

Don't Do Stupid: Marriage Edition
Ignore Each Other's Needs
Clay Weed

TALK IT OVER

Key Scripture:

Ephesians 5:23–25 (NLT)

23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

25 For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her

1 Corinthians 7:1–5 (NLT)

1 Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to abstain from sexual relations. 2 But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

3 The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. 4 The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife. 5 Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Genesis 2:18 (NLT)

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him."

James 1:19 (NLT)

Romans 12:10 (NLT)

1 Timothy 5:8 (NLT)

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- What's your favorite movie or TV show about a married couple and why?

Start **sharing**. These questions are to help get your group thinking and to create openness.

- Ladies, do you agree with Pastor Clay's list of your top 3 needs? Men, do you agree with the list for your top 3 needs?
- **Read Ephesians 5:23–25.** Discuss the biblical roles of husband and wife, and their respective responsibilities. How do these roles and responsibilities meet each other's needs?
- Why do you feel many married couples serve others well but struggle serving the needs of each other?
- What are your love languages? What are your spouse's top 2? Where do you struggle to meet your spouse's needs in their love language?
- **Read 1 Corinthians 7:1–5.** What is the message of this passage? Why is sex such a challenge in so many marriages, especially when approached regarding meeting each other's needs?
- **Read Genesis 2:18.** According to this passage, for what purpose did God create woman? What are some practical applications from this passage, for men and women?
- Pastor Clay gave us 4 action steps: 1) Honest and teachable conversation, 2) Asking for what you need, 3) Being present in the moment, and 4) Stop ignoring each other's needs. Discuss these. Which comes easiest for you, and which is the biggest struggle?

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Ask your spouse to share with you one area where you aren't meeting his or her needs.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Lift up all of the marriages and relationships in your group, that God strengthens and blesses them according to His will. Thank God for the unique gifts and contributions of group members and spouses. Confess and repent where you have fallen short of God's standard for sacrificial love in your relationships.

Question: "How can I have a godly marriage?"

Answer:

Understanding God's purpose for marriage is critical to having a godly marriage. God created marriage to be a covenant agreement between two people, a man and a woman, and Himself (Matthew 19:6; Malachi 2:14). As husband and wife, the couple is united by God as "one flesh" both legally and spiritually (Genesis 2:24). This three-way union, with God at the center, forms the foundation on which to build a godly marriage.

God has a unique purpose for the marriage covenant. A good resource on this topic is *Sacred Marriage* by Gary Thomas. In the book, the author explores the biblical concept that God's intention for marriage is to make us more holy, not to make us happy. Christian marriage is a divine picture of Christ's relationship with His bride, the church. Through His demonstration of love for us, Jesus Christ modeled how to love our partner in marriage: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. . . . This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church . . . and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:25–33). Jesus came to serve and give Himself sacrificially for the church, which is what husbands and wives are called to do for one another in marriage.

If you've been married for any length of time, you understand the challenges of blending the lives and aspirations of two flawed and sinful people into one cohesive partnership. Marriage relationships are complex and complicated. We bring our emotional baggage and brokenness from past hurts into the mix. The only way to make a marriage work is for both partners to "follow God's example, . . . and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:1–2). We must obey the Lord's command to love our spouse unselfishly, laying down our wants and desires "as Christ laid down his life for us" (1 John 3:16).

God's purpose in the life of every believer, whether married or single, is spiritual transformation, as the believer is sanctified by the work of the Holy Spirit and conformed to Christ's image (1 Peter 1:15–16; Romans 8:29; 12:1–2; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–7; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Hebrews 12:14). How different would our marriages look if we made it our life's mission to help, support, serve, and pray for our spouse in his or her walk with Christ each day? Instead of focusing on our partner's faults or our own unmet needs, what if we looked for ways to love one another in the completeness of God's love (1 John 4:12)? What if we followed the instruction to "encourage one another daily" (Hebrews 3:13), "spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24), "serve one another humbly" (Galatians 5:13), "be devoted to one another" and "honor one another" above ourselves (Romans 12:10), and "be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you" (Ephesians 4:32)?

A godly marriage requires deliberate effort and sacrifice. The foundation starts with our faith in God and our commitment to our covenant with Him and our spouse. Keeping Christ at the center of our relationship is vital to maintaining the health and success of our marriage.

Here are some basic practical guidelines for fostering a godly marriage:

- Pray together regularly (Colossians 4:2). Praying as a couple will strengthen your spiritual bond and bring you both closer to the Lord. Be authentic with each other, confess your sins, and share your struggles.
- Read the Bible together regularly (2 Timothy 3:16–17; Psalm 119:105).
- Attend church, worship together, and get plugged into the body of Christ. Serving and sharing your lives with other believers will build you up in the faith and provide a network of friends and counselors to support you through challenging times (Hebrews 10:24–25).
- Make important decisions together (Amos 3:3).
- Keep the lines of communication open (James 1:19). Listen to your spouse to hear what he or she is saying. Be honest and sincere. Treat each other with kindness and respect. Be quick to forgive.
- Nurture the romantic side of your relationship (Proverbs 5:18). Remember to have fun together, hold hands, laugh together, and admire each other's accomplishments.

You can have a godly marriage. Even if your marriage seems beyond repair, don't give up. Be sure you have done everything within your power to give God time to restore the relationship. Seek out a trained marriage counselor. Consider that God may have brought you to this place in your marriage to work out a good purpose in your life and the life of your spouse (Romans 8:28). Nothing is too difficult for God (Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:26). The Lord wants to make you holy, whole, and complete. Your difficulties in marriage may be the path He has chosen to transform you.