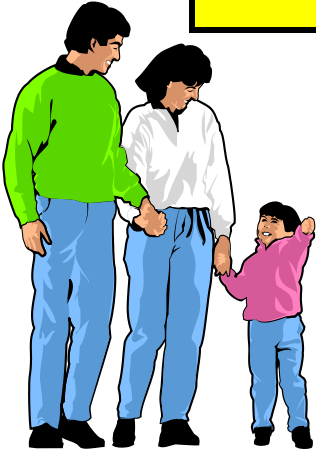


HOME IMPROVEMENT

God's Wisdom for Successful Homes



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Evangelist:
Kent Heaton

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HOW TO GIVE AND RECEIVE CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM

INTRODUCTION

- A. "First behold the beam in *your* eye..." Matthew 7:1-5
- B. However, one is not to deal with oneself alone.
 - a. "Faithful are the *wounds* of a friend." Proverbs 27:6
 - b. "*Admonish* one another." Romans 15:14
 - c. "*Silence may be golden but sometimes it is just plain yellow!*"
 - d. The old adage, "If you don't have anything good to say, don't say anything at all," is not true. Sometimes it takes courage to warn or to instruct a person so s/he is built up spiritually. It may be what is sorely needed.

I BIBLICAL INSTRUCTIONS

- A. Proverbs 12:1 "He that *hates reproof is stupid!*"
- B. Proverbs 12:15 "He that *hearketh unto counsel is wise.*"
- C. Proverbs 3:11 "Don't *refuse criticism.*"
- D. Proverbs 13:18 "If you refuse criticism, you will end in *disgrace.*"
- E. Proverbs 25:12 "He wears a badge of honor who *accepts reproof.*"
- F. Ephesians 4:15 "Speak the *truth in love.*"

**ALL OF US ARE IMPERFECT & NEED HELP!
THIS IS TRUE OF EVERY RELATIONSHIP.
We all have room to grow!**

1. Husbands & wives, parents & children, etc. need help from one another. We tend to shun it, but we need it!
2. Have you ever tried to proofread your own work?
3. We all need help from others who periodically shed light on our blind spots.

Proverbs 16:2 *Self-deception* is the worst kind.

The problem is not criticism – but *destructive* criticism. Too often we don't know how to do it right so we avoid it all together.

WE MUST BUILD UP & NOT TEAR DOWN!

II HOW TO GIVE CRITICISM *CONSTRUCTIVELY*

- A. **Choose your setting carefully** – timing is everything!
1. Do so after a meal and not when you're hungry.
 - a. Ex. Esther gave two banquets *before* she approached the king. Afterwards, she got what she desired.
 2. Criticize in **private** – praise in **public**!
 3. Consider the *feelings* of the other person.
 - a. How do you find out when it is okay?
 - b. *Ask!* “Honey, do you mind me sharing a constructive suggestion with you tonight?” S/he will either say “yes” or “no.” If “no”, usually curiosity will cause your spouse to ask about it later. Then s/he will be mentally prepared and less defensive. Doesn't that make sense?
 4. Most people want to be helped and desire honesty in the relationship if they are just approached in the right way.
 5. However, “*A man convinced of his will is of the same opinion still!*”

DON'T SHARE UNTIL YOU ARE SURE THE OTHER PARTY IS EMOTIONALLY READY

- B. **Don't give an overdose!**
1. One common failure is to pour it on! (“...And another thing, and another thing, etc.”)
 2. Hagar the Horrible gets permission and then says, “Better sit down and get comfortable.”
 3. Most don't realize how critical they have become...*LISTEN* to yourself. (Proverbs 17:9)

WARNING:

OVERDOSING KILLS THE MOTIVATION TO CHANGE!

SUGGESTION:

|| **ONLY ONE CRITICISM A WEEK** ||
(That ought to be enough – that's 52 a year!)

GO ON A 24-HOUR CRITICISM FAST!
(See attached handout)

4. Challenge: Make it easy! **Ask for it** periodically.
- C. **Couple criticism with compliments**
1. Notice the ratio: 3 compliments to 1 criticism (John's example in Revelation 2:1-4)
 2. *"The bitter pill of criticism can be swallowed much easier if first sugar-coated with the medicine of sincere praise."*
 3. Mary Poppins says: *"Just a spoon full of sugar helps the medicine go down!"*

III HOW TO RECEIVE CRITICISM *CONSTRUCTIVELY*

- A. Recognize the hand of GOD! Romans 8:28 (GOD wants to use this for my good.)
- B. Let your first words be **"Thank you!"** I Thessalonians 5:18 *"In everything give thanks."*
- C. Three reasons:
 - a. He said it to your face – not behind your back.
 - b. If it is true, you need to change and now you can grow.
 - c. If it is false, it gives you opportunity to correct the misunderstanding.
- D. **Always ask:**

What can I learn from criticism?

Not all are valid. But we can still learn something from all kinds of criticism.

1. Then **act** if possible. You can't do what everyone says!
 - a. Ex. My daughter wanted me to triple her allowance – not a good idea.
 2. Work with the reasonable requests for small things as much as possible.
- E. Never give the same criticism two weeks in a row. Give the other party at least a month before you bring up the same thing again.

IV. WHAT ABOUT THE THINGS THAT WON'T CHANGE?

A. "Love *covers* a multitude of sins." I Peter 4:8

LOVE ACCEPTS MANY IMPERFECTIONS!

Some things you will need to **accept...**

1. Otherwise, anger turns inward and becomes *bitterness and depression*.
2. Say the **Serenity Prayer!**

"GOD GRANT ME THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE, THE COURAGE TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN, AND THE WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE!"

3. "*It is to His glory to pass over a transgression and seek love.*" Proverbs 18:11

THE CONCLUSION:

Don't mind criticism...

If it is not true, disregard it.

If it is unfair, keep from irritation.

If it is ignorant, smile.

If it is justified, learn from it!

TAKE THE “CRITICISM PLEDGE” & TRY A UNIQUE FAST

We live in a negative world! We are all bombarded with criticism constantly. **Why not allow your home to be a refuge from criticism?** Think of your mate as a haven, a **peaceful retreat, the ever-quiet eye of the hurricane.**

Research has found that the **significant decreasing of criticism and negative comments** from our family relationships is **even more important** than learning to express love positively. Small wonder Paul stresses we are to **dwelling on the positive!** *“Whatsoever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely and of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, dwell on these things”* Philippians 4:8. One of the reasons this is so important is that it takes a great many positive strokes to make up for even one critical comment. So, **keep criticisms to a minimum and express them only if you feel it is really necessary.** *“Be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath”* James 1:19.

Try promising your mate you will **never say a critical word** about him or her, make him\her **the brunt of jokes, nor in any way speak unkindly** of the other or **betray your relationship, and ask your partner to do the same!**

Think about it...What confidence it gives a woman to know that when other men are making fun of their wives or complaining about their weaknesses like their cooking, homemaking, lovemaking, shortcomings, and faults, **her name is safe.** And likewise, when women get together and begin to belittle their husbands, what security it gives a man to know that **his name will not be mentioned.** Oh, **it is not because there are no faults;** faults are self-evident. **It isn't because it wouldn't be justified.** Speaking no ill of each other is simply...

BECAUSE OF YOUR LOYALTY TO ONE ANOTHER!

**HOW DOES ONE OVERCOME BEING A CRITICAL PERSON?
TAKE A 24-HOUR CRITICISM FAST!**

Start by stopping! **For a period of 24 hours, refrain from criticizing yourself, the government, the food, your boss and/or co-workers, your spouse, your surroundings – come to a complete halt for twenty-four hours!!** Watch out for back-seat driving and comments on other drivers. Phone calls are dangerous. Especially watch out when you are hungry or under any kind of time pressure! **You cannot criticize anyone for any reason unless human life is in danger. Another exception would be if you hear or see another person who has agreed to take the fast but is criticizing without realizing it.** You may, in this case, point out kindly to him/her that s/he has done so and needs to start over, without being critical yourself for having pointed it out!

This is not as easy as it sounds. The majority of people do not succeed in their first attempt. Do not be discouraged. If you find yourself being critical, make a note of the time and **start your “fast” over again until you have gone for 24 hours** (including the time you are asleep) **without being critical at all!**

BE CAREFUL NOT TO COMMIT WHAT I CALL, "Criticism of the Heart." If a critical thought enters your mind and you get rid of the thought in a moment, then it does not count and you do not have to start your 24 hours over. If, on the other hand, **you let that critical thought stay in your mind and you develop it** into a full production with quadraphonic sound and vista vision, they you must start over again.

Don't be too hard on yourself if you don't succeed in this assignment right away. This is a difficult assignment!

WHY SHOULD YOU TRY?

These are the positive objectives that I hope you will experience while doing this:

1. It will increase **your awareness** of the critical nature of our **society**.
2. It will help you to **become aware** of your **own compulsion to criticize**.
3. It will enable you to experience the **power of self-mastery**.

The answer to the question "Why should I try to stop criticizing?" is simply..."*So that you can lay a foundation for love and acceptance in your home instead of rejection.*"

Take the pledge of **verbal loyalty to the relationship** to demonstrate your commitment to it! As a token of your willingness, stop criticizing. **Commitment and willingness are two keys to loving, lasting, emotionally-close marriages.**

I challenge newlyweds and couples who desire to enrich their marriages and to experience emotional 'remarriage' to **take the following pledge:**

"I PROMISE, AS YOUR MATE, THAT I WILL NEVER SPEAK ILL OF YOU TO FRIEND, FAMILY, OR STRANGER. I WILL NOT EMBARRASS OR BELITTLE YOU IN FRONT OF OTHERS, NOR WILL I BE CRITICAL OF YOU IN YOUR ABSENCE. I WILL NOT DISCUSS OUR PERSONAL PROBLEMS WITH ANYONE WITHOUT YOUR PERMISSION. THIS IS MY PLEDGE TO YOU."

NOW LIVE IT !!!!!

