

Secrets of an Amazing Marriage:

Prepare to Transform Your Relationship!



By Brian Tubbs

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INTRODUCTION

Do you know where to find the SECRETS to an amazing marriage? I'm going to cut right to the chase and tell you.

The secrets to an AMAZING marriage are found in the FOUNDATION!

That's right...your happiness in marriage will be DIRECTLY related to the health and stability of your relationship's FOUNDATION.

So...here are my questions...

- ***Are you satisfied with your marriage?***
- ***Are you fulfilled spiritually and emotionally?***
- ***Are you happy?***
- ***Is your spouse happy?***

The reason why many people have to answer "no" to one or more of those questions is that they fail to understand the nature of relationships. Because it's so easy for us to **fall** in love, we assume that it **SHOULD** be easy to **stay** in love.

I'm here to tell you that STAYING in love takes commitment. This is why we have marriage vows during wedding ceremonies. Remember the vows you made? Assuming yours was a fairly traditional ceremony, you pledged to "forsake all others" and stay with your mate "in sickness or in health, poverty or wealth" – "until death you do part."

Now, here's the challenge...

Think of a car. If, while driving, you take your hands off the steering wheel, what happens? The car drifts to the right. If you allow the drift to continue, it will crash.

Likewise, your relationships (be it your marriage or your friendships) will drift away from where they should be – and will “crash” if that drift continues.

It takes conscious, deliberate, and decisive effort to keep your relationships on track. That’s what this free e-book is all about – to help you put your marriage back on track, and enjoy an amazing relationship with your husband or wife!

This electronic booklet and its accompanying e-course provide a simple, step-by-step plan to help you unlock the secrets of success for your marriage. If you follow this plan, with God as your ultimate guide, then you should prepare for dramatic results!

So, let’s get to it...

STEP #1

Take Responsibility for Your Life, Reputation, and Marriage

I can't help but feel that I might lose some readers right here. Some of you reading this e-book have been dealt a bad hand in the game of life. Let's face it. Life is not always fair, and some people have more than their fair share of tragedy and challenge. You may feel like life is literally against you. There could be numerous circumstances or people working against you.

I've counseled quite a few people over the years, and I know that life can be hard. That it can deal some pretty severe blows. But as battered as you may be, it *is* your life, and...

YOU *have a choice to make.*

And here it is....

You can take responsibility for your life and situation

....OR....

**You can try to point the finger and pass the blame to
someone or something else.**

The choice you make it up to you, but the stakes are too high to ignore. You have **only one life** and there is no restart button. This isn't a video game, where you can

earn bonus lives through the accumulation of points or where you can simply load up a new game if things start to go badly. This is it. You have one life. What are you going to do with yours?

It's at this realization that some people just throw up their hands and resign themselves to mediocrity or disappointment. Others lose themselves in depression or escapism (drugs, alcohol, etc.). The fact that you have only one life should **not** send you deeper into despair or depression, no matter how tough things are for you right now. It should motivate you to drive your personal flag into the ground, and take your stand!

You may have lost several jobs, had trouble with the kids, suffered failures and setbacks in friendships or relationships. Now is not the time to throw in the towel. No matter how many times you've fallen, you can still get up. No matter how old you are, it's never too late to turn things around.

Some people will seize onto that hope. But then comes the tough part. Improving your life requires one fundamental choice: **You must accept *personal* responsibility.**

That means you must stop blaming God, nature, circumstances or other people for your lot in life. And...since we're talking primarily about marriage...that also means NOT blaming your husband or wife.

This is where some people dig their heels in angrily and start declaring all the reasons why God, their husband or wife, or life in general has put them in the situation they're in. They feel trapped and victimized, and they get very defensive when someone might dare suggest otherwise.

If you're in that camp, I ask you to bear with me a few minutes longer. Give me a chance to show you how a "Me versus Life" perspective is only hurting you. If you want to rise above your adversity and circumstances, you must open your eyes, ears, and mind to whatever lessons (however personal or painful) that God wants you to learn.

Things Happen for a Reason

Life may seem random, but it really isn't. Things happen for a reason. The random element is solely our personal perspective. For example, to those working high up in the World Trade Center the morning of September 11, 2001, the horrific tragedy of planes flying into their office buildings seemed random. They were taken completely by surprise. When those New York office workers were coming to work that day, not one person thought: "Hey, today could be the day that Osama bin Laden attacks us with hijacked airplanes."

