

Marriage Revival



*With
Tom & Teri Wagoner*

Dear Friends,

Thank you for inviting us to your marriage event this year as we seek the Lord's face together.

The truths that we will be sharing come directly from God's word through others who have poured into our marriage through the years.

Teri and I are far from perfect. We consider our marriage a work in progress as we seek to honor Christ and love each other every day.

You may feel your marriage is beyond repair, but the same God who raised people from the dead (John 11:43-44) can raise a dead relationship, or even bring healing to an injured or cold one.

Let's open our hearts together and hear God speak and respond to the Holy Spirit as He meets with us.

Tom & Teri Wagoner

Marriage Honesty

‘Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.’
Psalm 139:23-24

1. New Birth

‘Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?’ 2 Corinthians 13:5

- I have fully agreed with God about the sin in my life, and I have turned away from it so that I can live the kind of life Jesus died to provide. This repentance has changed the way I live, speak, and think (Acts 26:20; Luke 13:3, Titus 2:11-14) **YES NO**
- I have placed all of my trust and complete confidence in Jesus Christ alone for salvation – trusting in no one and nothing else (Ephesians 2:8; John 14:6; Acts 16:31; Romans 10:9-10) **YES NO**

2. Intimacy with God

‘Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this that he understandeth and knoweth me...’ (Jeremiah 9:23-24a)

THE BIBLE

- I desire to read and obey God’s Word. **Yes No**

PRAYER

- Meaningful prayer is a part of my daily life. **Yes No**
- I am praying regularly with my spouse. **Yes No**

3. Obstacles to My Marriage

‘But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear’ (Isaiah 59:2)

PRIDE

- It is hard for me to express genuine love and gratitude for my spouse. **Yes No**
- It is difficult for me to ask forgiveness from my family. **Yes No**
- Sometimes I look out for myself rather than others. **Yes No**
- I have sin that is unconfessed in my life. **Yes No**

4. Priorities

‘But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.’ (Matthew 6:33)

- From 1 – 8, rank the following activities based on the amount of time you spend doing each in a given day:

_____ Internet

_____ Social Media/Entertainment

_____ Food

_____ Spouse/Family

_____ Sports/Recreation

_____ God’s Word (reading, memorizing, meditating)

_____ Prayer

_____ Friends

- I am open to responding to God when He speaks to me. **Yes No**

Together (15 Minutes)

Setting: Get together with your spouse and complete this section.
Make sure you can talk freely.

Objective: To share your feelings and commitment with each other.

Instructions: Read each question and spend time sharing.

1. Share and discuss your letters.
2. Verbalize to your spouse the commitment you made to God during your individual prayer time.
3. Close your time together by taking turns thanking God for each other.
4. Write the points of action you will take individually and as a couple.

Love Letter

Assessing the Dimensions of Intimacy

After you have taken a few minutes to reflect on your relationship with your spouse, indicate your perception of your degree of intimacy in the three areas of spirit, soul, and body. Place an X on the scale below to signify your view of the relationship.

1. The spiritual dimension of our relationship is...

Lacking Very
In Intimacy Intimate

What aspects of your spiritual relationship would you most like to see changed or improved in your marriage?

2. The emotional or friendship dimension of our relationship is...

Lacking Very
In Intimacy Intimate

What aspects of being a friend to your spouse would you most like to see changed or improved in your marriage?

3. The physical dimension of our relationship is...

Lacking Very
In Intimacy Intimate

What aspects of your physical closeness would you most like to see changed or improved in your marriage?

Eight Intimacy Needs

Review eight (8) commonly identified intimacy 'needs' noted below and a) mark three (3) that are the most important for you to receive from your spouse and b) mark three (3) that you think your spouse would see as particularly important to receive from you.

Myself	Eight Commonly Identified Intimacy Needs	Spouse
_____	*Acceptance – deliberate and ready reception with favorable positive response – Rom. 15:7	_____
_____	*Affection – (Greet with a kiss) – to communicate care and closeness through physical touch – Rom. 16:16	_____
_____	*Appreciation – (Praise) – to communicate with words and feelings personal gratefulness for another – I Cor. 11:2	_____
_____	*Approval – expressed commendation; to think and speak well of – Rom. 14:18	_____
_____	*Attention (Care) – to take thought of another and convey appropriate interest, support, etc; to enter into another's 'world' – I Cor. 12:25	_____
_____	*Encouragement – to urge forward and positively persuade toward a goal – I Thess. 5:11; Heb 10:24	_____
_____	*Respect (Honor) – to value and regard highly; to convey great worth – Rom. 12:10	_____
_____	*Security (Peace) – confidence of 'harmony' in relationships; free from harm – Mark 9:50	_____

- Tell God you are willing to let Him change you through both your spouse's strengths as well as your spouse's weaknesses, differences and selfishness.

Part Two: (10 Minutes)

Write out the answers to the following questions in the form of a love letter. Use the blank Love Letter page for your letter.

