

Marriage PREP

Building for a Lifetime

Welcome to MarriagePrep!

We are excited for you and this new stage of life that you will be entering in together! Many things in life require some degree of preparation, but maybe none more so than two people coming together in marriage, committed to spend the rest of their lives together. This weekend workshop was created and designed with you in mind. We want to gift you with the foundation and tools necessary to navigate your way to a healthy, successful marriage. Through this fun and interactive weekend, we believe you will walk away having discovered more about yourself, your future spouse, and your relationship – all while making new friendships along the way. So, make yourself at home and settle in for a weekend that will help your marriage last a lifetime.

Before we begin, let me tell you a bit about your fellow participants. You will find that this group represents a cross section of different ages and stages of life. There are some in here who are moving quickly toward a wedding day, finding yourself in the midst of one of the most hectic, stressful times of your life. There are also those in here who are simply exploring if marriage is part of their future. Some of you have been married before and others are experiencing this stage of a relationship for the first time. We know that many of you are not members of our church, but heard about this seminar from a friend, family member, or advertisement. Regardless of why or how you came to be part of this group, we want to say a warm welcome to each of you.

The most valuable time of the weekend will likely be the time you spend talking with each other about the concepts we discuss. Be open, honest, and bold as you explore new places and ideas. Enjoy your time together. We pray that your relationship is enriched in the process.

As we begin, let us start off with this truth and foundation of MarriagePrep: God is the author of marriage, and His ideas about marriage really work. While our society and culture often define marriage in contrasting terms to God's ideal, we hope you are encouraged to explore your relationship and incorporate God's truth into this journey called marriage. Now, let's get started!

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Expectations



Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts

(by Les & Leslie Parrott)

Discussion Questions

Respond to the following statements with “True” or “False.” Discuss your answers with your mate.

_____ The feelings of love and passion we feel today will not fade after we are married.

_____ I will never be lonely after I am married.

_____ Marriage is God’s way of meeting my needs.

_____ I know that my mate will be a better person for being married to me, and that I will be a better person for being married to my mate.

_____ My life will be easier after I am married.

H. Norman Wright states in his book, *Communication: Key to Marriage*, that:

“Too many couples enter marriage blinded by unrealistic expectations. They believe the relationship should be characterized by a high-level of continuous romantic love. As one young adult said, “I wanted marriage to fulfill all my desires. I needed security, someone to take care of me, intellectual stimulation, economic security immediately – but it just wasn’t like that!” People are looking for something “magical” to happen in marriage. But magic doesn’t make a marriage work: hard work does.”

The Primary Goal of Marriage Prep
is Discovery.

$$E - R = D$$

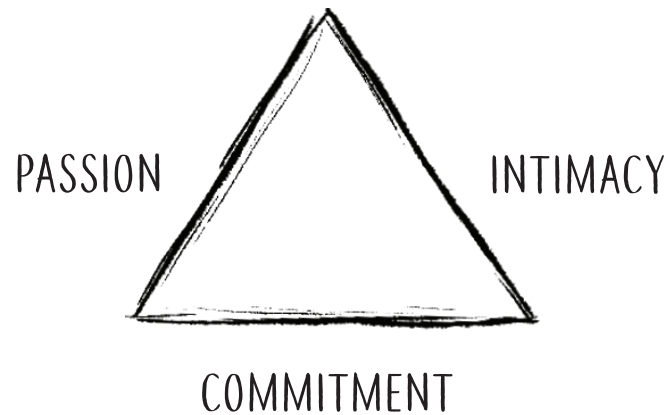
(Expectation - Reality = Disappointment)

What formed my Expectations?

How I see my marriage
+ How I see my mate

Expectation

Realistic Expectations Contribute to Marital Happiness.



Passion

The **biological side** of the triangle is **Passion**, the spine-tingling sensation that moved us toward romance. Passion is sensual and sexual, characterized by physiological arousal and a desire for physical affection.

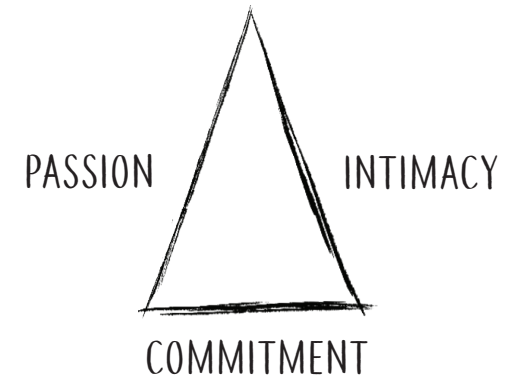
Intimacy

The **emotional side** of the triangle is **Intimacy**, the desire for someone to know us better than anyone else and still accept us. Intimacy hinges on closeness, sharing, communication, honesty, and support.

Commitment

The **cognitive side** of the triangle is **Commitment**, the promise that looks into an unknown future and promise to be there...until death. Commitment creates a place of certainty in the midst of swirling waters of uncertainty, securing love for our partner when passion burns low and when turbulent times overtake us.

Romantic Love



Foolish Love



Companionable Love



Which triangle best represents
our relationship?

Romantic Love



Foolish Love



Companionable Love



We commit to the process of
developing a balanced love style as
we grow together.

My Marital Expectations Are Shaped By...

My Marriage Mode

Previous Relationships

My Environment

My 60 second takeaway



Communication

COMMUNICATION QUIZ

Complete the following “communication quiz.”
Use the scale: 1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree

- 1) We are good at sharing positive feelings with each other. _____
- 2) We are good at sharing negative feelings with each other. _____
- 3) My partner is very good at listening to me. _____
- 4) We share our preferences and ideas. _____
- 5) We can talk about problems in our relationship. _____
- 6) We usually resolve the problems we discuss. _____
- 7) We rarely argue over a topic more than once. _____
- 8) We are able to admit when we make mistakes. _____
- 9) We continue working on a conflict until it is resolved. _____
- 10) My partner deeply understands me. _____



Human personality and communication are multi-faceted. Communication involves giving and receiving information, but also includes expressing feeling and emotion.

Eric Berne developed the theory of Transactional Analysis to help us understand how couple communication takes place. He suggests that each of us can communicate in three ways:

P

PARENT

Communicates as observer and helper:
Nurturer. Teacher. Rule Giver

C

CHILD

Communicates with feeling and emotion:
Compliant. Pleaser. Rebel.

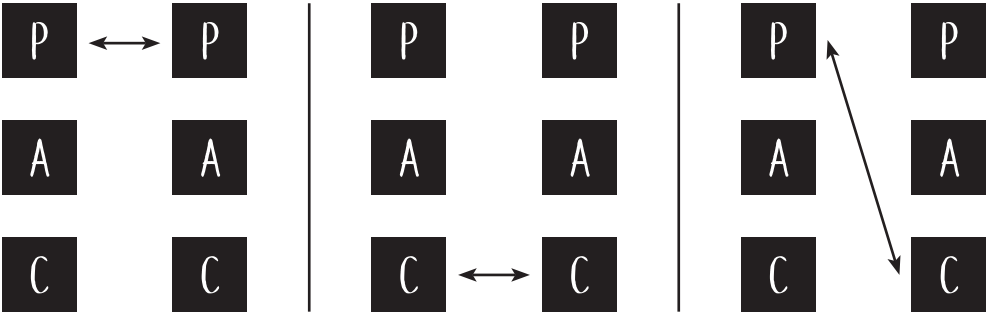
A

ADULT

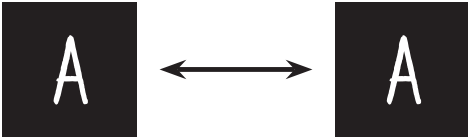
Communicates as mediator:
Sifting through both behavioral and emotional communication to form a solution

- Which communication role do you play most often?
- How does your mate respond when you play that role?
- How effective is that form of communication for you?

Communication breaks down in these ways:



Communication builds when we speak to one another as mediators, carefully choosing our words, attitude and tone of voice.



Words

“The heart of the righteous studies how to answer.” - Proverbs 15:28

Attitude

“Hatred stirs up quarrels, but love covers all offenses.” - Proverbs 10:12

Tone

“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt so that you may know how you should respond to each person.”
- Colossians 4:6

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger.”
- Proverbs 15:1

What words consistently build communication in your relationship?

