

BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION - SESSION 1
FINDING JOY IN MY MARRIAGE

ASSUMPTION: There is not enough joy in your marriage

TRUTH: Joy isn't found in what I receive – it is found in what I give.

RESPONSE: Give myself to Christ in my marriage so that I may have His joy no matter what the situation.

*I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things **so that you will be filled with my joy**. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. John 15:9-12 (NLT)*

MY JOY IN MY MARRIAGE vs CHRIST'S JOY IN MY MARRIAGE

MY JOY: Things work out to _____

FOCUS: I focus on things _____ in life that impact my marriage

Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what he is doing. Rom. 8:7 (Mes)

PROBLEM: Circumstances and people _____

KEY TO SUCCESS: _____

CHRIST'S JOY: I remain in Christ's love as I _____ in my marriage

If you love me, you will obey my commands. John 14:15 (NCV)

Those who know my commands and obey them are the ones who love me, and my Father will love those who love me. I will love them and will show myself to them. John 14:21 (NCV)

FOCUS: I focus on things _____ in my life that impact my marriage

I want them to be strengthened and joined together with love so that they may be rich in their understanding. This leads to their knowing fully God's secret, that is, Christ himself. Col. 2:2 (NCV)

Let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short. So from now on, those with wives should not focus only on their marriage. 1 Cor. 7:29 (NLT)

A man who is not married is busy with the Lord's work, trying to please the Lord. But a man who is married is busy with things of the world, trying to please his wife. He must think about two things—pleasing his wife and pleasing the Lord. 1 Cor. 7:32-33 (NCV)

PROBLEM: I _____

It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. Rom. 7:21-23 (Mes)

KEY TO SUCCESS: _____ **the way Christ** _____

Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that. Eph. 5:1-2 (Mes)

FUNDAMENTALS

1. Don't use God as a reason to _____

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Tim. 5:8

You say, "Even if your parents are in need, you may give their support money to the church instead." And so, by your man-made rule, you nullify the direct command of God to honor and care for your parents.

Matt. 15:5-6 (LB)

2. Marriage is God's place for _____

It's good for a man to have a wife, and for a woman to have a husband. Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual disorder. 1 Cor. 7:2 (Mes)

3. Marriage is _____

The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. Marriage is not a place to "stand up for your rights." Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out. 1 Cor. 7:3-4 (Mes)

4. Sex in marriage is a _____

Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 1 Cor. 7:5 (NLT)

5. Look for opportunities _____

Lazy people who refuse to work are only killing themselves; all they do is think about what they would like to have. The righteous, however, can give, and give generously. Prov. 21:25-26 (GN)

6. Submit to _____

Honor Christ by submitting to each other. Eph. 5:21 (LB)

7. Wives must _____

You wives must submit to your husbands' leadership in the same way you submit to the Lord. For a husband is in charge of his wife in the same way Christ is in charge of his body the Church. (He gave his very life to take care of it and be its Savior!) Eph. 5:22-23 (LB)

So you wives must willingly obey your husbands in everything, just as the Church obeys Christ. Eph. 5:24 (LB)

8. Husbands must _____

And you husbands, show the same kind of love to your wives as Christ showed to the Church when he died for her. Eph. 5:25 (LB)

Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly. Col. 3:19 (NLT)

9. Never look for an _____

Don't be wishing you were someplace else or with someone else. Where you are right now is God's place for you. Live and obey and love and believe right there. God, not your marital status, defines your life. Don't think I'm being harder on you than on the others. I give this same counsel in all the churches. 1 Cor. 7:17 (Mes)

10. Don't become a _____

If the unbelieving spouse walks out, you've got to let him or her go. You don't have to hold on desperately. God has called us to make the best of it, as peacefully as we can. You never know, wife: The way you handle this might bring your husband not only back to you but to God. You never know, husband: The way you handle this might bring your wife not only back to you but to God. 1 Cor. 7:15-16 (Mes)

11. Find help from _____

God has opened the eyes of those called to salvation... to see that Christ is the mighty power of God to save them; Christ himself is the center of God's wise plan for their salvation. 1 Cor. 1:24 (LB)

Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central. It is no longer important that I appear righteous before you or have your good opinion, and I am no longer driven to impress God. Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I am not going to go back on that. Gal. 2:20-21 (Mes)

