

# Marriage Success for Leaders<sup>1</sup>

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A quote we like to share from an unknown author says, “Getting married is easy. Staying married is more difficult.” This is true of every marriage and especially true of leader marriages that experience so many expectations from within and without.

While marriage was designed by God to bless the human family, Satan has tried everything to denigrate, depreciate, and defame this important institution. As such, expect your marriage to naturally move toward a state of alienation.

The Bible says in Romans 3:23, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”<sup>2</sup> This reminds us that there are no perfect marriages because there are no perfect people. However, since God is more powerful than Satan, every marriage can thrive when the spouses are intentional about connecting with each other every day through the power and grace of God.

## Expectations Surge

To be sure, expectations for Christian leaders surge from within because of the need to represent Jesus well. The concept may often be seen as the need to pretend to have a perfect marriage when you do not. Of course, the more couples feel compelled to present to the public an image that is not real, the less likely they are to accomplish that goal because of the stress generated internally, given the reality of our human frailties.

The pressure from without comes from others such as church members, family, friends, colleagues, and employing organizations.

To transcend these burdens, couples must spend much time in prayer, seeking a genuine relationship with God and with each other. In Romans 12:12 we read: “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”

Each day has only 24 hours in which leaders must have time alone with God, eat, exercise, have family worship, respond to email, carry out other work responsibilities, connect with relatives and friends, and sleep!

So how do couples create more time in the context of living in the third millennium in

order to have the quality relationship that makes life really worth living?

## Establishing Healthy Boundaries

The truth is, for this to happen, healthy boundaries must be established in order to survive and thrive. And healthy boundaries are found in the context of emotionally intelligent people, who have a high level of self-awareness, knowing what they want to accomplish in the process.

On this matter, Daniel Goleman suggests: “Self-awareness means having a deep understanding of one’s emotions, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and drives. . . .

“[It] extends to a person’s understanding of his or her values and goals. Someone who is highly self-aware knows where he is headed and why. . . . The decisions of self-aware people mesh with their values.”<sup>3</sup>

This self-awareness and emotional intelligence does not just come because we have more education or are smarter than anyone else. It comes because of an intimate relationship with God and our desire to honor Him in our most intimate relationship with our spouse.

While we cannot add hours to our day, we can add order and priority to those hours so we maximize time with our spouse each day, week, month, and year to have the kind of relationship that will stand the test of time and give honor and glory to God.

## A New Framework

For things to change, if this has not been a priority, we will need to develop a new and improved framework to live by. We will need to shift the paradigm of our lives. This means

we will need to see and do things differently to get a different result.

In contrast to other relationships which are constantly changing, marriage is meant to be permanent, and understanding that the responsibilities in marriage are not postponable will help us to make our marriage a high priority *each day*. This means scheduling meaningful time to spend with each other *each day*.

Looking at the reality of marriage, we must be mindful that sometimes it is more difficult than it needs to be because we approach this highly spiritual work without the corresponding spiritual values that must be present for it to work.

As we have stated elsewhere, “There is no other way to survive and thrive in such a close and intimate relationship such as marriage, without adopting a perspective that includes the feelings and opinions of others, at the very least the feelings and opinions of the person we have chosen as our spouse.”<sup>4</sup>

As you commit to nurturing your marriage today and in the future, we encourage you to remember Paul’s admonition in 1 Cor. 10:31: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

May your relationship with God grant you the patience and kindness needed to give honor and glory to God though your marital relationship.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Adapted from “Pastoral marriages: A contemporary challenge” by Willie and Elaine Oliver, first published in the May 2017 issue of *Ministry*,<sup>®</sup> International Journal for Pastors, and can be read in its entirety at [www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2017/05/Pastoral-marriages](http://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2017/05/Pastoral-marriages). Used by permission.

<sup>2</sup>All Bible references are from the English Standard Version.

<sup>3</sup>Daniel Goleman, *What Makes a Leader: Why Emotional Intelligence Matters* (Florence, MA: More Than Sound, 2013), 10, 11.

<sup>4</sup>Willie and Elaine Oliver, “The Beauty of Marriage” in *Marriage: Biblical and Theological Aspects*, ed. Ekkehardt Mueller and Elias Brasil de Souza (Silver Spring, MD: Biblical Research Institute, 2015), p. 6.