

# Why Good Marriages Go Bad

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How To Make Sure Yours Lasts

Bill Clark, Ph.D.

## ABSTRACT

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Divorce has become commonplace in American society, even among Christians. As troubling as that is, there's a sadder truth: Most do not have a clue why or how their marriage fell apart. They would tell you they do, but they don't. The story they tell is typically biased and inaccurate. Like so many, they were swept over the brink without understanding what was happening to them.

This book has one purpose: to help you understand why Christian marriages fail and what you can do to save yours. I want to help you become your own best counselor. When you understand what is happening to your marriage, you will be able to stop the deadly process and rescue your marriage.

## Description

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**Why Christian Marriages Go Bad: How to Make Sure Yours Lasts** is a six chapter, how-to book designed for Christian couples who know their marriages are failing but can't (i.e., time and cost) or won't seek professional counseling.

**Why Christian Marriages Go Bad** is psychologically and biblically solid, easily understood, and directly applicable. It includes many case examples that illustrate the various concepts and principles that are described; a series of simple tests to help a couple objectively clarify what is wrong; an assortment of helpful diagrams to visualize relational processes; and thought-provoking 'His and Her' questions at the end of every chapter.

**Why Christian Marriages Go Bad** not only explains the actual process of how a marriage dies, but also helps a couple pinpoint their state of deterioration. This process is discussed in detail and explicit intervention strategies are suggested for each state. Rather than a 'one-size-fits-all' corrective approach, this book meets a couple where they are and offers balanced, insightful advice.

**Why Christian Marriages Go Bad** offers balanced, insightful advice from a biblical perspective. It puts the couple in charge of turning their marriage around while empowering them to become their own best counselor. Couples are given the freedom to work at their own pace and in their own particular relational style.

## About the Author

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Bill Clark, Ph.D. is a seminary trained, licensed professional counselor with over 27 years of clinical experience in the public and private sector. He has had a wide variety of public speaking engagements in evangelical churches, Christian clubs and organizations focusing primarily on marriage and family issues. He also conducts weekend marriage conferences for Christian couples with an emphasis on communication, conflict resolution, and biblical role fulfillment. He has been married to Diane for 38 years.

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## INTRODUCTION

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**A** failed marriage is one of life's most heartbreaking tragedies. Designed by God to give a couple the joys of heaven on earth all too often becomes a living hell.

Few newlyweds ever dream their love will end in divorce. Intoxicated by the heady feelings of romance, they naively believe their bond is safe; that divorce will not touch the life of their love.

Statistics, however, tell a different story. Among couples marrying for the first time, about 40-50 percent will eventually divorce. And of the 50-60 percent who manage to avoid divorce, only 25-30 percent experience real marital intimacy. The rest grind it out in emotionally empty and loveless relationships.<sup>1 2</sup> They hang on for their children's sake, moral or religious convictions, financial convenience, or fear of social disapproval. The ugly reality is that relatively few couples, even Christians, ever experience the fulfillment and satisfaction God intended for their marriage.

### **Robert and Cindy**

When Robert<sup>3</sup> entered my office, I was surprised by his behavior. He looked and sounded completely different from what I had imagined during our phone conversation the day before. After sharing a brief description of his marital problems, I asked him to tell me a little about himself. He immediately became animated. "I've just been offered full partnership in a very prestigious law firm here in town! I can't tell you how excited I am. It's what I've been working so hard for." I was impressed with his achievements as well as his self-confidence. The man I was now shaking hands with seemed quite different. He appeared inhibited, almost bashful.

Robert sheepishly explained that his wife, Cindy, had refused to come with him; that she wanted no part of counseling. "She said I'd turn everything around on her." Robert admitted that he had come to counseling only to appease Cindy. "In my opinion, our marriage is as good as any of our friends. The problem is that she has unrealistic expectations of me as a husband and father. To tell the truth, I'm scared. She said she doesn't love me anymore and is talking about taking the kids and going to her parent's. Nothing I say makes any difference. I don't know what to do. I don't want to lose her."

Robert and Cindy had been married for ten years and had three boys, ages six, four, and two. Cindy was a well-loved and respected kindergarten teacher who had an extraordinary ability to touch a child's heart. She and Robert had been Christians since childhood and were actively involved in their church. Robert prided himself on the fact that as a Christian lawyer he had successfully persuaded a handful of couples not to divorce but to work through their problems.

By the end of the first session, I was convinced that Robert loved his wife and wanted to save his marriage. He admitted that he'd taken Cindy and the kids for granted and been selfishly wrapped up in his work. "I really doubt she'll give me a chance. I've really messed up." Before Robert left, I handed him a sealed note..

"What's this?" he asked.

"It's a special invitation to Cindy. I've asked her to come with you to the next appointment. If she won't come for you, maybe she'll come for me. Robert, let's pray about that and your marriage before you leave."

When Robert returned for his second appointment, Cindy was with him. She shook my hand warmly and thanked me for the note.

I started the session by asking Cindy to tell me about their marriage. As she laid out the long-held secrets of their troubled marriage, Robert did not attempt to interrupt or contradict her. He seemed to take in every word as if he was hearing it for the first time. Cindy pulled no punches. She painted a sad story of neglect that had finally destroyed her love.

"You know," Cindy said reflectively, "it was the last thing in the world I wanted to happen to our relationship. It fell apart little by little over the years. I tried to tell Robert but he wouldn't believe I was slipping away. I had such high hopes in the beginning, but now it's over, at least for me. I don't love him anymore and I don't know if I'll ever be able to love him like I did. There's been so much hurt and disappointment."

Robert began crying with his face in his hands. Cindy said nothing. She seemed unmoved by the pitiful drama and made no effort to comfort him. She stared blankly without emotion.

"I'm so sorry. I love you. Cindy, please give me another chance," Robert pleaded.

It was evident that Cindy had not fallen out of love with Robert. She had stumbled out over a long period of time; their marriage had died a slow, gradual death. The love, care, and warmth she once had been replaced with coldness, apathy, and indifference.

As Cindy poured out her heart over their lost love, I watched Robert's face twist with pain. It was as if he was being slowly tortured. It was more than her words that tore at him; it was the deadness in her eyes, the tone in her voice that seemed to whisper, "I don't love you anymore." There was no stirred emotion, no talk of unfinished business, only a feeling of sadness, regret for what might have been.

It was clear that Robert understood the full meaning of her message. The thought of rejection visibly shook him. There were tears, confessions, promises. Then came threats, but she gave no sign of softening.

Cindy had already prepared herself with the thought that she could not afford any display of sentiment; she must remain detached and unemotional. Anything else would signal a change of heart, a ray of hope.

Cindy calmly continued, 'I don't hate you, Robert and I don't want to hurt you. I still care about you, but not as a wife. You and I both know we've drifted apart and don't have anything in common anymore.'

His mind rebelled at the idea that she was addressing him as an acquaintance, not as her husband and the father of their three children. He had become someone separate and totally disconnected from her life. She showed no anger or bitterness. There was nothing. He had ceased to exist.

The hopeless expression on Robert's face made it clear that he knew he was finished. Any attempt to begin again would be useless. He understood that Cindy's love was dead and she had gone beyond a point of no return.

That was a turning point in Robert's life. He was forced to take a hard look at his relationship with Cindy; and at himself. He had failed miserably as a husband but was unable to explain what had happened to his marriage over the past ten years. This started Robert's search for a clearer understanding of what had destroyed their relationship and what it would take to restore it.

### **What Happened?**

Professional counselors are uncomfortably familiar with the course of dying love. They know love dies a slow, grudgingly reluctant death. It yields to separation, divorce or a loveless coexistence only after a struggle. Regrettably, most who have gone through a divorce never realized their love died a very predictable death. As Robert and Cindy painfully discovered, it was not a matter of falling out of love, but stumbling out over a period of months and even years. There were distinct, predictable stages of emotional detachment with clear warning signs that went unnoticed. Had they observed and addressed these signals, their marriage might have sidestepped the detachment process.

Current research reveals that only 10% of married couples seek professional help for their relationship problems. And it's usually toward the end of their relationship when emotional damage has already taken place.<sup>4</sup> Most never turn to anyone for help. They suffer alone to the end.

What can you do if you are stumbling out of love? How can you stop the detachment process and protect your marriage? As a marriage counselor for over twenty-five years, I've made several personal discoveries that can turn your dying marriage around. You must understand the basic cause for the death of marital love; the three stages a dying marriage



passes through; the warning signs of each stage; and the action steps that must be taken to arrest the emotional detachment process. When you grasp these key concepts and follow the steps I prescribe, your marriage can be saved. Not only will your love be rekindled, but you will have a relationship that will last a lifetime.

If you suspect that you may be stumbling out of love, I urge you to read on. I challenge you to make an honest evaluation of your marriage and take the steps that will prevent your divorce.

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### Notes from the Introduction:

1. Glenn, N.D. (1998). The course of marital success and failure in five American ten-year marriage cohorts. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 60, 569-576.
2. National fatherhood Initiative (2005). *With this ring: A national survey on marriage in America*.
3. Pseudonyms. (All names used in reference to case studies throughout the text are fictional. Each case study is an amalgamation of many couples that the author has counseled)
4. Johnson, C. A., Stanley, S. M., Glenn, N. D., Amato, P. A., Nock, S. L., Markman, H. J., & Dion, M. R. (2002). *Marriage in Oklahoma: 2001 baseline statewide survey on marriage and divorce*. Stillwater: Oklahoma State University Bureau for Social Work.

## CHAPTER ONE

### STUMBLING OUT OF LOVE

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Couples with a strong emotional bond experience a more intimate relationship. They report high levels of trust, acceptance, commitment, support, and security. But those with a damaged bond stumble out of love; they spiral downward through an *emotional detachment process* that ends with the death of their love.

#### **The Emotional Detachment Process**

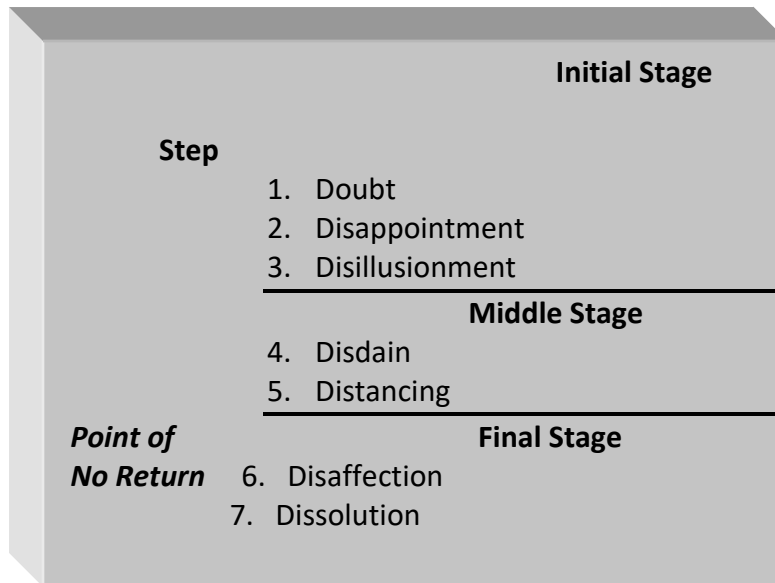
Love's death is always a predictable event. Like the course a terminal disease takes, a dying marriage also follows a fixed path with clearly definable stages.<sup>1</sup> This process is emotional detachment; the gradual deterioration of love and respect of one partner for the other. And as a couple's bond erodes, apathy and indifference quietly replace oneness with isolation.<sup>2</sup>

Marital dissatisfaction differs from emotional detachment; it is a temporary state of disunity. Both partners maintain their love for one another and a desire to keep their relationship intact. Emotional detachment, however, is marked by a history of unresolved conflict that severs a couple's bond.

The detachment process does not determine what a spouse will do about their dying marriage, but describes its course over time. Some separate or divorce; others settle for a loveless coexistence and seek happiness outside of the marriage. Only a few choose to strengthen their emotional bond.

Over the past twenty-five years, I have counseled hundreds of couples. And it has been my observation that every dying relationship passes through three distinct stages before ending. The rate of decline through the stages varies from couple to couple. For some, reaching the final stage takes years; for others just months. I have also observed the decline varies from person to person. One partner may stumble farther out of love than their mate over the same period.

The diagram below outlines the three stages of decline, the specific steps within each stage, and the order in which they occur in the emotional detachment process.



## The Emotional Detachment Process

### Philip and Candace

During their first session, it was obvious by Candace's interaction with her husband, Phillip that she was in the emotional detachment process. Several times she said she “loved” him but was no longer “in love” with him. Phillip confirmed that she had been extremely cold and distant for many months. All attempts to show affection or have sex were ignored or rejected. There was little conversation except for the day-to-day exchanges about bills, errands, laundry, and the children.

Phillip felt completely different toward Candace; he repeatedly expressed his love and insisted they save their marriage. Several times, he took her hand and said, “I love you. Please don't give up.” Each time she stared blankly at him with no emotion. And by the end of the session Candace had made it clear their marriage was over and she had no intention of re-bonding.

### The Three Stages

Couples stumbling out of love pass through three distinct stages: initial, middle, and final. And unless the process is stopped, the marriage will end in separation, divorce, or a loveless coexistence.

The Initial Stage has three declining steps (*doubt, disappointment, and disillusionment*) and is the least destructive to the marital relationship. During this stage, psychological damage is minimal and the possibility of stopping the emotional detachment process still exists. However, once a spouse has passed into the middle or final stages, the prospect of saving the marriage decreases.

The Middle Stage is comprised of steps 5 and 6: *disdain and distancing*. Anger and resentment begin to grow, causing emotional distancing.<sup>3</sup>

If the emotional detachment process continues, a couple enters the final stage. This stage has two steps: *disaffection and dissolution*. Disaffection is the process of losing all feeling for a mate and becoming emotionally detached; it occurs prior to crossing a psychological boundary I call the *Point of No Return*<sup>4</sup> ([See diagram](#)). Once crossed, few turn back, because they believe their love can never be restored. From here it is a short stumble to the end—*dissolution* or divorce.

Not all spouses in the Final Stage divorce. Some remain in a state of disaffection and never leave the marriage; they live in an emotionally empty and loveless relationship. There are a number of reasons for coexisting with a mate: a sense of obligation to the marriage vows; moral or religious beliefs; the children's emotional welfare; financial convenience; insecurity of being alone; the stress of change; or a lack of alternatives.

### **Robert and Cindy (revisited)**

“It’s humbling to admit I drifted so far from Cindy. She was in the final stage when it all came crashing down. I guess she put up with my taking as long as she could. The strange thing was I didn't have a clue she had emotionally unhooked from me and was ready to call it quits. To tell the truth, I was shocked and angry because I thought we had a good marriage. I wasn't unhappy with her. Life, to me, was good. How could our marriage be so bad?”

“I can now see I was blind about our marriage. What Cindy said to me during that first session was a rude awakening. There were some ugly realities I didn't want to hear. I had emotionally neglected her for years. And it caused her to question my love. In the beginning, she handled my time away from her and the kids as being necessary to get my career started. It was an investment in the family's future. The sacrifice was supposed to be temporary and I'd eventually be able to spend more time at home. But one year ran into another and she finally lost hope things would get any better. I'd become so wrapped up in my work I totally overlooked what was happening to our marriage. The truth is I had become self-absorbed. I didn't see it. I can remember Cindy trying to tell me a bunch of times that our marriage was falling apart, but I just passed it off as her being emotional. I see now she was right. She realized she was stumbling out of love and felt helpless to do anything about it. After years of being alone, Cindy put up a wall and shut me out. She got to the point of no return, and that's when she started talking about divorce. It's so clear now. She went through all three stages and I never realized it. I didn't see the warning signs.”

### **The Initial Stage (Doubt, Disappointment, Disillusionment)**

Many newlyweds are surprised by their spouse's behavior once the newness of married life has worn off. The attitudes and behaviors that were hidden while dating become larger than life. Attempts to impress begin to disappear and one or both begin to wonder, “Should I have married this person?”

### **Amy and Roger**

“While we were dating Roger made me feel so loved. It was wonderful! But everything seemed to change on our honeymoon. I began to have serious doubts about having married him.” Although Amy was uncertain about their relationship from the beginning, she held onto the

belief her young husband would learn to love her. She determined to patiently love him until his love for her grew. A home was established, a career developed, and two beautiful children were born. But Roger became even more distant and cold. After four years of feeling unloved and left out of her husband's life, Amy began to stumble out of love. And her hope for a more satisfying marriage eventually ended in heart-crushing disappointment.

### **Unrealistic Expectations**

Doubt also springs from another source; it is created when one or both partners *romanticize* their mate.

Romanticization<sup>5</sup> is the exaggeration of the qualities we are seeking in the other and masking those that are undesirable. By viewing their fiancé through rose-colored glasses they become a romantic ideal, someone that fits their picture of a perfect partner. But when they are seen in a more realistic light, doubt begins to surface. Some are able to adjust to living with a knight in tarnished armor or a princess with her crown askew; they are willing to accept their mate as a human being with weaknesses and flaws. Others, however, are not as forgiving. They refuse to accept a less than perfect picture of their partner.

Some young couples hold destiny *beliefs*; once they find true love, their relationship will be immune from trouble and full of happiness: no arguing, great sex, and all without hard work.<sup>6 7</sup>

When reality sets in, though, doubt turns to disappointment. They realize their partner is not capable or motivated to live up to these idealized qualities. And a fear begins to grow that their marriage is destined for frustration, conflict and unhappiness. The majority, however, are still able to maintain a sense of confidence about the future of their marriage.

Ironically, the disappointed spouse often blames themselves for the problems and assumes the responsibility for improving the marriage. Self-blame is expressed in a variety of ways: "I thought it was me, that I wasn't being a good wife; I thought I had done something to make her change; I felt like I wasn't making him happy and needed to try harder."

The disappointed spouse is typically the wife. And she is usually the one who assumes the responsibility for repairing the relationship. Men assign this role to her because she tends to be more nurturing and relational by nature; he assumes she is more qualified to assess what is wrong and shoulder the burden for making it work. Disillusionment quickly sets in, however, when her best efforts to straighten the marital kinks are resisted with argument, withdrawal or denial.

Marital disillusionment is loss of hope that a spouse will change; the belief that previous efforts to salvage the marriage were in vain and any future attempts will produce the same discouraging results.

### **Hazel**

"He said I was making a big deal out of nothing; that I was just nagging and ought to drop it. He just wouldn't accept that we had any problems. He wanted to stick his head in the sand." This kind of response often makes the disillusioned spouse believe their complaints are illegitimate and unfounded; they begin to doubt their view of the marriage is valid.

### **Reactions to Disillusionment**

Many deal with feelings of disillusionment by overeating, overworking, oversleeping,

overspending, abusing substances, or contemplating suicide, eroding the foundation of the marriage. Cherished expectations slowly die and are replaced with deep hurt and anger. The respect a disillusioned spouse once had for their partner gives way to a resentful, reproachful attitude.

Despite the disillusionment, most spouses stick it out during the initial stage; they continue believing their relationship will somehow improve. Oddly enough, when professional counseling is most needed, it is rarely requested; the disillusioned spouse confides in a family member or trusted friend. Others share briefly with a physician or minister. And although there is an unwillingness to throw in the towel, most drift into the Middle Stage.

### **The Middle Stage (Disdain and Distancing)**

Disillusionment eventually deteriorates into deep-seated anger and resentment. What once shocked and surprised the disappointed spouse no longer does. They begin to expect their partner to behave in a self-centered manner. And hurtful behaviors are viewed as deliberate attempts to wound them, breeding feelings of rejection. Disdainful and disrespectful thoughts begin to occur: "At times I dreaded to see him come home; I didn't want him near me; Just the sight of him made me sick; I had fantasies of her being killed in a car wreck. As much as it made me feel guilty, I wished she were dead; I couldn't stand him touching me; I'm so mad I could just scream; I was so repulsed by my husband that I could go days without saying a word to him."

In the Middle Stage, the emotional bond weakens triggering a series of negative behaviors: The distressed couple find it difficult to meet one another's basic emotional needs for closeness, comfort, security, and affection; there is a reluctance to resolve conflict in a constructive manner; and partners develop a tendency to complain or react in a critical way.<sup>8 9</sup>

Research indicates the wife is usually the one who demands change and emotional closeness. And the husband responds by avoiding or disengaging from the process; his withdrawal being directly related to the degree of her demands.<sup>10</sup> As negative feelings build and dysfunctional patterns develop, their ability to resolve issues and put emotionally painful events behind them disappears. Small disappointments become associated with major hurts and the negative events of the past. The couple's emotional distress intensifies and a negative view of the relationship history develops. And current disputes and conflicts are interpreted in light of that perspective.

This is in contrast to marriages where a strong emotional bond exists; in those cases, partners display a variety of positive behaviors during conflict: They openly share their point of view and personal feelings; compromise and negotiate; actively listen to one another's opinions; and express empathy and support. These behaviors encourage the other to stay engaged during the conflict resolution process. And the outcome is mutual understanding, positive feelings, and a strengthened emotional bond.

As hurt and anger grow, a hostile spouse reacts in either a covert or overt way. Those who are passive show their contempt in subtle and indirect ways. Lacking the skill or confidence to confront, they sulk, withdraw, become physically and emotionally cold, or refuse to cooperate. These behaviors are used to punish their partner or protect themselves from further hurt. Some show their hostility in more overt, direct ways. They insult, criticize, berate, scream, curse, grab, shove, hit, or throw and break things. As resentment and bitterness grow, the contemptuous spouse focuses on their partner's negative behaviors. Negative traits once overlooked are now

viewed as flaws; positive qualities that were attractive are minimized and demeaned. What was once considered good concerning their mate is now obscured by a hostile attitude. They emotionally distance themselves and quietly erect a psychological wall of resentment and contempt, weakening the emotional bond.

### **Anne (Covert Anger)**

Anne showed contempt for her husband by not speaking to him. On one occasion, there was no communication for two weeks. When she had to speak to him, she sent her message through their oldest child. The silent treatment abruptly ended one evening when a grease fire broke out while cooking. Forgetting her resentment, Anne screamed for her husband's help. She later admitted if it had not been for this frightening incident, she would have made no effort to resume communication. Anne shared, "I was determined not to give into him. I wanted him to feel the pain that he'd given to me."

### **Bob and Lorraine (Overt Anger)**

The moment Bob and Lorraine entered my office, a vicious argument broke out. It did not end for almost two hours. Several times during their dispute, I was convinced they were going to physically attack one another. I sat nervously on the edge of my seat. All attempts on my part to stop their arguing were ignored, and at one point, both began to attack me. There was finger pointing, fist shaking, teeth clenching, and ungodly profanity.

Bob painted Lorraine in the worst possible light. He said she was lazy, untrustworthy, sexually cold and distant, ill tempered, irresponsible, aggressive, and unfit as a mother and wife. He left no stone unturned; nothing was sacred. By the time he had finished, Lorraine was sobbing hysterically. She was a pathetic sight; smeared mascara, tear-streaked cheeks, disheveled hair, runny nose, puffy eyes, and a look of complete devastation.

When it appeared that Bob had won, she pounced back. She accused him of being a child, a wife abuser, a drunk, a poor provider, hopelessly dependent on his parents, a probable adulterer, and a questionable father and husband. With each accusation, Bob became more furious. His face, ears, and neck were blood red. His nostrils flared and his fists were clenched. Lorraine continued goading him by saying, "Go ahead and hit me you bully. Slap me around like you do at home! Show the counselor what you're really like!" If it had not been for exhaustion, Bob and Lorraine would have continued fighting. The session had been wasted with mud slinging and tearing one another other apart; there had been no constructive dialogue about their problems or saving their marriage.

Taking advantage of their fatigue, I shared my concern. I pointed out they were nearing the Final Stage of the emotional detachment process and headed toward divorce. Still dazed by their fight and embarrassed by their behavior, neither said a word. They sat quietly looking at the floor. I ended the session by calling for a truce, praying for their relationship, and scheduling another appointment. Neither one showed up the following week.

### **Evaluating Costs Versus Benefits**

During the Middle Stage, a spouse will reevaluate the costs (e.g., time, money, energy) and benefits (e.g., love, affection, attention, emotional support, affirmation, respect, and intimacy) of staying in the marriage. Unlike the beginning of the relationship where benefits outweighed costs, it is the opposite in the Middle Stage. There is a feeling the relationship has become



imbalanced, and it is costing the emotionally distanced spouse more than they are willing to pay.

Giving behavior begins to subside and the hostile spouse becomes focused on the barriers for leaving the marriage: a lack of financial security, a concern for the emotional impact on the children, religious and moral convictions, family disapproval, or a lack of job skills. Obstacles are weighed against attractive alternatives outside the marriage: a new mate, job change, geographical move, or the pursuit of further education.

