

We Will Pray

...And the Two Shall Become One

Ignite The Fire Movement
Summit Ministries Newnan Magazine

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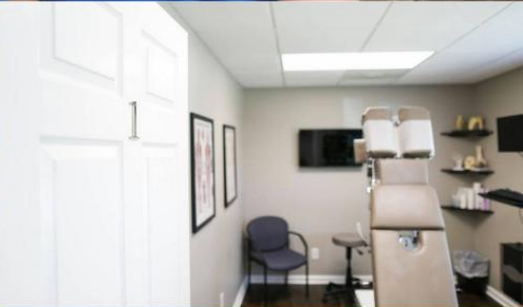
Featured Article

**REFLECTING
CHRIST TO THE
WORLD
THROUGH
CHRISTIAN
MARRIAGE**

**The Blessing of a
Christian Marriage**

**Do You Know What "I
Do" Means?**

**Bedrock Principles
for a Rock-Solid
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Editor's Note

THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE



Marriage is a beautiful bond between a man and woman. This is what God ordained in the beginning of creation. It was necessary for Adam to have a helpmeet. God gave him a woman and they were united in holy matrimony. Everything about their marriage was holy and sacred. This first marriage was divinely designed to be the pattern for all marriages. With this pattern, we can see the beautiful bond that marriage offers to every couple who desires to come together as one. "Therefore, shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh (Genesis 2:24 KJV)."

All marriages should be holy, sacred, and God-centered. The Bible teaches that marriage is ordained of God, and both parties should be equally yoked. It is an institution on earth that represents Jesus and the Bride, the Church. If we follow God's ordained plan, our marriages will always be worth fighting for and restoring in the broken places. Marriage is like a house: it always needs repair work and cleansing. Holy Spirit empowers the repair and cleansing and empowers us to keep building and forgiving!

Aaron North of the *Minnesota Daily* noted, "For me, though, marriage is a sacred bond between two people who not only feel love for each other but also have decided to still love each other even when it is not the path of least resistance.

The sanctity of marriage lies in these choices: to love each other even when you don't like each other and to stay together even when the only thing preventing separation is the simple decision not to separate." His statement solidifies the truth that marriage should be done with God to survive the storms and the damage they bring. Only God can help us love each other when don't like each other.

Marriage should never be entered into for the sake of the children who have been born out of wedlock. Often, we try to put a band-aid over the children's emotions and attempt to create stability by marrying out of convenience. We should want a marriage that is secured in the arms of Jesus, to withstand any storm on a raging sea. Convenience is just what it suggests! Webster defines it as the state of being able to proceed with something with little effort or difficulty. As stated above, marriage is a beautifully-bonded relationship, not a convenient coming together.

Marriage also should never be a negotiation or a "let's make a deal," but revered instead as a sacred and holy bond. Many marriages end up becoming a negotiation without the consent of both parties. If marriage is ordained of God, and it is, then Satan wants to negotiate and make deals with parties involved to sabotage and create chaos within the marriage unit. Everything God creates, Satan mimics to destroy future generations of believers. It is imperative to keep marriages sacred and holy. Otherwise, future generations of Kings and Priests will not be birthed into the Kingdom of God.

More than anything, marriage is a depiction of Jesus and the Church, which is the Bride of Christ. Marriage is beautiful, honorable, and it should be sanctified. Our earthly marriages are sanctified (set apart) as an example of the Great Wedding to come. We all who belong to Christ will be invited to the great wedding feast; however, our invitation depends on how we love like Christ, give like Christ, forgive like Christ, and reign with Christ.

Agathe D. Harris

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HEIRS UNITED: THE THREE PURPOSES OF BIBLICAL MARRIAGE

By: Hollie Mosley

When I consider Biblical marriage, I think of the very first couple: Adam and Eve. God created Adam and put him in the Garden of Eden to “work it and take care of it” (Genesis 2:15, NIV). “The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him... So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, He took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib... and He brought her to the man. The man said, ‘This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.’ For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh“(Genesis 2:18:-24). Together in the garden, Adam and Eve tended it and enjoyed fellowship with the Lord. God walked with them in the garden, in the cool of the day. This is what God planned for all mankind! We, too, were created to know the Lord in an intimate relationship, to enjoy His presence, and to have meaningful work. Adam and Eve were to be a “model couple,” teaching their children and subsequent couples how to serve the Lord.

I love Adam’s words about Eve! Created from Adam’s own rib, Eve was part of him. Husbands and wives are one, joined together by God. We are to be united in our love for God, our love for each other, and our service to others. We are two separate personalities and bodies, yet joined together to be one in God’s eyes. We complement each other and are better together than we are as individuals.

Three God-ordained purposes for married couples emerge from Adam and Eve's example of communion with God and working the garden. First, they knew God and talked with Him. This is the definition of PRAYER. We also have the privilege, as believing couples, to fellowship with God in prayer. Jesus Himself said, "...I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19). One of the joys of my marriage is praying with my husband. We have prayed for many things through the years: our daughter, our family, the sick, the lost, and for wisdom. I feel God's presence so powerfully when we pray together! God has answered many of our prayers and is still at work as we persevere in prayer.

Second, in the couple's labors, I see an example of SHARED MINISTRY. God has ministry opportunities for us that bring joy and fulfillment. The gifts He has given us are to serve His kingdom. My husband and I have very different gifts, but we have the same goal: to serve the Lord by serving others. We spent several years teaching children's Sunday School together. We truly loved those children and delighted in seeing them learn and grow. We still pray for and encourage them when we see them. This shared ministry brought us closer together as a couple.

Even if you and your husband have "your own" vital ministries, commit to serving somewhere together.

One of our church's ministers and his wife, each busy with their own ministries, hosts a young couples' monthly fellowship. Other couples visit shut-ins, share hospitality in their homes, and go on mission trips. There are endless needs, and the Lord will lead you to something special if you seek Him for it. Your greatest ministry and first priority, however, will be to your children and family.

Adam and Eve later had children and populated the earth. Genesis 1:27-28 says, "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number...'" Here we see the purpose of believing couples to RAISE GODLY OFFSPRING. God instituted the family as His primary means of spreading the gospel.



As we raise our children in the “training and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4), we are “making disciples” as Jesus commanded us in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Our children will then go on to make disciples and their children will go on to make disciples, a multiplying effect that reaches the world for Christ. Raising a godly family takes purposeful planning, prayer, patience, and sacrifice. My husband and I have had the privilege to raise a daughter - now grown and on her own - and we are very proud of her. We shared the commitment to put her needs before our own, to spend quantity and quality time with her, and to model values we wanted her to live out.

It took lots of prayer, teaching her God’s Word, and serving in a church where others also loved and disciplined her.

Biblical marriage is a privilege! We are "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7). We bring God honor as we serve together as husband and wife.

