

Why Your Marriage Will Never Be an Equal Partnership

June is traditionally the month for weddings. All the planning and expenses come together for a grand beginning as two people join their lives together.

If only we put as much effort into preparing for the *marriage* as we do preparing for the wedding.

For most of my adult life, I've heard various definitions of marriage.

I've heard it described as an equal partnership. A 50-50 partnership. A contract between two consenting adults who agree to mingle their assets and their lives. And, if you happen to be a Hallmark movie fan, a guarantee of life lived happily ever after.

But after 40 years of marriage, I can say with assurance that marriage is *not* an equal partnership.

It is *not* 50-50.

It is *not* merely a contract.

And it is not a guarantee of life "happily ever after."

So, what is marriage?

For the Christian, marriage is not simply the union of two people. In a Christian marriage, Christ is the center of the relationship, because Christ is the center of the life of each individual.

For the Christian, the goal of marriage is Christlikeness. Of course, that's our goal in all of life, including each of our relationships. However, marriage, unlike other relationships,

provides daily opportunities to become more like Christ by putting the other person's needs before our own. Did I say daily? More like minute by minute, even in the best of marriages.

Marriage is also a covenant, not a contract. Contracts can be broken with the help of skilled attorneys. But consider the traditional marriage vows: "Till death do us part ... so help me, God." Regardless of what our culture tells us, marriage is meant to be a lifelong commitment.

Marriage is also a partnership. But not an equal one, nor a 50-50 one. Marriage is a dynamic relationship in which both parties give 100 percent (or more!). Depending on the circumstances, it may seem as if one person is giving more than the other. Still, life is in a constant state of change. Children. Physical health. Finances. Mental health. Career. But if each party is committed to give 100 percent, then even if the other does not or can not, Christ is still at work, reproducing His image in us.

Finally, marriage is an exercise in submission. The apostle Paul wrote, "'Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ" (Eph. 5:21, NIV). What does that look like? Yes, the wife is called to submit to her husband (Eph. 5:22). But the husband is called to love his wife as Christ loved the church (Eph. 5:25)—a sacrificial love that holds nothing back, including his own life.

Yes, marriage is a lot of things, but one more thing it's not is easy. Not easy, but definitely worth it.

What advice would you give to a couple getting married today?
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