How do you express a different attitude when you find communication is breaking down?

What helps you soften your tone?

What outcome can you expect if you consistently focus on applying these skills in conversations with your mate?

“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Ephesians 4:1-3

My 60 second takeaway



Personalities

Popular SANGUINE

"Let's do it the FUN way!"

These personalities are engaging and seem to overflow with positive energy. Typically extroverts, they enjoy being around others and can easily initiate conversations.

What others say about this personality:

He never meets a stranger.

She's always the life of the party.



Peaceful PHLEGMATIC

"Let's do it the EASY way."

Phlegmatic personalities are loyal peacemakers. They do enjoy being around people, but these personalities would prefer to be in small groups rather than a room full of strangers.

What others say about this personality:

She always puts others first.

He is the nicest person.



Powerful CHOLERIC

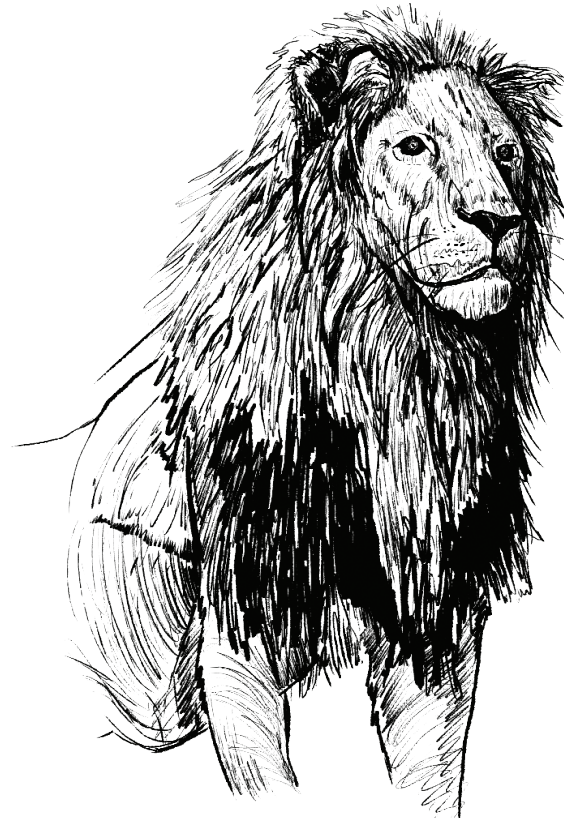
"Let's do it MY way."

Choleric personalities know they are right and strive for control. They are self-disciplined and focused. As goal-oriented individuals, choleric personalities like to make decisions and see work being accomplished.

What others say about this personality:

If you want something done, he's your guy.

She knows what she likes.



Perfect MELANCHOLY

"Let's do it the RIGHT way."

These personalities are perfectionists.

They are task-oriented and organized, which makes them dependable individuals. Often quiet, melancholy personalities require space to think and reflect.

What others say about this personality:

She always has it together.

He is such a thinker.



Personality Plus for Couples by Florence Littauer

Personality Patch by Teresa Gilbert

Making Love Last Forever by Gary Smalley

Popular SANGUINE

Strengths

Fun-loving, outgoing, optimistic
Spontaneous, enthusiastic, expressive

Weaknesses

Easily distracted, disorganized, irresponsible
Loud, emotional, people-pleasing

Communication

If married to a Popular Sanguine, find a quiet place to talk and let them know that it's important to you.

If you are a Popular Sanguine

Focus on what your spouse is saying and be intentional about letting him/her know that you are listening.



Peaceful PHLEGMATIC

Strengths

Easy going, consistent, adaptable
Caring, kind, gracious

Weaknesses

Procrastinator, avoider, indecisive
Defensive, uninvolved, unemotional

Communication

If married to a Peaceful Phlegmatic, understand that it is hard and incredibly uncomfortable to communicate feelings, especially when it's about something personal. Be careful to listen or he/she may shut down and be hesitant to share the next time.

If you are a Peaceful Phlegmatic

Figure out an effective way for you to communicate and if you don't want to talk about it, then you probably need to talk about it.



Powerful CHOLERIC

Strengths

Practical, hard-working, productive

Bold, passionate, driven

Weaknesses

Irritable, quick-tempered, opinionated

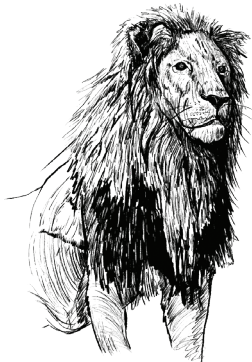
Workaholic, stubborn, insensitive

Communication

If married to a Powerful Choleric, let them know you have something important to say, and help them understand what they can do to make the situation better.

If you are a Powerful Choleric

Listen carefully and let your spouse know that you hear/understand what they're saying, even if you don't agree. Share your opinion, but not in a dominating way.



Perfect MELANCHOLY

Strengths

Thoughtful, organized, self-disciplined

Orderly, careful, task-oriented

Weaknesses

Perfectionist, legalistic, pessimistic

Critical, self-deprecating, argumentative

Communication

If married to a Perfect Melancholy, help them hear how it makes you feel. They may have a difficult time realizing their fault. Try making a plan.

If you are a Peaceful Melancholy

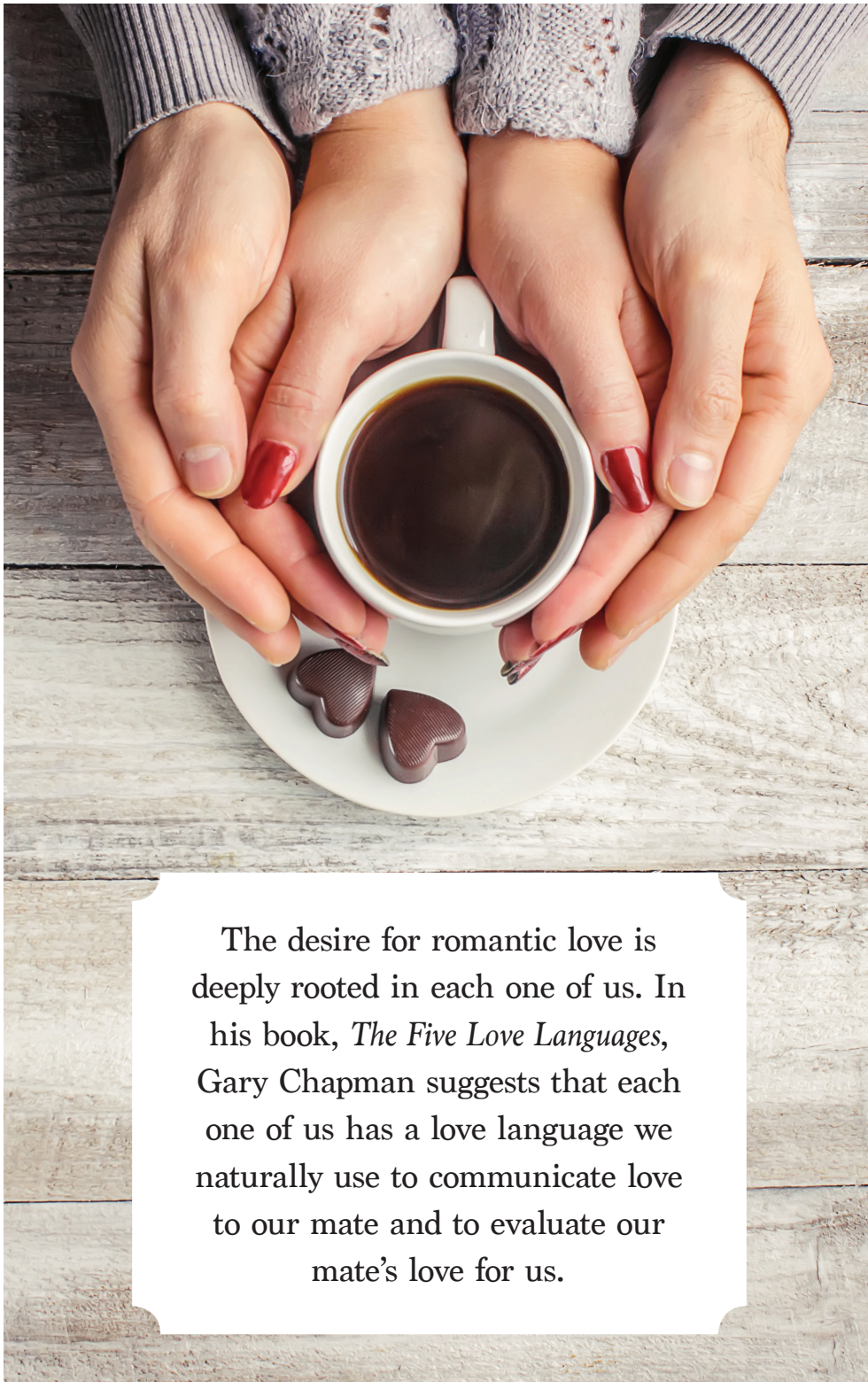
Work to see the situation from your spouse's perspective. Remember that situations and people may not always be "right" or "perfect," and that's okay.



