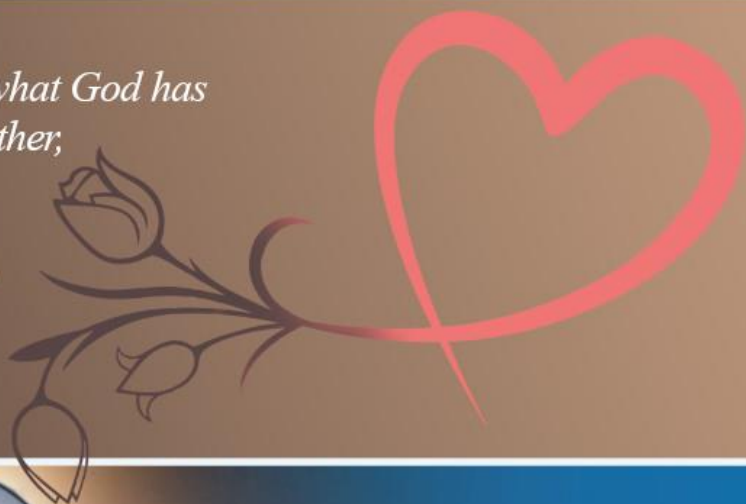


keys that unlock the full potential of your marriage

## marriage by the book

*"Therefore what God has  
joined together;  
let no one  
separate."  
Mark 10:9*



# 7 KEYS FOR A HEALTHY & HAPPY MARRIAGE

**Bruce R. Edwards**

# **7 KEYS FOR A HEALTHY & HAPPY MARRIAGE**

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by Bruce R. Edwards

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## INTRODUCTION

*“Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’<sup>5</sup> 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’? <sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” Matthew 19:4-6*

Did you know that you and your spouse weren't brought together by accident? God put you together for a reason, which is to fulfill His will on earth and to be a picture of Jesus and the Church. Marriage was and is God's idea. That is why marriage is important to God, and He desires your marriage to flourish.

The most important decision you will ever make next to your salvation is **WHO YOU PLAN TO LIVE WITH** in marriage. Marriage can enhance your destiny or destroy your destiny.

Marriage is a miracle where God supernaturally makes two become one. There are many factors that go into making a

## Marriage is a Miracle

God takes two separate individuals a man and woman and makes them one.  
Genesis 2:24

marriage healthy and happy. In this book we share 7 essential keys that will help you unlock the full potential of your marriage. These keys are Biblical principles that when used properly are guaranteed to work. They aren't the only tools available in God's Word, but they provide a great foundation to build a great marriage on.

The powerful thing about these keys is, that no matter where you are in your marriage – how bad it is or how good it may be, they can help restore, heal, and strengthen your marriage. These keys will help you unlock the full potential of your marriage.

Before we can begin our study of these 7 Keys for a Healthy and Happy Marriage we first need to understand where the idea of marriage came from and God's designed purpose for marriage and for the male and female



## THERE'S A BETTER WAY

*“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:8-9*

***“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”*** (Proverbs 14:12) The world has all kinds of different definitions for marriage. In fact, a recent Gallop poll found only 29% of Americans believe marriage is important. Another recent poll among Christians found over 50% of millennials believe couples should live together for two years before they get married.

Unfortunately, marriage is misunderstood, abused, neglected, and increasingly redefined by man. What used to be “holy matrimony” is all too often now simply one of many alternative living arrangements. When marriage is done man’s way and we ignore the instructions and boundaries of God’s design—we experience consequences such as heartache, distrust, divorce, disease, abortion, alimony, single parenthood, and neglected children and families. Unfortunately, even many Christians have adopted man’s way of living.

The problem.... marriage was not established by man it was and is God’s idea. Contrary to much contemporary thought and teaching, marriage is not a human concept. Mankind did not simply dream up marriage somewhere along the line as a convenient way of handling relationships and responsibilities between men and women or dealing with childbearing and parenting issues. Marriage is of divine origin.

There is man’s way and then – “There’s a Better Way”, God’s way! God established marriage in the very beginning for a divine purpose. All things were created by Him (Jesus) and for Him that includes marriage. (Colossians 1:16) Marriage was the first institution established by God.

## God’s Way

God established marriage. It is the first institution established by God. The family was the second institution ordained by God and the third was government.

From the outset, God established marriage as a permanent relationship, the union of two separate people—a man and a woman—into “one flesh”. God designed marriage to be blessed. For those willing to lay aside the world’s way of doing marriage and begin to do marriage God’s way, there will be unrivaled fulfillment, and happiness.

However, God doesn’t promise that we’ll never face difficulties in marriage. In fact, often we face several challenges in marriage, but when we do marriage God’s way, He is with us helping us navigate THROUGH the rough places. With the right perspective on marriage and using the tools God gives us in His Word, we can know how to handle conflict when it arises and have the wisdom needed to overcome. When we do it God’s way, we can have a healthy and happy marriage for His glory.

It is futile to expect the world to do things God’s way but as Christians we should be committed to following the Lord. This includes doing marriage God’s way. Marriage is designed for believers: men and women who walk by faith and not by sight and live in a daily and growing personal love relationship with Jesus Christ.

Doing marriage God’s way begins by surrendering our will to the will of God. “***Not my will but, your will be done***”. This is our choice, and it is a daily decision. We are notorious for wanting to do things our way. We often allow our choices to be influenced by the world more than the Word of God. We must choose to surrender our ways to His ways.

Marriage that is built on God’s plan and standards requires much more than just human effort and intellectual understanding. It requires transformational changes that makes us different than we were before in our relationship as a couple, and in our individual roles as husband and wife. Marriage is



important to God, and when we do it His way, He will cause our marriage to flourish.

It takes only a few minutes to get married but building a marriage requires a lifetime. Marriage as God designed it is like a precious gem. It develops over time. Diamonds don't form in ten years; they require hundreds of years. That's one reason why God established marriage as a permanent, lifelong relationship. There must be sufficient time for two people with

separate and distinct backgrounds to become fused together. Marriage is a process.

## Doing it God's Way

We will never obtain God's kind of marriage simply by going along with the crowd, doing what everybody else does. We have to dig deep into the heart of God to discover

I can say with great humility and gratefulness that Trudy, and I have watched God work in our lives over the years helping shape and mold us as husband and wife. It has been an exciting journey as God who is rich in mercy and grace bless us and help us become one. He is still working on us. We are a work in process, but we are committed to doing it God's way.

When we miss it or stumble along the way He is there to pick us up and help us continue on for His Glory. Doing it God's way is the better way.

***“being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”*** (Philippians 1:6)



## **MARRIAGE'S DIVINE PURPOSE**

*“And God blessed them. And God said to them,  
“Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and  
subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the  
sea and over the birds of the heavens and over  
every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

*Genesis 1:28*

Everything in life has a purpose. Understanding God’s purpose for marriage and how God designed the man, and the woman is essential for building a healthy and happy marriage.

If you bought a cell phone and never received any training on how to use it—and you completely disregarded the user’s manual—you’d be foolish to get angry when you could not operate it properly or disappointed, you don’t enjoy all the benefits it can provide. It is just as foolish to try to operate a marriage without reading the owner’s manual, the Bible.

The Bible teaches us that marriage is a God-ordained institution that involves the joining of a man and a woman together as “one flesh” in a lifelong relationship.

God’s purpose for the institution of marriage is to establish through it the institution of family and through the family the other intuitions of society.

Human society in all its forms depends on marriage for its survival. That is why the current low regard for marriage in the minds of so many is so dangerous. With all traditional values and foundations being assaulted at every turn, is it any surprise that marriage is under attack as well? With so many people so confused about marriage, is it any wonder that society in general is in such disarray? The adversary’s global attack on marriage is actually an attack on society itself, and ultimately an attack on God, the creator and creator of society and marriage. The adversary knows that if he can destroy

## God’s Divine Purpose

Before there were churches, schools, or businesses; there was the family; and before the family there was marriage.

marriage, he can destroy families; if he can destroy families, he can destroy society; and if he can destroy society, he can destroy humanity.

