

Do It Yourself Marriage Preparation



We're excited that you're considering marriage.
It's God honouring and very romantic.

In this booklet you will find some thoughts and ideas that will help
you plan your special day.

Compiled by Pastor Russell Watts, Whangarei Central Baptist Church

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Please note – all DVDs referenced in this manual are available to watch on the Whangarei Central Baptist website: www.whangareicbc.org.nz
On the drop-down menu under ‘Teaching’, choose ‘Marriage Resources’

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Why some couples shouldn't get married:

Here are four common reasons why counsellors and pastors would not advise couples to marry.

- a. They don't trust each other.
- b. There is addiction and violence going unaddressed.
- c. Some forms of mental health make marriage very hard.
- d. If one of them is not a believer.

Recently I read an article on the New Zealand Christian Network's website where a son (Seth) asked his dad if he thought he should marry. "Dad, do you think that she will make me happy?" he asked. Dad's answer was quite profound.

Marriage Isn't For You

By Seth Adam Smith November 2, 2013 Love and Family



Kim and me after cutting the cake.

"Seth, you're being totally selfish. So I'm going to make this really simple: marriage isn't for you. You don't marry to make yourself happy, you marry to make someone else happy. More than that, your marriage isn't for yourself, you're marrying for a family. Not just for the in-laws and all of that nonsense, but for your future children. Who do you want to help you raise them? Who do you want to influence them? Marriage isn't for you. It's not about you. Marriage is about the person you married."

How to affair-proof your marriage

The first thing that I would like any couple getting married to do is to make a covenant agreement with each other. By understanding this agreement and following through on it you will affair-proof your marriage.

When Jesus was speaking about money he said “*where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” I have found that this is also true of the treasures of your heart. By that I mean your dreams and fears and hopes for yourself and your family’s future.

Often, when things are pressured at home, a man will go to work and begin to talk to a female workmate about what he is going through. If this female is a good, empathetic listener (even if she is not good looking) he will invest some of his treasures into his relationship with her, especially if she takes his side and builds up his ego. If he invests his treasures in her, his heart will follow, or at least be divided between the now two important women in his life. In a best case scenario his marriage will weaken, but stay together. In a worst case scenario a ‘soul tie’ will be formed with this new woman and he will become, over time, attracted to her. People often say they have fallen out of love, when what they really mean is that they have stopped investing their lives in their spouse and have invested them in someone else.

In the same way, a woman who shares her treasures with another man faces the same dangers and potential damage to the relationship.

Added to that, if a man seeks comfort in the fantasy world through on-line porn, he will begin to invest his desires in the fantasy woman and loose attraction for his wife.

I have also seen it where a woman imagines being ‘that’ girl in the soap opera or in the romantic novel.

Fantasizing in anyone other than your spouse will seriously harm your marriage.

So, as soon as possible, make a promise to each other to keep the treasures of your heart just for each other and to keep on sharing, even when life’s pressures hit.

Homework:

Watch DVD of Ranui Baptist Church service “How to Affair Proof your Marriage”
www.whangareicbc.org/marriage-resources

How men and women often have a different decision making process

Many of you will be familiar with the difference between an extrovert's way of thinking, and talking until they reach a decision, and the way an introvert prefers not to talk until they have reached some conclusions.

I have found that in a majority of marriages the same pattern applies.

Women, as has often been said, use a far wider vocabulary and a far greater number of words in a day than do men.

When it comes to the decision making process, a lady often wants to talk and be heard, and talk some more, until she comes to some conclusions, i.e. the conclusions are reached as she is expressing herself to her supportive husband.

Men, on the other hand, like to talk less (like the introvert). They prefer to be told the problem and then be given time to think about it for a day or two, while working in the garage etc. before they are ready to discuss the potential solution.

The problem is that a lady often needs to talk and a man often needs to get away from all the talking and have time out in his man cave to think.

So... Guys, love your wives by actively listening to them. Let them know that you are there for them and invite them to keep expressing themselves. She will feel so loved if you give her the time and respect to do this.

Ladies, love your men by not pressuring them for their thoughts or their feelings straight away. Often when you ask your husband what is he feeling – an honest answer will be nothing (that's normal and okay, initially). As you think around the issue, he may think you are coming to a conclusion or a suggestion that he is not ready for yet. This will make him feel pressured. Thank him for listening and give him time to think through his own thoughts before he comes back to you with his suggestions.

Homework:

Watch Mark Gungor on YouTube "Tale of Two Brains" - you can find the link on www.whangareicbc.org/marriage-resources

Understanding Ephesians 5:21-27 and the kiwi myth of the 50/50 marriage

You and I will commonly hear someone counsel their friends re marital problems by saying if you both work at it, if you both contribute an equal amount (50/50) of effort, you will have a good marriage. If she does her part and he does his then....

There are two problems with this great kiwi theory.

1. Nobody knows how to measure if they have contributed their 50% into the marriage.
2. Everybody thinks they are contributing more than their fair share.

God has a very different model for marriage;

Wives and Husbands Ephesians 5

²¹Honour Christ and put others first. ²²A wife should put her husband first, as she does the Lord. ²³A husband is the head of his wife, as Christ is the head and the Saviour of the church, which is his own body. ²⁴Wives should always put their husbands first, as the church puts Christ first.

²⁵A husband should love his wife as much as Christ loved the church and gave his life for it. ²⁶He made the church holy by the power of his word and he made it pure by washing it with water. ²⁷Christ did this, so that he would have a glorious and holy church, without faults or spots or wrinkles or any other flaws.

Notice verse 21. Put others first. A good marriage is all about serving your spouse and meeting the needs of your spouse.

The word 'head', in verse 23, comes from the Greek word kephale, which means source or origin. Like 'headwaters' of a river and not like 'headmaster.'

Ephesians 3

²⁸Faith in Christ Jesus is what makes each of you equal with each other, whether you are a Jew or a Greek, a slave or a free person, a man or a woman. ²⁹So if you belong to Christ, you are now part of Abraham's family, and you will be given what God has promised.

What the Bible is saying is this: wives love your man, support him, respect him, and help him do well.

And men: love your wives, care for them tenderly, and help them do well in life even if it means giving up your own life for them.

It's all about service to each other - **not** 50/50, but 100/100, i.e. giving without measuring what you are getting back.

One plus one = one

Genesis 2: 24 'That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh'.

You should always honour your parents (Exodus 20:12) but if you don't leave them you will not be able to build a new family with your spouse.

Leaving involves two kinds of surgery:

- (i) Severing the cord of dependency. That means that you no longer rely on your parents for material or emotional support. The day you get married you become independent of your parents.
- (ii) Severing the cord of allegiance. During the wedding day, your priorities officially change. Your loyalty has been to your parents and siblings, up until your wedding day. But from your wedding day, your loyalty must be to your spouse.

I would highly recommend that, if there is a problem in your marriage, never run your spouse down to anyone, ever. Going to your parents individually for help may get them offside with your spouse long-term. Going together may be okay, but going to a trusted mentor, pastor, counsellor as a couple, is far better.

Being united to your spouse

Marriage is a commitment between two people and God. It involves three promises:

- To stay married for life
- To love and care for each other
- To be sexually faithful to each other

One flesh

While this primarily speaks of sexual intimacy, it's more than that.

From your wedding day forward, you need to make your decisions together, set your goals together and draw on each other's strengths to do what is best for the marriage. In order to move forward for a lifetime as an increasingly unified and happily married couple, you will need to serve each other and look out for each other's needs. Ultimately, for a great marriage you will need rely on God (He will teach you how to forgive, to love without measuring the cost, etc.) and do things His way.

For Homework:

Great expectations

Bear in mind, as you work through this section with your fiancé/spouse, which you cannot change or fix your partner (and it isn't your place to try).

Describe your parents' marriage to each other:

- a) What was there, in their relationship, which you would like in yours?
- b) What was there, in their relationship, that you want to avoid?
- c) How will your relationship with your parents change after you are married?
- d) How many children would you like to have?
- e) What will you do if you cannot have your own biological children naturally?
- f) Traditions like movie night, Christmas at the grandparents, holidays at, are important. What traditions would you like to put in place for your family?
- g) What are going to be the three most important values that you will teach your children?
- h) How much time will you spend apart with your friends?
- i) What will you do when you disagree?
- j) How often will you pray and do Bible study together?
- k) Where will you attend church?
- l) What beliefs will you teach your children?

If you have been in a relationship before:

- a) Are you holding any unique expectations from your previous relationship?
- b) What do you expect to be different from your previous relationship?
 - Finances
 - Home
 - Housekeeping
 - Children/ Parenting
 - Sex

How will you accomplish that?

Ideas for communication during “couch time”

As a church, we encourage couples to spend time together daily, simply to develop their relationships. If this time is not agreed to and planned, it usually won't happen.

It will be of benefit to your children for them to know that, you value each other so much, that they cannot disturb you during these times.

Some basic guidelines for communication

- Do not bring up problems from the past (neither of you are likely to have the same memory of it).
- Determine to listen to each other's words and feeling and don't interrupt.
- Don't be defensive.
- Speak the truth in love.
- Focus on specifics, not generalisations.
- Focus on behavior, not character.
- Look at the facts together. Never judge the other person's motive for saying what they do.
- Use as many 'I' statements as you can and avoid 'you' statements.
- Remember, only God can read your mind. You must ask your spouse for what you need from them.

Effective listening (take 15 minutes)

1. Ask your spouse to tell you about something that is worrying them. Listen carefully.
2. Reflect back what they have said, particularly about their feelings, to show that you have understood. If you did not understand then your spouse should tell you again.
3. Then ask, “What's concerning you most about what you've told me?”
4. Again reflect back what they say.
5. Then ask, “Is there anything you could do (or, if appropriate, you'd like me or us to do) about what you've just said?”
6. Again reflect back what they say.
7. Finally ask, “Is there anything else you would like to say?” Then swap roles.

Take 15 minutes daily, with your spouse, to practice listening skills; using these questions:

1. Tell your spouse how you feel when you see him/her after a long day.
2. Tell your spouse what quality about him/her you really appreciate.
3. What would be one of the most significant/special things that has happened to us as a couple?
4. How can I demonstrate to you that I am really listening to you?
5. Tell each other how you feel when you know that you have hurt them.
6. What was the best thing about this week?
7. What do you feel when I tell you I need you?
8. Is there a little job that I can do for you daily, to show I care?
9. As Christians, we choose to act with God's love towards each other, even when 'we don't feel like it'. What does this mean?
10. If you could only keep one memory from the past, what would it be and why?
11. What are the three most important milestones we've passed together? Why was each so important to you?
12. Who are your three closest, personal friends, and what do you enjoy most about them?
13. What do you think have been the most romantic times we've had together? How can we keep the romantic side of our marriage alive and exciting?
14. What two problems, if solved, would make the most positive difference in our marriage?
15. What do you see as the three most important decisions we need to make this year? What would help us make each decision wisely?
16. How would you describe your ideal day?
17. In what three specific ways could we improve our everyday communication? Where are we strong? Where do we have struggles?
18. If you knew that you only had six months to live, how would you spend it? What would you do? Where would you go?
19. What do you see as the three biggest needs in the world?
20. Which work or home responsibility do you find most exciting, and which do you find most frustrating?
21. In your opinion, what three things produce the most stress in your life? How can I help you overcome them?
22. Of all the gifts you have received over the years, which one means the most to you?
23. Of all the presents which you have been given, which have you enjoyed receiving the most?

24. Have you ever received a compliment that was particularly meaningful to you? If so, who said it and how did it affect you?
25. What comes to mind when you think of your best day ever?
26. What comes to mind when you think of your best job ever?
27. What is your favourite childhood memory?
28. Who was your favourite relative when you were a child?
29. What dreams have you achieved? What dreams have you thrown away?
30. If you could do anything in the world and be certain of success, what would you do?
31. What has been concerning you recently? Is there any way I can help?
How can I make your life a little easier or better?
32. Describe your most embarrassing moment. Also share your most affirming experience.
33. If you were suddenly removed from me, by something unexpected (such as death) who would you like me to seek comfort from? Whose counsel would you most like me to avoid, and why?
34. What do you consider to be the three most important things we can do with our children this year?
35. If we suddenly became richer than either of us could imagine, what would you like to do with the money?
36. In what single area do you most want to grow personally, in this year?
Why did you choose that area and how can I help?
37. Of all the people you've known in our life, which three do you most admire and why?
38. What new traditions would you like to start in the family and why? What was your favourite tradition growing up?
39. What are your spiritual strengths? Who would you like to encourage and grow spiritually this year? What can I do to encourage you in this area?
40. How do you think the Bible influences our lives? What Bible verse puzzles you most and which verse blesses you most?
41. What are the three most important values we want to teach our children before they reach adulthood?

