

A BIBLE-BASED MARRIAGE GUIDE & PLANNER¹

CONTENTS

<i>Session One, Part One: Building A Solid Foundation</i>	
Scriptures	page 2
Foundation Questions	page 4
 <i>Session One, Part Two: Adding Sizzle To Your Marriage</i>	
Scriptures	page 5
Questions About Friendship & Lovemaking	page 6
The Sex Plan by Landon Saunders	page 7
Speaking Of Sex by Paul Faulkner	page 9
 <i>Session Two, Part One: Really Loving Your Mate</i>	
Scriptures	page 10
 <i>Session Two, Part Two: Resolving Conflicts</i>	
Scriptures	page 12
Dealing With Anger	page 14
Dealing With Anxiety	page 15
Guidelines For Communication	page 16
Guidelines To Reinforce Love Feelings	page 18
 <i>Session Three, Part One: Family & Parenting</i>	
Family & Parenting Questions	page 19
Parenting by Hugo McCord	page 20
 <i>Session Three, Part Two: Finances</i>	
Questions About Money	page 23
 <i>Session Three, Part Three: Expecting The Unexpected</i>	
Facing Reality	page 24
Marital Problems	page 26
Marital Problem Warning Signals	page 27
 <i>Session Four: Planning The Ceremony</i>	
Questions About The Wedding Ceremony	page 28
Sample Ceremonies & Vows	page 29

¹Scriptures are from the *New Revised Standard Version* (Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ, 1989) of the Bible unless noted otherwise.

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

BUILDING A SOLID FOUNDATION

Genesis 2:18-24

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner.” So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken.”

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

Ephesians 5:21-33

Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

Deuteronomy 24:1-4

Suppose a man enters into marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her, and so he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; she then leaves his house and goes off to become another man's wife. Then suppose the second man dislikes her, writes her a bill of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house (or the second man who married her dies); her first husband, who sent her away, is not permitted to take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that would be abhorrent to the Lord, and you shall not bring guilt on the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a possession.

Matthew 19:1-12 (compare Matthew 5:31-32)

When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. Large crowds followed him, and he cured them there. Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?" He said to them, "It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery." His disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." But he said to them, "Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can."

FOUNDATION QUESTIONS

1. Name three characteristics which you admire in your mate.
2. Name three weaknesses which you least appreciate in your mate.
3. Are you well acquainted with your mate's family? Describe your relationship to them.
4. Give three reasons for wanting to marry your mate.
5. How long have you known each other? How long have you been engaged?
6. Does your family approve completely of your choice of a mate?
7. What would you consider grounds for divorce?
8. Is there anything which makes you jealous of your mate?
9. What are the goals for your life? Have you discussed these goals with your mate?
10. Is this your first marriage? If not, what caused your divorce? What is the status of the relationship with your former spouse? Are there any attachments, such as child custody, economic obligations?
11. Has any severe crisis occurred in your life that might aggravate or impair a marriage relationship (for example, rape, abuse, incest, disease, etc.)?

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

ADDING SIZZLE TO YOUR MARRIAGE

Deuteronomy 24:5

When a man is newly married, he shall not go out with the army or be charged with any related duty. He shall be free at home one year, to be happy with the wife whom he has married.

Proverbs 18:22 (compare Proverbs 31:10-31)

He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the Lord.

Hebrews 13:4

Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers.

Proverbs 5:15-23

Drink water from your own cistern, flowing water from your own well. Should your springs be scattered abroad, streams of water in the streets? Let them be for yourself alone, and not for sharing with strangers. Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a graceful doe. May her breasts satisfy you at all times; may you be intoxicated always by her love. Why should you be intoxicated, my son, by another woman and embrace the bosom of an adulteress? For human ways are under the eyes of the Lord, and he examines all their paths. The iniquities of the wicked ensnare them, and they are caught in the toils of their sin. They die for lack of discipline, and because of their great folly they are lost.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5

For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from fornication; that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not with lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.

1 Corinthians 7:2-5

But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

QUESTIONS ABOUT FRIENDSHIP & LOVEMAKING

1. What activities (recreation, social, etc.) do you have in common?
2. Do you dislike any of your mate's family or friends?
3. Should each of you be permitted one night a week for your own interests?
4. Should special days, such as anniversary and birthday, be remembered by your mate?
5. Do you think your knowledge of sexual and physical relations is excellent, good, fair, or poor?
6. Do you think sexual intimacy is very important in marriage? For your mate? For yourself?
7. What is your opinion of premarital sex?
8. Do you think your mate is sexually adjusted and ready for marriage?

