

20 ways to bless yourself, your life's partner and others through your marriage
Lessons learned (and still being learned) through almost 40 years of marriage

1. Maintaining our own personal relationship with Jesus – especially spending time alone with God each day in meditation upon His Word and prayer – deepening your delight in the Lord
2. Praying regularly together – making it an integral part of your daily life
3. Growing together in the Lord – helping one another grow, eg through encouraging one another in the Word by sharing what God is teaching us – also through correcting and rebuking one other as needed (though not in public)
4. Putting on a humble, broken spirit – willing to examine our own individual hearts to see where *I* may have failed instead of pointing the finger / playing the blame game – recognising the ever-present pride in our hearts with all the potential to cause damage to a healthy marriage relationship
5. Setting our sights on building a marriage relationship that will bless both ourselves, our children and others around us – aware that we have only one go at it – not wanting to end our lives with regrets over a failed marriage or a marriage that just survived – through Christ becoming “conquerors” rather than “contestants”
6. Working persistently through conflicts – refusing to push problems under the carpet – resolving conflicts as they happen (ie while they are still small issues)
7. Persevering in our desire to keep growing as “friends” (“mates”) who deeply enjoy living and serving together
8. Keeping the lines of communication open – sharing feelings as well as thoughts
9. Offering and receiving forgiveness where we have sinned against one another – continually and without long delays
10. Letting go of petty annoyances rather than turning small differences or annoyances into major conflicts
11. Learning to bear with each other’s weaknesses and shortcomings rather than trying to repair our mate’s weaknesses (as we view them!)
12. Guarding our words and conversation with one another even with no one else listening – learning to speak tenderly and kindly to one another
13. Serving and helping one another – sharing daily tasks together – not having hard and fast dividing lines between us regarding home duties, cf. putting off “my rights” attitude, eg “it’s her responsibility to do this job for me”
14. Working hard to put off negative attitudes towards our mate’s words and actions – ridding ourselves of the habit of reading between the lines to find hidden meanings in our mate’s words (convincing ourselves of the rightness of our assumptions) – instead training ourselves to think the best in love
15. Working to overcome our own personal weaknesses, eg perfectionism, control etc. that is focused on conforming our partner to our own expectations and high ideals – rather focusing on overcoming our personal weaknesses in order that our growth in Christ might bring greater joy and blessing to our mate
16. Growing in our understanding of the differences in each other’s personalities and temperaments – learning to appreciate and celebrate these differences – learning to understand each another in light of our different family and cultural backgrounds
17. Stimulating love through affection and touch
18. Working to deepen the enjoyment of our sexual intimacy by reading, talking/communicating, prioritising, helping one another – also working to grow out of negative fundamentalist attitudes towards sexuality
19. Seeing ourselves as a ministry team rather than two separate individuals serving God – not “*my*” ministry or “*your*” ministry but “*our*” ministries – helping each other to be fruitful – affirming one another – being each other’s primary encouragers, especially when getting knocked about in ministry (eg not affirmed, criticised by our leader, feel a failure)
20. Making all major decisions on the principle of unity of heart and mind – while one person may have the initial thought/idea/vision, nevertheless both to be confident in God’s way/will (versus one dominating or controlling the other)

Graham Roberts, March 2002