For Homework:

Practice asking questions and active listening 3-4 times a week (even using the phone or Skype)

The five love languages

Complete the following quiz to discover your love language (i.e. how do you like to give and receive love 'best'), or complete it online at www.5lovelanguages.com.
Select only one option, per question, and transfer the total to page 14.

GROOM:

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 1. | My fiancée's love notes make me feel good. | A |
| | I love my fiancée's hugs. | E |
| 2. | I like to be alone with my fiancée. | B |
| | I feel loved when my fiancée helps me do yard work. | D |
| 3. | Receiving special gifts from my fiancée makes me happy. | C |
| | I enjoy long trips with my fiancée. | B |
| 4. | I feel loved when my fiancée does my laundry. | D |
| | I like it when my fiancée touches me. | E |
| 5. | I feel loved when my fiancée puts her arm around me. | E |
| | I know my fiancée loves me because she surprises me with gifts. | C |
| 6. | I like going most anywhere with my fiancée. | B |
| | I like to hold my fiancée's hand. | E |
| 7. | I value the gifts my fiancée gives to me. | C |
| | I love to hear my fiancée say she loves me. | A |
| 8. | I like for my fiancée to sit close to me. | E |
| | My fiancée tells me I look good and I like that. | A |
| 9. | Spending time with my fiancée makes me happy. | B |
| | Even the smallest gift from my fiancée is important to me. | C |
| 10. | I feel loved when my fiancée tells me she is proud of me. | A |
| | When my fiancée cooks a meal for me, I know that she loves me. | D |
| 11. | No matter what we do, I love doing things with my fiancée. | B |
| | Supportive comments from my fiancée make me feel good. | A |
| 12. | Little things my fiancée does for me mean more than things she says. | D |
| | I love to hug my fiancée. | E |
| 13. | My fiancée's praise means a lot to me. | A |
| | It means a lot to me that my fiancée gives me gifts I really like. | C |
| 14. | Just being around my fiancée makes me feel good. | B |
| | I love it when my fiancée rubs my back. | E |

- | | | |
|-----|---|--------|
| 15. | My fiancée's reactions to my accomplishments are so encouraging.
It means a lot to me when my fiancée helps with something I know she hates. | A
D |
| 16. | I never get tired of my fiancée kisses.
I love that my fiancée shows real interest in things I like to do. | E
B |
| 17. | I can count on my fiancée to help me with projects.
I still get excited when opening a gift from my fiancée. | D
C |
| 18. | I love for my fiancée to compliment my appearance.
I love that my fiancée listens to my ideas and doesn't rush to judge/criticise. | A
B |
| 19. | I can't help but touch my fiancée when she's close by.
My fiancée sometimes runs errands for me, and I appreciate that. | E
D |
| 20. | My fiancée deserves an award for all the things she does to help me.
I'm sometimes amazed at how thoughtful my fiancée's gifts to me are. | D
C |
| 21. | I love having my fiancée undivided attention
Keeping the house clean is an important act of service. | B
D |
| 22. | I look forward to seeing what my fiancée gives me for my Birthday.
I never get tired of hearing my fiancée tell me that I am important to her. | C
A |
| 23. | My fiancée lets me know she loves me by giving me gifts.
My fiancée shows love by helping me catch up on projects around the house. | C
D |
| 24. | My fiancée doesn't interrupt me when I am talking, and I like that.
I never get tired of receiving gifts from my fiancée. | B
C |
| 25. | My fiancée can tell when I'm tired, and she's good about asking how she can help.
It doesn't matter where we go; I just like going places with my fiancée. | D
B |
| 26. | I love hugging my fiancée.
I love surprise gifts from my fiancée. | E
C |
| 27. | My fiancée's encouraging words give me confidence.
I love to watch movies with my fiancée. | A
B |
| 28. | I couldn't ask for any better gifts than the ones she gives me.
I just can't keep my hands off my fiancée. | C
E |
| 29. | It means a lot to me when my fiancée helps me, despite having other things to do.
It makes me feel really good when my fiancée tells me that she appreciates me. | D
A |
| 30. | I love hugging and kissing my fiancée after we've been apart for a while.
I love hearing my fiancée tell me that she believes in me. | E
A |

BRIDE: Select preferred option for each question and transfer total to page 13

- | | | |
|-----|--|--------|
| 1. | Sweet notes from my fiancé make me feel good.
I love my fiancé's hugs. | A
E |
| 2. | I like to be alone with my fiancé.
I feel loved when my fiancé washes my car. | B
D |
| 3. | Receiving special gifts from my fiancé makes me happy.
I enjoy long trips with my fiancé. | C
B |
| 4. | I feel loved when my fiancé helps with the laundry.
I like it when my fiancé touches me. | D
E |
| 5. | I feel loved when my fiancé puts his arm around me.
I know my fiancé loves me because he surprises me with gifts. | E
C |
| 6. | I like going most anywhere with my fiancé.
I like to hold my fiancé's hand. | B
E |
| 7. | I value the gifts my fiancé gives to me.
I love to hear my fiancé say he loves me. | C
A |
| 8. | I like for my fiancé to sit close to me.
My fiancé tells me I look good and I like that. | E
A |
| 9. | Spending time with my fiancé makes me happy.
Even the smallest gift from my fiancé is important to me. | B
C |
| 10. | I feel loved when my fiancé tells me he is proud of me.
When my fiancé helps clean up after a meal, I know that he loves me. | A
D |
| 11. | No matter what we do, I love doing things with my fiancé.
Supportive comments from my fiancé make me feel good. | B
A |
| 12. | Little things my fiancé does mean more to me than things he says.
I love to hug my fiancé. | D
E |
| 13. | My fiancé praise means a lot to me.
It means a lot to me that my fiancé gives me gifts I really like. | A
C |
| 14. | Just being around my fiancé makes me feel good.
I love it when my fiancé gives me a massage. | B
E |
| 15. | My fiancée reactions to my accomplishments are so encouraging.
It means a lot to me when my fiancé helps with something he hates. | A
D |
| 16. | I never get tired of my fiancé kisses.
I love that my fiancé shows real interest in things I like to do. | E
B |
| 17. | I can count on my fiancé to help me with projects.
I still get excited when opening a gift from my fiancé. | D
C |

- | | | |
|-----|--|---|
| 18. | I love for my fiancé to compliment my appearance. | A |
| | I love that my fiancé listens to me and respects my ideas. | B |
| 19. | I can't help but touch my fiancé when he's close by. | E |
| | My fiancé sometimes runs errands for me, and I appreciate that. | D |
| 20. | My fiancé deserves an award for all the things he does to help me. | D |
| | I'm sometimes amazed at how thoughtful my fiancé's gifts to me are. | C |
| 21. | I love having my fiancé's undivided attention | B |
| | I love that my fiancé helps clean the house. | D |
| 22. | I look forward to seeing what my fiancé gives me for my Birthday. | C |
| | I never get tired of hearing my fiancé tell me that I am important to him. | A |
| 23. | My fiancé lets me know he loves me by giving me gifts. | C |
| | My fiancé shows his love by helping me without having to ask. | D |
| 24. | My fiancé doesn't interrupt me when I am talking, and I like that. | B |
| | I never get tired of receiving gifts from my fiancé. | C |
| 25. | My fiancé is good about asking how he can help when I'm tired. | D |
| | It doesn't matter where we go, I just like going places with my fiancé. | B |
| 26. | I love cuddling with my fiancé. | E |
| | I love surprise gifts from my fiancé. | C |
| 27. | My fiancé's encouraging words give me confidence. | A |
| | I love to watch movies with my fiancé. | B |
| 28. | I couldn't ask for any better gifts than the ones my fiancé gives me. | C |
| | I love it that my fiancé just can't keep his hands off me. | E |
| 29. | It means a lot to me when my fiancé helps me, despite being busy. | D |
| | It makes me feel good when my fiancé tells me he appreciates me. | A |
| 30. | I love hugging and kissing my fiancé after being apart for a while. | E |
| | I love hearing my fiancé tell me that he missed me. | A |

Profile for the groom

A: _____ B: _____ C: _____ D: _____ E: _____

A = words of affirmation

B = quality time

C = Receiving Gifts

D = acts of service

E = physical touch

Profile for the bride

A: _____ B: _____ C: _____ D: _____ E: _____

A = words of affirmation

B = quality time

C = Receiving Gifts

D = acts of service

E = physical touch

Interpreting and using your profile score

Your primary love language is the one that received the highest score.

You are “bilingual” and have two primary love languages, if point totals are equal for any two love languages.

If your second highest scoring love language is close in score, but not equal to your primary love language, this means that both expressions of love are important to you. The highest possible score for any one love language is 12.

You may have scored certain ones, of the love languages, more highly than others; but do not dismiss those other languages as insignificant. Your Groom or Bride may express love in those ways, and it will be helpful for you to understand this.

In the same way, it will benefit you both to know each other’s love language and how they express their affection for you, in ways that you interpret as love.

This isn’t a game with a scorecard. The payoff of speaking each other’s love language is a greater sense of connection. This translates into better communication, increased understanding, and ultimately, improved romance. Use the insight from this to improve your relationship!

Groom: Please read the chapter in the 5 Love Languages book that your fiancé scored most highly in and look for ways to gain understanding and do new things. Read, also, the chapter “Love is a Choice”

Bride: Study the chapter your groom scored highest in and see what new things you could start doing. Also, read the chapter “Love is a Choice” in the 5 Love Languages Book.

What do your responses to conflict mean?

From John & Agnes Sturt.

Circle your most common responses to conflict with your spouse. Consider what that reveals about your attitude to yourself and to your spouse. Read “Fighting fair or fighting dirty”.

My Attitude Towards Myself	My Attitude Towards My Partner		
	I value and affirm myself	I value and affirm you	I don't value or affirm you
		I win and you win	I win and you lose
		2. Negotiate 8. Clarify 15. Agree to differ 18. Try to understand 20. Explore 23. Use “I” statements 25. Share feelings 27. Compromise 30. Fairness	3. Out-talk 5. Force 7. Exaggerate 11. Criticise; sarcasm 12. Blame 16. Physical threat 17. Emotional threat 24. Use “You” statements
I do not value or affirm myself		I lose and you win	I lose and you lose
		3. Give in 6. Be Martyr 9. Go silent 10. Hide feelings 19. Pretend 21. Resentful	1. Withdraw 13. Evade 14. ‘Stop’ is losing 22. Leave the room 26. Refuse discussion 28. Disappear 29. Procrastinate

N.B. You cannot change you fiancé/spouse. You can only take responsibility before God for your own weaknesses!

Homework

Keep your self-evaluation of this page beside your bed and pray through your area for growth.

Fighting fair or fighting dirty

The following is a list of some ways of fighting; destructively and constructively. It is helpful to identify 'dirty' fighting behaviours and choose to replace them with corresponding 'clean' ones.

