

Symptoms of a Stuck Marriage

Based on Ted Cunningham's book *Fun Loving You*

1. **You blame your spouse** — Many couples (young ones, especially) focus on their spouse as the source of life as well as the source of problems (e.g., “If my spouse would just do this, then life would be better”). Instead, we need to focus primarily on our relationship with God.
2. **You question your compatibility** — Today's online dating/match-up services emphasize compatibility. The media portrays romance as all about chemistry. Ted Cunningham counters that by saying “character trumps chemistry and compatibility,” because shallow integrity leads couples to seek an easy way out when they are facing challenges in their marriage.
3. **You repeat mistakes and develop patterns** — Couples get into a bad habit of reading the same scripts over and over again instead of trying new ways to communicate. Ted recommends the “LUV talk” method: *Listen, Understand, Validate*. In his counseling, he gives couples a toy car to hold; the spouse holding the car gets to talk while the other has to listen.
4. **You rush decisions** — Couples who feel exhausted in their marriage (e.g., tired of conflict, tired of not caring) are more likely to rush into a divorce. Ted urges them to reconnect to God and give their marriage time to heal.
5. **You close your heart** — Many couples allow anger to overwhelm them to the point they cannot even consider other responses or reactions. Ted urges them to work on keeping their heart open (Proverbs 4:23).
6. **You isolate yourself from others** — Couples mistakenly think no one understands how they're struggling. But the fact is *all* couples face challenges. Ted encourages them to connect with other Christian couples who've been where they are.
7. **You doubt your future as a couple** — Beware seeds of doubt that well-meaning friends can plant into your relationship (e.g., “You deserve better”), because such doubts can lead to divorce. Instead, Ted offers advice about how to breathe life and hope into a dead or dying marriage:
 - Don't take sides. Fight together as a team to save your relationship.
 - Avoid blaming on issues. Instead, focus on your heart.
 - Center your conversations on marriage, not divorce. Stay committed.
8. **You explore other options** — Tragically, many couples give up on their relationship and begin seeking someone new before their divorce is final. Ted counters with a quote from Dr. Scott Stanley: “Commitment is making a choice to give up on all other choices.” Ted also urges couples to start with hope — God can breathe new life into your relationship.

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