Marriage is also the foundation upon which the Church is established. The New Testament describes the relationship between Christ and His Church as being like that of a bridegroom to his bride. This analogy has significant implications for understanding how husbands and wives are to relate to each other. So, part of the purpose of marriage is God's way of establishing His kingdom on the earth.

God's purpose for marriage is to bring a man and a woman together as one. ***Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh***" (Genesis 2:24). When we get married, we are to leave our mother and father and cleave to the one we marry. The result? The two become one flesh. It is a miracle of God!

## God's Divine Purpose

Your "marriage is your greatest tool to be a witness for Christ in this world. It is your greatest testimony to bring other people to a knowledge of God, to introduce His power, grace, strength, and love."

Two separate, unique, and whole persons (one male, one female) from different families, backgrounds, and cultures become "ONE FLESH" by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit and when they make a covenant to with one another and

God, committing themselves to remain together until death.

If you keep placing your parents' opinions and views before your spouse's, you are planting seeds of destruction, and you

will eat the fruit of greater discourse and ultimately divorce.

When Trudy and I were married I had just entered the United States Air Force and we were required to move hundreds of miles from our home and parents. It was the best thing that could have happened. We had to depend on one another and were forced to learn to live with each other without family interfering. It turned out to be a great blessing.

No matter how serious you are about your marriage, if you don't know the reason why it exists, you will abuse or misuse it in some way. God's *Foundations for Marriage* introduces you to God's plan for husbands and wives and provides biblical principles you can immediately put into practice in your own marriage. As you grow to be the couple God designed you to be, you will discover firsthand the truth of the Scripture, "*They shall become one flesh*" (Genesis 2:24).

## God's Purpose for Men and Women

God created men and women equal, but He created them different.

God did not create the human race by putting a parent and child in the garden of Eden. He put Adam and Eve there—husband and wife. God established the husband and wife as the primary human relationship, and they are the key to every other relationship.

Understanding and living in God's original purpose for men and women is crucial for right relationships between husbands and wives. If we fight against God's purpose, we will be unfulfilled and frustrated. He made us the way we are for His purposes and our benefit.

God created men and women equal, yet He created them

different. “Different” doesn't mean one is inferior or superior to the other; it simply means different. The differences between men and women are necessary because of their God-given purposes.

Males and females are not different because of society, environment, or family upbringing; they are different by design. Husbands, this means your wife is the way she is because of why she is. Likewise, wives, your husband is the way he is because of why he is.

Because God is love, His plans embody what is best for us. His purpose requires two sexes working together in cooperation to accomplish a mutual vision. Accordingly, males and females have complementary designs that enable them to fulfill God's purpose together.



**A great marriage is not when the 'perfect couple' comes together. It is when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy their differences....**

**Happy Marriage**



Let's take a look at what the Bible teaches about God's purpose for man and woman, husband and wife.

While marriage is a miracle in which God supernaturally makes two become one. The fact remains the two, male and female are different. God uniquely designed each for a specific purpose yet perfectly complementary designs. The secret to a successful marriage is to recognize, support, and benefit from these harmonious purposes. It is to help one's spouse, through unconditional love, to become all God created him or her to be.

No matter how serious you are about your marriage, if you don't know the reason why it exists, you will abuse or misuse it in some way. In the following pages we introduce you to God's plan for husbands and wives and provide biblical principles you can immediately put into practice in your own marriage. As you grow to be the couple God designed you to be, it is vital for you to learn the truth of God's Word about marriage, "*They shall become one flesh*" (Genesis 2:24).

So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he

*created*

him; male and female, he created them.

GENESIS 1:27





## **THE HUSBAND**

*“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”  
Ephesians 5:25*



The biblical functions of an effective husband are to...

- Worship
- Work
- Cultivate
- Protect
- Teach

Any male not carrying out these functions is malfunctioning.

Husbands, in order to be the provider God created you to be, you must have two things—a vision and the means for provision.

***“Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keeps the law, happy is he”*** (Proverbs 29:18v). Having a family vision is so important that if you don't have it, there will be no discipline. Vision will keep you focused, and on course.

A husband's purpose is to lead, teach, and stay in the presence of the Lord so that he knows what his family is to be doing and where they should be going.

Husbands without a clear purpose and vision for their life makes for a frustrated wife. Your wife is a helpmate, but if you're not doing anything, how can you expect your wife to help with it? This opens the door for two totally opposite and separate visions within one home, if that happens you will have division, which leads to all kinds of problems and often divorce. Jesus said, ***“Every kingdom divided against itself brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand”*** (Matthew 12:25).

Listen men, you need to give up his selfish desires in order to serve your wife and family. A real man takes care of others before himself.

The *woman is the glory of the man*” (1 Corinthians 11:7). The glory of something is its true nature or best expression of itself. The sun is in its glory when it shines at noon, and husbands are in their glory when their wives are radiant.

Husbands have a great responsibility to reflect the image of God so that this can be reflected to their wives and their wives can reflect God's image in turn.

Men are supposed to make everything they touch better than it was when they first encountered it. Find new ways to help make your wife better. Your job is to cultivate your wife so she can be all God created her to be. You need to nurture all the potential she has.

## Marriage by the book

“Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; For as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. *And all things are from God.*” 1 Cor. 11:11-12

The boundary that God has established for the one-flesh experience is the husband-and-wife relationship. Marriage enables us to enjoy sex to the fullest. Sex is a physical sign of a spiritual act—the giving of oneself completely to another and for another.

Any man who comes home, grabs his wife by the collar, and shouts, “Woman, you haven't cooked my food yet?” should expect his next meal to be poison. Men, if you're beating up your wife and children, stop it! God didn't give you strength to abuse your family members. He gave you that strength to protect them. They should feel secure every time you show up, not afraid.

# **10 THINGS A HUSBAND SHOULD TELL HIS WIFE**

- 1. I love you.**
- 2. I am grateful you are my wife.**
- 3. How can I help?**
- 4. You look amazing.**
- 5. Let's pray together.**
- 6. Let me do that for you**
- 7. What do you think?**
- 8. You're the best.**
- 9. I'm sorry or I was wrong.**
- 10. I appreciate all that you do.**

Husbands are always to be accountable and responsible. Real men don't play the blame game—always pointing a finger at everyone but themselves. When something is wrong in your marriage, it's up to you to make it right. Don't wait for the other person to make the first move. Men, as far as God is concerned, you are ready for marriage when you are able to teach your family His Word. If you don't know the Word, you should make it a priority to study and gain knowledge of the Bible. You can't teach what you don't know.

Your wife is like a flower that adapts to the soil. You are like the soil. If you don't like what she has been manifesting, then check what you've been feeding her—nutrients or poison. ***“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked;[or whatever a man sows, that he will also reap”*** (Galatians 6:7). God created your wife to function on love, and if you are not giving your love to her, then you are causing her to malfunction.

*The woman is the glory of the man”* (1 Corinthians 11:7. Your wife was made to be your glory and expose what you are like. When she's happy, that's to your credit. If she's always depressed, withdrawn, sad, or grouchy, that tells me a lot about you, too. She is simply manifesting your glory.

God designed you to cultivate your wife like a beautiful tree. If your tree is wilted after a few years, then it isn't her fault. If you've been married for five years or more and she still hasn't blossomed, then you have a poor track record, brother.

Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the Church. (Ephesians 5:25). *(Wives this is written to your husbands not to you, so it is not your responsibility to remind of it. You need to stay focused on what God tells you do as a wife. We are going to cover those things in a few pages. However, this is written to the men.)* So, take heed men and love you wives like

Christ loved the church. Be the man God created you to be.

