

Best Marriages

(these marriages inevitably produce the healthiest families)

The best marriages I have encountered in the past 37 years enjoy five common denominators. The wise husbands and wives in these great marriages are:

1. united - 2 Cor 6:14-16
(their primary goal in life is to please Jesus Christ)
2. intentional - 1 Cor 9:24
(they plan - they begin with the end in mind)
3. disciplined - Heb 12:11
(they mean what they say)
4. accountable - Heb 13:17
(they obey their spiritual leaders)
5. charitable - 1 Cor 13:4-8;13
(they think and speak well of each other)

* Lex Rex vs. Rex Lex - Will God's law be the law, or will I (the king) be the law?

Interestingly, these five characteristics are the same as those I see in people who are successful in many other walks of life.

Gen 2:23-25 NIV

23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." 24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. 25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

The Qualifications of Spiritual Leaders in the Body of Christ

1 Tim 3:1-7 NASU It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. 2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. 4 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity 5 (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?), 6 and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. 7 And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

One aspiring to spiritual leadership in the church must demonstrate the following characteristics: (the Greek nuances are in parenthesis)

1. above reproach (no valid accusation can be made against him)
2. the husband of one wife (sexually pure)
3. temperate (able to think clearly)
4. prudent (knows how to properly establish his priorities)
5. respectable (orderly - not living a chaotic life)
6. hospitable (loves strangers - has a home open to all)
7. able to teach (capable of teaching and preaching God's Word)
8. not addicted to wine (his judgment can never be clouded by alcohol)
9. not pugnacious (not "a giver of blows" - not violent)
10. gentle, peaceable (gracious - quick to pardon - not holding a grudge)
11. free from the love of money (not covetous - motivated by love)
12. manages his household well (excellence in everything dealing with his home)
13. keeps his children under control (his kids are submitted and respectful)
14. not a new convert (spiritually mature)
15. of good reputation with those outside (held in high regard by unbelievers)

1 Tim 3:11 NASU Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things.

2 Tim 2:2-7 NIV

2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. 3 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs-he wants to please his commanding officer. 5 Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. 6 The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. 7 Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this.

Matt 28:19-20 NIV

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Marriage Mentor's Guide

(Some Practical Tips)

**Mentor* - a trusted counselor or guide

I. **Your Goal** - to assist your couple to develop a Godly marriage that is a blessing to them, their children, and their world. Your guidance, instruction and mediation will help provide them with:

- A. Protection - they will develop a "bullet proof" marriage
- B. Growth - they will become fully committed Christ followers
- C. The Ability to Reproduce - they will ultimately mentor a couple of their own

II. **Your Commitment & Theirs**

A. Yours

- 1) You agree to pray for them continually (1Thess 5:17)
- 2) You agree, as much as humanly possible, to be available to them as a resource, advisor, sounding board and most importantly a friend (Gal 2:6)
- 3) You agree to mentor them with Biblical truth (John 8:32)
- 4) You agree not to judge them but reserve the right to ask hard questions (Mathew 7:1)
- 5) You agree to listen (Proverbs 18:13)
- 6) You agree to meet with them for at least an hour or more at least once per month for accountability and Bible study
- 7) You agree to connect with them at least one other time per month by phone
- 8) You agree to schedule some "just for fun" event with them at least once/quarter

B. Theirs

1. They agree to investigate, start, and/or maintain a personal relationship with Christ (James 4:8)
2. Ultimately, out of gratitude they commit to knowing God's commandments and obeying them as the Holy Spirit gives them strength (1 John 2:3-6)
3. They agree to make every effort to pray with their spouse daily (James 5:16)
4. They agree to "mentoring mediation" for any issue that is not resolved within 24 hours (Eph 4:26)
5. They agree to be accountable to you on requirements 1 through 4 and other items related to becoming a fully committed Christ follower

III. **Your Format** - the objective of your monthly discipleship session is to assist your couple to be "in Christ" and to have His "mind" by providing:

- A. a safe environment where they can discuss even their greatest problems
(Ask each time "Do you have any unresolved issues with one another or anyone else?")
- B. Biblical counsel - Psalm 37:30-31
(avoid human wisdom and your personal experience)
- C. a venue where honest questions about matters of faith can be asked
(Jesus used people's legitimate questions as one of His primary teaching methods)
- D. a time to impart wisdom {skill at living - 2 Tim 3:16-17}
(the mind of Christ is generally both "taught and caught")

IV. **Your Tools**

- A. Your Bible (get to know it "like the back of your hand") - 2 Tim 2:15
- B. The Good to Great Marriage Manual - relational
- C. The Covered in the Dust of Your Rabbi Discipleship Manual - theological

V. **Your Back-up** - Fred & Joan Nelson - 656-9759, Liz Zeller - 690-4434, Doug McGrail - 591-0769, Diana Shay - 255-0680, Melissa Brumit - 591-4094, Greg Chirrick

-591-1520, Curt Brott - 248-5672, Shawn Brookhart - 861-6363

Heb 13:17 NIV

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Matt 28:19 -20 NLT 19 Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. 20 Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

