

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your correspondence to the Al Denson Show and for tuning in every week to our program. My prayer for you is to be encouraged in your daily walk with Christ through the words of this booklet. Our hope is that in turn you will tell others of what God is doing through our ministry to youth and parents on TV. I am convinced you will not find another program on any network anywhere that deals with issues today's youth and their parents are facing, and provides answers from a Godly perspective.

In addition, we would love for you to help us by going to our web site at www.aldenson.com. Here you can write to us, order additional material like this booklet, check out all my music, have a daily bible study, and stay up to date on the ministry. You can also send us a prayer request and questions for the TV show. But more importantly, please continue to be in prayer with us as we work together to help those that are in need.

Thanks for watching and God Bless!

Sincerely,

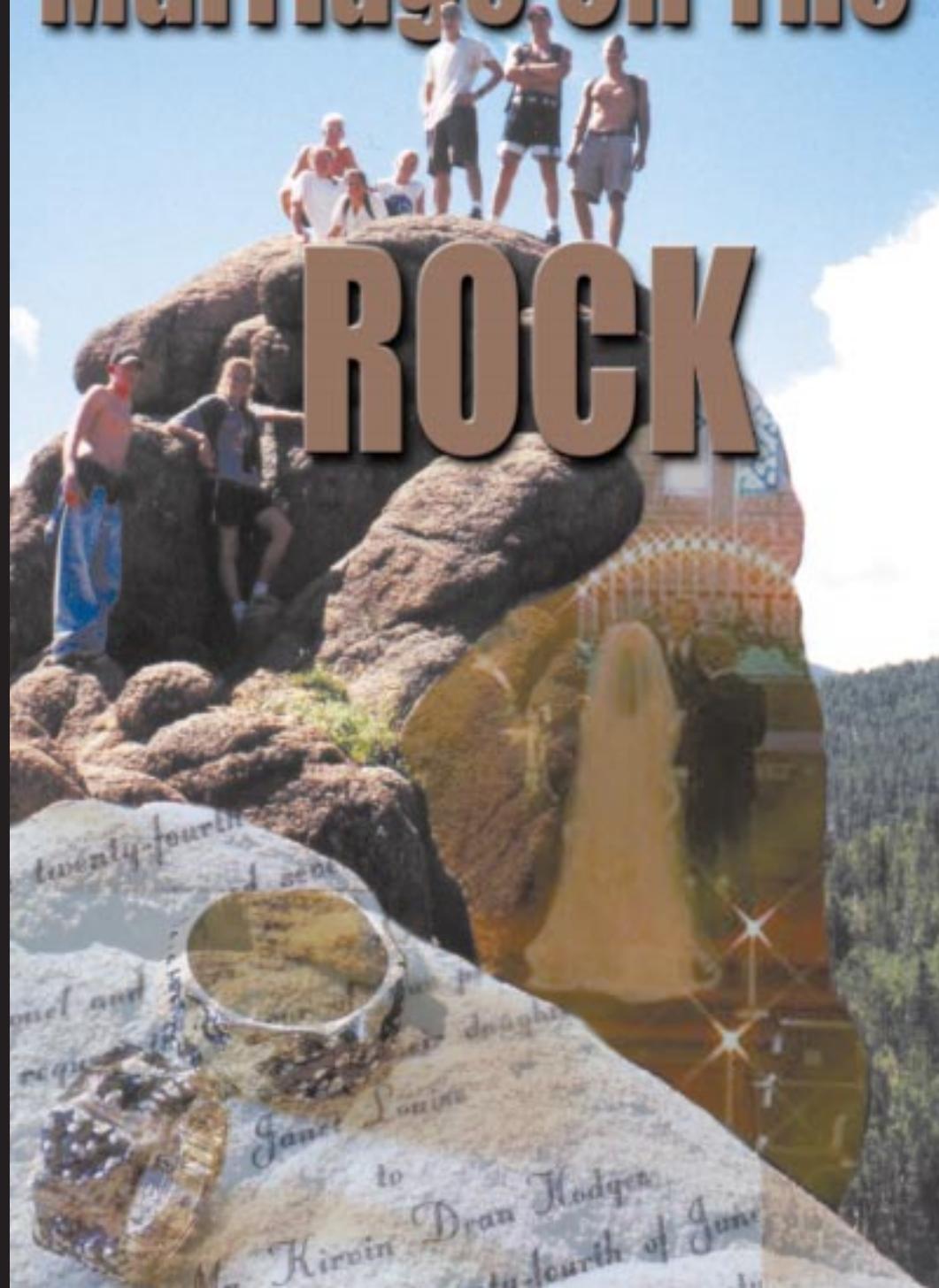


An Outreach of Celebration Ministries

The Al Denson Show
Box 220 Grapevine, TX 76099
Email: aldenson@aol.com
Web Site: www.aldenson.com

Marriage On The

ROCK





Most artists create for only a brief moment in time. That phenomenon was once known as “15 minutes of fame”. Yet even in a fickle world, there still emerge a talented few that transcends time and trends. With nearly 15 years as a major label recording artist and seven hit

albums to his credit, Al Denson is that kind of artist.

