

Seven Ways To Wreck a Marriage

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To Isabel, my wife
for over 50 years.



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Preface

The once-stable marriages that existed in our grandparents' day and in the days of their parents were only a fleeting note in the evolution of sociology. They have been washed away by a deluge in the tsunami of change.

The traditional wedding vows of "for better or for worse" and "'til death parts us" are being abandoned, or at least given only lip service by many who take them at the marriage altar. One couple's vows contained, "As long as we feel it is worth the effort."

Addressing the crisis being faced by traditional marriages, Dr. James Dobson, in his book, *Marriage Under Fire*, wrote this astute observation:

To put it succinctly, the institution of marriage represents the very foundation of human social order. Everything of value sits on that base. Institutions, governments, religious fervor, and the welfare of children are all dependent on its stability. When it is weakened or undermined, the entire superstructure begins to wobble. This is exactly what has happened during the last thirty-five years, as radical feminists, liberal lawmakers, and profiteers in the entertainment industry have taken their toll on the stability of marriage. Many of our pressing social problems can be traced to this origin (Dobson 9–10).

We are living in a world where change is occurring at the speed of sound. The global society is becoming a reality, and with it the breakdown of the fiber of what holds nations together: stable marriages and families. We have instant communication across the seven continents of the world, as their problems parade across our TV screens on a nightly basis.

It seems that every day we hear a report of a new scientific and technological breakthrough. The knowledge and

data banks of the world are expanding at an unprecedented level. Some claim knowledge is doubling every two to three years. Yet at the very foundation of our existence—strong marriages—we are in a downward spiral.

As the musicians played while the Titanic sank, we are standing by as the warning waters of a vast tsunami are sweeping our marital shores. As the alarm sounds the responses are:

- “Oh, it’s not as bad as the doom-and-gloom prophets are predicting.” This is denial in its clearest form.
- “Yes, things are bad but we’re a minority and can’t do anything about it.” This is a “going down with the ship” mentality.
- “Well, let’s do what we can, but the tide is strong and will overwhelm us.” This is a “lack of faith” response.
- “My house is secure; I have good insurance. Those other poor people should have prepared for the waves.” This is selfishness and arrogance.

Marriage is gradually being swept away and, as we sometimes watch raging tsunamis on the other side of the globe destroy human life, we are standing in water up to our waists trying to deny what is happening: marriages in our country are in trouble.

Every marriage, regardless of tenure, is subject to destruction by an unexpected tsunami.

This book is an attempt to give a clarion wake-up call relative to the foes marriage is facing today. This will not be an easy task in light of twenty thousand other books that have been written to help us create better homes, families, and marriages. Yet reality says all those efforts are not stopping the tsunami waves beating at our front doors.

I have been married fifty years to the same woman. We have faced our share of storms, but with God’s help

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we are standing on solid ground. The waves have subsided and now come only as small occasional ripples. We do not, however, take for granted a future in which it will be impossible for a tsunami to beat at our door. No! Every marriage, regardless of tenure, is subject to destruction by an unexpected tsunami.

Please take this book seriously. Don't just read it. Do what it asks you to do in various exercises. Knowledge is of little value if it is not put into practice. By uniting to defeat the foes of marriage we can turn back the tsunamic attacks on marriage.

Ten Commandments for Marriage Success

1. THOU shalt put God first in your marriage—He ordained it.
2. THOU shalt be guided by God's holy Word.
3. THOU shalt pray together and for each other.
4. THOU shalt love each other as Christ loves the church.
5. THOU shalt joyfully serve one another.
6. THOU shalt be partners until death separates you.
7. THOU shalt communicate openly and freely.
8. THOU shalt forgive more than seventy times seven.
9. THOU shalt spend and share weekly time together.
10. THOU shalt never believe divorce is an option.

Ten Commandment Covenant

God being our helper, we, the undersigned, promise to keep these Ten Commandments in our marriage:

Husband

Wife

Date

Introduction

Since you are reading this, it is a sure bet that you and I know some of the same truths. A major one is that marriage in our country, and even around the world, is in trouble, so much so as to threaten the fiber of marriage's existence as God would have it: "What God has joined together, let not man put asunder."

