

Habits for a Healthy Marriage

Maximum Marriage Seminar

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It's no secret that marriage is struggling in our society. More couples are choosing not to marry, and those who do are getting divorced more often. What's more, many of the marriages which do exist are anything but healthy. Adultery and "lesser" forms of unfaithfulness are considered relatively normal and acceptable within much of the broader culture. As Christians, we recognize the evil in these trends; however, we are not immune to them or to the influences which stand behind them. Divorce is also on the rise among evangelicals, and Christian marriages are often plagued by unhealthy patterns. What can you do to overcome the alarming trends of our culture and to promote an exclusive, committed, and passionate relationship with your spouse?

I. The Goal

A. God created marriage to be a permanent, lifelong commitment (Matt 19:1–9).

B. Marriage should model Christ's relationship to the church (Eph 5:22–33).

This passage teaches that God demands more than a lasting marriage. He demands that the husband and wife reflect the same devotion and connection that Christ enjoys with the church.

C. Marriage should provide happy and exclusive sexual gratification (Prov 5:18–20; Matt 5:27–28).

D. Conclusion: A healthy marriage is defined by more than permanence. It must also be characterized by Christ-like love and joy in each other.

II. The Threats

A. Highly Sexualized Entertainment Industry

B. Subtle Influence of Secular Values

1. Love is rooted in the satisfaction of my desires rather than the good of others.

2. Passion, not commitment, is the foundation of love.

3. Unfaithful imaginations and emotions are normal and relatively acceptable.

C. Undisciplined Life Patterns

1. Couples don't spend significant time together.

2. Couples are only alone when they are exhausted and unmotivated to engage in a meaningful relationship.

3. Couples do not engage in meaningful conversation about their spiritual life and other significant topics.

D. Oblivion to These Influences

1. We often don't recognize how these threats are influencing our hearts and the health of our marriages.

2. Your mind, will, and emotions are constantly shaping each other and shaping your heart.

3. Because your heart is the product of all of your life experiences, these threats have the potential for deep and long-lasting effect on your heart and your marriage.

III. The Answer

A. Develop your general spiritual health (Gal 5:16–23).

1. We must draw on the strength the Spirit provides.
2. We must commit to living out God’s Word in every area of life.

The phrase “walk by the Spirit” describes life in submission to God and his Word; therefore, we pursue this life by filling our minds with biblical truth and by submitting to it.

3. If your life is characterized by the “fruit of the Spirit” (vv. 22–23), then how can you not contribute to a healthy marriage?

B. Build a godly mindset.

1. Characteristics

- a. Contentment in God’s Will (Phil 4:11–13)
- b. Appreciation for Your Spouse

2. Process

- a. Take control of what influences your mind (Rom 13:14).
- b. Take control of what you think (Phil 4:8; Col 3:2).
 - i. Drive out evil imaginations, bitterness, jealousy, etc.
 - ii. Reflect often on all that is good about your spouse. Thank God and thank him or her.

C. Build godly disciplines (1 Tim 4:7).

1. Cultivate a healthy and passionate relationship.

- a. Practice the spiritual disciplines together.
- b. Develop patterns of deep and edifying conversation.
- c. Maintain a passionate and satisfying physical relationship (1 Cor 7:1–5).

2. Establish roadblocks to failure (Prov 5:8; 2 Tim 2:22).

- a. Maintain clear lines and accountability in your relationships with the opposite sex.
- b. Recognize temptation triggers and prevent patterns from repeating themselves.

D. Build appropriate emotions.

1. Love your spouse the way Christ loves the church (Eph 5:25).
2. Honor your spouse “as a fellow heir of the grace of life” (1 Pet 3:7).
3. Desire your spouse to the exclusion of all others (Prov 5:18–20).

IV. Conclusion

- A. Recognize the significance of your life patterns to the health of your marriage.
- B. Commit to honestly evaluating your life patterns and to disciplining yourself to do the things which are necessary to grow a healthier marriage.
- C. Believe that by God’s grace and with proper effort you can build godly habits, and your marriage can be a wonderful joy and a beautiful picture.