Summary: **Ephesians 4:31-32**

No	Ways of fighting 'dirty'	How to fight 'clean'
1	Attack the person	Attack the issue
2	Bring up old scores, even forgiven issues	Stay with the issue until resolved
3	Save up a record of wrongs	Hold no grudges (1 Cor. 13:5)
4	Introduce diversions	Allow no 'red-herrings'
5	Catch partner off guard, e.g. when hungry, tired, busy.	Plan mutually beneficial times for resolving conflict.
6	Increase tension and anxiety	Set caring, trusting atmosphere
7	Use physical violence or threat	No physical 'persuasion'
8	Raise your voice, shout	Lower your voice
9	Have a temper tantrum.	Deal with your anger first
10	Hide your feelings	Share your emotions clearly
11	Let emotions control the situation	Express emotions clearly, 'dialogue before discussion'
12	Criticise, belittle and put partner down.	Affirm and build partner up. (1 Thes. 5:11)
13	Manipulate partner, e.g. by withholding sex, money etc	Keep all communication straight and 'on the level'
14	Sulk, go silent, or leave the room.	Stay with it, refuse to 'cop out'
15	Apportion blame	Accept (appropriate) responsibility.
16	Attack partner's weak spots	Avoid the other's tender areas
17	Fight in public	No fighting in front of others, even digs or jokes
18	Use a lot of 'you' statements.	Use 'I' statements if possible
19	Seek to confuse, 'fog' issues	Use clear statements
20	Refuse to hear partner out.	Listen fully (James 1:19)
21	Talk about your own agenda	Explore both sides openly
22	Pretend problem doesn't exist.	Be open to partner's problem
23	Refuse to discuss the issue	Allow a fair hearing
24	Try to out-talk your partner	Allow equal discussion
25	Become a martyr, sigh, grovel	Be an equal participant
26	Procrastinate hoping problem will go away.	Deal with the issue as soon as possible.
27	Exaggerate and overstate	Stick with the truth (Eph. 4:25)
28	Insinuate, suspect motives	Give partner benefit of doubt
29	Mind-read, make assumptions	Listen, be open, learn
30	Speak for your partner	Speak for your yourself

Negotiation skills

The only way to win-win in relationships

Amos 3:3 “How can two walk together, except they be agreed?”

Paul wrote that there is neither male or female, slave or free, Jew or Gentile; we are all equals ‘in Christ’.

Ephesians 5:21-25 says that wives are to support their husbands and husbands are to support their wives and to be willing to die for them.

“A relationship can never become better than the balance of power that it is born out of.”
Dave Riddell

Without a balance of power a couple cannot negotiate. Often issues from the past need to be addressed before genuine, honest negotiations can begin.

Can there be negotiation in these situations?

1. Can a couple negotiate if one of them is scared of making the other angry?
2. If the woman has confused submission/respect for her husband with peace at any price?
3. If either of them are scared of being rejected or abandoned?

Boundary or wall?

In any relationship, everything that is not illegal or immoral should be up for negotiation. There should not be any ultimatums in a marriage. Everyone has the right to set a boundary, i.e. “**At** the moment I am only prepared to go this far, but we will keep talking about it.” If a boundary is not set then often a wall will be, which will damage the relationship. Walls can be expressions of anger, yelling, silence, etc. and damage a relationship.

Pretend agreements

These are unhelpful and dishonest. This is when one of the spouses say they agree (often just to get some peace), when in fact they don’t and won’t follow up that agreement with action.

Examples:

- Being in a partnership, but unwilling to negotiate goals and projects or to keep the other fully informed.
- Being in a church, but being unwilling to trust the leadership.
- Belonging to a group that expects more commitment than you can give.

NO ONE is a victim!

Step to balancing expectations and genuine negotiation.

1. First of all, take time to identify exactly what it is you want, as well as what you will settle for (your wish list and your bottom line).
2. Think about what the other person wants and needs. What do you have to offer them?
3. Then proposition them and consider their response. ('No' is not a verdict, unless that's how the 'victim' perceives it.) Rather, you must learn to reinterpret their response. What they have said so far in an invitation to negotiate.
4. The second person counters propositions (without cringing or bringing up irrelevancies, or surrendering to feelings of powerlessness and resentment).
5. Obstacles to agreement are identified with some empowering questions, e.g. "What would it take to change your mind or compromise on that?" etc. (not "Why are you always so unreasonable and demanding?" or "Oh really, look who's talking" etc. A new proposition is then put in the light of this new information (no pretend agreements).
6. Agreement reached and clarified, even if it is just for a trial period.

If a genuine agreement is not reached, that is normally an indication of a deeper issue the person has, which will need addressing through personal counselling and ministry.

A huge incentive for going through the above process is that you will both grow in skill and character and your children will have a vital life skill modelled for them.

Topics that should be negotiated intentionally in a marriage

- Financial goals and budgets - especially each person's personal spending money, and how much each person can spend without the other person's agreement (i.e. limit figure).
- Holidays.
- Recreation and couple time (how many nights out, weekly date time).
- Planning the priority of projects around the home.
- Where to live.
- What each person does for work and how many hours will be involved.
- Parenting strategy (this is usually the biggest issue for most couples). All strategies must be done without anger or harsh words and must be educational, i.e. try to get the punishment to fit the offence.

When children are young (up to 10 years) reflective sit time usually works best.

I.e. send them to a boring place for a set time then calmly ask them, "What did you do wrong?" "What do you need to do to put it right?"

Physical force is never appropriate, once children get to intermediate ages. It can cause real emotional damage.

Once someone is at college, a parent's role is governed by their relationship, as they basically become coaches.

When our child does what will be our agreed consequence?

When he/she doesn't do what shall be our agreed reward?

- Wilful disobedience?
- Childish behaviour based on lack of wisdom?
- Rudeness to parents?
- Hurting siblings?
- Every child needs some toys that they don't have to share, but what if they don't share what they should?
- Remember once a child gets to about 14 years old consequences are their best teachers. Don't shield them from consequences.

Date: (dd mmm yy) _____

Last Name: _____

First Name: _____

Address: _____

- Monthly to Weekly x 12 ÷ 52
- Annual to Weekly ÷ 52

INCOME (weekly, net after tax)		Monthly Expenses	Wkly	Monthly	Weekly
Salary/Wages		Bank Fees			
Partner's Income		House Mortgage			
Working for Families Assist		Electricity			
Child Support		Gas			
Benefit (before deductions)		Phone			
Family Tax Credit		Mobile Phone			
Accommodation Supplement		Internet			
Disability/Child Disability					
TAS		Appliance Rental			
Student Loan/Allowance					
ACC					
Superannuation/Pension		Credit Cards			
Board					
Other Earnings/Int/Dividends					
TOTAL (1)	0.00	Credit Contracts			
TOTAL (2)	0.00	Personal Loans			
TOTAL (3)	0.00	Other Monthly Costs			
TOTAL (4)	0.00	TOTAL (2)			
TOTAL	0.00				
		Annual Expenses	Wkly	Mthly	Annual
		House Insurance			
		Loan insurance			
		Health/Life Insurance			
		Vehicle Insurance			
		Vehicle Registration			
		Vehicle WOF			
		Vehicle Maintenance			
		Road User Charges			
		School Fees			
		School Activity Fees			
		Other School Costs			
		Rates			
		Regional Rates			
		Water Rates			
		Recreation (adults)			
		Recreation (children)			
		Other Annual Costs			
		TOTAL (3)			
		Other Expenses	Qtrly	Wkly	Mthly
		Heating (wood, coal, etc)			
		Taxation Provision			
		Medical Dr & Medicine			
		Dental			
		Optician			
		Presents			
		Repairs			
		Clothing/Shoes			
		Haircuts			
		Christmas Club			
		Vet Fees			
		Other Costs			
		TOTAL (4)			

EXPENSES

Weekly Expenses

Benefit Repayment

IRD Payments

Court Fines

Child Support

Groceries-General

Groceries - Other

Rent/Board

Petrol/Fuel

Fares

Personal Cash

Liquor

Tobacco

Gambling

Childcare/Daycare

Preschool (kohanga reo,)

School Costs (trips,lunch)

Giving (charity,church,koha,)

Children's Pocket Money

Superannuation Kiwi Saver)

Savings

TOTAL (1)

TOTAL INCOME

Less **TOTAL EXPENSES**

Surplus/(Deficit)

This budget form is for information only

Homework:

1. Watch DVD of Ranui Baptist Church service "Building a Strong Financial Foundation" on whangareicbc.org/marriage-resources
2. Write a budget out together.
3. Discuss how you will set up your accounts. E.g. Leave all the money in your account and draw out "cash only" for what you need each week. (Or set up an account for spending and one for annual needs).

She needs love! He needs respect!

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs; a Marriage Counsellor of 30 years' experience, has written a very practical book titled "Love and Respect". See also website: www.loveandrespect.com

His proposition is this: In marriage, a woman's basic need is to feel loved, whereas a man's basic need is to be respected. A man needs to give unconditional love to his wife and a wife needs to give unconditional respect to her husband.

Ephesians 5:33(CEV) So each husband should love his wife as much as he loves himself and each wife should respect her husband.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs quotes two surveys done amongst American men. In both of these studies large groups of men were asked; "What do you need MOST from your wife; love or respect?" In both surveys over 85% of the men said they needed respect the most.

- A man is commanded to love his wife because, even though our wives are wired to show love and want to be loved, we are not so well wired.
- A woman is commanded to respect her husband because even though men are wired around showing respect and being honourable, it doesn't come as naturally for women.

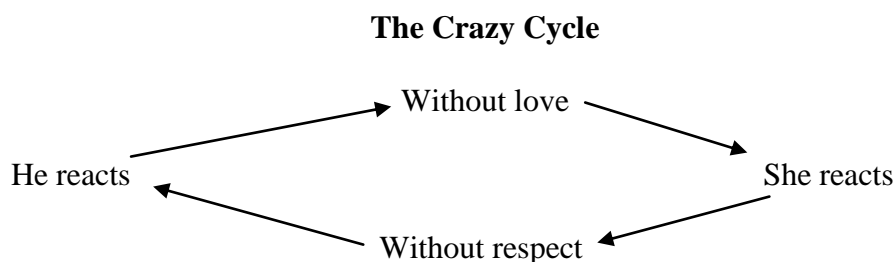
When a husband feels disrespected, it is especially hard to love his wife. When a wife feels unloved, it is especially hard to respect her husband. In fact, when a man feels disrespected in a relationship, he has a natural tendency to withdraw and to react in ways that feel unloving to his wife.

When a woman feels unloved she is likely to give him an earful, and has a natural tendency to react in ways that feel disrespectful to her husband.

Maybe God gave the command for men to love their wives and wives to respect their husbands for exactly that reason.

To quote Dr. Emerson Eggerichs: "When a woman feels unloved, a wife's usual approach is to complain and criticise in order to motivate her husband to become more loving. This usually proves about as successful as trying to sell knuckle dusters to Mother Teresa." Pg. 17 "Every wife ... wants her husband to appreciate how much she loves him, and she yearns to feel more love from him....the best way to love a husband is to show him respect in ways that are meaningful to him. Such respect lets him feel his wife's love for him and ignites in him feelings of love for his wife." pg.19

- Without love, she reacts without respect.
- Without respect he reacts without love and the crazy cycle begins.



Dr. John Gottman spent 20 years researching couples that had been happy and together for over 40 years. He found that though these couples had diverse backgrounds, cultures or income levels, they held two things in common. As they talked together there was “a strong undercurrent of two basic ingredients: Love and Respect.”

“Right or wrong, men interpret their world through the respect grid, and a wife’s softened tone and facial expressions can do more for her marriage than she can imagine.” pg.65

I think that communication in marriage is always further complicated by the way that men see and interpret things through male eyes, and women always see and interpret things through female eyes.

For example when a man says “I’ve got nothing to wear,” he means “I can’t find any clean clothes.” When a woman says, “I’ve got nothing to wear,” she probably means that she doesn’t have any new clothes appropriate to the situation.

- When our wives raise their voices and say we have got to get this sorted, often men hear criticism and maybe even contempt.
- When men don’t speak or they walk out of the room, which they might be doing because they don’t know what to say or to keep the peace, most woman would interpret that as not caring or even a hostile act.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs’ core message in his book is that God commands men to love their wives unconditionally and He also commands woman to respect their husbands unconditionally. Respect and love are not things you need to earn in a Christian marriage like trust may be.

Dr. Emerson Eggerichs says that they are the basic needs of men and woman and if you choose, with God’s help, to show respect to your husband - and men, if you choose, with God’s help, to show respect to your wife, you will begin to get back what you need most from your spouse. But it’s up to you; it is your choice to determine to give to them what they need.

After 30 years of marriage counselling and pasturing, Dr. Emerson Eggerichs concludes this: “When a husband receives unconditional respect from his wife, those fond feelings of affection will return, and he will start giving her the kind of love she has always hoped to receive.” p. 66

I want to suggest to you three things that you can do, to break the crazy cycle when it comes up in your marriage.

