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www.believeandbelong.org 2010

SETTING THE STAGE THROUGH PRAYER FOR MARRIAGES

Father, we thank you for **the gift of marriage**. We acknowledge that your ways are perfect and that you make no mistakes. We gladly confess that without you we can do nothing. Help us to submit ourselves to you completely with no strings attached.

May we become a church of **happy Christian homes** where Jesus Christ can be seen in our closest relationships. We pray for those who are hurting and lonely that they might receive a fresh touch from your Spirit. Grant healing and hope to us as we pray.

We ask for our children that you would grant them a holy excitement about marriage. We pray for godly desire for marriage, and also for godly spouses for our children. We thank you for those who are single. Thank you for their willingness to serve you. We pray that they would seek God's best every day so that they might glorify you with thankful hearts.

We lift up all the marriages in our congregation and pray that each one might be strengthened. We stand united by faith against everything the devil would do to destroy those marriages. We pray that none would be lost, that all would be preserved. And we thank you for husbands and wives who love you and who love each other. Grant that our marriages will not merely endure, but that they will grow and prosper and be filled with joy. May our marriages glorify you, and be a testimony of your grace to the world. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

AFFIRMING ALL TYPES OF RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE CHURCH

If you are married, take a moment to recommit yourself to your spouse.

If your marriage is in some difficulty, pray for God's healing power to come into your relationship.

If you are a widow or a widower, thank God for the good memories. Ask him for the grace you need this week.

If you are single because of divorce, pray for an intimate relationship with God to fill the void in your heart.

If you are a single parent, ask God to be the missing parent for your children.

If you have never married.

Pray that God will bring his best to you in his own time and commit to the Lord that you won't settle for second best.



**“I love you just the way you are
when you’re not being just the way you are.”**

FOUR Keys To Good Communication James 1:19

1. Learn the 16 most important minutes of each day.

The first four minutes after you get up.

The last four minutes before you leave the house.

The first four minutes after coming back home.

The last four minutes before going to sleep.

2. Pray together or pray for the other daily.

3. Write Out Your Feelings

4. When you are angry, don’t say everything you are thinking.

“Communication is possible whenever one person is willing to look at another person and see beyond the outside to the real person inside. This is what real love is all about.

You live with another person for years and see them every single day as they really are.

You know them better than they know themselves.

You know their weaknesses, their failures, their hidden fears, the bad habits.

And when the bad times come, you don’t turn around and walk away. Instead you reach over, you smile, you give them a kiss, and you say, “I love you.”

True communication happens whenever you look at another person and say, “I see the way you really are, and I’m not leaving you. I’m sticking with you to the very end.” That’s what it means to really love another person.



Forgiveness: The Overlooked Key

“Bitterness is a choice, just as forgiveness is a choice. No one can make you bitter. You choose bitterness the same way you choose forgiveness. Choosing forgiveness may seem difficult, but it is far easier than living in the sinkhole of a bitter spirit.”

1. A Biblical Case Study [Matthew 18:21-35](#)

- A. Forgiveness is difficult but it is not impossible.
- B. As long as we focus on what others have done to us, forgiveness is impossible.
- C. What we refuse to forgive, we hurt ourselves most of all.
- D. Whatever forgiveness costs us, unforgiveness costs us far more.

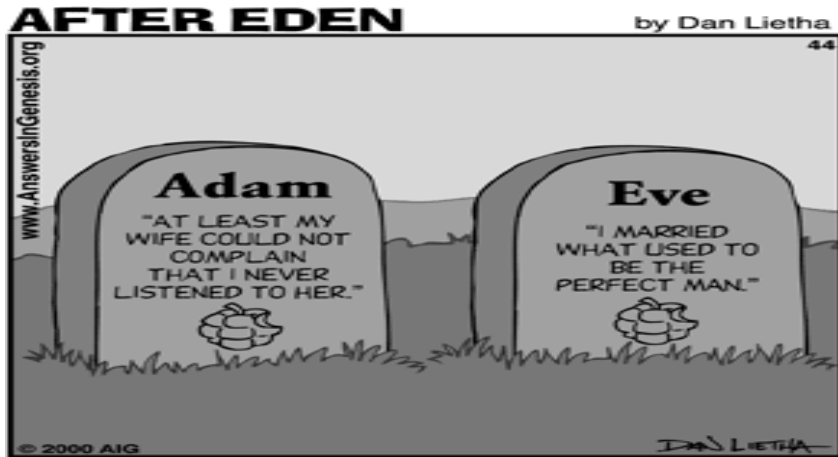
2. Three Sincere Questions

- A. “What about the person who says, “I can forgive but I can’t forget?”
 - B. “What do you do when the other person won’t admit they are wrong?”
 - C. “Does forgiveness mean I have to let people walk all over me?”
- “We need to become great forgivers. Why? Because forgiveness will save your marriage when nothing else will.”

