**5 Measures of a Meaningful Marriage**



<http://www.markmerrill.com/5-measures-of-a-meaningful-marriage/>

What makes your marriage meaningful and rewarding? Many people might answer with things like “being happy” or “having a soul mate.”  But these are not the best ways to measure how meaningful and rewarding your marriage is.  Basically, a meaningful marriage can be measured by five characteristics or qualities…

**1. You’re Pursuing More than Just Happiness**.

Happiness is important, and the culture holds it up as the greatest good there is.  We all want to be happy.  It feels like a basic human right in America: even the Declaration of Independence extols “the pursuit of happiness” as inspiration to the colonies to separate from England.  But sometimes we use happiness as the ultimate measure of good or success, in our marriages, with our kids, or in life. Gary Thomas, author of the book, Sacred Marriage, subtitled the book, “What If God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy?”  His point is a good one: marriage may produce happiness, but a meaningful marriage produces so much more.

**2. You’re Persevering through the Hard Times**.

Nobody likes going through hard times. Avoiding hard times, and staying on calm seas would seem to be a great measure of success in marriage.  But that’s not as realistic, or as meaningful, as real life. In life, all people suffer at some point. But remember what God says: “suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” (Romans 5:3-4). The perseverance and character you build up through, and sometimes in, the rocky roads of a marriage make marriage meaningful.

**3. You’re Inspiring Change in Each Other…for the Better**.

Accepting your spouse for who they are, and being accepted by your spouse for who you are, is freeing. We should celebrate each other’s unique design and personality. But that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t gently encourage change in behavior. And that change must start with ourselves. It can then inspire our spouse to change for the better as well. Marriage can be that impetus that pushes us to get healthier, start new habits, end old habits, and make needed changes.

**4. You’re Setting an Example to Others**.

We are tutoring our kids on how to handle life and marriage through our example. They are not just learning from the good and happy times.  They are watching, even more intensely, how we walk through the difficult times as well.  How we live our married life is more important than just how happy we are, because each marriage influences the people and world around it.  That example can be healthy (when a couple works through joy and pain together) or harmful (when a couple tears itself apart), but either way it will influence others.

**5. You’re Willing to be Dependent, not Just Independent, in Your Marriage.**

Our culture loves rugged independence, even in relationships.  But we are not designed to be independent of our spouses. Yes, we are two unique individuals with unique personalities, but when we got married, we became “one flesh.” We became one physically, emotionally, and spiritually and are to be dependent (not co-dependent) on one another in a healthy way.  And as we grow old together, that dependence may grow even stronger. By the way, a healthy dependence in marriage requires humility. Humility recognizes that I’m not meant to be alone in this marriage or in this life.

Ultimately, marriage is a tool in our lives that refines us in many ways.  Hopefully, this reading will help you evaluate how meaningful and rewarding your marriage is, or perhaps can be.