But "randomness" and "surprise" are merely perspectives. The terrorists who planned and executed the attack weren't surprised when their planes crashed into the buildings. To them, the attack wasn't "random." It was intentional and orchestrated.

Let's take nature. While no terrorist organization planned or orchestrated Hurricane Katrina, climate forces did. Any meteorologist can explain how nature came together to form the elements that unleashed Katrina's destructive fury on the innocent people of Louisiana and Mississippi. From the perspective of the family living in downtown New Orleans, Katrina was "random." From nature's perspective, however, there was a clear, scientific explanation.

As I write this e-book, Wilmington, Ohio (the town in which I currently live) is facing serious economic hardship, with thousands of area residents out of work! The

main (though not exclusive) cause was the decision made by its major employer to shutter operations and lay off over 6,000 people – a devastating move in a county of only 40,000 people!

Was it random?

From the perspective of those victimized by layoffs, it's a surprise, to be sure. But there were economic forces and human decisions that influenced and determined the situation. For example, the rising oil prices dramatically increased the company's operating costs. It's an air freight operation. What's more, consider the numerous political decisions over the years that caused this one air carrier to hold such a dominant and commanding presence in the region's economy. The entire city of Wilmington, Ohio became economically dependent on this one company. And...consider the decision made by the individuals who worked at the airport. They made the decision to work there, as opposed to somewhere else, putting them at risk, when something like this would happen.

That last explanation may seem unfair, but think about it. In spite of all the economic uncertainty over the last couple decades, Americans continue to base their livelihood on one or maybe two sources of income. And, in most cases, those sources of income are paychecks from companies over which they have little influence and no control.

This is where most people will recoil and protest: "What choice do we have?"

The truth is that we have **plenty** of choices. But we live like mice in a maze. We just go through the motions of life, with no sense or idea of the "Big Picture."

Do you understand “cause and effect”? Don’t breeze by that question. Let me ask it again...

Do you understand --- *really, truly* understand – the principle of CAUSE and EFFECT?

Every effect has a cause. (Incidentally, this is the greatest argument for the existence of God. Could the universe just randomly create itself? Just like the universe...***Every effect has a cause.***) Yet most people focus only on the effects. In fact, they live in the effects, and pay little attention to the causes. This is tragic, and it’s frankly one of the reasons why so many marriages are suffering – and failing.

Take a look at the nation’s math scores and our woeful lack of knowledge of history. Both of these subjects emphasize cause-and-effect, and our country’s poor academic performance in these subjects shows us that the problem is just getting worse.

Those who grasp basic math and appreciate history understand “cause and effect.” They understand that things happen for a reason, and that if we want to change outcomes, we must **alter** that which produces those outcomes.

Math is all about numeric equations. It’s your introduction to critical thinking and analysis. If you are rusty on your math, get an e-book or a video to refresh yourself. I’m serious. Take some time to work out the kinks and the rust in your brain. Practice some math problems. You can also try your hand at logic puzzles and games, like Sudoku.

In addition to revisiting and improving your math skills, I strongly encourage you to start watching the History Channel and reading some e-books on history. “But that’s boring!” you protest. Well, don’t complain about your lot in life then!

If you want to understand why certain people succeed and others don’t, history is the best place to start. There were **reasons** why Christopher Columbus gets the credit for “discovering” the New World, even though he wasn’t the first human being on the continent or even the first European to arrive. There are **reasons** why the United States became an independent nation. It wasn’t dumb luck or random happenstance. There is an **explanation** for how J.P. Morgan got enormously wealthy, and why so many people in the so-called “robber baron” era could barely feed or shelter themselves!

The “cause-and-effect” principle is the very theme of history. Consider World War II, which cost the lives of 45-55 million people! Yet, did you know that, were it not for World War I (especially how it ended), the Second World War might never have happened?

Let’s focus on individuals. Take the fifteenth and sixteenth Presidents. Why do we regard Abraham Lincoln as one of our greatest Presidents, while his immediate predecessor is universally regarded as a failure? Is it because people over the years chose to discriminate against or unfairly scapegoat James Buchanan? Of course not!

