



tight knots  
The Marriage Ministry of Jesus House

# Building a Healthy Marriage

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There is a saying that a good marriage is not just about finding the perfect partner but also about being the perfect partner. We often get caught up in how we think our spouse should look or behave or respond and we forget that our own appearance, behaviour and responses are just as important. Only God can fully meet all our needs, and even He sometimes does so in ways we would rather He did not.

A healthy marriage requires commitment, a decision to work at it and to develop it, with each spouse giving their best to the relationship and working on areas that need improving. There is no way around it; a healthy marriage is hard work but the rewards are worth it.

Follow us on Twitter [@tightknots](#) to find out more about the ministry, or contact us by telephone on [020 8438 8285](tel:02084388285) or email at [tightknots@jesushouse.org.uk](mailto:tightknots@jesushouse.org.uk)

## **KNOT ONE: Discover God's Design for Marriage**

In order to have a successful marriage, we need to take our instructions from the One who created marriage. The first step towards a Godly marriage is to seek to understand God's plan for marriage, and then to seek His help to bridge the gap between where your marriage is at present and where He (and, unknowingly, you) desires it to be.

## **KNOT TWO: Commit to being a 'Covenant Spouse'**

Marriage is a covenant, not a contract, so detractors who cite it as being "just a piece of paper" miss the point. A contract is designed with an inbuilt process of dissolution in the event that one or both parties become dissatisfied with the arrangement; in a covenant each party commits in a manner that is independent of the actions of the other – "for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, for better or worse". God is a Covenant Keeper, and to function in His image and likeness (as we were created to be) we must seek to also be covenant keepers.

## **KNOT THREE: Build an Enabling Environment**

When God brings couples together in marriage, His desire is that *each* spouse works towards creating a safe haven, an environment that enables *the other* spouse to grow and thrive. This entails seeking to fulfil each other's needs, providing physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual nourishment that enables each spouse to excel in every area of life. In marriage, our responsibility is to seek after the wellbeing of our spouse by being "other-centred"; if each spouse is doing this, the marriage will serve as a safe haven for both.

## **KNOT FOUR: Commit to Letting Go of Hurts**

Most marital challenges are the result of unmet and unrealised expectations, wherein spouses feel that marriage – or the person they married – does not fulfil the expectations they had at the time of agreement to be man and wife. This is true of every marriage; the difference between those that go on to enjoy healthy marriages and those that do not is in their response to dealing with these unmet expectations. Some are able to manage these situations with spiritual and emotional maturity,

while others crumble under the wreckage of an unmet desire. It is important to realise that you cannot focus on pressing forward in your marriage while stumbling under the burden of past hurts, so in letting them go you are not letting your spouse off the hook, but instead freeing yourself to better tackle your mountains. Remember that God is always waiting for us to reach out to Him to help us let go.

## KNOT FIVE: Commit to Fun and Intimacy

The truth remains that everybody wants to be happy, living and enjoying a fulfilling life. Apart from God, the person with the greatest capacity to feed or starve that need is our spouse, in whom we place our greatest trust, so commit to building a life that fills yourself and your spouse with love, laughter and passion. Intimacy refers to giving others access to yourself – to your dreams, hopes and fears – and access is freely given in a place of safety, so commit also to building an environment in which your spouse feels safe enough to open all of themselves to you. This way, you both can enjoy complete intimacy on a spiritual, emotional, physical and sexual level, and find delight in the journey.

## KNOT SIX: Commit to Purpose

Marriage was not designed because God thought it would be a good idea to romantically pair up random men with random women, but, as with everything with God, to fulfil purpose. According to the Bible, marriage was designed by God to expertly mirror the marriage between God and His people. It is little wonder marriage has been so keenly targeted by the devil throughout history, as the breakdown of marriages and the family unit has been responsible for most of the ills of any society. Your marriage is not solely about the unparalleled love you and your spouse share; you were paired together by God to fulfil a specific call, so it is important to commit yourself to discovering this purpose and to dedicate your life to living it out.

## KNOT SEVEN: Surround yourselves with Godly influences

Every journey is marked by the company we keep (or fail to keep) and it is no different with marriage. A perfect marriage is a myth, and sadly one that champions isolationist thought (“If we let outsiders in they’ll realise how imperfect our marriage is”). The truth is that every marriage has its struggles and every couple will get it wrong as often (if not more so) as they will get it right. Surrounding your marriage with Godly influences (in the shape of mentors and other couples with a similar commitment to pursuing purpose through their marriages) can help you navigate the darker paths your marriage will take or celebrate the many successes you will hopefully enjoy. And sometimes, because this is also necessary, the only purpose they might serve is to encourage you that your challenges are not unique to you, and that there is indeed a way of escape.

## RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

1. *Fit to be Tied: Making Marriage Last a Lifetime* - Bill & Lynne Hybels
2. *Power of a Praying Wife & Power of a Praying Husband* - Stormie Omartian
3. *Marriage as God Intended* - Selwyn Hughes
4. [www.careforthefamily.org.uk](http://www.careforthefamily.org.uk)
5. [www.familylife.com](http://www.familylife.com)
6. [www.relationshipcentral.org](http://www.relationshipcentral.org)



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