

Growing Together As One

Marriage Enrichment Principles
for Couples Affected by
Incarceration

*How can we equip
ourselves with
improved coping
skills?*

*How can we better
understand our
mate?*

*What is God's
purpose for our
marriage?*

*By
Greg & Melissa Alvis*

Growing Together As One

Marriage Enrichment Principles
for Couples Affected by Incarceration

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Printed in the United States of America

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ISBN 978-0-6153-7868-8

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Dedication

To Ed & Ardye Williamson,

Texans Do Care Ministries.

Thank you for believing in us when no one else would,

Thank you for sharing your faith together as a couple, and

Thank you for equipping us with the tools we needed to overcome.

To Johnny & Betty Moffitt,

Worldwide Voice in the Wilderness.

The two of you are a gift from God – lights that shine

so brightly in a dark world.

One day the two of you will see the fruit of your life-long

labor and rejoice with our Lord in Heaven.

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Preface

One of the oldest, and most famous, works of Western Literature is an epic poem attributed to an Ancient Greek writer named Homer. Writing in the 8th Century B.C., Homer entitled this classic, *The Odyssey*. In it he tells the story of a young man named Odysseus who goes off to war leaving behind his beautiful bride, Penelope, and their young son. After a decade long involvement in the Trojan War, Odysseus embarks on the difficult journey home to his family. It is a quest that takes an additional ten years to complete. Throughout their twenty year separation Odysseus and Penelope face numerous challenges and obstacles. Countless temptations must also be overcome. Yet these two lovers, who remain equally devoted to each other and their marriage, are eventually reunited in middle age. They validate the old adage that says *true love is worth waiting for*. Few couples will ever understand sacrifice like Odysseus and Penelope. Even fewer would be able to walk in their shoes. In fact, most people would respond to the plight of this couple by saying their story is simply fictional; that in reality, such sacrificial living is not possible. We disagree. Let me explain why.

On May 1, 1987 I (Greg) was transferred to what was then known as The Texas Department of Corrections to begin serving a lengthy prison term for a violent crime I committed the previous year. Unlike Odysseus, I was no war hero. Instead, I was a wretched piece of humanity who needed to be separated from free society. Like Odysseus however, I was leaving behind a loved one, Melissa. Neither of us could envision at the time of my transfer what the future might hold. We knew we had to start life over and God had to begin reshaping us, both individually and as a couple. As the days and weeks turned into months and years, we faced challenges and obstacles far too many in number to count. We also battled the obvious

temptations that come from trying to stay together while living apart. Finally, on April 15, 2008, the two of us were reunited after twenty-two years and twenty-five days apart.

Throughout the course of our separation we constantly sought out resources that might assist us in understanding *how* to remain together in spite of my incarceration. Whether it was in the form of a book on marriage or in the person of a marriage seminar volunteer, we came to realize our situation was so unique that nothing was actually being discussed on the topic. Most of the wonderful volunteers we met were not really sure what to say or how to help either. So we just kept searching. What we found was that through our own experiences, and through God's Holy Word, our questions were always getting answered. What you hold in your hands is the result of those twenty plus years of prison experience we shared as a couple, as well as the lessons we gleaned from many of our fellow couples and seminar volunteers along the way.

Our purpose for creating this workbook is to offer hope and encouragement to couples who are currently affected by incarceration. No one can fully understand the hardship that prison places upon a marriage unless, of course, they have gone through it themselves. The stress and strain on a couple's relationship can be unbearable. This is why we seek to identify daily living skills in each chapter that either we or our fellow couples have used to successfully navigate through an incarceration. We strive at all times to point our readers to the only true source for marital stability and hope - this being the Word of God. It is not a coincidence that the happiest and most fulfilling marriages we have known through the years all share a common theme. Each has been built on the idea of both spouse's having a relationship with Jesus Christ.

There are three underlying objectives throughout this body of work. The first is that each of us becomes more adept at understanding our mate. In order to achieve this, every couple must work hand-in-hand on the aspects of intimate growth available to them at that moment. A

second goal is to enhance each couple's ability to face the crisis of incarceration head-on. As difficult as it may seem, everyone beset by a prison term, whether prisoner or spouse, can equip themselves with improved coping skills. Finally, we want to encourage every couple to gain an ever-increasing understanding of God's role in their marriage. It is the knowledge of His love for us that triggers our unconditional responses of love to each other. And this begins the process of restoration and healing in our lives.

From the outset we want to acknowledge that no amount of study or preparation will alleviate the painful isolation a couple may sometimes feel. To make matters worse, it is uncomfortable knowing the only way to overcome a prison sentence is by actually going through it. Yet a term of incarceration can help form a bond in a marriage relationship. It can actually make each spouse sense their need of one another, and more importantly of God, in new and exciting ways. As a couple combines their strengths and seeks God's favor and guidance, their marriage is purified by the trials of incarceration. Their relationship becomes empowered to endure whatever circumstances life may bring as they gracefully grow old together.

It is our prayer that everyone who reads this workbook will take from its pages the single most important truth in life: **that God has created us for His glory**. May each of us be overwhelmed with the knowledge that even before the world began, He loved you and me.

"Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen".

{Ephesians 3:20-21}

*From Our Hearts to Yours,
Greg & Melissa Alvis*

Introduction

Where do we begin?

“Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain.”

Psalm 127:1

Introduction

*“Unless the Lord builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.” {Psalm 127:1}*

I remember *The Incident* like it happened just yesterday. Melissa and I had already lived through a decade of incarceration together. During that time we had grown in our understanding of one another and were learning how to communicate emotions we had previously hidden from each other. Feelings like the fears we had, anger that would surface from time to time, or the bitterness of being in our situation. Plus we were living with a routine; one that allowed us to feel a sense of control over our circumstances, which is a good thing when you live miles apart each day.

We had been blessed a few years prior to *The Incident* with my transfer to a unit located just minutes from Melissa’s apartment. This meant that not only could we write one another on a frequent basis, but also, we could visit every weekend. And this we did. Each week we lived for the weekend to arrive. We always scheduled our visitation time. This way there were never any surprises. Both of us would prepare for those two hours with anticipation and excitement because those were our dates. It’s why we visited nearly every weekend for a period of at least fifteen years.

Developing such a routine meant that every Saturday or Sunday I was blessed with being able to look into my wife’s eyes and tell her how much she meant to me, and how much I loved her. Each time our eyes met, the feeling of being overwhelmed with love bathed our hearts with a longing for more. Life was grand! Every once in a while though some sort of obstacle would

confront our relationship, and invariably, put a damper on those special moments of seeing each other at visit. Such was the case on the day of *The Incident*.

I remember going to visit that day upbeat and ready to hold Melissa in my arms. We had a contact visit scheduled, which was always more exciting than the once-a-month requirement of a phone visit. As I entered the visitation room I scanned the surroundings to find my wife. When our eyes met, I immediately sensed something was wrong. We had visited hundreds of times so the aura of our initial glance was always the same unless something had gone awry during the week for one of us.

As we embraced that day, I felt the trembling of my wife who proceeded to tell me of the tragedy she had just experienced. Her momma had passed away, and with those words came a flood of tears I had never seen before. The pain she was experiencing was so devastating that even the officer on duty was affected. I realized at that moment how much my absence meant to my wife and family. I also realized how helpless and pathetic I was as a husband in that situation. Not only could I not reach over and put my arms around my wife who was in obvious pain, but I would have to go back to my cell in a short time. Leaving her that day when she needed me most changed me. It helped me realize how little I understood about the importance of being there for her and my family.

Each weekend in visitation rooms across the country similar scenes unfold as couples face those life-changing moments together while living apart. For Melissa and I, this was the most difficult aspect of being separated by prison walls. Whenever the storm's of life would come, and they inevitably would, the results could sometimes be devastating or at least feel that way for many days. There simply did not seem to be an effective way to develop the oneness in our marriage at times because we lived in separate worlds each day. So how does a couple

overcome the day-to-day separation? To answer this we must first examine the ways a prison sentence impacts a marriage.

First of all, a period of incarceration prevents couples from developing certain aspects of their intimate growth together. Couples in free society build up their relationships using every area of intimacy. This includes the physical, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and social/recreational elements of intimate growth. Not so for those of us affected by incarceration. Our marriages must be nurtured without experiencing some of those relational components. A friend of ours, Harriet Ward, who along with her husband Chris ministers to incarcerated couples, describes it this way, “*The wives are too single to be married, but they are too married to date another man*”.

Incarceration also forces a couple to deal with changing family roles. The wife is no longer just a mate and a mother. She must now be the bread winner. And who is the father figure while the husband is in prison? Doesn't she have to carry this load to some degree?

For the wife and family left behind to wait, the experience can foster feelings of loneliness, abandonment, fear and insecurity. These emotions can quickly lead into long-term anger and bitterness, especially for the wife who is often the unseen victim of our crimes. Of the hundreds of couples we interacted with over the years, only a small group of wives had any support system in place. They were the exceptions. The rule was that most wives we met had to live with the *secret* of being married to an incarcerated man. If that wasn't difficult enough, the children had to face the ostracizing associated with having an incarcerated parent.

Prisoners are also prevented from participating in meaningful family events. In the years I was incarcerated my wife accomplished many things that, had I been free, I would have been able to celebrate with her. She graduated from college, participated in an Olympic torch run, and

ran a marathon to name a few. My brothers not only grew up, but they went on to college, got married and had kids. I could only read about such events in a letter from home.

What about emergencies and worst-case scenarios? How does a couple get through a situation where the wife, who now has the sole source of income, is laid off? Or what does a couple do when she faces illness alone? Not to mention all the things that can occur if the couple has children.

What about the incarcerated husband? He is faced with living in an environment where dysfunction is the norm. Where others with a history of violence and anger reside, and yet he has to not only come to grips with his own troubled past, but also, he must learn how not to be affected by the behavior of others.

It is obvious that prison imposes extreme hardship on the marriage relationship. If I am honest about it, there was probably not a single day in my two decades of incarceration when I didn't miss my wife. This induces pain. Simply put, BEING APART HURTS. What adds insult to injury is the fact the incarcerated and their family members are often misunderstood (best case scenario) or forgotten. This tends to lead us into deeper levels of despair and hopelessness. I grew weary just hearing about those who turned their back on Melissa because of me. This was even true with our Christian brothers and sisters.