How to break the “crazy cycle”

1. Assume the best of your spouse

You continually trust your children to your spouse’s care. If they are male, they are probably not good communicators of feelings but good providers and protectors. If they are female, they are probably good communicators of feelings. But no matter how skilled both of you are at finding the right words and expressions, you need to decide in your heart that even if she gets too emotional for your comfort, or even if he doesn’t express his feelings as well as you want him to, you both love each other and you both want things to work.

If she raises her voice, distorts her face and says some things that make you feel like mud, it's usually because she is desperate for your love and wants to feel connected with you. She may not be going about it the best way, but assume the best of her. And ladies, if he is foolish enough to tease you or tries to make a joke about the situation that you are really concerned about, or if he is way too silent, give him the benefit of the doubt. Men often find it hard to find the right words and many men have been trained to be tough; to not show too much emotion, and to walk away from conflict. Assume the best of each other; ultimately you both want the marriage to work and the family to be happy.

2. Forgive each other and have those “love and respect conversations” before you go to sleep

Jesus warned us not to let the sun go down on our anger. There are many scriptures in the Bible teaching us of our need to be forgiven and our need to forgive others. It takes a mature and strong person to initiate reconciliation. It takes real love and respect to consider your spouse's needs and to meet those needs before the day is finished. Assume the best of each other and forgive one another.

3. Be strong

Ladies, ask yourself this question, when you need to sort out an issue with your man:

“Is what I am saying and how I am saying it respectful to my guy?”

Men, before you respond to your girl ask yourself:

“Does my response demonstrate the love that she needs right now?”

No sarcasm, no jokes please.

Men, one of the many ways our ladies are not like us is that, often, their whole sense of happiness is based around their relationship to their husband. If a man is stressed about one area of his life, men have a tendency to compartmentalise that issue and it remains in the mix with the other issues, many of which may be doing well. When a lady feels her marriage has got problems, that colours the whole way they view their lives. Our love has that much impact on them. So, men, if they raise their voices and say things that seem like bullets fired at us, I want to encourage you to man up, take the shots, let them off-load and then quickly rush in to say you love them and you are listening. It's important that if you are even slightly wrong you say “I am sorry.” When you are with your mates, or at work, and there is a problem, usually you express your thoughts then let it go. Women find it much harder to let it go - unless they hear words from you that demonstrate that it is resolved. For example, “I am sorry”; “We are okay now.”

Please take each other's needs seriously.

Men, your ladies want to be close to you; they want you to care about what they are feeling; to try to listen to them rather than to fix them; to continually express your commitment to them; they want problems discussed now; they want to be treasured in a variety of ways; they need you to show them that they are your number one priority.

Women, your men want you to appreciate their need to work and achieve; to respect their desire to provide and protect; to try to understand that doing things for you is showing you that they love you; to recognise that their level headed problem solving approach is really a form of male empathy; that when you hang out with them they feel valued; that sex makes them feel like a man and that to be rejected for intimacy crushes their self-esteem.

Homework:

Whangarei Central Baptist Church has a free DVD further explaining these principles (or go to www.loveandrespect.com or www.whangareicbc.org/marriage-resources).

Sexual intimacy

God designed sex, not just for the creation of children but to be fun, healing and comforting as well. Sexual intimacy helps develop the unity (oneness) in the marriage.

Pre-marriage sex can be viewed as getting your needs met, letting the desires take control or even a way of using someone.

In marriage sex is a beautiful thing.

Key points to remember

1. Sexual intimacy is a gift that you give each other!

It's a gift that should be given very often. Sex, given in marriage, builds unity and heals. Sex withheld in marriage can cause deep hurt and can cause a person's mind to roam towards other potential partners.

1 Corinthians 7:5

So don't refuse sex to each other, unless you agree not to have sex for a little while, in order to spend time in prayer. Then Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

2. Men NEED sexual intimacy to feel good. Woman feel good THEN want sexual intimacy!

Wives, if your husband is normal, he will get turned on often and with little warning. Do your best to offer yourself to him. To reject him will have a powerfully negative effect on his self-esteem and how he feels. Extreme frustration will result. If you are unwell or it's the week of your period, do your best to satisfy him in other ways.

Husbands, if you flirt with your wife during the day, compliment her, care for her, spend time with her and have non-sexual contact with her, she will want to spend intimate time with you later. If she is not particularly turned on, do your best to meet her needs before your own. Guys, the better her sexual experience today, the higher her sex drive will be tomorrow.

3. While most Christian couples really look forward to their first intimate time together, on their wedding night, be warned that often, couples, on their wedding night, are just plumb exhausted. Your first time together will not be your best.

As you learn to take care of each other's needs and learn to understand each other's needs and preferences, sexual intimacy will get better and better as the years roll on. While TV presents affairs as being the best sex, the reality is the opposite. The best sex is enjoyed in a trusting, secure, giving relationship.

Pre-marriage

I encourage couples;

- a. Never to meet behind closed doors.
- b. Never to lie down together to kiss.
- c. Never to put hands where togs would normally cover.
- d. Never be in a house alone.

As a marriage counsellor, I have seen that the problems and insecurities created by sex outside of marriage are significant. Sexual relationships outside of marriage damage a person's 'soul', that is, damage their personality and emotional health, and lead to a lack of trust in future relationships.

Our Father in heaven has some strong words to say on this topic - to keep us safe and so that we can enjoy the 'best' marriages when we do get married:

Galatians 5:19-21

¹⁹*People's desires make them give in to immoral ways, filthy thoughts, and shameful deeds.*

²⁰*They worship idols, practice witchcraft, hate others, and are hard to get along with. People become jealous, angry, and selfish. They not only argue and cause trouble, but they are*

²¹*envious. They get drunk, carry on at wild parties, and do other evil things as well. I told you before, and I am telling you again: No one who does these things will share in the blessings of God's kingdom.*

The words immoral/fornication in your bible mean sexual intimacy outside of marriage.

For further information on 'why wait' go to our website whangareicbc.org.nz, click on Sermons, then Guides and search for 'Virginity's Virtue.'

Homework:

After marriage watch Mark Gungor on You Tube – 1 Key to incredible sex.

You can search it on YouTube, or there is a link on www.whangareicbc.org/marriage-resources

When booking your **Wedding date**, please consider the availability of the Pastor you want and the availability of the facility. (The facilities at Whangarei Central Baptist need to be booked through the church office, Ph. 09-438 3948). There is a fee for the use of the church (nominal for church members) and non-church members usually give the pastor a donation for his/her time.

It is wise to arrange a **rehearsal time** as well. This is often the night before, as members of the wedding party may be coming from outside the area. By doing this, it can take a lot of stress off the weekend.

Below is a normal outline for a Kiwi wedding. Use this as a starting point for your planning. Your Pastor can plan the things that you don't personally want to plan for the service. Your vows are the **most important part** of the day so please give these your particular consideration.

- Bridal party enters to her chosen music
- Welcome
- Prayer
- Reading from the Bible and or poems/secular readings. See note (a) on pages 29 -31
- Songs optional.
- Five minute message from the Pastor.
- Giving away of the bride or parents' support for the couple promised. See note (b) on page 32
- Vows. See examples in note (c) on pages 32 - 37
- Exchange of rings. See examples in note (d) on pages 37 -38
- Kiss.
- Song - optional.
- Signing of the marriage licence by couple and two witnesses. (An item, say a PowerPoint display with couple photos, or a CD playing is helpful here.)
- Optional: Sand Ceremony, Unity Candle, 3 Cord Ceremony
- Closing blessing (Pastor or Pastor and chosen friends).
- Pronouncement.
- Recessional music as party walks back down the aisle as Mr and Mrs.

Go through the various options and samples and create the Wedding you want. At least three weeks before the wedding, go over these with your Pastor.

It will help the Pastor in preparing a personalised message, if you can answer these few questions:

1. How did you first meet?
2. What attracted you to each other initially?
3. **Bride:** 5 things I love about the groom. **Groom:** 5 things I love about the bride.
4. What activities do you enjoy doing together?

In five years time we will be:

Living where _____?

Working as _____ and _____

We will have _____ number of children.

We will be serving God by _____

Entry music?

(a) Readings/poems

Songs?

(b) Giving away option

(c) Vows

(d) Exchange of rings

Item during licence signing?

Will you involve others with the pastor for the closing blessing?

(a) Readings and poems

Suggested readings for your marriage:

- Psalm 19, 84, 85, 91, 121, 139:1-18
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- Songs of Songs 8:6-7
- Isaiah 40:25-31
- John 2:1-11
- John 15:1-4, 9-17
- 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 (a)
- Ephesians 3:14-21
- Ephesians 5:21-33
- Philippians 2:1-11
- Colossians 3:12-17
- 1 John 4:7-16

Option 1: A friend
Is not afraid to see a person as they really are
What a friend sees does not bring judgement
Or a desire to end the friendship
A friend
Can peek into the window of someone's soul
And see where they need the lifting
The strengthening and the loving.

Option 2: If two are caring, as they're sharing life's hopes and fears,
If the music of laughter outweighs sadness of tears,
... Marriage is togetherness

If both derive pleasure from mere presence of each other,
Yet when parted no jealousies restrict, worry or smother,
... Marriage is freedom

If achievements mean more when they benefit two
And consideration is shown with each point of view,
... Marriage is respect.

And if togetherness, freedom and respect are combined
With a joy that words can never fully define,
... Then marriage is love.

'Marriage is Love' Gloria Matthews

Option 3: Out of the wild exuberance of creation
throughout millions of years,
you two have appeared...
Each of you unique,
distinctive, wondrously personal.
You have chosen to journey together
down this earth valley in the brief moment
of time that is yours.
From this day forward, you become a unit
of life that will bring forth futures.
You are both called into a new existence.
The old things have passed away;
a new heaven and a new earth is now
your dwelling place.
For the whole universe has come to each of you
in the form of a particular person who has a unique love for you
and is beloved by you.

'Inscape' Ross Snyder

Option 4: Love is the only sound and satisfactory answer to the problem of human
existence.

Erich Fromm

Option 5: I am not sure that Earth is round
Nor that the sky is really blue.
The tale of why the apples fall
May or may not be true.
I do not know what makes the tides
Nor what tomorrow's world may do,
But I have certainty enough,
For I am sure of you.

Amelia Josephine Burr

Option 6: ...come the wild weather,
come sleet or come snow,
We will stand by each other,
However it blow.

Simon Dach

Option 7: I think true love is never blind,
But rather brings an added light,
An inner vision quick to find
The beauties hid from common sight.
No soul can ever clearly see
Another's highest, noblest part;
Save through the sweet philosophy
And loving wisdom of the heart.

Phoebe Cary

Option 8: Love is not getting, but giving,
It is goodness, and honour, and peace and pure liking.

Henry Van Dyke

Option 9: O, human love! Though spirit given
Oh, earth, of all we hope in Heaven!

Edgar Allan Poe

Option 10: Better is a heart full of love, than a mind filled with knowledge.

Charles Dickens

Option 11: Friendship is a union of spirits, a marriage of heart, and the bond of virtue.

William Penn

Option 12: ...and yet even while I was exulting in my solitude, I became aware of a
strange lack. I wished a companion to lie near me in the starlight, silent and
not moving, but ever within touch. For there is a fellowship more quiet even
than solitude, and which, rightly understood, is solitude made perfect. And to
live...with the woman a man loves is of all lives the most complete and free.

*Robert Louis Stevenson from
"A night among the pines"*

Option 13: I like not only to be loved, but to be told I am loved.

George Eliot

(b) Giving away of the bride

The giving and affirmation

Option 1: *Celebrant:* Who gives this woman to be married?

Respondent: I do.

Option 2: *Celebrant:* Parents, by their presence, are saying to _____ and _____ that they pledge their loving support.

Do you, the parents of _____ and _____ give them to be married?

Parents: We do.

Option 3: *Celebrant:* Do you, the parents of _____ and _____
give your blessing to their marriage?

Parents: We do.

Option 4:

Celebrant: (Parents/The children of_____/Family members),
by their presence, are showing their affirmation and support to
and

Do you, the (Parents/Children/Family) of _____
and _____ affirm and support them in their marriage
relationship?

Response: We do.

Option 5:

Celebrant: Will you, the families and friends of _____
and _____ who have gathered to share in
this Wedding day, pledge to them your loving support in their
marriage.