- What were the qualities that attracted me the most to you when we first met?
- What qualities do I appreciate or have learned to appreciate most about you since we have been married?
- How have our differences helped me grow spiritually and emotionally?
- What steps will I commit to take to love God and you more?

Making It Real

Four Stages of Marriage

Personally (15 Minutes)

Setting: Find a place to be alone, but near your spouse, to complete this section.

Objective: To surface and identify your true feelings toward each other.

Instructions: Spend time in prayer individually in Part One and then complete Part Two.

Part One: (5 Minutes) Spend time in prayer.

1. Confess to God any rejection of, withdrawal from, or bitterness toward your spouse as sin. Thank God for His forgiveness and the cleansing blood of Christ. (Record what you confess)

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

2. Commit to God totally, by faith, to receive your spouse based upon the integrity and sovereignty of God. Be sure to put this commitment in your love letter.
3. Commit to God to trust Him with your spouse's differences and weaknesses to love your spouse with Christ's love (apart from performance). Be certain you put this commitment in your love letter.

1. _____ love
 - Begins at marriage ceremony
 - A time of getting to know each other more deeply
 - Learning how to give and receive love

(Since there are no children in this stage, the couple is free to have fun and enjoy being together without many responsibilities)

2. _____ love
 - Begins at birth/adoption of 1st child
 - Change occurs as love must be shared with little one
 - Sacrifice is experienced

(At this point, we might begin to sense why 'blended families' might experience very significant challenges – they are at stage one & stage two at the same time)

3. _____ love
 - Begins when the 1st child becomes a teenager and continues until the last adolescent leaves home
 - Prepare for stress in this stage demanding maturity

(Again, if a 'blended family' contains adolescents and younger children, the couple is dealing with all three stages at once)

4. _____ love
 - Begins when the last child leaves home
 - Personal identities are redefined
 - Renewal begins when the nest is empty

(The blessing of this stage is more time for each other)

Stage I: New Love

The Challenges

When a couple marries, things change. Before they were together because they felt loving feelings for each other. Now they are also together because they are married! The knowledge that there is a legal and moral tie 'binding' them to each other may create uncertainty over how much they 'romantically' love each other. The more a spouse thinks about this 'obligation' of marriage, the less there are thoughts of being together out of choice to love and be loved. Some couples focus so strongly on this sense of obligation, they kill romance and thus begin to feel 'trapped' in the marriage. Other couples fail to value their commitment to each other and wind up divorced because one or both become romantically displeased with the other.

The tension between romantic attraction and permanent commitment remains throughout marriage. The enduring and fulfilling marriage maintains a balance affirming the importance of both romantic love and permanent commitment before God and each other.

After the wedding ceremony, newly-weds try desperately to get along, but they come from two different family backgrounds sooner or later, one newly-wed expects the spouse to do or be something according to the patterns or 'rules' of his/her own family of origin. This expectation conflicts with the spouse's family of origin patterns or 'rules'.

During the 'honeymoon' phase of Stage 1, both partners usually give in to appease the other, putting aside their feelings to maintain harmony in the relationship. But as differences become more apparent, tension mounts, conflicts grow, and disillusionment may set in. The couple must 'leave' the expectations, 'rules' and often unresolved emotions of two separate families in order to 'cleave' to each other in their new family relationship. The 'honeymoon' is over. The challenges of Stage 1 are in full force.

Assessment: How Are We Doing With These Challenges?

Check the statements which you believe are true:

- In-laws don't control our schedule, finances, or other decisions.
- We don't have recurring power struggles over who 'wins' in everyday decisions.
- I am not consistently hurt by my spouse not measuring up to my expectations.
- We have established our 'couple' identity with common interests, couple friends, and our own traditions.
- We tend to quickly confess wrong and genuinely forgive each other over inevitable hurts.
- We have established a mutually satisfying sexual relationship.

Total: 0 – 2 checked = major concern

3 – 4 checked = needs improvement

5 – 6 checked = doing well with this stage; keep working to maintain the strengths

To reject your spouse is to...

1. Reject God and His will for you.
2. Choose disobedience toward God.
3. Expect discipline from God.

As an act of your own will, we must _____ (not just accept) your spouse as God's gift made personally for you, to meet your unique needs.

God's Holy plan is for you to _____,
_____ and _____. To truly become one
with each other. (Genesis 2:24)

Key Principle:

We must receive our spouse as God’s perfect provision for us!

A. God is sovereign.

B. Adam’s perspective of God enabled him to receive

Eve.