### **Paula**

"To tell the truth, I've spent a lot of time, thinking about leaving Richard. He doesn't have a clue that I'm ready to give up. Part of me hates the thought because I've put fourteen years into this marriage. Honestly, I never wanted to be a statistic, but I've really lost hope things will get any better. Richard never talks to me anymore and I feel so alone. He takes me for granted and thinks I'll always be there regardless of how he treats me. Sometimes I really wonder if I love him anymore. I think I love Richard, but I'm not in love with him. It's hard to explain but something is missing in our marriage. I probably would've been gone by now but I'm afraid of how the kids will take it. He's not much of a husband but he's a good father. Our kids love him very much. I know it would kill them if he weren't there every night, but I can't continue living like this. I don't know what to do. I guess I'm just waiting for something to happen."

### **Emotionally Divorced**

When the marriage together is kept together only by the barriers that prevent the hostile spouse from leaving, couples report feeling emotionally divorced. They believe their marriage has disintegrated into nothing more than a dead, empty shell. They are just going through the motions.

As anger intensifies during the Middle Stage, the emotionally distanced spouse becomes more intent on changing their partner. They are no longer willing to put up with their mate's undesirable behaviors. Some try to bring about change by threatening to leave.

### **Fran and Bobby**

Fran reported she was fed up with Bobby's self-centered, taking behaviors. Mustering up the courage, she bluntly told him she was going to leave if he kept fishing every weekend. Rather than frightening Bobby, her ultimatum left him feeling hostile and bitter. Bobby grudgingly sold his boat and all of his fishing equipment, but it was a hollow victory for Fran. What emotional bond she had with Bobby was replaced with a hardened coldness. Not long after, Fran stumbled into the Final Stage of the emotional detachment process.

### **Nearing the End**

At this stage, the spouse stumbling out of love is able to be more straightforward with their partner, but there are fewer attempts to please them. Less time and energy is devoted to the marriage, and other interests such as work, children, social activities, and friends take first place. As the emotional gap widens emotional distance becomes the normal state.

Despite the contempt and emotional distance, few choose to separate or demand their partner to leave in the Middle Stage; they are unwilling to end the marriage.

Those who have stumbled into the Middle Stage are often unaware their marriage is nearing



the end. Some are in denial and others are simply naive. When warned of this danger, most are shocked and saddened. Some see it as a wake-up call; others accept the notice with a sigh of relief.

### **The Final Stage (Disaffection and Dissolution)**

If the emotional detachment process is not stopped, the one stumbling out of love will enter the Final Stage. The intense anger of the Middle Stage is replaced with apathy and indifference.

The loss of the emotional bond is called disaffection.<sup>11</sup> Women describe this state with the phrase, "I love him, but I'm not in love with him." At best the disaffected spouse feels pity for their partner. The pangs of guilt that once kept them from giving up are now gone. Some report a sense of sorrow their marriage is ending.

As apathy grows, the disaffected spouse silently crosses the *Point of No Return*. All feeling for their partner is lost, along with the hope of reestablishing their emotional bond.

### **Patricia**

"It's over between us. There's nothing left. I told John I don't love him anymore, but he keeps saying he loves me. The things I griped about for years he's finally doing. I admit he's made a change, but I guess it's too little too late. It just doesn't matter anymore. I don't have the love a wife ought to have. Don't get me wrong. I don't hate him. I just don't feel anything for him. I have been thinking seriously about divorce but haven't brought it up. I'm not sure what he'd do at this point."

### **Letting Go**

As the disaffected spouse detaches from their partner, they reach out to family and friends for validation and emotional support. They look for allies who will justify their negative attitude and give approval for ending the marriage. (It is interesting to note that these same friends and family members are often the ones who encouraged them to stay in the marriage during the Initial and Middle Stages.) Having felt alone, the disaffected spouse now feels validated. They find the motivation to break from their partner.

During the Final Stage, thoughts of ending the marriage become stronger. Time and energy are spent developing plans to get around barriers that prevented them from leaving. The costs and benefits for leaving are counted, there is less rehearsal of past hurts, and they become focused on a future apart from their mate.

Ironically, some disaffected spouses seek professional counseling at this point. Counseling, though, is not for repairing the relationship, but getting "permission" to end the marriage. They hope the expert will grant them a "pardon."

Some admit they have come to let their mate down easy. They see the counselor as the "hired gun" that will do the dirty work of telling their spouse the marriage is over. Others view counseling as a way of assigning blame to ease their conscience. They expect the counselor to apply the balm of consolation.

The lack of motivation to work on the marriage is the reason counseling is ineffective at this stage. The disaffected spouse, however, considers the time and money well spent. They can now save face with their friends, family, and co-workers; they "tried" to save their marriage but "it just didn't work." They leave the impression the counselor was incompetent or their mate

unwilling to deal with their problems.

In the Final Stage, it is common for the partner of the disaffected spouse to become motivated to work on the marriage. They begin making the changes that will stop the detachment process. The disaffected spouse, however, often views any change on their part as short-lived and phony. Some acknowledge their partner is trying, but they remain emotionally unmoved; their apathy and indifference overshadow the good their partner is trying to accomplish at the last minute.

### **Harold**

"I've told her over and over I'd do anything to save our marriage. She says I never talked to her. I'm talking to her. She says I never spend any time with her. I'm spending time with her. She says I pout and withdraw when I'm mad. I'm not pouting or withdrawing. I'm doing the best I can and she doesn't even notice. Our marriage is not over! She says it is and she's tired of trying. I can't believe it! She's just giving up. I can't do it on my own; she's got to do her part."

### **Options for the Detached Spouse**

Many detached spouses remain in their marriage, and they stay for a variety of reasons: For some it may be a commitment to their marital vow. Others endure because of the investment of time they have in the relationship; leaving would mean a loss of that investment. Some stay because of their age; they have reached a point in life where a change would require more energy, emotional strength, or financial resources than they have. Coexisting is less taxing than facing the adjustment of divorce.

A few put on the brakes and avoid divorce; they are able to work through their disaffection and reestablish a loving relationship. Most, however, stumble out of love.

This book has been written to help you prevent your marriage from going bad. To do that you must clearly identify what state of the emotional detachment process you are in. If you are stumbling out of love, it is crucial that you recognize and respond to the warning signals. To ignore the signals may mean the difference between saving and losing your marriage.

The following inventory will help you determine where your relationship is in the emotional detachment process. If the inventory indicates your marriage is dying, discuss the questions at the end of this chapter and immediately begin reading chapter two. If your partner refuses, move ahead on your own. My experience has shown that a change in one person can become a catalyst for change in the other.

### **The Emotional Detachment Inventory**

Mark all items in each subtest with a true or false answer. After you have completed each section, add all of the true responses and mark the appropriate score in the Profile Scale. Compare your answers.

<b>Initial Stage</b>	<b>Husband</b>		<b>Wife</b>	
<b><i>Step One (Doubt)</i></b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
1. After we married, my spouse became someone that I didn't know.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I've had frequent doubts about having married my spouse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I feel like my spouse purposely hid a lot of his/her bad behavior when we were dating.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I can now see that I had an unrealistic picture of my mate before we married.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. It has been hard for me to accept him/her for who they really are now that we are married.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b><i>Step Two (Disappointment)</i></b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
6. I'm definitely disappointed that my spouse hasn't lived up to my expectations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I'm hurt and angry that my mate is "coasting" now that we're married.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Although I'm disappointed about the way our marriage is going so far, I'm still optimistic about our future.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I've tried to talk to my spouse about our problems but he/she denies that there's anything wrong.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. Although I'm unhappy about our marriage, we still show love and affection to each other.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b><i>Step Three (Disillusionment)</i></b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
11. I'm starting to lose hope about the future of our marriage.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I'm feeling more hurt and anger toward my spouse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. My partner's flaws are glaringly apparent to me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I'm sometimes made to feel that my perceptions of the marriage are overly negative and critical.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. Although things aren't good in our relationship, I'm determined to stick it out.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<b>PROFILE SCALE</b>		<b>H</b>	<b>W</b>
	<i>9-15 In or Past Initial Stage</i>		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<i>4-8 Moving Toward Initial Stage</i>		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<i>0-3 Not in Initial Stage</i>		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Middle Stage</b>	<b>Husband</b>		<b>Wife</b>	

<b><i>Step Four (Disdain)</i></b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
1. My anger has turned into real resentment toward my spouse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I'm no longer shocked by what my mate says or does.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I sometimes believe that he/she does things on purpose to make me angry.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I don't feel loved or cared for by my spouse like I used to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I find myself "clamming and/or blowing up" more at my spouse lately.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b><i>Step Five (Distancing)</i></b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
6. I've put up a "wall" between my spouse and myself.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I don't show my spouse much attention or affection anymore.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Our sexual relationship has gotten progressively worse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. It seems that all I can see in my spouse are negative traits.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I've been thinking seriously about leaving my marriage. I'm looking at the pros and the cons.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. It's "costing" me more to stay in this marriage than it is worth.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I feel "emotionally divorced;" our marriage is an "empty shell."	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I've made threats to my spouse that I'd leave if he/she didn't change.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I'm definitely not trying to please my mate anymore. My marriage gives me little satisfaction these days.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. We've talked of separation or divorce at least once.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b><i>PROFILE SCALE</i></b>	<b>H</b>		<b>W</b>	
9-15 In or Past Middle Stage	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
4-8 Moving Toward Middle Stage	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
0-3 Not in Middle Stage	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Final Stage</b>	<b>Husband</b>		<b>Wife</b>	
<b><i>Step Six (Disaffection)</i></b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
1. Although there's still some anger toward my spouse, I'm mostly apathetic and indifferent.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I've lost all feeling for my spouse and don't believe it'll ever be the same.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. I care what happens to my spouse, but I'm not in love with him/her anymore.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. If I feel anything for my spouse, it's pity and maybe some sadness that our marriage is over.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I'm definitely going to leave this marriage. I'm planning a future without my spouse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I've begun to look to family and friends for validation and acceptance. They're in favor of my leaving this marriage.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I'm making specific plans as to how I can leave the marriage. I'm looking seriously at all of the financial and emotional realities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. We've seen a counselor or have thought about it, but I have little hope that it'll help.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I have little motivation left for working on our marriage.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. My spouse is trying harder to make things right, but I don't really care anymore.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b><i>Step Seven (Dissolution)</i></b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
11. Our marriage is over. We've contacted an attorney about divorce.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I/my spouse have moved out or planning to move out of the house.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. My spouse and I've talked about custody of the children, financial arrangements, and division of property.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I/my spouse have been staying away from the house more lately.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. I/my spouse have been telling our family and friends that we're divorcing.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<b><i>PROFILE SCALE</i></b>		<b>H</b>	<b>W</b>
	<i>9-15 In or Past Final Stage</i>		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<i>4-8 Moving Toward Final Stage</i>		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	<i>0-3 Not in Final Stage</i>		<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

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### Questions for Him and Her:

1. Do your inventories indicate you are stumbling out of love?
  2. Which stage of the emotional detachment process are you in?
  3. How long have you been in this stage? Do you think you may be transitioning to the next stage?
  4. Have you or your spouse crossed the Point Of No Return?
  5. Are you determined to save your marriage? Are you willing to stop the emotional detachment process?
- 

### Notes from Chapter One:

1. Kayser, K. (1993). *When love dies: The process of marital disaffection*. New York: The Guilford Press (p. 89). This is an adaptation of Karen Kayser's model which she terms "The Phases of Disaffection." She describes the three phases as: 1. Disappointment, 2. Between Disappointment and Disaffection, and 3. Reaching Disaffection.
2. Kayser, K. (1996). The marital disaffection scale: An inventory for assessing emotional estrangement in marriage. *The Journal of Family Therapy*, 24, 83-88.
3. Ibid, p.6-7.
4. Ibid, p.88.
5. Cox, F.D. (1984). *Human intimacy: Marriage, the family and its meaning, Third Edition*. St. Paul: West Publishing Company (pp. 129-131).
6. Knee, C.R., Patrick, H., & Lonsbary, C. (2003). Implicit theories of relationships: Orientations toward evaluation and cultivation. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 7, 41-55.
7. Goodwin, R., & Gaines, S.O. (2004). Relationship beliefs and relationship quality across cultures: Country as a moderator of dysfunctional beliefs and relationship quality in three former communist societies. *Personal Relationships*, 11, 267-279.
8. Bartholomew, K. (1990). Avoidance and intimacy: An attachment perspective. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 7, 147-178.
9. Grau, I., & Vogel, M. (1998). Closeness-distance regulation in close relationships. Poster presented at the 41st congress of the Deutschen Gesellschaft fur Psychologie in Dresden, 1998.
10. Shi, L. (2003). The Association Between Adult Attachment Styles and Conflict Resolution in Romantic Relationships. *The American Journal of Family Therapy*, 31, 143-157.
11. Kayser, *When love dies*, (p.6-7).

## CHAPTER TWO

### WHY MARITAL LOVE DIES

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All relationships grow or they die; this is especially true of marriages. As a counselor, I have observed that marital relationships refuse to remain motionless. They are continually moving toward intimacy and oneness, or into apathy and isolation.

#### **The Give And Take Process**

The dance between oneness and isolation is a phenomenon all couples experience. It is borne out of the natural give-and-take of a relationship. When a spouse consistently gives to their mate, they add value to the marriage. But when they take more than they give, the marriage is weakened; one or both partners spiral downward through the emotional detachment process, ending in the death of their love.

A giving spouse consistently meets the basic needs of their mate: meaningful conversation; shared activities; affirmation; encouragement; honesty; respect; sexual satisfaction; affection; and family commitment. And the couple's emotional bond is strengthened.

A taking spouse, however, makes no attempt or an inconsistent attempt to return their spouse's love. They want their needs met, but are reluctant to give back in an equitable way; the emotional bond deteriorates and a couple's good marriage begins to go bad.

To ensure his desires are met, a Taker uses three tactics: The first involves an attempt to dominate and control their partner; to maneuver them into a subordinate role. There are a number of ways this is accomplished. Some show a disregard for their spouse's opinions and desires, especially in the decision-making process. Any attempt to express their opinion is quashed; it is devalued as inappropriate or invalid. If this approach is unsuccessful, the Taker resorts to intimidation or angry outbursts. The message is clear: "I don't want an equal relationship with you. I want the freedom to act as I please without your interference."

When a mate is ignored, criticized, bullied, judged, ridiculed, or devalued, there is deep emotional pain; a profound sense of hurt and rejection. Feelings of inadequacy and inferiority are created and self-esteem is crippled; smoldering resentment grows and a wedge is driven between the couple.

A Taker may refuse emotional or physical intimacy by withholding support, companionship, care, or sexual relations. The exploited spouse is left feeling lonely, unloved, and unaccepted. There is deep-seated mistrust and an unwillingness to share their innermost feelings, weakening the emotional bond.

There is a third tactic: refusing to resolve conflict in a timely and constructive way.

Agreeing to talk about problems and negotiate may lead to losing control. So the Taker stonewalls their partner; they make no attempt to discuss issues of conflict.

### **Barbara and John**

"I feel like I'm falling apart. I can't take it anymore. Between the fifty hours or more I spend at work, house cleaning, cooking, caring for our two children, and trying to keep John happy, I think I'm having a nervous breakdown." Having said this, 39-year-old Barbara, a well-groomed but somewhat overweight mother of two, began sobbing. Tearfully she said, "I still love John, but he's not there for me like he used to be. He stays so busy with his job he barely knows we're alive. The kids and I feel so left out of his life, especially me. There was a time when we were very close. I thought nothing would ever come between us and ruin our love for each other. I guess what really hurts is he doesn't take the time to listen anymore. I wonder if he even knows our marriage is in trouble. I hate to think what will happen to us if he doesn't wake up. I know I haven't helped the situation by nagging, crying, and screaming. It seems I've tried everything else to get his attention but nothing works. He blows his stack and withdraws even further from me. I don't know what to do. I feel like I'm getting depressed because it seems so hopeless. If I didn't know better, I'd think John doesn't love me anymore."

The love Barbara once had for John was slowly slipping away. She missed the closeness they had during the early years of their marriage. She often thought about the times they talked into the night about their future. She still remembered her sense of security when he caressed her with soft touches or kiss her forehead, eyelids, nose, and chin. Sometimes he would take her face in his hands and trace her features with his fingertips. He would pull her closely to him and kiss each finger, then the palms of her hands while looking into her eyes. A day did not pass that John was not trying to show his love for her in some way. There were phone calls during the day to say he loved her. He would leave love notes on her pillow or have flowers delivered at work. He would give compliments on her appearance or a wink to catch her eye in a crowd. And he always gave her a warm kiss and hug when he arrived home. He would pray with her when she was worried, snuggle on the couch, or read to her in bed. On occasion, John would surprise her with a weekend getaway. Barbara never dreamed she could ever be unhappy with John, much less stumble out of love.

### **A Failure to Give**

John and Barbara, like so many couples, became caught up in the hectic pace of life: raising children, attending PTA meetings, shuttling to and from soccer practices, maintaining a house and yard, working long hours to stay ahead of bills, serving in church, visiting family and friends, and other activities. They allowed their lives to become complicated and pressured. Fatigue left little to give to one another. John gave less and less but expected the usual from Barbara. At first his neglect left her feeling hurt and disappointed, but eventually she became disillusioned and bitter. Feelings of rejection caused her to withdraw. And sensing he was being shut out, John retaliated by retreating into an angry silence. This pushed their already troubled marriage into an even deeper spiral.

Barbara and John's marriage was in a relational nose-dive, and it finally disintegrated on the rocks of divorce. Like others headed for marital disaster, they had forgotten what originally gave wings to their marriage; they had lost touch with the things that had kept it



alive and healthy. The element they overlooked and neglected was consistent giving.

## Two Basic Expectations

Most newlyweds have two basic expectations: the belief their mate will exclusively satisfy certain, basic needs in their life, and the thought that they will equitably benefit from their spouse in proportion to what they give.

## Equity

An equitable balance of giving between spouses characterizes a healthy, stable marriage. Both partners sense their love is being fairly returned. Marriage counselors refer to this exchange as *equity*.<sup>1,2</sup>

An inequitable relationship occurs when either spouse believes they are receiving less than they should from their mate.<sup>3</sup> There is a feeling of exploitation. And it comes out of the belief their partner is taking more than they are giving. Over time, disappointment, frustration, and anger are generated, leading to distancing. Ultimately, the emotional bond is damaged.<sup>4</sup>

Some wonder if equity can be measured; whether a husband or wife can keep a mental account of the day-to-day exchanges with one another. The average couple has no problem keeping up with their exchanges. They are continually monitoring, evaluating, and accounting how their partner is treating them. Their system may be subjective and imprecise, but it is at work daily in measuring equity. Every partner knows when they are receiving a fair deal or not. They perceive with a reasonable degree of accuracy whether their love is being fairly returned in proportion to what they have given.

Theologians object to equity. They argue that it is an unbiblical concept that marital partners should not use in relating to one another; the relationship should be based on unconditional love rather than some sense of fairness. Few argue with this ideal, but day-to-day reality confirms that equity is the rule-of-thumb by which most couples operate.

Attentiveness to equity is particularly true of newlyweds. The expectation is that benefits will be repaid in a timely and equivalent manner. As a couple's relationship matures, however, the expectation for equity diminishes. They are more willing to extend repayment into the future. But when a spouse senses they are being exploited, they will revert to more closely evaluating the exchange process. If equity remains imbalanced, the desire to leave the marriage grows.

## The Love Ledger

Equity can be illustrated with a Love Ledger. Every person has a mental "ledger" containing the *balance sheets* of many *accounts*. These accounts are the people with whom we have a relationship. They may be casual acquaintances, co-workers, relatives, friends, or family. A major account would include a spouse.

When a husband exhibits giving behavior (e.g., kindness, love, warmth, gentleness concern), his wife *credits* his account. She attaches a positive value to that behavior and mentally "records" it as *emotional currency* in her Love Ledger for him. A warm hug before leaving the house may be given a positive value but lower than, say, a surprise anniversary dinner and a special gift. In both instances, his account grows in value because of giving

behavior.

A *debit* is entered into the Love Ledger if she believes he has exhibited a taking behavior, such as a failure to let her know he will be late for dinner. It will be recorded as a debit. That behavior will not cost his account as much, though, as exploding in a rage. But in both cases, his account drops in value.

An account *balance* may fluctuate based on the type of transaction. Examine the credit and debit entries of John's account in Mary Anne's Love Ledger. His credits exceed his debits and his account is in *the black*. If the same thing is true of Mary Anne's account in John's Love Ledger, there is a mutual sense of equity. Mary Anne and John believe they are receiving in proportion to what they have given.

Love Ledger		Mary Anne J.		
<i>Account Name: John J.</i>				
1997	Description of Transaction	Debit	Credit	Balance
Nov	Beginning Balance			1 2 5 -
11/1	Served Breakfast in bed to Mary Anne		1 0 -	1 3 5 -
11/1	Praise Mary Anne on appearance		5 -	1 4 0 -
11/1	Hugged and kissed Mary Anne before leaving		5 -	1 4 5 -
11/1	Forgot to call Mary Anne about being late	5 -		1 3 5 -
11/1	Helped Kids with homework		1 0 -	1 4 5 -

Some accounts are credited frequently because of consistent giving. Others are regularly debited for consistent taking; their account balance goes into *the red*. A *negative balance* that is maintained for an extended period results in the account being *closed* temporarily or permanently. An account that is temporarily closed is one in which the exploited spouse emotionally or physically distances themselves from their mate. An account is permanently closed when an exploited spouse emotionally and physically detaches from their mate. Notice how far Linda's account balance in David's Love Ledger is in the red. This indicates their relationship may be in trouble.

Love Ledger		David E.		
<i>Account Name: Linda E.</i>				
1997	Description of Transaction	Debit	Credit	Balance
June	Beginning Balance			4 5
6/9	Major Conflict with D. about money	2 0 -		2 5
6/9	Silent treatment until bedtime	2 0 -		0 5
6/10	Left house without speaking to D.	1 0 -		- 0 5
6/10	Failure to call and apologize	1 5 -		- 2 0
6/11	Halfhearted apology to D. in morning		5 -	- 1 5

When one or both spouses believe their relationship has become inequitable, their interactions deteriorate into frustration, anger, and conflict. To relieve their distress, the

underbenefitted spouse acts in one of three ways: attempts to restore equity to the relationship (e.g., complain, manipulate, threaten, bribe); convinces themselves that the relationship is equitable (even though it's not); or leaves the relationship.

The overbenefitted spouse (Taker) may also feel distressed. If they are benefitted with attention and love beyond what is deserved, they feel guilty. The guilt may create enough psychological discomfort they will emotionally distance themselves from their partner.<sup>5,6</sup>

### **Taking and Receiving**

There is an important difference between taking and receiving. Receiving is accepting something that is offered. Jesus said it is "*more blessed to give than receive*" ([Acts 20:35](#)). The apostle Paul declared that "*the Living God gives us richly all things to enjoy (I Timothy 6:17)*." His good gifts to His children are to be received with gladness and fully enjoyed.

When a partner's love is received with gratitude and an attempt is made to return that love, the marriage is benefitted. Taking, however, is wrong because it is focused on getting rather than giving. [Proverbs 30:15](#) illustrates the greediness of the Taker: the two daughters of the bloodsucking leech cry, "Give! Give!" Self-gratification and indulgence are at the Taker's core. Both are destructive to the marriage.

### **The Common Marital Complaint**

Married women have a common complaint against their husbands: They feel used and taken advantage of. Research confirms that in the areas of emotional intimacy, affection, companionship, attentiveness, division of household work, and childcare, women typically do the heavy lifting.<sup>7</sup> They sense they are putting more into their marriage than they are receiving; they see themselves as Givers and their husbands as Takers. It is no surprise wives more often report marital unhappiness and dissatisfaction than their husbands. He is viewed as the one who expects, if not demands, that she satisfy his needs. And the outcome is the development of resentment and a decline in loving feelings.

### **The Taker**

The Taker is the one who brings death into the marital relationship. And this occurs when they are overly preoccupied with their own wants, needs and feelings; they give little but expect much. A Taker destroys the atmosphere needed to nurture a secure bond. As inequities are multiplied, the exploited spouse loses their balance and begins stumbling out of love.

Takers are not necessarily bad people; nor are they neurotic. But they do possess one fatal flaw: They find it difficult to be other-centered. The loss of a couple's emotional bond is the direct result of a Taker's self-centered behaviors.

### **Givers**

The Bible describes love as giving oneself to another. Contrary to the world's philosophy, love is not getting (i.e. taking) but doing what is in the best interest of the other.

