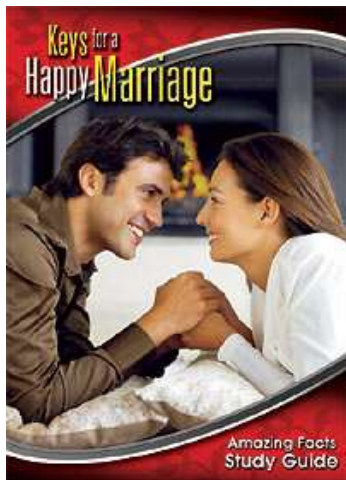


Keys for a Happy Marriage



Lesson 5

As you've probably heard, nearly half of all marriages now end in divorce, leaving bitter spouses and confused children in their wake. Don't let this happen to you! Whether your marriage is going through tough times or is experiencing marital bliss, or even if you're not yet married but considering it, here's some free but proven advice to help your marriage last. It's straight from God, the one who created and ordained marriage! If you've tried everything else, why not give God a chance? Follow the keys in this guide, and you can secure your home.

Seventeen Rules for a Happy Marriage From God's Great Book

1. Establish your own private home.

"Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh." Genesis 2:24.

Answer: God's rule is specific. A married couple must leave father and mother and establish their own home, even if finances require that it be a one-room apartment. Husband and wife should decide together on such policies as these. Then she should inform her relatives and he, his. They must remain firm no matter who opposes. Thousands of divorces would be avoided if this rule were carefully followed.



Establish your own home, even if it must be a one-room apartment.



Never forget that God Himself joined you in marriage.

2. Continue your courtship.

"Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8, RSV.* "Her husband ... praiseth her." Proverbs 31:28. "She that is married careth ... how she may please her husband." 1 Corinthians 7:34. "Be kindly affectioned one to another ... in honour preferring one another." Romans 12:10.

Answer: Continue (or perhaps revive) the courtesies of courtship in your married life. Successful marriages do not just happen they must be developed. Don't take each other for granted, or the monotony that results will destroy your marriage. Keep love growing by expressing love for one another or it will die, and you will drift apart. Love and happiness are not found by seeking them for yourself, but rather by giving them to others. So spend as much time as possible doing things together if you would get along well. Learn to greet each other with enthusiasm. Relax, visit, shop, sightsee, eat together. Don't overlook the little courtesies, encouragements, and affectionate acts. Surprise each other with little gifts or favors. Try to "outlove" each other. Don't take more out of marriage than you put into it. Divorce itself is not the greatest destroyer of marriage, but rather, lack of love. Given a chance, love always wins.

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3. Remember that God joined you together in marriage.

"For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife. ... Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Matthew 19:5, 6.

Answer: Has love almost disappeared from your home? The devil (that notorious home-breaker) is responsible for this. Don't forget that God Himself joined you together in marriage, and He intends for you to stay together and be happy. He will bring happiness and love into your lives if you will obey His divine rules (commandments). "With God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26. Don't despair. God, who places love in the heart of a missionary for a leprous savage, can easily give you love for each other if you will let Him.



Surprise each other with little gifts.



The wrong kind of thinking can destroy your marriage.

4. Guard your thoughts--don't let your senses trap you.

"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife." Exodus 20:17. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life." Proverbs 4:23. "Whatsoever things are true, ... honest, ... just, ... pure, ... lovely, ... of good report; ... think on these things." Philippians 4:8.

Answer: The wrong kind of thinking will destroy your marriage. The devil will trap you with thoughts like these: "Our marriage was a mistake." "She doesn't understand me." "I can't take much more of this." "We can always divorce if necessary." "I'll go home to mother." "He smiled at that woman." Stop thinking thoughts like these or your marriage is gone, because your thoughts and senses govern your actions. Avoid seeing, saying, reading, or hearing anything that (or associating with anyone who) suggests impurity or unfaithfulness. Thoughts uncontrolled are like an automobile in neutral on a hill. Anything can happen, and the result is always disaster.

