

## How to grow a great relationship

### Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

9 Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor. 10 If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble. 11 And on a cold night, two under the same blanket can gain warmth from each other. But how can one be warm alone? 12 A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 – NLT).

Marriage is NOT a selfish institution...

...to get what you can out of the relationship

Great relationships are about

- growing into God's purposes together
- investing in each other

How to build a great relationship instead of chasing the wind (from Ecclesiastes 4)

1. Add value to each others lives...(v. 9)

So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing (1 Thessalonians 5:11 – NLT).

- Build up your spouse in those areas where he/she is insecure

**Homework:** identify one area in which your spouse (or child/ parent/ friend) needs encouragement - and decide how you can encourage them in that area on a regular basis

2. Give each other more joy than pain (v. 10)

"This is what the LORD Almighty says: Judge fairly and honestly, and show mercy and kindness to one another (Zechariah 7:9 – NLT).

- Remember the good things in the relationship...

...it will shape your attitude

- Don't dwell on the weaknesses of the relationship...

...it will shape your expectations

**Homework:** make a list of what your spouse (or child/ parent/ friend) does to cause you joy and another list of what they do to cause you pain - then exchange lists!

3. Keep finding new ways and new places where you enjoy hanging out together (v. 10)
  - Find comfortable places where you can talk openly and honestly  
The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense (Proverbs 27:9 – NLT).  
  
**Homework:** talk about which places and times have been the most comfortable to talk openly and honestly
4. A genuine effort to change is more important than the short-term results (v. 10)  
Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself (Philippians 2:3 – NLT).
  - Develop habits that regularly communicate affection  
Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other (Romans 12:10 – NLT).
  - Evaluate on a regular basis (ex. every anniversary)
5. Don't go it alone (v. 11-12)
  - Choose carefully who else is in this with you!
6. Develop a common purpose (v. 12)
  - Organize your lives around God's purposes for you (see questions below)  
  
**Homework:** talk together about the main purpose around which you will organize your lives over the next 40 years

**Remember...** marriage is not about having the perfect partner or the perfect life  
...it's about becoming a better partner and dealing with life together

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Questions that can help you develop a common purpose...

1. What are your ministry passions?
2. What are your spouse's ministry passions?
3. To what cause are you both committed?
4. How do your gifts combine for the greatest effectiveness?
5. How does your current stage of life affect the way you can team up?
6. What types of activities energize you (and your spouse) the most?