THE SEX PLAN by Landon Saunders

1. *Decide to feel comfortable with your sexuality.* It's not too late. The following material can help you begin to feel good about your sexuality and to integrate your sexuality with everything else you want life to be. You and your sexuality have been together for a long time. Doesn't it make a lot of sense to think of your sexuality as a good friend? All that stands between you and that kind of comfort level is your willingness to make some important decisions.

2. *Decide to cope with your sexuality.* If you decide not to cope—you are deciding to be a victim. Your sexuality will become your enemy, upsetting your life with guilt, depression, insecurity, feelings of worthlessness. Coping with your sexuality can bring the self-confidence, satisfaction, security, and joy you're looking for.

3. *Decide to take responsibility for your sexuality.* It's powerful, and yet it's fragile. It's our most passionate energy, and yet it's our most intimate means of expression. Handle with care. Respect it. Bring your whole self into guiding it. Most sexual decisions are made in the glands. In accepting responsibility, you are involving your most powerful sex organ—your brain. Sex will be more rewarding when you take the whole person approach. You will feel better about yourself. Sex without respect is like rape. Sex is a powerful energy that works for us or against us depending on how we choose to use it. Take a look at the person in the mirror. You've got to take responsibility for that person. Nobody can make you do anything. Stop the excuses. Stop blaming what happens in your life on other people. You have the ultimate responsibility for your own pain, problems, confusion. You are the one person who can do something about them. Ask yourself, "Do I accept responsibility for my sexuality or do I choose to be victimized?" If you fail to take charge and impose your own terms on life, then you'll just have to live with the terms it offers. It's your move.

4. *Decide not to buy the "big lies" that cut you off from your real sexuality.*

Big Lie # 1: Sexual beauty depends on having a beautiful youthful body. Our culture packages sex like it was just for movie stars. As the popular song says, "You and me aren't movie stars. What we are is what we are." And it's enough. But if you let yourself believe the lie that sex is only for the "beautiful" or the naked paper people on the newsstand, you'll fail to recognize real sexuality when you see it. Sexual beauty is present in all human beings. This beauty springs from the power of people's capacity to care, not from the external standard forced on us by the big business of commercialized sex.

Big Lie # 2: If you're not having a lot of sex you can't possibly be happy. This lie hurts the widowed, the divorced, the young, the single, even the married. The plain truth is that sexual intercourse is not necessary for a happy life, in spite of the way we've been conditioned. Just acknowledging that should relieve a little pressure—a little of the compulsion. Today people are made to feel guilty if they don't have a lot of sex. You read the sex surveys, watch television, or go to a movie, and you're made to feel inadequate if you're not keeping up with the Joneses in bed, not to mention the "sensuous man" or the "total woman". Is that sexual freedom? Sexually

you need to learn to be your own person and avoid the intimidation of the sex business. As one man said, “Sex is best when it’s unimportant.” What he means is that sex is best when it’s not the only or most important thing in a couple’s relationship. Couples that have this kind of security will move at their own pace without being pushed around by other people’s sexuality. It’s personal. You have a right to decide to be in control.

Big Lie # 3: Sexual freedom is having a lot of different partners. A lot of partners may mean that you are really afraid of sexuality in its deepest dimensions. Promiscuous people are often running away from intimacy. One night stands are sexual activity but a far cry from sexual freedom. It’s narcissistic sex. The faceless interchangeable partner becomes a mirror reflecting the failure to transform self-preoccupation into love for a person. It’s disposable sex, and in the long run, it makes the people involved feel disposable. It isn’t freedom. It’s more like dying. Sex without intimacy is producing a plague of modern anxieties and frustrations, not the least of which is the death of real sexual delight.

5. *Decide to find the formula for the best sex.* In our hectic, disjointed world it’s hard to find the right perspective for sex in our lives. It’s hard to find the formula. “The ant knows the formula of his anthill. The bee knows the formula of his beehive. They do not know the formula in a human way, but in their own way. Only man does not know his formula.” [Dostoevsky]. What’s the formula for sex? There are a lot of homemade mixtures. Most of them don’t work very well. A lot of them are destructive. What’s the formula for the best sex? Well here’s part of the story. There’s CHEMISTRY. That’s the magic something about the other person that attracts and excites. Then there’s COMPATABILITY. That’s the ability to be friends and lovers. COMMITMENT is the tough love that can look another person deeply in the eyes and say, “I will never leave you. Others may come and go in your life, but I never will, for any reason, ever. If you grow wrinkly, I will love you. If you fail, I will stay with you. If you get sick, I’ll feed you, bathe you, sit up with you—anything—except leave you. I will never leave you.” That’s commitment, and total sex is possible only in a relationship of love and commitment. Then there’s COOPERATION. It’s the give and take dynamic by which you help each other grow. But all the magic of CHEMISTRY, the joy of COMPATABILITY, and the hard work of COOPERATION, go down the drain without COMMITMENT.

