

# A SIMPLE GUIDE FOR A STRONG AND LOVING MARRIAGE



Easy to Understand  
Difficult to Do

Several years ago we attended a two-weekend workshop put on by the Second Half Ministry program of the Navigators. This program (still offered) is designed for those desiring to explore what God may have purposed them to do in the second half of their life. Intense, powerful and fun, we explored things about ourselves, our gifts, our skills and our priorities. Some of these we were not completely aware of. We summarized these insights into a pretty accurate two-page personal profile. For couples these profiles were then merged to find if there was a clear direction that God may be leading them for a joint purpose in the second half of life together. It was quite clear for us to embark on a relationship ministry and one of the results of that is this small booklet. We hope you enjoy reading it and sharing it with others.

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## A SIMPLE GUIDE FOR A STRONG AND LOVING MARRIAGE

*And they shall become one flesh (Gen 2:24)*

Marriage. One of the most difficult commitments we can enter into and possibly the one we are least prepared to undertake with some assurance of success. While we are likely aware of the plethora of books and videos available on the subject few of us probably did much more than some quick pastoral counseling prior to the marriage ceremony. Then things went south and we became frustrated and ready to bail out. We were either too proud or the marriage too far gone to seek help. In most cases it appears to be the latter. Help sought too late is generally not effective in saving and restoring a marriage. This guide is for those who still want to have and preserve a strong and loving union with their spouse. We hope you find it to be the simple “instruction manual” you have been without. While it is “simple” at the same time it is difficult. It requires a commitment of time and effort towards replacing old ways, attitudes and habits with new ones. Please be aware this guide is not aimed at the “too late” group. If the marriage has turned adulterous, abusive or contains drug or alcohol issues it very likely requires professional help, which is beyond the scope of this guide.

The title refers to a “strong loving marriage”. It purposely does not refer to a “great”, “wonderful” or even “happy” marriage although those qualities are desired and may also be an outcome of the application of this guide. However, impacting those qualities are elements such as health and external factors outside of your control. We believe first and foremost “strength” is the foundation of a great, happy, wonderful and loving marriage. Furthermore we believe that “strength” is centered in Jesus Christ. If you do not know Jesus as your personal savior don’t worry this guide is still for you. The reason being that Jesus is in these words and will be in your life as you read them. We believe the fact you are reading this is His doing as He makes Himself known to you. Since there is much the bible has to say that is helpful we will include a few of those relevant passages.

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## FIVE WORDS (Chuck's Story)

Life is all about experiences. They shape who we are and how we act and react. We learn from them and hopefully gain wisdom. I believe that God's hand is in all wisdom and He directs its use for His purpose. So it is with this guide. About 30 years ago I attended a one-day conference on personal development and specifically on how one's attitudes affect actions and relationships. I had decided I needed to do something because my first marriage had recently ended in divorce. While it takes two to tango I felt my lack of ability to nurture the relationship was contributory. The traumatic experience of divorce was not something I wished to repeat again. I needed a new game plan. Books and counseling did not connect with me but something from this one-day seminar did. My mind is a little foggy on exactly how it all developed but I do recall we were asked to do an exercise and come up with words that would encompass a new attitudinal approach to use in our relationships. Somehow I ended up with just five words. I had no idea then if I would really use them, much less use them effectively. I certainly had no idea of how powerful they would become. The words are adore, affirm, comfort, console, and caress. Familiar words to us all but when put together in a marital game plan form an incredible bond. For years these five words continued to work in the background changing the way I interacted in all relationships but most importantly in my wonderful marriage to Barb. About ten years after we were married I shared these words with Barb. I had already come to know that she was an expert in their practice but apparently without the conscious effort I underwent. We had many discussions and became more aware of how each of the five words worked in our marriage and of the cases where we failed to apply them and ran into trouble. Shortly thereafter came the critical "Aha" moment which followed the arrival of Jesus in our lives. We came to find that "adore" carried with it a meaning specific to our relationship with Jesus individually and as the center pin of our marriage.