SUCCESSFUL QUARRELING

Introduction:

- A. Conflict is inevitable. “*A fellow who says he has never had an argument with his wife is apt to lie about other things, too.*”
- B. If you have a partnership, you have to work on things together. You will have disagreements due to different backgrounds and opinions you both possess.
 - 1. Marriage is two *becoming* one and the whole time you are trying to determine which one it is!
 - 2. One fellow said, “The nice thing about being single is that all the decisions are unanimous.”
- C. This subject is vitally important because the number one criteria necessary for long-term marital stability and happiness is **the ability to resolve conflict successfully!**
 - 1. The positives initially draw people together, but the negatives (and how they are handled) ultimately pull people apart.
 - 2. Research has found that there are 4 factors that if not dealt with are precursors of divorce: **CRITICISM, CONTEMPT, DEFENSIVENESS, AND WITHDRAWAL**. These are the 4 emotional land mines that will blast apart and destroy almost any marriage if they become chronic. Notice: They all deal with conflict resolution!
 - 3. This is critically important, yet so often neglected.

I GENERAL POINTERS

- A. Be *careful*...One zinger erases twenty positives!
 - 1. Song: “Angry words, oh, let them never...” holds good advice.
 - 2. Hurtful, harsh, unkind comments can become huge withdrawals from the love bank and do serious damage to the relationship.
- B. When in doubt, *wait*.
 - 1. You can always go back and say it later, but once it is out the hurt is not so easily taken back.
 - 2. One secret to a happy marriage: Let three things go every day...unsaid!
- C. Relationships have *momentum*. They have an ebb and flow to them that is either positive or negative.
 - 1. Things tend to be like a snowball rolling downhill. This works both to your advantage and disadvantage.
 - 2. When things start to go in the wrong direction, one or both parties need to recognize it and say, “Let’s get off this negative cycle and stop hurting each other. Let’s instead apologize, put it behind us, and start doing things to show love and build each other up, instead of tear each other down!”
- D. Beware of the modern *egalitarian marriage*.
 - 1. People quarrel more and more today than ever before because the traditional roles have been discarded. There is **no final arbitrator of disputes**.

2. No other organization on earth functions this way, but modern marriages attempt to do so. The result is that relationships deteriorate into power plays.
3. Blurred roles and **no more established rules** put untold strain on modern American marriages.

II WHAT DO MOST COUPLES ARGUE ABOUT?

- A. There are **5 traditional areas** of conflict that all couples have argued about as far back as such things have been studied.
1. Sex
 2. Children (whether or when to have them and how to raise them)
 3. Money
 4. In-laws (“What’s more important to you, your parents or me?”)
 5. Tremendous Trifles -- small, theoretically inconsequential things that drive most people to the brink of mayhem, divorce, or screaming meemies!
 - a. A trifle is something small, but it can be a tremendous source of conflict.
 - b. They are usually things one never thought about before marriage.
 - c. Examples: Dog-eared pages of a book, leaving hairs in the sink, squeezing the toothpaste “wrong”, eating styles, sleeping habits, etc.
 1. One man on his 25th wedding anniversary calculated he had kicked the sheets loose about 7,500 times, and that this had taken him at least a minute each night.
 2. Therefore, he figured he had wasted 125 hours of his life since he had gotten married fighting with his wife over the sheets!
 - d. If the relationship already has problems, these can become the focus. However, if the relationship is solid, they are usually just irritants that will not destroy the marriage.
- B. **New top issues!**
- A. Who does the domestic chores? (Women are often resentful if they have to work full-time and then pull a double-shift at home, too.)
 - B. How do we spend our precious and limited leisure time?

III WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HAPPY AND UNHAPPY COUPLES?

- A. Ironically, both happy and unhappy couples argue about the *same things*. The number of disagreements and how often spouses disagree is not a significant factor in marital satisfaction. The difference is in *how* the parties argue.
1. Happy couples argue as if the issue is *external to the relationship*.
 2. Unhappy couples get personal and “hit below the belt” which attacks the *person* rather than the *problem*.
 - a. Learning to apply the “Seven Rules for Fighting Fairly” is important.
 - b. Following these guidelines will prevent harming the relationship as disagreements are worked out.
- B. Mudd and Hay, two social scientists, found that even after a particular area of conflict or tremendous trifle was fixed in a marriage, it did not solve the problem..
1. The real problem was the *relationship itself*. Other surface issues were just symptoms of the relationship problems.

2. **Serious relationship problems** were revealed such as:
 - a. Feeling lonely and unloved
 - b. Feeling misunderstood (can't communicate)
 - c. Losing perspective (forgetting what spouses once meant to each other)
 - d. Feeling rejected and unworthy (partner causing a self-esteem problem instead being a solution)
 3. Time was wasted focusing on peripheral issues instead of on the *relationship*.
- C. Happy couples are very careful to not even think, much less express, the “**fatal thought**” which is two-fold: “This means **you don't love me** anymore, so therefore maybe we ought to **divorce.**”

IV WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENS DURING CONFLICT THAT MAKES IT SO CRUCIAL TO THE RELATIONSHIP?

- A. Willard Harley in **His Needs, Her Needs** explains it well when he talks about **THE THREE STAGES OF MARITAL INTIMACY**.
1. **Stage one:** You have become INTIMATE and feel close, so you tell each other *everything*.
 2. **Stage two:** You begin to have disagreements and enter into CONFLICT. This is not bad as long as you can *resolve the conflict so you can restore intimacy*.
 3. Couples go from stage one to stage two all the time. The key is to always return to stage one. Paul admonishes, “*Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.*” Ephesians 4:26
 4. **Stage three:** You remain in conflict and cannot resolve it. You begin to feel frustrated and misunderstood. The parties begin to hurt each other and the relationship. Emotional turmoil becomes the norm. Eventually one or both parties give up and erect deadly walls of defense. He/she enters into WITHDRAWAL.
- B. **The withdrawal decision...is a very serious one.** It means you have given up and decided that the way to cope with the hurt is to *emotionally disconnect* yourself from your spouse. This has far-reaching consequences.
1. You become emotionally and spiritually divorced from each other. You wake up one day and decide you “do not love him” or her anymore. The woman especially dreads physical contact because she cannot give of herself in this state.
 2. The wall you have built keeps out the good as well as the bad. This explains why even thoughtful, positive things don't mean a thing and will not be allowed as “deposits in your love bank” until you feel SAFE enough to let the wall down.
 3. **Warning:** WHEN THE OPEN SHARING OF FEELINGS STOPS, PASSION DIES! Romantic love is lost!
 4. The irony about romantic love is that when you have it, you think you can never lose it; and when you lose it, you think you can never regain it. Both are untrue and naive.
 - a. Romantic love *can be regained* if the parties understand what has happened to them. **Learning how to resolve conflict** will let both parties feel SAFE enough to share feelings so the walls can come down.
 - b. Trust is re-established and over time the old feelings of **intimacy and romance return!!**

- c. The key to **preventing affairs** is to commit to full disclosure about hard topics. Affairs happen when walls (secrets) are created between spouses and windows of intimacy with someone else. Deep sharing on a feeling level is what causes someone to fall in love.
- d. However, if there is **nothing important your spouse doesn't know** about, an affair will almost never happen.

CONCLUSION

- A. If you stay in stage one (intimacy) and learn how to avoid stage three (withdrawal), you will remain happily married!
- B. To avoid the wall, learn how to resolve conflict constructively. Have courage to not avoid tough topics to begin with. If a wall is already up, bravely go back and work through the conflict in order to regain the intimacy you both desire.
- C. In order to accomplish this, you need guidelines and rules to follow so that you feel safe. That is the reason for and the importance of the next lesson on “Rules for Fighting Fairly”.
- D. Following these principles from the start can prevent a wall from forming and keep the marriage strong. However, if the wall has been there for years, and bitterness and anonymity have crept in, then a third party counselor is necessary to help you work through it!
- E. It is painful and a bit scary, but it is **well worth it**. After a couple comes through the crisis, they are often better off and closer than they have ever been before! Just like with a bone that breaks. Nature heals it back stronger than it was before the break.
- F. When folks tell you it's no use and that their love is “dead”, give them HOPE. Remind them that we serve a God who specializes in the *resurrection from the dead!*

SYMPTOMS OF SPIRITUAL DIVORCE

Symptoms of **spiritual divorce** are indicators that a separation is *developing* and needs to be confronted through dialogue. They are “*signs*” and are present at some time in every marriage.

Take about 20 minutes apiece for each to privately do this exercise then exchange your answers and discuss together. Don't allow fear to prevent you from being open with each other.

Instructions:

- A. **Read through all the symptoms. Which symptoms are currently present** in your marriage? Place a check mark next to each one.
 - B. Re-read those that are checked. Select **2 or 3 you feel most strongly about** right now.
 - C. **Write and describe your feelings** about those 2 or 3. If time allows, continue on to the others checked.
1. Prolonged **moods of sadness** in our marriage and in the family
 2. Feelings of **disillusionment, boredom, and emptiness**
 3. **Dissatisfaction**
 4. **Indifference** to each other's problems
 5. Occasions of **coldness** in our relationship
 6. **Avoiding or refusing sexual relationship**
 7. No interest in things of the other – **lack of sensitivity**
 8. Lack of **kindness, tenderness, and small courtesies**
 9. **Failure to take time to think deeply**
 10. Feelings of **insecurity and mutual distrust**
 11. **More confidence in a third person** other than with each other
 12. Lack of **dialogue and intimate communication**
 13. Most **communication mechanical, routine, and surface**
 14. Feelings of **being alone and not understood**
 15. Frequent **bad humor and tension**
 16. Feeling **used**
 17. Frequent **quarrels:** in private, or in front of children or others
 18. **Ridicule** of each other
 19. **Superficial life and continuous escapes,** together or alone, such as liquor, drugs, TV, compulsive socializing
 20. Attitude of **selfishness**
 21. **Insults, rude words, and sarcasm**
 22. **Avoidance of situations that deeply need attention**
 23. Personal **relationship with God causing conflict**
 24. Lack of **appreciation**
 25. Lack or **loss of a sense of wonder**
 26. Lack of **faith in love and marriage**
 27. **Insensitive teasing**
 28. **Nagging**
 29. Lack of **planning things together**

TEN RULES FOR A GOOD CLEAN FIGHT

Resolving Conflicts In Marriage

By Brent Hunter

INTRODUCTION

- A. Two ideas to remember about hostility:
1. It is natural. Motion (growth) requires some friction.
 - a. Marriages are made in heaven, but so are *thunder and lightning storms!*
 - b. Marriage is similar to the merging of two great rivers
 1. Merging into ONE two different lives, backgrounds, habits, etc.
 2. Trying to share the same time, space & resources
 3. What happens when rivers merge together – RAPIDS! WHITE WATER.
 4. It is only natural that the blending of lives together will produce some friction, disagreements and conflicts.
 2. Since it is inevitable, you must agree to settle differences “agreeably.” **It is the #1 interpersonal skill necessary for long-term marital stability, so make sure you master it!**
- B. Handled properly conflict can be a good thing. Learn to view “*fight*s” not as tragedies, but opportunities!
1. Venting personal frustrations through lips which have learned how to do so can serve a wonderful purpose.
 2. Skill and self-control **can** turn potentially destructive squabbles into “*fair fights*” which solve problems and yield positive results!
 3. Remember: The secret to a good marriage is not finding the right person, but *learning to fight well with the person you have found!*

Rule #1 BE DRIVEN BY LOVE!