6. *Decide to not reduce the mystery of sex to machinery.* The mystery of sex is just one part of the mystery of being human. If you’re willing to cope with your sexuality, to take responsibility and to reject the “big lies” of commercial sex, you can learn to be at home in the midst of both mysteries. But the temptation is to reduce everything to technique and performance. “Americans talk about ‘adequacy’ in relation to sex. This use of an engineering term in reference to an act of pleasure exemplifies the American gift for turning everything into a task.” [Phillip Slater]. All the technical proficiency in the world cannot take the place of caring and trust. Keep sex human. Keep it loving. Keep it fun. It can be a time to laugh and play like children. The mystery of sex is the mystery of man and woman touching each other at all levels of their existence.

SPEAKING OF SEX by Paul Faulkner

A funny thing happened to sex on its way to the twentieth century. It lost its good reputation. Modern generations treat sex as though it were the product of some modern, wicked, pornographic mind. It is not. God created sex, and he created it for man's good. Man has taken this aspect of God's creation, like everything else, and perverted it. God's original design was "male" and "female". Each of us is indelibly stamped with one or the other of those genetic codes. And our sexuality influences virtually everything we do. It is, therefore, extremely important that we understand the nature of our human sexuality. In doing so, we learn to fulfill in our lives the promise and potential for which we were created.

Sexual union should never be viewed without the larger context of the relationship. Sexual union without the marriage commitment of a lifetime together is immoral. It is destructive. This fact should tell us something about God's design for the life in a completely unique way, in a way that we share life with no other. Because God made us so, each of us needs to be "one of a kind" to another human being. By reserving the sexual union experience for one person only, we do become one of a kind to each other. Husband and wife who share the sexual experience with each other, but with no one else during their entire life, achieve a precious uniqueness that others can scarce imagine.

Such a commitment allows one relationship in life to achieve its full potential. I believe that God intended the sexual relationship to be a joyous celebration of another day of living and sharing of life together. It enables a husband and a wife to say to each other, "I love you ecstatically and enjoy immensely our shared life." If that is what the sexual relationship is in marriage, two people must have something to celebrate in order for sex to be really meaningful. They celebrate that which is central to their marriage: commitment, love, companionship, caring, and sharing. This is what gives sex its real meaning. Two people must focus their attention on the centralities if their sexual relationship is to achieve its full potential.

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

REALLY LOVING YOUR MATE

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

Colossians 3:12-15

Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.

Galatians 6:2

Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

1 Peter 4:8-10

Above all, maintain constant love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

1 Peter 3:1, 2, 7

Wives, accept the authority of your husbands, so that, even if some of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives' conduct, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Husbands, show consideration for your wives in your life together, paying honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life.

Galatians 5:22

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

1 Thessalonians 5:11

Therefore encourage one another and build up each other.

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

Luke 6:31

Do to others as you would have them do to you.

Romans 13:8

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law.

Romans 5:8

But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

Romans 8:38-39

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Proverbs 18:13

If one gives answer before hearing, it is folly and shame.

Proverbs 29:20

Do you see someone who is hasty in speech? There is more hope for a fool than for anyone like that.

James 1:19-20

Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness.

Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 3:9

Speak the truth in love. Do not lie to one another.

Ephesians 4:25-26

Putting away all falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbor. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your wrath.

Proverbs 15:1

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 20:3

It is honorable to refrain from strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel.

Ephesians 4:31-32

Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

Romans 12:17, 21; compare 1 Peter 3:9

Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

James 3:2-8

For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by man, but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

Matthew 12:36-37

I tell you, on the day of judgment you will have to give an account for every careless word you utter; for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.

Proverbs 21:23

To watch over mouth and tongue is to keep out of trouble.

Proverbs 21:9, 19

It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than in a house shared with a contentious wife. It is better to live in a desert land than with a contentious and fretful wife.

Proverbs 27:15-16

A continual dripping on a rainy day and a contentious wife are alike; to restrain her is to restrain the wind or to grasp oil in the right hand.

