

Take Your Marriage Back

No Matter What

Brigham Young University
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"A great marriage is predicted not so much by your finding the right partner as by your being the right partner."



What About Commitment?

A well circulated joke starts like this: A farmer and his wife went into town for their yearly medical checkup. After the farmer completed the examination, the doctor invited him to leave the room so that he could speak with the wife alone. The doctor then informed the wife that her husband had a very serious disease. The doctor continued, "He must not have any stress in his life. In fact, you will need to do all of his chores and make him three nice meals a day." The farmer's wife began to fidget, but the doctor continued, "You must be available for him and do things with him, such as watch sports. Do not do anything that would upset him. Without this kind of special treatment, he will die."

The wife then asked, "How long will I need to do this for? A week? A month?"

"No," the doctor replied. "You will need to keep this up for at least a year. After that, we'll do another checkup and hopefully clear him with a bill of good health."

Later, on the way home from the clinic, the farmer asked, "What did the doctor tell you?" His wife replied, "You're going to die."

Most Putts Don't Drop

"Anyone who imagines that bliss is normal is going to waste a lot of time running around shouting that he has been robbed. The fact is that most putts don't drop, most beef is tough, most children grow up to be just people, most successful marriages require a high degree of mutual toleration, most jobs are more often dull than otherwise. Life is like an old-time rail journey - delays, sidetracks, smoke, dust, cinders, and jolts interspersed only occasionally by beautiful vistas and thrilling bursts of speed. The trick is to thank the Lord for letting you have the ride" (Gordon B. Hinckley, *Evening with a General Authority*, September 1980).



Marriage Takes Work

"Two people coming from different backgrounds soon learn after the ceremony is performed that stark reality must be faced. There is no longer a life of fantasy or of make-believe; we must come out of the clouds and put our feet firmly on the earth. Responsibility must be assumed and new duties must be accepted. Some personal freedoms must be relinquished and many adjustments, unselfish adjustments, must be made."

"One comes to realize very soon after marriage that the spouse has weaknesses not previously revealed or discovered. The virtues that were constantly magnified during courtship now grow relatively smaller, and the weaknesses that seemed so small and insignificant during courtship now grow to sizeable proportions. The hour has come for understanding hearts, for self-appraisal, and for good common sense, reasoning, and planning" (*Marriage and Divorce*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976, 12-13).



Marriage is Not Easy

"Marriage never was easy. It may never be," President Spencer W. Kimball has said. "It brings with it sacrifice, sharing, and a demand for great selflessness. ... It has come to be a common thing to talk about divorce. The minute there is a little crisis or a little argument in the family, we talk about divorce, and we rush to see an attorney. This is not the way of the Lord. We should go back and adjust our problems and make our marriage compatible and sweet and blessed" (*Marriage and Divorce*, pp. 12, 30-31).

Marriage is Work!

"Marriage is not an easy venture. It is largely a one-time-through, do-it-yourself project for the husband and wife. I repeatedly encounter the illusion today, especially among younger people, that perfect marriages happen simply if the right two people come together. This is untrue. Marriages don't succeed automatically. Those who build happy, secure, successful marriages pay the price to do so. They work at it constantly" (Dean L. Larsen, *Ensign*, March 1985, 20).



Matrimonial Sea is Never Serene and Calm

"Have you ever heard an old sea-captain boast that in all his experience he had never seen a squally sea, never a dull, heavy, storm-laden sky, never heard the tempest shriek through the rigging, and threaten to tear away the masts? His pride is in his skill, not in his luck. The matrimonial sea never remains absolutely serene and calm, with no ruffling waves for years at a time. The vital point is that the storms have all been weathered in safety and the love and trust, purified by time, remain undaunted."



Marriage Is A Long Cruise Across Uncharted Seas!

William Jordan then made another interesting observation: "In the days of courtship two may feel that they thoroughly understand each other, and that no matter how many marriages may fail *their* happiness together is absolutely assured. Yet courtship is only the kindergarten class of matrimony. Courtship is the preliminary canter, not the real race. It is the matrimonial shopping; marriage is the acceptance of the unreturnable delivered goods. Courtship is the joyous, sunshine launching of the craft of hope; marriage is the long cruise across uncharted seas. The two now pass under the test of new conditions; they face new problems and enter a life of finer attunement, of constant call on patience, tolerance, forbearance, concession, kindness, sympathy and wise understanding." (*Improvement Era*, July 1911, pp. 787–88.)