Husbands, you ought to always praise your wife. Speak well of her and esteem her highly; lift her up with your words; brag about her; magnify the little things she does by making them bigger than life.

Men, the words you speak to your wife affect her emotionally. What your wife is thinking is often different from what she is feeling and saying. You need to be patient and work through her emotions to find out what is truly on her mind. Conversing attentively with your wife fulfills a need within her. Listen to her and show interest in what she's saying.

Never think that by fulfilling a want, you are satisfying a need. A minkcoat may be something your wife wants, but it doesn't meet her need. She needs you to talk to her and tell her she's somebody important, special, unique, and everything you've ever dreamed of.

## Built to last

Let the wife make the husband glad to come home and let him make her sorry to see him leave.

- Martin Luther

Men, take care of your wives. Caring means that you go out of your way to make sure that she has everything she needs. Caring means that you leave everything you're doing just to make sure she's okay. Anticipate her need and meet it. That's love. ***“May you ever be captivated by her love”*** (Proverbs 5:19).

Being captivated by your wife's love is a decision you must make. Allow your wife's love to enthrall you. Call your wife every day and check to make sure everything is okay. Some men check on the sports scores or the Dow Jones average more

than they check on their wives. They have the right spirit but the wrong target.

If your wife asks, “Where are you going? What are you doing? Why did you take so long?” she isn't being nosey. She is the way she is because of why she is. What could be so secretive that your helper cannot help you with.

If your wife can't help you, she'll find something else to help. Ever wonder why the church is filled with so many women? Their husbands don't have a vision for their homes; therefore, the women go to the churches and help the ministers fulfill their visions. (selah)

A lot of women are filled with the bitterness their husbands have been pouring into them over the years. Unless their husbands repent and shower them with an abundance of love to wash away the poison, they will reap what they sow

Men, pay attention: Affection and sex are not the same. If you're not sure how to be affectionate, ask your wife. You'll be amazed by her responses. Do you know that just pushing the shopping cart patiently in the grocery store is a sign of affection? Helping her cook is being affectionate. Taking her shopping and watch her try on clothes and telling her she looks great. That's affection!

Do you know what season your wife is in? When it's summer, the sun is at high noon and hot. When autumn comes, things have cooled a bit. When it's winter, you're out in the cold! But suddenly, spring comes, and everything starts growing again. Now, you need to understand that sometimes you may be ready, but it's wintertime for your wife! When a woman asks you to hold her, she doesn't want to go to bed, she wants affection. Now, if you hold her long enough, you just may get rewarded!

***“Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice with the wife of your youth”*** (Proverbs 5:18). This verse is not saying to enjoy your wife when she is young and then go looking for somebody else. Your wife is supposed to be even better and sweeter to you as you both get older. So, grow old gracefully together.

Men, in order to learn how to love your wives, you first have to find out how Christ loved His church by studying His ultimate manual on love, the Bible.

God does not compare your marriage to that of your brother, sister, parents, or friends. He compares your marriage to Christ and His church. That is the standard. Husbands, the highest witness for Christ that you can give is loving your wife as He loved the church.

We need real men in our communities—men of the Word who know what true love is. Your wife wants to hear, “I love you. You’re beautiful. You’re so precious to me.”

Your wife didn’t forfeit her dreams and aspirations when she married you. She has basic needs and desires to feel successful and personally satisfied in her life, just as you do. Find out what her dreams are and be supportive of her goals.

You must accept the fact that the person you married is not exactly like you. Yet when the differences between your spouse and you press together, they will form the precious gem your marriage was always meant to be.



## THE WIFE

*“An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.” Proverbs 31:10*



There are three God-given purposes for a woman, they are enhancer, reflector, and life-giver.

The angel said to the women, “*He is risen! He is not here....Go, tell His disciples...*” (Mark 16:6-7). Why didn't God give the resurrection message to men first? They forget too much and don't have the ability to give life. He spoke to women who could take that message and never stop talking about it. This a good thing not a bad thing. PTL!

A woman is gifted with many creative abilities that can assist her loved ones, herself, and the world. She is an entire research and development department all in one. She sees possibilities and potential. She develops ideas and programs. She conceives and invents.

The wife is an inherent life giver—she multiplies everything she receives. Give her a smile, and she'll give you, her heart. Give her a house, and she'll give you a home. Give her frustration, and she will give you \_\_\_\_\_? (fill in the blank). That is how God created women.

Husbands, pay attention: If you take a little idea and drop it into your wife's mind, you'll never get just an idea back—you'll get a detailed plan!

Wives remember, your ability to think, develop ideas, and come up with plans is supposed to help your husband. BUT... if you're trying to prove to him that you're just as good as he is, then you're not his helper; you're his competitor.

If your husband doesn't pray or do the things you think he is supposed to do, don't brow beat him by asking, “Why don't you ever get up and pray? or why aren't you the man of the house or why aren't you loving like Jesus” Instead; “Pray for

him. (1 Corinthians 7:14).

When your husband opens up to you, encourage him. Don't knock him down with arguments and negativity, no matter how right you think you are. *"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger"* (Proverbs 15:1).

When God made woman, He drew her out of man so the man would have someone to love who was of the same nature. It was love that brought about the woman's existence.

Husband and wives are to respect and love one another. Jesus reinforced this principle when He said one of the greatest commandments is *"Love your neighbor as yourself"* (Matthew 19:19). If we really understood this truth, there would be more

patience, understanding, and forgiveness among men and women.

## Marriage by the book

*"Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; For as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God."* 1 Cor. 11:11-12

Your spouse needs to hear sweet words from *you*, not the person lingering by the water cooler! *"Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones"* (Proverbs 16:24).

Wives don't ever get so "spiritual" that you stay away from your home every night of the week going to prayer meetings. Though you think you're seeking the Lord's face, you will be giving the devil

an opening into your home. *"Do not give the devil a foothold"* (Ephesians 4:27).

Being a Christian doesn't give you the license to neglect your spouse. Your first mission field should be your husband. The same is true for the husband, your first mission field is your wife.

I am so grateful for my wife. She has always looked for ways to affirm me and help me. As associate pastor of a church with over 15,000 members and responsible for most areas of the church I was at the church almost everyday for many hours. My wife would come and be with me. Wherever I went or needed to be, doing a funeral, doing a wedding, counseling a couple, she was there. She invested in me, and our marriage was blessed. In return by the grace of God and the help of the Holy Spirit I would love her like Christ loved the church.

A wife can be a powerful force for good in her husband's life. *The Lord God said, 'It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him''* (Genesis 2:18). The wife's first purpose is to be a companion to her husband, so he won't be alone.

Wives even if your husband may not be able to provide you with a castle right away, you should take whatever he provides for you and give life to it. Paint it, add color to it, and place flowers in it. God blessed you with the ability to make that house a home.

If your husband doesn't know what to do or how to do it, you need to help him. Help him by pushing him into his position, not by taking it away from him. Never emasculate your man. *"She does him good and not evil all the days of her life"* (Proverbs 31:12).

Wives, you should always ask before you act, "Will this do him good?" A good wife will help her husband become all he's

supposed to be. A good woman knows what to say and how to say it build up and not tear down her husband.

*“She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness”* (Proverbs 31:26).

*Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her”* (Proverbs 31:28).

Wives know this, the words you speak to your husband provide him with information. Your husband is not looking for **emotions**. When you want to talk to him, you have to tell him what you think first, before you express what you feel.

Most men have great difficulty verbalizing their emotions, especially when they are hurting, depressed, or sad. A wife needs to create an environment that will enable her husband to

## Marriage by the book

“Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; For as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. *And all things are from God.*” 1 Cor. 11:11-12

be free enough to tell her what he is feeling—not cultivate an environment so negative that he won't ever risk revealing himself.