But the attention and acclaim his artistry has brought him over the years are anything but the routine rewards of worldly success. Rather, they are the fruits of a life of purpose and passion, and a mission that has always reached far beyond merely making music.

The millions of young people Al has performed for, befriended, counseled, consoled and clowned around with in his career already know that. And thousands more are finding out every day.

This past year has seen Al expand his efforts to a global audience through the reach of his daily syndicated television production, “The Al Denson Show.” “You’ve got to reach out to people where they are with the most powerful means and this form of media allows you to build trust and a rapport,” says Al. “This has all been so amazing. I can’t imagine what lies in store when the Lord finally calls me home, but I don’t have to wait for heaven to receive rewards. I get them every time a kid comes up to me and says, ‘I heard what you said, and I accepted Christ.’ You can’t ask for anything more or better than that.”

Write Al at: Box 220 Grapevine, TX 76099
Email: aldenson@aol.com Web Site: www.aldenson.com

Marriage On The ROCK

Statistics say that today in America six out of ten new marriages will end in up “on the rocks.” The divorce rate in this country is staggering and the consequences of all these broken lives and homes are evident in every aspect of our society. Sadly, statistics are also showing that there isn’t much difference in the divorce rate between couples who attend church and those who don’t. But, when it comes to troubled marriages, the divorce rate is only one of the issues involved. It’s tragic, but to some couples all being married has come to mean is not being divorced. Even many

Christians think that as long as they don’t have a piece of paper certifying a broken relationship, God won’t know it’s broken. Somewhere Christians have gotten the idea that a hurtful, unhealthy marriage is more pleasing to God than a divorce. The Bible is clear that God hates divorce, but God also hates the broken-down relationships that masquerade as marriages. Make no mistake, God does hate divorce, but He hates and grieves over lousy marriages, too.

So, what is the answer? How can broken relationships be repaired and what can couples do whose relationships aren’t broken to keep

them off of the rocks? The answer is that marriages must be built solidly on the only Rock that is unmovable and that Rock is Jesus Christ. A marriage built on “The Rock” is a marriage where both spouses don’t just go to

church, but where both are completely committed to the Lordship of Jesus in their lives. That means both spouses are totally surrendered to doing things His way.

Many couples forget or refuse to acknowledge that marriage was God’s idea. He thought it up, He created it, and only He knows how it works best. Products are purchased in this country

every day which come with directions clearly written on the packaging which say, “For best results, follow instructions of maker.” If those are important words when it comes to an appliance or even cough syrup, how much more important are they when it comes to marriage? God said in Hosea 4:6, “My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge.” Nothing much has changed today. God’s people are still having their lives destroyed because they are ignorant of the ways of God. If marriages are going to be saved, then Christian couples must purpose to do things God’s way.

...God does hate divorce, but He hates and grieves over lousy marriages, too.

This begins with accepting God's definition of love which is completely different from the world's definition. It's obvious that the majority of married couples today don't understand how God defines love. If you were to ask them why they got married, most would answer, "Because we were in love." That's good—to marry without emotional involvement would be ridiculous. Being "in love" is all about feelings and it's wonderful. It's music in the moonlight, stars in your eyes, love notes and roses, pounding hearts, and tingling excitement. It's chemistry, it's romance, and it is fantastic! It's what attracts you to each other in the beginning.

Most couples who get married because they are in love and foolishly believe that the feelings that brought them together will keep them together. The problem with that theory is that feelings are unreliable and can't be trusted. Feelings can change daily, depending on many external factors. If you have a relationship which

is based solely on how you feel, then when those feelings fade, so will your relationship. If the only reason you got married is because you were "in love," then there will be no reason for you to stay married when the feelings are no longer there. This scenario is played out in court rooms across America every day and is the major reason that so many marriages are ending in divorce. Almost every couple who ends up standing in front of a judge because they are no longer "in love," started out standing in front of a preacher because they were "in love."

Being in love is wonderful but it isn't enough. Love that lasts a lifetime has nothing to do with feelings. You see there is a big difference in "being in love" and "loving." Loving is not a feeling and it goes much deeper than movie-land romance. Love cares, it gives, it sacrifices, it bleeds, and it dies. You can know this because the Bible says that God is love and this is the way He demonstrated His love for you: He cared, He gave, He sacrificed, He bled, and He died.