It is certainly a challenge in our culture and times, surrounded by temptations and troubles. Satan wants to destroy the family. We must rely on the Holy Spirit and prayer, however, to keep us strong and focused. Commit to intercede for your marriage, pray together, and serve faithfully. Your joys will outnumber the sorrows! **WWP**



Hollie Mosley is a volunteer at the A-O House. She loves to pray and leads the prayer ministry at First Baptist Church. Her greatest joy is being with her husband and daughter. She loves to walk, sing, and work in her yard.



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MARRIAGE 44+ YEARS: GOD'S COVENANT DESIGN AT WORK

By: Mary Axness, N.D



One of my life's "Big Yeses" is to call couples to manifest joy and God's glory, God's way. Let us rediscover God's miraculous plans in a Christian marriage. A picture of blessed completeness draws from heaven's account the very heartbeat of the gospel. Moreover, God weaves the lives of two to become one; this, too, is the mystery of beauty in hope, love, and honor, living a journey to host the unstoppable splendor of God.

Unfortunately, Christian marriages are under severe attack by both obvious and subtle means. Unrestricted social media, health and emotional unwellness, inappropriate soul ties or attachment issues, unmet expectations, unequally yoked worldviews and cultural trends of anti-Biblical agendas - all contribute to marital discontent and disconnect.

They are literal arrows aimed to erode and pervert Christian marriages.

However, God is love and He IS our good news. He specializes in the most difficult human circumstances. God's character isn't like an emotional yo-yo, but rather He is consistently tender and empathetically aware of our seasons and struggles. He is ever ready to celebrate our progress for His signature designs. He has kind intentions to unfold His plans for us. I cannot emphasize enough the fun and childlike blissfulness that are meant for our perfecting wholeness.

Being married 44+ years, I sensed a divine grace enabling me to encourage and strengthen Christian marriages.

"Harnessing a thankful spirit creates a temperate life to receive vital nutrients from the Father: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Meekness and Self-control, in relationship with God, with self and with each other respectively." (Fruit of the Spirit Ephesians 5:22-23).



My aim is to honor The Triune God, beholding His kingly preeminence within two available and willing souls, for nothing is impossible with Him!

Each spouse must be willing to embrace God's plan for their union. Marriage means hard work, too! It is important to focus on each others' strengths while not ignoring certain habitual shortcomings. We must guard both our heart and daily Word-amplified thoughts, practices which bring upgrades of meaningful vision and rich fulfillment into every marriage.

Many have short-circuited God's heartbeat for marriage due to an unintentionally-divided heart, or have taken their spouse for granted. These actions forfeit multi-layered benefits of marital vows and union. Unforgiveness is one sure ingredient (among many) that can cause a spouse to throw in the towel too soon. (Let me insert here, however, that we are co-heirs of Almighty God's abundance. Abuse on any level requires dedicated and skillfully wise counsel. Applicable boundaries need courageous love and intentionally rebuilding of trust). While life offers good, even extremely good feelings at times, the opposite are just as painful and real.

While many weddings express creative glamour, intentional efforts, and diligent preparations, I often ponder what are the healing components that assure good will beyond the beautiful beginning to satisfy deep wells from the inside out? Trust and truth with humility brings providential fulfillments. It's not how we start, but rather how we finish that counts, for nations are watching!

Often it takes just one. Only in Christ can I continue to balance tensions between freedom and responsibility. Harnessing a thankful spirit creates a temperate life to receive vital nutrients from the Father: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Meekness and Self-control, in relationship with God, with self and with each other respectively. (Fruit of the Spirit Ephesians 5:22-23). Let me share a peek of what this looks like:

We never imagine that life's traumas can show up so suddenly as they have during the last few years. I lost my mother to Jesus' embrace in 2019. The following two years I also lost eight relatives, spiritual mentors, a pastor, and a cherished friend, (though no one passed from Covid). These excruciating losses were multiple tsunami-like grieving processes. Each melt-down of uncontrollable tears were as storms crashing without notice against my soul! It was my husband who deliberately dropped whatever he was doing, and within seconds came running towards me without a single word.

He wrapped his strong arms around my shaking body until the storm shadow passed. I am so thankful for my husband's willingness and sacrificial loving posture, assured wonder and security for my feminine soul! Who would be better than my spouse to be a pillar created for such a time as this?

In 2020, due to both families' multi-cultural, multi-religious faith differences, my husband suffered relationship loss of two siblings. He faced harsh words at the most untimely moments. Simultaneously, he experienced major professional adjustments. Can anyone relate? The Spirit downloaded precious wisdom to me: "Hurt people scatter. Healed people gather ... grow my heart's garden well, keep love on towards inner healing!" I exercised healthy boundaries (with in-laws) while being his cheerleader.

Throughout recent tumultuous moments, our families and grandkids are practicing praying and honoring. I trust God for a legacy of "loving purposefully," bringing heaven to earth. Our Father's mighty redemption powerfully shows up in countless miracles.



Throughout the Bible, God crafts failures into faith revivals. His workmanship is made manifest through Jesus and His example, and when we live out those principles, it is powerful. God even says in I Corinthians 7:14-15: "For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband (I Cor. 7:14-15).

God esteems Christian marriages, pouring out His most generous and generational blessings on them. Be still to hear God speak! His ways and means are higher than ours. The exchanged life brings peace instead of chaos (Gal. 2:19-21), and through it, God can rekindle the amber fire of His love toward your blessed marriage! **WWP**



Mary Axness, C.N, N.D. is a certified Naturopathic Doctor dedicated to rebuild and rekindle vitality of wholeness in the body, Enzymes Cooking, Preventive Functional Therapies. She employs ANA Muscle Testings. She is the founder of ReKindle Retreat/Rekindle Ready. She is an ordained minister from Victory Christian Center in Tulsa, Oklahoma. She does missions with marriage focus in China, Hong Kong, and USA. She is a published author and has been married to her husband Mark for 44+ years. Their marriage has produced two children and two grandchildren. She enjoys family time, reading, cooking, missionary travels, and fishing.





DR. DEBORAH SHEPPARD



ABOUT *Dr. Sheppard*

Apostle Deborah Sheppard has over 20 years of experience with Kingdom Business while being developed in the Apostolic Realm of the Spirit. She is a soul winner for the Kingdom of God and displays it through her driven passion for Christ's love, walking in the Prophetic, and her determination that there be no soul left behind! Apostle Deborah and her husband Wayne Sheppard are the founders of Unveiling Word Ministries in Newnan, GA. which was established in December 2008. She is the loving mother of three sons and three sons and a daughter with her husband.

Apostle Deborah Sheppard had earned a degree in Business Administration and Accounting. She is also a graduate of Leadership from Coweta County Chamber of Commerce. Recently, she graduated with her Doctoral degree in Theology on July 16, 2022.

