

# ***Important “Keys”***

## **To Marriage**

## **Enrichment**

- Entering into loving intimacy as a couple!
- Building our lives as husbands and wives for God’s glory!
- Growing in insights and abilities toward having a great marriage!
  - Become a better spouse!
- Having God’s best in marriage and in the home!

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## Introduction

*"And walk in love -- esteeming and delighting in one another -- as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, a slain offering, and a sacrifice to God (for you, so that it became) a sweet fragrance." (Ephesians 5:2, Amplified Bible)*

How would you describe the spiritual *fragrance* of your home, of your marriage? When visitors come, what is the first thing they notice about your marriage, or your family? ***Do they feel as though a bad attitude crawled under your refrigerator and died there?*** Or do they think someone has been baking spiritual bread in the kitchen all afternoon? What kind of *fragrance* do people sense about your family life? Should our lives have a heavenly, sacred fragrance?

*If we walk in the power of Christ's love, if we are imitating Christ in a walk in love, there will be a pleasant aroma of the presence of the Lord in our midst. Christ's sacrifice was a pleasant fragrance to God. Similarly, a Christ-like home atmosphere produces this sort of **aroma before God** and also before those who live in our home or come into our home. How is it with your home?*

Christ's death was especially an act of obedience to the Father. In the home is where our wholehearted obedience begins. ***What we are inside our hearts and lives*** (and home) ***makes the difference of what we will live around those we love. Doing comes out of being! What are you inside the heart?*** A spiritual aroma is the product of obedience.

Many have attended marriage seminars, read books, listened to tapes, and all the rest, yet have changed but little. These things often have little effect and bring few results. What is lacking is **obedience** -- and a total **heart surrender** to the Holy Spirit so He can fill our hearts with God's presence. ***But these two things must be preceded by repentance.*** It is not a matter of reading the right books, hearing the rights things only, but a matter of our calling sin - **sin, 1) breaking with the sinful habits of the past, and 2) bringing about inner transformation of the heart.**

Humanistic psychology is not the answer. Even a Biblical presentation of truth is not the whole answer. Unless truth is received with heart readiness to accept and practice, little will take place.

I have poured over many books, read much material, and have at times agonized over what I should put into these lessons. Mainly, I have been exercised of heart knowing content itself will not bring change. But how to write and how to challenge the heart of the reader and listener in the classes is what has troubled me the most! What will you do with those things shared? It is really your choice! ***I trust because of openness of heart, a submission of the will, and a tenderness before God, you will labor to apply truth to your life, marriage and home.***

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## **Introduction:**

Fulfilling marriages and friendships don't just happen. They come about when men and women gain the knowledge and skills to develop genuine intimacy. It happens when husbands and wives obey God and His Word. And in this series of lessons you'll discover a treasury of practical help in building loving, lasting relationships.

You'll discover important relationship differences between men and women; crucial things that every marriage needs to be truly intimate; how to use powerful communication tools for deeper understanding, encouragement, and correction; specific way to overcome anger and hurt feelings... and much, much more. We are looking at many **keys, and truly "application" is the key to it all!**

## **First Key: "The Pitfalls of Romantic Love"** *When TWO CLOUDS STICK Together!*

**We need to be "two clods that stick together!"** Where do I get that? God made man out of the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7). We have nothing to be proud of men for we are just made of dust. God commands us that in marriage we are to "*cleave to one another*" (Gen. 2:24). The Hebrew word which is translated *cleave* as used in Job. 38:38, for example, is used of two chunks of mud that cling together: "*when dust becomes hard and the clods of earth stick together*". . . *and we need to learn to cleave... to stick together!* A good illustration!

**Marriage is what you make it!** We may resist this idea, but it is true. We want to believe that someone or something, outside ourselves, makes our marriage. God maybe! "Romantic love," surely that is it, we would say.

Ideally, we may expect marriage to be something that just happens. It is supposed to be enjoyable, easy, and exciting. . . like floating down a stream in a lovely boat on a perfect day. We expect to be carried along with the tide of things into a haven of intimacy. . . just accidentally, without difficulty, work, or thought.

Of course marriage is not like other things we experience. What we do from nine to five is work. *But marriage (we say) -- ought not be work!* A lot of this feeling is due to the fact that we like things that just happen to us. We all relish surprises that are not of our own doing. *Marriage is often put into the category of expecting the exciting, unexpected, and inspiring to magically happen.*

**We have to create a marriage -- it does not just happen!** God gives us the building blocks, the frame-work and we must fill it all in. We need a godly, Biblical marriage in this contemporary world, based on Biblical principles, and that is what will make it God-honoring. A marriage is complex, because we are complex, a good marriage has to be forged out of the building blocks God has given us, and that includes us . . . our temperaments, personalities, needs, personhood, etc.

## **What the World Thinks About Sticking Together**

A sixty-year old husband went to a counselor who knew ahead of time that the man planned to leave his wife. After small talk he was asked, “*Why do you want to leave your wife?*” His reply was quick, indicating he had given it a lot of thought. “*I no longer love her,*” was his reply. The feeling between them was gone.

His answer was simple enough and seemed reasonable. It is like thinking, “*If the pilot light goes out, the furnace won’t heat. If the love is gone, it’s gone. And love is to marriage what Elmer’s glue is to a repair job, isn’t it? If the glue fails, the whole thing collapses. The emotion has vanished, the marriage is over. . . so he felt.*” This is a very popular way of thinking about marriage! **It is serious, disturbing, and a very deficient view of love.**

### **A. The idealistic nature of romantic love.**

1. A basic deficiency of romantic love is its idealistic nature.
2. Romance has a way of coloring everything it touches. The romantic sees everything through the proverbial rose-colored glasses.
3. The person (s) is gripped by powerful emotions and the vision is dramatically distorted. Then, there is little place for reality in the romantic perspective.
  - a. We see this in Jacob’s life (Gen. 29:20) “*he served seven years to get Rachel, but they seemed like only a few days to him because of his love for her.*”
  - b. This is love -- the romantic variety. Like a drug trip, the weakness of the romantic trip shows when the effect wears off and reality sets in.

***“Have your eyes wide open when you are courting... but only half open after marriage!” “Dream in engagement, but in wedlock be awake!” You don’t want your wedlock to become deadlock!***

4. Awaking to reality after a time, we may find many things we dislike about our spouse.
5. It is quite normal to be shocked to find he/she doesn’t live up to our image. One woman said, “*I married my ideal, I got an ordeal, and I want a new deal.*” In part, the ***ordeal is caused by the ideal.***
6. When romantic love rules and reigns (and that is what the world says love is) we don’t see the total person.
  - a. We readily distort what we see, or ignore what is there, or we say we don’t mind.
  - b. We are deeply in love, for, “*we fell in love with love!*”
  - c. Even our value system can be distorted for a time.

### **B. The emotional nature of romantic love**

1. There is another major weakness of romantic love, it is primarily emotional.
2. It is almost totally *feeling centered*. As a teen said about love, “*Oh that is a feeling that you feel when you have a feeling you haven’t felt before.*”

This is the prevailing viewpoint of the world. Popular songs, movies, TV programs, and romantic novels press this concept upon us before we reach the sixth grade. One recording of the world's popular people says, "I woke up in love today 'cause I went to sleep with you on my mind." Another group made popular a song entitled, "Hello, I Love You; Won't You Tell Me Your Name?"

We talk about "falling in love" as the reason why we got married. So called, *romantic love is the basis of marriage!* The world often views love as a mystical, uncontrollable happening that comes and goes as it pleases without reason or control. Love, to many, is a whimsical emotion... they say, "I can't live without her." and later they say, "I can't live with her." Romantic feelings are not a fit foundation for a marriage! ***It would be like using vanilla ice cream for the foundation of your house.*** (Matt. 7: 24-28)

### **C. Romantic love is a happening.**

1. Romantic love does happen. . . that we won't deny! All the popular expressions about it tells us that: "*We fall in love!*" Love hits us, we say.
2. This idea of love being a happening is a major fault of romantic love.
  - a. Then what happens when the 60 year-old man says, "*Love is dead, gone, caput, over, it is hopeless!*" He thinks he is just explaining, and not apologizing, for to him he could not help it.
  - b. His cotton candy melted, it evaporated! Love is gone, dead!
3. This brings a helpless panic!
  - a. Did I marry the wrong person? Did I really love? Did he love me?
  - b. Will my marriage last?
  - c. Why bother staying together? "*There is nothing between us anymore, the mystic, the feelings, and thrill, why, it is all gone.*"
4. The world says, "*We will stick together if it is worth it... or if we feel like it... or because of the children... or the money, etc.*"

## **What God Says About Sticking Together!**

### **A. Biblical Model: Marriage is permanent!** (Rom. 7:1-3; I Cor. 7:39)

1. Love is viewed primarily as a **choice** rather than an emotion. (I Pet. 1:22)
2. Right feeling is the result of right doing. (Prov. 4:23; 23:7)
3. The feeling of love is the result of the practice of Biblical love (Gal. 6:7-9)
4. For many, love is not based on God's will, on "*getting the pattern from God, but solely on emotional feelings.*" (I Pet. 1:8)
5. Commitment is the foundation of marriage. It is the cornerstone. If there is commitment then love can blossom, it can grow, and we will find answers if there is a need. (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5-6)
6. True love is something we are in control of... it is an ***act of the will...*** it is something we make happen. (I Cor. 13:1-8)

## *Keys To Marriage Enrichment*

- a. **“We make love!”** in the truest Biblical sense. (We are not talking about the physical... or sex.) **We do make love by giving love!** (Jh. 13:34,35; Eph. 5:25; women are to be husband-lovers -- Tit. 2:4-5)
- b. God does not command us to do something over which we have no control.
- c. Sex is not synonymous with love; many are sexually active and real, godly, Biblical serving, giving love **is not there!**
- d. Love is serving, ministering -- (Matt. 20:28; I Jh 3:16) *Love is an act of the will wherein we seek the highest good of the one loved!*

When a marriage is based on the 1)hearing of the ear, the 2) seeing of the eye, 3) and the feeling of the heart, then it is based on feelings and not necessarily on the will of God. People believe that when feeling is not there, love is gone, and they have a right to break up. We must go to God and get our pattern from the Word of God and about what God says, and that only. (Psa. 119:128)

### **B. Biblical answer: *The blissful bond of marriage!*** (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5)

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

1. Consider yourselves **bound together!** Marriage is a blissful bondage and there is God’s perfect plan for it all. **It is a bonding!**
2. You are to be *bound... to be joined to... to cling to!*
3. This includes *loyalty... trust... respect... honor... sacrificial love!*
4. This Hebrew word was often used to describe the Israelite people clinging to God and His law during time of apostasy, when others were forsaking Him. Moses says, in Deut. 4:4 **“But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day.”**

### **C. Biblical answer: *The bond of committed love!*** (I Cor. 13:1-8)

1. Cleaving means a total commitment! Your commitment to each other is the strongest possible marriage glue. (Divorce is a “ripping apart!”)
2. The commitment is profoundly **personal**.
  - a. Marriage demands an offering of yourself. You commit your body, your private and inner secrets of self in the most intimate union known to mankind.
  - b. Your commitment is not dependent upon fickle impulses of romantic love. It must be based on the human will, and strength of character, not the instability of emotions.
  - c. It is a pledge to another of a sense of solid attachment that allows you together to withstand all the tensions and conflicts that arise in any relationship.
3. This commitment is **socially sanctioned**. Publicly we leave our father and mother. It is a social agreement based on laws. (Book of Lev, Deut.)
4. It is a commitment before a Holy God -- **a Divine Commitment!**



- a. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.
- b. God is a witness to your pledges. He created the marriage arrangement. (See also Malachi 3:11-16.)
- c. When two marry, it is He who joined them.
- d. Marriage has the highest Divine sanction that could be given.
- e. It encourages us in permanency -- God's plan. ***Marriages are built on the bedrock of a total heart commitment.***

***This week . . . think about:***

Your ***attitude*** toward **God** determines  
how much He  
can help you.

Your ***attitude*** toward **yourself** reveals how  
mature you want to be.

Your ***attitude*** toward **your partner** determines  
the quality and success  
of your marriage!

+++++

***Visualize yourself -- today -- not as you are.***  
But as you *want to be*.

Are you *totally committed* to your spouse?  
What kind of marriage partner do you *really want* to be?  
How *unselfish* must you be to accomplish this?  
What new habits do you *sincerely want* to cultivate?  
What do you really want God to make of you?

***Do you realize that in the sensitive setting of marriage small choices have immense power to bless or to hurt a relationship?***

- Your choices have power.
- Where will your choices take you?
- Though our choices are small when counted one at a time, their cumulative effect is more powerful than we can imagine.
- Many wrong, sinful, small choices ***can*** and ***do*** bring much pain and suffering.
- In reality, our private choices (made in the heart) direct our steps, determine our behavior, change the quality of our relationships, and in the end, actually shape our lives.
- Are your ***secret choices*** moving you in a positive direction for your marriage?



