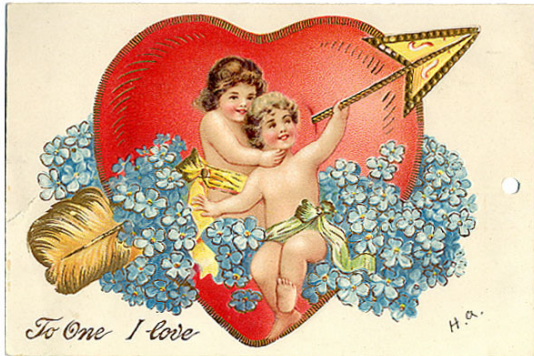




## Is Marriage Really Needed?

**Genesis 2:23-24:** (NASB) <sup>23</sup>*The man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. <sup>24</sup>For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*



Coming up this Thursday is a day to celebrate love and relationships. It is a day of chocolates, flowers, dinners out, cards, hugs and kisses. Yep, Valentine's Day! It is a day for saying "I love you" to that special person. But is it a day to celebrate marriage? Is that old stogy institution of marriage even relevant anymore? Shouldn't we just move forward - you know, modern times? Stay with us as we focus on love and marriage - that's right - marriage! It is the oldest and best God-given institution that the human race has ever had the privilege to celebrate!

### What is marriage?

 Introduction, *The Cracking Institution of Marriage*, David Goodnow

- *It's the oldest human institution, the key to success for each new generation, the foundation of our civilization, a foundation most Americans believe is cracking.*

**Genesis 2:20-24:** (NASB) <sup>20</sup>*The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. <sup>21</sup>So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. <sup>22</sup>The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup>The man said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. <sup>24</sup>For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.*



### "It's Something That We Do (Verse 1)," Clint Black

I remember well the day we wed  
 I can see that picture in my head  
 I still believe the words we said  
 Forever will ring true  
 Love is certain, love is kind  
 Love is yours and love is mine  
 But it isn't something that we find  
 It's something that we do  
 It's holding tight, lettin' go  
 It's flying high and laying low  
 Let your strongest feelings show  
 And your weakness, too  
 It's a little and a lot to ask  
 An endless and a welcome task  
 Love isn't something that we have  
 It's something that we do



### Observations regarding the first marriage:

- The noticeable absence of the woman revealed the emptiness the man had without her.
- God's creation of woman from man gives a sense of equality and companionship.
- Adam's desire for companionship was now fulfilled and he expressed this by saying, *at last...* and *bone of my bone*, etc. There must have been some time without Eve, thus allowing him to feel the contrast.
- *Therefore a man leaves his mother and father and clings* implies a lifelong devotion - not just for a moment or until you get tired.
- They become one flesh, inseparable and united in every way.

### Time together, *Dana Fillmore, psychologist and marriage counselor*

- *The average couple can spend as little as one hour total alone per week. The average couple with kids? Sometimes none! The average two people having an affair spend at least 15 hours per week together! Think about that! Those two people somehow manage to find 15 hours alone in spite of all their other commitments. When I work with couples, I ask for a mere 8 hours per week.*

When something is important to you, you will find the time. What is most important? We need to nurture the relationship of marriage.

### This sounds like the principle that Jonah violated:

Jonah 2:8: (NASB) *Those who regard vain idols forsake their faithfulness...*

Jonah focused on what *he* wanted rather than what *God* wanted. When we focus on ourselves, we lose the bigger picture and what is important.

### Are men and women really that different?

### Emptying the dishwasher, *How to Reward a Man, Mark Gungor, marriage counselor*

- *...the more you appreciate the kindnesses that he does, the more he wants to do it. Men love to be appreciated! I'll give you an example: I was at home and I had a dirty dish in my hand. I was by myself, and I had actually gotten trained so I could put it away by myself in the dishwasher. And I went up to the dishwasher and I opened it up, but it was full of clean dishes. That's a moral dilemma to a man! So it finally dawns on my little brain, empty the dishwasher! So without being asked, I emptied the dishwasher and put everything away and then of course I stick around 'cause I want to see what happens. Why? Because I love to be appreciated! My wife comes home; she goes over to the dishwasher and goes, "AH! You emptied the dishes! You're such a good husband!" And I eat it up!*

We know men and women are wired differently, and as a result, we are shown different roles:

Ephesians 5:21-24: (NASB) <sup>21</sup>*and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.* <sup>22</sup>*Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.* <sup>23</sup>*For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.* <sup>24</sup>*But*

as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

What does *this* mean? Notice the simplicity of this command. Christ is head over the church. He was willing to die for his church, so that is how husbands should pattern their love for their wives.