Response: We will.

(c) Vows

The vows are the most important part of your wedding day.

It's worth the effort to try to write your own vows. Legally they should include the words 'husband' and 'wife'.

When writing your wedding vows, give yourself plenty of time to think about how best to express your feelings. Ask yourself:

- How did I feel when I first met my partner?
- What do I value about him/her?
- What have I learned from this person?
- What dreams and goals do we share?
- What is unique about us as a couple?
- What have been some highlights in our relationship so far?
- What qualities make our relationship strong and long lasting?
- What do I look forward to about our life together?

How to write your wedding vows

Vows are usually between two and three minutes long, so be succinct and choose your words well. Remember, too, that your vows are a public declaration of your love for one another and not a private conversation. The key is to be sincere, speak from your heart and strike the right balance between personal and public. Once you have both written a draft set of vows, compare your vows with your partner's to make sure they're a good match in terms of style and length. As an added touch, you may want to get a copy of your vows printed on special paper to be framed or included in your wedding album.

Funny wedding vows

Your commitment to one another may be serious, but your wedding vows can be a chance to inject some personality and humour into your wedding ceremony. Inside jokes and funny lines can make for a more light-hearted ceremony, but remember to make your funny wedding vows tasteful, and keep it at a level that will still make your ceremony meaningful. And be sure to run through what you're planning to say with your partner!

Think about the sense of humour you share:

Get inspiration from Dr. Seuss: "Will you take her as your wife? Will you love her all your life?

And some extra promises: "Do you promise to love, honour, cook for, clean up after, surrender your share of the blanket to, relinquish the remote to, and lift the toilet seat after, until death do you part?"

Add your hobbies and interests: E.g. "I _____ take you _____, to be my spouse, on the dance floor, at the beach and on the golf course as long as we both shall live."

Romantic wedding vows

If comedy in your marriage ceremony isn't your cup of tea, perhaps romantic wedding vows are a better fit. You might like to:

- Include terms of affection in your vows.
- Add to the romantic atmosphere with candles and flowers.
- Quote from romantic verse, such as James Weldon Johnson's "The world for me, and all the world can hold, is circled by your arms."

Wedding vow inspiration

If you don't feel entirely confident writing your own vows, combine elements of your own with words from the samples below:

Option 1:

Groom: I _____ take you _____ to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, so long as we both shall live.

Bride: I _____ take you _____ to be my husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, so long as we both shall live.

Option 2:

Groom: I love you. Before this gathering, and in accordance with the laws of this land, I, _____ take you _____ to be my legal wife.

Bride: I love you. Before this gathering, and in accordance with the laws of this land, I, _____ take you _____ to be my legal husband.

Option 3:

Groom: _____ in the presence of God, and before this gathering, I promise to be your true and faithful husband, to love and care for you always.

Bride: _____ in the presence of God, and before this gathering, I promise to be your true and faithful wife, to love and care for you always.

Option 4:

Groom: I love you _____. Today I take you to be my wife, and I give myself to be your husband. I shall value the good times we have together and give you help and support in any adversity. I shall love and cherish you always.

Bride: I love you _____. Today I take you to be my husband, and I give myself to be your wife. I shall value the good times we have together and give you help and support in any adversity. I shall love and cherish you always.

Option 5:

Groom: _____ I have lived with you and I love you. Today I give myself to be your husband and I take you to be my wife. Whatever life may bring I will love you and care for you always.

Bride: _____ I have lived with you and I love you. Today I give myself to be your wife and I take you to be my husband. Whatever life may bring I will love you and care for you always.

Option 6:

Groom: I love you _____ Today I give myself to be your husband and I take you to be my wife. Whatever life may bring I will love you and care for you always.

Bride: I love you _____ Today I give myself to be your wife and I take you to be my husband. Whatever life may bring I will love you and care for you always.

Option 7:

Groom: I call upon all here present to witness that I, _____ take _____ to be my lawful wedded wife. I will love you, trust you, believe in you as you are, be honest with you, encourage you, support you in your endeavours, care for you and above all else, respect you as a person of equal worth, and with equal rights and responsibilities – in sickness as in health, for better, for worse, through all our life together.

Bride: I call upon all here present to witness that I, _____ take _____ to be my lawful wedded husband. I will love you, trust you, believe in you as you are, be honest with you, encourage you, support you in your endeavours, care for you and above all else, respect you as a person of equal worth, and with equal rights and responsibilities – in sickness as in health, for better, for worse, through all our life together.

Option 8: Traditional vows with Christian references:

Groom/Bride I _____ take you, _____ to be my (wife/husband) knowing in my heart that you will be a faithful friend and a true and loving companion. On this special day, in the presence of God, our relatives, and our friends as witnesses, I give you my sacred vow that as your (husband/wife), I will always be with you and support you. In times of sickness and in times of health, in times of joy and in times of sorrow, I promise to love you completely, to console and comfort you during difficult times, to encourage you to achieve your full potential, to laugh with you and to grieve with you; to share with you life's simplest but most enduring pleasures, to be truthful and honest with you and to cherish you for as long as we both shall live.

Option 9: A modern contemporary wedding vow

Groom/Bride: I, _____ take you _____ to be my (wife/husband) and partner in life and my one true love. I will cherish our friendship and love you today, tomorrow and forever. I will trust you and honour you, I will laugh with you and cry with you. I will love you faithfully, through the best and the worst, through the difficult and the easy. What may come I will always be there; as I have given you my hand to hold, so I give you my life to keep.

Option 10:

Bride: I love you, _____! I am so glad to be here today committing myself to you, realising that you are a gift from God. I'm proud of the man you've become. Your character, integrity, and commitment form a solid foundation for a relationship. Your strength and gentleness allow me to feel secure and at home with you. I treasure the fact that we laugh a lot when we're together.

With God's help and the abilities that He's given me, I promise to make our home a peaceful place that you'll enjoy coming home to, a place of love, acceptance and laughter!

I promise to make my relationship with you a priority, appreciating the way that our differences complement one another. With God's help, I will not run from you emotionally, knowing that you love me and that we both desire to grow through our conflicts.

I will trust the Lord to guide us through the rough times as well as the easy ones. I look forward to the growth and enjoyment of living the rest of my life with you.

I am proud to become your wife today. I willingly commit myself to be your best friend, greatest fan, and exclusive lover for as long as God grants me life. I love you.

Groom: _____ I love you and am proud to be standing here with you before God, our family and our friends. During the _____ years we have known each other, our relationship has developed into one of those rare and valued friendships that seem to grow, even when we're apart. It is a wonderful gift from God to base our marriage on our mutual commitment to Jesus Christ, our close friendship, and our love for each other.

_____, I am committed to Christ and to you. As God has called me, I will be the spiritual leader in our marriage and will rely on Him, while making ours a Christ-centred home. God has given you a sensitive and gentle spirit with which to interpret this world and I will listen to your thoughts, ideas, judgement and advice. I will seek to know and understand you so that I may better meet your needs, comfort your hurts, and communicate with you openly and honestly. You have my unreserved support, encouragement and trust.

By God's grace and power, I will be true and faithful to you until the day that one of us lays the other in the arms of Jesus. _____ I love you.

Option 11:

Groom: When I was very young, I committed my whole heart and life to Jesus. It was, and is, my desire and commitment to live a holy life that is pleasing to God. My passion is to know God and to know Him more fully and to grow in His grace and wisdom; to seek His face and know His voice. It is in that commitment that I commit my life to you. I promise to lead our family as a husband and father whose heart's desire is to be Christ-like. To be humble, meek, gentle, strong, forgiving, patient and loving. It is my desire to do all that I can that (_____*name of Bride's children*_____) would see Christ in me; to love them as my very own; to be a leader they can follow.

I will be there for you to encourage you, listen, protect, comfort and be faithful to you forever. I want to walk side by side with God in valuing you as the gift that you are. I want to do all that I can to help you become all that God wants you to be. To love you as Christ loved the church.

_____, you are my treasure, my gift from God. You are my best friend, my love. I am so thankful that God has brought you into my life. I look forward to a lifetime of having you by my side, serving God together. I love you with all my heart.

Bride: As I stand here today, I am humbled by all that God has given to me, in you. God knew the deep longing in my heart, long ago, for a man of godliness, a man of gentle strength and strong character, a man of loyalty and devotion. He has given all of that to me in you and so very much more. You have loved me with all the sweetest love. And you have loved my children as you would your own. You allowed each of us time to know the character of your heart, to see the integrity in your life, and to trust the love you have for each of us. What an incredible blessing you have been.

_____, it is my prayer that I will be found the woman who treasures all that God has given. I will continually seek to grow in my relationship with our Lord, which will enable me to be the woman I need to be for you. And I will encourage you to do the same. I will love you, I will honour you, I will respect you, and I will teach our children to do the same.

I will come alongside you to be your helper and to be a complement to your life. I will care for you when you're well and when you're not. I will be faithful to you every day of my life. I will be your most trusted friend and companion. I will also gently challenge you at times when you need that. I promise to pray for you continually, and to share in your love and commitment to God. I know that, at times, I will disappoint you. I wish I could promise you that I won't. But I will always try to be my best for you, to listen when I'm wrong, to be open to change when that's needed, to compromise.

I look forward with excitement for all that God has planned for us. I am thrilled to be spending the rest of my life with you. I love you with all my heart.

Option 12:

Groom: _____, I take you to be my wife.

Bride: _____, I take you to be my husband.

Both: To laugh with you in joy,
To grieve with you in sorrow,
To grow with you in love,
To live with you in peace and hope,
As long as we both shall live.

Groom: (Facing congregation) I ask everyone here to witness that I, _____
receive _____ to be my wife.

(Face bride and take her hand) _____ all that I am I give to
you, and all that I have, I share with you. Whatever the future holds, I will
love you and strengthen you, as long as we both shall live, this is my solemn
pledge.

Bride: (Facing congregation) I ask everyone here to witness that I, _____
receive _____ to be my husband.

(Face bridegroom and take his hand) _____ all that I am I give to
you, and all that I have I share with you. Whatever the future holds, I will
love you and strengthen you, as long as we both shall live, this is my solemn
pledge.

(d) Exchange of rings

Option 1:

Celebrant: Let us pray. (Holds ring)
Bless, O Lord, the giving of these rings. May _____
and _____ be ever faithful to each other, and continue to
love so long as they both shall live, Amen.

Groom: _____ I give you this ring in token of the vow made between
us, and as a sign of my love and affection for you.

Bride: _____ I give you this ring in token of the vow made between
us, and as a sign of my love and affection for you.

Option 2:

Celebrant: Wedding rings serve as a symbol of the vows you have just made. They are
the outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible love, which binds your
lives together. As they are of the finest of earth's materials, so your love is of
the richest of human values. As rings are without edge or seam, having no
beginning and no end, so they symbolise the perfection of love which knows
no end.

Groom: _____, this ring I give you, in token of our marriage vow.
May it ever be a symbol of the unbroken bond of our love and of all that we
share.

Bride: _____, this ring I give you, in token of our marriage vow.
May it ever be a symbol of the unbroken bond of our love and of all that we
share.

Option 3:

Groom: _____, I give this ring as a token of my love, and as evidence of the vow we have made together. May it forever signify the love we have for each other.

Bride: _____, I give this ring as a token of my love, and as evidence of the vow we have made together. May it forever signify the love we have for each other.

Option 4:

Groom: _____, I give you this ring in token of the circle of affection and tenderness I will surround you with. Wear it as a symbol of all that we share together.

Bride: _____, I give you this ring in token of the circle of affection and tenderness I will surround you with. Wear it as a symbol of all that we share together.

Appendix 1:

- Recommended reading and viewing.
- How to apply for a marriage licence
- Where wedding traditions come from.