All Marriages Have Conflict

"Why, we have been married for fifty years, and we have never had a difference of opinion." If that is literally the case, then one of the partners is overly dominated by the other or, as someone said, is a stranger to the truth. *Any intelligent couple will have differences of opinion. Our challenge is to be sure that we know how to resolve them. That is part of the process of making a good marriage better* (CR, April 1995, p. 86; emphasis added).



Doctrinal Foundations

- Matthew 19:5-6
- D&C 42:22

"Each partner must have a strong commitment to the marriage if it is to survive the inevitable hardships brought on by modern-day pressures. **Commitment produces a feeling of stability, which assures both individuals that although disagreements may surface, the marriage is their top priority and will be preserved.** This allows both to feel safe—without the fear that every problem that arises will lead to greater difficulties.

Challenge: We Live in a Disposable/Consumer Society

- People don't stay in communities their entire lives
- Careers change quickly
- If we don't like something, we throw it away and get a new one.
- Everything is disposable
- "With our society driven more and more by instant everything, many of us are losing the awareness that some of the best things in life take longer and aren't enjoyed until, like ripe fruit, they're ready to be picked" (Gary Smalley, *Making Love Last Forever*, [Dallas: Word Publishing, 1996], 267).

Lackluster Commitment

As James Dobson has said, "Too many couples today go into marriage with one eye on the exit door."



A Good Dose of "No Matter What"

- A strong marriage must have commitment
- No matter what comes your way, no matter what the trial, no matter what the challenge, you are committed— ***NO MATTER WHAT!!***



Studies on Marriage Commitment

- **Successful marriages require a high degree of motivation:** the desire to make the marriage work and a willingness to expend personal time and effort to make sure it does.
- **Marital success is more attainable if the commitment is mutual.** One person can't build a relationship or save a marriage, no matter how much he or she tries.
- Commitment to Whom: 1) the Savior, 2) Spouse, 3) Family



No Matter What

Couple, Artis and Pam, made T-shirts with **NMW**- "No Matter What"

"Every marriage will have its better and worse times, its springs and summers and falls and winters. Forever-love allows that full range of seasons. Enjoy the bright colors and the warmth of good days. Accept the dark, rainy days, the cold of winter, and the hot summer winds of disagreement and of waiting for someone to say, 'I'm sorry. I was wrong. I love you. Will you forgive me?' (Gary Smalley, *Making Love Last Forever*, [Dallas: Word Publishing, 1996], 267).



Best Insurance Against Stale Marriage

- Not only a commitment to the marriage
- **But, a commitment to growth in the marriage**
- David Mace, dean of American Marriage Counselors suggests that **commitment to growth should be the number one wedding vow!** (David Mace, *How to Have a Happy Marriage* [Nashville: Abington, 1978], 30).

Threats to Commitment

1. Let Your Marriage Go Stale

- **Couples don't fall out of love; they become disconnected.**
- **Remember, the opposite of love is not hate, but indifference!**

Threats to Commitment

2. In times of crisis, pull apart instead of together

"A couple may have poverty, illness, disappointment, failures, and even death in the family, but even these will not rob them of their peace. The marriage can be successful so long as selfishness does not enter in. Troubles and problems will draw parents together into unbreakable unions if there is total unselfishness there. During the depression of the 1930s there was a definite drop in divorce. Poverty, failures, disappointment— they tied parents together. Adversity can cement relationships that prosperity can destroy" (President Spencer W. Kimball, *Marriage and Divorce*, [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], 19, 22).

Threats to Commitment

3. Have uncommon goals, or no goals at all!

Couples tend to go different directions through the years of marriage. Often they find after ten or twenty years of marriage, that they have nothing in common. Set goals together, and take up hobbies that both of you can do!

Threats to Commitment

4. Do not nurture or care for your partner in the marriage

All of us should ask, "What have I done lately for our marriage or my spouse?" We have to renew our marriage every day. If you were to ask you spouse today, "Will you marry me?" What would they say?

