

B. Checking the Owner's Manual

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper as his complement." (or a helper suitable for him) Gen. 2:18

"Wives, understand and support your husbands in ways that show your support for Christ. The husband provides leadership to his wife the way Christ does to his church, not by domineering but by cherishing. So just as the church submits to Christ as he exercises such leadership, wives should likewise submit to their husbands. Husbands, go all out in your love for your wives, exactly as Christ did for the church—a love marked by giving, not getting. Christ's love makes the church whole. His words evoke her beauty. Everything he does and says is designed to bring the best out of her, dressing her in dazzling white silk, radiant with holiness. And that is how husbands ought to love their wives." Ephesians 5:22-25 (The Message)

"Husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way..." 1 Peter 3:7

C. Choose our attitudes and actions and feelings will follow

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Philippians 2:5-8

IV. Simple, Biblical Choices We Can Make to Make Marriage Great Again

A. Choose to view your marriage as a covenant rather than a contract

"Rejoice in the wife of your youth." (Prov. 5:18)

"People who enter marriage thinking of it as a contract will usually be disappointed. On many occasions both parties will fail to live up their end of the implicit agreement. That is simply the nature of human existence. However, people who view marriage as a lifelong covenant that depends on their own pledge and honor, not their partner's perfect adherence to a contract, can better tolerate the inevitable misunderstandings. Furthermore, the covenantal understanding of marriage promotes devotion. Partners expect to be together. Therefore, a covenantal view of marriage actually results in fewer breaches of the implicit contract."

Everett Worthington, Hope-Focused Marriage Counseling

B. Choose to Make God the Center of Your Marriage

"Couples in which both partners agree that 'God is at the center of our marriage' are twice as likely to report that they are very happy than those who do not agree." Dr. Brad Wilcox in Surprising Secrets of Happy Marriages

"Highly happy couples tend to put God at the center of their marriage and focus on Him, rather than on their marriage or spouse, for fulfillment and happiness." Shaunti Feldhahn, Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages

"Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives." Colossians 3:16

C. Choose to Believe the Best About Your Partner

"Highly happy spouses choose to believe their mate cares for them—no matter what they're seeing from their spouse or feeling at the time—and they act accordingly." Shaunti Feldhahn, Surprising Secrets of Happy Marriages

D. Choose to Communicate Openly and Resolve Conflict Without Drama

Two most common problem areas and most important tools in toolbox

Each partner needs to be able to share their deepest needs & desires without fear of criticism, making it safe for their partner to do the same

Conflicts need to be resolved without anger in a way that satisfies both partners; unresolved conflict causes anger and resentment

"Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry." James 1:19

E. Choose to Love and Forgive

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." Col. 1:12-14

"Couples with long-term successful marriages have identified forgiveness as one of the top three qualities responsible for their marital success."

Everett Worthington, Hope Focused Marriage Counseling

"Bitterness is the enemy of love, because it makes you unforgiving and unwilling to give love unconditionally. It is the enemy of hope because you keep living in the past and become incapable of seeing a better future."

Erwin McManus

Generosity as the key to long-term marital happiness:

"Marital generosity is one of the greatest contributing factors to happy marriages. Generosity is defined as being when one partner will simply do nice things for the other, getting nothing in return."

Dr. Brad Wilcox, Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages

Using Five Love Languages to better connect with your partner

- Words of Affirmation
 - Quality Time
 - Receiving Gifts
 - Acts of Service
 - Physical Touch
- From The Five Love Languages, by Dr. Gary Chapman

F. Choose to Cultivate Your Friendship

Friendship: One of the most powerful predictors of marital satisfaction

"Married couples who spent some sort of time talking or sharing an activity at least once a week were five times more likely to be "very happy" in their marriages than those who didn't." Dr. Brad Wilcox, quoted in Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages

Making Marriage Great Again
November 26-27, 2016 By Gary Post

“Highly happy couples aren't just spending time together because they are happy; a big part of the reason they're so happy is that they are spending time together.” Shaunti Feldhaun, Surprising Secrets...

A wife's #1 need in marriage: Emotional Intimacy:

"If you're not talking regularly with your wife on a personal level, I have some bad news for you: She doesn't feel loved by you. The number one desire of your wife's heart is to be close to you."

Dr. David Clarke, I Don't Want a Divorce

G. Choose to Do the Small Things that Make a Big Difference

1. The Fantastic Five for Him

- She notices his effort and sincerely thanks him for it.
- She says, “You did a great job at _____.”
- She mentions in front of others something he did well.
- She shows that she desires him sexually and that he pleases her.
- She makes it clear to him that he makes her happy.

2. The Fantastic Five for Her

- He takes her hand when walking through a parking lot or at the movies
- He leaves her a voicemail, email or text to let her know he is thinking of her
- He puts his arm around her or his hand on her knee when in public together
- He tells her sincerely that she is beautiful
- He pulls himself out of a funk when he is upset instead of withdrawing emotionally

From Surprising Secrets of Highly Happy Marriages, by Shaunti Feldhahn

V. Conclusion

- A. All truth is God's truth--best relationship advisor is not Cosmo, but God Himself, the One who designed marriage at creation.
- B. Healthy, satisfying, long term relationships happen because of choices we make and "things we do" deliberately to unselfishly meet the needs of our partner and cultivate our core friendship.
- C. If we immerse ourselves in what God has to say about our marriages, and then we choose our attitudes and actions based on His truth, we will be able to say along with Shulamith, Solomon's beautiful lover in the Song of Solomon, "This is my beloved, and this is my friend."

"God created marriage. No government subcommittee envisioned it. No social organization developed it. Marriage was conceived and born in the mind of God."

Max Lucado

I. Overcoming Strongholds That Keep Us From God's Best For Us

A. Eric Mason, "Unleashed" Men's Study on "Overcoming Strongholds"

“Though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ....”

II Corinthians 10:3-6-5

"Strongholds are fleshly arguments that resist the Word of God. Strongholds compete in our minds with God and His Word. They're systems of unbelief that inhibit our ability to grow through the sanctifying work of the gospel of Christ by faith." Eric Mason, Unleashed

B. *Cultural* strongholds that influence our thinking and keep us from growth

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.” I Corinthians 6:19-20

“Delight yourself in the Lord, and He will give you the desires of your heart.”

Psalm 37:4

“Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.” Matthew 6:33

II. Strongholds that Strangle Marriages and God's Truth that Frees Them

A. Stronghold #1: I should allow my feelings to dictate my relationship decisions and actions

God's truth applied using our reason determines godly actions

Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. Hebrews 13:4

B. Stronghold #2: Marriage is a temporary "contract" valid as you meet my needs and make me happy.

“...in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.” Phil. 2:3-4

C. Stronghold #3: Marriage is "magical," and should require no effort; if the "magic" is gone, there is no fix and it's time to move on.

"You've Lost that Lovin Feeling," the Righteous Brothers

"Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ." Gal. 6:2

III. What God Says About What Makes a Marriage Work?

A. It's Not Magic—It's About Things We Do