

ESTABLISHING GOALS FOR MARRIAGE

Too many marriages are crushed under the wight of unfulfilled and unreasonable expectations. It is essential that a couple know that they have unified goals and view marriage with very similar points of view. If they don't, they will run the risk of disappointment and frustration. With the emphasis people are placing on personal happiness and immediate gratification, it is all too possible to find yourself perceiving that your marriage is not working. You may find yourself having an overwhelming desire to bail out rather than working through the problems.

For these reasons it is vital that your work through your goals together, agree on them and develop a working plan as to how to achieve them.

There are certain areas that you will want to consider including, because they have a vital impact on the success or failure of your marriage. You shouldn't limit your goals to these areas but consider their place.

1. Finances
2. Communication
3. Extended family relations
4. Raising of children
5. Recreation
6. Romance
7. Pursuit of friendships
8. Spiritual goals
9. Future goals
10. Career
11. Personal goals
12. Hobbies
13. Mutual ministries
14. Blending of families
15. Time (how to spend it)
16. A satisfying sex life

Part I - The "I" list.

The first part of your assignment is to choose individually what your top ten goals for marriage would be. Do not discuss this phase of the assignment with your prospective spouse. Turn the areas mentioned, and those you might add, into goal statements. Be sure to choose goals that are achievable and goals that you can make definite plans to achieve. Keep them specific, "I want to have a happy marriage," would be too broad. All your goals will be working at that anyway.

Take 5 minutes to see if you can think of some specific areas of marriage that would be as important or more important than those we listed.

Each partner should get their own pad of paper and individually wrote their ten specific areas of marriage in which to set goals. Remember to do this alone.

Now take 15 minutes and write your ten goals for your marriage in the order of their importance to you. Sample goal: I want the Lord to be first in our marriage.

If you have finished, wait for your partner to finish.

Part II - The "we" list

When you are both finished take 5 minutes to compare your lists and see to what degree you view marriage the same. It will be natural to have several differences. Marriage is working out your differences, so take the next 30 minutes and turn your lists into ten goals for your marriage. That means that some goals will have to be discarded and some combined if they are similar. Don't give up your goals too easily, if you think they are critical to your marriage. Again, be sure to arrange them in order of importance.

Part III - The plan of action

Now you are ready for the last phase of this exercise. It is not enough to have ten goals that you agree upon. You must form an action plan to understand how you can achieve these goals. Using your combined list of ten goals turn them into a plan of action. List each goal and then list several steps to take to achieve each goal.

Example: We (they are "we" goals now) want God to be first place in our marriage.

Plan of action:

1. We will attend worship and Bible class together weekly
2. We will pray together once a day.
3. We will tithe 10% or more of our income to the Lord in a mutually agreed upon way.
4. We will read the Bible through once a year.
5. We will give ourselves to a common ministry.
6. We will join ourselves to an adult fellowship of believers.

This is now the basis for your common expectations for marriage. Review them and ask yourself, "Are they realistic in light of your real strengths and weaknesses and can they be achieved?" Review them at least monthly to see if you are taking seriously your own plan for marriage and drop or add goals and plans as you realize the need.