1. Our acceptance of our spouse is not based on their performance.

2. Adam knew and trusted God. That He knew best...

Hindrances to Receiving This Gift (Genesis 2:22)

1. Our _____ (Gender, background, temperaments, preferences, perspective, roles, gifts) (Genesis 1:27)

A. Differences are not _____, but _____ to teach us to trust Him and grow us!

2. Our _____

A. Weaknesses are not excuses for rejecting our spouse!
(Impatient, demanding, indecisive, critical, self-sufficiency, messiness, talking too much)

3. Our _____

A. We must admit our _____.

B. We must put our spouse’s needs ahead of our need.
(Philippians 2:3)

Experiencing Intimacy Ingredients In Stage I

Affectionate Caring: ‘I care about you.’

- What did you do originally that contributed to you falling in love? Do again the things you did before you were married, especially if you have stopped doing them: special cards, fun dates, flowers, unexpected gifts, extended ‘talk times.’
- When your partner is upset, anxious, or hurt, don’t try to ‘fix it.’ Rather, just listen and offer comfort.
- Resist waiting for your partner to take the initiative in verbalizing love or showing affection. You move first!
- Tell your spouse you’re sad when he/she has been hurt or disappointed, because you care about his/her feelings.

Vulnerable Communication: ‘I trust you.’

- Practice open-ended questions: ‘Tell me something about your day,’ is better than ‘How was your day?’
- Protect time for quiet talks – or the tyranny of other things will crowd them out.
- Seek your spouse’s advice and comfort first, before talking to other family members, friends, or acquaintances.
- Invite conversation about feelings, fears, dreams, and hurts – just listen and care.

Joint Accomplishments: ‘I need you.’

- Develop common interests, hobbies, and fun diversions; take the initiative to suggest ideas.
- Develop a common budget and joint finances.
- Read a good book together.
- Creatively share specific ways you appreciate your spouse, bolding declaring, ‘I need you.’

Mutual Giving: ‘I love you.’

- Begin listing all you are grateful for; this prompts the desire to give.
- Give to meet your partner’s needs in the way that your partner enjoys, not necessarily in the ways you enjoy.
- Seek to know the needs your partner missed growing up, such as attention, affection, etc., and strive to especially give what your partner missed.
- Encourage your partner to share needs; probe as necessary to discern how you can best
- Demonstrate your love; *“Darling, I’m sensing that you may be needing something from me right now— Would you like to tell me what it might be?”*

Given where we are in Stage 1, I need to give more attention and effort to

Stage II: Shared Love

The Challenges

As newborns arrive and begin to grow, they fortify their parents' belief in the inherent 'fallenness' of human beings! Usually, during the child's second year, the couple realizes that the child has a will of his own which differs vastly from the will of his parents. Decisions must be made about when and how to discipline the child.

Most of us dislike discipline. It is an emotional issue with a family history—actually two family histories. As a child, each partner was disciplined differently for different reasons. And each partner may have strong feelings about the way his parents handled discipline.

Thus the terrible two's can be terrible for the parents; new and highly emotional decisions about child rearing intensifies conflict over who makes the rules. These conflicts may even upset the previous balance of power within the marriage.

When the child is five or six, usually he enters school. Suddenly, the family, through the child, is on public display. How the child behaves reflects on the parents. Negative reports from school authorities may rekindle open conflict between the parents.

Also when a child enters school, time schedules change; adjustments in lifestyle must be made. Both husband and wife may be involved heavily in their careers while juggling too many family responsibilities. Lonely and hungry for closeness but with little time set aside for intimacy, they may be ripe for an affair.

Assessment: How Are We Doing With These Challenges?

Check the statements which you believe are true:

- We have recognized and overcome some of the hidden agendas or 'expectations' we each brought from our childhood.
- Neither work pressures or the children's needs prevent us from regularly setting aside special times just for us.
- I no longer doubt that my spouse is God's special provision for me.
- My Partner's peculiar imperfections are not stealing my joy in marriage.
- We seem to focus more on giving to each other than on being preoccupied with what we're 'getting.'
- I've come to see many of my shortcomings and how my spouse balances me with his/her strengths.

Total: 0 – 2 checked = major concern

3 – 4 checked = needs improvement

5 – 6 checked = doing well with this stage; keep working to maintain the strengths

God's Holy Plans for Oneness in Marriage

Man's/the world's plans have _____! Let's look back at God's plan...

Plan #1. _____ - Establish independence from your parents/past.

Pray.... Power.... Beware of overdependence on parents.

(Genesis 2:24a)

Plan #2. _____ - Establish Interdependence on one another. (Genesis 2:24)

A. God created Adam with an unmet need. Adam was _____! (Genesis 2:18)

B. God chose to build a unique need into Adam not met by God's personal presence alone!

1. God showed Adam His _____. (Genesis 2:19-20)

2. God _____ Adam's need by creating Eve. (Genesis 2:21-22) God made her perfectly suitable for him.

The Question Now Is...

Will Adam _____ Eve?

Will you?

Plan #3 _____ (Genesis 2:23)

A Warning and a Challenge

There is great opposition to oneness! The World...Flesh...Devil!

