

# Great places 1794 essay



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How to Have A

Joyous Marriage!

by Roderick C. Meredith

Here are “ keys’ to help make your  
marriage special! These insights and  
tested principles will help you build  
your marriage into a precious  
relationship of joy and beauty.

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With tears in their eyes, dozens and scores of women have told me how miserable their marriages were. They obviously

wish with all their hearts that things were better, but they don't know what to do.

" My husband won't really open up and talk with me about our problems", many women say.

" My psychologist told me to go have an affair and I would feel better," one woman said. " But I know that's wrong and I just can't do that!"

In our " now generation," most folks don't think of the long-term consequences of their actions, and our acceptance of " quickie"

marriages and divorces only compounds the problem. Why try to work through all the problems in your marriage when you can just divorce and feel better right now?

In an outstanding recent article, former Secretary of Education, William J. Bennett, made these insightful comments: "...but

during the same recent 30-year period there has been a 560% increase in violent crime; a 419% increase in illegitimate births; a

quadrupling in divorce rates; a tripling of the percentage of children living in single-parent homes; more than a 200%

increase in the teenage suicide rate; and a drop of almost 80 points in SAT scores....!"

If you wish to avoid the misery of this foolish generation, then read carefully and prayerfully the pages to follow. For we are

going to discuss seven vital keys to building and enriching the very basis of all decent society—your marriage and your family.

#### I. Commitment is basic

The expression "till death do us part" may seem old fashioned or passA© to many young people. But those same couples may be

suffering loneliness, emptiness and misery if they leave that concept out of their marriages.

Yet today, most people take for granted the modern option of leaving their mate and forsaking their marriage vows. Many

couples plan for the eventuality of divorce by having a lawyer write up a prenuptial agreement. Then they promise to stay

together for life, but insist on acting “ prudently” to protect their assets in case the marriage doesn’t last.

This idea may seem wise and prudent, but is it really?

No!

The common acceptance of the “ escape hatch” of an easy divorce creates a vicious cycle. The more some people divorce, the

easier it seems for others to do likewise. And the breakdown of a society has begun!

Nearly all thoughtful men and women realize that a stable home and family is basic for a decent society. As our homes and

marriages come apart, so the wildness, ruthlessness and violence in our society will increase.

It is vital that we all grasp that the basis for marriage itself is the supreme purpose of our Creator! That’s right! If you leave the

great God who made us male and female out of the picture, then human reason is the only basis for anything—and absolute

chaos will ensue.

It is God who said:

“ Let us make man in our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “ Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1: 26-28).

God instituted marriage

We see here that it is God who made us male and female. And His first command to humans was to “ multiply”-obviously implying marriage and home.

God the Father is the Author of marriage. In Matthew 19, Jesus gave us some principles concerning marriage. The Pharisees tested His teaching on the subject by asking, “ Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?” (Matthew 19: 3).

In other words, can a man put away his wife for just any reason? They distorted what Moses had said in the Old Testament

about putting a wife away, and would even use a pimple, a wart or almost anything as an excuse to put their wives away.

And He answered and said to them, “ Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and

female,” and said, “ For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become

one flesh”? (verse 4-5).

God made the man and the woman for each other. He created the man and his wife to complement one another physically,

psychologically, emotionally and mentally so they could live a balanced and happy life together.

Jesus taught that a man should leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife!

If you do have to bring senile or infirm in-laws to your home later, after the marriage is firmly established, then that’s different.

But at the beginning, and certainly for the first several years, normally, you’re to leave relatives and cleave to your wife or your

husband.



Throughout your married life, always remember that it is GOD who made you "one."

In a true marriage, a man and woman covenant before God to take each other as mates for life. Under all normal circumstances, you should stay together. If need be, you should pray and work to save your marriage.

In Malachi 2: 13-16, our Creator shows why He sometimes withholds His blessing:

You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive

it with good will from your hands. Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been witness between you and the

wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant. But did He

not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your

spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. "For the LORD God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it

covers one's garment with violence," says the LORD of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal

treacherously."

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Notice that God says plainly that He hates divorce!

So should you. That doesn't mean you hate divorced people. Neither does God. Rather, He pities them and wishes that we

humans would quit fighting and arguing and learn to love one another.

If we would truly do this—and make a real commitment when we marry—then we could work out any problems that might

arise. We could learn the lessons of giving, sharing and forgiving in a way that only marriage can teach. Our faithfulness to our

mates shows our Maker that our commitment to Him will also be lasting.

