



**LIFE** MISSION  
C H U R C H

**EQUIPPING WORKSHOP:**

# MARRIAGE

**WITH JOBEY & KATIE MCGINTY**

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who are saved, equipped, and sent with the Gospel.



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# INTRODUCTION

## **Step by Step**

Almost all spiritual growth is incremental, a slow process. In this day and age, we want quick fixes and instant satisfaction. But that isn't how real, lifelong, fulfilling, and healthy growth happens. We're here to run a marathon, and this will hopefully serve as one big step toward that finish line, the finish line that you won't cross until the Lord takes you home. So be patient, be hopeful, and be persistent.

Much of the material here will be new for you and some of it will be old for you, mere reminders. Regardless, my hope is that the truths found within this study are used to "stir up one another to love and good works,"<sup>1</sup> and that it ignites a newfound passion for love, marriage, your spouse, and most especially, the Gospel of Jesus. This study won't solve all of your problems, and as a matter of fact, it may even reveal more problems you didn't even know were there. But hopefully, this study helps to point you to the solution to those problems. Namely, Jesus.

## **What You Can Expect**

I believe that many people will in fact be "stirred up" towards good deeds towards their spouse. I believe that many will find a deepened passion, romance, and intimacy. I believe that there will be lots of incredibly encouraging conversations and discoveries that build oneness. I believe that it will help bring couples back to "the beginning" and foundation of their relationship, rediscovering old passions and desires for one another.

But I also believe that many arguments will be born. I believe that many past hurts will resurface, or even surface for the first time. I believe that there will be a lot of awkward moments, discussions, and realizations that come about. I believe that there will be (as there should be), lots of pride and egos being attacked, and lots of repentance to be had. I believe there will be confession of sin, as well as the usually company that goes with that: fresh wounds for the partner.

The list goes on. But all in all, wherever you land (and you will quite possibly land in both "camps" of these contrasting results), you need to know that it's good. It's incremental sanctification. It's getting to the root cause of problems. It's not allowing deeply rooted issues continue. It's not giving into the status quo. It's being relentlessly in pursuit of the freedom, joy, passion, love, oneness, and sanctification that God desires for us and that He brings about in our lives through this incredible gift called "the two becoming one flesh."

## **Lastly, a Reminder**

Every person is different, and that makes every marriage doubly different. Growth for each person and each marriage will look very different from the other marriages you know. But you need to know and be convinced that there is no perfect marriage. You need to know that every marriage has its own set of problems and issues, even if you never see them or hear of them.

You aren't alone. And you have nothing to be ashamed of. We are a church of broken people with deceitfully sinful and prideful hearts. The first reaction of Adam and Eve after they sinned was to hide from God.<sup>2</sup> Our sin makes us ashamed, but we need to know that we can be real, vulnerable, and honest about our faults, because Jesus has covered the shame of our nakedness not by fig leaves, not by the skins of animals, but by the righteousness of His own blood.

I'd like to welcome you into this study with the words of the Apostle John, whom I share this sentiment with:

**My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.  
But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father,  
Jesus Christ the righteous.**

1 John 2:1 (ESV)

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<sup>1</sup> Hebrews 10:24

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 3:8#

# PART I: THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

Do for your spouse what God did for you in Jesus,  
and everything else will follow.

-Tim Keller

## A Few Stats

In spite of popular belief, the "Christian divorce" rate is *not necessarily* the same as the rest of the world's divorce rate. Commonly cited, the overall divorce rate hovers around close to 50%, while those who profess to be Christians have a divorce rate that hovers around 45%. However, given the fact that around 85% of America claims to be Christians (which, if we are to be honest, doesn't seem like the case), it would make sense that the number is not much different.

In a more specific poll done by the Survey of Marital Generosity, marriages who claimed in a survey that "God is center of our marriage" are 26% more likely to say "Very Happy" with their marriage (77% of respondents who claim that "God is the center of their marriage" are "Very Happy"). Only 1% of those same people say they have a proneness toward divorce.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, couples are 35% *less likely* to divorce when church attendance is regular.

What do even this few stats show us about marriage? It seems that when couples center their lives around the One who *designed* marriage, the marriage is much more likely to not just last, but be fruitful and fulfilling. Claiming to be Christian alone does not strengthen or solidify a marriage. It is only through the regular and ongoing efforts of the husband and wife to anchor the marriage to the work of Christ that sustains a marriage.

We hope to aid in that pursuit through this brief study and workshop.

## WHAT IS GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE?

In **Genesis 2.18-25** we see the first record of marriage. In these incredible verses, it says this:

### **Genesis 2:18-25** (ESV)

<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."  
<sup>19</sup> Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. <sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

<sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

And so we see that all the way back in the Garden, God had a purpose to create oneness, even a specific oneness in which we would be naked and not ashamed. But the oneness may not be the oneness you are thinking of.

Though it was in the Garden that God first created man and then declared that it was "not good that the man should be alone," subsequently making a "helper fit for him," God's ultimate goal was not to fulfill man's need for oneness with another human. Rather, this human oneness through the gift of marriage was given to serve an even greater purpose: it was God's creative, tangible, loving, and incredible way to give us a glimpse of a much greater, more incredible, and even improbable union and oneness:

The oneness of Christ and His bride.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.faithfulchoices.com/outrageous-statistics-on-christian-marriage/>

Long before creation itself, God knew that He wanted to lovingly give His Son a perfect, spotless bride. He planned from before the foundations of the world that He would see His Son become one with His bride. This was God the Father's joy and desire. And to help us, the church, His bride, to understand, love, appreciate, and be filled with wonder and awe of this great future union, He gave us a very real, deep, and profound gift to point us to the everlasting love of our Savior. He gave us the great gift of marriage between a man and a woman.

Two becoming one flesh. Naked and unashamed. A picture of our future union with Christ. The church becoming one with Him. You and me, despite our sinful pasts, naked and unashamed before our holy God.

You see, marriage was given to us as a gift to be a reflection and reminder of the Gospel.

