

Marriage Anchors



JIM & BARBARA GRUNSETH

Marriage Anchors

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Your Anchor

Marriage Anchors Introduction

Have you ever been fishing in a small boat on a lake? After awhile, fish begin to strike your bait. You think, "This is wonderful!" But then, due to currents and the breeze, your boat slowly drifts away. You try to get your boat back to where they were biting. However, as soon as you return to it, your boat drifts again. You get frustrated, pack up, and go home. This is one of the reasons we don't fish much!

Anchors play a key role not only in boating and fishing, but also in life and marriage. The following are vital principles or "Anchors" that will help strengthen your marriage for life. It is our desire to help you any way we can. Please let us know if these Anchors are helpful to you.

Anchor 1: Possess the highest view of God.

At the age of 28, I had a wife and 2 very small children; a boy and a girl. I worked hard with long hours at my company. My wife was home with the kids. When I was home I was tired and tended to be pre-occupied with work and earning the approval of my bosses. Jesus and church appeared to be important in my life, yet my priorities and accompanying attitude revealed otherwise.

I was a dyed in the wool people pleaser! Everyone at work and at church thought I was a committed follower of the Lord Jesus and His teachings. Confession: I was a carnal, incongruent man! I put on a Christian face outside the home at church and work, but I put on a different face at home. I was two faced and torn within.

My heart view of God was small. To me, He was sort of a loving Genie or Santa in the sky who helped me when I wanted help. He was my Savior but only in a convenient way. In my heart, I wanted God to revolve around me and my plans! I would come home from work sometimes at 8:00 AM in the morning. My wife was waking up, getting the kids up, and looking for breakfast. I was looking for supper. My work day was over. I wanted to sleep.

She and I were like two ships passing in the night but seldom communicating. She was frustrated because our marriage and our family were less important to me than getting the boss to approve of me. I was the “present but absent” husband and dad. I grew tired of her complaining that our family was hurting. I was fed up with her attitude! I expected her to get behind me and support me. I wanted the world to think of me as a highly respected and successful Christian family man. I was living a lie.

We’d go to church on Sunday, with our fake “Everything is fine!” masks on. As soon as the service was over and we were headed home, we’d take off those masks and the pain, despair, and isolation would flood the car. Our small children could do nothing about it except be marinated in that miserable mood.

My priorities were wrong and out of balance. There was on going sin in my life. My family was isolated and suffering. My view of God was small. Jesus was on the back burner of my heart.

In time, the Lord began to humble me, break me, and pin me to the mat. I fought Him all the way down. It is what we humans are good at. Fighting God!

Since the European Renaissance at the end of the Middle Ages, people have lowered their reverent, exalted view of God. They began raising their view of mankind as the center of all things, not God! It was celebrated that man can be trusted to solve his own problems without God’s help. This humanistic attitude has crept into many marriages.

If this rings true with your life, we urge you to ask God to give you a teachable heart; a heart after God. Spend time with Him. Read His Word, the Bible. Meet with other Christians for encouragement and study. Begin living as though the Bible is true. He is waiting to help.

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.” 1 Peter 5:6

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”
Matthew 5:6

“Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.”
Psalm 37:4

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.”
Psalm 119:9-11

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Anchor 2: Focus on the Provider and not on the provision.

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 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 Anchor 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.

If you want God's peace, and joy to be present in your home, you need to earnestly grab a hold of this anchor. 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.

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Anchor 3: Surrender this hour.

Typically when we think of “surrender”, we think of giving up, tossing the towel in, or giving in to the opposing forces’ demands. In the spring of 1865, General Lee had to make the most difficult decision of his life. The following is an eyewitness account:

With his army surrounded, his men weak and exhausted, Robert E. Lee realized there was little choice but to consider the surrender of his Army to General Grant. After a series of notes between the two leaders, they agreed to meet on April 9, 1865, at the house of Wilmer McLean in the village of Appomattox Courthouse. The meeting lasted approximately two and one-half hours and at its conclusion the bloodiest conflict in the nation's history neared its end...

At a little before 4 o'clock General Lee shook hands with General Grant, bowed to the other officers, and with Colonel Marshall left the room. One after another we followed, and passed out to the porch. Lee signaled to his orderly to bring up his horse, and while the animal was being bridled the general stood on the lowest step and gazed sadly in the direction of the valley beyond where his army lay - now an army of prisoners. He smote his hands together a number of times in an absent sort of way; seemed not to see the group of Union officers in the yard who rose respectfully at his approach, and appeared unconscious of everything about him.

All appreciated the sadness that overwhelmed him, and he had the personal sympathy of every one who beheld him at this supreme moment of trial. The approach of his horse seemed to recall him from his reverie, and he at once mounted. General Grant now stepped down from the porch, and, moving toward him, saluted him by raising his hat. He was followed in this act of courtesy by all our officers present; Lee raised his hat respectfully, and rode off to break the sad news to the brave fellows whom he had so long commanded.¹

Surrender is never an easy thing. It tears at the very fabric of our being. One of the main reasons for destructive conflict in marriage is that one or both mates are fighting an ongoing Civil War in their own hearts. The battle is not between the North and the South, but it is between God and self.

We desire to call all the shots and run our life apart from the lordship, direction, and empowering of the Holy Spirit. This very personal, spiritual battle lies at the crux of almost every struggle in marriage, in family, and, in fact, in all relationships.

