

Deadly Enemies of Marriage

Ephesians 5 is the best chapter in the Bible to read about marriage. This passage expresses in very clear terms God's plan for a happy home. Viewed from the negative standpoint, Ephesians 5 exposes five very destructive elements in a marriage that can ruin it. These are the five most dangerous enemies of a marriage. Know what they are, beware of them, and protect your home!

1. Sex Sin.

Verses 1 through 7 expose the difference between love and lust. Love involves unselfishness, even self-sacrifice (See vs. 1-2). Lust is absolutely selfish, like covetousness (See v. 3--Note Exodus 20:17). Love and lust are not synonyms; they are antonyms! "Walk in love,...but fornication...let it not be once named among you." Adultery is not about love. It's about betrayal, deceit, self-indulgence, and weakness. Lust is the enemy of love, and illicit sexual lust is damaging to the marriage relationship. "Fornication" is a general term that means sinful sex relations (sex outside the marriage bond). Notice in Matthew 5:32 what Jesus said about fornication, marriage, and divorce. But Ephesians 5 warns us not only against fornication, but also against "all uncleanness." There are sexual sins that do not involve actually having sex. Dirty talk, according to verse 4, is included in the broader category, "all uncleanness." Certainly the sin of Matthew 5:28 (Look up this verse) is also included in this group. Normal sex relations between husband and wife are good and are vital to a marriage, but any perverted sex-related activity apart from these is destructive to the home.

Decision: Both men and women should abstain from sex outside of marriage, and from sex-related sins such as involvement in pornography, flirtation, dirty joking, and masturbation.

Study Proverbs 5 for divine instruction on self-control in this area. Also look over I Corinthians 7:1-5.

2. Spiritual Compromise.

Verses 8 through 17 call upon Christians to "walk as children of light." We are not to do the sinful things unsaved people do, and we are not to condone these things either (Read verse 11). We are not even to talk about such things, except just enough to denounce them (See verses 12 and 13). In other words, we should seek to live holy lives. We should "go all-out" in our dedication to Christ! Verse 14 calls upon us to have a personal revival, to awake out of sleep. Verses 10 and 17 indicate that we should find out what pleases God and then set out to do it. Verses 18 through 21 tell us to live our lives "filled" with the Holy Spirit of God. Verse 9 told us that God's Spirit within us will produce "goodness and righteousness and truth" in our lives, if we let Him! Verses 18 through 21 say that the Spirit-filled Christian will be joyful, thankful, and humble. Every believer has been "sealed" with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30), but God wants us to be filled with the Spirit. The sealing (See Ephesians 1:13-14) gave us His presence in our hearts. The filling of the Spirit will give Him control over our lives! Again Ephesians 5 is saying "go all-out" for God. Don't be satisfied to be sealed and yet unfilled. Don't merely avoid sin; reprove it. In other words, don't compromise about spiritual matters. What a person needs from God to be what he must be in the home will not come unless he surrenders totally to the Lord! Carnal, lukewarm, halfway Christians cannot be godly parents, husbands, or wives. Spiritual compromise in all its forms will hurt your home. How is your prayer life? How is your church attendance? Do you have some pet sins you won't give up? All the power of God is available to those who surrender all (Acts 5:32), and we need His power to be what He says we must be at home in Ephesians 5:22-33.

Decision: Dedicate your life to the Lord in order to see His power come into your family life.

3. Substance Abuse.

Verse 18 puts into the middle of the section about full surrender a warning about alcohol. "Be not drunk with wine." Booze and drugs will destroy a marriage. The very beverage served at some weddings will ruin the marriage the wedding began! The happy Christian home is alcohol-free.

4. Selfishness.

Verses 21 through 29 tell us what God calls a wife to do for her husband, and what He calls a husband to do for his wife. The wife is to submit to her husband, to support, help, and follow his lead. The husband is to love his wife and to give himself sacrificially for her benefit. Christian marriage pictures the love of Christ for His people, and the submission of His people to His loving Headship. The key to making this work (and it does work; no other marriage arrangement works) is unselfishness! This basic unselfishness is described in verse 21:

Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

The Fullness of the Spirit (verse 18) produces an unselfishness that acknowledges God's place above all, and that puts the other person's needs ahead of our own. Happy marriages must have lots of unselfishness! When we begin to think much about our own needs, our own expectations, and our own wishes, this key element in marriage fades, and family troubles come. Most of the biggest family problems would be healed if those involved would just stop being so selfish! People say that divorce is caused by money issues, adultery, and alcohol, but the real cause of most divorces is selfishness.

5. Separateness.

Verses 30 through 33 are very interesting. "They two will be one" is God's will for a marriage. People can be legally married, can live in the same home, can share in the bringing up of children, but still live very separate lives. You may like to live this way, but your marriage and even your children will suffer if you do. Separateness is really the fruit of selfishness. Couples should make decisions together, have fun together, and daily attend to one another's needs. As they grow in the marriage, husband and wife are to grow in their oneness. It can be done. God will help you, if will consider the first four "enemies" we have listed and apply these principles to yourself. Don't let an issue that divides you remain unresolved. Work on oneness.