- A. This is the **one principle** from which all the others spring (we’re laying the foundation). Husbands and wives are to love each other, **Ephesians 5:25; Titus 2:4**.
1. That means more than just having warm feelings of affection for each other. It means I always want to act in their best interest – always seeking their good and never doing anything to hurt them.
 2. It’s not just an emotion; love is a decision to behave in a certain way. When Paul defined love, he described it as **a way of behaving**, I Cor. 13:4ff.
 3. If we want to manage conflict well, then we need to be sure that our actions are **always driven by love**, I must never do anything thing to hurt. I should always be acting in the best interest of my spouse.
 - a. Love needs to be the atmosphere that fills our homes and pulses through our marriage conflicts.
 - b. Before we speak or act, we need to ask, “Am I acting with love?”
 - c. Folks, that’s not just a good idea, that’s what God demands.

- B. Now, the other principles spring from this one. If you want to act with love, then before you can address a conflict, you first need to...

Rule #2 DO YOUR THING TO COOL OFF! (Eph. 4:26; Prov 29:8, 30:33, 17:27)

- A. Never be ashamed of anger--it is natural, not sinful. The only thing you need to regret is handling it badly. Proverbs 29:22 *"An angry man stirs up strife, and a hot-tempered man abounds in transgression."*
- B. Since you are literally in a state of **intoxication** when your *"fuse is lit,"* reduce the emotional state before a discussion begins.
1. *"There is more hope for a fool than a man of quick temper."* Proverbs 29:20
 2. *"...and a wrathful man stirreth up contention."* Proverbs 15:18
 3. **IF YOU ARGUE WHEN YOU'RE ANGRY, YOU'RE APT TO MAKE MATTERS WORSE!**
- C. If we are driven by love, we will do whatever it takes to cool off FIRST!
1. Engage in some physical activity
 2. Go for a walk
 3. Take a hot bath
 4. Pray alone--it calms the spirit so you can see the situation more clearly.
- D. The key here is this: **Rule our passions, rather than allowing our passions to rule us!**
1. Proverbs 16:32 *"He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, then he who captures a city."*
 2. **No one likes living with a volcano** – we must cool off and get anger under control.
- E. Afterwards, you may just decide to forget the whole thing! (Proverbs 17:9; 19:11)
If not, proceed to Rule #3!

RULE #3 ARGUE WITH THE RIGHT PERSON (PROVERBS 3:30; 25:9)

- A. Remember to express frustration/anger toward the person you are really angry with and **not some innocent party.**
1. Be honest. Husbands, how many times are you angry and frustrated at something at work, and the poor wife suddenly can't do anything right?
 2. Similarly, wives can be frustrated after dealing with the kids all day and consequently are ready for war as soon as their husbands come in the door?
 3. We all do it – and it is grossly unfair!
 - a. **Proverbs 3:30 "Do not accuse a man for no reason – when he has done you no harm!"**
- B. Beating up on innocent third parties is called *"dumping."*
1. **Dumping is cruel**, it allows you to **escape** the real person or issue, and **resolves** nothing. It only makes matters worse!

2. So, have the courage to **make sure** you are bringing your complaint to the right person.

RULE #4 ARGUE ABOUT THE RIGHT THING (PROVERBS 15:7, 28)

- A. Seems obvious too, but how many marriage conflicts are really about an **unspoken agenda**? Many arguments are fought about the **wrong subjects**.
 1. Ex. Husband criticizes his wife's housekeeping when the real complaint is a lack of intimacy in the relationship!
 2. Ex. Wife criticizes her husband's tardiness when the real issue is she is feeling neglected?
 3. We must be **in touch with our feelings** and ask, "*Am I really angry because of this or is it something else?*"
 4. Sometimes our arguments solve nothing because we are not talking about the right thing.
 5. A good indication of a hidden agenda is when OUR ANGER IS OUT OF PROPORTION TO THE OFFENSE.
- B. **The issue here is one of Honesty, Ephesians 4:25.**
 1. We must learn to be upfront about our frustrations and stop working with a hidden agenda.
 2. Not only is it dishonest and unfair, but arguing about the wrong thing does nothing to solve the problem!
 3. John 8:32 Jesus said: "*The truth will set you FREE.*" You will not have an *authentic* successful marriage unless you are honest.

RULE #5 ARGUE AT THE RIGHT TIME (ECCL. 3:1-11; PROVERBS 25:8)

- A. Both must agree the time is right before beginning. Something as simple as timing can make a big difference in how we resolve our marriage conflicts.
- B. Here are some times **not** to argue:
 1. **In front of company.** To do so is *degrading*. *Violates trust*.
 2. **When there is not enough time to finish.** Have you ever found yourself in the middle of big argument right before company arrives or it is time to go to services?
 3. **When either party is hungry or tired.**
 4. **Just as one or both spouses come home from work.**
 - a. 80% of marital fights occur between 5-6 pm
 - b. Instead of celebrating being together, we dump on each other. That is a bad time.
 - c. Good rule of thumb: Do not discuss problems until **after** dinner.

RULE #6 DON'T BE HISTORICAL (EPHESIANS 4:26)

- A. Man complains, "My wife always gets historical." Amused, his friend replied, "I think you mean hysterical." "No, I mean historical," he said. When we argue she reminds me of everything I've ever done wrong."
 1. Why do we drag up the past? Often, we are losing an argument so past blunders are brought up in order to gain some advantage.
 2. Example: "I might be wrong now, but you are just as guilty." This moves us

in the wrong direction!

- B. Be committed to **not bring up past fights**.
 - 1. *"He that harpeth on a matter separateth chief friends."* Proverbs 17:9
 - 2. Bringing up items that you thought were resolved **breeds mistrust** and a **lack of confidence** in the relationship.
- C. The real issue is one of **FORGIVENESS**. Ephesians 4:31-32
 - 1. Once an argument is resolved, it is to be **buried and never resurrected**. Don't bury the hatchet with the handle left sticking out of the ground.
 - 2. Before ending an argument, make sure it is closed for both parties.
 - a. If it's not, don't drop it until it is resolved.
 - b. But when it is finished, then **both must agree is over**. Period.
 - 3. Paul said that in true love, I Corinthians 13:5 one does not *"Take into account a wrong suffered."* Love means we stop keeping the books.

RULE #7 DON'T RAISE YOUR VOICE

- A. That is tough if increasing the decibel level is how you grew up! To some, a fight isn't a fight without some yelling!
 - 1. Truth is, loudness does not make things better; and it does not communicate love. In fact, it's often when we start getting louder that hurtful things come out of our mouth.
 - 2. Yelling at someone is *disrespectful and degrading*. It certainly is not the golden rule.
 - 3. Harsh, loud words are **not consistent with the love that should drive our actions**. Paul said that love leads us to be "kind," (I Corinthians 13.4).
- B. **Listen to Solomon**: Proverbs 15:1 *"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger."*
 - 1. Here is the key: "Lower your voice one octave, rather than raising it two."
 - 2. Make a point as the heat goes up in a discussion, to take the volume down.

RULE #8 AVOID NAME CALLING (PROVERBS 14:22; 27:4)

- A. There is no excuse for hurling insults or profane names at loved ones.
 - 1. Abusing intimacy and resorting to *"knife twisting"* are especially harmful.
 - 2. Thoughtless names (labels) puncture deeply and are remembered for years.
- B. Three reasons why personal verbal assaults are so destructive:
 - 1. They throw an argument off-track and do not lead to a resolution.
 - 2. They focus attention on the mate, not on solving the problem.
 - 3. They hurt the relationship and **ruin mutual respect**.
- C. Three suggestions:
 - 1. Tackle the problem, not the person.
 - 2. Replace *"you"* statements with *"I"* statements. (Instead of *"You lazy bum!"* say, *"I feel you're not working as hard as you could."*)

3. Be determined to only use words that edify! Ephesians 4:29 *“Let no unwholesome words proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so it will give grace to those who hear.”*
- D. Insults, sarcasm, filthy and profane names are sometimes used with our spouse that we would never even consider using with anyone else!
1. We should treat our families the best, not the worst!
 2. I Corinthians 13 tell us love is patient, kind, does not act unbecomingly.
- E. Name calling is counter-productive because it often creates a problem that is bigger than the original problem that provoked the argument!
1. Careless insults can create pain for years to come. How absurd!
 2. Solomon in Proverbs 12:8 *“There is one who speaks rashly like the thrusts of a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.”*
 3. Words are powerful. If we want to manage our conflicts well, we must use words that edify!

RULE #9 AVOID "STAMP-SAVING" (PROVERBS 10:18)

- A. Some save up grievances like stamps, waiting until the book is full to cash it in.
1. Ex. Unloading other complaints in rapid succession during an argument over something else.
 2. Be sure to only discuss one disagreement at a time.
- B. Don't let things build up! Foster the type of relationship where you can express irritations as they occur.
- C. Stamp-saving...
1. Overwhelms the poor mate who is bombarded with so much all at once.
 2. Is disconcerting to the one who discovers that true feelings weren't revealed earlier.
 3. Breeds both a lack of trust as well as confidence.
- D. **The cure:**
1. Express displeasure at the earliest convenient time.
 2. Mention it next time it occurs (if a recurring fault), and not during an argument about something else or choose to forget it forever!

RULE #10 DON'T FOCUS ON WINNING (EPHESIANS 5:21)

“Submit yourselves one to the other in the fear of Christ.”

