



6 Keys
to a love that lasts

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Creators of the Intimate Couple



The truth is, we all want
LASTING LOVE

Everyone wants lasting love; but often times, we go about getting and keeping it the wrong way (just look around at the culture we live in – it is ripe with examples of how to fail at lasting love).

Here at The Intimate Couple, we believe there are six keys or pillars to experiencing lasting love in your dream marriage! Within each key, we also share with you an 'enrichment exercise' – these are designed to help you and your spouse strengthen that area of your marriage.

If you will study these six areas and strengthen each one with the exercises provided, we know you'll cultivate the kind of lasting love in your marriage that we all want!

Sincerely,

Jim & Carrie Gordon, Creators of www.theintimatecouple.com



Key #1 COMMITMENT

In our western culture, long-lasting marriages are becoming increasingly rare. No one said a lasting marriage was easy—it's not! However, when people are willing to make changes in attitude and action, the result can be staggering! What is this willingness? **We call it commitment!**

In an article by Dr. Greg Swenson, a study of 351 couples experiencing longevity in their marriages for more than fifteen years is cited:

“Respondents were asked to choose reasons for their long lasting marriage. Cumulatively, the top seven reasons were ranked in the following order:

1. My spouse is my best friend.
2. I like my spouse as a person.
3. Marriage is a long-term commitment.
4. Marriage is sacred.
5. We agree on aims and goals.
6. My spouse has grown more interesting.
7. I want the relationship to succeed.

Besides the rather amazing fact that husbands and wives cumulatively agreed on the rank order of the first seven reasons, **I find it interesting that three of the seven reasons are directly related to the idea of commitment.** Three others, including the first two, focus on the value of the other person as an individual.”

Not surprisingly, the ideas of **commitment** and valuing your spouse over self are also some of the raw materials of intimacy.

COMMITMENT ENRICHMENT EXERCISE

Simply ask your spouse these questions:

1. What actions or attitudes that I'm involved in make you question my commitment to you or to our relationship?
2. How do I demonstrate selfishness?

When you receive your answer, don't be defensive or withdrawn. Instead, **take the answer to heart** and **bring about positive change!**

3. What can we do to invest time and resources to improve our marriage? (read/listen to marriage books, attend a marriage conference, other?)
4. Compose lists for each other: "Ways You and I are Different but that I Wouldn't Want to Change!"
5. Ask each other, "*How can I pray for you?*" and then pray for one another and pray together for your marriage.

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Key #2 FORGIVENESS

It has been said that in every successful marriage, “*both husband and wife have become good forgivers*”. Forgiveness is the act (sometimes needing repetition) and process of letting go of the hurt and resentment of an offence.

Forgiveness occurs when:

1. We release the person who hurt us, to God’s care and judgment.
We let God take care of whatever He wants to do with the offence and the offender.
2. We surrender our right to expect them to either say “*Sorry*”, or be punished somehow for their wrong.

In every marriage, partners hurt each other, sometimes deeply. We must forgive: there is no other option, no Plan B.

The world-famous Mayo Clinic identified the medical benefits of forgiveness! The following list of benefits is an excerpt:

“Researchers have recently become interested in studying the effects of being unforgiving and being forgiving. Evidence is mounting that holding on to grudges and bitterness results in long-term health problems. Forgiveness, on the other hand, offers numerous benefits, including:

- lower blood pressure
- stress reduction
- less hostility
- better anger management skills
- lower heart rate
- lower risk of alcohol or substance abuse

- fewer depression symptoms
- fewer anxiety symptoms
- reduction in chronic pain
- more friendships
- healthier relationships
- greater spiritual well-being
- improved psychological well-being”

For marriage to go to the next level of intimacy, forgiveness must be an active ingredient in the relationship. This can be extremely difficult for some people: however, there are no other options. Nursing a grudge and harboring bitterness will destroy your marriage—and your health! Forgiving others actually sets you free!

It is very interesting that Jesus told us we had to forgive in what has been called **The Lord's Prayer**:

*Our Father in Heaven, Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.
—Matthew 6:6-8, The Bible*

And then, Jesus goes on to say,

*“If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you.
But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sin.”*

A casual reader might get the mistaken idea that Jesus is demanding we earn our salvation through 'good works': we forgive others—then He will forgive us.