My 60 second takeaway



Love
Languages



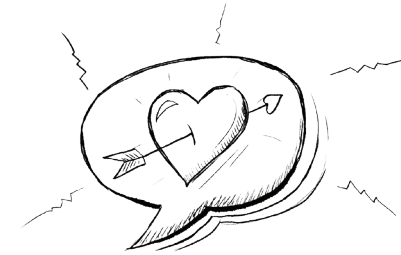
The desire for romantic love is deeply rooted in each one of us. In his book, *The Five Love Languages*, Gary Chapman suggests that each one of us has a love language we naturally use to communicate love to our mate and to evaluate our mate's love for us.

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

Verbally complimenting your mate "You're great!"

Expressing words of encouragement and kindness that show value to your mate

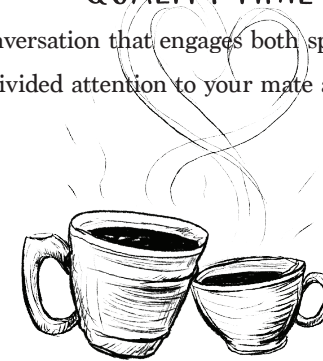
"I believe in you. I know you can do it!" "Thank you. I appreciate you."



QUALITY TIME

Sharing conversation that engages both speaker and listener

Focusing undivided attention to your mate and his/her interests



GIFTING

Offering a tangible symbol of your thoughts for your mate

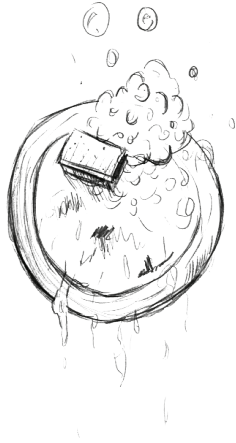
Following thoughts of your mate with concrete action



ACTS OF SERVICE

Completing small actions (chores) that require time, energy, planning, thought, and effort

Engaging in mutual commitment to build a home of respite for one another



PHYSICAL TOUCH

Offering non-sexual touches that establish a connection with your mate

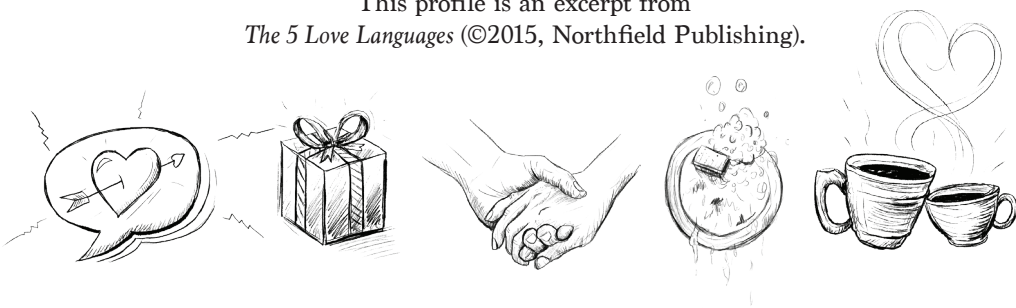
Physically reminding your mate of your attention to him/her



How to speak this language	Communicate	Take Action	Avoid
WORDS OF AFFIRMATION	Compliment Speak words of kindness	Send notes/cards Praise in public	Criticizing
QUALITY TIME	Make time for each other	Take walks together Complete puzzles Play board games	Spending more time with friends than with mate
GIFTING	Find concrete symbols of your love	Hide love notes Send flowers Call unexpectedly	Forgetting special events
ACTS OF SERVICE	"I can" "I will" "I'd love to"	Complete "the list"	Helping others before helping mate
PHYSICAL TOUCH	Touch often	Hold hands Hug	Neglecting your mate's needs

Love Languages Personal Profile for Couples

This profile is an excerpt from
The 5 Love Languages (©2015, Northfield Publishing).



Below you will see 30 paired statements. Please circle the letter next to the statement that best defines what is most meaningful to you in your relationship. Both statements may (or may not) sound like they fit your situation, but please choose the statement that captures the essence of what is most meaningful to you the majority of the time. Allow 10 to 15 minutes to complete the profile. Take it when you are relaxed, and try not to rush through it.

1) It's more meaningful to me when...

- A I receive a loving note/text/email for no special reason from my loved one.
- E my partner and I hug.

2) It's more meaningful to me when...

- B I can spend alone time with my partner – just the two of us.
- D my partner does something practical to help me out.

3) It's more meaningful to me when...

- C my partner gives me a little gift as a token of our love for each other.
- B I get to spend uninterrupted leisure time with my partner.

4) It's more meaningful to me when...

- D my partner unexpectedly does something for me like filling my car or doing the laundry.
- E my partner and I touch.

5) It's more meaningful to me when...

- E my partner puts his/her arm around me when we're in public.
- C my partner surprises me with a gift.

6) It's more meaningful to me when...

- B I'm around my partner, even if we're not really doing anything.
- E I hold hands with my partner.

7) It's more meaningful to me when...

- C my partner gives me a gift.
- A I hear "I love you" from my partner.

8) It's more meaningful to me when...

- E I sit close to my partner.
- A I am complimented by my loved one for no apparent reason.

9) It's more meaningful to me when...

- B I get the chance to just "hang out" with my partner.
- C I unexpectedly get small gifts from my partner.

10) It's more meaningful to me when...

- A I hear my partner tell me, "I'm proud of you."
- D my partner helps me with a task.

11) It's more meaningful to me when...

- B I get to do things with my partner.
- A I hear supportive words from my partner.

12) It's more meaningful to me when...

- D my partner does things for me instead of just talking about doing nice things.
- E I feel connected to my partner through a hug.

13) It's more meaningful to me when...

- A I hear praise from my partner.
- C my partner gives me something that shows he/she was really thinking about me.

14) It's more meaningful to me when...

- B I'm able to just be around my partner.
- E I get a back rub or massage from my partner.

15) It's more meaningful to me when...

- A my partner reacts positively to something I've accomplished.
- D my partner does something for me that I know they don't particularly enjoy.

16) It's more meaningful to me when...

- E my partner and I kiss frequently.
- B I sense my partner is showing interest in the things I care about.

- 17) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
D my partner works on special projects with me that I have to complete.
C my partner gives me an exciting gift.
- 18) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
A I'm complimented by my partner on my appearance.
B my partner takes the time to listen to me and really understand my feelings.
- 19) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
E my partner and I share non-sexual touch in public.
D my partner offers to run errands for me.
- 20) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
D my partner does a bit more than his/her normal share of the responsibilities we share (around the house, work-related, etc.).
C I get a gift that I know my partner put thought into choosing.
- 21) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
B my partner doesn't check his/her phone while we're talking.
D my partner goes out of their way to do something that relieves pressure on me.
- 22) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
C I can look forward to a holiday because of a gift I anticipate receiving.
A I hear the words, "I appreciate you" from my partner.
- 23) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
C my partner brings me a little gift after he/she has been traveling without me.
D my partner takes care of something I'm responsible to do but I feel too stressed to do at the time.
- 24) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
B my partner doesn't interrupt me while I'm talking.
C gift giving is an important part of our relationship.
- 25) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
D my partner helps me out when he/she knows I'm already tired.
B I get to go somewhere while spending time with my partner.
- 26) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
E my partner and I are physically intimate.
C my partner gives me a little gift that he/she picked up in the course of their normal day.
- 27) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
A my partner says something encouraging to me.
B I get to spend time in a shared activity or hobby with my partner.

