

10 Biblical Principles for Marriages and Marriage Counseling

1. Both of You: *Keep Putting Jesus First; Keep Loving Jesus Most: Matthew 22:35-38*

Love God most with your most: with all your heart, soul, mind, and spirit. Repent of anything you put on the throne above Jesus. Put Jesus before yourself. Put Jesus before your children, your work, your ministry. Put Jesus before your need to be right. Put Jesus first. Love Jesus most.

2. Both of You: *Be Empowered, Changed, and Comforted by the Trinity—Filled by the Spirit, Empowered by the Son, Comforted by the Father: Ephesians 5:18; 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 1:3-8*

Paul surrounds his marriage counsel with Ephesians 5:18 and 6:10-18. Spouses change as they are filled by the **Spirit** (5:18). Marriages change as spouses become more like Christ in **Christ's** resurrection power (6:10-18). In your marital hurts, be comforted by the **Father** of compassion and the God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-8).

3. Both of You: *Remember Who Your Enemy Is—Satan!: Ephesians 6:11-12*

Your struggle is not against your spouse. Your enemy is not your spouse. Your joint enemy is **Satan!** He wants to destroy your marriage. **Join together** as spiritual warriors to defeat Satan in the Lord's mighty power.

4. Both of You: *Take Personal Responsibility: Joshua 1:6-9; Philippians 4:9*

You've been given more spiritual tools than most people on the planet. Use them. Be mature and courageous and **do** what God commands. What you've heard in the Word—do! Put it into practice!

5. Both of You: *Take the Log Out of Your Own Eye, Confess, Repent: Matthew 7:3-5; James 4:1-4*

Don't focus on what your spouse is doing wrong or not doing right. Remember Matthew 7:3-5 and take the mote out of your eye. Recall James 4:1-4—the real problem in any marriage resides within *your heart*. Ask God to reveal any sins to repent of. Ask forgiveness of your spouse.

6. Both of You: *Forgive Each Other, Reaffirm Your Love, Comfort Each Other: 2 Corinthians 2:5-11*

Your spouse will never repent perfectly or be perfect. Still, forgive them as Christ forgives you. Still, reaffirm your loyal love to them as Christ loves you. Still, comfort them as the God of comfort comforts you. Surrender bitterness. Refuse to keep track of wrong. Love. Start afresh every morning as God renews His faithfulness every day.

7. Both of You: *Speak Life Words, Not Death Words to Your Spouse: Ephesians 4:29; Proverbs 18:21*

When your spouse hurts or fails you, do this: 1.) Find comfort in Christ. 2.) Seek hope in God. 3.) Take the mote out of your own eye. 4.) Forgive the mote in your spouse's eye. 5.) Love like Christ. Say this, "My spouse is doing _____. I'm going to respond like Christ by thinking and doing _____." Speak life-giving, helpful words about and to your spouse—words that nourish **them** according to **their** need, that it will benefit **your spouse**.

8. Both of You: *Put the Interests of Your Spouse First in the Power of Christ: Philippians 2:1-5*

When your spouse doesn't meet your need, be filled by the One who meets your every need—the Trinity Who encourages you, is compassionate with you, values and affirms you. Out of His fullness, choose to fill your spouse by putting their interests before your interests. Put your spouse first.

9. Husband: *Shepherd Your Wife with Christ's Sacrificial Love: Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:7*

Husband, your #1 marital calling is shepherding your wife. Shepherd her like Christ shepherds the church: with death-to-self, sacrificial, *agape*, mature, other-centered love. Ask God to empower you to live out Ephesians 5:22-33. Seek to know your wife richly and to treat her with respect as a spiritual heir with you (1 Peter 3:7).

10. Wife: *Love Your Husband Like the Church Loves Christ: Ephesians 5:22-33; 1 Peter 3:1-6*

Wife, your #1 marital calling is to love your husband with respecting love (Ephesians 5:33). Mature respect encourages strengths, affirms gifts, and gently, humbly challenges wrongs. Mature respect speaks the truth in love to help your husband to keep growing in Christ—because you are for your husband and believe in Christ's work in him. Ask God to use your godly life to draw your husband closer to Christ (1 Peter 3:1-6).