## II. Communication is vital

One of the greatest shortcomings in literally millions of marriages is the lack of open and loving communication. Note that I

said, “ open and loving,” not shouting, criticizing or threatening.

This lack is especially discouraging to many wives. A young man will put his best foot forward during the courtship. He will

walk and talk for hours with a pretty young woman he hopes to marry. His hormones are raging. So he will confide in her,

encourage and flatter her, do almost anything to get this beautiful young woman to say “ yes” and marry him.

But, not too many days or weeks after the marriage, a man may begin to withdraw. He seems to forget that his sweetheart

agreed to marry because she honestly thought she was liked and respected as a person. She expected and hoped to be a full

partner in life with her future husband-sharing with him their mutual plans, hopes and dreams.

However, when "hubby" starts coming home late with liquor on his breath and has nothing to say, or when he eats dinner

quickly and silently and then plops himself in front of the TV, or when he spends most nights away from home playing pool with

"the boys"-that hurts!

So before you even become officially engaged, you had better become "best friends" with your future mate-and mean it.

You had better find out if you truly have a whole range of interests in common-besides sex and romance!

In a truly happy marriage, the two individuals are to become like one person.

There is to be a oneness of mind, body,

emotions, attitudes and a sharing in nearly every aspect of life.

This doesn't mean that a man can never play basketball, handball, pool, or cards with other men occasionally. Good

masculine companionship once in a while helps a husband to be more of a man. This gives him more confidence and more of a release for a particular part of his nature that ought to be expressed with other men.

But if a husband is always playing cards, basketball, baseball, or pool with other men-or away from home trying to make it

big on the job-then this takes him mentally, emotionally and physically away from his wife and children. A continuing

practice of this is wrong! It is breaking the commandment of Christ that a man is to cleave to his wife.

Every married man has the God-given responsibility to spend time at home with his wife and children. Is this where a

considerable amount of your time and interest lies? Or is it always somewhere else, doing something else?

Where is your "heart"? How and where do you spend your time?

Spend time alone with your mate

Husbands and wives need special time together-sometimes apart even from the children. Get a babysitter, if you can, and go

out to dinner or to a concert once in a while. You can walk, hand in hand, as you used to do when you were courting and

dating-dance together, talk together and love together.

You can even take short trips together. Then you will appreciate the children more, because you've been away from them for a

few days (not several weeks or months) perhaps once or twice a year. This doesn't hurt them at all, if they are properly trained

and your family is emotionally close as it should be.

Look at some examples in the Bible. You'll find that men like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were away from their children far

more than many of us today. It's a matter of correctly training the children while you're with them, and giving them a stable

atmosphere and foundation for the remainder of their lives.

Of course, many don't have much opportunity to go someplace together, or can't afford it. But there are other ways you can be

alone together. You can begin by sending the children to bed by eight or eight-thirty in the evening. Then you will have an hour

and a half or two hours together-before you go to bed.

You can listen to music together, read the Bible together occasionally, and do other things together. Sometimes you can have a

babysitter watch the children while you and your wife take a long walk together.

A little thoughtfulness and tenderness can help a great deal!

Many of you men who have marriage problems should court your wife as you used to. Practice the art of trying to cleave to

her, and spend time together. Then you will really understand your wife, and she will feel close to you mentally and

emotionally. Both of you will have more of the mutual understanding and affection you used to have when you were first

married.

But you do need to communicate in all those activities! Remember, love does not automatically make one a skilled mind

reader.

Men, be sure you don't let other things distract you-or create situations which excuse you-from talking openly and genuinely

with your mate about your deepest interests and concerns in life. Let her know if you think something is missing in your

relationship. And truly listen to her with your heart as well as your head when she talks to you about similar matters.

If you love your mate, tell him or her-say it frequently. Open up. If you share your hopes and dreams with the love of your life,

then your love will grow deeper and be even more meaningful.

### III. Set family goals together

A truly meaningful home and marriage ought to have a number of goals in mind besides sexual fulfillment. Too often, young people are so consumed with sexual interest that they neglect to build a home, an enduring family and a meaningful life together. So when the sexual fireworks start to slow down after a few months or years of marriage, these people feel a sense of letdown or betrayal.

