

## Can My Marriage Be a “Happily Ever After”?

**Genesis 2:23-24:** 23 *The man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man. 24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*



It would seem that most entering into marriage do so with high expectations of a life of happiness, fulfillment and companionship. Unfortunately, for far too many, these expectations are foreign to their reality. Excluding marriages that end in divorce, how many are truly happy and fulfilled and how many are simply going along to get along? These are hard things to look at. In order to do so in a positive and growth-oriented way, we need to establish two basic truths for our conversation. First, let’s understand that “happily ever after” is a fairy-tale ending. The feelings it ignites on an everyday bliss-filled life are unfair and not real. Second, we should understand that our marriages CAN be happy, fulfilled and full of companionship, IF we know what we’re striving for and are willing to put in the effort.

What kind of happiness then are we looking for? Is it the exhilaration of being swept off of one’s feet or is it being powerfully blessed by God in the everyday aspects of our life?

The Beatitudes in Matthew 5 help us establish the kind of happiness Christians should be seeking.

Arguably, the most well-known sermon in the world is the Sermon on the Mount, delivered by Jesus over 2,000 years ago on a mountainside near the Lake of Gennesaret and Capernaum. It was his longest recorded sermon and covered important topics like loving your enemies, anger, murder, adultery, divorce, fasting and laying up treasures in heaven. His audience was his disciples plus a curious crowd, attracted by his ability to perform wondrous miracles. The sermon began with several deceptively simple “blessed” statements called the Beatitudes. These statements are a profound foundation for all the teachings of Jesus. They show us not only how to frame our view of life, but they also show us how we are to treat those around us with godly grace.

The simple theme of these Beatitudes is based on the idea of being blessed. Some English translations use the word *happy* instead of *blessed*.

**Matthew 5:3:** (J.B. Phillips) *How happy <3107> are those who know their need for God, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs!*

**Blessed/Happy:** Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #3107 *makarios*; a prolonged form of the poetical *mákar* (meaning the same); supremely blest; by extension, fortunate, well off: blessed, happy(-ier)

The meaning of *blessed* or *happy* goes far beyond simple happiness. It is always tied to those who serve God no matter their circumstances, or it describes God Himself.

Being *blessed* or *happy* means we have been touched or guided by God’s favor, which means we personally have God’s attention.

Life is pretty good if we personally have God’s attention! This is the definition of *blessed* or *happy* we want to focus on.

Let’s go back and look further in the context of the Beatitudes.


**After Jesus revealed seven attitudes of character we are to develop, he continued with two more examples of when we can be happy:**

**Matthew 5:10-11:** (J.B. Phillips) *10 Happy are those who have suffered persecution for the cause of goodness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs! 11 And what happiness will be yours when people blame you and ill-treat you and say all kinds of slanderous things against you for my sake!*

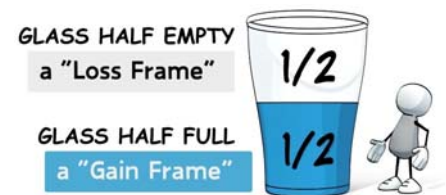
To the average person, these two verses are a paradox. It’s a happy day for us when we’re being persecuted, unfairly blamed and slandered?

Yes. Jesus is teaching us to see things from a different and higher perspective. He is broadening our daily life approach. Suffering, from a natural sense, could be hard or difficult. We could be angry, mad, sad or hurt. Trials and challenges, including those that might come up in a marriage, are hard to handle.

Alison Ledgerwood is a social psychologist. This TED Talk ([Ted.com/talks](https://www.ted.com/talks)) is not about marriage. It is about a fundamental thought process that works well if we understand how to apply it to marriage.

 **Glass half full, Getting Stuck in the Negatives and How to Get Unstuck, Alison Ledgerwood TEDxUCDavis**

- *We all know intuitively that there are different ways of thinking about things. The same glass, the saying goes, can be seen as half full or half empty. And there's a lot of research in the social sciences showing that depending on how you describe the glass to people as half full or half empty, it changes how they feel about it. So, if you describe the glass as half full, this is called a “gain frame” because you're focusing on what's gained, then people like it. But if you describe the same glass as half empty, a “loss frame,” then people don't like it.*



This is brilliant in its simplicity! Is the glass half full or half empty? Half full is a “gain frame”—this is something good. Half empty is a “loss frame”—something bad is happening. But it is the same glass!

