

Is It Time to Refocus and Be More Intentional – Jan. 2023

LWCC Marriage Ministries Email for Jan. 2023

Greetings again from The Marriage Ministry Team and WELCOME to 2023.

We sincerely trust you have found some time to relax and be refreshed in every way during this Christmas / New Year season.

I received a post at the beginning of the month which, in one sense, didn't arrive at quite the right time. It was headed..... "Does your marriage need a fresh start in the New Year?" You see, the day before, we'd had 'a few words', which, as can sometimes happen, drifted into 'a few more words', only this time with 'just a hint' of attitude thrown in. What was it the American astronaut calmly said from outer space....."Houston, we have a problem!" And yes, we did!

It was more than just a little tichiness common to this time of the year. As we talked, we realised that a few things had been getting out of whack for a while. We've had a very challenging year, with both of us having health issues that have hugely impacted on our lifestyle and our relationship. As we talked, we also realised how much it had also impacted on our closeness and our intimacy, and we needed to put in place some strategy to correct and renew our 'Love Life'. And just to help the men reading this, I said 'Love Life', not sex life, as our Love Life and our Intimacy, involves so much more than just our sex life. With the problems Ronnie has had since her surgery in May last year, our love life has definitely been impacted, so we did a bit of a 'stock take', as it were, and made some fresh commitments to each other to focus and be more intentional in our relationship.

This time of the year is certainly a great time to reflect on our recent past and maybe you too could check and see if you too need to refocus, or even set some new priorities and goals for your Love Life going into this new year. If you would like a fresh start for 2023, maybe this is the perfect time to set yourselves up for success in your relationship for the year ahead.

Every couple's situation is different and unique. Still, outlined below are some general guidelines that might help you in refocusing or reinvigorate your marriage in the year ahead. Maybe, before you look at them, you could be extra brave and ask each other what sort of a rating you would give your love life right now. Don't get defensive if your spouse says, "Well....." Talk it through.

START THE YEAR WITH GRATITUDE

This is a great one to start with, because Gratitude is a wonderful attitude, especially when it comes to your relationship. As we welcome the New Year, focus on what you're grateful for. What aspects of your spouse make you feel happy, proud, and excited to share your life with them? Your spouse chose You. How about that! Take a moment or two to reflect on that, and think, am I still grateful. Being grateful is not only a wonderful attitude, it is a wonderful attribute that really impacts on your day-to-day existence. Pay attention to the parts of your marriage that bring you joy. If you're going through a difficult season, you might consider focusing on good memories and nostalgia. Whatever you might be going through, finding points of gratitude in your life can help make all the difference.

Having refocused on the internal aspect of gratitude, pause for a moment or two and think of ways you could express your gratitude to your wife or your husband for the fantastic choice they made. Look at little things you could do to show your gratitude.

MAKE PRAYER A DAILY PRIORITY

The beginning of a fresh year is also a good time to begin or refresh important routines. In addition to gratitude, consider making prayer a daily priority. Even better, why not pray together?

Prayer can help the two of you focus on growing spiritually as you build intimacy. It's a beautiful way to bond and spend time together in the midst of a busy life. If praying together has not come easily to you as a couple, here's a little tip that might help you get started. Find a few minutes that work for you: maybe it's first thing in the morning, or maybe it's last thing before the light goes out. Just find somewhere in the course of each day that you could set aside 5 or 10 minutes to begin with, and see where it goes from there. Ask each other if there is one thing they are struggling with, or having to make some decisions about, or something they are about to face that they feel a little apprehensive about, and would like some prayer for. Then take a few moments to pray for each other regarding what you've shared. As you get more comfortable with each other, then pray for something you think about on the spur of the moment - their health, your children, someone you know is struggling.

FORGIVE THE PAST YEAR'S WRONGS

All couples have issues they struggle with, and at times, you'll each need to forgive one another's wrongs. The New Year is the perfect time to release the things that have been nagging you over the past months—or even years. Are there grudges either of you have held onto? What might be relieving to let go of? If it has been a year that has had some relational hassles, maybe, you could take some time to come together and specifically express forgiveness for the things that have gone down, and pray for release from any residual baggage that might be lingering and having a bit of an influence upon your relationship.

As you forgive and release your spouse's missteps, you'll feel much more positive about the future. Challenge yourselves to make forgiveness a regular practice, too. You might be surprised at how much your relationship transforms for the better. If you feel you need some help, you need someone to pray with you both, don't be afraid to call out and ask us for help with this, because it can bring such breakthrough and healing.

LEARN SOMETHING NEW ABOUT ONE ANOTHER

There's always something new to learn about one another. This coming year, why not commit to learning something new about your spouse every month? Sharing something about yourself that your spouse doesn't know could help you zero in on fun facts about yourself you might have lost touch with over time.

What meaningful life experiences can you think of that your spouse might like to know? Do you have childhood memories you haven't unearthed in a while? What about talents or accomplishments from your past that you're proud of? Have fun finding new ways to get to know one another better.

COMMIT TO BETTER LOVE

It's never too late to commit to loving one another better, and the beginning of a brand new year is a fantastic time to refocus. One way to accomplish this is to get to know each other on a deeper level. Ask some tough questions. For example, ask each other how could I love you better: Is there any ambition, or plan, or goal you have for this year, and what could we do together, or what could I do to support you, in making that happen for you.

Well, if you've made it to this paragraph, congratulations. Just a final word on our plans for the first half of the year:

- We are planning to commence the **next Alpha Marriage Course** on Monday evening the 17th April. Early bird registrations are open. It will be limited to 10 couples and we have 2 already registered.
- We hope to confirm in the next couple of weeks, our first **Marriage Date Night** for the year.

Trust you are getting some helpful things from these emails, and thanks to those who have sent us feed-back.

Blessings to you all from the Marriage Team

Stan & Ronnie, John & Karen

(Content adapted from article by Prepare/Enrich)