## THE ADORATION OF JESUS CHRIST

*And walk in love as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us (Eph 5:2)*

As mentioned the five words came first and knowing Jesus came later. Well, really He was there all the time. We just didn't know it. Effectively, we did not know Him. Indeed, it was not until we both were in our forties that we each, at different occasions, asked Jesus to take over control of our lives. Of course, we soon came to recognize that Jesus was the architect of those "decisions". There is a Bible passage quoting Jesus as saying:

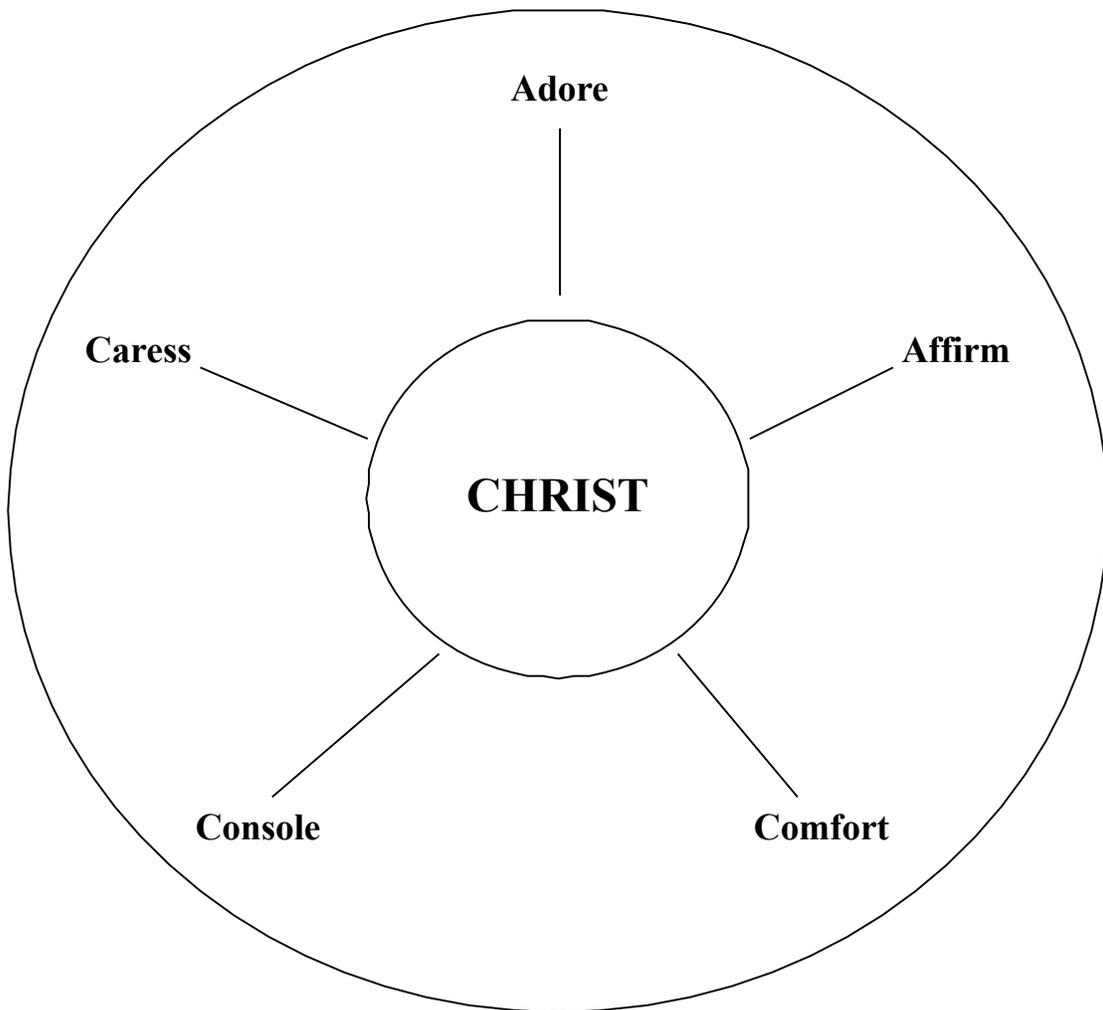
*"Here I am. I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with Me" (Rev 3:20).*

Not to dwell on this critical juncture in our lives but it is worth noting that both of us previously thought we were "Christians" and knew Jesus. We were active in church worship, Bible studies, men's and women's groups, etc. but we had never come to that "decision" point. Jesus chooses the time and the circumstances when we come to Him.