- 28) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
C my partner surprises me with a small token of their appreciation.
E my partner and I touch a lot during the normal course of the day.
- 29) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
D my partner helps me out – especially if I know they're already busy.
A I hear my partner specifically tell me, "I appreciate you."
- 30) **It's more meaningful to me when...**
E my partner and I embrace after we've been apart for a while.
A I hear my partner say how much I mean to him/her.

Now go back and count the number of times you circled each individual letter and write that number in the appropriate blank below.

A: _____ WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

B: _____ QUALITY TIME

C: _____ RECEIVING GIFTS

D: _____ ACTS OF SERVICE

E: _____ PHYSICAL TOUCH

Which love language received the highest score?

This is your primary love language. If point totals for two love languages are equal, you are "bilingual" and have two primary love languages. And, if you have a secondary love language, or one that is close in score to your primary love language, this means that both expressions of love are important to you. The highest possible score for any single love language is 12.

My 60 second takeaway



Chemistry

SEX IN MARRIAGE IS:

A gift of intimacy intended
to be enjoyed.

A life-long exploration!

Intended to thrive in this
safe place.

DIFFERENCES IN MEN AND WOMEN IN THE BEDROOM

MEN	WOMEN
Visual	Emotional
Quantity	Quality
Dragster	Diesel

HAVING A GREAT LOVE LIFE TAKES:

Effort from both of you

Communication

Understanding



BUILDING A GREAT SEX LIFE IN YOUR MARRIAGE

What a husband can do:

- 1) Be a leader in the relationship.
- 2) Seek to understand your wife's needs.
- 3) Cultivate romance outside the bedroom.
- 4) Build walls of protection around your marriage.

What a wife can do:

- 1) Be a believer in your husband!
- 2) Set a healthy pace for your home.
- 3) Take the initiative occasionally.
- 4) Know that you are the only one for him.

*“Be kind to one another,
tender-hearted, forgiving each
other, just as God in Christ
has forgiven you.”*

Ephesians 4:32

My 60 second takeaway




Conflict

TWO SIMPLE TRUTHS

Conflict in a marriage is normal,
natural, and necessary.

Conflict handled appropriately will
always lead to growth in yourself
and your marriage.





*“Conflict is
inevitable,
but combat is
optional.”*

Max Lucado

It's not a matter of if and when but simply **HOW**. How will you handle the conflict that comes into your marriage?

4 BASIC ROOTS OF CONFLICT

Know where conflict is coming from. Chip Ingram lays out four primary areas in which conflict arises.

- 1) Difference in beliefs
- 2) Difference in perspective
- 3) Difference in style
- 4) Selfishness

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something, but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.” - James 4:1-3 (NIV)

COMPLAINING focuses on you and how you feel about something. When you complain, you're getting the hot air out without hurting your spouse.

CRITICIZING focuses on the other person and how you feel about them. Critique is full of accusations and immediately puts your spouse on the defensive.

	Bad Fight	Good Fight
GOAL	Winning the Fight	Resolving the fight
TOPIC	Surface issues	Underlying issues
EMPHASIS	Personalities/Power Struggles	Ideas and issues
ATTITUDE	Confrontational and Defensive	Cooperative and receptive
MOTIVATION	Shift blame	Take responsibility
MODE	Belittle	Respect
MANNER	Egocentric	Empathic
DEMEANOR	Self-righteous	Understanding
SIDE EFFECT	Escalation of tension	Easing of tension
RESULT	Discord	Harmony
BENEFIT	Stagnation and Distance	Growth and intimacy

What are the benefits of a good fight?

1) A good fight keeps us real

Tim Kellar says, “Marriage does not so much bring you into confrontation with your spouse, as to confront you with yourself.” In other words, conflict in marriage can be a mirror to learn more about ourselves.

2) A good fight sheds light

Myla Kabat-Zinn has a beautiful quote on this. She says, “Each difficult moment has the potential to open my eyes and open my heart.”

3) A good fight clears the air

Conflict appropriately handled reduces tension, animosity, and clears hard feelings.

4) A good fight makes you stronger

“Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors.” Couples who are able to acknowledge their partner’s faults while maintaining positive views of their marriage overall experience more stability and satisfaction over time.

Before you begin tackling any issue in your marriage, it's important to ask yourself, "How serious is the issue?" In other words, "Is the issue serious enough to bring about some conflict?" Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott have a few key questions they suggest you ask yourself before bringing up a potential issue.

GRAVITY OF OUTCOME

Will the result of this fight really matter?

Trivial  Critical

LEVEL OF HURT/SADNESS

Do I feel wounded or down because of it?

Trivial  Critical

IMPACT OF VALUES

Is this issue a threat to my convictions or principles?

Trivial  Critical

PREOCCUPATION

How much am I thinking or worrying about it?

Trivial  Critical

The more weight you put on the right end of each of these issues, the more necessary it is to address the conflict. However, before you jump into conflict resolution mode, you need to check a few key and practical areas in your own life. Some of these questions may seem trivial and not important, but they just might be the difference maker. Here is a great working checklist from Les and Leslie Parrott.

1) Am I hungry or in pain?

2) Am I tired or exhausted?

3) Am I emotionally charged?

4) Do I feel pressured or need time to think?

D **DEFINE** the problem (on your own). *Proverbs 15:14*

I **INITIATE** a time to talk. *Matthew 5:23-24*

F **FOCUS** on the “perceived” problem, not the person.
Proverbs 18:19

F **FEEL** their pain (as though it were your own).
Proverbs 17:17

U **UNCOVER** the root symptoms. *Proverbs 20:5*

ROOT SYMPTOMS

Money values, priorities, power/control issues, sex communication, unmet emotional needs, past history/ baggage, in-laws loyalty, expectations, children/work roles and/or goals

S **SET** things right between you. *James 5:16*

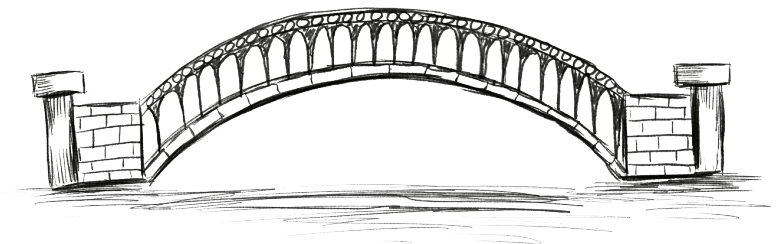
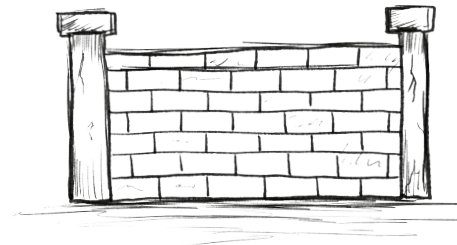
1) **Confess** - “I was wrong for _____”

2) **Apologize** - “I am so sorry for _____”
“Please forgive me”

E **Establish** a specific action plan that addresses the issues discussed.

Remember

It’s important to know that conflict can either build walls or bridges. Conflict should be handled with great care, diligence, and grace.



My 60 second takeaway



Protect Your
Marriage

THE VALUE OF PROTECTION

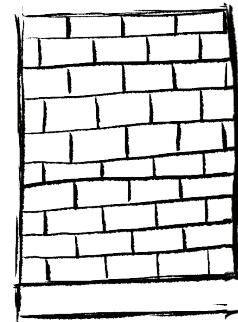
We live in a world where home security is quite the challenge! What steps can we take to be as secure as possible in these new “homes” we are building?



Security Questions

HOW DO I PROTECT MY HOME?

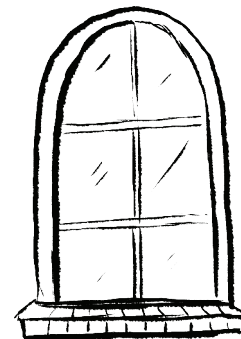
WALLS AND WINDOWS



WHAT IS A WALL?