12. Find help from _____

The Helper will come—the Spirit, who reveals the truth about God and who comes from the Father. I will send him to you from the Father, and he will speak about me. John 15:26 (GN)

The Helper will teach you everything and will cause you to remember all that I told you. This Helper is the Holy Spirit whom the Father will send in my name. John 14:26 (NCV)

A person who does not have the Spirit does not accept the truths that come from the Spirit of God. That person thinks they are foolish and cannot understand them, because they can only be judged to be true by the Spirit. 1 Cor. 2:14 (NCV)

We who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us. For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus... what is important is faith expressing itself in love. Gal. 5:5-6 (NLT)

REBUILDING MY FOUNDATION

1. STAY _____

Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Rom. 8:6 (Mes)

I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

Phil. 3:13-14 (NLT)

2. LOVE _____ MORE THAN _____

You cannot be my disciple, unless you love me more than you love your father and mother, your wife and children, and your brothers and sisters. You cannot come with me unless you love me more than you love your own life. Luke 14:26 (CEV)

Jesus said to his disciples: If you love me, you will do as I command. Then I will ask the Father to send you the Holy Spirit who will help you and always be with you. John 14:15-16 (CEV)

You love him even though you have never seen him; though not seeing him, you trust him; and even now you are happy with the inexpressible joy that comes from heaven itself. 1 Pet. 1:8 (LB)

3. LET GOD'S SPIRIT _____

The sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. Gal. 5:17

Letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. Rom. 8:6 (NLT)

If we are living now by the Holy Spirit's power, let us follow the Holy Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Gal. 5:25 (LB)

God's Spirit doesn't make cowards out of us. The Spirit gives us power, love, and self-control.

2 Tim. 1:7 (CEV)

4. SEE TROUBLE AS AN _____

Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. James 1:2-3 (NLT)

These troubles come to prove that your faith is pure. This purity of faith is worth more than gold, which can be proved to be pure by fire but will ruin. But the purity of your faith will bring you praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is shown to you. You have not seen Christ, but still you love him. You cannot see him now, but you believe in him. So you are filled with a joy that cannot be explained, a joy full of glory. And you are receiving the goal of your faith—the salvation of your souls. 1 Pet. 1:7-9 (NCV)

FOUNDATION WORKSHEET

Read Luke 6:46-49.

“So why do you keep calling me ‘Lord, Lord!’ when you don’t do what I say? I will show you what it’s like when someone comes to me, listens to my teaching, and then follows it. It is like a person building a house who digs deep and lays the foundation on solid rock. When the floodwaters rise and break against the house, it stands firm because it is well built. But anyone who hears and doesn’t obey is like a person who builds a house without a foundation. When the floods sweep down against that house, it will collapse into a heap of ruins.”

Luke 6:46-49 (NLT)

1. What is Jesus trying to get us to see in this story?
2. How do you build a solid foundation for your marriage according to Christ?
3. What are some things that are happening in your marriage that go against the Word of God that you already know?
4. What are some things that are missing in your marriage that go against the Word of God that you already know?

Read John 15:9-12

*I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things **so that you will be filled with my joy**. Yes, your joy will overflow! This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. John 15:9-12 (NLT)*

1. How can you be filled with Christ’s joy?
2. Apart from loving God, what is the most important commandment for you in your marriage?

SESSION 2: BUILDING THE EXTERIOR
EMBRACING GOD’S DREAM FOR MY MARRIAGE

ASSUMPTION: We have dreams in our lives and our marriage that are unfulfilled.

TRUTH: God’s dreams for my marriage are different than mine.

RESPONSE: I must pursue God’s dreams for my marriage.

BUILDING BLOCKS

1. _____ God’s dream for your marriage.

“I know what I am planning for you,” says the LORD. “I have good plans for you, not plans to hurt you. I will give you hope and a good future.” Jer. 29:11 (NCV)

2. _____ in fulfilling God’s dream for your marriage.

