

i'm getting married!

Preparing your Heart for a Lifetime

By Jim and Barbara Grunseth

Credits and Dedication

This book is designed to help you and your fiancé prepare your hearts for the greatest calling and adventure you will ever experience! We are not so interested in helping you with all the little time line planning details. Rather, we want to help you search your heart, coach you, and help you learn to fall in love with the Lord Jesus Christ, the Author of Marriage. You do that and He will work out all the rest.

Much of this material is designed for you and your fiancé to work through together before you get married in order to enrich and strengthen your marital relationship later. Please keep this in mind as you go through each chapter, exercise, or reading.

We hope that throughout your engagement, you will thoroughly chew on the following questions:

- Why are we getting married?
- Will the Lord's work be advanced more if we marry?
- What expectations do I and my fiancé each have regarding marriage and family?
- Are the Lord Jesus and His Word at the **epicenter** of each expectation?
- How will the timing of our wedding most insure that the Lord is honored and that our marital relationship steps off on the right foot?

Sections of the material in this book are adapted from some of our other published writings: **Remember the Rowboats: Anchor your Marriage to Christ, Home to Home: Passing on Five Cornerstones of Christian Marriage, and Embracing the Truth: Understanding the Eight Keys to Christian Living.**

We want to acknowledge and thank Linda Montgomery (marriage and family branch of the Military Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ) for her excellent contributions as Contributing Editor. She and her husband, Mike, are great encouragements to us!

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We dedicate this book to every engaged couple who wants solid hope, direction, and encouragement from God's Holy Word, the Bible.

If you would like more encouragement, please visit www.marriageanchors.com

May God bless you as you trust fully and only in Him!

Sincerely,

Jim and Barbara Grunseth

Ordering links, contact information, our photo, and our biography are on the last pages.

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Introduction

You Want Me to Pilot a 747 Jet? When?

You are making plans to get married or you are thinking about making plans to get married. What a great calling and adventure ahead of you! As you well know, this life-altering decision is one that must not be entered into lightly. No doubt knowing that half of your friend's marriages will end in utter destruction has caused you concern. It needs to. The marriage relationship is unique. It was and still is ordained by the God of the Bible. Jumping into God's marriage with poor training and/or a nonexistent or weak relationship with the One who ordained it makes no sense!

So many couples these days choose to live together first in order to see if they are compatible. It seems more economical and it sure seems like it solves the problem of being lonely. Biblically, this makes about as much sense as jumping into a wide patch of quicksand. The sinking ones say, "That's funny, it looked like solid, proven ground while I was jumping in!" Many come back later, after the resulting sinking, isolation, and destruction and say "I was wrong! Why didn't someone warn me of the miseries, curses, and dangers of making a mockery of God's holy and sacred institution, marriage?"

If someone told you that on June 10th, you would have to put on the Captain's airline uniform with well earned wings, step into the complicated cockpit of a brand new 747 Jet airliner and fly it, would you focus on the uniform and décor or the training you need for the ominous task? This is not to say that planning the wedding is not important, but preparing for the marriage is infinitely more so.

With careful, calm, and proper preparation, the days, weeks, and months after your wedding will be remembered with much joy and gratitude. With little preparation and a poor take off, your "Marriage Plane" will probably go down into a field somewhere. When I married my first wife, not only did I enter marriage clueless but was in bondage to people-pleasing and lust. Although I made a decision to trust the Lord Jesus Christ at the age of 18 while a freshman in college, my heart was divided between loving and following Jesus and thirsting for recognition and self-centered pleasures. This first marriage almost ended after 7 rather long and difficult years. I regret those years of truly poor, godless "me first" choices.

Barbara and I want to help you any way we can. We hope we gain your trust. We will be as honest with you as we can. It is our desire to help prepare you for God's great calling and mission involving His marriage of you and your fiancé. Please feel free to contact us anytime. www.marriageanchors.com Office: 262-642-5092, Jim's cell: 262-745-4160, Barbara's cell: 262-745-9653, Jim's e-mail: jgrunseth@centurylink.net . Barbara's e-mail: rberrybarb@centurylink.net . See back pages for more helpful information and links.

Chapter 1

Don't Get Married!

Kate came to our home recently because she was troubled over so many issues in her life. She expressed deep anger and frustration because things were not going her way. She had been married once before but that ended in disaster.

She desperately wanted peace and hope in her life. She had been to at least twenty counselors and pastors over the years. She either did not like their advice or they simply told her things she wanted to hear to pacify her.

We strongly advised her to end her relationship with a controlling, immoral man who did not follow or serve the Lord Jesus. She said she did not want to do that. She **felt** that continuing to meet with this man was **God's plan** for her spiritual growth.

We referred her to the **Living Truth**, the written Word of God, the Bible. God is quite clear about **His plan**.

*“Do not be **yoked** together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?”*
(2 Corinthians 6:14)

She got mad over this straightforward confrontation. Here she was....a mid-forties Christian woman expecting God to revolve around her hopes, needs, wishes, and dreams. Kate is dearly loved by her Heavenly Father, yet she has fallen into the devil's trap. She has swallowed the lie “God wants me happy. He will allow me to disobey Him so that my plans can be fulfilled.”

She said, “I learned so much from this difficult relationship! How could it not be ordained by God?” We shared with her that if her choices in life oppose God's Word, then her choices oppose and offend God Himself.

She sat there in her lonely, selfish misery and cried.

Then she said that she wants to get married again someday sooner rather than later. “I don't want to be alone. I want to love and be loved just like most people want.”

Barbara, in her quiet, merciful, discerning way, gently looked into Kate's eyes and said to her, “**Don't get married!**” Kate looked absolutely blown off the map! The look on Kate's face said, “How can you say such a cruel thing? God wants me happy!”

There are many passages from God's Word that she needs to humbly embrace. One such verse is Joshua 22:5 ESV

*“Only be **very careful** to observe the commandment and the law that Moses the servant of the LORD **commanded** you, to **love** the LORD your God, and to **walk** in all his*

*ways and to **keep** his commandments and to **cling** to him and to **serve** him with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul."* {**Bold** added}

Barbara tried to help her understand that if you want to marry someday, you must be willing to die to your selfish plans. She urged Kate to humble herself and cry out to the Lord Jesus to arrest her heart so that she would surrender fully and daily to the hopes, plans and dreams of her Lord, Teacher, Friend, and Savior. His Word, the manna from Heaven, would be her guide.

Barbara stated again. "**Don't get married!** ...unless the Lord calls or commands you to marry a godly man who's faith has been tested by trial, and who has been proven to be faithful to the Lord and his path of Truth."

Barbara boldly went further. She told Kate, "**Don't get married!**...unless your ministry together will glorify God more than remaining single." Kate was shocked to learn that God's ordained marriage is not so much about happiness, closeness, and "lovy dovy-ness". Rather it is about one Christian man and one Christian woman humbly surrendering to Christ and obeying His command to enter into His marriage to advance His Kingdom.

We need to heed the following verses in terms of relating to God's sacred calling and mission in light of marriage:

"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received." (Ephesians 4:1)

"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me." (Colossians 1:28,29)

"All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:" (2 Corinthians 5:18)

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us." (2 Corinthians 5:20a)

When Kate left, she apologized for getting angry. She thanked us for sharing the loving Truth with her. What she does with the Truth is between her and God.

So for all who read this and are thinking of getting married...**Don't get married!**...Unless:

1. The Lord commands you to marry a faith-tested, faith-proven godly person.
2. Your ministry together will glorify God more than remaining single.

Chapter 2

And Everyone Who Calls

As you pray and make plans for your wedding, your honeymoon, and your marriage, it is imperative that you take the following Old Testament verse very seriously.

*“And everyone who **calls** on the name of the LORD will be saved;”* (Joel 2:32a) (**bold** added)

Many of your friends and perhaps some in your family have never read this verse or could care less about it. Barbara and I cannot stress enough the fundamental importance of this Scripture. The Hebrew word, “**call**” means literally to “cry out, to call out, to proclaim from the utter depths of your heart”.

The Lord Jesus is the One you must cry out to. Fully embracing Him and His Word, the Bible, as your only hope for a fruitful, loving marriage. Please put off the wedding indefinitely until you come to the point in your life where you cry out with that deep, groaning soul cry. Beg the Lord Jesus to save you from your sin, wickedness, self-centered values and certain hopeless eternity separated from God and loved ones. You must realize you are **forever doomed** without Him.

Have you once and for all settled the questions: Do you belong to God? Are you going to Heaven? Are you a child of God? Is Jesus Christ really your personal Lord, Savior, and Master? Who is your anchor in life? When all else fails, will your anchor also fail you? When others betray and lie to you, will your anchor do likewise? Consider the following questions:

1. Where did you come from?

- God loves you and created you to know Him personally. He is loving and true and would never lie to you.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

- The One True God of the Bible formed you in your mother’s womb.

“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.” (Psalm 139:13,14)

2. If God has created you and loves you, what is preventing you from knowing Him intimately?

God wants to give you a fresh start. A clean slate is just a prayer away.

- You are sinful and separated from God, so you cannot know Him intimately or experience His saving, keeping, and protecting love.

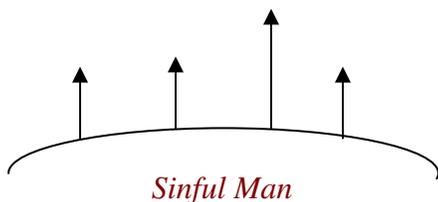
“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” (Romans 3:23)

“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 6:23)

- Just as fire and gasoline cannot be together, those who have the stain of sin can never be in the presence of a holy, sinless, and perfect God.
- You must be pardoned. Your sin must be forever washed away.
- God created man to have fellowship with Him, but due to his own stubborn self-will, he chose to go his own independent, selfish way, and fellowship was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin.

Holy God

God is holy and man is sinful. A great gulf separates the two. The arrows illustrate that man is continually trying to reach God and establish a personal relationship with Him through his own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion--- but he inevitably fails.



3. If there were only **One Way** to bridge this gulf, would you want to know it?

In 1830, George Wilson was tried by the U.S. court in Philadelphia for robbery and murder and was sentenced to hang. Andrew Jackson, President of the United States, granted him a presidential pardon. But Wilson refused the pardon, insisting it was not a pardon unless he accepted it. The question was brought before the U. S. Supreme Court, and Chief Justice John Marshall wrote the following decision: “A pardon is a paper, the value of which depends upon its acceptance by the person implicated. It’s hardly to be supposed that one under sentence of death would refuse to accept a pardon, but if it is refused, it is no pardon. George Wilson must hang.” What was the outcome? George Wilson was hanged.¹

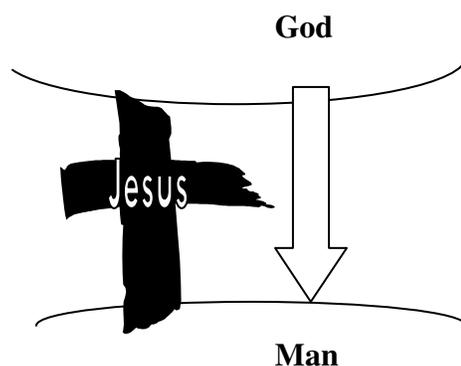
- Jesus Christ is God’s **only** provision for man’s sin. Through Him alone we can know God intimately, be fully pardoned for our sin, and experience His unconditional love.

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

- He died in our place and rose from the dead.

“Christ died for our sins...He was buried...He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred.” (1Corinthians 15:3-6)

- He is the only way to God.



This diagram illustrates that God has bridged the gulf that separates us from Him by sending His Son, Jesus Christ. He chose to die on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sins.

- Those who love darkness, reject Christ, and refuse His free offer of forgiveness and new life will perish. They will be eternally condemned for their sins. The

wrath of God will fall on them. They will be cast forever into the Lake of Fire in Hell. No rescue! No comfort! No hope!

“They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.” (2 Thessalonians 7:10b-12)

4. What must occur in order for you to be saved from your sins and eternal death and be assured of complete forgiveness and Heaven?

- You must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Then you can know God personally and experience His love.

“Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” (John 1:12)

- You receive Christ by faith.

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast.”
(Ephesians 2:8,9)

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from sin and self-rule (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive us of our sins and to make us what He wants us to be. Just to agree intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an emotional experience. We receive Christ by faith, as an act of our will.

- When you receive Christ, a Great Exchange occurs instantly!

First: Jesus takes all of your past, present, and future sin, condemnation and guilt away. Back on that Cross, Jesus removed your sins and placed them on Himself. He was crucified, became guilty on your behalf, and was condemned. He then suffered torment in Hell so you would not have to. He freed you from the penalty and power of sin.

Second: In exchange, Jesus gives you His righteousness and His life. You are forgiven, unable to be condemned, holy, blameless, pure, and forever innocent of all charges. You have eternal life. God, the Father, now sees you holy and perfect. He loves you the same as He loves Jesus. This exchange is irrevocable. It is finished!

“I delight greatly in the LORD; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.” (Isaiah 61:10)

5. Would you like to receive Christ right now by faith through prayer?

Here is a suggested prayer:

Lord Jesus, I need You. I want to be assured of going to Heaven when I die. I also want to know You personally. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord.

Thank You for forgiving me of my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.

- Remember: Jesus is now in your life. You belong to Him. He will never leave you nor forsake you. You are God’s own son or daughter. The Bible promises eternal life to all who receive Christ.

Heaven is your new home!

“My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand.” (John 10:27-29)

He, who saves your soul, keeps your marriage.

Think of your upcoming marriage as a ship that will soon be in a storm out in the ocean. Without Jesus you will take on water, drift, list, then sink and be lost.

As you walk by faith in this Christian life, you must also remain married by faith. If you are depending on anything other than the Lord Jesus to sustain you or your relationships, you will finish this life poorly and will regret the way you lived.

Anchoring your future marriage to Christ means you agree it is not “your” marriage, but God’s. Matthew 19:4-6 reads:

*“‘Haven’t you read,’ he replied, ‘that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’? So they are no longer two, but one. **Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.**” (Bold added)*

In the King James Version, the word for “separate” is translated “put asunder” which in the Greek means, “to place room between, that is, part; reflexively to go away: —depart, put asunder, separate.” (Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance)

Malachi 2:15,16 reads:

“Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth.

*“**I hate divorce,**” says the LORD God of Israel, “and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,” says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.” (Bold added)*

You see you do not have the authority or the right to tamper with or tarnish anything God has ordained. Since your God hates divorce, you must hate divorce. Why would you ever do anything that God hates? If you belong to God, then you and everything you hold dear must be in subjection to His will, His desires, His plan, and according to His Word, the Bible.

Endnote

¹ destined for security, “Session 1: Can You Be Secure in Your Relationship with God,” pages 13-14, Life Builders, Campus Crusade for Christ, 2003

Chapter 3

Beware!

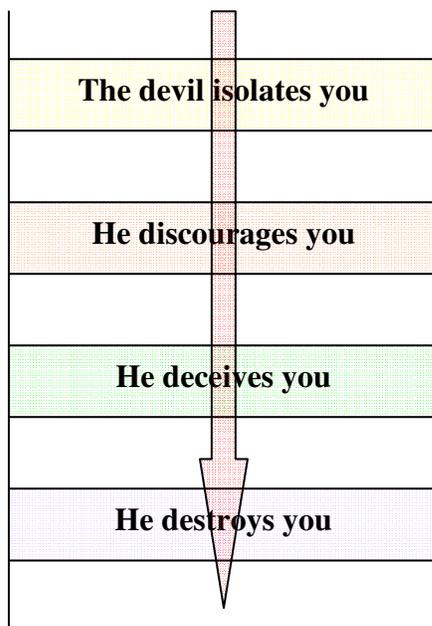
Imagine quietly resting under a tall pine, on the edge of a large stand of trees. It is late morning on a warm, sunny day. All is still except for the gentle breeze. You look up and see the treetops quietly swaying, softly whispering. You sigh deeply and close your eyes.

