

6 Keys to a Better Marriage - [Jim Burns](#) - Contributing Writer

Whether you've been married six weeks or 26 - years, you know that there's more to making a great marriage than having "the ultimate wedding."

Time was when society as a whole understood this fact. Wedding ceremonies were **simple**. Marriages **weren't** always flashy or fancy, but they lasted. They **weren't** subject to the emotional mood swings that so easily crush them today.

When you were growing up, **divorce** was a rarity. It only took place under the most dire of circumstances. (**Think back to your childhood and adolescence. How many of your friends grew up in what were considered "broken homes?"**)

Then, the **sexual** revolution took place. Men and women gave up on the "traditional family" in record numbers, both in society at large and in the Church as well. Soon the **divorce** rate in both areas had grown to a staggering high of around 55 percent.

These days, however, that rate is coming down. Folks are getting married again and staying married. They're putting a bit more thought into what marriage means before walking down the aisle. (**In fact, the average age for first - time brides is now 25; for first - time grooms, it's 26.**)

More than likely, these newlyweds grew up in **divorced** homes. They know the pain and frustration of having two - sets of parents, of shuttling back and forth between two - homes a couple times a week, of wondering if there was something they could have done to keep their parents together.

Well, in addition to putting a bit more thought into marriage than the generation before, this new wave of newlyweds is also doing what they can to stay together. As psychologist Dr. Gary Rosberg says, these folks are serious about wanting to make their unions "divorce-proof."

If you're the parent of a teenager, this revelation is good news on two - different levels. First, with regards to your own marriage - who among us **isn't** interested in strengthening the bonds of holy matrimony? Second, though, think of the impact this wave is having on your kids. You and I were never taught how to "divorce - proof" a marriage. We were simply told that marriage was forever and that is was **wrong** to **divorce**. (**Talk about sound, if not overly simplistic, advice!**)

Now, we have the opportunity to be the transitional generation -- to teach our kids what a "**divorce** - proof" marriage is all about.

Dr. Gary Rosberg and his wife, Barbara, have identified a number of key biblical principles they feel are key if a marriage is to truly be "**divorce** proof." And following these guidelines will **not** only improve your relationship with your spouse today, doing so will also establish a pattern your children can follow for their relationship with their future spouse as well.

I call these principles, “6 Keys to a Better Marriage Today.” If you want to strengthen your union right away, start showing your spouse . . .

1. Forgiving Love -- Because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, all of our **sins** have been forgiven. The forgiving love HE has shown to us is essential in a marriage. It offers a fresh start after one spouse hurts or offends another. Without forgiveness, **no** marriage will ever last.

2. Serving Love -- Do you know your spouse’s deepest needs? Loving him or her with a servant’s heart is the best and quickest way to find out. Serve one another in love (**after all – the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve**).

3. Persevering Love -- Marriage is a marathon – **not a sprint**. Are you in it for the long haul, or do you have the tendency to “bail out” when the going gets tough? Persevering love sustains us through the trials of life (**and trials are what makes any marriage real**).

4. Guarding Love -- In other words, let him or her know that you’ll do anything to keep the marriage together (**as long as its legal and moral, of course**). The modern culture **isn’t** all that keen on marriage -- even though it’s the backbone of society. Guarding love protects your heart and the heart of your spouse from the threats to your marriage and believe me they’re (**the threats**) out there!

5. Celebrating Love -- That’s right – celebrate your marriage! What a gift the two of you have been given. Celebrating love equips you to maintain a satisfying emotional, physical, and **spiritual** connection with your mate. Celebrate it!

6. Renewing Love -- **No** marriage will survive if either or both spouses constantly challenge its integrity by threatening to leave. The fact is, Renewing love enables both husband and wife to regard the marriage covenant as unbreakable (**just like God does**). So, share this gift with your spouse every day. Rejoice in the fact that you’ll be together forever -- “for better or **worse!**”

These six vital expressions of love will make your marriage better. They’ll also help you teach your children how to understand what biblical love and marriage are all about.