So what is a couple to do? How can they realistically overcome such insurmountable odds? We will spend the rest of this workbook sharing what we believe are the most effective ways to combat the obstacle of incarceration together. We know from our own experience and from the lives of those who walked alongside Melissa and me that each of us must come to the realization this is going to be difficult. However, we also know that God, who is the creator of the institution we call marriage, is able to see us through this crisis. It is God's forgiving and

transforming grace that penetrates our lives and heals marriages beset by a prison sentence. It is God who helps us to reflect on the past, plan properly for the future, and live constructively each and every day. And it is God who helps all of us affected by incarceration develop unique, creative, and powerful marriage relationships. Our circumstances demand it, and more importantly, He is glorified by it.

We begin our search in Chapter 1 by looking at *The Covenant of Marriage*. We will turn to God's Word to see what it says about marriage. Why was it created? What is God's purpose for it in our lives? How is it lived out in our day-to-day routine? We will also discover what the roles of husband and wife actually look like through the lens of the Bible.

Chapter 2 discusses *Developing Intimacy*. Here we will look at the different ways a couple can grow together while also discussing the reality that our marriages have a number of limitations, which have to be dealt with properly. In addition, we will talk about the needs each of us have as we go through this experience and how we can meet our spouse's need for support right now.

Chapter 3 is on the topic of *Communication*. Early in our marriage we struggled with our inability to understand each other. Many of these struggles simply revolved around the different ways we communicate individually. For Melissa and I, this has been one of the most important concepts in our growth over the years. Instead of always trying to change each other, we have learned how to better understand one another.

Chapter 4 is our favorite topic because it discusses what we call *Climbing Mountains*. The continuous stress and strain on the physical body of a mountain climber is analogous to the constant emotional and spiritual tug on couples impacted by incarceration. The times of rest and

refreshment for us can seem so few and far between. Yet there are effective ways to approach our pain of being apart. We hope this encourages those currently affected by a prison term.

Finally, in Chapter 5 we discuss the idea of *Submitting to One Another*. This is not a concept that is in vogue in today's culture, yet nothing could be more satisfying or fulfilling when it is lived out in our day-to-day life as couples. This is where the rubber meets the road and we begin to see that marriage is designed by God to make us more like Jesus. Having said that, how many of us can actually quote our marriage vows right now? More importantly, how many of us have ever sat down and thought about the purpose, intent, and meaning of those vows? And do we really believe God can use this time to begin building a marital legacy for us as a couple?

Melissa and I know the journey that leads to parole and reunion can be accompanied by days of pain and despair. It can also be filled with days of warmth, joy, excitement and hope. We want to give you, our fellow couples, a slightly different perspective as you work towards the day of your being reunited together. It is one that focuses on the old maxim of there being a *three-fold path to healing*. It goes like this:

Hope is knowing where we are going,

Faith is what keeps us going,

Love is the path that leads us there.

As each of you continue the journey to becoming reunited as a couple, we want to encourage you to remember that the God of all creation has a plan for each of us. His plan is not only for our individual lives, but also, for our life together as a couple. We conclude this introduction with a quote that has been inspiring to us over the years. It has always been a constant reminder of how God has used His relational gift of marriage to us in ways far beyond what we could have imagined when our journey of incarceration began,

“Marriage is the pursuit of a dream. A dream of loving and being loved; of wanting another and being wanted in return, of melting into one another and being eagerly embraced, of understanding another and being understood, of feeling secure and guaranteeing another’s security, of being fulfilled in fulfilling another’s needs.”¹

May you know in your heart that God can, and will, come alongside you and your spouse to see the two of you through this difficult time in your lives. And may you continue boldly in the pursuit of your dream of being reunited. As a couple who has walked along that path in life, we can tell you life out here is even better than we could have imagined. Yes, many days are still filled with challenges and obstacles, but the experience of incarceration gives us a much greater respect for the marriage covenant we entered into together. And the rigors of the daily grind we experienced in two decades apart make each day we spend together out here even that much sweeter. So hang in there. Your days of being together are near. Your time to grow together though is NOW!

¹ David Augsburg, *Sustaining Love* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1988) p. 72

My Thoughts on Marriage

1. What ideas did I have about marriage before we became man and wife?

2. How has this period of incarceration affected our marriage relationship?

3. How has my spouse been able to stay beside me during this prison stay?

4. List two things about me that I believe can help make our marriage better right now.

5. List two things about my spouse that I believe can help make our marriage better right now.

6. I believe our relationship is strongest when ...

7. I believe our relationship is weakest when ...

What I Think and Feel

1. When we are together, I am happiest when ...

2. When we are together, I am saddest when ...

3. I feel most afraid when ...

4. I feel loved when you ...

5. I feel appreciated when you ...

6. My greatest concern/fear for our relationship is ...

7. What I have the most difficulty sharing with you is ...

The Covenant of Marriage

God's Gift to You

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

Genesis 2:24

The Covenant of Marriage

*“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and
hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*

{Genesis 2:24}

Have you ever wondered why you feel so complete when you are with your spouse? I think many of us would respond to this question by saying it is the power of love at work in our lives. But what if there is something more profound going on when you and your mate are together—and maybe more importantly, when you are apart?

The ancient Jewish rabbis taught that the man is restless while he misses the rib that was taken out of his side, and the woman is restless until she gets under the arm of the man, from where she came. If ever there was a term that describes a marriage affected by incarceration, it would be *restless*. How often have you experienced that feeling?

When the apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Christians at Ephesus, he said that marriage between a man and a woman was analogous to the relationship that exists between Jesus and the church. He called it a “profound mystery” {Ephesians 5:32}, quoting a passage written previously by Moses in Genesis chapter 2. According to Paul, the marriage relationship has always been a picture of what Jesus’ relationship with us would look like, even though no one realized that when God created the institution of marriage.

The Creation of Marriage

To discover how God created this incredible relational gift we all enjoy and need so much, we must start by examining the scriptural account of the beginning of creation, which is

found in the first book of the Bible, Genesis. In the opening two chapters, we read about God speaking into existence the world as we know it.

“And God said” is how He created light, which He separated from darkness. {Genesis 1:3-4}

“And God said” is how He created the expanse of heaven and how He separated the water above the expanse from the waters below the expanse. {Genesis 1:6-7}

“And God said” is how the dry land called earth appeared and how the seas on the earth came into being. {Genesis 1:9-10}

“And God said” is how the vegetation—plants yielding seed after their kind, and trees bearing fruit—all came into existence. {Genesis 1:11-12}

“And God said” is how the sun and the moon and stars appeared in the sky. {Genesis 1:14-18}

“And God said” is how the fish appeared in the sea, and how the birds and the swarming creatures began flying across the expanse above the earth. {Genesis 1:20-22}

“And God said” is how the beasts of the earth, the livestock, and all the creeping animals were created. {Genesis 1:24-25}

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth’” {Genesis 1:26}.

Chapter 2 of Genesis restates the creation story in detail. When God saw what He was creating, it was all good, except for one thing. *“Then the Lord God said, ‘It is **not good** that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him’” {Genesis 2:18, emphasis added}.*

God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and then removed one of his ribs. The Lord took that rib and fashioned woman from it. He brought the woman to the man and said, *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh” {Genesis 2:24}*. This was the beginning of the institution we call marriage.

God’s original design was to create one new life existent in two persons. In addition, this was to be a permanent relationship. The words *hold fast* in verse 24 is the English translation of a Hebrew word meaning, “to cling to, stick to, or fasten together.”¹

Another way of looking at the idea of *hold fast* is this: If you glue two items together with superglue and then try to tear them apart, both will be damaged. In the same way, divorce damages both husband and wife.

The Purpose for Marriage

God’s first purpose for marriage was to give man companionship. Having my wife with me brings enjoyment, pleasure, friendship, and fellowship, which God designed her to give me. I also provide the same for her each day.

A second purpose for marriage is to teach us about the relationship Jesus has with the church. In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul describes what a Christian marriage should look like and how a husband and wife are to interact:

“This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband” {Ephesians 5:32–33}.

¹ W.E. Vine, *Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996).

As a husband, I am to love my wife as Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for her. My wife is to submit to our marriage and my role in it as the church submits to Jesus. Both of us are to learn through our marriage eternal lessons about Jesus' relationship with the church. What are you learning right now through your marriage about our Lord's relationship with His bride, the church?

A third purpose for marriage is for us to become mirrors for each other's lives. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul prefaced his instructions to husbands and wives with a command for them to be "*submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ*" {Ephesians 5:21}. If I am submitting to my wife out of reverence for Christ, I should be able to see the effects of that on her life. She too should have an imprint of her faith upon my life. This becomes a ministry we provide to each other. In addition, it is a ministry for the entire world to see. Our marriages can be tools of evangelism in God's hands if we are submitting to each other out of reverence for Christ.

A fourth purpose for marriage is so man can have dominion over the earth. In Genesis 1:28 we find God's first instructions for man and his life on earth:

*"And God blessed them. And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and **subdue it** and **have dominion** over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" {emphasis added}.*

A man's entire life is spent trying to create, subdue, and have dominion. In marriage, couples need to learn what God wants them to do in His kingdom. What does He want your marriage to reflect? Moreover, how can He be glorified through your activities as a couple?

Along with this purpose for a couple's life together, each spouse has a unique purpose. By becoming all He has designed us to be individually, we are better able to minister to our

mate. As we meet our spouses' needs, we free them to meet the needs God has for them each day as they share their gifts from Him with a lost and hurting world.

A fifth purpose for marriage is procreation. Genesis 1:28 says we are to “*be fruitful and multiply.*” In this way, we will rise up a future generation of people who know and love their Creator God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Roles in Marriage

All Christians should resemble Jesus when it comes to interacting with and loving others. However, there are distinct roles for husbands and wives to live out as they go about their day-to-day activities.

For the Husband

“*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh*” {Genesis 2:24}. The husband should always honor his father and mother. But marriage provides a new and primary responsibility for him. Through marriage he enters into a new life with his wife—one that is lifelong and permanent.

“*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*” {Ephesians 5:25}. Husbands are commanded to love as Jesus loved. A husband's love exhibits self-denial and sacrifice. This means putting his wife and her needs first. A husband's love is unconditional. In other words, it is not contingent on how his wife loves him or treats him.

“*For no one ever hated his own flesh, but **nourishes** and **cherishes** it, just as Christ does the church*” {Ephesians 5:29, *emphasis added*}. The word *nourishes* here describes a husband's focus on the health, strength, and well-being of his wife. He is to provide for her needs so she

can grow mature in her faith. The word *cherishes* here depicts the husband's responsibility for exhibiting the warmth, affection, and comfort his wife needs to feel safe and secure each day.

"Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" {1 Peter 3:7}. A husband should strive each day to understand his wife in order to better meet her needs. This Scripture's reference to women being "the weaker vessel" refers only to her physical nature. It does not presume her to be any less important. A wife simply needs her husband's protection and strength every day. And husband's, you're prayers are hindered when you do not fulfill God's role for meeting you're wife's needs.

"Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them" {Colossians 3:19}. A husband is to exhibit a loving attitude toward his wife instead of reacting in a harsh or angry manner. His words and actions either build up or tear down his wife and their oneness.

For the Wife

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" {Genesis 2:24}. This applies to the wife too. She is to leave behind her family and parents and cling to her husband as they build a lifelong relationship together.

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord" {Ephesians 5:22}. This Scripture has been misunderstood and abused in our culture. It does not imply that the wife is to be subservient to her husband. It simply means that regardless of her accomplishments, her education, her experience, or her knowledge, she is to respect the role her husband is supposed to be living out in their marriage. She submits to him not because of his perfect walk with God, but because of her own humility and obedience to the Lord.

“... and let the wife see that she respects her husband” {Ephesians 5:33}. The greatest gift a wife can give to her husband is to show him respect at all times. Husbands have an insatiable appetite for being appreciated and looked up to. Even when a man fails, an attitude of respect exhibited by his wife can be used by God to minister to his heart.

“An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain” {Proverbs 31:10–11}. The thirty-first chapter of Proverbs defines what it means to be a godly wife and mother. To the husband of this type of woman, she is the most valuable aspect of his life. He truly will have no lack of gain.

For One Another

There are numerous passages that give both spouses specific guidelines they are to implement each day as they live out their roles in marriage.

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another” {John 13:34, emphasis added}. Jesus came to this earth to show us how to love. By giving Himself unconditionally for the benefit of others, He gave us an example to follow as we go about our day-to-day activities.*

*“...Outdo **one another** in showing **honor**” {Romans 12:10, emphasis added}. By honoring our mates each day, we reflect an admiration for who they are.*

*“...Clothe yourselves, all of you, with **humility toward one another**, for God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble” {1 Peter 5:5, emphasis added}. No other virtue is more powerful in a marriage than humility. To live with another human being in such close confines each day, and to have the attitude of putting the other person’s needs first, is living as Jesus lived.*

“addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart” {Ephesians 5:19, emphasis added}. The life that a couple begins after they are married needs to be an eternity-centered one. Romance is a necessary component to a happy, enjoyable, and fulfilled life as a couple, but fellowship is something they will share forever.

“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing” {1 Thessalonians 5:11, emphasis added}. The apostle Paul reminded the Christians at Thessalonica how important it was for them to build one another up. As we go through life there will be tribulation, frustration, heartache, discouragement, even despair at times. Through it all we must remember that one glorious day we will all go home to be with Jesus forever. Along the way, we can remind each other of the numerous times God’s hand was obviously at work in our lives. And how often he has carried us through those times of difficulty.

“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2, emphasis added). It is one thing to know that God understands my situation. But if someone else meets me where I am and helps me through a difficulty, just knowing that person cares can make the difference between my wallowing in a problem and my being able to overcome it. Spouses who bear their mates’ burdens are gifts of grace from God.

“bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive” (Colossians 3:13, emphasis added). Two sinners who are living in this sin-stained world together are going to disappoint each other from time to time. When we forgive and move on, we are living out our Christian faith walk, which is the foundation of a happy and healthy marriage.

Daily Living Skills

How can we put into practice the principles we have just discussed? Staying together while living apart is extremely difficult. If one or both spouses decide they do not want to work on their relationship, frustration and anxiety will build over time. My wife and I learned, through our marriage and through observing the marriages of other couples, that most people do not know how to respond to the disconnect imposed by a term of incarceration. What we all needed during our separation was a game plan.

I have been a sports fanatic for as long as I can remember. I enjoy team sports far more than individual sports. There is something intriguing about a group of people doing something well in unison. Marriage also is a team effort. Each spouse has a role to play, and both must put the team (their marriage) first if they are going to enjoy long-term success. This is especially true for a couple who is facing a period of incarceration together. What can a husband and wife do to stay together while living apart?

To begin, the husband should take the lead, even if he feels unworthy to do so. His wife needs to see him taking steps that build their relationship as a couple. He empowers her when she sees his investment in their marriage.

How can an incarcerated **husband** take the lead in marriage?

- Begin and end each day by lifting his wife up to God in prayer.
- Prioritize her needs during the day by calling and/or writing based on her schedule and preferences.
- Listen closely to everything she says.
- Prepare himself for a stable employment future.
- Be an active dad if there are children at home.
- Work on the issues that led him to incarceration.
- Lead her in a study of the Bible or Bible-application topics.

- Be patient with her feelings, her fears, and her doubts.
- Understand that trust in him is something she will have to develop over time.
- Encourage her as she strives to overcome the difficulty of staying together while living apart.
- Become involved in programs that aim to develop an understanding of marriage and family, especially those they can attend together while he is incarcerated.

What can the **wife** of an incarcerated husband do to live out the role God has created for her and ensure greater success for them as a couple?

- Begin and end each day by lifting him up in prayer to God.
- Remember that respect and honor are the most important aspects of his manhood.
- Encourage him to grow during his incarceration by taking classes, getting involved in programs, etc.
- Protect herself from influences that may be unhealthy for their relationship. This may mean avoiding certain people, including various family members.
- Find purpose in the stress and pain she is experiencing. Look for ways to give to others.
- Take care of herself, physically and spiritually.
- Surround herself with people who can be a support system for her and her husband.
- Keep the children involved in his life.

There is no doubt that most of us are unfamiliar with the covenant of marriage God originally designed us to live in. Our culture gravitates toward what we could call contract marriages. In such a relationship, I will love you and honor you as long as you do the same for me. This type of relationship is nothing more than a game of cat and mouse.

God has designed marriage though and when we put into practice each day the principles we find in His Word, we begin building a lasting and fulfilling marriage. One that is actually strengthened by the term of incarceration that seeks to destroy it.

Looking at our Covenant

1. Do you believe marriage is a covenant or a contract? What do you think is the difference between the two?

2. Do you feel “restless” when you are apart from your spouse? How would you describe your feelings to someone not in your position?

3. Do you and your spouse agree with the section that talks about the purpose of marriage? What is the most important purpose of marriage to you?

4. In what way(s) do you see your spouse living out the role that God has ordained for him/her?

5. In what way(s) could you improve in living out the role God has ordained for you in this marriage?

6. Which of the “*For One Another*” passages can the two of you begin putting into practice more as you continue moving forward in your marriage?

Developing Intimacy

Growing Together As One

“Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun...” Ecclesiastes 9:9

Developing Intimacy

“Enjoy life with the wife whom you love...”

{Ecclesiastes 9:9}

About midway through my incarceration, I went to work in the administration building at the unit I was assigned to. Each day my coworkers and I gazed at the vending machines used by the staff. The thought of “free world” chips, snacks, and sodas always had an appeal. Two young men, one of whom was blind, serviced the machines each week. I couldn’t figure out how the blind vendor was so adept at loading his machines. How did he know one candy bar or bag of chips from another?

One day, I saw the two vendors walking down the back hallway of the building, obviously headed toward the restroom. The sighted guy spoke continually, and his blind partner used a walking stick to feel his way along the wall. After a while, the sighted man came back alone. A few moments later, his blind friend joined him in the lobby, once again using his walking stick to feel his way up the hall, and apparently counting his steps. The blind vendor walked as confidently as if he were in his own home.

As I pondered this scene, I realized that the sighted vendor had probably given his blind friend a mental picture of their surroundings when they walked down the hall together. So he knew how many steps there were between the doorways. I was amazed at this man’s ability to adapt to his circumstances. Though he couldn’t see, he used his other senses in ways far beyond the norm. His mental abilities were far superior to those of us who could see.

I discussed this with my wife during our subsequent visits, and God used it to give us a fresh perspective on our marriage. He taught us that even though certain aspects of our relationship were on hold while we were living apart, there were other facets of our marriage we could refine and use as a springboard for our growth as a couple. And we did! Up until that time, I had a tendency to see only the things we had to live without each day. The blind vendor helped me to see life as my wife had all along. Her motto throughout our incarceration experience was not to focus on the things she didn't have but to enjoy the things she did have.

What about you and your spouse? In what areas of intimate growth do you and your mate struggle with the most? More important, what are the two of you doing to refine the areas of growth you share right now as a couple?

Areas of Intimate Growth

Marriage and family counselor, Gary Chapman, says there are five basic areas in which a couple should grow together in order to maintain a happy and healthy relationship.¹

Emotional Intimacy: sharing feelings at a deep level

Physical Intimacy: sharing bodies, both sexually and non-sexually

Spiritual Intimacy: sharing a relationship with God

Intellectual Intimacy: sharing thoughts, ideas, and desires

Social Intimacy: sharing activities together

¹ Gary Chapman, *Now Your Speaking My Language* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2014) p.2

Those of us affected by incarceration struggle to build our marriages without several of these critical components. Yet as my wife and I discovered, that does not mean we can't build rock-solid marriages. Just like the blind vendor, who compensated for his lack of sight by refining his senses of hearing and touch, we can compensate for our lack of time together and our inability to work on the physical and social aspects of our relationships by focusing on the areas of intimacy that are available to us right now.

Stages of Intimate Growth

Our growth as couples staying together while living apart is a process. My wife and I learned this rather abruptly through a series of events that took place after I had been incarcerated for about seven years. At that time I was transferred to a facility that was just minutes away from my wife's apartment. We both considered it a godsend. Instead of visiting just once or twice a month and writing a few times every week, we started visiting each weekend and writing daily.

What we didn't realize was how much pain and fear had been building inside both of us during those earlier years of my prison stay. In an attempt to cope with our separation, we had not spent much time focusing on each other. We essentially put our feelings on a shelf between each letter and visit. It just seemed easier that way.

When I was transferred close to home, we decided to stop that protective pattern. We knew we had to begin facing our feelings and our fears. This was scary at first. But it was one of the most important aspects of our growth as individuals and as a couple. Dealing with the problems we had always internalized gave us the courage to move forward at a time we needed it most. It literally changed our marriage.

When we look back at our incarceration period, as well as that of other couples we have known through the years, we notice three distinct stages occur for couples who are trying to stay together while living apart. They are *Survival, Stability, and Steadfastness*.