Now, let’s bring this to where you and I live. Why do some employees get favored treatment? Why does so-and-so around the corner make more money than you? Why did your friend get promoted – and not you? Why does your neighbor earn a six-figure salary, while you still struggle paycheck to paycheck? Why is your marriage

unhappy, and yet you see other couples who appear to be deeply in love? Why? Why?
Why?

The questions range from personal issues to health challenges to money matters to professional goals and aspirations.

Now here's MY question...

Do you REALLY want to know the answers to those questions?

Or do you just want to vent and complain? If the latter, I submit to you that you'll probably be waiting a long time for your life to get better.

The principles in this ebook can help you achieve the life you want, but you'll have to work your way through this painful and difficult process first. You have to stop shaking your fist at life and demanding "justice" or "fairness."

Instead, you need to step back – and as objectively as you can – study your life and the "Big Picture" around it. If you want answers, you best be willing to hear them. Some of the answers you may not want to hear, but you need to hear them.

Zooming Out

Once you accept that things happen for a reason, you then need to fix your position. Where do you fit in the "Big Picture"?

Have you used Mapquest? You can pinpoint a location by providing an address – and zeroing in on that spot. When you do that, however, your view is limited only to that immediate area. If you want to see more of the surrounding area, you have to zoom out. The further out you go, the more you can see. You need to do this with your life.

The truth is that we are often so close to our situation that we're unable to exercise any sound judgment or discover any solutions to our problems. Give yourself a bird's eye view of your life by "zooming out."

We'll use the workplace as an example. I've worked on both ends of the spectrum. I've been an employee and I've been the boss. I can tell you that it's much easier being the employee. But...I can also tell you that the only way you will grow professionally and achieve any kind of meaningful success in your career is by seeing your company from the boss's perspective.

Most people focus only on themselves. The average worker sees his job solely as a source of income and benefits. He wants to make as much money as possible, and get as many vacation days, sick days, and other benefits as possible. And he wants to get all that by doing as little work as possible. When a company policy comes down from the top, he views that policy solely from his perspective. How will it affect his pay, his benefits, or his day-to-day work environment?

The boss, on the other hand, must concern herself not only with her welfare, but with the health and viability of the organization overall. A good boss understands that if the organization falters or fails, everyone's pay and benefits are at risk. And she accepts responsibility for insuring the health of the organization. In undertaking that task, she will sometimes ask for more work and/or greater sacrifices from the employees. She'll ask for a "team" commitment to the organization overall, rather than a self-centered focus on one's own piece of the pie. It's a completely different perspective, and the higher up you go in the "boss" ranks, the more responsibility you must accept.

You do not necessarily have to be the boss to understand the boss. You certainly don't have to wait until you're a boss, before you adopt the boss's perspective. And you shouldn't wait that long. The sooner you can put yourself in the mindset of the boss, the better things will be for you on the job.

The dynamic is the same if you're a boss without direct authority. For example, I'm a pastor. As the pastor, I'm the leader of the church. But I don't have direct power or authority over the congregation. They are volunteers. They choose to be a part of the church, and for that matter, they have the power to vote me out as pastor, if they so choose. But, so long as I'm the pastor, I'm responsible for the health and welfare of the congregation. That's my role.

Shortly after being ordained and while preparing to leave my home church, my pastor brought me in his office and gave me these words of advice: "Don't think like the sheep. Think like a shepherd." The word "pastor" comes from the word "shepherd," and a church is often likened in the New Testament to a herd of sheep. My pastor was telling me to think like a leader and not a follower.

Having since served as a pastor myself, I completely understand his wisdom. When the pastor announces changes for a church, he sees the changes as necessary to improve the church overall. The individual parishioner views the changes as how they will affect him or her personally. This is what makes church politics so difficult. And if you don't think churches are political, then you don't have very much experience in churches.

Whether we're talking about your church, your job, or your neighborhood organization, do you have the mindset of a leader? If you do, keep it up. If you don't, start. Study leadership.

Choose to Improve

If you're not satisfied with your life at present, you must **choose** to improve it. Don't fall into the trap of thinking that there's no hope or that it's too much for you. While you won't be able to fix everything over night and there will be some areas over which you have (at least for now) little control, you can still improve your situation.