God mentions one of the reasons He made man and woman one in marriage. Notice again the inspired words of Malachi, " But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth" (Malachi 2: 15).

A young husband and wife normally ought to be planning for children, a real home, a sense of family, stability and all that this implies. If both husband and wife are working, they need to plan together to set aside money so she can stop working for several years, at least, in order to have and rear children.

Couples should discuss what kind of home, education and family activities they feel will work out best for them. They should

regularly set little goals to work on together. Then, as partners in their family enterprise, they should see that these smaller goals

all fit in with and support the fulfillment of their major family goals.

An illustration of working toward a smaller goal might include planning together a summer vacation trip. Each partner might

wish to do some reading and research separately, talk to different friends, get ideas. Then, together, they can spend time

discussing alternatives, planning a tentative trip budget, and finalizing plans.

This type of goal-sharing and planning is obviously increased when a couple has children. Then they need to discuss regularly

the childrens' health, development, education, friends, neighborhood problems and their respective goals in life.

That is one reason, among many others, why having children often serves to give greater strength and stability to a marriage.

Jesus Christ said to His disciples, " No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I

have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you" (John 15: 15).



Even the Son of God did not withhold from His friends the plans and programs He and the Father had in mind. So you men, especially, open up and bring your wives into the planning process of how and where you want to live in the future, where you hope your career may take you and the goals you have in mind for yourself and for the family as a whole. Make them feel like an integral part of the big programs in your life.

#### IV. Marriage means giving

One of the greatest joys in life that everyone ought to experience is the joy of giving: is seeing the deep appreciation, the radiant smiles and the joy of others because you thought of them.

The Apostle Paul wrote, " I have shown in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ' It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20: 35).

Marriage is certainly one of the best places to learn to give. For when you are constantly living with another person, when you are bound by God in marriage to that person, you desperately need to learn to give and give and give in order for that union to be as deeply happy and satisfying as it should be!

As the one God intended to take the lead, a husband ought to take the lead in creating, in marriage, an atmosphere of giving

and serving. Then the wife should surely follow this lead so that each party is trying to give a wonderful life and marriage to

the other, to enrich their partner's life in every possible way. Otherwise, if both partners are immature, selfish and just trying to

“ get”, then big trouble lies ahead!

You husbands especially need to remember that Christ gave Himself for the Church:

That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious

church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their

wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself (Ephesians 5: 26-28). Authorized (King James) Version.

Every right-minded man certainly desires to cherish and protect his wife. She is his sweetheart, his companion, the mother of

his children. He ought to realize that she is part of him! “ For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just

as the Lord does the church” (verse 29).

Realizing that his wife is part of him, a man certainly ought to have a solicitous and protective feeling toward his wife and sweetheart. He should constantly be thinking of her welfare so that she does not strain or overdo; so that her grace and beauty may be preserved throughout all of their married life. A real man will notice when his wife is overworking and lighten her burdens whenever possible. He will leap to action to lift heavy things for her, scrub those burnt pans or vacuum for her when she is tired or over worked. He will help her when she is sick, and protectively and lovingly watch over her in many such ways!

Of course, a man should not do this because he is nagged or henpecked into doing it! And no right-minded wife would knowingly do this. If a wife makes demands beyond reason upon her husband, it is his duty as the family's leader to set his foot down and restore a proper balance in their relationship—though, as much as possible, he still helps her out in sincere love and concern for their life together. The woman also has her responsibilities, her particular duties in the household, and she should gladly do them. But, help from her husband comes in as an act of love—freely and fully given when she is sick, downcast or is

suddenly faced with an object too heavy to lift, a job too difficult for her to accomplish without the physically stronger partner

of the marriage giving of his help and strength in love to his wife and sweetheart.

Learn this lesson, men! Your wives will repay you in a thousand ways over the years to come if you learn to give this help

when it is needed—and give it freely and in kindness.

The Christian wife

Certainly every Christian woman ought to think about serving her husband—about caring for his health and personal needs,

about encouraging him, loving him and helping him grow as a husband and father in every way she can.

One of the great tragedies of our inflationary society is that millions of young wives are virtually forced to work outside the

home! Often, they come home tired and bedraggled at night. A wife in this situation lacks the zest and energy to cook special

meals, keep the house as she would wish to—let alone be an enthusiastic sweetheart, companion and lover for her husband.