Well, what did that all mean? It meant everything but specific to our marriage it brought clarity to how and why the five words guide us. The first of the five words was "Adore". Initially we treated that word in the context to be described in the next chapter. As used here "to adore" is defined as "to worship". Additional definitions of "adore" include "to pay divine honors to", "to express reverence and honor", "beseech", "ask in prayer" and of course "to love". We believe the "adoration" of Jesus Christ is the encompassing womb of safety for our marriage and submit it can be so for yours as well. When Jesus became the head of our individual lives He also therefore became the head of our marriage. It was He who gave us strength to say, "I'm sorry" and ask for forgiveness when if by our own volition we would stubbornly resist doing so. It was His doing that showed us the hurtfulness of foul language and helped us to eliminate those words from our vocabulary. It is Jesus who strengthens our love for Him and for each other as we bring to Him our cares and requests. When we learn to trust in Him we also strengthen our trust in each other. Praying together we found to be a special time of strength and love in our marriage.

So, the five words don't stand alone. They are encircled by the love and adoration of Jesus Christ.

## MARRIAGE



## ADORE

*However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband (Eph 5:33)*

The next five chapters outline each of the five words. It is important to be aware when considering the meaning and marital implications of each word that any one word does not stand alone. Its value is in concert with the other four words. We submit that if the five words together are consciously and continuously applied it is nigh impossible for a marriage to not be strengthened. While this guide is written with the emphasis on positive actions it should be clear that failure to apply any one of the words to the marriage relationship would by definition result in some negative impact on that relationship.

The word “adore” heads the list of Five Words. It is derived from the Latin “*adorare*” and includes definitions “to pray”, “to worship”, “to regard with loving admiration and devotion”, “to be extremely fond of”. So “adore” references the adoration of Jesus Christ as well as the loving characteristics encompassing the relationship with our spouse. In this regard it is the word that probably best encompasses the initial key ingredients that started off our relationship with our future spouse. Just look at the definitional synonyms for “to adore”.

They include:

to:

love

be crazy about

be gone on

be mad for

be nuts about

be serious about

be smitten with

be stuck on

be sweet on

be wild about

cherish  
delight in  
fall for  
flip over  
prize  
revere  
esteem  
treasure  
appreciate  
hold in respect  
marvel at  
take pleasure in  
love

Most of these words and phrases probably sum up our feelings during dating and on through at least the first few months of marriage. As important as these were then they are equally important later in keeping the marital fire aglow. Yes, the intense initial infatuation does mellow. The initial fire seems by design to be intended to subside to a rich glow. If it dies out entirely the marriage relationship is likely to follow suit. To keep the glow bright and constant takes conscious effort. When it does wane at various times and under various circumstances the antidote is more fuel. That fuel is the subject of the rest of this guide. When we think of adoration in our marriages maybe the term “be smitten with” softens and no longer applies in quite the same way it once did but “treasure”, “appreciate” and “take pleasure in” may actually reign stronger than they did early on.

As you read these words on “adore” and do not feel mutual adoration is where it should be in your marriage relationship take heart. There are four more words to discuss that when applied together will significantly impact the “adoration” in your marriage. We submit if a married couple “affirms”, “comforts”, “consoles” and “caresses” each other it will be pretty difficult not to have a strong and adoring marriage.

## AFFIRM

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another,  
as God in Christ forgave you (Eph 4:32)*

“Great meal!”  
“You look wonderful”  
“I like your hair that way”  
“That tie looks spectacular”  
“You are so creative”  
“Your project really turned out well”

“Can’t you do anything right”  
“That is the worst (fill it in) you have made, done, worn”  
“Why can’t you be like \_\_\_\_\_”  
“You drive like a jerk”  
“All you do is sit around”  
“You’re disgusting”

You get the drift. Constant positive word flow is a huge chunk of fuel to any marriage. The opposite will quench the fire faster than a stream of water.

