



Teaching, exercises and activities to help you
build a healthy, loving, strong family.



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Gateway Community Church



Build Your Marriage

The goal of marriage is to have intimacy and partnership in a lifelong commitment to share your life with your spouse.

These exercises are intended to help you build a healthy, strong, loving and growing marriage.

Genesis 2:24

24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Communication

Often in marriage we fall into a lull of communication. That means important things are not spoken or swept under the rug. Sometimes we bottle things up, we intentionally hold back expecting our spouse to "get it". Communication is the only way we know each other, partner with each other and remain truly close. Before we know it, the neglect of honest communication can become a wedge, then a cavern, that is difficult to cross.

Here are some questions and exercises that can help you melt the ice, bridge the divide and maintain healthy communication.

How would you rate the communication in your marriage?

What areas of your life do you wish you and your spouse had better communication?

What do you think are the barriers to communication in these areas?

If there was one thing you would like to communicate to your spouse what would it be?

Exercise:

Plan out an hour of uninterrupted time with your spouse. Begin by going over the above questions together.

Make a commitment together that you will totally listen first and ask at least one question to your spouse before giving your perspective. After you go over these questions, partner together to agree to a plan to maintain or improve your communication together.

Suggestions: Plan out an hour each week of "connection" time. Ask your spouse if there is anything that they feel needs to be talked about. Think of at least one question you want to ask about your spouses week that you are curious about or haven't heard about that you think might be important to them.



Conflict Resolution

Ephesians 4:31-32

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

No marriage is devoid of tension and conflict. Whenever two people throw their lives together with different expectations, different personalities, emotional, physical and spiritual needs, personal weaknesses and then add in the pressures of finances, kids, work and household, there is likely to be conflict at some points.

Conflict is not always bad. Even though it can be painful, it can help you find areas for personal growth, understanding, and communion that can grow your intimacy and partnership.

The goal is for us to be open to healthy conflict and conflict resolution. Unhealthy conflict is driven by pride and defensiveness. It usually means that winning the argument is more important than growing the marriage. That almost always comes from a point of weakness.

Healthy conflict is driven by a willingness to listen and understand, self-evaluation, and sometimes standing your ground on an important point of principle. It also requires humility and forgiveness.

Questions to Consider:

What would you say are the most common ongoing areas of conflict in your marriage?

How are they usually handled between you and your spouse?

Suggestion: Try to avoid personal attacks when trying to resolve issues in your marriage.

Exercise:

Sit down with your spouse and ask them their thoughts on how you handle or resolve conflict. Listen to what they say before you jump in with your thoughts. Try to ask at least one follow up question before you respond.

Challenge:

Make a commitment that at least once a month you will sit down with your spouse and ask them:

Is there any unresolved conflict or resentment that we need to discuss?

Have I said anything that hurt you or bothered you that we need to discuss?



Understanding your spouses' needs and love language

A significant part of a healthy marriage is understanding that there are going to be some areas where you and your spouse don't see eye to eye. You will have some different needs, language and expectations. Understanding that, discussing it and finding ways to respond can be key to a healthy, growing, strong marriage.

Needs:

In the book "His Needs Her Needs" the author lists some key marriage needs including: affection, sexual fulfillment, conversation, recreational companion, honesty and openness, attractive spouse, financial support, domestic support, family commitment, admiration and respect.

What do you think are your primary needs in your marriage relationship?

Do you and your spouse understand each other's primary needs? Have you talked about them?

Sit down with your spouse and talk about your needs. Which ones do you think are not met. How can you each do better at responding to each other's primary needs.

Language:

We all have different personalities and needs that affect what we respond to in communicating love. In Gary Chapman's book "The 5 Love Languages" he suggests five ways of communicating love in a marriage relationship: words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, physical touch.

What forms of communication make you feel loved, honored or respected in your marriage? Can you think of a positive example?

Do you think you and your spouse are in tune with each others language?

Sit down with you spouse and discuss with each other the acts that make you feel loved, honored and respected in your marriage.

Talk about ways you can improve that for each of you. Remember and share the times in your marriage where you have felt affirmed in that way.