Galatians 5:16-24 says:

“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.

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 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.

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

Minute by minute, hour by hour, it boils down to this: Choose to follow Christ and His Word or continue to navigate the rocky waters of sin, and stubborn self-will. You will discover that when you lay down your weapons of pride and self-focus, you will become someone your mate wants to be near. You will find yourself with a servant's heart. When you honor God in your home with a choice to serve your mate and surrender to Christ's rule, He promises you something. 1Samuel 2:30b says,

“Those who honor me I will honor...”

We invite you to surrender this hour to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Join Jesus in His prayer to our heavenly Father for surrender in Matthew 6:10:

“your kingdom come, your will be done...”

If you are not, yet, a follower of Christ and therefore, do not have the gracious, enabling Holy Spirit within you, please click the following to find out how to invite Christ into your life >[click link to Your Anchor](#)

¹ "Surrender at Appomattox, 1865," EyeWitness to History, www.eyewitnesstohistory.com (1997).

Anchor 4: Look for the Ancient Path.

Jennie, a young lady in her early 30's, went for a relaxed, peaceful walk in a national park. The sky was blue, the air fresh, and the trees whispered in the breeze. She chose a well worn path that many hikers often took. After about ten minutes, she came to a fork in the trail.

The path to the left seemed wide and smooth with very few hills or curves. The one on the right was narrow, with roots and half buried boulders. It curved left to right and up and down deep into the thick forest. The left path seemed inviting and clear of thorny vines. The right path was initially not appealing. It was the more difficult way.

Which path do you think she chose?

Each of us is given the opportunity to choose the right or the wrong path. Honor and character are never achieved easily. **Brokenness, humility, and servanthood** are definitely not found on the wide path on the left where most people travel. Who in their right mind wants to become broken, humiliated, and servant-like? These three qualities are desperately needed in a Christian Marriage. Both marriage partners need to regularly ask God to lead them on this demanding journey. In the Bible, Joshua 24:15 says,

“But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

We want to encourage you to choose the best, yet more challenging path of following the Lord Jesus with complete abandon. Choose to love and serve your mate without condition. Give up your quest to find your inner self. It will only lead to disappointment and despair. Call upon the Lord Jesus. Choose to issue **kindness** and **peace** instead of contention and rage in your home. Apply Jeremiah 6:16:

“This is what the Lord says: ‘Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls...”

Allow yourself to be brought low. Ask that God grant you His wisdom and grace to love, affirm, and protect your mate regardless of their ability to earn it.

In the book of Proverbs, Chapter 4: verses 12-15, we receive advice:

*“When you walk, your steps will **not be hampered**; when you run, you will **not stumble**. Hold on to instruction, do not let it go; **guard it well**, for it is your life. Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. **Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way.**” (Bold added)*

Continuing in Proverbs, Chapter 4, look at verses 18 and 19:

“The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.”

Choices:

- **Look up.** Look up to Christ alone. Gaze upon Him and only occasionally glance to the concerns of this world. *“Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.”* Psalm 37:4 Your mate will be encouraged!
- **Look out.** Look out beyond yourself and your pain. Ask Jesus to give you eyes for those in need of compassion, patience, and understanding. *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”* Ephesians 4:32 What an example you will be for your family!
- **Look past.** Look past people’s sins and help them whether they are of a foreign faith, background, or citizenship. Look past how others have hurt you. See beyond the injury they have caused. Forgive and choose to love. Be as Christ would be to them.
- **Look away.** Turn your eyes away from wicked, worthless things. *“I have made a covenant with my eyes.”* - Job 31:1 *“I will set before my eyes no vile thing.”* Psalm 101:3a Ask, “Will this honor God?”
- **Look ahead.** *“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland.”* Isaiah 43:18-19 Too many husbands and wives are wearing their bright badge of suffering from the wounds of their past. If not dealt with, this will cripple their present relationships. They seem not interested in giving out compassion because they are always wrapped up in demanding to receive it. Forsake this self-focused cry for pity.
- **Look to.** Look to your present and your future in light of eternity. Don’t get bogged down with the temporary things of this earth. Help the poor, issue forgiveness, and share with those who need the Savior. Learn to serve the Lord together so you and your mate develop a humble reputation for loving Christ and serving others. Only what is done for Christ will last forever.

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.” Hebrews 12:2 (Bold added)

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Anchor 5: Hesed your 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 “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 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 marriage. People are looking at your marriage to see if Jesus and the Bible are real! ¹

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

¹ Adapted from Chapter 10, “Oars and Life Jackets”, Remember the Rowboats: Anchor your Marriage to Christ, pp: 94-95.

Anchor 6: Rest in what Jesus has decided about you.

Bob and his wife, Maria, are in a rut. They each feel like they cannot measure up to what they need to be. Bob struggles being a few pounds overweight, very impatient, and, always trying to earn praise from his bosses at work. He has some health issues but does not want anyone knowing about them. What might people think if they found out about his weaknesses and insecurities?

Maria worries all the time. Battles with her kids, her looks, her clothes, and her health are made more complex because of terrible memories from her past. Abuse and disrespect in her pre-adolescent and teen years has left her with a very damaged and sagging self-image. She wishes she were someone else with a different history and better life.

Most of us, at one time or another, feel like we don't measure up. If we are not confident in our identity in Christ, two destructive things can happen: We will settle for our depressing opinion of ourselves or we will despair trying to get other people to like us.