A. From the beginning _____ has challenged God and His plan for oneness.

1. His strategy is focused on _____/ Independence from God. (Isaiah 14:12-14, Ezekiel 28:12-18)
2. _____ is the great enemy of oneness.
3. God created mankind (and marriage) and placed us in the middle of this _____ .
(Genesis 3:1-6)

Three Things Have Happened

1. The image of God has been marred (Romans 3:23)
2. Marriage companionship has been high-jacked by...
 - A. _____/ _____ (Genesis 3:7-10)
 - B. _____ (Genesis 3:12-13)
 - C. _____ (Genesis 3:16)
3. A Godly legacy has been replaced (by and large) by a godless legacy. (Genesis 4:8)

The power of _____ is threatened by couples who are becoming one, therefore, he majorly _____ these couples.
(Ephesians 6:12)

Experiencing Intimacy Ingredients In Stage II

Affectionate Caring: 'I care about you.'

- Prioritize couple 'dates' for special romantic times along—no kids, no friends, just the two of you.
- Express empathy and compassion when your partner has had a rough day.
- Don't forget special gifts, love notes, and 'I was thinking of you' phone calls.
- Be ready and willing to 'help out' with expanded parenting responsibilities.

Vulnerable Communication: 'I trust you.'

- Take time to share together the joys of watching your child grow up; make family times a priority.
- Be vulnerable in expressing your needs for affection and sexual intimacy.
- Discuss any differences or concerns about each other's parenting decisions privately.
- Express appreciation and support in front of your children: 'We sure have a special Dad, don't we, kids?'

Joint Accomplishment: 'I need you.'

- Develop a sense of togetherness and one-ness about parenting goals and discipline strategies.
- Read and discuss good parenting books: *The Father Book* by Minirth, Newman, and Warren, and *Things That Go Bump in the Night* by Warren and Minirth.
- Develop friendships with other families who will positively influence your children.
- Develop new interests or hobbies together as a couple.

Mutual Giving: 'I love you.'

- Share parenting responsibilities in order to give each other relaxation time or diversions.
- Creatively plan for romantic times **alone** in your own home.
- Always have a fun get-away time scheduled to look forward to.
- Don't sweat the small stuff; defer to each other on minor parenting decisions.

Given where we are in Stage II, I need to give more attention and effort to

Stage III: Mature Love

The Challenges

This stage is called 'Mature Love' because that is what you will need to successfully navigate the countless competing demands and challenges. The arrival of teenagers signals the beginning of this stage. Be prepared for your love to be tested. Those once loveable youngsters may change overnight into moody, uncommunicative strangers who don't want to be hugged and who may be anything but appreciative.

During this stage, parents are often at a crossroads in their own careers. They may be struggling to make ends meet just as college expenses loom on the horizon. Many mothers reenter the work force, sometimes leaving teens or other family members to care for the household. As the so-called 'sandwich generation,' Stage III couples may also have to deal with the challenges of caring for aging parents.

Teenagers challenge family rules and family structure. Intimacy patterns are disrupted—sitting down to play board games may have been eagerly anticipated a few years prior, but not now. The family may struggle with defining significant ways to enjoy being together, especially if there are other children younger than teenagers. It is no wonder that this stage is usually a time of low marriage satisfaction for both husbands and wives. With several children in the home, Stage III may be extended for a long period, often compounding the stress.

Assessment: How Are We Doing With These Challenges?

Check the statements which you believe are true:

- Each of us has established a fulfilling life through our gifts, talents, hobbies, and skills.
- We work well as a team in dealing with our kids, so that they are not able to manipulate us against each other.
- I have come to recognize the imperfections in my growing up years, have felt the feelings from those years, and have received understanding and comfort from my spouse.
- We give priority time to our marriage without complaining or resentment.
- Our kids are becoming our friends as we release them to live their own lives.
- We have addressed the pending loss of our children, jobs, and parents by deepening our couple relationships and by pursuing new dreams with each other.

Total: 0 – 2 checked = major concern
3 – 4 checked = needs improvement
5 – 6 checked = doing well with this stage; keep working to maintain the strengths

Purpose #2 – Simply Complete One Another (Genesis 2:18)

- A. _____ is to replace isolation.
1. _____ destroys oneness and companionship.
 2. To _____ each other is almost unheard of today.
 3. Joy, Passion, and _____ are found in this kind of companionship.

Purpose #3 – Secure a Godly Legacy (Genesis 1:28)

- A. Oneness in marriage is so important to _____ a Godly legacy.
1. Men nor women are _____, _____, or _____ made or equipped to parent by themselves.
 2. Raising children was planned to be a _____ effort.
 3. To appreciate their special identity, kids must see _____ marriages modeled by their parents.
 4. The roles of husband and wife are clearly understood by children whose parents _____ a _____ marriage in their home.

Holy Purposes for Oneness in Marriage

Introduction

A. Marriage is to BE...

1. In the _____

a. His idea/plan

b. 1st Institution

c. Priority Relationship in family.