 **Our first beginning, marriage is for life (a couple married 66 years) youtube.com**

- *In our church, we were having a social. We were sitting down, laughing and talking. Jethro came up, he spoke to us, and he then threw his hat in my lap. I thought, what's the matter with him? After a while he walked me home, and we started from there. That was our first beginning...*

### Now the command to the husbands:

**Ephesians 5:25-31:** (NASB) <sup>25</sup>Husbands, **love** your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup>so that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup>that he might present to himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup>So husbands ought also to **love** their own wives as their own bodies. He who **loves** his own wife **loves** himself; <sup>29</sup>for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, <sup>30</sup>because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup>For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.

Note the word "love" here is *agape* love, the highest form of selfless love that gives unconditionally.

 **52 unexpected things, How to Reward a Man, Mark Gungor, marriage counselor**


- *Guys, get a clue. I know it's hard, but she loves unexpected kindness. You need to learn to give her unexpected little things; that's how you can keep a woman crazy in love with you...I want to write a book, "365 Unexpected Things a Man Can Do For a Woman." I thought about and then decided on 52! Every day?? What was I thinking?*



**Observations: Look at the detail of the man's responsibility!**

- Women: Love and be subject;
- Men:
  - 1) Love and give himself up for her;
  - 2) Love and care for her as your own body;
  - 3) Your love for her becomes your way of self-preservation;
  - 4) Cherish her; and
  - 5) Leave all other ties for her sake

### What are the danger signs in a marriage?

 **Married at 9:15, marriage is for life, (a couple married 66 years) youtube.com**

- *We courted five years and we had to build up confidence in each other. We married on our birthday, one Wednesday night at 9:15. At my house, all the clocks just stopped at 9:15. I look at the clock almost every morning at 9:15 and remember what I said when I told Reverend King, Sr. that I take this girl to be my wife... (They were married by Martin Luther King, Sr. and grew up with Martin Luther King, Jr.)*



**Galatians 6:2-5:** (ASV) <sup>2</sup>*Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.* <sup>3</sup>*For if a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.* <sup>4</sup>*But let each man prove his own work, and then shall he have his glorying in regard of himself alone, and not of his neighbor.* <sup>5</sup>*For each man shall bear his own burden.*

To bear one another's burdens is to show the highest trust one for another.

 **The four horsemen, John Gottman and John Stossel, 20/20 (television show, 1993)**



- Among all the problems couples have, Gottman says, there are four kinds of behavior that are most likely to predict divorce.
- What we find is there are what I call Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse. These are the four things that happen that are characteristic of couples who are on a trajectory toward their marriages falling apart: The first one is **criticism**, the second is **defensiveness**, the third is **contempt**, however that is expressed, and the fourth one is **withdrawing** in the interaction.
- Gottman says the biggest predictor of divorce is **when the husband withdraws**.



We can *all* be critical and defensive. We certainly have the ability to demonstrate or outwardly show contempt for our partner, and all of us tend to withdraw at times and think, "What's the use?" Left unchecked, these can bring disaster and unhappiness to a marriage.

Even a car needs maintenance to keep it running. We have to do the work required to keep our marriages running.

All four of these horsemen are founded in thinking of *me* first, *my* interests, *my* needs, *my* approach.

**Holding grudges and constant complaining are never good things:**

**Proverbs 19:11-13:** (NASB) <sup>11</sup>*A man's discretion makes him slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook a transgression.* <sup>12</sup>*The king's wrath is like the roaring of a lion, but his favor is like dew on the grass.* <sup>13</sup>*A foolish son is destruction to his father, and the contentions of a wife are a constant dripping.*

**Letting anger or resentment fester...that's gonna hurt tomorrow!**

**Ephesians 4:25-27:** (NASB) <sup>25</sup>*Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.* <sup>26</sup>*Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,* <sup>27</sup>*and do not give the devil an opportunity.*

This gives us a good principle for marriage: Speak truth with your spouse. It is okay to be angry, but do not sin. Take care of the issue before the evening is



over. Talk it through and ask for forgiveness if we have made a mistake. We have to be willing to admit fault.

