

Blueprints: God's Radical Design for Marriage



By Tami Myer

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THE HOUSE OF MARRIAGE



"Coffee Talk"

"There you go, girlfriends!" Amy set the coffee cups down carefully.

"You take decaf with sugar," she announced, sliding the steaming coffee across the table to Brenda.

"And Carla likes regular with cream." Amy handed a cup to Carla at the end of the table. Although the bakery shop was bustling with customers that morning, the three friends were intently focused on catching up on the others' lives.

Amy: Well, Carla, how are the newlyweds?

Carla: Okay, I guess. . . . Actually, I have been feeling like Frank is not the same guy that I married. I mean, I really thought that I was marrying my soulmate. Your husband has got to be your soulmate,

right? You know, someone who can listen and understand and have [raised eyebrows] A LITTLE BIT of sensitivity!

Brenda: Oh, yeah, you gotta have a soulmate to have a good marriage. But there are bound to be a few bumps along the way, Carla.

Carla: Yeah, I guess so. But I am really determined to have an excellent marriage. My goal tonight is to have a totally romantic dinner. We are going to have steaks and candlelight. My goal is to have my husband be able to show some affection and appreciation, and to get back to being a romantic guy!

Amy: There you go!

Carla: Well, we'll see. . . . Brenda, how are you doing? How are things going with Brad?"

Brenda: You do not want to know. Honestly, I think I made a huge mistake. I *know* I made a huge mistake. The only thing to do now is to call it quits and move on. It is just foolish to stay in this misery. It is hopeless.

Amy: Oh, Brenda, I am so sorry! [sigh] But I think you're right. Sometimes the only thing you can do is bring it to an end as quickly and as painlessly as you can. Chalk it up as a learning experience, and move on to something better. But really, I am so sorry for you.

Brenda: Thanks. I am just tired of having my husband ruin my life. He has brought one curse after another into my life. I have got to get away from him!

Amy: Well, and you have kids, too, Brenda. You have to think about them. It's not fair to them to live with fighting all the time. I know it's hard, but you gotta do what you gotta do.

Brenda: I love the idea of being married, but it has to be a "50-50" deal. Brad has no problem with me doing 100% of everything! I am so through with that!

Carla: Oh, yeah, I agree. Marriage is about two people doing 50-50. I know that some people say it should 100%-100%. Whatever. The point is . . . a husband has got to do his full, fair share!

Amy: That's right! And then when the husbands do their fair share, we can respect them. My husband has been whining that I don't respect him. Duh! He does nothing deserving my respect. First he has to DO something worthy of respect, and then I will be thrilled to respect him. That's how it works. Why can't he get that?! It seems pretty simple—right?

Now, if we took that script in hand, highlighted everything that was based on truth, and crossed out everything that was based on deception, what would it look like?

There were three true statements in that conversation:

- Brenda takes decaf with sugar.
- Carla likes regular with cream.
- There are bound to be a few bumps along the way.

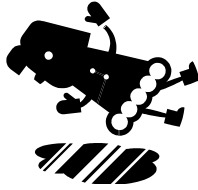
That's it! Everything else was faulty thinking. But doesn't that sound like a typical conversation that we might hear going on around us?

Most of us are walking around with our heads twisted on backwards.



We don't really mind living like this, with our heads twisted on backwards, because we see that this is how everyone else wears her head; this is really quite popular.

The problem, though, with having our heads on backwards is that we keep banging into stuff, we keep falling, and we keep getting hurt. Life can be pretty confusing when your head is on backwards!



Our natural thinking can be completely contrary to truth, 180 degrees backward. In Isaiah's words, we think that dark is light and that bitter is sweet. But the Scriptures tell us what truth really is; and as we learn and believe that truth, we get our heads turned straight. God gets our heads turned the right way.



Life makes a lot more sense now; we don't keep crashing around and stumbling about.

If ever we had our heads twisted on backwards, it is in this area of marriage. In fact, listen to God's words to Eve when He told her what the consequences would be from her act of rebellion: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16).

We could paraphrase it this way: "Now that you have twisted your head on backwards, you will crash around painfully in your marriage."

In the beginning, God created men and women in His image in order that He might enjoy loving them and being loved by them. It is the greatest pleasure of God to love, and He made us to bring us into the delight and joy of His love.



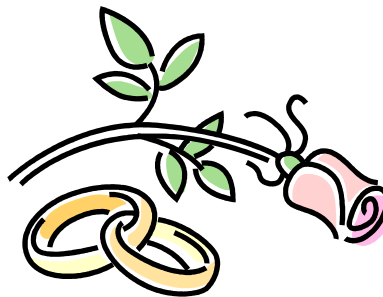
But God has an enemy, and we have an enemy, who schemes with cruelty and who plots with intense hatred and who works vigorously to oppose God's beautiful plan of love and joy.

Marriage and family are designed to reveal God to us. When these structures are twisted and marred, the enemy succeeds in twisting and marring our understanding and our enjoyment of God Himself.

If marriage is designed to lead us into the love of God, then what better strategy could the enemy devise than to attack marriage?

Marriage receives the most fierce battering, the most intense barrage, from spiritual forces of darkness than anything else on earth.

When a marriage falls, everything good takes a hit. When a marriage falls, our children are assaulted. When a marriage falls, the Church is assaulted. The hands of marriage and family touch the deepest, deepest core of men and women and children. The impact of these hands reaches every part of life.



Your marriage matters.
Your marriage matters greatly.
Your marriage matters more than you can imagine.

This is why the enemy opposes your marriage fiercely and unceasingly. Do not believe that because your marriage takes much work that your marriage is not worth much. Your marriage requires much energy and much hard work precisely because it is worth much!

The enemy does not see just one small marriage to destroy. Why would he care about one legal statistic? He does not.

What he sees and what he cares about is this:
 he sees that through this one marriage, he can destroy the husband's immortal spirit, created in the image of God;
 through this one marriage, he can destroy the wife's immortal, beloved-of-God spirit;
 through this one marriage, the enemy can destroy the precious-to-God spirits of the children, the spirits of grandchildren, the spirits of brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, and grandparents, and the spirits of aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews.

Through this one marriage, the enemy sees that he can harm the spirits of neighbors, the spirits of coworkers, the spirits of friends, and the lost spirits of many who might have been rescued by the evangelizing work of the Church.

"Divorce is contagious." When one marriage collapses, the earth quakes under a multitude of spirits.



Conversely, when a marriage is sustained, a multitude of spirits is strengthened by it.

Your obedience to God in your marriage has life-giving impact.

This is true even when our marriages are difficult.

If your marriage is painful to you, know this: your obedience to Christ attains a glory and a reward that far outweighs the suffering. God does not allow any pain in a believer's life which does not achieve far, far more than what was suffered.

When we see what God has bought through our suffering--however great it may have been--we will not regret one bit of it. If we could see in the spiritual realm what God sees when we are fully yielded to Him, we would change not one thing.

If your marriage is painful to you, know this:
 your obedience to Christ is achieving unbelievable glory
 and unimaginable beauty
 and incomparable splendor
 and unspeakable joy
 and unending pleasure in the Presence of God.



This, then, is what is at stake.

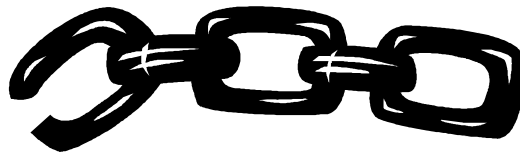
The enemy opposes this good and this glory that God proposes, and Satan fights against us through our marriage. But we are not unaware of his schemes.



His battleground is the mind, and his weapon is deception. If he can just get us to believe a lie, we lose.

Nothing less than our eternal future, our happiness, everything that matters—all of this rides on what we choose to believe. Simply by believing lies, we risk everything.

Lies plunge us into darkness and captivity, but truth sets us free in the light. Your marriage is worth fighting for, and one way you fight for it is by believing truth.



Let's look at several myths that our culture promotes. They may be trendy, but they are lies that have our heads twisted on backwards. We will look at one now, and then we will discuss several later in conjunction with other aspects of marriage.

The first myth we believe is that unless both the husband and the wife are actively working to improve their relationship, then there is no hope for the marriage. We think that unless both people are willing to put attention and energy into the marriage, then it really won't help much. But is that true?

"The Power of One"

Vanessa: Would you please tell me how to get to the library?

Tania: Ke sa ou di?

Vanessa: I need to go to the library. What is the best way to get there?

Tania: M-pa comprend. M-pa palé Anglai.

Vanessa (getting a bit impatient): LI...BRAR..Y! LI...BRAR..Y!

