

each other. Some of them may be unrealistic or unreasonable too. But even when dealing with legitimate expectations, both of you have to realise that each one has to give something as well as receive. It takes time and effort to understand what your partner is looking for, and to make an honest attempt to provide him or her with your support. Selfishness is one of the major killers of marriages.

9. Avoiding marriage killers. Withdrawing from communications, depriving your partner from sexual relationship, leaving conflicts unresolved, looking only for your own interests, making comments that put down or insult your partner, comparing your partner with someone else, daydreaming about how it would be with a different partner, etc., can be potential killers of your marriage. Don't entertain them.

10. Separation from families. Many partners not only bring in the influence of their families of origin into their marriage, they also allow ties to their families of origin to remain stronger than those with their partners. This is unhealthy, because this will not allow your marriage relationship to grow and become strong and for you to become one. Couples have to also watch out for parents or other relatives who would like to control them from a distance.

11. Spouse and children. In many marriages everything seems to go well till children arrive on the scene. At this time the attention of the couple may shift from their partner to the children. This is damaging to the marriage relationship even if it may not appear so at that time. While children are a very important part of the family, you must not allow your relationship with them to become stronger or more important than your marriage relationship.

Conclusion. Next to our relationship with God, the marriage relationship can be the most rewarding experience on earth. But it is a fact that it becomes virtually like hell on earth for many unfortunate people. I wish that this pamphlet might help you in your marriage to avoid the common pitfalls and to experience the best of each other.

The Wedding Gift ©

Marriage is a gift from God for mankind, and the marriage partners each a gift to the other. Its potential for making each partner complete and whole along with the other partner is unsurpassed. Usually every couple enters marriage with high expectations, and hopes that their marriage is going to be better and different from many others they see around them. But unfortunately statistics is against them. In order to avoid their becoming another sample in this dismal statistics they need to recognise from the start what they are up against, and what they can do about it. This pamphlet is an attempt to summarise the currently available wisdom gathered through observations of mankind by many experts. While I do not claim any originality or ownership of the ideas presented here, I have compiled them in this form with the hope that it will help prepare newlyweds to be aware of possible dangers along the way and to take necessary precautionary action.

Beginning with God and staying with Him

Since God is the one who created man and woman and designed the concept of marriage, He is the one who knows best about how to run it. He knows every issue involved, and He tells us in His word what are to be sought after and aimed for, and what are to be avoided. If your marriage is to succeed, what better course to follow than to listen to Him from the beginning and all through your life!

God wants couples to become joined together in such a manner that they are no longer two but one. This is a multi-dimensional process that progresses throughout life in which the partners increasingly share every part of their lives with each other. It involves a lifelong commitment to each other of loyalty and faithfulness, and sticking with each other through thick and thin. Marriage is not something that can be taken up on a trial basis with different partners or dissolved when there are disappointments or adversities in life.

In order to ensure a smooth and orderly life in the family God has planned a certain hierarchy in it. The husband is the one who is primarily responsible to God for the family, and the wife recognises and respects that authority given to her husband. Children are to obey the parents, and even when they grow up and leave home, to respect and honour their parents. You need to make sure that the atmosphere in the family respects and maintains this order.

If you need God to guide you to the right partner for your life, you also need Him to sustain you through all the difficult patches that you will surely face. God is the one who can give you wisdom, strength, courage, comfort and guidance, and sustain you so that you can enjoy the blessings of marriage in every respect. Start with Him, and stay with Him.

Eleven factors you need to take into consideration for a successful marriage.

1. Families of origin. This is a term experts use to denote the families from which each of the partners has come. When you get married, it is not just the two of you who are involved, but you bring into your marriage your experiences in your family of origin. Each of you has picked up behavioural patterns from your parents and others, whether they are good or bad. Also, each of you may have a desire to have or not to have a marriage like your parents had. Cultural and social background and value systems can be different on both sides. Since both of you are coming from entirely different families of origin, this could generate a great deal of conflict. But if you are awake to this potential, and learn to become aware of your own and your partner's tendencies, it will help you to manage them and avoid a lot of frustration.

2. Temperamental build. All of us have genetically inherited unique personality traits from our parents and grandparents which define our basic behavioural patterns. This is why some of us are outgoing while others are reserved and withdrawn. We vary in many areas such as friendliness, leadership, hard work, humour, working in a group, crisis management, courage, initiative, imagination, discipline, orderliness, punctuality, dependability, creativity, aesthetic sense, neatness, optimism, etc. We all have certain natural strengths of character and also weaknesses. As a married couple you must recognise that you are different from each other, and learn to understand and respect each other's temperament. Don't try to fit your partner into your mould.

3. Gender biases. Even though some people try to insist otherwise, there are psychological differences between men and women, apart from the physical. God has made it like that since He has different roles for them in the family. As a result men and women tend to look at things and people differently, and their assessments can be different. They may be both right from *their* point of view, which can be very difficult for the other partner to understand. There are natural strengths and weaknesses on both sides. This calls for a learning process for both partners. The wise couple learns to make use of each other's strengths

and support the other where he or she is weak.

4. Communication. One of the most common reasons why marriages break down is because of lack of proper communication between the partners. Both partners need to be able to express their views, concerns, fears, anxieties and needs to their partners honestly and without fear. Family background and temperament, and unresolved conflicts may, slowly over a period of time, overrule each partner's ability and desire to communicate. One may want to have more communication and the other may try to keep things to himself or herself. A distance begins to build up between them. It is good to keep this in mind, and agree on certain ground rules to enable each one to keep the communication channel open.

5. Forgiveness. You are two imperfect people living in an imperfect world, and you will find yourself and your partner doing or saying things that hurt each other or are difficult for the other partner to bear with. Learning to forgive each other quickly will ensure a smooth healing of wounds and avoiding building up pressure that can cause an explosion later.

6. Sexual relationship. This can be a strong bonding factor between the couple or a serious cause of conflict. The couple needs to understand the basic differences between male and female sexuality. Though both can enjoy the sexual relationship equally well, what each one associates with it and what arouses them are different. For men the sex drive is very strong, and mere sight or thought can arouse them. Women associate sexual relationship with the whole status of their relationship with their husbands and may not be prepared for a relationship suddenly. Husbands would need to be considerate towards their wives with respect to their physical and emotional condition, and lead their wives to the physical relationship gently and slowly. Wives on the other hand must not think that sex is dirty or that their husbands are too demanding.

7. Conflict resolution. However well the couple is 'matched' to each other, the sheer pressure of day to day circumstances can bring in conflicts. Since both of you are used to dealing with conflicts in different ways, trying to handle conflicts can snowball into major relational crises. You have to recognise the differences between you two and your approaches and not be naïve enough to get into arguments without ground rules that have been agreed to previously. Leaving conflicts unresolved is not an option.

8. Give and receive. Both husband and wife have certain expectations from