

# Long-term problems, like termites, can eat away at your marriage

## But you can fix a broken relationship by exterminating them

**BY TAJUANA DAVIS**  
LIVING HOPE MINISTRIES

Termites can eat through an entire piece of wood, leaving only a skeletal structure on the inside without touching the outside. That's why termites are so damaging. Everything looks great on the surface, while on the inside, the house is just a hollow shell. You only realize there's a problem when your foot goes through the board. Or your house falls down.

But long before that happens, the frass appears — another name for termite droppings. That's when you need to address the problem. You can't just sweep the frass away and ignore the issue. You must repair the damage and call a professional if needed.

Marriages also have "termites." Early in the relationship, you're in L-O-V-E and believe your relationship will never have problems. But later, you notice the first frass pellets. You catch a look you haven't seen before or hear an attitude in your spouse's voice or sense an unfamiliar frustration. It's barely in your consciousness and it's a bit uncomfortable. You don't want to question this exciting new relationship, so you sweep the thoughts away.

But after a while, you see a pattern you can no longer ignore. When you raise the issue, your spouse gets defensive and upset. Over time it becomes an "untouchable" area. You stop communicating about the problem, hoping it will simply go away.

Issues don't just go away. The longer you ignore them, the more they fester and grow until they become major issues in the relationship. You wonder if there's hope. You wonder if your relationship is broken and if you can fix it.

Maybe it's time for a frass inspection. You can find those termites and exterminate them. What should you look for? How can you talk about it? What can you do about it? Even if you've been ignoring a problem for years, it's not too late to begin repairs.

Learn how to fix a broken marriage by considering common problems

If they were in their first year of marriage, the problem was usually about adapting to each other's differences and the new dynamics of married life together.

If they had a new baby, the issue focused on time and energy constraints, as well as the expectations of the couple's parents.

If the couple has been married closer to five years, they often were dealing with multiple children with different temperaments and unique demands, mixed with the stress of handling work, housekeeping and the regular activities of life.

Once a couple has been married for about 10 years, they often struggle to keep their relationship strong. Their conversations

center around the kids, so if they're not talking about kids, they're not talking at all. And that makes it hard to connect with your spouse. They start taking each other for granted, living more like roommates than lovers. Issues that were once small have grown because they haven't had the energy to deal with them.

### SIGNS OF A FAILING MARRIAGE

The first step to fixing a broken relationship is to acknowledge that the frass exists and that it's a symptom of something deeper that needs attention.

A professional exterminator has the experience and knowledge to know exactly where to look and what to look for during an inspection. He or she knows that termites don't show up in the refrigerator or a car; they look at places where wood often gets damp and exposed. In the same way, marriage experts can help us know where to begin our own search.

What are the biggest issues in marriage? What are the symptoms worth investigating? Here's a list of the most common issues that begin to surface when a relationship is struggling. Once you've decided to journey toward a healthy marriage, consider each item and see if it applies to you.

Do this separately, then use your responses as the basis for your first intentional conversation. Choose a place where you won't be distracted. This won't be a meeting to solve anything but to simply explore and understand each other's perspective with respect.

You feel lonely in your marriage.

You don't feel safe talking about finances together.

You prefer the company of others more than being with your spouse.

You get mildly irritated about a lot of little things your spouse does.

Your spouse is not the first person you talk to when you're dealing with tough issues.

You don't celebrate special days (birthdays, anniversaries, etc.)

anymore.

You subconsciously keep track of past wrongs.

You don't have much to talk about with each other.

Teasing has become hurtful, or sarcastic.

Your conversations with your boss and coworkers are more civil than ones with your spouse.

You have the same argument repeatedly, with no resolution.

You've stopped arguing or disagreeing — you've given up because you feel like there's nothing worth fighting for.

You stop sharing wins.

It feels physically wrong to be together (no intimacy).

You feel more like yourself when you're separate.

You keep secrets.

You don't express appreciation to each other for little things.

You want to change the other person.

Trust is low.

You've stopped having date nights.

You feel resentful about what your spouse isn't doing.