God has made us what we are. In Christ Jesus, God made us to do good works, which God planned in advance for us to live our lives doing. Eph. 2:10 (NCV)

You were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. Gal. 5:13

3. _____ when problems occur in your marriage

Those who are dominated by the sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. Rom. 8:5 (NLT)

So letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. But letting the Spirit control your mind leads to life and peace. Rom. 8:6 (NLT)

DISCERNING TRUTH IN YOUR MARRIAGE

LIE: If I adjust to God’s dream for my marriage and my spouse won’t – “I Lose”

TRUTH: If I adjust to God’s dream for my marriage and my spouse won’t – “They Lose”

Try to stay out of all quarrels, and seek to live a clean and holy life, for one who is not holy will not see the Lord. Heb. 12:14 (LB)

Look after each other so that not one of you will fail to find God’s best blessings. Watch out that no bitterness takes root among you, for as it springs up it causes deep trouble, hurting many in their spiritual lives. Heb. 12:15 (LB)

LIE: If I fail my marriage fails.

TRUTH: Failure is inevitable – success is always an option. Success = God lifting me up!

*All have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious ideal; yet now God declares us "not guilty" of offending him **if** we trust in Jesus Christ, who in his kindness freely takes away our sins.*
Rom. 3:23-24 (LB)

If we say that we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he can be depended on to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong. 1 John 1:8-9 (LB)

LIE: I'm not getting what I want right now out of my marriage.

TRUTH: There is always more I can give right now in my marriage.

You can be sure that using people... what you can get out of them... will get you nowhere, and certainly nowhere near the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of God. Eph. 5:5 (Mes)

They all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. Phil. 2:21 (ESV)

We want to live well, but our foremost efforts should be to help others live well. With that as a base to work from, common sense can take you the rest of the way. 1 Cor. 10:24-25 (Mes)

LIE: It's time to quit!

TRUTH: It's time to step up to the plate!

Be brave. Be strong. Don't give up. Expect GOD to get here soon. Psa. 31:24 (Mes)

Stay with GOD! Take heart. Don't quit. I'll say it again: Stay with GOD. Psa. 27:14 (Mes)

You, LORD, give perfect peace to those who keep their purpose firm and put their trust in you. Isa. 26:3 (GN)

*God will bless you, **if** you don't give up when your faith is being tested. He will reward you with a glorious life, just as he rewards everyone who loves him. James 1:12 (CEV)*

A LESSON FROM BASEBALL

1. I'll never get a hit if I don't _____

Things that keep me from stepping up to the plate

1. PRIDE
2. RESENTMENT
3. ISOLATION

2. Keep swinging, sooner or later _____

Things that keep me from swinging

1. ANGER
2. FRUSTRATION
3. HURT
4. MISUNDERSTANDING
5. WEARINESS

3. _____ and _____ will bring success.

Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions; I will put them into practice with all my heart.

Psa. 119:34 (NLT)

Let the message about Christ completely fill your lives, while you use all your wisdom to teach and instruct each other. Col. 3:16 (CEV)

ASK THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

1. **What is God's dream for me in my marriage?**
2. **Can I let go of my dreams and accept God's dream for me in my marriage?**
3. **How does God's Spirit coach me in my marriage?**
4. **Who else can help me live out God's dream for my marriage?**
5. **Can I trust Christ to give me a full life no matter what happens in my marriage?**

If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you refuse to take up your cross and follow me, you are not worthy of being mine. If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give up your life for me, you will find it. Matt. 10:37-39 (NLT)

6. **Am I willing to make the sacrifices required of me so that my marriage will be stronger?**

Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that. Eph. 5:2 (Mes)

Lesson 1 LOVE

PRINCIPLE 1: RECOGNIZE YOUR INABILITY TO LOVE.

Somewhere it has crossed our path. Despite our inability to retain it in our experience, it still lives deep inside us. Daily, often in painful ways, its image reminds us of what we don't have, even creating anger in our hearts toward those we blame for stealing its fullness. Tauntingly it whispers to our hearts that we should have waited longer, or seductively it suggests it could still be had if only you would run somewhere else.

You might have read it, seen it in a movie, remembered it from a fairytale or simply imagined it in your own mind. You might have thought you had it, only to find out that what you really had was a cruel joke, a cheap counterfeit or possibly a well-orchestrated lie. Whatever the origin of its existence inside of you, you are certain that it is illusively unattainable.