God is the prime example of a true Giver. [John 3:16](#) states that "God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son." In [Galatians 2:20](#) we read, "He loved me and gave Himself for me." [Ephesians 5:25](#) says that Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. It is God's nature to love; because He loves, He gives. A literal translation of [James 1: 17](#)

reads, "Every *good* (act of) *giving* and every *perfect gift* from above is continually coming down from the Father of lights..." [Matthew 7:7-11](#) underscores this fundamental attribute of God." Ask (lit. keep on asking), and it will be *given* to you; seek (lit. keep on seeking), and you will find; knock (lit. keep on knocking), and it will; be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to *give good gifts* to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven *give good things* to those who ask Him?" God delights in giving good gifts to his children, especially when they persistently ask him in child-like expectation.

Christians are commanded to imitate God in their relationships with others; we are to exhibit love by giving. When Christ was questioned by an expert in the Mosaic law, he summarized the entire Decalogue: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with your entire mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." To love is to give. And God's children are to give to their neighbor's need (your closest neighbor is your spouse): "If your enemy is hungry *give* him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, *give* him water to drink" ([Proverbs 25: 21-22](#)). Love is not self-centered, but other-centered; it is a willingness to give of oneself in touch, time, words, service, and gifts. Not to give is not to love.

Many complain they had no idea their spouse was a Taker. If they had known, they would have never married them. Obviously, the wedding ceremony did not magically change their kind, affectionate, and caring spouse into a Taker. What happened? Early in the marriage, spouses are usually tolerant of their partner's less-than-perfect qualities. But as time passes and these shortcomings begin impacting the relationship, the exploited spouse becomes intolerant. Behaviors initially overlooked or excused are now seen as flaws. Other misjudged the character of their fiancé or were intentionally deceived. Regardless of the prenuptial situation, the exploited spouse now feels bewildered about establishing an equitable relationship.

### **Paul and Marie**

Marie, a young woman in her mid 30's, contacted my office asking for help. She complained she was miserable in her new marriage because her husband, Paul, had "grossly misrepresented" himself while dating. The outgoing, confident, romantic man she thought she had married was actually a cold, introverted, uncommunicative "wimp." She alleged that she had been "duped." Marie had little hope their marriage could be saved or Paul would change. She wanted out of the relationship.

At the end of the first session, I asked to meet Paul. She reluctantly agreed. Several days later, he made an appointment. He was not the fiend she described, but warm and gracious. He greeted me with a hearty handshake and gave me the impression he genuinely wanted to save their marriage. And he even made a plea for help in winning back his wife's love. Following my conversation with Paul, Marie's allegations seemed exaggerated. I asked that they both come to the next session.

At the follow-up appointment, there was a noticeable change in Paul's demeanor. His

charming smile was replaced with an angry frown; it was obvious that he was in no mood to talk. When I confronted Paul he snapped, "Look, I told her I don't have any problems and I don't need to be here! She's the one who needs the help. I'm sick and tired of her constant griping about our marriage. If she thinks she can do better, she's welcome to leave anytime she gets ready!" After a long and bitter tirade, Paul stormed out of my office. At the door he wheeled around and shouted, "Are you coming?!" Marie put her head down and said nothing. Realizing she intended to stay, he slammed the door.

Tearfully, Marie apologized for her Paul's rude behavior. She shared this was a typical example of his behavior. Paul often blamed her for his explosions then he would withdraw into an angry silence and not speak to her for days. What puzzled her was that he never demonstrated this kind of behavior to his co-workers or customers. He was always kind, considerate, and ready to help. Marie dropped out of counseling after two more sessions. Four months later, I received a note stating she and Paul had divorced.

### **Takers: One Thing in Common**

All Takers have one thing in common: They are self-centered people who are reluctant to establish an equitable relationship. Their selfish behavior causes emotional wounds that send their partner into a downward spiral.

Takers are not ignorant of what makes their spouse happy. Two situations confirm this observation: what the Taker does while dating and what they do when their exploited spouse threatens separation or divorce. In both cases a Taker resorts to giving behavior. Dating requires giving behavior to secure the love of their potential mate, and giving is critical for convincing their detached spouse. Once the goal is achieved, however, a Taker reverts to taking behavior. This accounts for the yo-yo effect observed in an inequitable relationship.

### **Attachment Style**

Givers wonder why their mate acts in such a self-centered way; even when the outcome is so negative. A Taker's behavior is best understood by the psychological construct of attachment.

Who we are as adults have a lot to do with the protection, comfort, and support we received (or did not receive) from our childhood caregivers. We quickly learned how available and approachable these individuals were based on our daily interactions with them. Some were nurturing, fostering a sense of security and trust. Others were inconsistently supportive, and some rejecting and unavailable.<sup>8</sup> And because of the quality of their care, we developed an insecure or secure attachment to them.<sup>9</sup>

We transposed this mental model about self and our caregivers to other key relationships (e.g., teachers, classmates, coaches, stepparents). And that perspective morphed into our attachment style.<sup>10</sup>

An insecure attachment style has several basic characteristics: a fear of being abandoned or not loved by a caregiver; worry that a caregiver won't be available or responsive in times of need; a tendency to become clinging, controlling, or coercive to ensure the attachment figure will stay close and available; and a strong preference to maintain independence, and emotional distance from the significant other.<sup>11</sup> As adults those with an insecure attachment

have difficulty establishing intimate relationships. There is often a failure to support their partner during stressful times and an unwillingness to share personal thoughts and feelings. Their style of relating damages social and romantic ties because there is minimal emotional investment. This explains why those with this attachment style experience minor emotional distress when a relationship ends.

Studies confirm that securely attached children manifest radically different behavior: They are more trusting, socially skilled, empathetic, and autonomous; less disruptive and aggressive; have healthier self-concepts; are able to resolve conflict effectively; persevere in difficulties; and problem-solve effectively. As adults they have high self-esteem, enjoy intimate relationships, seek out social support, and are able to share feelings with others. Individuals with this attachment style have more intimate, satisfying, long-term relationships.<sup>12 13</sup>

A spouse's attachment style is critically important to the stability of a marriage; it affects the quality of a couple's daily exchanges. Research shows that individuals with an insecure attachment style have a tendency to become Takers. And those with a secure attachment style, Givers.<sup>4 6 12 14 15 16 17</sup> Takers create inequity causing the underbenefitted spouse to feel exploited, and the net effect is a damaged emotional bond.

### **Born With Bents**

Scripture reveals that who we are as individuals involves more than our attachment style; it is also shaped by an inborn condition called sin.

Every human being is born with a natural inclination to sin; it is a universal condition all inherit because of Adam's failure to obey God's command. And as his descendants, we have hearts that are naturally inclined toward evil. Jeremiah, the prophet, described the heart as "deceitful and desperately wicked" ([Jeremiah 17:9](#)). We are all sinners ([Ephesians 2:3](#)) and prone to act selfishly. [Proverbs 22:15](#) says that foolishness is "*bound up*" (i.e. 'tied to')<sup>18</sup> in the "*heart*" of a child. Even casual observation proves a parent does not have to teach a child taking behaviors; selfishness is an inherent human trait. Man is not a sinner because he sins; he sins because he is a sinner. And it is out of this corrupt nature that every sinful attitude, word, and action originates.

As born sinners, every child is predisposed to develop sinful response patterns. Taking behaviors are learned through parental interaction with the child and modeling. Others develop response patterns from day-to-day experiences with siblings, peers, relatives, neighbors, and friends. When authority figures fail to address and correct these behaviors, they become embedded, sinful habit patterns. And the longer a pattern is practiced, the more pronounced a Taker's personality becomes.

### **Nicole and Darrin**

"My parents helped me move out of our apartment yesterday. I just didn't feel safe anymore. Darrin and I had a bad fight two nights ago, and he hit me. Blood was everywhere. I can't believe it, but he had the nerve to say I'd done it myself. In the past, I wouldn't have said much about it, but I can't keep pretending it's okay. I now see that trying to keep peace with him was the wrong thing to do. The next day he'd act like nothing had happened and that'd be the end of it. He showed no remorse. I guess I'm finally willing to admit that Darrin's temper is getting more and more violent. At first, it was yelling and cursing, then

pushing and shoving me into the doors and walls. Now he's hitting me with his fist. I can't tell you the times I've worn long-sleeved shirts to cover up my bruises. I've been too ashamed to tell my parents. I'm so scared. During the fight two nights ago, he said he'd kill me. I thought he said it out of spite, but now I wonder."

Nicole, a 21 year old, slim, hazel-eyed, blonde related that she had seen "red flags" while dating Darrin. She chose, however, to ignore these warning signals because she was "in love." One evening while visiting his parents, Darrin exploded into a rage at his mother over a minor irritation. Remarkably, his father did not defend his wife. When Nicole tried to reprimand Darrin for his disrespectful behavior, his father turned and whispered, "Let him cool off; if you don't, he'll get worse." The full weight of her future father-in-law's comment didn't register until two years later. "I think he was trying to warn me then. I wish I'd listened."

Darrin, the youngest of three children, was born to an upper middle-class couple, the Johnsons, who were in their late thirties. Due to Mr. Johnson's financial security as a bank vice president, his wife was able to stay home and raise their children. Their home life appeared to be ideal until their oldest child, Ryan, reached adolescence. At sixteen, he became rebellious and defiant. This led to multiple suspensions from school and minor brushes with the law. One night while drinking with several of his friends, his car struck a bridge abutment. Ryan went through the windshield, and was instantly killed. Mrs. Johnson, having already been overly protective and fearful, went into a year long depression. Therapy and medication were ineffective. Her doctor eventually admitted her for inpatient psychiatric treatment. Following a two and one-half week stay, she was discharged.

Mrs. Johnson's over-protectiveness of her remaining two children intensified. She would rarely leave them. Any attempt on her husband's part to discipline the children was met with opposition. To keep peace, Mr. Johnson assumed less and less responsibility. Mrs. Johnson's fears worsened following an incident at school. A classmate accidentally struck Darrin with a baseball bat during gym class. X-rays showed only a mild concussion but their family doctor suggested an overnight stay. The next day he was released to return to school, but Mrs. Johnson insisted he stay at home. From then on she became obsessed with her children's safety to the point of being suffocating. Darrin resisted her attempts to control him, causing frequent arguments. Mr. Johnson made no attempt to intervene. Darrin's behavior escalated into open belligerence and hostility. One evening during dinner, he flew into a rage when his mother asked him to take his elbows off the table. He jumped up, jerked the tablecloth, plates, and food off the table into the floor and stormed out of the house. Nothing was said or done. On another occasion, Darrin shoved his father backward onto the couch and stormed out of the house. There was never any remorse or an apology for his behavior.

In high school Darrin developed a reputation for being domineering, controlling, and abusive, especially with females. Every dating relationship ended in disaster. When he enrolled in a local community college, his charm and good looks caught Nicole's attention. Unaware of his reputation, she was swept off her feet and they began dating. Following a seven-month romance, Darrin proposed and they were married the following summer.

Nicole's fairy tale world came crashing down the first night of their honeymoon cruise in



the Caribbean. When Darrin discovered her menstrual cycle started, he became enraged and refused to speak to her. During the last six days of the cruise he sat on the upper deck reading. Nicole stayed in their cabin and cried. Once home, nothing was said to their parents or friends about his behavior. This marked the beginning of Nicole's two-year nightmare.

### **The Real Problem**

Secular and Christian counselors have written scores of books on marriage. The majority emphasize a couple's best chance for repairing their marriage is in improving relationship skills: communication, anger management, problem solving, and conflict resolution. There is no question these skills are essential for a successful marriage. However, these books do not address the underlying cause of recurring conflict; the reason loving relationships self-destruct. My counseling experience has shown that the primary issue is not a lack of relational skills, but the Taker and his selfish, inconsiderate, careless, insensitive, and abusive behavior. Relational skills, for most couples, is a relatively minor issue during the dating and engagement period; there are recurring efforts to win the love and affection of the other; loving behaviors are prevalent producing an overflow of loving feelings. If there was not a lack of relational skills then, why would this become an issue once a couple marries? The real problem for a good marriage going bad is taking behavior; consistent taking destroys a couple's emotional bond and makes them vulnerable to divorce. Unless a Taker becomes a Giver, there is little hope of having a happy, satisfying marriage; no matter how good their relationship skills are! I have counseled hundreds of couples over the past twenty-seven years and have come to a firm conclusion: The greatest hindrance to marital happiness is not poor relationship skills, but the failure *to identify and change the Taker(s) in the relationship*. Givers, I have found, experience marital happiness because they are other-centered; their partner and marriage are given first place.

Many secular counselors argue that a person's character is fixed and unchangeable; a Taker is always a Taker. In God's economy, that is not true. Change is a realistic possibility for all Christians because we have two essential change agents: God's Word and his power. A Taker cannot legitimately complain, "I'll never change," or "That's the way I am;" he is capable of significant change. He can become a Giver, even if taking behavior has become second nature.

### **Robert and Cindy (revisited)**

At the end of Robert and Cindy's counseling session, I emphasized they had no other alternative but to reconcile. Divorce was not a biblical option in their situation.

"Not an option?" snapped Cindy. "What do you mean? I don't love him anymore. As far as I'm concerned, it's over."

"I'm sorry you feel that way, Cindy, but it's not over according to God's Word," I countered. "As far as I understand your situation, you don't have biblical grounds to divorce your husband. It's God's desire that you two reconcile and learn to live in love with each other."

"That's the point! I don't love him," she fired back angrily.

"I understand but with God's help Robert can become the man he ought to be. And your love for him can be renewed. Robert has said he's ready to change; he has acknowledged



that he's neglected you and the children for years; and he's asked for your forgiveness."

"We've tried that and it didn't work," Cindy retorted. "Did he tell you about Dr. Bentley, the last marriage counselor we saw three years ago? We went for almost a year and there wasn't any change. In fact, the counselor was exasperated with Robert's stubbornness. He refused to keep seeing us. Robert argued with him every session or sat there with an attitude. He made me look like a fool."

Cindy explained that Dr. Bentley had privately advised her to "cut (her) losses" and divorce; that Robert was a "pathetically hopeless case" who would probably never change. She had seriously considered taking his advice but changed her mind because of the children.

"To be honest, I'm not motivated at all to work on our marriage. I feel so hopeless. Maybe Robert needs to see you by himself for awhile," she said discouragingly.

Robert said, "That sounds like a great idea! I need to focus on getting my life straightened out."

Robert and I began meeting on a weekly basis. Our hope was Cindy would eventually join the counseling process. We spent hour after hour talking about communication, anger management, problem solving, and conflict resolution skills. Week after week Robert returned reporting little or no change in Cindy. She was still cold and distant.

It was obvious we weren't making headway. I suggested that Robert invite Cindy to the next session. He was skeptical but promised to give her my message.

I started the session by going over the relationship skills we had addressed. I then asked for feedback. Immediately, Cindy turned to Robert, then to me, and with a look of amazement exploded, "That's not his problem! Robert's problem is that he's totally self-centered. He doesn't need better relationship skills. For Heaven's sake, he's a lawyer! Robert needs to learn to put others before himself. Robert thinks only of Robert."

Her comments hit Robert like a ton of bricks. He sat stunned. He said nothing. He was lifeless. Cindy's unexpected analysis suddenly brought him to his senses. The fog evaporated. Robert's problem was himself. She had put her finger on the key issue: His taking behaviors were destroying her love. Beneath his good looks, charm and eloquence, Robert was a self-centered Taker. By putting himself first, he was driving a wedge between them.

### **Are You a Taker?**

Maybe you are a Taker but do not know it; your mate has been giving you this message but you have not heard it. It has not hit home and caused you to take an honest look at yourself. For some, like Robert, it takes a crisis to get their attention and motivate them to change.

Are you a Taker or Giver? If you are unsure, you need to make an assessment. I encourage you to do three things: Answer the discussion questions *together* at the end of this chapter; carefully read Chapter Three; and complete all of the tests.

If you discover that you are a Taker, do not minimize the harmful effect your behaviors are having on your marriage. Act now while you have the chance.

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### Questions for Him and Her:

1. In my opinion, I'm a Giver/Taker. My conclusion is based on the fact that...
  2. In my opinion, my mate is a Giver/Taker. My conclusion is based on the fact that...
  3. Were your parents Givers or Takers?
  4. I believe that I am/am not satisfying my mate's basic emotional needs.
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## CHAPTER THREE GIVER OR TAKER?

All individuals are Givers or Takers; those who marry come as one or the other. Some drift back and forth between the two; they give only when it is convenient; when it is to their advantage or when they are in a generous mood. Giving inconsistently creates inequity, but not to the degree of a Taker.

Now is the time to determine if you are a Giver or Taker. To help you make an objective evaluation, complete the Giver/Taker test and all of the subtests. Be careful to respond in reference to *yourself* and *your spouse*. Once you have completed the test, add all *true* responses and check the appropriate box in the profile scale. Follow up by comparing your scores.

**Instructions:**

Read each statement carefully. If the statement is true or mostly true for you, then type a "1" in the appropriate column. If the statement is NOT true, then type a "0" or just leave blank.

<b>GIVER/TAKER TEST</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>Wife</b>
	True=1 False=0	True=1 False=0
1. I/my mate make(s) an effort to have meaningful conversation.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I/my mate give(s) hugs and kisses.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I/my mate am(is) respectful of my spouse/me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I/my mate am(is) open and honest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I/my mate say(s) "I love you" often.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I/my mate help(s) around the house with chores.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I/my mate allow(s) freedom in the relationship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I/my mate demonstrate(s) trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. I/my mate call(s) during the day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I/my mate attempt(s) to look attractive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I/my mate enjoy(s) having sex.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I/my mate give(s) gifts.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I/my mate am(is) able to share on a deeper level.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I/my mate give(s) undivided attention.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I/my mate am(is) an involved parent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. I/my mate am(is) respectful of my spouse's/my opinion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. I/my mate make(s) my spouse/me feel significant.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. I/my mate make(s) my spouse/me feel secure.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. I/my mate am(is) accountable to my spouse/me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. I/my mate put(s) my spouse's/my interest first.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. I/my mate do(does) things to please my spouse/me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. I/my mate enjoy(s) being with my spouse/me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I/my mate resolve(s) our differences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. I/my mate share(s) a sphere of interest with my spouse/me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. I/my mate encourage(s) my spouse/me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26. I/my mate try(ies) to understand my spouse's/my viewpoint.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27. I/my mate cooperate(s) on money matters.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
28. I/my mate take(s) an interest in our children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29. I/my mate handle(s) anger appropriately.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30. I/my mate attempt(s) to solve problems constructively.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31. I/my mate encourage(s) my spouse/me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32. I/my mate am(is) empathetic to my spouse/me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33. I/my mate show(s) real concern.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34. I/my mate am(is) a good listener.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35. I/my mate give(s) my spouse/me a second chance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

36. I/my mate apologize(s) when wrong.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37. I/my mate praise(s) my spouse/me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38. I/my mate am(is) patient with my spouse/me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39. I/my mate involve(s) my spouse/me in decision-making.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40. I/my mate am(is) concerned about my spouse's/my happiness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41. I/my mate make(s) my spouse/me feel special.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42. I/my mate take(s) my spouse's/my feelings seriously.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43. I/my mate see(s) my spouse's/my good qualities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
44. I/my mate am(is) proud of my spouse's/my accomplishments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45. I/my mate am(is) complimentary of my spouse's/my appearance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
46. I/my mate pursue(s) a win-win solution to conflict.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
47. I/my mate am(is) sympathetic to my spouse's/my feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
48. I/my mate make(s) my spouse/me feel appreciated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
49. I/my mate see(s) to it that there is a fair division of labor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
50. I/my mate work(s) to improve the marriage.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>PROFILE SCALE</u></b>		
35-50 Giver		
20-34 Inconsistent Giver		
0-19 Taker		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Husband's Profile</b>	<b>Wife's Profile</b>

If you are a Taker, admit it to yourself and your spouse. You are in good company. Don't become discouraged; with God's help, you *can* become a Giver; a partner who gives joy rather than pain. Before the change process is addressed, you will need to identify what type of Taker you are.

### **The Eleven Taker Types**

There are common traits among all Takers, but there is also diversity. The following is a list of the eleven Taker types.<sup>1</sup>

<b>The Pouter</b>	<b>The User</b>	<b>The Player</b>
<b>The Doormat</b>	<b>The Doubter</b>	<b>The Rollercoaster</b>
<b>The Moper</b>	<b>The Bighead</b>	<b>The Avoider</b>
<b>The Controller</b>	<b>The Loner</b>	

Before examining the eleven taker types, there are three facts you must understand. First, a Taker may be dysfunctional in the way they relate to their mate, but that does not mean they have a psychological problem. A Taker's primary problem is in establishing an emotional bond. Their taking behaviors create an inequitable relationship. This becomes the catalyst for their partner stumbling out of love.

Secondly, there is no pure form of any Taker type. It is likely that a Taker will have characteristics of several types.

Thirdly, there are degrees of severity among taker types. Two Takers may have the same type, but one behaves in a more extreme way than the other.

The following is a brief description of the eleven taker types. Short subtests are included for each type. Once you have completed a test, add all *true* responses and mark the Profile Scale.

### **The Pouter**

The Pouter is easily offended, leading to being sullenness and obstinacy. This taker type has a low tolerance for frustration. There is a tendency to be chronically impatient, critical, and irritable unless things go their way. The Pouter does have periods of being enthusiastic and cheerful, but they are short-lived.

The primary characteristic of this type is the tendency to express anger in an indirect way. The Pouter uses a number of strategies: procrastination, dawdling, stubbornness, "forgetting," a lack of cooperation, unwillingness to talk, withdrawal, pouting, inflexibility, negativity, and other similar behaviors.

The Pouter is "difficult," argumentative, unpredictable, and discontented. They behave as an adult and at other times as a child. They can easily switch among a variety of roles as a tactic to gain attention and reassurance from their mate: the martyr, the slighted, the aggrieved, the misunderstood, the contrite, the guilt-ridden, the sickly, or the overworked.

The Pouter is a Taker because of their unpredictable mood. Tension, confusion, and insecurity are stirred up, preventing an emotional bond from developing.

<b>THE POUTER</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>Wife</b>
	True=1 False=0	True=1 False=0
1. I become easily irritated when things don't go my way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Others have said that I can become sullen and moody.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. When I'm in a good mood, it doesn't last very long.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I find that I'm offended over small slights and the mistakes of others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I tend to be impatient with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I'm prone to "clam up" when angry.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. My spouse says that I withdraw and pout when I'm mad at him/her.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I sometimes "forget" on purpose.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I'm stubborn and don't like to give in.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Some say that I can be inflexible and rigid.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I'm prone to be critical of others and overly negative.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I find myself in a lot of arguments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I'm prone to put "guilt trips" on my mate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. My spouse says that I sometimes "act like a child."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I like to play the role of a martyr sometimes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>PROFILE SCALE</u></b>		
<i>9-15 Pouter</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>4-8 Pouter Tendencies</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>0-3 Insignificant</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Husband's Profile</b>	<b>Wife's Profile</b>

### **The Doormat**

The Doormat has an excessive need to be taken care of and is observed in overly submissive and clinging behavior. The Doormat gives the impression they cannot function without their spouse's help.

The Doormat has difficulty making everyday decisions and frequently asks for advice and reassurance. The Doormat pressures their partner to assume full responsibility for every major area of their lives.



The Doormat has a great fear of losing the approval and acceptance of their mate. This prompts them to agree with their spouse even though they may believe they are wrong. The Doormat does whatever it takes to avoid alienating their spouse and losing their sense of security.

The Doormat has an obvious lack of self-confidence because they believe they are not as competent as others. They are reluctant to initiate projects or act independently of their mate. And even when the Doormat can be convinced they are capable, they request constant supervision and reassurance.

Living with a Doormat can be a trying experience. Due to their feelings of helplessness, dependency, fear of abandonment, and self-doubt, the Doormat has little to offer in a marriage. Their neediness creates an inequitable relationship making them a Taker rather than a Giver.

<b>THE DOORMAT</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>Wife</b>
	True=1 False=0	True=1 False=0
1. I like for my mate to take care of me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. My spouse says that I'm overly dependent on him/her.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I need to have my spouse by my side.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I feel helpless sometimes without my mate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I often let my spouse make decisions for me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I need a lot of reassurance from my spouse.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. My mate assumes responsibilities that are mine.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I have a great fear of being rejected by my mate.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I don't like to disagree with my spouse.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I couldn't stand it if my spouse left me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I don't have much self-confidence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I usually don't do as well as others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I often ask my mate to help me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I experience a lot of self-doubt.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. It seems like I have low self-esteem.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<u><b>PROFILE SCALE</b></u> 9-15 Doormat 4-8 Doormat Tendencies 0-3 Insignificant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<b>Husband's Profile</b>	<b>Wife's Profile</b>

### **The Moper**

The Moper is always "down in the dumps and reports chronic feelings of depression and unhappiness. Mopers tend to be overly serious and lack a sense of humor. They believe they do not deserve to have fun or be happy. Their unhappiness is often due to chronic worry and pessimism though they prefer to view themselves as "realistic." Mopers anticipate the worst and doubt things will ever improve.