ANGER

The causes of anger are injustice, frustration, threat, and hurt. The effects of anger are withdrawal, turning inward, attacking a substitute, and, positively, facing the sources of anger. Human anger is normal and not necessarily sinful. Human anger can be harmful. Human anger often results from distorted perception. Human anger often leads to sin, for example, vengeance, verbal abuse, dishonesty, and refusal to share. Human anger can be controlled. Anger must be acknowledged. Outbursts must be restrained. Confession and forgiveness must be utilized. Ruminating and revenge must be resisted.

Keys to Overcoming Anger

- *Admit your anger.
- *Consider the sources of your anger. What made me angry?
- *Evaluate your anger.
 - What is making me feel angry?
 - Why am I feeling anger and not some other emotion?
 - Am I jumping to conclusions about the situation or person
 - Who is making me angry?
 - Is my anger really justified?
 - Is it right for me to feel inferior or threatened in this anger-arousing situation?
 - How might others, including the person who is angering me, view this situation?
 - Is there another way in which I could look at the situation?
 - Are there things I could do to change the situation in order to reduce my anger?
- *Practice humility, confession, and forgiveness.
- *Practice self-control.
 - Slow down your reactions. Count to ten.
 - Deal with feelings of inferiority. Build self-esteem.
 - Avoid an angry mind-set.
 - Cultivate the “fruit of the Spirit.”
- *Avoid anger-arousing situations and people.
- *Evaluate situations that cause you anger.
- *Learn how to confront with kindness and love.
- *Pray to God.

ANXIETY

Anxiety may be defined as “an inner feeling of apprehension, uneasiness, concern, worry, and/or dread which is accompanied by heightened physical arousal.” The kinds of anxiety are acute, chronic, normal, neurotic, moderate, high. The two basic types of anxiety are anxiety as fret and worry, and anxiety in the form of a realistic concern. The causes of anxiety are numerous: threat of danger; threat to self-esteem; threat of separation; conflict; fear; unmet needs for survival and security; unmet needs for significance, self-fulfillment, and selfhood; and individual psychology, personality, and/or sociology. The effects of anxiety are seen in: psychological reactions, physical reactions, defensive reactions, and spiritual reactions.

Keys To Overcoming Anxiety

- *Admit fears, insecurities, conflicts, and anxieties when they arise.
- *Talk these over with someone else—on a regular basis if necessary.
- *Build self-esteem.
- *Acknowledge that separation hurts.
- *Maintain contact with separated friends and build new relationships with others.
- *Seek help from God and others in meeting one’s needs.
- *Learn to communicate.
- *Learn some principles and techniques of relaxation.
- *Periodically evaluate one’s priorities, life goals, and time management.
- *Openly express feelings.
- *Choose manageable tasks.
- *Develop an acceptable dependency relationship.
- *Avoid impulsive action.
- *Avoid “magic of the mouth.”
- *Be realistic about guilt.
- *Refuse to pay the “shame tax.”
- *Keep one’s psychological integrity intact.
- *Seek good information.
- *Stay in good physical condition.
- *Develop a workable, biblical theology.

GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATION²

1. Remember that actions speak louder than words; nonverbal communication usually is more powerful than verbal communication. Avoid “double messages” in which the verbal and nonverbal messages convey something contradictory.
2. Define what is important and stress it; define what is unimportant and deemphasize or ignore it. Avoid fault-finding.
3. Communicate in ways that show respect for the other person’s worth as a human being. Avoid statements which begin with the words “You never . . .”
4. Be clear and specific in your communication. Avoid vagueness.
5. Be realistic and reasonable in your statements. Avoid exaggeration and sentences which begin with the words “You always . . .”
6. Test all your assumptions verbally by asking if they are accurate. Avoid acting until this is done.
7. Recognize that each event can be seen from different points of view. Avoid assuming that other people see things like you do.
8. Recognize that your family members and close friends are experts on you and your behavior. Avoid the tendency to deny their observations about you—especially if you are not sure.
9. Recognize that disagreement can be a meaningful form of communication. Avoid destructive arguments.
10. Be honest and open about your feelings and viewpoints. Bring up all significant problems even if you are afraid that doing so will disturb another person. Speak the truth in love. Avoid sullen silence.
11. Do not “put down” or manipulate the other person with tactics such as ridicule, interrupting, name-calling, changing the subject, blaming, “bugging,” sarcasm, criticism, pouting, or inducing guilt. Avoid the “one-upmanship” game.

