



Life Blueprints

The Top Ten Mistakes Christians
Make in Their Marriages
Dr. Jay Dennis

Colossians 3:5-19 NASB

5Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

6For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,

7and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him-- 11a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all. 12So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. 14Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. 15Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful. 16Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

18Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.

The FBI had an opening for an assassin. After all the background checks, interviews, and testing were done, there were 3 finalists. Two men and a woman. For the final test, the FBI agents took one of the men to a large metal door and handed him a gun. "We must know that you will follow your instructions no matter what the circumstances. Inside the room, you will find your wife sitting in a chair. Kill her! The man said, "You can't be serious, I could never shoot my wife." The agent said, "Then you're not the right man for this job. Take your wife and go home." The second man was given the same instructions. He took the gun and went into the room. All was quiet for about 5 minutes. The man came out with tears in his eyes, "I tried, but I can't kill my wife." The agent said, "You don't have what it takes. Take your wife and go home." Finally, it was the woman's turn. She was given the same instructions, to kill her husband. She took the gun and went into the room. Shots were heard, one after another. They heard screaming, crashing, banging on the walls. After a few minutes, all was quiet. The door opened slowly and there stood the woman. She wiped sweat from her brow. "This gun is loaded with blanks," she said. "I had to beat him to death with the chair."

"I think [marriage] vows should be changed, because they've been in existence for 600 years, when people used to live until they were only 35. So they only had to be with each other for 12 years, then they would die anyway. But now, it's a big commitment because you're going to be with someone for 50 years. It's

impossible. The vows should be written like a dog's license that has to be renewed every year."¹

He may have great hair but he has bad morals.

As Paul writes to Christians in the Church at Colosse, he gives us the most successful tips on marriage I believe found anywhere in the Bible.

I. ALLOWING COMMUNICATION TO DETERIORATE.

One woman has said, "Trying to control my dry hair, I treated my scalp with olive oil before washing it. Worried that the oil might leave an odor, I washed my hair several times. That night when I went to bed, I leaned over to my husband and asked, "Do I smell like olive oil?" "No," he said, sniffing me. "Do I smell like Popeye?"

Communication will make or break your marriage. It comes easier for women than it does men. Men tend to be gifted more in the area of pouting and withdrawing and be Simon Says Not.

During an attack of laryngitis, a woman lost her voice completely for two days. To help her communicate with him, her husband devised a system of taps. One tap meant, "Give me a kiss," two taps meant, "No," three taps meant, "Yes," and 95 taps meant, "Take out the garbage."

Colossians 3:8-9 NASB

8But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices,

Notice most of what Paul warns against comes out of the mouth. These are word weapons that target and attack the heart.

All of these words are habitually bad attitudes coming out of one's mouth. The mouth is an indicator of the attitude. For instance, "wrath" means a sudden outburst of anger. "Malice" is harm caused by evil speech. You hurt someone with your words. "Slander" is derogatory speech intended to hurt or wound someone. "Abusive speech" means to tear someone down, being critical. It has to do with the tone of voice as well being hurtful. Then there are lies. Not being honest. Misrepresenting the truth.

Professor H.W. Jurgen, a West German sociologist, claims that married couples chat with one another 70 minutes a day in the first year of their marriage. This drops to 30 minutes a day in the second year and then only to 15 minutes a day in the 4th. His research shows that by the eighth year, a husband and wife, typically, share hardly any small talk and become nearly silent with one another. ²

Do you and your spouse feed each other a steady diet of put-downs? If you do, your marriage could be headed for divorce court.

When psychologists Cliff Nortarius and Howard Markman studied newlyweds over the first decade of marriage, they discovered that couples who stayed together uttered 5 or fewer put-downs in every 100 comments to each other. But couples who inflicted twice as many verbal wounds -- 10 or more putdowns out of every 100 comments -- later split up.

Watch what you say! Little, nit-picking comments are like a cancer in marriage, slowly draining the life out of a committed relationship.³

II. NOT GROWING SPIRITUALLY AS AN INDIVIDUAL.

When you are not growing spiritually as a husband, you are inviting Satan into your marriage. It's the same for wives. You must each be individually growing as a Christian—going forward, not backwards. You are doing one or the other. Your wife can't grow spiritually for you. She can't worship, pray, and read the Bible for you.