## **Second Key: The Significance of God's Plan for Marriage!**

Much ignorance exists as to the origin of marriage and of the home. Far too often people get married in the course of things, just because that is what people do and because of the passion and desire they have built between themselves.

This ignorance exists both on the part of those who are about to be married, as well as those who are already married. God's basic principles are found in His Word concerning the establishing of the first home. These are essential to follow in the building of any marriage and home since the beginning of time.

In the Biblical account it is interesting to note that God created the man to begin with. (Gen. 22:7) Then He created the woman from the man, (Gen. 2:18-22) and brought her to the man (Gen. 2:22). *We will see many principles for life!*

### **Observations From the Biblical Account!**

#### **A. *It was the Lord who determined that man needed a companion.***

1. It was the Lord who said that Adam was alone.
2. It was the Lord who said that Adam needed a companion. (Matt. 19:1-9)
3. It should be the Lord in each life who determines if marriage is to take place.
  - a. Love alone is not a basis for marriage. Love is the sacrificial giving of oneself to the object of love. Love is an act of the will to give oneself in service to another.
  - b. Compatibility is not a basis for marriage.
  - c. Individuals must discern the Lord's will: His choice for them.

#### **B. *To meet the "need" of Adam, the Lord made woman.*** (Gen. 2:22)

1. Adam's "aloneness" included needs that another man could not meet. Even God couldn't meet Adam's need at this point.
2. The Scriptural principle of male and female in marriage is hereby established by God. (Gen. 2:24)
  - a. It is emphasized later by Moses. (Matt. 19:4-5)
  - b. It is approved by Christ. (Matt. 19:5)
  - c. Contrary relationships are condemned. (Rom. 1:27)

*"And likewise the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet."*

**C. The Lord gave Eve as a gift for Adam.** (Gen. 2:22)

1. Adam was a **gift** to Eve and Eve a **gift** to Adam.
2. This *gift principle* is important for us to see. Your spouse is God's gift to you as much so as it would be if God especially created both of you and brought you together as He did Adam and Eve.
3. How do you treat this one who is a gift? (James 1: 17)

**D. The woman was made from the man.**

1. The very unity of the human race in its descent from one another is established. (See Romans 5:18.)
2. The highest form of *unity* of husband and wife is revealed. (Gen. 2:23; also Eph. 5:28-32)
  - a. Did God give Adam the right one? We would all say, **yes!**
  - b. Did God make a mistake and give Adam the wrong one? We would strongly declare, "*Of course not!*"
  - c. Did God give you the **right** one? Are you treating that one as a special gift from God? **Do you look at your spouse as a gift given by God?**
3. The dignity of the woman is established. She is made from the same substance as the man... and is a part of the man. Made by God!
4. The priority of the man in the home is revealed from the beginning. (Gen. 3:16; I Cor. 11:3, 8-9; Eph. 5:22-24). (Not superiority, but headship that is sacrificial and loving.)

**E. The woman was made to stand as a help-meet by the side of the man.** (Gen. 2:18; See I Cor. 11:7-12.)

1. The help-meet of verse 18 is better translated as a "*helper like him.*"
2. As a "*helper*" woman is an aid and companion to the man in his tasks. (See Titus 2:3-5. What are older women to teach the younger?)
3. As being "*like him*" woman is man's counterpart, corresponding to him in nature: physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. (Corresponding ... the same, but different as we shall see.)

**F. The Lord brought the woman to the man.** (Gen. 2:22)

1. God's choice -- Eve -- was **brought by God to Adam.** The Lord eliminated the necessity on the part of Adam for "*searching.*" **Adam's responsibility was acceptance of God's choice for him.**
2. The Lord eliminated any possibility of mistake.
  - a. He brought only one.
  - b. He brought His choice.
  - c. Are you willing to accept the one God has given you... as His choice?
  - d. Did you bring about the circumstances that brought you together?

- e. Did you give to yourself the parents you have, or choose the place of your upbringing, and bring into your life the wife or husband you married?
- f. In all of this you desperately need to accept God's providential will for you and your spouse.

**G. The Lord personally sanctioned (sanctified) their relationship.**

- 1. He brought her to Adam. It was done personally. (Gen. 2:22)
- 2. He blessed them. (Gen. 1:28)

**Observations About the Permanence of the Marriage Bond!**

**A. The permanence of the marriage relationship is established.**

- 1. Man is to **cleave** unto his wife. (Gen. 2:24)
  - a. The Hebrew word for "cleave" may also be translated to "stick to, to cling to, to adhere to, or to be attached to."
  - b. The Greek word for "cleave" used in Matthew 19:5 (where Christ quoted Genesis 2:24 as an argument against divorce) may also be translated "to **glue, to cleave closely to, or shall be joined.**" (Also seen in Acts 11:22-23, 26 -- how we are to cleave unto Christ.)
- 2. The principle of permanence in marriage is further established in the words of Christ in Matthew 19:6 -- "What therefore God hath joined (united, glued) together (into oneness) let not man put asunder."
- 3. This sets forth the principle of total commitment to our spouse.

Commitment means: "We will stay together no matter what happens; we are committed no matter the trials, problems, and burdens or difficulties we might face! We will find answers, get help if that is needed, but separation or divorce will never be an option."

**C. Adam was accountable to accept Eve just as she was.**

- 1. There is the principle of total acceptance! Without that, there can easily be the practice of rejection. (See Romans 15:5-7.)
- 2. Rejection of others often becomes a way of life.
  - a. **Rejection produces friction, and friction produces bondage.**
  - b. Being in bondage, we can't minister to the other person.
- 3. Everything we have in life we *received* .... or we *don't have it!* Rejection is usually evident in many different ways.
  - a. How do you see rejection in life?
  - b. Do you practice rejection of others? \_\_\_\_\_ How?

**C. Adam and Eve were both righteous before the Lord when united.**

1. Their union took place before the fall. (Gen. 2:25)
2. The principle of spiritual unity in marriage is hereby established.
3. This same principle is continued in the New Testament.  
(II Cor. 7:39; II Cor. 6:14-16; Eph. 5:30-32)
4. *Except the Lord build the house we labor in vain.* (Prov. 127:1)

a. What does it mean to allow the Lord to “build the house?”

\_\_\_\_\_

b. What are the building materials? (Be specific) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

c. Where will you find the building materials? (be specific and not general in your answer.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Consider this week:**

- **Marriage never fails -- people fail.**
  - They fail when they expect more than they give,
    - when they talk more than they work, dream more than they “do.”
      - Marriage is not held together by one person -- two made it; two maintain it.
- **Marriage doesn’t solve problems -- people do.**
  - Marriage doesn’t do anything for people -- they do something for marriage!
    - Marriage is not an extended honeymoon with work -- it is a happy struggle!

**The Need To Feel Wanted**

1. Since you have been married have you taken time to build acceptance toward one another? If so, how? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How are you demonstrating acceptance? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do you love conditionally and therefore your spouse never has known the security that comes from total acceptance? \_\_\_\_\_

**- Consider -**

You have a powerful need to feel wanted. Each of us longs to be significant in the life of another person.

We yearn for a sense of being valuable to our mate for who we are, with no strings attached. This is the very heart of intimacy.

When we feel unwanted we may pretend it doesn’t matter, but it does. When feelings of not being wanted creep into the marriage, the pain of rejection is so deep that it threatens to shatter the core of our identity and being.

We feel unimportant, rejected and useless!

## **Third Key: Facing Marital Problems!** ***When Two Porcupines Marry!***

Some of us may feel that our lives are like two porcupines living together, constantly pricking, and hurting one another. Why do we have marriage problems. Where are they likely to come from? What can we do about them? So often we feel that Christians ought not have problems. Or possibly we deny having problems, and pretend that we don't have them, hoping they will just go away.

The Word of God is very clear about the *certainty of problems*. Just as sure as dust gathers on furniture, we will have problems (Job 5:6-7). Or they will be as certain as the sparks fly upward (Job 14:1). We are told not to borrow tomorrow's or bring over yesterday's problems (Matt. 6:34). All kinds of problems are common to all (I Cor. 10:13), and are actually for our good (James 1:1-3).

So we all have problems. There are only two groups that don't have them: the dead and the insane, who don't know about them. The well-adjusted person faces problems every day! The maladjusted person keeps shoving them behind him or pushes them aside, and will not face them, nor seek to solve them. **What do you do with problems?** In your home or marriage, you should never have a serious problem of your own making or because of your neglect in facing it. If it becomes almost impossible, or terribly serious, you have waited too long; you have put it off for too long.

### **The Source of Problems**

**A. A false view of marriage.** (Romans 7:1-4) We saw this in a former lesson.

**B. Things will be the same as they were before marriage!**

1. Some try to keep the same friends, same life-style, same priorities as before and neglect their spouse. They live more like room-mates, not married couples.
2. Some feel marriage is 50/50, so they keep their own check books, and each one tries to live life as separate, and yet together.

**Biblical Truth: There must be change.**

1. It cannot be the same. The "me/you" or the "him/her" must become "**we.**"
2. The "mine/yours" or "his/hers" must become "**ours.**" (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:3-5)

In marriage we surrender our sovereign rights. We must agree to change and to learn to do so! We must schedule into our lives a daily prayer time, a daily time of relaxed feelings, of sharing the needs, interests, concerns, desires, etc., of the heart and build a *weaving of our lives together*.

In this manner we will help to bring about the changes that must take place.

**C. Sinful attitudes we take into marriage.**

1. **Don't try to change me . . .** "You'll have to accept me just like I am, I'm not going to change."

- a. *"I can't help it. . . this is just the way I am!"*
- b. *"It's my temperament. . . I didn't get married to change!"*

**Biblical Truth:** You are responsible for your choices!

- a. Real change is not only commanded, but it is possible, or God would never have commanded it. (Col. 3:8-14; Eph. 4:24-32)
  - b. Change can bring great joy and fulfillment.
2. **I must watch out for myself!** *"I have my rights, and no one is going to tell me what to do."* (me'ism, selfishness, egotism, self-importance.)

**Biblical Truth:** I must die to self. (Jh 3:30; Lk 9:23; Matt. 16:24; Rom. 7:18)

- a. *"He must increase and I must decrease."* (Jh. 3:30)
- b. *I must take up my cross, die to self, live for others.* (Gal. 2:20; Lk.9:23)

3. **We just don't have any problems.** Then we will help you find them!

**Biblical Truth:** You DO have problems, and they must be discovered, admitted, and dealt with! (Prov. 28:13; I Cor. 10:13; I Pet. 5:8-9)

- a. God wants you to have a happy home. His plan for your home is not just a few happy times, a few good days, but peace, joy, and victory in daily living.
- b. A happy home begins by 1) getting on your knees, and praying until you have it, 2) being willing to even die for it, and 3) recognizing that the central key is communication.
- c. Settle one issue at a time, determine to solve problems and stay at it until they are solved. ***Put away P R I D E, so you can succeed.***
- d. Recognize that a happy marriage is not a gift from God, but is something we build. (Psa. 127, 128)

### **Some Specific Problem Areas**

There are specific problem areas; we must face the facts, consider the needs, and problems, and work for their solution! ***What are yours?***

- 1. lack of communication
- 2. finances
- 3. anger, pride
- 4. lack of love
- 5. spiritual differences
- 6. children's training
- 7. house management
- 8. sex, lack of affection
- 9. wrong priorities
- 10. adultery (influenced by wrong literature, TV viewing, etc.)
- 11. life-dominating sins -- such as drug abuse, selfishness, abusiveness, laziness, indifference and apathy, pornography, homosexuality, etc.
- 12. in-law problems -- selfishness, putting others ahead of spouse  
***Do you feel like two porcupines. . . pricking each other?***

## **Detecting Our Problems**

- A. You must see the problem afar off,** or the problem will “run over you,” before you discover it. The family must **discover the problem!** (Prov. 27:12)
- B. You must recognize the problem afar off,** before human love is already injured.
1. You must love your wife and children with a divine love.
  2. There should be a desire to protect your family so well that no danger comes into the marriage and home.
  3. You ought to have a *heart burden* to be an umbrella of protection, hedging your family from the world and sin.
- C. Don't allow problems “to run you down” before you discover them.**
1. Too often families call for counsel and help only after the “*house is two-thirds burned down.*”
  2. No one can wave a magic wand and give you a happy home.
  3. A happy, godly home comes from “*right planting or right sowing, and then we will have the right kind of harvest or reaping.*”
  4. The ability to detect potential problems before they begin or in the first stages can make a big difference.
  5. Often we wait too long and-- *only after anger, wrath, bitterness, lack of trust and respect have grown to an almost insurmountable mountain --* do we finally admit what is taking place and seek help.
- D. The wrong ways to discover you have problems!**
1. “Now we know!” -- because of domestic abuse, violence, name calling, emotional-mental abuse. *How Sad!*
  2. By the unfaithfulness of the other spouse.
  3. By separation/or divorce. Many a man (or wife) has come home to find a note... “*I have had it, I will never be back. . . I can't any longer take the abuse and hurts!*” In some cases they were shocked and seemingly not even aware of the severity of their actions and attitudes over the years. **Amazing!**
- B. The best way to become aware of problems!**
1. Talk to each other -- ask questions!
    - a. Identify the real, **root** problem.
    - b. Don't argue over the issues, or the symptoms, rather truly consider the real problem -- the roots. *Confess your own faults in it all!*
    - c. Say to yourself, “*I can't expect (him/her) to change unless I do!*”



## **Keys To Marriage Enrichment**

- d. Seek to have conversation *seasoned with salt* -- uplifting, helpful, and cooperative -- with the goal to solve problems. (Col. 4:6)

### ***To continue to hurt each other is to hurt yourself!***

2. Examine your sex life. Is this a battle ground?
3. Examine your schedules, priorities, use of time -- become aware of the extent to which anything and everything crowds out time for one another.
4. Work on a list of things you each need to change!
5. Review your lives often for life does not remain static. **Consider:** *Things change. . . things get better or worse. . . for you are growing toward each other or growing apart!*
6. Look for signals, warning signs of deeper trouble ahead! **Notice:**
  - a. a change of voice tones.... or attitudes,
  - b. a growing carelessness about appearance or sudden changes in appearance, attire, etc.
  - c. indifference to spouse's affection or advances toward being loving,
  - d. an uncaring response about how the other person feels,
  - e. anger or resentment revealed by reactions to various aspects of pressure. . . a worsening response on a daily basis,
  - f. a growing neglect of many things in daily life,
  - g. an effort to be away from home, more and more, with various kinds of excuses or reasons that don't seem truthful or reasonable.

