

World-Changing Marriages Have These 4 Core Values in Common

The fact that people don't know how to do family well is one of the biggest causes of dysfunction in society today. I believe the restoration of family and marriages could truly change the world. The foundation of a healthy family is built on the culture and connection of the mother and father; the marriage.

I've been married to the woman of my dreams for 42 years, and we've been together for 47 years total. So today I want to share some core values for a healthy marriage. I pray this will strengthen your family or help you to work through trials if you're going through a hard time in your own marriage.

Here are four foundational core values for marriage:

1. Be humble and put your spouse first. This may go without saying, but I think it's still worth addressing. Marriage means you have come into a relationship to lay down your life for another person. It's choosing to die to yourself every day for the sake of loving another. Philippians 2:3-4 puts it well: "Let nothing be done out of strife or conceit, but in humility let each esteem the other better than himself. Let each of you look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." We look out for each other's needs.

2. Regardless of trials, your spouse should be your closest friend, your greatest ally, your most bonded companion and your covenant partner for life. I think something that gets in the way of this kind of bond is the fact that many people marry but never merge. The truth is that from the beginning of creation God intended to marriage to be two people becoming one. In fact, one person (Adam) became two people in the garden (Adam and Eve), so that two people could become one in

marriage. Genesis 2:24 says, "Therefore a man will leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and they will become one flesh." When trials come, it's important that you stay connected, as one. Hard times can either bond you or break you depending on whether you cleave to each other or leave one another. Take the opportunity to grow closer to each other. Instead of disconnecting in the midst of a difficult season, make sure you're communicating to your spouse, "I'm with you."

3. Fun and happy are the fruit of good choices and not the goal of life itself. Therefore, we can't rely on fun and happiness to produce love in our marriages. This in itself may not be fun to hear, but a great marriage will take hard work. Successful marriages don't just happen. Instead, they're the result of daily choices to love each other. Something I consider as a foundation of a great marriage is this practice: do what you do "when you feel like it" whenever you really don't feel like it. So, whatever you do for your spouse when you feel "loveable," do that when you're not in the mood. This is what it looks like to have character and choose someone every day instead of basing your commitment and covenant on your feelings. I've said it before and I'll say it again: Feelings are great servants but terrible masters. If we relegate our love for a spouse to our feelings, then we relegate our marriages to be thrown around by the winds of life. Love is not a feeling. It may connect and inspire feelings, but it's not one in itself. Love is a covenant.

4. It's not your spouse's job to make you happy, because happiness is an inside job. The word "happy" is used around 80 times in the New Testament, and not once does it have anything to do with marriage. This all being said, the greatest joys of my life have been found in marriage and my family! But joy and happiness are not the same things. Jesus promised us joy, which is based in Him and knowing what's on the other side trials. I also want to say that my greatest joys in marriage

aren't from the ways that Kathy has given to me (and trust me, she's the most giving woman I know), but rather from the ways that I've been able to love her. I often sit on my porch and watch her ride her horses (that I bought for her a few years ago) and I just cry. She runs and laughs with the horses, and when she comes back she can't wait to tell me all about them. I love to think that I was able to do something for her that makes her come alive. There's something powerful about engaging and loving people at their point of passion instead of your own; it's truly beautiful to be able to love like this. My regret is that I didn't do this earlier in our marriage.

Love Better Than You Have Before

Today I pray for a revelation of keys to a great marriage to be dropped in your spirit, and I release grace over you to love better than you ever have before. I encourage you to take a look at your heart and ask God to help reveal any ways that you could lay down your life for your spouse. It may not be easy, but I promise it's worth it. Do you have other core values for your marriage? I'd love to hear about them in the comments! {eoa}

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