Apostle Deborah Sheppard is a successful Entrepreneur, Community Activist, Philanthropist, and Author. She has written, "The Essence or Spiritual Discipline", Co-Author of "Junia Arise" Anthology book which was written with six other authors called "Chosen Apostle Women in the Frontline", both books are available on Amazon. She has also birthed a broken women's ministry called, Sister 2 Sister Tailored Made LLC, Real Talk #iammysisterkeeper, and Commonwealth for the Common-good Resource Center, Inc. in correlation to the book of Ruth, Ester, Proverbs 31, and 1 Samuel.

Apostle Deborah Sheppard is also an international speaker. She has been featured on the Majesty-Now Show, The Word Network, and Plus or Minus 60' TV Station. She is leading the way for other women in The Kingdom of God.

Apostle Debroah is pressing towards the mark of the higher calling which is in Christ Jesus. Apostle Sheppard challenges others to "rethink" so God can develop Christ's character in them. Apostle Sheppard declares and believes the best is yet to come in the Kingdom of God! Her goal is to reach the world with the teaching of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit!

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EXPONENTIALLY MORE

By: Juanita Killingsworth

Many of us have grown up with the “Cinderella/Prince Charming” view of marriage. Beautiful Cinderella is romantically swept off her feet by her Prince Charming and then they live happily ever after! As Christians, God never promised us an easy life, including our marriages. Peter writes, “...don't be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.” 1 Peter 4:12-13 (ESV).

Recently, a young friend shared that no one told her how hard marriage would be. The ladies who gave her bridal showers, her parents, even I myself failed to prepare her for those tough days that come more frequently than I would like to admit in my own marriage.

My parents will celebrate 73 years of marriage on October 2nd this year. What a legacy of how a Christian marriage should be! Unfortunately, I followed my own desires and I chose someone the first time who was not a Christian. “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers” 2 Corinthians 6:14 (NIV).



I knew I made a huge mistake when he became physically, mentally and emotionally abusive. My ability to be the servant God desired of me was crushed. I was taught that you get married and stay married. So, I stayed and kept trying. After almost 12 years, I knew I had to leave. God protected me during that time because He had so much more planned for me.

Twenty-nine years ago, and literally days after getting the courage to leave my first marriage, I did meet my Prince Charming - Rodney. Starting a relationship and dating was the last thing on my mind at that point. God had a plan for me that included my prince and the princesses to come. Rodney asked me to marry him on our second date. I thought he was crazy, but I realized I had to allow God to take control of my life. One year later, we began our journey as a married couple. Paul writes in Ephesians 5:25 (NIV) “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church...” Rodney loves me even when I find it hard to love myself.

I still struggle and can become overwhelmed with emotions of unworthiness that developed from the abuse. Rodney is there by my side on those days: sometimes being loving, caring and building me up, but sometimes he is just direct and blunt. I do not like the latter in the moment, but I know that it comes from a place of love and it is what I need.

Marriage gives you a partner for life who will be beside you through struggles and triumphs. One of our biggest challenges was receiving the diagnosis that our youngest daughter has Down syndrome. How could God have allowed this unthinkable thing to happen to me? To our family? As we returned home from the doctor that dreary day in December, I was crying uncontrollably. My prince turned to me and said, "God gave her to us with Down syndrome, and we have to figure out what He wants us to do." Paul says in Ephesians 5:33 (NIV) "...and the wife must respect her husband." I must admit, I did not feel respectful at that point. How dare he be so wise! He was leading me, leading our family into the unknown, but being faithful and willing to do whatever God wanted us to do.

There still are days that are a struggle, but because we put God at the center of our lives and our marriage, we have the strength to face the challenges and then rejoice in the triumphs. Marriage is a journey, a continuous process, like taking a trip that never ends, but with many stops. You communicate your thoughts, wishes and desires to determine where you will go next. The journey continues and is ever changing. Our journey is just that - ours.

No one else travels the same path that we do, a path that includes happiness and sadness. Our journey has had challenges that are great but the rewards have been even greater.

Our marriage is not perfect. We are not perfect people. We thrive mainly because God put us together. Our lives consist of investment of time, lots of forgiveness, affection, prayer, mutual respect, and a rock solid commitment that we will always be there for each other. There have been and will continue to be mountains and valleys, but God makes our marriage and our lives exponentially more than we could have ever designed for ourselves. We are incomplete without each other. This is why Paul says that to love your spouse is to love yourself (Ephesians 5:28 NIV).



Marriage is not about a beautiful wedding, fancy home, cute kids, nice cars or white picket fences. Marriage is hospital stays, working long hours, fighting through struggles, paying bills, keeping the faith and staying together through it all. So, even though “Cinderella/Prince Charming” is not the subject line to describe a Christian marriage, when we seek God’s plan and follow His guidance for our marriages and our families, it can mimic the romance story that we desired as a child. So they did live happily ever after with God as their Hope.

WWP



Juanita Killingsworth has lived in Sharpsburg for over 13 years with her husband, Rodney, and daughters, Kayla and Katy Ann.

She spent 17 years homeschooling her girls from Kindergarten through 12th grade. She volunteers at her church and in the community. She is an avid advocate for individuals with disabilities and their families. Their family is excitedly preparing for the marriage of their oldest daughter, Kayla, in March 2023.



MARRIAGE 101: A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

By: Clare Whitlock



“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He will make your paths straight” (Proverbs 3:5-6 NASB).

Marriage is a blessing from God! I’ve seen way too many people miserable in their marriage. I can only speak of reasons in my own life that have lead to less desirable situations than what God wanted for my marriage.

God never wants any believer to live life alone. He wants fellowship with his children and to walk with us through every joy and every sorrow. He wants to support us through every struggle and challenge in life. It is through life that God molds us and makes us to look and act more like His Son, Jesus. He allows adversity to purify us and help us to see Him more clearly. God especially uses the marriage relationship to teach us that service over self is the example His Son, Jesus exemplified.

In the beginning of my marriage to “My Jimmy,” I acted out of unresolved pain from my childhood. I was a quick-tempered, frustrated person who expected my Jimmy to be a mind-reader and healer of all my pain. I expected him to meet my needs which only God could supply. This left him feeling like a failure and frustrated. Thank God, Jimmy loved me and had a strong enough relationship with God at the time to be patient with me.

As life moved on and children came, I imposed perfection on both my Jimmy and my children. I expected them to speak and act like perfect people. I found it hard to extend them grace and patience. After about ten years of marriage, God got a hold of me. I was a believer but did not take advantage of the strength my relationship to God offered. If I had realized who I was in Christ and not expected my family to give me my self-worth, I would have taken pressure off them.