It is love. Romance. Respect. Rest. Joy. Life. Hope. This is the kind of love we dream about, isn't it? The kind of infatuated, reckless, intense love that stuns you into blissful service for the rest of your life. Yet, how can something so real to our hearts be so far from our experience? It has been well-said that "while love may be blind, marriage is a real eye-opener."

We all want the ideal, end up getting an ordeal, and because our idea of love is distorted, start looking for a new deal. Maybe what we need, however, is not a new deal, but a new vision — a new understanding of what real love is.

When you stood at the altar, you probably dreamed that your marriage would have richness, depth, passion and intimacy — so much so that you and your spouse would easily and continually serve and long for each other. You imagined you would be sad when you had to be away from each other and you anticipated celebrating each other when you got back home. That's why you "fell in love." That's why you said, "I do; I will; I'm IN!"

Yet the view of love that's propagated by Hollywood and the kind of love that's put to melody in songs isn't real love. It is fleeting. It is a romanticized, emotional version of love defined by feeling and experience. Emotions alone will not last. So what does all this mean? It means you need and were intended to experience and enjoy something more. Much more.

God wants to help you experience the richness of relationships that you long for, but it's going to come through a love unfamiliar to the natural world; that is, through sacrificial love and selfless commitment. This is love as God intended. This is true love. This is the love that God models and the love that the Bible defines.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7 TEACHES THAT LOVE:

Is patient and kind. It doesn't look for instant gratification or immediate change. Rather than wounding or reminding of failures, it encourages. It is always thoughtful in actions, attitudes and speech.

Doesn't envy or boast. It celebrates when another is celebrated. It doesn't have to one-up the other to somehow be better. In fact, love actually admits failures and shortcomings rather than making excuses or pretending they don't exist.

Isn't rude or insisting on its own way. Rather than demanding or manipulating to get what it wants, real love actually finds joy in serving the other and putting their needs first. It even studies the other's needs and wants so it can meet them.

Is not irritable or resentful. It can handle interruptions, shortcomings and disappointments without becoming angry or agitated. It gladly overlooks small offenses and graciously forgives larger ones without bringing them up later.

Bears and endures all things. It sees the other's hardships as its own and takes them on in selfless ways. It stays completely and actively committed regardless of how it feels or what it is receiving in return.

Believes and hopes all things. It acts in a trustworthy manner with no secrets, which leaves no room for suspicion. It believes the best about the other and does everything it can to make the relationship work.

Love is not only demonstrated by these actions, but also by initiating, regardless of how your spouse responds. Jesus' life was a model of this kind of initiation.

Romans 5:8 says, "*But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" He didn't wait for us to be good enough. Rather, while we were actively sinning, He died for us! Real love goes first.

This isn't hard; it's impossible. In fact:

You are powerless to love your spouse the way you promised you would, the way they dreamed you would and the way God designed that you should.

The point of Lesson 1 is that our definition of love isn't big enough and that we don't have the ability to love our spouse as we should without God's help. Recognizing and admitting that you can't love as you should without God's help is the first step toward having the marriage for which you've always hoped.

Regardless of where you would rate your marriage on a scale of 1 to 10 — whether you are simply hoping to reconnect with your spouse or if your marriage needs a complete resurrection — these next 15 lessons will help you understand how to love the way God intended and reengage with your spouse.

QUESTIONS/PROJECTS:

Answer questions 1-4 by yourself first, then share them with your spouse (before group time). Some of these questions will be discussed during your group time.

1. What has informed your view of love up to this point in your life (your family, friends, Hollywood, the Internet, etc.)? How does that influence the way you interact with your spouse?

2. How would you describe your parents' marriage? In what ways is your marriage similar? In what ways is your marriage different?

3. Which one of the qualities of love in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 do you struggle with the most and why?