3. Practical Steps Toward Forgiveness

- A. Writing a letter of forgiveness to your spouse
- B. Talk it over with a close friend
- C. Ask God to forgive your spouse
- D. Memorize [Psalm 103:12](#)
- E. Meditate on [Matthew 6:12](#)
- F. Perhaps it means asking forgiveness for your sins
- G. Ask God to bless your spouse in every way
- H. Take a step of active love toward your spouse

“Forgiveness will mean different things to different people. The cost will differ depending on the magnitude of the offense. But the result is always the same—liberating freedom from the past and a new foundation on which to build a healthy marriage.”



Let's Get Back To Eden...Live On Top Of The World

With that as background, we turn now to Genesis 2, the most basic passage in the Bible about marriage. Before jumping into the text, please note these two points about the

context: 1) ***This story takes place before the fall.*** That is, the first marriage took place in paradise, in the Garden of Eden. It shows us what marriage is meant to be as it comes from the hand of the Creator. 2) ***We see God's intimate involvement in the first marriage.***

Let's highlight six key facts from the passage.

A. God takes the initiative to show Adam his loneliness (v.

18a). It is God who says to Adam in verse 18, "It is not good for a man to be alone." Adam doesn't figure that out by himself.

The point is clear: God sees Adam's need and moves to meet it even before Adam realizes he has a need.

B. God takes the initiative to meet Adam's need (v. 18b).

God promised to make a "helper" suitable for Adam. That helper would be Eve who will "complete" him and complement him.

She will make up what is lacking in him, and together they will be stronger than if they were apart.

C. God teaches Adam how to be a leader & a lover (vv. 19-20).

Having said that God will make a "helper" suitable for Adam, we might expect that the next verse to say something like, "So God created Eve." Instead we get the story of Adam naming the animals.

The power to name is the power of authority.

D. God brings the woman to the man (vv. 21-22).

Note how God takes the lead in all that happens. He puts Adam to sleep, then he takes a rib from his side, then he fashions Eve, then he brings her to Adam. God is the author of the first marriage, and he is intimately involved in every aspect.

Verse 22 tells us that God “brought her to the man.”

E. Adam recognizes Eve as similar but different (v. 23).

God’s answer to Adam’s loneliness is simple and profound. He created a partner for Adam—like him, from him, for him yet different from him.

The Hebrew words tell the story. The word for man is “ish,” for woman “ishah.” The difference is the same in English and Hebrew:

Man—“ish”

Woman—“ishah”

Verse 23 contains a poetic exclamation in Hebrew that unfortunately is lost in our modern translations. The first three words actually mean something like “This is it!”

F. God’s intention for marriage is plainly stated (vv. 24-25).

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame” (Genesis 2:24-25).

In these two verses we find the four essential components of Christian marriage:

LEAVING—leave his parents

CLEAVING—be united to his wife

INTIMACY—become one flesh

TRANSPARENCY—naked and not ashamed

Leaving means breaking away from your parents to establish a home of your own.

Cleaving means being glued together so tightly no force can tear you apart.

Intimacy involves growing together over the years so that while you are still two people, in a deep way you have become “one flesh.” It includes sexual relations, but it is more than that.

Transparency means having a relationship built on such trust that you can let down the barriers and allow another person to know you deeply—body, soul and spirit.



GIVE THE GLORY TO GOD (read in unison)

The difference between man and woman is God's glory.
The completing of each other is God's glory.
The satisfaction of the woman in the man is God's glory.
The satisfaction of the man in the woman is God's glory.

Making love as husband and wife is God's glory.
Showing our children the goodness of marriage is God's glory.
Keeping your marriage vows is God's glory.
Staying faithful is God's glory.
Honoring your spouse is God's glory.

Loving your wife as Christ loved the church is God's glory.
Submitting to your husband as unto the Lord is God's glory.

Treating your wife with kindness is God's glory.
Respecting your husband is God's glory.
Staying together for a lifetime is God's glory.
Celebrating your 50th anniversary is God's glory.

Let the glory of the Lord fill this place!



HOW CAN TWO WALK TOGETHER, EXCEPT THEY AGREE? (Amos 3:3)

How?

My relationship is going to move forward by...

can two walk together?

My relationship is going to get better because I am committing to the following:

a

b

c

except they agree?

I will admit that we have not been in agreement on these subjects

a

b

c