



# NOURISHING YOUR MARRIAGE TOOLKIT

Loving your way through the COVID-19 crisis

## Nourishing Your Marriage In This Season

In these unprecedented times, we are faced with uncertainty like few of us have known in our lifetimes. The impact of the Coronavirus has been felt in ways none of us could have anticipated, from the weight of financial pressures to a greater sense of our mortality. Family structures and regular routines have been disrupted, anxieties over family members working on the front lines have grown, and we're finding ourselves challenged in one way or another.

We've watched as much of the world has come to a halt, with the vast majority of us being forcibly confined to our homes. Amid the strain the sudden changes might be having on our ability to carry out the most basic of functions, we've had to look for answers for ourselves, for loved ones and even for our children, when the most honest answer is that we probably don't know. We don't know why it's happening or how long it will last.

What we do know, as with in all things in life and faith, is that opportunities abound even in the midst of chaos. We know that this season offers us a chance to reshape our perspectives, reassess our beliefs and review our daily habits.

In our marriages, we have to figure out how to make the most of the time together, whether the proximity is one spouse's idea of heaven and another's idea of hell. We have to work with intentionality to build the marriages – and families – of our dreams, to feed them with the right nutrients and allow the circumstances to bind us together in His love. We have put this little resource together for this reason.

These tips are by no means exclusive and should only serve as a start to get you on your way. Our prayers are continually with you and we believe that God will do what He has done throughout scripture, which is to take the little we make available to Him and turn it into a bountiful harvest.



## COMPLEMENT

Never before has the word ‘together’ appeared more meaningful to this generation, and despite the isolation, we are becoming increasingly aware of the shared impact the pandemic is having on all of us. In the same vein, it is important that we weather the crisis **together** as couples. Each of you might have a different reaction to the situation but you must strive for a collective approach which emphasises your oneness. Your spouse is not the enemy; you are both experiencing this challenge. Embrace the challenge **together**.

### Question to ask yourself:

- “Is this choice I’m about to make bringing us closer together or drawing us apart?”

### Practical steps:

- Create a structured schedule *together* – this includes house chores, home-schooling, shopping etc – and share the responsibilities within the structure

### Scripture to ponder on:

- “Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?”  
**Amos 3:3**





## CONNECT WITH GOD

Praying together will help foster that oneness, and the beauty of prayer is that you don't need to come up with the strategy for success yourself. You also don't need to have had a habit of doing so – praying together – for a long time. Simply go to God as you are; express your concerns with honesty. Do continue your own personal time with God, but make time to pray together, especially in this season.

### Question to ask yourself:

- “Are my arguments for not praying with my spouse stronger than our need to be united before God in prayer?”

### Practical steps:

- Pick a specific time to pray, keep it simple, and give each other room to express your different prayer styles.

### Scripture to ponder on:

- “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.” **1 Peter 5:6-7**

## CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER: PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY AND SPIRITUALLY

Expressing your feelings, thoughts and fears presents an opportunity to build intimacy, especially as we all need an outlet for expression as we grapple with the uncertainty. Keep an eye out for each other; check in on your spouse and talk things through. Social distancing shouldn't mean emotional distancing. Marriage hasn't been cancelled and being a family hasn't been cancelled. And since home is meant to be a safe place for everyone within it, take the necessary steps to preserve that safety for all its inhabitants.

### Question to ask yourself:

- “Am I focusing on the children's needs – or on the work I need to do – as a means of avoiding connecting with my spouse?”

### Practical steps:

- Check in often on how you are both feeling. Share your thoughts with each other. Give each other some extra grace. Have a conversation you'd been putting off. Have a 'His & Hers' games night.

### Scripture to ponder on:

- “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. Again, if two lie down together, they will keep warm; but how can one be warm alone? Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” **Ecclesiastes 4:9-12**





## CONSIDER YOUR DIFFERENCES

Your awareness of your differences will be heightened within a period of enforced confinement, so the potential for conflict also heightens. For instance, one of you might be closely following the news for updates while the other may prefer not to have any details. One spouse might find solace in weighty tasks while the other might view the season as an ideal time to take life less seriously. One of you might be more inclined towards isolation even within the enforced isolation, while the other might want to spend every waking – and sleeping – moment together. Whatever your differences, it is important to remember that not viewing life through identical lenses is fine; in fact, our differences are precisely what makes us better together so you need to give each other room and grace to be who God designed you to be.

### Question to ask yourself:

- “Am I focusing on the weaknesses of my spouse’s makeup or am I highlighting its strengths?”

### Practical steps:

- Create space and room for individual expression. Be sensitive to the different ways we respond to the same situations. Celebrate the enviable qualities your spouse possesses, especially as they come to light in isolation.

### Scripture to ponder on:

- “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” **Romans 12:4**

## CAPTURE THE MOMENTS

Regardless of how things seem at present, this season will pass. And when it does, we will look back on all the opportunities it actually offered and realise that they've been lost to us. As we trust God to bring us out on the other side, we must be careful to avoid being in a place where our refrain is "If only I had known!" So make the most of the time together, seize the opportunities that present themselves. Grow as individuals and definitely grow as a couple. Learn from each other's strengths but make sure you 'do life together' no matter what things look like on the outside.

### Question to ask yourself:

- "What simple things can we do together which we will look back on in years to come and think 'Thank God we did that'?"