4. Why is it difficult for you to love your spouse the way Christ loves you?

5. Read: 1 John 4:7-21 and record any insights into God's love and how you should love your spouse.

1 John 4:7-21 (NLT)

Dear friends, let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is a child of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God, for God is love. God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us. And God has given us his Spirit as proof that we live in him and he in us. Furthermore, we have seen with our own eyes and now testify that the Father sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. All who confess that Jesus is the Son of God have God living in them, and they live in God. We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. So we will not be afraid on the day of judgment, but we can face him with confidence because we live like Jesus here in this world. Such love has no fear, because perfect love expels all fear. If we are afraid, it is for fear of punishment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced his perfect love. We love each other because he loved us first. If someone says, "I love God," but hates a Christian brother or sister, that person is a liar; for if we don't love people we can see, how can we love God, whom we cannot see? And he has given us this command: Those who love God must also love their Christian brothers and sisters.

Action Item: Write your spouse a note or email thanking them for making a commitment to come to this Marriage Conference and being willing to work on your marriage.

SESSION 3: FINISHING THE INTERIOR
MAINTAINING INTEGRITY IN MY MARRIAGE

ASSUMPTION: You have experienced or know someone who has experience a failed marriage.

TRUTH: Because we are human, we all have lapses of integrity in our marriages.

RESPONSE: I must find God's way to maintain integrity in my marriage.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. John 14:6-7

The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness. John 10:10 (GN)

_____ is who I am when no one is looking – it is the “true” me.

_____ is what people know about me. – could be true or false.

Both are impacted by my _____

INTEGRITY:

- 1: firm adherence to a code of especially moral values : _____
- 2: an unimpaired condition : _____
- 3: the quality or state of being complete or undivided : _____

CLEANING OUT YOUR HOME

Sin and shame go together. Lose your honor, and you will get scorn in its place. Prov. 18:3 (GN)

1. Disassociate with _____ in your life that corrupt your marriage.

Oh, the joys of those who do not follow evil men's advice, who do not hang around with sinners, scoffing at the things of God. Psa. 1:1 (LB)

You are not to keep company with anyone who claims to be a brother Christian but indulges in sexual sins, or is greedy, or is a swindler, or worships idols, or is a drunkard, or abusive. Don't even eat lunch with such a person. 1 Cor. 5:11 (LB)

2. Eliminate _____ in your life that impair your marriage

A home filled with strife and division destroys itself. Mark 3:25 (LB)

You must put away all these things:... furious rage, malice, insults, and shouted abuse! And don't deceive each other with lies anymore. Col. 3:8 (Ph)

Stop being angry! Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper— it only leads to harm. Psa. 37:8 (NLT)

A lazy person is as bad as someone who is destructive. Prov. 18:9 (GN)

Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too. Rom. 1:29,32 (NLT)

Wrongdoers eagerly listen to gossip; liars pay close attention to slander. Prov. 17:4 (NLT)

3. Conquer _____ in your life that divide your marriage

Do you know where your fights and arguments come from? They come from the selfish desires that war within you.

James 4:1 (NCV)

Everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. 1 John 2:16

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

1 John 2:15 (NIV)

We are tempted by our own desires that drag us off and trap us. Our desires make us sin, and when sin is finished with us, it leaves us dead. James 1:14-15 (CEV)

FURNISHING YOUR HOME

Do not be fooled: You cannot cheat God. People harvest only what they plant. If they plant to satisfy their sinful selves, their sinful selves will bring them ruin. But if they plant to please the Spirit, they will receive eternal life from the Spirit. Gal. 6:7-8 (NCV)

1. Nurture _____ that strengthen your marriage

You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Isa. 26:3 (NLT)

They delight in doing everything God wants them to, and day and night are always meditating on his laws and thinking about ways to follow him more closely. Psa. 1:2 (LB)

The LORD is good, a strong refuge when trouble comes. He is close to those who trust in him. Nah. 1:7 (NLT)

When we get together, I want to encourage you in your faith, but I also want to be encouraged by yours.