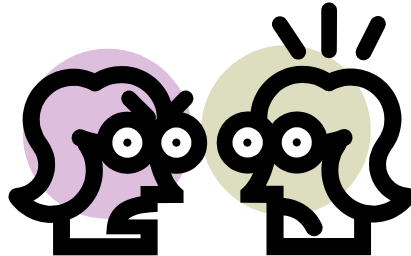
Tania: Li pa la? Ke moun pa la?

Vanessa: Books! Books! Books! Where do they have books?

Tania (getting agitated): Ou palé ampil, me m-pa kompren ke sa ou vlé!

Vanessa: Oh, good grief. Just forget it! [walks away] That was no help at all.

Tania: Bon. M-kontan ou alé. Ou pa janti. [walks to other side]



Those two people were frustrated because they did not speak one another's language. They were not trying to be difficult, and there was nothing wrong with either one of them. They simply did not understand each other's language.

A perfect solution to this frustrating dilemma would be for Tania to learn English and for Vanessa to learn Creole. If they both learned the other's language, they easily would be able to understand each other.

But what if only Tania learned to speak English? How is the situation changed? Let's see.

Vanessa: Would you please tell me how you to get to the library?

Tania: Oh, sure. Drive north on this road, and then turn left at the next light. It will be two blocks down on the right.

Vanessa: Go north, and then left at the light?

Tania: That's it. Would you like me to go with you?

Vanessa: Oh, sure. That's even better! My car is this way.

[They walk away together.]

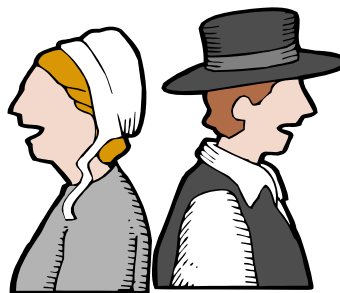
What a difference! Just one person learning another's language can completely change the situation.

Of course, it is great if two people will both learn a new language. That would be ideal, especially in a marriage relationship in which the man speaks “blue” and the woman speaks “pink.” But if only one will learn another language, that is enough.

Women often feel hopeless in their marriages because their husbands won’t go to counseling or do not seem interested in changing. We think that unless both parties are working together on the marriage, then what’s the point? But that is faulty thinking!

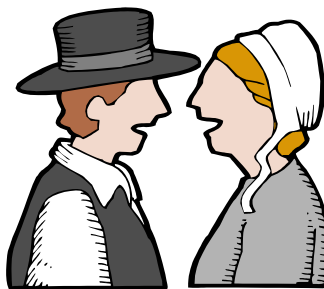
One person—YOU—learning about your husband can make a huge difference.

People in a marriage can easily get turned back-to-back in conflict.



This is a difficult situation. Can just one person change this type of strained relationship?

If just one person will simply walk around the other person and turn the other way, then the two people are again face to face.



Take hope! One person can make all the difference that is needed.

If you are feeling alone in your marriage, take hope! There is great power in the obedience of one person in her marriage because God Almighty fills those acts of obedience with His incredible power.

In fact, Proverbs 14:1 says, "A wise woman builds her house; but with her own hands, the foolish one tears hers down."



While this verse is a stern warning to wives looking for excuses, it is also a very strengthening challenge to wives who will receive encouragement.

A wise wife is credited with nothing less than the building of the house of marriage. Talk about meaningful work! Talk about significant accomplishment!

One wise woman can build a marriage. One can build.

In contrast, a foolish wife is charged with the active destruction of her marriage house. Single-handedly, a woman can destroy her marriage.



Since the Scriptures use the analogy comparing marriage to the building of a house, let's use that word picture. How does a wise woman build her house?

FOUNDATION

Let's start with the foundation. What makes a good foundation for a strong house of marriage?

"Prince Charming"

Vanessa with feather boa: I have discovered the dreamiest man. He is truly a Prince Charming.



He gives me lots of attention. He's romantic. We talk for hours. He loves children. . . . I just know that this man is going to meet my needs.

[Vanessa exits and then enters with an apron and baby doll]:

*Help!
I am not happy here!
My dream man has become a nightmare!
My Prince Charming has become a couch potato.*



Sure, he wants kids, but not when they are crying or when they need a diaper change or when he's busy!



*This is not what I expected.
This is not the man I married.
He is not meeting my needs!*

[Vanessa exits.]

This idea that “my husband will meet my needs” is a very common expectation going into marriage.

But the crown of Prince Charming makes a lousy foundation for a marriage. Sitting on a sharp, pointy crown of expectations, the house of marriage totters and wobbles and collapses.

Our lists of expectations may differ from woman to woman, but every bride has one when she gets married. And who has the longest list? It is often the Christian wife!



It is ironic that Christian women can be more discontent in their marriages than unbelieving women. This happens when a woman takes her list of expectations of a husband and then makes it even longer with all the things that she expects from a *Christian* man.

She can add quite a few more things, such as

- leading family devotions,
- consistently exhibiting godly behavior,
- praying heartfelt prayers aloud every morning, and
- demonstrating sacrificial love at all times.

She might add

- singing in the choir or
- teaching a Bible study.

As Christian women, we can actually create more arenas in which our husbands can fail to meet our expectations, and we are more dissatisfied as wives than ever.

The Scriptures tell us about another, very different foundation, one that is solid and unshakeable. This foundation has both a primary and a secondary layer of strength.

1. The primary foundation is a reliance upon Christ.

It is Christ who is my need-meeter.
He is not only the creator but also the sustainer of my life.
He is my provider and my protector.

God may or may not choose to use my husband to meet a need in my life. It does not matter to me how God chooses to meet my needs. He will meet my needs. He is my Source.

Regardless of the actions of others, I am completely secure in the care of God; I am completely unthreatened.

My well-being is not vulnerable to the actions of others because I am completely sheltered in the protection and provision of God.

This is the mindset which gives us strength.
This is the mindset which frees us from fear.
This is the mindset which releases us from the need to control.

Our underlying, solid-Rock foundation is this:
We rely upon Jesus as our Need Meeter.

In fact, the Scriptures tell us an amazing thing:
God says that He will be our Husband. (Isaiah 54; Hosea 2)

God is willing to enter into a covenant with each of us personally in which He promises to be the One who provides for us, who protects us, and who meets our every need.

He will be unshakeable in His loyalty to us;
 He will be steadfast in His faithfulness to us;
 He will be fully trustworthy in His commitment to us;
 and He will be unfailing in His love toward us.

If we enter into covenant with God, God will be a Husband to us. This puts us into a completely secure place. This is a firm foundation for our entire life, as well as for our earthly marriage to a man.

We need not panic when a man fails as a husband to us.
 We need not feel desperate when a man disappoints us.
 We need not feel vulnerable when a man fails as a provider to us.
 We need not fear when a man fails as a protector to us.
 We need not manipulate; we need not scheme; we need not run away.

God is our Husband! He will not fail us. He very well may meet our needs through a husband, but He is not limited to that. God can meet our needs in any way He desires as we remain yielded to Him. The LORD is our Shepherd; we have everything we need!

2. The secondary foundation is a commitment to minister to the needs of our husbands.

A very common marriage myth is that our marriages are where we go to get our needs met; marriage is where we go to be nurtured and renewed. We think that our husbands should be our soulmates--able to understand our hearts, able to comfort our hurts, and able to fill up all the holes in our souls.

The Christian version of this second myth is shaped this way: "My husband should minister to me so that I can go out and minister to other people. If my husband will be good to me, then I can go out and do a lot of good for the world."

But here is the truth: our marriages *are* our places of ministry. Our marriages are our *priority* places of ministry.

If you are married, then your highest calling on earth, your most noble calling, is to your husband as his wife. It is your primary place of ministry and service.

If you are considering marriage, a good question to be asking is not "is this man my soulmate?" or "will this man meet my needs?" or "does this man make me happy?"



A better question to be asking is this: "Is God calling me to serve this man as his wife?"

This calling to your husband will become an unshakeable foundation for you on all those days when your husband does not feel like a soulmate or does not meet your needs or does not make you happy. It does not matter. You are there to serve, and that commitment does not change.

This second foundation can be poured only after the first one has been built into our lives. Once we know that our needs are being met by God, then we are free to serve our husbands.

Without this foundational security, we can consider giving to someone else, but we must then receive back. Most of our natural giving is actually bartering.

But when we know that our needs have already been provided for, then we can truly serve another person. We may have greater neediness in our own lives than our husbands do, but we are still committed to a marriage of ministry because we are confident that Christ takes care of all of our needs.