### **Steps Toward Victory Over Problems**

There are a number of things, that IF we will work at applying them, IF we will enter into them with a whole heart, and IF we will encourage and help each other toward victory . . . **victory can be ours!**

You must discover the problems, but then we must also determine to solve them. Victory comes for God's glory.... "*But whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy*" (Prov. 28:13). "*...that we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trust in Christ*" (Eph. 1:12).

1. You must **identify** and take **responsibility** for each problem.  
(Prov. 20:6; 21:2; Rom. 14:12; Gal. 6:1-5)
2. You must be totally **dedicated** to Jesus Christ . . . as Lord!  
(Rom. 12:1-2; 14:9; II Cor. 5:14-15)
3. You must **work** at the problems daily, until you solve them.
  - a. Deal with them or they will hatch new problems.
  - b. Communication is two people who are spiritual enough to talk about their problems, to solve them, and to work toward a God-honoring, Biblical conclusion. (Eph. 4:22-32)
4. You must communicate with **love and forbearance** -- for you both need to be relaxed, totally free to share things on your heart.  
(Col. 3:8-14; James 5:16; Rom. 12:10)

## *Keys To Marriage Enrichment*

5. You must put away the great problem of **pride**. (James 4:6-10; Psa. 34:18; 51:17)
6. Anger and bitterness must be removed, the **wall** between the two of you removed -- by **repentance**, making **restitution**, **forgiving** totally, and thus bringing **restoration**. (Col. 3:13; Eph. 4:31-32)
7. You must **ask God** (Psa. 51) -- and your **spouse**, then -- for **forgiveness** -- being willing to honestly face personal sin. (Isa. 44:22; 43:25; I Jh 1:7-2:2; Lk 17:3-4; James 5:16)
8. You must **face the need of change** . . . by examining your attitudes, your thoughts, and behavior in the light of the Word of God. . . then obeying the principles God has given us! (Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:8-14)
9. You must seek to **see** the problem afar off! (Prov. 22:3; 27:12)

### **Consider. . . this week:**

#### **Don't wait for more information!**

Action brings insight -- understanding. *If any man will do, he shall know.* (John 7:17) Just obey!

#### **Don't wait for a right feeling!**

Action and thoughts control feelings! So right actions brings right feelings. Love is commanded, something YOU DO! *"Love one another!"*

#### **Act the way you ought to be!**

Deceitful action is hypocrisy -- obedient action is faith! *Hear Christ's sayings and do them.*" (Matthew 7:24; James 4:17; Jh 15:9-12)

## **Fourth Key: Foundational Principles for the Marriage and Home!**

As we begin, we must lay a Biblical foundation. There are certain *foundational principles for life. . . for all of us!* These are central to all we could say about marriage, and family life. These apply to every age, for personal living, for every aspect of life.

It is imperative that you seek to “*live out*” these basic principles in everyday life. Without bringing these into focus, wanting transformation in life, the truths of the following pages of studies for the marriage and home will be of little help!

### **My Home Is Of God**

What does it mean that “*your home is of God?*” This is a central truth that must be understood and effect our lives deeply. Can you say, “*My home is of God?*”

#### **A. This means that God created (brought about) my marriage and home:**

(A careful reading of the following portions will cause you to see the importance of this -- Gen. 1:26-27; 2:18-24; Psalm 127:1; Psa. 78:5-8.)

1. The wife, the husband, the children were all brought together by God.
2. God having instituted the home, also planned in His providence to bring us together. We don't live in our house as a family, as a husband and wife out of accident.
3. Few things are instituted by God -- but our marriage is!
4. God uses the *beautiful picture of marriage* as a *type or picture of salvation*. (Rom. 7:4; II Cor. 11:2)
5. Terrible devastation occurs when the family unit is violated. When there is error, sin grows in the family.
6. God's concern for the family, the marriage, and the home life, is seen over and over again in the Word of God. (See Deut. 4:9-10; 5:29; 31:11-13.)

Marriage is God's plan for the ages. ***A marriage and home is not a happenstance.*** It is not an after-thought. All of us are related to a home, a family unit. Marriage is the primary foundation of the home and of life itself.

We must come to the place of saying that “*our marriage and home is of God.*” We must accept our mates as special gifts from God, as Adam accepted Eve as God's gift to him. We must accept our children as God's special gift also, just as they are. Our concern ought to be that they 1) know God, and serve Him, and 2) that they follow His ways. (Consider Judges 2:6-13.)

### **My Choices Determine My Harvest**

Life is made up of unending choices! Your marriage came about because of choices that came out of the dating process. No one forced you to marriage whom you did.

No one caused you to enter into marriage when you did, nor with whom you did. If we were walking with the Lord and sought His will, then we had the special joy and peace that comes from submission to God's plan and will for our lives. No matter whom we married. . . marriage is for life. . . and we must make the choices that will bring joy, peace, harmony, and the joy of a God-fearing marriage.

Daily we make ongoing choices. We choose how we are going to respond to one another, or how we will react. Our attitudes, words, etc., are all choices.

**A. *We must come face to face with the fact that we produce our own harvest.***

1. Your present and future condition and circumstances are the direct result of your past, present, and future sowing. (Gal. 6:7-9)
2. Sowing and reaping are the result of choices. My present condition is the result of my choices in the past. This is true concerning every area of my life.
3. It is hard to get a couple to see that ***what they are sowing right now*** in one another's lives is what they will be reaping one year, five years, ten years, yes, maybe all the years of the future.
4. We are daily sowing words, actions, deeds, thoughts, and attitudes that will be reaped in our lives and in the lives of our children.
5. The present reaping should teach me ***now-- to sow now --what I need to sow*** -- so that my harvest will be right in the future. (Consider the experience of -- Lot, Samson, Daniel, Jonah, Achan.)

**B. *What will the harvest be?***

1. We can easily sow and reap a **negative** harvest, such as: (Gal. 6:7-8)
  - a. rejection
  - b. apathy, indifference
  - c. resentments
  - d. anger
  - e. neglect
  - f. sensuality
  - g. envy, jealousy
  - h. hostile attitudes
  - i. bitterness
  - j. impure thoughts

I am sure that Lot, Achan, Samson, Jonah and a host of others wished that they could have been set free from the harvest of their sinful sowing. The harvest they had to reap doubtless brought great sorrow.

2. Or we can choose to sow **positive**, God-honoring seed, such as: (Gal. 6:8; 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9-10)
  - a. openness
  - b. acceptance
  - c. forgiveness
  - d. faithfulness
  - e. honor
  - f. respect
  - g. loyalty, trust
  - h. humility
  - i. purity
  - j. good habits
  - k. godly love

We may go to a counselor, or a pastor-counselor, and want him to immediately set us free from the results of our past sowing. We want the problem solved, and removed from us right then. But that is an impossibility. The counselor can only talk with us, teach us the Word of God, pray with us, and comfort us, but he cannot set us free from the harvest of our past sowing.

3. It is so difficult to change our sowing when we are still reaping from the past wrong sowing.
  - a. We must continue to sow that which is godly, and Biblically right even if we continue to reap from the past.
  - b. In due time, God will intervene, and things will change.
4. If you are sowing sinfully, you must change. You must look at your goals, your life, your attitudes and what is taking place.
  - a. Listen to the Word of God -- hear and heed what God says. (Lk 8:18)
  - b. When others say something is wrong -- we had better listen. (Lk 8:8-9)

Too often we try to live on past glory. That is, in the past we served the Lord, and now we allow ourselves to coast, to sow slothfulness and carelessness. We may still be reaping *good from the past*, but if at the same time we are sowing complacency and neglect, the future will change. We will reap from our sinful neglect and selfish living. The reaping won't be fun, *be not deceived, God is not mocked.*" (Gal. 6:7)

### **Our Covering the Problem Brings Tragedy!**

Self deception is the worse deception in all the world. We must stop blinding ourselves to our own sins. (Psalm 19:12-14; Jer. 17:9; Psa. 139:23-24) It is so easy not to see our own sins, for "*every man's cause is right in his own eyes.*" (Prov. 20:6; 21:2)

#### **A. Why is there so much tragedy?**

1. Why do so many couples drift apart and find a *great gulf fixed* between them?
2. Why do so many marriages become stale, and experience emotional divorce?
3. I think most of the time one or both are covering their problems.
  - a. This is done by **projectionism**, (*projecting blame on someone else.*)
  - b. **defensiveness**, (*explaining, defending one's words, and actions*) and
  - c. both or one of them practices **rationalization** rather than honestly facing problems. (*Rationalizers are people who are able to invent a seemingly logical and acceptable explanation for behavior that is unacceptable. They seem to have an airtight argument for virtually everything. In the end, they suppress and avoid the truth.*)

#### **B. We must uncover and deal with each and every sin problem.**

(Prov. 28:13; I Jh. 1:5-2:2)

1. Honestly face the facts of the case.
2. Be honest about personal failure and sin.

#### **C. We must start confessing and forsaking sinful habits, thoughts, reactions, and attitudes:** (Repent -- See Rev. 2:5 and Rom. 2:3-6)

1. It is so easy to gloss over sin and just call it a mistake.
2. If we don't call sin - **sin**, and see it as serious as a *rattlesnake in the house*, we will just let it go and never deal with it.

**D. We must stop being blind to our sin -- ignoring it, denying it -- and covering it.** (Jere. 19:9; Prov. 20:6; Gal. 6:7)

1. Are we blind to our abrasiveness, bitterness, resentments, neglect, thoughtlessness, anger, and unforgiveness?
2. Do we see our anger, sensuality, selfishness, worldliness as God sees it?
3. It is so *easy to accuse another as we excuse ourselves!* So easy to live within ourselves as if everything is all right.
4. We must work at being open to our own wrong doing!
  - a. We should not deliberately blind ourselves to our own sins.
  - b. We should not get angry and then retaliate when someone tries to help us see the wrong in our lives.

**Consider --This Week--** *pray about, talk about, and work at the following:*

**The marriage needs the following to be what God desires:**

**COMMIT** yourselves to Christ -- completely, repentantly, believingly.

**SUBMIT** yourself anew to your partner -- humbly, openly, totally.

**ADMIT** your failures and ask for your spouse's forgiveness.

**RENEW** your wedding vows *audibly -- at least to one another.*

**PRAY** daily for one another -- separately and together, audibly.

**FORGIVE** quickly, early, completely.... yes, daily!

SPEAK, ACT, DEMONSTRATE, GIVE LOVE EVERY DAY!

## Fifth Key: Building Up One Another

What is a good prescription for a “*very good marriage?*” What would you include in a listing of ingredients for an exciting marriage? I think that every couple desires the very best marriage they can have, at least they would say that, even though they don’t work at it.

We will look at three things, out of many, that could be considered which will help you “*build up one another*” for a really good marriage. These needs are to be worked at simultaneously and maintained consistently. If necessary they can be implemented by either partner alone, and often one of the two will have to make the first move without any promise of cooperation from the other.