### Practical steps:

- Watch your favourite movie or discover a new television series together; cook together and for each other; go on walks together; express your affection in writing; carve out exclusive time together – put younger children to bed early and create a 'no-kids zone' for your older children.

### Scripture to ponder on:

- "Build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit...for thus says the Lord: After seventy years are completed at Babylon, I will visit you and perform My good word toward you, and cause you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."

**Jeremiah 29:5,10-11**





## COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

Though the enemy would have you think otherwise, we had much to be grateful for before the pandemic, and we still have many things to be grateful for within it. As individuals and as couples, we can all find things to be grateful for if we can be bothered to look, so make it your goal to dig up things to thank God for. Look over milestones of your time as a couple – wedding photos, photos from holidays, the different stages of your children’s development – and remind yourself of the role God played in each, and store these reminders as fuel to boost your hope and faith for the rest of the season. It might seem cliché, but learn to develop an ‘attitude of gratitude’. Rather than focusing on what isn’t going well, focus on what, by God’s grace, is.

### Question to ask yourself:

- “What do I need to thank God for today?”

### Practical steps:

- Set up a family gratitude jar. Go over an old family album or home movies to see how far God has brought you. Talk to each other – and your children – about instances of God’s goodness in your life.

### Scripture to ponder on:

- “Though the fig tree may not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines; though the labour of the olive may fail, and the fields yield no food; though the flock may be cut off from the fold, and there be no herd in the stalls – yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer’s feet, and He will make me walk on my high hills.” **Habakkuk 3:17-19**



## PRAYING THROUGH THE SEASON

We've put together a few verses of scripture you can meditate on, pray about, and declare as a couple to help you through this season.

- Lord, according to Your word in **Psalms 29:11**, You give strength to Your people! We need this strength today. Please bless us with Your peace!
- In **Hebrews 12:14** You instruct us to strive for peace with everyone. Please help our efforts in this period of enforced confinement, for we know we will not see You without the holiness You desire of us.
- Lord, You asked us in **Philippians 4:6-7** not to be anxious about anything. Instead we bring everything which makes us fearful or anxious about the world, our lives and each other before You in prayer, thanking You for all You have done. We know from Your promise that Your peace, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.
- Lord Jesus, even as You told us in **John 16:33** that we would have tribulation in this life, You promised that we would find peace in You, and asked us to take heart because You have overcome the world. We take heart now in Your most holy name and believe we will taste of Your supreme victory.
- In **Isaiah 26:3** You promised to keep in perfect peace one whose mind is stayed on You. Lord, help us trust You and fix our thoughts on You even as circumstances try to lure our attention away.
- As recorded in **Psalms 118:24**, this is the day that You have made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.
- Lord, You asked us in **James 1:2-3** to count it all joy when we meet trials of various kinds, adding that the testing of our faith produces steadfastness. Lord, we release ourselves to Your will and to Your plan for us in

this season, that we will produce the fruit You desire to see in us.

- As recorded in **Psalms 33:21**, our heart is glad in You, because we trust in Your holy name.
- In **Deuteronomy 31:8** You promised to go before us, to be with us; to never leave or forsake us. So we will not fear or be dismayed, because we trust in You.
- In **Psalms 34:17** You promised to hear the righteous when they cry for help, to deliver them out of all their troubles. Deliver us O LORD, according to Your great name.
- As written in **Psalms 3:3** You, O LORD, are a shield about me, my glory, and the lifter of my head. Keep us safe from all that would threaten to harm us.
- As written in **Romans 8:38-39** we are sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from Your love in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- In **1 Corinthians 7:3-4** You instructed that the husband has the responsibility of meeting the sexual needs of his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband. Strengthen our sexual union at this time, teaching us that we do not have exclusive rights to our own bodies, but that those rights are to be surrendered as gifts to our spouses. Help us honour Your desire that ours might be satisfied.
- In **James 1:19-20** You asked that we be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath, instructing that the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God. Help us manage our moods and tempers in this difficult period, and extend grace to our spouses.
- In **Colossians 3:12-13** You ask us to be merciful as we endeavour to understand others, to be compassionate, showing kindness toward all. To be gentle and humble,

unoffendable in our patience with others. Teach us to tolerate the weaknesses of our spouses, to seek to forgive even as Christ forgave us.

- In **1 Thessalonians 4:3-5** You make clear Your desire for our sanctification: that we should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of us should know how to possess our own vessels in sanctification and honour, not in passion of lust like those who don't know You. Keep us from all forms of sexual immorality and help us seek to satisfy each other and leave the marital bed undefiled.
- In **Genesis 2:24** You declared that a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, becoming one flesh. As we isolate from the rest of the world, strengthen the oneness You desired in and for us from the very beginning.
- In **Ephesians 5:21-29** You ask us to submit to one another in the fear of You. As wives, You have asked us to submit to our own husbands, as to the Lord. While as husbands, You've asked that we love our wives just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her. Help us honour these commands to the glory of Your name.





We recognise that some couples would have come into this crisis on the back of existing marital challenges, and as such will find some of these recommendations difficult to fulfil. Some may have need for a third party – a counsellor or a mediator – to step in to help them through their challenges. If this applies to you, please don't hesitate to get in touch at **[tightknots@jesushouse.org.uk](mailto:tightknots@jesushouse.org.uk)**

Additional resources to help nourish your marriage can be found on our website: **[www.tightknots.org](http://www.tightknots.org)**

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