The Second Continental Congress euphorically declared independence from Great Britain in July 1776. By December, the cause was all but lost. George Washington's untrained Continental army had disintegrated to a poorly supplied and woefully dispirited shadow of its former self. Just a few months before, Washington had commanded an army (disorganized and unprofessional as it was) that numbered over 15,000 men, and which had forced the British out of Boston without firing a shot!

Now, in December of 1776, Washington's army had been humiliated in several disastrous battles and pushed out of New York. Chased across New Jersey, Washington's army was fading away, due to the harsh elements, inadequate supplies (including food), desertions and expiring enlistments. The American Revolution was, for all intents and purposes, over.

It was over, that is, except in the mind of George Washington! Where others saw defeat, General Washington saw ***opportunity***.

Comfortably housed in Trenton, New Jersey were the crack troops of the dreaded and feared Hessian mercenaries that King George III had sent to America to help crush the Continental army. Rather than fear the Hessians, however, as so many of Washington's soldiers and fellow officers did, the Commander-in-Chief saw an opportunity. If he could surprise the Hessians and take Trenton, it would be a stunning blow to the overconfident British.

On Christmas Night 1776, General George Washington made his move. After crossing the partly frozen Delaware River, Washington's army embarked on a dangerous and audacious trek to Trenton to attack some of the best trained troops in the world. Washington's army attacked on the morning of December 26, and the surprise was total and complete. The Hessians were unable to form up to effectively repel the attack. They were cut down in the streets by Continental bayonets and artillery. Seeing their fight was hopeless, they surrendered.

Washington followed up his victory with another at Princeton a few days later, catching a British unit off guard and escaping the clutches of General Lord Cornwallis (the same Lord Cornwallis he would face again a few years later at place called Yorktown). In the course of a few days, George Washington breathed new life into the cause of American independence. Before Trenton, the Revolutionary War was essentially over. After Washington's Trenton-Princeton campaign, the cause of American independence was burning bright once again!

General Washington saved the American Revolution. How? Put simply, George Washington refused to lose. He determined to make the best of his desperate situation. Rather than bow to what looked like inevitable defeat, Washington chose to change the

circumstances. He decided to improve his situation – and thereby the situation of the entire country.

By the way, do you know the secret pass phrase Washington used for the march on Trenton? “Victory or Death”

The Choice is Yours

There’s a story of a wise Native American chief who always had something profound to say. One day, a couple members of the tribe approached him with a trick. They held a bird in their hands, behind their backs, so the chief couldn’t see it. And they asked the chief if the bird was alive or dead. If the chief said the bird was alive, they planned to quickly kill it - and then display the corpse to show the chief his error. If he said it was dead, then they would easily produce the live bird to show the chief and all the onlookers that the old chief had lost his touch.

The chief pondered their question, and then walked away after saying these words: “It’s in your hands.”

Your life and your marriage are in your hands. Take ownership of them. And decide to make them the absolute BEST you can! The choice is yours.

SUGGESTION – Rent the movie “Fireproof” starring Kirk Cameron

STEP #2

Choose a Positive Outlook

Martha Washington once said, “I am determined to be cheerful and happy in whatever situation I may find myself. For I have learned that the greater part of our misery or unhappiness is determined not by our circumstance but by our disposition.”

Some people find themselves in desperate or deeply hurtful situations. In the course of my life, I’ve lost my father to a heart attack. He was forty-nine years of age. I was twenty-one at the time of his passing. I could’ve been bitter about that, and did occasionally lapse into some angry moods. But only on occasion did this occur. Rather than focus on losing my dad, I instead have chosen to remember the happy times *with* my dad. My dad loved me and my mother and sister. I have some wonderful memories with him. Why should I focus on the loss, when I can focus on what I gained having him as a father?