Women, remember that when your husband is talking, he's not telling you what he's feeling; he's telling you what he's thinking. Therefore, don't draw any conclusions without first discovering what he's feeling behind his thinking.

Men, by the virtue of his purpose, has a teaching capacity. The worst thing to do to a teacher is to make him believe he doesn't know anything. When you start making the teacher feel like he has nothing to offer, you are ~~hurting~~ his very

nature.

Ladies, the best thing you can do for a man is to keep saying, “Tell me more.” Even if it seems like foolishness, ask him about it. Encourage him to talk and to share his thoughts by listening to what he is saying.

Never underestimate the value of being supportive of each other's goals, aspirations, and dreams. They provide the wings for your spouse to soar like an eagle and truly accomplish all things.

One of the most ridiculous and dangerous things to tell your husband is, “Why don't you be like So-and-so?” Every man is his own being, and he has his own image of himself. Your job is to be supportive of *him*, not the clone you think he should be.

When you tell your husband that you don't need him, you are doing more than just wounding his feelings; you are killing the very heart of his nature. He was designed to sustain and provide for you. It's the essence of his manhood.

The husband is designed to fulfill his purpose; his purpose determines his nature, and his nature determines his needs. If you want your husband to function effectively, then discover and learn to fulfill his needs.

Don't give your spouse what you need. You both have totally opposite needs and will only frustrate each other by assuming the other should be satisfied with what satisfies you.

Husbands and wives must work together to address one another's needs. Jesus' great principle, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts20:35), is vital. As you give and meet the needs of others, you will be blessed.

*Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses”* (Mark 11:25). Forgive and continually keep on forgiving. Unforgiveness not only can kill your marriage, but its stench can also cause your spiritual relationship with God to rot and die.

Wives, bless your husbands by getting involved in their recreational activities. If he likes to play tennis, then learn how to play tennis. If he likes to jog, then jog with him sometimes. If he likes football, learn how to throw and catch the ball. Play his game and you'll win your game.

Wives, do you know how many men are where they are today because their helpmates made sure they got there? Whatever a man is not, his wife can help him become. The secret to staying in love is to keep finding things within your spouse to fall in love with over and over again.

***“A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband”*** (Pv. 12:4). The crown of a king is his glory. Many people think that a good wife is just the queen to her king (her husband), but he is only a king because she is the crown of his glory.

***“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus”*** (Philippians 2:5). If the husband and wife both have the same attitude as Christ Jesus, then their relationship is based on selfless giving, sacrifice, service, and forgiveness.



## **Seven Choices You Can Make to Strengthen Your Marriage**

1. The choice to grow spiritually
2. The choice to love unconditionally
3. The choice to serve sacrificially
4. The choice to forgive (often & quickly)
5. The choice to persevere persistently
6. The choice to communicate respectfully
7. The choice to bless abundantly



# Key Number 1

## *Jesus*

*“For God has already placed Jesus Christ as the one and only foundation, and no other foundation can be laid.” 1 Corinthians 3:11*



Jesus is the key to and for everything in life. Without Jesus there is no life – i.e., an abundant fulfilling life. (John14:6) Therefore, He is the master key to marriage.

In 1Cor.3:10-11 Paul tells us that there is only one sure foundation that we can build on: *“According to the grace of God, which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”*

God is warning us to be careful what we build upon. Too often we build our marriage relationships on an unsure foundation that cannot stand the trials and tests of time.

The only way marriage can fulfill its genuine purpose is when Jesus is the foundation of our marriage. Making Christ the foundation is fundamentally a choice. Each couple chooses either to build on the rock of Christ or a foundation of sinking sand.

Making Jesus the foundation of your marriage does not mean there will not be any storms or challenges what it does mean is your marriage will withstand the storms and become stronger and better.

How can you have a healthy and happy marriage? Make sure God is at the center of your marriage. There is no other way for your marriage to truly thrive. God and marriage must go hand in hand if you desire to have a successful marriage.

Having your marriage centered on God is a foundational principle to marriage. Without God as the foundation, all other keys cannot be grounded properly. A marriage built on God seeks God, serves God, honors God, and pursues God.

The union of two sinners is doomed to destruction – unless they have surrendered their life to Jesus and make Him Lord of their life and marriage. The only way to make it is to have God as the glue holding you together, to build your marriage on Him as the foundation.

The world has many ideas of what makes a strong foundation. Some say it's education. Some say it's a love of and reliance on self. Others claim that it's power. Still others believe it's money. And today, with the prominence of social media, a growing number believe it's influence and prestige. But *none* of these ideas are foundations that will build a life and marriage that will last. Every one of them will crumble, falter, disappoint and lead you astray. Relying on whatever human strength you and your spouse have is not enough to make it.

Building your life and marriage on the rock of Jesus is the only way to have a healthy and happy marriage. You can know and

## Built to last

Having your marriage centered on God is a foundational principle to marriage

trust that God has a *good purpose* for marriage. He will help equip you, transform you, and empower you well beyond what you are capable of doing in your own ability and power.

All of this I'm sure makes sense to you and sounds good. You know you should do it – make Jesus the foundation of your

marriage – but what does that look like? How do you do it?

### How Do You Build on the Foundation of Jesus?

Jesus gives us the answer in Matthew 7. He said, “***whoever hears my Words, and does them...***” these are the ones who build on the rock. There just two basic steps; 1) hear His Word and 2) Put His Word into Action.

Hearing His Word includes – reading, listening, speaking, and meditating on the Word. When we do, we are feeding our spirit and providing the nutrition it needs to be healthy and strong. Jesus said, “***Man does not live by bread alone but by every Word that comes out of the mouth of God***”. (Matthew 4:4) We need to hide the Word in our hearts. (Psalm 119:11)

Have our foundation built on Jesus starts with knowing what His Word says.

However, it is not enough to only hear His Word. James warns us

***“not to be hearers only but doers of the word”*** (James 1:22)

We need to put His Word into action. When it says to forgive those who use us, we need to forgive. When it tells us not to worry, we need to not be anxious for anything, etc. We need to actively engage God's word – into our lives, how we think, what we say, how we respond, how we act.

The answer to how you build your life and marriage on the foundation of Jesus is very simple and straight forward however, it is not easy. There are forces at work trying to get us to question the Word of God. The cares of the world try to rob of us our time in the Word. Doubt and fear try to steal our peace and faith.

If you want to build your marriage on the foundation on Jesus, you will need to invest your time in the Word of God and then put that Word into action in your life and relationship every day.

When you build on the firm foundation of Christ, you will be able to withstand whatever comes your way. A foundation based on God produces steadfast faith and a life that allows us to be living examples to others.

Learn to trust God with the small stuff. When you do, you will find it easier to trust God with the big stuff and all that concerns your marriage. So,

- **trust the Lord** and know that the promises of God are sure.

- **abide in His Word** and you will see the power of God, the promise of God, the provision of God, and the presence of God.
- **apply God's word** to your life: believe it, live it, trust it, apply it and pray according to God's word.
- **have faith in Jesus** and in God's word.



## **Key Number 2**

# ***Holy Spirit***

*“But the Holy Spirit will come and help you,  
because the Father will send the Spirit...”*  
*John 14:26*

Learning marriage principles is great and they can be helpful, but we need the power of the Holy Spirit for our marriages to remain healthy and happy. Next to building our marriage on the foundation of Jesus we need to engage with the Holy Spirit for our life and relationships to thrive. The Holy Spirit is our helper!

Unfortunately, when it comes to marriage we often feel alone. God's standard for husbands and wives is so high that we wonder, **“Who is going to help us be the husband or wife the Word of God instructs us to be? How can we deal with all the marriage problems we face?”**

The answer is the Holy Spirit will help you! When God created marriage, He breathed the Holy Spirit into Adam and Eve. Their marriage was Spirit-filled until they rejected God. Because of the redemptive work of Christ at calvary the Holy Spirit is available to every believer and Christian marriage.

