



Dear Life Coach Alex, with the growing number of marital separations and divorces, even in the cultures that once fostered strong family units, one begins to wonder if marriage really works. Does marriage work?

Due to man's never-ending quest to understand the life matters that are only better understood from a spiritual standpoint, "Does Marriage Work?" is one of the most pondered questions in life.

Marriage is the most delicate undertaking in life, and for it to thrive and survive requires consistent nourishment, unabashed attention, constant compromise and the daily renewal of our marital vows, regardless of the number of years that you have been married.

But with the astronomically increasing number of divorces in our societies, and attempted fundamental changes to its definition, how do we make our marriages thrive and survive? With the heightening need for two incomes in the family and the stress that comes along with technological advancement and the call for increased productivity with lesser resources, how do we maintain bliss in our marriages? Sad as it is, it is even sadder to know that within cultures that were remarkably known to foster deep family values like respect and togetherness, divorce is now rampant.

Some statistics indicates that up to 53% of marriages now end up in divorce, and that the top causes of divorce are financial stress, infidelity and abuse. In some cultures, this translates to abuse of leadership especially by the husbands, lack of encouragement especially from the wives, interferences from the families of either or both spouses, lack of household support especially from the husbands, disunity in parenting within the marriage, adultery by either the husbands or wives (or both), and spouses gossiping their challenges amongst their respective groups of friends instead of humbly seeking and accepting input from professional marriage coaches and counsellors.

The question should not be whether marriage works, but rather what are you still yet to do to make your own marriage work! Allow me to appropriately substitute 'marriage' for 'love' in the famous biblical definition of love recorded in 1 Corinthians 13 and you will find the answer to this most-asked question of recent times:

**In a marriage, the husband and wife must be patient and kind with each other.
There should be no envy in marriage, no boasting, and no pride.
Husbands and wives must never be rude to each other, neither should they be self-seeking.
They should neither be easily angered nor keep a record of wrongs.**

**In marriage, there should be no delight in evil but rather rejoicings with the truth.
Husbands and wives should always protect each other, and always trust each other.
They should consistently hope for the better, and always persevere in every situation.**

Marriage Never Fails!

How well are you doing in these areas? Which of these areas do you need to start working on in order to energize your marriage? How often do you protect each other? How much do you trust each other? **If you are not working on one or more of these areas at any given time, you are leaving your marriage to chance that does not exist!**

As a Life Coach who has had the privilege of helping to energize the marriages of many people from different cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds, I hereby affirm to you that Marriage Works! For sure, couples do go

through major roller coasters in their marriage, but by the grace of God and some desire and determination on their part, they will come out victorious – time and time again.

This is my take on marriage: It is a process and not a destination. It is always a work in progress. It is the development of our character to become more humble, more conscious, more forgiving, more giving, more committed, more determined, more loving, and more holy.

Like you may have heard me say repeatedly, what most couples need is to take the time to lovingly educate each other about each other's needs, and then be willing to truly love each other. Most couples need more of this – talking together, working together, raising and disciplining the children together, playing together, attending church together, praying together, serving together, reading together, cooking together, sitting still together, walking together, holding each other's hands, watching TV together, attending events together, cleaning the house together, managing the finances together and definitely making love together!

This is what breeds mutual understanding and support, and most of all, companionship and intimacy. If you are so determined to make your marriage work, here are some strategies for you to energize their marriage:

1. Identify the detrimental character traits that you acquired in your upbringing; traits like inflexibility, anger, impatience, harshness, forgetfulness, selfishness and lack of knowledge and convictions that you inherited from your parents or from the people you associated with while growing up, and then work with a coach to effectuate a plan to work on them through them. One of the key killers of marriage is the upbringing baggage that people stubbornly or ignorantly bring into their marriages.
2. Be mindful of the detrimental character traits of your spouse as well, and refrain from pushing his or her buttons especially in those areas. Consistently use knowledge and encouragement to spur him or her towards personal growth, while giving him or her benefit of doubt in every circumstance.
3. Put your spouse first in every circumstance especially in front of others and your children in order eliminate the natural tendency of pride and competition. This will help you to build a union of trust, respect, fun, laughter and selflessness in the key areas of marriage: Companionship, Support and Intimacy (CSI).

For you to say that marriage does not work, you must be ready to tell God that you have consistently followed all His 'not burdensome' advice about how to make your marriage work and gotten a different result.

If you were to acquire a new gadget today, won't you read through the operating manual before deciding to blame the manufacturer for you not being able to operate it? In the same way, don't you think it is only fair to have tried everything to the specification of the Creator before saying that His creation doesn't work?

You must start seeing things from a spiritual perspective rather than from how the world sees it. For in the words of Apostle Paul, "Let us not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day; for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So let us fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen; for what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."

Of course, Marriage Works!



Alex Nosa Ihama is a Life, Business and Executive Coach, who has been facilitating Marriage, Parenting, Career and Leadership workshops and seminars for years. Either face-to-face, or through the phone and email, he has personally coached hundreds of people worldwide and tens of thousands more through his website. This is in addition to his countless motivating and inspirational articles and newsletters that are now received in over 70 countries.

Alex strongly believes that the key to success, which he defines as contentment, is in the hands of each individual regardless of his or her situation and circumstance. This is the fundamental statement upon which he founded the three organizations: The Exhortation Institute of Life and Business Skills, The Exhortation Life and Business Coaching Services and the Exhortation World Outreach. For more information, visit his website, www.TheExhortation.com.

If you require coaching in a specific area of your life or business, or would like this message delivered personally in the form of a keynote, workshop or seminar at your church, organization or community event, or to share your much-appreciated feedback and questions, send an email to alex.ihama@TheExhortation.com.

While all questions will be responded to by the Life Coach, yours may be the next topic for Our Life Coaching Corner!