**Matthew 5:12:** (J.B. Phillips) *Be glad then, yes, be tremendously glad—for your reward in heaven is magnificent. They persecuted the prophets before your time in exactly the same way.*

It wasn't a pretty picture the way the prophets were persecuted but it was a privilege to serve God. When Jesus says, *Be glad...be tremendously glad* because we can be persecuted just like the prophets, we have to put that thought into perspective. How can we do that? How do we see this experience as a glass half full?

There is a basic question we will continually ask as we talk about making our marriages happy:


**Am I seeing this particular marriage experience through “glass half empty” or “glass half full” eyes?**

What is marriage anyway? How high a level of commitment do we understand marriage to be for Christians? The Bible is explicit regarding marriage. Marriage is called a *covenant*, specifically a *covenant of God*. What does *covenant* mean in the Bible?

Let's start with the Old Testament word for *covenant*:

**Covenant:** Strong's Exhaustive Concordance #1285 *beriyth*; from Old Testament #1262 (in the sense of cutting); a compact (because made by passing between pieces of flesh)

(Source: McClintock and Strong's Biblical Cyclopedia, selected lines) Covenant: a mutual contract or agreement between two parties, each of which is bound to fulfill certain engagements to the other.... The Hebrew word is derived...from the root...“he cut,” and taken to mean primarily “a cutting,” with reference to the custom of cutting or dividing animals in two, and passing between the parts in ratifying a covenant...In making such a covenant God was solemnly invoked as witness (Genesis 31:50), whence the expression “a covenant of Jehovah” 1 Samuel 20:8...and accordingly a breach of covenant was regarded as a very heinous sin (Ezekiel 17:12-20).

A covenant is a powerful, solemn and serious promise. It is not something to be entered into lightly or easily. It requires great care and consideration before entering into a covenant, including the marriage covenant.

**In the Old Testament, making a “covenant” was serious business. Let's look at one of God's covenants:**

**Genesis 9:12-13:** *12 God said, This is the sign of the covenant <1285> which I am making between Me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all successive generations; 13 I set My bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a sign of a covenant <1285> between Me and the earth.*

The word here for *covenant* is the same word used for the covenant of marriage. When God makes a promise, as He did to Noah in these verses, it is the same word we use when we make that marriage promise. This is much bigger than is commonly thought!



**Marriage is not only defined as a covenant, but it’s defined as a covenant of God:**

**Proverbs 2:11-12,16-17:** (ASV) *11 Discretion shall watch over thee; Understanding shall keep thee: 12 To deliver thee from the way of evil, from the men that speak perverse things; 16 To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the foreigner that flattereth with her words; 17 That forsaketh the friend of her youth, and forgetteth the **covenant** <1285> of her God.*

(Source: Matthew Poole’s Commentary on the Holy Bible) *The covenant of her God - the marriage covenant; so called, partly because God is the author and institutor of that society and mutual obligation; and partly because God is called to be the witness and judge of that solemn promise and covenant, and the avenger of the transgression of it.*

This is a fundamental promise, not to be taken lightly. The marriage covenant is the highest kind of promise we can make on the human level. It is a serious and solemn event. When we make a *covenant of God* we are invoking God to witness it and to oversee it. We do not want to do that lightly.

Can our marriage be a “happily ever after” event? Let’s rephrase it to ask, *Can that covenant I made before God produce happiness and blessing for the two of us?*

In each segment, we are going to introduce some “glass half full” scriptures that talk about challenges. How should we consider these?

**A “glass half full” scripture:**

**Romans 8:28:** *And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.*

The context of this verse is that bad things can happen. We need to trust that these experiences are God’s providence for us as growth lessons to be more like Christ.



**“Glass Half Full” Acceptance:**

Because marriage is such a sacred commitment that was established in the sight of God, let us frame and reframe our approach to every challenging experience within that covenant as something that has been brought to us for the growth and maturity of both our spouse and ourself.

Let’s be purposeful in our marriage covenant by keeping these three things in mind:

1. Understand what happiness truly means.
2. Realize we can and will have serious challenges as we go through married life.
3. Keep in our minds and hearts how profoundly deep the marriage covenant is.

There are obviously many circumstances that occur in life that can easily derail our marriage relationships. Be aware and be ready!


**Our objective is to see the challenges we may face in our marriages as having the glass half full. Practically speaking, how do we do this?**

Admittedly, while this may be a challenge, it is an entirely achievable challenge. The foundation of our success begins with a willingness to apply “glass half full” thinking to the many and varied aspects of our married lives where we may be struggling. Let’s begin with two simple and powerful married life expectations—love and respect.