### Giving Blessing to Your Mate!

Maybe you never thought of **blessing** as something to be introduced into your marriage. This principle of giving **blessing** is a Biblical one, and the Christian is commanded to practice it! (I Pet. 3:9)

#### A. The meaning of the word... blessing. (I Pet. 3:8-11)

1. Blessing is based on two Greek words... meaning “*giving a well-word,*” So blessing means giving a good word, a healing word, or that which will build up or aid another person.
2. Our speech ought to mean much good others. **There is power in our words.**
3. Christ gave blessing rather than cursing when under great suffering. When they reviled Him, what did He do? (I Pet. 2:20-23) \_\_\_\_\_

#### B. The application of this truth:

1. In response to annoyance, to provocation, what do you give? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you seek to bring blessing, or to bring peace to troubled waters? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Compare the two kinds of wisdom in James 3:13-18. Then list the **characteristics of the world’s wisdom: Wisdom from above:**

a. _____	b. _____	a. _____	b. _____
c. _____	d. _____	c. _____	d. _____
e. _____	f. _____	e. _____	f. _____
4. In I Peter 3:10, the Lord tells us that if we love life and desire to have good days... *we will keep our tongue from evil* in any form.
5. Another aspect of blessing is to “*bestow practical benefits upon*” the other person. It means to look for opportunities to do kind deeds.
6. Another way to give blessings is to give appreciation and thanksgiving for the other person. Make your praise known verbally.



7. Lastly, you can bless your mate by calling down God's favor through prayer. How much do you pray for your mate? When? How often?

**C. God's part in giving blessing.**

1. God has promised to hear your prayers. (I Pet. 3:9) If we give blessing God states that we will *receive blessing!*
2. No matter how your spouse treats you, giving blessing should be your response.
3. Scripture teaches us that the Lord will protect and honor the husband or wife who applies the Biblical principle of giving blessing.
4. When you give blessing (instead of returning evil for evil and railing for railing) you allow the Lord to work in the life of the one who may be rendering evil or railing.

**Summing up:** Giving blessing is a practical action conveyed by deed, attitude, and words. Blessing in its fullness will work wonders when applied to marriage.

## **Edifying One Another!**

We read much about edifying in the Word of God. In marriage it has a very special meaning, and if applied it will bring much intimacy, loving closeness, joy, and richness to the marriage partners.

**A. The meaning of the word... Edify:**

1. The word edify generally means "*to build up.*"
2. The meaning of the word *edify* is found by considering the root meaning of the English word. Edify comes from the old Latin word, "*aedes,*" which originally meant a "*hearth or fireplace.*" In ancient times this was a place of warmth and light for the whole family, a place where daily bread was prepared, where the family gathered for comfort and sustenance. I think we see applications to our lives from these thoughts.
3. The Greek word, "*oikodomeo*" is a combination of two words: meaning "*to build a family, a home or a house.*" The word means a) to build up each other, b) a place where we build up another, c) a practice of building up one another.

**B. The application of the word to daily life:**

1. Study Rom. 14:19; 15:2; I Cor. 8:1; II Cor. 12:19; Eph. 4:12, 16, 29; I Thess. 5:11
2. In *edifying* we allow the love of God to control us so that we give our spouse the freedom to grow and to develop into the person that God wants him or her to be.
3. We dwell with one another in such a way that there is no fear in failure or of hurtful criticism. We apply Colossians 3:12-14.

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4. We bring about *edification* by the application of former lessons and their application to our lives.
5. *Edification* comes about by what we think upon -- as we think upon the right things. Phil. 4:8 gives us a list of things to focus our thoughts upon.
6. The husband brings about *edifying* by loving responses ... nourishing ... cherishing ... encouraging ... praising ... (I Pet. 3:7; Eph. 5:28-29)
7. A wife *edifies* her husband by giving ... praise ... admiration ... adoring ... esteeming highly for his work's sake ... (Eph. 5:33; Titus 2:2-4)
8. Both can *edify* the other by focused attention, by loving eye contact, by a loving touch, by kind words. *Edification builds up and never tears down!*

### **Sharing Life In Sweet Companionship!**

God planned marriage to be an exciting companionship! One of the most precious aspects of marriage is the privilege of sharing life with someone whom we love. ***This sharing is to take place in a climate of total acceptance.*** So often we do not set a priority to establish the practice of a shared life. We must work at a shared companionship.

The gospels clearly reveal that Christ shared His life with the apostles and disciples. Christ-like sharing ought to be practiced in the home by both spouses in their attitudes and actions toward one another.

#### ***A. Sharing of our life means:***

1. sharing our time, interests, and concerns,
2. sharing our ideas, ideals, and our innermost thoughts,
3. sharing our spiritual walk, our objectives and our goals,
4. sharing our hearts in a sensitive way with awareness and perception of the needs of the other person.

#### ***B. Sharing the things necessary for a rich marriage:***

1. Being totally relaxed with one another... with no fears, tensions, apprehensions, or hidden agendas.
2. Having total rapport with one another, understanding the spouse's temperament, personality, needs, concerns, bents, etc.
3. Having nothing between us in unresolved conflicts, confrontations, or misunderstandings.
4. Having no walls between us... no hurts or sins that have not been forgiven and forgotten.
5. Sharing is a result of building the kind of ***oneness*** that the Scriptures urge us to develop. This is an inner-twinning of our minds, hearts, and souls.

**Conclusions -- meditate on these this week:**

A husband says, *“My wife does the craziest things -- and she’s the first to admit it. We all get a good laugh when I bring it up at a party”*. (And of course the wife may well suffer from the abuse and inconsiderate attitudes, words, and actions of the husband.)

***There are answers... they are unfolded in this lesson.***

1. Building up another in marriage can become an exciting and joyous labor of love.
  - It will bring spiritual fruit and blessing.
  - It will bring blessed results in the lives of our children and youth as well.
  - It will bring a victorious life, which in turn will bring boldness to witness, as we share the gospel with those around us.
2. **Think with me** -- *“There are no unhappy marriages -- only marriage partners who are immature...not growing, learning, facing, admitting, confessing when wrong, and changin.g”*
3. Love accepts a partner as he or she is, habits and all, without nagging, whether the spouse changes or not, and *true godly love will cause us to bless, edify and share with one another.*
4. Love assures the spouse that he or she is important enough to remember with extra courtesies -- voicing love frequently throughout the day.
5. The spouse who embarrasses his or her partner... points up differences or difficulties... parades weaknesses publicly... or jokes at the other’s expense, probably:
  - is ***insecure in himself***, has very poor self-image, and has not entered into his position in Christ,
  - is ***self-righteous, proudful, and blind to his own failures, and***
  - has not entered into the joy of ***“building up his spouse.”***

## **Sixth Key: Removing Walls We Have Built!**

How can we have marriage intimacy instead of rejection, frustration, hurts, suffering and heartache? What is intimacy? Why do some couples have a great marriage and others suffer much sorrow?

- Intimacy means that I know who you are at the deepest level, and I accept you.
- Intimacy is reaching out to understand each other in the face of busy schedules, different personalities, embarrassing secrets, and past hurts.
- Intimacy is a block of time given freely or sacrificially to the other to whom you made vows.
- Intimacy is opening up to your mate when he or she reaches out.
- Intimacy is being spiritually, intellectually, and emotionally connected so that you feel oneness in mind, soul, body, and spirit.

### **I. BUILDING WALLS CAN DESTROY INTIMACY AND LOVE. (I Pet. 3:9-10)**

#### **A. It is easy to build invisible walls.**

1. Invisible walls can loom up and cut off affection, tenderness, and the will to work at your relationship as you did during dating days.
2. Walls are built a brick at a time.... often from *railing for railing and evil for evil*.
3. It happens in seemingly “*perfect marriages*” where the couple has everything - - great house, wonderful education and background, and financial security.
4. In a few weeks, months, or years after marriage -- they may be puzzled over the coldness that is a wedge between them.
5. Possibly she no longer responds to his caresses, which was no problem early in their marriage. And possibly he neglects, ignores her, and has built great resentment and bitterness. (Col. 3:18-19)
6. The wall has gone up . . . just one brick at a time . . . and slowly the marriage is coming down. The wall may seem to be totally invisible.

#### **B. Building walls is usually an *ongoing process!***

1. Sharing the story of Susan and Eric! (*I will give the story here!*)
  - a. They readily agreed with their spouse, but did so with resentment.
  - b. They had many thoughts of irritation toward the other spouse, but ignored those feelings. . . as the feelings grew.
  - c. Issues were not settled, but were growing (Heb. 12:12-15) and some of the anger appeared on the surface.
2. Susan opposed three changes in the house plans, but in the interests of peace (so she said to herself), she let them pass.
3. A number of Susan’s ideas irritated Eric, (he felt he was far more logical, sensible than she),

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- a. those ideas of hers seemed so silly,
  - b. but in the interest of a solid relationship (?) he suppressed his reactions and smiled.
4. Things continued to develop:
- a. It was the same old thing. . . hidden irritations, stubbornness, selfishness. . . that sequence that dooms so many marriages.
  - b. They tucked away many negative, harsh, angry and irritating thoughts. (Prov 23:7; Matt 12:33-35; Gal. 6:7-9)
  - c. They did not realize. . .
    - that an unspoken concern, • an irritable spirit suppressed,
    - a critical spirit ignored. . . would build an invisible wall that would slowly divide them.
  - d. They were cutting off the desire for affection and cementing in its place tension and thoughts unknown to the other person.
  - e. They had kept their true feelings to themselves. . . and smoldered inside.
5. Little things became big things. . . *sharing the cobweb story in their life.*
- a. For six days Eric had added to this invisible wall by:
    - keeping his thoughts to himself,
    - deceiving his wife, • pretending all was well,
    - and concealing his own hostility.
  - b. Those six evenings he kissed her, hugged her, and said nice words, while anger and disgust was in his heart.
  - c. Susan was doing a slow burn over the *Great Cobweb* incident.
    - She did not like it, but her manner toward Eric was beautiful, She play-acted that everything was all right.
    - She pretended appreciation, but it was deceptive,
    - Actually, she was full of resentment and anger.

### **C. What was taking place? What was in their invisible wall?**

1. Active deception, not sharing their thoughts.
2. Resentments of his interference, and impatience toward her habits.
3. Disgust. . . rebellion. . . anger. . . and growing hostility.
4. Self-centeredness, and impatience.

### **D. Did their marriage produce these things?**

1. NO... their marriage only revealed what was already in their hearts.
2. They tried to handle all these things by holding on to them and holding it all inside!

## **II. WALL BUILDING COMES FROM MANY LITTLE BRICKS:**

Incredible isn't it, but people get so distressed over a spouse's driving, neatness, eating habits, housekeeping, etc.

One incident doesn't mean that much, but the daily grind takes its toll.

**A. Little issues can be made about many little things.**

1. What do you do with the newspaper... fold it neatly near the coffee table, or leave it strewn around the room, a section here, there, etc.?
2. When you do come home from work, do you change your clothes before you sit down in the living room? Or lounge around with your grubbys on?
3. How cool do you set the air conditioner? How high do you open the window?
4. How many blankets do you sleep under?
5. Do you undress with the blinds down and the lights on? Or leave the blinds up and dress in the dark?
6. Do you install the toilet paper with the paper coming down from the front or top or from the back and bottom of the roll?
7. What do you do with wet towels? Drape them over the shower curtain? Over the bathtub? Put them in the clothes hamper? Or hang them neatly on the towel rod?
8. Where do you put the toothpaste tube, or the brushes?
9. Do you start on a new tube of toothpaste before you've squeezed the old tube flat? How do you squeeze the tube... from bottom or top?

**B. On and on it goes. . . there are many things** over which married couples get irritated, argue, and build walls.

- And they say, *"We're just not close any more!"*
- *"I can't stand him even touching me!"*
- *"There's nothing between us anymore, love is dead!"*
- *"I don't know why we even bother to stay together!"*

**C. All of this has to do with choices. . . decisions about what we think and how we are going to react.**

1. The clashes we have looked at involve differences of opinions between marriage partners.
2. Their *reactions* to these clashes erected invisible walls that destroyed any tenderness, fellowship, and the will to love.
3. This happens to newlyweds, old-timers, the educated, the wealthy, the healthy, and the uneducated, the sick and the poor.  
***What about you?***

**III. KEEPING THE WALL OR BRINGING CHANGE? *Which shall it be for you?***

**A. Listen to this contrast:**

Have you ever heard of a couple whose marriage was *riddled and torn apart* from too much harmony, happiness, good will, consideration of one another, joy and peace?

1. Can you imagine Eric and Susan coming to a pastor for counsel. . . beaming at each other with admiration, affection, and approval?
2. Can you imagine Susan saying, *“We have a problem, a serious one, I am just thrilled when Eric’s car pulls into the driveway. Both of us are ecstatic every time we touch each other. We constantly give each other admiration, affection and approval. Please, tell us how to start a fight. We can’t stand all this harmony and good will.”*

**B. Consider the problem:**

1. Disagreement is as natural as breathing when any decision is called for and opinions differ.
2. Disagreement often reveals our hostility, stubbornness, rebellion, and self-seeking.
3. ***Wrong thinking*** is the ***foundation*** of wall building.

