

How You Can Truly Enjoy Your Marriage—Instead of Simply Tolerating It

I think most people would agree that a good marriage isn't going to just "happen." It's going to require some give and take. And more than anything, having a great relationship means being committed to doing things *God's way*.

For instance, I've found one major way to improve my marriage is to adopt an attitude of *giving* rather than *getting* (see Acts 20:35). Our natural inclination is to focus on ourselves. We have a tendency to think, *What can you do for me?* or *How can you make me happy?*

If you enter marriage with the mindset that your spouse should make you happy all the time, you're setting yourself up for disaster. However, if you make the choice to be a blessing to your spouse—if you set your mind to thinking, *I want to give ... what can I do to be good to them?*—then you'll not only strengthen your marriage, but you will also become extremely happy!

I admit, I used to be an incredibly selfish person. To be honest, I just plain wanted my way, and I got upset when I didn't get it. In fact, I can still remember many mornings when I would lie in bed just thinking about how I was going to get Dave to do what I wanted to do that day. I was wrapped up in myself—thinking all about what *I* wanted and what others could do for *me*.

Well, one morning, as I lay there formulating my plan for how I was going to get everything I wanted, the Holy Spirit got my attention and spoke something to my heart that I will never forget.

The Lord said to me, "Joyce, sometimes you remind Me of a little toy robot that someone winds up every morning. Then, after you're fully wound up, you walk around all day long saying, '*What about me? What about me? What about me? What about me? What about me? What about me?*'"

That got my attention! Over time, as I sought the Lord's help, He helped me, little by little, to change and be less selfish.

One great way to be good to your spouse is to take the time to learn what they like and dislike. For instance, I've learned that Dave really values spending quality time together. So, even though I'm more of a multitasker, I've learned to give Dave my undivided attention when he wants to sit and tell me something.

Likewise, Dave has made an effort to learn what I like. Many times, he will choose to do all the dishes at night just because he knows how much it blesses me. It may seem like a little thing, but it goes a long way toward sustaining a healthy relationship!

This principle comes from Acts 20:35c (AMP), which says, "It is more blessed [and brings greater joy] to give than to receive."

For many years, I could quote this Scripture, but I obviously didn't believe it because I spent my time trying to make myself happy rather than be a blessing to others. But God has taught me that we don't even know what "happy" is until we forget about ourselves, start focusing on others and become generous givers in every way.

I'll never forget several years ago when I was planning a birthday party for Dave. I spent one entire day in particular running errands, making plans and consuming myself with how I could make it a great event. By the time his birthday arrived, I was absolutely filled with joy and couldn't wait to see his reaction. I actually think *I* enjoyed his birthday more than he

did! Why? *Because I got my mind off myself and focused on being good to someone else.*

It's so important to remember that you can never out-give God. Even if you feel right now like you're doing all the giving and your spouse is doing all the taking, be assured that *God* will always take care of you and bless your obedience to His Word.

Galatians 6:7 gives us a wonderful promise from God. It says, "Do not be deceived ... whatever a man sows, this and this only is what he will reap." I love this! When we make a decision to be givers and spend our time focusing on how we can be good to others, God says He will find ways to bless and take care of us.

I want to encourage you to take action to improve your marriage in practical ways. For the next week or so, take just a minute or two each morning to set your mind in the direction of *giving* instead of *getting*. Purposely think of something you can do for your spouse that will be a blessing to them.

As you do—as you choose to take time to make their life better—I believe you'll begin to experience more happiness yourself—and truly have a marriage you both enjoy. {eo}

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 135 books, including Battlefield of the Mind and The Power of Thank You (FaithWords). She hosts the Enjoying Everyday Life radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit .

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