_____ is experienced on two levels

1. _____ with God.

2. _____ with each other

Purpose #1 – Show God’s Image (Gen.1:27)

A. God made _____ to show His Image on earth.

B. God made _____ and _____ different, so

that together they could reflect the _____ of God...

1. Their oneness will reflect the character and unity of God.

(Matthew 19:4-6 and John 17:22-23)

2. Their oneness is also a picture of the relationship between

Christ and His Bride, the church. (Ephesians 5:22-23)

Experiencing Intimacy Ingredients In Stage III

Affectionate Caring: ‘I care about you.’

- Get away for a weekend, just the two of you, to rekindle romance and refocus your goals.
- Connect with each other emotionally as you part each morning and as you reunite in the evening. Express affection for each other in front of your teenagers, sitting together, holding hands, cuddling, embracing.
- Apologize when you are wrong—when you have been impatient, intolerant, or insensitive to your spouse or children.

Vulnerable Communication: ‘I trust you.’

- Don’t keep your seemingly insignificant joys and blessings to yourself. Share them with your partner. As you evaluate your goals, directions, and involvements, plan for specific times for sharing your ‘mid-life journey’ with each other. Be attentive, supportive, and understanding as you receive other’s sharing.
- Begin talking about life ‘beyond the children.’ Begin to develop goals and plans for the ‘empty nest.’ As a couple, seek the input and counsel of other couples who have done well (or at least survived) this stage. Their perspectives and mentoring can be invaluable.

Joint Accomplishment: ‘I need you.’

- Continue Marriage Staff Meetings to plan your parenting strategies, resolving problems as they arise. Flood your spouse with expressions of appreciation—adolescents can drain your emotional and physical energy without showing much appreciation.
- Involve one another in your favorite activities or hobbies. Be alert to self-reliant, independent patterns of relating.
- Support each other emphatically; if you sense your spouse experienced regrets or disappointments, express comfort, such as, ‘Honey, I hurt for you that you felt discouraged today. I love you.’

Mutual Giving: ‘I love you.’

- Review your partner’s current priority of intimacy needs. Plan how you might meet those needs. If you are unsure, inquire, ‘I’d really like to meet your needs this week. What might I do that would help you feel loved and special?’
- Remain available during your partner’s ‘down’ times, looking to God to meet your needs so that you can be supportive of your partner during these difficult periods.
- Pray together often during critical times of decision or discipline, entrusting your children to the Lord. Be comforting in response to your partner’s childhood reflections, since pain may surface as parents age and die.

Given where we are in Stage III, I need to give more attention and effort to

The Challenges

In this longest of the four stages, couples return to where they began twenty or thirty years earlier. The nest is empty, and for better or worse, they are alone together again. With twenty to forty years ahead of them in this stage, couples must work to readjust their relationship, support their children's movement into the adult world, and perhaps become grandparents.

As teenage children become adults and leave the nest, some parents find their offspring's move away from home traumatic, especially if that child has been the emotional focus of one or both parents. Some couples divorce after the last child leaves, explaining, '*We only stayed together for the sake of the children.*'

When a couple's children marry and have children, the couple must accept changes in the structure and functioning of their own family. For some parents who have already 'let their child go,' the transition to grandparent-hood is relatively easy. But parents who have retained tight control of their child even after the child marries may become caught up in the affairs of their child's family. Accepting a different role as advisors and peers to their children may be difficult. One especially dangerous pattern is the grandparent who forms a 'coalition' with a grandchild against the parent.

A significant challenge for Stage IV couples is to define a fresh purpose for living—a renewed vision with significant goals and directions. Meeting this challenge helps these couples avoid over-involvement with their grown children—the couple has other things to do!

In a society that glorifies youth, Stage IV couples need to gain a sense of mastery over their lives and a feeling that they are meaningfully contributing to their world.

Assessment: How Are We Doing With These Challenges?

Check the statements which you believe are true:

- I am free from a preoccupation with age and/or health that would hinder me from enjoying life.
- I consistently experience intimacy in my marriage, so that my children leaving the nest won't pose a threat to my marital happiness.
- We are careful not to lead separate, self-reliant lives that would hinder our intimacy.
- I am able to experience the simple joy of being alive today.
- I am able to be a good friend to my grown children without trying to run their lives.
- We are developing a fresh vision, purposes, goals, and plans for the rest of our lives together.

Total: 0 – 2 checked = major concern

3 – 4 checked = needs improvement

5 – 6 checked = doing well with this stage; keep working to maintain the strengths

Experiencing Intimacy Ingredients In Stage IV

Affectionate Caring: 'I care about you.'

- Beginning discussion and planning for a 'second honeymoon' trip to rekindle romance and celebrate new freedom!
- Creatively expressing your love and appreciation never grows old—send cards, leave notes, buy gifts, or send flowers.
- Read and discuss books on renewing romance and sexual intimacy, such as *Love Life for Every Married Couple* by Dr. Ed Wheat.
- Express respectful, appreciative comments in public about your spouse. Send the message that he or she is special!

