

The Ten Commandments of a Successful Marriage

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Commandment One - Thou Shalt Not Be a Selfish Pig
Puppy Love Versus Mature Love

Puppy Love

Mature Love

Focuses on receiving

Seeks to give to the other person

Impatient, self-centered

Patient in spite of the other's flaws

Displays outbursts of anger

Responds gently to irritants

Self-protective

Transparent and Vulnerable

Insists on meeting its needs

Commandment Two - Thou Shalt Cut the Apron Strings

Covenant Versus Contract

Covenant

Based on love

Motivated by commitment

Assumes relationship

"til death do us part"

What's mine is yours

Your interests are my interests

Prepares for life together

Contract

Based on law

Motivated by compulsion

Prepares for marriage to fail

Protects what is mine

Secures own interests

Prepares for life apart

Commandment Three - Thou Shalt Continually Communicate

Levels of Communication

Couples must have a mutually agreed upon system of talking with and listening to each other.

1. **Clichés'** - when someone greets you with either of these, they really do not want you to report how things are going. These are examples of "socially acceptable" greetings. They mean no more than a simple handshake.
 - a. How's it going?
 - b. How are you today?

2. **Just the facts** - one level up from clichés'. At this level we communicate facts apart from any kind of opinion or emotional response. Every healthy relationship requires an exchange of facts.
 - a. It's raining today.
 - b. It's time to change the oil in the car.

3. Opinions and Convictions - when we communicate an opinion or conviction, we begin to give the listener a glimpse of what makes us tick. Our statements reflect our beliefs, loyalties, and personal commitments.

a. I believe that...

b. It appears to me that...

4. Feelings - (this question may cause most men to break out into a sweat.)

a. What are you feeling?

5. Needs - the deepest level of communication

a. tactfully and directly communicate needs

b. give-and-take must occur

Commandment Four - Thou Shalt Make Conflict Thy Ally

Two Myths About Conflict

1. Good marriages do not have problems.
 - a. Do you ever fight or quarrel with your spouse? If so, congratulations - you have a perfectly normal marriage.
2. Conflict hurts good marriages.
 - a. Conflict is an important part of every good marriage.
 - b. Handled wisely, it can lead to greater intimacy.
 - c. Handled poorly, it can lead to greater isolation.

The Don'ts of Conflict

1. Don't be ashamed of your anger.
 - a. your opinions and conclusions are important
 - b. anger is not the issue; how you deal with your anger is
 - c. the Bible says, "be angry and sin not: do not let the sun go down on your wrath (Ephesians 4:26)
2. Don't call in heavy artillery or use deadly weapons.

- a. you're not in this thing to wipe out your spouse
 - b. storming out and slamming doors does not win the war
3. Don't air your dirty linen in public.
- a. don't discuss private conflicts in front of family, friends, or business associates.
 - b. don't inappropriately pour out your heart to your friends or family (especially your parents) because this will hurt your mate and do nothing to resolve the conflict.
4. Don't paint yourself into a corner.
- a. if you don't stop, I'll get a lawyer
 - b. don't use broad statements and threats to control your mate
 - c. don't drag up old things from the past that have nothing to do with your conflict
5. Don't use the turtle approach.
- a. don't climb into your shell, hunker down, and stay there

- b. don't go silent
 - c. I'm not going to say anything until (he/she) apologizes
6. Don't keep a chip on your shoulder.
- a. don't overstate things
 - b. You have every characteristic of a dog, except one...and which one is that...*loyalty!*
7. Don't use sex as a weapon.
- a. "I'm not going to make love to you until we get things worked out."
 - b. I'll show you: I'll find love in the arms of another.
 - c. Jesus meant it when He said, "All those who take up the sword shall die by the sword." (Matthew 26:52)

The Do's of Conflict

1. Talk and listen to God.
 - a. Pray
 - b. verbalize your conflict to God and wait for His response
2. Try to understand your mate.
 - a. could it be your partner feels insecure?
 - b. what frightens or agitates your mate?
3. Try to understand yourself.
 - a. why am I on edge today?
 - b. why did I say that?
 - c. why am I acting like this?
 - d. The Bible says, "The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out." (Proverbs 20:5 NIV)
 - e. seek Godly counsel

4. Talk to your mate.

- a. pick positive, edifying words
- b. Psalms 141:3, "Lord, put a watch over my lips; Lord be the keeper of my mouth."
- c. Proverbs 15:1, "A gentle answer turns away wrath."
- d. return blessing for insult, trade sweet for bitter

5. Don't let the sun go down on your anger.

- a. don't let your anger fester (Ephesians 4:26)
- b. never go to sleep until you get your hearts together
- c. do not let anger be your last emotion before you go to sleep

6. Make confession and forgiveness a priority.

- a. Honey I'm sorry, will you forgive me?
- b. offering a little forgiveness is all it takes

***Commandment Five - Thou Shalt Avoid the Quicksand of
Debt***

10-70-20 Budget

1. First subtract your tithes and your taxes from your gross monthly income.
 - a. The Bible teaches that we are to bring to God our "first-fruits"
 - b. "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's."(Matthew 22:21) Pay your taxes.
2. Take 10% of what is left after your tithes and taxes and save or invest this amount.
3. Use 70% of the remainder for operating expenses.
 - a. Mortgage/rent, utilities, food, clothing, etc...
4. Apply the last 20% to debt reduction. If 20% will not cover your payments, then you can start by paying off the ones with the highest interest first. You may also consider a debt consolidation loan as long as it does not add on more debt.