Colossians 3:10 NASB

10and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him--

Notice the word “renewed.” You are to daily allow Christ to take over your life. You are to let Jesus change you. You daily experience God. You are to look more like Jesus today than you did yesterday. How does this happen? Zero in on one word in verse 10—“Knowledge.”

When you get into God's Word daily and live by what it says, it transforms you.

Romans 12:1-2 Phillips

12:1-2 - With eyes wide open to the mercies of God, I beg you, my brothers, as an act of intelligent worship, to give him your bodies, as a living sacrifice, consecrated to him and acceptable by him. Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold, but let God re-mold your minds from within, so that you may prove in practice that the plan of God for you is good, meets all his demands and moves towards the goal of true maturity.

Romans 12:1-2 NASB

1Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. 2And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Knowledge isn't just information, it is experiencing God. That means life transformation.

Colossians 3:16 NASB

16Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

You are to make God's Word at home in your daily life. The Bible is not a stranger to you.

III. INSENSITIVITY.

A husband was told by the marriage counselor to try and be more considerate of his wife. One day he comes home from work. He's dressed up in a suit, he has cologne on, and he has a bouquet of flowers and a box of candy in his hands. He rings the doorbell and he's standing there as she opens the door. He holds out the flowers and the box of candy. The wife opens the door takes one look at he standing there and starts crying. In between her sobs she says, "Oh, I can't believe it! Little Johnny has been throwing up; the dishwasher just broke; your parents are coming to visit this weekend and to top it all off, you come home drunk!"⁴

Grooms! Once you get married remember that when you have a discussion with your future wife, always remember to get the last two words in: "Yes, dear." When you are insensitive to your mate you are damaging your marriage. It will never grow beyond where it is, in fact, it will go backwards. I'm speaking of selfishness. A "Me-First" attitude. Not wanting to be inconvenienced for the sake of your husband or wife. Taking each other for granted. Assuming you will always have each other around. Impatience. Notice what can change your marriage. There are six qualities that can turn your marriage around (These are turn-your-marriage-around qualities).

Colossians 3:12-13 NASB

12So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; 13bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Compassion—being tender and not hateful. Showing affection (and not just when you want to have sex). It means being easy to live with. Not indifferent to the needs of your husband or wife.

No husband has ever been shot while doing the dishes.

Kindness—not harsh in words or tone. Doing practical things that help and encourage the other person and making life easier for that person because of something you do.

One woman writes: "My husband bought me a mood ring the other day. When I'm in a good mood it turns green. When I'm in a bad mood, it leaves a red mark on his forehead."

Humility—putting the other person first. Not prideful or ego-centered. Asking daily, "What can I do to make you happy?"

Gentleness—a willingness to suffer injury instead of inflicting it. You are not gruff. You are gracious.

Patience—you don't seek revenge, to get the other person back for hurting you. You don't lose your temper—spouting off without thinking.

Bearing with One Another—You hang in there with each other together. My wife made me a necktie a few years ago that I rarely wore. In fact, I had forgotten about it until one day a local men's store announced an "ugly tie" contest. I secretly pulled the tie from its resting place and entered it. I never gave it another thought until I saw it hanging in the store window accompanied by a blue ribbon. Horrors! My wife's loving creation on public display as "the ugly tie of the day!" Although I could see the tie hanging there in the window, I could feel it around my neck--real tight!5

IV. LIVING WITH UN-FORGIVENESS.

This is tearing apart many marriages. Resentment over something said or done in the past.

Recently, a survey was made of 200 married adults in regards to forgiveness. The researchers were wondering how one's ability to forgive others would affect their marital satisfaction and personal well-being. The results were astounding! This research suggests that there is a huge relationship between marriage satisfaction and forgiveness. In fact, it appears that as much as one-third of marriage satisfaction is related to forgiveness. Not only does the ability to forgive impact the marriage relationship, it was significantly related to personal emotional distress. As forgiveness ability went up, individuals reported fewer symptoms of depression, anxiety, and fatigue! These results are powerful and suggest that all counselors, both secular and faith-based, should be helping people develop the skill of forgiveness.⁶

Colossians 3:13 NASB

13bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

Forgiveness doesn't mean "forget-ness." It doesn't mean don't deal with it or confront the issue that caused the unforgiveness. It doesn't mean you accept what the person said or did. It doesn't mean instant trust.