If you are a follower of Jesus, the Devil has a well oiled plan to destroy you, your marriage, your family, and your witness for Christ.

He despises the truth so he feeds you very believable lies. He gets you to believe that your worth in life, at school or work, and at home is based on three things:

- Your performance
- Your appearance
- Your possessions

He will help you construct an **Ideal Version** of yourself that is always better than the Real You. If you are a man, you may desire to be more handsome, more popular, and in demand. You may desire more degrees, more promotions, better health, more hair, and a great physique. You may feel your big break will come any day now.

If you are a woman, you may want more men to notice you. You may wish you weighed less, had better clothes, and a perfect childhood with an intact family. You might wish you had a great home, wonderful friends, and perhaps a loving, stable husband along with healthy children. You might expect others to you admire more for your ability to spin many plates at once with amazing skill.

What the Devil does not tell you is that as you strive to become that person who performs better, has better appearance, and has more things, this Phantom and monstrous Ideal Version of you raises the bar and looms even higher! The result is you feel terrible! You say to yourself, "Oh what's the use! I try hard. Then I give up and fail. After awhile, I try hard again only to repeat the tragic cycle. Not only can I not measure up to my punishing Ideal Self, but I feel I cannot measure up to my mate's demands and those at

work / school and church! I want to check out! I feel like tossing the towel in and running away or maybe hurting myself...”

Jesus has wonderful news for you! The only “you” that Jesus loves, died for, and delights in is the **Real You!** You know, the one who is imperfect, who stumbles and fumbles. The one who struggles and does not have his or her act together. The one who fails now and then. The one with the imperfect past. The one who is a few extra pounds over weight. The one who’s mate is critical towards them. The one who has doubts and insecurities.

Jesus wants to crucify your Ideal Self, rebuke the Devil and send Him fleeing!

Circle at least 3 of the following eternal truths that bring you hope and encouragement: (Note: These are all true at all times and in all places if you belong to Jesus.)

- You are God’s own daughter or son. John 1:12
- You are a fellow heir with Jesus. Romans 8:17
- In Jesus, you are a brand new creature. 2 Corinthians 5:17
- You are right now a Saint! Ephesians 1:1
- You are Heaven’s citizen—not Earth’s. Philippians 3:20
- You are made righteous. You did not earn it. 2 Corinthians 5:21
- Jesus will never leave or forsake you. Hebrews 13:5
- You are redeemed and forgiven forever! Colossians 1:14
- You are not really living! Jesus is living in and through you! Galatians 2:20
- You can never be condemned again! Never! Romans 8:1
- You are precious, honored, and always loved just the way you are. Isaiah 43:4-5

Be of good cheer. Your Lord Jesus loves you. He will comfort, provide for, and guide you. Zephaniah 3:17 captures beautifully your Heavenly Father’s endearing compassion for you, cradling you softly and safely in His arms:

“The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing.”

If you choose to rest in what Jesus has decided about you, you must live by **Faith**. We recommend you memorize the following **Faith Principle** and then start applying it as you read and meditate on Scripture.

“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 you are God’s child, and He accepts you just the way you are, **warts and all**, then you need to cherish, affirm, uphold, and accept your marriage partner just the way he or she is, imperfections, insecurities, idiosyncrasies and all! After all, aren’t you to love your mate in the same way the Lord Jesus loves you?

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Anchor 7: What is best for your 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 17. 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 Anchor 7 Principle: You don't need to give anyone an explanation for the decisions you, as a couple, make.

If 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 set this Anchor! The in-laws will 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.

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 remarried, 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 are only and totally one flesh with your new mate! Your new marriage will almost assuredly be tested. Stand firm on these truths. Men, your wives' greatest need is to experience being **safe** and **cherished**. Ladies, your husbands' greatest need is to experience **respect** and **affirmation**. Do not let your past threaten your present and thus your future!

2nd Anchor 7 Principle: Never let your children get in between you and your mate.

If you 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 Anchor 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 mate.

Because the husband and wife are not absolutely unified as a singularly, loving and consistent team, 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

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Anchor 8: Establish and enforce strong moral fences.

Battle Casualty

The following story is fictitious but similar destruction of good families occurs regularly in America. The Devil is the enemy of your soul and he seeks to determine the outcome of your character and your witness for Christ. Be on the alert!

Pastor Dave was a good man. He loved Lynn, his wife, very much. He also loved their two children, Mike and Kelly. He pastored a small church and for the most part, the church people got along well.

In addition to preaching and teaching, he also counseled a growing number of people at church. He knew that many people were hurting and struggling with issues and problems. Both he and his wife cared deeply for them. Because of the needs and demands of ministry, Dave found himself working longer hours. With meetings, discipleship and evening counseling, he found himself only two nights a week home alone with his family. He was a pastor and he cared. He felt that he needed to be "on call" even during his nights off. He grew to hate the phone.

Lynn, his wife, began to resent all the meetings that took her husband and the kid's father away all the time. She began to wonder if Dave was married to the church more than to her.

They did not talk much about it. When they did, they were both so tired that the tension between them was never properly dealt with. They buried their anger.

Even though they wore their "smiles" at church, at home their jaws tightened. Dave and Lynn began to isolate themselves. They really had no one to pour their hearts out to. Who can a pastor and his wife go to anyway?

