

The Marriage Relationship Requires Work: by Chris Garner

Few couples have any marriage training or education; they don't understand themselves, much less their spouse and often don't truly understand who they are "in Christ." They often don't possess the foundational relationship skills required for marriage. Couples haven't attended marriage classes or seminars where they can learn Biblical principles and relationship skills that would help them have a productive, growing marriage. They enter marriage thinking they will *live happily ever after*, but soon learn that the "feelings" of love recede after the "honeymoon" period is over. Couples juggling career, family, friends, church involvement and personal development find that their marriage relationship has moved lower on the priority list in their day-to-day lives. They grow apart and don't understand why their relationship has deteriorated, yet they have not invested time and energy into their marriage. Too many people think they marry and then move on with life; that the marriage does not (or perhaps should not) require work. This thinking leads to the breakdown of their marriage.

Many people think that it is enough to be *committed* to the relationship, that their spouses know they love them—that work is not required for the relationship to grow. That fact is that love will die if the marriage relationship is ignored. Couples race through the week working at a frenzied pace in an attempt to complete work assignments, care for children and accomplish personal, vocational or spiritual goals. They think that they will catch up with their relationship on the weekend, during vacation or somewhere along the way—*it does not happen!* Couples invest in homes, careers and retirement, but do not spend the time, energy or money to build a strong marriage—a marriage that will withstand any storms that will come against it.

The *work* required to build a strong marriage is not that bad! Can you spend a few minutes connecting with your spouse each evening talking about your day? Can you spend a few hours each week doing something together—going out for coffee, playing games, taking walks, doing a hobby or craft; something you can both enjoy together? Can you commit to spending a weekend alone (at home or away) twice a year? Send the children to grandma's house and take some down time for the two of you. You must be purposeful about building your relationship—that is the *work* of marriage. You did it naturally while dating and with a little effort you can do it again. Your investment into your marriage will pay off! It can become fulfilling, loving, strong and a testimony to your family and friends.

The Marriage Minute
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