

*Your Marriage Retreat Guide*

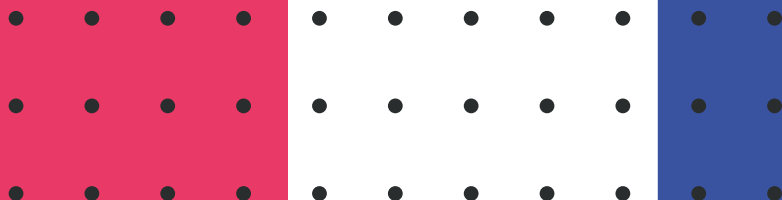


CREATING A

# V I S I O N

FOR YOUR MARRIAGE

*By: Dr. Conway Edwards*



## WHY CREATE A WRITTEN VISION FOR YOUR MARRIAGE?

Many couples live day-to-day, paycheck to paycheck, emotion to emotion, never pausing long enough to think about what they want for their marriages. Couples spend months preparing for the wedding day but rarely any time praying about and talking through what they want their marriage to look like and what their values and goals are for their marriage. *Proverbs 29:18a* says, “Where there is no vision, the people are **unrestrained...**” Too many people today are living unrestrained, with no boundaries when it comes to their finances, their moral values, and their goals for the future.

Creating a written vision for your marriage will help you and your spouse to identify your priorities, primary values, and goals for the type of marriage you desire. It will provide safety and security in the marriage as you both know what direction you’re headed and it will serve as a reminder of the commitment you made to reach these goals.

### How To Use This Guide:

This workbook is not meant to be done in one sitting, but may be done during a weekend getaway with your spouse or over the course of a few scheduled times without distractions. Take a few minutes to pray with your spouse for God’s guidance before you begin working through the pages of this workbook. If you get stuck on any section of the workbook, take a break, pray again for wisdom, and then start again when you have time free from distraction.

“Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to do so?”  
*Amos 3:3*



# GOD’S VISION FOR MARRIAGE

Before identifying the unique values and goals specific to your marriage, it’s important to first understand what the Bible says about the purpose of marriage. Read the following passages in order to discover two purposes for marriage: Genesis 2:24-25, Ephesians 5:21-33

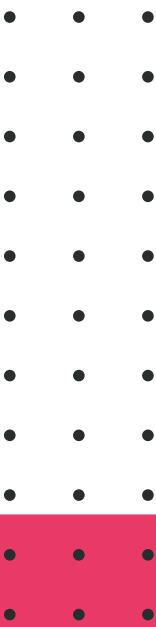
**1. ONENESS:** GENESIS 2:24-25 DESCRIBES THE FIRST MARRIAGE IN THE BIBLE BEING ABOUT ONE WOMAN AND ONE MAN UNITING FOR LIFE TO BRING GOD GLORY AS THEY LIVE, WORK, LOVE AND PARENT.

**2. REFLECTING THE RELATIONSHIP OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH:** CHAPTER 5 OF EPHESIANS LAYS OUT A NUMBER OF WAYS THAT HUSBANDS AND WIVES SHOULD LOVE ONE ANOTHER.

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# THE 4 LAWS OF MARRIAGE

Source: The Four Laws of Love By Jimmy Evans

*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. - Genesis 2:24*

## the law of PRIORITY

Expressed in the phrase, "a man shall leave his father and mother." In terms of priority, the marriage has to be placed before all other relationships. Don't give priority to your parents, children, work, or hobbies.

## the law of PURSUIT

Expressed in the phrase "...and cleave unto his wife." The word cleave sounds foreign in English, but in the original language, it means to pursue with all your energy. Are you actively pursuing your spouse? Marriage is work, and it requires energy.

## the law of POSSESSION

Marriage is about sharing everything, expressed in the phrase, "the two shall become one flesh." When you get married you share everything with your spouse. Selfish people cannot succeed in marriage because selfish people refuse to share. They won't cooperate and ignoring the law of possession will wreck your relationship.