Furthermore, we may be willing to serve--we may even be eager--but our personal reservoirs for giving are limited. Sometimes, after only five minutes of service, my giving tank can be empty.



So without the first foundation, the secondary one is merely good intentions without the strength to fulfill them: it is because God meets my needs that I am able to serve others.



Now with this double-layered foundation, a woman views her husband in an entirely different way. Instead of seeing her husband as someone who should meet her needs and as someone who lets her down at times, she now sees her husband as the man that she is called to serve always. He is not her project; he is the one she serves.

We have been assigned to minister to our husbands. Their reactions and their behavior do not change our assignment at all. Their actions may alter the way we best minister to them, but the goal of ministry is a constant.

You may be talented as a musician or a teacher. You may be skilled as an administrator or a nurse or a bookkeeper or an engineer. That ability that you have is a talent which many other women have, too.

But you are the only woman in the entire universe--
you are the only woman on the whole planet--
who can minister to your husband as his wife.



You have a sacred calling to minister to your husband.

God has uniquely equipped you--and He will continue to equip and enable you--to minister to your husband in a way that no one else can.

Imagine this: A woman accepts an enormous challenge in the business world. She takes on this demanding assignment, but she is truly challenged by it. She is excited to have this incredible opportunity to succeed in an admirable way.

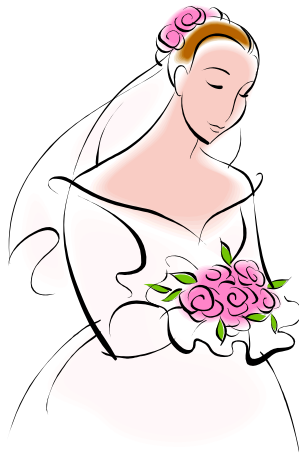


She already has the confidence of having been given the job, knowing that she has been chosen as the one best able to accomplish this significant task. This woman has impressive credentials; she has all kinds of talents and skills which she applies to this particular endeavor. She devotes herself to this work with energy and creativity.

As she does this, she enjoys a great sense of fulfillment because she is using her unique abilities in a rewarding way. Eventually, she succeeds in creating a strong, profitable business.

And what does everyone say? "Wow! What a woman! We are impressed." Everyone stands and applauds.

Now imagine this: A woman accepts an enormous challenge in the relationship world: she gets married.



She takes on this demanding assignment, but she is truly challenged by it. She is excited to have this incredible opportunity to succeed in an admirable way.

She already has the confidence of having been given the job, knowing that she has been chosen as the one best able to accomplish this significant task. This woman has impressive credentials; she has all kinds of talents and skills which she applies to this particular endeavor. She devotes herself to this work with energy and creativity.

As she does this, she enjoys a great sense of fulfillment because she is using her unique abilities in a rewarding way. Eventually, she succeeds in creating a ministry that is full of life and beauty and strength.



And what do some people say? "How demeaning! What a waste! We scorn this."

What?! That is certainly head-on-backwards thinking!

That business success, while it may be worthy of some respect, is only temporary. But your success as a wife is worthy of great respect; your ministry as a wife is attaining treasures with eternal weight.

You are creating noble things;
you are achieving things of great significance;
you are accomplishing things of lasting and priceless value.

Imagine holding a closed box in your hands.



Imagine that a thief in the room knows that a million-dollar treasure is inside that box, but you do not know that. What would that scheming thief do?



He would try to get you to let go of the box; he would want you to grow tired of holding it or even to scorn it. Knowing the true worth of the box, the thief tries to persuade you that the box has little or no value. That way, he can take the box from you when you put it down or when you trade it for something much less valuable.

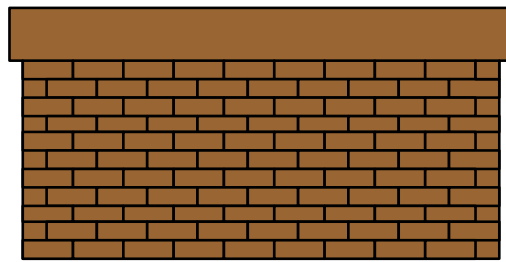
In the same way, the enemy of our souls tries hard to belittle marriage and to demean the priceless ministry of the wife. The enemy knows the true worth of marriage; he knows the power of a godly wife.

But we are not unaware of his schemes; we will not let go of our commitment to serve our husbands.

This unwavering commitment to minister is a crucial layer of the marriage foundation.

Let's go to the next piece of the marriage house.

WALLS



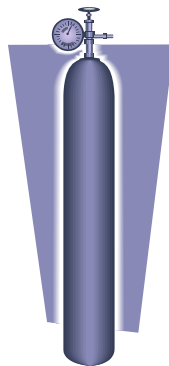
What is your husband's deepest need?

His deepest need is not your deepest need.

Your husband's core need is like the oxygen that his soul breathes. It is an essential.

When someone is without oxygen, there is nothing more critical. The need for oxygen has to be met even before the need for food or drink. Your husband has a need which is that critical within his soul.

But this is not a core need for a woman. Unless a woman learns this about her husband, she may unknowingly deprive him of the very air that he must have in order to breathe.



If this deep need is not being met, a man will find it nearly impossible to stay. Indeed, he will leave, either physically or emotionally. He will die inside. If, however, this need is being met by his wife, a man will find it nearly impossible to leave.

This core need for men is the need for respect. The walls of the marriage house are respect.

As women, our deepest need is to feel loved.
But your husband's deepest need is to feel respected.

Not only do we women need love--that is, affection—but we want *unconditional* love. We need to feel loved even on days when we are not very lovable. In fact, we need to feel loved *especially* on those days!

In the same way, not only does a husband need respect, but a husband needs *unconditional* respect. He needs to feel respected even when his wife does not think he has earned it. He may need respect *especially* at those times!

We love our children unconditionally, regardless of their actions, because of who they are. And we can respect our husbands unconditionally, regardless of their actions, because of who they are.

Your husband is made in the image of God Almighty. According to Scripture, simply being made in the likeness of God is reason enough for respect.

Your husband's actions may not be worthy of respect.
But his spirit is. His spirit is worthy of your respect.

Be in awe of who God made him to be.
Focus on his spirit:

honor his immortal spirit that was created for great strength;
respect his spirit that was created to be mighty.

When you cause your husband to feel disrespected,
he can not hear anything else you say because he can not breathe.



When we don't feel loved, we sometimes keep thinking about it, don't we?

Let's say your husband comes home one evening and says something unloving to you, and you just can't get past that comment.

You keep thinking about it.

Everything else he says to you is filtered through your hurt. Everything else for the rest of the week stands in the hazy background of those words that made you feel unloved.

In a similar way, if we treat our husbands with disrespect, they can not get past that. Everything else moves to the background. When we fail to give respect to our husbands, nothing else really matters.

One of the greatest things a mother can do for her children is to teach and to model respect for their father. Having instilled in their spirits honor for their father is a gift that will bless those children for the rest of their lives.

Conversely, one of the most damaging things a mother can do to her children is to foster in their spirits dishonor for their father. When people have a broken foundation of dishonor for the father, the other pieces of their lives will be continually subject to brokenness and failure, anger and sadness.

We convey respect or disrespect in three ways:

- in our words,
- in our actions,
- and in our body language.

Our tone of voice and our facial expressions are powerful communicators of respect or disrespect—more powerful than our words, in fact.

Have you ever received a love letter? Many wives wish that their husbands would write a love letter to them, and women will sometimes write love letters to their men. But instead of writing love letters to our husbands, we really should be writing *respect* letters.



Have you ever written a letter to your husband that expressed nothing but solid respect? Here's my challenge to you: write a respect letter to your husband that salutes him just as powerfully as you can with the help of God's Spirit. Write a letter that will cause him to walk taller and stand straighter. If he actually swaggers after he reads your words, then here is my salute to you!



May God forgive us for suffocating our husbands with disrespect. May God forgive us for choking the life out of our husbands and then condemning them for their weakness.

We breathe life into our husbands when we give them the gift of respect. We breathe life into our husbands when we admire them and honor them.

A man can be wilted with self-doubt, wilted with a sense of failure, wilted with a lack of confidence. But his wife can breathe life into him.

She breathes the oxygen of respect into him, and he can rise up to be a man of strength and nobility. She breathes respect into him, and he can rise up into grand, heroic greatness.

It is a glorious thing to breathe life into a human being. It is glorious, and it is sacred. It is what God did at creation, and it is what you do in your marriage.

This is the God-given gifting of a wife.

Only when heads are twisted on backwards is this gifting seen as something demeaning or weak. It is a divine gifting, a work that mirrors the very work of God.