One of our criticisms of men in society today is men are wimps! They don't stand up and have the integrity and maturity to be real men in their relationships.

In this song from the recent Muppet Movie, Gary and Walter are brothers. Gary is a Muppet and Walter is a man.



Want to see the video?

Go to <http://youtu.be/-WWWTW1P8rQ>



**"Am I a Man or a Muppet?" (Verse 1) Muppet Movie**

(Gary's girlfriend, Mary, speaking through a letter)

Gary, I've gone home. I love you, but you need to decide, are you a man or a Muppet?

(Gary)

I reflect on my reflection  
and I ask myself the question,  
what's the right direction  
to go...I don't know.

Am I a man, or am I a Muppet  
if I'm a Muppet then I'm a very manly Muppet  
If I'm a man, that makes me a Muppet of a man...

Will you accept the responsibility that comes with being a real man?

**Generally it is pride and ego that is behind our marriages' destructive behavior:**

**Proverbs 16:18-19:** (NASB) <sup>18</sup>Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before stumbling. <sup>19</sup>It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud.

**Scriptural principle that applies to the marriage union:**

**1 Corinthians 8:1-3:** (NRSV) <sup>1</sup>Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that all of us possess knowledge. **Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.** <sup>2</sup>Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; <sup>3</sup>but anyone who loves God is known by him.

**Is there such a thing as a "soul mate?"**

 **Hey, Sugar Bee, marriage is for life, (a couple married 66 years) youtube.com**

- *I think about when I get out of bed in the morning, what am I gonna call my wife in the morning? Hey, Sugar Bee! Yeah, that's her name for today. Tomorrow it will be another name! Think about making people happy - we are still working at it and grow every day...*



He works every day at making his wife feel special. There is effort required in maintaining a good marriage. After 66 years, they are still working on it every day!

**General Principle: Here is a general summary of guidelines with which to assess our marriage role:**

Romans 12:3-4: (NASB) <sup>3</sup>For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith. <sup>4</sup>For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,

Don't try to make your spouse "you," or an extension of "you." Have them be the best "them" that they are and compliment their parts.


**"Soul mate" defined, Love, Marriage and Stinking Thinking, Mark Gungor, marriage counselor**

*(Mark Gungor is responding to an e-mail from a married man who, although he has a wonderful wife, thinks he found his "soul mate" in another woman...)*

- *Is there such a thing as a "soul mate?"*
- *If people want to say as a term of endearment, "she's my soul mate," or "she's my sweetheart," I've got no problem with that. But what they are trying to buy into is that there is this one special cosmic person just for you. What he is saying is, "Oh my goodness, I have a fabulous wife, but she (this other woman) is my soul mate! Surely God doesn't want me to miss out on a soul mate!" He has bought into a broken, stupid line of thinking that comes from pagan thinking, actually from Greek mythology. The Greeks at one time believed that people have four legs and four arms and two faces...apparently we made some god angry and he split us all in half. And that's how we wound up with two arms, two legs and just the one face. And part of the punishment now is that we have to search out the world to find our other half to be whole. You complete me!*

This idea of a "soul mate" could be such a devious device of the deceiver. Once we are attached, we undoubtedly have ups and downs in life and it may be at those down times when we get restless and start to believe the lie that there is "the one" out there for us. We are supposed to make it work, not commit adultery. Self-sacrifice belongs in marriage. Men need to be the leader in their household and draw them to a godly way of living.

**Let's see what Jesus very bluntly had to say about this:**

Matthew 5:27-30: (NASB) <sup>27</sup>You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery; <sup>28</sup>but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup>If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell (*gehenna*). <sup>30</sup>If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell (*gehenna*).

Ecclesiastes 9:9: (NASB) *Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life and in your toil in which you have labored under the sun.*



Is she perfect? No, but are you? We have to put this in the right perspective and then enjoy the gift of our marriage that we have been given.

So, built into this covenant of marriage, this solemn promise is the dedication to deliver what we have promised. Even though it may not be romantic, pleasant, easy or even fun at times, this dedication is what makes our promise a reality.