There are no perfect marriages. All marriages face the same challenges: how to keep the lock secure in wedlock, and how to succeed in one of the greatest commitments a couple can enter, which includes the vow, "for better or for worse."

Here are some sobering facts that spotlight the foes marriages are facing:

- 50 percent of all marriages in the United States end in divorce.
- 49 percent of couples experience marriage problems in first year of marriage.
- 65 percent of couples who live together before marriage will divorce.
- 60 percent of second marriages end in divorce.
- 80 percent of firstborn children in some areas of Norway are conceived out of wedlock, as are 60 percent of subsequent births.
- 40 percent of marriages will end in divorce within four years.
- 75 percent of those who receive marriage counseling say they are worse off after counseling.

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- 33 percent of all births were by unmarried mothers, according to a 2001 U.S. Census report, compared to only 3.8 percent in 1940.
- Divorce is cheap and easy: Internet ad: “Online divorce in Georgia 149.00 dollars.”
- Children of divorced parents have, on a whole, more social, economical, educational, and moral issues than children of stay-together parents.
- The divorce rate among those claiming to be Christians is higher than that among atheists.
- The number of same sex marriages is growing and such marriages are becoming more and more acceptable.

Children in the Fallout

Dr. Judith Wallerstein has been studying the effects of divorce on children for twenty-five years, but even she wasn't expecting the findings presented here, that while children learn to cope with divorce, its greatest effects don't emerge until adulthood (Wallerstein).

Billions of dollars are spent each year handling the fallout from broken marriages. What are the causes of this tragedy and how can they be stopped? There are more efforts than ever to respond to marriage problems. On Amazon.com there are over twenty thousand titles addressing marriage and family issues. That number is bound to increase! More seminars, workshops, and courses are available now than ever before. Yet the downward spiral continues.

Action Makes for Success

Foes continue to launch attacks on God's desire for marriage: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Jesus added these words: “Therefore what

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God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:4–6). Every year millions of couples violate God’s design for marriage.

How can the marriage vow, “until death separates us,” be true for a lifetime? Wanting a successful marriage doesn’t produce one. Attending a seminar or workshop on marriage doesn’t automatically bring success to a marriage. Likewise, listening to tapes or reading books and articles won’t turn a failing marriage into a successful one. Only by taking proper actions can a marriage move forward on the journey to success.

Here is a great definition of success: “Success is the progressive realization toward any honorable and worthwhile goal.” Certainly success in marriage qualifies as an honorable and worthwhile goal, a goal we must work on every waking moment, thus the progressive realization. It is a process that requires (1) commitment, (2) time, (3) a plan, (4) prayer, (5) skills, (6) love, and (7) action.

This study is about the wrecking of marriage, of which there are many. In my studies I have identified fifty-five, but I will share only the seven I consider to be the major ones contributing to the dismantling of marriage success.

On September 11, 2001, a group of well-organized terrorists attacked America. That surprise attack rallied Americans to mount an all out effort to defeat this enemy. On December 7, 1941, the Empire of Japan made a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor. Americans rallied and won the war. It is time for the church and caring people to wake up to the attacks on marriage, home, and families. It is time for the soldiers of Christ to rally.

The preservation of marriage as God would have it begins with you and me. We must identify the enemies of marriage and resist their attacks.

Wanting a successful marriage doesn’t produce one.

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List what you believe to be three of your biggest foes of a successful marriage.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

How committed are you to studying and using this material?

___Totally ___Reasonably ___Slightly ___Not at all

CHAPTER

1

Encourage Satan, Marriage's Number One Enemy

Charles and Helen had been married five years. The first three years were, in their words, the honeymoon years. Then in the fourth year the downward spiral started. They were arguing more and more, blaming each other for the problems in their marriage. They even brought up each other's parents as causes. They tried on their own to solve their marital issues. They read books by secular counselors and watched TV counselors.

Life together only grew worse. They decided to share their marital problems with their local minister. After listening attentively, the minister affirmed that they had real issues, but the issues they believed to be reasons were only symptoms. The real cause was the work of Satan. His goal is to destroy marriages. If he can do that, homes will be destroyed, and if homes are destroyed, the nation will be destroyed, as well as the church.