- A. If we're not careful, our marriage conflicts can take on a life of their own.
1. The focus can become **winning the argument rather than reaching a resolution.**
 2. When that happens, *everything changes.*
 - a. We begin to use every trick in the book so we can win.
 - b. We refuse to admit any wrong or acknowledge any validity in what the other person is saying, less we give them some advantage.
 - c. We begin to pick a part every little detail of what is said, i.e. “I don't forget to take out the trash all the time; I did once last year!”
 - d. The conversation begins to be dotted with challenges, i.e. “prove it” or “give me one example when I did that.”

3. When we reach that point, **no one will come out a winner**. We may win the battle, but ultimately lose the war...and the “good will” and mutual respect we both need and desire for a good relationship.
- B. What we need to remember is that marriage is a *cooperative enterprise*.
1. If my goal is to **win and get my way**, then I’m going to make my spouse miserable.
 2. The goal should be to **reach a solution that will please God** and that both of us can live with. A good marriage provides for some “give and take.”
 3. I’ve got to be unselfish and take into account the needs of my spouse as we try to work this out, **Philippians. 2:3-4**.
 4. In **I Corinthians. 13:5** Paul says that love “**does not seek its own.**”
 5. We need to accept our share of the blame and never resort to threats or give ultimatums. We certainly should never use sex or money as weapon.
 6. We need to reach a conclusion that if possible will suit both, not just one.
To do otherwise may help us win more arguments, but in the end, **we’ll lose the war – and perhaps our marriage too!**

CONCLUSION

- A. Take these homes and make a pact to live by God’s rules when managing conflicts.
- B. Mature partners know that differences are not wrong.
- C. Conflicts can be worked out *fairly, amiably, and lovingly*.
- D. Both must be honest, so a wall of silence will not be built and drive them apart.
- E. Marriage run by GOD’S principles can be a little bit of Paradise left to bless both man and woman in a sinful world.
- F. Remember: *"Marriages are made in heaven, but the maintenance contract must be maintained on earth."*
- G. God has the answers for our every need; do you rely and depend upon Him for help?



PRESCRIPTION FOR THE B. E. S. T. MARRIAGE

Presented by Brent Hunter

INTRODUCTION

- A. A recent poll found that 62% of married couples reported their marriages less than desirable. Seventy five percent reported they thought their marriage was in a rut.
- B. It appears that the Righteous Brothers song “You’ve Lost That Loving Feeling” has unfortunately, become the theme song for too many marriages.
- C. What is the prescription necessary to cure the ailments that plague so many marriages? I believe it is simple and four fold in nature. **If you want the B.E.S.T. marriage each of these important medicines must be applied:**
- | | |
|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Blessing | 3. Sharing |
| 2. Edifying | 4. Touching |

INGREDIENT #1: BLESSING

- A. Blessing (Gk. Eulogia) is actually a combination of two Greek words:
1. Eu = well and Logos = word.
 2. Literally means “**speaking well to or about another.**”
- B. Jesus modeled this for us.
1. “When He was reviled, He did not revile in return” (I Peter 2:23) but instead prayed that the Father would bless and forgive them!
 2. He commanded: “**Bless those who curse you**, and pray for those who spitefully use you” (Luke 6:28-29).
- C. The Apostles modeled this for us. “**Being reviled, we bless**; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat” (I Corinthians 4:12-13). See also Romans 12:17.
- D. Marriage is to be a blessing. The Key is: **Bless and be a Blessing!**
1. The worthy woman will “open her mouth with wisdom and the law of kindness is on her tongue” (Proverbs 31:27) even when she is upset with her husband or feels provoked.
 2. The Godly man will have the same attitude. “What is desirable in a man is his kindness” (Proverbs 19:22).
 3. Important principle: **Respond to a curse with a blessing** (Romans 12:14)! Must not “bless our Lord and Father, and with the same tongue curse men” (James 3:9-11).
- E. How can we and do we most effectively bless others?
- a. By the words we speak (Proverbs 25:11).
 - b. By learning when to be silent (Proverbs 11:12-13).
- F. Three ways to bless:
- a. By being kind, not as a duty but as a “gift of blessing.”
 - b. By expressing appreciation. Notice the good and express verbally your thankfulness.
 - c. By calling God’s favor upon him/her in prayer. How much do you pray for and with your partner?

- G. Summary: Bless your marriage through good words, kind actions, thankful appreciation, and intercessory prayer. A good place to begin is with Numbers 6:24-27, the priestly benediction.

INGREDIENT #2: EDIFICATION

- A. Literally = “To build up.” Be each other’s cheerleader!
- B. Elizabeth Barrett Browning spoke to this in her love poem, “Let Me Count The Ways.”
- She said the more she loved - the bigger person she became.
 - “Make my love larger to enlarge my worth.” This is the beauty of edification, it enlarges our hearts!
- C. Root word for edification: “A hearth or fireplace.”
- To the ancients the hearth was the center of activity in the home and brought forth warmth and light, togetherness and physical sustenance.
 - What the hearth was to the physical body, the marriage relationship should be for the soul!
- D. Three golden strands of edification which are interwoven together:
- Personal encouragement
 - Inner strength
 - Peace and harmony (I Peter 3:9-12).
- E. Bible is filled with admonitions concerning edifying one another:
- “Eagerly pursue what makes for harmony and the edification of one another” (Romans 14:19).
 - “Make it a practice to please your neighbor for his good, to edify and strengthen him” (Romans 15:2).
 - “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up” (I Thessalonians 5:11).
 - “Love builds up (edifies)” (I Corinthians 8:1)!
- F. How does the husband edify?
- Husbands should nourish emotionally by giving sincere praise. He should “nourish and cherish” his wife (Ephesians 5).
 - Be genuine. Provide specific and generous compliments.
 - Practice the Philippians 4:8 process with your wife.
 - Before you speak? Will this build up? Encourage? Make for peace?
- G. How does the wife edify?
- By being responsive, especially with her eyes and smile.
 - Showing respect (Ephesians 5:33). She is the beneficiary when she does this well and enhances his sense of manhood.

INGREDIENT #3: SHARING

- A. In order to have unity, oneness, and intimacy in marriage as outlined in Genesis 2:24-25 one must learn to share!
- Sharing involves a willingness to blend your will with the will of your mate.
 - True love is not so much looking into each other’s eyes as much as learning to look in the same direction! So look for mutual goals!

- B. “An intimate long-term marriage is not the involuntary result of fleeting emotion but the creation of time and will.” Dr. WH Auden.
 - a. Intimacy begins when two people deliberately share the same world, time, interests, activities, feelings, thoughts, goals, ideals.
 - b. “Both must communicate experiences, dreams, fears, and secrets.” Dr. Ed Wheat.
- C. When was the last time as a couple you shared a laugh and really had fun? Went on a date? Prayed together?
- D. Good marriages maintain some individuality. Allow “spaces in your togetherness,” but at the same time truly share your lives together!
 - 1. What must be avoided at all cost is separation.
 - 2. “Two ships passing in the night” is a recipe for disaster.
 - 3. Sharing involves these four areas:
 - a. **Common ground** – things you share now.
 - b. **Separate ground** – separate interests. Can you bridge this gap?
 - c. **New ground for one** – can one party develop enthusiasm for their partner’s interest?
 - d. **New ground for both** – what new absorbing interests can you both develop together as you grow. Be creative!

INGREDIENT #4: TOUCHING

- A. The importance of the caring touch of another human being is often ignored.
- B. Biblical examples of touching:
 - 1. Jesus laid his hands on the children that came to Him (Matthew 19:13-15).
 - 2. Jesus “put forth His hand and touched” a leper (Matthew 8:2-3)!
 - 3. Brethren are to be “kindly affectionate one to the other” (Romans 12:10).
- C. Benefits of touching:
 - 1. Learning to touch each other joyfully in non-sexual ways is absolutely essential to build emotional intimacy.
 - 2. Touching a woman affectionately kindles a flame in her heart and establishes a good emotional climate of warmth and love in the home.”
 - 3. A tender touch says: “I care.”
 - 4. A UCLA study found touching blesses us by:
 - a. Raising the hemoglobin in our blood and thereby increasing the body’s ability to heal.
 - b. Lowering blood pressure
 - c. Increasing our life span and energy level.
 - d. Making people more positive about life!
 - 5. Most couples need eight to ten meaningful touches a day.
 - 6. Are you providing and receiving the touch you both need in your marriage?

CONCLUSION

- A. Put these four ingredients into your marriage and you will find your marriage will not fall into a rut but will thrive and fulfill your heart’s desire!
- B. The key is to follow God’s prescription and trust the great physician throughout the process.

TURNING PAST FAILURES INTO PRESENT SUCCESSES

“Replication or Repudiation plus Responsibility”

By Brent Hunter

Introduction

- A. Jonathan Edwards\Max Duke comparison: *“In the early 1700s, two men developed distinct reputations for themselves—one was Jonathan Edwards, a man of integrity, refinement and Christian character, and the other was Max Duke, a well-known criminal. During the last two hundred years, their descendants have been traced. In Jonathan Edward’s line of descendants are 13 college presidents, 200 preachers, 60 prominent leaders, 90 physicians, 32 authors, 6 professionals and 300 farmers. On the other hand, Max Duke’s descendants include 90 prostitutes, 100 criminals, 145 confirmed drunkards, 300 delinquents, and 285 who contracted various evil social diseases.”*
1. It is **amazing** -- the effect of one person’s influence!
 2. The Ten Commandments establish this principle. (Exodus 20:4-5)
- B. It is easiest to simply blend in, BUT we are **free moral agents!**
1. We can **replicate** (repeat)
 2. We can **repudiate** (consciously choose NOT to repeat)
 3. We can be **responsible** (make the right choices)
- C. **THESIS:**
- I. Replication -- powerful!
 - II. Repudiation -- pit falls!
 - III. Responsibility -- key!

I REPLICATION

- A. Background and overview
1. Each of us has 2 families:
 - a. A family of *orientation*
 - b. A family of *outcome*
 2. How we respond to ‘a’ determines ‘b’:
 - a. We either *replicate* -- repeat
 - b. Or we *repudiate* – change
- B. We see the overwhelming strength of replication...
1. In **MARRIAGES AND FAMILIES!**
 2. It is *easier* to replicate\repeat what you are used to than to change.

