

## Three Enemies to Your Marriage: Part 1 – Identifying The Enemies.

### LWCC Marriage Ministries Email For January 2026

Greetings from the **Marriage Ministries Team** as we come to the last few days of the first month this of 2026. As my family will tell you, being 'Brief' has unfortunately never been a part of my vocabulary, but I assure you, the length of this our first email for the New Year, will not be a trend for the rest of the year. So, I apologise for a contribution that is a little longer than normal, but I think once you get into it, you will hopefully give me some liberty.

The content of this, and maybe our next couple of emails, has been percolating for quite some time due to something we have come across way too regularly over the years, and recently two things happened that set me to putting pen on paper as it were. My hope is that we can put some Perspective to something many couples face, Identify some causes, and then a path to Resolution, that at the beginning of this New Year may in turn bring radical Transformation for some couples.

First, I read a quote (which I'll mention shortly), and about the same time a couple who had been married for over 30 years, (who don't attend LWCC) reached out for some help. Once we'd heard their story, I commended them for having the courage to come. They'd come to their wedding day with great expectations, which had never been fulfilled because, in their words, "We simply had no idea"!

As you prepared for your Wedding Day, however long ago that might have been, what were your thoughts, or, more particularly, what were your expectations? Looking back, how objective or realistic were you? And right here, at the beginning of 2026, that might be your first opportunity for an interesting chat. What were those thoughts and expectations???

We get married with such high hopes of a wonderful life with this incredible person who has swept us off our feet, and that we are going to live "happily ever after"!

But then.....oh boy..... one day, for some, like the couple who came to see us, we wake up and wonder what happened!!!! Somewhere along the line, we realise that the journey towards that "happily ever after", towards the oneness we so longed for, is actually filled with obstacles that attempt to halt this mingling of two becoming one, and we struggle to understand how it happened.

There's no doubt that God's intent for Marriage is that we grow together in 'oneness', yet this intent for some, gets clouded over, or for others comes crashing down when these obstacles all too often begin to interfere, and our marriage doesn't turn out to be all we had expected. If you've hit this wall, or experienced an associated drifting apart in your relationship because of it, take heart that you're not alone. Many hit it, some are able to work through it, while others, like the couple who came to see us, really struggle.

This couple had become very disillusioned. They, like so many we've seen over the years, had really struggled for a long time with a variety of 'issues' that appeared early on in their marriage. After their 12<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, they went to see the pastor of the church they attended at the time. He prayed with them, gave them a book and sent them on their way. As time went on, they tried to find ways to handle themselves better, but, feeling really embarrassed, and not wanting to 'expose' themselves and their short-comings again, they tried to soldier on.

Let me introduce the quote from Tim Challies, that will, I trust, put some Perspective to this predicament:

*“Marriage is under attack. In fact marriage has always been under attack. The world, the flesh and the devil are all adamantly opposed to marriage, and especially marriages that are distinctly Christian. Marriage, after all, is given by God to strengthen his people and to glorify himself; little wonder, then, that it is constantly a great battleground.” – (Tim Challies)*

If we weren't already, we need to be aware that there are primarily **these three enemies, or threats**, to our marriages: there's;

1. An **external** threat – **The World**, with its varying cultures, attitudes and differing philosophies.
2. An **internal** threat – **The Flesh**: simply put, **Each of Us** carrying into our marriage a culture, some attitudes and possibly a little unresolved baggage, that neither of us were fully aware of, or fully appreciated had the potential to disrupt and derail our 'happily ever after' ideal.
3. An **invisible** threat – **The Devil**, the spiritual enemy, who will attempt anything to try and break marriages and families apart, to thereby derail people from God's dream for their lives and their homes.