The word “affirm” is from the Latin word “affirmare” which means “to make steady”, “to strengthen”. Synonyms include:

to:  
validate  
uphold  
assert  
confirm  
support  
state positively  
express dedication to

But before we are truly effective at affirming our spouse we need to affirm ourselves. We believe that is best done when guided by Christ. There are numerous books, videos and seminars that offer guidance toward self affirmations. Most contain similar commentary to the following:

“It has been demonstrated that nearly 90% of our thoughts are negative, no wonder we find ourselves struggling. Each negative thought or word is a **negative** affirmation and these nasty little beasts can be even more powerful than positive affirmations because we often find them easier to accept. It is these negative thoughts that feed and validate our negative internal beliefs. Under this kind of negative bombardment most people simply do not have the strength to break free of their negative thoughts and become hopelessly locked into their own (usually false) negative beliefs.

**Positive affirmations** are designed to challenge those negative beliefs and start to stem the flow of negative thoughts and words that seek to validate them. Affirmations are more than just repeating words. It is a whole process of becoming aware of your thoughts and words in everyday life, choosing to think and project happy positive thoughts.” (i)

Engaging the authority and leadership of Jesus Christ by encompassing our desired affirmations into daily prayers is a powerful way to effect desired changes. Positive affirmations need to become a habit. It is said that for something to become a habit it needs to be repeated for at least 21 days. You may consider this also another reason for Jesus Christ to be at the center of your marriage. When He is in charge and you communicate your desires to Him wonderful changes do take place.

See the Footnotes for a detailed reference and discussion on relationship self talk affirmations and how they can be implemented. Included are some positive affirmation statements directed toward strengthening a loving marital relationship. (ii)

The Addendum “Prayers For A Strong And Loving Marriage” follows the footnotes.

## COMFORT

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (2 Cor 1:3-4)*

*Let your steadfast love comfort me (Ps 119:76)*

From the Latin “*com*” + “*fortis*” which means “strong” and the verb derivation “*fortare*” resulting in a definition of “to give strength and hope to”. Also “to give cheer” and “to make to feel better”.

Some synonyms for “to comfort” include:

to:

abate  
aid  
allay  
alleviate  
ameliorate  
assist  
assuage  
bolster  
buck up  
calm  
compose  
confirm  
console  
divert  
ease  
encourage  
enliven  
free  
gladden  
grant respite  
hearten

mitigate  
nourish  
put at ease  
quiet fears  
reassure  
refresh  
relieve  
remedy  
revitalize  
revive  
salve  
soften  
soothe  
stroke  
succor  
support  
sustain  
sympathize  
uphold  
upraise

Again, “to comfort” is a strengthening action. A strong and satisfied spouse is mandatory for there to be an equally strong and loving marital relationship. How can a bond be strong if one part is weak? Frequent comforting comments and actions will be found in any strong and loving marriage. Just as with all five words each partner will possess his or her own unique contributory style.

The words “comfort” and “console” appear to have some similarities and indeed that is so. They share a few of the same synonyms but are functionally different as used here.

## CONSOLE

*Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows (Is 53:4)*

From the Latin *consolari* and meaning, “to alleviate or lessen grief, loss, sorrow, disappointment, or the trouble of”. Also, “to give solace or comfort”

Synonyms for “to console” include many of those used for “to comfort” plus:

to:

express sympathy

share sorrow

listen to woes of another

feel with

commiserate with

condole with

Loss, grief and sorrow are a natural part of life. Being there for each other is one of our greatest expressions of our love. Grief can sometimes be masked by an artificial portrayal of cheer and well being. We need to stay attuned to our spouse’s true feelings and needs. Most importantly, if Christ is in our life we will know to turn to Him and in Him will lie our strength.

## CARESS

*Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth (Sos 1:2)*

What a great word! It embodies so much. “Caress” is derived from the Latin “*Carus*” and the French “*caro*” and is defined as “to treat with fondness, affection or kindness”, “to touch or stroke lightly in a loving or endearing manner”, “to touch or affect”, “to rub or pat”, “to kiss”,

Synonyms for “to caress” also include:

to:

brush

buss

clinch

clutch

coddle

cuddle

embrace

feel

fondle

hug

make love

massage

neck

nestle

nuzzle

pat

play around

rub

squeeze

And many more.