Do you remember when you were at the altar getting ready to say I DO? At that time, you saw only two people (you and your spouse) as the minister announced the marriage covenant. You may not have realized at that time there was a third unseen person at the altar with you waiting to seal the marriage covenant. It was the Holy Spirit!

Marriage is a covenant with three people, husband, wife, & God (the Holy Spirit) ***“A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.” (Ecclesiastes 4:12)*** The third strand in the cord of marriage is the Holy Spirit

Jesus sent a helper – the Holy Spirit to help us as believers. In Malachi 2, it says that marriage is God's “Holy Institute.” The Holy Spirit is also there to help us in our marriage. It is the Holy Spirit's job as teacher, leader, guide, and helper to make sure

that the two become one flesh. The Holy Spirit produces fellowship with God and an affective relationship with our spouses.

We need to allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives and marriages if we are to have lives-and therefore marriages-characterized by love, joy, and peace. Often, we try to do marriage on our own without the help of the Holy Spirit.

So how do we allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in our marriage? First, remember and realize the Holy Spirit is available to help every believing Christian in all aspects of their lives, including marriage. He is interested in every detail of your life no matter how small or big.

## Marriage by the Book

The Holy Spirit is your helper. He will guide you and teach you in your marriage

Second, recognize you need His help. If you agree and believe the Holy Spirit is an important key to the health and happiness of your marriage, consider these four steps – they can lead your marriage toward a renewed sense of oneness:

1. Ask God to teach you these insights concerning His Holy Spirit.
2. Believe that God loves you and that He desires to walk with you in oneness through the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. Confess to God your utter dependency on the Holy Spirit for power. If there is any known sin in your life, confess it by agreeing with God that it is sin and is displeasing to Him.

4. Draw upon God's power by faith and obedience. Begin walking by the Spirit in your marriage: "Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25).

When you ask the Holy Spirit to help your marriage succeed. He will teach how to not quench the Spirit, but instead how to flow with the spirit. He will teach you how to keep your marriage fresh and vibrant!

The Holy Spirit is always speaking and ready to help, the question is are we listening? It is important to be sensitive and alert to hear from him because he is the helper sent to us by God to help guide us through our marital relationship.

We should also listen for the Holy Spirit especially when we are having a tough time with our spouse because He will provide us with the correct answers on how to handle each situation.

So, listen carefully for the Holy Spirit as He attempts to communicate and guide you through your marital situations. By utilizing the Holy Spirit, you will have a successful lasting marriage. Please allow the Holy Spirit the opportunity to participate in your marriage today. You have tried everything else, give Him a try!!!!

Life is busy, raising kids, making a living, paying bills, and handling all the challenges that come – all of these make it hard for couples to maintain a strong marriage today. Stress leads to tension and our sinful human nature comes out. We need power that is beyond us to overcome our sinful tendencies. God provides this power through the person of the Holy Spirit.

Living out our faith in our marriage and home is not a religious



effort, but the working out of all the aspects of our daily life with the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit not only gives us wisdom but also the power to be transformed.

The Holy Spirit is an important key for a healthy and happy marriage!



## Key Number 3

# *Prayer*

*“Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”*  
***Philippians 4:6-7***

Prayer is a paramount biblical key to a healthy marriage. There is power in prayer. Jesus said, *“if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three have gathered together in My name, I am there in their midst.”* (Matthew 18:19-20) And when a married couple agrees in prayer together it is even more powerful, it has a powerful impact on their marriage like nothing else, they can do. *“A couple that prays together stays together”*.

In fact, statistics tell us while **50 percent of first marriages end in divorce, and 78 percent of second marriages end in divorce, less than 1 percent of couples who pray together daily end their marriages.** This alone ought to motivate any couple to invest time in prayer.

## Marriage by the Book

It took two to get  
married, but it will take  
three to stay married.  
Keep God in your  
marriage.

Praying for together as a couple is probably your greatest weapon and source of strength! Too often prayer is a last resort for most Christians. When we are suffering, hurting, or in trouble we will pray. If your marriage is in trouble, you generally don't have to be told to pray. We need to make prayer and offensive weapon not a defensive weapon.

I am talking about praying together as husband and wife. Our individual prayer time is equally important. If we are not praying, we are not receiving the input and ministry we need from the Father. Not only does that impact our individual faith walk it will also impact our marriage relationship. So, make sure you are having your individual prayer time. It will have major positive impact in your marriage.

However, your individual prayer time is not a substitute for your prayer time as a couple. If you want to move from just surviving in your marriage to thriving marriage it can be found in the secret place: prayer.

Trudy and I pray together almost every morning. We have made it a priority. It is not a long time, but we hold hands and begin to pray together. We begin by praying in the spirit and then move into praise and thanksgiving. We enter His presence with thanksgiving and come before Him with praise. We thank Him for His mercy and grace in our life, for saving us, and for every good and perfect gift that comes from Him. We pray for our family, church, and ministries. We ask for His help, wisdom and direction for the day. We always end with a kiss.

Prayer is not optional it is necessary **IF** you truly want to build a godly marriage that flourishes. So, how do you get started praying together? Here are a few tips on getting started.

1. Start by having a discussion about praying together.
2. Talk about the day and time that will work best for you. I encourage you to have prayer every day.
3. Start small. Maybe just 5 minutes a day to start. Often if couples try to commit to something longer, they give up and quit. You can always add more time as you get into a routine.
4. Discuss how you will pray? What I mean is do you both pray at the same time, or does the husband start and the wife finish or vice versa. Do you alternate days. One day the husband leads and the next the wife.
5. Start out with some type of prayer model to follow. Like - P.R.A.Y.

P – raise and worship. Start by praising God for who He is.  
R – repent asking for God’s forgiveness for where we have done things we shouldn’t and not doing things we should. His mercy is new every morning  
A – ask God for the things and help you need.  
Y – yielded slow down and appreciate God presence and goodness. Thank Him for all that He has done for you.

Be comfortable with silence. Sometimes when you’re praying with another person, there may be a lull in the conversation you’re having with God. That’s okay. Just wait, staying tuned for God to lay something on your heart to pray next. If it seems you’re done praying, one person can close the prayer with “Amen.” (Amen means “so be it” in Hebrew.)

There are many benefits to praying together. Some of them are

1. It helps keep God and the center of your relationship and dependence upon him.
2. It strengthen your love for each other
3. It changes things.
4. It help foster unity
5. It unlocks the kingdom into your life as a married couple.

Know this when you pray together your prayers go directly to God’s throne. He hears every breath, praise, and plea uttered. There is power in prayer. It is a huge key to a healthy and happy marriage



**Key Number 4**  
*Love*

*“Love never fails” 1Corinthians 13:8*

The word *love* is tossed around so frivolously in today's world we often miss the kind of love that marriage works on. We love pizza. We love our favorite sports team. There is the love we have for our friends and family. There is even the romantic love that we experience.

However, the key to marriage is a different kind of love. It is the God kind of love. In the Greek it is called "Agape". 1 John 4:8 says, "God is love". The Greek word there is "agape" meaning He is the source of love. His love is undeserved, unconditional, gracious, and sacrificial.

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 provides us the most complete Biblical definition. It says, "***Love (the God kind of Love) endures with patience and serenity, love is kind and thoughtful, and is not jealous or envious; love does not brag and is not proud or arrogant. <sup>5</sup>It is not rude; it is not self-seeking; it is not provoked [nor overly sensitive and easily angered]; it does not take into account a wrong endured. <sup>6</sup>It does not rejoice at injustice but rejoices with the truth [when right and truth prevail]. <sup>7</sup>Love bears all things [regardless of what comes], believes all things [looking for the best in each one], hopes all things [remaining steadfast during difficult times], endures all things [without weakening]. <sup>8</sup>Love never fails [it never fades nor ends].***

Notice this kind of love never fails. It is this kind of love that Christian marriages are based and built on. Our relationship with our spouse may begin on a friendship kind of love and move into a romantic type of love, but if our marriage does not move to an Agape kind of love, it will never grow into the full potential of what God intends it to be. Love, the God kind of love is an important key to a healthy and happy marriage.

