

Joyce Meyer: Don't Allow These Selfish Ideals to Sabotage Your Marriage

My husband, Dave, and I have been married over 50 years, and I can honestly say we have a great marriage. But it didn't start out that way.

Like many people, I learned that it takes effort and a willingness to let God change us if we're going to have a healthy marriage. One of the most important things we can do is examine our expectations.

Having unrealistic expectations can sabotage a marriage before it ever begins. So many people enter marriage expecting their spouse to be something they are not. Or they have the unrealistic expectation that he or she will be able to keep them happy all of the time.

For starters, I think it's important to realize that the way you feel when you're dating is different than how you'll feel after you've been married for a while. In the beginning, everything is new and exciting, and emotions are running high. But a day will come when all of those emotions won't necessarily be there, *and that's OK*.

For instance, just because I don't melt into the carpet every time Dave walks into the room doesn't mean I love him any less than before. In fact, I love him *more*. Our love is deeper because it's based on years of experience and getting to know each other. We have a quality of relationship now that is so much greater than when we first met.

The key to building a healthy marriage to Dave has been a serious commitment to be as close to God as I can possibly be. Maturing spiritually in Christ has changed me in wonderful

ways that have healed and restored my soul and filled me with His love.

In Ephesians 3:17 (AMP), the apostle Paul prayed for the church in Ephesus, “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through your faith” and that they would be “[deeply] rooted and [securely] grounded in love.” Being changed by the love of God has given me the ability to love Dave the way I should love him, rather than expecting him to be everything I think he should be.

It’s become a long-standing joke—especially for women—that we look at the person we’re going to marry and think, *I can change them*. Sadly, this is the way I viewed my husband during the early years of our marriage.

Dave and I have completely opposite personalities. He’s naturally laid-back and easygoing, always looking at the bright side of things. I’m more of your typical Type A personality. I’m highly motivated but can also be too harsh and insensitive.

Well, for years, I tried to get Dave to be more aggressive like me, especially when it came to stepping out into new things. He would inevitably say, “Joyce, you’re always out ahead of God.” And I would reply, “And you’re always 10 miles behind Him!”

On one occasion, after I continued to criticize his behavior, Dave finally said, “Joyce, you’d better be glad I’m this way. Because if I weren’t, you wouldn’t be doing what you’re doing.” And he’s right!

The Lord used this experience to show me the dangers of nit-picking Dave about things I perceive as weaknesses. Even if Dave *does* need to change in an area, God is the only one who can change him—my pestering will only make things worse and drive a wedge between us.

I used to just pray for God to change Dave. Now, I pray more like this:

“God, I would really like for Dave to change in this area, but maybe he’s not the problem—maybe it’s *my* attitude. So, first, I ask You to change anything in me that needs to be changed. If there’s something Dave needs to change, I pray that You will work in that area of his life. In the meantime, please help me to focus on all of the great things about my husband.”

If you’re constantly trying to change your spouse, you end up focusing on all of their weaknesses and things you don’t like. And you’ll overlook their strengths and good qualities.

Dave is a great husband, and I honestly have no complaints. But if I just focused on the things that annoy me from time to time, I would eventually see nothing else and make myself miserable.

But when I focus on the good things and everything I really *like* about him, it produces feelings of gratitude, love and joy ... and the “bad stuff” suddenly seems less important.

Take a moment right now and pray for your spouse. Commit your relationship to the Lord and ask Him to help you focus on everything you *like* about them. No one is perfect, but when you choose to love your spouse for who they are, *you open the door for God to bless your marriage in amazing ways.*

Joyce Meyer is a New York Times’ bestselling author and founder of Joyce Meyer Ministries, Inc. She has authored more than 100 books, including *Battlefield of the Mind* and *Your Battles Belong to the Lord (FaithWords)*. She hosts the *Enjoying Everyday Life* radio and TV programs, which air on hundreds of stations worldwide. For more information, visit .