

## Jump Starting Your Marriage

Marriage is the hardest relationship on the earth and because it is so hard many fail to improve what they need to improve, and so the relationship eventually stagnates. If this is happening to you, I recommend something that has helped many couples, and I'm confident if you are open, can help your marriage get to a higher level. It would involve just a few minutes with your spouse, but may have enormous impact upon your relationship, even turning a troubled relationship around. There are two exercises of interfacing with each other I want to encourage you to consider. The first is called the Five-As and the second one is a Marriage Mantra. Each of these must be done daily and it would be helpful if it could be done in the morning before you and your spouse begin your day. I especially encourage the husband to initiate this effort and for the wife to submit to his spiritual leadership with respect to this attempt (Eph. 5:21-23). You may have to launch out by faith in initiating this "ritual," but over time, it may become a *meaningful ritual* that will bless the relationship.

### **The Five-A's**

The Five-A's was developed by Roger & Becky Tirabassi.<sup>1</sup> I have taken the liberty to enhance their approach a bit. It is a very effective strategy for jump-starting a stagnant marriage (all things considered) and keeping the marriage built up. I have seen this approach jump-start many relationships and have wonderful implications for many couples. This exercise is best done in the morning (preferred), but if not, the evening will work. It usually takes only 3-5 minutes. Treat it as a non-negotiable daily ritual that you integrate into the habits of the

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Tirabassi & Becky, *Little Changes Big Results for Crazy, Busy Couples* (Newport Beach, California: Little Changes, Big Results, 2011), 19-26.

relationship. Hopefully, it will become a meaningful ritual that will bless your relationship.

Here are the Five A's:

**Affirmation/Appreciation** Affirm or express appreciation for your spouse in some way (e.g., the work they do for the family, efforts with the relationship, the blessing he/she is to you in the relationship, something good he/she does). Eventually you will look forward to sharing a positive perspective on your spouse. Through practicing affirmation, you become an *edifying couple* (Eph. 4:29).

**Apologize** Clear the air. Confess a wrong you did, a mistake you made, or a failure on your part. This is not the time for a prolonged conversation about a serious offense or transgression. So, don't needlessly open up a "can of worms" during this particular exercise. That should be something you schedule for further detailed discussion. After sharing the apology, the spouse listening should respond with: I forgive you; or I need a little more time, but will forgive you. Through the habit of apologizing to each other, you become a *confessional couple* (Jam. 5:16).

**Ask** See if there is anything you can do to help your spouse that day. It should be a simple item that would take only 5-15 minutes, such as picking up an item at the grocery store, picking up your laundry from the cleaners, getting your prescription, making a call for you, teaching your spouse how to do some computer tasks. Through helping each other out with small things, you become a *servant couple* (Gal. 5:13).

**Amen** Find out what you can pray for your spouse about. Just one or two things that you can keep in mind during the day and intercede for your spouse in prayer. Through the habit of daily praying for each other, you become an *intercessional couple*. (Rom. 12:12; Eph. 6:18; Col. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:17).

**Affection** Hug each other for 20 seconds, which at that time may initiate oxytocin (a delightful mood elevating endorphin). The touch receptors signal the brain, which releases this delightful endorphin. Through habitually hugging each other, you become an *affectionate couple* (Phil. 2:1).

### **Marriage Mantra**

The second “ritual” I want to encourage you to do every day is the “marriage mantra.”<sup>2</sup> You should face each other, hold hands and look into each other’s eyes while speaking this mantra. You can eventually develop your own marriage mantra, but this one offers a good sample or model from which to work with. Here it is:

*We begin this day acknowledging that we will walk in the Spirit, be open to God’s use of our life and encourage each other in this spiritual journey we are on together. We commit to live joyfully in the mandates of our covenant. We will live radically in the present, love each other deeply, avoid anything that would damage our relationship, and debrief with each other on a daily basis. I’m grateful that you are my spouse and together we will make a difference in this world. Amen<sup>3</sup>*

### **Conclusion**

Your marriage must be kept on the front burner. Otherwise, it will get cold. These two approaches will be very effective in keeping your marriage on the front burner, so it can stay warm and cook nicely. If you are going to have a relationship, why not make it the best it can be. These exercises will:

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<sup>2</sup> This is a term and mantra that I have personally developed.

<sup>3</sup> This is a Marriage Mantra I developed years ago and have put it in the hands of many struggling couples. You can certainly utilize this one, amend it in any way, or write your own unique one.

- give you accountability with this high-calling of the marriage you both have committed to;
- put you on to that path of deeper connectivity; and
- encourage a wonderful mutual submission (Eph. 5:21).

There is something profound with this idea of two becoming one-flesh (Gen. 2:24). It is apparent that “Spiritual growth is the main theme; marriage is simply the context.”<sup>4</sup> And that He may have “designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy.”<sup>5</sup> God is using the marriage to challenge you to grow—an “iron sharpening iron” thing (Pr. 27:17).<sup>6</sup> May these two exercises encourage you into the depths of what God has intended for your marriage.

### Resources

Mason, Mike. *The Mystery of Marriage: As Iron Sharpens Iron* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1985)

Thomas, Gary. *Sacred Marriage*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000.

Tirabassi, Roger & Tirabassi, Becky, *Little Changes Big Results for Crazy, Busy Couples*. Newport Beach, California: Little Changes, Big Results, 2011.

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<sup>4</sup> Gary Thomas, *Sacred Marriage* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 26.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>6</sup> Mike Mason, *The Mystery of Marriage: As Iron Sharpens Iron* (Portland, Oregon: Multnomah Press, 1985).