Each of you who read this need to meditate deeply about the quality of life you desire. Think carefully about building a real

family with children—and a wife that is able to stay home and rear that family as our Creator certainly intended!

The apostle Paul was inspired to instruct the older women:

That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discrete, chaste,

keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Titus 2: 4-5) Authorized

(King James) Version.

As Proverbs 31 tells us, a woman like this who gives herself to her family, to building a real home—will indeed be honored

both by God and by man. “ Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her” (Proverbs 31: 28).

If you can use your marriage and your family as a “ training ground,” to unreservedly love, share and give to others, you will

develop the greatest characteristic of all. Then, from a strong, happy marriage as a base of strength, that love can flow out from

you and your mate to the rest of your family, friends, neighbors and associates.

In every aspect of your married life, learn to practice the way of give. You will not be sorry.

## V. The ART of FORGIVING

To be happy and remain happy in marriage, you must not only give but also forgive. There have never been two perfect

people on earth, and so no marriage has ever been truly perfect—as all long-married people understand.

You knew full well when you married that your husband or wife was not perfect. So you must not hold them up to some

unreasonable standard of perfection. If you do, you will both be perfectly miserable.

When there are real misunderstandings and hurts—and there will be—you must learn to forgive. As a real Christian, you are

commanded to forgive all men—so how much more your own mate!

Jesus Christ, the One who shed His blood for us, stated, “ For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will

also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew

6: 14-15).

You must ask God in prayer to grant you the spirit of forgiveness—the ability to completely put away all resentment and

animosity against others who have hurt you. And then you need to practice this. Do it regularly. Build the habit of forgiving

others quickly, especially your own mate!

There are those who carry grudges. They often brood and fume and smolder over little hurts and misunderstandings.

Are you like this?

If you are, you need to pray to God in heaven to help you get over this tendency—and to completely forgive your mate for

the literally dozens of little hurts that can occur when two people live together.

Do you really enjoy making yourself miserable, your mate miserable and everyone else miserable by carrying grudges around

forever? If you really think about it, very few of us really want this result.

So work on it.

Change your pattern of thinking. Don't allow yourself to get hurt so easily.

Pray your heart out to God who is called “ the

Father of mercies” (II Corinthians 1: 3). As He forgives us again and again, so must we forgive others—including our mates.

The apostle Peter commands Christian men to honor their wives, “ as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers

may not be hindered" (I Peter 3: 7).

Peter then proceeds to give instructions that apply to all situations, but especially the " marriage situation":

Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not

returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may

inherit a blessing (verses 8-9).

Yes, we need to have compassion for our mates and forgive them regularly.

We need to be courteous and tenderhearted in

marriage. For marriage is a wonderful workshop for learning the art of giving, forgiving, kindness and mercy-if we will

prayerfully and unselfishly use it to help us build these qualities into our character.

The apostle Peter asked Jesus, " Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

(Matthew 18: 21).

Think about it! Sometimes your mate will offend you (though you probably shouldn't be so sensitive!) many times in one day!



Jesus understood. He knew that we all need forgiveness from God and from each other again and again. So Jesus

answered, “ I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven” (verse 22).

So love your mate. Forgive your mate. Don't carry grudges.

Remember how difficult it must be for him or her to live with you! If you were someone else, how would you like to have to

put up with all the mistakes and foibles that you exhibit almost every week of your life?

Remind yourself that you cannot be happy “ hating” your mate. Learn to genuinely forgive, forget and move forward to a truly joyous and satisfying life.

Which brings us to our next point.

## VI. Romance and fun

Most courtships and marriages begin with romance and fun. The young couple spends a lot of time together. They go to the

beach, the mountains or the park. They eat together. They go out dancing, or to the museum, libraries or movies. Above all,

they have long, intimate talks with each other—looking into each other's eyes, exulting in the romance of love.

And they have fun.

In most cases, they laugh and kiss and kid around and really enjoy the getting-to-know-you stage of courtship. Life takes on a

special glow because of their attraction to each other—and because they are using that attraction to enhance and make special

the sharing of all their activities and intimate moments together.

But all too often—a few weeks or months after the marriage—this fun and romance begins to leave the marriage. Often, life

becomes hum-drum and dull and one or both marriage partners start asking themselves, “ What went wrong?”

Why?

There are often a number of reasons, of course, but let’s discuss two of the most common reasons why a marriage loses its

romance and zest.