As you contemplate the serenity of your surroundings, your attention is soon drawn to the lake's shoreline about 30 feet away. You begin to observe the lake and the natural forces that affect it. Think of the lake as the environment in which you live. Like two rowboats, you and your fiancé are at the mercy of the environment unless you have a plan and you both work diligently at it.

There will be pressures and forces at work in your upcoming marriage that will affect your relationship and the relationships you come in contact with. Pressures will naturally and gradually wear down the sweetness and health of your relationship. Right now, being engaged and all, you can't keep apart. After the altar, you may begin to not mind being apart. Later on, you may very well look forward to being apart. Unless equipped, your future marriage loyalties will wane. Most of the time, these forces lead your marriage through four stages we call the **Devil's Ladder**. The Lord, however, has a sure plan for your marriage, the **Lord's Ladder**.

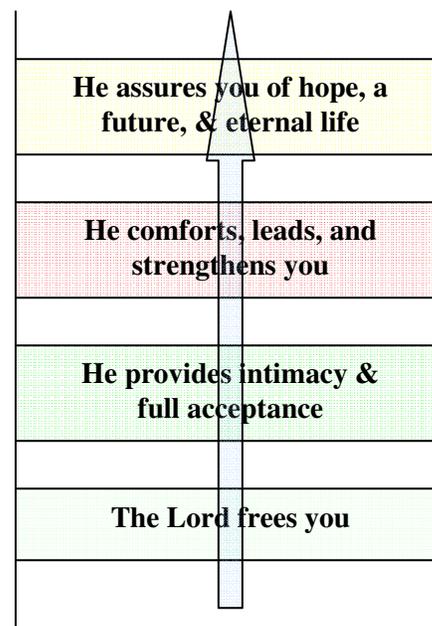
DEVIL'S LADDER

He pulls you down.



Lord's Ladder

He lifts you up!



According to Galatians Chapter 5, marriage partners will either choose to live by faith or they will choose to be controlled by their flesh. The first will bring hope, oneness, and life. The second will bring despair, isolation, and death.

Memorize this:

**“Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true,
regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.”**

Life Builders Faith Principle, Campus Crusade for Christ

If one does not live by faith, and consequently love by faith then the flesh rules and the wages of sin is death. The marriage that refuses to live by faith will eventually become unhealthy, unhappy, and unfruitful.

Know your Enemy! Be aware of the spiritual battle you are in. (Study Ephesians 6:10-18) The devil has a plan to destroy your upcoming marriage.

Be sure you are constantly aware of the **Devil’s Ladder** and the **Lord’s Ladder**. Warn other couples of the dangers and warning signs of the first one and also the blessings and joy of the second one. Marriage partners who fall into deep sin, or who file for divorce are **pulled** down the Devil’s Ladder rung by rung. He is a master at greasing the rungs. Help others to see this and to get off that ladder! (Ezekiel 33:1-6)

Choose to cling to the Lord Jesus and His wonderful ladder. Most assuredly, He will **lift** you and your marriage up. Ask Him to do this. Seek Him together with all your heart. He will never fail you or the marriage He has called you to.

“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” (Deuteronomy 31:8)

Please memorize this verse and consider making it a part of your wedding vows on your wedding day. As the Lord Jesus will never leave nor forsake you, you, likewise, will never leave nor forsake your mate. This way, the world will have a cinematic view of God’s unconditional and everlasting love toward them should they receive it. They will hopefully be drawn to the Lord Jesus as a result of observing you two! Your marriage is designed by God to be a **“Heaven welcoming, Heaven increasing”** instrument. It is essential you grasp this vital truth!

Waves Push You Apart

For a moment, think of your upcoming marriage as two rowboats out in the middle of a lake. On this lake, these two rowboats are meant to be together. They are initially close but as the waves have their constant, subtle effect, the boats slowly drift away from one another. When a couple marries, the last thing on their minds is isolation and rejection. They would never expect, as mates, to naturally grow apart to the point of breaking their vows. Differing backgrounds, family experiences, and past relationships are like waves. If you do not prepare for their influence and impact, you and your boats might take in some water!

Many such boats are not at all equipped for the waves that will inevitably ensue. Likewise, couples often flounder, and drift apart when life's waves crash up against them. When Barbara and I got married we were not prepared for the differences we encountered. Boy, were we caught off guard!

Jim's roots come from northern Wisconsin, good Norwegian and German stock. His dad came from eleven brothers and sisters and worked a farm, general store, and the post office for a town of 99 people. There was plenty of love, homemade breads, pies, and swimming holes. For many years indoor plumbing was only something you saw in the Sears catalog. There was no hint of finer culture.

Jim writes, "Mom, as German as they come, believed in three square meals a day. 'You must have some meat and something sweet at every meal.' she would say. Dad was a principal of middle and elementary schools in Elkhorn for over 37 years. I experienced sort of a double life being the principal's son. Most of the teachers loved me and many of the boys in class picked on me. I did not like school at all.

My older brother, John, seldom let me play ball with him and his friends. I seemed to always be the little brother tag-along who just got in the way.

Mom comforted and fed. Dad provided and told us what to do. We never had more than one car. We only had two bedrooms. We enjoyed food so much; we could have an engaging talk on the qualities of certain acclaimed cheeseburgers from Art and Sylvia's Diner across town."

Barbara, the oldest of 5 children, grew up on the North Shore of Chicago in the town of Deerfield. She writes, "My father, uncle, and grandpa owned and operated a successful heating and cooling business. My German, Norwegian, and Polish heritage included frequent participation in and a genuine appreciation for music and the fine arts. My mom, grandma, and I loved visiting Orchestra Hall in Chicago as well as the Goodman Theatre and Art Institute. I was the concert mistress in my high school orchestra. I thoroughly enjoyed my school experience.

My family and I were involved in everything from piano and baseball, to hockey and horseback riding. My three younger brothers and sister and I enjoyed going to the country club to golf, swim, play tennis or just sit and read and enjoy great food and refreshments.

My mom developed the reputation for being a very hard worker. You can imagine with that many children! She was a great teacher and fed her brood well! We frequently had friends over for parties or after school treats. Fine hospitality was modeled for me at an early age.

Our family summer lake home in Wisconsin offered a gorgeous setting for vacation. There were sail boats, rowboats, speed boats, and water skiing, fishing, picnicking, cookouts, and hammocks. My brothers, sister, and I were often busy floating on air mattresses and tubes, or attempting new dives off the pier. I fondly remember us standing real still in the water to let the minnows tickle our feet. What riotous fun it was! We spent warm days searching the beach for smooth stones to skip on the water. We also discovered crayfish and bull heads under the beached row boat. Other times we would hunt for and spy lost or discarded lake treasures that would wash up on shore.”

Weather Erodes Your Timbers

Remember the last time you were at water’s edge? If you looked closely, you might have seen driftwood, a broken piece of glass, seaweed, and perhaps part of an old rope washed up on shore. The sun, the storms, and temperature changes do their work. It is a known fact that water, over time, is one of the most erosive elements on earth.

Coming from different backgrounds and quite different family environments, our differences, at times, struck at the core of our marriage much like the wind and rain affect us. We knew we had to secure our marital relationship for the storms ahead. Our life experiences were not at all similar.

Barbara and I were raised differently. We approach life from different angles. We also developed different styles of parenting. Since we each had been married once before, we also had rather different views of married life, conflict resolution, and finances. Barbara is merciful, gentle, yet firm. I, however, went to West Point and had instilled in me discipline, punctuality, and respect for rules. Needless to say, we had to make some serious adjustments and compromises. We learned to pray at bedtime every night together. This is the best decision we ever made!

There is a reason why people secure their boats, batten down the hatches, and anchor them well before the storm comes. If they do not, the storm would damage their craft and possibly smash it into other boats or the pier. Do you have a plan to batten down the hatches and secure well your marriage against the inevitable storms of life? If you do not, you will end up listing, smashed, or at the bottom of the lake. Most marriages are clueless.

Small Leaks Can Sink You

Our son, Dan, took Barbara and me fishing on a small, private pond one day in Northern Indiana. The water was clean, the fish plentiful, and the company enjoyable. We actually caught some good-sized fish! However, there were several small problems. In the back of this rustic, aging rowboat, I noticed 3 or 4 nickel-sized holes in the watery floor. While Dan and Barbara

were having great fun catching fish, I was watching arcs of water shooting up 5 or 6 inches into the boat. Laughably, I tried to plug up a hole or two with my now soaked tennis shoes. The more I tried to stop the incoming water, the more water seemed to rush into the boat. The boat was filling fast.

So what did I do? Of course, I tried to stand up in order to get a better picture of the situation. Wrong thing to do! With 5 inches of water in the rowboat, stability is something only to hope for. If it had not been for smart thinking on Barbara's part, all of us would have joined our fish friends in the pond. As it was, our boat almost did not make it back to shore.

Two small, steady leaks that naturally occur in marriage are:

1. **Self-centeredness**
2. **The performance-based relationship**

These two must be faced and dealt with on a daily basis. Why should the devil wade out into the lake of your marriage and devote time, personnel, and energy, if you and your mate are willing to destroy your relationship all on your own? He has limited resources and demonic personnel. He assigns them usually to those people and marriages that are beginning to learn the benefits of trusting and obeying the Lord Jesus and His Word.

Take a look at self-centeredness. You must decide that holiness and selflessness before the Lord is that which determines your happiness. You must resolve that obedience to God is the entrance gate to the pleasures He intends for you. Ask the Lord to instill in you a healthy fear of God. Ask Him to reveal to you anything in your life, your home, or on your property that erodes a pure lifestyle, or offends His Holiness. Finally, you both must submit to a Christ-centered way of life where grace, thankfulness, and mercy abound. Asking for forgiveness and then forgiving one another should be a common theme in your home. The devil can tamper with many things, but these he cannot touch. Where Jesus resides, the devil must retreat. James 4:7-10 reads:

*“⁷**Submit** yourselves, then, to God. **Resist** the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸**Come near** to God and he will come near to you. **Wash** your hands, you sinners, and **purify** your hearts, you double-minded. ⁹**Grieve**, mourn and wail. **Change** your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. ¹⁰**Humble** yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.”* (**Bold** added for emphasis)

Make these choices and just watch what God does!

Self-centeredness is pride unleashed and self-focus gone bad. It is our ugly attempt at getting what we want and what we think we deserve. It is putting our self ahead of others. It is getting our needs met through sinful, inappropriate means. Remember, the self-centered heart is always unsatisfied. Discontentment is the fragrance of the self-centered. It is carnal and dark and wholly opposed to God and His Holy Word, the Bible. It is the devil's delight! God's marriage will be destroyed if this is not dealt a deathblow on a daily basis.

The Apostle Paul, addressing the Christians in Rome warned them:

“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires. Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace.” (Romans 6:11-14)

If sin is your master, and not Jesus, your marriage will breed pain and death. If you are making provisions for the flesh, the devil will lie to you. He will whisper, “Of course this choice is sinful, yet full of pleasure. Yes, there will be feelings of self-loathing, guilt, shame, and condemnation, but you will quickly get over it and your sin will only hurt you.” The truth is this: If you choose sin, you will not get over it quickly and others will always suffer. Always.

If God convicts you of a sinful, self-centered heart where pride, lust, discontentment, anger, or unforgiveness are frequent guests, confess your sin, turn from your wicked ways, and ask Jesus to take control of the throne of your life.

In the New Testament, John writes,

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1John 1:9)

We are finding in our lives what helps is to remember to:

- **Spend regular, quality time with the Lord Jesus and His Word, the Bible**
- **Stay off His throne**
- **Do what He says**

You see, until you and your mate decide to start wanting what God wants for your life and marriage more than what you personally want, your marriage will be of no great threat to Satan. His scheme to enslave souls and secure them in the stench and drudgery of endless darkness will continue.

Now take a look at the performance-based relationship. If this small leak is not dealt with immediately, its nickel-sized hole will lead to the sinking of your boat! Whenever you choose to take control of your life and prevent the Lord Jesus His rightful place on the throne of your heart, you become what the Bible calls carnal, worldly, or in the flesh. So if you are not Spirit-filled (by faith), then you are controlled by your flesh. Discord, impatience, and dissatisfaction will permeate your life in much the same way as rotting fish smell permeates a shoreline. When your flesh controls you, you will always base your relationships on performance.

The Apostle Paul says in Galatians 5:16-18: *“So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.”*

You know you are in a performance-based relationship if you feel you have to earn another person's favor or love. It looks like this: "Honey, I will love you, care for you, and cherish you when you measure up to my standards of performance." Love that must be earned is never love! It is **conditional probation** in which the person wanting to be loved always feels that if he or she does not perform up to standards, they will experience some form of rejection, shame or even punishment. This demonic perversion is from the pit of Hell. This type of relationship is utterly foreign to our loving Heavenly Father. What happens in the performance-based relationship is deadly. Invariably, the person seeking to be loved and accepted strives futilely to earn the right to be favored or treasured. But as soon as the "other" person notices the effort, the bar is raised. The poor soul seeking acceptance is crushed in defeat. This terrible cycle continues until the death of the relationship.

Sunk!

Chapter 4

Study your Fiancé's Family Carefully!

Someone once said, "When you marry someone, you also marry their family!" Ouch! Although this is not true theologically, it is very true practically speaking. We have seen numerous marriages crumbling under the "oven broil" setting of In-law wars. With the hillbillies, we have the Hatfield's vs. the McCoy's. In the story of Romeo and Juliet, we have the Capulet's against the Montague's.

Be careful and prayerful regarding the family you marry into!

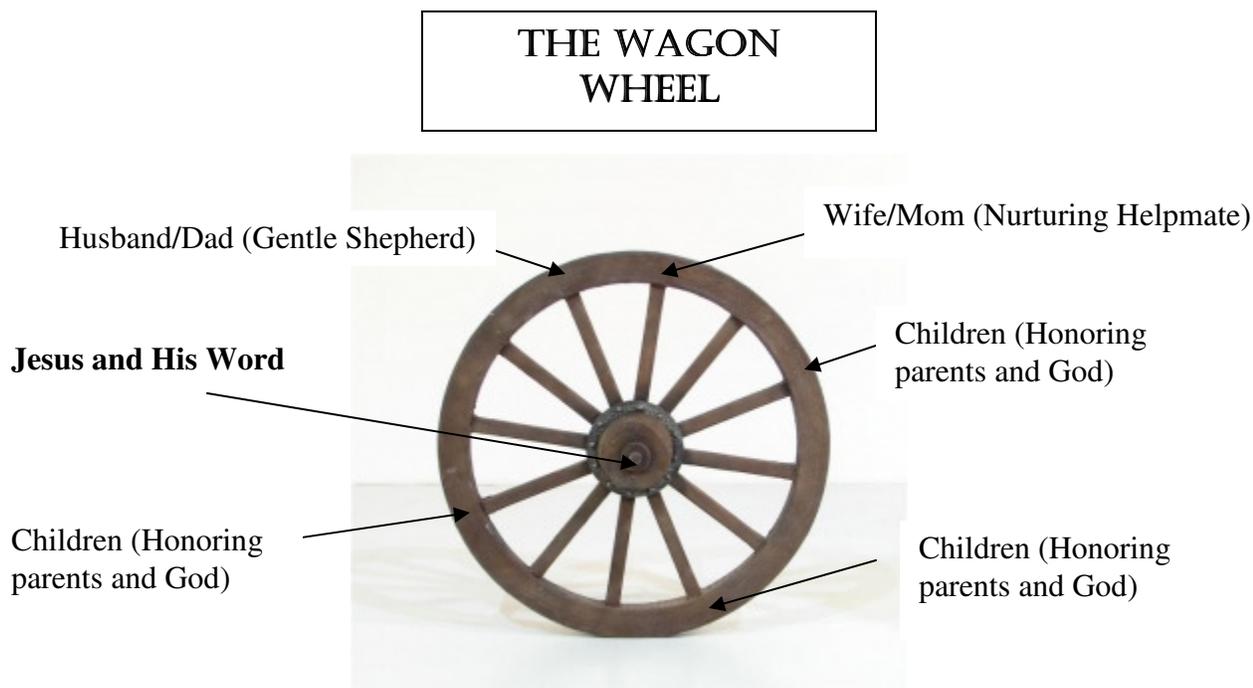
Unrealistic expectations can kill a marriage. If you set unrealistic expectations for your fiancé's family, they will be hurt and you will be tense, and your upcoming marriage relationship will be unduly stressed. As you seek the Lord Jesus and spend time in His Word, ask Him to help you develop an unconditional positive regard for each of your fiancé's extended family members. Usually, there is at least one of those family members that, if you are not careful, may drive you nuts!