²Adapted from Sven Wahlroos, *Family Communication: A Guide to Emotional Health* (New York, NY: Signet-New American Library, 1976).

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

12. Be more concerned about how your communication affected others than about what you intended. Avoid getting bitter if you are misunderstood.

13. Accept all feelings and try to understand why others feel and act as they do. Avoid the tendency to say, "You shouldn't feel like that."

14. Be tactful, considerate, and courteous. Avoid taking advantage of the other person's feelings.

15. Ask questions and listen carefully. Avoid preaching or lecturing.

16. Do not use excuses. Avoid falling for the excuses of others.

17. Speak kindly, politely, and softly. Avoid nagging, yelling, or whining.

18. Recognize the value of humor and seriousness. Avoid destructive teasing.

GUIDELINES TO REINFORCE LOVE FEELINGS

1. *Rely Upon The Wisdom Of God*

Proverbs 3:5, 6, 7 says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord, and turn away from evil. It will be a healing for your flesh and a refreshment for your body.”

2. *Listen*

Listening is more than just hearing; it is hearing in order to understand and with a view to sympathize. Much hearing is selfish hearing. It takes time to listen properly. *Proverbs 18:13* tells us, “If one gives answer before hearing, it is his folly and shame.” And *James 1:19, 20* says, “Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness.”

3. *Know When To Speak and When To Be Quiet*

Proverbs 10:19 exhorts, “When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but the prudent are restrained in speech.” *The Living Bible* paraphrases, “Stop talking so much. You keep putting your foot in your mouth.” With fewer words, choice words are needed. So, as *Proverbs 17:27* suggests, “One who spares words is knowledgeable; one who is cool in spirit has understanding. Even fools who keep silent are considered wise; when they close their lips, they are deemed intelligent.”

4. *Say The Right Words In The Right Way At The Right Time*

Proverbs 25:20, says, “Like one who takes off a garment on a cold day, like vinegar on a wound is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.” And from *Proverbs 15:23*, “To make an apt answer is a joy to anyone, and a word in season, how good it is!”

5. *Build Trust By Keeping Confidential Matters Secret*

Proverbs 11:13 says, “A gossip goes about telling secrets, but one who is trustworthy in spirit keeps a confidence.” And *Proverbs 20:19* warns, “A gossip reveals secrets; therefore do not associate with a babblers.”

6. *Help One Another; Edify One Another; Encourage One Another*

Give advice, but do not command, boss, nor dictate. *Ephesians 5:21* encourages, “Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

FAMILY & PARENTING QUESTIONS

1. Has divorce occurred in your family?
2. Do you plan to live with your family or your mate's family?
3. How many children would you like to have?
4. Who is to be the head of your home?
5. What is your plan for settling family problems?
6. Who is to discipline the children?
7. Should your mate ever keep anything a secret from you? If so, what?
8. Is the wife in this family going to work?
9. What are your beliefs concerning religious education of children?

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

PARENTING by Hugo McCord

Discipline

If angels require discipline (2 Peter 2:4), if adults require discipline (Hebrews 12:6), surely children both young and old require discipline (“bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord,” Ephesians 6:4). It matters not what expert psychologists say; it is still true that “a child left to himself brings shame to his mother” (Proverbs 29:15). The parent who thinks he loves his child when he does not dare lay a hand upon him is not showing love at all, because “he who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him” (Proverbs 13:24). The parent does not overdo it, evoking justifiable anger (Ephesians 6:4, “do not exasperate your children”), or breaking the spirit of the child (Colossians 3:21, “do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged”). Rather, the thoughtful parent carefully uses the rod of correction to drive wrong attitudes and bad habits from his beloved offspring. “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15).

A parent who corrects his or her child in love is the child’s best friend, perhaps saving the child from bodily harm, perhaps saving the child from harsher discipline by civil authorities, perhaps saving the child from death. “Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death (Sheol)” (Proverbs 23:13-14). The wise parent who corrects his child will also save himself from much future grief. “Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul” (Proverbs 29:17).

Teaching By Both Parents

God's plan in every parent’s life is “that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just” (Genesis 18:19). All Hebrew parents were instructed to teach God’s laws to their children and to their grandchildren. This teaching was not limited to one day a week or just one hour each day. It was to intermingle with every daily activity. “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them upon your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates” (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

One of life’s mightiest principles is Proverbs 22:6, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” However, one misjudges if he concludes no well-trained child will ever go astray. No matter how well trained a child is, if he gets in the wrong crowd and allows evil associates to train him, then that child will go bad, godly character,

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

notwithstanding. “Bad company corrupts good character” (1 Corinthians 15:33). Generally speaking, though, a child brought up “in the Lord” will resist evil influences and will continue in the godly training that he received at home.