How We Approach "Spiritual Direction"

(by Michele Oakland and Fred Nelson)

Step #1 - we discuss what it means to "be saved and indwelt by the Holy Spirit" (Spiritual Checkup page)

Step #2 - we secure an agreement that loving and obeying God will be their primary goal in life

Step #3 - we secure an agreement that the person wants *our* help in achieving the above goal

Step #4 - through discussion, prayer, and study of the Scriptures we help them discover and acknowledge the specific sins that have caused their pain and/or relational problems (*helping the person determine how and why a sin entered their life is often productive*)

Step #5 - we encourage them to *confess* their sins and *repent* (Repentance pages)

Step #6 - we encourage them to systematically *forgive* those who have hurt or offended them (Forgiveness by Foster)

Step #7 - we teach them the importance of the "spiritual triangle" of Bible study, listening prayer, and intimate fellowship with other believers

Step #8 - we instruct them regarding their new identity in Christ (My Identity in Christ pages)

Step #9 - we continue the discipleship process or pass them to another "1 Timothy 3 leader" who will do the same

***It is important that we never put our new friend in a position where he is more worried about hurting our feelings than getting help for himself. (*Enabler* - a person who provides *unhelpful help* with a good motive)**

The Flesh Verses the Spirit

Our Goal - to help people understand and receive God's grace through Jesus Christ whereby they will gratefully comply to His teachings and enjoy and further His Kingdom.

Danger #1 - legalism (attempting to engender God's favor by the mere performance of acts and routines without true spiritual involvement)

Danger #2 - licentiousness (disregarding all moral restraint)

*** Both are examples of living according to the flesh.**

The Precarious Balance

SANCTIFICATION, SANCTIFY

A. Noun.

hagiasmos NT:38, "sanctification," is used of (a) separation to God, 1 Cor 1:30; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2; (b) the course of life befitting those so separated, 1 Thess 4:3,4,7; Rom 6:19,22; 1 Tim 2:15; Heb 12:14. **"Sanctification is that relationship with God into which men enter by faith in Christ, Acts 26:18; 1 Cor 6:11, and to which their sole title is the death of Christ, Eph 5:25,26; Col 1:22; Heb 10:10,29; 13:12.**

"Sanctification is also used in NT of the separation of the believer from evil things and ways. This sanctification is God's will for the believer, 1 Thess 4:3, and His purpose in calling him by the gospel, v. 7; it must be learned from God, v. 4, as He teaches it by His Word, John 17:17,19, cf. Ps 17:4; 119:9, and it must be pursued by the believer, earnestly and undeviatingly, 1 Tim 2:15; Heb 12:14. For the holy character, hagiosune, 1 Thess 3:13, is not vicarious, i.e., it cannot be transferred or imputed, it is an individual possession, built up, little by little, as the result of obedience to the Word of God, and of following the example of Christ, Matt 11:29; John 13:15;

Eph 4:20; Phil 2:5, in the power of the Holy Spirit, Rom 8:13; Eph 3:16.
From Notes on Thessalonians, by Hogg and Vine, pp. 115, 271.
(from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright (c)1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.

*Ps 37:30-31 NLT 30 The godly offer good counsel;
they know what is right from wrong.
31 They fill their hearts with God's law,
so they will never slip from his path.*

How to Have a Relationship with God, Your Heavenly Father (What the Bible Teaches - Scripture References from the NIV)

} ***The Bible teaches that we are to examine our own spiritual condition.***

2 Cor 13:5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you-unless, of course, you fail the test?

} ***The Bible teaches that there is only one way to be saved from our sin.***

John 14:6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Acts 4:12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

1 Tim 2:3-6 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men-the testimony given in its proper time.

} ***The Bible teaches that there are 4 principles that I must embrace in order for me to be in relationship with God.***

1. I must believe that I am a sinner. (*pisteuo*; believe = trust in, rely on, cling to, surrender to)

Rom 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

2. I must believe that my sin separates me from God now and for eternity.

2 Thess 1: 8-9 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power

3. I must believe that God's perfect Son, Jesus Christ, became sin on my behalf and paid the

full penalty for that sin on the cross.

2 Cor 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

4. Out of gratitude for Christ's sacrifice I must acknowledge Jesus as Lord (boss) and yield to His authority in my life.

Rom 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (*Kurios*; Lord= one in total authority)

Are you a "Christ-liker" or a saved, spirit filled follower of Jesus Christ?

WHAT WILL YOU RECEIVE IF YOU HAVE THIS "REGIME CHANGE" AND BECOME A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST?

#1 You are assured a magnificent eternal life with God

John 3:36

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

#2 You will receive the Holy Spirit that enables you to truly change

Rom 8:11

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

#3 You can now understand and obey God's instruction manual for life (the Bible) and so enjoy a wonderful life here on earth

John 10:9-10

I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

#4 Persecution

2 Tim 3:12

In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,

Eph 2:3-10

All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Matt 4:17 *From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."* NIV

The Kingdom of Heaven – the rule of God in the hearts of men.

