

much as possible. They certainly discuss kids' schedules, grocery lists, and utility bills. But they don't stop there. They also communicate hopes, dreams, fears, and anxieties. They don't just discuss the changes that are taking place in the kid's life, they also discuss the changes that are taking place in their own hearts and souls. This essential key cannot be overlooked because honest, forthright communication becomes the foundation for so many other things on this list: commitment, patience, and trust... just to name a few. (read Proverbs 25:11-15)

8. Selflessness

Although it will never show up on any survey, more marriages are broken up by selfishness than any other reason. Surveys blame it on finances, lack of commitment, infidelity, or incompatibility, but the root cause for most of these reasons is selfishness. A selfish person is committed only to himself or herself, shows little patience, and never learns how to be a successful spouse. Give your hopes, dreams, and life to your partner. And begin to live life together. (read Ephesians 4:29-32)

A healthy functional Marriage

A healthy functional marriage is characterized by:

- * *A right understanding of headship and submission.*
- * *Personal equality of two persons who are committed to reaching wholeness.*
- * *Commitment to Jesus Christ.*
- * *Commitment to the marriage institution.*
- * *Love (unconditional)*

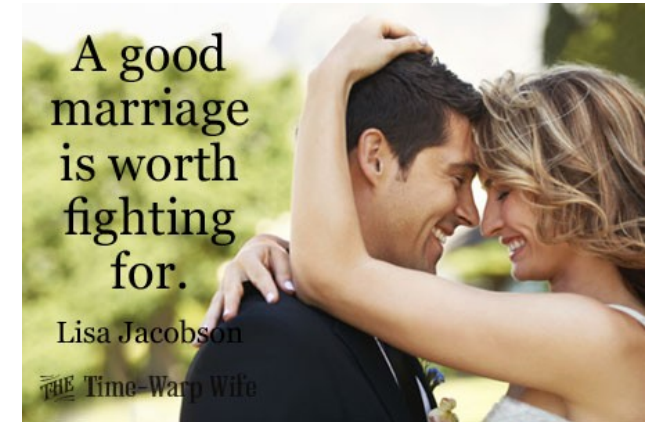
- * *Trust*
- * *Respect*
- * *Intimacy (spiritual, intellectual, emotional and physical).*
- * *Personal responsibility taken for one's choices, actions and happiness.*
- * *Self-discipline (delayed gratification, telling the truth, dedication to reality).*
- * *Allows for growth both individually and in the marriage.*
- * *Good modelling to their children.*
- * *Nurture of their children.*

Definition of Christian Marriage

An excellent definition of Christian marriage is the one submitted by Norman Wright, popular author on marriage:

A Christian marriage is a total commitment of two people to the person of Jesus Christ and to one another. It is a commitment in which there is no holding back of anything. A Christian marriage is similar to a solvent, a freeing up of the man and woman to be themselves and become all that God intends for them. Marriage is the refining process that God will use to have us develop into the man or woman he wants us to be.

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God's Purpose for Marriage

There are three leading purposes in marriage, all of which are seen in Genesis 1-3, are:

- * *Fellowship*
- * *Fulfilment*
- * *Family*

God's original purpose in marriage also includes the following.

- * *Marriage is the first and most fundamental institution of any society.*
- * *It originated with God, therefore, we cannot do with it as we please.*
- * *A male / female union is central to the family.*
- * *A wife is a gift from God.*
- * *God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16).*
- * *Reconciliation is always the goal when difficulties occur - the Lord is highly committed to marriage reconciliation and enrichment.*
- * *Reproduction is a important purpose in marriage but not the most important (Genesis 1:28).*
- * *A companionship and love relationship.*

It is important to understand that husband and wife have different roles in a successful marriage.

- * *The wife is a helpmate to her husband.*
- * *She is a complement or counterpart - to fill in where the husband lacks.*
- * *She is a balance and modifying influence to her husband (1 Samuel 25:32).*
- * *She is a partner, but is not the property of the husband.*
- * *She has equality in personal worth and dignity.*
- * *The husband needs her but she is not a servant. She is a person of great worth.*
- * *The individuality and uniqueness of the wife is maintained.*

8 Essentials for a good Marriage

1. Love/Commitment

At its core, love is a decision to be committed to another person. It is far more than a fleeting emotion as portrayed on television, the big screen, and romance novels. Feelings come and go, but a true decision to be committed lasts forever – and that is what defines true love. It is a decision to be committed through the ups and the downs, the good and the bad. When things are going well, commitment is easy. But true love is displayed by remaining committed even through the trials of life.

Don't be yoked to an unbeliever, because what has light to do with darkness. (read 2. Cor. 6:14)

2. Sexual Faithfulness

Sexual faithfulness in marriage includes more than just our bodies. It also includes our eyes, mind, heart, and soul. When we devote our minds to sexual fantasies about another person, we sacrifice sexual faithfulness to our spouse. When we offer moments of emotional intimacy to another, we sacrifice sexual faithfulness to our spouse. Guard your sexuality daily and devote it entirely to your spouse. Sexual faithfulness requires self-discipline and an awareness of the consequences. Refuse to put anything in front of your eyes, body, or heart that would compromise your faithfulness. (read Hebrews 13:4)

3. Humility

We all have weaknesses and relationships always reveal these faults quicker than anything else on earth. An essential building block of a healthy marriage is the ability to admit that you are not perfect, that you will make mistakes, and that you will need forgiveness. Holding an attitude of superiority over your partner will bring about resentment and will prevent your relationship from moving forward. If you struggle in this area, grab a pencil and quickly write down three things that your partner does better than you – that simple exercise should help you stay humble. Repeat as often as necessary. (read Philippians 2:5-8)

4. Patience/Forgiveness

Because no one is perfect (see #3), patience and forgiveness will always be required in a marriage relationship. Successful marriage partners learn to show unending patience and forgiveness to their partner. They humbly

admit their own faults and do not expect perfection from their partner. They do not bring up past errors in an effort to hold their partner hostage. And they do not seek to make amends or get revenge when mistakes occur. If you are holding onto a past hurt from your partner, forgive him or her. It will set your heart and relationship free. (read Ephesians 4:31-32)

5. Time

Relationships don't work without time investment. Never have, never will. Any successful relationship requires intentional, quality time together. And quality time rarely happens when quantity time is absent. The relationship with your spouse should be the most intimate and deep relationship you have. Therefore, it is going to require more time than any other relationship. If possible, set aside time each day for your spouse and pray together (read Matthew 18:20). And a date-night once in a while wouldn't hurt either.

6. Honesty and Trust

Honesty and trust become the foundation for everything healthy in a marriage. But unlike most of the other essentials on this list, trust takes time. You can become selfless, committed, or patient in a moment, but trust always takes time. Trust is only built after weeks, months, and years of being who you say you are and doing what you say you'll do. It takes time, so start now... and if you need to rebuild trust in your relationship, you'll need to work even harder. (read Philippians 4:8-9)

7. Communication

Successful marriage partners communicate as