“Caress” is our favorite word. We enjoy it daily in our marriage. In passing by each other in our home we will often give a pat or kiss. While the blazing infatuation in your relationship may have subsided to the “glow” stage it does not mean you lessen this aspect of your relationship. Of course “caress” also encompasses a good sexual relationship. However, sex is first and foremost a brain function and therefore functions best when we are successful in implementing the five words.

## THE KIDS

*Children, obey your parents / Fathers, do not provoke your children  
(Col 3:20,21)*

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. (Dt 6:5-7)*

Now, you may say that all this may work if there is just the two of you and no children in the household to complicate things. And they do. However, the same ingredients in the five words do apply to other loved ones. This is not a guide on raising children but as they do affect the marriage relationship we briefly comment in the context of this guide.

First, it is mandatory that the husband and wife love and their relationship be primary. Our kids are obviously very much loved and certainly well cared for by us but not in the same way and with the same degree of importance as we are to each other. Our children will know and respect this fact. However, where it is not the case the kids make use of their position of strength to their selfish advantage. This puts family stability under duress.

Second, our children are extraordinarily observant of our behavior. Until they fall in love themselves we, as parents, are likely the continuously most influential people in their lives. If they see a strong loving marriage guiding the family ship of state there is a good chance they will emulate the behaviors they see. The key is family time together. In today's environment we all are quite aware of the huge pull away from family and towards friends and a myriad of technological and non-family outside activities. It is obviously difficult for our kids to view positive roll modeling behavior if they are never around much to interact with us and view us in action living the five words. The goal should be the transfer of our relationship wisdom to our children.

## THE WARRANTY

*Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone (Eph 2:20)*

*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. (Jas 4:7-8)*

*So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this in mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus (Phil 2:1-5)*

As Christians we rely on Jesus Christ as the cornerstone of our marriage and He is our marital warranty. We know of no other. We seek to live constantly in the presence of God. The love of Jesus is to radiate through us every second of every minute of every hour of every day in all we do and say to all those with whom we come in contact. He is not a Sunday morning God. He is with us all the time.

Are the five words a guarantee of a perfect marriage? Absolutely not.

Will we have stress and conflict? Yes and frequently.

Will we fail in our role as husband, wife, mother, father? Yes and more times than you care to count.

Will we be tempted? Yes and with regularity.

Even the apostle Paul says:

*For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep doing. (Rom 7:19)*

But the great good news is that Jesus Christ came into the world as God in human flesh to save us from ourselves. Jesus led a perfect life (without sin). He took upon himself all of our mess (sin) and washed us clean through His death and resurrection to present us perfect for eternity with a perfect God. That is God's gift to all who through faith know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. We will keep on messing up but Jesus is the gift that keeps on giving. Our earthly life with Him is merely our preparation for our eternal

life with Him in heaven. Our goal here on earth is to grow in Christ likeness. Our life's purpose is captured well in an interview by Paul Bradshaw with Rick Warren, author of 'Purpose Driven Life' and pastor of Saddleback Church in California. Rick said, "In a nutshell, life is preparation for eternity. We were not made to last forever, and God wants us to be with Him in Heaven". The brief interview can be found in the footnotes.

Acknowledging our deep love for each other and the transcending love of Jesus Christ in our lives we come to the completion of this simple guide with these words:

*Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends. So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three: but the greatest of these is love. (Cor 13:4-8,13)*

## FOOTNOTES

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i [www.vitalaffirmations.com](http://www.vitalaffirmations.com)

ii [www.Ilovespirit.com](http://www.Ilovespirit.com)

While this site and these affirmations are oriented for the wife it does not take much imagination to rephrase them for the husband. Also this source is a secular discussion and makes no reference to the power of prayer in creating affirmations. However, it should be apparent that any affirmation can be incorporated into a prayer. Here is an excerpt:

**“Relationship Affirmations/Love Affirmations** are one of the many powerful ways to deliberately design the future of your relationship. Love affirmations/relationship affirmations can be used to complement relationship creative visualization.

### **What are Affirmations?**

An affirmation is a statement expressing a desired outcome that you say to yourself. It puts you in a frame of mind that assumes that your goals are achievable and possible. It keeps your mind focused on your outcome. When used repetitiously, it becomes firmly planted in your unconscious mind. Hence, eventually what you have affirmed for becomes a reality.