Home teaching is powerful, especially in the child’s youngest years. The power of home teaching is reflected in the old saying, “The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world.” Mothers and grandmothers are very effective teachers of children (see 2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15), but no wise father will exempt himself from personal involvement. Each parent has something positive to contribute and something the other cannot accomplish. Every child is admonished, “Listen, my son, to your father’s instruction, and do not forsake your mother’s teaching” (Proverbs 1:8).

A United Front

Parents will not always agree on decisions about their children, but they are unwise parents if they disagree openly in the presence of their children. Wise parents will come to a oneness of judgment before anything is expressed in the hearing of their children. Parents must remember that a house divided cannot stand. When parents present a united front to their children, they will gain their children's respect.

The Right Kind Of Father

The right kind of father will save money for his children (2 Corinthians 12:14) and will take care of present needs (Matthew 7:9-11). Proper fathering will involve the supplying of spiritual needs also. The right kind of father will be like the heavenly Father in every possible way (“because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in,” Proverbs 3:12). The right kind of father is tender; he remembers his own faults and weaknesses when he was a lad. When a father is tender and sympathetic, he rises to a mighty stature as a father, because he resembles God. “As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust” (Psalm 103:13-14).

The Right Kind Of Mother

The kind of mother one should not be is exemplified in the ostrich. “She lays her eggs on the ground and lets them warm in the sand, unmindful that a foot may crush them, that some wild animal may trample them. She treats her young harshly, as if they were not hers; she cares not that her labor was in vain, for God did not endow her with wisdom or give her a share of good sense” (Job 39:14-17). Just the opposite is the worthy wife and mother of Proverbs 31 who show love, foresight, and energy in the care of her family. “Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all. Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”

Tender Loving Care

Parents deserving to have children should exhibit a tender affection and a strong cleaving to their offspring comparable to that of Jacob for Benjamin. “His life is closely bound up with the boy’s life” (Genesis 44:30). This tender loving care, loving a child more than one loves himself, is illustrated by the touching lamentation of David when he heard of Absalom’s death. “The king was shaken. He went up to the room over the gateway and wept. As he went, he said: ‘O my son Absalom! My son, my son Absalom! If only I had died instead of you—O Absalom, my son, my son!’” (2 Samuel 18:33).

Ten Rules of Behavior for Parents

Children can teach parents if they will listen. The article “An Eye-Opener for Parents” is quite instructive. A British psychologist, Dr. R. F. Hertz, conducted a research project of wide interest to parents. He asked nearly 100,000 children between the ages of 8 and 14 from 24 different countries to make a list of rules of behavior for parents. Here are the ten points voted by the majority of the children:

1. Do not quarrel in front of your children.
2. Never lie to a child.
3. Always answer children’s questions.
4. Treat all your children with equal affection.
5. There must be a mutual tolerance between parents.
6. There should be a comradeship between parents and children.
7. Treat your children’s friends as welcome visitors in the house.
8. Don’t blame or punish your child in the presence of his friends.
9. Concentrate on your child’s good points and don’t over-emphasize failings.
10. Be constant in your affection and your mood.

Ten Commandments for Parents [Adapted]

1. Love your child with all your heart, soul, and strength, but wisely.
2. Regard your child’s respect and love as worth earning, not to be demanded.
3. Think of your child as a person, not as a possession.
4. Be patient with your child’s immaturity, and remember your own mistakes as a child.
5. Consider it your child’s decision to make you a hero, and be a proper one.
6. Remember that your example speaks louder than any fault finding or moralizing.
7. Be a signpost on life’s highway, rather than a rut out of which the wheel cannot run.
8. Teach your child to stand on his/her own two feet, and fight his/her own battles.
9. Help your child see beauty, appreciate kindness, love the truth, and be a friend.
10. Make your home a haven of happiness for your family and your children.

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

QUESTIONS ABOUT MONEY

1. How much money do you think you will need to operate your household?
2. Does your wife or husband plan to work?
3. How much money should your mate have for personal expenses?
4. How often should a family eat out?
5. What part of your family income should be given to the church or to charities?
6. Do you plan to buy or rent a dwelling?
7. What is your opinion of buying on credit?
8. Which of you is going to handle the money and payment of bills?
9. How much money should be spent on recreational activities?
10. Have you planned any kind of budget? A will? Insurance?
11. If she does work and becomes pregnant, how will the family adjust to lower income?