A caller suggests: The world expects marriage to bring them happiness - that's the marriage you see in TV commercials. But the Christian knows that you must bring happiness to the marriage. (1 Corinthians 7:14) Humanity is created to find happiness in God. But God in His wisdom and love does not expect us to make that journey to Him alone. Our love for God is love for our spouse and love for our spouse is love for God.

**What is the main ingredient? Love in its highest form.**

1 Corinthians 13:4-5: (NRSV)

- <sup>4</sup>Love is patient
- love is kind
- love is not envious
- or boastful
- or arrogant
- <sup>5</sup>or rude
- It does not insist on its own way
- it is not irritable
- or resentful



More statistics, *The Cracking Institution of Marriage*, David Goodnow

- *Half of all who marry will divorce. Cohabitation - unmarried couples living together - is up 12-fold since 1960. Out of wedlock births have since exploded from 1 in 20 to over 1 in 3 today.*
- *The real fact of the matter is, if marriage is not strengthened, the consequences are going to be at your doorstep, in your workplace and at your school. It's everyone's problem. We have to be concerned about it and engage in the fight to save and marriages in America.*



A caller suggests: The most important thing in a marriage is the supreme love for God on the part of both parties.

When you get down to it, love in its highest form is spelled:

**COMMITMENT**

A few of the qualities laid out in the previous text:

*Love is patient: James 5:7: (NASB) Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains.*



## Why can't we patiently cultivate a loving marriage?

*Love is kind: Ephesians 4:32: (NRSV) and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.*



Sometimes we forget to be tenderhearted towards our spouse. Sometimes it is easier to be tenderhearted toward those not as involved in our lives.

### Married strangers, *Dana Fillmore, psychologist and marriage counselor*

- I don't know how many couples have come to me over the years on the verge of divorce who tell me, "There's no major issues, we've just grown apart." What 'grown apart' means to me is that they were not spending enough time together. If you don't continue to connect throughout your life, you run the risk of being married to a stranger. How can you work on communication? How can you work on money issues if you never have the opportunity? I can explain everything I know about all of these topics.*
- Unless you have time alone to talk to each other, be affectionate with one another and enjoy each other, it won't work. The relationship between the two of you is the foundation of the marriage and family.*

If you grow apart, you have not worked at staying together. And that is a major issue! There is a commitment part that is lacking. You end up cultivating "marriage weeds," and not "marriage fruit."

*Love is not arrogant: 1 Corinthians 8:2-3: (NASB) <sup>2</sup>If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know; <sup>3</sup>but if anyone loves God, he is known by Him.*

*Love does not insist on its own way: Romans 12:10: (NASB) Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor;*



*A caller suggests: (1 Peter 3) Abraham and Sarah are models for marriage. The Bible gives us recipes for how to live in a relationship.*

Instead of complaining about aspects of your marriage you do not like, live the way you want it to be. Watch what can happen over time!

### Something going on, marriage is for life, (*a couple married 66 years*) [youtube.com](#)

- I knew something was going on because he was doing a little different. It was all work related. You know how people work together? Then it goes a little bit further than work. It goes to having an affair with somebody on the job. He apologized and said don't hold that against him for a long, long time, because he would not do that anymore. And if he did anymore, I didn't know it. But that's where I said that sometimes when the road gets rough and rocky, you got to see if you can help to straighten it out.*



This shocked us! There was a coming together and willingness to work through a massive problem. They did not give up.

### Do we fall into the old "the grass is greener elsewhere" thinking?

**Proverbs 5:15-18:** (NASB) <sup>15</sup>Drink water from your own cistern and fresh water from your own well. <sup>16</sup>Should your springs be dispersed abroad, streams of water in the streets? <sup>17</sup>Let them be yours alone and not for strangers with you. <sup>18</sup>Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth.

Stay at home. Be committed to that which you made a covenant in front of God.