- C. It's so influential that we **often repeat even things we hated while growing up!**
1. Paul's struggle: *"For the good which I would, I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I practice."* Romans 7:19
 - a. Ex. Divorce tends to be contagious
 - b. Ex. Child abuse is often carried out by those abused
 2. Abraham *lied* (half-truth), Isaac & Rebecca, Jacob & Esau
 3. There is amazing comfort in **familiarity** -- even if it's painful.
- D. The children of Israel came out of Egypt.
1. They left bitter bondage. (Exodus 1:11, 13-14)
 2. They wanted to return – but why? (Numbers 11:5)
 3. Their fixation on the **past** destroyed the possibility of a **better future**.
- E. **We tend to raise our children EXACTLY THE WAY WE WERE RAISED.**
1. Small wonder Ecclesiastes 6:11 says, *"Wisdom is good for an inheritance..."*
 2. And the psalmist says *"...more to be desired than fine gold."*

II REPUDIATION

- A. *"We are all affected by our past, but we are **not prisoners of it.**"*
1. *"Repent and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance."* Acts 26:20
 2. Overcoming sinful habits is not easy! **BUT IT IS A MATTER OF CHOICE!!**
- B. Major pitfall: the tendency to over-react (extremes)!**
1. Illustration: Corinth first refused to withdraw from someone that they should have; and then to correct it, they refused to accept him back into fellowship as they should have! This is a typical example of repudiation.
 2. Illustration: the children of Israel
 - a. 1st generation -- **zealous!**
 - b. 2nd generation -- **apathetic!**
 - c. 3rd generation – **rebellious!**
 (They *"forsook Jehovah"*! They decided to be independent of their parents by repudiating too much. -- Judges 2:12)

III RESPONSIBILITY

- A. Learn from the past -- **make choices, NOT EXCUSES!**
1. Adam and Eve – With their first sin, both tried to blame the other.
 2. Today no one seems responsible for his own actions.
- B. Don't blame your parents!**
1. Ezekiel said, *"The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge."* That generation used this excuse. But God replied, *"This saying will be heard NO MORE"*! Ezekiel 18:2-4

3. See page 27 (“Don’t Blame Your Parents”)
- C. What makes a man or woman great? Those who have the courage and character to repudiate bad parenting and make the right choices!
 1. Hezekiah’s father was a very wicked king.
 2. Abraham’s father was an idolater.
 3. Gideon’s father was an idolater.
 4. Jephthah’s mother was a harlot, yet he became a mighty man. (Judges 11)

CONCLUSION

- A. Replicate the good...Repudiate the bad! (2 Corinthians 5:10)
- B. We must all STOP MAKING EXCUSES & BE RESPONSIBLE!
- C. Repent! With God’s help - be a Hezekiah, a Gideon, or a Jephthah.
- D. Do the 3-part assignment on page 26. It is never too late to increase your insight and turn things around.
- E. *“Too many of us lose our peace of mind and security by allowing us to be nailed on a cross between two thieves. On the one side is the thief of regrets over the past, and on the other, fear of the future.”* Turn to GOD, receive forgiveness, put regrets behind you, and with His power take your past failures and transform them into present successes!

ASSIGNMENT TO APPLY PRINCIPLES

THREE PARTS:

Spend some time thinking seriously about these 3 items. Then on a separate sheet of paper write out your answers. Be as specific and thorough as possible.

- I Think about what things you *liked* about your upbringing and would like to **replicate or repeat**.

- II Think about and list the things you would like to *repudiate* and **take responsibility to change**.

- III Discuss how you will avoid the tendency to **over-react and simply go from one extreme to the other**.

This assignment is especially effective when done at a **young age**. I have felt very good about the results achieved when given to 18-19-year olds who have **only been out of their family of orientation** for a **short while**. They can **think clearly about what they would like** in their **new families of outcome** before they begin to **repeat or replicate bad habits**.

However, it is **never too late** to increase one's awareness in this area and with God's help become a **"transition person."** **Negative traits stop by choice** with this type of person and successive generations are spared the **negative consequences** of the bad traits being passed down to their descendants.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if each generation analyzed its past and decided to improve its family so that every generation got better and better instead of just repeated over and over the mistakes of the past?

You can be a part of making this happen!

DON'T BLAME YOUR PARENTS

by *Jacob H. Conn, M.D., Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, Johns Hopkins University Medical School.*

The unsuccessful, the unhappy at various periods in history have blamed their plight on numerous things -- fate, the gods, demons, innate cussedness, or heredity. Today it is the fashion to hold one's parents accountable for every flaw, from plain laziness to mental illness: "I can't save money because my parents never taught me economy." "I'm a hypochondriac because my mother fussed so much about my health when I was little." "In childhood I wasn't permitted to think for myself."

A woman I know actually blamed her parents for her unattractive appearance. Asked why she didn't wave her hair, powder her nose, or occasionally get a new hat, she answered plaintively, "When I was a child Mother always told me I wasn't good looking." It did not occur to her that as an adult it was up to her, and nobody else, to make the most of her looks.

The current notion is that little children are emotionally fragile, that you can wreck a child's whole future by loving him too little or too much, by teaching him the facts of life too late or too soon, by being too strict or too indulgent. Such half-baked misinterpretations of the importance of the formative years ignore the fact that most human beings are blessed with an inner strength. Actually, the average child is as tough psychologically as he is physically. Just as the body repels germs and viruses, so the mind has similar immunities and resistances to the unwise or unkind doing of parents.

History is full of examples of men and women who had unhappy childhoods and yet made a success of their lives. John Stuart Mill became a great philosopher and led a harmonious married life despite a father who never praised him, never allowed him to associate with other children, and relentlessly forced him to study night after night. Beethoven's ne'er-do-well father drove and exploited him shamelessly. Florence Nightingale's parents hemmed her in by all the restrictions that went with Victorian gentility and bitterly opposed her going into nursing.

Ordinary mortals likewise have the capacity to build worthwhile lives despite a past full of psychological handicaps. I do not deny that "parental rejection" or "over-domination" may genuinely handicap some individuals. But a human being is not a machine that once set rolling in the wrong direction is unable to change its course. The essence of maturity or "adjustment" is to make the most of yourself with whatever you have, which includes your physique, your mental endowments, your social opportunities, and your parents.

Almost daily in my practice I see patients who blame their failure to meet life on their parents

instead of on themselves. A fearful, immature spinster wept that she "couldn't leave Mother." Yet her mother told me: "Doctor, I wish to goodness you'd help her, so that she'd go and get married." Nothing tied this woman to her mother's apron strings but knots of her own making.

"No wonder I'm the way I am," a seriously depressed man said to me. "Look!" He pulled from his pocket a yellowed newspaper clipping that told of his parents' double suicide twenty years before. He admitted that he had carried the clipping all those years. The heart of his problem was not the shocking memory but his compulsion to dwell on it.

Contrary to popular notion, mental illness or neuroticism is not caused by an event but by the way a person reacts to it. A disturbing incident is only the match which sets off the firecracker; it's the gunpowder within the cracker which actually causes the explosion. It is good old-fashioned character -- a compound of inherited tendencies and our ability to tolerate disappointments -- that determines whether we withstand childhood tragedies or whether they down us all our lives.

If it were true that what happens during childhood fixes us once and for all, everybody would be neurotic. Certain events in childhood are genuinely upsetting, among them weaning and a new baby in the family. But the normal individual outgrows his baby shoes.

The great majority of normal, healthy-minded youngsters manage, without special help, to cope matter-of-factly with their parents' antics. Just try to spoil a child who has such innate common sense that he doesn't need or want to be spoiled! Or try to dominate the average three-year-old. Children who do not have the neurotic need to be dependent will not be dominated. Maybe they react with tantrums. Maybe they argue. Maybe they are sullenly silent. But whatever the technique for maintaining their integrity, "Mom-ism" won't and can't wreck them.

The psychiatrist's job does not consist -- as many of my patients think -- of breaking apart a person's past so that he can lay his failings, weaknesses, and peculiarities right at his parents' door. All that a psychiatrist can do is to lead the patient to face the truth about his own wish to be dominated or sheltered or what not and help him take a stand by himself. Once that point is reached, his past life matters very little. As Dr. Franz Alexander, a distinguished Chicago psychoanalyst put it, "The patient is suffering not so much from memories as from the incapacity to deal with the actual problems of the moment."

A single experience in adult life can so change human beings that it is sheer nonsense to maintain that their natures were immutably determined years before by what their parents said or did to them. A short illness turned St. Francis of Assisi from a frivolous, extravagant young man into a devout ascetic. Gay young blades marry and become serious and responsible husbands; gadabout young wives turn into settled stay-at-homes after the birth of a baby. The human organism is a

going, changing concern, with the motives of the present its propelling force.

Too many of us with shortcomings are interested in asking, "How did it start?" Too few ask themselves, "Why do I keep it up"? A person must first make the frank self-admission, "I am worrisome -- or thriftless, or hypochondriac, or irresponsible -- because it suits some purpose of my own to be that way."

The cliché, "There are no problem children, only problem parents", is as extreme and fallacious a swing of the pendulum as the idea that all children were imps of Satan. Even a little child can be responsible for his own bad upbringing, for it takes two to make an emotional bargain. When a father is too authoritarian it may well be that he is so because the child craves being bossed. When a mother prolongs treating Junior like a baby it may be because she responds to his own need for protection. Children are not mere lumps of clay which adults mold. In the parent-child relationship, as in marriage, one personality modifies and plays upon another.

Parents can set the stage for the drama of their children's lives. They can supply inspiring or uninspiring examples of conduct, which will influence basic mental, physical, and spiritual growth. But acceptance or rejection of the background they give is a matter of the child's individual character.

GIVE HONOR TO THE WOMAN

I Peter 3:7

INTRODUCTION

- A. God commands us “...*not to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God who gives us all things richly to enjoy.*” I Timothy 6:17
 - 1. God wants us to enjoy life and find pleasure from obeying Him.
 - 2. Paul commands us to “*rejoice always, again I say rejoice!*” Philippians 4:4

- B. Many Christians find it difficult to be joyful. Depression, low self-esteem, and discouragement are too commonplace.
 - 1. Women experience feelings of low self-esteem about being women more than men do about being men.
 - 2. Why is there a “gender gap” of as much as 5 to 1?

- C. Unique gender needs seem instrumental here.
 - 1. Male – “failure in reaching goals”
 - 2. Female – “feedback from the closest circle of family/friends in the last few days”
 - a. Memorize this, men – it explains so much of the “mystery.”
 - b. When a woman in your life seems irritable or upset, ask, “*Have I (or anyone in the family, friends, or co-workers) said something to put her down recently?*”
 - c. This will help you to understand a woman’s mood-shifts better.
 - d. If a man will just reflect on the lowest periods of his life, then he’ll begin to understand how a woman can feel in only a few hours.

I WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT HOW TO SOLVE LOW ESTEEM IN WOMEN?

- A. **The solution:** two basic points from **I Peter 3:7**
 - 1. Husbands are to be ***understanding and sympathetic*** to their wives.
 - 2. Husbands need to demonstrate that they ***honor*** their wives.

- B. Doing these two things will solve the fundamental problem in female self-esteem. With rare exception, if the wife is unhappy about who she is, the husband has failed in his role to properly honor and respect her!!!

- C. Some feminists are offended by I Peter 3:6 where the wife is to *call her husband “lord.”* The idea is to show **deep respect and look up to her husband.**
 - 1. “*Mutual admiration society*” – Notice the “likewise” in I Peter 3:7. The husband is also to **esteem and look up to his wife!**
 - 2. With rules about authority, headship, and submission come rules about one’s *attitude* that must accompany a husband’s authority.
 - 3. Ideally, both should feel they got better than they deserved.

- D. To “ *dwell with them according to knowledge* ” (vs 7), husbands must cultivate a sympathetic spirit and *considerately “live with your wives in an understanding way.”*
1. Gary Smalley says: “*Men are like buffalos and women are like butterflies.*” Emotionally, a man must be careful not to run over his wife!
 2. Ex. The wife is hurt and needs comfort, but the husband belittles her for “being too sensitive.” The Bible tells him, “*as you assert your authority, do so in an understanding way.*”
 3. **Give her your shoulder, not your mouth!** When she hurts, use compassion and understanding! Answer *feeling with feeling, not with fact* !!
- E. To “*give honor unto the wife as the weaker vessel*” (vs 7) is critical.
1. This needs constant effort. Her sense of who and what she is can be lost in a few days if it is not reinforced.
 2. NOT RECOMMENDED: “Honey, I told you when I married you I loved you, and if I change my mind I will let you know!!”
 3. How is the woman “weaker” or more fragile?
 4. She is emotionally the more sensitive and intuitive which enables her to carry out her God-given roles.
 5. GOD “*formed*” man from the dust (Genesis 2:7) – the same word used for shaping clay pots and utensils. In contrast, GOD “*fashioned*” the woman – an artistic term used by skilled craftsmen when sculpting the most intricate items in the temple.
 6. What is displayed in your hutch with lights and honor? Vessels that are fragile or indestructible? (Ever see an iron skillet in a curio cabinet?)
- F. The phrase “*heirs together of the grace of life*” (vs 7) may simply be the happy home that God wanted for us, rather than just salvation.
1. A home in turmoil and an unhappy wife means little “grace.”
 2. Honoring your bride will lessen the tension and change the tone.
 3. If the attitude is right, the husband’s “*prayers will not be hindered.*”

II SOME PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

- A. **Tell her often** how much you love & appreciate her! **Be creative!**
1. Make her feel valued and special every day if possible, not just on her birthday or Mother’s Day. **Be specific:** “Our kids are surely blessed to have a mother like you. You take such good care of them!”
 2. Illustration: “Honey, do you like my dress?” Good answer: “*That dress isn’t half as good looking as you are!*” Better answer: “*That dress is beautiful, but I like what’s IN it a whole better!*”
- B. **Tell others!!**
1. Before friends say, “This is my wife and she’s all mine!” (Use continual positive reinforcement. What you told her 3 weeks ago is gone!)
 2. Lavish praise and appreciation on your mother-in-law. Your wife will love the “sideways compliments”!

3. Some women only survive because friends or bosses tell them how valued they are. For others, the “paycheck” is their only validation. But GOD wants this honor and esteem to come from the **husband!!**
4. The verbal intimacy in the Song of Solomon provides the husband with a pattern to follow!!

C. **Change your attitude** if necessary!

1. If you think your wife “can’t handle it” or is “a space cadet,” it will be extremely difficult to honor her!!
2. **Watch sarcastic put-downs!** Give her the benefit of the doubt. (Ex. She’s not nosey – just inquisitive!!)
3. **Don’t bark orders at her!** James Dobson says:
“A man may call his wife or daughter stupid or dumb and not mean it. The sad part is, a woman accepts and believes what her husband and father tells her.”
4. **Remember non-verbal disrespectful judgments.** Rolling your eyes at her (or worse, in front of others) wounds her deeply.
5. **Gifts are important.**
 - a. “The little things mean a lot!”
 - b. The price is not important but the message *behind* the gift!
 - c. Buy her what she wants, not what you want or want her to have!
 - d. Random acts of kindness say, “You are important to me!!”
6. **Watch comparisons!**
 - a. Don’t compare her unfavorably to your mother or first wife. Accept and love her as she is!!
 - b. If you are always bragging on other women, she will be thinking, “What about me?”
 - c. Be careful not to make her feel “taken for granted!”

CONCLUSION

- A. Men feel this is a “one sided” lesson. The lesson is for the woman this time and not the reverse. However, the woman as “the helper suitable” is literally “the answer” to the man.
- B. If you honor your wife and love her the way she needs to be loved, she will respond! GOD built her to be that way!!
- C. Remember, much of a woman’s self-esteem is based on the **positive feedback** she receives “from the closest circle of family and friends in the last few days.”

QUESTIONS ON HONORING THE WOMAN (Thoughts on 1 Peter 3:7)

Do you agree that this is a neglected emphasis in our teaching today?

How many lessons have you heard on “Wives, be in subjection to your husbands” versus “Husbands, honor your wives?”

How can we best restore proper balance?

Gary Smalley, in his book *If Only He Knew*, claims that *almost all marital problems can be traced back to the man not loving his wife like Christ loved the church.*

What is your reaction to this? Is this fair?

Can you think of a reason why men should feel thrilled about this?

Women are designed as “responders”. How they treat us is often a mirror image of how they *perceive* we treat and feel about them. Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

Where does your wife feel she fits into your priorities?

Do you give your wife the benefit of the doubt and put her actions in the best light possible as a way to show love?

Will you make a commitment to pray more prayers privately and publicly, thanking the LORD for the important role that women play in the church and in the home?

To most women, the “little things are the *big* things.” Think of some little things you can do that will help your wife/daughters to feel loved and cherished.

The following story was based partially on an article found in Reader's Digest (February, 1988). The original work was copyrighted by Patricia McGerr in 1965.



JOHNNY LINGO'S 8-COW WIFE

When I sailed to Kiniwata, an island in the Pacific, I took along a notebook. After I got back it was filled with descriptions of flora and fauna, native customs and costumes. But the only note that still interests me is the one that says: "Johnny Lingo gave eight cows to Sarita's father." And I don't need to have it in writing. I'm reminded of it every time I see a woman belittling her husband or a wife withering under her husband's scorn. I want to say to them, "You should know why Johnny Lingo paid eight cows for his wife."

Johnny Lingo wasn't exactly his name. But that's what Shenkin, the manager of the guest house on Kiniwata, called him. Shenkin was from Chicago and had a habit of Americanizing the names of the islanders. But Johnny was mentioned by many people in many connections. If I wanted to spend a few days on the neighboring island of Nurabandi, Johnny Lingo could put me up. If I wanted to fish, he could show me where the biting was best. If it was pearls I sought, he would bring me the best buys. The people of Kiniwata all spoke highly of Johnny Lingo. Yet when they spoke they smiled, and the smiles were slightly mocking.

"Get Johnny Lingo to help you find what you want and let him do the bargaining," advised Shenkin. "Johnny knows how to make a deal."

"Johnny Lingo!" A boy seated nearby hooted the name and rocked with laughter.

"What goes on?" I demanded. "Everybody tells me to get in touch with Johnny Lingo and then breaks up. Let me in on the Joke."

"Oh the people love to laugh," Shenkin said, shrugging. "Johnny's the brightest, the strongest young man in the islands. And for his age, the richest."

"But if he's all you say, what is there to laugh about?"

"Only one thing. Five months ago, at fall festival, Johnny came to Kiniwata and found himself a wife. He paid her father eight cows!"

I knew enough about island customs to be impressed. Two or three cows would buy a fair-to-middling wife, four or five a highly satisfactory one.

"Good Lord!" I said, "Eight cows! She must have beauty that takes your breath away."

"She's not ugly," he conceded, and smiled a little. "But the kindest could only call Sarita plain. Sam Karoo, her father, was afraid she'd be left on his hands."

"But then he got eight cows for her? Isn't that extraordinary?"

"Never been paid before."

"Yet you call Johnny's wife plain?"

"I said it would be kindness to call her plain. She was skinny. She walked with her shoulders hunched and her head ducked. She was scared of her own shadow."

"Well, I said, "I guess there's no accounting for love."

“True enough,” agreed the man. “And that’s why the villagers grin when they talk about Johnny. They get special satisfaction from the fact that the sharpest trader in the islands was bested by dull old Sam Karoo.”

“But how?”

“No one knows and everyone wonders. All the cousins were urging Sam to ask for three cows and hold for two until he was sure Johnny’d pay only one. Then Johnny came to Sam Karoo and said ‘Father of Sarita, I offer eight cows for your daughter.’”

“Eight cows,” I murmured. “I’d like to meet this Johnny Lingo.”

I wanted fish. I wanted pearls. So the next afternoon I beached my boat at Nurabandi. And I noticed as I asked directions to Johnny’s house that his name brought no sly smile to the lips of his fellow Nurabandians. And when I met the slim, serious young man, when he welcomed me with grace to his home, I was glad that from his own people he had respect unmingled with mockery. We sat in his house and talked. Then he asked “You come here from Kiniwata?”

“Yes.”

“They speak of me on that island?”

“They say there’s nothing I might want that you can’t help me get.”

He smiled gently. “My wife is from Kiniwata.”

“Yes, I know.”

“They speak of her.”

“A little.”

“What do they say?”

“Why, just...” The question caught me off balance. “They told me you were married at festival time.”

“Nothing more?” The curve of his eyebrows told me he knew there had to be more.

“They also say the marriage settlement was eight cows.” I paused. “They wonder why.”

“They ask that?” His eyes lighted with pleasure. “Everyone in Kiniwata knows about the eight cows?”

I nodded.

“And in Nurabandi everyone knows it too.” His chest expanded with satisfaction. “Always and forever, when they speak of marriage settlements, it will be remembered that Johnny Lingo paid eight cows for Sarita.”

