

MARRIAGE

KEYS TO A HAPPY MARRIAGE

Mark 10:7-9
Ephesians 5:31-33



*Promise me You
will Ask me to
Marry you One
Day*

Marriage

Course Overview

Where once the family was the stable foundation upon which all else was built, today its shattered remnants are the source of much of what troubles society. And while marriages still outnumber divorces, the gap is rapidly closing. Marriage is well on the way to becoming a failed institution.

Dr. Macon has wrote and taught extensively on interpersonal relationships and much of it is applicable to this most personal of relationships. In this course you will discover methods to make a marriage work, why many marriages fail, how to discover if partners are well suited to each other, and how to save a failing marriage.

While magazines are filled with the advice of “pop” psychologists, the trend has only worsened. Here are real solutions—workable solutions—that can be applied to improve any intimate relationship.

Lesson: Keys to a Happy Marriage

God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden as the first married couple. Marriage is ordained and established by God, and He includes keys to a happy marriage in the Bible.

Consider this story about a happily married couple in North Carolina: A certain man and his wife were about to celebrate 35 years of marriage. They’d actually met as teenagers because they attended the same church. When they became young adults, they were at a church convention where the man asked the young lady for a date. That first date was an epic one. They drove two hours to tour New York City instead of a local Pennsylvania mountain waterfall attraction as they had first planned.

Over time they began to realize how much they enjoyed each other's company and knew they were 'growing' in love.

After they got married, they encountered many of the typical newlywed challenges, including the financial ones, but they managed to make ends meet.

Before long, their son was born and brought them incredible joy, as did the child's sister who was born four years later. The couple settled down into what was to be a 31-year career in hospital financial administration, and the wife worked part-time as a substitute teacher and then as a clerical worker.

Today, their children are grown, and they have four beautiful grandchildren. They own a home in the Piedmont area of North Carolina, and they're now serving wonderful people as their pastor.

You might be thinking, 'That's their beautiful, inspiring love story? There's nothing interesting about that!' That's right! To you, the reader, it might seem meaningless, but to that wife and husband that's the brief outline of 35 years of a happy marriage. These represent years that are filled with countless stories and memories that they cherish, things that would mean nothing to you but everything to them.

The point is there is no 'magic formula' to pattern your life after that will lead to a happy marriage. Married couples are each unique with their own hopes and dreams—their own special circumstances in life that make them who they are.

God Must Be Involved in Your Marriage

For a marriage to be happy and successful for life, the husband and wife must include God as a partner in their marriage. They must acknowledge God as Supreme in their lives and together yield to what God instructs in the Bible about marriage. The marriage will fail if it is based on self-gratification and pleasure.

Is God really involved in marriage?

Malachi 2:14

Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the Lord has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

Mark 10:7-9

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."

Marriage is a covenant that includes God! Many marriage ceremonies include words such as, "Do you faithfully promise and covenant with God, in the presence of these witnesses to take..." If we covenant with God, then this makes marriage on a far higher plane than simply agreeing to live together legally as husband and wife. It means we willingly submit to the role God must play in the marriage. We will live by His rules.

What's the purpose of marriage?

Ephesians 5:31-33

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Ephesians 5 reveals how marriage is a type of the incredible love relationship between Jesus Christ and His Bride, the Church. No love could be greater! The Bible is the ultimate love story when understood in its overall concept and purpose.

What is true love?

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails...

Love isn't just a feeling of passionate desire for your lover and the unbearable thought of being apart. True love is based on outgoing concern for your partner. It's about self-sacrifice for the good of the one you love.

In every marriage, things go wrong. What if the problem is not my fault?

Proverbs 14:12

There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

Philippians 2:3-5

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...

Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

1 Thessalonians 5:15

See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

Over time, seemingly insignificant irritations can get blown out of proportion, and before long, couples say or do things that are offensive to each other. The result? Arguments, conflict and, all too often, shouting matches.

It is often very difficult to see our own faults. We're always right in our own eyes, so we naturally place the blame on our partner. This mind-

set started way back in the Garden of Eden when Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent (Genesis 3:12-13).

But even if it really is not our fault, loudly insisting the other person take all the blame is not helpful. The optimal solution instead involves seeking peace, not revenge (Matthew 5:9; Romans 12:17-21). It involves seeking win-win strategies. The Bible shows that sometimes our good actions can, over time, win over our mate (1 Peter 3:1).