Paul makes this even more explicit in his letter to the Ephesian church:

**Ephesians 5.22-33** (ESV)

<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

So even from the Garden, God had the picture of Christ and His bride in mind. Two becoming one. Us, the church, becoming one with Christ. One flesh; us, hidden in Christ. A profound mystery, as Paul calls it. One commentator said, "Paul saw that when God designed the original marriage, He already had Christ and the church in mind. This is one of God's great purposes in marriage: to picture the relationship between Christ and His redeemed people forever!"<sup>4</sup>

## **WHAT IS THE GOAL OF MARRIAGE?**

So as we see, marriage is about the Gospel. It is about God Himself. But because of our self-centeredness, marriage, at some point, became simply about "us." It became about our happiness and what's best for "us." But if that wasn't bad enough, it got even worse yet. Marriage has now even become simply about "me."

So how do we get out of this awful pit of self-centeredness? How do we find ourselves on the path to pursuing God's goal of marriage? First of all, it would do us well to keep this short, pithy (there's that word again!) statement in mind:

**There is only one God, and I am not Him.**

Marriage is about the Gospel, and at the center of the Gospel is God, not you. The redemption of man is *not* the center of the Gospel. The salvation of sinful humans is *not* the center of the Gospel. No, man will never be, in his sinful state or redeemed state, *ever* be the center of God's Gospel. The center of the Gospel will always and only ever be God's own glory. The cross and the saving work of Christ for the redemption of ill-deserving enemies of God, however, is the *means* by which God is most glorified. But the *goal* of God's glory being displayed will always be central.

It's often been said that "marriage is not meant to make you happy, but to make you holy." Usually, that statement is met with a little bit of push back, but then followed by the sobering reality that, deep down, we know that it's true. God uses marriage to grow us.

But there's something that is missing from that statement. There's something very monk-ish that seems to paint marriage as a lifelong journey with someone else who was sent into your life simply to rub sandpaper on you. It gives us the notion that marriage, since it doesn't exist to make us happy, is just full of dismal, painful suffering and displeasure as we live out our lives imprisoned to the old "ball and chain."

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<sup>4</sup> G.W. Knight, quoted in **Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood**, by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, pg. 176.

But I have a belief that when we continually learn to make Christ the center of our life, we naturally run from the things that used to hold our hearts, and we now behold the only One who is *worthy* of the kind of worship we were created to give. When this Ultimate One finds Himself at the center of our affections, we are changed, we find peace, we find joy, fulfillment, satisfaction, pleasure, purpose, excitement, and real happiness.

And so, as I believe that God uses many means of bringing us through our process of sanctification, most notably through the Word, prayer, and fellowship, I believe that marriage is one of His great means by which he grows us in our holiness. Because of that, I think that it's important that we take the idea of marriage one step further:

**Marriage is not meant to make you happy, but to make you holy;  
And as you become holy, you become happy.**

I deeply believe that when we grow in our holiness, we grow in happiness. Real happiness. Not the cheap imitation happiness that is dependent on material blessings and artificial status, but the kind of happiness that fills you when you are in that spot where you are beholding the wonder of Christ more than ever. A joy that transcends everything.

### **Iron Sharpens Iron**

With this in mind, then, we realize that if we desire to be truly filled with joy and contentment, then we are in need of some more of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Not only that, but we know that we can now see our marriage as an incredible gift to further that process in our lives.

In **Proverbs 27.17** it says that "iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another." Another proverb tells us that "faithful are the wounds of a friend," and that those wounds are much better to have than the "kisses of an enemy."<sup>5</sup> Your spouse has been brought into your life not to provide you with joy and fulfillment, but to help you grow toward a joy and fulfillment that comes from being sharpened by them as you are conformed more and more into the image of your Savior.

You see, any time we see someone or something as the source of our joy, rather than a means to finding more of Jesus who alone can give us real joy, we run the easy risk of making that person or thing into an idol. Rather, it's important for us to see that "every good and perfect gift comes from above,"<sup>6</sup> and see these gifts as a means to our growth towards Christ. Whether you are giving God thanks for your family, your salvation, your food, your car, or your favorite sports team winning a game, whenever we lift our hearts by "giving thanks to God" and "doing all things in the name of the Lord Jesus,"<sup>7</sup> we grow in our sanctification, becoming more like Christ.

So instead of making our marriage into an idol, or our spouse or family into an idol, we need to start seeing them as a means to *God's end in our life*. And what is God's end and purpose in our life? It's the same as His purpose in the Gospel:

His glory.

God wants His glory in and through your life, and He has given you a marriage in order to bring about more holiness in your life, which will, in turn, bring you joy. Consider the famous statement from the Westminster Confession of Faith which reminds us of what the main purpose of man's existence is:

**The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.**

Now consider Pastor John Piper's adaptation, showing us that God's glory and our joy are *not* exclusive from one another:

**The chief end of man is to glorify God *by* enjoying Him forever.**

Do you see the slight adjustment? Piper shows us that "God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him." When a Christian is completely satisfied, when they think of the love and affection of Christ, and when they consider all the wonderful things God has done for them, and they say, "it is more than enough, and I am deeply satisfied with it," God gets ultimate glory. He has now been shown and put on display by us sinful, former enemies to be the most marvelous thing on earth. So much so, that we who at one time were opposed to Him now find ultimate joy. God's glory and our joy work in tandem.

**God's glory brings us joy, and our joy brings God glory.  
Wrap your head around that for the rest of your life.**

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<sup>5</sup> Proverbs 27.6

<sup>6</sup> James 1.17

<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 5.20#

So, now, let's add one more adaptation:

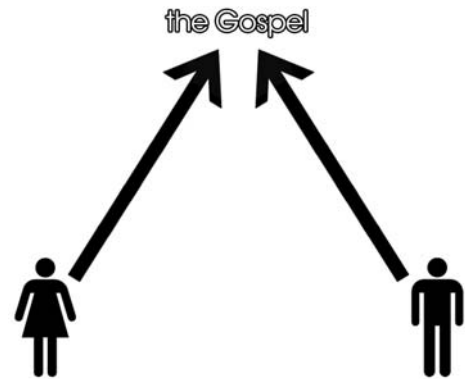
## The chief end of marriage is to glorify God by helping each other enjoy God forever.