## the law of PURITY

Expressed in the phrase, "They were both naked.. and were unashamed." A healthy marriage requires intimacy without fear. If we are careful in how we behave and take responsibility for our issues, this kind of relationship is possible. But if we hurt each other and don't take responsibility, we become sensitive. We refuse to open our hearts to each other.

## I. IDENTIFYING VALUES

Our values are what guide the way we live our lives. The decisions you make on a daily basis are driven by the things you value. Take some time individually to think about the top 5 values you have for your marriage. You will then discuss your top 5 with your spouse and together create a combined list you both agree on that will become the guiding values for your marriage. Below are some examples of possible values:

**ENJOYING VACATIONS**

**SHARING HOUSEHOLD DUTIES**

**OWNING A HOME**

**EATING DINNER AS A FAMILY**

**CHILDREN'S SPORTS/ACTIVITIES**

**SERVING IN MINISTRY**

**SPIRITUAL GROWTH**

**EDUCATION (COLLEGE/ADVANCED)**

**EXTENDED FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS**

**SPENDING TIME WITH FRIENDS**

### TOP 5 VALUES FOR YOUR MARRIAGE

01 \_\_\_\_\_

02 \_\_\_\_\_

03 \_\_\_\_\_

04 \_\_\_\_\_

05 \_\_\_\_\_



Now that you and your spouse have identified 5 primary values that will govern your marriage, it's time to brainstorm how you will practically support these values through daily actions. For example: if one of your top values is for the family to eat dinner together, then what is your plan to make that a priority? You may select an action item such as: **we will commit to eating dinner as a family 3 nights per week.** This will give you a goal to keep this value prioritized. Use the space on the following page to identify 1-3 practical actions under each of your top 5 values.

# VALUES IN MARRIAGE

VALUE:

ACTION:

ACTION:

ACTION:

VALUE:

ACTION:

ACTION:

ACTION:

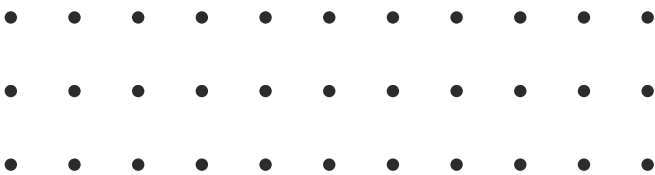


**VALUE:** \_\_\_\_\_  
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## II. INCREASING INTIMACY

Developing intimacy as a couple is one of the keys to success in staying committed to the marriage vision you develop. When the word “intimacy” is discussed, most couples tend to focus only on emotional or physical/sexual intimacy. In reality there are many types of intimacy that are important in marriage. Below we will look at 4 types of intimacy and how you can make them an integral part of your vision for marriage.

### 1. EMOTIONAL INTIMACY: EMOTIONAL INTIMACY IS HOW COUPLES CONNECT THROUGH FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS. THIS TYPE OF INTIMACY INVOLVES THE ABILITY TO SHARE WITH EACH OTHER BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FEELINGS.

RATE YOUR CURRENT EMOTIONAL INTIMACY ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5 BELOW:

*Husband*

1	•	2	•	3	•	4	•	5
DOESN'T KNOW ME EMOTIONALLY				MEETS MY EMOTIONAL NEEDS				

*Wife*

1	•	2	•	3	•	4	•	5
DOESN'T KNOW ME EMOTIONALLY				MEETS MY EMOTIONAL NEEDS				

Emotional intimacy in marriage is about meeting each other's top emotional needs. Dr. Willard Harley identified the top 5 emotional needs of men and women in his book, *His Needs Her Needs*. From the list below, identify your top 5 emotional needs and have your spouse do the same. Then, discuss 3 ways you can begin to increase emotional intimacy by meeting your spouse's top emotional needs.