Everybody in their home, especially the kids, found themselves walking on egg shells. The invisible tension was growing. Yet, it was as if there was some kind of unwritten rule that stated:

"We are hurting. But because we are a pastor's family and are to set a good example, we will not talk about our problems. We will ignore the tension. We'll rise above it. It will go away someday."

Both Lynn and Dave tried to cover up or medicate their pain by getting more involved in the church and other people's lives. After all, isn't that what Jesus wants?

Satan and his legion of dark angels assigned to bringing down this family unit crouched in the corner of the church- plotting, planning, grinning, with eyes wide open. One particularly intelligent and crafty demon turned to his master and softly whispered:

"Oh Prince of Darkness, we praise you for your ability to blind and destroy. This miserable pastor's family is slowly falling. Soon they will be ours. Much damage. Much pain. Look! Ha! No one is praying for them. No one is looking out for them. They are busy, tired, isolated. There is much tension, denial. Yes! No accountability! No encouragement! They've lost perspective. This married couple is not praying out loud regularly together. Now, in for the kill!"

Karen, an attractive and gifted divorced mother of three small children visited Dave's church today. After the service, Dave introduced himself to her and welcomed her. She was gracious and stated that she was looking for a good church home. She also inquired if she could help further develop a children's church program.

Dave thought he had died and gone to Heaven!

"Yes!" he said, fumbling for the right words. They set up a meeting for Tuesday at noon at the church to discuss these possibilities.

Dave found himself rather looking forward to this meeting. He wasn't sure why. When Tuesday noon arrived, he and Karen met in his office with the door closed. The part time church secretary had left for lunch.

All was innocent. Plans were made for Children's Church. **They closed in prayer.**

Dave suddenly found himself not quite as depressed as before. He felt hopeful again. Ministry was no longer the drag that it had been.

They met each Tuesday noon in the church-alone. All was innocent. Intentions were good and godly. Good plans and prayer developed. But more than that developed.

At the end of their fourth meeting, Karen, looking a little needy, asked Pastor Dave, **"Do you have a minute, Pastor?"**

"Sure!", Dave said.

She proceeded cautiously but kindly. She began to open up about the struggles she was having with her youngest daughter. She said that she valued his wisdom. Dave felt good. He felt respected, appreciated.

He listened to her. After she shared, for some strange reason, he felt the urge to share with her how tired and busy he has been lately. He even shared that he thought he needed to cut back on some ministry to preserve his family and his sanity.

She listened intently. She fully agreed with him. She smiled at him and told him how blessed the church was to have him for a pastor. He soaked this up!

Over the next few months, not much changed. Dave and Lynn were cordial but found themselves squabbling more and more over the littlest things.

One Tuesday, Dave called Karen at her office and said, "Hey, Karen, what do you say we try that new restaurant over on Third Avenue instead of meeting here in this stuffy office?"

"Good idea!" she laughed. "I'll see ya there at noon." It seemed harmless, fun and a nice break.

Dave and Karen met for lunch at least once a month. Dave never bothered to tell his wife about it. Intentions were good. No crime there.

Six months later, Karen met him at the restaurant. When she sat down, she started to cry quietly. Dave's heart went out to her. His loving compassion swelled. With God's love, he calmly reached over and held her hand.

"What's wrong, Karen?"

She poured her heart out and told him that she just got word that her father had passed away. After lunch, they went back to his office and prayed and talked some more. Much more.

After an hour, as Karen got up to leave, she looked into her beloved friend's eyes and asked, **"Could I just give you a hug-in the Lord?"**

They calmly embraced. Funny, how could something as spiritual as this feel so good? He held her for a rather long time, comforting her in her grief. She felt safe in his arms, her pastor's loving arms, almost like Jesus holding her.

A month later they began holding hands regularly at prayer times. They were on the same ministry sheet of music. Lynn was not. What was wrong with Lynn anyway?

"Lord, thank you for Karen. What a fine sister.", Dave thought.

At the end of one of their brother-sister hugs, Karen gave Dave a tender, loving kiss on the cheek.

Dave never felt so good, so manly, so needed. Deep in his heart, he almost wished that his wife could be more like Karen.

One Tuesday when Lynn was visiting her parents one hundred miles away, Pastor Dave invited Karen over to his home for coffee and prayer.

That day was bright and sunny. A cool breeze filtered the air. Dave could not get over how nice she looked. Her perfume was just right. They looked at each other with a long look. They embraced each other, kissed, then tenderly and expectantly walked toward the bedroom...

God was forgotten for awhile.

They met secretly like this three more times over the next few weeks.

Being with Karen was wonderful! Yet the guilt became crushing. Dave began to wish that he would die in a car crash or that lightening would somehow strike him. He felt dead inside.

He felt tortured by his sin. How could he have let Lynn, his wonderful children, and the Lord down?

This was inexcusable! He felt he was worthy of death! He would confess this to God, break it off with Karen, and then put it behind him.

Plans Didn't work.

Two weeks later, Lynn received an anonymous phone call. She learned of the betrayal. She could not believe it. Her life would be destroyed. "No, it is not true." she cried.

She gently, firmly confronted Dave that night with tears forming in her eyes. Dave at first denied it, his eyes glancing quickly to the right. Then, about an hour later, he could no longer live with himself. He broke down and confessed his sin. He cried and cried. Lynn felt raped by his sin. She felt dead inside. Perhaps she could forgive him, but she just knew their marriage was over.