The Stage of Survival

In this first stage, it's "**all about me.**"

Once the pain of separation begins to set in, couples fall into a self-protective pattern of behavior in an attempt to guard their emotional well-being. This stage is a roller coaster marked by the highs of romance and the lows of separation. There is very little sharing about how each person is feeling. The focus here is always on the future.

The Stage of Stability

In this stage, it's "**all about us.**"

The couple has begun to share their thoughts and feelings with each other and is willing to become vulnerable. They start to become best friends. Then they start to build their two lives into one cohesive future. The focus of this stage is still on the future, but there is a secondary focus on the present.

The Stage of Steadfastness

In this stage, it's "**all about God.**"

The couple finally realizes that this life is not about them. They begin to put their trust in God for direction, guidance, and purpose. They learn how to be open and honest with each other. They become companions, not only in this life but also for all eternity. The focus of this stage is nearly always on the present.

Once a couple begins talking about how to move forward in their journey together, they can progress from survival mode to a successful marriage. This takes courage though. And it takes a willingness to share what we are really feeling on the inside.

Types of Intimacy Needs

Only through connectedness can we begin opening up our lives to our mates and learn how to become transparent about whom we are. In fact, when I think of the word *intimacy*, I see it as *in-to-me-see*.

David and Teresa Ferguson, cofounders of *Intimate Life Ministries*, say that all of us were created with certain relational needs that can only be met by our spouses. These include things like acceptance, encouragement, and respect.¹ We feel the strongest and most vibrant in our marriages when our mates are meeting those relational needs. And we feel the weakest when those needs are unmet.

According to the Fergusons, when God created man and saw that something was not good, He was referring to the lack of companionship Adam needed. They assert that since man was created as a relational being in the image of God, he has certain innate relational needs that can only be met by a spouse.

According to their research, here are the top ten relational needs all human beings have:

Acceptance	Receiving our mates lovingly and unconditionally
Affection	Expressing feelings of love verbally and/or physically
Appreciation	Placing value on our mates, offering praise and gratitude to them

¹ David and Teresa Ferguson, *Intimate Encounters Workbook* (Austin, TX: Relationship Press, 1997) p.12

Approval	Exhibiting a positive acceptance of our mates and their actions
Attention	Taking notice of and focusing on them with interest
Comfort	Ensuring the well-being of our mates and giving them a sense of hope
Encouragement	Instilling courage in our mates and inspiring them
Respect	Placing a high regard on our mates and esteeming them
Security	Instilling a sense of trust and dispelling any fear of danger
Support	Coming alongside our mates and helping them

What inspires you and your spouse? What relational needs are at work when the two of you draw near to each other? Which of the above needs are you missing right now that your spouse could be meeting? The meeting of these needs, and the emotional maturity that results from them, is key for any couple to continue growing together as one.

Daily Living Skills

A couple who is impacted by a period of incarceration can enhance their ability to develop intimacy through some basic daily living skill activities.

To begin with, they must understand the importance of feeling safe with each other as they go through this time of crisis. Without vulnerability and openness, they will tend to put on masks in an effort to encourage each other. The couples I have known who have truly grown through a prison stay have seen the futility in that strategy. Instead, they share their hurts, fears, frustrations, and anger as well as their joy, excitement, and expectations. As soon as one spouse takes the frightful step of bearing his or her heart, the other spouse will gain the courage to do the same.

Growing together during this difficult time requires focusing on the areas of intimate growth that are available right now. Consider the following ideas:

Emotional intimacy. Begin talking through the problems you now face as a couple.

Intellectual intimacy. Find shared interests and hobbies that can be done together.

Spiritual intimacy. Study the Bible and pray together, asking God to reveal the purpose He has for the two of you. This is the most important kind of intimacy, because a shared faith can move mountains in a couple's life.

You should also examine your marriage to determine what stage it currently is in. This will help you to identify areas you may want to work on. Remember, improving at anything requires time and effort. This is especially true as we work on the most important relationship we will ever have in this lifetime: our marriage.

Finally, once you examine the worksheets that accompany the chapter and determine what intimate needs both you and your spouse have, work to meet those needs. Every marriage is a work in progress, whether it faces incarceration or not. And every marriage brings two relational beings together in need of one another. Be a blessing to your mate and seek to fill him/her up each day with the relational components that most fulfill them. Only then are the two of you building one new life together.

Looking at Intimate Growth

1. What areas of intimate growth do you and your spouse work on the most together?

2. How do the two of you work through the areas unavailable to you right now? Do you talk to each other about those areas?

3. What advice would you have for a couple just starting out on a period of incarceration together? What would you tell them to work on the most?

4. Do any of the stages of intimate growth (survival, stability, or steadfastness) describe your marriage right now?

5. After discovering your mates most important relational needs, what can you do to meet those moving forward?

6. Do you and your spouse share any of the same relational needs?

Relational Needs Assessment¹

Instructions: Read the definitions of the individual relational needs below and select the three that are most important to you by checking in the box next to each. Then do the same for your spouse. Select what you think are the three most important relational needs to your spouse and place a check in the box under the “Your Spouse” column. The goal of the exercise is not to see how well you know your spouse. The objective is to ensure that you know what is most important to your mate in order to meet his/her needs.

You	Relational Need	Your Spouse
	Acceptance: Receiving our mate lovingly and unconditionally	
	Affection: Expressing feelings of love verbally and/or physically	
	Appreciation: Placing value on our mate with praise & gratitude	
	Approval: Exhibiting acceptance of our spouse’s actions	
	Attention: Focusing on our spouse with interest	
	Comfort: Ensuring the well-being of our mate	
	Encouragement: Instilling courage & inspiration in our spouse	
	Respect: Placing a high regard on our mate and esteeming them	
	Security: Instilling trust and dispelling fear and danger	
	Support: Coming alongside to help our spouse	

¹ Adapted from Intimate Encounters Teaching Master, David and Teresa Ferguson, *Intimate Encounters Workbook* (Austin, TX: Relationship Press, 1997).

Communication

The Circulatory System of Marriage

“Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body.”

Proverbs 16:24

Communication

*“Gracious words are like a honeycomb,
sweetness to the soul and health to the body.”*

{Proverbs 16:24}

Have you ever encountered people you couldn't stand to be around? You may not have been sure why. You just knew that you did not like them, whether it was something about their demeanor, their personality, whatever.

I met someone like that while I was incarcerated. Unfortunately, he was a staff member. I hated being around the guy. Everything he did seemed to irritate me. At first I thought it was because he was a jerk. I was wrong. As the years progressed, I came to realize that God had given this man a different temperament from mine. If I had understood this concept earlier, I would not have felt so much stress when I was around him. And I wouldn't have spent five years wondering why he couldn't be more like me!

Have you ever tried to change someone? I think we all have to some degree. This is especially true with our spouses. Though our differences may have initially drawn us to each other, after we've been married a while we want to give our mates a makeover.

I'm not talking about spouses helping each other become better people. I'm referring to our attempts to change the basic temperament God has designed within each of us. The part of our personality that is uniquely us can be a source of confusion and frustration if we don't understand those differences.

Temperament/Personality Differences

Temperament has been defined as “the combination of inborn traits that subconsciously affects all our behaviors.”¹ An individual’s temperament is innate. It is not developed based on environment or life experiences.

The ancient Greeks identified four basic temperaments. Modern psychologists and behavioral scientists tend to agree. Studying the different personality types and acknowledging the differences can greatly benefit us as individuals and as couples.

Here is a brief description of the four basic temperaments. We have combined various systems into an easy-to-understand grouping of the four basic personality types.

The Leader (extrovert)

People with this personality like to lead. They are the decision-makers in any group they are part of. They are goal-oriented. They enjoy, and even thrive on, challenges. They are also control-oriented, and strong and direct in the way they communicate with others. They can be demanding and impatient when things don’t go their way. This is the kind of person you want leading your company, your ministry, your country, etc. The apostle Paul had this temperament.

The Talker (extrovert)

These people are the “life of the party.” They light up every room they walk into. They love being around people and can be very spontaneous (impulsive) in their decision-making. They enjoy being the center of attention. They can be persuasive but also quite flexible. This is the kind of person you want networking for a cause or a company. The apostle Peter had this temperament.

¹ Tim Lahaye, *Spirit-Controlled Temperament* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1994) p.2

The Organizer (introvert)

These are the perfectionists. They enjoy understanding and solving complicated issues, and they believe there is a right way to do everything. They are analytical and accurate in what they do. They are also cautious. They can be overly strict in how they approach people and situations. This is the kind of person you want doing all the detail tasks in an organization. Moses in the Old Testament and Luke in the New Testament had this temperament.

The Encourager (introvert)

These are the caring and loyal people. They put others first. They are compassionate and accommodating, championing peace and harmony at every turn. They are easygoing and supportive. They can be indecisive and procrastinate when put on the spot. This is the kind of person you want when you need someone with a listening ear who can bring stability and calm to a situation. The apostle John had this temperament.

Which temperament do you identify with the most closely? Which one best describes your spouse? Chances are good you have a different temperament than your mate does. If you're not sure which one fits you and your spouse best, I encourage you both to complete the questionnaire at the end of this chapter.

Studying the different temperaments will enable us to better understand how others communicate. The better our understanding of this concept, the fewer barriers will exist in our relationships; and more importantly, the fewer communication breakdowns we will see in our marriage.

Communication Differences between Men and Women

Understanding temperaments is extremely important. But it is only half the battle. The other half is basic male-female differences. Below are some of the major differences in how men and women communicate. This is a compilation of our years of interacting with others and learning from each other what our strengths and weaknesses are.

For men, the main point in conversation is to transmit facts and get information. For women, the main point is to share feelings and express emotions.

Men tend to communicate about the physical world. In other words, what the weather is like. What teams are going to win. How they are going to do something. Women prefer to discuss relationships.

Men can easily compartmentalize topics of conversation. When my wife and I are discussing something, I just want to know the specifics of what she is talking about; nothing more. This is not something women are usually capable of. In fact, my wife needs to explain every nuance to the situation before finishing the conversation.

Men often zone out during conversations. Maybe this is just me. Women will rarely do that. They seem to be more focused on the issues at hand.

When men interact with other men, their conversation is usually competitive. We tend to outdo each other. When women communicate, they are cooperative. My wife seems to focus more on how something is affecting the person she is communicating with.