Examples of emotional needs:

**ADMIRATION**  
**RECREATIONAL COMPANIONSHIP**  
**CONVERSATION**  
**FINANCIAL SUPPORT**  
**PHYSICAL ATTRACTIVENESS**

**OPENNESS & HONESTY**  
**SEXUAL FULFILLMENT**  
**FAMILY COMMITMENT**  
**AFFECTION**  
**DOMESTIC SUPPORT**

HUSBAND'S TOP 5  
EMOTIONAL NEEDS

WIFE'S TOP 5  
EMOTIONAL NEEDS

# INCREASE YOUR EMOTIONAL INTIMACY

WHAT ARE 3 WAYS THAT YOU AND YOUR SPOUSE CAN INCREASE YOUR EMOTIONAL INTIMACY?  
(FOCUS YOUR ACTIONS ON THEIR SPECIFIC EMOTIONAL NEEDS)

2. PHYSICAL INTIMACY: PHYSICAL INTIMACY INCLUDES BOTH SEXUAL AND NON-SEXUAL TOUCH. SINCE MEN AND WOMEN ARE CREATED DIFFERENTLY, PHYSICAL INTIMACY REQUIRES UNDERSTANDING AND RESPONDING TO THESE DIFFERENCES. THE KEY IS COMMUNICATION AND INTENTIONALITY.

RATE YOUR CURRENT PHYSICAL INTIMACY ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5 BELOW:

*Husband*

1	•	2	•	3	•	4	•	5
ICE COLD								RED HOT

*Wife*

1	•	2	•	3	•	4	•	5
ICE COLD								RED HOT



LIST 2 WAYS THAT YOU AND YOUR SPOUSE CAN INCREASE YOUR PHYSICAL INTIMACY.

(ie. schedule sex, times of non-sexual touch)

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•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•



**3. RECREATIONAL INTIMACY: THIS IS ALL ABOUT EXPERIENCING CLOSENESS THROUGH FUN AND PLAY. RECREATIONAL INTIMACY IS CULTIVATED WHEN COUPLES DO THINGS TOGETHER THAT THEY BOTH ENJOY. IF SPOUSES DO NOT HAVE SIMILAR INTERESTS, THEN YOU SHOULD FIND TIMES TO ENGAGE IN AN ACTIVITY YOUR SPOUSE ENJOYS TO INTENTIONALLY BUILD INTIMACY IN THIS AREA.**

RATE YOUR CURRENT RECREATIONAL INTIMACY ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5 BELOW:

*Husband*

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5

FLYING SOLO CO-PILOT

*Wife*

1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5

FLYING SOLO CO-PILOT

LIST 2 WAYS THAT YOU AND YOUR SPOUSE CAN INCREASE YOUR RECREATIONAL INTIMACY.  
(ie. attend a sporting event, art festival, hike, etc)

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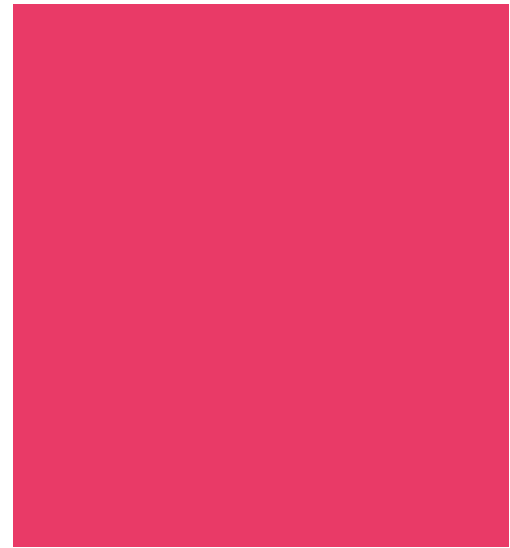
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**4. SPIRITUAL INTIMACY: SPIRITUAL INTIMACY IS ABOUT CONNECTING WITH GOD TOGETHER. MUCH LIKE THE OTHER TYPES OF INTIMACY, DIFFERENT PEOPLE CONNECT WITH GOD IN DIFFERENT WAYS. PRAYING TOGETHER AS A COUPLE, READING THE BIBLE, AND SERVING TOGETHER ARE ALL WAYS TO DEVELOP SPIRITUAL INTIMACY. YOU CAN ALSO ENGAGE IN SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES YOUR SPOUSE ENJOYS TO GROW IN THIS AREA.**



