

When the Enemy is Attacking Your Marriage

Every marriage goes through ups and downs. That's precisely why we say vows like "...for better or for worse...". We relish in the good days, but what are we supposed to do when we feel stuck in a prolonged "for worse" season—when we feel like we are trying our best, but our circumstances and feelings seem to keep getting in the way of our progress? I believe these are moments when the enemy likes to attack our marriage the most. He comes on strong when our defenses are down, and we are exhausted and dismayed. Make no mistake that he is out to get us. Satan is a thief who only comes to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10), and he would love nothing more than to break up our marriage and family.

None of us are immune to hardship in life, but every one of us has the power to choose how we react to it. It's easy to be a good husband or wife when things seem to be going well, but what about when things get hard? How should we handle a cancer diagnosis, the death of a loved one, financial hardship, job issues, moving, bad decisions, and other crises? What are we supposed to do when we are under attack? How do we fight against the enemy?

As a married couple, we should be each other's number one partner, advocate, cheerleader, prayer warrior, and friend. But, when life throws us something more than we can bear, we sometimes feel like giving up. We become emotional recluses and shut each other out. We stop talking and go through the motions.

WE. CHECK. OUT.

We tell ourselves that our circumstances and our marriage will never get better, and we fail to see the good that is just beyond the trials we are experiencing. We start to believe the lies from the enemy. Lies like:

"You're doomed. This marriage is never going to work."

"Things will never get better. Give up already!"

"You both are too damaged. Not even God Himself can pick up these pieces."

"You married the wrong person. It just wasn't meant to be."

Don't believe those lies! You and your spouse can get through this season. When you choose to reconnect with your spouse and check back into your marriage, your marriage will become even stronger. Choose to fight for each other, not against one another. We serve a God who still brings dead things to life, and that includes a worn-out, lifeless marriage (Romans 4:17). Our Father can bring healing to our mess. He can breathe new life into our relationship and make it more beautiful, more life-giving, more intimate, and more trusting than we ever thought possible (Isaiah 61:3).

But, we can't lay back and let the enemy continue to attack us. **WE. MUST. FIGHT. BACK.** Here's how:

1. Keep talking to one another.

May integrity and honesty protect me, for I put my hope in you. Psalm 25:21

Daily communication is a must. We can't expect our relationship to get out of a rut if we don't tell our spouse how we genuinely feel and listen when they share their feelings as well. We must refuse to shut down, even when every part of us wants to. Instead of retreating, we need to sit down and talk to one another about everything, including daily musings, kids, work, hopes, dreams, fears, frustrations, etc. We must do this to stay connected, get back on the same page, and build trust.

2. Be the change you'd like to see in your spouse.

And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness. James 3:18

It certainly takes two to make a marriage work. But, when a marriage is stuck in a rut or being attacked, someone has to make the first move toward healing. Instead of just expecting our spouse to change or take the first step in mending our relationship, we need to initiate. If we desire better communication, then we need to initiate conversation. If we want more romance, then we should begin flirting with our spouse.

If we want more date nights, then we should plan a date. Our efforts will show our spouse how much we are committed to the marriage and put our marriage on the right track.

It's important that we do these things out of love and commitment but not expecting our spouse to do something in return. If not, we might fall into a "tit-for-tat trap" that will only leave both of us angry and disappointed. When we reach out to our spouse with unconditional love and a genuine desire to strengthen our marriage, they will feel free to open up as well. When both partners approach one another with open hearts, the marriage will begin to heal.

3. Pray for your spouse.

Praise God, who did not ignore my prayer or withdraw His unfailing love from me. Psalm 66:20

Prayer is the greatest weapon we have against the enemy's attacks. It puts our mind and heart in right-standing with the Lord and softens our hardened heart towards our spouse. When we are mad at our spouse and frustrated with our marriage, the root emotion we are experiencing is disappointment. We are disappointed that our marriage isn't a fairytale. Instead of dwelling on what we don't like about our spouse or marriage, let's pray for them. Ask God to bless them and bring us closer together. We can pray on our own AND together. It's amazing how God will soften our hearts toward each other when we specifically pray for one another. This is also an excellent example of unconditional love and humility—two must-have attributes in a strong marriage. Prayer is also our lifeline when we are facing hard circumstances that are out of our control. We don't need to try and carry this burden alone. God wants us to lay it at his feet, and we do this by praying. When we surrender our burdens to Him and ask Him to fill us with His strength and wisdom, He will.

4. Spend more time together.

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another. Hebrews 10:25a
As I mentioned before, we tend to "check out" when things get uncomfortable or difficult. Instead of finding reasons to be away from our spouse, we need to spend more time together. Put the kids to bed earlier and talk. Go for a nightly walk after dinner. Meet up for lunch regularly during the workweek. We have to be intentional and make time for one another if we want to foster a stronger marriage.

5. Cling to the Lord's promises and be patient with the process of healing.

The Lord's promises are pure, like silver refined in a furnace, purified seven times over. Psalm 12:6

Never forget that God wants good things for you and your spouse. He wants you both to heal and have a thriving marriage. Don't allow yourselves to get discouraged. Cling to God's promises in His Word by reading the Bible daily.

We don't get into a marriage rut overnight, so we can't expect to see a drastic reconnection after one day of trying. It takes baby steps — one day at a time. The main thing we need to remember is we must refuse to give up on one another. We are choosing to face this "for worse" season TOGETHER...helping each other...leaning on one another...every single day.

In time, we will see and feel the reconnection and experience His healing, but more than anything, God will show us how we are stronger together. He will bless us as we honor our marriage vows, and we will have an amazing testimony of endurance, commitment, and love that will inspire those around us—especially our own family.

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