

The Real Reason Marriages Are Failing

Editor's Note: This is part three in a three-part marriage series. Find part one [here](#) and part two [here](#).

Throughout my teen years, I worked with my father in the under-ground construction business. My dad's closest friends, builders respected for their work, were very careful in preparing the ground and laying the foundation.

Granted, the cost to build a strong foundation was expensive, but a weak foundation would cost more. Without proper support, a structure may not be sound and could present future problems. Developers hired architects and engineers; appointed a contractor; paid fees to the county or to the city, as well as to other departments; developed a set of plans, and used heavy equipment to move tons of dirt, all to prepare the foundation. If only we were as careful in preparing for marriage.

In the same way, a relationship with Christ provides the foundation for strong marriages. The foundation built today provides the strength to weather the storm tomorrow. In Matthew 7:24-27, Jesus said: "Whoever hears these sayings of Mine and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on a rock. And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house. And it did not fall, for it was founded a rock. And every one who hears these sayings of Mine and does not do them will be likened to a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house. And it fell. And its fall was great."

Contextually, this Scripture is dealing with obedience to God's Word. This should cause all Christians to search their

hearts as to whether they are truly obeying Him in all areas of life. It's unfortunate that today's focus is largely on external factors (for example, looks, money, position, status, etc.). These superficial values have left marriage in a moral, as well as a spiritual, crisis. We've become a society focused on prosperity instead of provision, we value wealth instead of wisdom, and we are drawn to charisma instead of character. It's little wonder that divorce is at an all-time high—our foundation has slowly deteriorated.

In the past, a lifelong commitment and exclusive intimacy in marriage held the family together. It was in that setting that children learned, love grew and character developed. Divorce was rarely an option ... a spouse was considered an asset rather than a liability.

Marriage today is not failing because it's more difficult than in years past—it's failing because the foundation has weakened. A "genuine" relationship with Christ is the solid rock upon which marriage must be built. Sadly, most are neglecting this foundational truth. Do you have a genuine relationship with Christ, or are you simply going through the motions? It all begins here.

As a child, I was captured by the stories that my grandfather told about life on the farm in Oklahoma in the early 1900s. The images I've held are not those of pleasant surroundings and ideal conditions, they're impressions of 12-hour days spent working the land, wind storms that could devastate a crop, blistered and sunburned skin, and poverty unlike most Americans know today. Life, in general, was harder then, but, interestingly enough, character seemed much stronger. It was a time when commitment, integrity and honesty stood in place of contracts, disclosures and bylaws. I'm not suggesting that we return to that time in history but that we revisit and strongly encourage those same principles today.

What do you bring into a relationship? How is your

relationship with Christ? Many focus on finding the “right” person without first focusing on becoming the right person. Why do so many marriages fail? In many cases, it’s because they have religion and not a true relationship with Jesus. No wonder Jesus said, “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me” (Matt. 15:8). A.W. Tozer states it best: “Millions of professed believers talk as if [Christ] were real and act as if He were not. And always our actual position is to be discovered by the way we act, not by the way we talk.” Again, it all starts here.

It’s no surprise that more than 50 percent of marriages in the United States end in divorce. Love doesn’t leave people—people leave love. True love is not just an ecstatic feeling, it’s a decision that we make to remain faithful to our commitment. Marriage was intended to be a commitment based on love, surrendered to servitude, built on perseverance, and held together with commitment.

A Focus on the Family newsletter stated that when a research team studied 5,232 married adults who were interviewed in the late 1980s, they discovered that 645 of them were unhappily married. Five years later, these same adults (some divorced, separated, or still married) were interviewed again. The study revealed that two-thirds of the unhappily married spouses who stayed together were actually happier five years later. The opposite is often true for those divorced. Although those who divorce may temporarily escape the pain, divorce introduces new emotional and relational difficulties.

In a nutshell, unless it is severe and/or life threatening, weather the storm—it’s worth it. Though the road ahead may be uncertain at times, the solid foundation beneath will never shift. It’s all about Who you know.

Watch my sermon, “Lord, Remove My Guilt and Shame,” on Vimeo.

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