Recommended reading and viewing

The Five Love Languages

By Gary Chapman (Northfield Publishing, 1995)

The Other Side of love: Handling Anger in a Godly Way

By Gary Chapman (Moody Press, 1999)

Boundaries in Marriage

By Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend (Zondervan, 1999)

His Needs, Her Needs

By William F. Harley (Monarch Books, 1986)

Look Before you Leap

By J. John (Authentic Lifestyle, 2004)

The Marriage Book

By Nicky and Sila Lee (Alpha International, 2002)

The Mystery of Marriage

By Mike Mason (Triangle, 1997)

Loving Against the Odds

By Rob Parsons (Hodder & Stoughton, 1994)

Sixty Minute Marriage

By Rob Parsons (Hodder & Stoughton, 1997)

A Celebration of Sex

By Douglas Rosenau (Thomas Nelson, 2002)

Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage

DVD from Church

Virginity's Virtue

DVD/Sermon from Church

What is a marriage?

A marriage is the formalisation of a relationship between a man and a woman, in accordance with the Marriage Act 1955. The Marriage Act and the Births, Deaths, and Marriages, and Relationships Registration Act 1995 set out the criteria, rules and processes for a couple to have their marriage solemnised and registered in New Zealand. Regulations made under those Acts prescribe applicable forms and fees. All forms are available from Births, Deaths and Marriages offices.

How to apply for a marriage license

You can download a marriage application on line from www.bdm.govt.nz. or www.dia.govt.nz.

Marriage conducted at the Registry Office

If you wish for your marriage to be conducted by a Registrar of Marriages at the Registry Office, you must pay a fee of NZ\$173.70 when you send in, or hand over, the completed Notice of Intended Marriage form. This includes the fee for the marriage licence and the ceremony. Please discuss with the Registrar at the office, where you plan to have the marriage ceremony, of the date and time for your ceremony. Remember to include your contact details (e.g. a telephone number in New Zealand or an address) in case the Registrar needs to contact you.

Where is our nearest Registrar of Marriages?

A Registrar of Marriages is located in most cities and towns throughout New Zealand. See **Cheque Payments for a New Zealand Marriage Licence** or **New Zealand Civil Union Licence** to check the locations of the Registry Offices in New Zealand. The contact details for your nearest Registrar of Marriages can be obtained by **contacting us**, or contact the District Court for the addresses.

Marriage conducted by a Marriage Celebrant

If you wish for your marriage to be conducted by a Minister or Marriage Celebrant, you must pay a fee of NZ\$122.60 when you send in, or hand over, the completed Notice of Intended Marriage form. This includes the fee for the marriage licence but does not include any expenses of the marriage celebrant. The name of the celebrant must be given on the form in order for your licence to be issued. Only those persons appointed by the Registrar-General as Marriage Celebrants, and whose names appear in the list of Marriage Celebrants in the New Zealand Gazette (or at www.bdm.govt.nz), have authority to solemnise marriages in New Zealand.

Auckland

Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages

PO Box 6147
Auckland 1141

Level 6, AA Building
99 Albert Street
Auckland 1010

Freephone: 0800 22 52 52 (New Zealand only)

Phone: (+64 4) 463 9362

Fax: (+64 9) 362 7908

Opening hours: Monday to Friday 8:30am - 5:00pm, except Wednesday 9:00am - 5:00pm

How to pay your marriage licence fee

Registry Offices will accept over the counter payments by cheque, cash, New Zealand money order or, in most offices, credit card and EFTPOS.

Marriage Licenses take at least three days to process. When you apply, ensure you have identification, date, name of the celebrant and the place of the Wedding.

Where wedding traditions come from

When planning a wedding, many couples incorporate "traditions" into the ceremony and reception, but often they don't even know where the tradition comes from, or what it symbolises. Here are a few traditions and their origins, some of which could be incorporated into your wedding. Don't feel that you have to incorporate all of them, just include ones that have the most meaning and appeal to you. It is a good idea to explain to your guests why you have incorporated a particular tradition, that way they get to share in the significance too.

- The word "**wed**" is derived from the ancient Greek word for "**pledge**."
- The word "**bride**" comes from old English, being a name for '**cook**', which explains a lot! While "**groom**" originated from '**male child**'. It would be logical to think that "bridegroom" meant 'male cook' but it doesn't. Instead, bridegroom is a Germanic word meaning exactly what it appears to mean - simply, the man who is marrying the bride.
- The **kiss** dates back to the earliest days of civilisation in the Middle East. A kiss was used as the formal seal to agreements, contracts, etc. In Ancient Rome a kiss was used to legally seal contracts, hence the obvious use of the custom at the end of the wedding ceremony to "seal" the marriage vows.
- The term "**tie the knot**" also goes back to Roman times. The bride would wear a girdle tied with many knots, which the groom had the duty of untying.
- The Western European tradition of a **Best Man**, began in olden days, when it was sometimes necessary for a man to kidnap his bride from a neighbouring village. He needed his strongest friend (his Best Man) to help with the kidnapping and to stand by him at the wedding ceremony, to fight off any relatives that might try to take her back.
- It was in England that many of our most enduring Western European wedding traditions began. The ancient rhyme about **something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue** is now an important part of most Western European weddings, even though many brides and grooms no longer know the significance of the rhyme.
Something **old** is symbolic of continuity. The old item was often a piece of lace, a grandmother's scarf or an old piece of jewellery. Something **new** signifies hope for the future and can be anything from a piece of clothing, to the wedding band itself. Something **borrowed** is symbolic of future happiness and is often provided by a happily married friend of the bride. And finally, something **blue**. In ancient times blue was the colour of purity and often, both the bride and the groom, wore a band of blue cloth around the bottom of their wedding attire.
- It was the Knights of Yore, who gave us the Western European tradition of the groom wearing a **buttonhole flower**. It was customary for a knight to wear a flower or a colourful handkerchief belonging to their lady fair, when they entered a tournament. The tradition later evolved into the groom wearing a flower from his bride's wedding bouquet.

- It was in Italy, the land of love, that **gold wedding rings** first became popular, and it was also in Italy that the tradition of the **wedding cake** first began, when, in the first century BC, a cake or bread was broken over the bride's head to ensure fertility.
- During the Tudor period in England, it became customary for the wedding party to throw old shoes at the bride and groom's carriage; if the carriage was struck by a shoe it was considered a symbol of good fortune to follow. From this old Western European wedding custom was born the tradition of **tying shoes to the back of the groom and bride's car**.
- Wearing a **white wedding gown**? Prior to the 16th century this most important Western European wedding tradition was not common. To this day, a traditional Irish bride often wears a blue wedding dress, rather than a white one. This is because blue symbolised purity in ancient times. It wasn't until the year 1499, that a white wedding dress began to symbolise virginity and purity; when Ann of Brittany popularised the white wedding dress and the tradition became part of Western European wedding culture.
- Traditional English **wedding cake** is a fruitcake, usually made with raisins, ground almonds, cherries and marzipan. The top layer of the wedding cake is called the "christening cake", which the couple saves for the baptism of their first child.
- The fruitcake is served at the wedding reception along with another traditional cake - the **groom's cake** - which originated during the Tudor period. It was once English custom for this to be a fruitcake as well, but today, the groom's cake is likely to be chocolate.
- **Cutting the wedding cake** together, still a predominant ritual at weddings, symbolises the couple's unity, their shared future, and their life together as one.
- The **three tiered cake** is believed to have been inspired by the spire of Saint Bride's Church in London, England.
- An old Irish tradition calls for the wedding couple to walk to the church together, before exchanging their wedding vows. As they walk down the main street to the chapel, onlookers would not only **throw rice** to bless the marriage, but larger items as well, such as pots and pans (That's a bit much if you ask me!)
- English lavender, an ancient symbol of love, loyalty, devotion and even luck is often mixed with the bride's **wedding flowers** to help ensure a happy and long-lasting union.
- Another tradition is for the bride to braid her hair for her wedding day. **Braided hair** is an ancient symbol of feminine power and luck. Another symbol of luck is to be married on St. Patrick's Day, considered the luckiest wedding anniversary date in Ireland.
- Greek brides wore traditional **wedding veils** of yellow or red, which represented fire. These brightly coloured veils were supposed to protect the bride from evil spirits and demons.
- Traditionally, brides have been thought to be particularly vulnerable to evil spirits. Many wedding customs and traditions originated as an attempt to fight away such evil. **The veil** was worn with the belief that it would disguise the bride and fool the evil spirits. It was not until 1800, in Britain, that the veil came to symbolise modesty and chastity. Today, the veil remains the ultimate symbol of virginity.
- In ancient Greece, **diamonds** were considered tear drops of the Gods, and it was believed that a diamond reflected the flames of love.

- A bride's **engagement ring and wedding ring** are traditionally worn on the third finger of the left hand (the finger next to your little finger). Although there is no precise evidence to explain the origin of this tradition, there are two strongly held beliefs. The first, dating back to the 17th century, is that during a Christian wedding, the priest arrived at the fourth finger (counting from the thumb) after touching the three fingers on the left hand; '*...in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost*'. The second belief refers to an Egyptian belief that the ring finger follows the *vena amoris*, which is the vein of love that runs directly to the heart.
- The origin of **throwing confetti** over newlyweds predated Christ, since it originates from the ancient Pagan rite of showering the happy couple with grain, to wish upon them a 'fruitful' union. Pagans believed that the fertility of the seeds would be transferred to the couple on whom they fell. The throwing of rice has the same symbolic meaning. The word confetti has the same root as the word 'confectionery', in Italian, and was used to describe 'sweetmeats'; that is, the grain and nuts coated in sugar which was thrown over newlyweds for the same Pagan reason. In recent years, small pieces of coloured paper have replaced sweetmeats, grain and nuts as an inexpensive substitute, but the use of the word confetti has remained.

What is the process for getting a marriage licence?

- ✓ When a couple intend to get married, they are required to complete the appropriate type of 'Notice of Intended Marriage' form, which includes a statutory declaration that both parties are free to marry each other and that all the details supplied on the form are correct.
- ✓ One of the parties must appear in person before a 'Registrar of Marriages' to sign the statutory declaration.
- ✓ The required fee must be paid.
- ✓ The Registrar will (no sooner than three days after receiving the 'Notice of Intended Marriage') issue the 'Marriage Licence', together with two copies of a document known as a 'Copy of Particulars of Marriage'.
- ✓ One of the parties will need to deliver these three documents to their Marriage Celebrant **before** the ceremony.

If the date of your intended marriage is more than 2 weeks after the date that the three documents are to be collected, you may decide to have them couriered to you at your own expense. You should discuss this with the Registry Office at the same time as you give notice of your intended marriage.

What happens after the ceremony?

- ✓ The Marriage Celebrant sends one 'Copy of Particulars of Marriage' to the 'Registrar of Marriages' so the marriage can be registered with 'Births, Deaths and Marriages'.
- ✓ The Marriage Celebrant gives the other 'Copy of Particulars of Marriage' to the couple.

On payment of the required fee and in the prescribed manner, a 'Marriage Certificate' may be obtained from 'Births, Deaths and Marriages'.

Consent forms are available from 'Births, Deaths and Marriages' offices and agencies, and through their website: www.bdm.govt.nz.

Where can we find a current listing of approved marriage celebrants?

A current list of Marriage Celebrants in your area is available from your nearest 'Registrar of Marriages', or by phoning 0800 22 52 52 (NZ only), +64 4 474 8150 (outside New Zealand) or through their website at www.bdm.govt.nz.

Appendix 2:

Sermon – Sunday 15 February 2015

Keeping things tight at home – Protecting the connection in marriage

Proposition: Every day we get to make choices that will move us towards, or away from, our spouses. Just as God has pursued us, so we are to pursue the ones we are married to.

Over the years of doing marriage counselling, and just loving children, I have made one really profound observation. That is, if the big people in a child's life - usually a mum and a dad or grandparents and a parent – however the family is structured; if the big people in a child's, or even teenagers' life, are communicating healthily and tight relationally, little people and even young adults will behave better and succeed more greatly. I have seen so many, apparently naughty children, start to become well behaved and pleasant children when they see mum and dad or the significant adults in their lives, showing consistent love to each other. When things are tight at home between parents, then a child feels secure and will perform at their best.

This morning I want to suggest to you that in every marriage or every significant relationship, people are either actively moving towards each other or actively moving away from each other.