FACING REALITY

Concerning marriages there is a problem. Loves dies. Love feelings are not necessarily “built in”. They are learned socially. During courtship, we treat the other person courteously. We smile a lot, we try to be pleasant, we avoid saying offensive things, we dress to look attractive, we use our best manners, and so forth. There is emotional stimulation and physical attraction; there is social interaction with pleasing activities. However, these behaviors that cause love feelings must be reinforced. During courtship, couples have a high frequency of reinforcing each other for appropriate behavior. But after marriage this often dwindles. Partners spend little time together and they stop sharing activities that are mutually enjoyable. Children, work, individual tastes and activities interfere. Love can also die when partners fail to reinforce positive in one another. Smiling, caressing, complimenting, spending time together, helping with the children—these are positive things that need to be complimented and reinforced. If not, then love feelings can disappear, and love can die.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MARRIAGES?

“To me it seems that we are living in an important and uncertain age, and the institution of marriage is most assuredly in an uncertain state. If 50-75 percent of Ford or General Motors cars completely fell apart within the early part of their life as automobiles, drastic steps would be taken. We have no such well organized way of dealing with our social institutions, so people are groping, more or less blindly, to find alternatives to marriage (which is certainly less than 50 percent successful). Living together without marriage, living in communes, extensive child-care centers, serial monogamy (with one divorce after another), the women’s liberation movement to establish the woman as a person in her own right, new divorce laws which do away with the concept of guilt—these are all gropings toward some new form of man-woman relationship for the future. It would take a bolder man than I to predict what will emerge.” [Carl Rogers].

“Many marriages today are like the house built upon sand. They have been built upon a weak foundation of dreams. Because in dreams the mind does not have to distinguish between reality and fantasy, one is able to create without restraint. Often, therefore, dreams are the starting point for successful endeavors; however, dreams not followed by adequate planning usually do not come true. Marriages built on dreams are risky because dreams do not consider the disappointments that are inevitable in every marriage. When the rains of reality and the winds of stress burst against such marriages, the relationship that holds them together crumbles.” [H. Norman Wright].

1. *Expectations Are Not Fulfilled.*

“Someone has suggested that there are two basic causes for trouble in marriage: not finding in marriage what one expected to find, and not expecting what one actually finds. As most couples marry, they expect stability, security, and predictability in their marriages.” Unfulfilled expectations can be caused by emotional difficulties, unexpected circumstances, minor or major changes, and so forth. “The normalcy and potential of change is a message which couples need to hear even before they marry.” [Quotes from H. Norman Wright].

2. *Unsatisfactory Marital Behavior Patterns Develop.*

The common symptoms of poor marital behavior patterns are lack of communication, constant arguments, unfulfilled emotional needs, sexual dissatisfaction, financial disagreements, in-law trouble, infidelity, conflicts about children, domineering spouse, suspicious spouse, alcoholism, and physical attack. Some unsatisfactory marital behavior patterns include half-marriage, outwardly ‘well put together’, married singles, married children, and sadomasochistic marriage.

3. *Marital Satisfaction Fluctuates During The Family Life Cycle.*

“Marriages may be made in heaven, as the popular saying goes, but their maintenance occurs in an earthly setting. The emotional euphoria with which most marriages start is eroded over time by establishing daily routines, by growing irritations from constant association, by competing attractions of jobs and children, and by coping with the multitudinous problems, both large and small, that family life in an industrialized society entails. Fortunate couples develop an intimate understanding unique to the relationship that replaces the raptures of the first period of the marital career.” [Jane Aldous]. The stages of marital development include: (1) after the honeymoon, (2) pregnancy and childrearing, (3) the middle years, and (4) retirement and death.

MARITAL PROBLEMS

“It should be remembered that marital conflict is often a symptom of something deeper, such as selfishness, lack of love, unwillingness to forgive, anger, bitterness, communication problems, anxiety, sexual abuse, drunkenness, feelings of inferiority, sin and a deliberate rejection of God's will for his creatures. Each of these can cause marital tension and can be influenced by husband-wife conflict.” [Gary Collins].

Different Marital Problems

*Faulty communication that includes “double messages,” miscommunication, avoidance, etc.

*Defensive self-centered attitudes—fear of becoming “one flesh,” self-protection maneuvers, failure to love due to the fear of rejection, etc.

