



Doing Family Right

What Does It Look Like to Have God in Your Marriage?

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Got God? You got changes.

Conversion means change. "All things become new" ~ means all things become new! That's change. "Be not conformed to this world but be transformed," means serious change (2 Cor. 5:17, Rom. 12:2).

Surrendering your life to Jesus Christ is radically counter-cultural whether its just you or in your marriage. The God-difference is to be a big difference. Jesus' purpose is to bring change.

What is God in a marriage supposed to look like? The impact of His presence, wisdom and strength is undeniable. The changes are to be many. Here are just some that start showing when the difference God makes really takes effect.

God makes us look in the mirror...

It started with Adam. When confronted by God in the Garden of Eden, he immediately pointed the finger at Eve: "**It's not my fault** – she made me do it!"

And ever since, couples find it **easier to blame** than to claim their stuff. It's never hard to find fault especially in those closest to us. But it's not as easy to see it in us. We've all **got blind spots** – things we don't see about our attitudes and actions.

Complicating it, we **usually judge others** by their actions and ourselves by our intentions. We usually mean well so we don't like it when our actions are questioned. That's when we **get defensive**.

When God is at the centre of a marriage, **He doesn't let us off easy**. He says in effect, "Let me worry about changing your spouse – you focus on changing you!" (**Stay in your Lane!!!**) After all, you are really the only person who can do that. He calls you to look in the mirror and become the person He wants you to be. Start there. **Let God change you**.

1. God enables us to treat our spouse well...

In Shaunti and Jeff Feldhahn's research for their books *For Women Only* and *For Men Only*, they interviewed thousands of couples about what they needed most from their spouse. The simple expression of their study: **women need love and men need respect.**

But their conclusion didn't surprise God because nearly 2000 years ago He put in print: "Men, love your wives, and women, respect your husbands" (**Ephesians 5:33**).

How you treat your spouse matters to God. That's part of the change.

God brings two people together to meet each other's needs. **Treat your mate like you want to be treated.** It's what Jesus meant with the golden rule. Sometimes, we might find ourselves treating everyone else better than our own family. Go figure. Then, we come home and dump on the ones we are supposed to love the most. One lady said, "I wish my husband treated me as well as one of his clients." Sad.

When God is at the centre of a marriage, He changes all that. He not only tells us to love our family, but as we allow Him to work in us, **He changes us and motivates us to treat them better than anyone in the world.** And that begins a great and amazing marital cycle.

2. God allows our friendship to grow warmer...

There are a lot of couples out there that are **merely tolerating their marriages.** Instead of being "stuck on" each other, they feel "stuck with" each other. They're either just hanging on for the kids or they've accepted that nothing will change and seem content to live in a mediocre marriage.

God wants so much more for you. He wants us to be captivated by each other (Proverbs 5:18). He calls us to take time for each other; **to put our spouse's needs ahead of our own** and to show each other love in tangible ways to build real connectedness.

God did not put you together for you to be miserable – or even bored. When God is at the centre of a marriage, it means we keep dating, talking, flirting and laughing. It means listening, affirming, acts of kindness, thoughtfulness and more. **This intentionality builds a deeper friendship that keeps growing through the years.**

3. God gently pushes us toward reconciliation...

The two most powerful words in the English language can also be the hardest to say: **“I’m sorry.”** And when spoken, they call for a response just as difficult; **“I forgive you.”**

Let me be clear: **reconciliation is what God requires.** Getting things right with those closest to us is His norm.

Regardless of your intentions or excuses, you will both screw up. Yet, surrendering to God in your heart changes how we operate. **I have yet to see a marriage blow apart when both husband and wife have a soft heart toward God.** Think about it. Have you?

When God is at the centre of your marriage, bitterness and unforgiveness are not an option. The Bible says He will forgive us only to the extent that we forgive others (Matthew 18:35). That’s tough. **God requires that we have the humility both to apologize and to forgive,** and as we do so He replaces isolation with intimacy. He brings change.

4. God declares that all the made is good – sex too...

Marriage gets a bad wrap today. It is seen as unsexy. Many see it as an outdated institution that limits their passion options. It does and wisely so. But it is to be far from sexless. In a world of so much sexual distraction and compromise, it’s about time that Christian marriages come live in the bedroom so people can see that God’s way is best here too.

LET’S BE CLEAR! Focus on making love NOT having sex! Complete mutuality. No pressuring. No violation of will! For both of you or not at all.

After all, marriage was God’s idea in the first place. He declared it to be “very good” – the intimacy too. God is not a sexual killjoy; **the truth is He wants you to celebrate your sexuality fully and freely within the covenant of your marriage.** **NOTHING OUTSIDE OF THAT!** If you don’t believe that, check out Song of Solomon! God removes the barriers to a good and mutual sexual experience and invites us to drink our fill (SS 5:1, 1 Cor. 7:1-9). God will help you keep the passion alive.

5. God leads us through our trials...

All marriages face tough seasons. Sometimes they come from within or between you, but many times they come from outside forces like illness, death, financial hardship, unexpected moves or career changes, wayward kids, in-law troubles...**how about unfaithfulness with porn & sexual addiction?** The list goes on. These kinds of stresses can break the back of even a great marriage.

Where is God when things go sideways?

If you don't deal properly with these pressures, you can **take out our frustrations on our spouse** and the kids. Bad idea but so like us.

But when God is at the centre of our marriage, we find He often can **use trials to draw us together as a couple**, instead of driving a wedge between us.

But we have to keep our eyes on Him.

He reminds us of His loving plan and assures us He is walking with us through the darkness. He rekindles the awareness that **my mate is not the enemy**; that we are in this together. He gives a peace through the storm and enables us to come out the other side stronger and closer than ever.

The difference God makes in marriage is huge...

Having God at the center of your life and marriage doesn't guarantee that you will never face struggles. You are still two imperfect people living in a fallen world and that doesn't automatically change when God is in the picture. **The truth is, the greater the surrender to God, the greater the difference he will make in your life and marriage.**

That's what God looks like in a marriage.