Choosing to respect the other family's members can be quite challenging indeed! A number of years ago, when one young lady close to our family told us she intended to marry a particular young man, we became alarmed! She did not know anything about his family and had not spent any time with them. We encouraged her to go spend the summer near the family to get to know them and gain wisdom and perspective.

She spent months with them, sharing meals and having lengthy discussions. She also experienced their family's recreational habits. **She was aghast!** She realized that her life's experiences and those of her fiancé and his family were profoundly different. Her favorite things were obviously not theirs. Her spiritual foundation differed dramatically. She grew up in a conservative, evangelical Christian home with its own set of joys, struggles, values, and problems while her fiancé's family was hardly interested in spiritual matters at all. They loved motorcycles and came from a rougher background of broken homes and immorality.

Her fiancé, although a nice, professing Christian, had struggled greatly with sexual immorality and perversion. What happened? Well, she married him anyway. Four months into their rocky marriage, her new husband dumped her for the gay lifestyle! She was devastated! He divorced her and left her high and dry! She went through a dark and dismal journey but eventually, by the grace of God, she met another man who actually loved the Lord. They received intense pre-marital training, got married, and are now doing well. They love each other and have a precious son! The Lord Jesus is at the helm of their marriage.

Please be sure that you and your fiancé both understand the **Family Systems Model of:**



Note: The husband/dad and the wife/mom are not the center axle of the family. Those people who fight vigorously to run the show, be the center, and call the shots will produce a very dysfunctional, carnal family. The family will be based on four things: **Fear, control, performance, and shame.** There will be the **No Talk Rule.** This means that *“You are to never talk about our family problems.” If you do, that means we might have to face those problems...and we can’t do that! Why...we have no problems! In addition to that, if you do spill the beans and break this family rule, you will be punished through shame, ridicule, and isolation!”*

One Christian family with 5 at-home children was in tension and riddled with turmoil. Why? Guess who was subconsciously given permission to be the family Wagon Wheel Axle and be Top Controlling despot? Amazingly, it was their 9-year old daughter who was calling the shots. If anyone confronted her or challenged her, the whole family suffered from her wrath! When we showed them the Wagon Wheel drawing, it suddenly dawned on them like a light turned on in a dark room. Later that night, they gently showed the Family System Wagon Wheel to their daughter. They lovingly but firmly told her that she was no longer going to be in charge ruling the family with her moods, selfishness, and demands.

Jesus is the only one who has the right and responsibility to rule the affairs of His family. He ordained it. Hopefully all are saved. He promises to guide and protect it as long as each family member submits and fully surrenders to His will and His Word.

Mom and Dad are never to have a **Parent-Centered Marriage.** *“I’m sorry, Ramón. I am putting the kids first. I will pour my life into them. Get used to it! You come second!”*

Rather, according to the Scriptures, they are to be **Marriage-Centered Parents.** *“I’m sorry Jenny. Your dad (even step dad who is also my husband) and I will pray about your request to go*

to that big party at Maria's home after the game on Friday. We will take it before the Lord, ask for wisdom tonight when we pray together before bedtime, and we'll get back to you in the morning with our answer. We love you and care for you deeply."

No one has the right to get in between you and your mate after you are married. No one! In Matthew 19:6, Jesus says,

"So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

If God gives you children, you are not one flesh with them. You are not one flesh with your parents. You, when married, become one flesh **only** with your mate!

As you ponder the family you grew up in with a lot of grace and forgiveness in mind and you study your fiancé's family, we pray you will seek wisdom and direction from the Lord. If you desire to learn more about "The Rules of the Carnal Family", read Chapter 6 of our book, **Remember the Rowboats: Anchor your Marriage to Christ**. 1(800) 827-2788. You go to the last page of this book and also find helpful web links. Feel free to Google the book title as well.

If you let us know you are engaged, we'd be happy to help anyway we can. We'd love to pray for you by name. Just contact us.

Here are a few key questions to get you and your fiancé thinking in the right direction:

1. How do you and your family spend the holidays?
2. Who pays the bills and balances the checkbook? What kind of budget will you live by?
3. Will you have one or two bank accounts?
4. Do you both want children? How many? When?
5. Who does various chores and carried out regular responsibilities such as taking out the garbage, making the bed, doing the wash, washing and drying dishes, loading and unloading the dishwasher, taking care of a pet, making and cleaning up after meals, planting flowers and a garden, and mowing the lawn?
6. How do you decide on major purchases and investments?
7. What do you do if your respective parents don't get along or are too intrusive?
8. Will you allow each other full access to your emails, web searches, and text messages?
9. What type of internet protection will you have to guard your heart?
10. Will you keep the same friends after you are married?

Chapter 5

Finances – A Blessing or a Curse.

Jermaine and Katherine met with us recently. They loved the Lord and were heavily involved in serving their local church. Their faces communicated a heaviness of heart that we will never forget. Due to lack of self-discipline, Jermaine, without telling his wife, had accumulated \$50,000 of multiple credit card debt. Even though they both had fairly stable jobs, this debt and his lack of transparency were putting a horrible strain on their marriage. They were also embarrassed and did not want anyone, especially their church, to know. He simply loved electronic equipment and he felt he deserved these purchases since life was hard and he wanted enjoyment. His wife was not joyful!

Next to marital infidelity and rejecting your future mate as God's gift and provision for you, poor financial management and stewardship will rapidly strain, strangle, and destroy your wonderful marriage relatively soon once you step down from the altar. This chapter is really about godly stewardship.

It is about obeying and trusting God and managing humbly and properly all of the resources He entrusts to you. Unwise financial choices can kill your marriage. Wise financial choices will bring healing, hope, stability and even honor. Stop listening to what our culture tells you to spend your hard earned money on. Stop comparing yourself to others, where they live and what kind of car they drive. Consider adopting the following **11 Points**:

1. **All that you are and have is a gift from God.** He expects you to wisely manage all that has been entrusted to you. One hundred percent belongs to God. You will either be a wise or a poor steward of it. You will either flounder irresponsibly in the area of personal stewardship or you will seek wise counsel and manage what you have.
2. **It is wise to get help.** If you are struggling in this area and have more than \$1,000 in credit card debt, we urge to get help from a financial counselor. We endorse Crown Ministries and any materials by Larry Burkett, David Ramsey and Ronald Blue & Co. Also, computer software such as Quicken can be of great help.
3. **First, you must learn to balance your checkbook each and every month.** You need to develop a plan that looks both to the short term (this month up to 12 months) and to the long term (to the end of your retirement years). This is crucial since many of you will be living into your late 80's and even the 90's. Your **Personal Financial Plan** should have three sections:
 - ❑ **A Spending Plan**
 - ❑ **A Giving Plan**
 - ❑ **A Saving plan**
4. **Test God? Yes, test God!** In the simplest of terms, a good target is to gratefully give back to God at least 10% of the 100% He entrusts to you so the work of the Lord can go forth. God loves a marriage that gives cheerfully, sacrificially, abundantly, and secretly. When in doubt, give. When you are needy, give. When you get a short paycheck or get laid off, give. Learn

to give by faith with a grateful heart. When the Holy Spirit nudges you, give. Do not wait to get out of debt, give to the work of the Lord now. Perhaps the only place in Scripture where God challenges you to test Him is in Malachi 3:7-12:

"Ever since the time of your forefathers you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you," says the LORD Almighty.

"But you ask, 'How are we to return?'

"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.

"But you ask, 'How do we rob you?'

"In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse-the whole nation of you-because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.

***Test me in this,** says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty." (Bold added for emphasis)*

Luke 6:38 is a great promise from God to you:

"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

Simply put, you cannot out-give God.

We want to stress that giving out of guilt because you think God will love you more is a wrong motive and certainly not true. What pleases God is learning to give back to Him by faith and with a thankful heart for all He has done for you.

5. **Avoid debt.** Make it your immediate and long range goal and passion to get out of and avoid debt. We know this is difficult especially for students taking out loans. But with God's help and your patient self-discipline the above-mentioned goal will serve you well in the long run. If you are in debt (and most of you are), make plans to get out of debt as early as possible. In some cases, a person will pay twice the original purchase price because of interest paid over the long haul.
6. **Spend each week or month less than you earn.** Avoid buying things over time. If you need a couch for your family room, do not buy it with interest. Save up a bit each month. Keep a written log of this, and when you have enough saved, **pay cash.** You may have to sit on the floor or on pillows for a while. So what? When you have saved for and then have that couch, it will be fully paid for. Stay away from impulse buying. Many people see something they like and what do they do? **They pull out the plastic!** The average family's unpaid ongoing credit card debt is somewhere around \$8,000! We know of some missionaries with credit card debt (abuse) of between \$25,000 and \$28,000! One couple had \$50,000 credit card debt!
7. **Pay off your credit card(s) each month in full.** This is our strong pleading: Get a handle on your credit cards today. If you must have one, it should be used rarely for things like

emergencies. One of our daughters and her husband decided to be prudent. They obtained just one credit card with a limit of \$1000.00 for emergencies. They say it helps them not to over spend. They have learned it is better to not have such a looming, ever-present temptation nesting in their wallet.

Here is where self-discipline is essential. **We made a commitment long ago to pay off all credit card bills in full each month.** We have seen one couple with 12 cards all charged to their highest limits! They ended up divorced and bankrupt. If you cannot make this commitment, get a scissors and cut them all up. You will be glad you did.

8. **Divide each paycheck compartmentally.** A great idea is to get help from a relative or close friend or a financial counselor. They will help you develop a plan. For instance, we save \$50 a month for our annual vacation. When the vacation time comes, the money is there. We do the same for Christmas gifts, car repairs and registration, house maintenance, property tax, income tax preparation, etc.

Since I have to pay \$100 a year in December in order to renew my Ordination certificate, we save \$10 each month in our bank's savings account. Then in December, I have the \$100 that has been building up all year plus I have an extra \$20 for next year.

We have 5 daughters. We promised each of them that we would contribute \$1,500 toward their wedding. Now that is not much when you think of wedding costs these days, but with five daughters that is all we could do. We have been saving \$25 a month for many months now. Four daughters are married. If and when the fifth gets married, we will be ready. As of today, we have \$1,225 saved. This plan really works!

NEVER ALLOW YOUR WEDDING AND HONEYMOON EXPENSES TO THRUST YOU INTO DEBT! NEVER!

You should also get professional advice from a Certified Financial Advisor about setting money aside each pay check for your children's college / technical school costs and for retirement.

9. **Consider buying used cars.** There are arguments for both buying new and used cars. At this stage in our life, we will never buy a new car again! Once you drive it off the lot, it depreciates thousands of dollars in value. We buy only used cars. We save \$25 here and \$50 there. We recently paid cash for a used, four year old Buick with 53,000 miles on it. We paid one third the original sticker price.
10. **Avoid loaning money to or borrowing money from loved ones.** Our experience as biblical mentors is that it strains relationships in an unhealthy manner. If you want to give money, great! If you are fortunate enough to receive financial gifts from family, it must be done with **NO STRINGS ATTACHED.**

NEVER OWE RELATIVES MONEY! Your giving and receiving must be done without conditions. Don't even keep a record of how much you give a loved one. We helped each of

our children with some of their college expenses. However, we told them they would have to pay for the rest of their education. We know not all parents will be able to do this and that is understandable.

11. **Never take a second mortgage out on your house!** No matter what the need, refuse to do this! You are putting yourself in financial bondage in your later years. If you want to go on that big vacation, painstakingly save for it each and every month. Without self-discipline, poverty, debt, and strained relationships occur.

Chapter 6

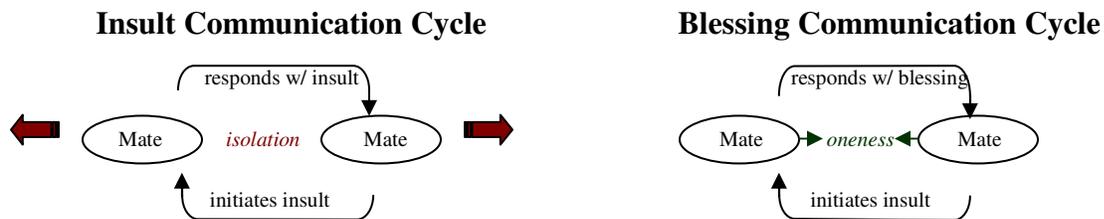
Learn What your Future Mate Needs

Raji loved Monique so much! He thought about her all the time! Every minute he was not working, he wanted to be with her. She felt the same about him. Deep in his heart he felt Monique would make him complete once they were married. She made him feel so alive. Monique felt warm and safe when she was with Raji. He was the man she had always hoped for.

After the wedding and honeymoon were long past, they began to argue. They began to have thoughts like, “She’s not very sensitive to my needs.” or “He must think the world revolves around him!” What they need now and what they really needed while they were still engaged was some honest, straight forward instruction and dialog regarding this topic. Let’s take a look at what your future mate really needs:

1. Your future mate needs blessings, not insults.

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing. I Peter 3:9



2. Your future mate needs comfort and empathy, not solutions and sermons.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Matthew 5:4

- Remember: Do not fix the problem or offer solutions or advice. Love through quiet listening. Choose to comfort and affirm knowing he/she doesn't deserve it.
- “Comfort” looks like: *“Honey, what you’ve just shared touches my heart. I hurt for you. What you are feeling must be very painful. I’ll always be here for you. Always.”*

- With tender listening, eye contact, and patient empathy (entering into one another’s pain or suffering), take turns sharing, listening to, and comforting one another asking each other the following questions:
 1. What is troubling you, discouraging you, or stressing you the most right now?
 2. What would you say is your greatest unmet need today?
 3. What do I say, do, or what attitude do I express that depletes you the most? What affirms or builds you up the most?
 4. What two qualities about my character do you admire, value, and appreciate the most?

Spend more time learning and practicing empathy than preparing for your upcoming wedding day.

Imagine, after the wedding, that you and your mate are vacationing and you are each having your own little picnic on opposite shores of a river. You have your blanket spread out on the left river bank. You have found a nice shady spot under a big sycamore tree. You have your broasted chicken, potato salad, chips, pickles, grapes, soda, and all the rest. Amazingly, your precious mate has a similar blanket with goodies spread out across the river on the opposite river bank.

Your tendency is to shout across the river, “Hey, come on over, eat and drink with me! Come, listen to me and see life from my side of the river. See life from my point of view for once!” This attitude is what destroys good marriages. It says, “You exist to hear me out, and meet my needs!” What is needed here is empathy. This is when you choose to act selflessly and your passion is to comfort, side with, and encourage the other person. The heart of empathy is brokenness and humility, thinking of yourself less.

The Lord Jesus will prompt you to empathize with your mate. There you are sitting on your nice picnic blanket on your side of the river. Since it is “your side”, you naturally think it is the best side. You think your way of looking at things and your view of the river is best. However, you choose to please the Lord by leaving the safe and proud comfort of your blanket and your side of the river. You choose to get up, even when you’d rather not, and **walk over the little half moon bridge to the other side.**

You shock your mate by asking permission to join her picnic experience. Your heart’s desire is to quietly sit down on her blanket, eat her food with her, and listen to her side of the story. Your passion is not to be right or to win. Your passion is to care, to understand, and know a bit of what it is like to see and taste life from her perspective...from her side of the river.

When you minister empathy, Christ is in control. Your ears enlarge, your emotional drawbridge is lowered, and your mouth shrinks away. Of course, this repulses your flesh so let His Spirit within you lead instead.

An empathetic dialogue might go something like this:

“You know honey, I have not been very attentive toward you lately with work and all. I guess I have wanted you to revolve around my world and my needs more than the reverse. I am truly sorry. Please forgive me. I want to now give you my undivided attention. I am all ears.”