**C. Consider the Biblical answer:** (Phil. 2:2-4; Rom. 12:10; James 1:19-21)

1. Here’s God’s answer and the basis for good human relations. (Phil. 2:2-4)
2. Here is the truth of the matter. (Isa. 53:6) We have each gone astray, and have gone our own way.
  - a. We have made choices based on what we want.
  - b. We have made selfish choices as we looked out for our interests, and not the best interests of the partnership.
  - c. We have walked in *“iniquity,”* wanting our way. . . self-seeking; for marriages often magnify, rather than eliminate, self-seeking.
  - d. We readily walk in the deeds of the flesh, in worldly wisdom and sinful reactions. (James 3:13-16; Gal. 5:15-17)

**D. The saints of God can change! The method for change is clearly given in the Word of God.**

1. Change takes place only as we change our minds about the fact that we can change. (Rom. 12:2) We can be ***transformed***, accept that fact! Then, on that basis do the following!
2. *“Put off what you need to put off!”* Take a stand against the practice of sin. (Eph. 4:22; 4:26-27; 29, 30-31; Col. 3:9-10) Putting off is a decision, then a practice, a labor until we build godly habits.
3. *“Put on what you need to put on!”* Make a decision to put into your life godly characteristics that will bring change. This must be a decision, then a practice until it is habitual. (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12-14)
4. This all takes place by *“renewing your mind!”* (Eph. 4:23; Rom. 12:2)
  - a. Daily, hourly, if necessary renew your mind to work at putting off and putting on.
  - b. Renewing your mind is a process where we change the way we think,
  - c. we change our attitudes and outlook,



- d. and we change our reactions and responses from sinful to godly ones.

**Then we can build an intimate, loving marriage.**

**This week consider the following:**

***Not the situation. Not your difficulties. Not your partner,  
But your responses to these makes or breaks your marriage!***

***Problems are opportunities. . . assets. . . wings. . . not weights,  
Your response makes the difference!  
It is truly up to you!***

***What is your response?***

*Negative?*

*Buck-passing. . . "It's their fault. . . they failed me."  
God-accusing. . . "Why does God do this to me!"  
Fate-blaming. . . "The cards were stacked against me!"  
Self-rejecting. . . "I'm no good. . . just a born loser!"  
Self-pitying. . . "My partner doesn't understand me!"*

*Positive?*

*Honest. . . "I'm wrong. . . I admit it. I need to change!"  
Teachable. . . "I'll learn from my experience."  
Humble. . . "I've sinned, but I refuse to be a failure!"  
Practical. . . "I'll grow up and make our marriage all it can be!"*

### **Questions to Consider And Answer This Week!**

- 1. What I am doing to help build a wall in our marriage!**
- 2. What makes up the wall we have built? (check-mark the items or list them.)**

not forgiving others of their past? \_\_\_\_\_ holding on to resentments? \_\_\_\_\_  
disagreements over child management? \_\_\_\_\_ over finances? \_\_\_\_\_  
holding on to hidden negative and damaging thoughts? \_\_\_\_\_  
holding on to anger, and a critical spirit? \_\_\_\_\_  
pretending everything is all right while I am doing a slow burn inside? \_\_\_\_\_  
actively deceiving? \_\_\_\_\_ holding on to stubbornness? \_\_\_\_\_  
play-acting, suppressing thoughts while inward very irritated? \_\_\_\_\_

- 3. What are some of the little things we have issues over?**
- 4. What I am going to do to bring change in my life!**
- 5. What intimacy means to me. . . I will discuss with my spouse!**
- 6. Other aspects I see in our marriage that has helped to build a wall!**

# **The Seventh Key: Embracing Supernatural Factors!**

## ***(Rather Than Causing Divisions)***

There are many ways that divisions come in a marriage and companionship is lost. I am especially thinking of one particular aspect. Much of the problem comes from a lack of understanding of what the Lord means by “*submission*” for the wife and “*headship*” for the husband.

- To a lot of people “*submission*” means “*doormat*,” and the wife is treated in that manner.
- Then along with that “*headship*” to some means “*dictator*,” and the husband makes most of the decisions from a “*self-centered, selfish*” attitude.

We want to look at factors that will make a difference in any marriage. These are God’s answers and are closely connected with the previous lessons. If you have done the extra home work (taking an hour a week minimum for this) then you have gleaned many truths that will help your marriage.

### **A Misunderstanding of Scripture Brings Certain Kinds of Problems!**

#### **A. We want to look at five steps of disintegration in a home.**

1. These things come about from competition, comparison, confusion, and a consideration of “*who is more qualified or who should control!*”
2. Everyone is looking for
  - a. fulfillment,
  - b. expression as a person
  - c. acceptance, and
  - d. love.
3. The following five steps of disintegration come about when there is a misunderstanding of the wife’s position and the husband’s true position.
  - a. The husband is not being **head** in the right way,
  - b. and the wife is not **submissive** in the right, God-given way.

#### **Husband:**

- a. **Retreats** from responsibility in the home. Neglects the many things he should do.
- b. **Resents** his wife taking over and becomes her critic.
- c. **Retreats** to his job, work, his hobby, sports, TV, or whatever is at hand. May be a workaholic as an “out”!

#### **Wife:**

- a. **Reasons** from pride, struggles to prove herself more qualified, (rejects submission as it seems like being a doormat).
- b. **Releases** husband from his responsibility at home, husband is willing to “give in” to her.
- c. **Resents** her husband, leaving all the responsibility to her... not long until it seems like its too much for her, and it is!

### ***Keys To Marriage Enrichment***

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| d. <u>Reacts</u> against his wife, “ <i>did you ask me?</i> ” ... “ <i>see, it did not work, did it?</i> ”   | d. <u>Reacts</u> to her husband, sees all the mess they are in, kids going wrong, etc., and he is to blame for he won’t take his place.  |
| e. <u>Runs</u> elsewhere, to find fulfillment as a person, and to find expression as a person. ... looks to job, other people, ... to another woman, ... to sports, etc. | e. <u>Runs</u> elsewhere... trying to find fulfillment, expression, worth, joy, and purpose. She is hunting for something besides competition, and comparison, as she tries to find completion and not defeat. |

The husband particularly lacks:

- consideration
- courtesy
- care

### ***B. Now we want to consider what this does to children and youth!***

1. The security factor is gone: Parents who are excited about one another are the source of true security.
  - a. Children are not secure because you tell them you love them.
  - b. Children are secure because of the love between their parents.
2. The children, (youth) refuse to communicate the important things. . . they only share what they want, such as...
  - a. the desire for things,
  - b. what they want someone to do for them,
  - c. they often hold inside of them what is important to them.
3. They resent their parents, are unhappy about their parents’ quarreling, etc.
4. They rebel against their parents, determining to have their own way; they feel they are *old enough to be trusted, to do as they please*.
5. They also run elsewhere, trying to find security, love, and acceptance. Now among their peers, usually the wrong ones, they try to find what they feel they lack. They may be at the mercy of many wicked people.

Did you notice. . . where are the people of this family? They are not home, if you would even call this a home. You will not find them home for they are all *out trying to find fulfillment, expression for their lives, completion, and love somewhere else*.

### **The “Supernatural Factors” God Give Us!**

God’s Word gives us the picture of the fulfilled, Bible-patterned home. It is God’s will that your home be a *heaven on earth!* It is His will that your home becomes a place of “*excited love,*” that you know ***His Supernatural Answers!***

**It is based on:**

- “one plus one”-- equals one,
- completion, not competition or comparison.
- being on the “same team.”

**A. We must embrace, practice living. . . the “oneness factor”:**

1. God wants the “**wow**” to be there, the sweetness to be there!
2. But we noticed the other’s **weaknesses** before marriage!
  - a. We carry over these weakness into marriage, and we remember various failures,
  - b. we add to that list after marriage, and
  - c. we mentally are comparing and rejecting.
  - d. We bring about a distance and a coldness.
3. We must **remember** and **respond** to the fact that God gave us our spouse.
  - a. Adam had the big picture that he was alone, that God in His will brought Eve unto him.
  - b. This was the only hope for human companionship, and to reject that mate in any form was to reject God Himself.
4. Every time we reject our mate, poke at our mate, respond wrongly to our mate, argue with our mate, shout angrily at our mate, or push our mate aside. . . we are building a distance, causing division. We are competing with the **oneness God ordained**.
5. We must receive the spouse as a **gift**... God’s ordained, chosen one to be the complement of our lives. Put the “**WOW**” in **your marriage!**

**B. We must embrace, practice living the “responsibility factor”!**

The *oneness factor* teaches us that *one plus one equals one*, that each is equal to the other. The responsibility factor teaches us that each one has his or her own place of responsibility given by God. Here the aspects of “*submission and headship*” come into play!

1. The husband as **head**: (I Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23)
  - a. The man is in the position of authority (as a position), but his function is something different.
  - b. His function is that of being a **sacrificial lover!**
    - He must give and give, and give to his wife.
    - He must put himself in the place of a servant.
    - As a giver -- he must overwhelm his wife with meeting her needs.
    - He must be willing “*to die for his wife.*” (Eph. 5:25)
    - He must, therefore, give up some of his selfish plans for her -- that is what headship is all about.
    - He must be willing to take the lead. . . that he might in every way produce in her the very best, as Christ desires for us. (Eph. 5:26-27)
  - c. His love is to **set his wife apart** and **lift her up** to be a glorious woman, beautiful in spirit, and in person.
    - Seriously, every man should ask himself.. “*Is the way I show loving working?*”
    - “*Do I truly love her like Christ loves?*”

2. The woman in **submission!** (Eph. 5:22, 24; I Pet. 3:1-6; Col. 3:18)
  - a. The husband is to be a sacrificial lover and the **woman is to submit** to that loving leadership.
  - b. She is to submit to his authority, as head, as the lover, not to a dictator (as his function is not to be a dictator).
  - c. Her submission will help things to run smoothly, to encourage the “*oneness factor*,” to make sure that factor works.
  - d. Even the trinity has headship, and yet they are equal, and one.
  - e. The wife is to express herself, maybe even disagree at times, but she is to still be **submissive** in the way she does this.
  - f. The **WAY** she disagrees, and shares her ideas is what make the difference.
    - She is to exhibit a *meek and quiet spirit*. (I Pet. 3:1-6)
    - In quietness and meekness she is to share. (cf. James 3:17-18)

**C. We must embrace, practice living -- the “Supernatural Factor!”**

1. God can turn us inside out -- His **power** is there. (Rom. 6:11-14; Eph. 6:10; Col. 2:6-7)
  - a. The vital relationship with the “*Designer of the Family*” makes possible victory for the family.
  - b. He can change us, His power, **ability** is at our hand. (Phil. 2:13)
2. God can turn us change us -- His **grace** is available for us. (II Cor. 12:9)
3. God can turn us around -- His **promises are ours**. (II Cor. 1:20)
4. God can change us -- if we will enter into His **provision**. (II Pet. 1:3-4)
5. God can change us -- if we will **add to our lives** the characteristics we need -- by the power of the Holy Spirit. (II Pet. 1: 5-11)

How will the world know salvation works if they do not see it in the homes of the professing Christians? If Christ cannot change the most intimate part of life -- your marriage, and if salvation does not work there -- then where does it work?

## **The Eighth Key: Practicing Principles of Good Communication!**

Surveys tell us the average couple spend only about seven minutes a week in any meaningful communication. Oh, it does not mean that no one talks; they talk about the trivial and the meaningless. Far too often such communication never touches on the one thing that really matters and the things that need to be discussed and solved. Sometimes a person wonders why some couples married because after marriage they seldom talk, or they talk so little they seem to practice ignoring the other person.

### **Consider these questions:**

1. Why is there such a breakdown in marriages?
2. Why do couples drift apart?
3. Why is coldness, hardness, and indifference evident in so many homes?
4. Why do so many marriages fail?
  - Probably the most basic reason is because of poor communication.
  - I never have counseled a couple who communicated well.
  - Usually their communication level with each other was very poor.

Life is not made up of a few crises, but of 10,000 different happenings, events, etc., and it is in these multitude of little things that:

- feelings and resentments are built,
- grudges and ill will are held as ill-temperedness is the norm,
- and anger begets anger and forgiveness is so seldom given.

If we can't discuss the little things, and solve them, then the weighty things will never be solved. If we can't discuss and solve our problems from day to day, how will we ever solve the issues that are so important to rearing children, managing money, showing affection and *all the nitty-gritty things* that make up life.