RATE YOUR CURRENT SPIRITUAL INTIMACY ON A SCALE OF 1 TO 5 BELOW:



*Husband*

1	•	2	•	3	•	4	•	5
DISCONNECTED				CONNECTED				

*Wife*

1	•	2	•	3	•	4	•	5
DISCONNECTED				CONNECTED				

**LIST 2 WAYS THAT YOU AND YOUR SPOUSE CAN INCREASE YOUR SPIRITUAL INTIMACY.**

(ie. reading the Bible, praying and serving together)

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•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

# MARRIAGE GOALS

*“Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.” Ecclesiastes 4:9-12*

As seen in the scripture above, when two spouses are working together in the same direction with common goals, the outcome is far better than two people working individually. One of the greatest benefits inherent to marriage is built in support, encouragement and accountability. The final aspect of developing a vision for marriage that we will discuss is goal setting. Take the time now to discuss marriage, personal, and ministry goals with your spouse.

## III. MARRIAGE GOALS

Using all that you have learned about your marriage and one another so far in this Vision workbook, now identify 3 marriage goals that you want to pursue as a couple this next year. These goals will help you maintain the values and priorities you have created thus far.

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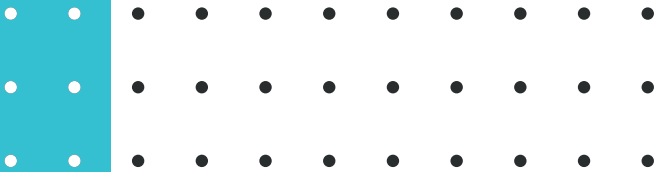
Sample goals: pray together daily; quarterly overnight get away without the children; weekly date night; weekly “staff” meeting with spouse to discuss family logistic/goals, conference once a year

# IV. MINISTRY GOALS

One of the greatest ways to grow in spiritual intimacy with God and with your spouse is to serve others using the gifts God has placed within you. Take some time to identify 3 ministry goals as a couple that you can commit to over the next year. The following questions might help spark some ideas of how to use your unique talents and passions.

- WHAT SPECIFIC AREAS OF YOUR CHURCH WOULD YOU MOST ENJOY BEING INVOLVED IN?
- WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE FOR MINISTERING TOGETHER BASED ON YOUR SIMILAR PASSIONS?
- WHAT TALENTS OR GIFTS DO YOU SEE IN YOUR SPOUSE THAT YOU THINK WOULD BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS?

“For even the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”  
*Mark 10:45*



# V. PERSONAL GOALS

The quality of your marriage relationship will always be a bi-product of your individual relationships with God, so part of your growth in marriage will be directly connected to your growth as individuals. As a couple, discuss and develop some individual goals that you can encourage each other in over the next year.

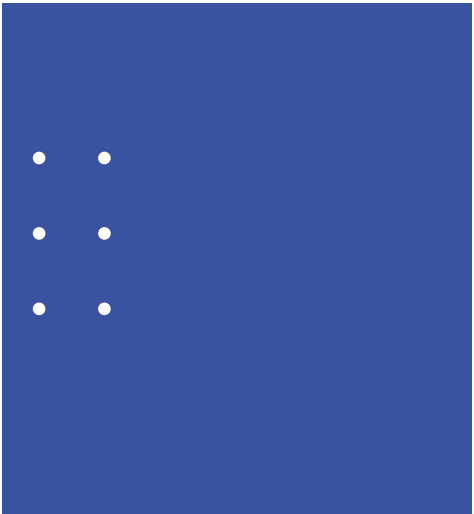
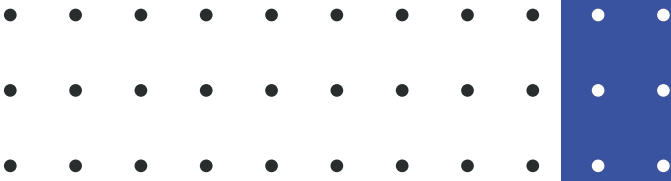
LIST 2 PERSONAL GOALS FOR EACH SPOUSE THAT YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH THIS YEAR THAT WILL HELP YOU GROW **SPIRITUALLY**:

H \_\_\_\_\_

W \_\_\_\_\_

“And you shall love the  
Lord your God with all  
your heart, and with all  
your soul,  
and with all your mind,  
and with all your  
strength.”