### Building Blocks

When we recognize that marriage is not just simply the "two becoming one," but that God is a part of this now "threefold cord,"<sup>8</sup> we get a better picture of how we grow in this holiness and joy.

The illustration on the right shows us that as the husband and wife are both personally moving more and more towards making the glory of God central to life by centering their life on the Gospel Christ in their own daily lives, the two themselves come closer and closer.

A marriage, however, that is built solely on and is centering on and moving toward *each other*, rather than toward and on God, will be a marriage that is built as a "house on the sand."<sup>9</sup> When that person changes, or gets sick, or goes through menopause, or gains weight, or loses their hair, or loses interest in the things that once interested the two of you, the foundation has now been eroded. But when the marriage is built on the One who never changes, the foundation stays sturdy.<sup>10</sup>



### The 50/50 Heresy

Since marriage is about becoming more and more conformed to the image of Christ and becoming more like Him, that means that our part in the marriage should always aim to be sacrificial, generous, and giving. One awful quip that is oft repeated, even at wedding ceremonies, is that "marriage is a 50/50 compromise."

What an awful proverb! Isn't the point of a wedding vow to say "I'm in it no matter what"? But the actual attitude of many marriages today is, "I'll give my 50% so long as I'm getting my 50%. As soon as I'm not benefiting from this marriage, I'm going to start looking elsewhere."

Somewhere along the lines, marriage became less of a covenant commitment to one another, and more of a contract for a cable provider. "I'll pay my bill as long as I get what I want, but if the cost goes up or the channel line-up changes, I'll start shopping around."

Instead, what we *should* be seeing is that marriage is a 100/100 commitment, rather than a 50/50 compromise. So what happens if the other is giving only 80%, or 30%, or even -10%?

You still give 100%.

It's a covenant. A promise. One flesh. Till death do us part.<sup>11</sup>

The promise of Christ is especially true when it comes to marriage. He said that "whoever loses his life will find it." Within the context of marriage, when you give 100% despite any reason that you may recognize that tempts you to give less than that, you will find real "life" within your marriage. How is this? Well, it's *not* because your marriage provides you with ultimate joy, but it's because you are learning to become more and more like Christ *through* your marriage.

And thus, you are filled with joy. Real joy.

So, to restate our observations, the central goal, passion, and focus of your marriage should not be happiness, completion, satisfaction, fulfillment, or *even the emotion of love*, but it should always and only be the glory of God.

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<sup>8</sup> Ecclesiastes 4.12

<sup>9</sup> Matthew 7.26

<sup>10</sup> Hebrews 13.12

<sup>11</sup> That said, the Word does give way for two acceptable reasons to biblically end a marriage, namely adultery (Matthew 5.31, 32) and abandonment (1 Corinthians 7.10-16).

## WAYS WE PURSUE GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE

### Men:

- Must learn to be students of the Word and pastors of the home.<sup>12</sup>
- Must be protecting their wives and family from false doctrine.
  - Husbands should have humility to ask if they don't know.

#### **2 Timothy 3:2-7** (ESV)

<sup>5</sup> [People will be] having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people. <sup>6</sup> For among them are those who creep into households and capture weak women, burdened with sins and led astray by various passions, <sup>7</sup> always learning and never able to arrive at a knowledge of the truth.

#### **2 Timothy 4:2-5** (ESV)

<sup>2</sup> preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. <sup>3</sup> For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, <sup>4</sup> and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. <sup>5</sup> As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

#### **Jeremiah 17:9** (ESV)

<sup>9</sup> The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

#### **Proverbs 28:26** (ESV)

<sup>26</sup> Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.

- Absolutely must learn how to make the Gospel bigger than the marriage itself.
  - We must always aim to bring each other back to the Gospel, not "what will help the marriage" or "what will benefit me."

#### **Matthew 6:33** (ESV)

<sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

#### **Psalms 37:4-5** (ESV)

<sup>4</sup> Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. <sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act.

- When things are properly "in order" according to God's design, as the verse above says, "He will act." Consider the following quote from C.S. Lewis. It's no coincidence that this comes from a book titled, "**The Joyful Christian**." One could easily, for the sake of this study, replace the word "Earth" with "Marriage."

Aim at Heaven and you will get Earth 'thrown in';  
aim at Earth and you will get neither.

-C.S. Lewis, from "The Joyful Christian"

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<sup>12</sup> Titus 2.1, 2 // 2 Timothy 2.2

## Women:

- **Need to be wives to their husbands first, and mothers to their children second.**

Wives, ask yourself the question, “do I feel more like a mom to my kids, or more like a wife to my husband?” Knowing that responsibilities, dependence, and busy schedules make it difficult to answer, ask the follow up question, “am I more passionate about my being called to be a wife, or my call to be a mom?” Do you spend a proportionate amount of time planning, thinking about, preparing for, praying for, and pursuing your role and call as a wife to your spouse as you do being a mom to your children?

### **1 Corinthians 11:8–9** <sup>(ESV)</sup>

<sup>8</sup> For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. <sup>9</sup> Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

- In all of Paul’s letters, he always addresses the husband/wife relationship first, and children second.<sup>13</sup>
  - It undermines his leadership with the children.
  - Marriage is a picture of the Trinity, as well as a picture of our unity with Christ.<sup>14</sup> Our relationship with our children is not.
  - The Scriptures say that “the two become one,” not “the three (or four or seven) become one.”<sup>15</sup>
  - The Scriptures teach that as our kids get older, they are to “leave and cleave,” leaving the parental relationship and becoming one with their own spouse. The parent/child relationship, though filially will maintain its integrity though life, will relationally change dramatically. It is not so (or at least not designed so) with marriage.
  - Kids need to be shown the biblical picture, example, and value of a godly marriage.
- **Need to be wives to their husbands, not mothers to their husbands.**

### **Proverbs 21:9** <sup>(ESV)</sup>

<sup>9</sup> It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a quarrelsome wife.

