

Reasons to Marry with Satisfaction

To keep a marriage satisfied, it takes a team effort. But finding the right spouse can be the most difficult part in making this effort less strenuous. When a marriage is struggling, couples look for the reasons why they married in the first place. There are numerous reasons to marry such as true love, desire for a lifetime companion, or even a financial security. Each presents a common choice to unite as one flesh but at the cost of conflict within the marriage.

Without a solid foundation of the reasons to get married, couples can spoil their marriage. A useful exercise to find these reasons would be to create a list of the pros and cons and share it with your spouse or future spouse. This will allow them to grasp the basic tenets of one's view of marriage and help a couple to work through the issues prohibiting marital satisfaction. Many marriages as well as relationships struggle with communicating issues that it sets the table for an emotional breakdown. A solution would be to keep the idea of not going to bed angry. Although there will be times where space is necessary, it is very important that issues are not left unaddressed. By creating time for discussion as well as venting, emotional scars can be avoided thus moving towards marital satisfaction.

Another common choice for moving towards marriage would be starting a family. The Bible wants married couples to reproduce but situational awareness should still be addressed. Couples need to understand what social, emotional, and financial changes they are getting themselves into. The social aspect will change since there will be less free time to hang with the guys or go shopping with the girls now that a new responsibility has entered the family. Giving up personal things or interactions with others will be shortened. The early stages of development will be a great building experience but babysitters do come in handy. Making time for one on one date will break the tension at home and bring back the needed intimacy. Emotional awareness

will decrease between each spouse as they deal with the stressors of raising their children. To cope with this, each spouse needs to settle on a type of disciplinary pattern. Their role in the family will keep a healthy balance within the family structure. Finally, finances and spending habits adapt from wants to needs. The average cost of raising a middle class child is approximately 180,000 dollars. Before a couple decides to have a child, they need to secure a financial background and prepare their hearts for a journey. The usual Friday nights out at a fancy restaurant will not happen as much due to the shifting costs. The best solution is for couples to save as much money as they can so they are prepared for the financial struggles they may face with a child. Marital satisfactions for a newlywed couple is almost certain, but as the years pass, expect a tough journey. Some days, one spouse will want to walk out, but they must stop and remember why they fell for the love of their life.

Marital Satisfaction within Parenthood

Nora Ephron in her book *Heartburn* wrote, “A child is a grenade. When you have a baby, you set off an explosion in your marriage, and when the dust settles, your marriage is different from what it was. Not better, necessarily; not worse, necessarily; but different.” Transitioning from couple hood to parenthood is a very critical, and to some degree, permanent period. This time period involves mastering a whole new set of roles and maintaining a satisfactory relationship with your spouse along with a satisfactory relationship with the child (Taylor and Francis). Often times, parental roles can compete with the roles of the relationship. To add to this, economic stressors along with other life stressors begin to magnify. This can put much strain on a relationship and often leads to a decrease in emotional support for each other (Guttman and Lazar).

According to J. Guttman and A. Lazar, many research studies support the notion of a general decline in marital satisfaction after the first child is born. However, Clulow would argue that a decrease in marital satisfaction may not necessarily be due to children but rather a natural process accelerated by children (Guttman and Lazar). Another opinion by John M. Gottman is that 70 percent of wives experience a steep drop in their marital satisfaction within the first year of the baby's birth. The husband's dissatisfaction often comes as a reaction to the wife's unhappiness (Gottman 211). Of course there are exceptions to these statistics, yet it is common considering what the couple goes through during this new stage of life.

Although there are many reasons for such disgruntlement such as sleepless nights, feeling overwhelmed or unappreciated, the weight of a huge responsibility, economic anxieties, lack of self care, and more, one major contribution to a marriage during parenthood is whether or not the husband and wife experience parenthood together. If only one spouse experiences the life-altering experience, it is more than understandable that there would be natural distance between them. At the University of Haifa in Israel, a study was conducted on factors that constitute marital satisfaction. The results indicated that couples with children value Agreement, Consideration, and Intimacy at a higher level than couple who do not have children (Guttman and Lazar). When these, along with other important factors in a marital relationship are not focused on and emphasized, the happiness and satisfaction among the couple has the potential to be affected.