You may ask any of a number of meaningful questions that build and heal rather than tear down and destroy such as, *“Honey, what would you say your greatest need is right now?”* or *“When was the last time you really felt loved by me?”*

As she is sharing, you simply listen attentively, nodding your head, keeping tender eye contact. When she is done sharing, you share four magic words that most women from cradle to grave never hear, **“Please tell me more.”** After she picks her jaw up from hitting the floor, you again listen to understand and experience her perspective.

Now men you will love this! After she has shared all she can, you rephrase what she just shared with you in your own words because you want to understand her correctly. You start out with something like, *“Now Honey, I want to make sure I fully appreciate and understand what you are saying...that I get it right. Is it true, that you feel your greatest need is to have regular times throughout the week where we share, listen to, debrief, and encourage one another so we can become closer as a couple?”*

Then, wife, you lovingly let him know how accurate his summary was and clarify anything he missed. You, husband, summarize again so as to get it right as close to 100% as you can. When this happens, your mate begins to experience being valued, listened to, and treasured.

Remember the litmus paper test for empathy in your marriage is this:

If the Lord Jesus is first in your life, then your mate will experience being treasured and central in your heart. Your marriage will be a warm, kind, and inviting place to be.

A marriage without empathy becomes nothing more than a cold business arrangement between two people. Empathy says, “I will show you I care. You will experience attentive focus. You and your views will be respected, heard, and prized.”

3. Your future mate needs to know he/she is a treasured priority.

“How beautiful you are my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes are doves. How handsome you are my lover! Oh, how charming...” Song of Songs 1:15-16

- When married, schedule a regular weekly date/get-away time. Call it “Planned Hope”. (i.e.) Perhaps a Friday lunch, Friday night, or Saturday breakfast together.
- Call if you are going to be late or early. Call each other throughout the day.
- Hold hands often. Go to bed together. Cuddle-pray out loud together.
- Look for ways to encourage. Speak words of life into your mate.

Why is it that some gardens do better than others? The answer is they are **nurtured**. Good soil, fertilizer, careful planting, proper spacing, weeding, and watering all play their part. The same goes for your marriage.

I once planted a small garden. I planted it in May but I did not go back to it until October! I had one limp zucchini about 3 inches long and some very hot radishes! In essence, the soil was so poor weeds did not even like to grow there. They don't call me “Brown Thumb Jim” for nothing.

This is what happens to so many marriages. They plant at the wedding altar. Then the couple expects their marriage relationship to just grow, deepen, and flourish. Is it any wonder why the majority of marriages sooner or later end up like my October garden?

Your future marriage will be like a garden. Tender, timely care and respect are required. Many husbands and wives gradually take their mates for granted and then they watch each other slowly fade away from any meaningful or heartfelt relationship or commitment. This poorly-tended marriage almost always leads to some form of adultery or straying from the vows.

Men, nurture your bride daily by choosing to be **gallant**. Open the car door for her. Pull out a chair for her at a restaurant. Don't sit down until she is seated. When she walks into a room where you are seated, stand up to honor her. Always help her with her coat. Go out of your way to pamper her. Take her on a date at least once a week. Start this habit during your engagement. If God blesses you with children, let them know that at 9:30 p.m. on week nights and from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Sundays, your bedroom door is locked. This is your time to nurture, talk, and love. You can pick your own times, of course.

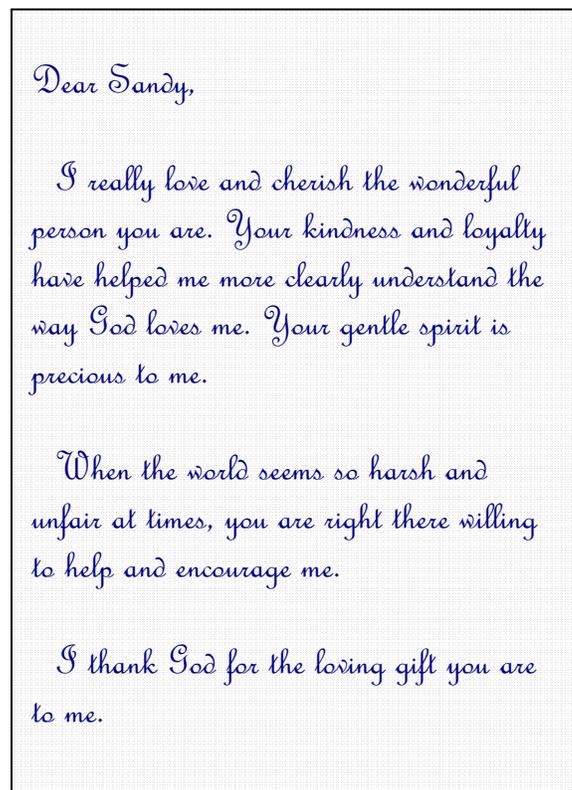
Men, choose to be **romantic**. It is a choice. Cards, flowers, candy, surprise phone calls or visits during the day, etc., will nurture. After you are married, walk up to your wife, hold her in your arms, and tell her how special she is to you. Plan a special "get-a-way" weekend—just for the two of you. Pour a hot bath for her. Share with her your inner thoughts, hopes, fears, and concerns. Ask for her advice. She craves to know the "real you"—the one who lives inside your skin. **Become a listening man**. She does not want your answers. She wants your understanding. She needs not your solutions. She needs your ears and your tender eyes attending to her.

Women, let your words be **sweetened with grace and gentleness**. After the wedding, utilize perfume, intimate apparel that he likes, candles, his favorite meal, a short love note to

encourage him, and walk up to him and hold him tightly, etc.—all of this will nurture. Before your wedding, nurture him in ways that will not lead him into temptation.

Women, **affirm him; let him lead.** Defer to him. In your marriage, build him up and defend him in public settings. Never slander him. Never! Once married, gently caress the back of his neck, rub his shoulders, and tell him you missed him when he comes home. Tell him you are proud of him and need him.

Another way to nurture your mate is to write, email, or text a short, tender note like this (A hand written note on stationery or a nice card will mean the most):



Dear Sandy,

I really love and cherish the wonderful person you are. Your kindness and loyalty have helped me more clearly understand the way God loves me. Your gentle spirit is precious to me.

When the world seems so harsh and unfair at times, you are right there willing to help and encourage me.

I thank God for the loving gift you are to me.

So treat your future marriage like your garden. Be good to your garden. Likewise, be good to your marriage. It takes planning, thoughtfulness, and hard work. A happy marriage can deteriorate rather quickly in 3 or 4 months without nurturing. The same is true of your marriage someday. So try these suggestions and let's see what kind of **“Garden Marriage”** will result. Take care and let us know how you are and how we can encourage you!

Things to share with each other in a spirit of kindness and gentleness. Emphasize empathy:

1. What is your greatest fear right now?
2. “I experience being loved and valued by you when...”
3. What about our relationship do you cherish the most?
4. Is there something about our wedding planning or engagement that frustrates or encourages you?

Chapter 7

Seven Glues

Barbara and I want to get real practical with you. Married couples who come in for biblical counseling have none of the following seven glues. To keep from isolating yourself from your mate when you are married, you need the seven glues that will glue you and your future mate tightly together. Couples with teachable and humble hearts who practice these disciplines **do not break up**. They have disciplined themselves in obedient surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. They have chosen to hold fast together and let nothing get in-between them. Nothing!

First Glue-

Hold Hands Everywhere

Some people think this concept is shallow and silly. It does not matter what they think. It works! We teach couples to hold hands when walking, shopping, and sitting in church, even attending funerals! Remember God has called you and your mate to be as one. Show it. Some folks give Barbara and me a second glance at the grocery store. We keep reminding ourselves that not only is this good for our marriage but on-looking couples might start holding hands as well. We are learning that leadership is modeling and modeling is everything. A few years ago, Barbara and I were near the front row participating in our church's worship service. We almost always hold hands and when some of our children would sit with us, we made sure that Barbara and I were together, side by side.

This particular Sunday after the service was over, a young teenage girl about 16 came over to us and said something that quite honestly we did not expect. "You don't know me," she said, "but I have been watching you two from a distance for many weeks now. I hardly know anything about you except for one thing: Someday when I have a husband, I want a marriage just like yours!" Barbara and I were both humbled and grateful to God that He had burdened our hearts to hold hands and hold fast our love for God and, thus, for each other.

When you hold hands, you are telling the world:

- You are in love.
- God was right in bringing you two together.
- You are fulfilling God's plan by filling each other's gaps. You need each other's strengths and weaknesses.
- You want to honor God by your commitment to each other.

Ecclesiastes 4:9,10 reads, “*Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!*”

Second Glue-

Same Bed Time

Obviously, this is something to aim for after you are married. One of the questions we ask married couples the first or second counseling visit is, “Do you both go to bed together at the same time?” One mate for a host of reasons is usually dead exhausted at 8:00 PM. They have been with takers all day long and their adrenaline reserves are utterly depleted. The other mate tends to look forward to the later hours. Perhaps he is a night owl, likes to unwind in front of the TV with his remote securely in his hand.

We have found that married couples care for each other better and are less likely to get involved in sin via the movie channels or the Internet when they go to bed together. We have also found that nothing good happens after midnight. With the average person needing somewhere between 7 and 8 hours of sleep per night, going to bed together at a reasonable agreed upon hour works best. If one wants to sleep right away but the other needs to unwind, make use of such things as earplugs, sleep eye masks, and small, clip on reading lights. Remember if the devil has a middle name it would probably be “Isolation”. Going to bed together at the same time promotes oneness, togetherness, and marital love.

Third Glue

Cuddle-pray at Bedtime

Couples that sincerely pray to the Lord out loud together on a daily basis remain strong in their love for God and each other and they finish well in life. Barbara and I strongly recommend that you begin this practice of praying out loud together while you are engaged. Then by the time you get married, it will be a discipline already established. Our experience has shown that about 95% of Christian couples do not pray together out loud on a regular basis. After you are married,

it is good to pray out loud together during meals at home and at restaurants. It is also wonderful to pray with your children at bedtime.

The kind of praying that we see lacking in Christian marriages is where the husband and wife privately pray together out loud on a daily basis away from the dinner table, perhaps in their own bedroom, in the car, or while taking a walk outside.

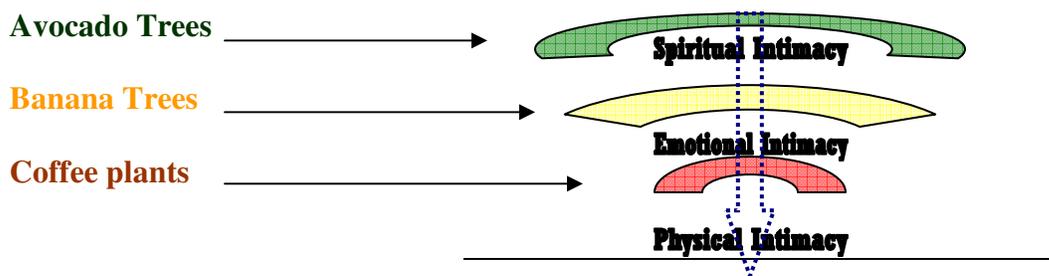
In Christian marriage, the most important level of intimacy is your **prayer life** with God and your mate. Barbara and I model and teach bedtime **cuddle-praying** for those couples already married. We start out in the middle of our queen-sized bed. I wrap my arms around my lovely wife, Barbara, and then I pray a short prayer to the Lord out loud something like, “*Lord, thanks for this day and your blessings. Please watch over us, our home, and our kids and their homes. Thanks for Barbara and please bless her tonight.*”

Barbara then prays out loud something like, “*Well Lord, please give us good rest, we’re beat. Help us to shine your truth and love to each other, our family, and to everyone. Watch over Jim and his doctor’s appointment tomorrow. Please also encourage Mike and Carol since Mike just lost his job*”. Some nights the prayers are much shorter if we are both exhausted. After this short prayer, and a few minutes of just holding one another, I roll over on my left side and she usually holds me. Eventually we separate to our respective sides of the bed. We have missed a few nights and sometimes only one person prays. Ninety percent of the time, we both pray out loud in **cuddle-praying**.

Intimacy in marriage is like the three interdependent layers of rain forest foliage. Imagine for a moment you are in one of the lushest rain forests in existence. In studying the various layers of forest foliage, you discover three canopies of plant life. You will commonly find the tall **avocado** trees providing cover at the top, **essential** in distributing rain and sunlight to the lower two levels. At the middle level you might find the shorter **banana** trees designed by God to provide the right covering for the lowest level. On the floor of this amazingly fertile place, you can find coffee plants growing providing rich **coffee** beans.

The three levels of rain forest are unique and interdependent. If the top canopy is destroyed, the remaining ecosystem will be severely stressed and much life will perish. The pounding sunlight will destroy the middle and lower levels. The direct, torrential rains would also cause massive erosion and much of this beautiful habitat would be lost.

Often if there is a deficiency or problem at the ground level, then just look up, way up. The reason for the ground problem may very well be found by studying the top level.



Intimacy in marriage has everything to do with prayer.

The highest level of intimacy established in marriage is “spiritual intimacy”. This is why Satan attacks first and foremost at this level. He knows that if a Christian married couple prays out loud together, much of his wicked efforts will fail. He and his demons especially hate it and tremble when you pray **out loud**. He cannot read your mind but he has to listen to your voice. If you are drifting from your Lord, you will find it difficult to pray out loud with your mate.

Ephesians 4:26,27: reads, *“In your anger do not sin’: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.”* If you go to bed angry, he won’t have to hear you two praying out loud to the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, the Lord Jesus. If this does not happen, then while you slumber, the devil, will be establishing strongholds of wickedness. Then he will move in to further isolate you two.

The next or middle level of marital intimacy is “emotional intimacy”. If you are humble and honest before God, possessing a clean, forgiving heart, God will begin to bless your emotional relationship with you and your mate. One rule Barbara and I live by is the **Ten Minute Tiff Rule**. When you have a spat or heated disagreement, agree with God as your witness to come together and resolve the tiff and forgive or ask forgiveness within 10 minutes. Sometimes you need a little time to cool down, collect yourself, and experience the gentle nudge of your loving Heavenly Father. Ten minutes is plenty of time to deal with it and get over it.

Remember, you are on the same team! Some couples have never resolved or reconciled their tiffs. We met with one wife recently who slept in a separate room for a week because she and her husband were still stewing in the juices of grudge holding, resentment, and unforgiveness. It is time to choose to no longer be offended!

Ephesians 4:29-32 reads, *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

The final level of marital intimacy is **“physical intimacy”**. When you and your mate unconditionally give yourself to one another and bless one another in this way, God is pleased and glorified. Barbara and I spend almost no counseling time on sexual intimacy. Why? It is because sexual intimacy is just like the ground level of the rain forest. When you address the problems in the top and middle levels, the ground level issues become resolved.

As you bless one another during intimacy, your act is a testimony of how good God is to you. Your sexual intimacy is a way of saying “Thank you.” to God. As a couple, frequently, act out your gratitude to God.

Fourth Glue

Insist on the Weekly Date

This Glue is plain and simple. Always plan and have your weekly date. Barbara and I on Fridays will often schedule in a lunch at Moy’s Chinese restaurant in Elkhorn. We take a good hour and sometimes an hour and a half to eat, relax, and unwind from the intense pressures of counseling and ministry. We always hold hands. We laugh and chat with the wait staff.

We guard this time. Only required trips, illness, or emergencies will keep us from our special time together. If Friday is a wash, then we pick Thursday or even Saturday AM to go out and get some good, hot coffee, bacon, eggs, hash browns, and toast or biscuits. Stop drooling and make plans. If you do not make such plans and guard them, the urgency of other good activities and demands will rob you. In time you will drift apart.

If nothing is planned, well, guess what results.

We met one struggling couple with 5 children. During 17 years of marriage since their brief honeymoon, they had not scheduled any sort of over night get away for just the two of them. They were good people and wonderful parents but they were toast! They were exhausted and snipping at one another. You see, because of their love for their kids, they became what we call the “**Parent-Centered Marriage**”. We train couples to be “**Marriage-Centered Parents**”.