### **Proverbs 21:19** <sup>(ESV)</sup>

<sup>19</sup> It is better to live in a desert land than with a quarrelsome and fretful woman.

- Mothering defaces God’s design for marriage, and it is a sin against God. It suffocates them, which robs both the wife and children of the benefit of having the husband/dad lead the home in a godly way.

## Both:

- **Need to be partners, team mates, and each others’ biggest fan.**
- **Need to first pursue their relationship *primarily* as husband and wife, not just as parents to their children.**
  - The divorce rate for empty nesters has doubled since 1990, and research shows that after age 40 it’s often the wife who wants the divorce.<sup>16</sup> Even though the overall divorce rate declined by 1.6% between 1981 and 1991, the divorce rate for couples married more than 30 years went *up 16%*. Even secular researchers have pointed to the fact that many marriages are centered around the children, which leads to emptiness when the kids leave.<sup>17</sup> Far too often, when the kids become the center of the home, rather than the Gospel, and when the wife in particular finds most of her purpose, joy, fulfillment, and passion wrapped up in the kids, when they are gone, she is all of a sudden dissatisfied.

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<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 5.22-6.4 // Colossians 3.18-20 // 1 Timothy 3.2-5 // Titus 1.5-9

<sup>14</sup> Ephesians 5.22-33

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 19.4-6

<sup>16</sup> <http://miami.cbslocal.com/2012/06/01/empty-nest-divorce-rate-rising/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.marriagemissions.com/empty-nests-and-empty-marriages/>



- **Need to pursue their relationship as husband and wife, then as parents to their children, and only then, lastly, as children of their own parents.<sup>18</sup>**
  - Far too often, an inability (or more accurately, a refusal) to “leave and cleave” and put one’s spouse before their own parents is a major cause of conflict and disunity. This *must* be seen as a direct attack on God’s design for marriage and a refusal to trust in His design. This can be very, very difficult for many reasons, but a healthy “leave and cleave” relationship must be cultivated for the sake of the marriage, the family, and ultimately, God’s glory.
  
- **Need to celebrate the “wins” in each other’s lives on a regular basis.<sup>19</sup>**
  - Make adequate time in your week to encourage each other. Tell each other what you noticed that they are growing in and improving in. Mention times during the week that you were blessed by something they said or did.
  
- **Should not compare yourselves to others, but to what God wants for us.**
  - This does not mean that you shouldn’t learn from others or look to their example, but you should not compare yourselves to them in a way where you make their marriage the goal, or on the flip side not looking to their marriage as a justification for how much “better” your marriage is than theirs.

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<sup>18</sup> Ephesians 5.31

<sup>19</sup> Hebrews 10.24, 25. Though specifically about the church, the greater context is encouraging brothers and sisters in Christ towards good works on a regular basis. #

## PART II: CULTIVATING “BEST-FRIENDSHIP”

### HOW CAN WE BE LOVERS IF WE CAN'T BE FRIENDS?

70% of women determine their satisfaction with sex, passion, and romance of their marriage by the quality of friendship within it.<sup>20</sup> Likewise, with the men, 70% of them say the same exact thing. And incredibly, men and women agree on the same thing!

Friendship is paramount to a satisfying and fulfilling marriage.

**Proverbs 2.17** speaks of the treachery of the woman who leaves “the companion of her youth,” speaking of her husband. The word for “companion” in Hebrew is *‘allup*, and it means “special confidant” or “best friend.” For us who are married, it’s a devastating thing to remain as married, yet having lost our “best-friendship” with our “special confidant,” our spouse.

In ancient Greek, there are four different words used to describe different “types” of love.

1. **Agape-Love:** sacrificial love, best shown by the Gospel and expounded in **1 Corinthians 13**. This is a self-sacrificing, selfless love.
2. **Storge-Love:** the Greek word “storge” describes an affectionate love that most defines the love between parents and children, and sometimes husbands and wives. It’s a love that is largely derived naturally or instinctively, and is born out of an inborn natural obligation.
3. **Eros-Love:** the word “eros” is where we get “erotic.” It’s the feelings of love most associated with romance, deep emotion, and sexual passion.
4. **Phileo-Love:** Also known as “Friendship-Love,” the word “phileo” is where we get “Philadelphia,” “the City of Brotherly Love.” It’s a love that describes a likeminded love between friends.

C.S. Lewis, in his book written about these four words that he simply titled, “**The Four Loves**,” said this:

To the ancients, friendship seemed the happiest and most fully human  
of all loves; the crown of life and the school of virtue.  
The modern world, in comparison, ignores it.<sup>21</sup>

He even argues that it’s the least natural. But why does he say this? He states that we are born with a natural desire and need for *eros-love* (sexual/erotic love) in order to breed and continue life; we need *storge-love* in order to actually sustain the families we start (without it, we would abandon the babies we create), and we need *agape-love* in order to prevent us from extreme acts of violence, murder, and genocide, but we can get through life without *phileo-love*. Of all the four loves, friendship-love is a luxury, much like a boat or sports car; nice to have in life, but not necessary for life.

And that, he argues, is what makes it so special.<sup>22</sup>

Lewis describes the “realization” that you have met a true friend by the exclamation of a typical first exchange that would go something like, “What? You too? I thought I was the only one!” He observes that there is something that is realized that draws us to a person that is what he calls the “special thread” in the friendship.

And it is this kind of love that we want to cultivate within our marriage. This unique “special thread” that is, by all means, a luxury in this day and age; worse yet, it is even a novelty within marriage.

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<sup>20</sup> **Real Marriage** by Mark and Grace Driscoll, pg. 24

<sup>21</sup> **The Four Loves**, from “The Beloved Works of C.S. Lewis,” C.S. Lewis, pg. 244

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 244, 245

## Reasons Why We are Not Best Friends

- Past sin together
- Don't trust each other
- Don't have anything in common
- Super tired, so we don't do anything together
- I already have best friends
- Got married for the wrong reasons (too young, got pregnant, etc.)
- Disappointment/Unrealized expectations
- My spouse acts like my mom/dad
- Age difference
- Different values
- I fell out of love
- My spouse is a different person from when we got married
- We argue about everything
- We have different biblical beliefs
- My spouse only thinks about themselves
- My spouse annoys me
- My spouse doesn't get me

## The "Compatibility" Myth

For believers, we all have, at very least, one very important common thread that can and should draw each other together as we exclaim, "What?! You too?!" And that, of course, is the Gospel.

