

Ever After | And They Lived... | Discussion Guide - *Ephesians 5:21-33*

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People get married to live “happily ever after”. Here is how to find yours.

When a person gets married, they generally are at least hoping for their very own version of a fairy tale. They want their own personal “*happily ever after*”. Even though, no one gets married to be miserable, a “*miserably ever after*” or even a “*miserable until it’s over*” is far more likely. But, it doesn’t have to be that way.

Ephesians 5:31-33 (NLT) As the Scriptures say, “A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.” 32 This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. 33 So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

Honor Your Vows

Malachi 2:14 (NLT) ...the Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young.

Almost all couples make a vow of some kind on their wedding day. Here is an abbreviated and combined vow commonly used.

Before God and in the presence of these witnesses, ... Will you love and comfort them, honor and keep them, and in joy and sorrow, preserve with them this holy bond, until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, or until God by death shall separate you. (Traditional vows, combined)

If every marriage merely practiced love, comfort, honor, and protection consistently, “*happily ever after*” would be much more common than it is. Honestly, it is just too easy to completely forget the vows made to the person you love when faced with the overwhelming chaos of life, career, children, and even friends. Too many “check out” for 20 years or more from being a spouse in order to become a parent. Always remember, our vows were to be a couple, being parents is a rewarding benefit, but it is not the priority relationship. The best gift anyone can give their children is a great example of a healthy “happily ever after”.

Grow As An Individual

Many young couples complain that their partner is trying to change them. It should be recognized that a marriage vow is a vow to change. In fact, we can’t “*not change*”. When couples complain that they have grown apart from their partner, they are really just admitting that they were absent from each other while both of them continued to change. Life simply changes us, whether we want to or not.

Although life may change us, we can choose to grow instead of simply being conformed by whatever life throws at us. A choice to grow acknowledges that your wife needs a better husband, or that your husband needs a better wife. Two people choosing to grow equals a Better Marriage.

Ephesians 4:15 (NLT) Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.

Pursue Your "Happily Ever After..."

Ephesians 5:33 (NLT) So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

If you want a "happily ever after" you will have to go after it. Here are a few things it will take to be successful.

It will take Time. If we MAKE time for our marriage, we will, in time, have a much better marriage, maybe even a great one. Make time to be a couple, to talk, listen, and enjoy each other.

It will take some Education. There is so much to learn in your marriage. No one else has the opportunity to so completely know someone as you do your spouse. They are so different from you, and yet so complimentary at the same time. Be ready to learn your spouse.

It will take a bit of Comprehension. There is a difference between academics and applied learning. Marriage is very frustrating in this regard. Learning about your spouse or the opposite gender is a great step, but getting to know the love of your life will take some reflection.

It will take a lot of Practice. It is difficult to do anything well the first time, and marriage will present both partners with a lot of firsts. Don't quit just because honest first attempts fail. Rather, learn and try again. Fear of failure is the surest way to live in misery.

And, it will take continual Forgiveness. Everyone needs forgiveness, and NO ONE deserves it. If forgiveness could be earned, there would have been no need for Jesus' death upon the Cross. But, forgiveness can be freely given. And the more you give forgiveness the more freedom you will personally realize. A marriage without forgiveness will not last very long. So learn forgiveness. Congratulations on the *start* of your very own, "*happily ever after*"!

Talk About It

- What are your first thoughts regarding today's topic? Please share with the group.
- Please share with the group some of your fondest memories from your wedding day.
- Read the abbreviated and combined wedding vows above. What are your feelings about them? Do they capture what it takes to stay married? Why or Why not?
- How are you growing personally at this time in your marriage or life? How could you invest in your own personal growth more?
- Share how you find time for your marriage. What kinds of things do you do together?
- Share one of the biggest "light bulb" moments you have had regarding your spouse.
- Are there things in your marriage that "we don't talk about"? Why? Could those things be forgiven?
- Is there anything in today's topic that you would be excited to share with a friend?