*5 Myths about Marriage*

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*This article is part of the*[*5 Myths*](https://www.crossway.org/articles/series/5-myths/)*series.*

Myth #1: Marriage will rid you of your sin.

Most of the troubles we face in marriage are not *intentional* or *personal*. In most marriage situations, you do not face difficulty because your spouse intentionally did something to make your life difficult. Yes, in moments of anger that may happen. But most often, what is really happening is that your life is being affected by the sin, weakness, and failure of the person you are living with. At some point you will be selfish. In some situation you will speak unkindly. There will be moments of jealousy, bitterness, and conflict. You will not avoid this, because you are a sinner and you are married to a sinner.

When your ears hear and your eyes see the sin, weakness, or failure of your husband or wife, it is never an accident; it is always grace. God loves your spouse, and he is committed to transforming him or her by his grace, and he has chosen you to be one of his regular tools of change. So, he will cause you to see, hear, and experience your spouse’s need for change so that you can be an agent of his rescue.

*Forgiveness begins by your giving the offense to the Lord.*

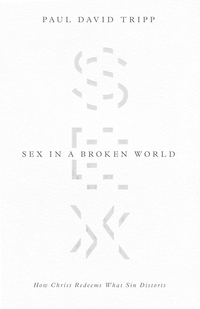
Myth #2: Marriage will meet your expectations.

Everyone’s marriage becomes something they didn’t intend it to be. You are required to deal with things you didn’t plan to face. In every marriage sin complicates what would otherwise be simple. In every marriage the brokenness of the world makes things more complicated and difficult. In every marriage either giddy romance wanes and is replaced with a sturdier and more mature love, or the selfishness of sin reduces the marriage to a state of relational détente.

Myth #3: Being in relationship with someone you love is easy.

It is hard work to care, it is hard work to discipline ourselves to be careful, and it is hard work to always be thinking of the other person. Be prepared to have your feelings hurt: you and I tend to want the other to work hard because that will make our lives easier, but we don’t really want to have to sign in for the hard work ourselves.

Laziness is self-centered sin, reducing us to marital passivity. We want the good things to come to us without the hard work of laying the daily bricks that will result in the good things. And we are often more focused on what the other is failing to do and more focused on waiting for him to get his act together than we are on our own commitment to doing whatever is daily necessary to make our marriages what God intended them to be. You can have a good marriage, but you must understand that a good marriage is not a mysterious gift. No, it is, rather, a set of commitments that forges itself into a moment-by-moment lifestyle.

[](https://www.crossway.org/books/sex-in-a-broken-world-tpb/)

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[*Paul David Tripp*](https://www.crossway.org/authors/paul-tripp/)

Best-selling author Paul David Tripp helps us see that only the gospel can redeem sexual brokenness, giving us a clear view of God’s original purpose for sex.

Myth #4: Forgiveness is merely a horizontal transaction.

Here is what you have to understand: forgiveness is a *vertical commitment* that is followed by a *horizontal transaction*. Both aspects of forgiveness are essential in the order that I have presented them.

When you have been wronged in word or action by your husband or wife, your response must be shaped by an immediate commitment that you make before God. Forgiveness begins by your giving the offense to the Lord. This does not mean that you act as if something wrong is right. It means that you do not carry the wrong with you (bitterness), and that you do not treat the other in light of the wrong (judgment). You entrust yourself to God’s mercy and justice, and you give yourself to overcoming evil with good (see the principles laid out by Paul in Rom. 12:9–21). You commit to respond to your spouse with the same grace that you have been given. You do not insert yourself into God’s position and mete out punishment for his or her offenses.

Myth #5: Intimacy propels a good relationship.

Marriage really is just a long-term exercise in gardening. If you’ve done any gardening you know there simply aren’t any shortcuts. When you drive by that house festooned with gorgeous flowers of a wide variety of colors and kind, tell yourself that what you are looking at is hard work. Gardens begin with hard work. Clearing the land isn’t fun, but it’s essential. Digging holes for the seeds isn’t enjoyable, but it, too, is a necessary step. The work of regular watering and weeding is also a necessity.

Sex is not the fuel of a good relationship; it is the expression or fruit of one. So it is impossible not to drag the character and quality of the relationship into this moment of nakedness and vulnerability. Sinners (which, in case you forgot, all of us are) always drag their sin into their marriages. We are all “weedy” people who need to pull personal and relational weeds daily so that the flowers of love and grace may grow.

*This article is adapted from* [Sex in a Broken World: How Christ Redeems What Sin Distorts](https://www.crossway.org/books/sex-in-a-broken-world-tpb/) *by Paul David Tripp. Along with*[*"5 Myths about Martin Luther,"*](https://www.crossway.org/articles/5-myths-about-martin-luther/)*this article is part of a new series called "5 Myths."*



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