Mark 12:30



LIST 2 PERSONAL GOALS FOR EACH SPOUSE THAT YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH THIS YEAR THAT WILL HELP YOU GROW **INTELLECTUALLY**:

H \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

W \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Sample goals: read 20 minutes each night; read \_\_\_\_ books per month; take a class on a subject that interests you; sign up for a Bible class at church.

LIST 2 PERSONAL GOALS FOR EACH SPOUSE THAT YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH THIS YEAR THAT WILL HELP YOU GROW **PHYSICALLY**:

H \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

W \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

sample goals: eat healthy; exercise 30 min. 3x per week; get more sleep; routine doctor visits; etc.





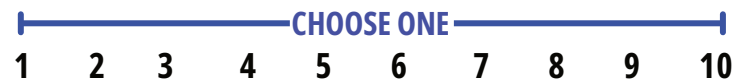
## VI. PRE-DECIDING

Life can be overwhelming and chaotic for many of us, juggling careers, children, friendships, and various other responsibilities. During such a busy time, having pre-decided who you are as a couple, based on your shared values, can be beneficial when faced with a marital crisis.

Rate yourself on these pre-decisions to determine if you're prepared for a crisis.

**EVALUATION: As a couple rate where you currently are with these pre-decisions.**

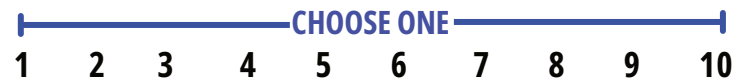
We resolve negativity daily.



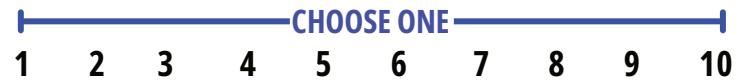
We reach out for help before a crisis.



We engage in the Kingdom or our calling together.



When in doubt or suspicion, we assume the best.



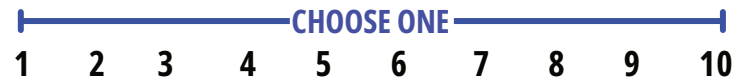
We pray together daily.



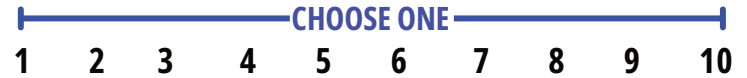
We become the experts of each other.



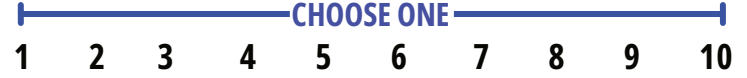
We out-serve one another daily.



We listen to the other's heart, not their words.



Our marriage is our priority relationship.



I give my spouse all of me and expect nothing from them in return.