The Word describes us as a "peculiar people" who Paul says are "the refuse of the world." We were once aliens and strangers of God,<sup>23</sup> enemies of God,<sup>24</sup> and self-seeking sons and daughters of disobedience.<sup>25</sup> And then, one day, one very different day for each one of us, we were brought forth by the Word of God and saved by His own desire.<sup>26</sup> This common thread, even if this one thread, is enough to unite us as we discover that we have enough in common to share life together.<sup>27</sup>

And if the Word expects that we sinful, self-centered, self-seeking people can be otherly minded and sacrificial towards perfect strangers, how much more does it imply that we can be otherly minded and sacrificial, and a great deal then some, with the person that we have married and become one with?

We have often heard another popular myth concerning love and marriage. There is the idea, which is found absolutely nowhere in Scripture, that there is "the one" out there for you. But let's get something straight, there is no perfect "one" for you out there, because everyone out there is a sinner, and no one on this earth is meant to bring you that kind of satisfaction.

So I want to remind you of something. Marriage is simply a murky, yet still glorious, foreshadowing of a far greater union that we will one day savor in its fullness. Because of that, remember this:

**You have not, and you will not, find "the one,"  
because "the One" has already found you.**

Indeed, "the one" is not your spouse here on earth, but rather, "the One" is Jesus, the faithful Bridegroom of the bride, the church. You have been given a helper in this momentary marriage, to help be a shadowy picture of the greatest oneness you can ever know.

Why is it important for us to know this? If we elevate our spouse to some unattainable pedestal reserved for "the One," we will be gravely disappointed in them. Don't ever forget, you married a sinful person who has a deceitful heart, just like you. So what does this have to do with cultivating "Best-Friendship"?

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<sup>23</sup> Ephesians 2.19 // Colossians 1.21

<sup>24</sup> Romans 5.8-10

<sup>25</sup> Ephesians 2.2, 5.6

<sup>26</sup> James 1.18

<sup>27</sup> Acts 2.42-47 // Ephesians 4.2 // Colossians 3.13

## Our Common Thread

It's been described that in marriage, we can either be going through marriage in a manner that is back to back (constantly at odds, arguing, and living as "married singles"), side by side (like team mates and co-workers), or face to face (as friends and lovers). Naturally, there will be moments and sometimes seasons in which all three of these three will get more stage time. But just because that is "normal," it doesn't mean we should settle for it. Sanctification and becoming more holy is about growing in Christ and getting rid of the "sin that so easily entangles us."<sup>28</sup> We should aim and hope to spend more "face to face" time than the other two, especially the "back to back" manner.

At the end of the day, it's hard to admit that Michael Bolton (the singer, not the computer tech) made a poignant observation when he asked, "how can we be lovers if we can't be friends?" For marriage to be a means that is used for its maximum potential for God's glory, we *must* have a solid friendship as the basis for the relationship we have with our spouse.

To have that God-glorifying friendship, we have to agree upon the Gospel and God's glory as being our common thread and covenant with each other to move towards it at all costs. If that goal or "compatibility" is based on anything else than the Gospel, such as money, sexual pleasure, personality traits, hobbies, or anything else, that marriage will be built on sand,<sup>29</sup> because all of those foundations can change, shift, and deteriorate.

But Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever.<sup>30</sup> His glory is unchanging,<sup>31</sup> His Word is eternal,<sup>32</sup> and His promises are sure.<sup>33</sup> Our inheritance is unfading, undefiled, imperishable, and kept in heaven for us.<sup>34</sup> And so, we build our marriage, and make the goal of our marriage, the Gospel, and we pursue it with all we have. What this means, then, is that we look at our spouse as our partner in this journey towards Christ-likeness. It means seeing Christ as the goal in their life, seeing where they are now (sins, flaws, hurts, and all), joyfully setting aside our selfish ambition, and proclaiming, "I see where you are now, I see where Christ is now, and because I love you and I love Him, I want to help you get there."

## A Skillful Surgeon

I mentioned from the Word earlier that iron sharpens iron, and that the wounds of a friend are better than the kisses of the enemy. Since God has given us a spouse as a means to our sanctification and growth, we can picture our spouse as a surgeon given to us to perform some necessary surgery on us over the course of our life. Likewise, we can picture ourselves as surgeons given to our spouse for their health and growth.

But a good surgeon only cuts enough that is necessary, and does so carefully with the patient's best interest in mind. A good surgeon doesn't look the other way at health issues, and a good surgeon doesn't just do it for their own paycheck or accolades, but rather for the health and benefit of the patient.

Similarly, as best friends to our spouse, we are keenly aware of their sin, but we go about helping them grow in it properly, with tact, discernment, patience, and, above all, love. Too often, we use our scalpel, which is intended to bring about health, and we wield it as a sword, a weapon to incur shame or embarrassment in the heart and mind of our spouse.

Even for those with unbelieving spouses need to know that God can use unbelievers to bring about sanctification and help you grow towards Christ, even if they are unaware of themselves being used by God in that way.

Tim Keller, from his book, "**The Meaning of Marriage**," puts it this way:

The Gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope. This is the only kind of relationship that will really transform us. Love without truth is sentimentality; it supports and affirms us but keeps us in denial about our flaws. Truth without love is harshness; it gives us information but in such a way that we cannot really hear it.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Hebrews 12.1

<sup>29</sup> Matthew 7.26

<sup>30</sup> Hebrews 13.8

<sup>31</sup> Job 23.13 // Hebrews 7.24

<sup>32</sup> Psalm 119.89, 160

<sup>33</sup> 2 Corinthians 1.20

<sup>34</sup> 1 Peter 1.4

<sup>35</sup> **The Meaning of Marriage**, by Tim Keller, pg. 48

## THE FACE OF FRIENDSHIP

Well you knew that you wouldn't be able to go to a Marriage Workshop without having **1 Corinthians 13** brought up, and rightfully so. This is an absolutely incredible both theological and practical picture of God's definition of love, and it is absolutely necessary for us to consider deeply if we are to work on the "best-friendship" of our marriages.