My mother was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis sometime in her thirties, when I was a young teenager. And I watched her health deteriorate over the years, until she died just a few years ago. The MS wasn’t all she had to contend with. Her body wrestled with quite a few ailments, and she endured more pain and suffering than most people would ever be able or willing to handle. Yet I watched her continually grapple with the choice of whether to surrender to the misery or to find and claim joy in her life. My mom wasn’t always successful in her choice, and there were times when depression got the best of her. In fact, her battle was made all the worse by the fact that, among her ailments, she had chemical depression – often exacerbated by the various medications

she was taking. Still, I can write that overall Mom chose to see the best in life. She consciously chose to rely on her faith in God and her love for other people to get her through. And she won the respect and love of everyone who knew her, for her courageous and loving spirit.

There have been times in my life where I haven't lived up to the example provided by my mother. In many cases, I've allowed myself to slide into anger and bitterness over life's circumstances and setbacks. And when that has occurred, it's affected my outlook in life, strained my relationships, and inhibited my ability to grow and learn.

Bitterness and unhappiness are easy emotions. They are the natural default when things are tough. But they will only hurt **you** in the long run.

Do you want to be known as a bitter and angry person? Are you known that way now? Do you want to be seen or perceived as someone who is frequently (or, worse, constantly) negative? Are you a chronic complainer? Have you been described as a "whiner"?

Please don't be upset or offended at my putting these questions to you. If you are unwilling or unable to be honest with yourself, then you are in very bad shape. It's critical that you put yourself under the microscope. Give yourself a thorough examination.

And as you examine yourself, don't just consider your own moods and behavior. Think about what your environment and the information you are taking in. Take proactive steps to fuel your mind with positive input.

Choosing a positive outlook isn't a simple matter of flipping a light switch. It's a process of firming up your character, managing your emotions, and incorporating positive and constructive habits into your life.

Achieving a positive outlook begins with God and prayer. The book of Hebrews promises that God is a "rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." I obviously recommend the Bible here, but I would also add Rick Warren's *The Purpose-Driven Life*. It's a great book that deals with the theme of living your life on purpose. As you read the Bible (and other supplemental material, like Warren's book), bathe everything in prayer. You should, as Paul says, "pray without ceasing."

In addition to exploring your relationship with God, start listening to encouraging and uplifting music, reading positive and helpful books, and watching television and movies that will make you feel good about your life. We sometimes put a lot of stuff into our minds that cause us greater stress and anxiety. Don't do it. Just as your body is a reflection of what you eat, your mind and attitude are a reflection of the information (music, TV, e-books, conversations, etc.) that you take in.

I encourage you to put yourself on a steady diet of books, e-books, articles, audios, etc. that will help develop you personally and professionally. To get you started, I recommend *The Purpose-Driven Life* by Rick Warren, *Your Best Life Now* and *A Better You* by Joel Osteen, *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman, *Winning With People* by John Maxwell, and [Save Your Christian Marriage](#) by Lee Baucom.

The bottom line is this. Be proactive and strategic in what you put into your mind.

STEP #3

Project a Positive (and Sincere) Attitude

This next step is tied very closely with the first two. You need to not only possess, but also *project* a positive attitude to everyone around you.

People don't like to be around negative people. In fact, negative people can make an atmosphere (and a home) toxic.

When I say "negative" people, I don't just mean those who are cantankerous or aggressive in their behavior, though these folks are sure included. I'm also talking about people who constantly gossip, whine, and complain.

If you wish to shine in your marriage (and, for that matter, all your relationships – in-laws, children, extended family, friends, etc.), then be known for a positive attitude! There's a huge difference in how a negative person and a positive person are seen and measured. Of course, your positive attitude must be sincere and consistent.

You can fake a positive attitude for a while – maybe even for several months. But the longer you fake it, two things will happen. First, you'll only be able to carry that ruse in one or two areas of your life. Maybe you can sustain it at work, but it'll fall apart when you get home. Second, you'll find yourself feeling (and becoming) shallow and hypocritical. In the end, you won't like yourself, as you'll know – deep down – that your reputation is built on a tenuous "house of cards." Don't go this route.

Focus on SUBSTANCE first, and *then* image. Your attitude must truly reflect your heart. Communicating a positive attitude is most effective (and, in the long run, only possible) when you truly HAVE a positive attitude.

The ancient Israelite king Solomon once wrote: “Keep your heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). If your heart is right, you’ll be able to project a bright and uplifting spirit to those around you.