Finally, God created men with a basic desire to conquer. He created women with an innate need to nurture. Thus, a man's greatest need from his spouse is respect. A woman's deepest need from her husband is to experience being loved.

The Importance of Love and Respect

How do couples begin to work through all the potential differences that exist between them? God's Word holds the key!

The apostle Paul wrote an instruction manual on marriage in chapter 5 of his letter to the Ephesian church. He concludes that passage with one of the most profound Scriptures in the Bible:

"...let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband" {Ephesians 5:33}.

This verse summarizes the primary principles every marriage should be based on: the husband should focus on loving his wife unconditionally, and the wife should concentrate on respecting her husband unconditionally. The reasoning behind these twin truths becomes clear when we look at God's instructions to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Genesis chapter 3 describes the fall into sin by Adam and Eve, followed by God's pronouncement of judgment upon sin. Then we see His edict as to the consequences of sin entering into the world. His decree includes the following statement to Eve, *"...Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" {Genesis 3:16}*. God created men with an innate need to conquer or to rule. Thus they are constantly seeking to fill the need they have for honor and respect. That void is filled when a wife respects her husband unconditionally.

Women, on the other hand, were created by God with an innate desire to nurture and love. That's what comes naturally to them. It is also what women need most. A wife's void is best filled when her husband loves her unconditionally.

As a man, I find it easy to honor and respect my wife. Exhibiting unconditional love is more difficult for me. My wife, however, has an uncanny ability to reach out in love, but she struggles occasionally with honor and respect. Nowhere in Scripture does God command wives to love or husbands to respect. Why? Because we have a tendency to do those things naturally.

Emerson Eggerichs wrote a book titled *Love & Respect: The Love She Most Desires; the Respect He Desperately Needs*, which I highly recommend. Dr. Eggerichs is the president of Love and Respect Ministries. He and his wife, Sarah, travel the country conducting Love & Respect marriage conferences. You might want to consider attending one together when this chapter of your life is over.

In the end, men and women both need love and respect. In fact, I cannot unconditionally love my wife without treating her in a respectful manner. And she can only fully respect me through the power of the unconditional love she has for me. A marriage can overcome any difficulty, including incarceration, if these two virtues are operating as they should.

Daily Living Skills

I encourage you and your spouse to fill out the worksheets at the end of this chapter. Your answers and the recommended activities will help both of you gain a better understanding of each other. This should be the focus of every marriage, but it is especially critical when a couple is striving to stay together while living apart.

Discover Your Personality Type

Take this short test to get an understanding of what type of temperament you have. It is based on testing created by Gary Smalley and John Trent in their book, *The Two Sides of Love*.¹

Instructions: Circle the words below in each box that best portray you. Make sure the word actually describes you. Not what you want to be like. Do not take much time. This will help ensure you are selecting only the words that best describe who you are. Once you have finished, count the number of words up, and place that score in each of the corresponding boxes.

<i>THE LEADER</i>		<i>THE TALKER</i>	
Likes Authority Confident Firm Enjoys Challenges Problem Solver Bold Goal-Driven Strong Willed Self-Reliant Persistent	Takes Charge Determined Enterprising Competitive Productive Purposeful Adventurous Independent Controlling Action-Oriented	Enthusiastic Visionary Energetic Promoter Mixes Easily Fun-Loving Spontaneous Creative Optimistic Infectious Laughter	Takes Risks Motivator Very Verbal Friendly Enjoys Popularity Likes Variety Enjoys Change Group-Oriented Initiator Inspirational
Circle the number chosen: _____		Circle the number chosen: _____	
<i>THE ORGANIZER</i>		<i>THE ENCOURAGER</i>	
Enjoys Instructions Consistent Reserved Practical Factual Perfectionist Detailed Inquisitive Persistent Sensitive	Accurate Controlled Predictable Orderly Conscientious Discerning Analytical Precise Scheduled Deliberate	Sensitive Feelings Calm Non-Demanding Avoids Confrontation Enjoys Routine Warm and Relational Adaptable Thoughtful Patient Good Listener	Loyal Even Keel Gives In Indecisive Dislikes Change Dry Humor Sympathetic Nurturing Tolerant Peacemaker
Circle the number chosen: _____		Circle the number chosen: _____	

¹ Gary Smalley & John Trent, *The Two Sides of Love* (Colorado Springs, CO: Focus on the Family Publishing, 1992).

Communication Styles

Title	Leader	Talker	Encourager	Organizer
	Serious Extrovert	Friendly Extrovert	Friendly Introvert	Serious Introvert
Animal Type	Lion	Otter	Golden Retriever	Beaver
Oriented Towards	Dominance	Interaction	Service	Competence
Motivational Needs	Challenges Authority Control	Applause Popularity People	Acceptance Security Harmony	Structure Approval Excellence
Motto	If it's worth doing- do it now	If it's worth doing- make it fun	If it's worth doing- let's do it together	If it's worth doing- let's do it right
Strengths	Being a leader Getting results	Being a persuader Being an encourager	Being supportive Being a producer	Being factual Being conscientious
Weakness	Being impatient	Being impulsive	Being a procrastinator	Being too strict
Fears	Being controlled	Being ignored	Being embarrassed	Being criticized
Does not tolerate	Weakness in others	Perfectionist people	Impolite people	Inaccuracies
At their best	Goal-oriented Self confident Visionary	Fun-loving Sociable Persuasive	Tolerant Loyal Thoughtful	Orderly Scheduled Factual
At their worst	Stubborn Hot-tempered Domineering	Dramatic Forgetful Gets off task	Resists change Indecisive People pleaser	Critical Obsessive Rigid

Communication: Personality/Temperament Differences

“Making the differences work for you”

1. What is it like to be married to your spouse? In other words, what are the benefits as well as challenges to being married to someone who has the personality or temperament that your spouse has?
2. On the handout there are **Fears** and **Weaknesses** that are typical for each of the personality or temperament styles. Look at those that represent the underlying temperament that best describes you. How can your mate come alongside you right now to help you in these areas?
3. Look at the **Strengths** and **At their best** categories for your mates underlying temperament. How have you seen these exhibited in his/her life and how will they be used by God as you spend your life together in marriage?

Climbing Mountains

Overcoming the Obstacles
of Living Apart

“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

Philippians 4:13

Climbing Mountains

“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

{Philippians 4:13}

The unit where I spent most of my incarceration was the site of a hospice care program during my stay. The infirmary, which offered care and compassion to terminally ill offenders for about seven years, allowed incarcerated volunteers to get involved in the program. The motto was “Inmates helping inmates.” Participating in that program was one of God’s greatest blessings on my life. Those of us who volunteered gained a greater appreciation for living. We also grasped a better understanding of our own frailty and mortality as we witnessed other offenders struggle through their final days. Those dying men actually taught us how to live!

One of the classes I took as a volunteer, and eventually would teach, was called “Concepts of Death and Dying.” The purpose of the class was to get all volunteers thinking about our future patients’ impending deaths. We learned that the dying process is accompanied by specific stages of grief. These stages were first identified by a psychiatrist named Elisabeth Kübler-Ross.¹ After years of interviewing terminally ill patients, she identified patterns of emotional processing. She discovered that most people go through the same basic grieving steps.

Through my hospice involvement, I came to realize how relevant these grieving stages are with any type of traumatic loss, including incarceration. My wife and I would have benefited from knowing what was going on inside us emotionally when we began the long and difficult journey of my incarceration.

¹ Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, *On Death and Dying* (New York: Macmillan Publishers, 1969).

Stages of Grief

The stages of grief, as described by Kübler-Ross, are:

Shock and Denial

In this first stage, we cry out, “No, this can’t be happening!” We are not equipped to process all the emotions involved, so denial acts like a buffer, helping us face those feelings at a pace we can handle. Initially, my wife and I found it easier to pretend everything was fine rather than face what I had done and the ramifications of my prison sentence. As we became stronger, the denial began to fade.

Rage and Anger

In this stage, we ask, “Why is this happening to me?” We question everything and everyone, even God. This difficult stage can seem endless, but the feelings do fade with time. Although I experienced this stage to some degree, it was much more prevalent with my wife and other family members as they tried to understand how I could have ended up in this situation.

Bargaining

This stage is filled with statements like “What if ...” or “If only ...” During this stage, we attempt to arrive at a truce with the situation or with God. On countless nights, especially during the early years of my incarceration, I would lay in my bunk praying for God’s intervention in my life. This kind of questioning sometimes leads to what the incarcerated world calls “jailhouse religion.” Ultimately, we must get through this stage by coming to terms with the reality of our behavior and the resulting incarceration.

Depression

In this stage, we acknowledge our reality. “Yes, it is me.” This often leads to deep grief, which can catapult us into ever-increasing levels of despair. This is a natural response given all the feelings we are processing. When my wife and I finally realized the futility of bargaining with God, sadness, loneliness, and anguish set in. However, we refused to give in to the temptation to isolate ourselves, individually or as a couple. We knew from our past this was not a good solution. Incredible healing takes place when a husband and wife open up to each other during this stage. Moreover, opening up to one another allows a couple to move forward at a time when it is most needed.

Acceptance

In this stage, we accept the present circumstances and start living with a new perspective, a new “normal.” A couple affected by incarceration begins learning how to deal with all the limitations and obstacles they face in their life together. They live for the present, understanding that neither the regrets of yesterday nor the hopes for tomorrow can bring peace, security, and stability today... unless those hopes are based on an eternal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Lessening the Gulf Between Expectations and Reality

Expectations about love and marriage have a powerful impact on marital relationships. When our spouses meet the expectations we have for them, we tend to feel contentment and happiness. When those expectations are not met, disappointment and frustration set in. Expectations, in and of themselves, are not bad. But if we don’t understand what our expectations are, and ensure they are realistic, they will play havoc with all of our relationships, especially our marriage.

If a sizable gap exists between a couple's expectations about a prison sentence and the reality of that sentence, they will experience intense levels of frustration, fear, and pain. As I went through the stages of grief during the early years of my incarceration, I set unrealistic expectations for myself and my life. Those expectations included what I would accomplish while incarcerated and when I would be released. Issues like appeals and parole setoffs nearly became time bombs in my marriage because I was not viewing them realistically.

Only when I was ready to admit the harsh reality of having to serve a lengthy prison term did I come to a place of peace and contentment. Ironically, I went through the same process upon my release from prison. Once again, I had unrealistic expectations as I embarked on my second chance in free society. I believed I would be accepted by society as a whole and that employment and housing would come easy. Such was not the case. I had to align my expectations with the reality of my new life before I could reach the acceptance phase and a place of contentment after coming home.