Read through it first, highlighting, underlining, and circling phrases and words that stick out to you. Put a square around all the qualities, both positive (patient and kind) and negative (not arrogant).

### **1 Corinthians 13.1-13** <sup>(ESV)</sup>

<sup>1</sup> If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

<sup>8</sup> Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. <sup>9</sup> For we know in part and we prophesy in part, <sup>10</sup> but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. <sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

<sup>13</sup> So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

It should be first noted that Paul tells us that you can be pretty dang awesome, but have your awesomeness be in vain. He even says you can be burned at the stake for someone or something, and even *that* will be in vain! Now, I have never been close to giving myself over in that way, but if I ever did, I sure wouldn't want that to go to waste!

So let's look at these traits one by one to help us ensure that all we do is based out of love.

### **Patient**

- Walks together, especially when in disagreements
- Do you respond to your spouse with "are you kidding me," or "what were you thinking," or "why can't you just...", or "ugghhhh!!!,"?

### **Kind**

- Love aims to bring enjoyment and pleasure to another's life.
- Love aims to bring healing and wholeness to another's life.
- Love is gentle, caring, nurturing, and strives for godly peace in the home.

### **Does Not Envy or Boast**

- Love doesn't compare to other spouses.
- Love doesn't idolize other marriages.
- Love doesn't justify the marriage based on others that are "worse than ours."
- Doesn't revel in saying or thinking "I told you so"

### **Is Not Arrogant or Rude**

- Love doesn't open wounds that don't need opening.
- Love doesn't point out flaws in front of other people.
- Love doesn't gossip.
- Love doesn't complain to others.

### **Does Not Insist on its Own Way**

- Love doesn't do things for self-centered fulfillment.
- Love is generous, giving and is "others" minded.
- Love doesn't think, "what's in it for me?"
- Love doesn't think, "I'll do that if you do this for me."
- Love doesn't remind the other of "favors" owed from the past.
- Love doesn't manipulate.
- Love doesn't play mind games.



**Is Not Irritable or Resentful**

- Love isn't irritable or get frustrated or angry.
- Love has no bitterness, but rather walks in forgiveness of others because of the forgiveness they have in Christ.
- Love does not bring up the past as a reminder or means of humbling, shaming, or propping up self.
- Love doesn't use guilt trips.
- Love doesn't use silent treatment.
- Love doesn't punish. It believes that Christ was punished in our place.
  - No sleeping on the couch.
  - No depriving the other of intimacy, romance, or sex.
  - No withholding other blessings, such as hobbies, time with friends, or other enjoyments.

**Does Not Rejoice at Wrongdoing; Rejoices in the Truth**

- Love doesn't seek to win arguments, but rather seeks unity and oneness.
- Love doesn't enjoy when someone "pays for" something they did wrong.

**Bears, Believes, Hopes, and Endures All Things**

- Love sees their friendship with their spouse as a lifelong covenant.
- Love desires to "take up their cross" daily to follow Christ.
- Love does not seek the easy way out.
- Love doesn't use the "D" word.
- Love believes that God's grace is bigger than our or our spouse's sin.
- Love puts its hope completely in God's promises, not what "seems" to be the case in their marriage.
- Love looks to see change in themselves first, not their spouse. Take the opportunity to ask "am I seeking to be a lover of pleasure or a lover of God?"

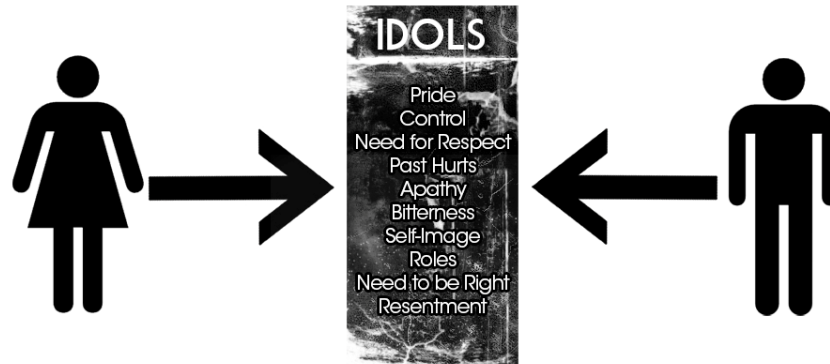
**Never Ends**

- Love believes that all that they are is kept and sustained by the eternal love of God.

## WHAT COMMON IDOLS STEAL OUR FRIENDSHIP-LOVE?

How do we combat these insufficiencies and sinful attitudes that convolute the friendship within our marriage? As Lewis said, as friends we have somehow discovered a shared goal and interest that draws us together. But there will always be things that get in our way and will stop us from growing. If we want to grow, we have to be sacrificial and put ourselves on the throne as a living sacrifice.<sup>36</sup> But to do that, we first must identify those idols and put them to death so we can rightly put Jesus on the throne.

**We can't put ourselves on the altar until we take ourselves off the throne.**



**Figure 1:** Friendships are hindered, disconnected, and cut off when idols come in between.

### **One Example for Men:**

- Men want respect and want to feel like men.
  - **What's the Idol?** Self-sufficiency, desire to be worshiped, power, desire to be god, self-entitlement
  - **What's the Danger?** Anger, ego, godless home, pornography, adultery, disrespectful, no humility
  - **What's the Solution?** Repentance by admitting that they know they don't deserve anything they have, but that everything, including their spouse, is a gracious gift of God.

