

Building Intimacy

How can husbands and wives _____ closer and make their marriages stronger? Today, we're going to discuss building intimacy in marriage. We study God's Word because we _____ Him and want to stay _____ to Him. The best way truly to know God is to _____ what God has revealed about Himself in His Word. We also realize that the One who blessed mankind with the marriage of Adam and Eve still has the best plan for men and women today.

Intimacy is the close _____ of ourselves with our mates—our thoughts, feelings, plans, hopes, and dreams—our very souls and bodies. Intimacy has two essential elements: first, the _____ of being truly loved, accepted, and valued for what we are. Second, the significance and privilege of making a substantial, lasting, positive impact on another person we love. When we love and stay close to each other as God _____, we make each other better and stronger.

The Scriptures, in Malachi 2:14, call marriage a covenant, a lifelong relationship, in which a man and a woman have _____ to remain true to each other until death parts them. It will take _____ to keep any marriage strong and warm for a lifetime. The key to keeping a good marriage lies in the quality of the relationship. Close marriages don't just happen. Men and women must _____ to have good marriages and be willing to invest their hearts and their time into that relationship. They must be willing to make their marriages a _____ and must be willing to grow together. Whether you're in a problem marriage or you've grown complacent, there's still _____ for you. If you're willing to make some _____, you can have a great marriage.

Our reading today comes from Proverbs 5:15-18.

A loving and meaningful marriage _____ intimacy. For two _____ to embrace each other, intimacy is a must. If you don't know how your partner thinks and feels about various issues or concerns, he or she is somewhat of a _____ to you. For two hearts to _____, they cannot be strangers. Some assume that intimacy automatically occurs between married partners, but I've seen far too many "married strangers." I've talked to too many husbands and wives who _____ isolated from their spouses and lonely, even after many years of marriage. I've heard statements like, "We share the same house, the same table, and the same bed, but we might as well be strangers." Or, "We've lived together for twenty-three years, and yet I don't know my spouse any better now than when we first married." Or, "What really hurts is that we can spend a weekend together and I still feel lonely. I think I married someone who would rather be a _____." Intimacy is not automatic; it takes work for two people to grow close.

There are three types of intimacy in marriage. The first is _____: loving support, sharing of burdens, sharing of goals, showing that we esteem our mate, and loving attention. In Song of Solomon 3:2, the bride says, "I will _____ him whom my soul loves." True intimacy is more than a physical desire; it must involve the _____ person, so that we can say with Song of

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Solomon 6:3, “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is _____.” It’s two hearts and two lives so intertwined that they belong to each other and they _____ for each other.

A second form of intimacy is _____: affection, touching, sharing in duties, and the sexual act. “Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, ‘I have gotten a man child with the help of the LORD’” (Genesis 4:1). God regards this physical intimacy between husband and wife in marriage as honorable. **Read 1 Corinthians 7:2-3.** Physical intimacy is not only approved in marriage but also is God’s will.

A third kind of intimacy is _____: shared prayer and devotions, shared morals and values, shared spiritual goals, and a shared style of handling forgiveness and reconciliation. I think here of Aquila and Priscilla; when you read about _____, you read about the _____. When Apollos came to Ephesus, Acts 18:26 says that Priscilla and Aquila pulled him aside “and explained to him the _____ of God more accurately.” First Corinthians 16:19 says that Aquila and Priscilla had a _____ meeting in their house. Paul said, “Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow _____ in Christ Jesus, who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well” (Romans 16:3-4). Aquila and Priscilla _____ their lives and their faith together.

When couples share faith and values, they’re able to teach others the _____ together and to give their children an unconfused _____ about God. When a husband and wife _____ over morals, spiritual truths, and values, they leave their children guessing as to what is right and wrong. Couples need to be _____ spiritually in the truth of God’s word.

The Scriptures give a _____ picture of a husband and wife who never had the kind of intimacy that God desires. I’m speaking of King David and Michal, the daughter of Saul. **Read what 2 Samuel 6:16 and verse 23 records.** Intimacy is first a matter of the _____. To have true intimacy two people must _____ each other and must maintain that love.

How can I _____ this intimacy in my marriage? First, I must accept and welcome my spouse as my _____ in life. All husbands and wives have differences in the way they think, the way they do things, and the way they like to eat, the things they eat and the way they react to things. Accepting my spouse means I will love and respect him or her, even though we may _____ on things that do not matter. We need to accept our spouses in matters that don’t involve accepting or approving _____. Should your spouse sin, loving your spouse means humbly confronting the sin in the hope they will _____. In those matters which do not involve sin, your spouse needs to know you love and accept them as a person.

Second, everyone needs _____. They need to know that they’re _____ for through loving words and through physical touch. Hugs and kisses are essential to happiness in marriage. Sweet notes, caring deeds, and expressions of love ought to flow between husbands and wives. Virginia Satir, a family therapist, said, “We need four hugs a day for survival. We need eight hugs a day for maintenance. We need twelve hugs a day for growth.” Five times the Scriptures urge Christians to _____ one another with a holy kiss or a kiss of love. Everyone needs affection.

Third, husbands and wives need _____. They need the feeling of gratefulness from their spouse. Nothing hurts more than to _____ unappreciated for what you do for your family.

