you. You can decide that as far as depends on you, you will be—and become—the person God needs you to be to your spouse in this season. You can determine to keep learning and growing in any way necessary to become that person.

What is your marriage goal?

Imagine your marriage a year from now. Do you like what you see? What about 10 years from now? How about at your funeral—what would your spouse say about you?

Try writing out what you want your marriage to be in the future. What kind of a spouse do you want to be? And then consider what you are doing to move toward that goal. Yes, your spouse gets a vote in your marriage. But your own thoughts, attitudes and actions will be powerful in creating that future.

As a Christian spouse, what's it like to be married to you?

Now what's the next step you're going to take toward being that spouse?

Your Turn: *What's it like to be married to you? Do you like what you see? Is there anything you plan to change? Leave a comment below.* {eo}

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