One day I was looking through Bible studies for possible options to offer the ladies in my church and I ran across one called, “In My Father’s House,” written by Mary Kassian. One part of the study description particularly caught my eye: we limit our understanding of God the Father by how we were treated by our earthly father. I ordered the study and thought to myself, “I am doing this one, just God and me.”

I share this part of my testimony to say that we bring into our marriage our brokenness and pain, and if we do not try to help each other heal and grow together, we will fail in our marriages. God healed me from the abusive relationship between my dad and myself through this study of God’s Word. He also provided a man who showed me unconditional love and patience, much like God the Father. I realized that God wants my obedience more than my happiness, despite how difficult marriage can be at times.

Realizing that all good and perfect things come from above, I began to take my focus off myself and my needs and began to look for ways to meet the needs of my family, especially my hubby. God blessed me with my husband and children, and He chose me to fill this role in their lives. He uniquely equipped me to fulfill this purpose for my life, and in the process, my own needs were met without me asking for anything.

I no longer expected my Jimmy to meet all my needs. God demonstrated my true value by sending His precious Son to the cross for my sin, and He has been faithful in meeting my every need. He is the source of my joy and peace.

God has proven Himself over and over again as He answers my prayers and blesses my requests far greater than my wildest expectations. Gradually, my trust in the Lord grew, and through the process, my walk with Him also grew. This change has better equipped us to love and enjoy one another and to grow in our love relationship with God.

One of the blessings of our Christian marriage is watching our oldest son live as a godly husband and father (our youngest son has not yet married), asking our advice on important decisions and making God-honoring choices. He and his wife are growing in their walk with the Lord, serving their family the same way we served ours. This is a generational blessing of God. God is faithful to those who earnestly seek Him.

As our faith grew, Jimmy and I began to experience life through God's eyes and began to have a more eternal perspective on this life. We understand that just as a wedding has a dress rehearsal before the ceremony, so this life is a dress rehearsal for what is to come. We believers are the bride of Christ.

In Matthew 9:15, Jesus referenced Himself as the Bridegroom and we as believers (The Church) are the bride of Christ. God's plan is that we would be holy as He is holy. The marriage relationship refines and prepares us for Christ's return.





If you are considering marriage, please seek godly Christian counsel. It is very important to settle the issue of faith before making the life-changing decision of marriage. Be assured that God will bless the marriage of those who put Him first in their relationship. **WWP**



Clare Whitlock graduated from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (Leavell College) with a Christian Ministry degree and Minors in Women's Ministry and Psychology. She has served as Minister to Women and Member Assimilation since 1998 at First Baptist Church of Newnan, and also served as a chaplain at Cancer Treatment Centers of America and Serenity Hospice for a combined seven years (2013-2019).

Clare has been married to Jimmy Whitlock for 42 years and is a mother of three sons: James III, Nicholas (who died in service to his country in 2012), and Robert. She delights in her role as "CiCi" to four grandchildren: Kaitlyn, Ila Clare, Wen and Hunter.

She also enjoys quiet time with Jesus, spending time with family and friends, walking and gardening.

BEDROCK PRINCIPLES FOR A ROCK-SOLID MARRIAGE

By: Pastor Jimmy & Beth Alison



When we were asked to write an article on marriage, we thought there had been a mistake. We have been married 32 years, but we are far from having a perfect marriage. Like all of the other couples I know, we have had seasons more challenging than others. Seeking to model our marriage after Jesus' teachings on love and forgiveness has been the key for us. We have found that a Christian foundation has been and continues to be the bedrock for our journey. At the end of the day, the joy we have experienced in our marriage can be directly traced to our walks with Jesus.

I (Jimmy) have led well over 200 couples through pre-marital counseling over the past 30 years. I discuss lots of topics with these couples: God's design for a healthy marriage, children, past baggage, communication, ways to cherish each other, sexuality, finances, in-laws, and spirituality. These sessions are part of what I enjoy most about ministry.

I tell these couples that their choice of a spouse is the most life-impacting decision (outside of following Jesus) they will make in their lives. Wouldn't you agree? If you are married, the health of your marriage is your most important work in your life.

Here are some things we have learned about marriage as we have worked on ours for the past 32 years:

MARRIAGE is God's idea. God established the covenant of marriage. It's not a coincidence that the Bible begins with a marriage (Adam and Eve) and ends with a marriage (Jesus and the Church). In marriage, we not only make a promise to our spouse but we are making a promise to Almighty God. With that promise, He makes us a promise as well. In marriage, if we maintain our loyalty to Him by the way we love our spouse, He will bless our marriage with joy and peace. Marriage is part of God's plan to build His Kingdom on earth.

- How are you modeling the Kingdom with your marriage?

MARRIAGE is forever. As the wedding rings exchanged in a wedding ceremony are unbroken circles without an end, so is the great adventure of marriage. On your wedding day you made a marriage contract that will grow in meaning with the years and change, yet never lose its power for happiness if you care for it as your most precious possession.

- How are you modeling that your marriage is a life-long commitment?

MARRIAGE means two are now one.

Your love will cause you not only to look toward one another, but also look out together in the same direction, sharing the same hopes, working for the same goals, caring for the same things, not without differences but with the same purposes while remembering as a rule for each day: "In small things, liberty; in great things, unity; in all things, charity."

- How are you walking in-step with your spouse when it comes to your family decisions?



MARRIAGE grows our understanding of what love is.

There is no better definition of love than that of Saint Paul (1 Cor 13): "Love is patient, love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful, nor conceited, nor rude; never selfish, not quick to give offense. Love holds no grudges, but it delights in the truth. There is nothing love cannot face, there is no limit to its faith, its hope, its endurance."

Little sacrifices every day will keep love alive as you say continually to each other, "to your joy I dedicate my life".

- How are you sacrificing daily for your spouse?

MARRIAGE teaches us how to serve.

Jesus' style of leadership was servanthood. When we follow Jesus through the Gospels, He is seeking out ways to serve those in need. Marriage gives us the opportunity to serve unconditionally, as Jesus served the Church. Healthy marriages are filled with acts of service.

- How are you daily serving your spouse?

MARRIAGE teaches you how to compromise.

Once married, it doesn't take long to discover that without compromise, the marriage won't last. The paradox of compromising in a marriage is that it's not 50/50. Rather, to compromise is 100/100. As you grow deeper in love with your spouse, your desire to serve her/him will reach 100%. To compromise is to fully surrender to the other.

- Do you think of compromise as 50/50 or 100/100?

MARRIAGE teaches you how to anticipate needs.

As you grow in your marriage, knowing what your spouse needs will become natural. You will anticipate his/her needs before they are verbalized.

- How are you anticipating the needs of your spouse? **WWP**





Marriage is a journey. Learn something new about each other every day.

Keep your bed pure.

Remind your spouse daily why you love her/him.

Men—be quick to listen before fixing your wife’s problems.