What often happens over the years is Dad gets caught up in his work and hobbies while Mom pours her life into her beloved children. The job and the kids get most of the attention but the marriage slowly dissolves. When the kids all finally leave the nest, Mom and Dad look at each other as strangers. Divorce often results. You must decide upon a stubborn unyielding resolve to become Marriage-Centered. You will most likely receive flak from some family members and maybe even from some people in your church. They may think you are being selfish or egotistical. Take it like good soldiers. God will be very pleased and He will bless you down the road. If you do not cultivate and tend to your marriage like good gardeners, weeds of isolation, disinterest, and affairs usually result.

Fifth Glue

Return Blessings

Nothing is more repulsive to one's flesh than to show kindness and favor toward someone who has hurt or betrayed you. This fifth Glue is just as difficult as the third Glue: **Cuddle-praying**. Many movies have the theme of revenge. Payback is a central theme in most cultures. Unfortunately it is also a favorite pastime in marriage.

God's Word is quite clear. Read what the Apostle Peter wrote:

"Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing." (I Peter 3:8,9)

Note the following:

- You were called or commanded to return blessings. God has ordered you!
- He wants you to inherit blessings, not curses. Disobedience brings curses. Obedience brings blessings. It is your choice. What do you want?

Some mates return insults immediately with yelling, door slamming, throwing things, name calling, and even hitting which is illegal and a criminal offense. Immediate insults also include giving the "silent treatment" or taking off to go to a bar or on a spending spree.

Other mates return insults in a quiet, delayed manner. They will appear forgiving, yet a week, or even a month later, they might inflict their strike when least expected. "Honey, I am sorry that you will need to cancel your hunting trip, but I am just not feeling very well..." Nice effect! It always boils down to this:

Will you obey God or your flesh?

Let us say your husband comes home exhausted and preoccupied with struggles at work. He more or less ignores you, and he plops down in front of the T.V.. You could say to yourself, "Well, bucko, two can play this game!" or you can obey God and receive a blessing later by doing a quiet, loving, and an undeserved act of kindness. This might look like, "Honey, I bet your day was draining and difficult. Here is your favorite soda and some chips. Sit up a bit and I

will rub your shoulders to help you relax.” Now don’t let your motive be to get a blessing back from him. Rather seek only to please God. Remember, He promises you will inherit a blessing.

Learn to bless your mate. Show grace and mercy to your mate. Remember that grace is giving to someone that which he or she does not deserve and mercy is withholding that which he or she does deserve.

Say you have a nice boat that you are securing in the water to a sturdy pier. If you only tie one end of the boat to the pier, the other end will probably be tossed around by the wind and waves. It is always best to tie both ends of the boat securely.

Here is a quick exercise:

Place your fiancé directly in front of you. Now apart from Jesus, you know what he deserves! But you, by a choice of the will, bless him with your **left hand on his right shoulder**. Think of this as issuing the **same grace** that God issues to you. You are going to give to him that which he does not deserve and can never earn such as affirmation, kindness, forgiveness, and support.

Now, you further bless him by placing your **right hand on his left shoulder**. Think of this as issuing the **same mercy** that God issues to you. By a sacrificial act of your will (faith), choose to withhold from him that which he does deserve apart from Christ such as rejection, criticism, or a cold shoulder. You deserved Hell. Jesus gave you Heaven instead. Do the same for your mate.

Do now what comes natural. Use both arms and slowly pull him close and hold him safe and secure. Tell him how much you love him. After doing this, simply reverse roles and have your fiancé initiate the **“blessing Glues”** of grace and mercy. This shows how God loves you and how you must love each other.

The worst thing a couple can do is leave conflicts unresolved. Decide right now that no sun will ever set on your unresolved conflicts and anger. We recommend a three step approach in dealing with your conflicts. As soon as God convicts you (gets through your tough hide of pride), do three things:

- **Pursue** the offended person.
- **Admit** your failure.
- **Request** their forgiveness.

The sweetest, yet rare occurrence is when both of you meet each other mid way in the hall as a result of God’s conviction upon your own heart. Wow! That would be cool! If both your hearts are soft toward God and each other, God will reinstate intimacy.

Sixth Glue

Establish Talk Times

It is vital to establish regular, disciplined talk times during your engagement. Gearing up for your wedding and for your marriage is both fun and highly stressful. For some couples, once a week will do. Others need a sharing debriefing time every day. One married couple we know lights a candle and takes the phone off the hook for 10 minutes every eve when both get home from their daily activities. Others go for walks or lunch or breakfast dates. These talk times like the weekly date must be guarded jealously and insisted upon.

One older couple that had 12 children knew they would not survive without close, loving, honest, and supportive communication. Each evening when both returned from their jobs, they would light a candle and place it on the kitchen table. The kids playing rambunctiously in the background knew that this was “Mom and Dad’s Time” and they had better respect it. This husband and wife just took turns sharing their **Low Point** and then their **High Point** of the day respectively. While the one was sharing, the other just listened and comforted and affirmed. They did not try to fix one another or correct one another. They just loved through quiet, tender listening.

During one of these daily talk times, a couple of the kids upstairs started yelling and making all kinds of racket. Mother stopped the talk time session for just a second and she called out to them, “Is there any blood?” There was no answer, so she and her husband continued their talk time. After all, this was “their” time!

Suggested Talk Time Questions and Ideas

Remember to listen more, and talk less.

God gave you two ears and one mouth.

1. Thinking back, what was the most uplifting, memorable time of our relationship?
2. When do you feel loved, valued, or respected by me the most?
3. What has been the most treasured gift that I have given you and why?
4. If there is one thing that I do, a priority that I uphold, or an attitude I express for which you are thankful or proud, what is it?
5. What is your greatest wish, dream, or hope?
6. What is your deepest fear or worry?
7. Please share with me your greatest need right now.
8. What, could I do to be more considerate so that you would feel more loved, valued or listened to especially now during our engagement?
9. What area of my life do you see as needing work?
10. What is one thing you'd want God to do for our friendship and relationship?
11. Share one thing that is draining, bothering, frustrating, or discouraging you.
12. Share one thing that is bringing you hope, fulfillment, and joy.
13. Share one thing that you are wishing for, dreaming for, or praying for.
14. What was the most discouraging thing (low point) about your day?
15. What was the most encouraging thing (high point) about your day?

Seventh Glue-

Serve in Church Together

Remember, when God has you married, then He intends to shine His truth and love to others through the oneness and togetherness of your marriage. If you are living together and unmarried, this is actually a curse against the Gospel of the Lord. He cannot and will not shine His love and truth through sin. Then the devil's plans are further enhanced. If you are living together, confess this as sin against God and His plans to redeem the lost. Then repent by moving out and remaining pure and holy in heart and action.

Barbara and I encourage you, if possible, to not just go to church together, but also to serve together. We know in some cases this will be difficult but we find it a great way to be together and to be a witness as a team. We recommend you serve God together just like you should take vacations together and sleep in the same bed together.

We are all for some time away from each other like ladies night out or the men going golfing. What is frustrating to us is to see a tired married couple barely getting any quality time together all week and then we separate them even further when they get to church.

If possible, we urge you to serve as a team. If I am asked to teach a class, Barbara will be there in the front row praying for me and encouraging me onward. I will have her speak now and then as well. Later on in the year, if the church asks her to teach the Kindergarten class, she will teach and I will be her assistant.

We know there are exceptions but we believe you should strive to serve together. This way you grow in love and strength being with each other and others will see Christ's love and kindness in your united service. We trust that God will bless you as you implement these Glues into your marriage.

Chapter 8

Manage the Ramp Up to your Wedding Day

Planning a wedding day is fun, yes, but takes an incredible amount of work. Countless decisions need to be made and thousands of details need to be attended to. All these tasks need attention while also maintaining relationships, your job, and your sanity. We have some suggestions.

The best thing to remember is to stay organized. Keep all books, papers, and brochures in one place. Priorities are important. Keep a wedding notebook and a detailed calendar where you can put everything in writing. I suggest you keep these near your Bible and devotional for the day. Don't assume you will remember anything. There may be important Scripture references or songs that come to mind that will slip away without written reference.

Keep careful watch over the budget. Determine who pays for what and the amount available to spend. Do not plan on using your wedding gift money that people give you in envelopes at the reception to pay off your wedding expenses. That is a bad plan. Remember, there is life after the wedding, so don't go into debt over one celebration day.

Enlist help from a few, close, responsible friends. **You don't want to be in charge of anything on your wedding day.** You do not want to be exhausted or stressed out so that you cannot enjoy the occasion. Relax and trust them to carry out your orders and wishes.

Select your wedding party somewhere between six months and one year prior to your wedding. When coming up with your guest list of whom you will be mailing invitations to, be sure to consider a few important things. You and your fiancé need to be sensitive to each other and look out for one another. Make sure you are both comfortable with the people who will be attending the wedding. If you are thinking of a larger wedding or one that is smaller, we recommend going with the smaller version.

Visit and reserve your ceremony location and your reception location. This should be done in a timely manner since date availabilities fill up fast. The earlier you get this done, the better. If possible, keep these two locations fairly close in proximity. Otherwise, those attending the ceremony will be stressed. Get in writing the cost and the hours you have the place reserved. Be sure to include an **easy to read map** of how to get to the ceremony and the reception in your invitation mailing. This is essential!

We experienced a small nightmare with one of our daughters. The reception was held in a beautiful, old world river mansion. It was around 8:45 PM and the meal was over. The dancing was about to begin. Just then, the manager of the place leaned over to us and whispered, "You know, if the party lasts beyond 9:00 PM, I will need a check for \$150.00 for each additional hour." Trust us, that is not something you want to hear! We thought we had the place the entire evening. Jim was blowing out table candles with guests still sitting at their tables. It was sort of funny, actually. We allowed our daughter and her new husband one fine dance together, and then we humbly said, "Good bye, thanks for coming!" to everyone. Ah, wedding memories!

Reserve the minister. Don't forget honorariums. Be sure to secure your music. Be aware that some churches won't allow ceremonies for non-members. **Select and hire a D. J. or band for your reception.** Interview them and be specific about the songs to be played. Music for the ceremony usually must be approved by the attending minister or sometimes by church policy.

A wedding that crisply starts on time and ends at a reasonable time, will be better for all. Less time is better than more time for the ceremony.

Get competent, biblical marriage coaching and training. In addition to reading this material or listening to the audio version, it is imperative to meet with a pastor or Christian counselor at least 5 or 6 times. We heartily recommend you go through **Home to Home: Passing on Five Cornerstones of Christian Marriage**, which is our marriage prep and marriage enrichment material. Ordering information is on the last page of this book. The benefits of **Home to Home** are:

1. You get to spend time individually with the Lord and His Word.
2. You also get to interact with and learn to pray with your fiancé.
3. As you meditate on these Five Cornerstones, you will forge together the nonnegotiable cornerstones of your relationship both now and after you are married. The Five Cornerstones are:

- **Loving Faithfulness**
- **Reverence**
- **Understanding**
- **Purpose**
- **Nurturing**

Select invitations and response cards. Keep a close tally for a final number attending at the reception.

Have several extra pairs of black socks for those groomsmen who may forget to bring them. Also be sure the wedding party does not lock their knees while standing near the altar. Otherwise, **T-I-M-B-E-R!**

Select your photographer. Choose one with proven reliability. Don't just see web sites with photos, but, rather talk with some people who are pleased with his or her work. Find out for sure who will be taking the photos / video. You don't want some assistant or college intern showing up on your wedding day to do the photos when you expected the key photographer! Be sure to set 'in cement' the cost. Also, specifically include special pictures in special settings you want. This may be in addition to what the photographer wants to take. Get all of this nailed down in writing before hand. Surprises on your wedding day are not fun. Make sure there is a firm deadline on when you will receive your finished pictures. If the deadline is not met, their fee should be reduced accordingly.

Register for gifts together at the stores of your choice. This is a good idea in order to avoid getting duplicate gifts. Remember to record this 'gift registry' information on your invitation. Don't forget to purchase gifts for your attendants while you both are out shopping together.

Choose colors and gowns with *all* the girls. Ladies have different body types. Be sensitive and make sure everyone agrees. You, the bride, make the final decisions, of course, but just be sensitive. A dress that looks great on one bridesmaid may look horrible on another. Final fittings should be no later than **one month** before the ceremony in case there are mistakes to contend with. Mistakes do happen so prior planning early will pay off. I went to pick up my gown for my daughter's wedding and it was two inches too short! I had to run out and get flat shoes instead of the ones with heels. It is OK to politely check their work. Don't just take their word for it. A good principle to follow is this:

People do what you inspect...not what you expect.

Get your marriage license at least one month prior to your wedding. Do not forget this legal necessity! One of our daughters did!

Distribute a list of important names and cell phone numbers to key people before the wedding so emergencies can be dealt with quickly.

Have a close confidant attend to all the little details. One bride had nice cheese slices at her reception but forgot to provide crackers to put the cheese on. Let someone else worry about such matters.

Brides, get your hair done first and done early. One bride had the bridesmaids staying at her parent's home. She graciously let them all take their showers first and get their hair styled in front of the bathroom mirror first. You guessed it. The bride never had time to do either.

Here are some good reminders as you plan your wedding. It is wise to do or say something during your reception to honor your parents. This will definitely please the Lord. Exodus 20:12 says,

"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you."

Please take this command seriously. God does. Another bit of wisdom is if your events are outside, be sure you have an **inclement weather plan** because if it might rain, it probably will. One major complaint that many guests have toward some of the weddings they attend is having to wait an hour or even two hours at the reception before they can eat. This, of course, is due to having to wait until the photographer is finished. Come up with a plan so the guests can eat fairly soon after they arrive at the reception.

Finally, **THE CAKE!** Be sure you, your fiancé and perhaps another trusted person make cake visiting appointments with credible, reputable cake makers. You need to actually go there and taste samples of the **cakes** and different **frostings**. Don't order it from a photo or what is based on what someone tells you. One major complaint guests have regarding the cake is that it just tastes awful! If it passes the "Wow! This sure is yummy!" test with your three cake and frosting testers, chances are your guests will love it as well. Also be sure that the amount of cake slices your expected cake is to produce will more than feed hungry guests. The truth is that most

guests live for really good wedding cake. It literally makes their day! Be sure to have a pre-appointed person who knows how to divvy out correct size portions. The Mother of the Bride should never be chosen for this task.

Take frequent breaks from all this planning that is on your mind. It's easy to get so obsessed with the wedding that you forget to enjoy friends, movies, sports, a good book, or whatever you do to unwind. If you are too stressed out, you will not be able to relax and make wise decisions. You may say and do things out of character that will hurt those closest to you. You may be easily swayed by people who do not understand you nor have your best interests at heart. You will not be able to be still and hear the direction from the Lord for your special day.

Focus on the things you are grateful for. Joy, contentment, and peace will overtake you and you will regain your perspective. List all the things that are right and good and all the people you are thankful for. Recall the favorite experiences you have had in your life. Celebrate all the great reasons you fell in love with your betrothed. Thank God for the wisdom He has taught you through your favorite Scripture verses.

If something does not go according to plans, let it go and chalk it up to a unique memory characteristic to your wedding alone. You need to reserve energy and excitement for your honeymoon. Too many couples experience exhaustion and even illness during the days immediately following their wedding. We know of couples who have spent days on medication unable to enjoy the lovely accommodations and surrounding countryside because of poor wedding planning and wedding management. Avoid the disappointment! So enjoy this process of planning and looking forward to your big day. Hopefully, this information will help.

Chapter 9

What is Best for your Upcoming Marriage will be Best for your Family, In-laws, Church, Work, and Community.

Trying to blend two families is like putting rocks and a wet towel in a blender, turning it on, and expecting God to create a delicious smoothie. Barbara had three kids and I had four! The kid's ages ranged from 10 to 18. We were sort of the Brady Bunch on steroids! My first wife had passed away from cancer and Barbara's first husband divorced her for other women. Now all nine of us were being brought together. At times, everything seemed peaceful. Other times, it seemed like a three ring circus. Still other times we thought we were fighting in the Civil War! The Grunseth's versus the Benson's, "Us" verses "Them".