Counseling did not work. The church asked Dave to leave. Lynn and Dave got a divorce. It was worse than death. The children were devastated. They felt to blame. Three months later, Dave was working two part time jobs: 25 hours at a hardware store, and 25 hours at a grocery store. The house sold. Lynn and the kids moved into a very small apartment. Dave had already moved into one a while back. They were broke. Someone from church gave her a job as a receptionist for a small company.

Both Dave, with child support and alimony payments, and Lynn, with her meager salary, could barely make ends meet. Some helped Lynn. Few helped Dave. God forgives. People often do not. The divorce cost \$28,000 dollars. No more savings. No more piano lessons. Forget vacations. The dog had to go.

The children cry often. Their rage grows...

Pastor Dave did not win. A lot of people lost with him.

Anchor 8 Principles:

- **Be wise in your weakness.** Since you are always weak, your choice is to either be wise or foolish in your weakness. Unfortunately, the great majority of people are deceived by the Devil. Because of their self-sufficient pride, they actually think they will not fall.
- **Trust yourself less.** Godly wisdom is learning to trust yourself less and less everyday and entrust yourself to God, to your mate, and to a few good men / women (same gender)
- **Seek regular, affirming accountability.** One of the marks of the man or woman who experiences, brokenness over their pride and self-sufficiency is desperate hunger and thirst for God and His Word. He or she willingly seeks godly encouragement, inspection,

and then confession results. You dare not trust in your own strength or ability to walk uprightly with the Lord. If you do, you are a sitting duck for the Devil.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 says: *"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!" (Bold added)*

Godly accountability is gracious, and affirming. Mutual confession and the bearing of one's soul can take place with confidentiality and freedom.

James 5:16 says: *"Therefore confess your sins to **each other** and pray for **each other** so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."* (Bold added)

- **Guard your heart; Guard your marriage.** Each person's plan will be different. With your mate, establish agreed upon **moral fences** for each of you. Some we have established are the following:
 1. Never stay in hotel rooms alone.
 2. If in a hotel room with my wife, she has full control over the TV remote. I never touch it. I do not trust myself!
 3. We never mentor or meet alone with a person of the opposite sex. We want to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.
 4. If either of us senses in our heart any "danger signals" that there are any emotional fireworks or red flags from any person, we share it and take guarding action.
 5. Barbara and I both seek and have one or two people (same gender) who can share at the "gut, temptation, weakness, and sin" level.
 6. We have **Covenant Eyes** "guard your eyes and heart" protection on our computer and cell phones. We would not have a computer without it! Purchase it at: <http://www.covenanteyes.com/?promocode=lifebuilders> Men, be sure your wife is the password keeping administrator, never you!

In light of all of this, do you see the vital importance of establishing and enforcing moral fences? Please join us so that your marriage will make an eternal difference!

"If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness." 2 Corinthians 11:30

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Anchor 9: Empathy – The art of caring deeply.

Imagine that you and your mate are vacationing in Paris, France and you are each having your own little picnic on opposite shores of the Seine 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 bucket of 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 right 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. Let it go.

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.”¹

¹ Excerpt from Chapter 10, “Oars and Life Jackets”, Remember the Rowboats: Anchor your Marriage to Christ, pp: 99-101.

Anchor 10: Finances – A blessing or a curse.

Next to marital infidelity and rejecting your mate as God's gift and provision for you, poor financial management and stewardship will rapidly strain, strangle, and destroy a once wonderful marriage. This financial anchor 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. Stop comparing yourself to others, where they live and what kind of car they drive. Consider adopting the following **11 Anchor 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 books written by Larry Burkett or David Ramsey. Also, computer software such as Quicken or the Principal Plan 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:

"⁷Ever 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?'

⁸"Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.

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

"In tithes and offerings. ⁹You are under a curse-the whole nation of you-because you are robbing me. ¹⁰Bring 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. ¹¹I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit," says the LORD Almighty. ¹²"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 as much for a purchase as the original 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!

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 loved ones.** Our experience as biblical mentors is that it strains relationships in an unhealthy manner. If you want to give them money, great! Give without conditions. Give with absolutely no strings attached. 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.¹

¹ Excerpt from Chapter 11, "Plan Ahead!" Remember the Rowboats: Anchor your Marriage to Christ, pp: 109-114.

Your Anchor

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 you, will your anchor also fail you? When others betray and lie to you, will your anchor do likewise? Consider the following questions in light of what the Bible says:

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)

“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.” (John 17:3)

- The One True God of the Bible who loves you, 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.

“our God is holy.” (Psalm 99:9b)

“the stain of your guilt is still before me,” (Jeremiah 2:22b)

- 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.

Sinful Man

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.

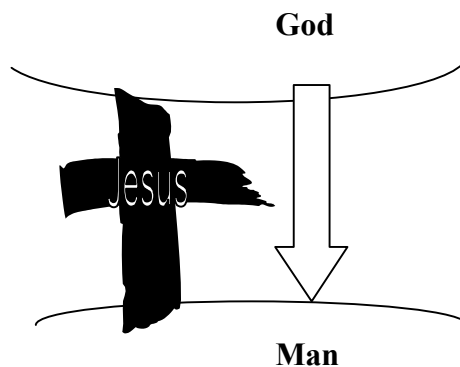
"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

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

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

"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 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.” (2Thessalonians 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.