### How do we make our marriage stronger?


 **Priorities - kids second, Dana Fillmore, psychologist and marriage counselor**

- *In order, our priorities should always be: Marriage, kids, job, family and friends, etc. If the order gets mixed up, the whole thing could fall apart. When I ask for this, most couples look at me like I've lost my mind. What about my job? I have to provide for the family! I don't see my kids all week. I have to spend time with them at night and on the weekends.*
- *I understand what it means to be a working couple with children. But if the marriage falls apart, it all falls apart. Your kids will not thank you if you put them first but then get a divorce.*

### Here lies a key for longevity in marriage:

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:** (NIV) <sup>9</sup>Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: <sup>10</sup>If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! <sup>11</sup>Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? <sup>12</sup>Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

The third strand is God! So, with God as our "tie that binds us together," we have a built in security in our building of our marriage. Take that love for God and express it to our loved ones.

 **Forgive and forget, marriage is for life, (a couple married 66 years) youtube.com**

- *...forgive him and try to forget it and then after a while you will forget it. And keep yourself in communication - it is a fine thing in marriage. We have stood the test of time all these years. And we still standing! We still workin' on it. We'll have to work on it some more.*

### Clothing ourselves with grace as we put away every damaging imperfect human characteristic:

**Colossians 3:8-15:** (NRSV) <sup>8</sup>But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. <sup>9</sup>Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices <sup>10</sup>and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. <sup>11</sup>In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all! <sup>12</sup>As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. <sup>13</sup>**Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.** <sup>14</sup>Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup>And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful.

We should think how much can I give today to make my spouse happy? That takes humility, selflessness, and committed love.



**"When I Said I Do" (last verse), Clint Black, Lisa Hartman Black**

When I said "I do"  
I meant that I will  
till the end of all time.  
Be faithful and true  
devoted to you  
that's what I had in mind  
when I said, "I do."  
Truer than true  
You know that I'll always be there for you.  
That's what I had in mind  
that's what I had in mind  
when I said, "I do."

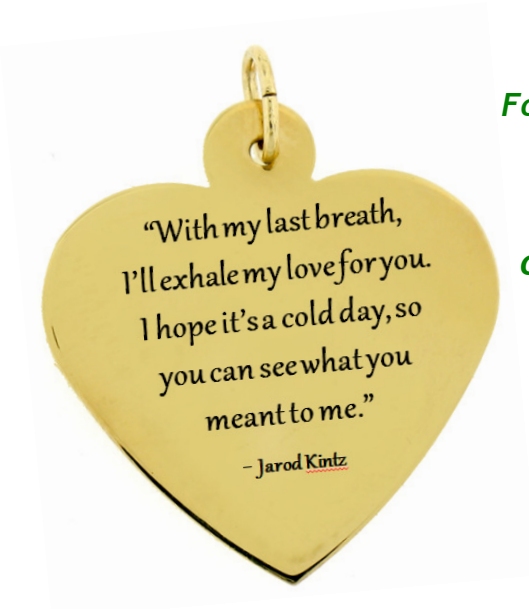
Marriage is not just an institution; it is an action of living. This is what I have done and will continue to do.

**Here is a sure fire success tip - always see your spouse as more important than you!**

**Philippians 2:2-4:** (NASB) <sup>2</sup>*make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.* <sup>3</sup>*Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;* <sup>4</sup>*do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

Imagine if we apply this Christian principle directly to our marriages!

Valentine's Day is coming up. Take that day and apply it in the best way you know how to show what love and true commitment are in a marriage. Show your spouse it is "to death do us part" no matter what the circumstances in life are. God has ordained this for us by making this commitment with God as our witness.



**So is marriage really needed...?  
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!**

**And now even more to think about...  
only in the **Full Edition of CQ Rewind!****



Notable and Quotable:

"The more you invest in a marriage, the more valuable it becomes." - *Amy Grant*

"A great marriage is not when the 'perfect couple' comes together. It is when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy their differences." - *Dave Meurer*

"Strike an average between what a woman thinks of her husband a month before she marries him and what she thinks of him a year afterward, and you will have the truth about him." - *H.L. Mencken*

"A successful marriage requires falling in love many times, always with the same person." - *Mignon McLaughlin*

"Success in marriage does not come merely through finding the right mate, but through being the right mate." - *Barnett R. Brickner*

"A man without a wife is like a vase without flowers." - *African Proverb*

"Love requires a willingness to die; marriage, a willingness to live." - *Mignon McLaughlin*

"People do not marry people, not real ones anyway; they marry what they think the person is; they marry illusions and images. The exciting adventure of marriage is finding out who the partner really is." - *James L. Framo*