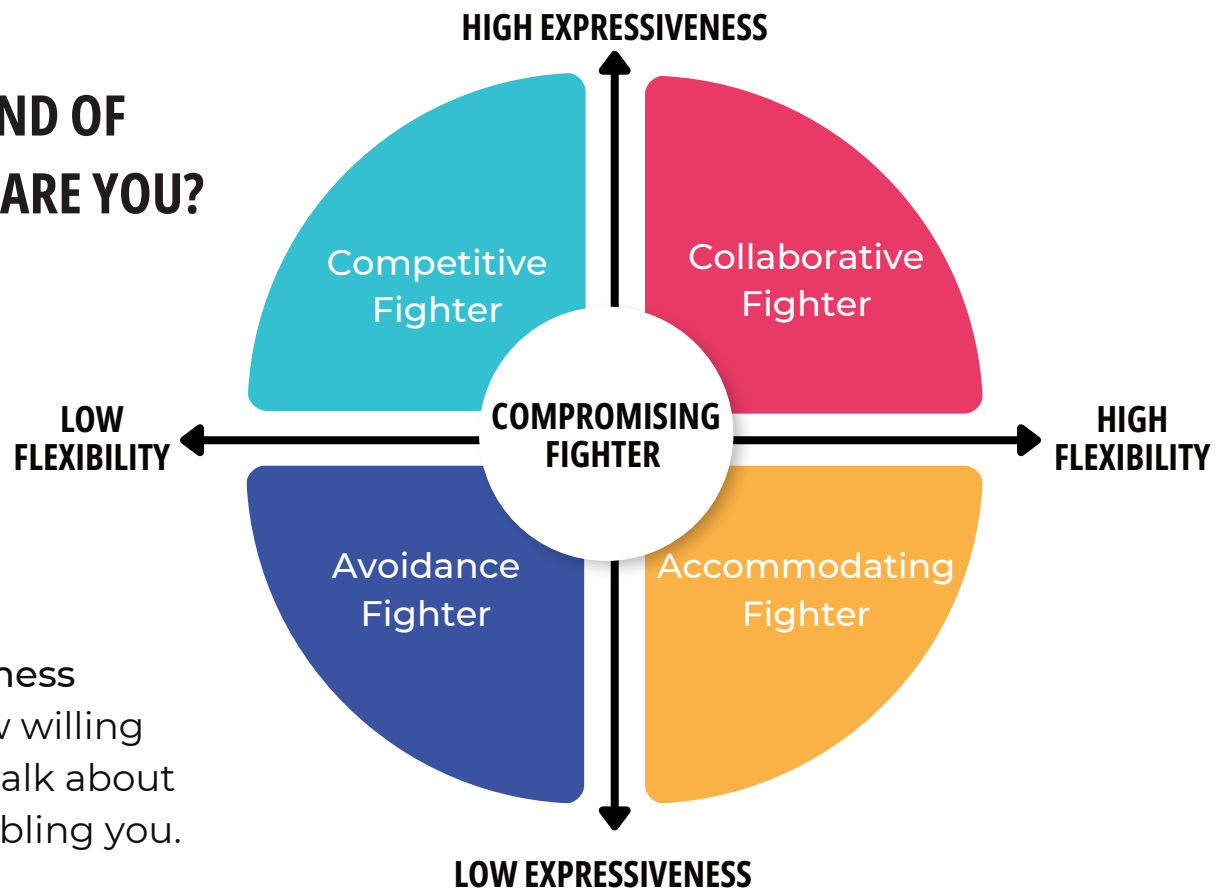
### Now that you have evaluated...

Based on your pre-decision evaluation above, determine as a couple the 2-3 areas you are going to work on this year.

## VII. HANDLING CONFLICT

Your marriage will undoubtedly have conflict. Before jumping into a fight unprepared, start with some self-evaluation on what kind of fighter you are and discover where you need some work. Then, agree now on how you will handle it when it happens.