This kind of love is not based on feelings or emotions. It is a choice that you make on the basis of what God said, and then act on it in faith until it becomes a reality in your spirit, soul,

and body.

The God kind of love is unconditional. In other words, our love for our spouse is not based on what they do or don't do. We don't withhold our love because they don't meet our needs or act in a way we want or expect. We love them because we make the decision to love. A godly marriage doesn't give love on an "if – then" basis or base love on feelings alone. Both measures are very unhealthy.

Our love is sacrificial. This means our love withstands the failings and weaknesses of the one we love at our own peril; it is committed to helping and doing whatever it takes to make our spouse better regardless of the cost.

The love we're to show our spouse is to be reflective of the love God shows us every single day. Certainly, our spouse isn't always deserving...neither are we if we're honest with ourselves. Yet, in spite of ourselves, Christ loves us with an everlasting love that never ever runs dry.



## Built to Last

The God kind of love  
NEVER fails. Choose  
to love.

When expressing love to your spouse is difficult, take extra time to fill up on God's love. Remember it is a decision not a feeling. As a Christian, you can do it because the love of God is in you. (Romans 5:5) Just chose to let the love of God in you out!



Walking in love is not only a key for a healthy and happy marriage it is the key to the life of faith. Faith works by love. (Galatians 5:6) Anything we do without faith is worthless, like a clanging cymbal. (1Corinthians 13:1)

So, if you want your marriage to be everything God intends it to be choose to “love” when you do your marriage cannot fail. It is a key that unlocks the full potential of your marriage.



## **Key Number 5**

# *Mercy*

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

Mercy is another powerful way to cultivate the characteristics of a healthy marriage. This is possible because of Jesus Christ.

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)*

*Do not let the sun go down on your wrath. (Ephesians 4:26)*

Marriage provides many opportunities to extend mercy to our spouse and it gives our spouse many opportunities be merciful to us. In Matthew 5:7 Jesus said, “**Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.**” When you are merciful you are blessed, and in turn your marriage will be blessed. Being merciful means being kind and forgiving. Forgiveness is the action of mercy. Forgiveness plays such a huge role in marriage.

## Keys for a Health Marriage

God's mercies are new  
every morning.  
Receive them.

If your marriage is to remain healthy and happy both husband and wife need to be ready to always forgive. Mercy is an essential key for a healthy and happy marriage.

In marriage, it can be tempting to try and just ignore frustrations and brush offenses under the proverbial rug hoping they will eventually go away. However, instead those offenses become roots of bitterness that fester and

develop into something worse and more destructive.

Holding onto past hurts, offenses, and sins isn't healthy for the relationship and will put your marriage in the cross hairs of the devil. “**For where envying and strife is, there is confusion**

***and every evil work.***” (James 3:16) So, shut the door to evil and choose to forgive.

Forgiveness is a choice. Often, we withhold forgiveness waiting until the other person apologizes or until we feel they have suffered enough. We must choose to forgive and give it to God regardless of what the other person does or doesn't do. Some wrongs may seem too big to forgive. Some things are just too hurtful. Too shameful. Too invasive. Too heartbreaking. Too incomprehensible for our human minds and hearts. BUT, with the help and grace of God we can choose to forgive. ***“Mercy triumphs over judgment.”*** (James 2:13)

Forgiveness is about goodness, about extending mercy to those who've harmed us, even if they don't “deserve” it. It is not about finding excuses for the offending person's behavior or pretending it didn't happen. Forgiveness is not about letting someone get away with doing wrong. Forgiveness is giving mercy. Mercy is NOT giving someone what they deserve.

Here are three reasons to choose to forgive.

- 1. God calls us to forgive others their offenses against us** – *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”* -Ephesians 4:32
- 2. Unforgiveness separates us from God** – *“But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”* - Matthew 6:15
- 3. When we forgive others we experience true freedom** – *“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.”* - Galatians 5:1

In choosing to forgive, we are following the perfect example of

God, who delights to show mercy. The Scripture (Proverbs 19:11) tells us how God says it is to our glory when we choose to overlook offenses. And that, I believe strongly, is a major key to having a healthy and happy marriage — not defending your “rights,” but choosing to overlook and forgive. Our time is too short to be spent trapped in the bitterness of offenses past.

In Matthew 18:21-35 Jesus reveals how seriously God takes our unwillingness to forgive others of their offenses against us. He uses the story of a wealthy man who came to collect debts from servants who owed him money. One particular servant owed him 10,000 talents, which is equivalent to 150,000 years’ worth of wages. That’s a lot of money, but the wealthy man showed compassion and forgave the debt. All of it! The servant went and demanded payment from another servant who owed him 100 days wages. When he couldn’t pay it back, the servant who had been forgiven the huge debt threw his fellow servant in prison. The one who had been forgiven much refused to extend the same compassion that he had received.

The wealthy man was justifiably angered by this and “*handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.*” (Matt 18:34) I think if we all were watching this, we would’ve applauded the wealthy man’s rebuke to the ungrateful servant. But it’s what Jesus said next that is so shocking. Speaking to Peter, Jesus said “*so shall my heavenly father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart.*” What Jesus is literally saying is that if we refuse to forgive anyone who has wounded us, our Heavenly Father will turn us over to tormenting forces until we forgive. And there are no exceptions to this. You see, we are not tormented by what happened to us in the past, we are tormented because we have not forgiven what happened in the past and in the marriage that unforgiveness makes for a troubled marriage. Is it really worth it not to forgive?

So, how are you able to choose to forgive when it seems impossible? Here are some 7 tips to help **you forgive-**

1. Remember how God has forgiven you. (Aren't you glad)
2. Don't make your forgiveness conditional.
3. Leave the judging to God.
4. Ask God for help – with God nothing is impossible (Luke 1:37)
5. Trust God – that is what faith is and choosing to forgive is an act of faith
6. You need mercy. Sow mercy and reap mercy.
7. Your own peace – holding on to unforgiveness is not worth staying upset and anxious.

Mercy in marriage is a two way street. While it is imperative for each spouse to choose to extend mercy and forgiveness it is just as important to be able to receive mercy and forgiveness. Sometimes because of guilt it can be difficult to receive forgiveness. Other times we are embarrassed of what we've done and don't want to deal with. Then there are situations where we just don't want to admit and take responsibility.

Receiving forgiveness starts with saying "I'm sorry". It is admitting you were wrong and committing to change. Any apology that is followed with the word "but" is not an apology. Saying, "I'm sorry that I hurt your feelings by doing \_\_\_\_\_, but what I really *meant* was..." is a false apology. But, a sincere apology, free of conditions and expectations, allows the work of the Holy Spirit to bring your peace and healing.

As beautiful as marriage is, there are times when we will get offended by our partners, feel hurt by their actions, and be disappointed in them. He will make mistakes. She will make mistakes. It is part of marriage. The question is what will you do when they happen? Do you allow them to create a division

that harms or even destroys the relationship? Absolutely not! Hence, the need for mercy and forgiveness. Mercy is a key to a healthy and happy marriage.





## **Key Number 6**

# *Humility*

*“Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another.” 1 Peter 5:5*



I'll admit it: I love winning. I am very competitive – at everything. I want win even if I'm playing tidily winks. I hate losing. When I do I stay up thinking of what I did wrong and how I could've won.

