

Reviving Your Marriage: Lessons from Ezra 9

Marriage matters to God. He created it, and He knows how it works. In our culture, we often see marriages fall apart, but we need to return to God's Word to implement principles that will help our marriages last.

How's your marriage going? Are there areas you need to shore up? Are there sins you need to confess? Maybe there are things that need to be revived.

The key takeaway is this: How you deal with issues in your marriage is just as important as that you deal with the issues. You want to grow together, not separate. Don't ignore sin issues—deal with them.

What Was the Problem in Ezra's Time?

In Ezra 9, we find that the Israelites who had returned from exile were intermarrying with the pagan peoples around them. The leaders came to Ezra saying, "The people of Israel and the priests and the Levites have not separated themselves from the peoples of the land... For they have taken some of their daughters as wives for themselves and their sons, so that the holy seed is mixed with the peoples of those lands."

It's important to note that God is not against interracial marriages. Moses married a Midianite woman, Joseph married an Egyptian, Boaz married Ruth (a Moabite), and Rahab (a Canaanite) married Salmon (a Jew). The issue was not race but faith.

God was against His people marrying those who didn't believe in the Lord for two main reasons:

1. Prophecy - The Messiah was to come through the Jewish line, and Satan tried to pollute and dilute it.
2. History - In the Old Testament, the Jewish people were to be holy to the Lord. When they intermarried with pagan cultures, it led them away from God.

Does This Apply to Christians Today?

Absolutely. In 2 Corinthians 6, God says: "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?"

Believers who marry unbelievers have forgotten the richness and value of their identity in Christ. They've forgotten that God is in a relationship with them and wants them wholly set apart to Jesus.

In over 30 years of ministry, I've never met a believer who said, "I'm so glad I married an unbeliever." Instead, many who intentionally married unbelievers grieve because they can't share the most important thing in their life with their spouse on a spiritual level.

Note: If you married an unbeliever before you were saved, that's different. You're now learning to be a godly witness while honoring your marriage covenant.

How Did Ezra Respond to the Problem?

1. He Grieved

"When I heard this thing, I tore my garments and my robe and plucked out some of the hair of my head and beard and sat down astonished."

Ezra didn't come in swinging fists. He showed the people his heart before he showed them his hand to fix things. He tore his robe as a sign of mourning, pulled his hair and beard, and sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.

How do you respond when you hear of sinful behavior in a believer or in marriage? Sometimes we shrug it off, but when a brother or sister falls into sin, we have a responsibility to help. But first, we should weep. Let it grip your heart what sin is doing in the lives of people you love.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem before He drove out those selling in the temple. He wept before He whipped. We need to mourn deeply before we go out seeking to correct others.

2. He Prayed

"At the evening sacrifice, I arose from my fasting, and having torn my garment and my robe, I fell on my knees and spread out my hands to the Lord, my God."

Do you pray over those you see falling into sin? Or do you just go to friends, podcasts, and books to try to fix broken marriages? While advice can be helpful, why not go to the One who made marriage and knows how it works?

Ezra's prayer included:

- Confession: "Our iniquities have risen higher than our heads and our guilt has grown up to the heavens." He called sin what it was and showed that sin is serious.
- Recognition of God's grace: "For a little while, grace has been shown from the Lord our God." He recognized how gracious God had been despite their sins.
- Acknowledgment of disobedience: "We have forsaken your commandments." He took them back to God's Word, showing this was a biblical stance, not a cultural one.
- Realization of consequences: "After all that has come upon us for our evil deeds... should we again break your commandments?" He pointed out that ignoring sin and continuing in their ways would call for God's judgment.

In his prayer, Ezra didn't make promises to do better or make excuses. He owned the fault and humbly confessed the sin.

What Can We Learn About Reviving Our Marriages?

1. Identify the problem: Is there sin in the camp? Sin never blesses; it only destroys.
2. Grieve over sin: Let it sink in deep. Let it grip you.
3. Confess it: Call it out. No more excuses.
4. Recognize God's goodness despite your sinfulness.
5. Realize that all sin must be judged: God doesn't overlook it, and neither should we. That's what the cross is for.

Life Application

If your marriage needs reviving, what are you waiting for? Go to God and allow Him to make it right. Once your confession is made, move forward in agreement and alignment with God's Word.

Set new habits or standards within your marriage to strengthen your spiritual bond. Remember, your miseries can never outdo God's mercies. His mercies are new every morning.

Ask yourself:

- What specific sins do I need to confess in my marriage?
- How am I demonstrating holiness in my relationship with my spouse?
- What new habits do I need to establish to strengthen our spiritual bond?
- Am I grieving over sin before trying to correct it in others?

Holiness matters to God, and it should matter in our marriages, our churches, our communities, and our personal lives. It's not optional. Strive for holiness, and watch God revive your marriage.