So that’s the answer, I thought: vanity.

And then I saw her. I watched her enter the room to place flowers on the table. She stood a moment to smile at the young man beside me. Then she went swiftly out again. She was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. The lift of her shoulders, the tilt of her chin, the sparkle of here eyes all spelled a pride to which no one could deny her the right.

I turned back to Johnny Lingo and found him looking at me. “You admire her?” he murmured.

“She...she’s glorious. But she’s not Sarita from Kiniwata,” I said.



“There’s only one Sarita. Perhaps she does not look the way they say she looked in Kiniwata.”

“She doesn’t. I heard she was homely. They all make fun of you because you let yourself be cheated by Sam Karoo.”

“You think eight cows were too many?” A smile slid over his lips.

“No. But how can she be so different?”

“Do you ever think,” he asked, “what it must mean to a woman to know that her husband has settled on the lowest price for which she can be bought? And then later, when the women talk, the boast of what their husbands paid for them. One says four cows, another maybe six. How does she feel, the woman who was sold for one or two? This could not happen to my Sarita.”

“Then you did this just to make your wife happy?”

“I wanted Sarita to be happy, yes. But I wanted more than that. You say she is different. This is true. Many things can change a woman. Things happen inside, things happen outside. But the thing that matters most is what she thinks of herself. In Kiniwata, Sarita believed she was worth nothing. Now she knows she is worth more than any other woman in the islands.”

“Then you wanted—”

“I wanted to marry Sarita. I loved her and no other woman.”

“But—” I was close to understanding.

“But,” he finished softly, “I wanted an eight-cow wife.”

~~ End ~~

MARRIAGE AS A SPIRITUAL COVENANT

Revised and adapted from Dr. Clark Warren's "The Triumphant Marriage"
and Bill Gothard's "The True Significance of the Wedding Covenant."

"Set me as a seal upon thy heart..." Song of Solomon 8:6

Introduction Refreshing & Instilling Marital Commitment

- A. We have not entered into a "marriage **contract**" but a "marriage **covenant!**" (Malachi 2:14, Proverbs 2:16f)
- B. What exactly is a covenant?
1. A Hebrew word: "In the sense of cutting; a compact made by passing between pieces of flesh"
 2. Examples are found in Genesis 15:9-10, 17-18 and Jeremiah 34:13, 18
- C. Our forefathers began many wedding traditions and understood this well. Over time, the original meanings have been lost.
1. "The True Significance of the Wedding Covenant" booklet opened my eyes.
 2. One covenant symbol: the different sides for seating the guests of the bride or groom represents the covenant relationship and the guests as "living sacrifices."
- D. A marriage is **sacred**. It is spiritual...heavenly. (Matthew 19:6)
1. A "holy triune not a human duet!!"
 2. If you break your vow to your mate, you may still have to keep your vow to God ("until death do you part" not "until divorce do you part").
 3. *"It is a snare to a man to say rashly, 'It is holy' and then to later make inquiry."* Proverbs 20:25 (½ of all divorces in 1997 occurred within the first two years!)
 4. The difference between a **covenant and a contract**:
 - a. A covenant is based on **trust** – a contract on **distrust!**
 - b. A covenant is based on **unlimited responsibility** – a contract on **limited liability**.

Illustration: God's promise to Abraham and all He went through to keep His Word demonstrate unlimited responsibility. Just as the traditional words "...for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health."
 - c. A covenant is **lifelong and not to be broken** – a contract can be **voided by mutual consent**.

Illustration: The rainbow in the sky reminds everyone that God's promise has no statute of limitations.

I COVENANT SYMBOLISM IN THE WEDDING CEREMONY

- A. The groom enters first – why? He is the initiator of the covenant.
- B. The father walks the bride down the aisle – why?
 - 1. The parents are an important part of the ceremony.
 - 2. Father's duty is to present his daughter as a pure gift. (Deuteronomy 22:13-21)
 - 3. The white dress symbolizes purity.
- C. The father gives the bride away to show the full blessing of the parents. This is the formal transfer of authority from the father to the groom after he has asked for the daughter's hand in marriage. (Numbers 30:4-8).
- D. The ring is a “token of the covenant.”
- E. The couple is introduced to establish the changing of names.
 - 1. *Illustration:* Abram's name was changed to Abraham.
 - 2. Spiritually we wear the “new name” of Christian once we enter into a covenant relationship with God upon baptism.
- F. What is the significance of the guest book?
 - 1. It should be signed after—not before. It indicates there are witnesses to the covenant who have a vested interest in supporting the marriage.
 - 2. The Armenians have a low divorce rate. When a couple gets in trouble, the godparents move in until they get it settled!
- G. What is the purpose of the receiving line? To give a blessing to the couple as in Ruth 4:11, 14f.
- H. The food at the reception is for the covenant celebration. This is very similar to the Lord's Supper.
- I. The couple feeds each other cake and they become “one flesh” in the eating of the cake, just as we become one in the eating of the bread. (I Corinthians 11:24f)

II DO WE HAVE A PROBLEM WITH KEEPING VOWS & COMMITMENTS TODAY?

- A. A lax attitude in general makes the taking of our vows seriously difficult.
 - 1. Ronald Reagan in 1981 fired the air traffic controllers because they broke a contractual agreement. Doubtful that would happen today.
 - 2. During the revolutionary war both sides respected vows so much that they avoided taking prisoners. Instead they simply made them promise they would not return to fight again. If they violated their honor and did so, then they were executed.
- B. Examine these **scriptures that apply to the taking of vows:**
 - 1. Ecclesiastes 5:2-7
 - 2. Psalms 15:4b (Zion dweller – swears to his own hurt and changes not!!!)
 - 3. Numbers 30:2
 - 4. I Samuel 1:11-21 (Hannah's vow)

5. Joshua 9:16-20

C. Commitment: the cornerstone of a triumphant marriage!

1. Consider the following quote about the nature of commitment:

“COMMITMENT ... IS WHAT TRANSFORMS A PROMISE INTO REALITY. IT IS THE WORDS THAT SPEAK BOLDLY OF YOUR INTENTIONS. IT IS THE ACTIONS THAT SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS. IT IS MAKING THE TIME WHEN THERE IS NONE, COMING THROUGH TIME AFTER TIME, YEAR AFTER YEAR. COMMITMENT IS THE STUFF CHARACTER IS MADE OF, THE POWER TO CHANGE THE FACE OF THINGS. IT IS THE DAILY TRIUMPH OF INTEGRITY OVER SKEPTICISM.”

2. *“Marriage demands toughness, and toughness proceeds out of commitment. No marriage will ever be stronger than the commitments that serve as its infrastructure.”*

D. We ask couples to say some hard-hitting, heavy-duty vows before they get married. So where do we go wrong?

1. Are vows **treated superficially** with the preacher left to “perform the ceremony? The couple is so nervous they hardly think about or realize the significance.
2. I encourage couples to **write their own vows** and wedding ceremony.
3. Suggestion: **Save the ceremony and go over it...at least once a year on your wedding anniversary.**
4. It is important that what you have vowed to each other be kept current and fresh! It is so easy to forget.

E. What matters is your current level of commitment

1. Often, the vows seem less vital and are less passionately held as time passes.
2. Sadly, many only vaguely remember what they said.
3. The commitment should be *active* not passive!!
4. *Illustration:* One may stay in a marriage by being passive. S/he doesn’t leave, but doesn’t *do anything* to make the marriage better either. Don’t forget the *positive*, radical part of *active commitment*.

III WE NEED THOROUGH, INSIGHTFUL UNDERSTANDING OF MARITAL PROMISES

A. We need a “*promise orientation*” that is highly enlightened.

B. The traditional vows have **6 separate parts:**

1. I will **love you** as long as we both live (kindness, sacrifice)
2. I will **cherish and honor** you as long as we both live (thoughtfulness, attentiveness)
3. I will be to you **what a husband or wife owes to a spouse** (dedication to doing my part and meeting the other’s needs)
4. I will **take you as you are** (acceptance)

5. I will **forsake all others** (faithfulness!!)
6. I will do all these things **for better or worse, in sickness and in health** (unconditionally serve and stay with you for as long we live)

C. WOW! What does that mean, practically speaking??

1. If we disagree, frustrate, disappoint, or hurt each other...?
2. If I think I don't get what I deserve...?
3. If I express how I feel, regardless of hardship...? **I will keep my vows!**

D. Now, REHEARSE THE PROMISES until they are BURNED INTO OUR BRAINS.

1. Marriage vows are usually spoken a single time, thus they have very little value in a marital crisis.
2. Dr. Clark Warren, author of "The Triumphant Marriage", suggests a change in frequency of the marriage vows.
 - a. Instead of "once-in-a-lifetime", 2 or 3 times a week for the first 10 years, and at least once a week for the rest of the marriage.
 - b. Verbalized regularly over a long period of time for tremendous power!!
 - c. HOW? Find a way that is natural, meaningful, and even fun!
BE CREATIVE!!
3. What about you?
 - a. The more you can find **new and creative ways** to affirm the commitment the better.
 - b. **Recite it over and over** so that when troubles come the brain will trigger new ideas on how to fulfill these vows!!

CONCLUSION

- A. **Do your homework!** Write your own concise summary of your vows.
- B. Your marriage will benefit dramatically from a simple exercise designed to help both partners **clarify and articulate promises.**

Here is a sample of what Gail and I came up with after looking over our original ceremony and thinking about the basic, most important needs that we each share.

I PROMISE...

(A renewal of our vows from Brent to Gail)

I promise I will do everything in my power to help you get to heaven,
to **accept you**, and to **remain loyal** to you **always**.

I promise to put **you and our marriage second only to God** and to be **open
and honest with you always** as we strive for **oneness**.

I promise I will **cherish, honor, and support you in good times and bad** and strive to love you
selflessly, like Christ loves the church, as I meet your **deepest needs**.

I promise to **pilot, provide, and protect** you and our family and to do these things
unconditionally until death do us part...so help me God!!

I PROMISE...

(A renewal of vows from Gail to Brent)

I promise I will do everything in my power to help you get to heaven,
to **accept you**, and to **remain loyal** to you **always**.

I promise to put **you and our marriage second only to God** and to be **open
and honest with you always** as we strive for **oneness**.

I promise to **admire, honor, and obey you in good times and bad** and strive to be an excellent
keeper at home and be **sensitive to your deepest needs**.