Vulnerable Communication: 'I trust you.'

- Express empathetic concern to encourage your spouse to share anxieties and fears: *'You seem a little anxious about something, sweetheart. I'd like to listen and give whatever support I can.'*
- Take time to reflect on fond memories and your gratitude for what you have.
- This guards against becoming negative and seeing life as 'half empty.'
- Dream together about things you would still like to do. Mutually support each other in accomplishing them.
- Share your spiritual journey and devotional life; cultivate spiritual and emotional closeness.

Joint Accomplishment: 'I need you.'

- Get involved together in ministry, making your experience, time, talents, and gifts available for God's use.
- Discuss and finalize financial and other plans related to your future, retirement, aging, and death.
- Rekindle some hobbies or common interests you formerly shared, or discover new ones.
- Cultivate two or three new couple friendships each year to expand your horizons and keep life interesting.

Mutual Giving: 'I love you.'

- Give your partner time, encouragement, and 'permission' to pursue individual interests, hobbies or goals.
- Support each other in family traditions, holidays, and grand parenting times. Be personally involved with your grandkids—don't delegate this role to your spouse.
- Gently comfort your spouse during life's inevitable and painful losses.
- Continue giving to meet your spouse's intimacy needs, such as attention, respect,, acceptance, affection, appreciation, and security. Occasionally ask your spouse. *'I'd like to help you feel loved and special—how might I contribute to that for you right now?'*

Given where you are in Stage IV, I need to give more attention and effort to

1. Do you try to make the home interesting, attractive, cheerful, a place of rest and relaxation, devoting as much thought and study to that as you would a job “downtown”?
2. Do you encourage your husband to spend time with his men friends?
3. Do you serve meals that are enticing in variety and attractiveness?
4. Do you handle household finances in a business manner?
5. Do you keep yourself attractive in appearance, in order that your husband may be proud to have everyone know that you are his wife?
6. Are you a good sport? Cheerful and uncomplaining, punctual, not nagging, not insisting on having your own way or the last word, not making a fuss over the trifles or requiring your husband to solve minor problems that you should handle alone?
7. Do you bolster your husband’s ego, not comparing him unfavorably with more successful men, but making him feel that he is successful?
8. Do you prevent your mother and other relatives from intruding unduly, and show courtesy and consideration to his relatives?
9. Do you take a sympathetic and intelligent interest in his business?
10. Do you cultivate an interest in his friends and recreations, so you can make a satisfactory partner of his leisure hours?
11. Do you encourage him to talk things through?
12. Do you encourage your husband and your children in the things of the Lord?

Since “we are what we have been becoming,” it helps to look back to see what factors made us the way we are. By examining previous experiences in our lives, we can see how they have such a special bearing on the way we feel, act and look at the present. We are, in this sense, the sum of all our experiences. However, even in the most gifted individuals this sum is hopelessly lacking, if God, through Christ, is not supreme in their lives.

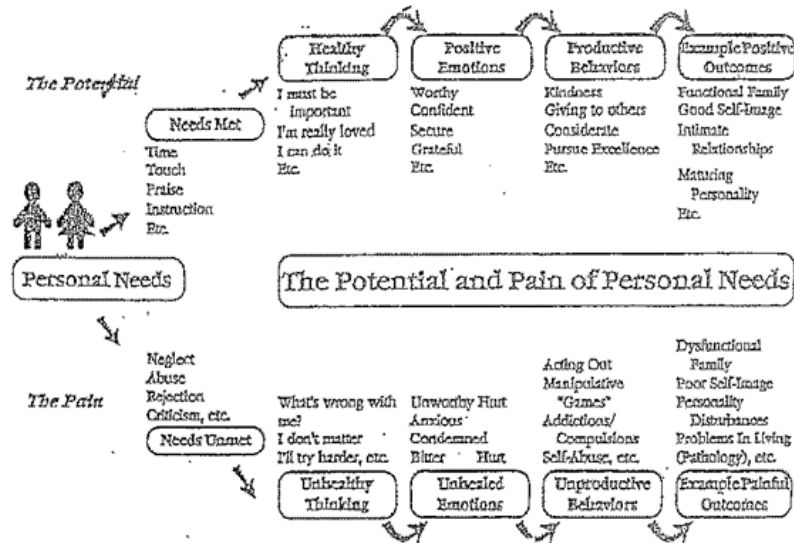
FOR HUSBANDS

Notes

1. Do you allow your wife an appropriate amount of the family income to spend as she chooses, without accounting?
2. Do you still “court” her with occasional gift of flowers; by remembrance of birthdays and anniversaries; by unexpected attention?
3. Are you cooperative in handling the children, taking your full share of responsibility and also backing her up?
4. Do you make it a point never to criticize her before others?
5. Do you share much of your recreation hours with her?
6. Do you show interest in and encourage her to develop intellectually?
7. Do you show as much consideration for and courtesies to her relatives as you do your own?
8. Do you enter sympathetically into her plans for social activities, trying to do your full share as a host in your own home and, when you are a guest in the home of others, trying to make her appear to the best possible advantage?
9. Do you make an effort to understand the peculiarities of feminine psychology and to help her through her varying moods?
10. Do you tell her at least once a day that you love her, and act as if you mean it?
11. Do you give spiritual leadership to family?
12. Do you encourage your wife to talk things out?

