

Need to Get on the Same Page as Your Spouse? Here's How

One of the most frequent desires I hear from married people is, "I wish my spouse and I could get on the same page." Two people hitched together can't make progress if they're pulling in opposite directions.

Your marriage is not a business. But for a moment, think of what it would be like if the CEO and the COO and the vice president of a corporation were all trying to accomplish different things. Energy, time and money would be wasted. Employees, customers and investors would be confused. The business would soon fail.

It's the same when husband and wife are not aligned. Some couples who are not "on the same page" stay legally married, but deteriorate into a miserable detente or living as roommates. Other couples fight and bicker and continually cause each other pain. Still others give up and end the relationship.

You've heard the statement that if you and your spouse were identical in every way, one of you would be unnecessary. Men and women *are* different. Personalities *are* different. But you still need to be aligned for your marriage to be successful.

So what does being on the same page with your spouse mean—and not mean?

What It Does Not Mean

1. Agreeing about everything.

You see the world through different eyes than your spouse. You may think it would be better if you and your spouse agreed about everything related to money, sex, work, spirituality and

more. But always agreeing is neither realistic nor healthy.

If you always agreed, your money might either be sitting there doing nothing or disappear before you see it. Or you might either always be working or spend all your time “hanging out.” Almost every aspect of life is better with more than one perspective.

To use the business analogy again, a CEO who is visionary needs a COO who can manage tactics and details. A leader who focuses on money and ROI needs a partner who can communicate engagingly and with passion. Agreeing about everything with your spouse would make your marriage weaker. In healthy marriages husband and wife learn to appreciate where their spouse is different from them.

2. One person setting the direction

In some marriages one person (husband *or* wife) dominates decisions and the other person simply gives in. That's *not* being on the same page. Instead it's a setup for resentment and disappointment, and it's unhealthy for both partners. Controlling things in that way has nothing to do with love.

In a healthy marriage both partners contribute equally to setting the direction and priorities. That direction may be different from what either would have chosen if things were only up to them.

What It Does Mean

1. Going in the same direction.

In a healthy marriage, you and your spouse agree on the broad outline of the mission for your marriage. Your roles may be very different, but you're both investing of yourselves for the same desired outcome. You may be the one to frame the house and put on the roof while your spouse installs the electrical and paints the walls. But you're using the same

blueprint to build the house of your marriage.

When couples slide into marriage with no agreed-upon direction the lack of a blueprint leads to chaos and conflict. That's why beginning with the blueprint of God's design for marriage is so important. The details of that shared direction can be amended or adjusted over time, but you're building *this* house, not *that* one.

2. Increasingly understanding each other.

Marriage should be a continual process of discovery. As you study your spouse, you understand them more: what makes them tick, how God built them, how you can encourage and support them better, and things about them you can value and appreciate even more. And you also learn more about yourself as you see your spouse's responses to you.

Seeking to understand each other is the foundation of healthy communication. Mutual understanding increases vulnerability and allows for problems to be solved and healing to happen. It's the context in which intimacy can grow and flourish between you.

3. Mutual submission.

This is the opposite of one person dominating the decisions. God's design for each of you is to "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21, ESV). You each give 100 percent, not worrying about what percentage your spouse is giving. You seek to be who God needs you to be to your spouse in this season.

This means that if something will hurt your spouse, you make an adjustment. This is not about being codependent to your spouse's feelings, but it does mean you are investing everything of yourself to help your spouse and marriage thrive.

My pastors, Joe and Lori Champion, discussed a moment early in their ministry when one of them spent a long evening doing church work on the computer while the other was hungry for intimate time together. As they worked through that conflict, they decided they would never allow ministry to destroy their marriage, and set their priorities accordingly. That kind of mutual submission makes marriages work.

How to Get There

Coming to be “on the same page” with your spouse takes intentional work. It takes listening, time, humility and courage. And it takes God’s intervention.

Next week we’ll talk about some specific steps that can help you and your spouse get more “on the same page.”

Your Turn: *Have you given up being “on the same page” with your spouse because you don’t always agree? Can you see how you can have different personalities and different roles and still be building the same house? Leave a comment below.* {eo}

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