Commandment Six - Thou Shalt Flee Sexual Temptation -

Online and Otherwise - No One Is Immune

1. Our flight is from anything that takes our focus away from the one person with whom God has said we are to share ourselves sexually: our spouse.
2. Sexual temptation begins by getting a glimpse of something pleasing to the eye and wanting what we see. What a mess these temporary moments of pleasure create for us in our marriage.
3. Being unfaithful to our mates leads to deception and lies.
4. Our sins do not go unnoticed by God. God knows everything we do and in time He brings correction to sin.
5. Disobedience to God brings heartbreak and dishonor
6. Don't walk; run from sexual temptation.
7. Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Using them for sexual immorality is a sin against God and against our own bodies.
8. In 2 Timothy 2:22, Paul teaches us to flee youthful lusts.

9. The Bible also teaches that our bodies are "*gifts reserved*" for our mates.

10. Treat sexual temptation like a deadly disease.

11. God created sex; it's His idea. He designed sex to be an act of joyful pleasure by which a husband and a wife bond physically, spiritually, and emotionally.

12. Human sexuality is unique; designed for procreation and pleasure.

13. Sex involves every aspect of our being creating total oneness.

14. Sex requires boundaries.

15. God created sex as a sacred act between two people committed to one another in a covenant relationship of marriage.

16. The sacred expression of love and oneness between a husband and a wife must be protected and honored.

17. The Bible says, "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled." (Hebrews 13:4)
18. Finally, sex has the additional sanctity of symbolizing God's great, intimate love toward His created beings.

Commandment Seven

Thou Shalt Forgive Thy Mate - 490 Times and More

Forgiveness

Can your marriage survive adultery?

1. Nothing is so difficult for a marriage partner to forgive as adultery.
2. One act of infidelity can undermine trust and unravel a marriage.

What factors contribute to the development of an affair?

1. Proximity
 - a. someone at work, at the gym, or at school
 - b. proximity leads to physical union
2. Problems
 - a. the couple's sexual relationship often fades due to family problems (i.e., children, finances, household responsibilities)
 - b. mid-life crisis: a man wants to prove his virility, while a woman wants to prove she's still desirable.

- c. failure: individuals who have failed are hurting and looking for someone to understand.
- d. success: gains the individual added attention that may and compliments that become enticing.

Taking the Route to Forgiveness

1. Forgiveness is the best route to deal with the imperfections, flaws, and sins that take place within marriage.
2. We need to cultivate a lifestyle of forgiveness and a mind-set that forgives consistently and unconditionally.
3. Jesus expounded the theme of forgiveness when Peter asked Jesus, "How often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him?" Jesus responded and said, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

(Matthew 18:21-22)

Why Forgive?

1. God commands us to forgive
2. Forgiveness is part of the character of God

3. Forgiveness is good for us

4. We forgive so that we too will be forgiven

Commandment Eight

Thou Shalt Keep the Home Fires Burning

Grow Old With Me

1. Marriage is work: best wishes and good luck have nothing to do with the health and happiness of a marriage.
2. Marital happiness is a matter of choice
3. The end of the honeymoon stage, need not be the end of happiness or passion
4. A Godly man/woman waits on the Lord to work out the details of his marriage
5. Even marriages with the best of beginnings will have their share of problems.
6. A husband and wife must work hard to keep the fires alive

Three Stages of Marriage

1. The Honeymoon Stage

- a. your mate can do no wrong
- b. you can't get enough of one another

2. The Party's Over Stage

- a. a couple truly gets to know one another
- b. both partners get to see one another's true humanity with all its' flaws and imperfections
- c. couples may feel traumatized and feel a little buyer's remorse
 - i. is he really the man I thought I married?
 - ii. what happened to the sweet thing I couldn't get enough of?
- d. at this stage, a couple must make a choice: to do whatever it takes to make their marriage genuinely happy and healthy.

3. The Best is Yet To Come Stage

- a. the most exciting and rewarding stage of all
- b. this is the mature love stage
- c. this stage sees everything in its beloved and yet can't help but shower the spouse with words and deeds of affection and love.
- d. nothing can kill this love: this love can endure anything
- e. in this stage, a husband or wife can look at their spouse and think, "I'm happy we get to grow old together."

The Look of Mature Love - 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Mature Love is...

Patient: I put up with the imperfections of my mate.

Kind: I perform acts of kindness for the other person.

Joyful with Truth: My love grows out of a base of honesty and integrity.