Since “we are what we have been becoming,” it helps to look back to see what factors made us the way we are. By examining previous experiences in our lives, we can see how they have such a special bearing on the way we feel, act and look at the present. We are, in this sense, the sum of all our experiences. However, even in the most gifted individuals this sum is hopelessly lacking, if God, through Christ, is not supreme in their lives.

Understanding Intimacy Needs



Implications for Childhood

*Personality Development is "intense" during the first 6 years of a child's life as the child moves through this complex maze of personal needs (Paul Meier reports the personality 85% developed by age 6; Meier, 1977)

*Unmet Needs Are Inevitable as we grow up in an imperfect world -- as imperfect children -- in imperfect families; we were all "under-nourished" in some areas of need; Health/Functional families may deny the hurts, ignore the needs and/or blame the child for having needs!

*Children Don't Comprehend their Needs -- so it's incumbent on parents to understand their needs; validate their importance and focus on "giving" to the child.

Implications for Marriage

*Unmet childhood needs "follow" us into marriage; often unconsciously we enter marriage hopeful that now we'll receive the acceptance we missed -- or the affection we long for -- or the attention we desire.

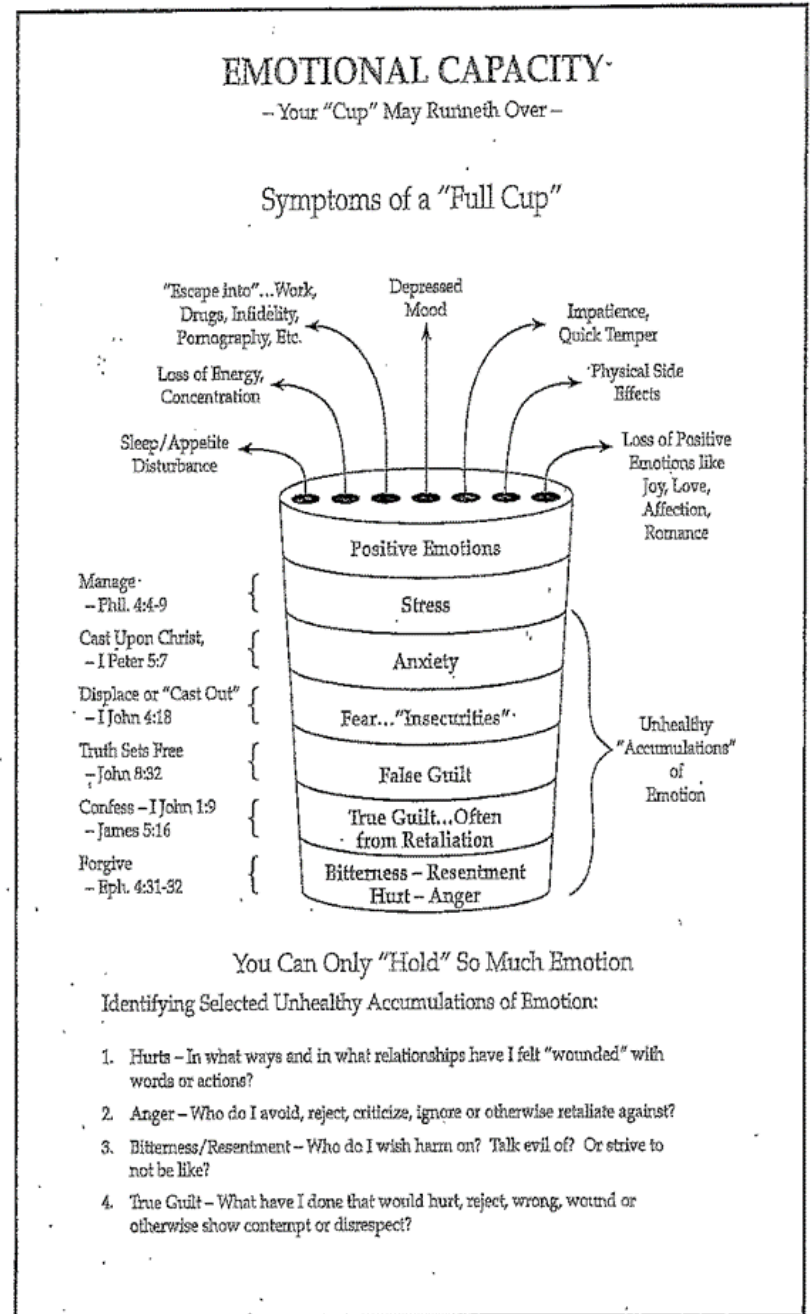
*Great Hurt is experienced in marriage when these same unmet childhood needs go unmet in marriage or worse yet, we receive the painful "opposite" -- rejection when we longed for acceptance; coldness when we needed affection; neglect when we needed attention.