- You must receive Christ. {Gladly welcome Him}

“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)

If someone were to say, “I hope to get to heaven because I’m a pretty good person”. “I’m hoping the good outweighs the bad”. How would you respond to this person?

- When you receive Christ, you experience a New Birth.
{Read John 3:1-8 if time permits}

- You receive Christ by personal invitation.

[Christ speaking]

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in...” (Revelation 3:20 N.K.J.V.)

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?

The following 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!

“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:11-13)

“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)

What comfort and assurance is God giving you right now?

1. Please read the following verses out loud.

“All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day.” (John 6:37-39)

“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:38,39)

What doubts might you still have concerning your assurance of your salvation and your eternal security?

If you were to die tonight, how assured are you of going straight to Heaven?

0%-----25%-----50%-----75%-----100%

2. Work on memorizing the following definition of Faith. This is the same definition discussed in other chapters of this book. Then discuss it and apply this faith principle to your assurance of being forgiven and going to Heaven someday.

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

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

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“We’d had it with the epidemic of divorce!”

Q&A with Marriage Mentors and *Home to Home* Authors Jim & Barbara Grunseth

What experience or process led you to write *Home to Home*?

Jim& Barbara—We saw so many engaged couples receiving inadequate coaching and training for their marriages. We also saw so many married couples not just struggling in their relationships but also slipping further and further into isolation. We’d had it with the epidemic of divorce! We wrote *Home to Home* so that couples, pastors, and home based small groups would have a very simple, concise, and affordable tool to:

Build healthy, encouraging, accountable relationships;
Instill 5 solid biblical “Cornerstones” so that marriages don’t just “go the distance” but flourish in oneness and purpose.



We wanted for couples to not just to break out of isolation patterns, but to build life long friendships with other couples. We took the Lord’s Great Commission Command to “Go and make disciples of all nations” seriously. Couples who disciple or mentor other couples are passing on what

has been entrusted to them.
2Timothy 2:2

What do readers tell you that they’ve gotten out of reading the book?

Jim & Barbara—95% of all the couples that we personally know who have completed the *Home to Home* 6 lesson process are still married and their hearts and homes are fixed on Christ. That statement speaks for itself. Couples have told us and written to us stating that they have never seen such simple, yet clear coaching principles based on eternal truth regarding their marriage. They also loved the encouraging, gracious friendships that were formed. They know that after going through *Home to Home* with just one couple or, say, 5 couples, they have friends they can call on or go to when life gets difficult and discouraging. They are so glad to know and understand such things as God’s amazing, unconditional love for them, God’s calling on their marriage, and His mission specifically designed for them. They have told us they now have a unified vision for why they are married. Most couples today have no idea why they are married.

Any dramatic before-and-after couple stories from your years of counseling and/or using this book?

Jim & Barbara—Roughly 12 years ago, we began mentoring a young couple, Dan and Michelle, from our church. They had placed their faith in

the Lord Jesus Christ a short time earlier. We grounded them in the Christian faith and went through *Home to Home* taking turns meeting at each others homes once a week for about a year. The trust between us became strong and our encouraging friendship, we know, will last a lifetime! They not only passed on the five Cornerstones of Christian marriage to another couple but He became the youngest Elder in our church. They took “be fruitful and multiply” seriously. They now have seven children!

Barbara—We had the great privilege of leading a small group of young married couples for 10 wonderful years. Occasionally one couple would move but then God would bring another couple in to replace them. We studied many topics but mostly we stuck to “keeping each other’s marriages” strong in the Lord and His Word. We went through *Home to Home* together. We learned and practiced what it meant to “look out for one another”. We were not so much the leaders but more simply hosts who helped “to keep the hockey puck in play” in terms of keeping open and honest discussion going. We modeled for them vulnerability and imperfection. We told them to never “get perfect” on us for if they did, we wouldn’t be able to relate to them. These 6 couples now have children of

their own. We are friends with them for life.

Jim—We had one couple whose marital relationship was, by all human standards, dead. Karen's sisters were all divorced. Her rebellious adult daughter begged her to "dump the drunk!" Tom was a slobbering alcoholic who tried many rehab programs but he always fell off the wagon and got drunk. Karen was in the process of leaving him when they came to see us. We earned their trust and began to deal with their "heart" issues. We helped them go to Jesus and His Word for help. Over time and with much emersion in God's Word, they began to experience:

Healing from their emotional wounds; Grace and forgiveness from the Lord; and the expression of mercy; and compassion toward each other.

During one session, Tom broke down and cried. Amazingly, his formerly estranged and fed up wife gently reached up with her hand and tenderly wiped away his tears. In all my 30 years of ministry, I have never seen something of the Lord so beautiful! He is sober and they are serving back in their church. They are in love again!

Jim & Barbara—We trained one pastor, his wife, and 5 kids with *Home to Home*. He had fallen due to adultery. He stepped down from the pastorate. Through *Home to Home* and the accompanying Scriptures, God restored their marriage and family.

Jim & Barbara—We mentored Ross and Cindy with *Home to*

Home and they passed these 5 Cornerstones on to another couple. He is a business owner who is led of the Lord and is now planting a new church. He is the new head pastor!

What about *Home to Home* facilitates the "passing on" of the five Cornerstones? How transferable are each?