***In this study we want to look at four major biblical principles of good communication. If these are practiced it will make a tremendous difference in any marriage or home.***

### **Speaking the Truth In Love**

#### ***A. There must be speaking:*** (Eph. 4:15, 25) *"Speaking the truth in love."*

1. Not clamming up, denying, pouting, crying, ignoring, or using whatever means we can to withdraw from talking.
2. God commands speaking, and sometimes we use silence to punish, or to show our anger, etc.

#### ***B. There must be speaking truth.*** (Eph. 4:25;

1. Not making implications or statements which go beyond the statements or answers of the other person.
2. Too often our answers imply things the other person did not say, nor did they intend to say.
3. If we don't speak the truth then we are speaking lies. (John 8:44)  
We are opening the door to satan. Never should we practice disguised conversation.

**C. And we must speak the truth in love.** (Eph. 4:15; I Jh 3:16, I Pet. 1:22)

1. Our speech must be controlled by God's love. (Rom. 5:5)
2. Our speech should build up the other person. Col. 4:6)

This is a two way street. Not only do I need to practice speaking the truth in love but I must allow the other person to speak the truth in love to me. Maybe that is the harder thing to do. Often we do not want to hear what the spouse has to say to us even if it is spoken in love.

### **Solving Problems Daily**

*"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil."* (Eph. 4:26-27)

Far too readily anger is a part of life, but God says we are not to go to bed angry and if we are angry we must put away the anger lest we give place to satan.

**A. Do not go to bed angry!** Confess it to the Lord, repent of it, then:

1. Go to the person and solve it before you retire, if you possibly can.
2. Don't allow the anger to linger in your heart for it will fester, grow and develop into bitterness. (Col. 3:19)
3. If we do not solve little things quickly they become big things.

**B. Do not allow the devil to get an advantage over you.**

(Cf. Prov. 16:32; 25:28)

1. Satan will work within to develop more resentment, hostilities, disgust, etc.
2. Every future problem will be distorted into something bigger than it is.
3. All the emotions (anger, bitterness) and attitudes from past problems will come into the picture with each new conflict.

### **Attack the Problem.... Not the Person!**

*"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying that it may minister grace unto the hearers!"* (Eph. 4:29)

- We so readily attack each other. It becomes a practice, a normal and easy thing to do.
- We just don't plan to do it, but we do it anyway.
- Generally, couples find that attacking the other person becomes a quickly learned habitual response.
- As we cover our own sin, generalize, and rationalize it, we blame the other person. **Practicing the "blame game" becomes the norm in many homes.**



**A. This corrupt communication includes:**

1. The caustic words,
2. the abrasive, ill-temper speaking,
3. the cutting, harsh, and hard words,
4. hounding, hurting words.
5. Corrupt communication becomes a repetition of hostile words that cut the other person to the quick.

**B. When we use this kind of speech, we:**

1. bypass the real issue, (and possibly never solve the real problem)
2. we zero in on the other person's character,
3. we tear up and rip up the other person with our words, and
4. thereby, grieve the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:30)

**Consider the following:**

Unresolved conflicts tend to grow from the minor to the major, little to big, less to more, from the cold war to the hot war. (*note below*)

*Difference of opinion ..... develops into a spat ..... which develops into a confrontation.*

*The heated debate or argument .... develops into a hot quarrel .... and a sense of division.*

*Next, intense physical anger .... becomes a full fledged fight .... and rejection of the other person sets in.*

*Finally a deep hostility develops .... the war is on, the other person is almost constantly treated as an enemy .... soon a separation or divorce may take place.*

***They did not attack problems together, but repeatedly attacked each other!***

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**Practicing Right Actions. . . Not the Wrong Reactions!**

Ephesians 4:31-32 gives us the content of this principle. These verses ought to be studied with great intensity and desire to apply what God is saying to us.

Many times spiritual, dedicated Christians find that their problems do not arise from overt, outward sinful actions, but from sinful reactions on their part.

*“And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” (Eph. 4:30-32)*

**A. Sinful, destructive conversation grieves the Holy Spirit.**

1. We can only grieve someone who loves us.

## *Keys To Marriage Enrichment*

2. He wants to be our comforter, guide, teacher, and source of power.  
Our sinful actions seriously grieve and quench His ministry in us.

### **B. *God commands us to put away certain things. . . to not practice sinful reactions.***

1. We must put away bitterness -- which we build by unforgiveness, and the determination to hold on to wrongs and offenses.
2. We must put away wrath -- which is flaming rage. It is "all reason gone mad." It is a reaction that destroys those we love the most.
3. We are to put away anger -- which is often a settled indignation, the hostile response, and reaction as a slow burn.
4. God also hates clamor -- the harsh contention, strife, brawling that is so often allowed in our homes between children and spouses as well. Clamor includes high pitched words, disorder, tumults, and contention.
5. We are commanded to put away evil speaking -- or slander, back-biting, talebearing, reproaches, etc.
6. Lastly, God wants us to remove all malice -- the desire for revenge. What is malice? The secret ill-will, just thinking evil toward someone. (If allowed to remain in the heart, it brings spite that cannot rest until it works evil. ***Malice is the henchman of hate.***)

### **C. *We must labor to put on:***

The term, "***be ye***" is a verb tense of continued action. It is not speaking of a one time action or occasional doing, but a constant seeking to practice these godly characteristics toward our spouses and those around us.

1. ***Kindness*** -- which is an active ***doing of good*** in words and actions. It is serving, ministering, and sacrificing for ones we love.
2. ***Tenderhearted*** -- is speaking of having a soft heart, a responsive spirit to another person . . . includes compassion, a heart burden for another.
3. ***Forgiving*** -- is a total release of the other person from the wrong which was committed. It is an act of the will whereby we release them, and includes a change of attitudes wherein we cease being resentful.

### **This Week Work On:**

1. First memorize these basic principles.
2. Write them, put them in a prominent place. Possibly write them on a card you can take with you through each day until these are a part of you.
3. Make a covenant to check up on each other, help each other apply these truths.
4. Consider your responses and be willing to repent of the the sin practices that you know are there.
5. Plan to change, work at change, pray for change, and then bring the change God wants you to both have in your marriage.
6. If you have children, help them see how these things apply to their live as well. Have them memorize these basic points.

# The Ninth Key: Building Communication Skills

A breakdown in a marriage may take years to come to the point of qualifying for the *intensive care unit*. The fact remains that most divorces occur because somewhere along the line communication broke down between marriage partners and life became boring and meaningless. Maybe now you have even come to the point of meanness, scorn, and contempt for each other.

Probably one of the greatest weaknesses in the home is the failure to build and maintain good communication skills. More families hurt each other because of the sins of the tongue than in any other area of daily life. Often people just are not following biblical guidelines and principles in their daily relationships.

**Consider:**

- Good communication is an art to be learned.
- Uplifting communication is the very life-blood of a marriage.
- Without God-honoring communication the relationship can become terminally ill and could eventually die.
- It is important to realize that it may take time to turn a marriage around, to heal a hurting relationship, but it can be done by a change in attitude, the application of the Biblical principles, and by practicing good communication skills.

**It is important:**

- For pessimism to become optimism,
- for silence to become enthusiastic interest,
- for nagging to become admiring,
- for antagonism to become acceptance,
- for rigidity to become flexibility,
- for selfishness to become unselfishness.

***Our attitude is so important and so visible! We convey our feelings to others by our attitudes even without words, but especially by our words.***

## Some Communication Guidelines

Think about the following guidelines, work at implementing them into your life and marriage. Consider what you must change!

**A. Be a ready listener, and do not talk until the other person has finished talking.** *“He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and shame unto him.”* (Prov. 18:13) *“Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak and slow to wrath. . . .”* (James 1:19)

**B. Recognize that God puts a premium on listening... it is important.**

Lk 8:18: \_\_\_\_\_ Heb. 3:7, 15: \_\_\_\_\_

Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22 : \_\_\_\_\_

**C. Don't be hasty in your words -- be slow to speak!** Speak in such a way that the other person can understand and accept what you are saying.

**Consider:**

1. Prov. 15:28: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Prov. 29:20 : \_\_\_\_\_
3. James 1:19 : \_\_\_\_\_

**D. When you don't understand** then repeat the person's statements given and say, "Explain to me exactly what you meant." Give the person the time to explain further and hold your speech while doing so, hear them out completely. Let the person share all his heart!

**E. Don't go to bed angry!** (Eph. 4:26,27) Each day clear up any offenses of that day. Speak the truth, but do it in love. Do not exaggerate!

**Consider:**

1. Eph. 4:15 : \_\_\_\_\_
2. Eph. 4:25 : \_\_\_\_\_
3. Eph. 4:26 : \_\_\_\_\_
4. It is very easy for us to "give place to the devil." vs. 27.
5. It is also very easy to build resentment and hostile attitudes.

**F. Do not use silence to frustrate the other person.** Explain why you are hesitating to talk at that particular time.

**Consider:**

1. Prov. 10:19 a : \_\_\_\_\_
2. Prov. 10:19 b : \_\_\_\_\_
3. Prov. 15:28 : \_\_\_\_\_
4. Prov. 16:21 : \_\_\_\_\_
5. Col. 4:6 : \_\_\_\_\_

**G. When you are in the wrong, admit it and ask for forgiveness,** and ask how you can change, what you need to do differently.

**Consider:**

1. Prov. 12:15 : \_\_\_\_\_
2. Prov. 16:2 : \_\_\_\_\_
3. Prov. 20:6 : \_\_\_\_\_
4. James 5:16 : \_\_\_\_\_

**H. Do not be involved in quarreling.** It is possible to disagree without quarreling. Quarreling becomes a habit we must break!

**Consider:**

1. Prov. 15:1 : \_\_\_\_\_
2. Prov. 16:32 : \_\_\_\_\_
3. Prov. 25:28 : \_\_\_\_\_
4. Eph. 4:31 : \_\_\_\_\_

### **Some Basic Considerations About Good Communication**

**A. Avoid discussing important matters when either one of you are:**

1. extremely tired,
2. hungry,
3. hot (causes irritability)
4. angry, or unable to control the emotions at that point.

**B. Put the problem away for another time IF:**

1. the day has been hectic,
2. there are communication problems already at that point,
3. be sure and come back to the problem and face it, and deal with it kindly, honestly, and in a Christ-honoring way.  
(Don't *cop-out* by driving around, eating, beating the kids, pouting, crying, talking on the phone in order to ignore, etc.)

**C. Analyze the immediate reason for the provoked irritation!**

1. What set off the reaction?
2. Are we holding on to hardness, unforgiveness, criticalness, hostility, ill-will, etc.?
3. Is there something deeper that was the real reason for the upset?  
Be honest!

**D. Help your spouse to feel at ease and secure when talking to you.**

1. Remember: A hostile approach often gets a hostile response.
2. Love thrives on the expression of love. . . in words, actions, and attitudes.
3. Anger, hostility, and sharp retorts will reap more anger.

**Consider:**

Gal. 6:7-9 : \_\_\_\_\_  
Prov. 29:22 : \_\_\_\_\_

**E. Mature couples should be able to discuss any kind of subject!**

1. It takes time to grow in communication ability.
2. Good communication skills must be worked at for they do not come automatically or accidentally.
3. **Apply** the following directives:

Rom. 12:10 : \_\_\_\_\_  
Col 4:6 : \_\_\_\_\_

**F. When starting to get upset, think upon the Lord. (I Pet. 2:21-23)**

1. Practice praising the Lord for His goodness.
2. Start thinking about Jesus, calling upon His name, saying His Name over and over again. . . until HE quiets your heart. (Isa. 26:3)
3. Draw nigh to God. . . He promises to draw nigh to you. (James 4:5-9)
4. Wait upon the Lord for your strength. (Isa. 40:28-31)

**G. Remember, we communicate through:**

- |                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. our conversation or words, | 2. our gestures,           |
| 3. our tone of voice,         | 4. our facial expressions. |
- Over half of our communication is not words, but the way we say things, our attitudes, and body language. **Watch your total communication!**

**Some Important Attitudes to Convey in Your Communication!**

**A. Consistently communicate:**

1. your love to your family, spouse, etc.
2. your understanding of them and their needs,
3. your admiration of them as individuals,
4. your courtesy and respect for each person,
5. your desire for companionship and fellowship.

**B. Plan times to visit, to communicate. . . thus showing your attitude of desire, acceptance, interest, respect, and honor.**

1. At dinner, at bedtime, and privately, take time with your spouse.
2. Avoid the “eat and run habit,” Plan for enough time to chat.
3. Share the most interesting things about your day.
4. Discuss matters of importance to each one.
5. At bedtime... share about the happiest moment of the day.

**Consider, this week. . . the following:**

(Put a check by the ones that apply.)