Rom. 1:12 (NLT)

2. Develop _____ that enrich your marriage

He was a thoroughly good man. He had led everyone in his house to live worshipfully before God, was always helping people in need, and had the habit of prayer. Acts 10:2 (Mes)

It takes wisdom to have a good family, and it takes understanding to make it strong. Prov. 24:3 (NCV)

God, who is at work within you, will give you the will and the power to achieve his purpose." Phil. 2:13 (Ph)

Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

Eph. 4:2-3 (NLT)

3. Intensify your _____ for God

God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. Phil. 2:13 (NLT)

We follow your will and put our hope in you; you are all that we desire. Isa. 26:8 (GN)

You're all I want in heaven! You're all I want on earth! Psa. 73:25 (Mes)

Your heart will always be where your treasure is. Matt. 6:21 (CEV)

KEYS TO MAINTAINING INTEGRITY IN MY MARRIAGE

1. Loving Christ more than _____

Father, the people of this world don't know you. But I know you, and my followers know that you sent me. I told them what you are like, and I will tell them even more. Then the love that you have for me will become part of them, and I will be one with them. John 17:25-26 (CEV)

2. Loving my spouse the way _____

If anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in Him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did. 1 John 2:5-6

I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need. Phil. 4:13 (NLT)

Christ's life showed me how, and enabled me to do it. I identified myself completely with him. Indeed, I have been crucified with Christ. My ego is no longer central... Christ lives in me. The life you see me living is not "mine," but it is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. Gal. 2:20 (Mes)

➤ My love for my spouse comes from my _____

We show our love for God by obeying his commandments, and they are not hard to follow.

1 John 5:3 (CEV)

The commandment that God has given us is: "Love God and love each other!" 1 John 4:21

We know what love is because Jesus gave his life for us. That's why we must give our lives for each other. 1 John 3:16 (CEV)

May the Lord lead your hearts into a full understanding and expression of the love of God and endurance that comes from Christ. 2 Thes. 3:5 (NLT)

➤ My love for my spouse comes from God's _____

We love each other because he loved us first. 1 John 4:19 (NLT)

Let everything you do be done in love (true love to God and man as inspired by God's love for us). 1 Cor. 16:14 (AMP)

We know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love. Rom. 5:5 (NLT)

When we love others, we know that we belong to the truth, and we feel at ease in the presence of God. But even if we don't feel at ease, God is greater than our feelings, and he knows everything. 1 John 3:19-20 (CEV)

No one has ever seen God. But if we love each other, God lives in us, and his love is brought to full expression in us. 1 John 4:12 (NLT)

We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in his love. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and God lives in them. And as we live in God, our love grows more perfect. 1 John 4:16-17 (NLT)

My children, our love should not be just words and talk; it must be true love, which shows itself in action.

1 John 3:18 (GN)

THE “ONE ANOTHER” COMMANDS IN THE BIBLE

Check 1 box on each row. You are rating yourself. “S” = strong and “W” = weak. “-“ = in between

S - W

- Mark 9:50 – “Be at peace with one another.”
- John 13:14 – “You also ought to wash one another's feet.”
- John 15:12 - "This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.
- Romans 12:10 - Be devoted to one another... give preference to one another in honor.
- Romans 12:16 - Live in harmony with each other. And don't think you know it all!
- Romans 14:13 - Let us not judge one another anymore.
- Romans 14:19 - Pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.
- Romans 15:7 - Accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.
- Romans 15:14 – You are filled with all knowledge and able also to admonish one another.
- Galatians 5:13 Through love serve one another.
- Galatians 5:26 - Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.
- Galatians 6:2 - Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.
- Ephesians 4:2 - with all humility and gentleness, with patience, show tolerance for one another in love.
- Ephesians 4:25 - No more lying, then! Each of you must tell the truth to the other.
- Ephesians 4:32 - Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ
Also has forgiven you.
- Ephesians 5:21 - and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.
- Philippians 2:3 - Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one
another as more important than yourselves.
- Colossians 3:13 - Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you.
- 1 Thessalonians 3:12 - May the Lord cause you to increase and abound in love for one another.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:11 - Encourage one another and build up one another.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:13b - Live in peace with one another.
- 1 Thessalonians 5:15 - See that no one repays another with evil for evil, but always seek after that
which is good for one another.
- 2 Thessalonians 1:3 - The love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater.
- Hebrews 3:13 - But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today".
- Hebrews 10:24 - Consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,
- James 4:11 - Do not speak against one another. James 5:9 - Do not complain against one another.
- James 5:16 - Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another.
- 1 Peter 4:9 - Be hospitable to one another without complaint.
- 1 Peter 5:5 - Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE
PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE.

**SESSION 4: ROUTINE MAINTENANCE
CHECKLIST FOR KEEPING MY MARRIAGE HEALTHY**

ASSUMPTION: You don't take as good care of yourself and your marriage as you should.