### **One Example for Women:**

- Putting kids first.
  - **What's the Idol?** Wanting to feel needed,
  - **What's the Danger?** Doing life my way rather than God's way. Broken marriage, future of emptiness/confusion and dissatisfaction. Poor example for the kids.
  - **What's the Solution?** Acknowledging that you have turned God's design upside down. Making a Gospel-centered marriage the goal.

### **Both:**

- Want the American dream, material possessions, etc.
- Happiness
- Financial stability
- Romance and passion
- "But he/she never does..."
- "It's not fair."
- Desire to be right in arguments
- Hurtful past
- "This is just how I am."

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<sup>36</sup> Romans 12.1, 2

## THE ROAD TO (OR BACK TO) "BEST-FRIENDSHIP"

- **Repentance.** Be specific. Admit by saying to the Lord and to your spouse:
  - "I have not been the best friend that I could be, because I have been [insert idolatry or sinful and selfish actions]...
  - "I want to put off that way of life and instead put on [insert corresponding fruit of the Spirit or selfless action]...
  - ...by acknowledging that I have been believing a lie that [insert what you think your idolatry gives you]...
  - ...but I know that in reality, [insert Gospel truth here].
- **Read a book on marriage, humility, idols, etc.** Check out the list of recommended resources at the end.
- **Study and get to know Jesus together.** We will soon be going through **Colossians** as a church. Consider getting one or two of the recommended books to go through together. One is a daily devotional you could read and discuss, another is a book loosely based on how we can grow in our passion for Christ through the truths found in **Colossians**. Do **Community Group Homework** together. Watch sermons together online.
- **Discuss the Sunday sermons every week.**
- **Pray for humility and selflessness.**
- **Develop a Mission Statement for your marriage.** Not a Mission Statement for your *family* (though you can and should do that, too), but for your marriage, exclusively.
- **Do the things you used to do.** What brought you together? What do you love about each other? What great memories do you have? Act like newlyweds or how you were when you were first dating.
- **Keep your bedroom to only have pictures of you and your spouse.** Treat your bedroom like a "marriage sanctuary." Have special "rules" or "values" for your bedroom.
- **Watch old videos and look through old pictures together from time to time, especially of ones you had from before you had kids.**
- **Have "protected time" where only "friendship" conversation is allowed.**
  - On date nights, keep it fun and about each other, not the kids, work, etc.
- **Take up another's hobby.** Do something together that one person really enjoys. Learning something new helps you enjoy them and their personality sacrificially. What's a hobby of your spouse's that you would be into giving a shot. What hobby would you love for them to try?
- **Learn to laugh more.** Have fun together. Do something crazy that you would never do. Don't just be each other's spouse, but become buddies, too. What are some crazy or "out there" things you would like to try or do with your spouse?
- **Build traditions together.** Traditions, not just one-off memories, can go a long way in developing a rich history with each other. They become something to look forward to and fondly look back to. They also are needed reminders of what makes your friendship "tick."

## PART III: ROMANCE, SEX, AND INTIMACY

Sex is the area of marriage that has some of the most problems. Divorces happen over it. We spend time getting better at and researching for jobs, hobbies, saving money, where to live, where to get our hair cut, how to save more money, which car to buy, but we rarely, if ever spend time researching, spending time or money, having conversations about, and getting advice on sex.

And we wonder why we are frustrated, dissatisfied, and unfulfilled.

Husbands, when is the last time you spent time, energy, and money thinking through and planning how to improve your romancing abilities, not just doing what you always do? Wives, when is the last time you spent a good amount of time planning through how you will give your husband a special evening of passionate pleasure that will surprise him?

### GOD'S DESIGN FOR SEX

Like every gift God has given us, sex is intended to be stewarded, and stewarded well. It is to be cultivated, invested into, worked on, improved upon, enjoyed, and used as an act (but not an object) of worship. Far be it from us to bury it in the sand like the poor steward.<sup>37</sup>

Sadly, many marriages, if not most, will spend all kinds of time on other matters, but when it comes to sex, they are content with just "doing what is natural." Eventually, sex can become a chore, it can become boring (for one if not both spouses), it can become a one-way street, it can lose its flair, lose its meaning, it becomes predictable, or it becomes something just for a special occasion, rather than a regular celebration of coming together to celebrate the oneness and friendship God has given us.

### **Sex is a Reflection of the Gospel**

Since marriage, as we have seen, is a human picture of the Gospel, we can also, even if dimly, see where sex and intimacy also reflect certain aspects of the Gospel. When the Bridegroom first becomes one with His bride, the church, each believer who enters into that relationship partakes in baptism, which is an outward symbol of what is going on in the inside of their heart. They immerse themselves in water to show the world that they have become one with Christ and are now part of the body of Christ. It is a onetime event.

In physical marriage, our one-time event is the wedding ceremony. It is an outward act to show the world what God has done on the inside of our hearts. It never needs to be repeated.

Likewise, when it comes to our relationship with Jesus, though we never have to get re-baptized, we are to interact with Christ on a daily basis, spending time in worship, prayer, and in His Word. We also are to get together with the body of Christ regularly as a special time of communion with our Lord. The Word says of these "special" moments during our week that we should do them regularly,<sup>38</sup> and that as often as we do it is to commemorate the great unity and oneness that Christ purchased for us.<sup>39</sup>

In a similar manner, though we should indeed be having good, healthy, intimate conversation and fellowship with our spouse throughout the week, just as we should be spending good, healthy, intimate time with Christ through the week, sex is given to us as a wonderful gift of God to bring us together with our spouse in order to celebrate, commemorate, and enjoy the great union that He gifted us with. And just as how communion is not intended to be privately taken with a single believer, but rather, in the church community when they get together, sex is also not something that is to be done alone, but it is rather a celebration that a man and wife are to enjoy together.

I think this is just one of the reasons why the Word tells us to have sex with our spouse frequently.

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<sup>37</sup> Matthew 25.14-30 // 1 Peter 4.9-11 // Colossians 3.17

<sup>38</sup> Acts 2.42-47, 20.7

<sup>39</sup> 1 Corinthians 11.23-26#

## SEX WITHIN MARRIAGE

Because of the greatness and beauty of this wedding gift that God has given us as a reminder of His love, passion, and desire for us, His bride, it is of utmost importance that we pursue it within the context of our marriage as a means to seeing God more and more glorified through our joy and satisfaction of Himself and the gifts He gives.