One of the first arguments Trudy and I had was while playing rummy. One night we were looking for something to do and she suggested we play cards. Her game of choice – rummy. Well, I discovered she was just as competitive, and she began to win game after game. My excuse, it was just a game of “luck”. It didn't require any skill and she just won because of “dumb luck”.

## Keys for a Health Marriage

A great man is always  
willing to be little.

Well, she continued to win and began to rub it in with little digging comments. My competitiveness and ego took over and I began to respond in a way that escalated the situation until I got mad. Things only got worse because of by very selfish and immature attitude.

Through that situation and a few more like it plus some growing up we realized the importance of having a “spirit of humility”. One verse that keeps us grounded in this area is James 4:6: “**God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.**” Let that sink in. It says God fights against those who are proud, BUT He pours out His grace (that is His power and ability) upon those who are humble.

You don't have to be a genius to figure out if you want God's help you better develop a spirit of humility. Humility is a significant key for a healthy and happy marriage. We need to **stay humble**. Pride and arrogance do not make a godly

marriage, but humility does. Humility is an ingredient for a peaceful home and unifies you and your spouse. Ephesians 4 2-3 (NIV) says *“With all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”*

## Keys for a Health Marriage

Humility is the  
foundation of all  
Godly virtues.

At the root of pride is selfishness. The greatest enemy of love in a marriage is selfishness—putting self-first instead of the needs of our spouse. Selfishness and pride are at the root of most every other problem. Problems like poor communication, financial challenges, problems in the area of intimacy, even infidelity, are all symptoms of selfishness.

Almost without exception when I meet with couples having marital problems the conversation will begin with, He or she doesn't understand ME, she isn't meeting MY needs, he isn't listening to ME, he's not paying attention to ME, etc. Notice it is all about ME. At the root of their problem is selfishness.

Prideful people are defensive, angry, blame-shifting, and focused on self. They consistently see that the problem lies not with them, but with everyone else. The gospel is not the focus; it is not the goal.

Humble people are broken over their own sin, more concerned with honoring God than arguing about what they deserve and try—by the grace of God—to stay focused on the gospel and the goal.

Peter tells us to, “*dress ourselves in humility*” (1Pt. 5:5) Notice it says WE are to put on the clothes of humility. God doesn’t do it for us. Noone else will do it for us. Here are three things to consider as you consider clothing yourself with humility:

1. **It’s a choice.** You can choose to live selfishly. You can choose not to put on humility. You can choose to live in opposition to your spouse. But considering the outcomes and strife, why would you choose relational destruction? Instead say, “Today, I am choosing to put on humility in my marriage. I choose to put pride aside and serve my spouse.”
2. **It’s an attitude.** The ability to see our own faults and admit when we are wrong is an expression of humility in marriage. Asking forgiveness and granting forgiveness with our spouse are ongoing expressions of humility as well.
3. **It’s a reflection of Jesus.** The Apostle Paul writes that Jesus, “*being in very nature God...made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant*” (Philippians 2:6-7). Our choosing to be clothed in humility and serve our spouse becomes a living example of Jesus’ humility to our spouse

When you choose to humble yourself, you open the way for God’s grace and favor into your marriage. It will strengthen your relationship and build your marriage.

**"Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's not thinking of yourself at all."**

A successful godly marriage cultivates humility. I can’t urge you strongly enough in your marriage to commit yourselves to a life of humbly serving your spouse.



## Key Number 7

# Work

*But don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves. For if you listen to the word and don't obey, it is like glancing at your face in a mirror. You see yourself, walk away, and forget what you look like. James 1:22-24*

The previous six keys to a healthy and happy marriage all are very important, but like any key for it to work you have to take it, put it in the right keyhole, and turn it. When you do it unlocks the treasure that had been locked away. Just having the key, but not using it does you no good. You have to work the key to open the lock.

Having a great marriage and having a marriage that continues getting better through the years takes work. If there was a secret sauce to marriage it would be work.

Doing well at your career takes work. So does staying in shape. Why would having a great marriage not take equally or even more work? MARRIAGE ISN'T EASY! It requires work. It requires investment. It requires you to roll up your sleeves and says, "*I want to make my marriage the best marriage ever.*" **A good marriage will never happen by accident.**

I am amazed at how many couples date, follow in love, get married and then think their marriage is going to just work out itself out and be great.

People will invest thousands of dollars and four to eight years of education to prepare for their career plus receive on the job training and continuing education. They will attend seminars and conferences to gain more knowledge and expertise to become even better at what they do.

Men and women will invest thousands of dollars and hours of time to improve their golf game, become a better cook, learn how to knit, or how to catch more fish. Isn't your marriage more important and valuable than any hobby?

A healthy and happy marriage requires continual commitment, energy, and devotion on the parts of both you and your spouse – throughout the days, weeks, months and years. In fact, marriage is merely a work in progress-it needs to be watered like a plant in order to grow and flourish. Having a thriving relationship over years is not for the faint of heart. You can't be lazy about it or expect it just to happen. You need to continue to invest in your marriage. Work is a NECESSAR key for a

marriage to be healthy and happy. It is not optional.

So, what does work look like when it comes to marriage? I am going to use the word **W.O.R.K.** as an acrostic to help explain it.

## **Worship**

What is worship? Worship is an expression, an encounter, and an experience with God. In other words, worship is the act of focusing on God. Usually when we think of worship only as what we experience at Church and with other believers when we sing songs of praise and worship. While corporate worship is very powerful and important worship goes beyond a once a week cooperate setting and just singing songs. Worship is a lifestyle. Jesus said, “***God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.***” (John 4:24)

Why worship? Because the heart of worship is placing God at the very center of our lives that includes our marriage.

As a couple we need to make worship an integral part of our marriage keeping God at the very heart and core of our relationship.

It is NOT work to worship God, but it does take work to make sure worship is a priority in our lives and in our marriage. It begins by understanding the importance of worship and then making it a priority. Life is busy and it is easy to allow other things to become our focus of worship.

So, how do you make worship a part of your marriage? Here are a few ideas of how you can incorporate worship in your relationship.

1. Attend church services together
2. Pray together every day.

3. Start and end the day thanking God together
4. Whenever driving in the car together you can praise God.
5. Have worship music playing in the house.
6. Serve each other with love – that is an act of worship
7. Check your attitude – having a cheerful and grateful attitude

There are many other ways to worship God. The important thing is to be intentional about worshipping God. It does take work. Usually when we think of worship, we think about the corporate worship we experience at Church where we attend the “Worship Service” with other believers singing songs of praise and worship.

Worship goes beyond a once a week cooperate setting. Worship is a lifestyle.

is the second most important thing in our lives. Marriage is designed by God to endure.

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our ‘God is a consuming fire.’”  
Hebrews 12:28 that exhortation to worship is not speaking about worship in the narrow sense of worshipping God only when we gather together in his name; rather, that exhortation governs all of life. Marriage and home life are part of the whole of life, and so the exhortation here is that we honor and worship God in our married life.

## **Overcome**

Great marriages are not great because they have no challenges. Marriages are great because they OVERCOME the challenges they encounter.

It takes work to work through difficulties, disagreements, and conflict. Part of the key to work is overcoming every problem. There is no quit or giving up.

Even when faced with the greatest challenges, husbands and wives must work together to even overcome hardships like – infidelity, sickness, death. Being committed to overcome whatever the situation maybe is key part of work. The good news is you have the power of the Holy Spirit helping you when you keep your marriage focused on Jesus.

## **Rejoice**

What separates happy marriages from miserable ones? Surprisingly, it's not healthy communication. It's not conflict resolution skills. It's actually the amount and consistency of true joy in the relationship.

God never made marriage to be something couples had to endure. Healthy marriage regularly produce joy, and joy keeps the marriage healthy. Soon after the marriage ceremony the joy robbers go to work trying to steal your joy.

