

Marriage is a sacred covenant where both husband and wife have specific roles and duties. But what happens when one spouse fails to live up to their responsibilities?

What Are the Responsibilities of Each Spouse?

Husband:

He is called to love his wife

“as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”
(*Ephesians 5:25, ESV*).

This love is comprehensive—it includes caring for her physical needs, providing emotional support, protecting her dignity, and leading spiritually.

Wife:

She is called to respect and submit to her husband “*as to the Lord*” (Ephesians 5:22, NIV). This means listening to him, honoring his leadership, and cooperating in the partnership of marriage.

Both:

Have the mutual right and responsibility to fulfill the marital duty, including intimacy (1 Corinthians 7:3-5, ESV).

What If One Spouse Fails to Meet Their Responsibilities?

Suppose the husband neglects his wife, is abusive, unfaithful, verbally abusive, or refuses to meet his physical and emotional duties. Or the wife disrespects her husband, mocks him, is unfaithful, speaks ill of him to others, or makes decisions without consulting him.

Should the other spouse stop fulfilling their own marital duties?

The answer is **No**.

Why Should You Continue to Fulfill Your Duties?

Consider this analogy: Imagine living in a rented house with 10 tenants sharing the water and electricity bills equally. If some tenants deliberately use more resources to avoid paying their fair share, they ultimately harm themselves because the overall cost rises. It is wiser to continue using your fair share responsibly so that everyone benefits.

Similarly, in marriage, if one spouse fails to fulfill their duties, the other should continue loving, respecting, and honoring their spouse. This is not about enabling wrongdoing but about preserving the marriage and demonstrating godly character.

What Are the Benefits of Maintaining Your Responsibilities Even When Hurt?

1. **Your Godly Example Can Influence Your Spouse**

The Bible encourages wives to submit to their unbelieving husbands so that their behavior may win them over without words (1 Peter 3:1-2, NIV). Likewise, 1 Corinthians 7:16 (NIV) says, *“For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?”*

Your faithful, loving example can soften your spouse’s heart and lead to reconciliation over time.

2. **You ‘Heap Burning Coals’ on Their Head**

Proverbs 25:21-22 (NIV) teaches, *“If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink, for you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you.”*

Showing kindness and patience even when wronged can cause

conviction in your spouse's conscience, bringing them to repentance.

3. **You Leave Room for God's Justice and Intervention**

Romans 12:17-19 (ESV) instructs believers not to repay evil with evil but to live peaceably and leave vengeance to God, who “*will repay.*” By entrusting your hurt to God and maintaining holiness and peace, you allow Him to work in your spouse's heart and in your marriage in His perfect timing.

Final Encouragement

Do not return evil for evil within your marriage, even if you are being hurt. Continue to love, respect, and fulfill your marital duties faithfully. This steadfastness reflects Christ's love and offers a path for healing and restoration.

Remember, marriage is not only a human contract but a holy covenant established by God. Your perseverance honors Him and opens the door for His transformative power to work in your spouse and your relationship.

May the Lord bless you and keep you steadfast in His grace.

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