An intangible barrier intended for shelter, protection, or privacy

- **What does a good wall look like?**
A boundary that keeps the bad things out, and keeps the good things in
- **What does a bad wall look like?**
A conflict that develops into a barrier in the marriage between husband and wife



WHAT IS A WINDOW?

An opening in the wall for the admission of air or light

- **What does a good window look like?**
A well-placed and timed opening for healthy interaction
- **What does a bad window look like?**
An ill-advised, disproportionate opening that weakens the wall purpose

WHERE IS THE GREATEST DANGER?

INAPPROPRIATE RELATIONSHIPS

WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS

- James Wiggins and Doris Lederer discovered that involved coworkers generally considered themselves to be happily married and highly compatible with their spouses. At the same time, collegial relationships provided the opportunity to share common interests and mutual admiration on a level that is rare in a long-term marriage.
- “Interest creates opportunity, lack of interest creates blindness, both are dangerous.” - *Not Just Friends* by Shirley Glass

SOCIAL ACQUAINTANCES

- Fred Humphrey, a researcher, calls it the “Cup of Coffee Syndrome.” You meet for a cup of coffee, look forward to sharing things, begin to share more things, and become dependent on that cup of coffee!

CLOSE FRIENDSHIPS

- When a friend knows more about your marriage than a spouse knows about your friendship, you have reversed the healthy position of walls and windows.



WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS?

An affair can be defined as “a particular action or proceeding that leads to dispute or damage to the relationship.” Inappropriate attractions may begin with a physical attraction, but the emotional connection can become the most dangerous bond.

Quotes and Excerpts from the Book “Not Just Friends” by Shirley Glass

“Good people from good marriages are having extramarital affairs.”

“When you withhold information and keep secrets, you create walls that act as barriers to the free flow of thoughts and feelings that invigorate your relationship. But when you open up to each other, the window between you allows you to know each other in unfiltered, intimate ways. In a love affair, the unfaithful partner has built a wall to shut out the marriage partner and has opened a window to let in the affair partner.”

“The reason the grass always looks greener on the other side of the fence is because you don’t have to mow it!”

EMOTIONAL AFFAIRS

are characterized by secrecy, emotional intimacy, and sexual chemistry.

In many cases, the transition from friendship to affair is barely perceptible – to both participants and observers.

AVOIDING FATAL ATTRACTION

- 1) Attraction is normal, but you don't have to act.
- 2) Fantasizing is a trap. Don't do it!
- 3) Always be appropriate, even if you need wise counsel to be sure.
- 4) Avoid risky situations.



WARNING SIGNS

The best way to recognize the signs is to recognize the progression.

12 Steps Of An Affair

Most men or women in an affair are somewhat surprised to find themselves in that position. The journey is built on a growing rationalization and dwindling perspective. Consider these incremental steps from start to finish:

- 1) **READINESS**
One finds himself/herself leaning away from the marriage.
- 2) **ALERTNESS**
One becomes aware of a person in his/her web of relationships.
- 3) **INNOCENT MEETING**
A truly innocent, chance meeting sparks the relationship.
- 4) **INTENTIONAL MEETING**
Chance meetings become more than chance.
- 5) **PUBLIC LINGERING**
The man and woman spend time together, rationalizing their feelings, thinking nothing can happen while they are with others.
- 6) **PRIVATE LINGERING**
The man and woman find themselves together after others have left. Conversation switches from events and ideas to feelings.
- 7) **PURPOSELY ISOLATING**
The couple plans time alone together for “legitimate” purposes.
- 8) **PLEASURABLY ISOLATING**
The couple plans time alone together for the enjoyment of being together.
- 9) **AFFECTIONATE EMBRACE**
The man and woman’s secret longings increase and lead to a “Hanging Hug.”
- 10) **PASSIONATE EMBRACE**
The couple begins affectionately touching and embracing which leads to passionate interaction. They rationalize their arousal by believing it is innocent and spontaneous.
- 11) **SEXUAL EMBRACE**
The couple gives in to sexual interaction.
- 12) **ACCEPTANCE**
The man and woman admit to themselves and to each other that they are having an AFFAIR.

At what step did the affair really begin?

WILL HAPPEN!

- 1) READINESS
- 2) ALERTNESS
- 3) INNOCENT MEETING

SLIPPERY SLOPE!

- 7) PURPOSELY ISOLATING
- 8) PLEASURABLY ISOLATING

DANGER!

- 4) INTENTIONAL MEETING
- 5) PUBLIC LINGERING
- 6) PRIVATE LINGERING

MINE FIELD! RUN!


- 9) AFFECTIONATE EMBRACE
- 10) PASSIONATE EMBRACE
- 11) SEXUAL EMBRACE
- 12) ACCEPTANCE

From Temptations Men Face, by Tom L. Eisenman

My 60 second takeaway

A photograph of two silver wedding rings and several sprigs of white, bell-shaped flowers with yellow centers, resting on a white wooden plank surface. A black rectangular box with the word "Vows" in white script font is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Vows



I, _____, take thee,
_____, to be my wedded wife/
husband to have and to hold from this day forward,
for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in
sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till
death do us part according to God's Holy Word I
pledge thee my love.

FOR BETTER:

What is your dream for your marriage?

FOR WORSE:

What is the worst thing you can imagine that could happen? Will you really stay?



Will you take this woman/man to be your wedded wife/husband, to live together after God's ordinance, in the holy estate of matrimony? Will you love her/him, comfort her/him, honor and keep her/him in sickness and in health and forsaking all others keep yourself only unto her/him, so long as you both shall live?

WILL YOU LOVE?

How will you show love to your mate?

WILL YOU COMFORT?

What will you do to help your mate when comfort is needed?

WILL YOU HONOR?

List at least five specific steps you will take to show honor to your mate.

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

- 4) _____

- 5) _____

WILL YOU KEEP HER/HIM IN SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH?

How will you serve your mate?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

FORSAKING ALL OTHERS, KEEP YOURSELF ONLY UNTO HER/HIM?

List six people or things who will “rank under” your mate.

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____
- 4) _____
- 5) _____
- 6) _____

“For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from who every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts though faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”

Ephesians 3:14-21



My 60 second takeaway



Appendix

Marriage Maintenance

Your Most Valuable Commodity

“Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time...”
- Ephesians 5:15-16a

It is essential that you use the (finite) time we have each day, week, month and year to maximize our lives, especially in marriage.

Time is a gift from God, and we must be careful to spend it wisely.

In the Beginning

- Set a time limit for discussion. Honor the time limit set.
- Stay on topic. Save other topics for other arguments. Focus on specific behaviors.
- Don't interrupt. Stay on the same eye level. Check to make sure you have heard your partner correctly before responding.
- Leave out blanket statements: always, never
- Stay in the present tense — past tense is often used to prove a point in order to “win.”
- Don't argue in the dark ... or in the car.
- Don't walk away or leave the house without first giving your mate the time-out signal and stating your need for a break.
- Approach the conflict with a problem-solving attitude.
- Take responsibility for change.

REMEMBER

It is likely that both of you want the same things: healing a painful experience, growth as a couple, and discovery of better ways to achieve your goals together.

Time Bandits

A time bandit is something that robs us of the most important things we should be doing with our time. As we get older and are married longer, life changes and before we know it, Time Bandits have come and robbed us of the essentials of our relationship:

- Jobs/Business
- Family of Origin issues
- Children
- Hobbies independent from each other

There is a numbing effect of time; we become numb and callous about our marriages over time and without an intervention, we will suffer the consequences. We must have great intentionality and sober commitment to “make the most of our time” and invest the right things into our marriages.

Back to the Future

Daily:

- Take time to touch.
- Find something that makes you laugh.

Weekly:

- Do something active that lifts your spirits.
- Boost your partner's self-esteem.

Monthly:

- Rid yourself of residue.
- Fire up bedroom passion.

Yearly:

- Retreat to Prayer and Goal Retreat.
- Set your goals for next year.