Every husband and every wife need recognition for the good they do and the sacrifices they make for the _____. Saying “thank you” and “I appreciate you” should be part of our everyday conversation with our mates.

Fourth, we must give our spouses our undivided attention, interest, and support. Withholding your _____ from your spouse says, “I don’t care about you.” When your spouse needs you, don’t selfishly refuse them. Giving your spouse your attention is how you let them _____ you genuinely care for them and respect them. You want your spouse to feel highly _____ and prized in your heart. Show them by paying attention.

Fifth, when your spouse hurts physically or emotionally, give them _____. Comfort means saying tender words, putting an arm around them, and feeling their _____ with them. When Mary and Martha lost their brother Lazarus, Jesus _____ with them. **Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.** When those we love hurt, we should empathize and give comfort.

Sixth, everyone needs encouragement. Husbands and wives need to know their spouses _____ in them and want them to move forward and to grow as a person. First Thessalonians 5:11 says to all Christians, “Therefore encourage one another and _____ up one another, just as you also are doing.” We especially need encouragement from the person we’ve married.

Seventh, we need to be _____ in our relationship with the one we love. We need to know that they will help us, all of us need that, and that they will help us to remain _____ from harm or danger. A secure and stable _____, where mom and dad love each other, is the best place for children to grow and prosper. Every parent wants his child to _____ as Jesus did. Luke 2:52 says, “And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man.” Children in Christian homes where mother and father are secure in their love make better grades and avoid the pitfalls of life.

Last, husbands and wives need to _____ one another. Each one needs to know that he or she has someone to walk alongside and help carry the _____ of life. They have someone to _____ their victories and their grief, someone who understands their burdens and their dreams. Marriage is a partnership of two people who complete each other and who _____ each other succeed in the challenges of life. Everyone needs to know there is someone in their corner who will cheer them and stand by them. Just as the Lord supports and watches over us, we as married couples need to say to our spouses, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

It’s vitally important for husbands and wives to _____ together. When a man and woman marry they no longer think and act as a _____ person. It is no longer “I” but “we.” All of life is then lived in connection with _____ person. Everything you do _____ this significant person. You’re a _____ of two, and when both of you participate, you function better. When you confront problems and crises in your life (and you will), you can find comfort and support in your loved one who _____ for you and with you. When you’re struggling financially, when you have problems at work, when you have tough decisions to make, or when you face a medical crisis, you can share the burden with your spouse; that will lighten the load.

Couples need to pray together for the _____ of their marriages. When you two are married, you _____ into an adventure with risks and challenges. The vows that you took at your

wedding will be _____ on all sides by Satan and by others. Praying together will make marriage stronger as well as help protect you from allowing challenges of life to separate the two of you. Couples who have prayer lists and pray daily and fervently will come to see the _____ of answered prayer. They will be encouraged as they see how God works in their lives.

When couples pray together, their prayers make an _____ on disagreements, conflicts, and anger expressed toward each other. When you see your spouse as a _____ of God, valuable and precious in His sight, someone that He sent His Son to die for, that will affect how you pray for him or her. You'll pray for what is _____ for your spouse. Praying together will bring you _____ together. I want my wife to pray for me and with me.

Praying together brings _____ for a couple. **Read Philippians 4:6-7.**

Why do we discuss intimacy? Because intimacy with our spouses is what _____ our marriages strong and secure. When people grow close to each other, intimacy allows each to see the other as they _____ are. They see their strengths and weaknesses, their beauty and their flaws. This kind of closeness may seem to open the door to vulnerability, but it also provides the greatest _____ of security. It allows each to say, "My spouse loves me in _____ of my flaws and weaknesses. My spouse loves me for me." When I think of the love that my devoted wife has given me in spite of my weaknesses, I'm grateful to her and I'm grateful for her, as God's gift to me. Because of her faith in God and her love for me, she "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." Love never fails. True devotion doesn't stop loving, even when people are _____. God loves us that way, and so should we.

Willard F. Harley in his book, *His Needs, Her Needs*, suggests, "Give your undivided attention to your spouse a minimum of _____ hours each week, meeting some of your spouse's most important needs." The things that made husbands and wives fall in love are the things that _____ them loving each other. There simply isn't any substitute for _____. When you marry for a _____, you pass through several stages of life, and each stage is different. By maintaining close intimacy, two people can _____ together for life a lifetime. When you give your spouse your time; you're actually giving him or her your most precious possession— that's yourself. That's true of marriage, and it's true of our relationship with _____. You can't be close to God if you _____ spend time with Him. Everyday read from His Word and pray fervently to Him; praise Him in song; and count your blessings. When you give God your time; you're giving Him your most precious possession—and that's yourself.

When we become Christians, the Lord adds us to His church; and we unite with Christ in a covenant relationship. We have His promise of grace and love, but we must commit to trust and obey Him. To enter that covenant relationship we must hear His words, confess our faith in Him, repent of our sins, and be baptized into Christ. Baptism into Christ is an immersion in water and it means we're baptized into His death. That's when the blood of Jesus washes away our sins and causes us to be born again. In baptism we're crucified with Christ and we rise to walk in newness of life according to Romans 6:3-7.