The Moper is overly self-critical and prone to feel guilty for their shortcomings and failings. They have low self-esteem and express feelings of inadequacy, inferiority, and worthlessness. Mopers focus on the failures of others rather than their positive attributes; this causes the Moper to be negativistic, critical, and judgmental.

The Moper is quiet, introverted, and passive; they prefer to follow rather than lead. And their non-assertiveness often causes personal distress and problems in social and occupational functioning.

The Moper's gloomy mood is a deterrent to the development of intimacy in marriage. Their tendency toward introspection and self-absorption keeps them from becoming a Giver.

<b>THE MOPER</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>Wife</b>
	True=1 False=0	True=1 False=0
1. It seems like I'm rarely happy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. My spouse thinks that I'm a "drag."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I often feel gloomy and down.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. My mate says that I'm often pessimistic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Some say that I don't have a sense of humor.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I'm overly serious.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Sometimes I wonder if I deserve to be happy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I worry a great deal of the time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. It seems like I'm always negative.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I'm not pessimistic; I'm realistic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I get down on myself a lot.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I often feel guilty about my shortcomings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. My spouse thinks that I have a low self-esteem.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I don't have a lot of friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. It's hard for me to stand up for myself sometimes.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>PROFILE SCALE</u></b>		
<i>9-15 Moper</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>4-8 Moper Tendencies</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>0-3 Insignificant</i>		
	<b>Husband's Profile</b>	<b>Wife's Profile</b>

### The Controller

A preoccupation with control characterizes this taker type. A controller is excessively conscientiousness about rules, details, procedures, and schedules at the expense of flexibility, openness, and efficiency. Their need for orderliness and perfection comes out of unrealistic standards. They have a strong compulsion to make every detail perfect and to avoid errors and mistakes, which accounts for their excessive attention to detail even though it results in inconvenience, delay, and unfinished projects. The Controller is oblivious to the annoyance and frustration their rigidity creates.

The Controller is excessively devoted to work even when there is not economic necessity. They find it difficult to relax and take time for leisure activities. When a Controller does take time for a vacation, they are usually uncomfortable. Their thought is that it is an unproductive waste of time. Time spent with friends is usually in an organized activity (e.g. sports) and approached as a serious task requiring careful organization and hard work. Play becomes a structured task requiring perfect performance.

The Controller is excessively conscientious, scrupulous, and rigid about matters of morality, ethics, or values. And they are self-critical when they violate their strict standards of conduct. The Controller is black and white in their compliance, unwilling to allow any rule bending regardless of circumstances. Although the Controller may appear highly moralistic in their behavior, these qualities are usually unrelated to their cultural or religious identification.

The Controller is often unwilling to delegate responsibility to their spouse. They believe they will not do the job properly. The Controller has highly specific ways of doing tasks and becomes frustrated if done differently. They believe there is only one right way of doing things and prefer to do the task themselves.

The Controller has trouble accepting their spouse's viewpoint because they are wrapped up in

their own rigidly held perspective; there is an unwillingness to compromise or change. When a Controller does not have control, they become angry and withdrawn.

It is difficult for the Controller to express tender feelings except in a highly controlled manner. They are uncomfortable when their mate expresses emotions, and respond in a reserved, formal manner. The Controller seems stiff and stilted to their spouse. This is due to a heavy reliance on reason and logic and a lack of emotionality.

The Controller is unable to create a close, intimate relationship because of their rigid control of themselves and their spouse. The absence of freedom stifles their partner's sense of independence and creates a feeling of powerlessness in the relationship. Their mate feels oppressed and unable to be himself or herself, creating a wall that prevents the development of an emotional bond.

<b>THE CONTROLLER</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>Wife</b>
	True=1 False=0	True=1 False=0
1. I like to be in the driver's seat.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I like things done the right way or not at all.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. It is of the greatest importance to follow the rules - no deviations.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Some say that I tend to be a little rigid and inflexible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I sometimes get bogged down with details and don't finish a project.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I like things neat and in order.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. My spouse complains that I'm a perfectionist.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I hate to make errors.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I pay attention to detail.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I'm prone to overwork. Some consider me to be a workaholic.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. It's hard for me to relax and take it easy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I don't have many close friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Vacations are a waste of time. Nothing gets done.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Some say that I'm overly serious, that I don't have much fun.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I'm a little on the "stiff" side socially.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>PROFILE SCALE</u></b>		

<i>9-15 Controller</i> <i>4-8 Controller Tendencies</i> <i>0-3 Insignificant</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Husband's</b> <b>Profile</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Wife's</b> <b>Profile</b>
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### The Avoider

The Avoider is overly sensitive to negative evaluation by their mate. There is an intense fear of criticism, disapproval, and rejection causing the Avoider to avoid their partner unless they are assured of acceptance. The Avoider has a difficult time establishing an emotional bond due to their fear of being exposed, ridiculed, or shamed. They are on high alert and continually scan their social environment for any sign of rejection.

The Avoider is introverted and shy, and is described as being invisible. They avoid any attention that might be disapproving or critical. The Avoider finds it difficult to open up and talk about themselves if there is a risk of being rejected.

The Avoider has a desire for intimacy but feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem keep them from being vulnerable. The same is true with new activities; the Avoider will not be put in a potentially embarrassing situation.

The major problem with this Taker type is similar to that of the Doormat. The Avoider's self-absorption keeps them from contributing positively to their marriage. They desire intimacy, but are too preoccupied with protecting their ego to be a Giver.

<b>THE AVOIDER</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>Wife</b>
	True=1 False=0	True=1 False=0
1. My feelings get hurt easily.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I hate for someone to evaluate or critique me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I sometimes feel like no one likes me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I can't stand the thought of being rejected.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I sometimes wonder if others really accept me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I dread the thought of being embarrassed or humiliated in public.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Some say that I'm shy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. It's hard for me to stand up for myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I don't like for the focus to be on me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. It's hard for me to open up to others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. I have low self-esteem.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I don't like to try new activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I often feel very lonely.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Some say that I tend to be a loner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I don't have many close friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>PROFILE SCALE</u></b>		
<i>9-15 Avoider</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>4-8 Avoider Tendencies</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>0-3 Insignificant</i>		
	<b>Husband's Profile</b>	<b>Wife's Profile</b>

### The User

A User disregards the rights and feelings of their mate. They use deceit, manipulation, or intimidation to gratify their own personal desires. When it comes to decision-making, the User rarely plans but acts impulsively; they have little regard for the possible consequences to themselves and others. Sudden changes in jobs, residences, and relationships are evidence of this disregard. The User may drive while intoxicated, engage in dangerous sex or promiscuity, abuse substances, or behave in other high-risk behaviors with potentially harmful consequences. The User is irritable and aggressive with their spouse and may become verbally and/or physically abusive.

The User is grossly irresponsible regarding work. There may be periods of unemployment even though jobs are available. And a User is likely to quit a job without a realistic plan for finding another. When they do work, they are chronically tardy or absent even though there is no legitimate reason. The User's irresponsible behavior extends to the management of finances. They may default on debts, fail to pay child support payments, or neglect to adequately support their dependents.

The User lacks remorse for their behavior. They are calloused and indifferent and offer only a superficial apology when they hurt, offend, or mistreat their spouse. The User believes their partner "had it coming" or "deserved what they got." There is little guilt or shame for their self-centered behavior.

A User has an inflated, arrogant opinion of themselves, and are outspoken, cocky, and self-assured. This is demonstrated in their gift of gab.

The User is an obvious Taker. Their self-centeredness rules out any possibility of establishing an emotional bond. This Taker type has a poor record when it comes to staying in a long-term relationship. Due to their lack of self-examination, a User will often have one or more failed marriages.

<b>THE USER</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>Wife</b>
	True=1 False=0	True=1 False=0
1. I look out for number one.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. If you get in my way, that's too bad.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. It's a tough world. You've got to fight for what you want.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I sometimes act before I think about the consequences.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I've moved from job to job in the past.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. My carelessness has cost me in the past.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I don't take anything off anybody.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I've had my encounters with the legal system.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I have a tendency to get behind on my bills.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I don't often feel guilty when I do something wrong.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Some say that I'm thick-skinned. Things don't bother me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I don't often apologize.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I feel pretty good about myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I have had a number of relationships in the past.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I've been accused of being self-centered before.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>PROFILE SCALE</u></b>		
9-15 User		
4-8 User Tendencies		
0-3 Insignificant		
	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Husband's Profile</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Wife's Profile</b>

### **The Doubter**

A Doubter mistrusts the motives of their partner; they fear exploitation and being deceived. To protect themselves, the Doubter scrutinizes their family, friends, and associates for evidence of hostile intentions. They question the loyalty and trustworthiness of their spouse with little or no evidence.

The Doubter is reluctant to confide in or become close to their mate due to a fear of betrayal. A deep sense of mistrust keeps their partner at an emotionally comfortable distance.

The Doubter reads demeaning and threatening meanings into innocent comments or events.

An honest mistake on their spouse's part is interpreted as a deliberate and intentional slight or personal attack. The Doubter perceives criticism and insult in their partner's words and actions. This occurs even when their mate is trying to show love and concern. The Doubter is unwilling to forgive even the smallest of insults, injuries, or slights. They are grudge-holders who persist in maintaining a hostile attitude, and waste little time in counterattacking their spouse.

The Doubter's lack of trust may cause them to be jealous and possessive of their mate; they may accuse their spouse of marital unfaithfulness with little or no justification. Although they claim to have proof of infidelity, it is usually nothing more than circumstantial evidence. To prevent betrayal, the Doubter constantly questions the whereabouts, actions, and intentions of their spouse. There may even be an attempt to take complete control of their partner to ensure a sense of security.

The Doubter is a Taker because of their excessive suspiciousness, mistrust, control, and hostility. They rarely establish an emotional bond.

<b>THE DOUBTER</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>Wife</b>
	True=1 False=0	True=1 False=0
1. It's hard for me to trust others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. If you don't watch your back you can get stabbed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. People will rip you off in a heartbeat.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. You've got to protect what's yours.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. To be my friend you've got to prove yourself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I don't like spilling my guts to anybody.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I play my cards close to my vest.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Once you've crossed me, you're on my list.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I don't like others to get too close to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I've been known to hold grudges.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I sometimes feel very jealous of my spouse.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I have thought and even accused my mate of unfaithfulness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. My spouse says that I shut him/her out.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. My spouse complains of a lack of freedom in our relationship.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I've got a problem controlling my anger.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



	<b><u>PROFILE SCALE</u></b>	
	<i>9-15 Doubter</i> <i>4-8 Doubter Tendencies</i> <i>0-3 Insignificant</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Husband's Profile</b>

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Wife's Profile</b>
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### The Bighead

The Bighead has an exaggerated sense of self-importance and is prone to overestimate their abilities and accomplishments. Bigheads believe they deserve admiration, praise, and recognition because of an inflated view of their power, success, brilliance, or beauty.

The Bighead believes they are superior, special, or unique in comparison to their mate. And they expect and demand special treatment because of a sense of entitlement. When their spouse does not cater to them or give them priority, they react with puzzlement or irritation.

The Bighead's self-absorption prevents them from being sensitive to the wants and needs of their partner. They expect to be given whatever they want or think they need. And there is little regard for the negative impact their behavior has on their mate.

The Bighead lacks sensitivity and has difficulty recognizing the needs and feelings of their spouse. However, they assume their partner should be concerned about their welfare. If the focus is diverted from them, they become contemptuous and impatient.

The Bighead is envious of their mate's success because they feel more deserving or entitled. And they find it difficult to acknowledge or praise their spouse's accomplishments and achievements.

It's difficult for the Bighead to establish an emotional bond because of their inflated self-importance, need for excessive admiration, and lack of sensitivity. They are totally self-consumed and incapable of recognizing and fulfilling the emotional needs of their spouse.

<b>THE BIGHEAD</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>Wife</b>
	True=1 False=0	True=1 False=0
1. I don't think I'm stuck-up. I'm just proud of who I am.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I don't get near the recognition that is due me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I think that I'm above average in looks.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I like to associate with people of my class.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. I expect to be respected.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. There are winners and there are losers. I'm a winner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. My spouse tells me that I'm insensitive to his/her needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I don't get too upset about other's pain.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I'm entitled to the best of everything.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Incompetent people really irritate me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Most people are below me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I have a hard time admiring and praising others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I don't feel inferior or inadequate whatsoever.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Some people are just special and should be treated as such.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I believe that I've been quite successful in life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>PROFILE SCALE</u></b>		
<i>9-15 Bighead</i>		
<i>4-8 Bighead Tendencies</i>		
<i>0-3 Insignificant</i>		
	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Husband's Profile</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Wife's Profile</b>

### **The Loner**

The Loner is emotionally detached from their mate. They lack a real desire for emotional closeness with their partner, and receive little personal satisfaction from being part of a family or social group. The Loner is friendless except with those they are related to. They are typically disinterested in the approval and acceptance of others.

The Loner gives the impression of being socially inept, and seems oblivious to the finer points of social interaction. In their interactions with others, they are emotionally flat and do not respond in kind to the smiles, nods, or social gestures of others. The Loner has difficulty expressing their feelings and responds in a passive manner, contributing to the impression they are emotionless, cold, and aloof.

Few Loners date before marrying because of their difficulty in being open and warm. And because of their detachment, they rarely bond or experience relational intimacy with their mate.

<b>THE LONER</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>Wife</b>
	True=1 False=0	True=1 False=0
1. Some say that I'm a loner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I don't have many friends.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I don't really care for close relationships.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I enjoy spending time by myself rather than with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. If you accept me, fine, and if you don't, fine.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Some say that I'm not too sociable.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. My spouse says that I'm cold and distant to him/her.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I don't smile very much.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I keep my feelings to myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I usually hold my anger, even when I'm very mad.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I don't get too involved in social events.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I just want to be left alone most of the time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. It's hard for me to open up to others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Some say that I'm too passive.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. I've never really been close to anybody.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>PROFILE SCALE</u></b>		
<i>9-15 Loner</i>		<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>4-8 Loner Tendencies</i>		<b>Husband's</b>
<i>0-3 Insignificant</i>		<b>Profile</b>
		<b>Wife's</b>
		<b>Profile</b>

### **The Player**

The Player is characterized by excessive emotionality and attention-seeking. When they are not the center of attention, a Player becomes dramatic. At first meeting, they are charming, enthusiastic, and the life of the party. These qualities soon wear thin, however, when the Player insists on being the focus of attention.

The Player may be sexually provocative or seductive; this behavior is observed in a variety of social, occupational, and professional relationships. Their physical appearance is the means by which they draw attention to themselves so the Player spends an excessive amount of time,

energy, and money toward that end. The Player also fishes for compliments. Critical comments from others greatly upset them.

The Player's speech and emotional expression are dramatic and theatrical; most view their behavior as excessive and overdone. They may cry uncontrollably on minor sentimental occasions, embrace casual acquaintances with excessive ardor, or display temper tantrums. The Player has a unique ability to quickly turn on or turn off their emotions, giving others the impression they are insincere and hypocritical.

The Player has difficulty developing an emotional bond because of their consistent attempts to control their partner through emotional manipulation and demands for constant attention. They give little but take much.

<b>THE PLAYER</b>	<b>Husband</b>	<b>Wife</b>
	True=1 False=0	True=1 False=0
1. I tend to be on the emotional side.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. I've been described as the life of the party.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. It is nice to be noticed.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I can sometimes be dramatic to get my point across.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Appearance is everything.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I've been accused of being too provocative.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Clothes make the man/woman.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I absolutely love to be complimented.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. I've my ways in dealing with the opposite sex.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I've been known to throw temper tantrums.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I hate to be criticized.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. I can become emotional at the drop of a hat.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Some have said that I can be superficial and shallow.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I hate not to be in the limelight.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. My spouse says that my attire calls too much attention to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>PROFILE SCALE</u></b>		
<i>9-15 Player</i>		
<i>4-8 Player Tendencies</i>		
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## The Rollercoaster

The Rollercoaster's fear of abandonment creates instability in the marital relationship. To avoid being alone, they will resort to a variety of manipulative behaviors: being inappropriately angry, threatening suicide, or withholding love and affection.

The Rollercoaster switches from putting their spouse on a pedestal to devaluing them as unloving and uncaring. In one moment, they praise their mate for being the only one who really cares, and the next accuse them of not giving or "being there" enough.

The Rollercoaster has an unstable self-image. This can lead to sudden and dramatic shifts in goals, values, opinions, plans about career, sexual identity, and friends. They act dependently toward their spouse then revert to an independent role.

The Rollercoaster displays impulsivity in many potentially self-damaging ways: gambling, spending money irresponsibly, binge eating, substance abuse, engaging in unsafe sex, or driving recklessly. The Rollercoaster is recurrently suicidal and makes gestures or threats when they expect their mate may leave them.

The Rollercoaster manifests emotional instability; this is observed in intense, intermittent depression, irritability, or anxiety. These moods can last from a few hours to a few days. They have difficulty expressing their anger in socially appropriate ways and are extremely sarcastic, bitter, or verbally abusive. The Rollercoaster's angry outbursts are directed toward their mate whom they see as neglectful, withholding, uncaring, or abandoning. Following temper fits, they feel intense guilt and shame, leading to a sense of self-condemnation.

Due to emotional instability and intense feelings of insecurity, the Rollercoaster has difficulty establishing a satisfying marital relationship. As a Taker consumed with protecting their ego, there is little hope of developing an emotional bond.

THE ROLLERCOASTER	Husband	Wife
	True=1 False=0	True=1 False=0
1. It has been hard for me to keep a relationship in the past.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. My worst fear is to be abandoned.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I'd be absolutely furious if my mate rejected me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. I can get angry very quickly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I've threatened to hurt myself before when I was angry with my	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

spouse.		
6. I can make my mate feel like the greatest saint or the greatest sinner.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. I sometimes wonder if my spouse is going to be there for me.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I've had a hard time finding direction for my life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. It's been hard for me to keep good friends in the past.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I've been known to act impulsively.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I tend to be up and down with my mood.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. If you make me angry, you'll regret it.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I have threatened to hurt myself in order to get my way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. I am prone to become irritable and agitated.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Sometimes I like being dependent and other times independent.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b><u>PROFILE SCALE</u></b>		
<i>9-15 Rollercoaster</i>		
<i>4-8 Rollercoaster Tendencies</i>		
<i>0-3 Insignificant</i>		
	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Husband's Profile</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <b>Wife's Profile</b>

### Summing Up

Once you have completed the subtests, write in the taker types for which you have moderate or significant tendencies. Remember, it is possible to have a blend of several types. If you discover you have moderate or significant tendencies for any of these Taker types, work through the discussion questions at the end of this chapter.

<b>HUSBAND</b>		<b>WIFE</b>	
<i>Significant Tendencies</i>	<i>Moderate Tendencies</i>	<i>Significant Tendencies</i>	<i>Moderate Tendencies</i>
1. <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	1. <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
2. <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	2. <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
3. <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	3. <input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

## **Robert and Cindy (revisited)**

"I've been a Taker most of my life. The sad thing is I was totally blind to that fact. If you asked me three months ago, I have no doubt I would've told you I was a Giver. I suppose I've been in denial about my behavior for a long time. Cindy has been trying to get my attention about this for years, but I wouldn't listen. It was easier to blow her off than take an honest look at myself.

I think what bothers me the most is that my wife has been a consistent Giver throughout our marriage. It wasn't until this past year that she got fed up with my taking behavior. I think she came to a place where she felt empty. She wasn't getting anything back from me. She was doing all the giving and I was doing all the taking.

All of the signs were there but I didn't see them. Slowly but surely she stumbled out of love. Looking back, I'd have to say it was my taking that ruined our marriage.

I'm a controller like the test says. I've allowed myself to be totally consumed with my work and what I wanted to do. It came first in my life. I guess I rationalized it by telling myself I was doing it for my family. You know, to give them the nice things they deserve. The truth is I was doing it for myself, to make me feel good. The more money I made the more praise I got and the better I felt about myself. It made me feel important. The crazy thing about it was the more I got the more I wanted. I was on a treadmill and didn't know it.

My problems went way beyond being a workaholic. I guess I had an inflated ego. I began to think I was entitled to special treatment. It was kind of an earned right. Saying it now sounds so selfish, but that's where I was. It had to be my way or no way. I called all of the shots. I was a dictator!

Of course, the bigger Taker I became, the worse our marriage got. I was so blind. I really believe if Cindy hadn't pulled the plug, I would never have seen this about myself or wanted to change. Even though it took a crisis, I'm very grateful it opened my eyes. I just hope she'll give me another chance to prove I can be a consistent Giver to her and the kids."

## **The Bottom Line for Takers**

Takers destroy their marriage by failing to be a consistent Giver. Some Takers do not give because they are needy; they require constant maintenance from their spouse. Their emotional insecurity and sense of helplessness creates an unhealthy dependence drawing the life and energy out of their partner. Others take in direct and forceful ways; they demand, intimidate, manipulate, and maneuver to keep their mate giving despite their disregard for equity.

Regardless of the Taker type, the basic problem is a refusal to give in an equitable way, leading to emotional detachment. Chapter Four describes the positive steps a couple can take to stop the emotional detachment process.

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### Questions for Him and Her:

1. The Giver/Taker test indicates I...
  2. My perception of my relational type is the same as/different from my spouse's.
  3. Review with your spouse those items that you marked False.
  4. Do any of the eleven Taker types describe you? If so, discuss each with your spouse.
- 

### Notes from Chapter Three:

1. American Psychiatric Association (2000). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders, 4th edition, text revision* (DSM-IV-TR). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Press. (The eleven Taker types described in Chapter Three are adaptations of the personality disorders identified in DSM-IV-TR Manual)



## CHAPTER FOUR

### SAVING YOUR DYING MARRIAGE

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**A** stumble not caught leads to a fall; the same is true of a couple stumbling out of love. The failure to act will first destroy the emotional bond, then the marriage.

Professional counselors know most couples stumbling out of love do not seek help. Of the relatively few who do, it is usually a brief consultation with a physician or minister. Most seal their fate by doing nothing; they stand by passively watching their marriage slowly disintegrate. Some make half-hearted attempts, but in the end, they are swept away in divorce.

Divorce, for the average couple, occurs between the second and fifth year of marriage.<sup>1</sup> Calculating the time it takes to make the decision to divorce, separate, establish a mutually agreeable solution about custody and property issues, file paperwork with the court, and wait for the judge's final decree, it is reasonable to assume most couples were experiencing serious problems in the first year of marriage. Ironically, at a time when a couple desperately needs help, they are least likely to ask for it. Some report a sense of shame they are having problems so soon; others lack insight about what is happening.

The purpose of Chapter One was to help you evaluate the current state of your marriage. An emphasis was put on determining what stage of the emotional detachment process you are in. If you are in the Initial Stage, now is the time to take action. Walls have not been built and motivation still exists for restoring your marriage; to delay is to jeopardize your recovery.

It is possible you have already entered the Final Stage. If that is the case, be warned your marriage is in real danger. You are a stumble away from separation or divorce. It is crucial that you respond immediately. A failure to act will damage your emotional bond.

If there is any confusion about the state of your relationship, carefully review the Emotional Detachment Inventory in Chapter One. Knowing the specific stage you are in is essential for determining the intervention you will need to restore your marriage.<sup>2</sup> What is vital for restoration in the Initial Stage may be useless if you have stumbled into the Middle or Final Stage. I will discuss Final Stage intervention strategies first because of the imminent danger.

## **Final Stage Intervention: Apathy Must Be Eliminated**

The primary characteristic of the Final Stage is apathy: the absence of loving feelings toward a mate; an indifference that is represented by emotional distance and isolation. In marriage, apathy, not hate, is the enemy of love.

When anger is buried alive, resentment and bitterness grow. And bitterness when it is fully grown damages the emotional bond, creating apathy.

Maybe you are emotionally detached from your spouse and have become apathetic. Love has disappeared with a desire for restoration; it seems pointless to keep trying. You have looked at all of your options, the pros and cons for staying or leaving; you feel the tension of being caught between escape and the need to cling to what is familiar, safe, and comfortable.