Relationship Retreat

Purpose

- To draw closer to each other and to God. In order to get a vision from Him, you must get away from cell phones, home phones, work phones, email, snail mail and walk ups to your home. This is a time to reflect on where you have been and a time to look ahead and dream about where God is leading you. Proverbs 3:5-6

Pick a Place

- Choose a place to go that is within 1-2 hours from home. Condos work well, because you can have a den to meet in and a kitchen to eat breakfast and lunch.
- Plan on 2-3 nights. If you have children, you need to drop them at a grandparent's house or make arrangements for them. This time is just for the two of you.
- Purchase two composition notebooks from any grocery/drug store. These make great journals to write out goals, prayers, verses, etc.
- Don't forget about romance! Bring candles, etc.

Where to Begin

- Have your own personal quiet time each morning.
- Come back together to begin your time in prayer.
- Ask God to use this time to draw you closer to Him and each other.
- Ask God to lead you in the right direction and to take action as He leads.
- Discuss what is on your heart. Write down your thoughts in your journal.

Evaluation of Last Year's Goals & Prayer List

- Reflect on the past year and think through significant moments.
- Look over last year's prayer list and other previous years.
- Look over last year's goals and grade your performance.

Reflection & Forecasting Questions

- What was the most significant moment of the year for us?
- What was a High Water Mark? A Low Water Mark?
- What did we like about last year? What would we do differently if we could?
- How did you do in accomplishing your goals?
- What do you want to accomplish this year?
- Who do you want to invest in this year?
- Who would you like to spend more time with this year?
- Where do you want to go on vacation this year?

Exercise — Heart Map

Write down all the desires of your heart (good, bad and ugly). Read Psalm 37:4. This exercise comes from the book *The Mind of Christ* by T.W. Hunt. Notice that many of your desires are at odds with each other. Pray that God would lead you to His desires for your life.

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

5) _____

Goals for the Next Year

Write out in a sentence what you want to accomplish and quantify a way to determine results numerically. A good formula is to ask yourself three questions. Where are you now? Where do you want to be? How will you get there?

• SPIRITUAL GOALS

- Daily Quiet Time
- Pray Together
- Bible Reading

• RELATIONAL GOALS

- Date Nights
- Next Year's Retreat
- Marriage Enrichment Book
- Family/Children

• VOCATIONAL GOALS

- Your Dream Job

• MINISTRY GOALS

- Where will you use your spiritual gift?
- Who will you invest in this year?
- What needs does the church have that you can meet?

• **PHYSICAL GOALS**

- Healthy Eating Plan
- Exercise Plan

• **RECREATIONAL GOALS**

- What do you do as a couple for fun?
- Vacation Plans?

• **FINANCIAL GOALS**

- Savings Plan
- Budget Discussion
- Tithing Plan

• **DESIGN THE PERFECT DAY**

- Based on your goals
- Get the calendar out and write out a weekly/monthly plan.

PRAYER LIST FOR THE YEAR

DATE	PRAYER REQUEST	SCRIPTURE	ANSWER	DATE



Cardinal Rules for a Happy Home

A 90 Day Couples Devotional

Cardinal Rules for a Happy Home is a 90-day devotional compiled from the decades of preaching, counseling, and personal life experiences of Dr. Ed Young. In words that are clear, practical, and sometimes humorous, Dr. Young offers insights and suggestions for building strong godly homes.

Each day begins with a Bible passage followed by practical applications for establishing a Christ-centered marriage, family, and Happy Home. At the end of each devotional, a prayer guide suggests specific requests based on that day's topic. With just 15 minutes a day, you can be on your way to a Happy Home.

The Cardinal Rules for a Happy Home include:

1. Build with WISDOM
2. Establish by UNDERSTANDING
3. Offer FORGIVENESS
4. Practice FAITHFULNESS
5. Exhibit SELFLESSNESS
6. Demonstrate LOVE
7. Exercise SUBMISSION
8. Honor your COVENANT
9. Live as ONE
10. Nurture FRIENDSHIP

To help you establish the practice of reading Scripture and praying together, the following pages are a fourteen-day excerpt from *Cardinal Rules for a Happy Home*. May you and your Happy Home be blessed each day as you read and pray through the next fourteen days and beyond!



Dr. Ed Young is the senior pastor of Houston's Second Baptist Church. His ministry is marked by a strong commitment to strengthening and beautifying the Church, the Bride of Christ. With a membership of over 70,000, the Second Family places an emphasis on marriage, the family, and kids. Dr. Young has authored several books including these on marriage and the family: The 10 Commandments of Marriage, The 10 Commandments of Parenting, Romancing the Home.



“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.” Matthew 7:24-26

Everyone is building a home. Whether you are actively house-hunting or not, you are building a home. The question is how are you building and on what are you building your home? Today’s scripture reminds us that a Happy Home is built on rock. When the rains of life come along, it does not fall because of the strength of the foundation on which it is built – the Lord. Psalm 94:22 says, *“But the Lord has been my stronghold, and my God the rock of my refuge.”* Are you building a home that has as its foundation God, the rock of refuge?

There are different kinds of houses that people build. Some inherit a house. This is a dangerous kind of house in which to live. When you start a family, through marriage, or in raising children, you tend to bring things from your family of origin. Be careful. Inherited houses have within them old hurts, painful pasts, and unhealthy clutter. Instead, I want to encourage you to start fresh with your mate. Build your own home, so you can choose for yourself the foundation on which you will build.

We can learn something from nature, and my friends The Cardinals. After the courtship, they “house-hunt” together. At first they visit locations looking for a secure foundation on which to build, singing back and forth as if “discussing” the location. The cardinal’s nest has four layers. Both male and female participate in the first layer – the foundation. This layer is sturdy and made up of the hardest and firmest twigs. The second is a leafy layer followed by a waterproofing layer of bark. Finally, they spread soft grass and crushed pine needles. They have created a sturdy home, but a soft place to land.

Is your home built on a firm foundation? Is it a place that is warm, welcoming and a soft-place to land? Incidentally, each pair of cardinals builds a new nest. They do not scavenge and occupy other birds’ nests. They start fresh – confident that their nest has been well established for all who will eventually live within.

Ask the Lord to provide the foundation on which you build your Happy Home. Invite Him in, and ask that He dwell with you.



“Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts on them may be compared to a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded on the rock. Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.” Matthew 7:24-26

I heard a story about a small boy who had attended his baby sister’s dedication at church. On the ride home he cried bitterly in his car seat. His parents tried to soothe him but when the usual methods were not working the exasperated father blurted out, “Why won’t you stop crying? What is wrong with you?”

Through tears, the little boy choked out, “The pastor prayed that we would be raised in a home with Christians, but I still want to live with you and mommy!”

As humorous as this story is, there are elements of truth that are not so funny. Are you building a home on wisdom, understanding, and the love of God? Are the things of God talked about and practiced routinely? Is prayer a way of life, or is it a quick blurb before a meal? Take a serious inventory of how God and Christian values are reflected in your home and to all who know you.

Pray for an increased awareness to include Christian values and prayer in your daily home life.



By wisdom a house is built... Proverbs 24:3

A few years back, we began to remodel, reconstruct, and redecorate several rooms in our home. We knew we had some updating to do to keep our home current and vibrant. Jo Beth and I easily found the things we wanted to change and devised a plan. After consulting with a decorator for some ideas, we signed off and away we went. However, we soon found out that it is the homeowners who actually endure the consequences of the remodel.

Our naïve approach was that it would not take too long, and we could easily make the changes that would greatly improve our existing house. Wrong! Remodeling developed into a much bigger undertaking than we had envisioned. I discovered four things about remodeling a home:

1. It takes a lot longer than you think it will take.
2. It costs a whole lot more than all of the estimates.
3. It takes tremendous determination and perseverance to get through.
4. It makes a bigger mess than you have been warned about.

Do you see the parallel in remodeling and reconstructing your home from a spiritual standpoint? Yesterday we talked about the evolution of updating on a daily basis. Today, we are digging into the Hebrew word *banah* – to rebuild, or reconstruct – to extrapolate more of its meaning in the passage. If a home is not constantly updated, old problems become entrenched. Therefore, remodeling will take longer and it will cost everybody involved something. There will be a mess involved as you get down to the root of the problem. However, it is worth the determination and perseverance to push through! Our home is just right for us. The remodel added comfort, beauty, and value to our home. All of the dust, money, and chaos proved to be worthwhile. We love our update, and you will too.