Is He really telling us that if we fail to forgive others—then we have failed to do our part, and we will not be forgiven ourselves?

Actually, no! It's quite the opposite...

Jesus is telling us that if we fail to forgive others who have hurt and wounded us, our hearts will be contaminated with bitterness and resentment. Then, we will automatically erect emotional walls within our hearts to prevent people from getting too close, and hurting us all over again. **With these walls and bitterness, we prevent God's love from entering!**

On the other hand, when we learn to forgive others, those huge walls don't rise up within our hearts—and, in fact, our hearts stay soft, and are free from bitterness. Then, God's forgiveness is also able to get into our heart!

We have witnessed couples forgiving each other from past offences and sins that might have destroyed their marriages. When they did—**they were free to emotionally move on in their relationships.** Of course, it took some time for trust to be built up again, but their marriages were headed in the right direction!

FORGIVENESS ENRICHMENT EXERCISE

Each of you take a piece of paper, and complete the following sentences:

1. An incident in my life where I need to **receive forgiveness** is...
2. One incident in my life where I need to **extend forgiveness** is...

For marriage to go to the next level of intimacy, forgiveness must be an active ingredient in the relationship. Nursing a grudge and harboring bitterness will destroy your marriage—and your health! **Forgiving others actually sets you free!**



Key #3 DESIGN

One aspect of God's design for marriage deals with roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives as found in the Bible: love and respect. This is what Ephesians 5:22-33 says:

You wives will submit to your husbands as you do to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of His body, the church; He gave His life to be her Savior. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives must submit to your husbands in everything.

And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up His life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's word. He did this to present her to Himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man is actually loving himself when he loves his wife. No one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for His body, which is the church. And we are His body.

As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

The design indicated in this passage is the pattern of Love and Respect. A wife is to respect her husband—because respect is fundamental to his needs. A husband, on the other hand, must love his wife—because love (the self-sacrificial kind!) is fundamental to her needs.

In the middle of conflict, couples tend to fixate on the offence of their spouse. We become experts at defending and justifying ourselves, and putting the blame where we think it really belongs—at the feet of our spouse! This never works.

Instead, the Lord taught us to forgive, and then meet the needs of our spouse:

- **Husbands—love like Jesus loved.** He gave Himself without reservation, even though no one appreciated or valued His sacrifice. How can you practically make your wife feel cherished and loved?
- **Wives—respect and submit like the church does to Jesus.** How can you show your husband an attitude of submission and respect?

Wives, you might be thinking, ***“But he might take advantage of me!!”***

And, of course, husbands may also be thinking along similar lines.

And to both nervous wives and husbands, we would say,
“Yes, that is always a possibility!”

And although it is a possibility, following God’s design leads husbands to focus on loving their wives sacrificially and, in turn, leads wives to focus on respecting their husbands.

The husband’s love is her guarantee that he will not abuse his wife’s submission.

The wife’s submission is his guarantee that she will not abuse her husband’s sacrificial love.

DESIGN ENRICHMENT EXERCISE

**Read through Ephesians 5:22-33
from the New Testament.**

Wives, list 5 practical ways you can demonstrate respect and appreciation to your husband TODAY!

Husbands, list 5 practical ways you can demonstrate sacrificial love to your wife TODAY!



We think couples need to make a big deal about their wedding vows. A vow is a solemn promise before God that must not be broken. In marriage, it is the ultimate act of commitment between two people.

Consider the strength of the following **Traditional Vows**:

I, (name), take you, (name), to be my lawfully wedded (husband/wife), my constant friend, my faithful partner and my love from this day forward.

In the presence of God, our family and friends, I offer you my solemn vow to be your faithful partner in sickness and in health, in good times and in bad, and in joy as well as in sorrow.

I promise to love you unconditionally, to support you in your goals, to honor and respect you, to laugh with you and cry with you, and to cherish you for as long as we both shall live.

We believe couples need to be reminded about the promises they made to each other on their wedding day!