**Q How does the “glass half full” approach work in the “love” part of our marriage relationship?**

The fact is, in many marriages, the feelings associated with “true love” change over time and often become less intense. This can bring us to feeling like we are falling out of love with our spouse, which can bring us to a pattern of low expectations. This pattern is a symptom of “glass half empty” thinking.

Alison Ledgerwood talks about several experiments they did in her study to see how the “glass half full/glass half empty” thinking affects people. Here is just one of those experiments:

 **Experiment, Getting Stuck in the Negatives and How to Get Unstuck, Alison Ledgerwood, TEDxUCDavis**

*We told participants in our experiment about a new surgical procedure, and we randomly assigned them to one of two conditions. For participants in the first condition, the first group, we described the surgical procedure in terms of “gains.” We said it had a 70 percent success rate. And for participants in the second group, we described the procedure in terms of “losses.” We said it had a 30 percent failure rate. So, it’s the exact same procedure; we’re just focusing people’s attention on the part of the glass that’s full or the part of the glass that’s empty. Perhaps, unsurprisingly, people like the procedure when it’s described as having a 70 percent success rate, and they don’t like it when it’s described as having a 30 percent failure rate. But then we added a twist. We told participants in the first group, You know, you could think of this as a 30 percent failure rate—and now they don’t like it anymore. They’ve changed their minds. And we told participants in the second group, you know, you could think of this as a 70 percent success rate—but unlike the first group, they stuck with their initial opinion. They seemed to be stuck in the initial “loss frame” that they saw at the beginning of the study.*



How sad that human nature gets stuck in loss! And interestingly, when we are in a positive position of thought, it is rather easy to change our mind frame to negative. But when we are in a negative position of thought, it is more difficult to switch to a positive mind frame. This an important perspective. It is natural for us to get stuck in “loss frame” thinking. Every one of their experiments proved exactly the same thing.

As Christians, we need to understand that there are different types of love in marriage. We will look at two of them:



The first, **philadelphia love**, is expressed in many ways in many relationships. It is the affection between spouses, parents to children and children to parents. This kind of love is basic, largely instinctive and has much to do with the give-and-take of any relationship.

This is the kind of love that we are used to. *I help you, you help me, we work together and we love one another.* We have emotions and feelings of love for each other.

**Titus 2:3-4:** (NKJV) *3 The older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—4 that they admonish the young women to love <5362> their husbands, to love <5388> their children...*

**Love:** Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance

#5362 *philandros*; fond of man, i.e. affectionate as a wife: love their husbands

#5388 *philoteknos*; fond of one's children, i.e. maternal: love their children

We give this kind of love, and ideally we receive it back from our spouses, children and others that we care about.

When we are giving this love but don’t feel as though we are receiving it, the consequences easily stimulate a “glass half empty” reaction. Just as the experiment showed, we tend to hold tightly to this feeling, and it can become overwhelming. This sets us on a path that is not healthy or productive.



The second kind of love that is necessary in a marriage is very different. This is **agape love**. This is a level of selflessness and benevolence and encompasses a level of giving with no thought of reciprocation. It is only concerned with the wellbeing of the other person. Jesus lived this kind of love.

**Love:** Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #25 *agapao*;  
to love (in a social or moral sense): (be-)love(-ed)

**John 15:11-12:** (NKJV) *11 These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full. 12 This is my commandment, that you love <25> one another as I have loved <25> you.*

*That your joy may be full—how?* By giving this selfless kind of love; a giving that has no thought of reciprocation. It is giving for the wellbeing of the other person with no thought for ourselves. This is what Jesus expresses to his disciples and how our *joy may be full*. This is very different than the give-and-take kind of love.

With this selfless love in mind, even if we are challenged with the give-and-take of our marriage, we can and should always be determined to love selflessly. Recognizing this does not give us permission to ignore our challenge; it does give us permission to see the glass as half full.

If we ever begin thinking we are not appreciated in our marriage, then we need to be purposeful to our spouse. How? By giving more and doing more and thanking them for what they do and for who they are, even when (especially when!) we don’t feel like it. Selfless love doesn’t have to “feel like it.”


**A “glass half full” scripture:**

**Romans 5:1-5:** *1 ...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, 2 ...and we exult in hope of the glory of God.*

That’s powerful!