During the Final Stage, it is common for an emotionally detached spouse to seek the "permission" of a counselor, physician or minister to leave their marriage. By sharing an extensive, and sometimes exaggerated history of their emotional wounds, past hurts become the basis for requesting a pardon. Blame is focused on the taking spouse so the giver can assume a victim or martyr role. With blessing in hand, the emotionally detached spouse can gracefully exit the marriage.

Some, in the Final Stage, know they are apathetic but do not have a clue about what to do. Suspended in marital limbo, they hope the inevitable will not happen.

Apathy destroys motivation to keep trying; there is a paralysis of the will. If you are stumbling out of love, there is always hope with God. Your marriage is not a lost cause; He is "the God of hope" ([Romans 15:13](#)). If you will turn to him, you can be assured he will be "a very present help in trouble" ([Psalm 46:1](#)). God has the power to restore your marriage; the ability to warm your cold and calloused heart. Divorce is not your only option; apathy can be conquered and replaced with a love that will last a lifetime.

## **A Preliminary Consideration**

No one should assume they will receive anything from God unless they have a relationship with him. God created every human being ([Acts 17:24-25](#)), but we are not all His children; some are outside of his family and do not have the right to ask him for help.

How do we establish a relationship with God? By realizing that we are all separated at birth from him because of an inborn sinful nature ([Ephesians 2:3](#)). This nature is bent toward sinful attitudes and behavior. Scripture says that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God" ([Romans 3:23](#)). This fallen nature separates us from God because he is perfectly holy; we are unable to live up to his high standard of righteousness. All attempts to bridge that gap by good works, religion, philosophy, morality fail miserably; none of us can be good enough.

Knowing our inability to rescue ourselves, God provided the solution: his sinless son. He took on a human body and voluntarily went to the cross for us. ([Luke 23:14](#)). His sacrifice was to pay our sin debt, and that debt was death ([Romans 6:23](#)). We deserved to die for our sin, but he chose to take our place. By giving his life for ours, he bridged the gap between us and God: "For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ

Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men" ([1 Timothy 2:4-5](#)).

Contrary to popular opinion, there are not many ways to God. Jesus said, "I'm the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" ([John 14:6](#)). It's through faith that we accept him as our sin payment. His desire is that we receive that gift and enter into a relationship with him. [John 1:12](#) explains that "as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become the children of God, even to those who believe in his name." This truth is summed up in [Ephesians 2:8-9](#): "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it's the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." By faith we are able to pass over the great chasm of sin by the bridge of the cross to eternal life. [John 3:16](#) records this amazing promise: "Whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

You can receive God's gift of eternal life through faith: "For whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" ([Romans 10:13](#)). If you have not made this decision, do so right now. Take God at his word; reach out to him in faith. He'll do all he's promised.

If you have trusted Christ as your sin payment, God's Word states you're his child; a legitimate member of his family. You are rightfully entitled to petition him as your Heavenly Father; to confidently expect he will hear and answer your prayers: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who's in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" ([Matthew 7:11](#)). [Hebrews 4:16](#) encourages us to "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

As you work through the following interventions, you will discover how essential his help will be in saving your marriage. Ask him for the ability you will need to break out of the emotional detachment process. He will be there for you.

### Step One: Identifying Bitterness

Unchecked bitterness leads to apathy, choking off the love and respect you had for your partner. Psychological walls are built and emotional distance develops, and the door to divorce opens.

Apathy vanishes when the grip of bitterness is broken. Bitterness is a malignant cancer of the soul that must be checked.

To help you assess for bitterness, use the inventory below. Complete all of the inventory items, add all true responses, and mark the Profile Scale score. Be sure to answer in light of your marital experience over the past six months.

<b>BITTERNESS INVENTORY</b>	<b>Husband</b>		<b>Wife</b>	
	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
1. I have harbored resentment toward my spouse for months.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I've recurrently spoken to others about my spouse in an unloving manner.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. I often entertain hostile thoughts about my mate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I can't stand for my spouse to touch me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I go out of my way to avoid my mate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. When I've around my spouse I tend to be tense and irritable.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I often have revengeful thoughts about my mate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I often mentally rehearse the bad things that my spouse has said and done to me over the years.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I tend to focus solely on the negative characteristics of my mate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I can go long periods without speaking to my spouse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I recurrently experience physical symptoms (i.e., acid stomach, nervousness, headaches, muscle tension, insomnia, diarrhea, etc.) because I'm so resentful toward my mate.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I recurrently experience emotional symptoms (i.e., anxiety, depression, bad dreams, etc.) because I'm so resentful toward my spouse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. I continually feel cold and calloused toward my spouse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. I often feel like hurting my mate verbally or physically.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. I often think of leaving my spouse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>PROFILE SCALE</b>	<b>H</b>	<b>W</b>		
<i>9-15 Intense Bitterness</i>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>		
<i>4-8 Moderate Bitterness</i>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>		
<i>0-3 Minimal Bitterness</i>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>		

If you are moderately or intensely bitter, you have likely become apathetic toward your spouse. A high score may indicate you have entered the Final Stage. To stop this decline, bitterness must be eliminated.

### **Ancient Examples of Bitterness**

The Bible has a lot to say about bitterness; a surprising number of men and women experienced bitterness during their lives. Scripture records those painful circumstances.

Six times Job lamented he had "bitterness of soul" ([3:20](#); [7:11](#); [9:18](#); [10:1](#); [21:25](#); [23:2](#)): "I'll speak in the anguish of spirit. I'll complain in the *bitterness of my soul*" (Job 7:11). "My soul loathes my life. I'll give free course to my complaint. I'll speak in the *bitterness of my*

soul" (Job 10:1).

After Hezekiah, king of Judah, recovered from a life-threatening sickness, he wrote: "Like a crane or a swallow, so I chattered. I mourned like a dove. My eyes fail from looking upward. O Lord, I am oppressed. Undertake for me! What shall I say? He has both spoken to me, and He Himself has done it. I shall walk carefully all my years in the *bitterness of my soul*" ([Isaiah 38:14-15](#)).

The prophet Jeremiah expressed his bitterness over Jerusalem's destruction by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar: "He has been to me like a bear lying in wait, like a lion in ambush. He has turned aside my ways and torn me in pieces. He has made me desolate. He has bent His bow and set me up as a target for the arrow. He has caused the arrows of His quiver to pierce my loins. I've become the ridicule both from all my people and their taunting song all the day. He has filled me with *bitterness*, He has made me drink wormwood" ([Lamentations 3:10-15](#)).

Hannah, the wife of Elkanah, declared she had "*bitterness of soul*" because of her inability to conceive a child. Penninah, Elkanah's second wife who proudly bore him children, tormented Hannah about her infertility: "She provoked her severely to make her miserable because the Lord had closed her womb. So it was year by year when she went up to the house of the Lord she provoked her; therefore she wept and didn't eat" ([I Samuel 1:6-7](#)).

Bitterness took root in the hearts of these Old Testament believers; it was the result of deep emotional pain associated with their losses: Job, in the loss of all ten of his children, his wealth, and his physical health; Hezekiah in the loss of his health and nearly his life; Jeremiah in the destruction of lives in the siege and the loss of his country's freedom to a pagan nation; and Hannah in the loss of her self-worth as an infertile wife.

The word bitterness comes from the Greek verb *pikraino*,<sup>3</sup> meaning to pierce with a sharp, pointed instrument. When life's stabbing blows leave deep, painful wounds, bitterness can occur. Mary and Joseph brought the infant Jesus to the Temple to be circumcised according to the Mosaic Law; an elderly man named Simeon blessed him. He prophesied to the child's mother: "He (Jesus) is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel and for a sign, which will be spoken against (yes, a sword will *pierce through your own soul* also) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed" ([Luke 2:34-35](#)). Mary experienced this heart-piercing pain when her son was brutally murdered. Like so many mothers, life's dagger was plunged into her soul.

The word *pikraino* also has the idea of a pungent (bitter) smell or taste. When life is painful we instinctively "spit out" the "foul taste" of our experience; we do so by trying to escape or avoid the circumstance or person causing our pain. Some escape through separation, divorce, abandonment, or suicide. Others retreat into the pleasures of food, alcohol, drugs, sex, shopping, pornography, leisure, or gambling.

And some do not retreat; they address their pain in a constructive way without becoming embittered. Others, however, seem powerless to avoid this trap. How is this difference explained? The secret lies in our perspective: how we choose to interpret and respond to pain.

Counselors frequently hear complaints about a client's circumstances or the people

causing their suffering. Their complaints can be summed up in one sentence: "Why is this happening to me?" There are a number of beliefs associated with this complaint: "God must not love me;" "God must not be in control of my life;" "I have a right to be angry with God for allowing this;" and "I have a right to be angry with him/her (i.e. the offender) for hurting me." Any of these beliefs can start an internal rebellion against God and/or the offender.

Job's bitterness is heard in his angry reactions to his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, Zophar. He repeatedly "contended" with the Almighty ([40:2](#)); Job accused him of injustice for being silent ([34:17, 29](#)).

Scripture does state that Hannah was embittered, but it is implied. She understood God had closed her womb ([I Samuel 1:5](#)), raising the age-old question: "Why me (God)?" Her infertility would've been all the more painful as her rival Peninnah kept producing one child after the other.

The Bible records Peninnah "provoked" Hannah "severely" to make her life "miserable" ([I Samuel 1:6](#)). And this continual provocation had its intended effect; it created an embittered spirit.

In ancient Israel, a Jewish man's pride and posterity was associated with having a son carry on his name. A barren wife was thought to be cursed by God. To bear a child, particularly a "quiver full" ([Psalms 127:5](#)), was seen as a sign of His blessing. Peninnah seized on this by reminding Hannah that she, alone, had provided their husband with descendants. Her harassment kept Hannah heartbroken and distressed. [I Samuel 1:6](#) relates that she "wept and didn't eat;" she became bitter and depressed.

Unchecked bitterness in a marriage can lead to apathy. And apathy can end in a loveless coexistence, separation or divorce. How can this be avoided? The biblical answer is simple but profound: "Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice" ([Ephesians 4:31](#)). Bitterness must be eliminated to check apathy. Steps Two and Three explain that process.

### **Step Two: Adopting a Biblical Perspective**

The apostle Paul suffered greatly for Christ's name, ([2 Corinthians 11:24-28](#)) but did not become bitter. There were two reasons: He constantly maintained a proper perspective toward his suffering, and relied on God's grace. Paul saw his pain as God's work in his life. He did not consider himself a victim; someone entitled to complain and indulge in self-pity. A biblical perspective enabled him to persevere and not blame God for wrongdoing or injustice.

Paul relied on God's grace. [II Corinthians 12:7](#) reveals that he was given "a thorn (lit. a stake) in the flesh," possibly a debilitating physical illness. Paul initially thought of this thorn as a hindrance to a wider and more effective ministry. He asked God three times (vs. 8) to remove it, and God responded, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (vs. 9). Rather than becoming embittered, Paul rejoiced: "Therefore most gladly I'll boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (vs. 9-10). Paul was able to endure terrible suffering because he kept a biblical perspective and relied on God's grace.

Job and Hannah became bitter. But with God's help peace and joy were restored in their



lives. [I Samuel 1:10-11](#) reveals Hannah "was in *bitterness of soul* and prayed to the Lord and wept in anguish. Then she made a vow and said, O Lord of hosts, if You'll indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me and not forget your maidservant but will give your maidservant a male child, then I'll give him to the Lord all the days of his life and no razor shall come upon his head." In her bitterness Hannah turned to God for help. She poured out her heart and asked for a son. And following her prayer there was a remarkable change in her perspective and emotional state: "The woman went her way and ate and her face was no longer sad" ([I Samuel 1:18](#)). Her depression lifted and her bitterness was exchanged for a settled heart brimming with joy.

Job realized his initial reaction was foolish and humbled himself before God: "Then Job answered the Lord and said, 'Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I've spoken, but I won't answer; yes, twice, but I'll proceed no further...I've heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes'" ([Job 40: 4-5; 42: 5-6](#)). Job's change of perspective brought about a change in his emotional state: "Then all his brothers, all his sisters, and all those who had been his acquaintances before came to him and ate food with him in his house and they consoled him and comforted him for all the adversity that the Lord had brought upon him." ([Job 42: 11](#)). Job's bitterness was replaced with an acceptance of God's sovereignty.

The right perspective coupled with God's grace enabled Hannah and Job to get rid of bitterness, and restore peace and joy in their lives. Neither received a promise from God that their situation would end, but he graciously chose to bless them. Hannah was given a child according to her petition: "And Elkanah knew Hannah his wife and the Lord remembered her. So it came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son and called his name Samuel saying, I've asked for him from the Lord" ([I Samuel 1:19-20](#)). Samuel, who was instrumental in paving the way for King David, became one of Israel's renowned spiritual leaders.

As for Job, "the Lord restored Job's losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before...now the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters... after this Job lived one hundred and forty years and saw his children and grandchildren for four generations. So Job died, old and full of days" ([Job 42:12-13; 16-17](#)).

### **Step Three: Granting Forgiveness**

Forgiveness is crucial for healing when you have been wounded by someone. [Ephesians 4:31-32](#) commands us to "put away" bitterness "and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, *forgiving one another*, just as God in Christ also forgave you." It is no coincidence the instruction to forgive immediately follows the command to get rid of bitterness. Forgiveness is essential for eliminating bitterness and healing emotionally.

Scripture does not inform us if Hannah forgave her tormentor. But it is reasonable to assume her new perspective made forgiveness possible. After Hannah weaned Samuel, she took him and a offering to the tabernacle of the Lord. She honored her vow by giving Samuel back to God. She prayed, "My heart rejoices in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord. *I smile at my enemies* because I rejoice in your salvation" ([I Samuel 1:28-2:1](#)). Hannah's prayer

revealed a heart of joy; a woman who could “smile at (her) enemies.”

Job's friends offered no comfort during his trials, but sarcastically rebuked and condemned him. Following his vision of God's glory and his repentance, Job forgave them. This is evident in the fact that he interceded on their behalf to God ([Job 42:8](#)).

As for Job's indictments against God, he "repented in dust and ashes." A glimpse of God's majesty and greatness helped him see the foolishness of his sin. He confessed his sin and God granted him forgiveness. Bitterness now gone, he had renewed fellowship with the Creator.

#### **Step Four: Filling the Emotional Vacuum (Emotional Rebonding)**

When bitterness is uprooted, apathy vanishes and the liberated spouse can withdraw from the Final Stage. The wall that separated the emotionally detached spouse from the Taker is leveled, and a new opportunity for reunion emerges. However, as the psychological debris is cleared away, the couple is faced with a different challenge: to fill the emotional void left by the vacuum.

Emotional rebonding is difficult for the disaffected spouse. The wall has come down, but there is apprehension about reconnecting with the Taker. An emotional reunion puts the spouse at risk for being wounded again. The temptation to withdraw must be avoided or the restoration process will stall. Decisive action must be taken to fill the emotional vacuum.

Resistance to rebonding is a common reaction of disaffected spouses. Their caution is heard in the statement, "I don't love him (her) anymore; how can I do something that I don't feel?" But the detached spouse cannot insist on feelings before taking action; they must act to move out of the Final Stage.

Consider the following illustration. You have not slept well because of anxiety about mounting bills. Your alarm clock goes off at 5:30; you moan the proverbial truck has run over you then slap the snooze button. Somewhere on the fringe of consciousness you remember that it takes thirty minutes to get ready, fifteen minutes to eat breakfast, twenty minutes to drive to work. And you remember you must be at a regional sales meeting by 8:00 a.m. In seconds, you weigh out the pros and cons of staying in bed (as your feelings demand you do) and of getting up and showering (because it is the responsible thing to do). You opt for the latter, in spite of your feelings, and get ready. The toast is burned and the eggs are dry, which adds irritation to your sluggish mood. Traffic is bad but you arrive on time. You head toward your meeting and after another cup of coffee you begin to wake up. There is light-hearted conversation and by the end of the meeting you are whistling as you head to your office. The day turns out productive, and you are glad you resisted your feelings to stay in bed.

Was it hypocritical to go to work even though you did not feel like it? Of course not! You did the responsible thing contrary to your feelings. If you had arrived at work and told your coworkers you could not wait to get there, then you would be hypocritical. If God commands a behavior, we are to obey regardless of our feelings.

The application of this principle is obvious: The hesitant spouse must move toward their partner regardless of feelings; they must act *as if* they already possess loving feelings.

#### **Robert and Cindy (Revisited)**

"I was definitely in the Final Stage when I told Robert I wanted a divorce. I didn't care anymore. Even though I could see some change, I felt like it was too little, too late. My



feelings for Robert were dead."

"I guess we'd already be divorced if you hadn't challenged me about my bitterness. I never realized how bitter I was toward Robert. The truth is I had harbored so much hurt and anger for so many years it turned into something very ugly. I was cold and hard-hearted toward Robert. I'm almost too ashamed to admit it, but I didn't care anymore. I was apathetic."

"It was my pride that kept him at the center of all of our problems. He was the one, in my mind, who had ruined our marriage. He was the one who pushed me out of our relationship. I can now see I played a part. I allowed my bitterness to shut him out of my life."

"I appreciate the fact you encouraged me to take a biblical perspective about my situation. Honestly, I had come to a place where I felt entitled to divorce Robert. I no longer loved him. I actually thought not loving him was reason enough to end our marriage. I can now see I was wrong. To tell the truth, I didn't stop to find out what the Bible says about divorce. I was acting on my feelings."

"It's been hard work tearing down the wall I built between Robert and myself. But with God's help it's beginning to happen. We're starting to talk more especially about how we both got off track and got into this mess. We're getting closer and I can truly say I want to re-bond with my husband. I want to recapture the love I once had for him. I'm hopeful it'll happen. God has been faithful so far. I know I can count on him to help us finish what we've started."

### **Middle Stage Intervention: Relational Walls Must Not Be Built**

The spouse in the Middle Stage has a dilemma that requires a different intervention. A relational wall is beginning to be built with the bricks and mortar of resentment; the erection of the wall must be stopped.

#### **Step One: Stopping the Blame Game (Bricks and Mortar)**

The Middle Stage is a dangerous juncture in the emotional detachment process. At this point the exploited spouse has already disclosed their unhappiness about the marriage. Hope has diminished and resentment is growing; they are no longer willing to be hurt by the Taker.

At the center of their resentment is blame; the Taker is responsible for their unhappiness and pain. Blame allows the exploited spouse to maintain a sense of adequacy and self-worth by placing the failure on the Taker. Blaming, however, involves a high degree of self-deception that prevents them from seeing their need for change.

Blaming was Adam and Eve's first response when caught in sin. When questioned, Adam blamed Eve and implicated the Creator: "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree and I ate" (3:12). God turned to Eve and asked, "...what is this you've done?" (3:13). Eve, reluctant to assume the blame placed on her by Adam, pointed to the serpent: "And the woman said, the serpent deceived me, and I ate" (3:13).

Our first parents resorted to blaming to deal with their shame and guilt. Not much has changed since then. Modern day husbands and wives continue to blame one another when problems occur.

In the early 1970's, research was done in the area of attribution theory. According to this model, attributions provide an explanation for the actions of others; they help us decide how we will respond and make predictions about their future behavior.<sup>4</sup>

Consider a co-worker who walks past you without speaking. You might choose to attribute their rude behavior to an external event ("He's under a lot of stress right now") or an internal factor ("He's always a cold and aloof person") as a means of forming your response. If you accept the external explanation, you would be supportive and understanding. If the other appeared to be true, you would avoid your co-worker.

Attribution research has shown the majority of husbands and wives blame their partner for the negative state of their marriage. Blaming allows positive behaviors to be attributed to themselves and negative behaviors to their mate; they take credit for the good acts while denying the bad acts. Blame shifting never benefits a relationship; it always leads to defensiveness and animosity. The emotional detachment process in the Middle Stage is reversed by stopping the blame game.

### **Step Two: Accepting Personal Responsibility**

How is blaming stopped? God's response to Adam and Eve provides the answer: He held them both responsible ([Genesis 3:16-19](#)); neither was allowed to avoid guilt by pointing a finger at the other.

Most counselors know that rarely is one partner responsible for the problems in a marriage. If a relationship is on the rocks, both had a part and both are responsible for repairing the damaged bond.

Being married to a Taker makes it easy to shift the blame. But the exploited spouse needs to be honest about their contribution to the dysfunction. Distorted perception may prevent them from seeing the truth about themselves.

Accepting blame is difficult; we all have a problem coming clean about our bad behavior. King David, "a man after (God's) own heart," (I Samuel 13:14) found himself dodging responsibility for sinful behavior. He went a whole year without confessing his adulterous affair with Bathsheba and murder of her husband, Uriah. It took a special messenger from God, Nathan the prophet, to confront David. Only then was he willing to repent and make a full confession.

God has the ability to accurately judge our behavior: "And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:13). His omniscience allows him to search the innermost places of our hearts. David came to understand this truth: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxieties *and see if there is any wicked way in me*, and lead me in the way everlasting" ([Psalm 139:23-24](#)).

The full truth about your marriage cannot be understood until you ask God for wisdom: "If any man lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without fault" (James 1:5). He can provide the understanding you need through his Word, a godly counselor, or your conscience. Do not minimize your partner's feedback. Consider what they have to say. Be ready to acknowledge your faults and ask for their forgiveness (James 5:16). Convey your willingness to make the changes God requires.

### **Step Three: Demonstrating Love**

Positive behavior exchanges between a couple strengthens a damaged emotional bond. The Bible refers to this mutual exchange as love; giving unselfishly to another. It is not focused on

feelings but caring, thoughtful behaviors.

Several exercises have been included to help you practically demonstrate love to your spouse. Each has been designed for three reasons: to see your spouse in a more positive light; to increase your sensitivity and attentiveness toward your spouse; and to foster more loving feelings toward one another.

The *Loving You List* is a practical application of the instruction found in [Romans 15:2](#). We are encouraged to "please (our) neighbor (i.e. your spouse is your closest neighbor) for his good, leading to edification." The same idea is found in [Philippians 2:3-4](#): "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

Create a list of small requests that would convey love to you and give the list to your spouse. Here is a sample of requests others have made: Make an unexpected phone call to say, "I've been thinking about you today;" send a card for no special reason; make all the arrangements for a special night out; leave a love note on her pillow; prepare his favorite meal; take the children out for a few hours; wear his favorite negligee; give a small, unanticipated gift. Everyday choose one activity on your spouse's list to complete. When your spouse completes a loving activity on your list, make a note. At the end of the week, share your private record of their loving acts. And express your gratitude for the love you've received.

The *Character Inventory* exercise is used to rebuild respect for your mate. When a spouse is stumbling out of love, it is easy to minimize or distort a Taker's character qualities. Character strengths can appear to be weaknesses. [Philippians 4:8](#) instructs believers to direct their focus on the positive: "Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there be any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things."

Make a list of five character qualities you once admired in your partner. Then write a brief description of an incident, event, or situation that displayed that quality. Note how it made you feel about them. Now share the list with your spouse in a quiet, private moment.

The *Praise Letter* is a variation of the *Character Inventory* exercise. To praise someone is "to give value, to lift up, to extol, to magnify, to honor, to commend, or to applaud" them. Everyone loves to be praised including your partner. Focusing positively on your spouse is a reliable method for making them feel appreciated and valuable. Ask yourself, "What do I really appreciate about my spouse that I haven't verbalized to them in awhile? What good qualities, good deeds, or good attitudes can I recall?" List five specific praiseworthy things about your mate. Use your list as an outline for a Praise Letter. They may be small, routine duties (e.g., fixing leaky faucets, providing financially for the family, cooking delicious meals) that are faithfully performed. Write out why you appreciate those things and how you have benefited. Be truthful and generous in your praise. When you have finished, read it aloud to your partner. You will discover that by sincerely praising your mate, they will be inspired to give their best to you.

Another exercise that rekindles love is *Covenant Renewal*. This activity reaffirms your marriage covenant. A covenant is a solemn and binding agreement made between two parties

in the presence of God ([Proverbs 2:17](#); [Malachi 2:14](#)). *The Covenant Renewal* is a statement of promise that you will faithfully and exclusively meet your partner's need for companionship and intimacy ([Genesis 2:18](#)).

Those stumbling out of love often disregard their marriage covenant. *Covenant Renewal* is designed to authenticate and fortify that agreement. Use the outline below to renew your marriage commitment.

### **Covenant Renewal**

1. A promise of a Christ-centered home
2. A promise of a lifetime commitment
3. A promise of emotional and physical intimacy
4. A promise of mutual respect
5. A promise of role responsibility
6. A promise of constructive conflict resolution
7. A promise of family involvement

When you have finished your covenant, read it aloud to your mate. Sign and date the agreement, then ask your partner to do the same.