"I dreamed of a wedding of elaborate elegance, a church filled with family and friends. I asked him what kind of a wedding he wished for. He said one that would make me his wife." - *Author Unknown*

"Between a man and his wife nothing ought to rule but love." - *William Penn*

"And when will there be an end of marrying? I suppose, when there is an end of living." - *Tertullian*

"We have to recognize that there cannot be relationships unless there is commitment, unless there is loyalty, unless there is love, patience, persistence." - *Cornel West, Breaking Bread: Insurgent Black Intellectual Life*

"Real love has little to do with falling. It's a climb up the rocky face of a mountain, hard work, and most people are too selfish or too scared to bother. Very few reach the critical point in their relationship that summons the attention of the light and the dark, that place where they will make a commitment to love no matter what obstacles - or temptations - appear in their path." - *Stacey Jay, Juliet Immortal*

"There's a difference between interest and commitment. When you're interested in doing something, you do it only when it's convenient. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses - only results." - *Kenneth H. Blanchard*



## Next, an article on communication:

(Source: [www.marriage.eharmony.com](http://www.marriage.eharmony.com))

### Effective Communication Skills in Your Marriage

*Effective communication skills are essential in all relationships, especially in your marriage. Learn five ways to help you and your spouse with your effective communication skills.*

Effective communication skills are key to marital success with your spouse. What's the best effective communication skill? There isn't just one – the best way to make your marriage better and strengthen your relationship is to learn how to make the most of each of the following effective communication skills. Arguments and disputes are often caused by breakdowns in the communication process. Here is how you can strengthen your relationship with your spouse so that a marriage with arguments and disputes can be resolved through effective communication skills:

#### Effective Communication Skill #1: Show your spouse respect

Effective communication skills in your marriage begin with keeping an open mind and reserving judgment. Never look for the "right" or "wrong" in what your spouse is saying. Remember that everyone has his or her own feelings which cannot be classified as right or wrong. Never interrupt – not only is it rude but it is selfish. Just listen.

#### Effective Communication Skill #2: Focus on your spouse

Try to put yourself in your spouse's shoes to get a better understanding and appreciation between the two of you. Listening is the first effective communication skill. Listen without constantly planning on what *you* are going to say next. Remember, no one can listen and talk at the same time! Let go of your own agenda so that you can be receptive to your spouse's point of view.

#### Effective Communication Skill #3: Notice what's *not* being said

Researchers estimate that approximately 55% of what we say is delivered through non-verbal signs. Make sure you are not showing signs like frowning, rolling your eyes, crossing your arms, fidgeting or tapping your feet or fingers. Instead, give your spouse your full attention by making direct eye contact, nodding your head or making appropriate facial expressions. Keeping a calm tone in your voice is also an essential effective communication skill – it can help keep a conversation from becoming an argument.

#### Effective Communication Skill #4: Think about your response

Take the time to think before you say anything in response. Learning effective communication skills is a marathon, not a sprint. If your reaction feels more emotional than matter-of-fact, then it's always better to get more understanding than to misinterpret what your spouse means.

When responding, let your partner know you heard what they said by restating what was said, such as *So you are saying you feel...* Don't be upset if your spouse tells you that you have misunderstood; if this happens, look at it as an opportunity to learn more about your spouse and then you can put your effective communication skills to good use.

#### Effective Communication Skill #5: Acknowledge Gender Differences

In order to use effective communication skills, it is important to understand that men and women communicate differently. Men often share because they want to give information or solve a problem. Women tend to talk to connect with someone or to get information. Women usually talk more about relationships than men. Men are often more concerned about details than women. It is crucial to keep these differences in mind to reduce long-term frustration and instead build understanding.



By keeping these effective communication skills in mind, you and your spouse will be on the road to a more successful relationship with fewer arguments and hurt feelings. You'll understand what makes each other "tick" and get to know each other on a deeper level through effective communication skills.

### And an article with a warning:

(Source: Excerpted from USA TODAY, February 11, 2013, Afternoon sex, affairs can be part of life on the road)

#### Opportunity knocks

Akie Davis knew it was wrong but he began cheating on his wife while traveling for work because it was easy.

"A lot of times, when the company pays for you to go to these exclusive places with great scenery, you're away from everything," says Davis, 42, of Houston. "You kind of wish your spouse was there. And they're not."

