A TRINFINITY MINI BOOK

Building a Marriage That Lasts

Love, respect, and commitment in Christ

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TRINFINITY
Enterprises

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About this book

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Contents

Introduction 3

1 God's design 3

2 Love and respect 3

3 Four kinds of marriages 4

4 Learning to talk and listen 4

5 Commitment that holds 5

Introduction

Couples usually start out with plenty of excitement. Sooner or later jobs, kids, bills, and old habits wear on a relationship, and the marriage that once ran smoothly starts to sputter. That does not mean the marriage is over. It usually means it needs attention.

God designed marriage, and He knows what makes it work. This book looks at His design, the love He calls husbands to, the respect He calls wives to, the work of communication, and the commitment that keeps a marriage strong for a lifetime.

1 God's design

When Jesus was asked about marriage, He went back to the beginning. He said, Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female (Matthew 19:4, NASB). Genesis 1:27 (NASB) says God created man in His own image, male and female He created them.

Men and women are different, and that is by design. The differences are not wrong. They are part of how a husband and wife together reflect God's image. Many conflicts in marriage come from forgetting that and expecting a spouse to think, feel, and react the way we do.

Research has also found what Scripture already teaches. Children raised by parents in a healthy marriage tend to do better in school and in life, and husbands and wives in healthy marriages tend to be healthier and more stable. God knew those benefits when He created marriage. Modern studies simply echo what His Word says.

2 Love and respect

Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

Ephesians 5:33 (NASB)

Ephesians 5:33 (NASB) gives husbands and wives different instructions. Husbands are commanded to love. Wives are commanded to respect. Both need love and respect, but in conflict a wife often feels unloved and a husband often feels disrespected. Emerson Eggerichs

has written about how each spouse's reaction can feed the other's hurt and set off a cycle that keeps spinning.

The love a husband is called to is the same kind of love God showed us. Ephesians 5:25 (NASB) says husbands are to love their wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her. That is not a feeling. It is a sacrificial choice made every day.

Scripture uses several ideas for love. There is the self-giving love God shows in sending His Son. There is the love of friendship, the natural affection of family, and the romantic love between husband and wife. A strong marriage has room for all of them, with God's self-giving love at the foundation.

3 Four kinds of marriages

One way to picture marriage is to look at two choices. A husband can choose to love or to be harsh. A wife can choose to respect and support or to resist. Those choices produce four kinds of marriages.

In the worst kind, both spouses are selfish. He is harsh, she is resistant, and each is trying to get his or her own way. In another kind, the wife goes along but resents her husband because he makes decisions for himself instead of the family. In a third, the husband loves, but the wife fights him at every turn.

The marriage God designed is the one where a husband loves his wife the way Christ loves the church, and a wife respects and supports her husband. Neither one is a doormat. Both are giving themselves to the other. Selfishness is the road to emptiness. Giving is the road to joy.

4 Learning to talk and listen

Good communication does not happen by default. It takes time, energy, and practice. Personality matters, so does the way we were raised. If my parents fought loudly or never fought at all, I probably learned a pattern I bring into my own marriage.

Men and women also tend to communicate differently. Many husbands read the headlines, and many wives read the fine print. I may hear only the facts when my wife is telling me how she feels. That is how a simple question like where do you want to go to dinner can end with someone hurt and confused.

Brent Barlow once taught a class where he told husbands to go home, ask their wives how they could be better husbands, and listen. His wife asked him if he followed his own advice. That conversation took an hour. It is a fair question for every one of us. People change as the years go by, and we never stop needing to get to know each other better.

Conflict will come. James 1:19 (NASB) says everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger. That one verse would settle a lot of arguments before they start.

5 Commitment that holds

Love is a decision, not just a feeling. First Corinthians 13:4-7 (NASB) describes love as patient and kind, not jealous or arrogant, not seeking its own, and bearing, believing, hoping, and enduring all things. None of those are emotions. They are choices.

Marriage is not a fifty-fifty deal. It is each spouse giving one hundred percent. There will be times when we fail as friends, fail in our love, and even question our commitment. In those times, God's love does not fail. We can ask Him to love our spouse through us when we fall short.

A healthy marriage needs regular care. Warning lights include feeling bored with each other, focusing on differences, daydreaming about a perfect spouse, avoiding each other, and chasing separate goals. When those lights come on, the answer is to spend more time together, not less, and to bring Christ back to the center.

Proverbs 17:17 (NASB) says a friend loves at all times. The best marriages I know are built on that kind of friendship, held together by commitment, and rooted in the love of God.

Building a Marriage That Lasts

Jobs, kids, bills, and old habits can wear down any marriage. This book looks at God's design for marriage, the love He calls husbands to, the respect He calls wives to, how to talk and listen, and the commitment that keeps a marriage strong for a lifetime.

Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

Ephesians 5:33 (NASB)

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