5. Never retire for the night angry with each other.

"Let not the sun go down upon your wrath." Ephesians 4:26. "Confess your faults one to another." James 5:16. "Forgetting those things which are behind." Philippians 3:13. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." Ephesians 4:32.

Answer: To remain angry and upset over hurts and grievances (big or little) is exceedingly dangerous. Unless quickly solved, even little problems become set in your mind as convictions and attitudes adversely affecting your whole philosophy of life. This is why God says to let anger cool before retiring at night. Be big enough to forgive and to say with sincerity, "I'm sorry." After all, no one is perfect, and you are both on the same team, so

be sportsmanlike enough to honestly admit a mistake when you make it. Besides, making up is a very pleasant experience, with unusual powers to draw marriage partners closer together. God suggests it! It works!



With Christ in your hearts and home, marriage will be successful.

6. Keep Christ in the center of your home.

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." Psalms 127:1. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Proverbs 3:6. "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:7.

Answer: This is the greatest rule. It really covers all the others. Put Christ first! The real secret of true happiness in the home is not diplomacy, strategy, and untiring effort to overcome problems, but rather, union with Christ. Hearts filled with Christ's love can never be very far apart. With Christ in the home, marriage will be

successful. The gospel is the cure for all marriages that are filled with hatred, bitterness, and disappointment. It prevents thousands of divorces by miraculously restoring love and happiness. It will save your marriage, too, if you are willing.

7. Pray together.

"Pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matthew 26:41. "Pray one for another." James 5:16. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally." James 1:5.

Answer: Pray aloud for each other! This is a wonderful rule that succeeds beyond the wildest dream. Kneel before God and ask Him for true love for one another, for forgiveness, for strength, for wisdom--for the solution to problems. God has given a personal guarantee that He will answer. The praying person is not automatically cured of all of his faults, but he will have a heart that wants to do right. No family ever breaks up while sincerely praying together for God's help.



Pray aloud for each other.



Forgiveness is always better than divorce.

8. Agree that divorce is not the answer.

"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." Matthew 19:6. "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." Matthew 19:9. "The woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth." Romans 7:2.

Answer: The Bible is clear. The ties of marriage are meant to be indissoluble and indestructible. Divorce is permissible only in the case of adultery. But even then it is not demanded, only permitted. Forgiveness is always better than divorce, even in the case of a moral fall. Marriage is for life. God so ordained it when He performed the first wedding in Eden. Thoughts of divorce as a solution will destroy any

marriage. This is one reason Jesus ruled it out. Divorce is always destructive and almost never a solution to the problem. Instead, it creates much greater problems, so it should never be considered. Torn, frustrated, unhappy, twisted lives almost inevitably follow divorce, and even success in life itself is often thwarted. God instituted marriage to guard people's purity and happiness, to provide for their social needs, and to elevate their physical, mental, and moral nature. Its vows are among the most solemn and binding obligations that human beings can assume. To lightly set them aside results in removing one's self from God's favor and blessing.

9. Keep the family circle closed tightly.

"Thou shalt not commit adultery." Exodus 20:14. "The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her. ... She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life." Proverbs 31:11, 12. "The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously." Malachi 2:14. "Keep thee from the evil woman. ... Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids. ... Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? ... So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife; whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent." Proverbs 6:24-29.

Answer: Family intimacies must never be shared with others--not even with parents. It is a great sin and a tragedy to break this God-given rule. A third person to sympathize or listen to complaints is a tool of the devil to estrange the hearts of husband and wife. Solve your home problems privately. No one else (except your minister or marriage counselor) should ever be involved. Always be truthful with each other, and never keep secrets from each other. Tell no jokes at the expense of your spouse's feelings. Vigorously defend each other, and strictly exclude all intruders. And as for adultery (in spite of what some marriage counselors say), it always hurts you and everyone else involved. God, who knows our mind, body, and emotional structure (and knows what helps or hurts us) says, "Thou shalt not." And when He says, "Don't," we had better not. Those who ignore His rule will pay the supreme penalty. So if flirtations have begun, break them off at once, or shadows may settle over your life that cannot be lifted.