I promise to **love you** and to do all these things
unconditionally until death do us part...so help me God!!

(Based on the fact that God has provided us with role-based relationships, I suggest you have different vows which focus in on each role. For help look at the handout of scriptures I have provided for you entitled "The Most Important Words about Husband and Wife.")



Refreshing and Re-instilling Marital Commitment

(Commitment and Vows in Marriage)

WORKSHOP WORKSHEET: STEPS TO RECONSTRUCT AND REFRESH YOUR VOWS

(Your marriage will benefit dramatically from this simple exercise designed to help both of you clarify and articulate the promises you have made to each other.)

1. What do you remember most about your wedding vows from memory? Quickly brainstorm together on a separate sheet of paper and see what you can piece together.
2. What vows have you heard said by others that you liked? Reflect upon what you have come to understand as vitally important to you and your marriage since your wedding day that could be added to a new, updated set of vows that you decide to commit to each other. Brainstorm together. Ask your mate for ideas as to what is important to him or her.
3. Look over the 6 parts listed on the handout for the traditional marriage vows and use this as a guide to help you reconstruct your vows. Can you put them in your own words that will have special meaning to you?
4. Given the different roles that God gives the man and the woman in marriage, look over the handout "The Most Important Words about Husband and Wife". Select from the scriptures some key concepts that reflect your unique roles that God would have you to commit to each other.
5. Condense all this into a brief list that you can both memorize and say to each other on a regular basis!! Periodic rewrites of the commitment statement will make it stronger and more meaningful.

Congratulations – you have done it!

Now write it out on a card, commit it to memory, and say it to each other regularly.

You will crave and enjoy hearing your mate talk about the special kind of love you both share as you repeat your promises to each other. And let the kids overhear you say it or say it in front of them – it will teach them valuable lessons about marriage!!

The Most Important Words About Husband & Wife

*“As therefore **God’s** picked representatives, purified and beloved, put on that nature which is **merciful** in action, **kindly** in heart, **humble** in mind. Accept life, and be most **patient** and **tolerant** with one another, always ready to **forgive** if you have a difference with anyone. Forgive as freely as the Lord has forgiven you. And, above everything else, **be truly loving**, for love binds all the virtues together in perfection. **Let the peace of Christ guide all your decisions**, for you were called to live as one, united body; and always **be thankful**. **Let the full richness of Christ’s teaching find a home among you ...***

~ Colossians 3:12-16a (Phillips)

“Let all bitterness and indignation and wrath [passion, rage, bad temper] and resentment [anger, animosity] and quarreling [brawling, clamor, contention] and slander [evil speaking, abusive, and blasphemous language] be banished from you, with all malice [spite, ill-will, or baseness of any kind].

~ Ephesians 4:31 (Amplified)

*“Wherefore, **accept one another**, just as **Christ** also accepted us to the glory of God.”*

~ Romans 15:7 (New American Standard)

*“**Be subject to one another** [“fit in with” each other] out of reverence for **Christ**...You **WIVES** must learn to adapt yourselves to your husbands, as you submit yourselves to the **Lord**, for the husband is the head of the wife in the **same way** that Christ is the head of the church and savior to the body. The willing subjection of the church to Christ should be reproduced in the submission of wives to their husbands in everything.”*

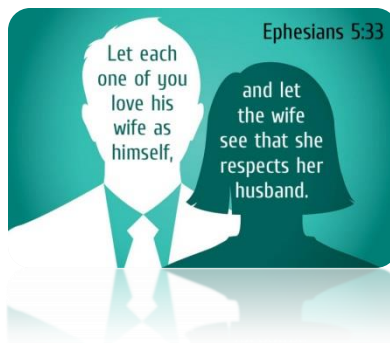
~ Ephesians 5:21 (Amplified)

*“In a similar way you wives should be submissive to your own husbands, so that if any of them will **not** be persuaded by the **message**, they may without message be won over by the **conduct** of their wives, as they observe your **chaste** and **respectful** behavior.”*

~ 1 Peter 3:1-2 (New Berkeley)

*“...Let the wife see that she **respects** and **reverences** her husband, that she **notices** him, **regards** him, **honors** him, **prefers** him, **venerates** him and **esteems** him; and that she **defers to him**, **praises** him, and **loves** and **admires** him exceedingly.*

~ Ephesians 5:33 (Amplified)



*“For this cause a man shall **leave** his father and his mother, and shall **cleave** to his wife; and they shall become **one** flesh.”*

~ Genesis 2:24 (New American Standard)

*“Consequently they are no longer **two**, but **one** flesh. What therefore **God** has joined together, **let no man separate.**”*

~ Matthew 19:6 (New American Standard)

*“**Take heed** then, to your spirit, and **let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.** For I **hate** divorce, says the Lord...”*

~ Malachi 2:15b, 16a (New American Standard)

*“The **HUSBAND** must give his wife the **same sort of love** that **Christ** gave to the church, when **He sacrificed Himself for her**...So men ought to give their wives the love they naturally have for their **own bodies.** The love a man gives his wife is the extending of his love for **himself** to enfold **her.** Nobody ever hated his own body; he **feeds** it and **looks after** it.”*

~ Ephesians 5:25,28-29a (Phillips)

*“...Let each man of you [without exception] **love** his wife [as being in a sense] his **very own self.**”*

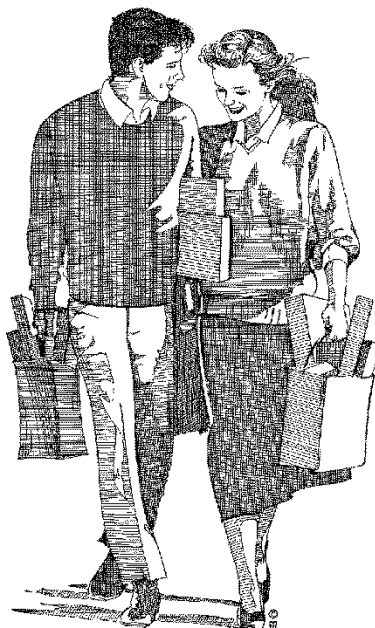
~ Ephesians 5:33a (Amplified)

*“Husbands, **love** your wives – be **affectionate** and **sympathetic** with them – and do **not be harsh** or **bitter** or **resentful** toward them.”*

~ Colossians 3:19 (Amplified)

*“...You husbands need to live **understandingly** with your wives as with a **weaker** vessel, rendering them honor as **joint** heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your **praying** may not be **hindered.**”*

~ 1 Peter 3:7 (New Berkeley)



*“Love **endures long** and is **patient** and **kind**; love **never** is **envious** nor boils over with **jealousy**; it is **not boastful** or **vainglorious**, does not display itself **haughtily**. It is **not conceited**, arrogant and inflated with pride; it is **not rude** [unmannerly], and **does not act unbecomingly**. Love [God’s love in us] does **not insist on its own rights** or its own way, for it is not self-seeking. It is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it **takes no account of the evil done to it** - pays no attention to a suffered wrong. It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail. Love **bears up under anything and everything** that comes, is **ever ready to believe the best of every person**, its hopes are fadeless under **all** circumstances, and it **endures everything** [without weakening]. **Love never fails** - never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end... And so faith, hope, love abide; [faith, conviction, and belief respecting man’s relation to God and divine things; hope, joyful and confident expectation or eternal salvation; love, true affection for God and man, growing out of God’s love for us and in us], these three, but the **greatest of these is love**.*

~ 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, 13 (Amplified)

*“Do two walk **together**, except they...have **agreed**?”*

- Amos 3:3 (Amplified)

*“**Two are better than one** because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.”*

~ Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 (New American Standard)

*“So let us then definitely aim for and eagerly pursue what makes for **harmony** and for **mutual upbuilding** [edification and development] of one another.”*

~ Romans 14:19 (Amplified)

*“...Being of the **same** mind, maintaining the **same love**, **united**, intent on **one** purpose. Do nothing from **selfishness** or **empty conceit**, but with **humility of mind** let each of you **regard the other as more important than himself**; do not merely look out for your **own** personal interests, but also for the interests of **others**.”*

~ Philippians 2:2-4 (New American Standard)

*“Whether, then, you eat or drink or **whatever you do**, do **all** to the glory of God.”*

~ I Corinthians 10:31 (New American Standard)



Two are better
than one...
if one falls down,
his friend can
help him up.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

REFERENCES:

I highly recommend any of Willard Harley's books. Especially recommended are: *His Needs, Her Needs, Love Busters, Fall in Love, Stay in Love, and I Promise*. For further details go to the excellent website: www.marriagebuilders.com.

You will also find hundreds of audio files and scores of lessons on marriage and family that I have done while at the Kirkland church at www.kirklandchurchofChrist.com I have compiled a revised summary of Harley's work that I use with couples.

NOTE: Be aware that Willard Harley does not quote the Bible though he uses many Biblical principles. His material is very practical and works! However, be careful. He does not believe that the man is the head of the house or in Biblical submission. This is subtle but it comes out in some of his principles and applications. Also, he does not discuss meeting spiritual needs. A huge omission! Like any book, read his carefully and of course reject anything that does not square 100% with scripture.

My favorite book for men is: "If Only He Knew." by Gary Smalley. It is a classic that explains to a man how he can best love his life from her view point like Christ loves the church.

My favorite book for women is: "Creative Counterpart" by Linda Dillow.

The **Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts** by Gary Chapman is also excellent.

I also highly recommend: **"Love and Respect"** (The Love she most desires, the Respect he desperately needs) by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. This book is published by Focus on the Family and is very practical and biblically based. There is also a good set of DVD's that go with it.

"Love life for every married couple" by Dr. Ed. Wheat is an easy read and has great Biblically based material in it that is good for both the husband and the wife.

Dr. John Gray's famous book: "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus" has some very good insights. I especially like chapter 11 on "How to communicate difficult feelings." Really helpful practical material.

Two books on the sexual relationship that are very good and tastefully done are **"The Act of Marriage"** by Tim LaHaye, **"The Act of Marriage after 40"** updated by Tim LaHaye, and **"Intended for Pleasure"** by Dr. Ed Wheat.

"Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families" by Dr. Steven Covey is very practical and character building!

Most of these books can be found cheaply at Amazon.com and are available in paperback and in used condition. No need to spend a small fortune to acquire excellent resources and helps in this vital area!