Jim & Barbara—The idea of *Home to Home* is simple. It is where 2 or more couples—engaged or married—meet together for at least 6 gatherings in one or more homes to build each other up, to laugh, to listen, to eat, to share from the heart God's sure hope and plan for their marriage. Yes, one couple is usually the Host and the other couple(s) is/are the Guest(s). The guest couples are coached to eventually pass what they have learned on to other couples either one couple at a time or in a small group. The material is easy to use. Each person has their spiral bound book and it is designed to the guest couples know they are being groomed to become Host couples. There are specific Host Guidelines at the back.



Each of the 5 Cornerstones is fully transferable. They are passed on and entrusted to other couples much like the baton is passed carefully in a relay running race.

Give three examples of real-life couples who've improved their marriages or have successfully mentored other couples using *Home to Home*.

Jim & Barbara—Darla and Bill were mentored with *Home to Home*. They came to us at each other's throats, arguing and accusing each other. They were battling financial, physical and emotional struggles. The deep friendship that formed and God's loving principles for their lives and marriage helped them to gain higher ground. They are doing well today.

Mark and Sandy were lay leaders in their church. Mark began having an affair with another lady. It looked like he was going to *bolt*... dump his wife and son and run off with his new flame. Through many difficult mentoring sessions, we took them through *Home to Home*. The pastors and others also helped. Mark finally repented of his sin and his wife forgave him. They are now serving in the church again in faithfulness.

Don and Anissa work for a Christian organization. She was sexually abused as a child and struggled also with a bi-polar type emotional disorder. We befriended them and fully accepted them with the grace and the mercy that only the Lord can give. In going through *Home to Home*, they caught the vision for how their marriage is really God's smallest battle formation to advance the causes of Christ. I believe they began to pass *Home to Home* on to another couple. They are both doing well.

Jim's "Rowboat" Story

One Marriage Mentor's Journey

Although I became a Christian at 18, I did not really get serious about the Lord until much later. As a young husband and father, my family suffered because I was carnal and double minded. I wanted to follow God but I also craved the respect and approval of people. My priorities were out of balance and sin had its hold on me. We were all fairly miserable. I regret those sins. God began to humble me and break down my pride in my late 20s. Soon after I turned 30, I renewed my vows to the Lord and committed to full time, vocational ministry.



Five years later, we moved to Illinois so I could attend seminary. The moving van that we hired to transport all of our belongings went up in flames during some repair work. We were lied to and

cheated by this moving company. It took three years to get it settled. This crisis took up much of my time during my first year of seminary.

At the beginning of my final year of school, Julie was diagnosed with lupus, Sjögren's syndrome, and, worst of all, advanced breast cancer. It was as if our hopes, plans, and dreams, were crystal figurines being smashed by a brutal sledgehammer. No matter how you look at it, cancer is an awful and sadistic disease. It not only eats away at the person it is ravaging, but it also eats away at the whole family. Relationships are strained. Emotions become wooden and empty. Anger and fear become the norm. Exhaustion is standard. Cancer lives with you.

Through eight surgeries, four regimens of chemotherapy, three separate hair losses, and months in hospitals, a frightening bone marrow transplant, and five unsuccessful trips to Bethesda, Maryland (National Cancer Institute), Julie fought her disease with courage maintaining her faith in God. Many were strengthened by her bravery. The chemotherapy helped to extend her life but it was devastating to her and to the rest of us.

She suffered from severe depression at times and experienced terrible mood swings that made living in our home difficult. On a regular

basis, she would cycle into a destructive, violent rage. Other times she could be very pleasant. Then, when least expected, her mood would change and she would beat, kick, and claw me. I should have called 911 and gotten her help many times. But I failed to do so.

You see I was trying to protect and preserve our image as the wonderful, suffering missionary family. Worse, I resisted getting her professional help because, deep inside, I thought the town's people and church family would think I was a bad husband. I thought if I were the husband God wanted me to be, Julie would respond with grace, kindness, and a stable emotional frame of mind. She suffered from a bipolar disorder of some type. Her extended family refused to believe that she was mentally unstable. I begged them for help. My pleas fell on deaf ears.

Frequently, our home was filled with chaos, tension, and anger outbursts. One minute she would be stable and the next she would fall apart. The four kids and I, along with Julie, were on one big roller coaster.

On top of all this, I felt utterly helpless. I was with Julie almost constantly for seven years during this battle, but I could not help her. I could not heal her. The Lord knows I tried just about everything known to man. The suspense of not knowing when the cancer

Excerpt from *Remember the Rowboats* (River City Press) Used with permission from Jim Grunseth

would strike again or take her life was like swimming in dark waters with that shark from *Jaws* near us.

We could never escape its presence or its influence. I once described living with long term cancer in our family as living with an evil, vindictive presence holding all of us hostage. Even when we went on vacation, "it" came with us. It controlled the life of our family. It was a cruel and terrifying time.

We put our trust in the Lord but the stress of seeing my wife and the mother of my children slowly melt away like a Popsicle on a hot day, gnawed at me relentlessly. I developed severe migraine headaches that lasted 24 hours a day for two years. The pain wrestled me to the floor many times. I became depressed and

exhausted, weary beyond words. My heart became like wood. Life to me had the taste of sawdust. I felt old.

I got hooked on prescription painkillers. It was like I could not get through the continuous headache pain without them. I prayed and prayed but they would not go away. I had bottled up so much agony. You see, I was Julie's husband and father of four children. I felt it was my responsibility to protect my family. Yet I could not stop the cancer.