### WHAT KIND OF FIGHTER ARE YOU?



**Expressiveness** reveals how willing you are to talk about what's troubling you.

**Flexibility** reveals how willing you are to accommodate what's troubling your partner.



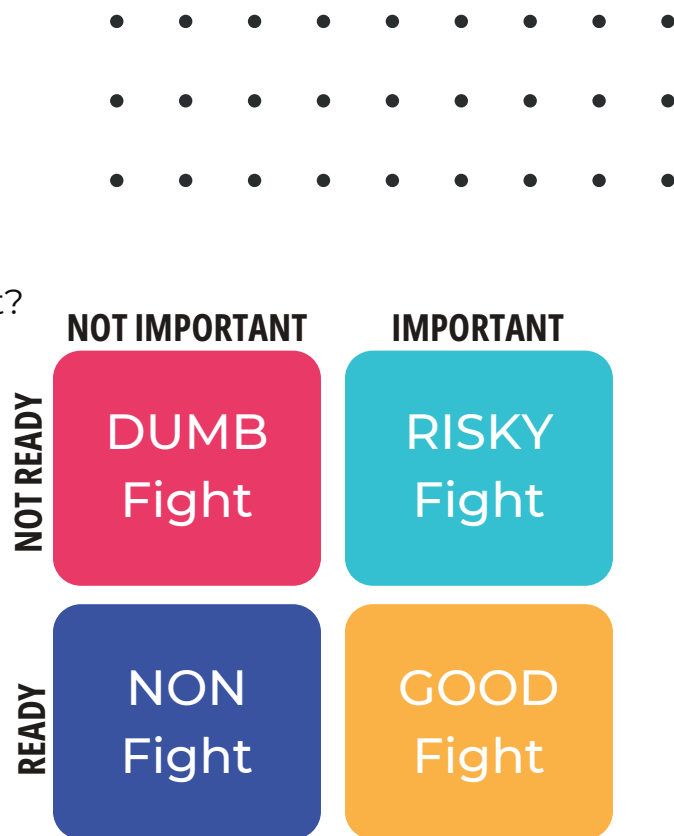
Ask these questions to evaluate if the issue is even worthy of a fight and if you're both ready for a healthy interaction.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK TO EVALUATE IMPORTANCE

- Will the result of this fight really matter?
- Do I feel wounded or down because of it?
- Is this a threat to my values?
- How much am I thinking/worrying about it?

### QUESTIONS TO ASK TO EVALUATE READINESS

- Am I emotionally amped up?
- Am I irritable?
- Am I hungry?
- Am I stressed out?
- Am I pressed for time?



We honor God when we seek to follow his commands and trust His wisdom through even the most difficult times of conflict. When we strive to reflect God's love, forgiveness, grace, and mercy to those we are in conflict with, we provide a beautiful witness to God's character and glorify Him.

**Christ-like conflict OVERLOOKS a lot.**

**Christ-like conflict is GENTLE.**

**Christ-like conflict LISTENS TWICE as much as it TALKS.**

**Christ-like conflict OWNS its part of the problem.**

**Christ-like conflict ASKS for forgiveness and is QUICK to forgive.**

**Christ-like conflict is wise in the TIMING of the confrontation.**

**Christ-like conflict never loses HOPE.**

## VIII. HOW TO BOUNCE BACK

Quiet quitting describes the practice of doing the minimum you can do and still managing to hold onto a job or, in this case, a marriage. If you're the spouse who is still invested in the relationship, it can be dismaying to see your partner seem to evaporate into thin air over time. They may still be "showing up" physically, but you feel that they are as ephemeral as a ghost in terms of the substance they bring to the marriage.

### Signs of Quiet Quitting:

**They don't crave intimacy with you.**

**Deliberately spend time apart.**

**They are not interested in what you are up to.**

**They don't bother to argue with you.**

**They are modeling a transactional marriage.**

**Avoiding questions or avoiding answering questions.**

**Seldom praying together.**

**There is hidden bitterness.**

**You stay in financial silos.**

**You are apathetic or have a lack of care or concern.**

**You are not dreaming together with your spouse.**

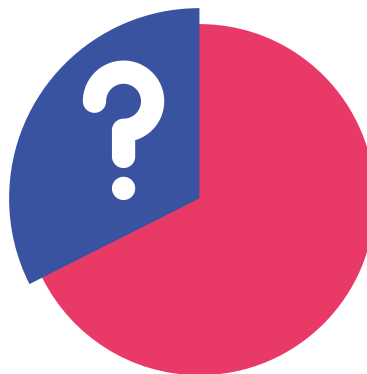
**You are doing the bare minimum.**

**There is a lack of attention and affection even when you're in the same room.**

**You are not in the Word together.**

**One of you goes to church while pulling the other along.**

Before you can begin to bounce back, you have to look inward and own your part in the marital problems.