This turf mentality, very common in blending families, can also occur in traditional, intact families. Sometimes this battle of the blending family involves well meaning, yet intrusive, over controlling, in-laws trying to heavily influence the way you should be raising your children. Inflicting guilt upon you for not going to their home for holidays as frequently as you go to "the other grandparents" is common. Your in-laws may demand action or require explanations for the decisions you make that affect their lives.

1st Principle: You don't need to give anyone an explanation for the decisions you, as a couple, make.

If, once you are married, you and your mate have discussed and prayed about what your plans are for the holidays, lovingly and graciously inform your extended families. If any of them demands an explanation, they never respected your decision in the first place.

It takes humble, gracious guts to establish this respect boundary! The in-laws may not like this at first. Some may try to punish or emotionally hook you and make you feel guilty. Do not give in to this self-focused tactic. If they are going to have a relationship with you, they will learn to respect you and the integrity of your marriage and family minus explanations. This actually is honoring your mother and your father. You are now living with the Lord Jesus as your Authority, not them. If they do not revere the Lord and His Word, the Bible, they may never get it. At least they will see Scripture being esteemed in your marriage.

Beware! A common and serious problem in younger couples is when the husband's parents wield powerful influence over him. What happens is his young wife feels insecure and not protected. She feels she is in competition for love and loyalty with her husband's parents. The parents begin to subtly marginalize her. She gradually begins to experience being cherished less and less by her husband. He is also frustrated and torn. He loves his wife but he does not wish to displease or hurt his parents. He is in the middle of a tug of war battle between loyalty toward his parents and love for his wife.

Many marriages break up over this dangerous threat to marital unity and oneness. In this case, the husband **must** take action. He **must** defend his beloved wife, cherish her, and most

likely he will have to respectfully confront his parents. For me, this was the hardest thing I had to do while I was in my late 20's. My emotional pain was crushing me. I was torn and in the middle.

I learned from Scripture and Bible study groups that when I got married to my first wife, I became one flesh with her. I was not one flesh with parents or children or my brother. God had called me to humble myself and rise up to the occasion and protect and cherish my wife. If I had not done this, my first marriage probably would not have made it. Genesis 2:22-24 says it loud and clear:

"Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called 'woman', for she was taken out of man.' For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

For those of you who have ex-mates, if you are remarrying, not only are you not one flesh with your ex, but that in a firm and respectful way, you must make it absolutely clear to any and all that you will be only and totally one flesh with your new mate! Your new marriage will almost assuredly be tested. Stand firm on these truths. Men, your future wife's greatest need is to experience being **safe** and **cherished**. Ladies, your future husbands' greatest need is to experience **respect** and **affirmation**. Do not let your past threaten your present and thus your future!

2nd Principle: Never let your children get in between you and your mate.

For many of you, you have not been married before and you have no children. But for some of you, your fiancé may already have one or more children. If you will have pre-adolescent children and teenagers under your roof, they can become masters of pitting one parent against the other. Some will become very adept at knowing when, where, and how to push just the right buttons in you. If you do not have this Principle strongly set in place, contention, rage, chaos, and depression will surface in family members. Left unchecked, these emotionally manipulative kids will drive a wedge in between you and your future mate.

Some of the more contentious children will end up causing great pain and isolation in their parent's marriage. This usually is not their intent because they simply want what they want so they test the boundaries set for them. This is quite normal. Allowing these wonderful kids to pit one parent against the other is divisive and destructive.

Going against your mate and giving in to your demanding or contending adolescent will severely hurt your marriage solidarity. It will also communicate to your kids you really do not love or respect them or each other. Using the sports analogy, your kids need to know that you and your mate were the same team jersey!

We recommend letting your teen know that you understand their request and that you and your husband/wife will go to your room together and privately discuss the request and pray about it. After some sort of unity is attained, you will come back to your teen and let them know what your unified decision is...and that it is final. If discipline is needed, let your teen know you and

your husband/wife will pray at bed time together. In the morning, “after the silt settles”, you will let them know what your unified decision is. They probably won’t like this, but in the long run two things will occur:

- They will experience being loved and respected.
- They will be secure knowing their mom and dad will never break up.

Decide that as long as both you and your mate have breath and a heart beat that no matter what, you will pass all decisions through the question-filter of **“Is this best for our marriage?”**

“Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.” (Matthew 19:6 NLT)

“Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain.” (Psalm 127:1a)

Chapter 10

The Devil's Plan for your Engagement

After years of mentoring couples, we find many are focusing on what God has provided them instead of focusing on the One who provides. We try to help them first look to God so they can properly see their mate.

Here is the dilemma. You marry the love of your life. You step down off the marriage altar and begin to zero in on your mate. Naturally, over time, you begin to focus on his or her faults, weaknesses, and idiosyncrasies.

Subtly, you will begin to reject your mate and require them to measure up to some set of standards. You subconsciously demand that they improve and meet your needs. Your mate feels he or she will never measure up to your performance-based requirements. You both will drift and isolate from each other. One or both of you will begin to look for someone else who will treasure you, respect you, or love you the way you feel you deserve.

When this happens, you are exactly where the devil, the enemy of your soul and marriage, wants you. **He gets you to focus on the provision rather than on the Provider.** He moves in for the kill: Affairs, broken vows, divorce, and long term pain. If there are children, they will rarely fully recover.

To understand this better, take a look at the “first couple”, Adam and Eve in the Bible’s first book Genesis, Chapter 2.

*“18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. **I will make a helper suitable for him.**"*

19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name.

20 So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found.

21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh.

*22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, **and he brought her to the man.***

23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."” (Bold added)

Instead of being absolutely thrilled with God’s handcrafted gift, Eve, can you imagine Adam looking at Eve for the first time and blurting out, “Hey God! Do you have anything back

in the warehouse with blond hair, perhaps something with a better personality? And, that nose...that has to change!”

How do you think Eve, God’s fashioned gift, would have felt? Worse yet, how do you think God the Provider and Fashioner would have felt?

I think the reason Adam did not reject Eve was he fully depended on his Heavenly Father to know what was best for him, and rested in that trust. He focused on the Provider and not the provision. He kept his focus upward.

Focus on the Provider and Not on the Provision

If you want God’s peace, and joy to be present in your home, you need to earnestly grab hold of this truth. Look at your mate and gladly welcome and receive him or her as God’s ordained, well-fashioned gift for you. You even need his or her weaknesses! When both of you do this by faith, God delights in you. Each of you chooses full acceptance with no hint of rejection. To hint rejection or require performance improvement is to slap God in the face. Couples that do that always reap the consequences.

So remember, God’s plan for your engagement is to focus on the Lord Jesus who provided you with your fiancé. The minute you begin to take your eyes off of Jesus is the minute the devil gets a toe hold, then a foot hold, and finally a strong hold. When you lower your eyes from Heaven to earth, you forget that it was Jesus who fashioned and prepared just the right person for you to marry. He or she is God’s choice for you, strengths **and weaknesses included!** Taking your eyes off Jesus, the Provider, will result in you rejecting your loved one. The battle lines must be drawn. You must take a stand on this principle.

Chapter 11

Learn to Resolve Conflict before you Reach the Altar

How do you resolve conflict? How do you settle fights, disagreements, and tiffs? From over 30 years of helping marriages and families, it is clear that one thing is true! **The majority of marriages today never fully resolve conflict.** Is it any wonder why 50% of marriages break up!

Being a rather sinful person and then being married to a rather sinful person is hard enough when both love the Lord. It is nearly impossible to survive and thrive in marriage if one or both marital partners are not following and loving Jesus and His Word.

The good news is this: The only true and lasting way to resolve inevitable conflict in your marriage is to do so **in the Spirit** instead of in the flesh. As a husband or wife operating in the flesh, you are willfully choosing to rebel against Jesus and His Word. You are choosing to live and respond selfishly and pridefully. You will slowly drift apart from your mate and slip into the fog of isolation. This, of course, will then lead to the death of your once loving, tender, and close relationship.

You are in the Spirit as a believer in Christ first only if you have called upon the Lord Jesus to save you from your sin and if you have humbly and gratefully received Him as your own personal Lord and Savior. Then once you have the Spirit of Jesus living in you, then you must consciously choose to surrender moment by moment to the freeing, joyful Lordship of Jesus Christ and his Word, the Bible. This takes humility and guts.

You are saved only once. But there are many fillings of the Spirit. What is required here is walking by faith. The definition of faith is this:

“Choosing to live as though the Bible is true, regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.” {Life Builders, CCC}

Seth and Jennie came to our home for marital counseling. They were hurting, angry, and ready to split up. He was in the battle of his life over alcohol abuse and she was full of pride and ready to divorce. What a mess! We spent many sessions together. It did not seem like we were getting anywhere until we handed out a one page sheet dealing with resolving conflict. For some reason known only to God, they were stopped dead in their tracks! A wave of humility and tenderness came over them. Tears and repentance followed.

We shared with them that the way in which they resolve their conflict will either **honor or dishonor God**. We shared with them that conflict is inevitable. We shared with them that as followers of Christ and lovers of His Word, the Bible, we have a choice. We will either respond to conflict in our **flesh** or in submissive obedience to the **Spirit**.

Take some time to ponder each of the **Flesh** responses and the corresponding **Spirit** responses.

Please release your pain, your grudges, your rejection, your wounds, your failures, and your past to Jesus. Perhaps go over these one by one with your fiancé. Jesus is waiting to heal and help! He will strengthen you.

Flesh

My rights!
I'm bitter!
Defend my view!
Yell, attack, belittle!
Serve me!
I'm right!
You're wrong!
I'll wait!
I must win!
You're just like your _____!
You always! You never!
Quick to anger! Cyanide mouth!
Leave me alone! {door slam shut!}
Become defensive, blowfish-like!
Hit, claw, slap, punch, threaten,
destroy, swear at, call names, toss,
shame, mock, leave, silence, glare
eyes, jut lower jaw, drive to mama's,
get drunk, Go to __ LL!
You're to blame!
I don't trust you!
I'm hurting! My past stinks! Shaft!
You're not there for me!
I deserve to be offended!
My emotions dictate my response!

Spirit

I will serve
I release you – go free
I yield to Jesus
Understand your view, empathize
Listen, gentle, few words
Serve mate
You are not my enemy
I'll initiate
Will humble myself unto God
You are more and more like Jesus
We all make mistakes, Honey
Slow to anger – Healing voice
Let's calm down, cool off, and both pray
Remain gentle, kind, soft spoken, quiet heart
Be a blessing
↓
I will own and confess my sin
I will entrust you and us to God
I will choose to give thanks and be content
I thank God for you – I receive you as His gift
I choose to no longer be offended
God's Word dictates my response

Galatians 5: ¹⁶ *So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.* ¹⁷ *For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want.* ¹⁸ *But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law.*

¹⁹ *The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery;* ²⁰ *idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions* ²¹ *and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.*

²² *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,* ²³ *gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.* ²⁴ *Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.*

Chapter 12

HESED your Future Mate No Matter What

In the Old Testament book of Hosea God commands a man to marry and love an unfaithful woman called Gomer. She even became a harlot after their marriage and Hosea has to buy her out of sexual slavery. So much for her keeping her vows! The year was about 710 B.C. and God had called Hosea to be His prophet to the Northern Kingdom known as Israel.

Hosea 3:1-3 says, *The LORD said to me, “Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. **Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes.**” So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley. Then I told her, “You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you.”* (Bold added)

In Hosea 2:19-20, God reveals to us the type of love He has for His children (Israel) and therefore the type of love Hosea is to demonstrate through obedience to God toward the unlovable, wretched Gomer. He was not asked to feel “in love” or to experience romantic warm fuzzies, but rather to show love.

Hosea 2:19-20 reads, *“I will betroth you to me forever; I will betroth you in righteousness and justice, in **love** and compassion. I will betroth you in faithfulness, and you will acknowledge the LORD.”* (Bold added)

This love is the Hebrew word “**hesed**”. Charles Ryrie in the NIV Study Bible (p. 1203) writes, “It means loyal, steadfast, or faithful love and stresses the idea of a belonging together of those involved in the love relationship. Here it connotes God’s faithful love for His unfaithful people.” By Hosea choosing to obey God’s command to unconditionally show mercy, and unwavering commitment to Gomer who did not deserve it, Israel would have a “real life” model of God’s unending, unmerited, unwavering love and mercy toward them.

Likewise, in Psalm 21:6,7, King David writes a powerful message to us:

*“Surely you have granted him eternal blessings and made him glad with the joy of your presence. For the king trusts in the LORD; through the **unfailing love** of the Most High he will not be shaken.”* (Bold added. This is the Hebrew word, “Hesed”)

God’s love will never fail you even when you fail Him. He will never leave or forsake you. You are prone to failure. He is not. You, oh Christian, are the glad recipient of God’s everlasting, unconditional favor and uncondemnable kindness. His “hesed” for

you is because of Him, not you. In His eyes, you are innocent of all charges. You have been washed by the blood of the Lamb. You are holy and precious to Him. Treat your mate the way God treats you.

You are to demonstrate this same “hesed” love toward your mate. The world is watching. The world is searching for evidence that the God of the Bible is real and that His love for His children is unconditional and everlasting. When you honor God and love your future mate as Hosea loved Gomer and as God loves His children, others will be drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ. Souls will be robbed from being sent to Hell, and the numbers in Heaven will increase. Now you know why Satan wants to isolate and destroy your upcoming marriage. People are looking at your relationship to see if Jesus and the Bible are real!

Does the Lord Jesus really satisfy your weary, frustrated, and, at times, wandering soul? Will your marriage be a “satisfied” marriage? Gladly receive God’s hesed and quickly pass this tender, uncompromising love on to your future mate. It is contagious!

May the Lord bless you as you obey Him by coming to the altar of marriage with humble, grateful, and expectant hearts! We are praying God’s best for you!

“I’m Getting Married!”

Freedom Exercise

“I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts.”
(Psalm 119:45)

Your upcoming marriage is being plotted against as you read this. The devil specializes in enslavement. He loves to isolate! He’s got you in his sights. He wants you and your future mate to experience real bondage, shame, and defeat. He is out to destroy you and your home.

Work together through the “**The Three Steps to Freedom**” with your fiancé.

Step #1

Release Your Guilt.

“Devil” means slanderer. Satan is the Accuser of the Brethren. He wants you feeling guilty and condemned all of the time! Satanic guilt starts a **Death Cycle**:

1. You sin, mess up, or just blow it.
2. You condemn yourself. Satan and his demons cheer you on.
3. You then despair and beat yourself up without mercy.
4. You flee, hide, or just give up. Your smile covers your despair. You isolate yourself from your mate only to set yourself up to sin or fail again.
5. This vicious cycle starts all over again.

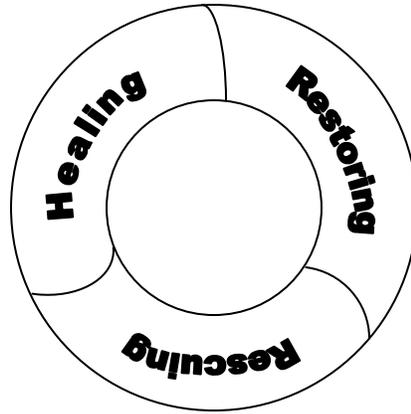
Now when you are truly guilty of sin, the Holy Spirit within you allows you to feel and experience His conviction in order to motivate you to agree with God, turn away from your sin, and fully surrender to His Lordship again. There will be no sweetness in your relationship until you do.

God’s conviction is like a **Life Preserver**:

1. God’s conviction is **RESCUING**.
2. God’s conviction is **RESTORING**.
3. God’s conviction is **HEALING**.

GOD'S CONVICTION: THE WONDERFUL LIFE PRESERVER

(note the drawing below)



As a child of God, picture yourself drowning in a sea of sin, despair, self-examination, or disbelief. Jesus is not on some tower looming over you, looking down at you with piercing, shaming, and condemning eyes. Jesus came to save the world, not condemn it.