Over the years, we have seen couples who did not take their vows seriously break up in the face of marriage trouble. Some people enter into marriage with mistaken ideas that make them think,

“If this marriage doesn’t work out, I can always get a divorce and start over again.”

When divorce is an option in people’s minds, they will take the easy way out in the face of big trouble. But a vow brings a level of commitment to a marriage that can weather any storm!

VOWS ENRICHMENT EXERCISE

Write a note like the one below to your spouse.

If you wrote your own wedding vows, feel free to use them in the note:

"Dear _____,

I've been thinking about our relationship, and do you know what came to mind? The wedding vows I spoke to you:

*For better or for worse,
For richer or for poorer,
In sickness and in health,
Forsaking all others,
...Until we're parted by death...*

Please know I recognize my need to become so much better! In my mind & in my heart, I am renewing these promises so that I am totally committed to you and to the success of our marriage!"

A vow is a solemn promise before God that must not be broken. In marriage, it is the **ultimate act of commitment between two people.**

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Key #5 REWINDING

Re-winding is like pressing the <rewind> button on your life, and beginning again to treat your spouse as you did when you were both first engaged!

Remember the excitement? Remember how you valued your fiancée? Remember how you spent so much time talking, laughing, and simply looking at each other?

The Bible refers to a group of people who, at one time, loved God ardently; but, over time, allowed that love to slip away. Finally, the Lord called these people "to repentance"—which really means, "to a change of thinking".

God told them, "*You have left your first love. Repent [change your thinking] and remember from where you have fallen. Return and do the things you used to do.*" (Revelation 2:4-5).

God's call was for them to rewind—to go back and do what they used to do, act like they used to act, and talk like they used to talk—**when they were still in love!**

A few simple ways to "rewind" in your marriage:

- Hold hands while walking
- Write a love letter to each other
- Say "*I love you*" more often
- Commit to going on weekly dates
- When you both are home after work, take 5 minutes to reconnect (hug/kiss, ask "*How was your day?*")
- Have sex more often
- Call your spouse from work and say, "*I was thinking of you...*"

At the beginning, when romantic love was fresh, we would do crazy things because of our love. **Let's rewind and start doing some of those same crazy things again!**

REWINDING ENRICHMENT EXERCISE

Think about this:

- Do you still write love notes?
- When was the last time you called your spouse in the middle of the day to tell them you're thinking of them, and you love them?
- Husbands—do you surprise your wife with flowers or small gifts regularly? Or do you only do the predictable thing on a birthday or anniversary?
- Wives, when was the last time you met your husband at the bedroom door in lacy lingerie?
- Husbands, when was the last time you told your wife you would do the supper dishes and get the children into bed, so she could put her feet up and relax? (That is romance at its best!)

Remember the excitement? Remember how you valued your fiancé? Remember how you spent so much time talking, laughing, and simply **looking at each other?**



Key #6 SEX

No matter where your marriage relationship is "locked up" right now, following the biblical design of sex is one of the keys to unlocking your dream marriage! It doesn't have to take years: it can take weeks—and even just days!

Marriage is the only relationship on earth that provides everything necessary for awesome sex that can be maintained over time! Every other arrangement—casual sex, cohabitation, or any other arrangement just does not work! Oh, there may be excitement for a time—but that time is short, and the painful consequences of sex outside of marriage are horrendous.

Sex is like our marriage's thermometer—it is a pretty close indicator of the health of the relationship. When our marriage is having trouble, then satisfying, exciting sex is the first thing to disappear!

On the other hand, a dynamic sex life is a pretty good indication that husband and wife are talking, laughing, communicating, and loving each other! But even sex can become routine, predictable, and boring!

Putting sizzle back into sex may require trying...

- new things, in...
- new places, at...
- new times!

This could be a tough assignment! Make sure you both are **open to hear, and be supportive and caring in your responses to one another.**

SEX ENRICHMENT EXERCISE

Set time aside during a romantic dinner or evening to discuss the following questions:

1. Are you happy with our sex life?
2. What can we do together to educate ourselves about and/or improve our sex life?