I recall vividly the early days of my marriage to Juliette. The book, 'The Five Love Languages,' by Gary Chapman had not yet been written. I hadn't worked out that her love language was quality time. I just expected her to show love by doing things for me and the kids, because my love language is acts of service. So, she felt that I didn't love her because I never sat still and talked, and I felt she didn't love me because she was so people focused and not task orientated. In those first few years we were actively moving apart because we were trying to control and fix each other; and in order not to be hurt, yet again, we withdrew from each other emotionally and chose not to share deeply with each other, in case we got hurt. Juliette was so faithful and kept believing for our marriage, but the turnaround for me came, one day, when I woke up and God said to me, "just accept her and love her". I had let my fear of getting hurt and had let my pride get in the way of just accepting and serving her, and it wasn't working - it was hurting. That morning I had heard God say "just accept and love her", and in the months that followed, as I chose to not try to fix her, but chose just to love her, God poured out His Spirit on our relationship and we began to truly fall in love. We began to serve each other with a consistent Agape styled love. Just as God had pursued Juliette and me individually, for salvation, I now sensed God saying "pursue closeness with Juliette every day". In the years that followed, I vividly recall how happy our kids were, every day, to see Juliette and me take time out just to talk with each other. God was so faithful in saving our marriage.

In **2 Timothy 1:7** (CEV) while teaching on boldness for evangelism, Paul makes this statement to his mentee Timothy.

⁷ God's Spirit doesn't make cowards out of us. The Spirit gives us power, love, and self-control.

Every day family, whatever your relationships are within your family or network, **you** don't ever have to respond out of hurt, or offence or fear of rejection.

'Never forget that scared people are bound to show you their worst. People who feel loved, on the other hand, will usually show you their best.' - Danny Silk

With God's Holy Spirit in us, giving us boldness, giving us power, giving us supernatural love, giving us self-control; we can choose to move closer to our spouses and our significant relationships. We can't change anyone. We should never try to control or manipulate anyone. Not one of us needs to have a victim mind-set. Every one of us can choose to love those around us and especially our spouses. Others might back away from the relationship and keep themselves safe from being hurt again, but we are God's people, a grace-giving people, and we have the courage, the power, the love and the self-control to build relationships.

2 Corinthians 3:17 (NIV)

¹⁷ *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.*

If you and I stay close to God and filled with His Spirit, then we have the freedom to love others powerfully, even when they don't deserve it. We won't be controlled by our hurts or our fears. We will be controlled by Him!

I want to quickly run you through some points on how to build connectedness with your spouse and those closest to you.

Eight keys to keeping things tight at home

1. Base your relationship on unconditional love.

Conditional love says that "if you don't do that for me, or if you don't behave the way that I want you to; if you hurt me or disappoint me, then I am going to begin to distance myself from you and this relationship". That's conditional human love.

Now, obviously, in a relationship, if there is violence or abuse or addictive behaviour, it must be confronted and help sought. However in most situations:

Unconditional, God type love says "You are not me, and I am not you, I will not try to control you. No matter what you do, I will choose to pursue a closer connection with you." You can't ever guarantee how other people are going to treat you, but in God you can guarantee how you will respond to them. If you can't be manipulated or controlled or hurt, because you are determined with God's help to just keep loving that person, you are both a free person and a powerful person.

2. Choose to love.

1 Corinthians 13:13 (NIV)

¹³ *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.*

When you value someone as a person, you care about their dreams and values, their health, their souls and their relationships; and that will always translate into helpful words and actions.

If you are choosing to show love to someone, that person will, over time, feel safe, valued, connected, nurtured, protected and understood.

If love is a daily choice, and I believe it is, then the fruit, the impact of that daily choice, is the sense of security and value that the other person receives from you.

3. Choose to honour.

It amazes me that God would not call us His slaves but His friends. He does not call us orphans, but sons and daughters. He sees the good in us and calls it out of us.

There is no honour in a marriage or relationship when one person holds all the power.

Honour says, "I respect you, I value you, I believe that you are capable of so much good."

Honour says to the little boy who just pulled his sister's hair, "Johnny, you need to go to the thinking chair and work out how you can put things right with your sister. But Johnny, you are better than this. You are a great little man who will help people with your hands."

Honour says to the teenager who is nervous about his first job interview, "Son, whether this employer takes you on or not, you will be a real asset to the team. You are honest, and conscientious and polite. You listen, Son, you have a lot to offer that company."

Honour says to the spouse who just said something unkind to you, "I don't understand why you just said what you did, but I know you want what is best for us."

Choose honour.

4. Choose self-control.

Self-control means that you can tell yourself what to do and then make yourself do it. Ultimately, no one can make you angry or make you say and do hurtful things. You have self-control when you can set goals for yourself in every area of your life and then you follow through on those goals. I am convinced from Scripture, that the moment you yell at someone, put them down, push them or ridicule them, you have sinned, and no matter what they did to provoke you, you are accountable for that sin. Getting close to God daily, praying in tongues daily, and getting into the Bible and fellowship as much as you can, will give the Holy Spirit control of your body and mind.

In your marriage or significant relationships, choose to say and do what God would have you do. Don't blame others for your problem or play the victim card. Just keep doing what is right in God's eyes.

5. Choose responsibility.

If you break the word 'responsibility' down it literally means the 'ability to respond.'

'Response-ability is the capacity to face any situation and make powerful choices that are consistent with who you say you are. It is the refusal to run away from difficulties or any part of your life or reality that you happen to dislike. When you take full ownership of your life in this way, you gain confidence and momentum in making good decisions.' - Danny Silk

When two people in a relationship are both acting responsibly, trust grows very quickly. When you do what you say you are going to do; when you make a mistake and you don't cover it up or change the topic; but instead you face up to it and do your best to fix it, there is such security formed.

Years ago, I bought Juliette a Navman so she would feel happier getting around the city. One day I borrowed it so I could pick up something which I had bought off TradeMe from an obscure street on the North Shore. Now, I thought Navmen were for girls. I have a very

good sense of direction and yet I learnt to trust that box with the American voice. “In 300 metres at the next intersection take the first exit. Perform a U turn as soon as possible.” I found that gadget to be so reliable and it made the trip stress free. So it is in marriage; when people choose to be responsible. Trust grows and stress diminishes.

6. Choose truth.

While living responsibly will earn the trust of those around you and me, when we consistently tell the truth to people it demonstrates to them that we are trustworthy. I am amazed at how, when you share your life with your spouse, things around you are constantly changing. Initially, so much of your conversations were dream orientated, but then it often becomes parenting or finance orientated, then career and location changes. Then your life changes as your kids grow up and leave home. Then there are things to work through around the topics of grandchildren and the care of very senior family members.

Life never stays the same for long. It's not static. There are pressures and surprises and challenges that come from all quarters, and so a key to keeping the connectedness in your relationship is to always tell the truth.

What do you really want? What are you really thinking or feeling?

How can your spouse help you right now?

Every time you crack open your chest and reveal what is going on inside, you are showing that you trust your spouse and that you want your relationship to be strong through all the seasons of life.

Now, if your spouse meets you half way and shares honestly their thoughts with you, that would be awesome, but even if they don't, you have shown that you are in control of your truth and given the relationship an opportunity to grow.

7. Choose faith.

Your spouse cannot read your mind, although some are pretty good at trying.

Your spouse can't meet all your needs. Your spouse is not responsible for your comfort, your happiness, your freedom. Only God can do that - and if you look to a person for everything you need to be happy – that is, I suggest, idol worship and a serious sin. Love your spouse. Share life with them, work hard to cultivate and protect your relationship, but never forget: your deepest longings, your deepest needs, the only one who truly and totally understands you is not him or her, it is God. If you want things to be tight at home, in a way that will bless you, your spouse, your children and your children's children, then individually, and as a couple, go to God first for what you need.

If both people are putting God first and seeking His wisdom and strength and character; if they are both submitting themselves to His authority, “*Jesus what do you want in this situation?*”; if two people are constantly pursuing a strong connection with the Perfect One, then you can imagine the impact that will have on their connection together. They will be learning to love from Love Himself and then bringing that into their relationship.

8. Pursue a common vision.

Couples will usually have a vision for their family; a vision for their marriage; a vision for their ministry into the community; a vision for their business, and maybe a vision for a super holiday one day, or a vision for their retirement years.

Proverbs 29:18 (NIV)

¹⁸ *Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint;
but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction.*

Life has lots of traumatic events and difficult seasons. Sometimes it feels like these trials come one after another, but where there is a clear vision, you are able to see the big picture and hang on to the greater purpose - even though you might be going through pain. Vision enables you to endure, so that you can reach your goals.

Family, I believe that we are all either building connection and intimacy in our significant relationships, or we are building separation. With God casting out our fear and providing us with His love, and his power, and His self-control, we can turn around a bad situation or make a good thing even better. Remember, no one can control how you love others. No one can manage how you honour, but you. No one can manage the truth that you speak, but you. No one can manage your self-control or responsibility, but you. And no one can manage your faith and vision, but you. When people make the right choices, God will always turn up, but, initially, the quality of what you are building relationally is up to you.

This sermon was based on the book “Keep Your Love On” by Danny Silk

Appendix 3:

Sermon - Sunday 1 November 2015

A Celebration Of Marriage

Why marriage?

Years ago, I heard a statistic bandied around a lot which said that Christian marriages were failing at a similar rate to non-Christian. An article from the 'Marriage Week' website gave me more clarity to that. In their research, it said the Barna Group interviewed anyone who claimed to be Christians, whether or not they knew God or went to church. (i.e. 60% of New Zealander's would say they are Christian but only 10-12% might actually be practicing Christians). Further research showed that if a person went to church on a fairly regular basis they improved their marriage success rate by 25% above the average.

1. Why non-believers should get married:

- Research shows that the majority of people who get married, stay married and are happy
- Married people live around 4 years longer on average than non married people
- Children of stable, secure, loving home environments do best in life
- The grass is not greener on the other side of the fence. Re-marriages have a lower success rate than first marriages (maybe more effort should be made to mow the grass on this side of the fence)

2. Why Christians should get married:

Other than the obvious: That sex outside of marriage is a sin and can cause a person (like drunkenness, greed etc) to have no part in the kingdom of God.

a) Companionship

Amos 3:3

True companionship grows out of a oneness of spirit.

b) Enjoyment

Hebrews 13:4

Song of Songs

Sex was meant to be fun and enjoyed in a secure, loving, faithful relationship.

c) Completeness

Genesis 2:23

God designed Eve to complete that which was lacking in Adam's life.

d) Fruitfulness

Genesis 1:28

Genesis 9:1

1 Peter 3:7

To multiply a Godly legacy in your children.

e) Protection

Ephesians 5:25

Titus 2:4-5

Malachi 2:15

Psalms 112:1-2

The husband protects his wife by laying down his life for her.

The wife protects the home.

The parents are to protect their children and raise up Godly seed.

f) To model the relationship between Jesus and the church

Ephesians 5:31-33

Why some couples shouldn't get married:

Here are four common reasons why counsellors and pastors would not advise couples to marry.

1. They don't trust each other.
2. There is addiction and violence going unaddressed.
3. Some forms of mental health make marriage very hard.
4. If one of them is not a believer.

Recently I read an article on 'The Christian Leader's Network' where a young man called Seth asked his dad if he thought he should marry:

"Dad, do you think that she will make me happy?" he asked.

Dad's answer was quite profound.

Marriage Isn't For You

By Seth Adam Smith November 2, 2013 Love and Family



Kim and me after cutting the cake.

"Seth, you're being totally selfish. So I'm going to make this really simple: marriage isn't for you. You don't marry to make yourself happy, you marry to make someone else happy. More than that, your marriage isn't for yourself, you're marrying for a family. Not just for the in-laws and all of that nonsense, but for your future children. Who do you want to help you raise them? Who do you want to influence them? Marriage isn't for you. It's not about you. Marriage is about the person you married."

There are several awesome Christians in the church who have divorced after abusive relationships. Divorce, while it is to be an absolutely last resort, is not the unpardonable sin.

In a few moments we are going to sing about God's power, God's ability to help us in our relationships, but before we do that - if you are struggling in your marriage right now - I want you to take encouragement from video clips from the 'Family Life' website.

Incidentally, the 'Family life' website is full of on-line resources and upcoming marriage enrichment weekends. www.familylife.org.nz

Hot tips to make a good thing better

I am going to very quickly run through six things you can do to make your marriage even better. Before I do that, can I stress that, though these things really work, there has to be an underlying attitude in your heart to make them work. That is, there has to be a desire in your heart to make things better. It's about having good intentions towards your spouse and a positive attitude to your marriage.