**Women—your man wants to know you are proud he’s your man.
Over communicate.**

Don’t bring up last year’s issues unless they are still present.

Discover your spouse’s love language and love her/him that way.

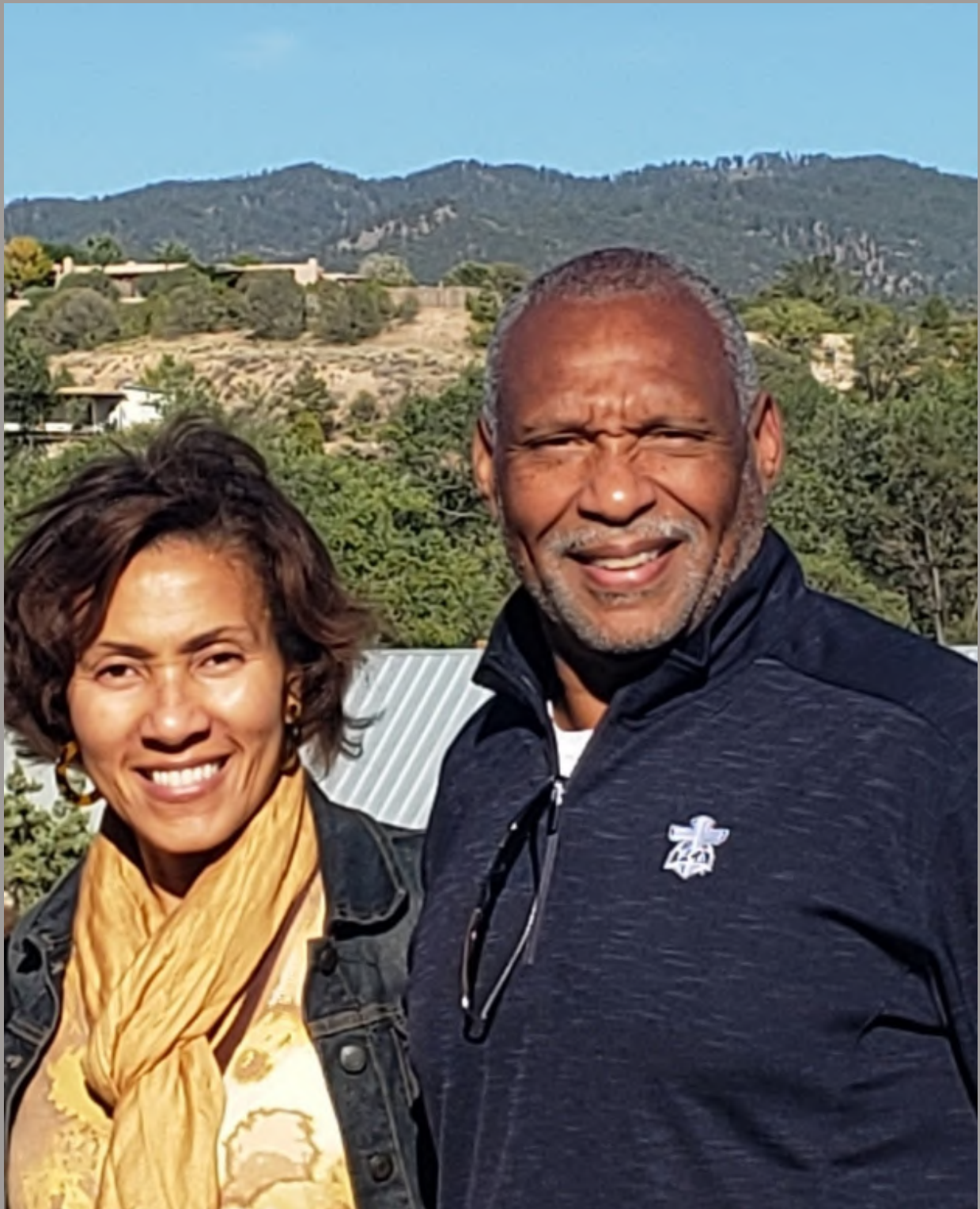
Don’t quit. Forgive. Change. Practice loving each other.



Jimmy Ellison is the pastor at Newnan City Church, located in downtown Newnan, GA. He and his wife, Beth, founded the church in 2017. They have been married 32 years and have two adult sons, Will and Ben.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT "I DO" MEANS?

By: Dr. Pamela Thompson



My husband, Ezra, and I met on the Bike Ride Across Georgia (BRAG) in June, 1995. We were amongst a sea of 2500 bike riders who reserved these brutally hot seven days every June to ride their bicycles across the entire state of Georgia (about 55-75 miles a day), while also camping out every night. That year was my first time doing the BRAG ride and Ezra's 5th, and I had no idea what to expect.

By day four, when my uh...rear-end was feeling too sore to do one more day's ride on that punishing seat, I wondered why others didn't seem to feel this pain in the same way I did. I looked toward Ezra, who seemed harmless enough for me to approach with the burning question of what must I do to be saved from the searing agony on my backside that was threatening to end my bike ride prematurely. Ezra kindly gave me his very own magic potion that apparently everybody knew about but me—A&D ointment, better known as diaper rash treatment. Well, thanks to Ezra, I got through the ride intact and exchanged pleasant goodbyes and phone numbers with everyone, including him, at the end of the ride.

We did not speak or see each other again until 6 months later when he called out of the blue and asked me to meet him for dinner. Though it turned out to be the best date I'd ever had, I was super busy in graduate school and not interested in much more at the time. Suffice it to say we evolved slowly, like flavorful stew cooked in a crock pot.



We married two years later, on March 28, 1998 during my spring break, and I recall that day as the sunniest and happiest of days when we exchanged vows.

Our paths had crossed when we were in transition in many ways. We both had been divorced for several years, and we were in various stages of recovery from those divorces—residentially, spiritually, financially, and occupationally. Spiritually, I was questioning a lot of things about God and the church in which I had been raised; Ezra wasn't questioning God actively, but he was not pursuing Him either. Little did we know how much we'd need God to manage and overcome the difficulties right around the corner.

After that sunny wedding day, filled with smiles and hopes for our new life, we were immediately thrust into the "work" of marriage I'd heard about and had underestimated. We were hit hard with significant stressors including rehabbing our first home on one income with vastly different ideas of how/why to change this or that; my seven-year-old step-son's first summer with us (two months after we married) and my realization of his unfamiliar ways/habits as well as Ezra's post-divorce guilt in wanting to be the perfect dad; living apart for a year while I completed my internship/doctorate in Memphis, TN; Ezra's multiple surgeries from sports injuries; my mentally ill brother's suicide; working opposite schedules which made us strangers at times passing in the hallway; my mother's failing health and moving in with us temporarily (and then permanently),

and lastly, but not leastly, there were the infertility struggles that left us unable to have our own children and that reshaped the vision of our future.

