

THINGS TO AVOID IN MARRIAGE



When we got married, my husband and I received our fair share of free advice from everyone who had already been married for a long time. However, it was only much later that we realised the treasury of wisdom they had shared with us!

Although there is a lot of good advice available as to 'what to do', it is often the 'what not to do' guidelines that serve us best. When it comes to our relationship with our spouse, we are equally vulnerable and therefore you may find these pointers worthy for consideration as a couple – however long you have been married.

1. Don't avoid conflict

It is normal that conflict will occur in any sincere relationship. Withdrawal from conflict, however, is not a solution to conflict. If you put off addressing certain matters for too long, it may just lead to a sudden volcanic eruption that brings more harm than simple daily conflict management. Think about your marriage relationship. Do you or your spouse often avoid conflict situations? Do one or both of you tend to fall into silence when things are not going your way or get out of hand? Bring these things before the Lord in prayer, bearing the true condition of your heart. Also, the reasons one or both of you chooses to avoid conflict.

Take action: *Ask your spouse for a time that you can speak without the interference of children, social media, calls or work. Pray beforehand for the Holy Spirit to give you the right words to share with your spouse – without complaining – to properly address the problem itself.*

Pray Scripture: Proverbs 10:31, 12:18

2. Don't avoid each other

To draw back from your spouse for a little while to gather yourself and not fall into the temptation of speaking words that you will later regret, is wise. However, when drawing back like this becomes a habit, you are at risk of cultivating a form of manipulation.

Take action: *When you spot this type of behaviour with yourself, especially when it has become a habit, pray about it and confess it before the Lord as sin. Ask the Lord for wisdom on how and when to speak to your spouse about it. Ask for their forgiveness, and for help to break such a cycle whenever it occurs in the future. Encourage each other to freely share your hearts with one another, mutually choosing not to judge the other for their point of view when it differs from the other person's.*

Pray Scripture: Psalm 25:9

3. Don't criticise

Counsellors agree that couples who continuously degrade themselves or each other, are very immature and not any better than small children! It is a hard word, but it is true. The practice of finding fault with another without the willingness to take a good look at your own conduct can be likened to the passage in Luke 6:37-42 about noticing the speck in another person's eye while having a plank in your own. It is easy to spot the wrongs of another and neglecting how our conduct hurts them in return.

Take action: *Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any unfair behaviour towards your spouse. Repent of this, and as the opportunity arises, speak about this openly with each other. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you how you can intentionally find ways to compliment and build up your spouse.*

Pray Scripture: Luke 6:37-42

4. Don't defend yourself

Feeling indignant when treated or implicated unfairly is a normal and often natural reaction. Defending ourselves is often related to fear – fear that the other is misinterpreting what you said or did and that they think you do not carry their welfare on your heart or that you are selfish. Often when our 'feelings' surface in arguments, everything is about ourselves – our viewpoint, our right, what we deserve etc. The words 'but I feel you did this' is often part of such conversations.

Take action: *Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if you tend to vehemently defend yourself whenever you are involved in a discussion or argument with your spouse. Sometimes people can become so overly sensitive that they start to defend themselves even before anything was said or done! Ask the Holy Spirit to show you the root of such behaviour on your side. Ask Him to help you not defend yourself all the time, and to show you how to handle matters differently from now onwards.*

Pray Scripture: Psalm 7:10

5. Don't side-step your responsibilities

One way in which to discern your own behaviour in this regard, is when you try to blame your spouse for anything that was not done right (this is of course the way you would have done it) or not done at all. At such times we may find ourselves saying things like: If you can just do this or that, or see what you are doing, we will not have this problem. What your spouse may be hearing is: You are the reason we have this problem.

Take action: *Ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you are wrong. If you are in any way negligent in practical matters, be mature, admit it and apologise. Such behaviour will immediately soften*

your spouse's heart towards you and may even move them to help you do what needs to be done. Never make excuses for yourself in your marriage relationship – be intentional to serve your spouse and to always do more than is necessary or expected. That is a wonderful way to show your respect and love.

Pray Scripture: Psalm 18:27, 25:9.

6. Don't recall past mistakes

Every relationship has moments one would rather forget. Even in the future there will be moments you will hurt each other. Take special care never to recall past mistakes or blame each other.

Take action: *If you have done this – immediately ask forgiveness with a sincere heart. Also do not accuse your spouse's family or friends when in a heated argument. Even when such arguments are factually true, be wise never to accuse one another.*

Pray Scripture: Psalm 25:7; 51

7. Don't think another man or woman will be better than your spouse

When it comes to everyday arguments and disagreements, this is simply not true. Every person on the face of the earth has shortcomings. You can be certain of one thing – whatever basic challenges you face with your spouse now, will certainly surface in any next relationship.

Take action: *Take a good look at yourself and humble yourself before the Lord and your spouse in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to help you grow in the fruit of the Holy Spirit.*

Pray Scripture: Galatians 5:19-26

8. Don't despise help from outside

Sometimes, as we go through certain seasons of life, we end up in a dead-end concerning a specific conflict situation or circumstance.

Take action: *Be humble and mature enough to allow someone you both trust to speak into your lives, to pray for you and support you until you have a breakthrough and can go on again on your own. Do not just give up on your spouse without giving it a fair chance.*

Pray Scripture: Proverbs 19:20-21.

Finally

Give thanks to the Lord that He is always with you and your family throughout your lives – in the high and low seasons. Always turn to Him for His help. Continue to pray. Prayer changes things.