Prayerfully consider what needs to be remodeled in your family relationships. Ask the Lord for the patience and perseverance to deliver you through to the other side of a reconstructed relationship that is comfortable, beautiful, and worth more than pure gold!



By wisdom a house is built... Proverbs 24:3

Most people know the story of Adam. He was the first man God created, but because he was alone, God provided a woman for him.

What does that have to do with our scripture from Proverbs? It revolves around that little verb *banah* that we have been considering. That same verb was used in Genesis to describe what God did with Adam's rib – He built the woman by reconstructing the rib. Isn't that fascinating? I think it is a wonderful picture of marriage and of building a home. You see, the woman was reconstructed to be a helpmate and a partner for the man. However, Adam was also reconstructed. He was put back together with one less rib. As we face life together in partnership, we are reconstructed and remodeled to account for the other one God has provided.

There is wisdom in reconciling the single, independent, self-focused person with the remodeled, reconstructed person who is remade to include a spouse. Today, look at your partner and know that each of you has been supernaturally reconstructed to include the other. As God strengthens your home and your marriage through the imparted wisdom of His Spirit, take the necessary steps to yield to that reconstruction project.

Pray today for a yielded spirit to God's reconstruction of your single-self into your remodeled-self that supports and augments your spouse.



By wisdom a house is built... Proverbs 24:3

STORM WARNING: Fifty percent of marriages end in divorce. This is a statistic affecting everyone reading this book. Whether you are married, single, or divorced, somewhere along the way divorce has affected your life. You may be in a marriage that is teetering on the dangerous precipice of divorce. You may be on the other side of divorce and are now single. You may be married to someone who has been divorced. Or you may be the child of divorce. Divorce is a driving and dividing force with which every marriage must contend.

Our scripture reminds us that wisdom builds a house. It is wise to know the very real threat of divorce to every marriage. The pressures on marriage are tremendous. Work, busy schedules, differing personalities, finances, and addictions are just a few of the weapons of mass-destruction that wage war on marriage. Additionally, sensualism and humanism are rampant in the culture in which we live. Loose morals and flexible standards are like having a house with loose sealant – a little air and water get in sometimes, but not much. We only begin to notice the results of the water and air when the mildew and the pests begin to overtake our home.

Do you see how dangerous the assault on a marriage can be?

God has a great building plan for marriage. It is a triangular affair. It takes a husband, a wife, and God Himself to protect a home. Think of it like a flat top roof with each spouse on one side and God laying Himself across the top to cover the entire home. *He is our shelter and our ever present help in times of trouble* (Psalm 46:1).

Divorce is a storm threat. Be on the watch. The National Weather Service often issues storm watches when the conditions are present to produce a dangerous storm. The conditions are present. Heed the warning. Do not get caught unprepared for a treacherous storm.



Pray today for the wisdom to see the areas that need to be shored up to prevent storm damage. Ask God to cover your home with His protection.

And he got up and went home. Matthew 9:7

Our scripture today is describing what a paralyzed man did after his healing. After the greatest moment in his life – where did he want to go? He wanted to go home.

Here's a test: Is your home right now a prelude to your heavenly home? Is your home a safe haven?

I remember as a child being called to the chalkboard to work a math problem in front of the class. Luckily, it was one I really understood. I knew the answer. So I went up to the board with as much confidence as a kid can have when everyone in the class is watching. As I started working the problem, I realized something had gone wrong. I must have left out one of the steps because things weren't adding up. I furiously erased and tried to retrace where I had messed up, but by now my classmates were abuzz and the teacher called time.

As I headed back to my seat, my head was hung and I could hear the snickers. Someone else was already at the chalkboard working the problem quickly and successfully. My face burned, my ears had a ringing in them, and my chalky hands were clammy.

After school, I could not wait to run into the back door of my house – home to my safe place. You see, my mother always created a welcoming environment. We did not have much in the worldly sense, but it felt warm and inviting, comfortable and safe.

The years have passed, and my failures are bigger and more intricate; but home is still that safe place for me. Jo Beth has created in our married home the same welcoming and safe haven. It is where I always want to return after failure or after triumph.

Our heavenly home will be the same – safe, welcoming, and comforting. Does that describe your home?



Pray that the Lord will bless your home and help you make it a safe and welcoming haven...a prelude to your heavenly home.



By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches. Proverbs 24:3-4

Many years ago, the phone rang late at night. My heart pounded. A quick mental inventory gave me the comfort that all of my boys, who were kids at the time, were home. I picked up the phone and received the news that there was black smoke billowing from the new house we were building. I threw on some clothes and shoes and drove over to the site. As reported, black smoke was billowing up into the midnight sky. A tragic feeling washed over me.

As I stood and looked at what had been our dream home, my heart sank. We had borrowed and stretched ourselves to have this house. We wanted it for the boys. I wanted it for Jo Beth, and she wanted it for me. The attention to detail, the cost, and the passion we had exerted were gone in a puff of smoke.

Then a wave of the Holy Spirit's comfort washed over me. I will never forget it. It was the knowledge that my riches were still safely tucked in their beds, out of the line of this fire. My precious and pleasant riches filled the rooms of my house and my heart. What Jo Beth and I had established as a family was untouched by the black smoke of this tragedy.



Ask your Heavenly Father to fill your marriage and your family with precious, pleasant, and untouchable riches.



Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the Devil an opportunity. Ephesians 4:26-27

Through the years, I have performed countless wedding ceremonies. Almost without exception, I have been tempted to change the vows from "Love, Honor, and Obey," to "Love, Honor, and FORGIVE."

Christian psychiatrist Dr. Leslie Brant says that the divorce rate would decrease by half if forgiveness were as much a part of marriage as the conjugal bed.

God created male and female, and He created them to be different. Physically our differences are obvious. Why is it then that we are so surprised that emotionally we are completely different as well?

When we disappoint our mate, it is often because we fail to take into account our differences. Men, we are especially culpable here. Women at least try to get their minds around what makes a man tick. However, without prayer and perseverance, we guys fail miserably.

With all of these differences, the best and only way to live in harmony with the opposite sex is to implement forgiveness as an everyday exercise. The beauty of forgiveness is that it builds a bridge for the other to walk across. Without it, the divide can become cold, dark, and lonely.

Forgive your mate daily, and the reward will be a deep, meaningful, and joyful marriage that sizzles!



Ask the Lord to bring to mind anything that needs to be forgiven in your marriage. Pray that with His help, you will be able to forgive and create a marriage that is grace-oriented.



Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. Colossians 3:5-6 NIV

There are many enemies of a Happy Home. Some are outside the home, but I want to concentrate on the enemies within the home. We have more ability to conquer these, because we have let them in ourselves. The first enemy I want us to consider is idolatry. This enemy can sneak up on us and become firmly entrenched before we realize it.

I have known many well-intended families who have worked very hard to provide for their mates, children, and loved-ones. However, when the desire to provide and achieve begins to outshine the desire and commitment to serve the Lord, idolatry has entered the camp.

Weariness can set in, and we begin to skip church. You know the subtle ways we reverse priorities. The kids wake up on Sunday morning. You are tired, they are tired, and it is raining. You decide it is easier to sleep in, have a leisurely morning, and forgo church.

Or, perhaps success has provided a fancy new boat or a lake house. You begin to skip church because the weekend gives you the best opportunity to enjoy your riches.

However, Monday rolls around and the kids don't want to go to school because... it's raining! Or they want to go ride in the boat. But work and school are the major priority. We can't miss work and we can't miss school! Do you see how we can confuse kids when we do not prioritize correctly?

Anything that takes precedence over God becomes an idol. Are you safe within your home, or is there an idol creeping into your camp?



Pray for the Lord to secure your home. Ask the Lord to bring to mind any areas that may become idolatrous and confess them aloud. Pray today for a renewed commitment to the Lord within your home.



Whoever commits adultery with a woman lacks understanding; He who does so destroys his own soul.

