

3 P'S OF MARRIAGE

Pray>Plan>Practice

First Step: Pray

Philippians 4:6 - Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

1 Thessalonians 5:17 - Pray without ceasing.

Mark 11:24 - Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive [them], and ye shall have [them].

John 15:7 - If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.

Matthew 21:22 - And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.

1 John 5:14-15 - And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:

Psalms 55:17 - Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and he shall hear my voice.

Matthew 18:19 - Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.

Hebrews 4:16 - Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Ephesians 3:20 - Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

Your **marriage** has the potential to bless both you and your spouse in significant ways. So don't settle for less than the best in your marriage. Go after the best God has for you and your spouse by praying big prayers for your marriage. **Here's how:**

Be specific. Rather than praying general, vague prayers such as "Lord, please bless our marriage," present specific requests to God. The more you focus your prayers, the more direct responses you'll receive.

Be bold. Jesus emphasized the importance of approaching God with confidence, asking boldly for what you'd like. Don't be timid when you pray for your marriage. Remember that God wants to give you good gifts that are in line with His will. Don't just pray to get by; pray to excel in your marriage. Go ahead and ask God to do whatever you'd like Him to do in your marriage.

Pray for your husband. Pray that your husband will: love the Bible and read it regularly, hate sin, love to pray, welcome Christian community in his life and be accountable to at least one Christian man, love to worship, understand the significance of fighting for his family spiritually, be a mighty man of God. Ask God to fill your husband with the Holy Spirit each day and make him a great leader in your marriage and family.

Pray for your wife. Ask for the grace to treat your wife as well as Jesus treats you. Pray for the humility you need to be a gentle leader in your marriage. Pray for peace in your home, and maturity for you and your wife as you deal with your disagreements. Ask God to strengthen your wife's faith; help her love to pray, worship, and read the Bible, convict her of sin and make her quick to repent, and help her follow where He is leading you both in your marriage. Pray for the ability to see your wife as God sees her and appreciate the gift she is to you.

Pray for your marriage's mission. Ask God for the ability to see beyond just the two of you to the greater world and how your marriage can be a blessing in it.

Ask God to use your marriage to touch other people's lives in positive ways, contributing to God's kingdom on earth.

Pray for a vision of how God wants to use you and your spouse to serve others. Ask God to show you a group of people, a part of the world, or an area of life that you and your spouse are both passionate about and could impact together. Then ask God to lead you to a ministry opportunity in that area.

Commit your marriage fully to God and ask Him to constantly show you and your spouse how you can best leverage your time, resources, and skills for God's kingdom. Be a couple that TRANSFORMS those around you for the better.

Second Step: Plan

The process of getting married is an important exciting, joyous, and of course stressful time. Planning a wedding is a big project and most couples feel a sense of relief when their wedding is behind them. Weekends can again focus on leisurely activities rather than appointments, and couples now have time to focus on planning their marriage, right?

Although not always common practice, research has found that couples who plan their marriage—before marriage, just as they plan their wedding, experience higher levels of marital satisfaction and greater relationship longevity. It is important for couples to delve into topics related to financial and family planning, sex, real estate, career goals, hopes and dreams for the future, division of chores in the home and so on. Although these topics may have been brushed upon while dating, successful marriages continually discuss and revisit these important topics.

While you and your spouse may not always agree, it is important that you share your vision for the future and listen to your spouse's vision. This process will deepen your understanding of each other's needs and wants and will increase your level of intimacy.

Additionally, you and your spouse will begin to influence each other, an important aspect of a marriage, and will create a mutually desirable plan for the marriage you both dream of.

It takes work to have a healthy marriage, but it is possible. Just like good nutrition and regular exercise can help you to have a healthy body, there are things you can do to have a healthy marriage.

Here are things you should include in your plan:

1) Plan to Spend Time with Each Other.

Married people need time with each other in order to grow strong together. Plan regularly scheduled **date nights** and weekend activities. If a getaway is not immediately possible, then make it a goal toward which you will work.

2) Plan to Learn how to Negotiate Conflict.

Conflict is a normal part of a relationship. There is a point, however, when it can increase in intensity and become emotionally and sometimes physically unsafe. Working out problems in a relationship starts with understanding what your issues are and how to discuss them.

3) Plan on Showing Respect for Each Other at All Times.

When a couple fails to respect each other, they often slip into negative habits. Nothing can damage a relationship quicker than criticisms and put-downs.

Treating your spouse as you would like to be treated will do a lot to **strengthen the bond between you.**

Paying your spouse a compliment is a quick and easy way to show him or her respect.

When you are tempted to complain to someone about one of your spouse's flaws, ask yourself how you would feel if he or she did that to you. Quit the complaining and murmurings and become a transformer in your marriage.

4) Plan to Explore Intimacy.

Marital intimacy can open your relationship to a whole new level of enjoyment and closeness. It is important, however, to remember that intimacy does not always mean sexuality. An often forgotten aspect of intimacy is the emotional type. An example of **emotional intimacy** is creating a safe space for your spouse to share his or her emotions without fear of you being judgmental or making light of them. Learn the difference between emotional and physical intimacy and when each one is most appropriate. Offering your spouse one type when they really need the other can create problems in your marriage.

5) Plan to Explore Common Interests.