1. How do you come together each day or a number of times in the day?
  - complaining? \_\_\_\_\_ • griping? \_\_\_\_\_ • joyful? \_\_\_\_\_
  - praising? \_\_\_\_\_ • thankful, thanking? \_\_\_\_\_ • hostile? \_\_\_\_\_
  - resentful, ill-tempered? \_\_\_\_\_ • trusting God \_\_\_\_\_ or fretful? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you monopolize the conversation? \_\_\_\_\_ (Skillful conversationalists have the marks of wisdom. . .they apply good skills, like some of the following.)
  - Do you use clever, little loving ways to get your spouse to go first, as *you give them the “you first” treatment?* \_\_\_\_\_ or do you take over, interrupt and put self forward? \_\_\_\_\_ or must have the last word? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Do you “**yield the floor**” quickly when you see your mate (or child) has something to say, or gives indication they have something to say? \_\_\_\_\_
  - Have you learned to “**read your mate’s signals**” (the raised eyebrow, the slightest movement in the corner of the lips, a furrowed brow, or some special gesture peculiar to your mate). \_\_\_\_\_ These are caution signals; let the person speak, or it is time to be quiet.
  - Do you try to impress the other person with how much you know? \_\_\_\_\_ Jealousy of every kind is dangerous stuff in marriage -- one of its worst forms is mental envy. Let your spouse teach you what they know -- be teachable. **Let the Holy Spirit control your inner spirit.** (Prov. 25:28; Eph. 5:18)

## **The Tenth Key: Building Bridges Toward Good Communication!**

In a primitive land, far away and long ago, villagers placed slabs of stone in the stream to get over to the other side. Thus began the first bridge. To build a bridge is a most natural thing to do. One of the most interesting sites I ever saw in Germany was a bridge at Trier. It was built prior to the time of Christ and is still used.

Bridges have been made of many things -- branches laid across the stream, timber, stone, and brick, concrete, iron, and steel. There have been long suspension bridges, bridges that span deep gorges, bridges across wide rivers, bridges over bays, train bridges, covered bridges, car bridges, foot bridges ... all of these to bring people together.

Walls are everywhere, but so are bridges. Whether you build a wall or a bridge depends upon your purpose. Do you want to let your spouse in, or keep him out?

As long as people have been separated they have been trying to bridge the gap. We desire to feel connected, to come together.

### **Consider:**

#### **The most important bridge in marriage is communication.**

- Words are the slabs of stone in the stream that get us over to the other side.
- Whatever obstacle we may have in our marriages, it is communication that bridges the gap. Listening is the bridge that draws our mate over to us.
- The motivations to build a bridge (rather than a wall) are the desires for intimacy, to give and receive love, and to be a friend... a loving companion. Walls keep us apart; bridges bring us together.

**Main Texts: Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:2-4; I Pet. 1:22; Jh 23:34-35**

### **Crossing the Bridge of Recognition of Differences in HOW We Communicate!**

*What bridges do we need to build?*

#### ***A. Men and women do communicate differently and for different reasons!***

##### **1. How men communicate:**

- a. Men speak to communicate information and facts.
- b. Men speak for function... for immediate purpose.
- c. Their communication basically relates to:
  - the real world around them,
  - to the tangible, physical world -- it is this world they are trying to manipulate and control.
- d. Men do also express feelings, but their main thrust is information.

##### **2. How women communicate:**

- a. They basically speak to express feelings, emotions, and inner moods.
- b. For most women, communication is emotional.
- c. Women speak to clarify... their communication relates to the emotional, psychological, relational world to which they are trying to bring peace and harmony.
- d. Women, of course, also communicate facts, but their main thrust is feelings.



**B. Consider how this may play out in real life:**

1. When a problem arises. . .
  - a. A wife is apt to repeat something over and over again (when she is emotionally moved about the subject or need).
  - b. The husband gives a quick answer, and to him that should care for it all. He gets impatient with the wife's asking again and again, not understanding her intent and need.
  - c. The wife asks repeatedly for she is trying to discharge the emotional tension that has built up in her heart. Only by going over the matter again and again can she relieve the feelings that make her uneasy.
  - d. Since communication is for her primarily to clarify, she feels (emotionally) the need to repeat herself.
  - e. The husband feels the wife is not listening to his quick reply of why she need not worry or fret. The husband who understands why his wife repeats herself takes a giant step toward accepting his mate and toward building good communication.
  - f. The wife should understand that when he no longer wants to talk about the subject, it is because he has said all there is to say... factually... and has nothing more to say. You see communication to him is functional.
  - g. The husband who does not longer talk about a matter is not necessarily shutting his wife out of his life -- he may just have no more to say about the matter at hand.
  
2. The great sad results that will arise:
  - a. The husband who does not understand a wife's basic purpose in communication is apt to become very frustrated, angry, and will gradually withdraw from her.
  - b. The wife who does not understand a man's basic purpose in communication is also apt to become very frustrated, hurt, and will gradually withdraw from him.

**Crossing the Bridge That Truly Connects Us!**

**A. It takes "time" together to be truly connected. (Take time)**

1. This problem is not what happens when we are together-- but we just are not together enough.
2. If we don't carve out enough time together, we won't cross the bridge to our spouses heart. Both have to make the relationship a top priority -- second, to the Lord.
3. A time deficit will inevitably cause the emotional tank of both spouses to be on empty. How can we fill those emotional tanks of personal need?

**B. It takes "talking" together to be truly connected. (Talk... talk... talk)**

1. We can be **together...** but not "**truly together.**" That takes sharing!
2. If we are together, but don't **connect**, what value is it? \_\_\_\_\_

Wives have made the following statements about all of this:

- *"I feel taken for granted."*
  - *"I am never shown that I'm important."*
  - *"I feel like he is on another planet -- he has to be told how I feel."*
  - *"I am vulnerable to attention by others who make me feel desirable."*
  - *"My personal needs don't seem important."*
  - *"I need to feel like my mate really sees and recognizes my strengths -- others do!"*
  - *"My mate pulls me down rather than builds me up!"*
3. Wives need emotional love, not just physical love. Husbands do too, but are not as apt to recognize this need.
4. Wives basically sense these lacks:
- a. not enough meaningful time together,
  - b. a lack of meaningful communication,
  - c. stress from money problems,
  - d. little intimacy in sex,
  - e. no help around the house,
  - f. no enough help in rearing children.
5. In good marriages both desire:
- a. unhurried time to connect,
  - b. to share their true feelings,
  - c. to make helpful concessions,
  - d. to understand the other spouse.
6. In the best marriages, there still are struggles, but they can communicate; their willingness to lovingly communicate compensates; they can work it out and meet needs.

### **Crossing the Bridge of Fears!**

Most marriages lack the blessing of open frankness, of mutual openness, of loyal and total openness to one another. We cannot understand each other if we have begun to hold back and are not truthful with our spouse or with ourselves.

**Why do we hold back? Over time two great fears that we all have begin to seep into our marriage.**

**A. *There is the fear of being judged or criticized:*** (Prov. 29:20; Eccl. 10:12; Eccl. 10:14; 12:10)

1. As our spouse mentions our faults, and blemishes, we are hurt.
2. We begin to withdraw; we see their faults, press them about their blemishes and they withdraw from us.
3. No one likes to be criticized, especially about things they can't change.
4. When we criticize each other we drive each other to withdraw.

5. Our wounded mates will not feel like they live in a safe, non-threatening place.
6. They will be prone to keep secrets and protect themselves.

**B. *There is the fear of receiving advice:***

When the wife, for an example, too quickly gives a ready-made answer to her husband's complex business problem. He may feel she simply does not understand the complexity of the problem. He wanted to talk through a delicate problem, but she short-circuited communication by answering too quickly or as if she knew the answers.

1. People are without exception more sensitive than we first think. Men are often hurt as easily as women, though men will try to hide it.
2. It is hard to be a good listener when we are prone to quickly answer. We may feel we have a helpful answer, but maybe our spouse just wanted a listener, a sympathetic heart, not a lecture.
3. Try not to respond when your spouse is sharing concerns, study to answer; don't answer until they ask for a response.  
(*Timeliness, discretion: Prov. 10:32a; 15:23b; Prov. 15:28; 21:23; 25:11*)

**C. *There is the need of deep listening:***

1. It is a desire to understand where your mate is coming from --
  - a. the motives, the unmet needs, and (*Listening: James 1:19; 3:18-19*)
  - b. the feelings that are also being expressed.
2. It is wanting to know the real meaning behind her/his spoken words.
3. Deep listening is hard work. It takes concentration and a willingness to set aside other things, and to block out other distractions.
4. Deep listening is the ultimate expression of concern for your spouse.
5. It cannot take place when we are preoccupied or in a hurry.
6. It can't take place when we, in pride, feel we have all the answers or hold contempt, hostility, or rejection of the other person.

**D. *Words have great power!***

1. Words are a window into the soul.
2. Words escort my spouse into my inner being, and usher me into her innermost thoughts.
3. We use words to paint the portrait of our love for each other.
4. A few sincere words skillfully put together can lift the spirit of your partner high into the heavens. **Words have great power.**
5. Work at putting these things to practice in your daily life.

## Eleventh Key: Overcoming the Major Destroyer of A Loving Relationship!

Our greatest problem is anger! **Anger in marriage is inevitable!** It does not have to be the cold edge of fury, but even the healthiest couple will at times feel the cool tip of frustration at times. No other relationship in life has the same potential for anger -- possibly because we experience so many unmet expectations. Maybe we have not truly giving "our rights" to God and accepted His will and providential working in our lives.

Short-term anger is common, but letting hurt feelings drag into long-term resentments and bitterness can devastate a marriage -- may even be fatal. Many have allowed anger to eat away at their love, forgiveness, and commitment.

Anger has the power to break down relationships. *It can push us into other sins, and emotionally tie us into knots.* Our hostility, and unforgiveness will *tie us up into knots -- causing unrest, lack of sleep, depression, and much hardness of heart.* (Eph. 4:30-32; Col. 3:8-14; Col. 3:19; Heb. 12:12-17)

Couples who learn individually, and personally how to *control their spirit (attitude)* (Prov. 16:23; 28:25) will make great strides toward loving intimacy. We must learn how to deal with anger in a constructive way. Holding on to hurt feelings, and hostility, and building scorn and potential contempt is a sure way to bring a total break down of the marriage.

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***Couples who keep their spirit "open" to each other when dealing with anger make great strides towards intimacy and loving closeness.***

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### ***A. Power struggles - - are the net result of unresolved anger!***

1. Some marriages are made up of daily *power struggles!* Both work at having control, both practice "one-upmanship," so strife, conflict, and competition becomes the norm of their existence. (Consider Philippians 2:1-4.)
2. Frequently one spouse or dating partner may go along with their loved one's every wish for a year or so -- but eventually things will change.
3. If unmet expectations and anger hasn't been adequately dealt with a battle for control in the relationship will often ensue.
4. Instead of each *yielding their rights* they begin using emotional *outbursts* to make a point and one or the other, or both try to control.

#### **What does the Word of God teach us in:**

a. Rom. 12:10 \_\_\_\_\_

b. Rom. 12:17 \_\_\_\_\_

c. I Jh. 4:16-18 \_\_\_\_\_

**B. Power struggles -- are caused by certain factors:**

1. **Issues are constantly raised** -- but never resolved.
  - a. If you are locked in a power struggle -- everything becomes an issue.
  - b. Little things are picked up as issues -- because behind it are all the hurts, hostilities, resentments, and feelings from previous disputes.
  - c. A wall has been built between the two that has never been removed.
  - d. Floating hostility and frustration becomes the norm -- with nothing ever resolved -- just anger that is attached to everything that happens.
2. If this continues, then, the problems pile up, they'll drop the issue, and **begin to attack the person.**
  - a. They do not clearly identify (or admit) the real issue or unresolved problem (s) for now they zero in on the other person's character.
  - b. The small skirmishes of the past now become character assassination time.
  - c. As the battle heats up -- they even attack one another over who needs to change.
  - d. They become locked into a power struggle of major proportions.

***In power struggles, the battle can continue on over who's in charge, who is setting the family rules, and who is following them.***

3. Finally, one or both **attack the relationship.**

Their thoughts may be... *"If these are the kind of issues we have, the kind of person I am dealing with... then what am I doing in their relationship? I may as well get out!"*

  - a. Now *security, trust, faith, love, and intimacy* are gone.
  - b. When the relationship gets to this stage -- everything jumps from level one (1) to level three (3) -- questioning the **relationship.**
  - c. Now even squeezing the tooth-paste tube the wrong way -- becomes grounds for divorce. (Because they question the relationship.)

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***Here is the "killing ground" of a marriage!***

- ***Unresolved issues***
  - ***Attacking the person***
  - ***Questioning the relationship***
- 

**C. *Is there a way to break free from this killing cycle and deal with anger and resentment in a more constructive way? Can we change?***

We will consider *three contributing factors* that help to create our problem.