### **Keep the following points in mind when crafting affirmations**

- 1) Phrase them as if they are occurring in the now. For eg. If your outcome is to become a more confident person, a suitable affirmation might be: ‘I am becoming more and more confident. I am feeling better and better about myself’.
- 2) Phrase affirmations in terms of what you want rather than what you don’t want, a negation. For eg, ‘I am not a self-conscious person’ instead ‘I am becoming more and more confident, content and fulfilled’. The brain cannot evaluate ‘not self-conscious’ without thinking of being self-conscious. For instance, when someone tells you ‘Do not think of a pink elephant’ What are you thinking of next? Also do not say ‘I have no self-doubt’ You get reminded of having self-doubt.
- 3) Do not give affirmations specific deadlines, for instance, ‘In three months time I will become a more confident person.’ Firstly, it might take more than 3 months to achieve that. Secondly, your unconscious mind might not want to work on your goal for now.
- 4) Craft or pick affirmations to work on that resonate with you the most, at that particular point in time.
- 5) Remember, energy follows thought.
- 6) Many self help books recommend that affirmations are repeated out aloud hundreds of times each day. However, saying out loud has nowhere the same impact on your feelings and behaviors as hearing the same things inside your mind. If you are telling wonderful things on the outside, but hearing a critical, demoralizing voice on the inside telling you that you are fooling yourself, your internal voice’s suggestions will win every time. To overcome this, it is best to do internal programming of affirmations at the alpha level of mind.
- 7) Affirmations are most powerful when combined with visualizations, in a meditative alpha state of mind.

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## How to use relationship affirmations/love affirmations

You can never heal relationships by talking and thinking about how awful it is. Love affirmations help heal your relationship by turning your thoughts away from the problems and help create new thoughts that will produce a solution.

### Relationship Affirmations/Love Affirmations

We have taken the liberty of substituting the word “spouse” for the word “partner” in several of the affirmations that follow.

- I see you clearly with the eyes of pure, unconditional love. I love what I see.
- My marriage/relationship made in heaven is made manifest on earth.
- I am in a joyous, intimate relationship.
- Every day in every way our marriage is getting better, better and better.
- My spouse and I are very much in love with each other.
- My spouse and I are fully compatible and perfectly aligned physically.
- My spouse and I are fully compatible and perfectly aligned sexually.
- My spouse and I are fully compatible and perfectly aligned emotionally.
- My spouse and I are fully compatible and perfectly aligned intellectually.
- My spouse and I are fully compatible and perfectly aligned spiritually.
- I draw love and romance into my life and I accept it now.
- My spouse is loyal to me.
- I am magnetic and irresistible to my spouse.
- From time to time I ask my spouse, “How can I love you more?”
- I choose to see my spouse clearly with the eyes of love and compassion. I love what I see.
- Love happens! I release the desperate need for love. I release the need for my spouse to approve of me. I allow love to find me easily and effortlessly.
- Love is all around me. I feel everywhere. Joy fills my entire world.
- I was born to learn to love myself more, and to share that love with people around me.
- My spouse is the love of my life and we adore each other.
- I rejoice in the love I encounter everyday.
- I now deserve love, romance, and joy—and all the blessings that life has to offer me.
- Love is all there is!
- Only love is real.
- I radiate pure, unconditional love towards my spouse.
- I am safe in all my relationships. I am always treated well.
- Long-lasting, loving relationships brighten my life.
- I am very grateful for all the love in my life. I find it everywhere.
- I am surrounded by love. All is well.
- My heart is open to love. I speak loving words to my spouse.
- I have a wonderful spouse, and we are both happy and at peace.
- I come from the loving space of my heart, and I know that love opens new possibilities.
- There is no problem so big or so small, that it cannot be solved with love.
- Deep at the center of my being is an infinite well of love.
- I am in a joyous intimate relationship with a person who truly loves me.
- My relationships are mirrors that show me myself.
- I am now learning from all my relationships.
- I laugh with my spouse more and more each day.
- My relationships are helping me to heal and love myself.
- I am strong, vulnerable, and loving in my relationships.
- All is well in my marriage. Really.
- I am now ready to accept a happy, fulfilling relationship.
- I am now ready for my relationships to work.