Genesis 2:18 says that women are the *helpers* of their husbands. When people refer with contempt and derision to that statement, surely they do not know—surely not—that the Hebrew word used in this passage is *ezer*, a word that is used elsewhere in the Old Testament for God. Demeaning? I think not.

“A wise woman builds her house; but with her own hands, the foolish one tears hers down.” (Proverbs 14:1)



As you commit to minister to your husband and to bless him with the gift of respect, remember that no one on the face of the earth can tear him down like you can, and no one can build him up like you can.

Let's look at the next piece in the house of marriage.

DOOR



Have you ever really wanted to talk to your husband? Not about anything in particular--just talk so that you can feel close to him. Just talk face to face so that you can feel connected to him.

As women, we feel that on a regular basis—this strong need to share in conversation, looking into each other’s eyes—just to connect. It makes us feel intimate with our husbands.

When that is not happening, we can feel it in a way that is almost physical. It wells up in us, and we feel this strong desire to talk with our husbands.

Well, have you every wanted to talk to your husband, and he just did not understand that?

He said things like, “What did I do now? What do you want to talk about?”

And you said, “Nothing. I mean. . . . everything! I mean, nothing in particular, just talk.”

And you stammered and fumbled, and it sounded kind of silly, which was frustrating, because it wasn’t silly to you; it was really important to you. And it hurt that he not only did not feel the same way, but he did not even understand it.

Now, listen to a husband respond to a wife’s desire for conversation:

Oh, all right. Since this means so much to you. [rolls eyes]

Okay, fine. [heavy sigh of resignation]

Didn’t we just do this?

How long will this take?

Are we done yet?

Good.

And then your husband walks away, getting back to what he really wanted to do and thinking that he has done his husbandly duty and that you should feel loved now. Do you? Not really!

Mostly, you feel disappointed. In fact, you are going to be more reluctant to ask to talk to him again. It just means so much more if he wants to talk, too. When he is not interested, when he is still keeping his eyes on the newspaper or the television, you think, *this is not what I had in mind.*

Now, let's take the very same words that we just applied to women and their desire for conversation. Let's image that we are a group of men right now, and let's use these same comments to reflect the desire of men for physical intimacy.

"We [men] feel, on a regular basis, this strong need to share and connect in a physical way with our wives. It makes us feel intimate with our wives. When that is not happening, we feel it; we feel this strong desire to be physically intimate with our wives.

"Well, men, have you every wanted to be with your wife physically, and she just didn't understand that? It was really important to you, and it hurt that she not only did not feel the same way, but she didn't even understand it.

"Maybe she responded like this:

Oh, all right. Since this means so much to you. [rolls eyes]

Okay, fine. [heavy sigh of resignation]

Didn't we just do this?

How long will this take?

Are we done yet?

Good.

"And then your wife walks away, getting back to what she really wanted to do and thinking that she has done her wifely duty and that you should feel loved now. Do you? Not really!

"Mostly, you feel disappointed. It just means so much more if she wants to do this, too. When she is not really interested, you think, *this is not what I had in mind.*"

Well, ladies, there seem to be two different gender languages. Women speak a gender language of conversation, and men speak their gender language of physical intimacy.

Physical intimacy is the door in the house of marriage.

Who should first learn the language of the other? Let's answer that with another question: How many other people can converse with your husband in his gender language?

Only one! You are the only one who can rightfully and helpfully speak his gender language with him.

But what about the female gender language of conversation? How many other people can speak with you in your gender language? As many godly girlfriends as you can collect!

Take note of this: Women are not as dependent upon their spouses in the area of core neediness as men are. We need to twist our heads on straight about this, and pay attention.

A husband's core need is met in a healthy way only by his wife. That is a serious responsibility for us.

Here we build, or here we destroy. We alone can do this building, and God has put the tools in our hands.

Physical intimacy is God's gift to us for powerful bonding. This is the glue that helps create the oneness that we desire.

Men are programmed to move through sex into relational intimacy. They can move through sex without pressing into intimacy, but this is often the passageway for them.

Women are designed to move through relational intimacy into sex. For women, sex functions as an expression of an already-achieved intimacy.

This means that men think that sex after a quarrel is a good idea because it is a passageway back to closeness. But this also means that sex after a fight is unthinkable to women because there is no attained-intimacy to express!

But if only one understands the other, it is enough.

We live in a sex-saturated society, and we think that we know what men want. We can see that sex is the packaging of what men want, but we are blind to the real need inside—and that need continues to be unmet in our culture. Inside that surface, physical need is a compelling, driving need to be accepted and to be desired.

At its core, this need is the same need that we women have! We want to be desired, too; but we think that we can meet this need through physical beauty.



We have certainly bought that lie, along with billions of dollars worth of make-up and botox! But that fails to satisfy us because the need is not to be beautiful but to be desired.

If a man does not talk to his wife, she does not feel hurt because she feels uninformed; she feels hurt because she feels rejected. The lack of communication represents a lack of acceptance to her. This sense of rejection is a deep wounding to her.

In a similar way, when a woman does not respond fully to her husband physically, she wounds him deeply. He feels unaccepted by the most important woman in his life. He feels rejected in his spirit.

One of the best ways for a woman to influence her unbelieving husband for God is to convey enthusiastic acceptance to him physically. If she does not, then he connects God and wife and rejection all together. The wife represents God to him, and she represents rejection or maybe mere tolerance to him; this does not draw him to God at all.

This also holds true for women with Christian husbands. When our physical responses and our behavior say, "I accept you, and I desire you," *then* is our holiness beautiful to our men. *Then* our holiness can attract our husbands to their wives and to God.

The apostle Peter wrote, "Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith. . . ."



I learned recently that the primary strategy of lions who are hunting for food is ambush. A lion specializes in surprise attack because he can not chase his prey very far before the lion gets tired. Lions do not have much endurance.

When the enemy pushes against your marriage, resist him, and he will flee. God's Word has endurance, God's people have endurance, God's strong arm has endurance, but the enemy of your marriage does not.

WINDOW



Let's look at another important piece of the marriage house.

Think again of the situation in which two people are frustrated in their conversation because they are speaking two different languages. They react with anger and feelings of rejection until someone realizes what is going on.

Well, human hearts speak five different languages of love. When a husband or wife understands the concept of love languages, it is absolutely transformational in a marriage.



Dr. Gary Chapman has specialized in this area. His book entitled *The Five Love Languages* describes each of these ways of expressing and receiving love: the giving of gifts, acts of service, physical touch, quality time, and words of affirmation. Although all five languages are valid expressions of love, every person seems to associate love more strongly with one of the languages.

Your husband's individual love language is the window in the house of marriage.

A woman who speaks the language of quality time does not really feel loved unless her husband spends time focusing on her. But if this is not her husband's love language, he will not understand why this is important to her, and he will not speak it to her. Although the man does love his wife, she won't feel loved because she does not hear it in her heart language, in a way that she understands.



Perhaps the husband, meanwhile, speaks the language of acts of service. He is continually fixing things around the house for his wife or washing her car. He thinks that he is expressing love, but she does not understand that because acts of service is not the native language of her heart.

The husband, for his part, feels quite unloved by his wife because she does not help pack his lunches or fold his laundry. It seems to him that his wife just wants to go on picnics! This creates a great deal of maddening conflict. In reality, it is simply two people trying to say "I love you" in two different languages; they just don't realize it.

But if just one person will learn the language of the other, it will make all the difference. Do not be frustrated if your husband does not learn your language. You can speak his language, and you can listen in his language.



If the wife will recognize that every time her husband takes out the trash, he is expressing love to her, then she can know that she is loved. And if she will express her love by making sandwiches for her husband, then he can feel loved.

When wives become fluent in the love languages of their husbands, life gets much, much better.

At this point, we are going to shift gears just a bit and set aside the house of marriage for a minute. Let me ask you this question: What are some of your marriage goals?

Take a minute to jot them down:

Now cross out any goals that involve your husband changing or doing anything.

Cross out any goals that refer to a certain kind of marriage (such as "an excellent marriage") or a certain kind of relationship (such as "an extremely close friendship").

These goals that you have just crossed out may be wonderful desires or ideal situations, but these make terrible goals.

The third myth is that a commendable goal for any wife would be to have an excellent marriage and a godly husband. These are wonderful things, no doubt; but they are not good goals.

A helpful goal is one that has to do with our actions only, not the actions of someone else. Because we can not control our husbands or even fully control our relationships, these kinds of goals can lead to frustration, anger, and discouragement.

For example, as wives, we are tempted to set goals such as this: "I am going to prepare a candlelight dinner, which my husband will appreciate greatly and which will inspire him to be romantic."

