

If You Want Your Spouse to Change, You Need to Learn This Key Truth

Your spouse doesn't need or want another mother, father, coach or Junior Holy Spirit. You wouldn't, would you? There's Someone who understands and loves your spouse much more than you do, who created your spouse for greater things than you could ever want for them, and who knows how to get them there. Any questions on who that is? And yet you can have a significant role in your spouse's transformation.

You're not the one to make your spouse into the person they're supposed to be. As much as you might like your spouse to communicate better, be more intimate, work harder, spend more time with you or respect you more, those may not always be the things God is working hardest in their life about right now. Your goals for who your spouse should become aren't automatically the goals God has for them.

Before being responsible to each other, you and your spouse are both individually responsible before God. He is the One who will render judgement on each of you. Paul's admonition applies especially well to marriage: "Who are you to judge someone else's servant? To his own master he stands or falls" (Romans 14:4).

That doesn't mean your experience and observations about your spouse aren't important, or that you have no influence. Who you are to your spouse will likely have a very big impact on how God can and does work in their life. Here are some ways in which you can assist in the transformation God wants them to experience.

Keep Growing Yourself

More than the words you say, it's who you are and who you are becoming that will provide a stimulus to your spouse to value and invest in spiritual things. Complaints, criticism, and pointing out their failures will only push your spouse away and raise their defensiveness. Your courage, resilience, faith, integrity and love will draw them closer. A lasting change that your spouse sees in you is the most powerful advertisement of all for God's kingdom.

How could your spouse demonstrate the character of Jesus in a way that would make you want more of what they had? Turn that around. Your spouse probably sees the real you more than anyone else; make sure that the real you is becoming increasingly like Jesus. Don't get weary on your own transformation journey.

Stay on Your Knees

How does God see your spouse and your marriage? Who is God asking you to be to your spouse in this season? You can't know those things without time on your knees in prayer. And you'll certainly have no hope of actually being who God needs you to be to your spouse without His daily input.

Your prayers will make a difference. Sure, ask God to change your spouse. But spend just as much or more time seeking God for how He wants to change you, and to understand who He wants you to be right now. Pray for your spouse and your marriage, and also pray for your own heart.

Study Your Spouse

God's primary purpose is not changing your spouse so that you can be more comfortable. But He IS in the business of doing something in your spouse's life. Look for that. Study your spouse. Intentionally pay attention to the ways they think and

communicate, what matters to them, and what leads them to change. Notice the ways they hear from God; it may be very different from you. Just because it's looks different doesn't mean your spouse loves God less.

This is more about character and motivation than it is religious behavior. Unless your spouse has forever and completely turned their back on God, the Holy Spirit is seeking an opportunity to do something in them. Pay attention; you'll be so much better able to support and celebrate positive change when you do.

Connect on the Adventure

Telling your spouse to do something, or criticizing them when they don't do something, will make it harder. But you can look for opportunities to connect with them on a spiritual adventure. Don't try to one-up your spouse in prayer; make talking to God something you do together in whatever way you both can enjoy. Demonstrate being vulnerable as you talk about spiritual things together.

An invitation almost always works better than saying "you should." Look for how you can invite your spouse into a deeper spiritual connection in ways that will be appealing to them. And it's not all about you! God may sometimes need you to back off so He can do something unique and personal in your spouse's heart.

Celebrate the Milestones

There's not a human being who doesn't appreciate being celebrated in a safe way, or who wouldn't want to do more of what brings a sense of joy and accomplishment. Notice the times your spouse demonstrates godly character growth, or overcomes a challenge as a result of their faith and connection with God. Be their best cheerleader and celebrate those times.

God uses marriage to grow each of you. How you honor God's work in your spouse's life will make you a growth stimulus for your spouse's journey as well. That's how you can fulfill your role in your spouse's transformation.

Your Turn: How have you been helping or hindering God's work in your spouse's life? How can you be a more effective support and growth stimulus in their journey of transformation? Leave a comment below. {eoa}

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