A piece of advice that Gottman provides in his book, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, is to "focus on your marital friendship" (Gottman 213). The importance of friendship in a marriage is the most stressed factor by Gottman as he says, "The determining factor in whether wives feel satisfied with sex, romance, and passion in their marriage is, by 70

percent, the quality of the couple's friendship. For men, the determining factor is, by 70 percent, the quality of the couple's friendship (Gottman 17).

Having this established friendship before the baby comes creates an easier transition as you understand each other and therefore work as a team, remaining in tune with one another. It is also important to make it a "second place" priority to carve out some time for the two of you. However, an important thing to remember is that even if a lot of time is spent discussing the baby, you have succeeded. Also, little intentions such as involving the husband with the child and giving the wife a break and being sensitive to each other's needs will prevent parenthood from dragging the relationship down but instead help elevate it to a new level of closeness, understanding, and love towards one another (Gottman 213-216).

Keeping God the Center of Your Marriage

Marriage between a man and a woman is a beautiful gift and an exciting adventure where two people unite to become one flesh and journey through life together. However, a marriage cannot flourish if God is not its center.

Try applying the verse, "A cord of three strands is not quickly broken" (Ecclesiastes 4:12) to marriage, where the three strands are the husband, the wife, and God. When Christ is placed in the center of a marriage, a spiritual dynamic is released that is much greater than two people trying to build a marriage on their own. And when Christ *is* the center, marriage then becomes a three-stranded chord that is not easily broken.

With God involved in the marriage relationship, a couple has a Helper. With the power of God, a couple can now overcome all obstacles. Authors John and Stasi Eldredge of the book *Love & War* wrote, "We have no idea how couples make it without God's help...Asking for your

marriage to flourish without God is like asking a tree to blossom without sunshine and water. Some sort of tree might grow, but you are not going to like the looks of it” (Love & War, page 18, 2009). The Lord sheds light on situations, He always has answers even when we have none, and first and foremost He will never leave or forsake us. By participating in constant prayer and communion with God, the common stress and tension between marital partners can be released and can bring freedom. God loves marriage because He created it, and He will bless your marriage if you let Him!

Strengths and Weaknesses

What is the best way to have a healthy strong marriage? This is a question that has been asked over and over again by many couples. There is no surefire answer to exactly how a marriage works. There are many different “ways” that people have come up with to try and solve the marriage problems, but the truth is that every couple is different. Every couple is going to have their own set of problems. With this said there are a few strengths to every marriage that seem to be universal and good to practice, but with these strengths there are the weaknesses the plague us.

Communication is the first thing that can either strengthen or weaken a marriage. “Self-disclosure appears to be an important aspect of relationship dynamics” (McCabe, 2006, p. 45) when related to marital satisfaction. Couples who have poorer communication usually do not have very successful marriages. They tend to fight more about the little which could have been solved using the simple method of communication. “Positive communication skills involved sharing thoughts and feelings, discussing problems together, and listening to the other person’s point of view (Robinson & Blanton, 1993, p. 41).

According to research conducted by Linda C. Robinson and Priscilla W. Blanton (1993); involving the interviewing of 15 couples on the strengths in their marriage. Intimacy appeared to be the central concept for these couples. They described ways in which closeness to their spouses permeated the relationship, encompassing the emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects of their marriage (p. 40). When experiencing intimacy with your partner you let yourself become vulnerable in ways you would never do with another person. This kind of closeness fuels a marriage relationship and makes it stronger. Without it the flame would fizzle out and become dry. Couples experience the shared joys and pains of life together as they begin their new family. They experience childbirth, graduations, traveling, and the simple pleasure of time alone in the craziness of life.

Unsurprisingly there was a great agreement among couples that commitment was important in their marriage. “Many couples referred to an expectation that the marriage would endure, citing the fact that divorce was not an option” (Robinson et al., 1993, P. 40). Couples can agree that it makes marriage so much more satisfactory when both can consent to the marriage being a lifetime commitment. Although some couples can think of a time when their spouse or themselves waived in their commitment to one another; but there was always that same commitment that brought them back together.

Religion also played an important role in the satisfaction of couples. Religion provides a ways that the couple can grow and be supported by a community of people who are growing with them. Religion “sustained their relationship through good times as well as bad” (Robinson et al., 1993, p. 44). Couples are provided a place where the family can be supported as the kids grow up. This can provide an eased mind for the parents when they leave their kids with these people; which in turn cause less stress on the marriage.

These are just a few things that provide satisfaction in a marriage. Couples who do things together and make time for one another seem to be the more satisfied and content with their lives.

References

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