How do you project this attitude? That’s simple. If it’s there, it will flow naturally. You just have to let it out. How? Smile more. That’s a start. Laugh more. Let yourself enjoy life. Work on the heart and then let yourself express that resulting joy.

SUGGESTION: *Make a list of all the things in your life for which you are thankful.*

STEP #4

Maximize Your Personal “Brand”

What’s your reputation? When people see you, what do they think? When they hear your name, what comes to their mind? Before you answer this, let’s consider an example...McDonald’s.

When you see a McDonald’s, what are your thoughts? McDonald’s has an identity – a reputation. And it’s a reputation that, at this point, is fixed in the minds of hundreds of millions of consumers around the world. This is called a “brand.” McDonald’s understands that a positive brand means more money, whereas a negative brand (or image) means less money.

Companies will invest millions of dollars to cultivate a compelling and consistent brand. Why? Because a consumer will decide whether to invest money in that company’s products or services, based on how he or she feels about that company. Companies with a positive reputation have a superior advantage in the marketplace.

As a consumer, you understand this principle. Chances are you are going to decide where to shop, based on which company you trust and appreciate the most. Many factors go into your level of trust or appreciation, including your past experience with that company, input from people you know, advertising, and more.

My father shopped based on these factors. I vividly remember how upset he would get over a bad experience at a store or restaurant. That experience would fix that company’s reputation in his mind, and would be the basis of what he thought about and said about that company from that point forward.

In one particular instance, I recall my dad getting irate with a rather clueless and fairly rude sales representative at a department store. Dad was so outraged by the store clerk that he stormed out, with me trying to keep up. He declared he would never shop there again (he didn't), and that he would forbid Mom and me from ever shopping there again (he didn't really enforce that one). That store clerk defined that department store in my Dad's mind, and the store lost him as a customer from that day forward.

Stop for a moment. Think about the companies (stores, restaurants, etc.) that you do business with or have done business with in the past. Which ones have a positive reputation in your mind? Which have a negative image?

Again, the image you have in your mind of a company isn't based solely on personal experience. You may have a positive (or negative) image of a company that you've never had any dealings with. If that is the case, consider what has informed your perception of that company.

Let's take the Nintendo Wii. I don't own a Wii and, in fact, have never played a Wii. But I nevertheless have an image of Nintendo and its product, based on advertising, input from my friends, and seeing others play it. Right now, I can tell you that I will probably (at some point – perhaps even soon) invest in a Wii.

You can think about any company or product – and they all have a “brand,” an identity or reputation that they are trying to emphasize, shape, or change.

The same is true with people. People have identities and reputations. They have brands. And that means...YOU have a brand. And guess what...people will interact with you and think about you, according to your brand.

What's this got to do marriage? Answer: **Everything.**

Your spouse will relate with you, based on your “brand” – your reputation in his or her eyes. Does your spouse see you as childish? Does your spouse consider you selfish? Are you thought of as dependable? Are you seen as neat or a slob? Are you considered thoughtful or clueless, gentle or cruel? And on and on.

Note that these questions all deal with perception and perspective. You may consider yourself to be selfless and compassionate, but does your wife or husband see you in that way? How your spouse sees you is what matters here.

And don't think you can change your mate's perspective through verbal persuasion or attack. Won't happen. Your reputation is based on what your mate SEES, HEARS, and EXPERIENCES in his/her relationship with you.

So, here's my challenge. Don't get defensive here. Take some time to honestly ask yourself the kind of “image” you put off. Try asking some close friends (and promise them that you're looking for honesty and won't hold their answers against them). Ask your spouse (and make the same, sincere promise you made to your friends).

STEP #5

Reaffirm and Refuel Your Faith

Let me briefly address this fifth and final step – insofar as the foundation goes, anyway. There's still work to do, even after your foundation is solid. But if you don't get the foundation solid, you're building on shaky ground.

In order to truly shore up your foundation, you need to confront the issue of faith. Do you sincerely, truly, and fully believe in and trust in God? Let me ask that again...

Do you REALLY, TRULY, DEEP DOWN believe in God?

And...do you TRUST God?

If you believe in and trust God, then my next question is....Does your life show it? And (related to that) do your views reflect it?

Are you praying, showing a good testimony, engaged in a local church, etc.?