Is that a good goal?

No, that is a good recipe for disappointment!



A good goal would be one that the wife sets for her own actions. An improved goal would be this: "I am going to serve a meal creatively and lovingly with my husband's likes and needs in mind."

This goal is not vulnerable to someone else's cooperation. It does not matter what time the husband gets home; it does not matter whether or not he appreciates the candles or compliments the dinner. The wife still succeeds in meeting her goal.

By changing her goal to one describing her actions instead of her husband's, the wife avoids needless frustration. The wife's goal is to serve, and she achieves that goal.

The goal to love someone else is never thwarted. With God's grace, we can always love; that is, we can always serve.

This, then, is our goal: to be the best wives that we can be, to minister to our husbands with excellence by the enabling of God's Spirit. This is our assignment, and this is what we will answer to God for.

We are not responsible for our marriages. We are responsible for our "wife-ing," for our service as wives to our husbands.

We do not take marriages to heaven; that is why the marriage itself is not our goal. We take people to heaven; that is why ministering the love of God to our husbands is our goal.

Here is a fourth myth that we hear often in our culture: submission to husbands is demeaning to women.

When someone says, "Women must submit because God says so," a lot of us feel the walls coming up in our spirits. We start crossing our arms.



The word "submission" carries a lot of heavy emotional baggage. We choke on this "s" word with its strong negative, offensive connotations. The concept of marital submission has been used like a battering ram against women; it is no wonder that women feel defensive and distrustful.

It is obvious that men have sinned against women. They have sinned egregiously against women; they have even claimed divine sanctioning for their abusiveness. Men stand fully accountable before God the Judge for their evil behavior.

But women have responded to men's sin with more sin of their own.¹

This only makes matters worse: mistreatment is compounded, and the cycle of abuse escalates.

We clearly need God's wisdom and God's truth.

Let's look first at a verse that goes down easily for us: Ephesians 5:21 explains that submission is mutual.

Now, to what are we mutually submitting? Both the husband and the wife submit to the needs of one another. This is the essence of love: we give from ourselves for the good of someone else.

¹ Carolyn McCulley. *Radical Womanhood: Feminine Faith in a Feminist World*. Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2008. Pages 46-47.

We love babies by meeting their core need for food. We love children by meeting their core needs for physical and spiritual health. We love our girlfriends by meeting their core needs for conversation (and coffee and shopping!)

And we love our husbands by meeting their core need for respect.

The submission of giving respect to a husband meets his need, a need which the wife does not have in the same way.

Husbands, in turn, are told to meet their wives' core need, which is for affection, a need which men do not have in the same way.

When Shaunti Feldhahn was conducting research for her book *For Women Only*,² she surveyed hundreds of men. She asked them whether they would rather have respect or love. She found that they were so confused by that question that she had to rewrite it.

To these men, love without respect was not love; they couldn't pull these apart as separate choices. That would be like asking women if they preferred affection or love.

Mutual submission is a husband submitting to his wife's need for affection and a wife submitting to her husband's need for respect.

We submit ourselves to ministering to our husband's genuine needs; in love, we give to meet those needs.

Men do not have a need to be abusive; they do not have a need to be tyrants; they do not have a need to dominate. Supporting a man's abuse is not godly submission. That is enabling brokenness; that is fostering sickness.

But husbands do have a need for respect.

We were created to be lovers of God forever. We are here on earth for a blink-of-an-eye to love God by loving other people into the love of God. All of our assignments from God while here on earth are designed to support these purposes.

² Feldhahn, Shaunti. *For Women Only: What You Need to Know about the Inner Lives of Men*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004.

God gave men the job of loving their families into God through self-sacrificing leadership. Leadership means accountability to God; it means responsibility for provision and protection.

No leader should be given responsibility without also being given the corresponding authority to fulfill that responsibility.

God gives authority as a tool for serving others. Husbands are accountable to God for the well-being of the entire family. Having the authority of headship allows them to fulfill their responsibility to protect and to provide.

I often hear women wishing for their men to be the leaders in their homes. This is not something that husbands can choose to be or not to be: they *are*! Whether or not their wives like what they are doing, husbands are responsible before God, and they will give an account to God for the welfare of their families.

When women say, "I wish my husband would be the spiritual leader in our home," they often mean, "I wish my husband would go to church or would pray with the children"-- but that is not what defines biblical headship.

Every husband, godly or otherwise, *is* the head in that he is accountable to God for protection and provision in that home.³

When men lead as godly men, their families tend to follow them into God. Men have been given the strength of servant-leadership by which they lay down their lives, and then their families can follow that path of sacrifice into the presence of God.

When women try to lead, their husbands and children are not led into God in the same way. Instead, women have been given the power of influence and invitation.

A godly woman attracts her husband through the beauty of holiness, purity, and reverence.⁴ This lovely fragrance draws him into the presence of God.

³ The apostle Paul wrote that just as a man "feeds and cares" for his own body, so a husband ought to love his wife (Ephesians 5:28-29).

⁴ 1 Peter 3

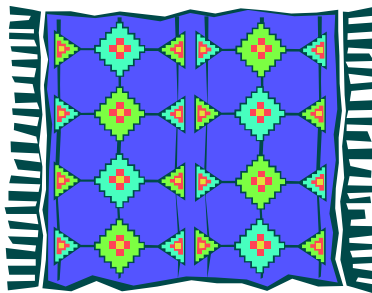
It is very ironic to me to see women trying to order their husbands into being leaders. How is a man supposed to follow his wife's command and be the leader at the same time?

If a woman assumes a role of superiority in any arena, including the spiritual, her husband will leave that arena. Men are designed to compete--and compete to win. But a man does not want to compete with his wife. If she is staking out an area of dominance, he often will simply relinquish that area.

Men are not designed to follow their wives. They do not follow them into taking out the trash, and they do not follow them into going to church.

But men will go where they can breathe respect . . . just as women will go where they feel loved.

When the garment of Boaz covered Ruth at the threshing floor, a symbolic image was created. The ancient Hebrews understood that this represented a covering of Ruth in marriage: a covering of protection and provision.



You can try leading all you want. If you really want a passive man, a man who leans on you to provide and to protect, then go ahead and be the covering--if that is what you want.

Many women have tried this, but they are then disgusted by the passive, irresponsible bum who is willing to let his wife be the provider and the protector.

Unless you want a man who will gladly let you do everything, then you must not suffocate him by being his covering.

No woman can model for her husband how to be a man. But she can give him the desire to be a man for her.

No woman can lead her husband into responsible manliness. But she can serve him into strength, and she can serve him into greatness.

Although wives are not designed to lead their husbands by authority, they are, however, powerfully designed to invite. God gifted the wife with an ability to attract her husband in a way that is almost irresistible to him.

If you want a man who is willing to fight for you,
a man who willing to die for you,
a man who will rise up to heroic and noble sacrifice for his family,
then cooperate with his God-given assignment of responsibility.

Both men and women are created in the image of God. ***A godly wife uses her power of attraction to invite a man into the love of God through respect, support, and cooperation.*** A godly husband uses his power of servant-leadership to lead a woman into the love of God.

One gift is not superior to the other. But only one is effective with men.

Ultimately, your ministry to your husband is your obedience toward God. Your service to your husband is your loving of God. In a way, it has nothing to do with your husband.

God says, "Go here. Do this." We say, "Yes, Lord. Wherever. Whatever. "

But when God says, "Go to your husband. Respect him; minister to his needs," then we say, "Oh, You have got to be kidding!"

But if this is what God has asked us to do, why are we protesting? We say that we will die for our Lord. Will we serve a husband for our Lord?

We have been discussing the myth that serving our husbands is demeaning. Is it demeaning to feed someone who is hungry? Is it demeaning to help someone who is injured? One reason that we are called to minister to our husbands is that our husbands need us.

God helps us because we need Him. He does for us what we can not do for ourselves. Your godly ministry to your husband does for him what he can not do for himself.

And at the same time, our ministry to our husbands accomplishes in our own lives the work that we ourselves desperately need—the work of freeing us from our self-centeredness, the work of freeing us from our selfishness.

Ministering to our husbands helps us to die to our broken, sinful selves so that our spirits can finally live and breathe and dance a truly abundant life. Selfless love is never demeaning to our spirits; it is always glorifying in the spiritual realm.



Before we look at a fifth myth, let me ask you this: what are some of God's best blessings to you?

Let me suggest another one that you may not have realized.

Recognizing this blessing in your life is so powerful that, if you have not realized this before, your entire life could change from this point on.

One of the greatest blessings in your life may be the faults or even the very wickedness of your husband.