In **Song of Songs 5.1**, Solomon even depicts the romance and passion of sexual love and romance as something that should intoxicate us. Think about that for a second, is your love life intoxicating? Do you get “drunk” with passion for your spouse? If not, don’t worry, many, if not most, do not. But just because that is the case, that does *not mean* that it should be acceptable. The Word has much to say about our intimacy and sexual unity with our spouse, and our aim should be what the Word sees and teaches, not what is “normal.”

In **1 Corinthians 7.1-5**, Paul says this about sex within marriage:

### **1 Corinthians 7:1-5** <sup>(ESV)</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” <sup>2</sup> But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. <sup>3</sup> The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup> For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. <sup>5</sup> Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

As we see, Paul does give a good reason for those who are married to abstain from and not have sex. It’s also probably the one excuse that has never been used by probably any spouse: prayer and fasting.

Outside of *mutually* agreeing to a (*short!*) time of prayer and fasting, a married couple is to otherwise give each other “their conjugal rights.” That means that unless the two of you have decided to specifically fast from sex to seek God on some matter of prayer, you are to celebrate the unity of marriage through sex, and you are to do it often.

How often is often? That’s up to you and your spouse. The reason that a time period of no sex Paul says should only be a “limited time” is so that either spouse isn’t tempted due to “lack of self-control.” This is a conversation that needs to be had between the two. Most men have a higher need for sexual release, and his desired frequency may be higher than his wife’s. Likewise, however, though most women have a lower “need” for the physicality of sex, they do, however, have a (sometimes) higher need for emotional and romantic connection. Sex is designed by God, when celebrated selflessly, to promote this aspect when it is part of a larger picture of, among other things, a healthy “Best-Friendship” and other healthy relational elements that are being cultivated in the marriage.

You may have heard the phrase (right or wrong) that alcohol is a “social lubricant,” making otherwise awkward interaction more easy and interactive. In the same way, sex is the “marriage lubricant” (no pun intended). It serves as a “great equalizer” within the marriage. It eases stress, tension, and anxiety. It is meant to build unity and oneness and increase the “teamwork” element in seasons of life that are otherwise difficult. It celebrates and revels in unity during seasons of fun and success. There have been countless studies on the mental, physical, and emotional benefits that sex has for married couples.

## PROBLEMS IN SEX LIFE

- Past issues
- Insecurities
- Differing expectations and desires
- Disinterest
- Blah attitude
- Pornography
- Laziness and a need to be sacrificial
- The barter system, a.k.a. “prostitution.” (e.g., “we can have sex if you do such and such.”)
- No emotional connection with spouse
- Exhausted from the day or week’s events
- Medical conditions



# HOW TO CULTIVATE A MORE VIBRANT SEX LIFE

Start Simple: Agree with each other that you want to grow for these reasons:

- **It's biblical. It is God's design and desire.**
  - **Pleasure: Song of Songs** is a love letter. It mentions the woman fantasizing about her husband, oral sex initiated by the woman and by the man, a striptease, and other very descriptive and poetic portrayals of both the husband and wife's body parts.
    - **Song of Songs 5.10-16**, a description of the male body, including what the Hebrew makes reference to as his "abdomen, which is like a polished ivory tusk."<sup>40</sup> You figure that one out.
    - **Song of Songs 7.1-9**, a description of the female body, including a reference to her "naval." However, this naval is found in her description placed between her thighs and her belly, and so it is much more likely a description of her vagina, as it describes it as a "rounded bowl that doesn't lack mixed wine."
  - Children (**Genesis 1.28, 4.1**)
  - Oneness (**Genesis 2.24**)
  - Protection of each other (**1 Corinthians 7.2-5**)
- **It is healthy.**
  - There are plenty of proven health benefits from having sex. Less stress, better blood pressure, a boost in immunity, stronger heart, lower chance of prostate cancer, etc.<sup>41</sup>
- **It is the "marriage glue."**
  - In **2 Samuel 12.24**, in a time of distress, King David consoled his wife after their child died. As part of the healing and comforting process, they came together for sexual oneness to rebuild their unity.
- **It is godly to be giving, generous, and sacrificial.**
- **Your body is not your own.**
  - **1 Corinthians 7.1-5**
- **It is one of the greatest natural gifts that God has given, and it's the greatest gift that we can give to our spouse.**
  - **Genesis 2.18-25**
  - Carolyn Mahaney, in her book, "**Feminine Appeal**," says this, in part quoting Professor Daniel Akin:

"The one flesh relationship is the most intense, physical intimacy and the deepest, spiritual unity possible between a husband and wife.' It is the highest form of the communication of love—a language that expresses love without words. It calls forth the deepest, most powerful emotions. It creates intimacy within marriage like nothing else...Each encounter will lead us to a deeper "knowing" of the one we love."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Meaning of Marriage, by Tim Keller, pg. 222

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.webmd.com/sex-relationships/guide/10-surprising-health-benefits-of-sex>

<sup>42</sup> Feminine Appeal, by Carolyn Mahaney, pg. 84. #

## YOUR NEXT STEP

Every marriage is unique and has its own dynamics, victories, and challenges. For that reason, there is no set marker for what a “more vibrant sex life” looks like. Rather, the hope and goal is that *your sex life* will be more vibrant in the future than *your sex life* is now. You are not trying to be like the couple next to you, or your best friends’ marriage. You are working to improve *your sex life*.

For that reason, growing and becoming more vibrant will look different for everyone. For instance:

- It may be getting counseling.
- It may mean a lot of repentance to God and to your spouse.
- It may be reading books.
- It may mean having sex once per week, twice per week, or simply for the first time in a long time.
- It may mean having hard conversations.
- It may mean sharing with each other fantasies that you would like to try.
- It may be trying new things.
- It may be adjusting your desires and expectations.
- It may mean spending time in prayer asking God for specific growth and change.