I sought the Lord and asked several men to meet with me regularly to encourage me, pray with me, and hold me accountable. This was of great help! I confess that several times during the cancer battle, I lost hope. Seven years is a long time. Several times, I felt that God had abandoned me. Thank heavens, I knew this not to be

true since Jesus promised to never leave nor forsake me. I was able to put my trust in "what is written" in the Word of God instead of my emotions or my experience. Once again, here is the Faith Definition: ***Faith is choosing to live as though the Bible is true, regardless of circumstances, emotions, or cultural trends.***

Julie died at home where she wanted to be with all of her family near her. She could no longer breathe since the cancer had invaded her lungs. The morphine and oxygen weren't helping anymore. She told me she wanted to go home to be with Jesus. And on that mid June afternoon, she did. We would have been married twenty years, missing our anniversary by only seven days.

Barbara's "Rowboat" Story

One Marriage Mentor's Journey

My heart skipped a beat as a surge of adrenaline was released into my system. My husband and I had gone to a company pool party with our three, young children. I was in the living room attending to our four month old, Sarah. I walked into the kitchen to get some water and was met with a crushing blow. My husband and another woman were at the refrigerator locked in a passionate embrace.

My flesh and the Holy

Spirit began to war determining the reaction I would choose. I felt rage, shame, betrayal, disbelief, fear, and gut wrenching pain. I turned and walked out in order to sort through all the emotion.

Could it be my marriage of almost ten years was a target of our archenemy, Satan? I recalled the wife of a co-worker warning me to get my husband out of this company before it was too late. Was it now too late?

I prayed for wisdom and

strength for battle. I confronted my husband that night in the privacy of our own home. He could not pray with me. His eyes lacked life. They were like deep, dark, cesspools. I cried out, "Abba Father," as I held on to his limp hands. I felt ripped in half as I cried deep, convulsive sobs. I pleaded with God to restore our marriage. Over the next three months I began searching for help. I tried a marriage counselor, but my husband refused to go in to see him, insisting it was all my

To order Jim and Barbara Grunseth's marriage mentoring resource *Home to Home: Passing on Five Cornerstones of Christian Marriage*, go to: <http://www.campuscrusade.com/1114> and save 15% off the retail price

Excerpt from *Remember the Rowboats* (River City Press) Used with permission from Jim Grunseth
fault.

I tried new clothes, new feminine manipulations, and pretended to be interested in all my husband's worldly interests. I remember going out with him one night to a series of night clubs he had discovered with his co-workers. I sat there nursing my cocktail watching the people on the dance floor I had just left. Their faces did not reflect deep contentment and the fun times my husband had described.

Just at that moment, the thought came to me; What if the Lord returned right now? My Savior would find me trying to please my husband more than please Him. I asked to be taken home and never went back.



Another night my husband took me to a company party at a private home. After swimming and socializing awhile, I was hungry. I went to the kitchen to the buffet. Food tasted great. The problem was I began to feel very strange. When I made it to

the couch, I was relieved to put my head down. Several men came over with my husband and hovered above me. I didn't know at the time but they were into wife swapping.

My husband told the men to leave me alone. It was at that point I recalled Sodom and Gomorrah and I jumped up, ran out the front door, down the street, crying. My husband came after me in the car, took me home, and went back to the party.

During my quiet times with Jesus, His still small voice kept saying, "Let him go." I was so caught up in performing in order to please my husband that I ignored the voice of my Lord. Finally, His words to me were confirmed by two pastors from different states both sharing 1 Corinthians 5:4,5:

"When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord."

I asked my husband to forgive me for not being the wife he thought he needed and again pledged my commitment to him and to our Lord. My husband chose to divorce not only his wife and three children, but also everything and everybody involved with Jesus.

He took all the money out of the bank and turned off all utilities in the house. I prayed

prostrate on the floor for God's leading. He provided me with a childcare job for some wealthy people. God was always faithful to supply all our needs.

I saw thirty four marriages dissolved that memorable day in court, all due to the devil's ultimate lie: irreconcilable differences. God was merciful to me and answered my prayer to remove me from the city and state we were living in. I could not bear to watch my husband in the clutches of the enemy.

The children and I set up house keeping near my family in Wisconsin. I was physically drained, emotionally rent in half, and spiritually exhausted from the battle. I determined to batten down the hatches and pull my children close to ward off any further destruction of our family unit.

Jesus became my husband. I ran to His arms daily for answers through prayer and His Word. I had a lot of fear at first. All responsibility seemed to rest on me. But I knew my enemy and I knew how to use the Word of God as a weapon.

When I had panic attacks at the grocery store or driving a car, I would set my mind on specific scriptures. I was in a war between the flesh and the Spirit.

"You will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is steadfast, because he trusts in you."
(Isaiah 26:3)

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,

but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)

“Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.” (Colossians 3:2,3)

I prayed that I would not

have to work at a job outside the home until my one year old was in first grade. I wanted to be the one to raise my children in those formative years to honor and glorify the Lord. He honored my heart's cry by allowing me enough in savings and child support to care for our needs.

After Sarah's fifth birthday, I was offered three teaching jobs, one of which was at a Christian school. My children and I were there for

twelve years.

I told the Lord long ago, that I would never again go out "looking" for a man to marry. If He wanted me to marry again, He would have to bring across my path a Christian man, proven to be faithful. We would both need to sense God's irrevocable calling to marriage and would need to compliment each other's ministry to advance the Kingdom of God.