So many couples, like the couple who came to see us, come into marriage blissfully blinkered to the fact that there are these Enemies or Threats lurking in the background, awaiting their opportunity to rear their ugly head and wreck their havoc. For many years this couple had seen all too clearly the impact of all three of these threats on their Marriage, and had really struggled with their inability to get past individual insecurities, and an inability to get on top of ways to handle themselves better. For him, the main two issues were being self-absorbed, and being a real procrastinator on almost everything, whilst she had always struggled with inferiority and intimidation, which made it hard to bring up things she felt needed to be talked about. She struggled to even ask for a little thing like suggesting she'd like them to go to the market together on Saturday - let alone address more important issues. "I can chit chat as well as anyone," she said, "but, the moment something needed confronting, or I had something I thought important that needed to be sorted or discussed, I got tongue-tied and defensive".

"We had no idea these 'issues' were lurking under the surface," they said to us. " We loved each other; we loved the Lord; felt strongly He had put us together. But when different things started to rear their ugly head, we were totally overwhelmed at where these things were coming from, were overcome with how we could behave so badly towards one another, and were totally ill-equipped to find a way to change. We were both very successful people outside of our marriage, but at home, behind closed doors, at times we were a mess."

Earlier I said, 'Many hit this stuff, some are able to work through it, while others, like this couple, really struggle'. What about you? As you've read through this email, what's been percolating inside you?

I sure hope you're one of those couples who are able to say, 'Yep, that was us, but praise the Lord we were able to see it for what it was, deal to it, and now we're on the other side'. How Good, and we rejoice with you. Seriously, take a moment to pat yourselves on the back, and celebrate your achievements. It's always good to pause and look back, especially at our victories.

For some reading this, though, the chances are you're not there - YET !!!! This stuff is still catching you out. It's for you that this email was written, and I congratulate you on reading through to this point. As mentioned in our introduction, the idea of this email was to express something we have observed a surprising number of couples struggling with, highlight it, then deal to it.

So as I draw this email to a close, two things:

- First, when you look at those three Enemies/Threats outlined above, did you notice what was missing? Your spouse **did not** make the top three. At the FamilyLifeNZ Couples Weekend to Remember, they ask the couples to turn to each other and say, "You are not my Enemy". What a simple statement to make, but also, what profound insight. So often as challenges and obstacles arise, and issues and baggage gets stirred up in those early years, the first person we turn on is each other. It may or may not be a surprise to realise, that that is how it's been since the beginning of time. Right back in Genesis 3, since Adam and Eve fell the Garden of Eden, when challenges have arisen in marriage relationships, couples have been 'blame shifting', then clashing and drifting apart, or sadly putting up with living in an under-current of disillusionment, because the enemy got his moment and hasn't let up since. It's not our spouse that's the issue, it's the hidden enemies we've highlighted throughout this email.
- So, where to from here. Well, to get this out there in a format that I feel will help couples get really good Perspective and Resolution, it looks like there are two further emails to follow: **Three Enemies to Your Marriage: Part 2 - These Enemies and Me**, then **Three Enemies to Your Marriage: Part 3 - Dealing to these Enemies**. I had not thought when I began to put pen to paper that this would turn into a series, but while you wait for **Part 2 and 3** to arrive, perhaps you could pause and take time to reflect and gain some Perspective. Reflect individually on what thoughts and emotions were stirred in you as you went through the above, then maybe A). you could share those with each other, and B). maybe even read it through again together, and chat about the different things that are mentioned. In the process, Take Heart: you've started a process, and got to this point of gaining some Perspective that has hopefully helped you see the enemies for who they are. And if I've really piqued your interest, and you just can't wait, you could send through a request to get **Part 2 and 3** as soon as possible. And No, I won't take it as an admission of where you are at, unless you tell me otherwise. I will simply take it that I must have done a reasonable job in putting pen to paper in exposing these enemies, and you want to see where I am going to take it. They are, as the saying goes, 'in the can', awaiting delivery in February and March. So if you feel you can't wait.....!!!

We so trust that this has been a helpful **Part 1**, and send our Blessings:

Stan & Ronnie, John & Karen.