Trusting: I believe in the best from my spouse.

Full of Hope: I hope for the best from and for my mate.

Enduring: My love lasts through even the toughest of times.

Mature Love is Not...

Jealous: Instead, it rests secure.

Boastful: Instead, it refrains from building itself up.

Arrogant: Instead, it humbles itself.

Self-Seeking: Instead, it puts a spouses needs and desires first.

Angry: Instead, it refrains from abusive outbursts.

Looking for paybacks: Instead, mature love forgives, even when treated wrongly.

But Most of All...

Love never fails: I'm always there to support my spouse.

The Making of a Mature Love

Mature love is...

Motivated

Attentive

Tender

Understanding

Respectful

Exciting

Commandment Nine

Thou Shalt Begin Again and Again

Six Principles for Beginning Again and Again

1. Acceptance

- a. Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (Romans 15:7)
- b. We are to accept one another the same way God has accepted us - unconditionally.

2. Attention

- a. Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. (1 Peter 1:22)
- b. Nothing signals love as clearly as attention.

3. Adjustment

- a. And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.
(Ephesians 5:21)
- b. If we want happy marriages, we have to learn to submit to one another

4. Amnesty

a. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

(Ephesians 4:32)

b. Forgiveness is an essential ingredient to a happy marriage.

5. Appreciation

a. Therefore encourage one another and build up one another; just as you also are doing. (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

b. Our expressions of appreciation help our mates to improve.

6. Affection

a. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. (1 Corinthians 7:3)

b. affection is a fundamental need of every human being.

If Your Marriage is Boring or Routine,

Read Between the Lines

1. Discover the thrill of beginning again and you will be amazed at the change that will take place in your marriage.
2. Our God is a God who redeems; He is a God of renewal.
3. The Prophet Jeremiah wrote, "Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."
(Lamentations 3:22-23)
4. Our God is the God of a second chance. He begins each day by renewing His mercies to us.

Commandment Ten

Thou Shalt Build a Winning Team

Our Marriages are the Nation's Business

1. We are part of a larger scheme than our own individual lives
2. God designed marriage to be like pilings; sunk deep into the foundation of His truth
3. Marriages serve as pillars to families
4. As marriages grow weaker, families grow weaker and societies suffer
5. Our marriages are our children's business
6. A parent's relationship sets in motion a child's entire destiny
7. Our marriages are God's business
8. God, like a loving father cares about His children; this includes caring about our welfare in the marriage covenant
9. God uses our marriages to teach others about their relationship with Christ

10. Husbands are to love their wives in the same manner that Christ loved the church: to the point of personal sacrifice if necessary. (Ephesians 5:25)
11. When marriages break up, the best that God designed ceases to function

Deciding to Build

1. Proverbs 24:3-4 tells us, "By wisdom a house [or marriage] is built, and by understanding it is established.
2. We must decide to build a winning team

Components for a Winning Marriage Team

1. The Eternal Architect
 - a. building a winning marriage requires a commitment to success
 - b. God, our eternal architect, wants to see us succeed in marriage even more than we do

- c. "In flesh and spirit they are His...guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. "I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel...(Malachi 2:15-16)

2.The Right Coach

- a. Jesus Christ is the Head Coach of a winning marriage team
- b. God means for His principles to be understood and applied to our daily lives. His Word is our playbook.
- c. The key to applying the wisdom of the coach to marriage is to receive Christ, to become intimate with Him, study His Word, pray, and worship.

3.The Players

- a. God has recruited us as players for His kingdom
- b. God can take our ordinary talents and abilities and do extraordinary things with them
- c. With Jesus on our side, we have all the talent we need to build a winning marriage team

4. The Intangibles

a. Goal setting

- i. a couple has to set long and short-term goals for their marriage

b. Commitment

- i. stick with the program even in the down years
- ii. constantly search for better ways to do what needs to be done
- iii. develop a vision for the future
- iv. commitment demands perseverance

c. Discipline

- i. it takes discipline to build a winning marriage team
- ii. discipline governs how a couple makes decisions

d. Togetherness

- i. a couple working together will have a good return on their labor (Ecclesiastes 4:9)

- ii. Husbands and wives functioning as a unit in decision making have a greater payoff
- iii. when a husband and wife are working together, there is a constant encouragement for each other

a. Strength

- iv. A three strand cord is not quickly torn apart (Ecclesiastes 4:12)
- v. When a couple puts God at the center of their relationship, His strength is so great the relationship cannot be pulled apart.

5. Fan Support

- a. Fan support comes from the encouragement of family, friends, children, co-workers, and the church family.
- b. Hebrews 12 describes a "great cloud of witnesses" that cheers on God's people in their race.
- c. Our witnesses encourage us to lay aside our hindrances and run victorious.

d. Couples should choose friends who provide positive support.

e. A strong fan-base requires Godly leadership and fellow believers to succeed.

A Final Note...

A Godly husband and wife, who wisely apply His principles, will not only be successful in their marriage, but to their community and to the world around them.