*3 And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; 4 and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; 5 and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the holy spirit (which) was given to us.*

We exult in our tribulations in just the same way we exult in the hope of the glory of God. Why? Because the tribulations give us the development that draws us closer to the glory of God. Glass half full, even though it looks half empty!



**“Glass Half Full” Acceptance:**

It is important to realize that we cannot change our spouse, but we can change how we decide to respond to them. “Glass half empty” issues of doubt regarding our love absolutely need confronting, but we can choose to do that with selfless love for them as our basis.

We want to make it clear we are never suggesting running and hiding from a problem, because that is not productive. We are suggesting finding a way to see that problem with a “glass half full” perspective.

Jesus embodied selfless love. He selflessly loved Peter, even as he heard Peter denying he ever knew him. His love for Peter did not falter. We cannot stress enough how important this selfless love is as a basis for healthy marriages! Don’t underestimate applying this kind of love because it helps build a bridge when we don’t feel like building it. This higher kind of love is the love God and Jesus have for us.



 **How does the “glass half full” approach work in the respect part of our marriage relationship?**



To be respectful of someone is to show them honor. This is different than selfless love. Selfless love will treat all in the same way, as it gives equally to all. Jesus died for all men equally. Honor and respect lift someone to a higher position than others around them for the purpose of having a relationship with them. A key symptom of marriage challenges is revealed when there is a lack of honor being shown. If I am not showing honor to my spouse, the issue is with me not with them.

**Honor:** Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #5092 *timē*; a value, i.e. money paid, or (concretely and collectively) valuables; by analogy, esteem (especially of the highest degree), or the dignity itself

**Let’s look at an example:**

**1 Peter 3:7:** (NLT) *In the same way, you husbands must give honor <5092> to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God’s gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will not be hindered.*

Why would our prayers be hindered? Because of our covenant. Treat her with respect.

There has to be that underlying basis of respect. “Glass half empty” thinking brings us down a road of accusation: *They don’t deserve it, or, they don’t pull their own weight, or, they are unreliable.* Whether these are true observations or a thought grounded in our own selfishness is irrelevant. It is irrelevant because it shows our partner a lack of respect.

**Respect is always hard to give when we think this way, so we need to reframe how we think:**

**Ephesians 4:15-16:** *15 But speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into him who is the head, even Christ, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.*

The “glass half empty” thinking and accusations are not *speaking the truth in love.*

Have you noticed how media is pushing the idea that men in the family have very little value? Hearing this over and over can have a damaging effect on the marriage relationship.



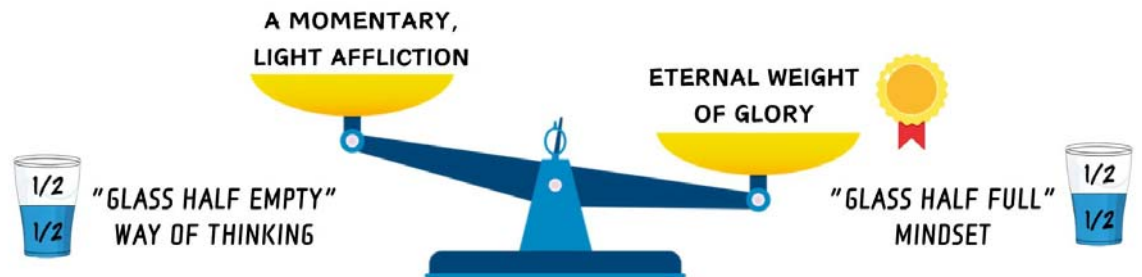
By speaking the truth in love, we can supersede or go beyond what the external influences bring our way. If we are speaking about the problem in love, we are speaking with honor and respect for the other person. We can deal with a problem in a relationship respectfully or disrespectfully. One is a “glass half full” approach and the other a “glass half empty” approach.



**A “glass half full” scripture:**

**2 Corinthians 4:16-18:** *16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. 17 For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, 18 while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.*

We are not to lose heart even though our outer man is decaying. That is a depressing thought! Even though things are falling apart with ourselves and our lives, we do not lose heart because our inner man is being renewed day by day. Paul labels these troubles as momentary, light affliction in comparison to an eternal weight of glory. Let’s weigh those two thoughts: momentary, light affliction versus eternal weight of glory. With a glass half empty way of thinking, a momentary, light affliction can be overwhelming. But with the glass half full mindset, the eternal weight of glory is more valuable and is worth going through the challenges of a momentary light affliction.