*Interpersonal tension concerning: (1) needs (for love, security, contact with others, to control, dominate, or possess, to achieve, to help); (2) sex (impatience, frigidity, and/or infidelity); (3) roles (the husband-wife or man-woman relationship); (4) money; (5) values and goals; and (6) religion

*External pressures from in-laws, children, friends, various crises, vocational demands, etc.

*Boredom—“As the years pass by, husbands and wives settle into routines, get accustomed to each other and sometimes slip into self-absorption, self-satisfaction or self-pity, each of which can take the excitement out of marriage and make life boring. When marriage is dull and routine, couples begin to look elsewhere for variety and challenge. This, in turn, creates further marital tension.”

Effects of Marital Problems

*Confusion and despair

*Withdrawal

*Desertion

*Divorce

Preventing Marital Problems

*Teach biblical principles of marriage

*Stress the importance of commitment in marriage

*Teach principles of communication and conflict resolution

*Stimulate marriage enrichment

*Encourage counseling

MARITAL PROBLEM WARNING SIGNALS³

Early Warning Signals

1. Denial—A tendency to ignore or explain away evidences of tension.
2. Avoidance—A decision to avoid or postpone indefinitely any discussion of tense issues or concerns about the relationship.
3. Repetition—Discussions, including arguments, that bring up issues repeatedly but never solve problems. This is a “here we go again” attitude.
4. Detachment—A self-defensive attitude that says in words or attitude, “I really don’t care about the problem.”

More Serious Warning Signals

1. Complete Communication Breakdown—Nevertheless one or both spouses tries to do things (like improving oneself, buying presents, and so on) that will improve the situation.
2. Attacks On Each Other’s Integrity—This involves subtle or overt, private or public, verbal or nonverbal attacks on the sexuality, appearance, achievements, intentions, or efforts of the other.
3. Withdrawal—An attitude which says, “I’ll take care of things myself and do my own thing.”
4. Lack of Self-Worth—A self-evaluating, despondent attitude that asks, “What is wrong with me? What did I do to get into this mess?”
5. Looking for Consolation—Finding someone inside the family or without to give support, help, love, or affirmation. This is at the basis of many affairs.
6. Giving Up—An “I’ve had it” or “things will never get better” attitude.
7. Ambivalence—A pattern of confusion in which the person does not know what he or she wants or wants to do.

³Adapted from William V. Arnold, Dixie McKie Baird, Joan Trigg Langan, and Elizabeth Balkemore Vaughan, *Divorce: Prevention or Survival* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1977).

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

A SIMPLE WEDDING CEREMONY

Entrance of the Bride & Groom
Reading of Scripture & Prayer
Exchange of Vows
Exchange of Rings
Pronouncement of Marriage
Blessing of Marriage
Kiss & Presentation

WEDDING CEREMONY WITH TRADITIONAL PROCESSIONAL & RECESSIONAL

Processional
Giving of Bride
Reading of Scripture & Prayer
Exchange of Vows
Exchange of Rings
The Unity Candle (optional)
Pronouncement of Marriage
Blessing of Marriage
Kiss & Presentation
Recessional

SAMPLE VOWS

I, ----, take you, ----, to be my wife/husband; and I promise, before God and these witnesses, to be your loving and faithful husband/wife; in plenty and in want; in joy and in sorrow; in sickness and in health; as long as we both shall live.

I, ----, choose you, ----, above all the others on the earth to be my lawfully wedded wife/husband, to have and to hold and to be joined as one from this day forward, in joy and in sorrow, in plenty and in want, in sickness and in health, to love, to cherish, and to adore as long as we both shall live.

I, ----, wed you, ----, in the spirit of the love that God has shown us both. I promise to care for you and to share my life with you as long as we both shall live. I pray that wherever our journey shall lead, through light or darkness, sickness or health, hard times or easy, we shall always be together, sealed in love, as God/Jesus Christ is my witness.

David W Fletcher

All Rights Reserved / Unauthorized Electronic Publishing Prohibited / www.davidwfletcher.com

SAMPLE RING PLEDGES

-----, I give you this ring as a sign of our covenant of marriage, a covenant of faith, hope, and love.

-----, with this ring I pledge my love to you, and with God's help, I will love you, I will cherish you, and I will not forsake you as long as we both shall live.

-----, I give you this ring as a sign of my love, and I pray that it may always remind us of this love, as a covenant of our care for each other from this day forward.