

GUEST OPINION: Ten Rules for a Successful Marriage

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Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me (Ruth 1:16-17).

These words from the Old Testament book of Ruth are often used in weddings. In fact, when they were used in my wedding was the first time I paid any real attention to them. They have been brought back to my attention in a special way in recent years as I have used them in my children's weddings.

Of course, we should first remember them in their original context. This beautiful love promise was made by a widowed daughter-in-law to her mother-in-law.

They represent a family love that endures through adversity and trial.

It is truly "family" in the strictest sense of the word, since the relationship began when one man, Naomi's son Mahlon, married one woman, Ruth.

Though not originally dealing with weddings and marriage, this passage is very appropriate to use in a Christian wedding. This is true because its challenge is consistent with what Christ says is God's original plan from the beginning of the creation. Here are Christ's words:

But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Mark 10:6-9).

It is my opinion that if we are to take seriously these teachings of Jesus in our own lives and marriages, we must make a commitment to live daily in ways that strengthen our marriages. Marriages are successful one day at a time in real life. Success is achieved by giving attention daily to the seemingly little things.

I want to suggest Ten Rules for a Successful Marriage, which I believe are practical for today's America. It is my observation that marriages that typically follow most of these rules are lasting and fulfilling. Marriages usually fail where several of these rules were violated as an ongoing way of life.

The rules are simply the observation of one person sincerely seeking to know what can be learned from successful Christian marriages.

Rules for a Successful Marriage

1. Eat most of your meals each day with your family, mostly at home. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Psalm 23:4-6, Ephesians 5:15-21)
2. Go to bed at the same time as your spouse and get up together each morning, both whenever possible. (Genesis 24:59-67, Psalm 144:9-15, Song of Solomon 4:1-7)

3. Find ways to show your love tangibly and often through small gifts and acts of kindness. (1 Peter 3:4-8, 1 Peter 4:7-10)

4. Never criticize your mate in front of anyone else. Always take your mate's side and support him/her. (Ephesians 4:14-16 and Ephesians 5:25-30)

5. Attend Sunday School, church, community events, school events, etc. together. (Exodus 20:8-11, Joshua 24:14-16, Psalm 122:1-9)

6. Pray together at each meal, and pray for each other daily. (Matthew 7:7-12, Matthew 18:19-20)

7. Never entertain any thought other than a lifelong, total commitment to your spouse. (Mark 10:6-9, Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 2:7, Genesis 2:18-25, Matthew 19:1-6, Exodus 20:14)

8. Talk freely to each other in total honesty, holding back absolutely nothing from your spouse. (Exodus 20:16, Ephesians 4:13-16, Matthew 5:37)

9. Give yourself to your spouse enthusiastically and often in marital commitment. (I Corinthians 7:3-5)

10. Grow in your own relationship with Jesus Christ and the ability to love as Christ loves you. (Exodus 20:1-3, John 13:34, Ephesians 5:25)

The believer in Jesus Christ understands how much Jesus loves him and then rises to love his spouse as much as Jesus loves him/her.

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