A co-worker and former girlfriend was there instead of his wife on one particular work trip. One thing led to another, he says, and the two ended up together. Their affair lasted a year, and their liaisons only took place when they were on the road.

Now divorced and author of *Black Man's Version To Exhale*, he recalls regretting each time he cheated on his then-wife.

"I felt shame. I was embarrassed," he says. "It was a very guilty feeling, especially when I had to come back home knowing about the infidelity." He is now engaged to another woman. He still travels for work, but he does not cheat on his fiancée. **"It wasn't worth it," he says of his affair.**

Guilt can be one consequence of having an affair while traveling, but Jane Greer, a relationship expert and author of *What About Me? Stop Selfishness From Ruining Your Relationship*, says another danger is that you end up hurting the person you had the tryst with.

"You may consider it a one-night thing and a light-hearted casual thing, but then the person you're with is more invested in it, and then you've really got a messy situation," she says.

An even messier situation would arise if you brought home a sexually transmitted disease, Wygant says. "Cheaters tend to not be very careful," he says. "They love the risk. It's a thrill to them." If that happens, you can probably expect your spouse or partner to find out about the infidelity. "There's the end of the relationship," Wygant says.

Even single people run into dangers when they hook up on the road, Saltz says. "We're sort of living in this hook-up culture," she says. But "for many people, divorcing sex and their feelings is easier said than done."

If the romantic encounter involves co-workers, there could be legal implications. Anthony Oncidi, partner and co-head of the California Labor and Employment Law Group at law firm Proskauer in Los Angeles, says if the relationship involves a supervisor and subordinate, a break-up could be fraught with problems. The two could stop communicating, and their work could suffer. Other employees could also claim that the person involved with the supervisor is getting preferential treatment. Even when two employees are on equal levels, one can claim that the other is harassing him or her. For that reason, Oncidi says, many companies have non-fraternization policies preventing or at least discouraging office romances.

"The rules regarding non-fraternization and non-dating follow employees on the road," he says. "When you are traveling for business, you are dragging the workplace with you wherever the travel takes you."

Finally, a bit about the sacredness of marriage as a covenant - and not just any covenant - but a "covenant of God."

**Proverbs 2:11-17:** (ASV) *<sup>11</sup>Discretion shall watch over thee; Understanding shall keep thee: <sup>12</sup>To deliver thee from the way of evil, from the men that speak perverse things; <sup>13</sup>Who forsake the paths of uprightness, to walk in the ways of darkness; <sup>14</sup>Who rejoice to do evil, and delight in the perverseness of evil; <sup>15</sup>Who are crooked in their ways, and wayward in their paths: <sup>16</sup>To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the foreigner that flattereth with her words; <sup>17</sup>That forsaketh the friend of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God:*

(Source: Biblical commentary from Matthew Poole) The covenant of her God: the marriage covenant; so called, partly because God is the author and institutor of that society and mutual obligation; and partly because God is called to be the witness and judge of that solemn promise and covenant, and the avenger of the transgression of it.

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(Source: McClintock and Strong's Cyclopedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature) *Covenant*: a mutual contract or agreement between two parties, each of which is bound to fulfill certain engagements to the other...The Hebrew word is derived...from the root..."he cut," and taken to mean primarily "a cutting," with reference to the custom of cutting or dividing animals in two, and passing between the parts in ratifying a covenant (Genesis 15; Jeremiah 34:18, 19). Hence the expression "to cut a covenant."

...1. Properly, *of a covenant between man and man*; i.e. a solemn compact or agreement, either between tribes or nations (1 Samuel 11:1; Joshua 9:6,15), or between individuals (Genesis 21:44), by which each party bound himself to fulfill certain conditions, and was assured of receiving certain advantages. In making such a covenant God was solemnly invoked as witness (Genesis 31:50), whence the expression "a covenant of Jehovah" 1 Samuel 20:8; comp. Jeremiah 34:18, 19; ...and accordingly a breach of covenant was regarded as a very heinous sin (Eze 17:12-20).

**Malachi 2:13-14:** (NRSV) *<sup>13</sup>And this you do as well: You cover the LORD'S altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor at your hand. <sup>14</sup>You ask, Why does he not? Because the LORD was a witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.*