



BUILDING A STRONG MARRIAGE

Marriage is one of the greatest gifts God has given us, but it is not meant to be easy. Marriage was designed to be a living illustration of His sacrificial and unconditional love for His church. In Ephesians 5:25–27, Paul calls husbands to “love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” This sacrificial love reflects the heart of God, who loves us even when we are unworthy. Likewise, wives are called to respect their husbands in the same way the church honors Christ.

When approached as God designed, marriage becomes an act of worship, not just toward one’s spouse, but to the Lord Himself. Loving and respecting one’s spouse is not about whether they deserve it but about glorifying God through obedience to His commands. One day, we will stand before God and give an account of our faithfulness in marriage. Imagine the joy of saying, “Lord, I loved and respected my spouse not because it was easy or always deserved, but for Your glory.”

MARRIAGE IS HARD AND IT’S MEANT TO BE

The challenges of marriage are not a mistake; they are part of God’s design. Through the difficulties, we are refined and shaped into the image of Christ. Tim Keller observed, “To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God.”

Marriage exposes our flaws and weaknesses like no other relationship, but it also offers the grace to be fully known and still fully loved. This is a picture of God’s love for us, undeserved, unconditional, and transformational. The hard work of marriage is part of God’s sanctifying process, teaching us to love selflessly and depend on Him for strength.

MUTUAL SUBMISSION AND BREAKING THE CRAZY CYCLE

God designed men and women with unique needs. Generally, men crave respect, while women long to feel loved. This design is highlighted in Ephesians 5:33: “Let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” However, when these needs go unmet, couples can fall into the “crazy cycle.”

Husband: “I’ll love her when she respects me.”

Wife: “I’ll respect him when he loves me.”

This cycle fosters bitterness and division, making marriage even more challenging. Breaking the crazy cycle requires humility and spiritual maturity. The most spiritually mature spouse is the one who steps off the cycle first.

Loving and respecting one’s spouse is not about personal comfort or convenience but about worshiping God through obedience. When a husband loves his wife unconditionally, even when he feels disrespected, he reflects Christ’s sacrificial love. Similarly, when a wife respects her husband, even when she feels unloved, she demonstrates trust in God’s design for marriage. This choice glorifies God and fosters a deeper bond between husband and wife.

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING FULLY KNOWN AND FULLY LOVED

Tim Keller’s insight that “to be fully known and truly loved” reflects God’s love for us is foundational to a thriving marriage. Marriage is a relationship where both partners see each other’s strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures. This vulnerability can be daunting, but when met with unconditional love and respect, it creates a safe and sacred bond.

Being fully known requires courage, and being fully loved requires grace. Marriage provides a unique opportunity to grow together in these areas, reflecting the relationship between Christ and His church.

FINAL THOUGHTS AND ADVICE

Grow Spiritually Together: Marriage thrives when both spouses grow spiritually together. Couples should share what God is teaching them, pray together, and celebrate His goodness in their lives. Each spouse should make their partner their closest earthly relationship, second only to Christ. When couples laugh, grow, struggle, and celebrate together, they will find themselves more united in their goals and more aligned in their faith.

Love and Respect as Worship: Loving and respecting one’s spouse is not about what they deserve but about glorifying God. When couples

choose to love and respect, even when it is difficult, they are worshiping the Lord. One day, couples can stand before Him and give a report that their marriage was not about their comfort but about His glory.

Communicate With Grace and Truth: Effective communication is foundational in marriage. James 1:19 says, "Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." Spouses should listen actively to one another, seeking to understand rather than to respond. Speak with grace, being truthful yet loving (Ephesians 4:15). Communication is not just about solving problems but also about building connection and intimacy.

Practice Forgiveness: No marriage is free from conflict, but the ability to forgive is essential. Colossians 3:13 reminds us to "bear[ing] with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgive each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive." Forgiveness is not about excusing wrong behavior but about extending grace as Christ has done for us. Holding onto bitterness erodes trust and intimacy, but forgiveness builds a bridge to healing.

Cultivate a Servant's Heart: Marriage thrives when both spouses adopt a mindset of serving one another. Jesus modeled servant leadership when He washed His disciples' feet (John 13:12–17). Similarly, a husband and wife should strive to outdo one another in showing honor (Romans 12:10) and seek to meet each other's needs selflessly.