All of your husband's faults and all of his sins—little and big—all of these things can come into your life as blessings to you!

His faults do not threaten your well-being;
 his mistakes do not hinder God's good plans for you;
 his sins do not thwart God's perfect purposes for you.

We often believe the myth—the lie—that someone else is ruining our life!

But if we are living in obedience to God, then other people can not mess things up for us. If we are yielding our spirits to the Spirit of God, then even the evil of other people operates in our lives only as blessing.

The little things in your husband that bother you, such as being late or being messy, and the big things in your husband's life that are painful to you, such as addictions to alcohol or pornography—all of these things can come into your life as blessing.

This does not mean that you do not take action to minister to your husband according to his needs and according to the wisdom that God gives you, but it does mean that you do not resent these things, that you are not bitter, and that you are not fearful.

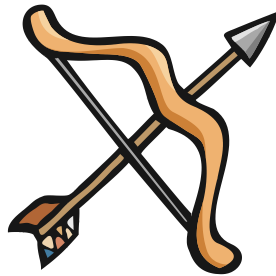
Knowing that God turns the curses of others into blessings for you means that you are able to fully embrace what God is doing in your life.

All of your husband's faults can be used by God to bless you.

It may be God's best blessing when men do not meet their wives needs.

If a man sins, he stands guilty before God and must give an account for that sin. But that very same act of sin, as it enters the sanctified life of a yielded, obedient believer, functions as blessing and not as curse.

People sometimes send sharp arrows into our lives, arrows which can strike us and cause us pain.



Although an arrow can hurt when it hits us, it can not poison us or harm us at all because the shaft of the arrow is empty.

Always, always, always, it is empty!

You decide how it is filled. ***You can hand every painful arrow and circumstance in your life to God, and God promises to fill every one entirely with blessing.***

If you do not give an arrow to God, then it can function in your life as curse and as harm. You will suffer from the poison of resentment and bitterness and unforgiveness. But you filled the arrow with curse yourself.

Deuteronomy 23:5 says that the LORD our God turns curses into blessings for us because He loves us!

Genesis 50:20 says that what the enemy intends for harm, God intends for good. The enemy can send an arrow with evil intent, but God fills it with blessing.

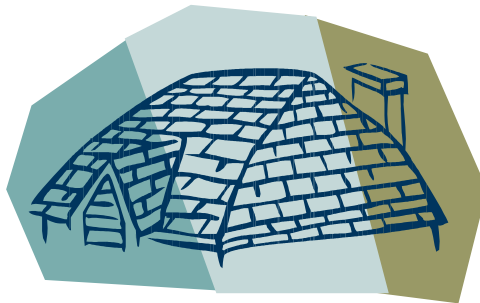
Romans 8:28 says that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him and who have been called according to His purposes. Every single arrow can be filled with God's blessing.

Jeremiah 29:11 tells us that God has good plans for us, plans full of hope; and Job 42:2 tells us that not one of these good plans can be thwarted!

We need not fear or resent any arrow that comes into our lives. We need only to keep giving every arrow to God so that He can fill it with blessing.

ROOF

The final piece of the marriage house is the all-important roof.



This symbolizes the practice of prayer, which covers every aspect of our marriages and which provides shelter from the storms of life and protection from the destruction of spiritual thieves. Not only is prayer our defense against every kind of harm, but it is also the means of securing every kind of blessing.

Most of you are familiar with Dr. James Dobson and Focus on the Family, a strong, worldwide ministry, which teaches God's plan for marriage. Now if Satan could pull down just one marriage, whose do you think he might target?

Shattering the marriage of James and Shirley Dobson would send spiritual shockwaves around the world. You can be sure that there has been tremendous spiritual opposition to that marriage. Dr. Dobson is absolutely vilified in the homosexual community, he is vehemently denounced by abortionists, and both the Dobsons and Focus on the Family have received threats of violence.

However, the Dobsons will celebrate forty years of marriage next year. Not only do they have an enduring marriage, but there has never been even a hint of scandal. Isn't that amazing?

Years ago, I heard something that really caught hold in my thinking and in my spirit. When I heard that Shirley Dobson fasted and prayed on a regular basis for her family, I thought, "Oh, that's it! That explains, at least in part, the success of their marriage."

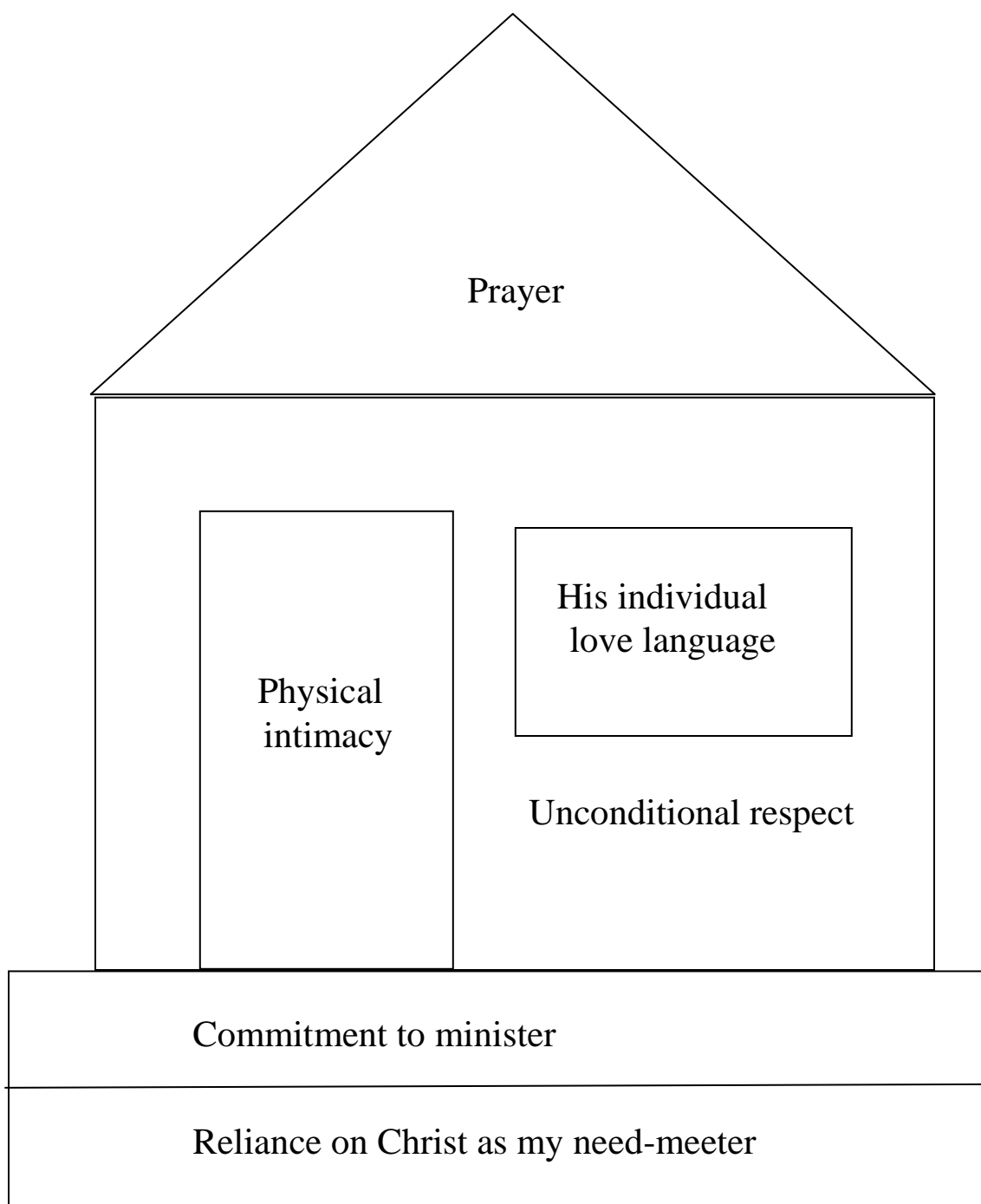
Instructed by Shirley's example and impressed by the power of prayer, I began that same practice in my own life. After twenty-one years of marriage, I praise God for His incredible goodness and His faithfulness.

My prayers have not been impressive, but God's answers have been. My obedience in prayer has been weak, but God's working in response has been strong.

