

How to Change Husbands...without Getting a Divorce
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She married Mr. Right...she just didn't realize his first name was "Always." It's an old joke, but it's not that funny for a lot of women—Christian or not. Couples are splitting and looking for happiness elsewhere. The divorce rate for Christians is as high as for non-Christians. Desperate housewives are staying in unfulfilling relationships because they have no Biblical reason for divorce.

In our culture, long-term marriage, which used to be the norm, is now bucking the trends. Rutgers University studies marriages in our country, and publishes an annual "State of Our Unions" report. Their 2007 report says,

"Today, there is more 'family diversity:' Fewer adults are married, more are divorced or remaining single, and more are living together outside of marriage or living alone."

So what's going on? What needs to happen in the marriage so that you honor God, your husband and your vows, and have a healthy relationship? Is there hope for that?

Yes. There is hope for a God-honoring, fulfilling marriage. Although it "takes two to tango," one person can make a significant difference in the relationship. Here's some steps the wife can take to change her husband. The first step is *commitment to a Godly marriage* in the face of an anti-marriage society.¹ Our culture has shifted away from the Christian values that formerly defined our society. We are all influenced by those around us. So, how can you sustain that commitment? Begin here:

- 1) Continually evaluate your thoughts, words, and actions by a Scriptural standard to see if dissatisfaction in your marriage is being generated by societal expectations.
- 2) Pray for (not about) your spouse. Pray for Christian men to interact with and encourage your husband.
- 3) Enlist a same-gender Christian to pray and support you.

The second step is for *the wife to see to it that she respects her husband.*² It is interesting that Paul didn't just say, "wives respect your husbands."

¹ Isaiah 33:6

² Ephesians 5:33

That little phrase, “see to it” implies that this respect may take some work. Here’s three “respect tests”:

- 1) Do your children respect you? Your children reflect how you treat your husband.
- 2) Do you “roll your eyes” at things your husband says? Rolling your eyes indicates not only disagreement, but an attitude of defiance—even if expressed in no other way.
- 3) Do you build your husband up to others?³ When you are pro-active in making your husband look good, it builds your relationship.

The third step is to *take care of the sexual needs* that your husband has. Women ask if the only thing men think about all of the time is sex. The answer is, “No.” Sometimes they also think about food. Here’s some guidelines for marital sex:

- 1) Don’t deprive or manipulate each other with sex.⁴ Plan to have sex a minimum of twice a week.
- 2) Control your thinking—men generally need to think less about sex, and women need to think more about sex.
- 3) Sex should be pleasurable. If it is painful, there is probably a physical reason that can be corrected.

A fourth step is to *recognize and appreciate your differences*.⁵ Many women go to college looking for the perfect man, and pick up a good husband along the way. We tend to marry our opposite, because at some level, we recognize the strengths our partner has that can fill in for our weaknesses. Then after we marry, we start attacking the qualities that attracted us, because they’re different from us. A phrase that is helpful for these differences is: “*It’s not wrong, it’s different.*” A Temperament Profile and coaching can offer more insights in this area.

A fifth step is to *identify your “hot buttons” and refuse to use them*.⁶ Hot buttons are the pathway to your innermost fears and emotions. Most longstanding differences have their root in a “hot button.” These roots need to be dealt with. For example,

³ Proverbs 31:11-12

⁴ I Corinthians 7

⁵ Psalm 139:13-14

⁶ Ecclesiastes 11:10 “So, remove grief and anger from your heart and put away pain from your body, because childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.”

- 1) If your father was undependable, you likely will have a fear that your husband will flake out on you. Therefore, any indication of that, no matter how slight, will evoke a disproportional response from you.
- 2) If you were molested as a child, you may expect every relationship to have a sexual aspect. This expectation may cause you to project that your spouse is unfaithful or mistreating your children.
- 3) If you had sexual relations with your spouse before you were married, you both know at that deepest level that you do not honor marriage vows. This can lead to mistrust in all aspects of your marriage.

Yes. There is hope for a God-honoring, fulfilling marriage. Follow the steps above and you're on your way in the right direction. You really **can** change your husband without getting a divorce...and that change begins with you.

Millie McNabb, B.A., B.Mus., founder of Christian Values Legacy, offers Temperament Profiles and coaching for individuals, couples and parents. She and her husband have been married for thirty-two years, and have four adult daughters. She has been sharing her insights, expertise and experience by speaking for Christian groups for over 25 years. Visit her website at www.ChristianValuesLegacy.com or email her at millie@ChristianValuesLegacy.com.