

Your Secret Supernatural Keys to Truly Understanding Your Spouse

You fell in love. You said “I do.” You thought you knew the person you were planning to make a life with. And then one day you look at the person in the bed next to you and wonder, *Where did you come from?* Understanding your spouse’s heart becomes increasingly important the longer you’re married.

Some people really don’t care to understand. They see marriage as a way to get their own needs met regardless of their spouse’s heart. Love to them means, “I love the way I feel when I’m with you.” And when they don’t feel good, and their spouse can’t make them feel good, they lash out or give up.

Some people make excuses. They see the wounds their spouse has received, and in response give them a pass on bad behavior. Love to them means, “I’ll sacrifice myself for you.” They slide into enabling their spouse’s addictive or abusive behavior while they shrivel up inside themselves.

And some people try to control their spouse’s heart. Their own feelings, perspective and values are the only ones that matter. Love to them means, “I’ll manipulate you into being the person I want you to be.” (Both husbands and wives can do this.) This can be displayed through both aggressive anger or passive-aggressive manipulation.

None of these approaches works to create intimacy or connection. None of them leads to the kind of marriage God intended.

So how do you do that? Here are three important ways.

Be Curious

This does not mean playing 20 Questions.

It does mean truly caring about how your spouse sees the world. (And believe me, they see things differently than you do!)

You can learn a lot about your spouse by observation. Before I got married, I heard and took to heart the wise advice, “Study your spouse.” Don’t ever stop studying them! Look at the world through their eyes. What makes them happy? What fuels their energy? What drains, hurts or scares them? What dreams do they have?

And you can learn even more about your spouse by listening. When they mention something, pay attention and ask them to explain. If your spouse tends to never stop talking, give them your undivided attention long enough for them to feel heard. If your spouse is a person of few words, kindly and invitingly draw them out.

It’s been said, “When someone shows you who they are, believe them.” Abusive, addictive or other destructive behavior is never OK. Trust is earned over time, and it’s neither loving nor godly to give your trust to someone who has demonstrated they are not trustworthy, at least until they have demonstrated change over time. Seeing that is honestly part of studying your spouse.

The point is to get curious about understanding your spouse’s view of the world – not as it relates to your own comfort, but as it relates to what’s important to *them*.

Go Deeper

What you see on the surface, and the words your spouse says, are important. But that’s only the beginning. Your spouse is multi-layered, as you are. That’s why you need to continue seeking to understand your spouse’s heart throughout your

marriage.

I've shared this story before, but it bears repeating. When Al and I got married, the bedroom environment became a source of tension. I wanted it quiet and dark; he wanted the TV to remain on. We didn't fight about it, but the tension was real.

A few years into our marriage one morning, in the kitchen, we got to the real issue. As he began to have health problems, Al became increasingly afraid of dying in his sleep. Periodically rousing himself just enough to be aware of the TV reassured him he was still alive, and he could relax and sleep. And I realized the sound was the biggest frustration for me. We both shed some tears, and for the remaining years before he passed away, we slept with the TV on—and on mute. Coming to understand each other's heart in this area changed everything.

That's the kind of difference understanding your spouse's heart can make. Certainly many issues are bigger and more complicated than whether or not to sleep with the TV on. But whatever the conflict, there's usually a deeper issue involved. Seeking to understand will help you find a solution.

Seek God's Perspective

The other piece of advice I heard and took to heart before getting married was, "Stay on your knees."

Only God truly knows everything about your spouse's heart. You desperately need His perspective. This is one of the most important things to pray about. Ask God to show you how He sees your spouse's heart. He may need to work on your heart so you can become open enough to care about understanding your spouse's heart.

God's perspective makes a difference. For example, when it comes to bad behavior, is your spouse acting out of a truly evil heart, or out of immaturity and woundedness? If you are being hurt because of their evil heart, it's critical that you

take action.

When it comes to intimacy, seeing your spouse with a measure of how God sees them will transform your relationship. You will be empowered to create a safe place for your spouse to share and grow. It will fuel your compassion and help you invite your spouse to come closer. It will help disarm your frustration and provide clarity and hope.

Is your goal understanding your spouse's heart? I hope so. It can change everything.

Your Turn: *How well do you believe you understand your spouse's heart? Have you sought God's perspective on your spouse's heart? How has that made a difference? Leave a comment below. {eo}*

For more information on following Christ in your marriage, check out the podcast included with this article.

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