Love takes time – any good relationship does. So stay the course, keep praying, and start “**divorce** - proofing” your marriage by loving your spouse!

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Unbelieving Spouse

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Unbelieving Spouse



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Once, in an emergency, an old Tennessee farmer hitched a mule and an ox together to his plow. When someone later asked him how it worked, he said, "Well, it would have been all right if my field had been round instead of square, because we sure spent most of the time going in circles."

Among the laws given by God to Israel in the Old Testament is a prohibition against hitching different animals together. God knew that the differing strengths of the animals would make the match unfair and difficult. The apostle Paul uses this as an **example** in talking about marriage: "Do **not** be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?" (2 Corinthians 6:14) God wants a husband and wife to believe together in HIS salvation through Jesus Christ. And if you're a believer who is yoked in marriage with an **unbelieving** spouse, you know how futile it can seem as you go round in circles

So, what can I do?

That's good for people to know before they get married, you may say, but what if a believer has knowingly married a **non - believer** or they were married as **non - believers** and one spouse comes to the Lord? Well, two things are certain. First, the unequal yoke does **not** in any way set aside the covenant of their marriage. A covenant is a sworn exchange of promises that can be revoked only if it is already broken beyond repair. The Bible teaches that an unequal yoke does **not** in itself break a marriage vow.

"If any brother has a wife who is **not** a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must **not divorce** her. And if a woman has a husband who is **not** a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must **not divorce** him." (1 Corinthians 7:12, 13)

Second, just as the ox and mule together in the yoke **weren't** able to plow a straight line, in like manner the believing spouse's attempt to forcibly bring the other around will never succeed.

Actions speak louder than words

So, if you're frustrated over your failed attempt to get your spouse to share the new life you've found, here is the word that will set you free, **not** from the yoke of marriage, but from useless struggle in it: All you have to do is to fulfill your biblical role in your marriage, and God will do the rest. Your responsibility toward your spouse remains just what it has always been: to love and cherish in every circumstance. The Bible says, "However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband." (Ephesians 5:33)

You can be at peace because you already have the Lord working for you. He is much more powerful than anything you could say to convert your husband or wife, working through your mystical union in one flesh that the Bible teaches. "For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery - but I am talking about Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:31, 32) That is why Paul could speak of the husband and wife sanctifying, of making holy, one another: "For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her husband ." (1 Corinthians 7:14)

In other words, you can **stop** trying to change your spouse, which causes strife in your home, and start believing for a miracle instead. God is working to convert your spouse through you, but by your actions much more than by your words. In fact, God may prefer to do the work without your words. "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do **not** believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives." (1 Peter 3:1.2)

One woman had argued for many months with her husband, who had objected to her bringing her Christian friends to their home for a prayer group. But one day she read in the Bible that it was God's plan for her husband to be in **spiritual** authority. She told him why having a prayer group was important to her, but that she was going to respect his wishes. To her surprise, the next week, when she was getting ready to go to the prayer group at a friend's home, her husband announced that he was going with her. That was the beginning of his decision to follow Jesus.

Release your spouse to God

God has sent the **Holy Spirit** to change your spouse. You **can't** convert your spouse. **No** one else but the **Holy Spirit** can, because matters of faith are unreasonable to the natural mind: "The man without the **Spirit** does **not** accept the things that come from the **Spirit** of God, and they are

foolishness to him, and he **cannot** understand them, because they are **spiritually** discerned." (1 Corinthians 2:14)

It takes God Himself to convince people to believe. So, release your spouse to God and allow the **Holy Spirit** to work.

Your responsibility is to be a faithful witness, **not** just sharing the truth but living it. Let the life of Christ in you minister that love which will bring you and your spouse into that **holy** union that God has ordained for your marriage.