After several weeks of counseling from a biblical view of the problem, Charles and Helen got their marriage back on track. With a renewed commitment to Christ and to each other, praying and communicating became the keys to defeating the enemy of their marriage.

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1. Write your first thoughts about Charles and Helen's difficulties.
2. List some possible contributors to their situation.
3. What may have prevented their problem?
4. What is a biblical solution for this couple?



It was the annual meeting of SAON. (Satanic Attack on Nations). Satan and his demons had gathered to review their successes and failures relative to destroying the righteousness in nations, because if righteousness is destroyed then unrighteousness takes over. That, of course, is the goal of Satan and his demons. Progress had been made but not enough.

"My little devils, how can we do a better job in destroying righteousness in the United States? That country is a trend-setter for the rest of the world, so if we can destroy its righteousness, then we will make mega gains in the rest of the world. We need some ideas; let's hear them."

Ideas of areas to infiltrate poured forth from those little devils: the economy, religion, entertainment, sports, health, government, education, and war.

"Stop! Stop! Stop!" Satan ordered. "These are no good. They may cripple the United States, but they won't destroy it. Come on, my little devils. Surely one of you has the right idea."

From the back of the fire pit a devil raised his hand and announced that he had a great idea. Satan gave him the floor.

"Marriage!" he said. "Marriage! If we destroy the marriages in the United States, the whole structure of the nation will fall, because marriage is the foundation of its

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society. Everything we have mentioned or could mention—the economy, religion, entertainment, and so forth—is tied to marriage.”

There was a period of silence, and then Satan shouted, “Yes! Yes! My little demon brother, that’s it! We will destroy their marriages, which will destroy their homes, families, religion, economy—everything!”

Satan and his demons left in an exuberant mood with a battle plan in place.

Who or what would you say is the number one enemy of marriage success?

sexual issues	in-law problems
infidelity issues	poor communication
easy divorce	religious issues
various forms of abuse	financial issues
busyness	selfishness

Yes, all of these are contributors to failure in marriage. And while all of them are major, the main one is not listed. It is a being: Satan! He is the number one foe of marriage success. Surprised?

The First Honeymoon

Talk about a honeymoon location. Wow! It has never been equaled. Where was it? The Garden of Eden. The paradise home where Adam and Eve spent their early days of marriage on a non-ending honeymoon—that is, until Satan came on the scene (cf. Genesis 1–3).

After God created the first man and woman, He said His creation “was very good.” He married them and gave them a turn-key home in the most beautiful spot on planet earth. The mind spins trying to imagine what that must have been like. The marriage and home of our greatest grandparents, Adam and Eve, must have been breathtaking.

All was well on the home front in Eden, that is, until there was a knock on the door. Guess who? The number one foe of marriage success. Satan. He didn’t have a wed-

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ding present. What could he possibly have wanted from this perfect couple, the first and only residents of the Garden of Eden?

God's foe of the ages couldn't stand seeing the beauty and happy relationship between the world's first married couple. From this marriage a family would be created, raised to glorify God. From a family, respect, honor, obedience, and love for God and righteousness would evolve. No way was Satan going to stand by and watch his kingdom of darkness being attacked. He knew a strong marriage would produce a strong God-fearing family which in turn would defeat his mission. He had to do something and do it quickly.

As a cunning warrior, Satan knew he had to attack the epic center of the family, so he went for the jugular—marriage. If the marriage failed, the family would fail. And if the family failed, society would fail.

Satan didn't beat around the bush with words. He didn't try to be too subtle or use trickery. He appealed to Eve's ego. She too could become a god. So she partook of the forbidden fruit and then exercised her influence over her husband. Adam ate the fruit she offered him (Genesis 3:1–7). The perfect marriage was now soiled. The perfect community became only a memory as Adam and Eve were cast out into a cold and cruel world (Genesis 3:8–24).

Then to Adam he said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life" (Genesis 3:17).

It has been said that since then husbands have been reluctant to listen to what their wives have to say. Whether true or not, Eve had a unique influence in the first marriage, a marriage which had been performed by God.