With true love, your marriage
cannot fail.

10. God describes love make it your daily goal to measure up.

"Love is forbearing and kind. Love knows no jealousy. Love does not brag is not conceited. She is not unmannerly, nor selfish, nor irritable, nor mindful of wrongs. She does not rejoice in injustice, but joyfully sides with the truth. She can overlook faults. She is full of trust, full of hope, full of endurance." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Weymouth.*

Answer: Please reread the above Scripture passage carefully. This is God's true description of love. How do you measure up? Love is not a sentimental impulse, but a holy principle that involves every phase and action of life. With true love, your marriage cannot fail. Without it, it cannot succeed.

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11. Remember that criticism and nagging destroy love.

"Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them." Colossians 3:19. "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman." Proverbs 21:19. "A continual dropping in a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike." Proverbs 27:15. "Why beholdest thou the mote [splinter] that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam [whole board] that is in thine own eye?" Matthew 7:3. "Love ... looks for a way of being constructive." 1 Corinthians 13:4, Phillips.*



Try to make your partner happy,
rather than good.

Answer: Stop criticizing, nagging, and faultfinding. Your husband or wife may lack much, but nagging won't help. Don't expect perfection, or bitterness will result. Overlook faults, and hunt for the good things. Don't try to reform, control, or compel your partner you will destroy love. Only God can change people. A sense of humor, a cheerful heart, kindness, patience, and affection will banish two-thirds of your marriage problems. Try to make your spouse happy rather than good, and the good will take care of itself. The secret of a successful marriage lies not in having the right partner, but rather in being the right partner.

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Learn to laugh and enjoy
wholesome times together.

12. Do not overdo in anything be temperate.

"Every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things." 1 Corinthians 9:25. "Love ... does not pursue selfish advantage." 1 Corinthians 13:5, Phillips.*
"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." 1 Corinthians 10:31. "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection." 1 Corinthians 9:27. "If any would not work, neither should he eat." 2 Thessalonians 3:10. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled." Hebrews 13:4. "Let not

sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin." Romans 6:12, 13.

Answer: Overdoing will ruin your marriage. So will underdoing. Work, love, rest, exercise, play, worship, meals, and social contacts must be carefully balanced in your marriage, or something will snap. Overwork and the lack of sleep, proper food, or exercise make a person critical, intolerant, and negative. Constant overeating is a great evil that strengthens the lower nature and dulls the conscience.

Sexual abuses destroy a love for holy things and weaken vitality. Marriage gives no license to sexual excesses. Degrading, twisted, or intemperate sex acts destroy love and respect for one another. A temperate sex life is recommended by the Bible (1 Corinthians 7:3-7). Social contacts with others are absolutely essential. True happiness cannot be found in isolation. We must learn to laugh and enjoy wholesome, good times. To be overly serious is dangerous. Overdoing or underdoing in anything weakens the mind, body, conscience, and the ability to love and respect one another. Don't let intemperance wreck your marriage.

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13. Respect each other's personal rights and privacies.

"Love is forbearing. ... Love knows no jealousy. ... She is not unmannerly, nor selfish. ... She does not rejoice in injustice. ... She is full of trust." 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, Weymouth.* "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Romans 12:10.



Do not tamper with each other's wallet or other personal property without permission.

Answer: Each spouse has a God-given right to certain personal privacies without explanation. Do not tamper with each other's wallets or purses, personal mail, and other private property unless given permission. The right to privacy and quietude when preoccupied should be respected. Your husband or wife even has a right to be wrong part of the time and is entitled to an "off-day" without being given the third degree. Marriage partners do not own each other and should never try to force personality changes. Only God can make such changes, and we shall all answer personally to Him on this matter (Romans 14:12). Perfect confidence and trust in one another, no checking up on each other, is absolutely essential for happiness. Spend less time trying to "figure out" your spouse and more time trying to please her or him. This works wonders.

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A clean, orderly home solves many family problems.