For wives, being a faithful witness means respecting your husband's role as the head of the family by being submissive to his authority. "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything." (Ephesians 5:22 - 24)

For husbands, that means giving yourself to your wife in selfless devotion, **remembering** your oneness, like the relationship of Christ to HIS church: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, **no** one ever **hated** his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church." (Ephesians 5:25, 28, 29)

A man who had gone alone to one of a series of evangelistic services accepted Christ as his personal savior and longed for his wife to share the same experience. He read in the Bible that wives are supposed to submit to their husbands. That, he figured, gave him the right to command his wife to go with him to one of the meetings, even though she would have to break a dinner invitation she had made to their friends. She complied with his order but **wasn't** in any receptive mood when she went to the service!

Later, after much discussion with his wife, the man was impressed by the **Holy Spirit** that faith is **not** something that can be coerced and his eagerness to share his faith with his wife **didn't** give him the authority to run roughshod over her. He released his wife to the Lord and fulfilled his responsibility as a husband by loving his wife as Christ loves the church. As a result, a short time later his wife accepted Christ as her personal Savior.

Command respect, not arguments

Just as your call is to respect your spouse's position and to love and cherish him or her, the children are also called to honor your spouse. It's very tempting to allow yourself to subtly convey to your children your disapproval of your unbelieving spouse and so undermine his or her authority over them. Help your children understand that they, too, are to be witnesses to the other parent by their respect and love. "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother." (Ephesians 6:1, 2)

Shun self - pity

One of the most subtle ways that **Satan** can wreck your faithful witness is to tempt you to harbor a grudge or to nurse feelings of self - pity. Brooding over your feelings of persecution can only rob you of the **Holy Spirit's** help. Confess and repent of any bitterness, resentment, or unforgiveness and receive God's cleansing. Then thank the Lord for HIS grace and forgiveness.

Although you should **not** broadcast your disappointment over your spouse's unbelief, you should share your feelings and **questions** with a Christian counselor or minister whose wisdom in spiritual matters and family relations is respected. And as you devote each day to the Lord in gratitude for the work HE is doing in your family, you can say with the Psalmist, "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it." (**Psalms 118:24**)

Pulling together

You can also give thanks to God for every little victory along the way. This exercise of prayer will foster in your **spirit** the hope you'll need for the longer haul. And keep up your hope. When your spouse does finally come to share your belief in Jesus Christ - what a triumph! Where the **Holy Spirit** is in control, there is great hope for the ideal relationship God has in mind between you, your spouse, and family.

Scripture references are from the New International Version.

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Marriage: Great **Sex** and a Biblical Relationship - By – Pat Robertson

The Bible: **Sex** in Marriage

God made men and women **sexual** beings. HE made our nervous systems capable of receiving pleasure from the **sex** act. **Sex** in marriage is good and **Holy** and ordained of God.

The Bible says that marriage partners should offer their bodies to each other in marriage and should **not** deny each other except for a short season for fasting (**see I Corinthians 7:3 - 5**).

The Bible: **Sex** for Pleasure in Marriage

There are some religious people who feel that the only reason for **sex** is reproduction.

Others believe that there are higher reasons for **sex** - namely, the ultimate joining together of a married man and woman – joining their two - **spirits**, joining their two - minds, and joining their two - bodies.

In the Old Testament the term for **sexual** intercourse was "to know" (**a husband or wife**). The most intimate knowledge of marriage partners comes about through these three - joinings in a Christian marriage. This is why Christians can have a much more stimulating **sex** life than non - Christians. Non - Christians **cannot** join together in the **spirit**. They lack that extra dimension.

What about Oral **Sex**?

The Bible is **not** explicit on **sex** practices between married people. Although it says that the marriage bed is to be undefiled, it does **not** say what it means by this (**see Hebrews 13:4**).

There are a number of practices of love and **sexuality** in marriages in which the Bible is silent. Therefore, it is difficult to pontificate and say, "Well, this is right and this is **wrong**."