All this happened within the first six or seven years of our marriage. It was a LOT! Today, we can look at those trials and see how they drove us to the cross.

Below are some of the lessons learned along the last 24 years of my own marriage as well as counsel which I regularly give to my clients:

- We developed hobbies together and apart which put a system in place for marital and individual refreshment. For example, during times of strain or tension, we continued to honor activities together which we both enjoyed (e.g., early morning workouts at the gym, scrabble playing at a coffee shop, attending neighborhood festivals, window shopping on weekend get-aways) as well as individual hobbies which caused some tensions to evaporate before returning home.
- We've learned to accept each other's quirks and find humor in them when it would otherwise be annoying at face value. It's helpful to ask oneself when irritating habits emerge in the spouse, "Would this even matter to me if I knew I'd never see my spouse again after today?"

The chances are good that the things that drive us nuts about our spouses in marriage are the very things we'll miss most when they're gone. We cherish our shared values and experiences, especially during the pandemic. I once heard a Christian radio minister (Stephen Arterburn) instruct couples to do this exercise to reinforce a focus on their marital glue: Imagine somebody presented you a descriptive list of a "blind date" intending to meet you, but in reality and unbeknownst to you this "blind date" is your spouse. Imagine all the things you'd have in common that would make you excited about meeting this person (kids same age, same type of pet, favorite meals consumed, same neighborhoods lived in, people you both know, churches you've attended, songs with special meaning, places traveled). You would surely think this must be the perfect mate for you. Use those commonalities as your springboard for marital growth and keep building new memories. **WWP**



Dr. Pamela Thompson has owned and operated her practice, Building Bridges to Better Lives, since 2004 where she serves as a Psychologist, Professional Life Coach, and Speaker. She has provided mental health services for individuals, couples, women's groups, and inmates since 1996. She is also the author of *Surviving Mama: An Adult Daughter's Guide to Overcoming Strained Mother-Daughter Relationships*. She lives in Newnan with her husband, Ezra, of 24 years and their beloved German Shepherd, Cyrus.

THE BLESSINGS OF BECOMING ONE, YET EACH UNIQUE, IN MARRIAGE

By: Harry & Tracey Pitts



Marriage is a beautiful thing, but it requires a 100% investment from both of us to give ourselves, our love and our resources to each other. To weatherproof our marriage against the harsh, difficult winds of life, our foundation has to be strong and solid. One of the core foundational truths that Tracey and I live by is that God is the guiding presence in our marriage. By following His directives, we are able to withstand any public or private difficulties that we may face. Happy couples will face challenges where there are differences of opinion. The danger, however, of allowing opinion to rule - as opposed to truth - is that opinion is more self-centered. Truth is couple-centered. Opinions tend to be filled with a selfish agenda and an unhealthy mindset that seeks to be right as opposed to the survival of the marriage.

Marriage requires a firm and dedicated commitment to an established vision - a guiding force for us against situations that will seek to derail our goal as a union of one in this world. Outside forces will challenge our commitment to each other and the marital objectives that we have established. We must immediately identify the threats and turn our weaknesses into strengths to prevent this invasion from taking place. When Tracey and I close the door on our weaknesses, we move into a place of strength. Acknowledging and understanding that God continues the process of making us one spiritually allows us to be a power couple. Tracey and I both bring uniqueness to our marriage, allowing us to operate at our greatest potential.

Tracey possesses godly character in loving people unconditionally. I wasn't trusting in this area of love because of disappointment from my parents and loved ones as a young person. I admitted to God and my wife that it was a struggle allowing people to get close to me because of past hurts. Tracey saw beyond all the past issues and looked deep inside me, and she was determined to help me overcome this area in order to create a marriage that could be heralded. At times I struggled, but with her support I was able to become a person who now can love without preconditions. I experienced freedom and love beyond what I could fathom. I knew that I loved and trusted her, but trusting others was difficult for me.

I never struggled in business because it only required understanding your target audience and making deals and normal conversation coupled with contracts, etc. In this setting, a level of intimacy isn't developed; instead, it's about what is beneficial for both parties. I understand numbers, people, legal litigation, and business etiquette: none of which requires a deep emotional commitment. Marriage, however, is different than calculating numbers or correctly wording a business contract. Marriage requires the choice that Tracey and I are attracted to each other; that we laugh at each other; that we are kind to each other even when we are not feeling our best; that we celebrate both small and large victories.





Marriage requires remembering special dates, and becoming good listeners of each other.



Tracey was committed to teaching me how to love on every level. Have you ever considered how love is equivalent to blood in the human body? Blood can serve multiple purposes. Blood carries nutrients and removes waste that can cause toxicity. Love performs the same functions: creating a healthy environment in our home, and safeguarding our marriage against things that keep us from being likeminded. Love is one of the most powerful weapons in the life of any married couple.



God so loved the world that He sent His son Jesus to become an offering of redemption on behalf of mankind. Jesus' sacrifice created a pathway for mankind to be restored in relationship with God. Love motivated God to bankrupt heaven for the redemption of humanity.

Tracey and I are equally yoked in our marriage because we agree on the truth of our need of our savior, Jesus, and the love He showed us in His sacrifice. Another foundational truth is the gift of forgiveness. Forgiveness fortifies our marriage and prevents dissention and heartbreak from ruling and dominating.



Forgiveness teaches us humility and the importance of selflessness. When forgiveness is a ruling force, there isn't any space for anger or rage. When love and forgiveness work hand in hand, this indicates we will fight for our marriage.

Our marriage requires that we respect and honor each other as equals. I do not need to place undue pressure on Tracey to become someone that I created or envisioned in my mind. It is a terrible thing to place unrealistic expectations on her. Tracey and I are unique and special, not copies of something or someone else.

We are uniquely who we are, tailor made for each other and no one else. Give your husband or wife the respect that they deserve in being uniquely the person God called them to be for your unique marriage.

Your marriage is divinely of God; therefore, allow God to script every scene and each chapter to build a memoir of righteous deeds for perpetual generations to learn from in their own unique way.

"The difference between an ordinary marriage and an extraordinary marriage is both husband and wife having an extraordinary intimate relationship with God." ~Prayer Oriented Wives Exemplifying Royalty (P.O.W.E.R.) **WWP**

Harry and Tracey Pitts are native Atlantans, and they presently reside in Villa Rica, GA. They are servant leaders of MCM Empowerment and are members of World Changers Church International. Harry and Tracey have been married for 31 years and have one son, DJ. They have a unified heart of love for the Lord and for people to become equipped and empowered via the Word of God.