You blame your schedules for your inability to work as a team.

Your personal hobbies mean more than the things you could do together.

You pay more attention to your phone than to your spouse.

None of these things signal a hopeless relationship by themselves, even though it might seem that way. You may feel overwhelmed if the list is long and the frass seems to be piled high. Just remember that the frass isn't the problem; it simply points to the problem.

### HOW TO FIX A BROKEN RELATIONSHIP

Healthy marriages don't happen by default; they happen by design. It's an intentional choice to follow God's design for a thriving relationship, and to learn how to fix a broken relationship. Philippians 2:2-4 says, "Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ... [I]n humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of

others."

Once you've worked through the list of issues on your own, don't talk with your spouse about every item you selected. Instead, choose the top three critical concerns and then put them in order. Before you meet, prepare separately by reading the following verse to set the tone for your connection: "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen" (Ephesians 4:29, NIV).

When you get together, talk about what that verse should mean as you move forward. After you do that, share only one item of your top three concerns. Describe why you chose that one and how you've observed it. Make sure you don't interpret what you've seen — just describe it. Then, let the other spouse share their ideas in the same way. Don't accuse; just state your observations. You're simply looking for frass at this point, not rebuilding the house.

Save the other things on your list for another time. There's no rush, as this is a time to build trust with each other. Do more listening than talking; ask more questions than presenting your thoughts.

As you consider

how to fix your broken relationship, consider these three suggestions.

1. Face the issue together

It's easy to see the other person as the problem. When tough issues come up, the tendency is for each of you to work on it from your own perspective, but that pushes you apart. Instead, join forces and face the issue together. Let the issue, not your spouse, be the focal point.

2. Focus on gratefulness

When long-term issues are present, there has probably been a level of long-term irritation, as well. If that's true, try keeping a "gratefulness journal" for the next month. At the end of every day, write down one thing about your spouse that you're grateful for. It doesn't have to be big, and it doesn't mean you're not still irritated. But we tend to become what we focus on the most. If you're intentional about looking for the good things, you'll start having a more balanced perspective of your spouse — and your attitude will begin to change.

3. Ask for help

This process is simply a place to start, a way to rekindle your commitment to dealing with the long-term hidden issues. After beginning the journey, you'll likely come to a place where you'll recognize the value of

professional help. Don't hesitate to reach out; this is your marriage!

You pay people to maintain your car, your furnace, and even your teeth. Why not invest in your marriage in the same way?

Is there hope?

The more frass you see, the easier it is to become discouraged. How will we ever fix this broken relationship, you think. Here's the good news: There are never guarantees, but there's always hope.

How? One step at a time. Focus first on the value of your marriage, and then decide that you want to make the journey. If you're moving together in the same direction, you've begun the path toward a world-class relationship.

You can decide to begin the healing journey to restore your relationship, rebuild the foundation, and get rid of the termites you have ignored. Eventually, you may decide to get help from a professional counselor.

If you are on the path of a broken marriage, I encourage you to reach out to a counselor who can assist providing healing and recovery.

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#### Local Planning Committee (LPC) Meeting 1 and Public Forum 1

The Mayfield Independent School's Local Planning Committee (LPC) will conduct a PUBLIC MEETING on August 28, 2025 at 5:30 PM CDT at the Mayfield Board of Education's central office located at 914 East College, Mayfield, Kentucky 42066. A PUBLIC FORUM for public comments will follow this meeting at approximately 6:15 PM CDT. This is the first of a series of meetings and public forums to develop a District Facilities Plan for Mayfield Independent Schools. The Kentucky Department of Education will provide training information for the LPC members. This meeting and future meetings will be informal gatherings to encourage local participation through community suggestions relative to future utilization of existing school facilities and construction of new school facilities. These community suggestions or recommendations will be closely monitored by the Local Planning Committee in the development of a proposed District Facility Plan for the Mayfield Independent School District. For additional information contact Mark Rogers, Director of Facilities at 270-247-9407.

The public is welcome and invited to this series of meetings and public forums.



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