IF THIS PIE REPRESENTS ALL THE PROBLEMS IN YOUR MARRIAGE, WHAT % DO YOU BELIEVE YOU'RE RESPONSIBLE FOR?

CIRCLE ONE  
0% 5% 15% 30% 45% 60% 75% 90% 100%

**THE PERCENTAGE YOU BELIEVE YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR, IS ALSO THE PERCENTAGE CHANCE OF BEING HAPPILY MARRIED.**

## How To Guard Against Quiet Quitting

There is an unconscious descension that will take you into quiet quitting and eventually divorce. Be aware of where you are in that process to then start the work to get to the redeeming love that we are called to.

## Are We Living With or Secretly Considering...

## Unrealized Expectations

## Boundary Settings for Disengagement

## Adjust Priorities to Avoid Future Pain

## Emotional Indifference

## Emotional Divorce

## Physical Divorce

## The First Step is Knowing Where You Are, the Next is to Redeem Love!

# Redeeming Love

The word redeem means to regain something that has been lost. In this case, it means to get your marriage back. Redemptive love is demonstrated by a willingness to do the right thing even though that willingness isn't reciprocated.

**Hold on to faith, let go of what you see.**

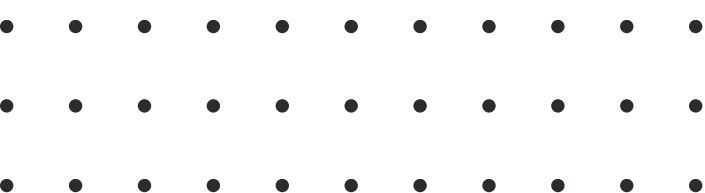
**Hold on to hope, let go of desperation.**

**Hold on to connections, let go of divisions.**

**Hold on to your covenant, let go of the marriage you used to have.**

**Hold on to His life, let go of yours.**

Are you quietly quitting your marriage? Do you feel like giving up? How can you reach out in love that is redemptive? Today, be the one to do the right thing first!



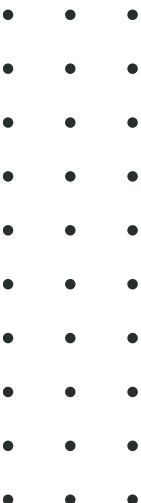
# IX. WHAT'S NEXT?

Hopefully this workbook has been helpful in getting you and your spouse to communicate, dream, plan and commit to different areas of your relationship that will ultimately serve to strengthen your marriage. Great marriages don't just happen, they are the result of intentional effort driven by a clear vision.

You have now identified core values to guide your marriage and committed to action steps for each value. You have agreed upon action steps to increase four areas of intimacy in your relationship. Additionally, you have set goals for your marriage and personal lives so that you are intentional about your growth. The final step to make sure this vision workbook becomes a consistent part of your marriage is to decide now how you will keep the vision in front of you as you take off running again with your busy schedules, work, family and demands of life. Use the next two pages to identify when you will meet as a couple on a consistent basis to evaluate, revise if needed and remember the values, goals and vision for your marriage.

“Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble”

*2 Peter 1:10*



# X. COMMITMENT

## HIS VISION COMMITMENT

I commit to meet (*twice a week, weekly, every 2 weeks, monthly*) to review this vision workbook. I give my wife permission to hold me accountable in my personal goals and in the goals we have set as a couple. I will also commit to encouraging my wife in her pursuit of individual goals. I will look for opportunities to daily serve my wife by meeting her primary emotional needs as identified in the emotional intimacy section.

*Husband* \_\_\_\_\_

## HER VISION COMMITMENT

I commit to meet (*twice a week, weekly, every 2 weeks, monthly*) to review this vision workbook. I give my husband permission to hold me accountable in my personal goals and in the goals we have set as a couple. I will also commit to encouraging my husband in his pursuit of individual goals. I will look for opportunities to daily serve my husband by meeting his primary emotional needs as identified in the emotional intimacy section.

*Wife* \_\_\_\_\_