It does mean to show grace. There is nothing your spouse has done or said to you that is worse—or even comes close—to what you did to Jesus and He forgive you!

True forgiveness means I surrender my right to hurt you back. It's my choice. You take the initiative—not the person who hurt you. It implies continuous action. Marriage is an institution of continual forgiving one another.

In *On This Day* by Carl D. Windsor, the page for Valentine's Day includes this anecdote: "Even the most devoted couple will experience a 'stormy' bout once in a while. A grandmother, celebrating her golden wedding anniversary, once told the secret of her long and happy marriage. 'On my wedding day, I decided to make a list of ten of my husband's faults which, for the sake of our marriage, I would overlook,' she said. A guest asked the woman what some of the faults she had chosen to overlook were. The grandmother replied, 'To tell you the truth, my dear, I never did get around to listing them. But whenever my husband did something that made me hopping mad, I would say to myself, *Lucky for him that's one of the ten!*'⁷

V. NOT PRACTICING REAL LOVE.

Love is the most used and abused word in the English language. Our faulty view of what it is is creating faulty marriages.

Colossians 3:14 NASB

14 Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

Notice, love is something you “put on.” It doesn’t say something that you feel. It is something you do, something you choose—like putting on a dress or your pants. You do things for each other no matter how you feel. You choose to act a certain way toward your mate.

Real loves doesn’t always ask, “Am I in love with him?” “Am I in love with her?” It simply keeps on doing loving actions and ---BAM!--- loving feelings always follow! Once you commit to loving actions, you are on the road to winning! So it is a matter of the will, not of the feel.

I challenge those who come to me for marriage counseling this way: "If you do what I tell you to do for an entire month, I can promise you that by the end of the month, you will be in love with your mate. Are you willing to give it a try?" When couples accept my challenge, the results are invariably successful. My prescription for creating love is simple: do ten things each day that you would do if you really were in love. I know that if people do loving things, it will not be long before they experience the feelings that are often identified as being in love. Love is not those feelings. Love is what one wills to do to make the other person happy and fulfilled. Often, we don't realize that what a person does influences what he feels.⁸

VI. BEING UNTHANKFUL.

We need to keep the thankfulness that this young woman had.

An unmarried girl who worked in a busy office arrived one morning and began passing out big cigars and candy, both tied with blue ribbons. When asked what the occasion was, she proudly displayed a new diamond solitaire ring on her third finger, left hand, and announced, "It's a boy, six feet tall and 190 pounds!"

Ungratefulness toward each other hurts your marriage.

Colossians 3:15 "Be thankful."

Be grateful. That means you're not a complainer. You're not always complaining to or about your husband or wife.

Be thankful for the man, the woman, you married. It also means saying, "Thank You."

It's not taking each other for granted. You appreciate each other and you express that appreciation. You affirm each other.

Notice the word, "Be." It means to become. It doesn't come naturally. You have to work at it.

VII. BEING UNAWARE OF SATAN'S SUBTLE TRAPS.

Colossians 3:5 NASB

5Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.

Satan has specific temptations that appeal to husbands and to wives. He is always setting eye traps and ear traps.

William Bennett, the former U.S. Secretary of Education, has said that a divorce is like the death of a small civilization. Statistics tell us that about one out of every two marriages fail in America. How close has divorce come to wiping out your "small civilization," your marriage? If you have yet to do so, now would be a great time to plant some protective hedges around your marriage. Protecting your marriage is a wonderful way to love your wife.