Proverbs 6:32 NKJV

As we resume our focus on the enemies within the home, I want us to consider one that is gaining tremendous ground and tearing marriages and families apart: infidelity. Men, guard your homes. Take proactive steps to keep this enemy out. Set ground rules for yourself; do not make your wife set the rules for you. Christian men especially need to be on guard. The divorce rate is statistically as high for Christian marriages as it is for all others. Here are some rules of thumb that help establish a moat of safety around your home, your marriage, and your relationship with God:

1. Never allow yourself to be alone with a woman other than your wife. No exceptions. Look at exceptions as spies from the enemy's camp.
2. Do not discuss your wife with other women...ever. Often we think we are seeking advice, but instead, we are betraying our vows to love, honor, and respect.
3. Keep no secrets. Share email and cell phone passwords. Transparency and honesty are foundational for godly intimacy.
4. Be in the habit of giving non-sexual touch daily. Women need this and thrive on tenderhearted connection.
5. Do not go to bed angry...always make amends before the sun goes down.
6. Pray together every day. Intimacy with the Lord inspires intimacy with each other.

The home is a target. Take steps to guard your home, your marriage, and your family from the sin of infidelity. Adultery comes in all shapes and sizes. Each brings disaster, heartache, and despair. Keep your home and marriage fortified, and know how to spot an enemy attack before it gets too close to home.



Men, pray for the Lord to secure your home. Ask the Lord to equip you to make wise choices, and to take proactive steps to protect you and your family from the sin of infidelity.



In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church – for we are members of His body.

Ephesians 5:28-30 NIV

A commercial for a vacation destination showed film footage of happy people in beautiful surroundings. The announcer said, “Enjoy the warm, welcoming hospitality of our people. Come relax, unwind, and enjoy. Once you experience it, you’ll want to return over and over again.” I could not help but think to myself, “That is what I want my home to be!”

Jo Beth has made our home a destination. Whenever I travel or have to be away for any period of time, my heart longs to return home. Home is where she most desires to be as well. Our home fits the ad. It is warm with welcoming hospitality. She serves me, and I serve her. We work at making sure we demonstrate “hospitality” to each other. It is a place we can relax, unwind, and enjoy. We have fun there.

Parents and spouses, it is vitally important to make your home not only a haven of warmth and security, but a fun place to be.

Biblically, it is my responsibility to set the tone of love and warmth in our home. I know most people think it is the wife’s. She is responsible for certain aspects. But do not miss the fact that the man’s responsibility is to set the tone. If I am loving my wife as I love my own body – making sure she is fed physically and spiritually, rested, secure, cherished and cared for – then the right tone will be set. A beautiful and enjoyable destination will be established, a place worth returning to over and over again!



Pray for God to help you establish a warm and welcoming destination in your home. Men, ask that the Lord lovingly show you how to love your wife as you do your own body.

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with a promise, so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

Ephesians 6:1-4

I remember a particularly rowdy family road trip. I would call it a vacation, but driving anywhere with the entire family cramped in the car for hours upon hours is more of a trip than a vacation. In those days, we did not have fancy SUVs where everyone had their own entertainment monitors, headsets, and drink holders. We did not even know where all of the seatbelts were!

So it was in this setting that my wife became exasperated with the boisterous bunch and quipped, “Children, obey your parents, because the Lord says it’s right!”

From somewhere in the far back seat, we heard the voice of the youngest rambler pipe in, “Father, do not provoke your children to anger!”

We looked at each other, speechless. I finished the verse, “Well honey, I guess we brought them up in the instruction of the Lord, or he wouldn’t have known that verse.”



Pray for joyful times together, and memory-making moments.



For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

Ephesians 5:31-33

Part of the thrill of marriage is bringing the new spouse into the close family circle. However, there is always some danger involved in trying to incorporate each other into an already existing family unit. First, the covenant couple must establish themselves as a single unit – a new independent family. Leaving your parents does not mean that you will disregard or abandon them. You will, however, have a new priority: your spouse. Here are some practical suggestions of what it means to leave your father and mother.

1. **The husband-wife relationship is now the priority relationship.** All other relationships come after this one. Your relationship with your parents is now secondary. Women, this can be especially hard for a Daddy's girl. Be on guard against old habits that place you in a position where you rely on your father instead of your husband. Likewise, men, your mother is no longer the one to nurture you. Your wife is your helpmate. She is the primary woman in your life. You must become a "one-woman man."
2. **Leaving also means you will not tolerate any criticism about your mate from your parents.** Period. You have become one flesh. To criticize him or her is to criticize you!
3. **Leaving means your spouse's desires, opinions, suggestions and requests are more important than your parents'.**
4. **Leaving means you are to seek your spouse's support to meet your needs.** Your parents should no longer be your primary source of income, affection, safety, security, approval, or advice.

Implement these standards early in your marriage. If you have been married for a while, it is never too late to leave and cleave and to keep your covenant between you and God, not you and the rest of the family!

Ask the Lord to help you rightly adjust to your priority relationship. Pray for gentle but firm boundaries that protect your marriage from outside interference.



Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Colossians 3:12-14

A Happy Home has friendship as its signature characteristic. First and foremost, the husband and wife must be friends. Within this environment of friendship and companionship, children become more secure and comfortable. They actually like being at home. Friends will flock to a home where the husband and wife enjoy and support each other.

One of my sons had a friend who seemed to never go home. When I would poke my head in to see my three sons sleeping, I could almost always count on a fourth head. When I asked my son why his friend never went home, he shrugged and said, "I guess we are just always having so much fun here, Dad."

A Happy Home is full of friendship and full of fun.

Prayerfully evaluate the level of friendship in your home. Ask the Lord to spring up a fresh measure of fun and fellowship.

Book Recommendations

BUILDING YOUR MARRIAGE

- *The Ten Commandments of Marriage* by Dr. Ed Young
- *Preparing for Marriage* by Dennis Rainey (workbook format)
- *Sacred Marriage* by Gary Thomas
- *Sacred Pathways* by Gary Thomas
- *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate* by Gary Chapman
- *Boundaries in Marriage* by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend (workbook available)
- *The Most Important Year in a Man's/Woman's Life* by Robert & Bobbie Wolgemuth and Mark & Susan DeVries
- *The New Building Your Mate's Self-Esteem* by Dennis and Barbara Rainey
- *Your Marriage Masterpiece* by Al Janssen
- *The Meaning of Marriage* by Tim Keller
- *Personality Plus* by Florence Littauer
- *What's It Like To Be Married To Me* by Linda Dillow
- *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* by Les & Leslie Parrot

BLENDING FAMILIES

- *Daily Reflections for Stepparents* by Margaret Broersma
- *Making Your Children Mind Without Losing Yours* by Dr. Kevin Leman
- *The Blended Family* by Tom & Adrienne Frydenger
- *Living In A Step-Family Without Getting Stepped On* by Dr. Kevin Leman
- *The Smart Stepfamily: Seven Steps to a Healthy Family* by Ron L. Deal

FINANCES

- *The Treasure Principle* by Randy Alcorn
- *Total Money Makeover* by Dave Ramsey
- Crown Ministries

THE SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP

- www.covenantlovers.com
- *A Celebration of Sex: Book and Workbook* by Rosenau, Nell & Fox
- *52 Ways to Have Fun, Fantastic Sex: A Guidebook for Married Couples* by Clifford L. Penner & Joyce J. Penner
- *Sheet Music: Uncovering the Secrets of Sexual Intimacy in Marriage* by Dr. Kevin Leman
- *When Two Become One: Enhancing Sexual Intimacy in Marriage* by Christopher McCluskey
- *Total Intimacy: A Guide to Loving by Color* by Dr. Douglas Rosenau & Deborah Neel
- *Restoring the Pleasure: Moving Past Sexual Barriers* by Clifford L. Penner & Joyce J. Penner
- *The Sexual Man: Masculinity Without Guilt* by Dr. Archibald Hart
- *Secrets of Eve: Understanding the Mystery of Female Sexuality* by Dr. Archibald Hart, Catherine Hart Weber & Debra Taylor
- *Sexuality – Getting Your Sex Life Off to a Great Start* by Clifford L. Penner & Joyce J. Penner
- *The Gift of Sex: A Guide to Sexual Fulfillment* by Clifford L. Penner & Joyce J. Penner



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