If you want to make your marriage better, make sure that there is humility in your heart. You cannot fix your spouse, it's not your job, but what can you do? What can you learn to make things better? There also needs to be a priority in your heart, to make sure your relationship to your spouse comes second only to your relationship to God. So, your attitude which is your good will, your humility and your focus are key ingredients.

Dr David Hawkins, a Christian marriage counsellor, says that these six hot tips can make any marriage go from good to awesome.

1. Communication

Every couple needs to set aside regular time, each day and each week, just to talk to each other. It needs to be budgeted into your week and a priority goal. When you first start dating there is no end of things you want to talk about, but as pressures build and life gets busy and settled, not all couples allow daily time to talk. Man, with the kids and work and the DIY projects, you assume that each other cares, but you don't invest the time. Whether you are in a good mood or a bad mood, full of beans or tired, you need time together to talk. One on one is essential, maybe over a coffee or as you go for a walk, but leaving each other notes or sending texts, etc are all good things to do. Never go silent on each other or walk away from a problem without at least trying to address it humbly. You may not feel like communicating if your feelings are hurt or if you have too many projects on but ... there is no better investment in your marriage, your child's happiness and your happiness than keeping things tight at home and making time to talk.

2. Active listening

Those who have done counselling training or our pastoral care course, become good at this and it's a great skill for life. In the foyer are our ideas for daily couch time questions and instructions on active listening. Every couple needs to learn to have conversations that are not about the bills, or the problem in-law, or the finances that just draw on each other's soul. And if you ask those questions and try to empathise, try to check what you are hearing is what they are saying. If you show interest in your spouse's comments, by asking further questions, and trying to put into your own words what he or she appears to be feeling, your intimacy in your relationship will deepen rapidly.

3. Develop shared interests

When you are going out together, just being together, doing anything - even the dishes - is awesome, but as time goes on and pressures increase you can easily forget to give time to shared interests.

Ask yourself; what did you enjoy doing together when you first started dating? What might you enjoy doing together now? When was your last dinner out or walk on a beach or dance lesson or renovation project? There are bound to be things that you enjoy doing together, and to be blatantly honest; investing in doing things together is far more important than investing all the other things that clamour for your attention. Make a list of what you do enjoy, or might try doing together, this week, as a couple.

4. Keep the romance alive

Unless you are showing a romantic interest in your spouse, you can bet your bottom dollar someone else will be. People in our culture love to flirt, to compliment, to flatter and suggest. If your spouse's emotional love tank is full and you are caring for each other, no problem. But if that tank is not full you are both in trouble. Most of us, when we think of romance, think of really expensive once-in-a-while activities. To be fair, though, romance is much more about an attitude of appreciation and nurturing that just exists on a day-in and day-out basis. For example, do you say nice things to each other, as you part at the beginning of the day or greet at the end of the day? Do you make a special effort to touch each other with kindness when you are together? Again, what kind of things did you do for each other while dating, that you could try again? Lots of pleasant comments and non-sexual touches go such a long way to building romance into a relationship.

I have shared our testimony of our first 7 years of marriage many times in church. It wasn't until we, or maybe mostly me, chose to act lovingly, irrespective of feelings at that time, that all our feelings began to follow and grow from those right choices. I thought this lady's comments on the 'Family Life' website were really simple and practical in helping men understand what romance looks like.

5. Conflict resolution skills

Every couple will have points of difference; maybe it's how you raise your children, or how you spend your shared finances, or issues around sex, or in laws and out laws. But there are always differences. The point is, you must have the skills and a plan, so that when these differences come up you will know how to deal with them in a healthy way in which no one gets hurt.

I would encourage all couples, when there is conflict, to:

- a) **Keep things in perspective.** When we get angry we usually distort the problem, making it worse than it really is. Try to step back from the issue and ask yourself, "Is the issue really as big as I feel it is?"
- b) **Keep your emotions under control.** The moment that you start yelling, putting down, getting physical, threatening, or bringing up problems from the past, you are sinning and you are only going to make matters worse.
- c) **Accept your part of the problem.** Admit it when you have been wrong. Even if you think you are only a small part of the problem. You can't fix your spouse, it's not your job, so ask God to fix you. Walk humbly. Say sorry whenever you need to. Remain humble in your relationship.
- d) **Learn to negotiate.** See pages 16 – 18. Listen to your spouse; try to understand what it is they want and what you can offer. Allow your spouse to hold different points of view and values to yourself. Share your wants and needs respectfully in a non-defensive manner. Use humble language; avoid using the word 'you'. Agree on a compromise that works for the both of you. If you can, try to work out your plans when the heat is not on. That's the best time to negotiate.

6. Commitment

Our society is definitely not built on commitment. We live in a world where if something gets a bit boring, or hard, or broken, we walk away. That does not fit the Christian concept of a marriage covenant.

Please, in your marriages commit to praying together. I absolutely believe the old cliché

"Those that pray together, stay together"

You and I, who have promised to love our spouses until death do us part, are in the world but not of the world. We live by a much higher, more selfless, more empowered standard. It's natural for anyone in this world to think at times; if it doesn't work I'll just move on. That's the way the world teaches us to think. But we are not of this world. We belong to a different kingdom.

Family, one of Satan's tactics, to stop the advance of the kingdom, is to come against Christian marriages. Not only should you have this attitude of thinking well of your spouse, and being humble about your own struggles, but you and I need to make maintaining and improving our marriages a real priority.

Statistics prove that things are very unlikely be better somewhere else. Make a real commitment to nurture your marriage. Be committed to your spouse and your future together. Don't say things to yourselves, or anyone else, like "this is never going to work." Instead guard your words and speak life over your relationship. Be committed daily to being really available to your spouse, then he or she will not be feeling insecure or unsafe emotionally.

One of the greatest strategies in the bible for reaching the world with the gospel, is that Godly men and Godly women would raise Godly children, who would, in turn, raise Godly children; and from that home God would create an environment where love and faith would be disseminated into the world.

Married people in the service this morning: are you willing to make that commitment for God, for your spouse and for a Godly heritage?

Appendix 4:

How to break addictions

Please take the time to work through and apply these 11 steps. God does not want you to be in slavery to anything, and permanent change can take place now. As you go through this section pray and record the thoughts that God is making you aware of.

Eleven steps to freedom from addiction

1. **Acknowledge that you have an addiction problem (e.g. porn, drugs, alcohol, smoking, eating, work, etc.)**
2. **I can deny it, if I learn to ‘hate’ it.**

“God will deliver you from your enemies, not your friends” – Derek Prince.

Write down 10 reasons why smoking, drugs, porn etc. is your ‘enemy’ and not your ‘friend’.

1. This is not good for my health.
2. This will be harming the health of my children.
3. My addiction costs me \$_____ a year. I would rather put that money towards _____ (something you want, e.g. a holiday).
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

3. **Read Galatians 5:19-21 and Ephesians 4:17-24.** What are these scriptures saying to you?
4. **Read Matthew 18:8-9.** What does it mean? What would cutting off the point of temptation mean to you practically?
5. **Identify the original hurt or cause of the addiction and ask for God’s truth to set you free.**
 - (a) What is the unbearable feeling/trigger that will cause you to pursue the addiction?

(b) When was the first time you had this feeling?

(c) What was the original lie, the wrong idea, you began to believe back then?

(d) What is the truth that God wants to replace that lie with? What does God say about that now?

6. **Retrain your mind to rethink truth daily.** (i.e. review the contents of this worksheet daily). What is God saying to you? What positive thoughts/sayings should you fill your mind with?

7. **Establish new boundaries in relationships.** (i.e. don't associate with, or allow certain people or behaviour into your home). For me this would mean:

8. **Find genuine internal comfort.** E.g. run, exercise, listen to music.

9. **Understand the process of physical withdrawal.** (e.g. It takes 3 days to get nicotine out of the system).

(a) Go cold turkey.

(b) Get non-nicotine based medication such as Nicobrevin (find info@Nicrobrevin.com)

10. **Win the battle of the mind.**

Read 2 Corinthians 10:5 and Philippians 4:8. Capture every wrong thought the moment it comes to mind and replace it with _____ (something pure, holy and worthy of praise). For me this would be:

11. **Record the names of two people who will hold you accountable.**

Name: _____ Ph: _____

Name: _____ Ph: _____

Cads	845-1818/0800787797 outpatient support - Trading Place.
Quit Line	0800778778 quit.org.nz patches/gum/lozenges 8 weeks for \$3
Bridge	630-1491
Higher Ground	834-0017
Odyssey House	374-4556
Care N.Z. Outreach	276-7193
Wings Trust	815-1631

Appendix 5:

How to Manage your Anger

“Whenever we are bumped, we’ll spill whatever we’re full of.” – Dave Riddell

Question: What is the most effective way to stop a pot boiling over; to lift off the lid, screw it on tighter or to take the pot off the stove?

(1) Truth coaches:

“Life is not always fair, you do not get to control everything that happens to you but ... you do get to choose your response” – Russell

“You clam up, blow up, or grow up. You can take offence or you can take correction. The choice is entirely yours, each time you get angry.” – Dave Riddell

“People cannot make you angry, it’s your choice based on what you believe about a given situation.” – Russell

Try to identify why you sometimes slip into angry responses:

- a) Is it part of the grief process?
- b) Are you having trouble setting boundaries? (e.g. saying ‘no’ then feeling guilty, or saying ‘yes’ and feeling used).
- c) Have you been bottling up feelings, hurts, disappointments, and haven’t learnt to vent them in an honest and healthy way?
- d) Do you have unrealistic expectations of yourself or others?
- e) Is it your way of avoiding having to deal with a problem or an unbearable feeling? (e.g. you may be too proud to accept correction and so you lash out verbally or physically).
- f) Do you struggle to communicate your thoughts clearly? Negotiate?
- g) Do you feel disrespected and not listened to?
- h) Are you taking on too much and not getting enough time out and sleep?
- i) Do you have a drug or alcohol addiction which leaves you irritable when you come off the drugs?
- j) Irrational fear/ rage which appears to have begun without a clear cause can be caused by the demonic and requires the prayer of faith.
- k) Are you too proud? Does it really matter what people think of you?
- l) Is the anger connected to a past hurt?
- m) Is anger your default reaction when you feel hurt?

(b) Truth coaches:

Live with a desire to simply please God.

*God made the person you are abusing and putting down in His image.
Your anger is your problem, but if left unchecked will damage the lives of a lot of others as well.*

Your children will usually tend to copy your ways of dealing with life, even if these are negative.

Proverbs 15:1 *“A kind answer soothes angry feelings, but harsh words stir them up”.*

James 1:19 *“My dear friends, you should be quick to listen and slow to speak or to get angry.”*

Ephesians 4:26 *“Don’t get so angry that you sin. Don’t go to bed angry.”*

Colossians 3:8 *“But now you must stop doing such things. You must quit being angry, hateful and evil. You must no longer say insulting or cruel things about others.”*

It’s never okay to yell, push, hit or put someone else down. You are at fault if you do.

If you need to protect someone from a bully, or an abusive person, do so calmly or involve the authorities.

Steps to overcoming anger problems

1. Identify the cause of your anger and address that problem through actively gaining new skills, beliefs or counselling. *“Lord show me why I am angry and how to get healed and free. It’s my problem.”*
2. Determine to stop the blame game. You alone, are responsible for your choices. It may be wise to daily reflect on a ‘truth coach’. Use one of those listed above or write down your own.
3. Identify the build-up process to anger (i.e. for most people there are physical signs, verbal clues, and behavioural changes before they explode).

Describe the steps in your process:

- a) _____
- b) _____
- c) _____
- d) _____
- e) _____

4. Remind yourself of your truth coaches at points ‘a’ and ‘b’.
Consider the ‘big picture’ (i.e. what will be the consequences of my chosen reaction?)
5. Come to an agreement with partner/ spouse/ workmate; i.e. When I give this non-verbal signal - e.g. put my hat on the table, put my watch on the TV or whatever - this means let me take half an hour out, doing something physical, before we revisit the conversation. Don’t nag or pursue me. I value you too much to talk at this stage but will, once I’ve calmed down.