Couples thrive when they share similar interests. That doesn't necessarily mean each person will enjoy every activity, but it opens up the opportunity for greater sharing and compromise. Doing things separately is not bad; however, common interests are important to healthy marriages. A common interest may be cooking or eating new foods together, going for walks or playing cards. The goal is to have something outside of your children that you both enjoy. This is a give and take process. Pastor Bailey mention during the Revival that his favorite soda is A&W Root Beer, but when he and his wife would go to the movies, because they shared a drink, he would get a Pepsi---something she liked as well. This is what it is all about, denying yourself sometimes, for the satisfaction of your spouse.

6) Plan to Create a Spiritual Connection.

Many couples grow closer when they share some form of spiritual connection. Simply spending time in a spiritual conversation, studying the Bible together, or attending church related functions can help you and your spouse grow closer spiritually. Again, during the Revival, Pastor Bailey spoke about the importance of family devotion.

7) Plan to Improve Your Communication Skills.

The ability to talk and **listen** to each other is one key to a healthy marriage. You should never assume your spouse knows what you are thinking or feeling. Tell your spouse what is going on and, as a spouse, know when to simply listen. Learning to really hear your spouse is a skill that may require practice. Somebody said God gave us One mouth and Two ears so we could Talk less and Listen more.

8) Plan to Forgive Each Other.

If he or she hasn't already, your spouse is going to do something that hurts, frustrates or upsets you. Guess what—you are going to do the same thing!

Sometimes it might even be on purpose, after an argument or misunderstanding. Forgiveness is a tricky but important virtue in a marriage, especially since no one is perfect. Try to allow your spouse some room to make a few mistakes because you will also make some of your own. When you make a mistake, act quickly to apologize and fix problems. Doing so will help to encourage **forgiveness** and strengthen your marriage.

9) Plan to Look for the Best in Each Other.

When you met your spouse, you fell in love with some of his or her wonderful qualities. Over time, however, your view of those qualities may have changed. For example, he may have been really good at saving money when you met. Now you just think he's cheap! Give each other the benefit of the doubt and create a list of all the things you love about your spouse. It will help you to fall in love all over again!

Third Step: Practice

1. Practice Having Charity for Each Other

Selflessly giving of oneself is one of the hardest aspects of marriage. Our natural tendency is to be self-focused: that we make sure we're happy; that we get our way; that we're right. But happiness in marriage cannot be achieved when we put our selfish needs first.

2. Practice Only Using Kind Words

It's easy to be kind and say loving words when you're happy with your spouse, but what about when you're upset, frustrated, annoyed or angry? It's better to walk away and say nothing than to say something hurtful and mean. We grew up with our parents telling us, "If you don't have nothing nice to say, don't say nothing at all!"

Wait until you're calm so you can discuss the situation without negative emotions tempting you to say something that would be hurtful and damaging.

Saying unkind words in the form of a joke or with sarcasm is an **abusive technique** that people use to avoid being responsible for their words/actions by forcing the blame on the other person, making it their fault that their feelings were hurt because they "just couldn't take a joke."

3. Practice Showing Gratitude

Showing genuine gratitude, to both God and a spouse, shows love and strengthens marriage. Giving thanks is easy and should be done for both the little and the big things, especially those things a spouse does on a daily basis.

"In the enriching of marriage, the big things are the little things. There must be constant appreciation for each other and thoughtful demonstration of gratitude

4. Practice Giving Thoughtful Gifts

An important way to maintain a happy, healthy marriage is to give your spouse a gift now and then. It doesn't need to cost a lot of money, if any, but it does need to be thoughtful. The thought put into a special gift will tell your spouse how much you love them- much more than a gift of monetary value ever can.

5. Choose to Be Happy---You have to Practice this

Just like being happy in life, being happy in marriage is a choice. We can choose to say unkind words or we can choose to hold our tongue. We can choose to be angry or we can choose to forgive. We can choose to work for a happy, healthy marriage or we can choose not to.

"Marriage demands work. A happy marriage requires the very best of us. Yet above all, maintaining a successful marriage is a choice"

6. Practice making A Daily Phone Call or having a Personal Conversation ... to say "I love you," to touch base, to discuss the day, to show you care.

7. Practice having 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.

8. Practice Patience Regardless ... of missed meals, tardiness, forgotten favors, a thoughtless remark, impatience. You don't have to address everything. Some fires will burn themselves out as long as you don't add fuel to it!!!

9. Practice Daily Service ... helping with house or yard work, sewing on a button, taking a turn with the sick child or parent, fixing a favorite meal. (*Write it down. Do it!*)

10. Practice on Budgeting ... to tie down income and expenses, help set financial goals, and give you control over your finances.

11. Practice Listening ... not only to what is said, but also to what is meant.

12. Regular Attendance ... at church---initially, this takes **Practice as well.**

13. Practice Working Together ... caring for a garden, painting a bedroom, washing the car, scrubbing floors, team teaching a class....it's all about finding ways to spend time together.

14. Practice Forgiving Each Other ... always learning from each other, trying a different way, being the first to make peace.

15. Practice Courtesies ... like saying please and thank you, not interrupting or belittling, not doing all the talking, continuing the niceties of courtship.

16. Practice Soft and Kind Words ... of tenderness, compassion, empathy.

17. Practice Respecting ... opinions, ideas, privacy.

18. Practice Supporting Your Spouse's ... Spiritual callings and church work.

19. Practice Caring for Your Spouse's Family by ... enjoying their company, praying for them, serving them, overlooking differences.

20. Practice *giving Occasional Gifts ...* such as a note, a needed item—but mostly gifts of *time* and *self*.

“Happily ever after is not a fairy tale. It’s a choice.”

Remember: When you know better, Do better.

Bro. and Sis. Nelson