When striving to stay together while living apart, most couples struggle with a huge gulf that exists between the expectations they set for their life together and the reality of that life, especially as the days and weeks turn into months and years. I heard many years ago that stress is the gap between a person's expectations and the reality of his or her situation. This would explain why so many couples live with constant worry and fear. These couples have set expectations that are not realistic as they walk through a period of incarceration together. When those expectations are not met, the result is a deep sense of loss, which leads to greater levels of worry, frustration, and fear about how they will make it. They simply cannot grow through the various stages of life together if they are always worrying about the future and creating unrealistic expectations for it.

Finding Purpose for the Pain

I think one of the most difficult aspects of staying together while living apart is admitting that this type of living arrangement creates fear within each spouse at times. Fear that can be debilitating. My wife and I found great comfort though in learning how many of the bible characters also faced fear during their lives; and how God used that emotion to draw those characters closer to him. Couldn't He do the same for us?

So how do we manage this inescapable aspect of our earthly life? How can a couple face their fears as they strive to get through a period of incarceration together? Many Christians would simply point to the necessity of trusting God. They would tell you that Jesus commanded us not to worry or be anxious. Yet they would have to admit that when things get chaotic in their world, they too spend countless hours wrestling with this crippling emotion.

My wife and I experienced fear while going through my prison stay. One of the things that helped us overcome was the idea of becoming "wounded healers." We knew God could use our pain to reach out to others in similar circumstances.

As an example from another offender's life, while I was working in the hospice program at my unit, I was called to the infirmary one evening because a new patient had just been transported in. He was dying of cancer and was in a depressed state. I wanted to help him view his circumstances in a new light. So I asked one of my fellow hospice workers, who was in remission for a similar type of cancer, to spend some time with this man.

That hospice worker had never talked much about his cancer treatments or the emotional pain they caused. But over the next several months, he began to open up to this new patient. As he did, he found purpose for the pain he had held inside for so long. And the patient could see that someone else had gone through the same form of cancer he had. This helped him see that he

was not alone. Within a few months, that dying man started feeling better. And he spent several hours each day going from room to room, talking with his fellow hospice patients. To everyone's surprise, that individual actually paroled out of the facility and went home a free man. He could have allowed fear to consume him. Instead, he found a deeper and more profound purpose for it.

We are all "wounded healers" to some degree. God wants to take our difficulties, our pain, and even our fears, and use them for His glory. Only then can we find purpose for the pain in our lives.

Learning to Fight Fair

Any couple who stays together while living apart will at times feel overwhelmed with challenges and obstacles. Turmoil can inundate their lives and their marriage. This leads to conflict between them. The problem is not so much the conflicts themselves as it is our fear of them. We forget that peace is not the absence of trials, but our ability to handle them.

We also fail to understand that conflict in marriage can actually be a good thing. As you learn how to wrestle with the inevitable tensions that arise in life, you become less afraid of them. You begin to realize that the troubles of this life can be opportunities to work through the hard issues. And that can actually make a marriage stronger.

My wife is a runner, and the only way she can effectively train for long-distance running is to put in the miles. This takes hard work. Nevertheless, the more she trains, the stronger she becomes. The same is true in marriage. As couples continue their quest to overcome a prison sentence together, they will face moments of conflict. During those times, their commitment to the covenant of marriage will ensure they handle whatever comes their way. As their union gains momentum and grows stronger, long-term trust and confidence builds into their relationship.

Daily Living Skills

The skills needed to climb the mountain of incarceration address the core issues of who we are and what we believe about ourselves, our mates, and our marriages. If you are struggling with the initial pain of separation, remember that grieving is a process. Talk with your spouse about the stages of grief, and find out where each of you is at. Just being able to acknowledge this can bring healing.

Discuss with your spouse what your expectations are as you live out your marriage vows in this situation. Do those expectations line up with the reality of your circumstances? Expectations are not just about the prison sentence. Every spouse has expectations about what marriage should be like. Remember that you will both be disappointed or happy in life based on how well what is happening matches what you believe should be happening.

Just as important, both of you should seek to find purpose for your pain. God designed marriage to glorify Him. This is true even for couples who are going through a period of incarceration together. Consider how you can become “wounded healers” in the lives of other couples. Or in the lives and marriages of your friends and family. What can the two of you do together to help others through their current obstacles and challenges?

Finally, when you experience conflict, do you and your spouse fight fair? Use the worksheets at the end of this chapter to discover how to deal with trials in a healthy and productive way. Learning how to respond to conflict in your marriage will be a key for a lasting and healthy relationship.

Looking at My Expectations

1. Have you experienced frustration or disappointment due to unmet expectations since this prison sentence began?

2. Do you think you and your spouse have set realistic expectations for how your life together will unfold as you continue staying together while living apart?

3. Have you and your spouse discussed what your expectations are for each other and your marriage right now?

4. Do any of these expectations describe your marriage: (a)We will live happily ever after with no major problems once this chapter of our life is over; (b)We should be in agreement on everything; (c)Just having more time to spend together will completely change our relationship.

5. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements: (a)We should expect conflict in our marriage at times; (b)We should expect disappointments in this life we are building together; (c) We should both anticipate thinking at times that we are doing more for our marriage than our spouse.

6. Where do you think expectations will most likely interfere with you and your mate as you continue living apart? Will it be loneliness, trials and suffering, dealing with differences between the two of you, or challenges with family and friends?

Conflict Resolution Do's & Don'ts

Do's

- Deal with one issue at a time
- Use “I feel” statements when it is your turn to speak
- Use “active listening” techniques when it is your turn to listen
- Acknowledge your spouse's feelings
- Be ready to ask for and receive forgiveness

Don'ts

- Bring up the past
- Use “always” or “never” statements
- Use “You” statements
- Think about your next reply while your mate is still talking
- Interrupt; please let your spouse finish before responding

Always remember: Your spouse's perception is his/her reality of the situation at that moment in time

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger” {James 1:19}.

The Power of *Forgiveness*

Forgiveness has an uncanny way of bringing incredible good out of incredibly bad situations

Forgiveness restores our relationship to God

Forgiveness brings freedom from the prisons of hatred, resentment and bitterness

Forgiveness allows us to gain control of difficult circumstances

Forgiveness gives us strength to keep going when things may seem impossible

Forgiveness enables us to show mercy

Forgiveness helps us mend broken relationships

Forgiveness brings hope, joy and a brighter future

Forgiveness makes us healthier, decreases our stress levels and lowers our blood pressure

Forgiveness allows God to bring about justice

Forgiveness makes us more like Jesus

Forgiveness is not optional

“ and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors...For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” {Matt 6:12,14-15}.

Honey, I am Sorry

Husband, say to your wife ...

Honey, I am sorry –

for not always being the kind of husband I should be;
for not loving you as you deserve;
for getting lost in my incarcerated world and forgetting about yours;
for being selfish and not focusing more on our marriage;
for not being the Christ-like man I should be.

Please forgive me.

Wife, say to your husband ...

Honey, I am sorry –

for not always being the kind of wife I should be;
for not respecting you as you deserve;
for getting caught up in my free world and forgetting about yours;
for not believing in you at a time you need it most;
for not being the Proverbs 31 woman I should be.

Please forgive me.

Now together, husband and wife say ...

with each other's support, encouragement and prayers,
we will strive to make our marriage all it can be right now
knowing that one day this chapter in our life will be over.

Submitting to One Another

Our Gift to Each Other
Our Ministry to the World

“submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Ephesians 5:21

Submitting to One Another

“submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

{Ephesians 5:21}

During the early years of my incarceration, my wife and I were blessed with the same spiritual mentor. The pastor of a local church also provided chaplaincy assistance to the incarcerated world. He gave us both direction and stability as we tried to rebuild our lives as Christians. He was a good man who believed in the power of the gospel and in the covenant of marriage.

One of the most poignant lessons I learned from him centered on a concept he called a “pot of love.” He stated that he made deposits into an imaginary *pot of love* by doing something for his wife or his children every day. He believed that filling this “pot” with acts of love and kindness made a difference in his family’s life each day. It allowed him to encourage and uplift his family, it allowed him to show support, and it allowed him to express his love for them.

Over the next few years, my wife and I encountered that same idea in other forms. People called it an emotional bank account, a love bank, a love tank. Whatever the name, the concept worked. When one of us made a deposit into the other’s “account,” we both felt more loved and needed. If enough deposits were made, there was a surplus for when those inevitable withdrawals had to be made. When our accounts were filled, acts of love and kindness toward one another just came naturally.

These deposits can be as simple as saying something nice to each other or giving compliments. They can be made by spending time together, even if just by phone or writing

letters. A deposit is simply showing your spouse genuine concern and offering a listening ear in some way. It tells him/her that they are important to you.

This concept also works in reverse. If there are more withdrawals than deposits, the account will eventually go bankrupt. Then the marriage will be unable to accept any more withdrawals, because there no longer is a balance in either spouse's emotional bank account. At this point the couple no longer feels "in love."

We make withdrawals every time we argue or show disrespect to our spouses. When we disregard their feelings or take advantage of them in some way. Even a series of small withdrawals can lead a relationship into emotional bankruptcy

Meeting One Another's Needs

As my wife and I practiced the concept of the emotional bank account, we noticed there was a two-fold benefit to meeting each other's needs. First, by making those deposits, we were equipping each other to be all we could be for God. When our needs were being met (at least the ones that could be met while we were living apart), we were more available for Christian ministry and service, looking for ways God could use us to touch the world around us. This brought meaning and purpose to our lives. It also enabled us to focus on what we had as a couple instead of what we didn't have.

The second benefit was that as we filled each other's emotional account, we felt more loved. That encouraged us to express our love for each other in tangible ways. Let me ask you a question. If you were given a million dollars, you would probably buy some things that you thought would make you happy. But you'd also probably give some of it away, wouldn't you?

Eventually, you would agree that giving money to others brings far more happiness than spending it on yourself. My wife and I discovered that meeting each other's needs did that for us.

The Languages of Love

Christian counselor Gary Chapman wrote a book titled *The Five Love Languages*, which has been published in thirty-eight languages and has sold about six million copies. His premise is that people express and receive love in different emotional “languages.” Learning to speak the love language of our mate can be instrumental in building a strong and lasting marriage.¹

The five love languages identified by Dr. Chapman are:

Words of Affirmation. This is your primary language if you feel most cared for when your spouse expresses his or her appreciation for you verbally.