The Signs of Wellness

(the blessings of living in compliance to the teachings of Jesus)

As a Christ follower regularly engages in the study of the Word, in prayer, and in intimate fellowship with other sincere believers who will pour into his life, God brings about some wonderful changes in the person's character. I have found that these three characteristics combined are often a signal that the believer is ready to go "make disciples" himself. As best I can describe them, the three characteristics of people who demonstrate this mental and spiritual wellness in their lives are:

1. an inability to remain offended from slights, criticism, & gossip

Rom 12:14-19 NIV

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

2. an inability to worry about the future

Matt 6:28-34 NIV

28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

1 Thess 2:8 NIV

We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us.

My Key Principles for Friendship Counseling/Discipleship

Fred Nelson, *Professional Friend*

(These principles have kept me focused, sane, and loving my work)

1. **The purpose of the Gospel of Christ is friendship. (*Friend* - "one attached to another by affection or esteem"; "the enemy of my enemy.")**
2. ***Friendship* is more important than *things*; but *integrity* is more important than *friendship*. I am commanded by God to speak the "truth in love."**
3. **I befriend the people that God puts in my path because they have been created by God, and they are precious to Him. If by loving them and sharing with them the Gospel, they enter His Kingdom, that is a bonus.**
4. **I always let my disciples pick themselves. I pray for God to send me FAT people (faithful, available, and teachable). I try to raise the spiritual bar frequently.**
5. **My plan from Mark 2 is to help people: *get save* (conversion); *get well* (discipleship); *get going* (leadership). I am diligent to make sure that those who "think" they are saved know the Biblical requirements (Rom 10:9) and especially the correct NT definitions of *Lord* = one in total authority and *believe* - trust in, rely on, cling to, surrender to. (Two useful questions - "Is Jesus the *boss* of your life?" and "What evidence do you have in your life that Jesus is the boss?")**
6. **I attempt to guide people not by my experience or even by common sense but by the written Word of God, the Bible. At the very most I am a compassionate "page turner."**
7. **My job is to love my neighbor not to fix him. I try to listen more than I talk.**

8. If time allows me to both *pray* for and *follow-up* with my friend - wonderful! If I have only enough time to do one or the other - I *pray* for my friend!
9. I can only lead someone as far as God has taken me. I must spend time with my Father.
10. My most useful and enlightening question has proven to be "On what do you base your decisions?" Nearly everyone eventually answers, "on my feelings?"
11. I don't take the credit when people seem to do better, and I won't take the blame when they don't.
12. Every piece of advice I give has the following two principles at its core:
 1. "Life is not about us but about God." 2. "Obeying God is the only thing in life that matters, and obeying God is always in our best interest."

The Four Legal Alternatives One Has in Dealing with an Emotionally Abusive Spouse
(When circumstances at home feel intolerable)

1. **Separate and file for divorce**
(unbiblical and doesn't work)

2. **Stay with the spouse and try to change their behavior by arguing and nagging**
(unbiblical and doesn't work)

3. **Stay with the spouse, love them like Jesus would, and pray that God will bring about repentance**
(Biblically acceptable, risky because the offended spouse may "fall off the cliff" emotionally, and sometimes works)

4. **Separate from the spouse and wait for God to bring about repentance**
(Biblically acceptable, inflammatory, and sometimes works)

Mal 2:13-16

13 Here is another thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, weeping and groaning because he pays no attention to your offerings, and he doesn't accept them with pleasure. 14 You cry out, "Why has the LORD abandoned us?" I'll tell you why! Because the LORD witnessed the vows you and your wife made to each other on your wedding day when you were young. But you have been disloyal to her, though she remained your faithful companion, the wife of your marriage vows. 15 Didn't the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard yourself; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. 16 "For I hate divorce!" says the LORD, the God of Israel. "It is as cruel as putting on a victim's bloodstained coat," says the LORD Almighty. "So guard yourself;

always remain loyal to your wife." NLT

1 Cor 7:10-11

10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. 11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. NIV

1 Cor 6:5-7

5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, 6 but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers? 7 Actually, then, it is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one another. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded? NASU

Ultimately, we never recommend divorce; we labor with all God's resources to help struggling couples who seek our assistance to save their marriages; and if a couple divorces, we endeavor to love both parties.

mentorcouplesagreement#2

Heb 13:17 NIV

17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Mentor Couple's Agreement

As part of our mentoring/discipleship arrangement, we promise that we will be readily available to you to discuss anything you deem important --- "the good, the bad, and the ugly." We will not allow an issue that is important to either of you to be *swept under the rug*.

In response to our promise we are asking both of you to covenant with us and one another that you will, from this day forward, refrain from speaking unkindly about your spouse or your marriage with any other persons but us. With us we ask that you be totally honest and thorough regarding your feelings about your spouse and their behavior --- even if they are negative.

And, lastly we would have you assure us that if either of you desires our assistance, that request will be met with an enthusiastic "yes" by the other spouse.

If you abide by the above guidelines, we believe that God will use us to keep you safe and help you grow.

We the undersigned agree to the above.

Husband's Signature _____

Wife's Signature _____