They are: • A feeling of being *devalued and a blocking of our goals.*

- An *inner guilt* from all the conflict and confrontation.
- A *deep sense of rejection.*

1. When we think someone is **devaluing us or blocking our goals** -- it often sparks our anger. What is the Bible answer? (Psa. 37:23)\_\_\_\_\_

What does Romans 8:28-29 teach us? \_\_\_\_\_

2. When we hurt others, God is trying to deal with us, and **inner guilt is the natural reaction** -- this often causes more inner stress, frustration, and anger in our personal lives. What are God's principles?  
Prov. 28:13 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

James 5:16 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Psa. 32:1-5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. When **we feel rejection** we will experience deep pain. What should we do about this? We can take it to the Lord and rest in what we are in Him.  
Eph. 1:6 \_\_\_\_\_

Isa. 26:3 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

I Pet. 2:20-24 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**D. Our major cause of disharmony -- is a "closed spirit!"**

Even unknowingly, we can hurt others by what we say, do, or how we react. This can result in their "closing their spirit." Likewise, people can offend us by their hurtful actions, reactions, or words. Often the result is hardness of heart, indifference, and a closed spirit.

1. The "spirit" is the innermost, intangible part of our being.
2. It is that part of us that touches another without words, or without any physical touching taking place. (Read and consider I Corinthians 2:9-11.)
3. A closed spirit is a closed attitude in which the person withdraws from others. *This becomes a form of rejection.*
4. The Greek word for mind is **psyche**. This represents a person's intellect, will, and emotions. It's where we communicate to ourselves (self-talk) feel, and make decisions regarding relationships.
5. *We are body, soul, and spirit* and any part can and does affect the other. When we have a closed spirit it will be evident in each part.

**E. We need to maintain an open spirit.**

1. An open spirit represents a person who is relatively free from anger, quickly forgives, and desires to be mutually transparent.
2. This is a person who desires to communicate, and who stays open to the other person's ideas.
3. This person does not withdraw, stone-wall, or react in negative ways.

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***There are serious results from a closed spirit: How do we close someone's spirit?***

1. Criticizing someone unjustly
  2. Taking someone for granted as a normal practice
  3. Dismissing someone's needs as unimportant
  4. Speaking harsh words to someone
  5. Making jokes about someone's character, or physical flaws
  6. Making sarcastic statements
  7. Being rude to someone in front of others
  8. Being unwilling to admit when we are wrong -- especially when we really are
  9. Telling someone or implying his or her opinions don't matter!
- 

***F. A closed spirit is often reflected in one or more ways, such as:***

1. an argumentative spirit,
2. a very critical spirit,
3. a resistance to discuss or agree on almost anything,
4. withdraw, or stonewalling with the intent of not working on anything with the other person (s),
5. disrespect and an unwillingness to receive advice,
6. a determination to not accept or give romantic overtures.

List ways you have sensed people *closing their spirit to you, or how you have responded to others.*

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***G. A closed spirit is often sensed in physical ways, such as:***

1. Their facial expressions begin to reflect anger or avoidance.
2. They obviously won't look at the other person.
3. They often turn their back away from us.
4. If you try to hug them -- they turn away, or stand like a post, or shrug their shoulders in indifference.

***In this also there is a difference between men and women!***

Women tend to be more sensitive and aware of the damage a relationship suffers from a closed spirit. A woman's needs for a close, meaningful relationship is often greater than a man's, so the wife will be more sensitive to words and actions that weaken relationships. Children also are deeply hurt from a parent's closed spirit.

***What are God's Answers?***

1. Gal. 5:15 \_\_\_\_\_
  2. Gal. 5:22-23 \_\_\_\_\_
  3. I Cor. 13:4-8 \_\_\_\_\_
-



H. Consider six keys that will help open a person’s spirit:

These are not six steps, but have to do with our personal attitude and the value we place on the other person. (If the person does not open their spirit right away -- get softer, increase your understanding, gentleness, and be carefully persistent.)

- 1. Manifesting gentleness, tenderness -- (Eph. 4:32; I Pet. 3:8; Col. 3:12)
- 2. Understanding what the other person has gone through -- (Rom. 12:10)
- 3. Listening carefully, with compassion, empathy, purposefully -- (James 1:19)
- 4. Acknowledge when the other person is hurting and admit when you have been offensive. (Luke 17:1-4)
- 5. Touch the other person gently.
- 6. Ask for forgiveness and quickly give forgiveness -- (Eph. 4:26-27; Col. 3:13)

Personal application: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Project:** Take a minor conflict from recent months -- find out how serious the conflict was -- ask the person who was offended to rate the severity of the problem.

0 \_\_\_\_\_ 10  
no problem                                  minor problem                                  major offense  
*Work through the problem using the keys above.*

Take a more sensitive problem and work through it. Set as your goal to both open your spirits as much as possible. Begin with expressions of a tender repentant attitude:

*“Honey, I love you, and I am committed to you for life.”*  
*“I don’t want to continue to offend you, and I know you don’t want us to continue like this!”*  
*“Do you think I really understand how you are hurting?”*

**Project:**  
What verses to you need to apply to your life? (List below)

a. \_\_\_\_\_ b. \_\_\_\_\_  
c. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_

## **Twelveth Key: Four Essential Ingredients Every Relationship Needs to Succeed and Grow!**

You are about to plant your garden or flower bed. You probably would recognize there are four essential ingredients -- good soil, air, water, and light. If these elements are available in the right quantities, then you know that almost nothing will stop a plant from being green and lush. *There are similarities in a marriage.*

Both of you will make a unique contribution. Each is needed if the relationship is to thrive and reach its potential. *What can you do to assure a marriage will grow into intimacy?*

We both have a past. Some come into the marriage like a lush, green plant. These are people who came from homes where a mother and father did a good job of “gardening” or **nurturing** their child. Other people come into marriage with their leaves already “browned out.” The result of missing out on the following four elements that are so important in any relationship.

Be honest about your life, your background and your personal lacks. There is hope for having a growing kind of relationship that blossoms into intimacy. *IF you will put into practice these four crucial aspects, what a difference it can make.*

### **A Marriage Needs Security to Grow and Thrive**

- A. Security is one of the most basic needs in a marriage.** God offers and gives us security fully and freely. We have security in His Person, His Word, and the promises therein. This gives us stability. (Eph. 1:3-11, Rom. 8:23-39.)
- B. Security is the assurance that someone is committed to love** and will value us for a life-time. (God maintains this kind of response toward us -- Phil. 1:6; Rom. 8:10, 32; Jh 13:1; 15:9)
- C. It is the constant awareness that whatever the difficulties we face,** we'll work to solve our problems together. *We will stick together!!*
- D. Security means that we are fully committed to the truth.** We are aware of the needs of the other person. Therefore, we make a decision to always be open to correction if we are not giving the sense of security that is needed.
- E. We build security by:**
1. speaking the truth in love, (Eph. 4:15, 25)
  2. going out of the way to encourage our spouse, (Eph. 4:29)
  3. quickly forgiving and not bringing up the past, (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13)
  4. listening without lecturing, (Eph. 4:32; 5:1-2; I Cor. 13:4-8)
  5. giving many gentle hugs. (Eph. 5:28-29; Rom. 12:10)
- F. We destroy security by:**
1. lying, (even white lies), for this tears down the trust level, (Eph. 4:25; Col. 3:9)

2. not keeping a check on our tone of voice or volume level,
3. being harsh, instead of soft, (Prov. 15:1; Col. 3:19)
4. giving threats, pressure, or non-verbal negative messages,
5. an unforgiving, critical spirit. (Practice Colossians 3:12-14.)

***On a scale from 1 to 10 , how secure do you feel your relationship is?***

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<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
little	security								great security

- Is your security level where it needs to be?
- Does you spouse share the same perspective as you?
- Are you both committed to building security?
- What would it take over the next six weeks to move the score up to a higher level? Or to keep it there?
- The bridge between the two of you is either weak or strong! Can your marriage stand up to the raging waters of trials? How secure is it?

**A Marriage Needs a Routine of Meaningful  
Communication to Grow and Thrive:**

**A. There are five levels of communication**, where are you? (These could be considered levels, or circles of communication. Most marriages never pass beyond the third circle or level. We too readily talk about places, things, ideas, but shrink back from personal involvement.)

1. There is the outer circle of ***cliches!***
  - a. *“How are you doing? Glad to see you! Hope you are feeling well, or How is your family?”*
  - b. At this level you basically do not learn or feel anything.
2. Second circle (or level) of communication is ***repetition of facts.***
  - a. *“Did you hear about that? The news today is pretty grim. Wow, the weather was sure bad today.”*
  - b. This takes up most of the conversation in a home out of about 37 minutes a day, which is the normal amount of speech.
3. The third circle (or level) evidences a willingness to ***express one’s own judgment or ideas.***
  - a. *“His statement was critical. I won’t vote for that.”*
  - b. We share our opinions, ideas, and judgment about matters.
4. A deeper inner circle is the circle of ***frank expression*** from our hearts.
  - a. *“To be honest, dear, I feel a little hurt.” “Dear, please share with me your thoughts, desires and longings.”*

- b. We are willing to express our desires in some areas.
5. The inner circle is where we are willing to be ***totally transparent***.
  - a. No denying, no evasiveness, no hiding, no play acting or agendas.
  - b. Here is total honesty, and open, loving frankness!
  - c. Here is where we build true *oneness, trust, respect, and intimacy*.

**B. *There are elements in conversation we need to recognize!***

***(A cartoon read: “I know you believe you understand what you think I said, but I’m not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.”)***

That may sound like both parties are confused!

When you talk to someone, you may convey several of these six things at once. **Conversation can be confusing about:**

1. What you think you are saying,
2. what you meant to say,
3. what you actually said,
4. what the other person heard,
5. what the other person says about what you said,
6. what you think the other person said about what you said.

***Did you get it? You both need to think this through!***

**C. *Too often our conversation is at a very shallow level!***

1. It may never reach the depths where the needs lie.
2. We may cloak our words with glib words, but underlying messages sometimes will slip out through our glances, our gestures, and our posture.
3. Feelings cannot be entirely suppressed. Do you convey messages that can be understood, or are you evasive, unclear, and careless?

**As a Couple You Need to Create Emotional/Romantic Bonding Times!**

**A. *Never lose sight of the need of romance on a daily basis.***  
(How’s your attitude concerning this?)

**B. *Do the things that brought you to marriage, keep the “honey” in the honey-moon.***

**C. *Build into your marriage unhurried times of sharing and building oneness.***

1. Oneness is a “heart to heart” response,
2. it is a “mind to mind” response,
3. it is a “soul to soul” response,
4. it is a “body to body” response.

**D. Consistently provide positive times of emotional bonding for this can be a tremendous stabilizing factor to a marriage.**

1. Make arrangements for dating times,
2. Set aside specific times for the two of you,
3. Don't allow the needs of children or youth to destroy your intimate times.

### **Your Marriage Needs Consistent, Meaningful, Non-sexual and Sexual Touching**

**A. Meaningful “touching,”** without sexual overtures, can be a source of building intimacy, closeness, and growth in oneness.

**B. Many men don't realize it,** but over 80% of a woman's need for meaningful touch is non-sexual.

**C. Sex does not begin in the bedroom.** It actually begins in the everyday acts of truthfulness, consistency, kindness, loving deeds and words, touching, and talking that build a growing desire for sexual intimacy.

**D. A university made a study** about women's health and came up with the following: *The average woman needs from 8 - 10 meaningful touches from a loved one each day to remain physically and emotionally healthy.*

**E. The sexual needs of a husband and wife** are very important.  
(I Cor. 7:1-5)

**F. The difference between men and women in this area is striking.**  
In some ways a man is like a microwave when it comes to the sexual area -- he is ready for sexual union in a matter of moments. But for the average women, her response to her husband is more like a crock-pot. It takes much longer, she needs to be treated as a valuable person in order to emotionally desire to share the physical intimacy with her husband for her feelings are far more involved.

**G. Loving intimacy with totally relaxed feelings** lowers blood pressure, and literally energizes a person who is down or hurting.

**H. Husbands and wives need to practice** small acts of touching, holding hands, stopping to give meaningful gentle inter-actions they both desire.

**I. These small, but gentle, acts of touch** can work like *super bloom* does to a plant and can bring growth to a relationship. This should include lying in bed, snuggling, holding each other without any sexual intent.

**J. Sexual giving of one another** should be the “cap-stone or climax” of many loving acts over hours or days.

**K. God's agape love** (Divine love) should condition the three kinds of love. (eros, phileo, agape) (I Cor. 13:4-8; I Jh 3:16, 23; I Pet. 3:8; Heb. 13:1-3)

**Review of the Elements of Marital Intimacy**

*Develop unconditional **security** . . . a life-time commitment of caring.*

*Establish meaningful **communication** . . .daily sharing our feelings, hopes, needs, dreams, and being a good listener when the other shares.*

*Scheduling **romantic** experiences . . . building an attitude of romance, working at intimate times or else pressures will control you.*

*Intimate **touching** -- sexual and non-sexual . . . many loving acts a day will keep the marriage counselor away!*