**“Glass Half Full” Acceptance:**

Love and respect are absolute fundamentals for a happy and blessed marriage.

When we fall into a “glass half empty” pattern regarding mutual respect, let us reframe it by realizing and accepting their value even if we don’t feel it. Addressing and correcting such issues is in every case an advisable step—as that is love and respect in action.

Love and respect, used every day and under every circumstance, are the foundations, the real drivers, that very much shape what our marriages become. Best pay attention to how we are letting them drive!

**Love and honor are such important and fragile foundations of any strong marriage.  
What do we watch out for next?**

Our next consideration is a fundamental aspect of the marriage covenant that does not get nearly the attention it deserves. This trait keeps things going when there are too many questions and not enough answers. It searches for direction and perspective when all you can see is fog. It stands as a protector of the covenant itself. This trait is commitment.



**How does the “glass half full” approach work in the commitment part of our marriage relationship?**

True commitment is profoundly foundational in any marriage relationship. For Christians, this commitment is directly built upon our respect and honor for God because He was called to witness our covenant.

**Truly respecting God is the very basis of our ability to truly respect our spouses:**

**1 Timothy 1:17:** *Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be **honor** <5092> and glory forever and ever. Amen.*

When we honor God, we learn to honor each other because He is our witness and guide in our covenant.



**Working to see the upside, Getting Stuck in the Negatives and How to Get Unstuck, Alison Ledgerwood, TEDxUCDavis**

- On a more personal level, what this research means to me is that you have to work to see the upside. Literally, this takes work; this takes effort. And you can practice this; you can train your mind to do this better. There is research out of UC Davis showing that just writing for a few minutes each day about things that you're grateful for can dramatically boost your happiness and wellbeing, and even your health. We can also rehearse good news and share it with others. We tend to think, right, that misery loves company, that venting will help get rid of our negative emotions, that we'll feel better if we just talk about how terrible our day was. And so we talk, and we talk, and we talk about the boss who's driving us crazy, and the friend who never called us back, and the meeting at work where every little thing that could go wrong did. But we forgot to talk about the good stuff. And yet, that's exactly where our minds need the most practice.*

Our minds need practice so we can more naturally accept happiness rather than naturally fall into the “glass half empty” way of thinking. We have to intentionally put work into how we approach our lives.

A basic motivation to work at seeing the upside when the glass looks half empty is commitment.

**Going back to the institution of marriage, we see how this sacred commitment came to be:**

**Genesis 2:18:** *Then the LORD God said, It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.*

The whole idea of a *helper* is not one who is “less than,” but one who corresponds to the individual needing the help.

**God is our Helper:**

**Psalm 33:20:** *Our soul waits for the LORD; He is our help and our shield.*

If God is *our help and our shield*, and we want our spouse to be our helper, this is a beautiful consideration. We don’t want to think of our helper as a “go-fer.” *Go get my coffee. Go do this or that.* *Helper* has a much broader sense of making a strong contribution.

God made Eve *a helper suitable for Adam*—essentially creating for him someone who made him whole; his second half. There is a natural level of commitment when we are matched with one who suits our needs.

The next level of commitment comes when we share commonality, a common basis, especially when it is a higher commonality.

**Adam and Eve were both direct creations of God:**

**Genesis 2:21-22:** *21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. 22 The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.*

God literally took a rib from Adam’s own body and built Eve as a helper to be by his side as a partner. If a helper is modeled after God being our helper, this is a good thing to be. God put Eve in place to be the compliment of who and what Adam was.

**The core principles of the marriage commitment are clearly defined by that very first marriage. After God directly created Eve from Adam, here is Adam’s response:**

**Genesis 2:23:** *The man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.*

*Bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh*—Adam’s response is essentially, *we are the same. She is the helper God has given to me. She is unique for me and to me.*

**The conclusion of the matter reveals the profound principle of marriage:**

**Genesis 2:24:** *For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be **joined/ cleave** <1692> to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*

**Joined/Cleave:** Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance #1692 *dabaq*; properly, to impinge, i.e. cling or adhere; figuratively, to catch by pursuit

To *cleave* indicates an unrelenting attachment. It describes the marriage commitment.