In his excellent book, "Hedges: Loving Your Marriage Enough To Protect It," author Jerry Jenkins shares this hedge with us:

Evangelist Robert M. Abbott writes that, just as the fact that "a certain percentage of people die annually through traffic accidents does not mean we stop searching for ways to remedy the situation," neither should we be ready to shrug off moral impurity among our leaders. Abbott continues, "None of us plans to have moral accidents, but we must also plan not to! Danger rides with us all the time." He compares the moral danger to that of a driver pulling several tons of equipment behind his car." This requires more braking power and a longer stopping time ... Brakes! Thank God for Brakes! Abbott writes that "we must learn to keep plenty of space between us and sinful acts, so we can start braking soon enough to stop before it is too late." He offers a list...when we might "need to put on the brakes early and well." Among them:

When you are so busy there is no time to be alone with God.

When you are too busy to spend at least one relaxed evening a week with your spouse and family.

When you feel you deserve more attention than you are getting at home.

When you wouldn't want your spouse [or a colleague] to see what you are reading or looking at.

When the romance in your marriage is fading.

When your charisma, appearance, and personality are attractive to the opposite sex, and you are tempted to make the most of it.

When you enjoy fantasizing about an illicit relationship.

When a person of the opposite sex makes themselves available by their behavior.

When someone [not your spouse] tells you how wonderful you are and how much they love you.

When Scriptures concerning adultery are for others, not you.

When you start feeling sorry for yourself.

When you hope God isn't looking or listening.

God will provide the brakes ... if you choose to use them. What do you need to start pumping the brakes for today?⁹

You have to daily die to your un-God desires. You have to nail them to the cross. You never negotiate with temptation because temptation can always out negotiate you. You run. You run to the Cross. You refuse to tolerate anything ungodly in your life.

Notice the temptations, there are 5 of them:

Immorality—that means any kind of sexual sin—an affair, homosexuality, any improper sexual conduct with someone to whom you are not married.

Impurity—it means sexual perversion.

Passion—it's lust fulfilled in your body.

Evil desire—it's lust in your mind.

Greed—a taking spirit. I want it and nothing should stop me from having it. I'll do whatever it takes to get it. It's a desire to have something even though God says "No."

VIII. MAKING DECISIONS WITHOUT CONSULTING GOD.

Colossians 3:15 NASB

15Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

As a Christian you have a wonderful Radar, a built-in decision-making system you were given at Spiritual Birth.

As a couple when you don't first consult God you can really mess up your marriage. This is where many marriages get off of God's tracks. Notice 4 words that help you determine if something is God's Will once you pray about it.

"Let"—let means you give over control to the Lord. You surrender to Him. You let Him know that whatever He tells you to do you will do it.

"Peace"—peace is that sense of certainty in your heart. A calmness about it rather than a turmoil or an uncertainty about it. It is an inside Green Light. An "Okay, Do it," feeling.

"Rule"—it means to umpire. When a decision arises, God is the umpire. He calls the shots. He decides. He determines if something is right or wrong, or even if the timing is right or wrong. How does it work? After you have surrendered to God and you pray, you will either have a peace saying, "God for it" or a turmoil, a check in your spirit, a hesitancy, a "Hold on" moment saying "Don't" or "Stop" or "Not now." It may be the right thing but the wrong timing.

"Hearts"—your mind, your feelings, your emotions.
Even little decisions have big consequences

IX. NOT INCORPORATING THE GOD-FACTOR INTO EVERY AREA OF YOUR LIFE.

Jesus doesn't want to be a compartment in your marriage (home). He wants to be incorporated into every part of it, even the physical. That part is vital and God has spoken clearly that you are to meet each other's needs. If not, you put out a huge Welcome Mat for the devil. (Here Devil, Devil). Jesus wants to be Lord of your Bedroom. He want to be Lord of the Telephone, Lord of the Remote Control, Lord of your Computer, Lord over the people you invite into your home, Lord of the Mirrors, Lord over your closets ...

Colossians 3:17 NASB

17Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.

You represent Jesus to your marriage partner. You are to model a Jesus marriage in front of your children, friends, and neighbors. You are to be Jesus to your wife, your husband.

X. NOT UNDERSTANDING AND FOLLOWING GOD'S ROLES.

It's not about superiority, it's about different roles. It's not about worth, value, or intelligence, it's about different roles. God is tougher on the husband in this area. Guys we have a lot of responsibility. You are partners. You are equal with different roles.

