

Marriage, what is marriage? It is the union of two spirits, bodies and souls becoming one.

What does union mean? Being a single entity or living being with characteristics of the same kind of quality; undivided in unity and in one accord. Forming a single entity of two or more components.

Men and women are so different, yet so similar. Both want to love and be loved. Both have a great desire for companionship. Below are the important issues that need to be addressed in all relationships.

- **Union**
- **Desires for Love**
- **Compromise**
- **Intimacy**
- **Quality of Love**
- **Physical Responsibility**
- **Spiritual Responsibility**

Ten Ways To Have An Excellent Marriage

The following are ten suggestions on how to work toward having a really great marriage.

Great marriages make for very happy and fulfilling lives. Mediocre marriages may contribute much to personal happiness. Bad marriages make for unhappy lives. With extra work and attention, many couples can transform their marriages from mediocre to wonderful.

We work hard with our jobs, churches, hobbies and projects of interest, why not work as hard with our marriages, this is our life and soul mate. This is the person that we grow old with, share joys and sadness, have and make children with, etc., etc.

To help bad marriages become good and then wonderful many times take counseling or extra focus on eliminating destructive behavior from the relationship.

1. Honor your vows: In the ups and downs of life, the only thing you have to fall back on is your character and honor in keeping the promises couples make to each other at the time of marriage. There will be times of unhappiness and vulnerability.

Protect your marriage by having strong boundaries that don't allow for emotional intimacy with opposite sex friendships. They take energy and closeness away from the relationship. Be loyal in the way you speak publicly about each other. Keep your partner's confidence. *(Forsake even the appearance of evil).*

2. Show love through actions on a daily basis: Anticipate and meet his or her emotional needs through daily acts of love and consideration. Be there for each other in times of joy and times of sorrow or threat. Sacrifice for his or her goals, growth, dreams, wishes and even whims. Have a willing attitude about pleasing your partner and responding to requests and concerns. This is love, freely given even when it is difficult or inconvenient. *(Remember never to forsake helping your mate to fulfill their gifts and callings from God).*

3. Express affection, admiration, appreciation and fondness: Expressions of love and appreciation for special qualities or efforts mean a lot. It goes beyond words to loving touches, embraces and holding. It includes physical proximity, special looks and loving eye contact.

Show excitement and interest in your greetings and fondness in your farewells. *(It is easy to take your mate for granite, remember to be conscience of this and not allow this to happen).*

4. Share your lives through emotional intimacy: Create and share a private world where

you confide deeply about life, joys, fears, hurts, frustrations and challenges. Talk often and openly about feelings and wonderment. Stay in touch with the details of each other's emotional lives. Use each other as sounding boards for talking a problem out loud, working through issues and gaining a valued perspective. Turn to each other for advice and comfort. Be a good listener. Always show empathy and concern.

5. Enjoy each other's companionship: Invest in each other by spending time together in mutually enjoyable activities. Laugh and play together. Enjoy each other's sense of humor. Find common interests. Make memories. Have adventures together. Take time for leisure and light-hearted fun. Take time for yourselves as a couple and nourish your marriage. Honor your specialness by celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, holidays and other couple and family rituals with gusto and excitement.

6. Keep romance alive: Make your marriage full of special surprises. Surprise your spouse with a vacation, a special date night, flowers, candy, special gifts or whatever excites them. Take the time to really know each other so your surprises have meaning. Marriage needs regular sexual fulfillment. Set the stage so the spark of passion stays alive.

7. Operate as a team: Share responsibilities as equals. parent and manage money as a team. Coordinate schedules and activities together. Plan and make decisions together. Support both your own family commitments and the extended family obligations as a team. Worship and share your spiritual journeys together.

Dream together and build a future together. Accept each other's influence and ideas. Work out differences with respect, patience, flexibility and a genuine spirit of learning. Focus on being kind and not on being right. You can disagree without being disagreeable.

8. Manage your personal stress: Don't bring anger, frustration and hurt from work or other situations into your home and unfairly take it out on those you love. Your home and marriage should be a haven and a place of peace.

Take care of yourself through rest, leisure, exercise, and pleasant personal diversions. This will allow you to give energy to the marriage instead of being a source of strain and worry.

9. Be quick to apologize and forgive: Events will happen that are truly unfortunate, neglectful, mean-spirited, selfish and just plain wrong. Every relationship will have its emotional wounds and traumatic experiences. Develop an attitude of resolving these issues quickly.

Try to learn about the impact of the mistake, acknowledge the harm that it causes, make amends if possible, ask for forgiveness and commit to preventing the hurt from occurring again. If you are on the receiving end, be quick to forgive. To forgive is a choice. Trust will be earned through time and change in behavior.

When arguing remember to not bring up past faults and failures in present arguments. Only deal with present issues. This will open the door for the enemy to step with confusion.

10. Develop skills for resolving conflict: Conflict is good. Conflict shows engagement. Conflict gives couples a chance to clarify their own thoughts and emotions. If not confronted, it will grow and escalate. However, the process should be respectful and courteous. Conflict resolution involves good listening, communicating clearly and not interrupting each other. It involves a willingness to compromise or to find solutions that work for both of you. It especially means minimizing disrespectful judgments, angry outbursts, selfish demands, defensiveness, blame, criticisms, contempt, or stonewalling to avoid the issue. Couples need to have a plan in place to disengage when emotions are heated and to re-engage in the same discussion within a reasonable time frame.

That is it. It is not easy. Having a great marriage takes a lot of work, but the rewards far out weigh the personal sacrifices involved.

11 TIPS to remember:

1. Keep God FIRST!
2. Pray Together!
3. Respect and honor each other!
4. Encourage each other to grow together!
5. Read the Bible together as much as possible!
6. Be swift to hear & slow to speak!
7. Make time to communicate with each other!
8. Protect and honor your marriage vows!
9. Do not let others come between your marriage!
10. Thank God everyday for your Mate & the Life you have together!
11. Understand that "love" is a choice, not a feeling!(You must choose everyday to Love your mate)