How sad! The honeymoon is over. The lights have been turned out; the gates are closed. Adam and Eve, our greatest grandparents, are eternal examples of the negative

results of Satan's attacks on the sanctity of marriage.

And Satan hasn't ceased his practice of attacking marriages. He is like a roaring lion stalking about seeing which marriage he can destroy next (cf. 1 Peter 5:8). Will it be your marriage or mine or both?

Adam and Eve are eternal examples of the negative results of Satan's attacks.

Why Satan Attacks Marriages

Why would Satan want to attack something as beautiful and precious as marriage? There are several reasons:

1. Satan knows God created marriage, and he hates what God has created.

And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him . . ." (Genesis 2:18–25).

2. Marriage is a covenant between a husband and wife, and Satan wants to see it broken.

Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously (Malachi 2:14–15).

3. God hates divorce, so Satan does everything in his power to cause divorces.

For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence (Malachi 2:16).

4. God joins a couple in marriage; Satan wants to separate them.

So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate (Matthew 19:6).

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5. Husbands and wives are united through prayer; Satan wants to destroy this power in a marriage.

Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

6. Wives may influence their husbands by their godly lives; Satan wants to motivate them to act ungodly.

Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives . . . (1 Peter 3:1–4).

7. God wants husbands to honor and love their wives by gracious and loving deeds; Satan wants to create strife and ill-will in marriages.

Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered (1 Peter 3:7).

8. God wants wives to be respectful and submissive to their husbands; Satan wants them to “wear the pants” and put their husbands in submission.

For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands (1 Peter 3:5).

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything (Ephesians 5:22–24).

9. God wants husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church; Satan wants husbands to resent, hate, and abuse their wives.

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Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her (Ephesians 5:25).

10. Jesus said there is only one approved cause for divorce; Satan says there are many, and any cause is acceptable.

Moses because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery (Matthew 19:8–9).

11. God wants marriage to create a family in which parents are honored; Satan wants children to disrespect and dishonor their parents.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. “Honor your father and mother,” which is the first commandment with promise: “that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1–4).

12. God wants love, unity, oneness, and same mindedness in a marriage; Satan wants to turn family members against each other, as he did with Cain and Abel.

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain, and said, “I have acquired a man from the LORD.” Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel (Genesis 4:1–8).

13. God wants children to be trained in an honorable way for the challenges of life; Satan wants them to be rebellious and disrespectful of parents and to resent authority in general.

Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it (Proverbs 22:6).

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14. God is pleased when husband-and-wife teams are involved in ministry; Satan wants to destroy the influence of a husband and wife.

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God." Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things (Acts 5:1-5)

And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla (because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to depart from Rome); and he came to them . . . So he began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately (Acts 18:2-26).

Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus (Romans 16:3).

15. Satan wants to destroy marriages in order to cast doubt and create resistance and rejection in regard to marriage, which leads to a sin called "living together out of wedlock."

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts, and through it he being dead still speaks (Hebrews 11:4).

Way back in the year 1521, Martin Luther said, "There is no estate to which Satan is more opposed than to marriage." Truer words have not been spoken. Satan is the

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number one foe of every marriage. His goal is to divide and destroy what God has joined together.

List three additional reasons Satan wants to destroy marriages.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

If you were Satan, how would you attack your marriage?

List three ways we can “Satan-proof” our marriages:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What one intentional thing will you do with this lesson?

CHAPTER

2

Open Your Mouth And Close Your Ears

As Alex and Peggy sat in the counselor's office, Alex was stoically reading a magazine. Peggy was weeping and wiping her tears. Their marriage was in trouble. As a last resort they had agreed to see a biblical marriage counselor. The counselor had read their intake forms on which they had stated their reasons for seeking counseling.

Alex's explanation was brief: "The problems are all in Peggy's head. We don't need counseling."

Peggy had a very different view: "Alex never listens to me. He always has his nose stuck in a newspaper or a book, or he's watching some man-thing on TV—football, boxing, or whatever. I can't even bring up the issues that are killing our marriage."

The counselor was finally able to get Alex's attention and get him to agree to participate in developing better communication practices. Through several months of intentional effort, Alex and Peggy solved their communication problems and their marriage was once again functioning without conflict.