

What to Do if You Think You Married the Wrong Person

It's important to choose your spouse wisely. But you're already married! When your relationship goes sideways, it's easy to feel as though things would be wonderful if you were just married to Mr. or Ms. Right instead of the uncaring, miserable, blockhead of a person that is your spouse. You ask, "Did I marry the wrong person?"

You married a sinner. And in case you haven't noticed, that's the only kind of spouse available.

(And yes, your spouse married a sinner too. Pause; you'll get that in a moment.)

Holding onto the idea that you married the wrong person is not healthy. I don't know if you married the wrong person or not. But I do know that it's not who you marry that determines the success of your relationship; it's who both you and your spouse *become*.

So what should you be thinking about if your marriage is unhappy, especially if your spouse seems completely unwilling to do anything about it?

The Right Spouse

There's a grave falsehood too many people believe, especially those in an unhappy marriage. That falsehood is that if they had just married the right person instead of the person they did marry, they would be happy.

That's simply not true. Yes, some marriages are unhappier than others. But every single marriage that survives has been through traumas and conflict. Every single successful marriage has taken hard work, learning, investment of time and energy, forgiveness, growth and a super-sized helping of God's grace.

Each marriage that works is the union of two sinners transformed through the Holy Spirit's work.

Here's what Paul says about an unhappy marriage:

If any brother has an unbelieving wife who consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. And if the woman has an unbelieving husband who consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband. ... But if the unbeliever departs, let that one depart. A brother or a sister is not bound in such cases. God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife? (1 Cor. 7:12-16).

So whether you married wisely or unwisely, once you said "I do," you're married to the right person. No manipulation or control. No complaining or whining.

And more importantly, through the Holy Spirit's work, you can *become* the right person for your spouse.

So instead of imagining a different spouse, focus on *becoming* the right spouse for your husband or wife. Focus on being the person God needs you to be to them in this season of your marriage.

How do you do that?

1. Seek God's Perspective

There's no marriage too far gone for God to restore. That doesn't mean every marriage will experience restoration, but that's not because of any failure on God's part. Your spouse gets a vote, and you cannot control his/her vote!

Spend some time seeking God's perspective on your spouse, your marriage and your own heart. There are times God releases

someone from a marriage; unless that happens, stay put. Quit trying to force your spouse into your mold. Spend the time to understand how God sees your marriage; that will be important in knowing what to do next.

2. Change Yourself

You can't change your spouse by trying to get them to be different. You've tried already, and that hasn't worked. So focus on becoming the person God needs you to be in this season in your marriage. If you change, your spouse will have to change in some way in response.

If you naturally hide, withdraw and avoid conflict, this will mean becoming willing to set hard boundaries and staying engaged in some hard conversations. If you tend to get angry and controlling, this will mean a major change in letting go and becoming a servant to your spouse. If you've looked to your spouse to meet your needs, this will mean learning to feed yourself. This will always mean developing skills that may feel foreign and impossible to you.

Seek Jesus deeply for your own healing. Learn communication. Learn intimacy. Seek to understand your spouse. Invite your spouse to join you rather than manipulating or demanding they do so. Step up and become the kind of person God created *you* to be. Those are things within your power to do; focus your energy there.

3. Stay on Your Knees

If God does release you from this unhappy marriage, serious listening prayer is the only way you'll come to understand that. If your spouse becomes a different person, it will almost always be through time on your knees rather than anything you tried to get your spouse to do.

As Paul said in the passage above, your godly influence in your home is likely to be the most powerful tool God has to

work on your spouse's heart. This is not about being perfect, but it is about being the growing inviting courageous person God created and is creating you to be.

So become the right spouse. And give God opportunity to recreate your spouse into the person He wants them to be as well.

Your Turn: Have you fallen into the pattern of wishing you married the "right" person instead of the spouse you have? What would a different focus mean for your marriage? Leave a comment below. {eoa}

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