Acts of Service. This is your primary love language if having your spouse do things for you makes you feel loved.

Receiving Gifts. If getting gifts from your spouse for birthdays and holidays makes you feel most loved, this is your primary language.

Quality Time. If getting your spouse's undivided attention makes you feel loved, this is your primary language.

Physical Touch. This is your primary love language if getting hugs, holding hands, or having sex makes you feel most loved.

Christians have another set of love languages that we are to use as a scriptural guide to marriage. The apostle Paul describes it this way:

¹ Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate* (Chicago, IL: Northfield Publishing, 2004).

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

{1 Corinthians 13:4–7}

Let’s take a closer look at how Paul’s advice works out in practical ways.

Love is patient. Therefore, we will bear those aspects of our mates we don’t like.

Love is kind. Therefore, we will find ways to exhibit kindness to our mates.

Love does not envy. Therefore, we will rejoice when our mates are honored.

Love does not boast. Therefore, we will always treat our mates with humility.

Love is not arrogant. Therefore, we will never put ourselves ahead of our mates.

Love is not rude. Therefore, we will not use behaviors that are offensive to our mates.

Love does not insist on its own way. Therefore, we will give our mates first place in our life.

Love is not irritable. Therefore, we will not resort to anger to solve any problems we have.

Love is not resentful. Therefore, we will not begrudge our mates for any wrongs they commit.

Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing. Therefore, we won’t promote wrongful acts by our mates.

Love rejoices with the truth. Therefore, we will encourage our mates to live in God’s Word.

Love bears all things. Therefore, we will keep our mates’ faults private.

Love believes all things. Therefore, we will always evoke confidence in our mates.

Love hopes all things. Therefore, we will live with high expectations for this life and beyond.

Love endures all things. Therefore, we will overcome the rigors of separation.

Building a Marital Legacy

In the foyer of our home hangs a framed marriage covenant agreement my wife and I consider to be the most important document in our life. Our marriage license is a legal document, and the vows we took at our wedding have lifelong implications for us both. But this framed agreement represents the legacy we want to leave with all those we meet in this lifetime. It states:

I joyfully receive you as God's perfect gift to me, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love you, to honor you, to cherish you and to protect you, forsaking all others as long as we both shall live.

Do you and your spouse believe that God can build a marital legacy in your life together—one that proclaims to your families, your friends, and your community the power of God's strength in your marriage? And are the two of you willing to live for your children and future generations by being servant leaders in your home, even now?

Incarceration imposes extreme hardships on a marriage. Yet that doesn't mean your marriage cannot be a beacon of light to the world around you. Your marriage can still be an example of what a godly union looks like. If you and your spouse want to be intentional about allowing God to build a new legacy for your life together, start with the following ideas:

- Pray with and for each other every day.
- Bear each other's burdens.
- Use encouraging and edifying words to lift each other up.

- Fight the battle of living apart together.
- Be good stewards of the things God has given you.
- Write your own marriage covenant agreement and vow to live by it.
- Join together as a couple in helping others in need.
- Learn everything you can about your spouse.

Daily Living Skills

Make investments into your spouse's emotional bank account every day by performing acts of love and kindness toward him or her. These deposits should concentrate on two main areas: your mate's love language and the practical application of the apostle Paul's explanation of love in first Corinthians 13.

If you're not sure what you or your spouse's love language is, take the test at the end of the chapter. This will ensure each of you becomes more in tune with the others language. Instead of loving your mate as you want to be loved, you will find ways to love your spouse the way he/she wants to be loved.

Finally, to build a legacy for your marriage, work with your spouse to write a vision statement for your marriage—one that tells the world who you are as a couple, what your marriage represents to the two of you, and what legacy you hope to leave behind. Leaving your future as a couple in limbo is poor preparation for a happy and fulfilling marriage. Planning together for the future ensures your marriage has every opportunity to succeed.

Creating a Vision Statement

Creating a vision statement for your marriage is essential for keeping your focus on what is important to you and your spouse. It unifies your goals, plans, and expectations together and becomes a road map for your future as a couple. A marriage-minded vision statement must inspire your relationship by encompassing all of your hopes and dreams.

STEP 1: Start out by writing down answers to the following questions –

- a) What I want for me in the future ...
In order for this to occur, I will have to ...
- b) What I want for my spouse in the future ...
In order for this to occur, my spouse/we will have to ...
- c) What I want for us as a couple ...
In order for this to occur, we will have to ...

STEP 2: Now you can begin to formulate a plan on what is important to you both as you move forward in your life together. What do you dream of, what do you hope for, what do you see God doing in your life as individuals and as a couple?

STEP 3: Now consolidate all you have into sentences that describe who you are as a couple. If someone from another country met you two tomorrow, how would they describe you? More importantly, how would you describe yourselves? Finally, if someone was to see the two of you as a couple ten or fifteen years down the road, how would they describe you? What will the two of you be doing together as a couple?

Here are some examples of what marriage vision statements could look like:

- *As a husband and wife, we enjoy the love of God being unleashed through our marriage and our family. We will seek to walk in our full potential as spouses, parents, and ambassadors for Christ.*
- *Our marriage encourages both of us to the point that we are always inviting the Holy Spirit into our lives to guide and direct us. We will live out a Christian faith walk as an example to the world around us, and look to be used by God as ministers of His grace for the rest of our life together.*



LOVE LANGUAGES PERSONAL PROFILE



FOR WIVES

To Get Started:

The profile consists of 30 pairs of statements. Circle the one statement in each pair that best represents your desire. Your husband may or may not do some of these, but if he did, which would you prefer? Once you've made your selections, go back and count the number of times you circled each individual letter and write in the appropriate blank at the end of the profile.

The **5** Love Languages

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | A I would love to get a funny email from my husband. | 9 | B Spending time with my husband makes me happy. |
| | E I wish my husband would hug me more. | | C I wish my husband would give me more small gifts that still mean something. |
| 2 | B I like to be alone with my husband. | 10 | A I would like to hear my husband say he's proud of me. |
| | D I wish sometime my husband would take my car to be washed, or do some other act of service without being asked. | | D I wish my husband would help clean up without being told. |
| 3 | C I would love for my husband to bring me a special gift, no occasion needed. | 11 | B No matter what we do, I love doing things with my husband. |
| | B I enjoy long trips with my husband. | | A I would like to hear more supportive words from my husband. |
| 4 | D I would feel really loved if my husband did the laundry. | 12 | D I wish my husband would not only say nice things to me, but do nice things for me. |
| | E I like it when my husband touches me. | | E I love to hug my husband. |
| 5 | E I would like my husband to put his arm around me sometimes when we are in public. | 13 | A I wish my husband would praise me more often. |
| | C I wish my husband would bring me gifts when he travels. | | C I wish my husband would give me gifts that are more thoughtful and personal. |
| 6 | B I wish my husband was more enthusiastic about getting out and going places. | 14 | B Just being around my husband makes me feel good. |
| | E I like to hold my husband's hand. | | E I wish my husband would give me a massage. |
| 7 | C I feel loved when my husband gives me gifts | 15 | A If my husband would react positively to my accomplishments, that would be encouraging. |
| | A I know he loves me, but I want to hear my husband say it. | | D I wish my husband would help me with tasks that he doesn't enjoy - just because he knows it would mean a lot to me. |
| 8 | E I like for my husband to sit close to me. | 16 | E I never get tired of my husband's kisses. |
| | A When I'm all dressed up, I wish my husband would compliment me. | | B I want my husband to show more interest in things I care about. |

NEXT



LOVE LANGUAGES PERSONAL PROFILE



FOR WIVES

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 17 | D I feel loved when my husband helps me with projects. | 24 | B It bothers me when my husband interrupts me when I'm talking. |
| | C I still get excited when opening a gift from my husband. | | C I never get tired of receiving gifts from my husband. |
| 18 | A I wish my husband would compliment me on my appearance more often. | 25 | D I would like for my husband to offer to help me when I'm tired. |
| | B I want my husband to listen to me more and respect my ideas. | | B It doesn't matter where we go, I just like going places with my husband. |
| 19 | E I can't help but touch my husband when he's close by. | 26 | E I wish my husband and I cuddled more. |
| | D When I have a lot of errands to run, I wish my husband would sometimes offer to help. | | C I wish my husband would surprise me with a gift more often. |
| 20 | D I would feel like giving my husband an award if he helped me around the house. | 27 | A My husband's encouraging words give me confidence. |
| | C I would feel loved if my husband's gifts showed signs of thoughtfulness. | | B I love to watch movies with my husband. |
| 21 | B I wish my husband would give me his undivided attention when I'm talking to him and not play with his phone. | 28 | C I wish my husband would give me a gift for no reason. |
| | D I would love for my husband to help clean the house. | | E I would love it if my husband touched me more. |
| 22 | C I look forward to seeing what my husband gives me for my birthday. | 29 | D It means a lot to me when my husband helps me despite being busy. |
| | A I want to hear my husband say how much I mean to him. | | A I wish my husband would say, "I appreciate you." |
| 23 | C I wish my husband gave me gifts more often. | 30 | E I love embracing with my husband after we've been apart for a while. |
| | D I wish my husband would help me, without my having to ask. | | A I want to hear my husband say he misses me when I'm gone. |

Excerpted from *The 5 Love Languages** (2010). Reproduction and distribution for use, personal and/or professional (workshops, organizations, churches, nonprofits, small groups, etc.), are permitted provided the profiles are distributed free of charge.

RESULTS

- A: _____ WORDS OF AFFIRMATION
 B: _____ QUALITY TIME
 C: _____ RECEIVING GIFTS
 D: _____ ACTS OF SERVICE
 E: _____ PHYSICAL TOUCH

Which love language received the highest score?

This is your primary love language. If point totals for two love languages are equal, you are "bilingual" and have two primary love languages. And, if you have a secondary love language, or one that is close in score to your primary love language, this means that both expressions of love are important to you. The highest possible score for any single love language is 12.

Would you like an email copy of your results?

Take the free quiz online at 5lovelanguages.com and get your personal results emailed directly to your inbox.

Want to learn more? Visit

5lovelanguages.com and sign up for Dr. Gary Chapman's FREE eNewsletter.



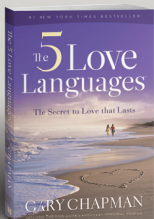
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LOVE LANGUAGES PERSONAL PROFILE



FOR HUSBANDS

To Get Started:

The profile consists of 30 pairs of statements. Circle the one statement in each pair that best represents your desire. Your wife may or may not do some of these, but if she did, which would you prefer? Once you've made your selections, go back and count the number of times you circled each individual letter and write in the appropriate blank at the end of the profile.

