

DIFFICULT MARRIAGE

Those who marry will have troubles. That's what Paul told the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 7:28). Even the best couples can struggle to protect their marriage vows. But what happens when marriage troubles become unbearable? Is there a point at which couples should end a bad marriage? Or is there hope for something better? Walk through the following steps as you prayerfully evaluate your situation.

STEP ONE: Discern Minor from Major Trouble

Unfortunately, many marriages end today over troubles that could have been overcome. University of Texas researcher Norval Glenn has found that divorces today are often blamed on problems such as “lack of commitment,” “too much conflict and arguing,” “unrealistic expectations” and “lack of preparation.” These are problems that both husband and wife and should work to overcome. Despite what friends, family or popular culture might say, these issues are no reason to end a marriage—especially in light of the serious long-term impact of divorce on your children. In their book, *The Case for Marriage*, Maggie Gallagher and Linda Waite explain that couples who think their only options are to either divorce or be miserable often find things getting better if they’ll just stick it out. In fact, almost eighty percent of husbands and wives who were very unhappy in their marriage yet stayed together described themselves as very happy just five years later!

STEP TWO: Anticipate the Hope after the Trouble

Major trouble occurs when someone either abuses or abandons their role in a marriage—when they break faith with their spouse and violate their vows. While God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), He permits it for marital unfaithfulness (Matthew 19:1-8). In God’s grace, He allows men and women whose spouses have been unfaithful to start over. However, God is in the business of helping couples redeem what many would see as a hopeless situation. “Even marriages that have faced one or more of the big ‘A’s—abuse, affairs or addictions—can be saved,” says Mitch Temple, a licensed counselor. Temple has led numerous intensive counseling sessions with couples that faced these major challenges and even though they had Biblical grounds for divorce they found a way to save their marriages.

STEP THREE: If Needed, Protect Yourself and Children

If your relationship is marked by physical abuse, you may find yourself confused, frightened and unsure about what to do. The most important thing you can do right now is take steps to protect yourself and your children from harm. Even if you want to save your marriage, you should not risk the safety of your children or yourself. A period of structured and therapeutic separation may be needed and can make it possible for you to get the help your marriage needs while making your family less vulnerable.

STEP FOUR: Seek Guidance—Don’t Go It Alone

Whatever situation you’re in, don’t struggle through a difficult marriage alone. You need the church body like never before—for perspective, advice, counseling, encouragement, and hope for God’s redemption. Make an appointment with Sara Thompson our Pastoral Counselor and director of our marriage ministry to discuss what your next step can be (sthompson@eastview.church).

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

- **Boundaries in Marriage** by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend;
- **Breaking the Cycle of Divorce** by Dr. John Trent
- **Love and Respect** - Dr. Emerson Eggerichs
- **Lovology: God.Love.Marriage.Sex and the Never-Ending Story of Male and Female** by John Mark Comer
- **The Five Love Languages** by Gary Chapman
- **Have a New Sex Life by Friday** by Kevin Leman