Ideally, both partners will eventually work together to solve their problems. Well-known marriage counselor H. Norman Wright offers the following advice: "Some negative ways of dealing with conflict are withdrawing, winning, yielding, and compromising. The ideal way of dealing with conflict is by resolving the conflict. It may take longer, but the relationship is then strengthened and needs are met on both sides"

What should we say to help heal our relationships?

Psalm 51:1, 10 (New Living Translation)

Have mercy on me, O God, because of your unfailing love. Because of your great compassion, blot out the stain of my sins...

Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me.

Ephesians 4:32

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

Ephesians 5:25

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her..

Titus 2:4 (New Living Translation)

These older women must train the younger women to love their husbands and their children.

When we sin, first we must repent and become right with God. Then we can seek His help in restoring the relationship.

In every marriage relationship, there are several phrases that can help heal the damage that has been done due to conflicts and arguments. Three key phrases are listed below.

1. "I'm sorry." Use this one often, and mean it! Tell your spouse you're sorry for saying or doing the thing that has upset him or her. Whether you were right or wrong, it doesn't matter; your actions have had a negative impact on the spouse you love, and you should apologize for that.
2. "I forgive you." Jesus Christ died to forgive us of our sins. His great sacrifice should motivate us to be willing to forgive others.
3. "I love you." When said sincerely, this declaration cannot be overused. We need to know we are loved by the person we love. This short, sincere phrase, backed by loving actions, can put to rest all of our negative feelings, hurts, resentments and faults and can melt the heart of the one hearing these three beautiful words.

Can the Flame Burn Again?

Some may feel like the romance and excitement is long gone in their marriage. They stay together for convenience or for the sake of the children or other family members. But, as the well-known song asks, "Where is the love?"

Can my marriage really be happy?

Proverbs 5:18-19

Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth. As a loving deer and a graceful doe, let her breasts satisfy you at all times; and always be enraptured with her love.

Ecclesiastes 9:9

Live joyfully with the wife whom you love all the days of your vain life which He has given you under the sun, all your days of vanity; for that is your portion in life, and in the labor which you perform under the sun.

Yes, your marriage can be happy! The Bible reminds us that a wife is a blessing from God and tells husbands to "bring happiness" to their wives, starting from the first year of the marriage (Proverbs 18:22; Deuteronomy 24:5). To achieve happiness, it's important to keep the perspective that it's not "my" marriage but "our" marriage. The two of you are in this together and need to work together to bring life and energy back to the marriage if it has been lost.

If you've been married a few years, find ways to rekindle the spark that led to your marriage in the first place. What attracted you to your spouse? Why did you get married? Try dating your spouse again!

Marriage and Family: The Missing Dimension explains: "Some marriage partners have rekindled this desire by asking God for a loving, humble attitude and doing things to show love to their mate, even when they don't feel like it. Many married people have found that the feelings they long for return when they start doing the things that bind two people together"

Beyond the romance, the marriage relationship should also be a close and growing friendship. Consider this excellent advice: "Enjoying your spouse as both friend and marriage partner will help override many marital disagreements, whether financial or social. Couples who remain in love almost inevitably must also be good friends. They will share the ups and downs that are common within the marriage relationship" (Jerold Aust, "[What Are the Keys to a Happy Marriage?](#)"). Did I really mean "for better or worse"?

As we saw in Malachi 2:14, marriage is a covenant. When we took our marriage vows, we probably repeated words like "for better or worse." Did we really mean it? No matter what the situation might be right now in your marriage, can't you work together to make it better?

Do you have the option to give up if the situation has become "worse"? God says He "hates divorce" (Malachi 2:16), and His expectation is for you to be committed to your marriage for life. Paul also gave instructions to Church members not to divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10-11), and Jesus Christ gave narrow definition to the terrible circumstances that would allow for divorce and remarriage (Matthew 19:3-9).

A helpful exercise to begin restoring the love in your marriage is to go back and watch a video of your wedding if you have it. Listen to the words the minister is saying. Say those vows to each other again.

In difficult times when you have tried everything you know how to do, it can be helpful to seek wise counsel (Proverbs 4:7; 11:14). Healthy, mature people are not afraid to seek help when they need it.

Can we learn to love again?

Ephesians 5:22-28

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body.

Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.

So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

As we are seeing, love is not to be confused with infatuation. Love is selfless concern for another. True love will build up the one you love, not tear him or her down. True love will want to give and serve the other, not take in selfish disregard for the desires of your spouse. A husband should treat his wife like his queen, and a wife should treat her husband as her "knight in shining armor"—as corny as that might sound.

Or, as the apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 5, we should treat each other as Christ and His Church do.