The **5** Love Languages

1

A I wish my wife would send me a love note (or text or email) for no special reason.

E I would like more hugs from my wife.

9

B I wish my wife and I could spend more time together.

C Even the smallest gift from my wife is important to me.

2

B I would like to spend more time alone with my wife, just the two of us.

D I enjoy working around the house with my wife.

10

A I would love it if my wife could say, "I'm proud of you."

D When my wife cooks a nice meal for me, I feel very loved.

3

C Receiving special gifts from my wife makes me happy - I wish she would do it more!

B One of my favorite things is traveling with my wife.

11

B No matter what we do, I love doing things with my wife.

A I wish my wife would say more supportive things to me.

4

D I would like my wife to run errands or put gas in my car.

E I wish my wife would touch me more.

12

D Little things my wife does for me mean more than things she says.

E My wife and I need to hug more.

5

E I wish my wife would sometimes put her arm around me when we are with others.

C Every now and then I'd like to get a surprise gift from my wife.

13

A I would love to hear more praise from my wife.

C It means a lot to me when my wife gives me gifts I really like.

6

B I like going places with my wife - even the grocery store!

E I like to hold my wife's hand.

14

B I wish my wife and I could spend more time together.

E I would like a back rub from my wife sometime.

7

C I value the gifts my wife gives me.

A I would love to hear my wife say the actual words, "I love you," more often.

15

A I wish my wife would be more enthusiastic about something I've accomplished.

D I wish my wife would help me with tasks, even those she dislikes.

8

E I wish my wife would sit close to me more often.

A I feel loved when my wife tells me, "You look good."

16

E I never get tired of my wife's kisses.

B I wish my wife would show more interest in things I like to do, even though they might not be her "thing."

NEXT



LOVE LANGUAGES PERSONAL PROFILE



FOR HUSBANDS

17

- D I would like my wife to work with me on projects.
C I wish my wife would get more excited about gifts from me.

18

- A I love it when my wife compliments my appearance.
B I wish my wife wouldn't jump in to criticize my ideas rather than hearing me out.

19

- E I can't help but touch my wife when she's close by.
D I wish my wife would now and then run errands for me when I'm busy.

20

- D At times, when I'm feeling swamped at work, I wish my wife would see that and do more around the house.
C If my wife gives me a gift, I would like her to put thought into choosing it.

21

- B I wish my wife would give me her full attention when we're talking, and not look away or check her phone.
D Keeping the house clean is an important act of service.

22

- C I look forward to seeing what my wife gives me for my birthday.
A I know my wife loves me, but I wish she would tell me more often what I mean to her.

23

- C It would be nice if when my wife takes a trip, she would bring me a little gift.
D I wish my wife would sometime surprise me by helping me with a chore I dislike.

24

- B It bothers me when my wife interrupts me.
C I never get tired of receiving gifts from my wife.

25

- D I want my wife to help me out when I'm tired.
B I wish my wife was as enthusiastic about going places as I am.

26

- E I love having sex with my wife.
C I like it when my wife goes to the store and picks up little things she knows I'll like.

27

- A I wish my wife would be more encouraging.
B I love to watch movies with my wife.

28

- C If I received a gift from my wife, I would feel appreciated.
E I just can't keep my hands off my wife.

29

- D I know my wife is busy, but sometimes I would love it if she would help me with things I have to do.
A I would really like it if my wife sometimes said, "I appreciate you."

30

- E I love embracing my wife after we've been apart for a while.
A I want to hear my wife say she believes in me.

RESULTS

- A: _____ WORDS OF AFFIRMATION
B: _____ QUALITY TIME
C: _____ RECEIVING GIFTS
D: _____ ACTS OF SERVICE
E: _____ PHYSICAL TOUCH

Which love language received the highest score?

This is your primary love language. If point totals for two love languages are equal, you are "bilingual" and have two primary love languages. And, if you have a secondary love language, or one that is close in score to your primary love language, this means that both expressions of love are important to you. The highest possible score for any single love language is 12.

Would you like an email copy of your results?

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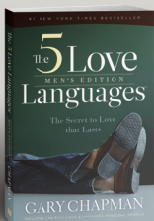
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Conclusion

Where do we go from here?

“By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.”

Proverbs 24:3-4

Conclusion

*“By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established;
by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches”*

{Proverbs 24:3-4}

I had been incarcerated about four years when I was given a job on a paint crew at the Coffield Unit. At the time, this was like a breath of fresh air. I would typically sit in my cell when I was not working and tell myself things like “4 down and 16 to go.” Those numbers were representative of the fact I had to do twenty calendar years before I would be eligible for parole. I do not know if I was processing the enormity of my situation when I was doing such things. I just remember trying to imagine what I would be like in 15-20 years. What would I look like? What would my wife be doing? Would our family members still be alive? All the while, I would also be praying for God to intervene and somehow take my prison sentence away.

Being on the paint crew meant that most nights I would be inside the facility somewhere repainting the cells, hallways, etc... It also meant a lot of quiet time. On a unit like Coffield, the noise can be deafening most days. So being up in the middle of the night and working seemed surreal at times. There was no yelling, no slamming of dominoes on the dayroom tables, and no televisions or radios blaring. This allowed me to do a lot of thinking. I would paint and think. Paint and think.

The one vivid memory I have during this time of my life was how alone I felt most nights. I would often wonder how Melissa and I could possibly get past this seemingly insurmountable obstacle in our lives and marriage. Especially with “4 down and 16 to go!”

I also realized during this time that I was not living in a close relationship with God. Both my wife and I had become born-again Christians during my first year of incarceration and been blessed so richly by God. Then I went to prison and started learning how to do time and how not to go stir crazy worrying about the future. My idea of how best to do that was to stay busy. Therefore, this is what I did. I went to college full-time and worked. I tried to ensure I left as little time as possible each day to think about my circumstances and my marriage. Whom I was leaving out the most though was God.

Do you remember a reference earlier in this workbook about husbands and wives feeling restless when they are apart? Moreover, do you remember the mention of how marriage is, according to the Apostle Paul, a picture of Jesus' relationship with us? Those lessons became very real to me during this stage of my incarceration. The fact that I was leaving God out of much of my life meant I was constantly restless on the inside. It also meant I would have no peace during those years of my incarceration.

The scripture reference we use in this concluding chapter also came alive to me during this time of my life. The marriage that Melissa and I were trying to not only maintain, but also build, could only continue moving forward if we allowed God to take center stage in our relationship. The scripture above states that a house is built by wisdom. This wisdom can only be found in one place – the Word of God.

So where do you and your spouse go from here? Most of the couples we interacted with over the years never got beyond where I was during those years at Coffield. For them the priority each day was to stop the hurt somehow. Staying busy, using emotionally protective measures or activities, or just turning away from each other were the only solutions they could muster during this difficult time of their lives. The results were always the same – a failed marriage.

However, some couples decided they were all in. They had made a conscious choice to stay the course no matter the cost. This meant that change had to begin taking place in their lives and marriage. They had to acknowledge that God needed to be in control of their relationship. They had to face the fact that pain would be a bi-product of this type of marriage, at least, for the duration of their prison term. Finally, they had to make every effort to begin learning how best to fulfill their role as a spouse to their mate.

In all honesty, the number of couples we know who have chosen this path are in the minority. Having said that, we also know they are among the happiest and most fulfilled couples we have met in our lifetime. They all made the decision to pursue God individually and as a couple. They also learned how best to live apart. In doing so, they gained an awareness that they needed to give more than they received; and each of those couples committed to leaving behind a legacy for others to see. Now it is your turn!

As you continue along your journey of staying together while living apart, Melissa and I want to leave you with a scripture – one that has always meant so much to us both; and one that will assist you in your quest to grow together as one.

“but those who trust in the Lord will renew their strength; they will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary; they will walk and not faint”

{Isaiah 40:31}_{HCSB}.

Recommended Reading

Blackaby, Henry	<i>Experiencing God</i>	Broadman & Holman	1994
Chapman, Gary	<i>The Five Love Languages</i>	Northfield Publishing	2004
Clarke, David	<i>A Marriage After Gods Own Heart</i>	Multnomah	2001
Crabb, Larry	<i>The Marriage Builder</i>	Zondervan	1992
Eggerichs, Emerson	<i>Love & Respect</i>	Thomas Nelson	2004
Farrel, Bill & Pam	<i>Men Are Like Waffles Women Are Like Spaghetti</i>	Harvest House	2001
Ferguson, David	<i>Intimate Encounters</i>	Relationship Press	1997
Feldhaun, Shauti	<i>For Women Only</i>	Multnomah	2004
Feldhaun, Shauti	<i>For Men Only</i>	Multnomah	2006
Larimore, Walt	<i>His Brain, Her Brain</i>	Zondervan	2008
Lee, Nicky & Sila	<i>The Marriage Book</i>	Alpha Resources	2000
Littauer, Florence	<i>Personality Plus for Couples</i>	Revell	2001
Omartian, Stormie	<i>The Power of a Praying Wife</i>	Harvest House	1997
Omartian, Stormie	<i>The Power of a Praying Husband</i>	Harvest House	2001
Parrott, Les & Leslie	<i>Love Talk</i>	Zondervan	2004
Parrott, Les & Leslie	<i>The Good Fight</i>	Worthy Publishing	2013
Ricucci, Gary & Betsy	<i>Love That Lasts</i>	Crossway	2006
Seamands, David	<i>Healing Damaged Emotions</i>	Life Journey	2004
Small, Dwight	<i>After You've Said I Do</i>	Revell	1968
Smalley, Gary & Ted Cunningham	<i>As Long As We Both Shall Live</i>	Regal	2009
Smalley Gary & John Trent	<i>The Two Sides of Love</i>	Focus on the Family	1992
Thomas, Gary	<i>Sacred Marriage</i>	Zondervan	2000
Warren, Rick	<i>What On Earth Am I Here For?</i>	Zondervan	2012
Wilhite, Jud	<i>Hope That Goes The Distance</i>	Baker Books	2004
Wright, H. Norman	<i>Communication: Key To Your Marriage</i>	Regal	1974
Wright, H. Norman	<i>Quiet Times For Couples</i>	Harvest House	1990
Young, Ed	<i>The 10 Commandments of Marriage</i>	Moody Press	2003

