

3 Key Steps to Take Your Marriage From Good to Great

If your marriage is good, be grateful! Those struggling in a bad marriage can learn a lot from you.

But God is not satisfied with good; He desires your marriage to be “very good.” He wants it to be great! When two people love God, love each other and are committed to ongoing growth, you can take your marriage from good to great. That doesn’t mean it will be problem-free, but it can be better than you ever imagined.

To have a reasonably good marriage, both you and your spouse must be people of good will. If your marriage is good, you’ve almost certainly learned much about things such as living in a state of forgiveness, keeping short accounts of wrongs, demonstrating appreciation and respect and communicating in ways that help you understand each other. You’ve learned that love is not a feeling; it’s a commitment. These foundational principles are part of every good marriage.

Before I married my husband, Al, I heard a marriage expert give two pieces of advice for anyone wanting a successful marriage: 1) Study your spouse, and 2) Stay on your knees. Those two things were huge in making my own marriage great. If you’re not doing those things daily, begin now!

But today I want to go beyond those foundational ideas and show you some important “advanced” principles that will take your marriage from good to great.

1. Envision the future.

Great marriages don’t just happen. Nobody slides into a great marriage. If things stay the way they are right now, what will your marriage be like next year? In 10 years? In 40 years?

Some couples get trapped by the idea that they will work on their marriage when the kids are in school, or out of school, or the money is better, or you get into the new house, or some other milestone. That's a mistake.

To get from good to great, ask yourself what kind of marriage you would like to have next year, in 10 years or in 40 years. If you die before your spouse does, what will you want them to say at your funeral? Take some time to think about that individually, and talk about it together. And then ask yourself and each other, *What are we doing now that will help us get us to that future?*

Only God knows the future, but planning for a great marriage and then taking action will dramatically increase the chance that you will experience it. Schedule some sessions where you ask each other the challenging questions and make plans for the kind of marriage you want tomorrow. A marriage retreat can be a great way to do this.

2. Stay relationally fit.

It takes intentional deep ongoing investment for anything to become and stay great. It's that way with a garden, a career, your relationship with God—and your marriage. Remember; great marriages don't just happen!

For the garden of your marriage to thrive and grow, you must be relentless in taking care of relational business. Don't allow the smallest weed of bitterness, misunderstanding or distance between you to get a foothold. Any time your spirit senses something amiss, talk about it and pray about it. Continue to approach your marriage as a learner; keep learning about your spouse and about relational skills. And if old baggage shows up, deal with it right away.

The garden of your marriage needs the fertilizer of time and communication. Don't wait until problems develop; set up a regular rhythm of time together. That means daily "I love

you's," check-ins and demonstrations of affection. It means regular date nights or similar times when you devote focused attention on each other and your relationship.

And it means praying together, worshipping together and serving together.

3. It's not all about you.

A marriage focused only on itself is likely to implode. Like a body of water, a great marriage needs regular fresh input of godly wisdom, healthy outside relationships and intentional nurturing. It also needs the regular output of giving to others of the grace it has received from God.

Beyond the service each of you does individually, take time to determine how you as a couple will intentionally bless others. That may mean inviting others to your home who could not invite you back. It might mean mentoring younger or troubled couples, volunteering together at church or another organization, or some other form of ministry. One of the best aspects of my marriage to Al was the radio program we produced together, daily helping others know about and experience the Fully Alive life Jesus came to give us.

There is little that can provide a more effective advertisement for the kingdom of God than a great marriage that remains great over the long haul. Ministering together formally or informally will become one of the most fulfilling aspects of your relationship.

If you've read this and realize your marriage is far from great, don't give up! Some of the best miracles happen when God takes a broken marriage and works His amazing transformation to make it great.

And if your marriage is only good, take some action today to move along the journey from good to great.

Your Turn: Would you rate your marriage as great? If not, which of these steps are you going to employ in taking your marriage from good to great? Leave a comment below.

For more inspiring marriage tips, listen to Ryan and Selena Frederick share about “fierce marriage” in the following podcast.

Dr. Carol Peters-Tanksley is both a board-certified OB-GYN physician and an ordained doctor of ministry. As an author and speaker, she loves helping people discover the **Fully Alive** kind of life Jesus came to bring us. Visit her website at .

This article originally appeared at .