**Joshua 22:5:** (KJV) *But take diligent heed to do the commandment and the Law, which Moses the servant of the LORD charged you, to love the LORD your God, and to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and to **cleave** <1692> unto Him, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul.*

God is our Helper, so we are supposed to cleave to Him. Our spouses are our helpers and we are likewise supposed to cleave to them. We see the commonality of how important this marriage commitment is. It is based upon a spiritually-based relationship. This is why we have to work hard at seeing the glass half full when there are challenges instead of a glass half empty.

To *cleave* is to powerfully and intentionally hold onto. We are to *cleave* to God which means to powerfully and intentionally follow His ways. Jehovah God instructed men to powerfully and intentionally be *joined* to their wives, so much so that the two become one—they are inseparable in thought, word, deed and action.

When we realize that the Bible is full of “glass half full” scriptures, we can reread them to help remind us how to think, process and reset our minds.

Observe the depth of promise and commitment from God and Jesus to us.

**As we see this unfold, let’s use it as a template for our commitment to our spouses, no matter what the trials and challenges may be:**

**1 Peter 1:3-7:** *3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*

*These are exciting promises we can cling to—being born again to a living hope...an inheritance which is imperishable...protected by the power of God.*

*6 In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, 7 so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

The purposeful commitment of serving God brings great contentment and satisfaction, as it should in our marriages. We need to be one as we support each other, even in our differences and difficulties. This is the key and the core of marriage. This is where commitment really comes in. We rejoice greatly in our circumstances even though we have difficulties, and this applies in our marriage as well as in our lives. We can have difficulties in our marriage, but this doesn’t mean we are any less focused on doing God’s will within the context of that sacred covenant. Focus in on the commitment, make it our own and change our thinking to a “glass half full” acceptance.





**“Glass Half Full” Acceptance:**

Anytime we see the glass as half empty in our marriage relationship, we need to remind ourselves that renewed commitment to our marriage covenant is the surest way to relabel that glass as half full.

When such commitment is combined with love and respect, we are handed a formidable tool kit to work on resetting marriage happiness.

We may lose sight of marriage happiness, but to reset it, one of the principle things we need to do is find that commitment to the sacredness of that covenant. This can put it all back in place into a context where we can see a foundation for building toward the happiness we thought was gone. Again, this does not mean we ignore our troubles. We don’t ignore them; we work through them. We use that godly commitment as a tool to do so.

Even though these principles of love, respect and commitment sound simple, let us never forget to put in the effort so they can succeed.

**Focusing on love, respect and commitment to make the glass half full is a lot. How much more is there?**

When it comes to attaining and maintaining a solid marriage, there is always more. This should not be taken in a “glass half empty” way—*Oh no, not more work!* Rather we can choose to accept it in a “glass half full” way—*There is so much more room to grow the strength of our marriage, what’s next?* Same glass—it just matters how you see it. It really is all about perspective and doing the work!

One of the foundations for a Christian, and especially in a marriage, is humility. Humility is a perpetual key for any Christian in any area of their life. Applying this character trait to our marriages is a necessity.



**How does the “glass half full” approach work in the humility part of our marriage relationship?**

**Romans 12:3-4:** *3 For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. 4 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function.*

If we think more highly of ourselves over our spouse, it's a recipe for disaster. Humility binds us together, but pride destroys.

The binding together of humility brings us closer because it is not threatening. It is a great way to begin to reestablish communication or context in a relationship. It is a great way to begin building.



Seeing the half full glass, Getting Stuck in the Negatives and How to Get Unstuck, Alison Ledgerwood, TEDxUCDavis

- *So, my husband (who has this disconcerting habit of listening to what I say other people should do and then pointing out that technically speaking I'm a person too) has taken to listening to me for about two minutes on days when I come home all grumpy and complaining about everything. And he listens, and he says, "Okay, but what happened today that was good?" And so I tell him about the student who came up to me after class with this really interesting, insightful question. And I tell him about the friend who emailed me out of the blue this morning just to say hello. And somewhere in the telling, I start to smile. And I start to think that maybe my day was pretty decent after all.*



We need to use the mirror! It is great to teach other people, but how are we learning? As she talks about this, we can feel that smile developing. We can feel that coming back to a position where we can really see the glass half full. What a great lesson for us in our marriages to be able to help our spouse maybe go from the “glass half empty” to the “glass half full” viewpoint.

How often do we seek out and recognize the ways that our spouse’s character can fill in the gaps of what we may lack or be able to do or see what we cannot?