Celebrate Small Moments: Ecclesiastes 9:9 says, "Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun." Couples need not wait for big milestones to celebrate their marriage. Small acts of kindness, shared laughter, or a simple "thank you" can go a long way in nurturing joy and connection.

Guard Your Marriage Against External Threats: Proverbs 4:23 warns us, "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." Guarding one's marriage means setting boundaries to protect the relationship from anything that could weaken it, whether it is unhealthy relationships, workaholicism, or distractions like excessive screen time. Couples should invest intentionally in their marriage and protect the sacred bond they have committed to.

Be Patient and Persevere: Galatians 6:9 encourages us, "Let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." Marriage is a marathon, not a sprint. Challenges will come, but patience, perseverance, and reliance on God will help couples navigate them together.

Keep Christ at the Center: Marriage is not just a relationship between two people; it is a covenant relationship with God. Jesus said in Matthew 7:24, "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will

be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Couples should build their marriage on the foundation of God’s Word. Couples should pray together, worship together, and invite Christ into every aspect of their life together.

Remember the Eternal Purpose of Marriage: Marriage is not just about happiness but about holiness. It is a tool God uses to sanctify us and draw us closer to Him. Ephesians 5:31–32 reveals that marriage is a profound mystery that reflects Christ’s relationship with the church. Couples should keep this eternal purpose in mind, especially in difficult seasons.

Model Your Marriage for Others: A couple’s marriage is a testimony to the world of God’s love. Titus 2:7 encourages believers to be examples of good works. Whether it is to children, family, friends, or the broader community, a couple’s marriage can serve as a light that points others to Christ.

Be Thankful Always: Gratitude can transform perspective. Philippians 4:6 reminds us, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.” Couples should regularly thank God for their spouse and the blessings in their marriage. Gratitude fosters a spirit of joy and contentment.

Never Stop Learning About Your Spouse: W. H. Auden said, marriage “is not the involuntary result of fleeting emotion, but rather the creation of time and will.” Over time, it is easy to take one’s spouse for granted. Couples should avoid this by staying intentional in their relationship. Spouses should ask themselves, What does my partner need from me today? How can I show love and respect in a meaningful way? Spouses should always strive to understand and support each other as they grow and change.

“Same Team”: A lot of couples use a simple phrase like “same team,” especially when things get tense. It is a quick way to reset the moment and remember that you are not against each other. You are for each other and moving in the same direction. When conflict shows up, “same team” helps shift the focus from winning an argument to pursuing what honors God and strengthens the marriage. When one spouse is struggling, it means stepping in, not stepping back, and standing shoulder to shoulder in the middle of it.

It also helps to put that purpose into words. If you have never created a “Marriage Mission Statement,” take the time to do it together. It is a clear, biblical expression of why your marriage exists and what God has called you to be and do as a couple. When life gets busy, stressful, or divided, that mission becomes an anchor. It reminds you what matters most and gives you something steady to return to.

Couples need to come back to that regularly, reminding themselves not

just how to live together, but why their marriage exists in the first place. Marriage is a partnership with a shared mission: to glorify God in a couple's lives and in the lives of their family.

CONCLUSION

Continually dating one's spouse is essential to keeping a marriage vibrant and enduring. Prioritizing one's spouse above all other earthly relationships, including children, ensures that when the nest empties, a couple is not left living with someone they no longer know how to love. Couples should plan regular date nights, share meaningful conversations, and nurture the friendship that brought them together in the first place. Ecclesiastes 9:9 reminds us to "Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun." By making one's spouse a priority, couples build a lasting connection that will sustain their marriage through every season of life.

Marriage is one of God's greatest gifts, but it requires commitment, humility, and mutual submission to Christ. It is hard work, and it is supposed to be because it shapes us into the image of Christ. By building a marriage on a foundation of love, respect, and faith, couples create a relationship that reflects God's sacrificial love for His church.

Couples should be intentional about growing spiritually together, learning about each other, and prioritizing their shared goals. When challenges arise, couples should remind themselves that they are on the same team and that love and respect are acts of worship to the Lord. With Christ as the foundation and center of a marriage, the relationship can thrive and glorify God in every season.



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