

KEYS TO PRESERVING AND STRENGTHENING YOUR MARRIAGE

Introduction

What Is the One Key to Keeping a Marriage Strong?

A. The gospel of Jesus Christ is the key to keeping a marriage strong.

1. Both the Old and New Testaments portray the Lord's relationship with us as a marriage.

Eph 5:32; Isa 54:5

2. You must first know the love of Christ. *1 John 4:19; Eph 5:1-2, 25, 32*

3. The best thing you can do for your marriage is to grow closer to Jesus.

4. Study God's Word and meditate upon the greatness of Christ's love for you.

5. Pray the prayer which Paul prays for the Ephesians. *Eph 3:14-19*

B. Christlike love is founded upon grace, not law.

1. Most human relationships are implicitly governed by law.
2. This is not how God has dealt with you. *Titus 3:5-6; Eph 5:1-2*
3. You are the chief of sinners who has been shown great mercy. *1 Tim 1:15*
4. Self-righteousness is delusional and destructive. *Js 4:11-12*
5. You married a fellow sinner and should not be shocked when he or she sins.
6. As you remember God's grace to you, restore and forgive your spouse. *Gal 6:1; 1 John 1:8-9; Col 3:12-14; Pr 19:11*
7. The kindness of God leads us to repentance. *Rom 2:4*

C. Keep fighting for love.

1. Walk by the Spirit. *Gal 5:16-24*
2. You are in a spiritual battle. *Gal 5:17*

3. Your spouse cannot make you fleshly. *Gal 5:16; 1 Cor 10:13*

4. Covenant love endures.

5. God loves us with an eternal and unchanging love. *Heb 13:5*

6. Christ's love described. *1 Cor 13:4-7*

What Must Be Done to Protect and Preserve Your Marriage?

A. The Lord must come first.

1. Make your personal walk with the Lord your highest priority. *Gal 5:16; 1 Pe 2:2-3; Ps 1:1ff; Phil 4:6-7; 1 Th 5:17*

2. Remain involved in a strong church. *Heb 10:24-25; 13:17; Eph 4:11-16*

B. Laziness will cause your marriage to deteriorate. *Pr 24:30-31*

1. Do not take each other for granted.

2. Quickly and completely resolve conflicts. *Rom 12:18*

- Conflict is dangerous. *Eph 4:26-27*

- Don't be quarrelsome - fire your inner lawyer (excusing and accusing). *Prov 29:22; 20:3; 25:24; Js 4:1-2; 1:19; Eph 4:29*

- First, get the log out of your own eye. *Mt 7:1-5*

- Gently restore your spouse. *Gal 6:1-2*

- Forgive as you have been forgiven. *Eph 4:31-32*

- Get help (godly counsel) if you need it.

3. Commit to communicate.

- Learn to listen in love. *Js 1:19; Phil 2:3-5; Pr 20:5*

- Build up with your speech. *Eph 4:29; Pr 16:24*

- Learn to communicate on a deeper level.

- Make specific plans to spend quality time together.

C. Lies are like a deadly cancer to your relationship. *Eph 4:25*

1. Nothing is more important in marriage than mutual trust.
2. Lying includes exaggeration, spin (“always” or “never”).
3. Why do people lie? People lie for selfish reasons. *Js 4:1ff*
4. Some people are so accustomed to lying that learning to be truthful is like learning to speak a new language (and to trust God). *Pr 3:5-6*
5. Make it safe for the other to honestly confess his or her sins and failings.

D. Lust can destroy your marriage. *Js. 1:14-15*

1. Be circumspect in your dealings with the opposite sex. *2 Tim 2:22; Prov 5:8*
2. Don’t be emotionally vulnerable with someone of the opposite sex. *Gen 2:24*
3. Don’t think that it can’t happen to you. *2 Sam 11:1ff; 1 Cor 10:12*

4. Agree upon guidelines for propriety in dealing with the opposite sex.
 5. Consider the consequences of moral failure. *Prov 6:27-35; 7:22-27*
 6. If boundaries are crossed, quickly confess and seek accountability.
- E. Lift one another up in order to strengthen your marriage.
1. Have you affirmed your spouse lately?
 2. Look for that which is affirmable. *Phil 4:8-9*
 3. Affirmation is biblical. *Prov 31:28-29; Rev 2:2-6; 1 Cor 1:4-8*
 4. Give God glory by affirming His work in your spouse. *Col 1:3 8; 1 Thess 1:2 10; Eph 2:10; 1 Cor 1:30 31*
 5. Affirmation is very powerful. *Prov 16:21b*

Concluding Summary



Books

Crabtree, Sam, *Practicing Affirmation: The God-Centered Praise of Those Who Are Not God.*

Harvey, Dave, *When Sinners Say I Do.*

Keller, Tim, *The Meaning of Marriage.*

Tripp, Paul, *What Did You Expect?*



Audios

Crabtree, Sam, “Affirmation: The Problem and Opportunity for Every Person.”

Crabtree, Sam, “The God-Centeredness of Affirmation.”

Crabtree, Sam, “Helping People Get Good at Affirmation.”

Crabtree, Sam, “Practical Applications of Affirmation.”

Duguid, Iain, “Friendship on Fire – The Song of Songs in Marriage.”

Harvey, Dave. “When Sinners Say I Do – Grace.”

Harvey, Dave. “When Sinners Say I Do – Sin.”

Kelleman, Bob. “Gospel-Centered Marriage Counseling – Four Pillars of Glorifying God Through Oneness in Marriage.”



Supplemental Resources

“Built to Last: The Greatest Risk You’ll Ever Take – Marriage Homework.”

“Business/Travel Plan for Avoiding Sexual Temptation.”

“Computer Purity Covenant.”