Feed and Nurture Each Other

"Love is like a flower, and, like the body, it needs constant feeding. The mortal body would soon be emaciated and die if there were not frequent feedings. The tender flower would wither and die without food and water. And so love, also, cannot be expected to last forever unless it is continually fed with portions of love, the manifestations of esteem and admiration, the expressions of gratitude, and the consideration of unselfishness.... Many couples permit their marriages to become stale and their love to grow cold like old bread or worn out jokes or cold gravy. Certainly the foods most vital for love are consideration, kindness, thoughtfulness, concern, expressions of affection, embraces or appreciation, admiration, pride, companionship, confidence, faith, partnership, equality, and dependence" (President Spencer W. Kimball, *Marriage*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978, pp. 46-47).



Threats To Commitment

5. Put everything else first in your life, and give your marriage whatever is left over. Which is often nothing but fumes at 11:55 p.m.

"Our marriage relationships ought to be a top priority. Our marriages ought to come before everything but our relationship with God" (*Church News*, 7 July 1990, 16).

Threats to Commitment

6. Do not have connection rituals or events to celebrate your love, marriage, and commitment



Threats to Commitment

7. Do not make the gospel the foundation for your marriage

"Marriage is often referred to as a partnership with God. This is not a figure of speech. If this partnership remains strong and active, the man and woman will love each other as they love God, and there will come into their home a sweetness and affection that will bring eternal success" (Howard W. Hunter, *The Teachings of Howard W. Hunter* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002], 130).

Threats to Commitment

8. Do Not Accept Responsibility for Problems

President Spencer W. Kimball said, **"If each spouse submits to frequent self-analysis and measures his own imperfections by the yardstick of perfection and the Golden Rule, and if each spouse sets about to correct self in every deviation found by such analysis rather than to set about to correct the deviations in the other party, then transformation comes and happiness is the result.** There are many pharisaic people who marry who should memorize the parable of the Savior in Luke—people who prate their own virtues against the weaknesses of the spouse. They say, 'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all I possess.' (See **Luke 18:9–14.**)" (*Marriage and Divorce*, Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, p. 19.)

Ephesians 5:22-33



- Eph. 5:22-33 (1486) The principle of sacrifice & commitment (XR Matthew 2:6)

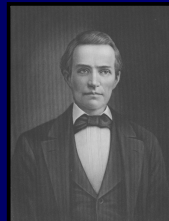
"You are to love your wife as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it (see Ephesians 5:25-31). Tenderness and respect—never selfishness must be the guiding principles in the intimate relationship between husband and wife. Each partner must be considerate and sensitive to the others needs and desires" (President Howard W. Hunter, *CR*, October 1994, p. 68).

No Matter What

"I was head over heels in love with Peter and had been dating him for a couple of weeks when I knew how serious we were both feeling. I knew there was something I had to talk to him about but was afraid—would he leave me? I have multiple sclerosis and had been in and out of a wheelchair already. (I was diagnosed at 18). I was afraid that once he found out I was 'less than perfect' he would leave for someone better. But we sat down together and I told him, knowing the possibilities. He turned to me, held my hand and looked into my eyes as he said, 'Deb, if you are going to be in a wheelchair for the rest of your life, I am going to be there to push it.' I knew that I could never be with anyone else"—

-- Debbie, Married for 19 Years and Still Going Strong!

Catherine & Orson Spencer



Commitment to the Lord

- I have always been intrigued by President Kimball's observation that every divorce is a product of selfishness. However, I have recently been even more fascinated by a comment made by the late Stephen L. Richards, member of the First Presidency. He said:
- **"There never could be a divorce in this Church if the husband and wife were keeping the commandments of God"** (Stephen L. Richards, *CR*, April 1949, p. 136).
- In a similar vein, President Kimball taught:
- **"When a husband and wife go together frequently to the holy temple, kneel in prayer together in their home with their family, go hand in hand to their religious meetings, keep their lives wholly chaste, mentally and physically, and both are working together for the upbuilding of the kingdom of God, then happiness is at its pinnacle"** (Spencer W. Kimball, *Marriage and Divorce* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976], p. 24).

The Law of Continued Courtship

- Commitment to marriage means commitment to continuing your love for each other. As President Spencer W. Kimball counseled in a 1973 fireside talk at Brigham Young University, **"Almost all marriages could be beautiful, harmonious, and happy, and eternal ones, if the two people primarily involved would determine that it should be, that it must be, that it will be."**
- What about continuing courtship? I Corinthians 7
- **"Too many couples have come to the altar of marriage looking upon the marriage ceremony as the end of courtship instead of the beginning of an eternal courtship."** (President David O. McKay, *Improvement Era*, June 1956, p. 396.)
- **"There must be continued courting and expressions of affection, kindness, and consideration to keep love alive and growing"** (President Spencer W. Kimball, *Ensign*, March 1977, 4).