For those more comfortable speaking than writing, *Memory Lane* can be used to stimulate a loving and meaningful conversation. Choose any of the subjects below (or your own) and share a story from your experience.

1. How we first met
2. Our first date
3. Our courtship
4. Our wedding day
5. Our honeymoon
6. Our most romantic/special moment
7. The crisis that brought us closer
8. The early struggles to make it financially
9. Our first vacation (without children)
10. Our most thrilling experience

### **Initial Stage Intervention: Unrealistic Expectations Exchanged for Realistic Ones**

Spouses in the Initial Stage report feeling disappointed, even disillusioned, when they discover their expectations were unrealistic. And when their partner is seen a more realistic light, confrontation and conflict occur. Intervention in this stage involves two important issues: addressing marital expectations and learning to cope with conflict effectively.

#### **Step One: Adopting Realistic Expectations**

All newlyweds enter marriage with expectations. Because we are imperfect people, occasional disappointments occur. However, when a spouse's expectations are consistently unfulfilled, serious problems develop.

Some discover the loving behaviors lavished on them before marriage gradually stopped

after the marital knot was tied. The difference between their expectations and reality left them feeling disappointed, deceived, and disillusioned.

Others report they had no illusions about their fiancé's shortcomings, but were hopeful their spouse could be shaped into a proper husband or wife. They, too, were left feeling disappointed and disillusioned when they realized their mate was not interested in change.

The detachment process cannot be stopped at this stage unless the disillusioned spouse adopts realistic expectations of their partner. A refusal to allow their mate to live below a hero or heroine status will trigger a stumble into the Middle Stage.

Spouses with unrealistic expectations are usually unaware of their misconception. The Marital Expectations Inventory will help you determine if your expectations are realistic or idealistic. Mark each test item true or false, add all true responses, and place your Profile Scale Score in the box below. Compare your score with your partner's score.

<b>MARITAL EXPECTATIONS INVENTORY</b>	<b>Husband</b>		<b>Wife</b>	
	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>F</b>
1. A good marriage is one in which all disagreements are avoided.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. My spouse should be able to sense my needs and thoughts.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. In a close relationship a spouse should meet all of their partner's needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. My spouse should be responsible for insuring my happiness in our marriage.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. My spouse should be completely supportive of all of my ideas and actions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. Being in love means my mate should consistently feel real passion toward me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. As a married spouse, I don't have to be as polite or nice to my mate as I'd be to a friend or stranger	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. Getting ahead (higher standard of living) should be one of our main priorities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. My spouse knows that I love him/her. I don't think it has to be spelled out all the time.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I believe that I should have my sphere of interests and she/he should have hers/his.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. My spouse should always respect my privacy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. My spouse should always accept me the way I am, bad habits and all.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. I'm not the affectionate type. My spouse should understand that.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. Sex with my mate should be perfect.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
15. A good marriage is one without pain and conflict.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
16. Being in love is a chemistry between two people. You shouldn't have to work at what is natural.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
17. Differences between my spouse and myself mean incompatibility.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
18. My spouse should be dependent on me.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
19. I think that the leadership role of the home should be shared between both spouses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
20. Some issues just don't need to be discussed.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
21. My mate doesn't need to know everything. The truth can sometimes be too painful.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
22. My spouse is responsible for my sense of security.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
23. My spouse should always be available to me	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
24. My spouse shouldn't expect me to give up my rights.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
25. Arguing is always wrong in a marital relationship.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
26. A spouse should be able to discuss their marital problems with their best friend.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
27. It's okay to go into debt if the family will benefit from it.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
28. If my spouse won't meet my needs, I see no reason to meet his/hers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. If I'm not happy in my marriage, why should I have to stay in it and be miserable?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. True love for each other should allow us to see eye to eye on every issue.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<b>PROFILE SCALE SCORE</b>	<b>H</b>		<b>W</b>	
<i>30-21 Unrealistic and/or idealistic expectations of mate</i>	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
<i>20-11 Mix of realistic and unrealistic expectations of mate</i>	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	
<i>10-0 Realistic expectations of mate</i>	<input type="text"/>		<input type="text"/>	

If you have an elevated score, your expectations may be unrealistic. Ask your spouse to go through your inventory with you. Examine all inventory items marked true. Ask for their honest feedback. And be willing to hear them out; even if what they share makes you uncomfortable. If you discover your expectations are idealistic, revise or eliminate them.

It is important that you mutually agree on the expectations you have of one another. Work through the list (below) of common marital issues and discuss your expectations about each area.

1. Communication/conflict resolution
2. Time together
3. Emotional intimacy
4. Physical intimacy
5. Role responsibilities
6. Job/career
7. Money management
8. Care/discipline of children
9. Household chores
10. Social involvement
11. In-laws
12. Leisure/vacations/holidays
13. Spiritual life
14. Short and long-term goals.

## **Step Two: Learning Conflict Resolution Skills**

The realities of marriage impact early on and lead to conflict. A couple without conflict resolution skills stumbles into the Middle Stage.

The ability to resolve conflict constructively is crucial to the Initial Stage. Nothing destroys the emotional bond more quickly than mishandling conflict. When conflict is resolved, love is nurtured and the couple's bond is strengthened.

Conflict is inevitable for two reasons. We are all different (e.g., male and female; temperament; family background) and live in a fallen world. No couple sees life from the same perspective or agrees on every issue. The issue is not whether there are conflicts, but how are they handled.

The greatest hindrance to resolving conflict occurs when a couple adopts a win-lose approach. Discussing an issue in a competitive, aggressive atmosphere ends in someone being hurt and offended. This is a Taker's biggest gun in maintaining power and control. The win-lose approach includes a number of tactics: attack, withdrawal, filibuster, blame, put-downs, guilt, explosion, silence, and exaggeration. The other person is intentionally placed at a psychological disadvantage so they will lose the argument. The irony is no one wins when they get the upper hand. And winning an argument is not the goal: it is resolving the conflict. When a conflict is resolved the couple wins (i.e. win-win) and the emotional bond is strengthened.

This approach is called *fair fighting*.<sup>5</sup> It is a set of ground rules that keep a couple "in bounds" during their dispute. When they honor these rules, disrespect and abuse do not occur.



It's similar to a referee explaining the rules to boxers before a match. He instructs them about a fair fight (e.g., no hitting below the belt; no hitting while on the ropes; no holding; no biting) and the penalty for violating the rules. During conflict, emotions can run high making rules for a fair fight essential. When there are no rules, hurtful comments are made that can compound a couple's problems and damage their bond.<sup>6</sup>

## **RULES FOR A FAIR FIGHT**

### **Basic Assumptions**

1. Conflict is inevitable and sometimes unavoidable.
2. Conflict is to be a win-win proposition.
3. Resolved conflict can strengthen your marriage.
4. Love is the underlying motive for conflict resolution.
5. Mutual respect and understanding are the underlying methods of conflict resolution.
6. Resolving conflict is the responsibility of both spouses.

### **Basic Rules**

1. Consider all the factors in the matter before confronting your spouse.
2. Pray about the issue before confronting your spouse.
3. Take time to cool off if you are too angry to fight fair.
4. Be lovingly honest about how you see the matter at hand.
5. Listen carefully without interrupting your spouse.
6. Respect their opinion even if you disagree with what they are saying.
7. Keep the conversation focused on the problem. Refuse to digress to the past or other problems.
8. Remember, it is 'we' against the problem and not each other.
9. Don't accuse, blame, criticize, insult, or personally attack your partner.
10. Use "I" messages rather than "you" messages. ("I'm angry because...").
11. If either spouse accidentally or intentionally goes out of bounds agree to call "foul."
12. Be solution-oriented during the discussion.
13. Be willing to negotiate and compromise.
14. Stick to observable behavior and refrain from assigning motives to your partner.
15. Ask for clarification when needed.
16. Table a matter if either of you become too angry to talk. Wait until your temper is under control. Then come back to the table as soon as possible to resolve the issue.
17. If your spouse reproves you, recognize that God may be using them to correct you. ("He who hates reproof is stupid" [Proverbs 12:1](#)).
18. If you are wrong, admit it and ask your partner's forgiveness.
19. Grant your partner forgiveness if it is requested. Do not question their sincerity or motive.
20. If your partner chooses to violate these rules, gently remind them of your original agreement.
21. In the event of an impasse, mutually agree on a godly person (e.g., pastor, elder, Christian counselor) who can assist you in resolving the conflict.



If you have worked your way through the steps of a particular stage, you should be noticing a change; change in your attitude and actions toward your mate. I hope that your change is motivating them to change. Progress sometimes is slower than we would like so pray for God's grace to be patient. Remain expectant as you depend on him to bring healing.

Stopping the emotional detachment process is not enough to save your marriage. There are two separate issues that must be addressed: You must lay a new foundation on which to build your marriage. The Taker(s) must become a Giver. Sidestepping either of these issue will reopen the door to the emotional detachment process. The exploited spouse will stumble out of love again. This issue will be discussed first because of its greater potential to damage the emotional bond.

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### **Questions for Him and Her:**

1. Are you serious about stopping the emotional detachment process in your relationship and starting over with your mate? If not, honestly explain why.
2. Where are you in the emotional detachment process?
3. Have you and your spouse completed the appropriate intervention for the stage that you are in? If not, why?
4. Have you started the intervention process but became stuck and gave up? Discuss the reasons with your spouse and commit to starting over.
5. Discuss the Rules for a Fair Fight list. Mark those items that you and your spouse need to improve.

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### **Notes from Chapter Four:**

1. Spanier, G.B & Thompson, L. (1984). *Parting: The aftermath of separation and divorce*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage (p. 13).
2. Kayser, K. (1993). *When love dies: The process of marital disaffection*. New York: The Guilford Press (pp. 140-156). The concept of prescribing an effective intervention strategy for each specific stage, of what I term the emotional detachment process, is a biblical adaptation of Karen Kayser's proposed model. She recommends stage specific strategies for the clinician's use during the counseling process.
3. Vine, W.E., Unger, M., & White, W. (1984). *An expository dictionary of biblical words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers (p. 121).
4. Myers, D.G. (1981). *The inflated self: Human illusions and the biblical call to hope*. New York: The Seabury Press (pp. 23-24).
5. Minirth, F., Meier, P., & Arterburn, S. (1995). *The complete life encyclopedia*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers (p. 405).

6. Ibid, pp. 406-407. This is an adaptation of Minirth, Meier, and Arterburn's "rules" in fair fighting.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### FROM TAKER TO GIVER

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Change is hard, but not impossible; even a diehard Taker can become a consistent Giver if they have the knowledge, motivation, and help from God. No Christian should complain, "that's the way I am, I'll never change." Change is possible because God has supplied the method and means for making real and lasting change.

The formation of personality is not just a matter of genetics; it also includes learned behavior. During the formative stages of life children experiment with different ways of perceiving and responding to their world. To preserve their sense of security and significance, children are compelled to develop a system for interpreting and reacting to the behaviors of others. Through trial and error they discover what they believe accomplishes that goal. As coping strategies are refined into preferred patterns of relating, an individual's personality begins to emerge. Some become Givers, other Takers.

Learned behavior patterns become deeply embedded habits with practice. And this is why change seems so difficult. The good news is learned behaviors can be unlearned. No one is trapped as a Taker; they can learn to become a consistent Giver.

Habit patterns are often mistaken for heredity traits; they appear to be unconscious and automatic. The difference, of course, is that habits are acquired through repetition. A Taker has become comfortable with these behaviors; they seem natural and are performed effortlessly, but they are destructive and must be eliminated if the marriage is to survive.

If you have admitted you are a Taker but are unsure about your specific taking behaviors, review the Giver/Taker Test in Chapter Three. Reexamine all items marked false and discuss each one with your spouse. Be willing to listen to their feedback and acknowledge all taking behaviors.

Some Takers are unaware that taking behaviors are sinful; a violation of God's command to love others as themselves. His word instructs us to acknowledge these behaviors as morally wrong and call them what he does: sin.

Changing an embedded habit pattern is difficult, and human effort is never enough. This kind of change requires God's power, but how does a Taker obtain that power?

When a believer takes a step of faith to obey the God's commands, the Holy Spirit ([John 3:6](#); [Romans 8:9,10](#)) supernaturally strengthens them. This spiritual duo between the Spirit of God and a Christian is "walking in the Spirit" ([Romans 6:11](#); [Galatians 5:16-25](#)) or being "filled with the Spirit" ([Ephesians 5:18](#)). Being controlled by the power of

the Holy Spirit is essential for overcoming taking behaviors.

The Spirit's empowerment has nothing to do with mystical experiences, feelings, or speaking in tongues. The following outline is a practical guide that will help you obey his command to be filled with the Holy Spirit:

1. Confess all known sin ([I John 1:9](#)) to God and the one you have offended; be specific. Ask that person's forgiveness.
2. Yield all areas of your life to God's authority and control ([Romans 6:13](#)).
3. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill (control) you ([Luke 11:13](#); [Ephesians 5:18](#)).
4. Believe you are filled ([Romans 14:23](#)). Step out in faith regardless of your feelings and obey God's commands.

Change is possible; there is no sinful behavior pattern beyond God's ability to touch. By his strength godly behavior patterns can be developed. Takers can become consistent Givers.

The Taker's part in the change process is described in [Ephesians 4:22-24](#). The apostle Paul instructs the Ephesian Christians "to *put off* concerning your former conduct the old man (i.e. the old sinful lifestyle) which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind. *Put on* the new man (i.e. the Christian lifestyle) who was created according to God in righteousness and true holiness." Change is a two-part method: putting off old behavior and putting on new behavior.<sup>1</sup> And both are crucial for real change. Putting off without putting on results in reformation and is usually short-lived. Transformation takes place when ungodly behavior is replaced with godly behavior. The two-part method is not magical and does not produce instant, overnight change. The more embedded a habit, the more time required to put off the unwanted behavior pattern. It is a process that takes time and patience, but diligent, persistent practice results in genuine change. Real results can be realistically expected in six to eight weeks.

[Ephesians 4:22-32](#) explains the two-part change process: "Therefore, putting away lying (putting off) each one of you speak the truth (putting on) with his neighbor for we are members of one another" (vs. 25). The cessation of habitual lying is no guarantee a liar has been transformed. Given the right amount of pressure he will revert to his old sinful pattern. Until the liar has "put on" truth telling through consistent practice, he remains vulnerable to the temptation of lying. There will not be real character change.

The two-part process is also illustrated with a thief: "Let him who stole steal no longer (putting off), but rather let him labor (putting on) working with his hands what is good that he may have something to give him who has need" (4:28). A thief continues to be a thief until he repents, gets a job, works hard to make an honest living, and helps others in need. When this has become a consistent behavior pattern, he is no longer a thief but a hard worker who shares with others.

The two-part process is addressed in the matter of communication: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of you mouth (putting off), but what is good for necessary edification (putting on) that it may impart grace to the hearer" (4:29). The apostle Paul urges the replacement of destructive words with those that are constructive. True

transformation is not the cessation of unwholesome talk, but the adoption of edifying communication.

How does a Taker apply the two-part process? What are the specific steps in the change process? There are five distinct steps in the two-part process for true transformation.<sup>2</sup> Several steps may be worked concurrently, but the best approach is in consecutive order.

1. Identify 'put off' behaviors
2. Identify 'put on' behaviors
3. Rearrange the environment
4. Establish accountability
5. Practice the new behavior

### **Step One: Identify the sinful behavior patterns to be 'put off'**

Chapter Three included a series of tests for determining taker type. Go to the summary box at the end of that chapter, review the types for which you have moderate or significant tendencies, re-read the basic description for each, and then briefly summarize the behavior patterns that characterize you. For example, "I'm a Controller. I tend to be rigid and stubborn. It's my way or no way; I overwork and neglect my family; My perfectionism is pushed onto my mate. I demand perfection from him/her; I don't make the time to be with my mate; I keep my emotions bottled up inside." If you have a combination of Taker types, complete a list for each. These are the sinful behavior patterns that must be "put off" for you to become a Giver.

Once you have identified your taking patterns, note the frequency and occasion(s) of these behaviors. Use a daily record. It will help you evaluate the severity of a habit pattern and its "triggers." Ask your partner for help because the tendency is to interpret our behavior in a favorable light. What seems harmless to us may be despicable to God and harmful to our spouse. An embedded habit pattern can be easily overlooked because it becomes second nature. Sinful behavior patterns with high frequencies should be addressed first.

### **Dan and Melanie**

"You're crazy, I never curse you!" Dan fired off angrily. Melanie turned her face toward me with a hurt, disbelieving look and shot back, "Dan, don't lie to this man. You know you've got a horrible problem with your temper." Dan said nothing but wagged his head back and forth. She explained at great length how his abusive language had devastated her and son, Cliff for years. She noted that he'd stop at nothing to reduce them to tears. He seemed to take special delight in humiliating them in front of friends.

Her resentment had been stockpiled for years; there was no feeling for Dan. She was withdrawn and cold, and all attempts on his part to be affectionate were rejected. She could no longer stand to be around him.

During an intense argument, Melanie screamed, "I hate you! Unless you get some help, I'm leaving. I can't take it anymore." Dan laughed it off until Melanie told him she'd seen an attorney. "Look, there's no need for that. We can work this out," Dan stammered.

"No, Dan. I told you that unless you get some help it's over."

Dan was not happy about having to talk to me. He was sullen and responded with curt answers. It was obvious he was just putting in time to appease his wife. While trying to break the ice with Dan, Melanie interrupted and began attacking him. After a five-minute tirade, I called a time-out and began exploring the issue with Dan. He angrily denied her allegations of abuse. I ended the session by asking Melanie to keep a detailed record of Dan's abusive speech over the next week. Dan shrugged his shoulders and said, "It'll be a waste of time. There won't be anything to write down."

When the couple returned for a follow-up visit, Melanie immediately handed me a spiral notebook.

"What's this?" I asked.

"It's the homework assignment you gave me last week. I kept a record of Dan's verbal abuse," Melanie said proudly.

As she reached to hand me the notebook I said, "I don't want it, give it to Dan." Dan reluctantly took the notebook but didn't open it. "Go ahead, Dan. Read it," I said insistently.

Dan slowly opened the notebook to the first page and began reading. His once confident voice went to a whisper. There were filthy obscenities, threats, vulgar comments, and hostile reactions to Melanie and Cliff. I interrupted and turned to Melanie, "Is this what Dan said to you last week?" Melanie nodded her head and began to cry. Dan started to close the notebook, but I insisted that he keep reading. By the time he had finished, Dan was also in tears and unable to look at me or Melanie.

"Dan, she was right and secondly, I think you owe your wife an apology. You have a serious problem with your tongue. I'm ready to help you make a change; the kind that God requires. I believe you can become a man who builds his family up rather than tears them down. Dan, are you interested in becoming that kind of man?"

Dan raised up, turned toward his wife, and tearfully said, "Honey, I'm so sorry. I've really hurt you and Cliff and don't deserve to be forgiven, but I'm asking that you try to forgive me and let me start over. I want to become the kind of man you can love and respect."

### **Step Two: Identify the godly behavior patterns to be put on.**

Not replacing a sinful behavior pattern with a new, godly one results in failure; under pressure the unwanted behavior will reoccur, and the habit becomes embedded again.

This principle is illustrated in some remarks Jesus made about the legalists of his day: "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man he goes through dry places seeking rest and finds none. Then he says, 'I'll return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it be with this wicked generation" (Matthew 12: 43-45). A relapse can be avoided by working the second step of the two-part process.

For every sinful habit to be put off the Bible gives a godly replacement. Not every put

off/put on combination is paired in the same verse or verses; you will need to search elsewhere in Scripture. Review the sample list below and observe the simplicity of this process:

<b>Put Off</b>	<b>Put On</b>	<b>Scripture Reference</b>
<b>1. Resentment</b>	<b>Dealing with problems in a timely manner</b>	<a href="#"><u>Eph. 4:26-27</u></a>
<b>2. Destructive words</b>	<b>Constructive words</b>	<a href="#"><u>Eph. 4:29</u></a>
<b>3. Insults</b>	<b>Blessings</b>	<a href="#"><u>I Peter 3:9</u></a>
<b>4. Worry</b>	<b>Right praying and right thinking</b>	<a href="#"><u>Philip. 4:6-8</u></a>
<b>5. Bitterness</b>	<b>Compassion and forgiveness</b>	<a href="#"><u>Eph. 4:31-32</u></a>
<b>6. Fear</b>	<b>Love</b>	<a href="#"><u>I John 4:18</u></a>
<b>7. Egotism</b>	<b>Accurate judgment of self</b>	<a href="#"><u>Rom. 12:3; Gal. 6:3-4; Phil. 2:3</u></a>
<b>8. Self-centeredness</b>	<b>Other-centeredness</b>	<a href="#"><u>Phil. 2:4</u></a>
<b>9. Temper</b>	<b>Restraint</b>	<a href="#"><u>Prov. 19:11; 29:11; James 1:19-20</u></a>
<b>10. Self-pity</b>	<b>Concern for others</b>	<a href="#"><u>Phil. 2:4; Rom. 15:2; Eph. 4:7,16</u></a>

When you have completed Step One, transfer your put off list to the box below. Step Two involves writing in the corresponding list of put on behaviors. Be sure to include your partner in the process.

<b>Put Off</b>	<b>Put On</b>	<b>Scripture Reference</b>
1. _____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____

### Step Three: Rearranging Your Environment

Having identified put off and put on behaviors, you are ready to rearrange your environment for change.

#### Jeremy

Following a presentation at a church retreat, Jeremy approached me. He asked if he could join me for lunch. I agreed and we made our way to the cafeteria serving line. While waiting to be served, he talked nonstop.

After we were seated Jeremy became quiet and began to look troubled. When I asked him if he was all right, he put his head down and shook it from side to side. After a few moments of unbroken silence, Jeremy looked up. I noticed there were tears in his eyes.

"Jeremy, what's the matter? Are you okay?" I asked.

Lowering his head again Jeremy mumbled, "I've got to talk to somebody. I can't keep this inside any longer."

Jeremy, whatever the problem is I want you to know I'll help you in any way I can. Please tell me what's going on," I prompted.

"I'm so ashamed. I don't think I can," he gently protested.

"Yes, you can. I can see that you are very troubled about something and need to get it off your chest. Trust me, Jeremy. God has crossed our paths for a purpose."

Jeremy took a deep breath and began sharing years of pent-up guilt and shame. He admitted he'd been addicted to pornography since the age of sixteen. For the past twelve years, he had lived a secret life; a life of deception and cover up. Even his wife was unaware of his problem.

Jeremy shared that he'd been a Christian since childhood and was a volunteer in his church. But he'd been living a double life and was ashamed of his behavior; he felt that he had been "unfaithful" to the Lord and his wife.

Jeremy was open about how he had become hooked and his frustration of not being able to break the bondage. He admitted that he'd thought seriously about taking his own life. After pouring his story out, Jeremy ended by pleading for help.

I asked him to read [I Corinthians 10:13](#): "No temptation has overtaken you except such is common to man; but God is faithful, who won't allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make a way of escape that you may be able to bear it." I then asked him take out his notebook and jot down everything he observed in the verse. In quick succession he wrote: "My battle with sexual sin isn't uncommon; I'm not alone in this; God knows my limit; and He'll make the way out for me if I'm willing."

"That's great Jeremy! God doesn't want you to live in bondage to sexual sin. Romans 6 states he's delivered us from the power of sin. We don't have to remain under its tyranny. We're free in Christ! Jeremy, you've got to learn how to draw on God's power daily to experience that reality. Why don't you ask him right now to help you break free from this sin?"



I instructed Jeremy to entitle the next page "Rearranging My Environment." I explained he needed to restructure his life so sexual impurity could be put off and purity be put on.

"Great, but I haven't got a clue how to start," Jeremy said excitedly.

"Okay, let me help you. Number one: "Confess your sin to your wife."

"Whoa! Hold on. I don't know if I can do that. She is definitely going to be angry and may leave me. Besides, what she doesn't know won't hurt her," he insisted.

"Jeremy, that's a sinful attitude. Scripture states we aren't to lie to one another. By not telling her what's going on in your life you're lying to her. You must be truthful. Secondly, [James 5:16](#) says that we are to "confess our sins to one another." As long as this sin goes unexposed, you run the risk of relapsing. Do the right thing and trust God for the outcome."

"I don't know," he complained.

"Jeremy, do you want to beat this thing or not?" I shot back.

"Yes, I do. Okay, you're right. What's number two?"

"Number two: "Destroy all of the pornography in your possession." Everything must go. I mean everything, Jeremy. In Acts 19, Luke reports that in the city of Ephesus "many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds. Also, many of those who had practiced magic brought their books together and burned them in the sight of all." You need to have a bonfire.