Instead, I see Jesus in a sturdy rescue ship. He not only throws you His Life Preserver, but He jumps in after you. Because you know His motive is to save and to care deeply, you will quickly want to receive His help. You are helpless without it. He lifts you up and out. Together read Psalm 40:1-3:

“I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD.”

He takes you to the warmth and safety of His ship of restored fellowship and He puts dry clothes on you, feeds you, and smiles.

This is a picture of a **Life Cycle**:

1. You sin or mess up.
2. You experience God's healing conviction. (John 16:8)
3. Not wanting to choke in the drowning sea any longer than you have to, you quickly cry out to Jesus for help and forgiveness.
4. Jesus is jumping in to rescue and restore you.
5. Instead of hiding, you receive His loving, affirming embrace and remain safe in His care. Fellowship restored; isolation destroyed.

Any remaining guilt you feel apart from the Holy Spirit's conviction is destructive, hurtful, and enslaving! It is not from God.

Take turns with your partner reading out loud the following verses:

- “Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”-- and you forgave the guilt of my sin.”*
(Psalm 32: 5)
- “You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.”*
(Psalm 32:7)
- “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,”*
(Romans 8:1)
- “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”* (1John 1:9)

Individually “√” the “” of the verse that frees your heart up the **most**. Then, together, discuss why you checked your verse.

If you have any unconfessed sin, please privately confess it to the Lord right now.

Step #2

Release Your Burdens.

Do you insist on carrying your own burdens?

The Lord did not design you to carry burdens for too long.

“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” (1Peter 5:7)

The American Heritage Dictionary defines “cast” as:

1. To throw or fling.
2. To turn or direct.
3. To deposit.
4. To release.

Your Heavenly Father reserves the right to carry your burdens. If you have burdens and troubles that are causing you anxiety, please cast them to your Father right now..... He is waiting.

Step #3

Release Others From Your Judgments.

If you are holding grudges, stewing, fretting, or harboring resentment and bitterness toward someone dead or alive, you are in sin, and therefore are in bondage.

If you remain offended by someone's action or attitude toward you, then your heart is filled with judgment. God wants to fill it with mercy.

Take turns reading the following verses out loud with your partner:

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.”
(Luke 6:36-37)

“For the LORD is our judge, the LORD is our lawgiver, the LORD is our king; it is he who will save us.”
(Isaiah 33:22)

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”
(Ephesians 4:32)

When you forgive someone, they don't have to ask to be forgiven or even apologize.

You are to release them from your requirement that they should somehow suffer or pay for the injustice and wounds they caused. You are to agree to endure the injustice, unfairness, and wrongful suffering that they have caused.

Jesus, on the cross, agreed to endure the sin and injustice you inflicted on Him. So you must do likewise to others who have hurt you if you are to call yourself Christian. Let them go free. You must release them from your judgment if you say you love God.

Is there someone – a parent, relative, mate, ex-mate, brother, sister, friend, son, daughter, a boss, your pastor, your church, or yourself – that you need to release from your judgment?

If so, please release them now.

Remember The Rowboats Wave Makers and Wave Calmers

*Taken with permission from Remember the Rowboats: Anchor your Marriage to Christ
Applies to when you are married but learn from them now...before you get to the altar!*

As an engaged couple, it is good to be aware of the sinful patterns of behavior that many people bring with them into their marriage. There is to be no blaming of your parents or your grandparents. Rather, take the time together to study these. If you struggle with any of the first group, talk with your fiancé about them. Be open, honest, and gracious. Ask God to help you become a Wave Calming person by His grace.

Wave Makers are destructive roles that people either assume or adopt in their marriage and family relationships. They are dysfunctional, sinful, and oppose the purposes of God. The devil encourages them.

Wave Calmers are roles pleasing to God. They honor God and His Word. Mates that adopt these are wise, godly, and Spirit-led. They will help fulfill the purposes of God.

Your inclination might be to assign some Wave Makers to your fiancé. This would be to Satan's delight. Please do not do that.

Growth Assignment:

As you read the **Wave Makers** and the **Wave Calmers**, choose one from each category **(circle them)** that speaks to your heart the most. Be prepared to tell why if you are meeting in a small group, class setting, or with your pastor.

Ask only that the Lord examine your heart. Ask Him to use this information in your life in order to serve and love your mate in a more balanced, healthy, and godly manner. (This material is adopted from **Home To Home: Passing On Five Cornerstones of Christian Marriage** by Jim and Barbara Grunseth, published by Campus Crusade for Christ, New Life Resources, Peachtree City, GA)

Wave Makers

1. Too Nice Mate
2. Overprotective, Oversacrificial Mate
3. Nonprotective Mate
4. Present, but Absent Mate
5. Subtle Cyanide Mouth
6. Insult for Insult Mates
7. Emotional Hook Mate
8. Codependent Mate
9. Controlling Mate
10. Two-Faced Mate
11. Shaming Mate
12. Christian Mate Controlled by the Flesh

Wave Calmers

1. Christian Mate Controlled by the Spirit
2. Suffering Mate
3. Parent-Honoring Mates
4. Submission
5. Tough Love
6. Gracing Mate

Wave Makers

1. TOO NICE MATE

This is an overly passive "milk toast" mate who demonstrates a low self-worth by almost always giving in to the whims, desires, and ideas of the other mate.

Example: "John, where would you like to take me out for dinner tonight?" "Well, Gee, Mary, I'll go wherever you want to go." "John, I'd rather have you choose." "Oh Mary, let's go wherever you would be the happiest!" "I think I'm sick to my stomach, John! Let's not go out at all!"

Avoid being a "Too Nice Mate." Demonstrate some backbone once in a while, John. Take the lead a little. Add some mystique and let her know that you are taking her out.

2. OVERPROTECTIVE, OVERSACRIFICIAL MATE

This mate is imbalanced in sacrificing all of his or her needs and desires. This mate is one who goes overboard on protecting his or her mate.

Example: "Tom, let's face it. You don't like to visit my parents. You also don't like me going out for lunch with Karen, my best friend. So I'll tell my parents that we just won't be coming over...hardly ever. And I'll also stop seeing Karen."

"Sandy! You'd love me that much?" "Yes, Tom. Jesus died for me so I'll die socially and emotionally for you..." In the meantime, Tom's selfish irresponsibility is enlarged and several important needs of Sandy's will now go unmet. This will lead to an ingrown, tension-filled relationship that will lead to troubles, burnout, and resentment.

3. NONPROTECTIVE MATE

This mate is imbalanced and lacks the proper self-control to properly protect.

Example: "Ramón, I just can't take it any longer! Every time we go to your parents' home, your mother belittles and embarrasses me right in front of our kids and you! I feel so vulnerable, unprotected, and defenseless. Ramón, you just seem to sit there and let them get away with it. Where is your allegiance to me?"

"Well, Maria, I just don't know what to do. I don't want you feeling threatened and I sure wouldn't want to hurt or offend my parents. They've been so good to us."

Note: If Ramón does not choose to take command and confront his parents in love, his parents will continue to show disrespect toward Maria. Their marriage will be in deep trouble. Ramón is a fence sitter. He needs to be decisive. With little explanation, he needs to respectfully tell his

parents that if such behaviors continue, consequences will follow. If he gets trapped into always having to explain his decisions, his parents will be able to control him from a distance. Ramón does not need to give explanations. He simply needs to lead and protect his lady, his wife.

4. PRESENT, BUT ABSENT MATE

This mate may be home near the family but is certainly not "with" the family. His mind is constantly on work, office drama, his own sagging self-image, church responsibilities, phone calls to return, or the meeting tomorrow.

Perhaps he has become "one" with the personal computer, video games, or the couch as in COUCH POTATO, with attention to the "one-eyed Trojan Horse," THE TV. This mate may feel that he deserves all these breaks today while, in reality, he is carrying on an affair with the above mentioned activities.

He actually says, "Ah...see, Martha! I didn't bring any work home tonight from the office!" The problem is that he brought home his "mental" briefcase.

5. SUBTLE CYANIDE MOUTH

This mate's words produce discouragement, despair, and blame. Her words cut instead of heal. She uses words that bring down instead of lift up. She exercises her mouth to try to catch others doing something wrong instead of catching them doing something right, even partially right.

She nags and loves to use "always" and "never." "YOU ALWAYS...!" or "YOU NEVER...!" She thinks she is good at telling someone the truth. Often, though, she is giving "piercing, truthful" feedback without love. She thinks she is right because she is telling a truth the person deserves or needs to hear.

If you have to correct, reprove, or rebuke someone, be sure to give your message enveloped in loving kindness. Timing, respect, and understanding are everything. Ask yourself if your goal is to "put down" or "build up."

6. INSULT FOR INSULT MATES

These mates were probably raised in homes where family members subconsciously returned disrespect and insults to each other as a habitual way of life.

When one mate insults, belittles, or degrades, it becomes a natural, carnal reflex for the receiving mate to send back a similar insult, usually one that will inflict the most pain and damage. This destructive cycle can continue on for years and can be passed on through future generations.

We see this on TV shows and in world news every day: Someone treads on your turf so you tread on theirs! After all, they deserve it. Right? Revenge has become the international past time. Just take a

look at what is going on in the Middle East!

Example: Joe says to Jane, "Thanks a lot! You're never interested in the pressures I'm facing at work! All you want me around for is to get a bunch of things on your 'TO DO' list done."

Jane, an "insult for insult" mate like Joe, might respond in many ways, two of which are:

Instant Insult Return

She might play the "silent" game awhile to punish Joe, or flee to another room to pout. She might hurl back an insult like, "Well! All you ever do is work, work, work! You don't care about me! You're married to your job! You're just like your father, Bill! I think I'll just call you 'Bill' from now on! Bill!!!"

Delayed Insult Return

Jane says to herself as she plots, "I'll be nice and forgiving to him now, but the next time he wants to get romantic, I'll put him in his place!"

She further plots in her mind, "Ah ha! He wants to visit his brother next weekend. Well, I'll be nice until the day we are to go and then I'll tell him I don't want to go, or that I'm not feeling well, or whatever, to get him back for what he said! He'll think twice about insulting me next time!" "Insult for Insult" mates need to ask God to reveal the sin in their hearts such as unforgiveness, resentment, and bitterness.

Returning insults is a part of the devil's plan to isolate and destroy, creating a deep wedge in a couple's relationship. If this "Insult for Insult" cycle continues, the relationship will spiral down to destruction. Joe and Jane need to confess their self-centeredness to God and to one another.

The Lord desires us to receive our mates unconditionally and choose to return undeserved blessings, even when we don't feel like it. When this is done God will be honored in our marriage. Read 1Peter 3:8-12; the central focus is verse nine:

*Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing,
because to this you were called
so that you may inherit a blessing.*

In the power of the Holy Spirit, we can choose to return blessings, rather than insults, by replying with gentle, quiet, understanding words that build, heal, and encourage. We also can choose to return blessings by demonstrating loving conduct, such as writing a tender note, providing a favorite meal by candlelight, or preparing a hot bath!

7. EMOTIONAL HOOK MATE

Usually due to parental modeling and conditioning when growing up as a child, this mate learns to get what is wanted by making loved ones feel guilty. Many do this without even knowing it. They learn to control family members by using improper, manipulative emotions. Others feel smothered; there is little peace in the home.

Example: Jack buys his wife a brand new sewing machine, just what she wanted! But wait! There's more! There's a lot more to this gift than meets the eye! Look! There are strings attached!

Yes, Jill loves the gift and now is made to feel that she owes it to Jack to allow him to go on his week-long fishing trip. This puts Jill in a bind. He "hooks" her. She has not been feeling well, being pregnant, and she is not sure she can take care of the household and care for their two small children if Jack is going to be gone for a whole week!

Even though Jack does not say it out loud, with his body language, attitude, and "emotional hookery" he clearly communicates to Jill that she would be ungrateful if she did not give him her blessing to go on his trip.

If this "emotional hookery" is not stopped, in time, many other areas of their family relationships may be affected, such as sexual manipulation or making adult children feel guilty for not "coming home" more often.

8. CODEPENDENT MATE

This mate is in pain, emotional pain and possibly even physical pain. This mate is experiencing real pain because of making some very unhealthy choices regarding relationships. The codependent mate would clearly disagree with this. She would say that she is trying as hard as she can to keep the marriage or family together. She would even go so far as to say that she is not trying hard enough!

A typical scenario goes something like this: A husband struggles in some area of his life such as alcoholism, over control, rage, physical or emotional abuse, gambling, lust, pornography, or some other addiction. Since he refuses to acknowledge that he even has a problem, the codependent mate sometimes begins to believe that she is responsible for his problems. She must be the reason for his anger outbursts, sin, and other unresolved issues.

If she does not feel responsible for causing his problems, then she usually feels that it is "on her shoulders" to correct, make better, heal, straighten out, or fix things. She is a rescuer and a helper. The more she tries to "fix" his sins, the more he will "look at her" as the one who is responsible for it all.

This is why a codependent wife will tend to become an extension of her alcoholic husband's "very ill-very sinful" personality. She tends to lose her own identity. When he's up, she's up. When he's down, she's down. He, in his denial, refuses to own or face up to the fact that he has a very serious problem. He is in sin and blatant rebellion against God.

He tends to make her "the problem" or "the cause" of his drinking. He might say, "You drive me to drink!" She will believe him. She will take on the blame and become the martyr. She will, no doubt, feel guilty most of the time. Since she feels responsible, she runs herself ragged trying to be a better, nicer, more supportive, less nagging wife. Very few of her needs are getting met.

The truth is that this codependent thinking and rescuing type of behavior never works! In fact, it fuels the whole mess! She gets so frustrated and discouraged that she will lie for her husband, buy him liquor, and clean up his messes to try to appease him. In other words, she will enable him. She thinks, "What would happen if the neighbors or his boss found out?"

Deep down in her heart she feels if people found out, not only would her husband be looked down upon, but more important to her, she would be looked down upon. After all, she feels the whole mess is her fault and her responsibility! She feels she would look like a failure! "We shouldn't talk about this problem. We'll pretend there is NO PROBLEM!"

To be a part of the solution, she needs to continue to love her husband and realize that she is not responsible for her husband's sin addiction. She does not "drive him to drink"; he drives himself to drink.

She needs to firmly, reverently, and respectfully refuse to rescue him, cover for him, and lie for him, or in any way enable him in his destructive choices. If need be, he may need to lose his job and hit rock bottom before he begins to own responsibility for his life and actions.

This is "tough love." This brave lady will need encouragement and support if she is going to keep from sliding back into codependency. She could benefit greatly from a church group based on prayer and Scripture.

Satan will accuse her of not "gracing" and not loving her hurting husband. He will tempt her with thoughts like, "After all, doesn't the Bible tell wives to love, support, serve, and respect their husbands?"

Let me be clear! This wife will be loving, submitting to, respecting her husband and helping him the most if she:

- Gives up trying to be responsible for her husband's hurtful, sinful choices and lovingly insists that he be responsible for his own choices.
- Finds ways to affirm him and bless him as long as her choices don't feed or encourage his problems and sins.
- Is gentle and respectful.
- Prays for him and asks the Lord to help her break out of her codependency.
- Gets the help and support she desperately needs.
- Talks about the "problem" and doesn't bury it.

Although she is "one flesh" with her mate, she is to have her own separate healthy, growing identity in Christ.

She is to worship God and God alone. Codependency is sinful because it takes what is due God and gives it to man. It is clearly a sinful, destructive choice that disobeys and dishonors God and leads to the preoccupation of the soul not with God, but, instead, with people and self.

9. CONTROLLING MATE

This mate is so insecure that he ends up trying to control everyone in the family. He has to be at the center of all decision making and usually is at the center of tension and conflict in the home.

Instead of serving, leading, or encouraging, he controls. Again this mate probably learned this controlling technique from observing a controlling parent. He is, however, without excuse. He stands alone before God.

He may use shame, guilt, sarcasm, or rage. He controls by use of moods and temper. Sometimes just "that look" will get other controlled family members to "shape up" or else! They feel they must "walk on eggshells" whenever he is around.