Trish, my wife, is ridiculously amazing at filling in the gaps I just don’t have. She sees things that I don’t. Many years ago I learned to listen to that, especially with raising our kids. There were times where she would say I needed to spend more time with this one, or maybe I could try that with another one. I learned to not even question it after awhile because at the beginning I thought I knew better. But she was always right! I hate to admit it, but I just said it to the world. It helps me reset and see things differently. It elevates and gives honor and respect to your spouse.

**Here is a great scripture that puts this all together:**

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:** 9 *Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. 10 For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. 11 Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? 12 And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.*

The third strand is God. What a beautiful thought.



If we weave our heavenly Father into all the aspects of our union together, of our sacred covenant that we made before Him, it gives us clear direction. Keeping God at the center of our married life is the tie that binds us together. No matter what the circumstances, no matter how full the glass is, it builds further security.

Because our marriage covenant as Christians is of God and is before God, that is our binding connection. We look to that connection over our common interests, hobbies, careers, or even our kids. It is having God in the center of our lives as Christians. This is what makes a Christian marriage have so much to work towards, and to be able to see when we have challenges that the glass is, in fact, half full.

**Having said all of this, with humility let us strive to always be honest with our spouses:**

**Ephesians 4:25-27:** *25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.*

We can interpret this “honesty” as “letting them have it” with the truth of our anger, saying these scriptures just gave us permission. We can tell our spouse what is wrong, what they didn’t do, and what they should have done. We can tell them because it says, *speak truth each one of you to the other.* However, we need to remember the respect and selfless love aspects of our commitment. Is that really what the scripture is saying?

Let’s look at the very next verse.

**This is why the verse continues in this way:**

*26 Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and do not give the devil an opportunity.*

It is all right to be angry, but don’t sin. Don’t give Satan an opportunity.

As we speak the truth to our spouses, let us be mindful of what we are focusing on so we can be reminded to see the glass as half full. If I focus on justifying myself or faultfinding, I am seeing the glass as half empty. If I am focused on communicating difficult things for the sake of “us,” I am seeing the glass as half full.

Instead of faultfinding and always having to be right, try laughing at ourselves when asked to get something and it’s right in front of us and we just can’t see it. How about admitting our mistakes and asking for forgiveness?



Like when your wife says, Go get such and such in the fridge? That’s a big fault of mine. I look in the fridge and inevitably it doesn’t look like I’m expecting it to. (See, I’m giving you all my excuses right now.) Okay, it’s placed in a different place than I’m expecting, but I just can’t find it. Now a fridge is a small space; it’s not like there is a lot of places to hide, but Rick can’t find the item. Then, Trish comes over, points to it and I say, Oh, you mean that thing that says “Ketchup” on it? Is that what you wanted? We do have to laugh at ourselves and admit mistakes and then move on.

**“Glass half full” scriptures:**


**James 1:17-22:** *17 Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow. 18 In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we would be a kind of first fruits among His creatures.*

God doesn’t change. He is the *Father of Lights*, and if the *Father of Lights* doesn’t change, we have everything we could possibly need. This is as positive a glass half full as we can get. Now we get to the point of challenge:

*19 This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore, putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls. 22 But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.*

Let's be purposeful by telling the truth to our spouse without anger and in a constructive way. Let's build up, not break down.

How do we do that? By seeing the glass as half full.



**“Glass Half Full” Acceptance:**

Marriage is the most sacred earthly covenant we can have the privilege of being involved in. As with any promise that encompasses every aspect of our lives, it continually requires attention and work. Let us always remember that applying selfless love, respect, commitment and humility in every challenging marriage experience can help us work towards our marital glass always filling up with happiness and God’s blessing.

Instead of looking at the glass half full, this says the glass is always filling up. That is the point. That is the Christian “happily ever after.” When we understand God has our trials and difficulties in His hands and we just need to be committed to having love and respect for each other—that is our happily ever after.

Remember love on those two different levels. With commitment and honor for one another, adding in humility to accept we each make mistakes so we can put things in order. The glass is half full, we just need to see it that way and respond to it accordingly—and to honor God as we honor our spouse.

