

Can This Marriage Be Saved?

By Ginny Schroeder

Often in my practice as a marriage and family counselor, couples come into my office, and although they don't use these exact words, that is the question they are asking. Do you think there is any hope for this marriage or should we call it quits?

Thus far, if a couple comes in together, my answer is always, "Yes, your marriage can work." And then I ask them a question: "Are you willing to commit to your marriage and work on it?" I initially ask them to commit to twelve weeks. By the end of 12 weeks, they can see progress and may experience renewed feelings of love for one another. Then I hope they will make a lifetime commitment.

When a marriage gets to the point where neither partner "feels" love for the other, and in fact, have only painful feelings in regard to each other, it is hard work to turn it around. That is why I ask for a commitment.

Each partner must be willing to live with their feelings of hurt, anger, even hatred long enough to get through them.

Most couples at this point, especially Christian couples, are experiencing profound disappointment, and even shame, that their marriage is so bad. They often think, with horror, "I made a mistake, I married the wrong person." A feeling of hopelessness arises.

If this is how you feel right now - take heart! You probably did not marry the wrong person. You probably married just the right person for you...one who is perfectly qualified to complement your personal characteristics and needs.

Of course those complementary qualities can become the very things that seem to tear you apart, the characteristics that you disapprove of in your spouse. As Jill Briscoe has said, "Marriage is made up of two incompatible people. Incompatibility is not grounds for divorce, it's grounds for marriage."

God can use your partner to heal you, to grow you up, and to bless you. As you work to heal the awful wounds in your marriage, God will heal you.

Happiness in marriage depends on each partner working to meet the needs of the other. This is one of God's wonderful paradoxes. "Husbands, love your wife. Wives, see to it that you respect your husband." When we work to meet our own needs first, it backfires and we are left bereft. When both partners seek to meet their mate's needs, they will each also find their own needs fulfilled.

If, at this time, you cannot get past the hurt and hard feelings to love your spouse - seek help! Put it in God's hands and He will work on your behalf. But you must stay and work to see the blessing. Don't give up!

*Compliments of Practical Family Living, Inc.
P.O. Box 1676, Appleton, WI 54912 (920) 720-8920*

You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute our articles in any format provided that you credit the author, no modifications are made, you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and you include Practical Family Living's web-site address (<http://www.pfl.org>) on the copied resource. Quotations from any article are also permitted with credit to the author and citing the web-site. Any use of other materials on this web-site, including reproduction, modification, distribution or republication, without the prior written consent of Practical Family Living, Inc., is strictly prohibited.