

Is Marriage About Your Happiness?

We live in a time in history when it seems that happiness and personal fulfillment are the goals of every endeavor. When people are faced with challenges in life or marriage, the first question they often ask is “What will make you the happiest?”

If your job is not bringing you happiness, then quit. If your marriage is not making you happy, then you owe it to yourself to get a divorce.

But there is a trap in this thinking that many of us never see: We focus on being happy more than we do on God’s design for us. God designed us to live for Him and to live for others. When we are driven merely by happiness and self-fulfillment, we bring destructive behaviors and consequences into our lives and relationships. There is no place this is truer than in marriage.

God wants your marriage relationship to make you and your wife more like Him. God wants to use your marriage to help make you not just happy but, more importantly, holy.

As we learn to embrace God’s plan for marriage, a wonderful thing happens. We become both holier and happier. When we move toward loving God and our wives with the same grace He loves us with, we get to experience a deeper and more fulfilling joy than surface-level, temporary happiness. God designed us to live a life characterized by sacrificial love and service. God is working every day in our marriages to help us become the men He made us to be.

A healthy marriage requires that we die to our selfishness on a daily basis. This makes marriage challenging but also an amazing place to learn to love and sacrifice. Marriage is not

about finding the perfect person and effortlessly living happily ever after. That's where a lot of guys miss it. Author and theologian Stanley Hauerwas puts it like this:

"Destructive to marriage is the self-fulfillment ethic that assumes marriage and the family are primarily institutions of personal fulfillment, necessary for us to become "whole" and happy. The assumption is that there is someone just right for us to marry and that if we look closely enough, we will find the right person. This moral assumption overlooks a crucial aspect to marriage. It fails to appreciate the fact that we always marry the wrong person."

We never know whom we marry; we just think we do. Or even if we first marry the right person, just give it a while and he or she will change. The primary challenge of marriage is learning how to love and care for the stranger to whom you find yourself married.

The beautiful thing about marriage is that it continually invites us to focus on another person and not just ourselves. Two people dying to themselves to serve and love one another. Showing each other the same grace God shows us.

In laying down His life, Christ modeled the kind of sacrificial love we are called to have for our spouses (see Eph. 5:25). Because self-sacrifice is not in our nature, this kind of love can come only from depending on Christ. We can't fake this kind of love. We can't will it to suddenly appear within us. It's there only because of what Christ is doing in us.

It's there because of the amazing power of God's grace in our lives. Author Paul Tripp calls God's grace "the most powerful, protective and beneficial force in the universe." God shares it with us to save us and also so we can share it with others, including, and especially, our wife. It's not always easy because we are imperfect individuals battling with our own

flesh, but Scripture promises that God is always there for us and that if we will draw near to Him, He will draw near to us (see James 4:8).

As He comes near to our own hearts and near to our marriage in His grace, we're empowered to love our wives.

Editor's note: This article is an excerpt from 33 The Series, Volume 5: A Man and His Marriage. [Click here](#) for the original article.