14. Be clean, modest, orderly, and dutiful.

"In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel." 1 Timothy 2:9. "She ... works with willing hands." "She rises while it is yet night and provides food for her household." "She looks well to the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness." Proverbs 31:13, 15, 27, RSV.* "Be ye clean." Isaiah 52:11. "Let all things be done decently and in order." 1 Corinthians 14:40. "If any provide not ... for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." 1 Timothy 5:8. "Be not slothful." Hebrews 6:12.

Answer: Laziness, disorder, dirt, and slovenliness are the devil's weapons to destroy your respect and affection for one another, and thus ruin your marriage. Neat, modest attire and clean, well-groomed bodies are essential for both husband and wife. The meals should be wholesome, attractive, and served on time. The home should be clean and orderly, because this brings peace, calmness, and satisfaction to all. A lazy, shiftless husband who does not provide for his household is a curse to his family and an insult to God. Carelessness in some of these seemingly small matters is destroying homes by the thousands.

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15. Determine to speak softly and kindly.

"A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger." Proverbs 15:1. "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest." Ecclesiastes 9:9. "When I became a man, I put away childish things." 1 Corinthians 13:11.

Answer: Force yourself to speak softly and kindly to your spouse. Silence, when one is attacked, is often the best method to cool wrath. Decisions made when angry, tired, or discouraged are unreliable anyway, so it's best to relax and let anger cool. And when you do speak, let it always be quietly and lovingly. Harsh, angry words crush your spouse's desire to please you.



Harsh, angry words crush your spouse's desire to please you.



Discuss and agree in money matters.

16. Be reasonable in money matters.

"It [love] is not possessive. ... Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5, Phillips.* "God loveth a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7.

Answer: All possessions and income in marriage should be "ours," not "yours" and "mine." Wives who don't work outside the home should receive a regular amount for groceries, clothing, and other budgeted items. It should be cheerfully provided instead of grudgingly released under protest. Wife and husband both should have small, equal sums (whenever possible) to spend as desired without giving account. A miserly husband usually angers his wife into being a spender, just as a wasteful husband makes a wife stingy. Showing confidence in your companion's managing ability will usually make him or her more businesslike.

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17. Talk things over and counsel together freely.

"It [love] is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. ... It is not touchy." 1 Corinthians 13:4, 5, Phillips.* "He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul." Proverbs 15:32. "Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him." Proverbs 26:12.

Answer: Few things will strengthen your marriage more than counseling together on all major decisions. Changing a job or purchasing a home, an automobile, a boat, furniture, clothing (major items at least), and all other items that require money involve both husband and wife, and the opinions of both should be considered. Talking things over together will avoid many blunders that could ruin your marriage. If, after much discussion and earnest prayer, opinions still differ, the wife should submit to her husband's decision. Scripture is clear on this. (See Ephesians 5:22-24.)



Talking things over together will avoid many blunders that could destroy your marriage.

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18. I want my home to be a place the angels of heaven enjoy visiting.

Answer:

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Which marriage partner should be the first to confess after a quarrel?

The one who was in the right!

2. Could you suggest a rule for a meddlesome mother-in-law?

Yes! Be quiet and mind your own business! (See 1 Thessalonians 4:11.) In fact, this rule applies to all in-laws. Many a marriage that might have been a little heaven on earth has been changed into hell by in-laws. The duty of all in-laws is to leave the newly established home strictly alone.

3. My husband is a godless man, and I am trying to be a Christian. His influence is terrible. Should I divorce him?

No! Read 1 Corinthians 7:12-14 and 1 Peter 3:1, 2. God gives a specific answer.

4. When my husband displeases me, I won't sleep with him. He says I am wrong. Am I?

Yes! God gives a definite answer to this question in 1 Corinthians 7:4, 5.

5. My wife ran off with another man. Now repentant, she wants to return home. My pastor says I should take her back, but God forbids this, doesn't He?

No. No, indeed! God permits divorce for adultery, but does not command it. Forgiveness is always better and is always in order. (See Matthew 6:14, 15.) Divorce will seriously mar your life and the lives of your children. Give her another chance! The golden rule (Matthew 7:12) applies here. If you and your wife will turn your lives over to Christ, He will make your marriage supremely happy. It is not too late.