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- I love myself and I naturally attract loving relationships into my life.
  - I am now attracting exactly the kind of relationship I want.
  - I am now divinely irresistible to my perfect mate.
  - All difficulties between me and \_\_\_\_\_ are now being healed.
  - The more I love myself, the more I love \_\_\_\_\_.
  - I love \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ loves me.
  - All of the changes in my marriage and life are positive. I am safe.
  - I am open to receiving love and to extending it.
  - I interact with my spouse positively and joyfully more and more each day.
  - I/We remain focused on the big picture in our marriage.
  - Giving my spouse unconditional love makes me feel energized.
  - I enjoy performing small acts of kindness for my spouse. I love to see the joy it brings.
  - I always keep a sense of humor about things in my marriage.
  - I am always centered and in present moment in my life and marriage.
  - I accept, respect, and enjoy our differences. Differences add interest and variety to my marriage.
  - I look for ways to contribute to \_\_\_\_\_'s growth and happiness. I support \_\_\_\_\_'s goals unselfishly, knowing that it will provide happiness.
  - I respect what my spouse has to say. I listen to my spouse with genuine interest. I offer empathy when appropriate.
  - I desire love, so I give my spouse love. I desire respect, so I give my spouse respect. I desire cooperation, so I give my spouse cooperation. I desire compassion, so I give my spouse compassion. I desire control, so I give my spouse control!

It is important to love yourself in a marriage, for when you love yourself it is easier to love someone else. Not only that, you also become very attractive and lovable to your partner.

It is hard to generate positive thoughts about your marriage if you can't generate positive thoughts about yourself. You can use self love affirmations to help you in this regard."

iii

From a short interview by Paul Bradshaw with Rick Warren, 'Purpose Driven Life' author and pastor of Saddleback Church in California.

Rick said:

"People ask me, What is the purpose of life?

And I respond: In a nutshell, life is preparation for eternity. We were not made to last forever, and God wants us to be with Him in Heaven.

One day my heart is going to stop, and that will be the end of my body-- but not the end of me.

I may live 60 to 100 years on earth, but I am going to spend trillions of years in eternity. This is the warm-up act - the dress rehearsal. God wants us to practice on earth what we will do forever in eternity.

We were made by God and for God, and until you figure that out, life isn't going to make sense.

Life is a series of problems: Either you are in one now, you're just coming out of one, or you're getting ready to go into another one.

The reason for this is that God is more interested in your character than your comfort; God is more interested in making your life holy than He is in making your life happy.

We can be reasonably happy here on earth, but that's not the goal of life. The goal is to grow in character, in Christ likeness.

This past year has been the greatest year of my life but also the toughest, with my wife, Kay, getting cancer.

I used to think that life was hills and valleys - you go through a dark time, then you go to the mountaintop, back and forth. I don't believe that anymore.

Rather than life being hills and valleys, I believe that it's kind of like two rails on a railroad track, and at all times you have something good and something bad in your life."

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He continued:

“No matter how good things are in your life, there is always something bad that needs to be worked on. And no matter how bad things are in your life, there is always something good you can thank God for. You can focus on your purposes, or you can focus on your problems:

If you focus on your problems, you're going into self-centeredness, which is my problem, my issues, my pain.' But one of the easiest ways to get rid of pain is to get your focus off yourself and onto God and others.

We discovered quickly that in spite of the prayers of hundreds of thousands of people, God was not going to heal Kay or make it easy for her- It has been very difficult for her, and yet God has strengthened her character, given her a ministry of helping other people, given her a testimony, drawn her closer to Him and to people.

You have to learn to deal with both the good and the bad of life. When I get up in the morning, I sit on the side of my bed and say, God, if I don't get anything else done today, I want to know You more and love You better. God didn't put me on earth just to fulfill a to-do list. He's more interested in what I am than what I do.

That's why we're called human beings, not human doings.”