"You don't understand. I've got thousands of dollars of stuff that I've bought over the last ten years. You're telling me that I've got to get rid of it?"

"Exactly! Listen, Jeremy, Scripture says that the Ephesian believers "counted up the value of their magic books, and it totaled fifty thousand pieces of silver." In today's currency that's about three hundred and fifty thousand dollars."

"Wow! I get the point" Jeremy exclaimed. "Anything else?"

Number 3: "Establish a routine of continuous and regular sexual relations with your wife." That means all illicit means of sexual gratification must be put off. Masturbation with pornography won't put out your sexual fire. It'll only add more fuel. You'll find that it'll become stronger the more you give in to it. Jeremy, God has provided a legitimate way for satisfying your desire; it's through your wife. Sexual relations between you and her are holy and good. They shouldn't be neglected (I Corinthians 7). When you bypass God's way, it sets you up for temptation, and it causes her to feel unloved and rejected.

"It sure seems like a lot to do," moaned Jeremy.

"You bet it does. But you told me that you're dead serious about getting out from under this thing didn't you?" I challenged.

"Yes, I did and with God's help I plan to start tonight. I'll sit down with my notebook and explain it all to my wife. I'm tired of hiding and being a hypocrite. I want the freedom you're talking about."

"Great! Let's pray and ask God to give you the courage to be honest and the power to make the changes we've talked about."

Jeremy's instructions for rearranging his life for change included specific actions that would

help him cultivate new, godly behaviors. The structure would keep him from slipping back into the old, sinful patterns.

#### **Step Four: Establish Accountability**

Change is difficult, and without the help of another, it is virtually impossible. One of those persons is the Holy Spirit; without his help, biblical change will not occur.

The Holy Spirit's power is essential to the change process, but as human beings, we need accountability from another person. Secular organizations such as Alcoholic Anonymous have known this for many years.

When an alcoholic starts a recovery program, they are encouraged to find a sponsor; a person who will offer them guidance, encouragement, and accountability. A sponsor is there to talk them through their compulsion to drink and keep them focused on the goal of sobriety.

A Taker needs accountability; someone who will ask them the hard questions on a regular basis. Most Takers naively believe they can change on their own. Pride is at the heart of such a belief. [Proverbs 16:18](#) rightly warns that "pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall." Scripture affirms the principle of accountability: "Consider one another (give attentive, continual care to watching over one another) in order to stir up love and good works" (Hebrews 10:24). We are to study how we can stimulate one another toward spiritual growth. There are no 'Lone Rangers' in God's economy; to think otherwise is sin.

A spouse is the most practical choice for an accountability partner; no one is in a better position to give daily feedback than him or her. However, a word of warning: If an addiction is involved, a Taker should seek accountability from someone else. This will prevent the partner from having to assume the role of a cop or judge. The short vignette that follows demonstrates how this couple became accountability partners for one another.

#### **Ronald and Sherry**

Sherry, by her own admission, was a Pouter ([Chapter Two](#)). When hurt, frustrated, or angry she would clam up and walk away without trying to resolve the problem. Ronald shared that Sherry would go for days without speaking to him. Her silence was accompanied by a coldness that left him feeling rejected and unloved. Problems were never resolved but swept under the carpet.

Ronald wanted to get help from a Christian counselor, but Sherry opposed the idea. She promised to change but repeatedly relapsed back into her old pattern. Ronald finally put his foot down and told her he was going with or without her. He did not want their fourteen year marriage to end in divorce. Sherry reluctantly agreed to go.

During their first session Sherry admitted she had a problem clamming up. She related her parents resorted to this behavior during conflict. "I never saw them resolve one problem in a constructive, healthy way. Daddy and mother would get mad and storm off into the bedroom. They wouldn't speak to each other for days. When I was in elementary school they stopped sleeping in the same bedroom. Their marriage has been dead for years, but they still live in the same house."

"I suppose you're aware of the dangers of continuing in this sin, aren't you, Sherry?"

"Definitely. I want to stop doing it. But clamming up has become so much a part of me I

don't know if I can," Sherry said sorrowfully.

"What you're describing Sherry is a deeply embedded habit pattern. With God's guidance and power you can be set free."

After walking Ronald and Sherry through the first three steps of the two-part process, we developed an accountability plan. She acknowledged that many times she was not aware of clamming up. When she walked away during an argument, it was much more difficult to stop the chain of events: Withdrawal led to pouting, which ended in emotional coldness and distance. Sherry realized if she was going to break the habit, she needed Ronald's help. He agreed to prompt Sherry if he sensed she was starting to shut down. We role-played several scenarios using this method. Ronald and Sherry decided she'd respond best to a statement such as, "Honey, your silence is beginning to give me the feeling you're shutting me out. Please don't. Let's talk through the problem. I want to hear what you have to say."

Sherry was asked to locate and memorize several key Scriptures: "Be angry, and don't sin. Don't let the sun go down on your wrath nor give place to the devil" (Ephesians 4: 26-27). The verses were printed on index cards and posted in prominent places throughout the house and car (e.g., on the dashboard, bathroom mirror, kitchen table, and over the kitchen sink). The intent was to continually remind Sherry of the put off/put on process.

If she relapsed, Sherry was encouraged to confess her sin and resolve the problem. A short behavior contract was written and signed during the session. I emphasized change is a process, which takes diligent effort, time, patience, and prayer.

"Six to eight weeks of consistent effort usually establishes a new habit, Sherry. It'll take practice, practice, practice." Don't give up. Your hard work will pay off if you'll stick with it."

The first session ended with an explanation of Step 5 (practicing the new behavior pattern) and the potential roadblocks that she would encounter.

### **Step Five: Practice**

Change does not occur overnight; it takes persistent effort. There are no shortcuts to godliness; it comes only by disciplined practice.

The apostle Paul exhorted his young protégé, Timothy, to "exercise yourself to godliness" ([I Timothy 4:7](#)). Godliness does not come from an instantaneous, supernatural act. While it is true Christians are declared righteous by God when they put their faith in Christ, there is still a great gap between our position and practice. A Taker's sinful habit patterns must be 'put off' through daily, disciplined practice.

The word exercise in [I Timothy 4:7](#) is *gymnazo*<sup>3</sup> from which we get the English words gymnasium and gymnastics. Both words, of course, are associated with athletes and athletics. An athlete becomes skilled at his specialty only through years of dedicated hard work and day-to-day practice. Every athlete must work at their skill until it becomes second nature. Disciplined practice is essential.

The same is true for a Taker; he must train himself toward godliness. Christ established the cost of true discipleship: "If anyone desires to come after Me let him deny himself take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" ([Luke 9:23-24](#)). He emphasized that sinful behavior patterns

must be denied daily; the Taker is to say 'no' to them and 'yes' to him. And with diligent practice, taking behaviors are replaced with consistent patterns of giving.

### **Robert and Cindy (revisited)**

"It's true what they say, old habits die hard, especially sinful ones," Robert said wistfully. "Half of the problem is discovering what they are. Thanks to Cindy's willingness to shoot straight with me, I finally got zeroed in on what needed to be put off. I was such a blockhead! I often wonder how I could've been so blind as to what was killing intimacy with my wife and the Lord. A habit sure can take over your life. You do it long enough and it becomes part of you. I had gotten really comfortable with a lot of behaviors that had no place in my life."

"That's right, Robert. Habits can be a blessing or a curse. You're aware of the ones that have become a curse to you and your marriage, but aren't you glad that you don't have to think about brushing your teeth or combing your hair every morning? We'd never get anything done if we had to mentally work through every step to complete a behavior. A habit can be a real blessing and make life a lot easier. You know, Robert, the good thing about a habit is what was learned and can be unlearned. They're not carved in granite. Godly habits can be practiced until they become second nature."

Robert looked out the office window as if he were looking into the past and chuckled. "It hasn't been easy, that's for sure. To be honest, I felt like throwing in the towel a bunch of times but Cindy and you kept encouraging me to stick it out. I'm glad you kept reminding me about the athlete who trains to become skilled at what he does. Everyday he pushes himself toward the goals he has set. He doesn't wimp out because he's tired or is in pain. He does a gut check and keeps going. You know, it's been seven weeks, and Cindy is starting to tell me she's seeing some real changes. That really spurs me on! I feel like we are beginning to get closer and closer. What do you call it? Oh yeah, emotional rebonding. We're starting to get glued back together. I guess the most important thing is that God is pleased with the changes that I'm making. Now that I'm becoming other-centered, my focus is on loving Him and those around me. I'm excited about what God is doing in me! Without him I know I wouldn't have made it this far."

"Robert, I'm excited for you and Cindy. I thank God he has intervened and turned your marriage around. I want to encourage you to go on with the good work God has started. Don't let yourselves go back to the old sinful patterns. If you do, you know what the consequences will be. Nail these new behaviors down. Make them a part of you. If either of you feel like you're slipping backwards, don't hesitate to give me a call. God bless you!"

### **Taker No More**

A Taker can change, but not without a daily struggle. The selfish habit patterns that were developed during childhood and adolescence won't simply leave on command. Prepare for an internal civil war. There's no other way to escape the tyranny of a sinful habit pattern.

New habits usually become part of a person's repertoire after six to eight weeks of consistent practice. Perseverance is the key. Too many Takers give up prematurely. They quit when they are on the threshold of real change.

Do not become discouraged if you don't see quick results. Change is a process that takes time. Continue to be patient and look to God for his help. You can be confident that "He who

has begun a good work in you'll complete it (i.e. developing, perfecting, and bringing that good work to completion in you) until the day of Jesus Christ" ([Phil.1:6](#)).

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### **Questions for Him and Her:**

1. As a Taker, have you admitted your sinful habit patterns to God and your mate? If not, would you be willing to do that now?
  2. Are you genuinely sincere about becoming a consistent Giver? If not, why not?
  3. Can you clearly explain to your spouse what walking in the Spirit means? Do you understand the importance of walking in the Spirit? If not, review the information in this chapter on that subject.
  4. Review the two-part process of change with your spouse. Have you made a commitment to your spouse to start the five-step program of change?
  5. Accountability is critically important to the change process. What's keeping you from approaching your spouse about this?
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### **Notes from Chapter Five:**

1. Adams, J.E. (1973). *The christian counselor's manual: The practice of nouthetic counseling*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House (pp. 171- 216).
2. Ibid, pp. 191-216. This is an adaptation of the seven steps that Adams describes for making biblical change.
3. Vine, W.E., Unger, M., & White, W. (1994). *An expository dictionary of biblical words*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers (p. 389).

## CHAPTER SIX STARTING OVER

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**A** building is only as strong as its foundation. Improperly laid, even the most impressive structure will collapse.

In 1173, Italian architects and engineers of the twelfth century discovered this fact soon after starting work on a eight story, marble bell tower.<sup>1</sup> By the time three stories were completed, the tower began to sink. Scientists of the day confirmed that the 179-foot tall tower was sinking at a rate of 1/20<sup>th</sup> of an inch every year. Construction was temporarily suspended to assess the problem and then resumed. In 1350, two hundred years later, the Tower of Pisa was finally completed.

The 837 year-old landmark is now thirteen feet out of perpendicular. In 1964, a multinational task force of engineers, mathematicians and historians were assembled to discuss methods for stabilizing the structure. Many solutions were proposed, but the task force chose to add 800 metric tons of lead counterweights to the raised end of the base. In 1990, after two decades of corrective measures, the tower was closed to the public. Apartments and houses in the tower's path were vacated to ensure public safety. The final attempt to halt the tilt was in 2000; engineers removed fifty cubic yards of soil from underneath the raised end of the tower. The tower was straightened eighteen inches. And after a decade of work, the Tower of Pisa was reopened to the public on December 15, 2001; it was declared stable for at least another 200 years.

Engineers now agree the original builders of the tower made two fundamental mistakes: The tower was built on a recovered marsh (*pisa* means marshy land), and its foundation was only ten feet deep. As each new level was added, the weight of the heavy marble overburdened the unstable foundation. This magnificent tower began to sink.

The application of this historical illustration to your marriage is obvious: Once the emotional detachment process has been reversed, a solid foundation must be laid on which to build the marriage. The three building blocks of a solid foundation are mutuality, intimacy, and effective communication patterns. Failure to lay a solid foundation will have a catastrophic effect on rebuilding your marriage.

### **Lack of Mutuality**

Mutuality is the joint demonstration of love and respect to one another. Any attempt to control a partner, disregard their feelings, opinions, or desires, or force them to do something against their will demonstrates a lack of mutuality. It sets the stage for an inequitable relationship.

Control and domination can be observed in a variety of behaviors: making decisions

independently; being inconsiderate of a partner's input or opinion; telling them how to spend their money; and limiting where and when they can go. Any attempt to control your partner is emotionally abusive and will damage the emotional bond.

A husband's desire to control his wife is the direct result of God's judgment on Adam and Eve for their disobedience: "To the woman He (God) said, 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception. In pain, you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband *and he shall rule over you*" ([Genesis 3:16](#)). Eve's attempt to control Adam by taking matters into her own hands ([I Timothy 2:14](#)) resulted in her being the one controlled. The Creator's judgment permanently fixed the husband's position in reference to his wife. He, from then on, would be her leader.

The biblical record reveals Adam and Eve were co-regents in the Garden before the Fall. They worked together in perfect unity even though God had made Eve subordinate to Adam; there was no attempt to abuse his authority or act as a dictatorial ruler. She was honored as his helpmate, the one who took away his loneliness.

But their oneness was lost because of Eve's attempt to usurp Adam's authority. Since then men have universally dominated women resulting in untold abuse, humiliation, and degradation. Their wishes, whims, and will have been forced on women with impunity. There's no surprise the women's liberation emerged as an attempt to address chauvinistic behavior in the home and workplace; and that women, even Christian women, cringe at the mention of submission.

A wife's submission to her husband, unfortunately, was only part of the judgment given to Eve. The Creator also declared her "desire would be for your husband" (Genesis 3:16). Some have suggested that *desire* in this passage refers to passion, love, or sex. This is probably not the case; it is commonly accepted that men have a much stronger sex drive. Women report their need is more emotional in nature.

Other scholars believe desire may refer to a psychological dependence upon their husband. This, too, is an unlikely explanation. Women have never enjoyed or appreciated the role of submission to their husbands. And there is never been a time in history when women have not chafed under male authority. What is the meaning of the judgment God placed on Eve?

In Hebrew, the word *tshuka* means desire; it is used only one other time in the Pentateuch.<sup>2</sup> *Tshuka* comes from an Arabic root word that means "to compel, to impel, to urge, or to seek control." In [Genesis 4:7](#), God warned Cain of the danger of becoming resentful toward his brother, Abel. His hostility was personified as a wild animal crouching at his heart's door ready to pounce upon him: "And if you don't do well (i.e. turn away from his pent-up hostility and hatred), sin lies at the door. And its desire (*tshuka*) is for you, but you should rule over it." This is the same word in [Genesis 3:16](#) and has the same grammatical structure. [Genesis 3:16](#) can be read: "To the woman he said, your *desire will be to control* your husband." God's judgment was that Eve would seek to control her husband; to usurp his authority. This was the point in time the long-standing war between men and women began. And that tension continues to this day, inhibiting mutuality from flourishing in marriages.

When a Taker of either sex attempts to dominate and control, their behavior confirms



they do not want a mutual relationship; they are focused solely on meeting their own needs. This explains why a controlling spouse resorts to ignoring, ridiculing, minimizing, and discounting the feelings of their partner. By shutting them down they're able to do as they please.

### **Geraldine**

"Stanley had a way of making me feel like I was nothing. He took away my sense of self-worth; he made me believe I was of no value to him or the marriage.

I've thought a lot about it. I've come to the conclusion he did it by taking complete control of my life. My feelings didn't count. You know the old saying, it was his way or the highway. I can remember trying to talk to him about this in the early years of our marriage. I'd say, 'Stan, you should treat me with more respect. I'm your wife, your partner, the mother of your children. I should be treated as your equal.' I was so hurt when he just laughed and said, 'Equal? You know good and well who wears the pants in this family! I make the living around here and that puts me in charge.' I suppose I helped create the monster he became over the years by giving in to his every demand. I did it to keep the peace, but there was no peace. I guess he got the idea that I didn't mind, so he kept on and it got worse.

To tell the truth, his domination almost strangled the life out of me, my drive, my enthusiasm, everything. I wound up hating Stan for what he'd taken from me. I became so cold and distant from him. It got to where I had nothing to do with him. He never seemed to understand. At least he claimed he didn't until I eventually pulled away. All I wanted Stan to do was treat me with some respect; to just listen to me and act like I was somebody. He just wouldn't do it. I'll never forgive him for not trying."

### **Equality**

Some husbands view their wife's attempt to establish an equitable relationship as a challenge to their authority; that she's trying to throw off his God-given role as head of the home. Feeling threatened some husbands react by becoming more authoritarian and domineering. And the effect is a greater sense of disrespect, further alienating her.

Wives can be just as guilty for not pursuing an equitable relationship. They do so by resenting and resisting the biblical directive to submit to their husband's leadership ([Ephesians 5:22](#); [Colossians 3:18-4:1](#)). By rebelling against his headship she demonstrates a lack of mutuality, destabilizing the relationship.

Feminists have asserted that the solution to the war between men and women is to abandon traditional gender roles. Men must renounce their dominant role so women will not be degraded and abused. Women, they assert, must reject the self-destructive belief of submissiveness. When a husband willingly abdicates his role as head of the home and shares power with his wife, equity will be established and peace can prevail.

This philosophy is flagrantly unbiblical and humanistic. There is no equality if either spouse abandons their God-given role. When mutuality thrives, neither partner is disrespected; both feel accepted and valued by the other. Independence and dependence yield to interdependence, and a balance of power is established.



## **Unfulfilled Intimacy Needs**

Intimacy is emotional closeness. A failure to cultivate intimacy precipitates the emotional detachment process in the underbenefitted spouse.

The lack of emotional intimacy between spouses can be described in many ways: a lack of togetherness or companionship; an unwillingness to share on a deeper level; or a failure to be supportive of one another. The result is a feeling of loneliness and alienation from their partner. There is a loss of psychological safety in sharing their innermost feelings.

The absence of intimacy is often due to a lack of mutuality. Behaviors such as selfishness, control, disrespect, and invalidation convey non-acceptance, putting emotional miles between partners.

The behaviors associated with substance abuse provide a prime example: Explosive behavior, irresponsibility, lying, withdrawal, and self-absorption systematically destroy a spouse's security, ending any chance of intimacy.

### **Ted**

Ted was well liked at work and church. His friendly, outgoing personality made him easy to warm up to. He had a reputation for being willing to help anyone in need. It was common for Ted to mow his neighbor's lawn while they were on vacation or stop and help someone fix a flat tire. He coached Little League baseball and football; and was recognized as being patient and fair with all of his players. Ted worked hard at every task assigned to him at church, and he could be trusted to finish what he started. Everyone, except Ted's wife, Marlene, thought he was a great guy.

Ted was the kind of man other men envied and women dreamed of. Marlene felt differently. She was aware of a secret Ted had kept hidden since his teen years. No one knew he had an alcohol addiction for the past twenty-two years. In trying to prevent embarrassment to the family, Marlene had not told anyone.

In the first years of their marriage, Ted set limits for himself. He could drink in moderation without becoming intoxicated. As time went on his behavior became increasingly erratic. There were periods of bingeing, which left him in a belligerent stupor. Marlene threatened to expose him unless he slowed down his drinking. On several occasions Ted appeared remorseful and promised to reform. By the fifth year of marriage, he had quit trying to control his drinking, and his addictive pattern grew worse.

One night during a drunken state, Ted backhanded Marlene. From then on she grew fearful and insecure. She began distancing herself emotionally and physically. Eventually Marlene realized she could not control Ted's drinking and shifted her focus to her children and home. She became increasingly cold and unaffectionate as Ted's drinking worsened.

Ted and Marlene's situation came to an unexpected head one evening. During a heated argument, he lunged at her; she stepped to the side and he fell through a glass coffee table. Wood and glass exploded throughout the living room. The children became hysterical and were escorted to their bedrooms. Returning to the living room, Marlene found Ted unconscious and lying in a pool of blood. He had severed an artery and was bleeding to death. She dialed 911 and grabbed a towel to stop the bleeding. Paramedics quickly arrived

and he was transported to the hospital for emergency surgery. After three days of hovering between life and death, Ted began to improve.

Once he regained consciousness, Ted demanded that Marlene tell no one what happened. Out of shame and duty, she was vague with the surgeon, nurses, and family.

Prior to his release, Ted and Marlene's pastor came for one final visit. During the pastor's prayer Ted began to weep; he poured out the truth about the accident and his long-held secret. He then turned to Marlene and apologized for the years of abusive behavior; unhesitatingly she bent down, hugged his neck and said, "I love you, Ted. We can start over."

That was the beginning of Ted's recovery and healing in their marriage. Though it took time and hard work, he and Marlene now have an intimate, loving relationship.

### **Poor Communication Patterns**

Poor communication patterns provide a third reason for a new foundation not being laid. Healthy communication patterns are not developed for a number of reasons: inattentiveness, withdrawal and avoidance, an unwillingness to negotiate or compromise, and the failure to manage anger effectively.

#### **Inattentiveness**

Inattentiveness sends the message "I don't care; you are unimportant to me." There are many causes for a spouse being inattentive: taking the time to really listen may fear that their point of view will be overlooked or ignored; a willingness to understand may be taken as agreement; what their spouse is encouraged to share may be too hard to handle emotionally; hearing another point of view may require changing their perspective or behavior; or patiently listening to what their spouse has to say might imply passivity and vulnerability.

#### **Withdrawal and avoidance**

Some dread conflict because of the emotional distress that is created; they feel tense, on-edge, panicky, and unable to think clearly during the heat of an argument. Those with fragile egos frequently resort to tactics such as withdrawal and avoidance.

Avoiding conflict occurs in a variety of ways: chitchat, ignoring or pretending not to hear, changing the subject, quickly admitting guilt, or skirting the issue when it is addressed. Those who avoid conflict assume it will disappear. In the short run, avoidance seems to work; in the long run, problems are compounded, resulting in emotional distance.

Husbands are especially prone to conflict avoidance. This can be puzzling to wives, since many of these men are skillful in handling conflict at work. The difference is at work a problem usually involves a straightforward business decision; it isn't emotionally charged. At home he is interacting with those whom he has an emotional attachment. This arena is filled with emotion and may lead to deep hurt. Hiding behind a newspaper, television, hobby, sport, or service club may be a safe way of avoiding conflict, but it leads to a build-up of anger and frustration in his wife.

## **Unwillingness to negotiate or compromise**

An unwillingness to negotiate or compromise typically ends with a couple becoming stuck in a polarized standoff. To get unstuck, they engage in a "win-lose" battle ([Chapter Four](#)) using a variety of tactics: control talk, fight talk, or spite talk.<sup>3</sup>

'Control talk' is a take-charge style and is used when a spouse wants to persuade, direct, or advise their partner. Control talk typically leads to misunderstanding, tension, and emotional distance.

'Fight talk' forces a spouse to make some kind of change. This style is direct, aggressive, and harsh, and it creates a feeling of being verbally pulled or pushed into compliance. Fight talk takes a variety of forms: blaming, accusing, attacking, scolding, demanding, threatening, name-calling, interrogating, taunting, lecturing, and cursing. Self-esteem is damaged provoking the wounded partner to withdraw or fight back. Fight talk may break up an impasse, but it does not promote long-term solutions to problems or strengthen the emotional bond.

'Spite talk' is used when a spouse feels powerless during a conflict. Hurt, frustration, and resentment are verbalized from a "one down" position of power. Spite talk includes a number of inappropriate behaviors: taking pot shots, adopting a "poor-me" attitude, complaining, nagging, pouting, foot-dragging, withdrawing, denying, score keeping, gossiping, or demeaning. Spite talk is an ineffective and inappropriate way of resolving a problem, and it does great harm to a couple's emotional bond.

## **Failure to Manage Anger**

The management of anger plays a significant role in reestablishing an emotional bond. And the impact of uncontrolled anger on a marriage is incalculable.

When a Taker blows up, their emotional energy is discharged onto their spouse. The impact ranges from a smarting sting to a painful, emotional wound. Those who clam up have the same intense emotional energy, but is internalized. Anger that is buried alive is displayed in a variety of damaging forms: pouting, withdrawing, becoming uncooperative, procrastinating, withholding affection, and refusing to communicate.

## **Laying a Solid Foundation**

A solid foundation is laid by ensuring that mutuality, emotional intimacy, and effective communication patterns are incorporated into the relationship; all three must be implemented in order to reestablish a healthy bond.