In the hospital the relatives gathered in the waiting room where their family member lay gravely ill. Finally, the doctor came in looking tired and somber. "I'm afraid I'm the bearer of bad news," he said as he surveyed the worried faces. "The only hope left for your loved one at this time is a brain transplant. It's an experimental procedure, semi-risky and you will have to pay for the brain yourselves." The family members sat silent as they absorbed the news. After a great length of time, someone asked, "Well, how much does a brain cost?" The doctor quickly responded, "\$5,000 for a male brain, and \$200 for a female brain." The moment turned awkward. Men in the room tried not to smile avoiding eye contact with the women, but some actually smirked. A man, unable to control his curiosity, blurted out the question everyone wanted to ask. "Why is the male brain so much more?" The doctor smiled at the childish innocence and so to the entire group said, "It's just standard pricing procedure. We have to mark down the price of the female brains, because they've actually been used." God made us different. God set this up to give you maximum Freedom, Maximum Fulfillment, Maximum Happiness, and Maximum Pleasure. Are you interested in that?

Colossians 3:18 NASB

18Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

First wives. Notice, **“Be subject.”** Not slaves, but subject. It means to willingly see your husband as the President of your home, the leader of your home. You look to him as the final decision-maker. Now, if your husband asks you to do something that violates God’s Word, don’t you do it. It’s “On him.”

Why? “As it is fitting in the Lord.” It’s the right thing to do. This is God’s plan. Jill Briscoe, wife of pastor Stuart Briscoe said: “Stuart, you are the head of our family. But I am the neck, which means two things: (1) I support you; (2) I help turn you whichever way I wish.”

Colossians 3:19 NASB

19Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them.

Husbands LOVE. It means to continuously, unselfishly, sacrificially, graciously give of yourself to your wife at all times. You serve your wife. You put your wife first.

“And do not be embittered against them.” Embittered means harsh or unfeeling. That could be in actions, words, tone, and attitude. Don’t irritate your wife. Don’t exasperate her.

It starts with a tiny fist wrapped around a mother’s finger. It continues with a young hand held gently in one much larger. It endures through puppy love, adolescent relationships, and courtship. And if we are wise, it extends into marriage, through middle age, beyond the golden years, to the very end of life. Holding hands is one of the most intimate expressions of love between two human beings. Don’t ever let this beautiful act slip away from you. It’s so much more than a gesture of affection, so much greater than a mere symbol of connection. It’s an incredibly meaningful communication, a deep connection in and of itself. It requires no words; in fact, no words can convey such a profound message.

Why would two people ever stop holding hands? Perhaps it seems silly, somehow undignified, when we’re older and have been married a long time. We may begin to think such things were meant only for young lovers and newlyweds. That’s far from true! Besides its many other purposes, holding hands helps satisfy the basic human need for physical touch, a need we never outgrow. Hold your spouse’s hand throughout your life together; don’t ever let it go until the day when you’ve fulfilled every marriage vow and finally release it from your grasp, placing it lovingly, trustingly into the hand of God.¹⁰

- 1 Preachingtoday.com---*Citation:* Rock star Rod Stewart, cited from PageSix.com (5-3-01); submitted by Van Morris, Mount Washington, Kentucky
- 2 sermoncentral.com
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- 5 preachingtoday.com---*Citation:* George A. Hazlett, Salem, OH. *Christian Reader*, "Lite Fare."
- 6 sermoncentral.com--- Peter J. Larson, New Forgiveness Research Jan 27, 2003
- 7 preachingtoday.com--- *Citation: Leadership*, Vol. 11, no. 2.
- 8 Dr. Anthony Campolo, in *Homemade*, June, 1988.
- 9 Practical Illustrations. (Chattanooga, Tenn: Leadership Ministries Worldwide, 2001) citation: Jerry B. Jenkins. *Hedges—Loving Your Marriage Enough To Protect It*. (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1989), p. 26-27
- 10 Bill Morelan. *Married for Life*,(Colorado Springs, CO: Honor Books, 2004) pages 12-13