TRUTH: Just because I see my spouse every day doesn't mean I'm focused on our marriage.

RESPONSE: I must purpose to focus on my marriage because it won't happen on its own.

BASIC TRUTHS

1. Who we are outside our marriage defines who we are inside our marriage.

STRESSED TIRED OVERBEARING STUBBORN DISCOURAGED

2. Before I _____ with my spouse – I _____ with God.

Before I _____ with my spouse – I _____ with God.

HOW TO USE GAUGES TO KEEP YOUR MARRIAGE STRONG

1. _____ Gauge

Do not follow foolish stories that disagree with God's truth, but train yourself to serve God. 1 Tim. 4:7 (NCV)

Dear friends, God is good. So I beg you to offer your bodies to him as a living sacrifice, pure and pleasing.

That's the most sensible way to serve God. Rom. 12:1 (CEV)

OUR PROBLEM

It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge. Rom. 7:21-23 (Mes)

I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope. Is there no one who can do anything for me? Isn't that the real question? Rom. 7:24 (Mes)

The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does. He acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different. Rom. 7:25 (Mes)

Do I spend time alone with God?

Do I adjust to God's Spirit when He speaks to me?

Am I growing in my faith in Christ?

Am I doing anything that allows my spouse to see Christ in me?

Do I serve God by serving my Spouse?

Who is really leading me? God or Me?

2. _____ Gauge

I don't have the strength to endure. I have nothing to live for. Job 6:11 (NLT)

Stay awake and pray for strength against temptation. The spirit wants to do what is right, but the body is weak.
Matt. 26:41 (NCV)

The LORD is my strength and shield. I trust him with all my heart. He helps me, and my heart is filled with joy.
Psa. 28:7 (NLT)

Am I taking care of my body?

What is my baseline? What can I attain?

Can I give my best physically to my marriage?

Am I physically available to my spouse?

Am I helping my spouse stay physically fit?

3. _____ Gauge

My life is ending in sadness, and my years are spent in crying. My troubles are using up my strength, and my bones are getting weaker. Psa. 31:10 (NCV)

Am I emotionally able to pursue the purposes of my marriage?

Have I already left my marriage in my heart?

Do I use my gifts and talents to make my marriage better?

Do I have the emotional strength to stay married?

Are my emotions directing my thoughts, what I say and what I do?

God said to me, "My grace is enough for you. When you are weak, my power is made perfect in you." So I am very happy to brag about my weaknesses. Then Christ's power can live in me. 2 Cor. 12:9 (NCV)

4. _____ Gauge

Exploit or abuse your family, and end up with a fistful of air; common sense tells you it's a stupid way to live.
Prov. 11:29 (Mes)

Jesus said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you." Mark 5:19

Anyone who won't care for his own relatives when they need help, especially those living in his own family, has no right to say he is a Christian. 1 Tim. 5:8 (LB)

Am I investing my time and energy in my family?

Am I teaching my children to love God through words, through example or both?

Am I teaching my children the value of family?

Am I purposeful in making memories for my family?

Does our family have traditions that bond us together?

Do I take the time to ask my family, "How am I doing?"

May the LORD richly bless both you and your children. Psa. 115:14 (NLT)

5. _____ Light

My check engine light came on the other day. I popped the hood and looked, and the engine is still there...Silly light!!

It's time to pull over!

If I keep going bad things will happen.

When it's on – Explore the reason!

I don't know what's wrong but I know we're headed for trouble if we don't figure it out.

CONCLUSION

1. My joy must be in my ability to join God in my marriage. (Obedience)
2. My direction must come from God – I must know His desires for me. (Grace)
3. I must adjust to all God is showing me. (Faith)
4. I must love God and allow His love to flow from me to others – especially my spouse. (Worship)
5. I must find people who care that my marriage is strong. (Fellowship)
6. I must seek counsel from those who follow Christ. (Discipleship)
7. I must serve my spouse as God directs. (Ministry)
If Christ isn't helping me – it isn't ministry!
8. I must allow others to see how Christ is helping me in my marriage. (Witness)
9. I must bring others to Christ so He can help them as He has helped me. (Evangelism)