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## ADDENDUM

### PRAYERS FOR A STRONG & LOVING MARRIAGE

BY RIETTE WOODS

[www.praymag.com](http://www.praymag.com)

*Prayer is an essential ingredient in building a solid marriage. Here are some prayers to guide you as you pray—individually or as a couple—for your relationship.*

*Protection.* Lord Jesus, You desire our marriage to last a lifetime. Protect, preserve, and sustain it. Do not allow sin, the enemy, circumstances, difficulties, or other people to separate what You have joined together. (Mal. 2:13-16; Mt. 19:3-9)

*Unity.* Knit our hearts together in complete unity. Teach us how to address things that hinder our relationship, and help us work through our differences with compassion and gentleness. Enable us to rejoice in and encourage each other's strengths and gifts, and empower us through Your Spirit to overcome individual weaknesses and sins. (Eph. 5:31; Col. 3:12; 1 Cor. 12:4-27; Gal. 5:16)

*Love.* Father, let us always treat each other with the utmost respect. Help us speak the truth in love by honestly and openly sharing our thoughts and feelings with each other. Cause us to be kind and compassionate to each other, forgiving one another, just as You have forgiven us. Deliver us from jealousy, pride, rudeness, selfishness, and thoughtlessness. Grant us a love that always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. May our love for each other never fail. (Eph. 4:15, 32; 1 Cor. 13:4-8)

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*Husband's Prayer*

Faithful Father, help me to love\_\_\_\_\_sacrificially, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. May I never be harsh toward my wife but instead honor and cherish her. I recognize that I am not independent of my wife, so help me to understand her needs, to draw on her wisdom and strength, and to treat her with tenderness and humility as my partner in Your blessings. Let me display an unselfish spirit at all times. (Eph. 5:25-33; Col. 3:19; 1 Cor. 11:11; 1 Pet. 3:7; Phil. 2:3-4)

*Wife's Prayer*

Glorious Father, help me to submit to\_\_\_\_\_as to the Lord. Enable me to honor and respect him as my head, just as Christ is the head of the church. I recognize that I am not independent of my husband, so help me to rely on his guidance and care. Grant me the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, and teach me how to be a suitable helper for him. Let me be an excellent wife who is her husband's joy and crown! (Eph. 5:22-24, 33; 1 Cor. 11:11; 1 Pet. 3:1-6; Gen. 2:18; Prov. 12:4)

*Physical intimacy.* Kindle the passion between us, God. Give us a hunger for each other, and let us be satisfied with one another. Keep our union pure and holy in every way. (S. of S. 7:10; Prov. 5:15-19; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 1:15-16)

*Wholeness.* Father, You heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds. Heal the emotional wounds that threaten to create strife in our marriage. Make us sensitive to each other's needs, and enable us to minister to one another in areas of hurt. Burden us to pray for each other, Lord. (Ps. 147:3; Jas. 5:16)

*Intimacy with God.* Father, draw us closer to You with gentle cords of love. Give us hearts to seek and serve You all the days of our lives. (Hos. 11:4; Ps. 27:4)

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*Guidance.* Your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Guide us into all truth and teach us to obey Your Word. Help us build our lives and marriage on Your truth so that we will stand perfect and complete in Your will for us. (Ps. 119:105, 25:5; Mt. 7:24-25; Col. 4:12)

*Finances.* Thank You, Father, that You know exactly what we need before we ask. We depend on You to provide our material needs. Train us to be content in whatever state we are in, and make us good stewards of what You have entrusted to us. When we encounter financial difficulties, unite us through love and acceptance. (Mt. 6:8, 25-33; Phil. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 6:6-8; Lk. 19:11-24)

*Parenting.* Lord, help us to bring up our children in Your training and instruction. Give us one mind as we discipline them, and teach us to do so in Your righteousness, justice, mercy, and truth. Grant us wisdom regarding their needs, and help us to guide them with godly counsel. May we inspire our children to honor us as their parents so that they will have long and blessed lives. (Eph. 6:1-4; Prov. 13:24; Ps. 89:14)

*Faithfulness.* Thank You, Father, for pouring out Your blessings on our marriage. May our union reflect Your covenantal faithfulness as we strive to relate to one another in ways that glorify You. (Dt. 7:9; Heb. 8:7-10; 1 Cor. 10:31)