

We Have Grown Apart

“We have grown apart. We have nothing in common anymore.”

“We cannot find anything to talk about.”

“We live in the same house but actually we are like strangers.”

Sad statements of a dying marriage. Such complaints, heard far too often by God’s ministers.

Such remarks express a hidden heartache in many homes today.

Mates either grow apart or together as the years pass.

Every happy marriage is the result of maximum effort. Happy marriages are **not** accidental.

How can we avoid division or breakdown in our marriages and keep them in good repair?

One way to avoid marital breakdown is to recognise the danger signals.

Be alert to symptoms that may indicate a barrier is forming between you and your mate.

1 When you realise that you are retreating from your relationship problems instead of facing them and seeking to resolve them.

You will always face difficulties in living together. Any marriage will have problems, because we humans are problem makers by nature.

Why?

The age-old sickness of self-centredness infects us all to one extent or the other, as a result, conflict arises.

Misunderstanding is inevitable because we **cannot** at all times “*read our mate’s mind*”, we do not know the motive behind what they say or do.

Disagreements are unavoidable and they can lead to anger.

A marriage, like every living thing, is in constant danger of deterioration.

A marriage needs to be kept in daily repair, and that is the task for **both** partners. A mutual involvement in resolving tensions and inevitable conflicts must be evident in the lives of **both** partners.

2 When you freeze into uncomfortable and unyielding silences, broken only by a few hostile words or cynical innuendos.

How can you open up acceptable conversation when such a situation is prevailing?

Learn to listen.

Listening is **not** just “*the other half of talking*”, it is 90% of good communication.

Listening is a skill.

A skill that must be learned and practised all the time.

To listen without interruption is the queen of compliments, to ignore and not meet the other person's eyes is the chief of insults.

Do you know how to listen?

Or do your eyes stray, and betray your wandering interest.

Do you let your mate's words and ideas fly past you as you plan your next comment?

Are you merely waiting for an opportunity to stun them with some wise words at the first opportunity?

Do you interrupt, or even worse, second guess, trying to finish the sentence for your spouse when they stumble for a word to describe their feeling?

Do you probe, question, interrogate, cross-examine your mate, suggesting impatience or superiority?

Or are you seeking to go beyond the words and phrases you are hearing to catch the idea and feeling behind the intent?

That is listening with love for your mate.

Love is a warm listener.

Loving is listening.

Caring is hearing.

True communication begins with listening and grows into genuine understanding.

For a husband and wife, understanding is a decisive step towards being a good mate.

The crucial key is our willingness to take this step.

3 When you let the attitudes or actions of your mate irritate you and fester within you.

This can cause these irritations to accumulate from day to day.

You take these irritations to bed at night, refusing to make up.

Ephesians 4:26-27 [NIV] *"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."* Such a situation calls for a drastic change of tactics.

Begin dissolving frustrations with love.

Start with open honesty with each other. Tell your mate that you love them and you don't want these misunderstandings to spoil that love.

Openness with each other is the channel of your love for each other.

Love is opening your life to one another in trust, believing that you will **not** be abused by such a revelation of your inner feelings.

The Christian Bible describes the love of a husband and wife like this.

Ephesians 5:28-29, 25, 33 [NIV] *“In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no-one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church” ... “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” ... “However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”*

I believe that in many homes that the seeds of marital discord exist in the form of small irritations, little maladjustments, insignificant areas of disagreements.

These can if **not** dealt with promptly soon grow into a jungle of weeds that will choke any growth of love and maturity in a marriage.

I realise that many of the points I’ve made are simple and have been made before, but I think they are worth repeating to anyone who wants a marriage to blossom.

- Remember to show appreciation, it is the best way to light a glow of love in your mate’s heart.
- Watch for small areas of friction and try to eliminate them before they erupt into major destructive conflagrations.
- Don’t expect perfection from the person you married, because you cannot offer perfection yourself.
- Try to control your own ego, at least to the point of seeing both sides of any controversy or disagreement.
- Study your mate and try to supply their basic emotional needs.
- Confirm your intimate love with a kiss and hug, no matter how rushed or busy you are. These bring you close to each other and make you both feel good.
- Frequent physical contact may be the best barometer of a good marriage.
- My wife insists we start each day with a hug and many kisses, and looks forward to more as the day progresses.
- Seek to give more to your marriage than you receive from your mate.
- Forgive and forget any hurts you receive.

Mark 10:6-9 [King James] *“But from the beginning of the creation God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; And they twain shall be one flesh: so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.”*

Forsake all others and cleave [stick fast to] your mate.

Are you working at your marriage?

Are you keeping it in good repair?

Are you always open to each other?

Are you involving God in your marriage?

If so, your marriage can be described by just one word.

Happiness.