**The 'Good, the Bad, and the Ugly' in Marriage**

Couples need to learn how to love each other with the love of God.

By Dave Boehi

<http://www.familylife.com/articles/topics/marriage/staying-married/gods-plan-for-marriage/the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly-in-marriage>

In recent weeks, I've been talking about why marriage is important in an age when an increasing number of couples are choosing to live together but not get married.  I continue to receive some perceptive e-mails on the subject, and one theme keeps coming up:  A recognition that we need to do a better job of showing couples how to deal with the difficult part of marriage—what one reader calls the "good, the bad, and the ugly."

"Marriage has become a negative term in this culture and society," wrote Elisha McGonagle.  "We no longer look at marriage with anticipation, but with fear. Fear drives so many people in this country. People are scared that if they get married then there is the possibility of getting divorced.

"No, marriage does not guarantee a lifelong relationship, but neither does any relationship ... And only marriage was designedto be a lifelong relationship. The only reason it is not is because we have made it that way. We too often look for any easy way out. If we feel unhappy, then just leave. If you feel unfulfilled, then leave. If your husband makes you mad, you can just leave."

Elisha knows first-hand the dangers of weak commitment in marriage.  After she and her husband were married nearly four years, they were considering divorce.  They talked with their pastor, and he said they needed to throw out the words "separate" and "divorce."  "If you don't have those things as an option then you are forced to work things out. What an extraordinary thought ... we actually have to work through our issues."

She goes on:

Our country is a fast-food country. We want things easy and we want it now. No way do we want to do anything that requires effort. We go into marriage thinking that we will have the perfect little marriage and the perfect little family in the cookie-cutter house and we will never argue. Wrong! We need to know what we are actually agreeing to. We are agreeing to stay with our spouse when things are the worst they have ever been. When they make you angry and call you names and hurt your feelings. Marriage is not a continuous date. You now get to see the good, the bad, and the ugly.

Other readers shared some practical words on how their faith helps them deal with difficulties and conflict in marriage.

Deborah Lynn Taylor wrote that marriage is designed by the ultimate Architect of love:

Through the love of God I can love my husband. I can love his smelly socks, and I can love the cologne he wears. I can love his bad habit of not taking out the trash, and I can love the way he impeccably cleans our bedroom.  God's love is patient and kind. It bears all things. It believes all things and it never fails. My husband and I have been married for seven years. And it has not been an easy road. We went from his surgery only two weeks after our wedding to losing his father. And all in between there was confusion, money problems, new babies, miscommunication and interference from unwanted life situations. But I remember that I love him. And I vowed to sustain through all of the good and bad times.

Misty Todd said that when she said, "I do" to her husband, she meant that commitment to last.  "I don't know how in the world people do it without Christ, though," she wrote.  "He is the center of our home, and we still have days that we could really hurt each other without Christ at the center of their hearts and lives."

Finally, Sherry Jennings wrote to remind us that "One of the most important distinctions of marriage the way God intended is that it is a covenant, not just a commitment or a contract.  In marriage, the way God intended, each spouse promises to love the other regardless of the other's performance and imperfections."

Sherry concluded her e-mail with some powerful words:

A marriage is about seeing each other through God's eyes, hearing each other with God's ears, lifting each other with God's hands, encouraging each other with God's words, and loving each other with God's heart.  Marriage is about choosing each day, each minute, to honor God with our words and actions, and in turn, we honor our spouses. Marriage is recognizing that God created my husband specifically for me … How can I not love, honor, treasure a perfect gift from my perfect God?