Babysitters Are Cheaper Than Divorces!

"Dating is an important part of marriage. Friday night dates have long been recommended to enhance marital relations. Finding a reliable babysitter to enable a couple to go out alone or with other couples at least once a week is an important part of strengthening marital relations. **Couples must have time away from children and telephones to renew their companionship, to remind each other of their unique strengths as individuals and as a partnership, and to keep courtship alive and vibrant.** Such excuses as 'There isn't any time,' 'We can't afford it,' ... 'We live in Dullsville,' or 'There is nothing to do' are weak" (Douglas E. Brinley, *Strengthening Your Marriage and Family*, [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994], 183-184).

Relationships Built on Time

"Relationships are strengthened by spending positive time together, when each can share feelings about life and living. If married people are to be therapists to each other— one of the most important roles each plays— there must be time for that joint therapy. Building frequent memories together will be welcome deposits to the marital bank account.

Relationships Are Not Built on a Single Strength

"Strong relationships are not built on a single strength, such as sexual intimacy, but on a consistent exchange of a variety of investments in each other. If sex were the only attraction between two marrieds, it would be like playing a single note on the piano when the potential exists for an entire symphony. **There is nothing as therapeutic as two committed, covenant people bouncing along arm in arm, continuing their courtship and watching their feelings bloom into a full, sweet-spirited, mature love that really is worthy of an eternal stamp"** (Douglas E. Brinley, *Strengthening Your Marriage and Family*, [Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1994], 184).

Critical Key!

- Dating may be more important after marriage than before!!!
- So, what are you going to do?
- Plan out the next 4 dates in your marriage. Each Spouse takes 2. Ready go!!!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Ideas for Restoring Oneness in Marriage:

1. *Have goals together as a couple and review them often.* I'm sure you wouldn't be surprised that when I ask couples about goals, they look at me with a blank stare.
2. *Attend the temple together.* Returning to the temple as a married couple will help you keep your eternal vows in focus
2. *Weekly Couple Meeting,* each Sunday. A time for goals, reviewing the calendar, working on weaknesses; planning meals, budget and financial issues, teaching the gospel. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.
3. *Night and Morning Prayer ...* to say thanks, to ask for help in your marriage and family, to worship together. Read and study together as a couple.
4. *A Daily Phone Call or Personal Conversation ...* to say "I love you," to touch base, to discuss the day, to show you care.

Ideas for Restoring Oneness in Marriage

5. *Write notes, love letters, and emails to each other.* The surprise of discovering love notes will strengthen and enhance the relationship.
6. *Exercise together.* Especially walking. Many couples have made a habit of this optimal connection time.
7. *A Weekly Date ...* to a favorite park, a concert, the library, the gym; or staying home for a candlelight dinner, a game, or a mutual hobby. Dating your spouse weekly has everything to do with being the right person. Love is a daily decision and a daily portion keeps the marriage alive.
8. *Daily Service ...* helping with house or yard work, mending a piece of clothing, taking a turn with the sick baby, fixing a favorite meal. (*Write it down. Do it!*)
9. *Daily Scripture Reading ...* to learn the gospel, to receive inspiration for yourself and your marriage, to become more like Jesus.

Ideas for Restoring Oneness in Marriage

10. *Working Together* ... caring for a garden, painting a bedroom, washing the car, scrubbing floors, building a piece of furniture, writing a poem together, team teaching a class.
11. *Courtesies* ... like saying please and thank you, not interrupting or belittling, not doing all the talking, continuing the niceties of courtship.
12. *Occasional Gifts* ... such as a note, a needed item—but mostly gifts of time and self.
13. *Pillow talk with no TV!* "Every couple ... should discover the value of pillow-talk time at the end of the day—the perfect time to take inventory, to talk about tomorrow. And best of all, it's a time when love and appreciation for one another can be reconfirmed. The end of another day is also the perfect setting to say, "Sweetheart, I am sorry about what happened today. Please forgive me" (Elder Robert L. Simpson, *Ensign*, May, 1982, 21).