Don't be double-minded here. Be true to yourself and your faith. If you believe in and trust in God, and if you believe in Jesus, then your life (and your home) should reflect these things. Don't compartmentalize God. Don't sideline Him. Make Him your number one priority – and keep Him there.

STEP #6

Reaffirm Your Commitment to Your Spouse

If you haven't followed the previous five steps....STOP. Go back. Review the first five steps. Work on them first, before going to this one. Because, if you haven't worked on those, THIS one will seem impossible and (for some of you) undesirable.

It's time to ask yourself a seemingly trite, but very profound question...

DO YOU LOVE YOUR SPOUSE?

Before you answer that question, I did NOT ask...

Do you *FEEL* love for your spouse?

That question is entirely different. I asked....

Do you LOVE your spouse?

Love is a decision. It's an action. It's a commitment. Love is not a feeling.

Many people don't agree with that last statement, and therein lies a huge percentage of the problems with marriage in our society today. Love is not a feeling or a set of feelings. It is ACCOMPANIED by feelings, but it is not a feeling in and of itself.

In the movie "Fireproof" (which you MUST see – if you have not), Caleb's friend tells him not so much to "follow your heart" but that "You've got to LEAD your heart!" What profound words of wisdom!

Right now, TODAY, make a decision to LEAD YOUR HEART! Make your feelings follow YOU – and NOT the other way around!

This also means that you don't let the OTHER person dictate your feelings either. You lead your heart. You lead your feelings. NOT your husband or wife. YOU!

**DISCLAIMER: If you are in an abusive situation, GET OUT and GET HELP!*

Don't make a commitment to stay living in a home that's dangerous for you and your children.

Get help....NOW.

Right now, you may not be happy. Assuming you are not in a dangerous and abusive situation (see disclaimer above), you need to take responsibility for your happiness – not in a desperate, reactive way. Rather, you must lead your feelings to security and happiness.

How can we do this? The answer is found in Proverbs....

“Commit your works to the LORD, and your thoughts will be established.”

(Prov. 16:3, NKJV)

If you don't have your feelings of love right now for your spouse, then here's what you do...

1. DECIDE to love your spouse and RE-COMMIT to your marriage. This is a decision and not a feeling! And you CAN make that decision, regardless of the circumstances (though, again, see the disclaimer on abusive situations).
2. Ask God's help. Pray. Pray. And pray some more. Tell God you are committed to your marriage and to loving your spouse, but you need His help.

3. ACT on your decision! This is the simple, but very hard part. How do you act on your love – when you have no feelings of love? Answer....The same way you get up in the morning to go to work, even though you don't "feel" like it! You have to DO THE RIGHT THINGS – even when you don't want to!

What does that last point mean in practice? Simple....Write a love note to your husband or wife (even if you don't FEEL the words). Are you lying? No! Because love is NOT a feeling. It's a decision. It's an act.

Another idea...take your husband or wife out to dinner or on a date...even if you don't feel like it.

KISS your husband and wife. Hold hands. TOUCH your spouse. And I'm not really referring to sexual touch here, although that can be part of it. What I'm talking about is a loving touch – a reassuring touch of presence and affection! You must do these things – even if you don't feel like it.

And here's what will happen....You will START to feel like it, after a while. It may take a while. It may take weeks or even months of awkwardness. Probably not THAT long. But it might. Prepare yourself for that. What will happen, though, is that – in time – you will start to get those FEELINGS back, as they will ultimately FOLLOW your decisions and actions.

STEP #7

Don't Give Up

Winston Churchill's most memorable commencement speech was only a few words. "Never, Never, Never, Never, Never Give Up!" declared the former British Prime Minister many years ago to a bunch of college students expecting more from the eloquent world leader. But what they heard was a principle they would never forget!

Don't GIVE UP!

I'm not going to tell you that rebuilding or repairing your marriage is easy. What I will tell you is that it's WORTH it! And it can happen – with God's guidance and love and with YOUR commitment not to give up.

So, hang in there! Don't give up!

FOR MORE INFORMATION

"Christian Marriage Helper"

<http://www.ChristianMarriageHelper.com>

"Save My Christian Marriage"

<http://www.savemychristianmarriage.net>

Pastor Brian Tubbs

<http://www.PastorTubbs.com>