He may puff up like a blow fish when things are not going his way. He may get angry, his eyes may widen, his jaw may tighten, and he may try to become bigger than he really is. He may even overeat and gain weight to wield more power. You see, he needs to get bigger to try to compensate for how terribly small he feels inside.

Sometimes a controlling husband will spiritually abuse family members. He might command his wife to do or not do certain things all in the name of headship and submission. Then he might inflict the cruelest type of guilt upon his wife by telling her that God will punish her if she does not obey him. He might also abuse her or other family members by dredging up past times when they have failed or sinned. This is the devil's way.

It is important for a wife to set boundaries and limits on what she will tolerate from a controlling mate. She must firmly confront him on his destructive attitudes and behaviors, and let him know the consequences for any abusive behavior, such as him having to leave the house, reporting him to the Elders of the church, or simply calling the police. She must be sure to follow through.

10. TWO-FACED MATE

This mate is moody and seems to be always on somebody's "case" at home. She may yell or brood or hold grudges. While at home in private, she seems like the furthest thing from being a Christian. There is little mercy, little forbearance, and a lot of accusation. She is self-focused.

Once she steps out of the house and mingles at church, at a Bible study, at work, or at a party, she

instantly transforms herself into "The Public Princess." She is nice, tenderhearted, and a good listener. No one would believe what she is like once back at home.

Her mate is frustrated! The children are confused! They wonder, "Who is our real mom?" Their understanding of a true Christian is greatly hindered. Will the real mom please step forward?

11. SHAMING MATE

This mate, although a child of God, feels he has to earn God's love by being a good citizen and going to church, at least more than the "Jones." He tries to appease what he believes to be an angry, hard-to-please God. He believes a lie!

He feels like he has to measure up to an impossible set of standards. Most likely, he feels he had to earn this kind of approval from his parents and possibly even from his church. He measures his mate's performance by the same legalistic standard he has imposed on himself.

The shaming mate seldom affirms, praises, or encourages his mate. He feels, "Why should I? My mate doesn't deserve it!"

The "shaming" mate feels "stuck" or even "sentenced" to live out his life with his mate. This "shaming" mate tends to belittle, ridicule, and tear down his mate.

Through words, attitude, body language, or priorities, the "shaming" mate communicates that his mate:

- Is not good enough.
- Needs to improve to earn favor and love.
- Simply does not measure up.
- Is flawed, was a mistake to marry, and now has to be tolerated.

The mate being shamed feels like there is always something wrong with who she is. She feels flawed, permanently unacceptable! She believes that she just can't "measure up" to be the kind of person the shaming mate wants or demands her to be. She assumes God also rejects her in this manner.

12. CHRISTIAN MATE CONTROLLED BY THE FLESH (See Galatians Chapter 5)

This mate, either out of ignorance or rebellion, chooses to run her life in her own way. She wants God and others to revolve around her own goals and dreams. Even though Jesus has saved her, she refuses to let Him "empower and direct" her life. She tries to live the Christian life without appropriating the power and love of the Holy Spirit who lives within her. Fatigue, frustration, and misery are inevitable. Only Jesus can live the Christian life. He wants to live this "abundant life" (John 10:10) in and through her, but she refuses to surrender or yield.

Her independence from God opens the door to other sins such as worry, fear, impatience, anger, resentment, ambition, idolatry, grudge-holding and immorality. The harder she tries to live right,

the greater will be the struggle. Her marriage and family suffer! Satan is pleased! She thinks she is in control, but she is fooled by Satan and is actually out of control. This is not what God wants. This is sin!

Wave Calmers

1. CHRISTIAN MATE CONTROLLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT (See Galatians Chapter 5)

This wise mate has found that the key to the Christian life is not struggle, but surrender! This mate wants what Jesus wants for her life more than what she wants for her life. (Job 22:21)

She desires God's Holy Spirit to fill, direct, control, and empower her life. By faith, she will go throughout the day depending on the Lord. She recognizes that yielding to God is an hour by hour, minute by minute choice.

She is sensitive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit when she does allow self to be in control. She responds by confessing her sin and yielding to the Lord, asking the Holy Spirit to once again control, direct, and empower her life by faith.

She chooses not to shame, insult, manipulate, or nag her mate or children since these "choices" would be sin and would be acts indicative of the flesh that wants to take command!

Her life will show the Spirit's fruit. Galatians 5:22 says:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...

This Spirit-controlled Christian desires this fruit to develop in her life in order to bring glory to God.

2. SUFFERING MATE

(Special Note: The Suffering Mate is not a role or a choice that someone adopts. Unless the suffering is resulting from sin, the family suffering does not have a choice. Suffering is a part of life. How an individual or family **responds to suffering** and pain will ultimately determine if the marriage partners involved will drift apart or be drawn close together and to the Lord.) The following Scripture refers to Jesus and His personal growth:

“Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered” (Hebrews 5:8)

The Suffering Mate may feel that no one understands what he is experiencing. He has gone through terrible times! His heart is filled with tears that still have not been shed.

He may have suffered the loss of a dearly beloved family member or friend. He or a loved one might be suffering pain and fear from enduring a long, dismal battle with cancer, AIDS, MS, heart failure, or some other medical problem. Perhaps he struggles with depression, or faces difficulties at home, work, or church. Perhaps he is grieving because of an unfaithful mate. It is possible other church members have judged him and set him aside.

Turtle? Porcupine?

He may respond like a turtle and then a porcupine. Because the trauma or illness in his life is ever present, it will serve as a mean, ruthless club!

The pain and tension will beat him mercilessly. He may be drained, wiped out, and weary. He may feel 10, 15, or even 20 years older than he is. Migraine headaches, digestive problems, and overeating may occur. Sleeping problems are common.

Dangers!

One of the dangers the Suffering Mate faces is that of retreating emotionally. Like the turtle, he may hide inside his shell, building up a wall of isolation. He may distance himself from loved ones and pour himself into his work. He may be a prime candidate for an affair.

Another danger is that the suffering mate may radiate emotional pain almost like there is an invisible circle of pain surrounding him. In addition to retreating like a turtle, he may now send out painful emotional barbs like a porcupine.

Here it seems to be true that the suffering mate hurts most the ones he loves most. The family members being hurt are simply in the suffering mate's circle of pain. If both mates are suffering, and they usually are, each mate in each other's "porcupine barb range" gets barbed quite often.

Needed: The Gift of Understanding

This hurting mate is crying out for someone to understand him. He doesn't need words that tell him, "Oh just wait! Things will get better soon! Aunt Tilly had that and she's doing fine now." or "Well, you messed up years ago. You're done as far as serving the Lord goes. You're on the shelf."

No! What he needs is understanding. He wants people to cry with him and just sit quietly with him or go for a walk with him. He needs loyal friends to enter into his world of pain and tell him things like, "Tom, what you are going through must be awful. How you must hurt. There's not much I can say but I just want to be with you. I care for you."

Needed: Awareness and Encouragement

These suffering mates need to be aware of these symptoms and dangers, and they should not be hesitant to ask others for help through their difficult time. They need kindness, understanding, think-time, and good friends who will shoot straight with them if need be. They need to realize that the pain they are experiencing is real and that others are in pain also. This will help them stop the "blame game" or the "poor me" game if they are tempted to play them.

They may need to forgive others and release all to God. Praying, walking, talking, and having some fun are all helpful. They are not alone in their struggle! The Lord understands! Godly character is forged and obedience is learned through suffering. If eyes are on Christ, many good things can result. The key is keeping your eyes on Christ and getting the help you need.

3. PARENT-HONORING MATES

In Exodus 20:12, God speaks the following words:

*Honor your father and your mother
so that you may live long in the
land the Lord your God is giving you.*

Today we hear much about assigning blame to our parents for all of the struggles, hang-ups and weaknesses that we now face. If we can just understand our past, the way we were raised and the "wrong choices" our parents made in raising us, then we can "rightfully" place blame on them and somehow we will then feel better. Then we can blame them for our foolish, irresponsible living.

This, however, is very destructive! This blaming of our parents, grandparents, and in-laws leads to resentment, pride, and despair. However, looking appropriately at our past and our family experience in order to see some of the foundational causes of our problems is beneficial.

Forgiveness is required. Owning our own adult choices and being accountable to God are also mandatory. We stand alone before God.

When we understand the framework and dynamics of our struggles and strongholds, they begin to lose power over us. They begin to lose their grip on our private lives. Wisdom can break these chains, allowing the light of Christ to enlighten, heal, and free us.

Let us not blame our parents! Bestow grace and mercy upon them. We need to thank God for them even if they hurt us deeply. We are to forgive as God has forgiven us. *Forgive as the Lord forgave you.* Colossians 3:13b. Grudge-holding, bitterness, and being stuck in your past will accomplish nothing and will waste your life.

Parent-Honoring Mates will understand that their parents did a good job in many areas of raising them as well as falling short in other areas. In most cases, parents do the best they can with what resources and knowledge they have. Realize that, apart from God's kindness and grace, we would easily fall and probably do a poorer job at marriage and parenting than our parents. Parent-Honoring Mates will be committed to what God desires and honor their parents. Treat them as if they were the parents God had hoped they would be.

Two sides to every coin

Just as there are two sides to every coin, there are also two sides to honoring parents and in-laws:

Honor: Side One

Make it a point to genuinely revere your parents and be thankful for them. Don't forget, it was God who chose them for you.

"Grace" them. You are to grace and bless them because God graces and blesses you every hour of every day. Also He commands you to honor them (Exodus 20:12). Forgive them if forgiveness is needed. Hold them in high regard.

You might honor your parents with a tribute by writing on paper what they mean to you. This is an opportunity to thank them and appreciate them. Have it framed. It is a gift they would always treasure.

Honor: Side Two

This side requires you to spend time on your knees in prayer before God. Many Parent-Honoring Mates have parents who are either not Christians or who do not approve of their adult children's values, convictions, interpretation of the Bible, or life style.

Some have parents who try to manipulate, use shame and ridicule, or place demands on them. Some parents may give generously, but subtly have strings attached. Some, with sweet, poisonous words, will attempt to cause friction in their children's marriages. Sometimes they will want to maintain control.

Parent-Honoring Mates may have to confront the offending in-laws or parents. This should always be done with reverence and respect. Going to an offending, abusive, or shame-oriented parents' house alone may be too threatening and damaging to their own marriage. They may need to go together.

The Parent-Honoring Mates are not to judge them, give lengthy or repetitive explanations, or be disrespectful. They are to be kind, loving, and very firm! If they are not firm and decisive here, Satan will use their parents to cause division and the "taking of sides" in their marriage. If these problems are not dealt with, they can destroy a marriage.

It is painful. Parents may throw everything in their arsenal at their married children. They may accuse them. They may try to somehow punish them. They may even threaten to disown them. They probably won't understand. Remember: They don't need to.

With loving kindness and firm gentleness, the Parent-Honoring Mates will stick to their convictions and decisions. It will not seem or feel like they are bringing honor to their parents, but they are.

Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate. Mark 10:9

"Man" includes parents and in-laws!

Special Note:

Unless there are crimes or immoral behaviors in your children's grandparents' home, please do not withhold your children from them. This is cruel. Your kids need their grandparents even though you may not fully agree on every issue of life.

4. SUBMISSION

To submit is to voluntarily come under the authority of someone; to reverently and respectfully look out for the other's best interests.

It does not mean that you serve as a "doormat" or a "slave." It does not mean that you should obey a mate who is sinning overtly, obviously, or blindly against God and you.

If your husband is establishing a pattern of disobedience and rebellion against the Lord, and he is asking you to do likewise, or to endorse his sin, or to cover for him, ask God to help you determine what words and actions on your part would be best for your husband's spiritual welfare.

God will help you deal with your husband properly. Timing, patience, and honesty are important. You may need to tenderly confront him. You are his helpmate. If you don't help him see his sin, who will?

Love and respect him, but do not fall into the trap of condoning or being a party to his sin and foolishness. God does not take aiding and abetting sin lightly.

5. TOUGH LOVE

This is loving action that goes against the tide of sin and irresponsibility, such as in alcohol abuse, continued physical abuse, and unrepentant adultery. Tough love does not feed someone's sin. It starves the sin.

Example: If your husband is an alcoholic who, instead of being wise in his weakness, remains foolish, you may need to reverently, respectfully, and firmly refuse to rescue or enable him.

With a spirit of firm, determined gentleness, you may need to let him experience the full consequences of his foolish, sinful, and destructive choices. Many alcoholics will live in denial until reality is allowed to come crashing in. This is also often true of those who are in bondage to other sin addictions.

If you "soft love" him by always rescuing him, cleaning up after him, or lying to cover for him, you won't be loving him at all!

You certainly won't be looking out for his "best interests." You will, on the other hand, be enabling him in his irresponsibility and in his sin. In "soft love" everyone loses. The "soft lover" who ends up enabling and, in reality, promoting her husband's hurtful attitudes and behaviors will also experience damage to her emotions.

Tough Love always has restoration, godly character, and strengthening of the marriage as its goal.

Tough love honors God, and is committed to oneness in marriage.

6. GRACING MATE

This mate receives gratefully the Lord's love, forgiveness, and unmerited favor. He understands that he is made righteous by Christ's substitutionary death on the cross and His victorious resurrection. He does not have to earn it.

He embraces the truth that he is totally and forever accepted by God. He is thankful that because of this, he is the apple of God's eye. He knows as fact that he is forever in God's family! Nothing in the universe can ever shake or alter this eternal truth to those who love Christ.

Wanting to model God's amazing love and blessing, he will look upon his mate with thanksgiving. As a gracing mate he will bestow unmerited favor upon her. He will love, accept, and delight in her, regardless of performance. He will be kind and gentle. The receiving mate of such grace will tend to feel loved, affirmed, and valued. She will tend to feel free from the tyranny and bondage of having to improve, measure up, earn approval, or meet standards of performance. By God's grace, she will want to grow spiritually, pleasing and reverencing God and her "gracing" mate.

Ideally, God's desire is that both mates grace and affirm each other. However, whether or not the other mate "graces" back, the "gracing" mate will continue to "grace" with reverence, respect, and tough, steadfast love.

Online giving to our ministry: <https://give.ccci.org/give/View/0139150>

Jim and Barbara Grunseth

Staff #0139150

Jim and Barbara Grunseth
Campus Crusade for Christ Staff (Priority Associates)
Full Time Field Staff



Jim and Barbara's prayer:

That God would enlarge our borders and help us to encourage, strengthen, and equip marriages and families to bring the light of Christ to the nations.

Jim and Barbara's passion:

To help marriages, families, and individuals find lasting hope and a future in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"The need is great; the obstacles, overwhelming; the calling sure!"

"...for the honor of Christ and the saving of the lost!"

Personal Biography

Jim and Barbara have 7 children between the ages of 31 and 39. They also have six precious granddaughters and six fine grandsons. Jim has been a full time staff member with CRU for over 34 years. He graduated from West Point and has a Masters degree in Counseling-Psychology from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He is also an Army Veteran and an Ordained Minister.

Barbara has taught over 13 years as a K-6 teacher at Faith Christian School, Williams Bay, WI. She is a graduate from The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee: Deaf Education. In the past, she served as a Mentor of MOPS {Mothers of Pre-Schoolers} in this area for 7 years. She counsels couples and families with me as well as mentors some younger ladies one on one.

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Jim and Barbara serve together with CRU. **They serve many churches and families** locally by offering professional, biblical counseling to individuals, engaged couples, marriages and families. They place a strong emphasis on evangelism and

systematic discipleship.

Jim and Barbara are helping to fulfill the Lord's Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) by winning people to saving faith in Christ and then training them to win, build, and send others into the world. They love to mentor marriages, families, and engaged couples as well as college students one to one. They provide **free professional counseling** that is both compassionate, and Scriptural. **Proverbs 3:3**

Jim and Barbara's **First Priority** is to have:

Undivided love for Jesus and His Word. Psalm 86:11

They speak at Christian marriage and family conferences, retreats, camps, and churches when given the opportunity.

To check out our other materials and articles, go to: www.marriageanchors.com

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