In undefined matters such as this, there is a biblical rule: "Whatever is **not** from faith is **sin**." If one feels that oral **sex** is **not** from faith, then he should **not** do it. God has called us to holiness, **not** to sensuality. But the expression of physical and **sexual** love in marriage is good, **Holy**, and God-given. Therefore, do **not** be afraid to ask God to direct you to those expressions of **sexuality** that are acceptable in HIS sight.

Adapted from Answers to 200 of Life's Most Probing **Questions** by Pat Robertson.

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The Biblical View of **Sexuality** - By J. Stephen Lang

One thing the world seems pretty certain about: Christianity is a killjoy, anti - **sex** religion. But this is a **lie**. Nothing in the Bible says that **sex** is **wrong**.

The Bible does hold the view that **sex** is such a mysterious and powerful thing that it ought to be subject to certain boundaries -- like marriage. The Bible views the body as something important -- something to be taken care of and used in God's service, **not** used as a **sexual** toy.

Put to **death** the **sinful**, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with **sexual sin**, impurity, **lust**, and shameful desires. **Don't** be greedy for the good things of this life, for that is idolatry. God's terrible anger will come upon those who do such things. You used to do them when your life was still part of this **satan's** world. But now is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language. **Don't lie** to each other, for you have stripped off your old **evil** nature and all its **wicked** deeds. In its place you have clothed yourselves with a brand - new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you. [Colossians 3:5 - 10](#)

Did you notice in the preceding passage the words "You used to do them . . ." ? This is a promise of forgiveness for people who dabbled in **sexual sin**. In the following quotation from [1 Corinthians](#), notes these important words "There was a time when some of you were just like that. . ."

Don't you know that those who do **wrong** will have **no** share in the Kingdom of God? **Don't** fool yourselves. Those who indulge in **sexual sin**, who are idol worshipers, **adulterers**, male prostitutes, **homosexuals**, **thieves**, greedy people, drunkards, abusers, and **swindlers** -- none of these will have a share in the Kingdom of God. There was a time when some of you were just like that, but now your **sins** have been washed away, and you have been set apart for God. You have been made right with God because of what the Lord Jesus Christ and the **Spirit** of our God have done for you.

Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which belongs to Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! And **don't** you know that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, "The two are united into one." But the person who is joined to the Lord becomes one **spirit** with him.

Run away from **sexual sin**! **No** other **sin** so clearly affects the body as this one does. For **sexual** immorality is a **sin** against your own body. [1 Corinthians 6:9 - 11](#), [1 Corinthians 6:15 - 18](#)

Give honor to marriage and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are **immoral** and those who commit adultery. [Hebrews 13:4](#)

When you follow the desires of your **sinful** nature, your lives will produce these **evil** results: **sexual** immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in **demonic** activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is **wrong** except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of **sin**. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will **not** inherit the Kingdom of God. [Galatians 5:19 - 21](#)

Let there be **no sexual** immorality, impurity, or greed among you. Such **sins** have **no** place among God's people. Obscene stories, foolish talk, and coarse jokes -- these are **not** for you. Instead, let there be thankfulness to God. You can be sure that **no** immoral, impure, or **greedy person** will inherit the Kingdom of Christ and of God. For a **greedy person** is really an idolater who worships the things of this world. **Don't** be fooled by those who try to excuse these **sins**, for the terrible anger of God comes upon all those who disobey HIM.

Don't participate in the things these people do. For though your hearts were once full of **darkness**, now you are full of light from the Lord, and your behavior should show it!

Take **no** part in the worthless deeds of **evil** and **darkness**; instead, rebuke and expose them. It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. But when the light shines on them, it becomes clear how **evil** these things are. This is why - it is said, "Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the **dead**, and Christ will give you light." [Ephesians 5:3 - 8](#), [Ephesians 5:11 - 14](#)

Those who live only to satisfy their own **sinful** desires will harvest the consequences of decay and **death**. But those who live to please the **Spirit** will harvest everlasting life from God the **Spirit**. [Galatians 6:8](#)

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