If your marriage has lost its joy – rejoice! In other words, re-joy. Paul said. “Rejoice and again I say rejoice”. Joy is a decision. Psalm 118:24 says, “This *is* the day the LORD has made; I will rejoice and be glad in it.” Notice it says, “I WILL”. In other words, to rejoice is up to your will – your choice. Choose today to rejoice in your marriage. Be happy, yes, rejoice in the wife of your youth. (Proverbs 5:18)

Stop the joy robbers in your marriage - Anger, jealousy, negativity, a critical attitude, worry, and many more. Don't allow the enemy to make you a victim, chose to be a VICTOR.



“Jesus always causes us to triumph” (2Corinthians 2:14) *In His presence is fulness of joy*” (Psalm 16:11) “for the kingdom of God is not a *matter of eating and drinking* [what one likes], but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” (Romans 14:17)

## **K**iss

You have to work at keeping the flame of romance burning. No matter how big a bonfire is if you don't keep adding wood it will soon go out. The romance in a marriage if it's not continually fueled will quickly subside to nothing but smoldering embers. God created marriage for a couple to enjoy true intimacy that is reserved only for the marriage relationship. The devil works overtime to try and pervert this beautiful gift from God and then works hard to try and destroy it within marriage. Healthy marriages make a habit of kissing every day. Marriage researcher John Gottman recommends a 6-second kiss every day. It should be long enough to feel romantic

We need to build our marriages on the foundation of Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit is vital as it sustains through each step of our journey, we need the spiritual interaction of prayer to keep us on track, the God kind of love is required to sustain our marriage, being merciful is a must, and maintaining a spirit of humility is essential.

These are the 7 essential keys for a healthy and happy marriage. We pray for each husband and wife to

# 10 Habits of Highly Happy Marriages

**H**ave you ever seen that couple who just seems to be perfect for each other. You can tell they are in love. They seem to always be happy and enjoy each other's company. The way they look at each other is just different than most couples. They have what my mother calls "that special spark". And I'm not talking about some new couple that are just starting out. I'm talking about couples who have been married several years. T

**T**hese kinds of marriages don't come easy; there are certain habits that couples like this have developed through their years of marriage. Habits that foster strong and healthy relationships that make them grow together and create a beautiful and steady bond.

**U**nfortunately, many couples develop bad habits that stifle and suck the life out of their relationships. We talked earlier about the importance of investing in your marriage to avoid the pitfalls of unhealthy marriages and bad habits. The 7 keys we shared were all about establishing a sound foundation to build your marriage upon. Make sure you are using those keys. They are what unlocks the potential God has put in you and your spouse for a great marriage.

**B**eyond those 7 essential keys there are "10 Habits of Highly Happy Marriages" that I want to share with to close out this book. Some of these habits incorporates some of keys.

## **1. They Cultivate Positivity**

Make it a habit to NEVER ever say something negative about your spouse. Your words have power. The Bible teaches use words of life, grace, and salt. Words that life up and encourage not tear down and criticize.

## **2. They Celebrate Their Differences**

Don't allow your differences to become a negative that the devil uses to try and drive a wedge between you. Often the things we found attractive and cute when dating become aggravations. God created all of different and we need those differences. They are what complete us. Remember God is the one who designed us we need to value and celebrate what makes our spouse different or risk rejecting God's good design. Make it a habit to show your gratitude and appreciation.

## **3. They Don't Make Assumptions About Their Spouses Feelings — they ask.**

Assumption is the lowest level of communication. Huge mistake. It's easy to jump to conclusions about what your partner is thinking or feeling. Don't! Successful longtime couples are able to focus on the context of the argument at hand, instead of making sweeping generalizations. "Instead of making broad conclusions about a situation instead they ask. They don't assume what the other person is feeling but are curious to inquire and are prepared to listen without judgment.

## 4. Serve others together

Your marriage is your ministry. You serve and honor each other as spouses, and together you can extend that ministry to your community. In all instances of Christ-like love, Christ is glorified. This is our ultimate purpose as humans: to glorify God.

Serving together is an incredibly valuable habit since it will consistently remind you that your core purpose is to bring God glory.

The possibilities for serving are vast, here are some suggestions:

- **Serve in your local church.** You may not serve on the same team, but you can serve at the same times. Plus, the Church is God's plan A for reaching the lost.
- **Serve your community.** Serve the poor, orphans, and widows in your community. Homeless shelters, assisted living homes, and other organizations are all in need of consistent, engaged, help. Maybe that's you?
- **Open your home.** Consider inviting couples over who are going through a tough time. Make a meal, talk, and just be friends to them.

## 5. They balance “me” time and “we” time.

Healthy marriages value and appreciate their individual independence but aren't afraid to lean on each other for support — a sign of emotional maturity. They are able to balance separateness and togetherness. They can enjoy feeling close to each other but are also able to feel

satisfied and fulfilled in the separate dimensions of their lives.

## **6. They Surround Themselves With Other Good Marriages**

Proverbs 13:20 says, “*Walk with the wise and become wise; associate with fools and get in trouble.*” A recent study found that when you surround yourself with divorced friends, you are as much as 147% more likely to get divorced yourself. Instead of complaining about your spouse to a divorced friend or family member, connect with Spirit-led believers who will stand with you and encourage you in your marriage. Look for couples who have strong, loving marriages and befriend them.

## **7. They Make Their Marriage a Priority**

Make it clear to your spouse and to the world that your priority is your marriage. Making this a habit helps making the right decisions easier. Asking a question like “Will this nurture and develop my relationship or take me away from it?” or “Is this aligned with my priorities?” This habit allows you the opportunity to step back and make sure you are moving in the direction you want to go before you make a commitment that can hurt your relationship.

## **8. They Kiss Every Day**

It’s not “kiss when you go on date” or “kiss when the kids aren’t around,” it’s “Kiss. Every day.” Marriage researcher John Gottman recommends a 6-second kiss every day. It should be long enough to feel romantic

and will be like a love vitamin – nurturing connection and intimacy in your marriage. Keeping romance and intimacy in the marriage must be a habit!

## **9. They Take Responsibility for Their Actions**

We are constantly making mistakes and fail to deliver on our promises. When you apologize, it shows that you are willing to take responsibility for your actions in the marriage. Some of the most powerful words you can say are I am sorry; I was wrong; Please forgive me. Make it a habit to be quick to forgive.

## **10. They Keep God at the Center of Their Relationship**

The cares of the world including the everyday routine of marriage can distract us from the most important priority in our life – Jesus. Proper priorities in life are critical – we must keep God first. When we do everything else will work out. “Seek first the Kingdom of God... (Matthew 6:33)

## *Running the Race*

Marriage is a lifetime race. It takes only a few minutes to get married and start your journey together but building a marriage requires a lifetime.

Marriage is not a sprint it is indeed a marathon. Ideally, we have a partner that runs beside us, that supports us through the race. Sometimes we run quickly, other times it is a slow jog or even a snail's pace walk. Sometimes there are obstacles and twist and turns we did not expect.

The important thing is keep going. Don't give up or quit. If your marriage is a hard place there is hope. With God's help He can restore and heal broken hearts and relationships.

Love or feelings don't not guarantee success in marriage. No one understands marriage better than God, He created it. A successful marriage depends on revelation knowledge – knowing and understanding God's principles.

Our prayer is for this book to help you better understand God's way of marriage and to provide you with principles from the one who created marriage that can help you build a healthy and happy marriage.

# 7 KEY FOR A HEALTHY & HAPPY MARRIAGE

## You will discover -

- > *THE BETTER WAY*
- > *THE SECRET SAUCE*
- > *THE KEY TO PEACE IN THE HOME*
- > *PEACE IN THE HOME*
- > *HOW TO RESTORE BROKEN  
RELATIONSHIPS*
- > *AND MUCH MORE*

**Bruce R. Edwards**