## **Creating Mutuality**

Mutuality is created out of the belief that each partner is equal and entitled to love and respect. Some men oppose equality with their wives because they fear their role as head will be usurped if they are not dominant. This fear lies behind many unnecessary power struggles in marriages.

The fear of being deposed as head has been a long-standing issue for men. The book of Esther gives an account of this fear among ancient Persian men. King Ahasuerus held a seven-day feast for all of his officials and servants. The purpose was to display the "riches of his glorious kingdom and the splendor of his excellent majesty" ([1:4](#)). No expense was withheld

to impress those who served and obeyed him.

Queen Vashti, also held a feast for the women in the royal palace ([1:9](#)). Scripture reports on the seventh day of the feast, "when the heart of the king was merry with wine," seven eunuchs were commanded to bring the queen before him. King Ahasuerus wanted to show her beauty to all of his guests ([1:11](#)). To his surprise, the queen refused to come. The biblical record reveals "the king was furious and his anger burned within him" ([1:12](#)). He consulted his wise men "who understood the times" about what he should do ([1:13-15](#)). Memucan, one of the wise men in his royal court, gave this counsel to the king:

"Queen Vashti hasn't only wronged the king, but also all the princes and all the people in all of the provinces of King Ahasuerus. For the queen's behavior will become known to all women so that they'll despise their husbands in their eyes when they report, 'King Ahasuerus commanded Queen Vashti to be brought before him, but she didn't come.' This very day the noble women of Persia and Media will say to all the king's officials that they've heard of the behavior of the queen. Thus, there'll be excessive contempt and wrath. If it pleases the king, let a royal decree go out from him, and let it be recorded in the laws of the Persians and the Medes, so that it won't be altered, that Vashti shall come no more before King Ahasuerus, and let the king give her royal position to another who is better than she. When the king's decree, which he'll make, is proclaimed throughout all of his empire, all wives will honor their husbands, both great and small. And the reply pleased the king and his princes and the king did according to the word of Memucan" ([1:16-21](#)).

Memucan verbalized a basic, subconscious fear all men have of their wives: "If I'm not dominant, she'll disrespect my role as head and try to take over."

This fear comes from a misunderstanding of biblical equality. In [Galatians 3:28](#), the Apostle Paul states that God sees men and women as equals. Men are not superior to women, and women are not superior to men. In his economy, inequality does not exist: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Scripture affirms equality, but also instructs men to lead their homes (cf. I Corinthians 11:3). How are these two concepts reconciled? How can there be mutuality when the husband is head of the home? This dilemma is resolved by examining the nature of the Triune God.

In [I Corinthians 11:3](#) Paul writes, "But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God." A casual reading seems to indicate the Father is in some way superior to the Son. We know this is untrue because Christ declared, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" ([John 14:9](#)), and "I and My Father are one" ([John 10:30](#)). [John 1:1](#) informs us that the Word (Christ) was "face-to-face" (Greek-*pros ton theon*) with God. Hebrews 1 states that Christ was exalted to be equal with God. They are coequal in their essence (nature), but different in their *function or role*. The wisdom of the Godhead deemed it necessary that Christ submit Himself to the Father: "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work" ([John 4:34](#)). In essence the Father and the Son are one, but in function they differ. Christ willingly submitted to the Father in a act of submission to carry out His will.

This principle is to be true in marriage. A husband and wife are of the same essence, but different in function. The wife, like Christ, assumes a place of submission to her husband, and

the husband leads his family in love, as Christ leads the church.

When a couple fulfill their roles in the love of Christ, mutuality is present; apart from that love, the Edenic curse destroys mutuality: The husband selfishly dominates his wife and she defiantly rebels against his leadership.

Love is a "fruit" of the Holy Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is *love*, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)). Mutuality requires this kind of love, and love is beyond the scope of human ability. Only the Holy Spirit can produce godly love, and only when a couple has fully yielded to Him.

Refresh your thinking about the Holy Spirit's power; re-read the introductory pages of [Chapter Five](#). You will soon be reminded that the Holy Spirit's power is essential for laying a new foundation.

### **Fulfilling Intimacy Needs**

Intimacy comes from the Latin word *intimus*, meaning inmost.<sup>4</sup> Inmost implies the disclosure of what is personal and private to another. In a marital relationship, intimacy means sharing heart to heart.

When mutuality is present in a relationship, so is intimacy. A couple becomes co-regents of their home. The Holy Spirit enables them to be fruitful *together*, have dominion *together*, and work out the plan of God for their lives *together*. Their togetherness becomes the basis for fulfilling one another's intimacy needs.

Adam and Eve enjoyed oneness prior to the Fall; they were obedient to the Creator's perfect plan. This was God's intention from the start; that a man and woman be "joined" together to "become one flesh" ([Genesis 2:24](#)); a union of body and spirit. Adam and Eve were totally open and transparent with one another. There were no games, pretenses, or walls to isolate them: "They were both naked, the man and his wife, and weren't ashamed" ([Genesis 2:25](#)). Their transparency made intimacy possible. And intimacy developed into oneness; God's plan for all marriages.

The marital bed unites a couple physically, but transparent, truthful communication unites the souls of husband and wife. This is true of all relationships; even our relationship with Christ. We establish this relationship based on the truth of Scripture: "In Him you also trusted, after you heard the *word of truth*, the gospel of your salvation" ([Ephesians 1:13](#)). When a person accepts his word as true, they enter into an eternal relationship with Christ, but it does not end there. A believer's intimacy with Christ is cultivated as they consistently listen and respond to his word (Scripture) and spend time talking to him in prayer.

The unity of the local church is also established and maintained by open and honest communication. [Ephesians 4:25](#) instructs the corporate Body of Christ to "put away lying" and "each one of us speak *truth* with his neighbor, for we are members of one another." Relationships are damaged and the unity of the body is disrupted when dishonest communication is present.

Some attempt to avoid emotional pain by lying; in the short run this tactic seems to work, but in the long run, dishonesty destroys intimacy. Speaking the truth in love is risky, but it is always in the best interest of the marital relationship. Examine the diagram that follows and observe how emotional intimacy is established:

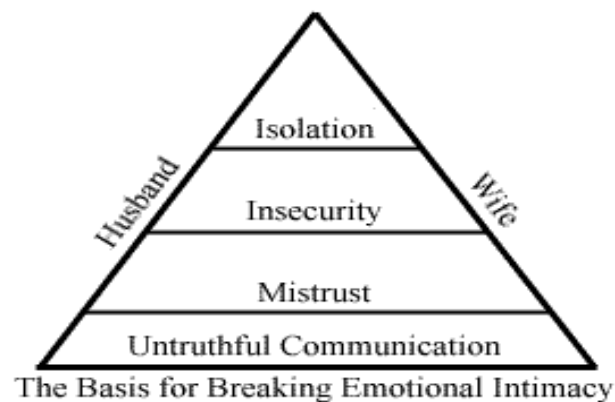


Truthful communication is the foundation of all intimate relationships. When a couple is open and honest with one another, trust develops. They accept their partner as reliable; someone in whom they can confide. A sense of security begins to grow, fostering more heart-to-heart sharing. And the couple's sharing blossoms into true emotional intimacy.

Honest communication has other practical benefits:

1. Truthful communication provides the means for negotiating with one another.
2. Truthful communication demolishes false impressions and illusions that may be presumed by a spouse.
3. Truthful communication makes life more predictable and rational. Each spouse is better able to understand their mate and plan for the future.
4. Truthful communication builds mutual respect (i.e. mutuality) toward one another.

The foundation of all relationships that end in isolation is untruthful communication. Study the diagram below:



Both sexes struggle with truth telling, but men seem to have the greater problem.<sup>5 6</sup> Marriage counselors report husbands are more fearful of opening up than wives. There are a number of reasons:

1. Cultural expectations dictate that men be strong (i.e. speaking the truth from the heart is often viewed as being weak and unmanly).
2. Under pressure men may resort to saving face so they can maintain their wife's respect.
3. Men fear losing control in a conflict; their dishonesty is an attempt to avoid a fight.
4. Men believe that their wives cannot handle the truth. They' become dishonest to spare her the worry, preserve her sense of security, or to keep up the facade that everything is okay.

Men need to understand that intimacy is never established by dishonesty. Honesty is essential for strengthening the emotional bond. Women see a man's willingness to be open and honest as strength, not an unmanly weakness. Her respect for him is enhanced when he's willing to be real and vulnerable. Being tough or 'macho' does not work; this is a destructive myth that must be dismissed.

Saving face is about pride, and God hates it. Pride comes out of a sense of superiority and indicates a husband has a lower opinion of his wife than he does of himself. He must get rid of his arrogance and give her the honor she's due: "Dwell with them (wives) in understanding, giving *honor* to the wife as being the weaker vessel, and being heirs together of the grace of life that your prayers may not be hindered" ([1 Peter 3:7](#)).

If a husband is dishonest because he fears losing control during a conflict, the Holy Spirit is divinely able to produce the "fruit" of self-control ([Galatians 5:23](#)). He must accept that dishonesty is unacceptable and trust God to help him behave in a godly manner.

Wives can handle the truth. She is the "weaker vessel," but this is a reference to her physical constitution, not her mental or emotional capabilities. God has made her competent to handle the hard realities of life. She is not emotionally fragile and in need of being sheltered from the truth. Men have misused this stereotype to justify their avoidance of being honest, and it must be put away as a response when conflict occurs.

Habitual liars are in need of God's transformation: "Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who deal *truthfully* are His delight" ([Proverbs 12:22](#)). Persistent lying will invite the discipline of God, and it may come in the form of a divorce.

### **Developing Effective Communication Patterns**

The third element for laying a new foundations is effective communication. The development of conflict resolution skills was addressed in [Chapter Four](#). Special attention was given to fair fighting. These rules are helpful when a dispute arises, but couples need a practical plan for communicating about the events of daily life.

The following is a simple method for communicating about the issues of life: identify the issue; understand both sides; look at all the options; make a choice; and evaluate the results.<sup>7</sup>



## Identify the Issue

Men have a problem dealing with the issues of life; not so much in their ability to identify the issue, but verbalizing their thinking and feelings. There is a tendency to clam up; to submerge the issue and any negative emotion about the issue. This response is counterproductive and interferes with the decision-making process. A couple must determine to respond in an open and honest way when there is a problem.

## Wayne and Beth

Beth made it clear that she had become apathetic toward Wayne and was seriously considering divorce. She said that she no longer loved him.

I sensed that Beth's apathy was tied to buried anger so I began exploring the possibility with her. She gave vague, general complaints about Wayne but nothing that seemed to justify her attitude. As I probed he suddenly blurted out a odd and unexpected question: "What about the Internet stuff?"

Immediately Beth put her head down and began to shake it from side to side; her gesture indicated that she did not want to talk about it.

Looking at Wayne I asked, "What about the Internet stuff? I don't understand."

Wayne took off his glasses and began to rub his forehead. He looked as if he was in severe pain. "Well, uh, uh...I, uh."

"Yeah, Wayne, why don't you tell him about the Internet stuff?" By now her head was raised in defiance. She was staring directly at him. And her glare seemed to make him even more nervous.

"Go ahead Wayne. Share with me what happened," I prompted.

Looking out the window, Wayne shared an incident that had occurred two years earlier; an event buried under a mountain of routine, daily activities. "This is so embarrassing. But I know I've got to deal it with if we're going to make it. I was on the Internet one night, and, well, I got curious. You know, about porn. I'd been hearing the guys at work talk about. I was looking at it and Beth walked in. I hit the delete button and the picture went off but not before she saw what was on the screen. I lied and told her it came up by accident. I apologized and said I'd be more careful. But I could tell she was suspicious. To my surprise she dropped it; she didn't say anything else about it."

"Beth, can you share with me what your feelings were?"

"I was shocked! I'd never seen anything like that in my life. It was disgusting! What Wayne didn't tell you is that it was two homosexuals having sex. I thought, 'Why in the world is he looking at that?' I went from being shocked to furious. I stormed out of the room and didn't say anything else about it to him. I guess I was too hurt. I couldn't believe he'd done it. A few days later, I asked a computer programmer at work how to check the history file. The file was packed! He'd been looking at that garbage every night for two weeks! I printed it all out; it was over two hundred pages! It was some of the most ungodly filth that you could imagine. I folded it all up and hid it in a box in my closet."

"Did you confront Wayne when he got home that evening Beth?"

"No."



"Did you show him what you had downloaded?"

"No."

"So, for over two years you've been sitting on this secret? You haven't mentioned it to Wayne?"

"Yes."

"Beth, I don't understand, especially in light of the fact that you were so angry. I suppose this has caused a great deal of bitterness toward your Wayne. Am I right?"

"Yes," she said sternly.

Wayne looked as if he could have crawled under his chair. All he could mutter was, "I'm so, so sorry, honey. I love you, I'm so sorry." Beth was unmoved. Her eyes were full of rage.

"Wayne, did you ever approach Beth after that night?"

"No. I guess I was too scared. I wanted to leave well enough alone. I thought maybe I had somehow lucked out and it was all over. I had no idea she had the pictures. I am so ashamed. I'm sorry you had to see that garbage."

Wayne and Beth's unwillingness to address this issue led to two years of misery. Beth became distant and cold; she would not let Wayne touch her. Wayne became aloof and indifferent, and he moved into the guest bedroom. One day turned into another as they went through the motions; they pretended to themselves and others that nothing had happened.

When there an issue arises, it must be promptly addressed. God commands all believers to "speak the truth in love" ([Ephesians 4:25](#)). A failure to be open and honest may end in marital disaster: "God isn't mocked; for whatever man sows that will he also reap" ([Galatians 6:7](#)). [Numbers 32:23](#) warns that "your sins will find you out." If there is an issue, spare yourselves unnecessary grief. Be honest with one another. Identify the issue and address it promptly.

### **Understand Both Sides**

Once you have defined the issue, the second step is to understand how you see the problem. Some start selling their solution before they have listened to their partner, create roadblock to a mutually agreeable decision.

Active listening is the most important skill in communication; it demonstrates respect and earns you the right to be heard. Most spouses, however, are so busy rehearsing their response they do not hear what their partner has to say. So they are unable to evaluate their mate's point of view. This sets the stage for misunderstanding and conflict.

The key to good listening is following what the other person is saying; placing our concerns on the back burner and letting the spouse be the leader. We follow when we encourage them to express how they see the problem. We must do that without interrupting or disputing. Attentive listening does not mean we agree with everything they say, but it does mean we give them the opportunity to verbalize their opinion. The goal of good listening is understanding.

Your listening skills can be improved with practice:

- **Face your partner while they are speaking.** Turn your body to face theirs. Give them eye contact. Turn off the television, put down the paper, or do whatever is necessary to prevent any distraction. If they are sitting, sit down. If they are standing, stand up.
- **Give feedback that you understand.** Nodding your head let's your spouse know you are tracking with them. Feedback conveys you are interested in what they have to say. You may not like what you hear, but you're validating their viewpoint. A brief reflective statement (i.e. "I can see that you are really upset about this, etc.) or saying "uh-huh" will let them know you understand.
- **Ask for more information.** This technique draws the speaker out and encourages them to keep talking. It demonstrates that you believe what they have to say is important. More information can be requested in a number of ways: "I'd like to hear more about what you're saying; Tell me more; Is there anything else?"
- **Sum up what they've said.** Once your spouse has expressed their point of view, sum up their message in a few brief sentences or phrases. Repeat back in your own words what you heard them say. Ask if your summary was correct. If it was not, ask for further clarification.

Active listening is a skill that can be mastered. Once developed, it will pay rich relational dividends.

### **Wayne and Beth (revisited)**

In their second counseling session, I addressed the issue that had divided Wayne and Beth for two years. There seemed to be a sense of relief that their problem was finally out in the open.

Beth expressed the deep pain that Wayne's behavior had caused her, and she explained why she had pulled away from him.

Wayne admitted why he had become involved in pornography. He shared that he had felt left out of Beth's life: "It seemed like she was married to her work rather than me. A lot of nights she wouldn't get home until 8:00 or 9:00 pm. By then she was exhausted and just wanted to go to bed. She was rarely interested in sex." He admitted he was secretly angry, but too afraid to tell her.

If Wayne and Beth had addressed the issue when it first occurred, they may have avoided two years of unhappiness, and found a mutually agreeable solution to their intimacy issue.

### **Look at the Options**

The third step is to review all options for resolving the problem. Brainstorming is a helpful way of identifying available alternatives. This method diverts a couple's focus away from one another to the issue, and serves to unite them in a productive partnership.

All options should be evaluated and those judged to be unusable are discarded by mutual consent. Most couples discover that collaboration leads to a solution that blends several ideas.

### Wayne and Beth (revisited)

In session three Wayne and Beth were asked to make a list of possible solutions to their problem:

1. We will have sex on a regular basis.
2. I (Beth) will cut back on my hours at work.
3. I (Wayne) will be honest about my sexual needs.
4. I (Wayne) will help with the household chores more often.
5. I (Beth) will be honest with Wayne about my anger.
6. I (Wayne) will never visit pornography sites on the Net.
7. I (Wayne) will find an accountability partner.
8. We will make time to be together (i.e. dates).
9. We will be open and honest about all issues

A spirit of partnership, cooperation and negotiation produces amazing results. By the third step most couples are energized to complete the process.

### Make a Choice

When possible, options are laid out, making a mutually agreeable choice is not difficult. The solution chosen should include two key elements:

- **List specific actions to be taken.** These action steps constitute a plan. Specific, concrete steps are defined so action will be taken. They should be written out. An effective action plan spells out the responsibilities of both partners.
- **Specify when these actions will be completed.** Don't leave your action plan open-ended by not including a time frame. Make the time for completion as clear as the identified actions.

### Evaluate the Results.

You may find that your action plan is not working for some reason. Reassess the agreement and revise the plan. Refuse to become frustrated or discouraged. As the poet, Ken Burns said, "the best laid plans of mice and men oft go awry." Return to the negotiating table; make the needed changes to resolve the issue.

### Wayne and Beth (revisited)

In the third session Wayne and Beth were assigned the task of choosing a solution to their problem. And they were asked to bring the results of their assignment to their fourth session:

1. We agree to have sex together at least twice a week. If either of us is too tired or sick, we'll let the other know in an open and honest manner.
2. I (Beth) won't work past 6:00 p.m. Once I'm home I'll devote my time and attention to my husband.
3. I (Wayne) will stop all Internet services except e-mail by October 15.
4. I (Wayne) will cook supper on the nights Beth has to work until 6:00 p.m.

5. If either of us violates this agreement, we' will openly and honestly address the violation with one another.

During the fourth session Beth and Wayne appeared noticeably happy; there were smiles, hand holding, and a softness in their faces. Wayne took out a folded piece of paper and said, "Here it is!"

As I read their agreement, I nodded in approval and handed it back to Wayne. "This is excellent! You've done a good job. There's one small problem, though," I added.

Wayne and Beth quickly looked at each other, then at me in puzzlement. At the same time they asked, "What?"

"You forgot to sign and date it." Chuckling, Wayne signed his name then handed it to Beth. "What you two have done tonight completes our work. I encourage you to continue using this method whenever you have an issue. You'll never need to return to my office again. Before you leave let's pray and make that commitment before the Lord."

You can lay a new foundation for your marriage and reestablish a relationship that is truly satisfying. But it must be laid on the bedrock of mutuality, intimacy, and effective communication patterns.

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### **Questions for Him and Her:**

1. Is there a lack of mutuality in your marriage? Explain.
2. Is there a lack of intimacy in your marriage? Explain.
3. Is there a lack of effective communication patterns in your marriage? Explain.
4. Do you understand the process for laying a solid foundation for your marriage? If not, will you commit to study this chapter again?
5. Of the three elements required for a firm foundation, which poses the most difficulty for you in making changes?

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### **Notes from Chapter Six:**

1. Nova online. (1999, October). *Fall of the leaning tower*. Retrieved from <http://pbs.org/wgbh/nova/pisa/>
2. MacArthur, J. (1981). *Family feuding: How to end it*. Edited and outlined by David Sper. Panorama City, CA: Word of Grace Communications (pp. 34-36).
3. Miller, S. Miller, P., Nunnally, E. & Wackman, D. (1991). *Talking and listening Together: Couple Communication*. Littleton, Colorado: Interpersonal Communication Programs, Inc. (pp. 118-125).

4. *The new lexicon: Webster's dictionary of the english language* (1989). New York: Lexicon Publications, Inc. (p. 506).
5. Carpenter, K.M., & Addis, M.E. (2000). Alexithymia, gender, and response to depressive symptoms. *Sex Roles*, 43, 629-644.
6. Levant, R.F. (2001). Desperately seeking language: Understanding, assessing, and treating normative male alexithymia. In G.R. Brooks & G.E. Good (Eds.), *The new handbook of psychotherapy and counseling with men: A comprehensive guide to settings, problems, and treatment approaches*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, pp. 424-443.
7. Miller, pp. 85-100. This is a brief adaptation of Miller, Miller, Nunnally, and Wackman's eight-step method for conflict resolution. They refer to it as "Mapping issues: Resolving conflict collaboratively."

## EPILOGUE

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**M**arital love dies an agonizingly slow death; it is not a rush into coexistence, separation, or divorce, but occurs as a couple stumbles out of love over time.

Many marriages end without the benefit of outside help; the help that could have put new life back into a dying relationship. This book was written for those individuals; the couple who would never ask for the guidance they need to keep their good marriage from going bad.

Some who read this book will make only a half-hearted attempt to save their marriage. The wisdom that could restore their dying relationship will be dismissed as "too much work" or "too much trouble." They will take the path of least resistance by blaming their spouse or rationalizing away failure. And some will expect their marriage to magically improve.

If this is your attitude, I encourage you to reconsider. Do not throw away your investment. Leaving your present relationship is no guarantee the next will be any better. Second marriages have a divorce rate of 67%<sup>1</sup>, and for a good reason: These individuals never stop long enough to honestly evaluate what went wrong; they are unwilling to look in the mirror and accept personal responsibility.

If your marriage is dying, one of you is a Taker, or you both are! When Jesus informed his disciples one of them would betray him, "They were exceedingly sorrowful, and each one of them began to say to Him, 'Lord, is it I?'" ([Matthew 26:22](#)). You must ask yourself the same question: "Am I the Taker in this relationship? This is a hard question to ask. The [Giver/Taker Test in Chapter Three](#) was designed to help you make an honest evaluation of yourself.

Perhaps you do not believe you are a Taker even though the test indicates you are and your spouse agrees. I encourage you to ask God to show you the truth: "God, examine me and show me what I am really like. Test me and help me to see my true thoughts and behavior. Reveal to me if there is any sin in my heart. Make it undeniably clear to me if I am a Taker and in need of change" ([Psalm 139:23-24](#)). He will give you the discernment you need: "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him" ([James 1:5](#)).

If you know you are a Taker, review [Chapter Five](#); it explains what you must do to be transformed into a Giver. God promises to give his grace to help you make the changes he

requires; changes that will bring new life to you and your marriage.

Counselors know the Giver is the one most vulnerable to discouragement, despair, and apathy. If you are a Giver, resist the temptation to become hopeless; you serve the "God of hope" ([Romans 15:13](#)). He can empower you to reverse the emotional detachment process. He has provided the way and the grace to keep you from stumbling out of love. If bitterness or apathy have weakened your resolve, ask God for help: "God, I don't want to go on making your Holy Spirit sad, so I am asking you to help me get rid of all of the bitterness and hateful feelings I now have in my heart toward my mate. Help me instead to become tenderhearted, willing to forgive, and willing to start over with my partner. Help me to forgive as you have forgiven me in Christ."

I encourage you review Chapter One; carefully study the material again. Find where you are in the emotional detachment process and ask God to meet you at that point. Determine not to allow yourself to cross the *Point of No Return*. Dig in your heels and say "No!" to the temptation to give up.

A final warning to those who have stopped the emotional detachment process: Do not stop here; begin to lay a new foundation. Some see this step as unnecessary, but it is not. Your relationship must be rebuilt on the principles discussed in Chapter Six. To disregard these elements will put your marriage at risk. It will be worth the time and effort to reread this chapter. Make the commitment to incorporate these three principles into your relationship.

The failure of a marriage is one of life's greatest tragedies; a pain that can spill over into the lives of our children, grandchildren, churches, and friends. But when marriage is lived according to biblical principles, a couple can experience heaven on earth. This is God's will for you. May you fully discover all that He intends for your marriage!

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### Notes from Epilogue:

1. Crouch, John (n.d.). *Divorce Rate in America*. Retrieved May 27, 2011, from <http://www.divorcereform.org>.

