

GOING FURTHER - Resources

Recommended Books:

Love and Respect (by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs) discusses a powerful biblical model for each spouse understanding and meeting the other's most deeply felt need.

Breaking the Cycle of Divorce (by Dr. John Trent) helps those who had no model of marriage stability break the cycle by creating a successful relationship.

Boundaries in Marriage (by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend) shows couples how to apply the 10 laws of boundaries that can make a real difference in relationships by learning when to say yes and when to say no.

Love Must be Tough (by Dr. James Dobson) offers hope for marriages in crisis—including those who have an unfaithful spouse.

A Difficult Marriage

Finding Hope and Help



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253 Jackson Street • Post Office Box 1205 • Thomson, Georgia 30824
706.595.4252 • Fax 706.597.0668

Hope for a Difficult or Abusive Marriage

Those who marry will have troubles. That's what Paul told the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 7:28). Even the best couples can struggle to protect their marriage vows. But what happens when marriage troubles become unbearable? Is there a point at which couples should end a bad marriage? Or is there hope for something better? Walk through the following steps as you prayerfully evaluate your situation.

STEP ONE: Discern Minor from Major Trouble

Unfortunately, many marriages end today over troubles that could have been overcome. University of Texas researcher Norval Glenn has found that divorces today are often blamed on problems such as “lack of commitment,” “too much conflict and arguing,” “unrealistic expectations” and “lack of preparation.” These are problems that both husband and wife and should work to overcome. Despite what friends, family or popular culture might say, these issues are no reason to end a marriage—especially in light of the serious long-term impact of divorce on your children.

In their book, *The Case for Marriage*, Maggie Gallagher and Linda Waite explain that couples who think their only options are to either divorce or be miserable often find things getting better if they'll just stick it out. In fact, almost eighty percent of husbands and wives who were very unhappy in their marriage yet stayed together described themselves as very happy just five years later!

STEP TWO: Anticipate the Hope after the Trouble

Major trouble occurs when someone either abuses or abandons their role in a marriage—when they break faith with their spouse and violate their vows. While God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), He permits it for marital unfaithfulness (Matthew 19:1-8). In God's grace, He allows men and women whose spouses have been unfaithful to start over.

However, God is in the business of helping couples redeem what many would see as a hopeless situation. “Even marriages that have faced one or more of the big ‘A’s—abuse, affairs or addictions—can be saved,” says Mitch Temple, a licensed marriage counselor. Temple has led numerous intensive counseling sessions with couples that faced these major challenges and even though they had Biblical grounds for divorce they found a way to save their marriages.

QUESTION TWO: Are Children a Blessing or a Burden?

In the past few years, social commentators have used words like “ankle biters” and “yard apes” to describe children and the stress they bring with them. But God calls children a blessing (Psalm 127:3-5). Even in the face of what one writer called the “bone-wearying work” of parenting, children provide the joyful reward of marital and parental love. Studies consistently find children are people's greatest source of happiness.

QUESTION THREE: How Long Should You Wait?

Magazine covers featuring celebrities having babies well into their forties can give couples the impression they have plenty of time to start their families. Unfortunately, those images have contributed to a tragically low awareness of the fertility window God designed for women. Couples today who marry in their late twenties and then spend a couple of years getting to know each other are often surprised to find that they are already pushing past their prime fertility season when they start thinking about having kids.

QUESTION FOUR: Who is Your Provider?

Couples seeking to start their families may feel overwhelmed by a variety of concerns about being pregnant, giving birth and adjusting their marriage, budget and lifestyles. This can be a natural response because babies do change everything and push couples beyond themselves. But God is faithful. Paul told the Corinthians, “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8). Having children is a good work and gives couples new opportunities to see how God is able to supply what they need.