

What to do When Marital Bliss Turns to Gloom

By Terry Sutter

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined by his wife, and they shall become one flesh”
Genesis 2:24

Marriage can be wonderful just as God intended, but sometimes it gets a bit rocky, couples can get stuck in ongoing disagreements. The disagreements could be over finances, sex, childrearing, in-laws, church involvement, you name it. One thing all disagreements have in common is that you must work through them and find mutually satisfying solutions, otherwise resentment builds and hurtful behavior ensues. This pattern begins to erode the relationship and could ultimately destroy a marriage.

When resentment builds it manifests in our outward behavior toward our spouse. The following is an example of what this could look like in a situation where the husband refuses to include the wife in managing the family finances. If the husband and wife continue to argue because the wife believes the husband is being unreasonable by excluding her from managing the family finances, the wife will become resentful and eventually out of resentment she may withhold affection or cooperation in other matters. The wife may not have made a conscious decision to behave that way rather it's a reflection of how she is feeling. In response, the husband stops helping around the house and helping with the kids. When that happens the couple gets trapped in a vicious cycle with each of them mistreating and hurting the other.

The sooner you work through your disagreement the better. Minimize the damage. Paul said “If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other” Galatians 5:15. If you and your spouse continue to have the same argument over and over and cannot find a resolution that you both find satisfying and maybe one of you believes the disagreement is jeopardizing your marriage then perhaps you could benefit from Christian marital mediation.

Marital mediation is not marriage counseling. It is a process for helping couples who are healthy psychologically but are experiencing difficulty communicating and resolving disagreements. Virtually any topic of disagreement can be addressed in marital mediation. The couple meets with an impartial third-party, the mediator, who facilitates the discussion of issues and assists them in finding mutually acceptable solutions to their conflict. The mediation process is very behavior and solution focused. It includes for example prayer, studying scripture, and discussing how feelings and needs relate to how spouses act toward one another. It is a valuable learning opportunity and can definitely help save marriages. Anything a couple does to improve their communication and conflict resolutions skills is a wise investment, considering that one of the hallmarks of a successful marriage is good communication.

If you have children, you really owe it to them to teach them by example that people who love one another can disagree and work through their disagreements in a civil manner and without hurting one another. This kind of instruction is invaluable to kids as they grow and eventually move out and make their own way in the world.

Even if you think you are at the end of your rope and don't hold out any hope for your marriage – marital mediation is worth a try. It may turn out to be the first time you and your spouse felt truly heard by the other or the first time you and your spouse truly understood the needs and feelings driving the other's actions and words. Very importantly, you will be better prepared to handle future conflict. The Bible tells us, “Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” Hebrews 12:14.

To learn more about Christian Marital Mediation, please contact Terry@ChristianDisputeSolutions.com or call 602.283.9887.