

Dear _____:

Allow me to make a suggestion or two that may help you to enter more and more into freedom. You probably are already doing what I'm going to say.

1. Read the Bible Together.

Each of you use a different version. The NIV and Living Bible is a good beginning. Alternate with reading a verse. Discuss how the version is different and what the verse means. Do not read too many verses. When you come to what looks like a break in the subject stop. Some days it may be only a couple verses. Discuss the meaning of the passage. Learn how to ask one another, "How can we apply these truths today?" without correcting and blaming one another. Don't be in a hurry.

2. Pray Together.

Ask the Lord to come into your lives, home and work. Invite Him into the lives of your children. Tell Him He is welcome. Surrender yourselves and all you have to Him each day. Choose to bless each other and all the children with God's love, grace, strength and wisdom. Make sure you each have your own private devotions and study.

3. Resist the Enemy Together.

When you become aware of some error, sin, tension or work of the enemy in your lives, marriage and family – then resist it and **those behind it**. Use words like "renounce," "reject," "uncover," "command it has to stop," "break it down," "will not permit it," "take authority over _____," etc. Use the sheet, *Suggestions Regarding Resisting the Enemy*. Make sure the problem is the work of the enemy before you try to apply these thoughts. Use the principle of James 4:7. Ask God to give you wisdom. Ask Him to show you what is their work and how to refuse it.

One of the most successful tricks of the enemy in a marriage is to develop a "grid" in the atmosphere between the family members. As a result when the husband speaks to the wife he speaks "through the grid" without realizing it and his words take on a different inflection and meaning than he intended. Because the words may confuse, seem harsh, hurt, and a person may sense the enemy, without being able to vocalize it, the result is anger, irritation and in time withdrawal. The same holds true for all members of the family. Family members must pray about this and talk to one another. If they believe a "grid" is there then take authority over it and command it must leave.

4. Separate the Issues in Your Marriage.

Lay aside all the secondary issues that are demanding attention and are separating you. Such issues may be money, use of time, discipline of children and sex. Be willing to work on the two main areas upon which your marriage is based: (1) your personal relationship with God and (2) your love (not sex) relationship with one another. Do the necessary repenting and prioritizing. You may need counsel in these areas. Do not settle for superficial repair of the foundation. Working in these areas may be painful and it will take time. However, without a firm foundation your marriage will always be in trouble. Make a choice to work together even though you do not feel like it.

5. Maintain Your Marriage Together.

Choose to express love to each other daily. Try to do four things in this area.

1. Recognize each other as a person and give each other their rights as a person.
(Think about how you would like to be treated as a person and then treat your spouse in that way.)
2. Give your spouse his or her rightful place in your life.
(Consider what that rightful place would be as applied to yourself. Then give that place to your spouse.)
3. Choose to do what is right by one another, sacrificially for their good.
(Ask yourself what you want your spouse to do for you by way of right and sacrificially – then do that for him/her.)
4. Watch out for one another and seek to help each other enjoy life.
(How would you want your spouse to watch out for you and to help you enjoy life? Then plan on how you can do that for your spouse and then do it.)

Carefully avoid competing with one another. Be slow to criticize and blame. Watch for attitudes, words and actions that bring hurt, questions and barriers between you. Talk about these and avoid them. Apologize for past failures. Be honest and sincere.

6. Maintain the Marriage Order Together.

God has given you the headship in your home. Assume that responsibility and exercise it in love and thoughtfulness. Plan ahead. Talk the issues out with Mary Ann. Keep in mind that your greatest influence will be in your daily life. Trust God to help you to be a spiritual, honest, loving person in your home. Mary Ann, God has given you the support and dependence position in your home. Assume it each day and pray for wisdom and strength to exemplify His grace and presence. Look to Don, for leadership.

7. Use the Warfare Prayer and Daily Affirmation.

Make use of these two hand-outs as you need them. Both will help you. When you are discouraged, upset or depressed – then get one of them and pray it out loud with a firm voice. Make the material your own spiritual affirmation. It is often helpful to use the Daily Affirmation as a tool for daily devotions, whether private or as a family. Rewrite these handouts as you wish. Try to go back to them occasionally.

Learn to reject all error and negativism of every kind and refuse to practice it. Ask God to help you live together in unity and happiness. When you have conflict talk to one another as to what may be its source (get beyond blaming one another). Work against the source – plan, adjust, rebuke the enemy, etc.

Sincerely,

Victor Matthews