*Great Love is felt in marriage when these same unmet childhood needs are met by a giving, caring spouse. Part of "understanding" my spouse is to comprehend special needs -- and part of agape love is to "give" to meet them.

Implications for Parenting

*Unmet Needs underlie a great deal of a child's acting out behavior; lack of attention might bring anger; missing appreciation and acceptance might bring withdrawal; successful parents address inappropriate behaviors as well as explore unmet needs; this requires awareness of a parent's needs, openness about feelings and a healthy self-image on the parent's part (Narramore, 1987).

*Need Frustration is seen as a factor to "Problems in Living" (i.e., labeled "pathology" by many); Unmet needs contribute to lack of identity and self-worth; self-defeating attitudes or behaviors may develop; discouragement, insecurity and loneliness might develop; abusive or addictive patterns might arise harming oneself or others (Smith, 1990).



Healing Family Emotional Hurts

Notes

'Let all bitterness, and wrath and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; And be ye kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you'
Ephesians 4:31-32

Identify Hurt

ALONE: list ways in which I or my marriage have been hurt by my spouse in the past.

Examples: *selfishness, critical/negative, insensitive, disrespectful, verbally abusive, unsupportive, ungrateful, unfaithful, wrong priorities, rejecting, unforgiving (specific hurtful events, fights, arguments or 'scenes' may need confession – use extra paper as needed!)*

FORGIVENESS

Jesus' three steps to forgiveness:

1. Face the hurt. (Matthew 26:38)
2. Understand the truth. (Luke 23:34)
3. Forgive the offender. (Luke 23:34)

NOTES:

Goals Questionnaire

Often in our Intimacy Therapy sessions we ask couples questions like these (check the ones for which you personally have an answer):

- What's the next special 'date' I have planned to look forward to with my spouse?
- What particular character qualities are we now emphasizing as we 'train up our children'?
- What's the next major household expenditure we've agreed on making?
- What are our financial plans for eliminating credit card debt? For saving for our children's college education?
- Which married couple friends are we purposefully developing close relationships with?
- What ministry dreams and plans do we share together as a couple?
- What spiritual goals are we sharing through our prayer times, devotionals, or Bible study?
- What plans do I have for personal development through education or career enhancement?

Selecting the Right Marital ‘Strokes’

Throughout the marriage-counseling process, a therapist might ask couples to focus on how often they give positive strokes (smiles, hugs, compliments)... because a couple’s stroking pattern plays a significant role in the happiness of their marriage.

Suppose a husband smiles and says to his wife, ‘You look great.’ He gives her a little hug and adds, ‘I love you.’ A few minutes later he says, ‘By the way, thanks for picking up my shirts from the cleaners.’ His statements ‘You look great’ and ‘I love you,’ as well as his smile and the hug, are unconditional strokes-strokes he’s giving his wife just for *being*. She didn’t have to do anything to earn them. His comment ‘Thanks for picking up my shirt’ is a conditional stroke-a stroke he gives his wife for doing.

Note also that this husband gave his wife three verbal strokes: ‘You look great,’ ‘I love you’ and ‘Thanks for picking up my shirts.’ He also gave her two nonverbal strokes: the smile and the hug. The hug was a physical stroke.

Some spouses list physical strokes as the kind they want most. Others like to be told ‘I love you,’ (a verbal, unconditional stroke). Some mates reveal in the conditional strokes of ‘Your dinner was delicious’ or ‘You did a fine job trimming that tree.’

Unfortunately, many spouses are not aware of their mate’s favorite strokes. To help you get in touch with the types of strokes you and your spouse enjoy, check the items that seem to appeal to your mate in Column 1 and you in Column 2. *Check only four items in each column.*

Mate	Myself	
___	___	Holding hands
___	___	Going for a walk
___	___	An unexpected hug
___	___	Finding a love note
___	___	Receiving a surprise gift
___	___	Being served a favorite meal
___	___	Being told ‘I love you’
___	___	Helping with the kids
___	___	Being approached sexually
___	___	Seeing the house straight
___	___	Seeing the lawn looking nice
___	___	Receiving compliments on looks
___	___	Taking a shower together
___	___	A surprise ‘date’
___	___	Getting a back rub or massage
___	___	Having a dinner out
___	___	Being praised for achievements
___	___	Having a quiet conversation

After you and your spouse complete this information, share your lists with one another. It’s important for each partner to come to understand...‘how do I feel loved and cared about?’... and then to lovingly express it!