

How Christian Marriages Can Thrive Through COVID-19

Have you seen the jokes or humorous remarks on television or in social media about the possibility of an American baby boom nine months from now?

A missionary friend, who is serving Jesus in Japan, has written to her supporters about a surprising new phrase that has been coined there: “Corona Divorce.” It seems that due to the COVID-19 quarantines, couples who are usually too busy working to spend consistent time together are now “safer-at-home” 24/7 and it is causing a lot of marital and family stress.

She says, “Marital counseling is practically nonexistent here, but churches are one of the few places where couples can receive help and advice.” She asks for prayer that Christian pastors and mature believers can help Japanese marriages “to be healed and restored.”

Corona Marriages

Unfortunately, this social liability is not just affecting marriages in Japan. The human propensity for selfishness and sin makes this a universal problem as well. Some spouses may feel smothered in their newly found togetherness. Others may be leaders at work, but at home, their roles and expectations don’t mix or match well with the spouse’s.

The Wuhan coronavirus is actually only the latest of many, in a family of viruses that has a similar, microscopic appearance of a crown, with spikes surrounding its edge. The word “corona” means *crown* in Latin and modern romance languages, and gives this virus its name.

Perhaps we can let that crown imagery prompt us to consider

what King Jesus would have believers think, say and do in this time of “Corona Marriages,” with its extended personal proximity with our spouses and family members.

Christian Marriages

Christian believers are to found their marriages on mutual submission, “out of reverence for Christ” (Eph. 5:21, NIV). This is to be expressed by Christlike “love” and “respect” (v. 33). We’ll explore those thoughts and themes next time, in part two. For now, let’s focus on marital insights from the “Great Love Chapter,” 1 Corinthians 13.

Love is both a noun and a verb. It can express an emotion or describe an action or attitude. The lack of love can make otherwise commendable things to be without real value or virtue (13:1-3). Theologians teach, “Love always works for the highest good of the object of its affection.”

The apostle Paul describes love as something that can be demonstrated with words or deeds:

“Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or selfish or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever truth wins out. If you love someone, you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, always expect the best of him, and always stand your ground in defending him” (1 Cor. 13:4-7, TLB).

Loving With Words

Our manner of speech is as important as the words themselves. Proverbs 15:1 guides us to avoid quarrels and harsh words by using gentle, loving responses. Verses 3-5 of the “Love Chapter” describe more than a dozen positive factors of communication that are motivated by “hardly even notic[ing]

when others do [us] wrong.”

Learning to compliment our spouse (especially in front of others) and keeping our private conversations current, never bringing up old issues or “keeping score,” can demonstrate our love and acceptance for “the object of our affections” with our words.

Loving With Deeds

Verse 5 of the “Love Chapter” speaks of “kindness,” which can relate to our manner of speech as well as specific actions or deeds. Kindness can be one of love’s strongest voices! Likewise, courteous or “court-like” actions toward our spouses can visually demonstrate our love to them and to others, even our children. Treat your spouse as your king or queen!

Finally, in this brief review, loving and unselfish actions can demonstrate our true affection for our spouse. Verse 7 speaks of showing our love by believing in our spouse and being loyal and unselfishly willing to defend them. When others might tear them down, we can lift them up with our loving affirmations and actions.

Loving in words or deeds requires a conscious and determined effort. It doesn’t come naturally to selfish humans. But, we can do it through the power of the Holy Spirit, who is given to reside within us, to transform our thoughts, words and deeds. Romans 5:5 says, “We know how dearly God loves us, and we feel this warm love everywhere within us because God has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with His love.”

Too Much Togetherness?

Struggling “Corona Marriages” exist where one or both partners selfishly think and act in ways that are something less than the marriage vows they made before God and “these witnesses,” to “love, honor and cherish” each other.

Growing Christian marriages survive and can thrive by following Paul's advice to the Philippians:

"Fix your thoughts on what is true and good and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely, and dwell on the fine, good things in others. Think about all you can praise God for and be glad about" (Phil. 4:8). {eo}

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