

These 3 Simple Acts Will Restore Intimacy to Your Marriage

The enemy is waging a war on marriages. One of his weapons is removing the intimacy and passion in Christian marriages.

Marriage is one of the most precious gifts God has given us, and it is the core of the family structure. Therefore, it makes sense that the devil tries so hard to break down marriages in the church.

In this article, I will be discussing intimacy in marriage and why it is so important to pray with your spouse, share feelings and praise one another. If you are married or on your way to being married or married again, make sure you have these skills. They will help you connect spiritually and emotionally.

Throughout my years of counseling couples, I have found that many marriages have no structure that encourages intimacy. We grow up believing that we get married and live happily ever after. Yet we are often not equipped for intimacy and can be disappointed when our husband or wife doesn't possess the secret code to intimacy either.

The early part of marriage can often be fun as you begin to learn about your spouse, go to work or school, get your first apartment, pick out furniture, go to church and are physically intimate without guilt. The new complexities of life, along with the multitude of new decisions, can keep couples talking and sharing regularly.

Slowly and subtly—no one really knows when or where it happens—something changes within the relationship. You don't seem to talk as much. Decisions are not met with the same glee

as when you were first married, but instead they are delegated and then discussed. Purchases become fewer; life begins to take on a certain level of routine. You don't feel as close and seem to be just living together.

What happened? How did the passion for each other leave?

Many couples lose their priorities. Passion is a result of priorities. Americans think passion is either a part of them or it isn't. But passion is a dividend of consistent investments placed into a relationship.

Let's go back a minute to when you were dating and starting to think that being married would be a good idea. Remember the passion in life that you had for your future spouse? Of course, you remember the passion, but what you may have forgotten is the foundation of that passion, the *priority* of the relationship.

Do you remember how you "made" time to be together? You planned your days and weeks around each other's work schedule, including days off. Those of you who were like me and moved away from a future spouse to go to school have the phone bills to prove it. Those phone bills took a good portion of the little income I made just to tell her about my day.

Do you remember the gratitude you had for the smallest things your future spouse did for you? This was especially true if my future spouse cooked for me. I was so grateful! You offered a constant stream of praise for your future spouse. Do you remember when you thought your future mate was so smart and attractive and had so much potential? You believed in him or her and offered regular encouragement.

Passion is a result of priorities. So many people try to get the passion back instead of getting their priorities back. Once you get the priorities back, the passion naturally follows and grows. Most couples ask, "What priorities?"

I will discuss these priorities shortly, but before I do, I want to share an analogy I often share within counseling sessions to couples. Many couples who come in for help in their marriage have sprains or fractures in their relationship. I liken the repair of this marital relationship to a fracture or broken bone. When you break a bone, you can still function but you look and act funny. Then you go to the doctor or emergency room.

The first thing they do is x-ray the bone in question. They look at the structure. Regardless of how it happened, the x-ray shows a damaged structure (your bone). The doctor and nurse apply a structural treatment to your structural problem, most likely a cast.

The cast is a structural treatment. The cast itself is just plastic or plaster; in and of itself, it has no healing properties. But when it is applied to a broken bone to hold the bone in place, surprise! Healing can and does happen.

That is what placing the priorities back into a marriage can do. No matter how sprained or broken, healing can and does take place. I have seen literal miracles in restored marriages when priorities were put back into the relationship. One of the structures I apply is what I call the "three dailies."

I want to add a personal note of testimony. I would never ask you to do something Lisa and I have not done or are not doing presently in our relationship. Lisa and I have done two of the three dailies every day (with only a few exceptions) for well over 25 years. When I developed the third exercise, we also actively applied this to our marriage.

Lisa and I maintain our relational priorities by practicing these three exercises. They are part of our bedtime routine. Neither of us expects to go to sleep without our relational ritual of the three dailies.

(If you want more expansive information and instructions on

the three dailies, check out my book, *Intimacy: A 100-Day Guide to Lasting Relationships*.)

Pray

Prayer is one of the priorities that must be set in place by a couple desiring more intimacy. Remember intimacy is three-dimensional—spirit, soul and body. As we grow spiritually together, our intimacy in the other two areas will grow as well.

Prayer is just talking out loud to God with your spouse, similar to talking with a friend. Prayer doesn't have to be hours-long or in any particular position. The principle of connecting with God together is essential.

Share Feelings

If you can't share the feelings in your heart because of a lack of training and practice, how can you expect a heart-to-heart intimacy to occur? If you have been able to skillfully tell your spouse what you feel and what is in your heart, then your spouse must likewise be able to clearly communicate his or her heart to you.

This lack of skill is one of the largest hindrances for a couple to start or maintain intimacy. That is why the feelings exercise is critical over the next few months. I do want to warn you that this is an exercise, and therefore it does require some effort to get a degree of mastery.

I have a feelings exercise guide with a list of feelings included in my book, *Intimacy: A 100 Guide to Lasting Relationships*. In this book, you will find these three dailies explained more in depth.

Praise and Nurturing

Both the giving and receiving of praise is a skill. Again, skills can be learned by anyone. Anyone can praise and nurture

a soul. As you practice the praise exercise daily, you and your spouse will experience the oil of intimacy drip into your soul and heal areas of dryness that you didn't even know existed.

When I counsel couples, I ask them when the last time was that they received real praise, eye-to-eye and heart-to-heart, and not just the obligatory "Thanks, honey." They look at each other and shrug their shoulders. This is sad because this is the icing on the cake for me. When Lisa tells me something positive about myself almost every day, my soul leaps. I feel affirmed, and I can take on another day of life events. This is because I know in the deepest area of my heart that at the end of even the worst day of my life, those big green eyes of hers are going to look right into my heart, and she's going to say something nice.

Some couples do all three daily exercises at the same time to make it easier. All three exercises, when you get to a level of skill, can take as little as 10 to 15 minutes each day. This is a small amount of time to develop a vibrant, love-giving, intimate marriage. Hopefully you will take these simple steps to ignite the passion and intimacy in your marriage. {eoa}

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