**So, can my marriage be a “happily ever after?”**

**For Rick, Jonathan and Christian Questions...**

**...Think about it!**

*All scriptures cited are from the NASB1995 translation unless otherwise noted.*





## Next episode

Episode 1321: Have We Lost Our Ability to Honor One Another? (Part I)



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<https://christianquestions.com/character/1216-marriage/>

##### Ep.1268: How Strong Are My Relationships? (Part I)

*Identifying the foundations, problems and practices of marriage*

<https://christianquestions.com/character/1268-christian-marriage/>

##### Ep.1307: Is There a Christian Secret to a Happy Life?

*Finding biblical clues for living a life of Christian happiness*

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- What are the different kinds of love in the Bible? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pJjUG4XiEZ4>
- What is respect? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rWl1oqupKas>

#### “Glass half full” scriptures:

**James 1:2-8:** 2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, 3 knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. 4 And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. 5 But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. 6 But he must ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea, driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that man ought not to expect that he will receive anything from the Lord, 8 being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

**2 Corinthians 1:3-7:** *3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. 5 For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. 6 But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; 7 and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.*

**1 Peter 4:12-16:** *12 Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; 13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of his glory you may rejoice with exultation. 14 If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests on you. 15 Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; 16 but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in this name.*

**Philippians 3:7-14:** *7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.*

#### **A little more on marriage as a covenant:**

**Malachi 2:13-14:** *13 This is another thing you do: you cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and with groaning, because He no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. 14 Yet you say, For what reason? Because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by **covenant** <1285>.*

Covenant keeping: Covenants are sacred and serious. We should NEVER enter any covenant relationship that we do not intend to keep or even have doubts about keeping.

#### **A covenant of God between David and Jonathan, in the midst of great adversity:**

**1 Samuel 20:8:** (ASV) *Therefore deal kindly with thy servant; for thou hast brought thy servant into a covenant of Jehovah with thee: but if there be in me iniquity, slay me thyself; for why shouldest thou bring me to thy father?*

(Source: Biblical Commentary by John Wesley) *A covenant of the Lord—That is, a solemn covenant, not lightly undertaken, but seriously entered into, in the name and fear of God, and in His presence, calling him to be the witness of our sincerity therein, and the avenger of perfidiousness in Him that breaks it.*

The marriage covenant is of the most serious in nature—serious to the point of “til death do us part.” Marriage is the highest, longest lasting commitment we can make between human beings!

**Discipleship is a solemn vow of fidelity:**

**Psalms 116:12-15:** *12 What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits toward me? 13 I shall lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the LORD. 14 I shall pay my vows to the LORD, oh may it be in the presence of all His people. 15 Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His godly ones.*

Discipleship is the highest commitment we as humans can make to God through Christ.

# Study QUESTIONS

## Ep.1320: Can My Marriage Be a “Happily Ever After”?

See:



<https://christianquestions.com/character/1320-happily-ever-after/>

1. What type of happiness should Christians be seeking? With what attitude should we as Christians view our trials and persecutions? (See Matthew 5:3, 10-12)
2. How does God regard the seriousness of His covenants? What level of commitment does the Bible indicate should be practiced in a marriage covenant? What is the meaning of “a covenant of God”? (See Genesis 9:12-13, Proverbs 2:11-12, 16-17)
3. Instead of thinking of marriage as “happily ever after,” how should we rephrase our commitment in a more realistic and Christian way? What frame of mind best helps us to accept the inevitable challenges in our marriage experiences? What three ideas will help us approach our marriage covenant in a purposeful way? (See Romans 8:28)
4. What are two types of love in a marriage? How can agape love help to bring us joy? What is the best way of dealing with doubts about love in our marriages? (See Titus 2:3-4, John 15:11-12, Romans 5:1-5)
5. What is the role of honor in a marriage? In a challenging marital situation, how can we reframe our thinking about honoring our spouses? How should Christians deal with the afflictions in our lives? (See 1 Peter 3:7, Ephesians 4:15-16, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
6. What is the basis of our ability to truly respect our spouses? How does the Genesis account of Adam and Eve help us define our understanding of our own marriage commitment? (See 1 Timothy 1:17, Genesis 2:18, 21-22, Psalm 33:20)
7. What is the definition of the word “cleave?” How does it apply to our relationships to God and our spouses? How can we rejoice under difficult circumstances? What is one way we can reset our marital happiness? (See Joshua 22:5, Genesis 2:24, 1 Peter 1:3)
8. How does the trait of humility contribute to building our relationships? What is the “third strand” that will strengthen our marriages and help to bind us together? Why is it important? (See Romans 12:3-4, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)
9. How can we be truthful with our spouses in a constructive way? What questions should we remember to apply in every challenging marital experience? (See Ephesians 4:25-27, James 1:17-22)
10. As Christians, describe what “happily ever after” looks like in your own marriage and life. What positive changes can you implement in your own marriage?