THE BLESSING OF CHRISTAIN MARRIAGE

By: Ken Waldrup



In the spring of 2004, when we were juniors in high school, I met my future wife on a blind date set up by mutual friends. We automatically hit it off and found out we had many things in common, most importantly being our faith in Jesus. This would become a defining aspect of our relationship in the years to come. We served together in youth ministry throughout college and were married in 2010. Since then I have gone back to school twice to pursue my master's and doctoral degrees. The Lord has also blessed us with two wonderful children who keep us busy and on our toes. Together we have served in full-time ministry, chaplaincy, teaching, and pastoring. In all this, my wife has been an immense support and helpmate and has been a vital participant in every endeavor God has placed in our path. Through every season of our relationship together, God has blessed us as we have strived to honor him with our lives and our marriage.

There are certain areas of our marriage that we have seen God work in amazing ways—by putting him first in finances, ministering together, parenting, and by biblically handling conflict. I encourage all Christian couples to focus on these aspects and see what God will do in their own marriage and ministries.

Early on in our marriage, as many seminary families are, we had an abundance of love but were quite small in budget. We made a decision together that tithing was non-negotiable in our finances and would be factored in, regardless of what our starting balance was. We wanted to “put our money where our mouth was” and demonstrate obedience, showing that God is our priority and not our money. Although at times it would be difficult (and somewhat painful!) God has miraculously stretched and blessed our finances in ways we could never imagine. It has been such a blessing to us to be able to bless our church and others through monetary giving and putting God first in our finances.

Our marriage has grown and evolved as we have ministered together in many different settings. We have found that we each have different strengths and weaknesses that cause us to rely upon one another to accomplish the goals that God has given us. As we work together in ministry, God has shown me that my wife and I were made for one another and have a synergistic effect on one another. God has blessed me immensely with a partner who leverages her strengths for the gospel and calls the best out of me. I can honestly say I would not be where I am in ministry without the love, support, and influence of my godly wife. Likewise, as the leader of my household, I strive to lead and love my wife as Christ loves the church, and serve her and my family faithfully.

One of the most sanctifying aspects of our marriage is the blessing of being parents. My wife and I have grown deeper in our faith and in ways we could have never imagined before having children. As parents, we learned we can only teach our children what we ourselves know.





This has pushed us to continue learning and growing individually and as a couple. We learned that we must demonstrate, on a daily basis, what we have taught them and that my example as an earthly father will shape the way my children view God as their Heavenly Father. My wife and I have grown closer together through the years as we parent our children and are sanctified as God shows us our own shortcomings as we attempt to disciple our children. The experience of parenting is deeply humbling and daunting, but the blessings and growth we have encountered has been immeasurable.

Another area that God uses to bring us closer together is conflict. Over the years, we have learned we have different dispositions and approach conflict in different ways. Personally, I like to confront it head-on and address the issues whether or not I'm thinking rationally. My wife prefers to avoid conflict but when necessary, will eventually approach the situation after she's had time to think about how she feels. Over the years we have realized that I could benefit from taking a moment to think it over before I approach a situation and she could learn to address issues rather than avoiding them. By doing this, we have a better understanding of one another and can help each other work through the conflict as a team rather than adversaries. Ultimately, God has shown us that conflict is not a failure but rather a tool for us to grow as a couple and another opportunity for us to be sanctified in Christ.

The purpose of Christian marriage ultimately is to show the world the love of Jesus and mirror His relationship with His church.

Within this framework, two individuals grow in Christ as well as closer together. It is my experience that Biblical marriage is an immense blessing that impacts not only the couple but all those with whom they come in contact. God can use a couple to make a lasting difference for generations to come through faithful devotion and sacrificial love towards one another. This type of relationship stands as a testament of God's love and devotion for His people, shining as an example in an ever-darkening world.

WWP



Dr. Ken Waldrup is currently serving as interim pastor of White Oak Baptist Church in Newnan, Georgia. He is a graduate of Brewton-Parker College with a Bachelor of Ministry, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity, and holds a Doctorate of Ministry from the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has served in many different ministry settings including youth ministry, teaching, and church leadership. He also serves as a hospital chaplain at the Cancer Treatment Centers of America. Ken lives in Sharpsburg with his wife, Anna, and their two children.



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REFLECTING CHRIST TO THE WORLD THROUGH CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

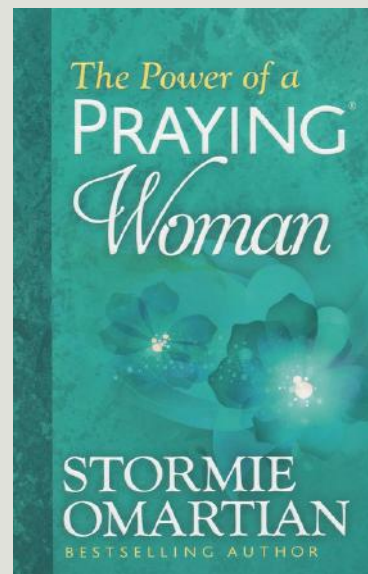
By: Drew & Lindsey Archer



My husband, Drew, and I met at freshman orientation the summer before we started college, but the sparks didn't happen then. We forged a friendship in the theatre department over three years before dating during our senior year. Drew was different than the other guys. He invited me to join him at church, he held doors for me, he brought me flowers, he made me laugh - he was full of the love of Christ, and it emanated from him. Within a month of us seriously dating, it hit me like a ton of bricks that he was the one God had called me to be with. A little over a year later we got engaged, and six months later we were married. How could I know he was the one at 22 or 23 years old? Was I truly listening to God? What would our life look like in our chosen careers as actors? As a child of divorce, was I going into this blindly?

We had a beautiful wedding and were ready to tackle our life together. But what about our marriage? Were we ready and prepared? Did we really know what we were doing? I just chuckle thinking about it. We had no clue what we were doing. I remember so many mistakes early on in our marriage. Drew likes to say he could barely tie his shoes at that age let alone be a husband (joking of course) and the same goes for me. I was full of pride, arrogance, and stubbornness, thinking I knew everything while quickly learning I didn't and needed God to show me the way. God truly had to break me and show me my need for Him as the center of our life together.