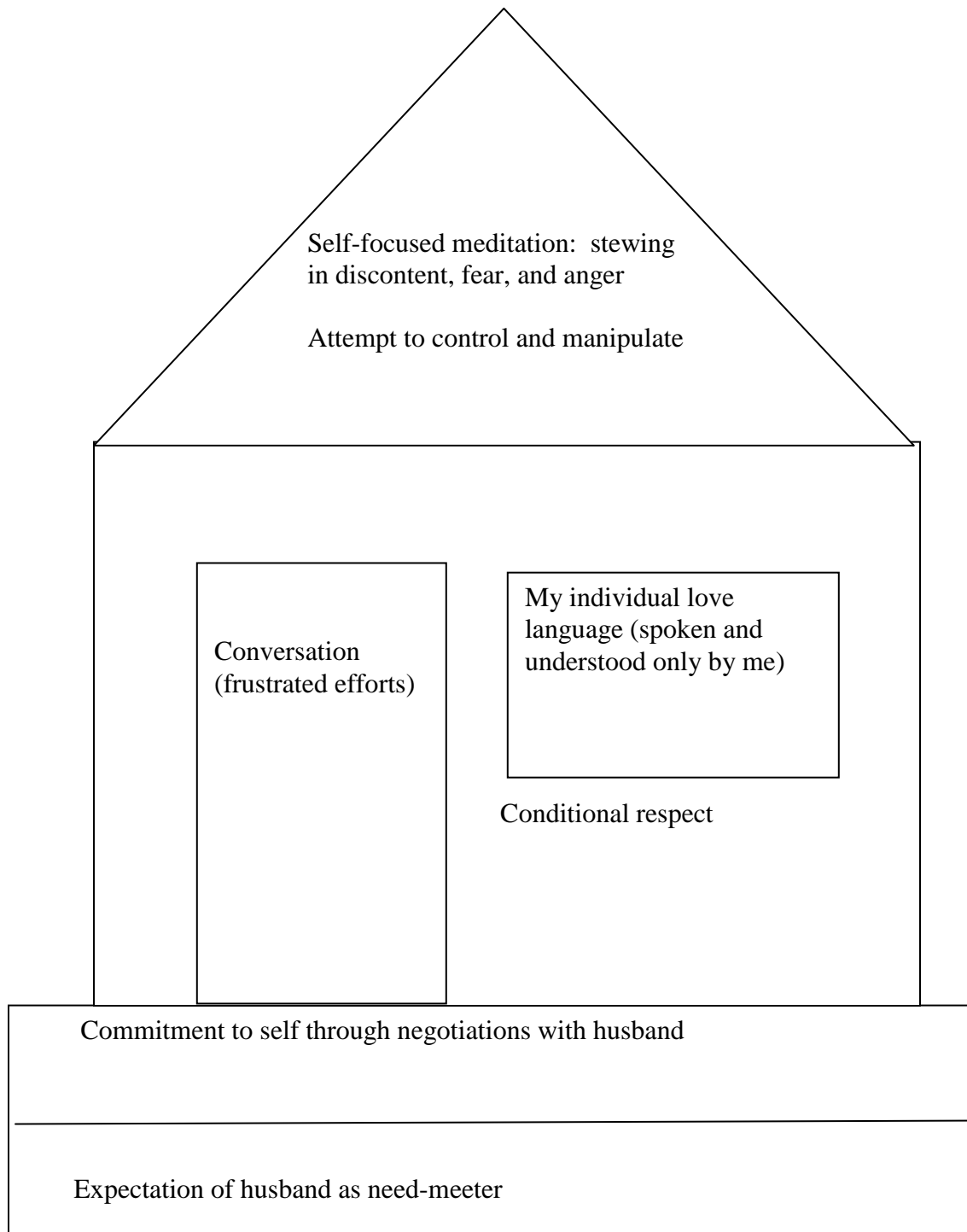
Praying the Scriptures for your marriage is a powerful way to pray. Through the Scriptures, we are blessed to hear God's tender and passionate heart for our marriages; we are privileged to carry God's burden for our husbands as our burden; and through the instruction of the Scriptures, we are brought into oneness with God's Spirit, which is the secret of answered prayer.

The final section of this booklet (pages 50-65) is a collection of Bible verses which create a powerful guide as we pray the Scriptures for our marriages.

"A wise woman builds her house,
but a foolish one tears it down with her own hands."
Proverbs 14:1



When we build a marriage house based on lies instead of truth, it looks like this:



This house will crumble!

Marriage Myths



1. Unless both the husband and the wife are actively working to improve their relationship, then there is no hope for the marriage.
2. Our marriages are where we go to get our needs met; marriage is where we go to be nurtured and renewed. Husbands should be our soulmates--able to understand our hearts, able to comfort our hurts, able to fill up all the holes in our souls.
3. A commendable goal for any wife would be to have an excellent marriage and a godly husband.
4. Submission to husbands is demeaning to women.
5. Someone else can ruin my life.

Building Our Marriages: Prayers from Scripture (Week One)

1. unity

"May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God." Romans 15:5-7



2. equipping by God to meet my husband's needs: insight/wisdom/energy/creativity

"A wise woman builds her house,
but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down."
Proverbs 14:1

"By wisdom a house is built,
and through understanding it is established;
through knowledge its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful
treasures."
Proverbs 24:3-4

"He will be . . . a source of strength to those who turn back the battle
at the
gate."
Isaiah 28:6

3. protection from evil

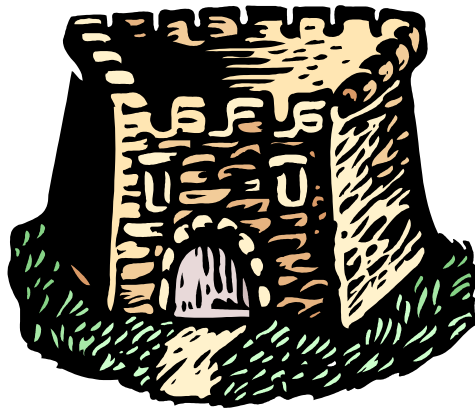
"hedge of protection" (Job 1:10)

"bind Satan" (Matthew 12:29)

"Catch for us the foxes,
the littlest foxes
that ruin the vineyards,
our vineyards that are in bloom."
Songs of Songs 2:15

4. deliverance from strongholds (anger, pride, lust, discontent, fear, unbelief)

"He will bring down your high fortified walls and lay them low;
He will bring them down to the ground, to the very dust."
Isaiah 25:12



5. joy together

"Relish life with the spouse you love
Each and every day. . . ."
Ecclesiastes 9:9, The Message

6. physical relationship



Proverbs 5:15-23:

- 15 Drink water from your own cistern,
running water from your own well.
- 16 Should your springs overflow in the streets,
your streams of water in the public squares?
- 17 Let them be yours alone,
never to be shared with strangers.
- 18 May your fountain be blessed,
and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.
- 19 A loving doe, a graceful deer—
may her breasts satisfy you always,
may you ever be captivated by her love.
- 20 Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress?
Why embrace the bosom of another man's wife?
- 21 For a man's ways are in full view of the LORD,
and he examines all his paths.
- 22 The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him;
the cords of his sin hold him fast.
- 23 He will die for lack of discipline,
led astray by his own great folly.

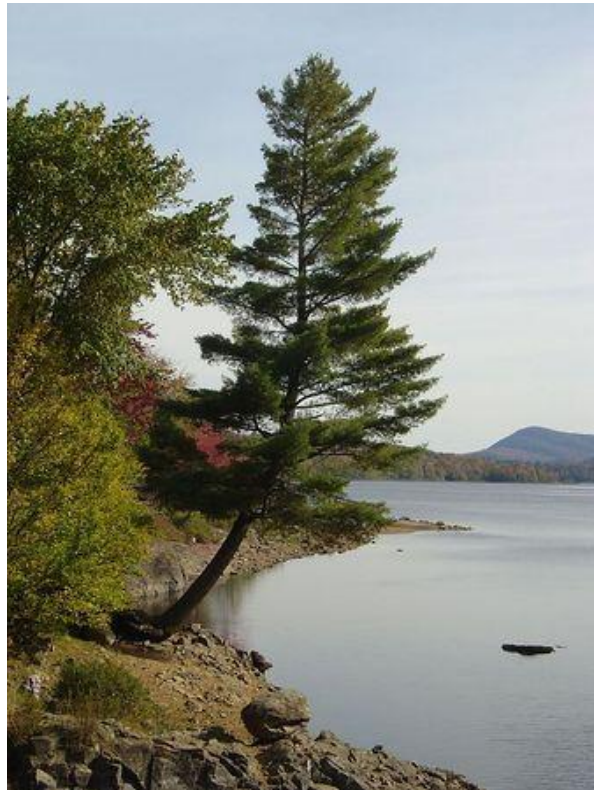
7. salvation for unsaved

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:44

8. spiritual growth for believers

Psalm 1:

- 1 Blessed is the man
 who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked
 or stand in the way of sinners
 or sit in the seat of mockers.
- 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD,
 and on his law he meditates day and night.
- 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water,
 which yields its fruit in season
 and whose leaf does not wither.
 Whatever he does prospers.