Ideas for Restoring Oneness in Marriage

14. *Showing Your Children that Your Marriage Comes First.* Set boundaries. Let your children know that you are in a conversation or activity with your spouse, and that takes priority. You will attend to the child's needs in a moment. Have a Check in time. Ritual half hour before bed each night to talk. Hot tub each night. 30 minutes when husband gets home from work. That is couple time. Door is closed. No interruptions.

"I don't hold out my own marriage as a model for all couples. And I don't mean to imply that we had no struggles with our children, or made no mistakes. We had our share of both. But I know we did one thing well: we taught our children that we valued our marriage without devaluing them, that more for us meant more for them, that we were mates before we were parents, and that in the solar system of our family, our marriage was the sun and the children the planets, rather than the other way around" (Doherty and Carlson, *Putting Family First*, p. 137).

The Bonus Key

- Get away together. Go rent a hotel room for a night. With Priceline, Hotwire, and other websites, Hotel deals are a dime a dozen
- At least once a year, if not every six months, you should get away for a 48 hour retreat.
- A must: Cruise once a year, if not every other. Ok, how about every major anniversary



A Lesson From Crabgrass

"Susan and I learned this not long ago when we planted grass in our backyard. As it started to grow, so did the crabgrass. So many neighbors and friends told us about the crabgrass in our new lawn that we soon began to believe the crabgrass would prevail. And for a while it did. The neighborhood consensus was that the lawn could not survive. Anyone could see that, just by looking at it! The crabgrass was so tall that the little blades of new lawn were barely visible.

"One neighbor told us to simply start over. He showed us how to spray the yard with a chemical that would kill everything. Another neighbor offered us his tiller. We were discouraged, to say the least. It had taken us several months to get even this far with our new lawn. We'd had to dig up rocks, bring in topsoil, level, fertilize, and prepare the area for the lawn seed.

A Lesson from Crabgrass

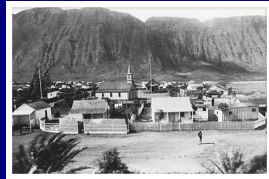
"While we were trying to make a decision, I stopped by a greenhouse one day with a few blades of the crabgrass. I described our plight to an elderly man who looked like he knew something about plants and grass. "That's not crabgrass; it's orchard grass," he said. "Just give your lawn a little more water, fertilizer, and time. As the new lawn grows, it will soon crowd out the orchard grass." We followed his advice and now have a backyard of beautiful, thriving lawn.

"Marriage also has its discouraging moments once in a while—a little unwanted crabgrass. And sometimes we may just want to give up the good in order to get rid of the bad. But the advice from the man at the nursery still seems pertinent. Give it a little more attention, make a little more effort, and the good experiences can eventually crowd out the bad ones. Focus your effort and attention on the lawn rather than on the crabgrass" (Brent A. Barlow, "The Highs and Lows of Marriage," *Ensign*,

Whole Souled Devotion

In his April 1990 general conference address, President Howard W. Hunter described the required level of commitment. He said: "Ultimately, what our Father in Heaven will require of us is ... a total commitment, a complete devotion, all that we are and all that we can be." (*Ensign*, May 1990, p. 60.) He spoke of the level of dedication one needs to manifest toward God and the Church, but his words are no less relevant in describing the relationship between husband and wife. This kind of total commitment, chosen for the right reasons, allows both partners to feel safety and security which can help them reach their greatest individual and joint development.

Jonathan Napela



The Savior Should Be the Foundation of Our Commitment

- From the family proclamation we learn that "Happiness in Family life is most likely to be achieved when founded upon the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ."
- If your marriage relationship is built on the Savior and his teachings, you will be happy and successful. In another General Conference address, President Hunter reminded us that, "...**what ever Jesus lays his hands upon lives**" (*Ensign*, Nov. 1979, 65).
- President Hunter added that if Jesus lays his hands on a marriage, it will live. Likewise, if Jesus lays his hands upon a family or a husband or wife, they will live. That is, they will thrive, they will grow, they will develop, they will heal, and they will succeed. The same promise is true for couples who are engaged. The Savior will help your relationship thrive, and grow, and move forward. To claim such blessings, he must be the centerpiece of your lives.

The Sure Foundation

"I regard it as an incontrovertible fact that in no marriage circle can true peace, love, purity, chastity, and happiness be found, in which is not present the Spirit of Christ, and the daily, hourly striving after loving obedience to his divine commands, and especially the nightly prayer expressing gratitude for blessings received" (President David O. McKay, *Gospel Ideals*, 473).