

## ***Why Marriages Fail***

Why do marriages fail? Pundits offer a number of reasons, but these explanations don't tell the whole story.

For example, marriages do not fail due to incompatibility. Every marriage is comprised of two people who are incompatible in some respects. In successful marriages, partners learn how to adapt to each other's interests. Their differences become a source of strength, rather than a source of conflict.

Marriages do not fail because of money. Our grandparents were far poorer than we are, yet there were far fewer divorces in their day. Somehow they figured out that money - or the lack thereof - was simply something a couple dealt with. When they said, "for richer or for poorer," they meant it. Poverty was a shared experience that brought them closer together, rather than driving them apart.

Marriages do not fail because of in-laws. God decreed that a man should "leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife" (Gen. 2:24). A failure to cut the apron strings when entering a new relationship with a spouse can generate a lot of problems. But the in-laws generally can't be blamed for the problems. They can't intrude into the marriage unless the couple allows them to do so.

Marriages do not fail because of sex. Of all the incompatibilities that a couple has to struggle with, this is probably the biggest. Men and women have completely different libidos, and it takes some couples a long time to understand each other's needs in this area. Some couples never do reach that understanding. But that doesn't mean a marriage is doomed. Successful marriages have this problem, too. They just learn to adapt.

Marriages do not fail because of kids. Of all the reasons offered for a failed marriage, this is the most inexcusable. Raising children to be happy, well-adjusted, productive citizens is a primary reason for marriage in the first place. This job can be exhausting, exasperating, and expensive. But if a couple remains patient and committed, it will be the most rewarding achievement of their life. If children become the source of marital discord, there's something else going on behind the curtains.

All of these issues may contribute to a failed marriage, but they are not the underlying cause. The main reason that marriages fail is simply selfishness. One or both parties in the relationship consider "self" to be more important than "spouse." Armed with that attitude, every difference, however trivial, becomes a potential battleground that can destroy the marriage.

Self-help books on sex, children, money, etc., can be good resources for helping a young couple cope with marriage. But the best resource is a thorough indoctrination in the Biblical meaning of "love" - treating others as more important than self.

*- by David King*

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## ***Which Harvest?***

If my thoughts are only on the coming of the next harvest, I should plant grain. If my thoughts are on the next half century, I should plant trees. But, if I am wise enough to set my thoughts on eternity, I should plant truth - deep within my heart and the hearts of all who will heed. Except I plant truth, I labor in vain.

*- by Dwayne Laws*

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## ***What Happens To Me When I Die?***

The word "sleep" is used at times in the Bible to speak of death without any reference to the condition of the spirit or where one goes after death. For instance, consider John 11:11-14, where Jesus used "sleeps" synonymously with "dead." When the body is dead it appears to be asleep, hence, the figurative use of "sleep." Likewise, when Stephen "fell asleep," this is an expressive way of saying "he died" (Acts 7:60, note 8:1).

Death means separation. Man dies when the spirit leaves the body (James 2:26).

Luke 16:19-31 is one of the best places to go in the Bible to teach us about what happens to us when we die. Please notice there is nothing stated in the text that says this is a parable. Jesus describes this incident as a matter of fact, an event which actually took place. The realm of the dead or the place of departed spirits (sometimes called Hades or the Hadean realm) is here described as consisting of two parts, one a place of comfort and rest (Abraham's bosom), the other a place of agony and torment. There is no passing between these two states (v. 26). There is consciousness as noted throughout this narrative. One's conduct in life determines where he goes upon death (v. 25, 27-31). The living cannot effect or change the condition of those who have died. Neither can the dead change the condition of the living. Our choices in this life determine where we go after we die.

Recall that Jesus said He would be in Paradise after His death (Luke 23:43). Acts 2:27 says Jesus did go to Hades when He died. Because He was without sin, we conclude Jesus was in that part of Hades referred to in Luke 16:22 as "Abraham's bosom" -- Paradise. This is where every faithful Christian can expect to go awaiting the resurrection of the dead. The unrighteous can expect to enter a place of flaming torment (Luke 16:24).

At His return, Christ will speak and all the dead shall arise, some to a judgment of everlasting life and others to a judgment of everlasting death (John 5:28-29; 2 Corinthians 5:10). Are you ready for death? (Hebrews 9:27)

*- by Joe R. Price*

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## ***Two Views of "Service"***

There are two very different ways to view service in the kingdom of God. They reflect two totally opposite understandings of what really constitutes "working" for the Lord.

The first view holds that a person's effectiveness and growth potential is directly related to the number of things he does in the public assemblies. Those who think this way are disappointed if there are limited opportunities to lead singing, word prayers, make announcements, wait at the Lord's table, etc. Frequently they will voice concern that they are "not being used," or are "not growing" if they don't have numerous chances each month to perform these functions. They seemingly like the "limelight," and feel unproductive if they can't be in front of the crowd. Such folks are typically unhappy in a larger congregation, because a larger group naturally limits the frequency of such "public" activities.

Others have a different outlook on these things. Yes, they are more than willing to do what they can in the worship services. Do you need a song leader, or someone to "fill in" when the preacher is gone? Need a teacher for the junior high or high school class? You need only ask - they are ready. But, these folks feel that such opportunities are only "icing on the cake." They understand that real service is something that springs from a heart that is fully and deeply dedicated to God. If there is something of a "public" nature that needs done, they'll gladly to it. But they are not sitting back waiting only for such opportunities - and murmuring if they don't come. Instead, they are making their own opportunities by teaching their own families, neighbors and coworkers. They see to the needs of the sick and downtrodden. They WORK! And they do it regardless of whether or not there is someone standing by to observe them.

It is this second view that is clearly taught by our Lord (Mt. 23:11; Lk. 22:26). Think!

*- by Greg Gwin*