Building Our Marriages: Prayers from Scripture (Week Two)

"I will contend with those who contend with you, and your children I will save." Isaiah 49:25

1. unity 1 Peter 3:8-9

Live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, . . . be compassionate and humble. (NIV)

All of you should be of one mind, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds. (NLT)

Be agreeable, be sympathetic, be loving, be compassionate, be humble. That goes for all of you, no exceptions. No retaliation. No sharp-tongued sarcasm. Instead, bless—that's your job, to bless. You'll be a blessing and also get a blessing. (Msg)



1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. (NIV)

And may the Master pour on the love so it fills your lives and splashes over on everyone around you, just as it does from us to you. May you be infused with strength and purity, filled with confidence in the presence of God our Father when our Master Jesus arrives with all his followers. (Msg)

2. equipping as wives Proverbs 31:11-12

Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life. She will not hinder him but help him all her life. (NLT)

The heart of her husband trusts in her confidently and relies on and believes in her securely, so that he has no lack of [honest] gain or need of [dishonest] spoil. She comforts, encourages, and does him only good as long as there is life within her. (AMP)

Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life. (NIV)

3. salvation for unsaved John 4:14 (NIV)

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."



4. protection from evil

"hedge of protection" (Job 1:10)

bind Satan (Matthew 12:29)

And pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one. (2 Thessalonians 3:2-3, NIV)

5. deliverance from strongholds (anger, pride, lust, unbelief, fear, discontent, addictions)

Jeremiah 23:29 "Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"



2 Corinthians 10:3-5

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (NIV)

6. commitment Song of Solomon 8:6-7 (NIV)

Place me like a seal over your heart,
like a seal on your arm;
for love is as strong as death,
its jealousy unyielding as the grave.
It burns like blazing fire,
like a mighty flame.

Many waters cannot quench love;
rivers cannot wash it away.
If one were to give
all the wealth of his house for love,
it would be utterly scorned.



7. physical relationship

Song of Solomon 4:11-5:1 (NIV)

- 11 Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride;
milk and honey are under your tongue.
The fragrance of your garments is like that of Lebanon.
- 12 You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride;
you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain.
- 13 Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates
with choice fruits,
with henna and nard,
- 14 nard and saffron,
calamus and cinnamon,
with every kind of incense tree,
with myrrh and aloes
and all the finest spices.
- 15 You are a garden fountain,
a well of flowing water
streaming down from Lebanon.

Beloved

- 16 Awake, north wind,
and come, south wind!
Blow on my garden,
that its fragrance may spread abroad.
Let my lover come into his garden
and taste its choice fruits.

Lover

1 I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride;
 I have gathered my myrrh with my spice.
 I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey;
 I have drunk my wine and my milk.

Friends

Eat, O friends, and drink;
 drink your fill, O lovers.

8. encouragement 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17

So, friends, take a firm stand, feet on the ground and head high. Keep a tight grip on what you were taught, whether in personal conversation or by our letter. May Jesus himself and God our Father, who reached out in love and surprised you with gifts of unending help and confidence, put a fresh heart in you, invigorate your work, enliven your speech. (Msg)

May our Lord Jesus Christ and God our Father, who loved us and in his special favor gave us everlasting comfort and good hope, comfort your hearts and give you strength in every good thing you do and say. (NLT)

Building Our Marriages: Prayers from Scripture (Week Three)



1. equipping as wives

Proverbs 31 (NIV)

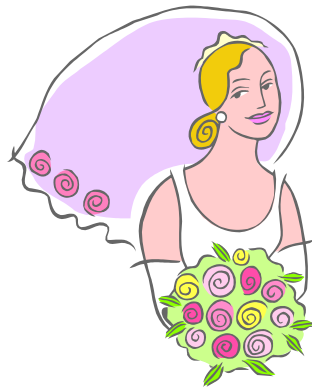
- 10 A wife of noble character who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies.
- 11 Her husband has full confidence in her
and lacks nothing of value.
- 12 She brings him good, not harm,
all the days of her life.
- 13 She . . . works with eager hands.
- 17 She sets about her work vigorously;
her arms are strong for her tasks.
- 20 She opens her arms to the poor
and extends her hands to the needy.
- 23 Her husband is respected at the city gate,
where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.
- 25 She is clothed with strength and dignity;
she can laugh at the days to come.
- 26 She speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
- 27 She watches over the affairs of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.
- 30 Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised.

1 Peter 3

The same goes for you wives: Be good wives to your husbands, responsive to their needs. There are husbands who, indifferent as they are to any words about God, will be captivated by your life of holy beauty.

What matters is not your outer appearance—the styling of your hair, the jewelry you wear, the cut of your clothes—but your inner disposition.

Cultivate inner beauty, the gentle, gracious kind that God delights in. The holy women of old were beautiful before God that way, and were good, loyal wives to their husbands. Sarah, for instance, taking care of Abraham, would address him as "my dear husband." You'll be true daughters of Sarah if you do the same, unanxious and unintimidated. (The Message)



Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

Your beauty should not come from outward adornment. . . . Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear. (NIV)

2. equipping as husbands

Titus 1:6-9

"Is this man well-thought-of? Is he committed to his wife? Are his children believers? Do they respect him and stay out of trouble?" It's important that a church leader, responsible for the affairs in God's house, be looked up to—not pushy, not short-tempered, not a drunk, not a bully, not money-hungry.

He must welcome people, be helpful, wise, fair, reverent, have a good grip on himself, and have a good grip on the Message, knowing how to use the truth to either spur people on in knowledge or stop them in their tracks if they oppose it. (Msg)



An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. (NIV)

3. salvation for unsaved

Colossians 1:12-14

. . . giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (NIV)



[The Father] has delivered and drawn us to Himself out of the control and the dominion of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in Whom we have our redemption through His blood, [which means] the forgiveness of our sins. (Amp)

God rescued us from dead-end alleys and dark dungeons. He's set us up in the kingdom of the Son he loves so much, the Son who got us out of the pit we were in, got rid of the sins we were doomed to keep repeating. (Msg)

4. deliverance from strongholds (anger, pride, lust, addictions, fear, discontent, unbelief)



Psalm 107:10-16 (NIV)

- 10 Some sat in darkness and the deepest gloom,
prisoners suffering in iron chains,
- 11 for they had rebelled against the words of God
and despised the counsel of the Most High.
- 12 So he subjected them to bitter labor;
they stumbled, and there was no one to help.
- 13 Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
and he saved them from their distress.
- 14 He brought them out of darkness and the deepest gloom
and broke away their chains.
- 15 Let them give thanks to the LORD for his unfailing love
and his wonderful deeds for men,
- 16 for he breaks down gates of bronze
and cuts through bars of iron.

5. physical relationship

Hebrews 13:4

Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband. (Msg)

Let marriage be held in honor (esteemed worthy, precious, of great price, and especially dear) in all things. And thus let the marriage bed be undefiled (kept undishonored); for God will judge and punish the unchaste [all guilty of sexual vice] and adulterous. (Amp)



6. equipping together

Colossians 3:12-14

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. (NIV)

So, chosen by God for this new life of love, dress in the wardrobe God picked out for you: compassion, kindness, humility, quiet strength, discipline. Be even-tempered, content with second place, quick to forgive an offense.

Forgive as quickly and completely as the Master forgave you. And regardless of what else you put on, wear love. It's your basic, all-purpose garment. Never be without it. (Msg)

Philippians 1:9-11 (Amp)

And this I pray: that your love may abound yet more and more and extend to its fullest development in knowledge and all keen insight [that your love may display itself in greater depth of acquaintance and more comprehensive discernment],

So that you may surely learn to sense what is vital, and approve and prize what is excellent and of real value [recognizing the highest and the best, and distinguishing the moral differences], and that you may be untainted and pure and unerring and blameless [so that with hearts sincere and certain and unsullied, you may approach] the day of Christ [not stumbling nor causing others to stumble].

Philippians 1:9-11 (Msg)

So this is my prayer: that your love will flourish and that you will not only love much but well. Learn to love appropriately. You need to use your head and test your feelings so that your love is sincere and intelligent, not sentimental gush. Live a lover's life, circumspect and exemplary, a life Jesus will be proud of: bountiful in fruits from the soul, making Jesus Christ attractive to all, getting everyone involved in the glory and praise of God.