6. What can I do? Men are always attempting familiarities with me.

Be very careful of your conduct. God says, "Abstain from all appearance of evil." 1 Thessalonians 5:22. Perhaps your conduct around men--a suggestive smile, immodest clothing, off-color jokes, or a "too relaxed" and comfortable attitude--encourages their advances. There is something about Christian reserve and dignity that keeps a man in his place. Christ said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." Matthew 5:16. When Christ really shines from your life, you will have little trouble with evil men and their advances.

7. Can you tell me simply and plainly what God's counsel is to one who has fallen but is truly repentant?

Long ago Christ gave a pointed and comforting answer to one who had fallen into immorality but was repentant. He said, "Go, and sin no more." John 8:11. His counsel still applies today.

8. Isn't the "innocent party" in a divorce sometimes partially guilty also?

Certainly. Sometimes the "innocent party," by lovelessness, inattentiveness, self-righteousness, unkindness, selfishness, nagging, and downright coldness, can encourage evil thoughts and actions in his or her spouse. Sometimes the "innocent party" may be equally as guilty before God as the "guilty" one. God looks upon our motives and judges accordingly. "For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." 1 Samuel 16:7.

9. Does God expect me to live with a physically abusive spouse?

Physical abuse can be life threatening and is a serious problem that demands immediate attention. The spouse and family members who have been physically abused must find a safe environment in which to live. Both husband and wife need to seek professional help through a qualified Christian marriage counselor.

QUIZ QUESTIONS

1. Marriage is (1)

- The joining of a man and woman together by God for life.
- A temporary, experimental arrangement to see if two people are compatible.
- Not even necessary. Men and women are free to live together without it.

2. God recognizes only one reason for divorce. It is (1)

- Incompatibility.
- An irritable spouse.
- Adultery or fornication.
- Godlessness of marriage partner.

3. The courtesies of courtship (1)

- Should be continued in the married life.
- Should be dropped quickly after the wedding.
- Are really silly and unnecessary.

4. The best guarantee of success in marriage is (1)

- Having Christ in the hearts and home.
- For the husband to force his wife into line.
- For the wife to get her way by threatening divorce.

5. For safety in quarrels, do the following: (3)

- Speak softly and kindly to one another.
- Make your spouse admit error.
- Call in neighbors to settle things.
- Force your spouse to keep quiet.
- Walk out and stay away for several days.
- Pray together.
- Get over your anger before retiring for the night.

6. Check the items that are keys to success in marriage: (2)

- Close the family circle to all third parties.
- Live in your parents' home.
- Run home to mother when angry.
- Tell close friends your spouse's faults.
- Establish your own private home.
- Write an old boyfriend for counsel.
- Never confess first after a spat.

7. The best ways to improve your marriage partner are to (2)

- Threaten to leave unless you get your way.
- Nag and criticize.
- Improve your own relationship with Jesus Christ.
- Make your partner sleep alone.
- Be loving, appreciative, and forgiving.
- Force your partner to change.

8. Check the items below which endanger a marriage: (6)

- Criticism.
- A stingy husband.
- A money-wasting wife.
- Laziness.
- A Christian home.
- Praying together.
- Disorder and filthiness.
- A forgiving spirit.
- Jealousy.

9. For success in making major decisions, (2)

- Husband and wife should counsel together.
- Husband should force his will on his wife.
- Seek God in prayer together.
- Insist upon having your own way.

10. A good rule for in-laws is to (1)

- Tend your own business and leave the newlyweds alone.
- Insist that newlyweds live with you.
- Determine to counsel newlyweds whether they want it or not.

11. In case of unfaithfulness by your spouse, the best thing to do is to (1)

- Leave at once and never come back.
- Immediately tell everyone how "low-down" your partner is.
- Be willing to forgive and to preserve your home, if at all possible.

12. Thoughts should be guarded carefully because (2)

- Impure thoughts lead to impure acts.

_____ Your spouse can read your thoughts.

_____ Wrong thinking will destroy your marriage.

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