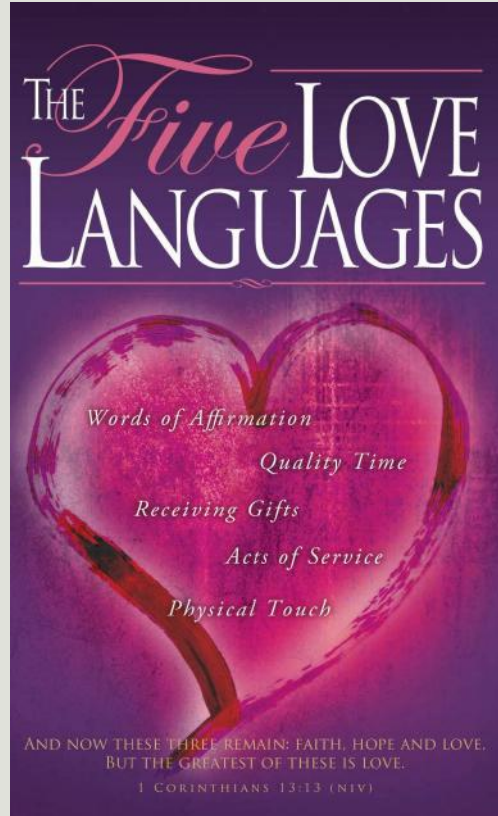
Drew and I don't claim to know everything but here are some helpful things I've learned over the years. Early on I read a book called *The Power of a Praying Woman* by Stormie Omartian. This book was so helpful for me in creating a healthy prayer life and for understanding the male brain and their needs in a better way. Let's face it, men and women are all wired differently. Things that make sense to me don't always to Drew, and vice-versa. It has really helped with setting my expectations.



Author Recommended Resource



Another valuable book is *The Five Love Languages*, giving insight in how your spouse likes to receive and give love! We've also had some "flops" in the book department. Drew's mom is always giving us devotionals and such and one year for Christmas we got a book called *The Love Dare*. It's meant to be a journal for a couple and to keep notes in and use together and I remember being so excited about it. Drew recently found the book and showed it to me. We got exactly one page into the journal and never filled any more of it. Journaling might not be our cup of tea!



Author Recommended Resource

Another helpful piece of advice is to find a church home with your spouse. Drew and I traveled a lot as actors, and even when we weren't "home" and were living in temporary spots around the country, we made it a priority to go to church. Why is being in church so important? If marriage is designed to be a reflection of Jesus and His Church (Ephesians 5:25-32), then being in community with other believers is one of the primary ways God strengthens and instructs us in our marriages.



We also have been a part of many small groups and bible studies together. Something valuable about that is how God has put us in fellowship with others who are in different ages and stages. Married people need to be in relationships with those who are older, those who are younger, those who are married, those who are single, those who have kids, and those who don't. God has strengthened and encouraged our marriage through all the different relationships he has given us in the body.

It's really important to make time for your spouse, even when schedules are busy. Carve out time for a date night—even if it's something simple like a walk or a "special dinner" on your back porch. This can be especially challenging if you have children. This is still a struggle for us! We have three children, and we both work full-time. Free time is pretty hard to find some weeks, and we have to get creative! Look at it as an adventure and think of fun ways to surprise each other.

Drew talking here: Lindsey's done a great job of giving some of our history, as well as some practical advice. I'll try to finish out by adding a few thoughts.

I remember sitting in premarital counseling with our pastor over 20 years ago and being asked why marriage was important. As someone who grew up in the church, I answered that the church is the bride of Christ and marriage is a way to reflect that.

I may have had that in my head, but it's taken a long time for that truth to make its way to my heart, and it's a struggle to hold onto what that really means. Despite our own selfishness and failure to love God with our whole heart, out of God's love, Christ gave himself for us to reconcile us to God and now we are only viewed by God as objects of grace, delight, and favor. In marriage, we are called to reflect that love, grace, and delight in how we view our spouse. While we cannot be Jesus for our spouse, we are called to show Jesus to our spouse in the way we love and care for them. It is a sacrificial love that continually chooses to view the other as an object of grace and delight, despite the fact that we often do not act deserving of that love. While all believers are called to demonstrate this kind of sacrificial love towards one another and the world, the covenant of marriage can be held up as one of the primary ways to show the world Christ's commitment of grace towards the church. This is much easier said than done.

Many people, including myself, on some level, enter marriage with the belief that the other person will solve all of my issues by meeting all my needs. But that is a very selfish view of marriage. The other person does not exist for you; they exist for God. Our marriage relationship is to start with an outward seeking posture of grace that seeks to build up the other in Christ.

Your spouse is not a source of fulfillment or the one who will fix all of your issues, those are things only God can do. But God can use both husband and wife in beautiful, powerful ways to accomplish his work in us. I think the best advice I can give is to seek to have Christ at the center of everything, not just our marriages, but all our relationships. When this happens, we grow closer to Christ as we grow closer to one another. Our marriages are a gift that God has given us to know Him better through knowing one another better. As our relationships grow and deepen with one another, so does our relationship with Him.

Back to Lindsey: “And if someone overpowers one person, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not easily broken” (CSB) Ecclesiastes 4:12. This was our wedding verse and hangs in our room as a daily reminder of God’s Word and truth. Drew and I still make mistakes daily as a married couple, but I’m so grateful for the Lord being the center of it all and guiding us all of these years. **WWP**



Drew and Lindsey Archer are local to Newnan and have been married for 20 years. Drew is a local pastor at Christ Presbyterian Church and Lindsey is co-owner of Steppin' Out Performing Arts. They have three lovely children, Celia, Joel and Audrey, who keep them busy and on the go.



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Jesus said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly"--a complete life full of purpose (John 10:10)

But here's the problem:

Step 2: Man is sinful and separated from God.

We have all done, thought or said bad things, which the Bible calls "sin." The Bible says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

The result of sin is death, spiritual separation from God (Romans 6:23).

The good news?



Step 3: God sent His Son to die for your sins!

Jesus died in our place so we could have a relationship with God and be with Him forever.

“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us”
(Romans 5:8).

But it didn’t end with His death on the cross. He rose again and still lives!

“Christ died for our sins. ... He was buried. ... He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Jesus is the only way to God. Jesus said, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me” (John 14:6).

Step 4: Would you like to receive God’s forgiveness?

We can’t earn salvation; we are saved by God’s grace when we have faith in His Son, Jesus Christ. All you have to do is believe you are a sinner, that Christ died for you sins, and ask His forgiveness. Then turn from your sins—that’s called repentance. Jesus Christ knows you and loves you. What matters to Him is the attitude of your heart, your heart, your honesty. We suggest praying the following prayer to accept Christ as your Savior:

“Dear God,

I know I’m a sinner, and I ask for your forgiveness. I believe Jesus Christ is Your Son. I believe that He died for my sin and that you raised Him to life. I want to trust Him as my Savior and follow Him as Lord, from this day forward. Guide my life and help me to do your will.

I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.”

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Hollie Mosley
Mary Axness, N.D.
Juanita Killingsworth
Clare Whitlock
Pastor Jimmy & Beth Ellison
Dr. Pamela Thompson
Drew & Lindsey Archer
Harry & Tracey Pitts
Dr. Ken Waldrup

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PUBLISHER

The Summit Ministries Newnan

Editor-In-Chief

Debra Harris

Managing Editor

Connie J. Singleton

Circulation Manager

Semone Brooks

Publication Layout

Kelly Staple, Kelly Nicole Digital

Photographers

Emmanuel Brooks

Amber Harris

Emmie Sellers (Cover Photo)

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