Love is the most beautiful word in the English language, yet it is the most misunderstood and abused word, as well. Americans say "I love you" in the same sentence with "I love pizza" or "I love my new car" because this is a culture which equates love with emotion and the gratification of personal desires. So, it only makes sense to get the true definition of love from the One who not only understands love,

but who actually is love. God says that love is something you do. Nowhere in the Bible is love ever equated with what one feels, but only with what one does. Loving, the Bible says, is a commitment to a set of behaviors.

The Bible describes this way of behaving in I Corinthians 13. It says, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no records of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, it always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails." Love is not what you feel for a person, it is your attitude toward that person and how you treat them. There is a big difference between the sacrificial commitment of loving someone and the

emotional involvement of being in love. Both are important, but they are uniquely different and serve two entirely different functions in your life.

Being in love is wonderful, but no marriage can sustain the emotional force that brings you together. Being in love will fade—expect it to happen. But God can replace it with something far better if you are both willing to make the commitment to loving. You will find that the mutual giving, sharing, caring, comforting, knowing, blending together, and the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual oneness which comes with loving is much more exciting and fulfilling than the feelings that come from just being in love.



Love is not what you feel for a person, it is your attitude toward that person and how you treat them.

Now that isn't to say that you can't enjoy those wonderful romantic feelings that brought you together, off and on all through your marriage. You simply need to understand that a marriage which lasts a life-time can't be built on being in love. Loving, on the other hand, can last a lifetime and get sweeter and grow stronger with each passing year. The secret to this kind of commitment is this: it is a choice. This is not just a choice to commit, it is also a choice to change if necessary. It isn't about changing your spouse—it is about making changes in your own life if you need to. This is about becoming responsible for who and what you are and where you are in life. It is about no longer blaming others or your circumstances for your behavior, or excusing your behavior by saying, "Well, that's just the way I am."

If you want to be the best husband or wife you can possibly be and have the healthiest marriage you can possibly have, then you must be willing to accept two truths: who and what you are today is because of the choices you've made in the past, and you are 100 percent responsible for all the choices you have made. You may have things in your past you wish you could change—that's reality, and living in the past won't change it. You must choose to live beyond your past and begin to take responsibility for all your own future choices. Dr. Gary

Smalley says, "Humans are a lot like cars. When we were young, we had "warranties"—reasonable expectations that our parents and others could fix most of our problems for us. But as adults, our warranties are up. We have to say, 'If my life is in need of repair, I'm the one responsible for getting it fixed.'"

So, to build a marriage on "The Rock," you must begin by:

- Purposing to do things God's way and not your own.
- Understanding the difference between "being in love" and loving, and then making a commitment to sacrificially love your partner for life.
- Taking full responsibility for all the decisions you have made in the past, and will make in the future.
- Admitting where you are wrong and being willing to change if necessary.

These are foundational to every healthy marriage, but even marriages with a solid foundation can be at risk. Marriages are like houses, they can have termites which can slowly eat away at their framework. The damage being done by these termites sometimes goes unnoticed until it is too late. Here are four "termites" you need to guard against:

~ Unresolved Anger ~

Nothing will damage a marriage any faster than the termite of unresolved anger. When reasons are given for divorce, people will normally list things like finances, in-laws, money, or even irreconcilable differences, but those things are usually not the problem. They are just symptoms of the real problem which is often unresolved anger. Unresolved anger is a serious problem because it can blind you to the truth about yourself, and to the real issues in your life.

Proverbs 29:22 says "...an angry man stirs up dissension." There is nothing more stressful than being or living with an angry person. These people are usually not bad or unpleasant all the time, you just never know when or where they are going to go off, or what will set them off.

But like the Bible says, they will "keep things stirred up." The partner of such a person feels every day like they are gardening in a mine field. Two people can have a half-way decent relationship, but have issues that just never seem to get resolved. These are issues that shouldn't call for heated feelings, but always seem to provoke an inappropriate outburst. If the reaction or over-reaction is out of proportion to the problem—be warned: there is unresolved anger beneath the surface that has nothing to do with the issue at hand. If this is a problem in your life, you may simply be reacting to someone or something in the present that has triggered a memory of someone or something in your past that caused you pain. More than likely, you are not even making the connection.

Unresolved anger is a serious problem because it can blind you to the truth about yourself, and to the real issues in your life.

Unresolved anger freezes your emotional maturity level...

Most of the unresolved anger in your life predates your present relationships. It is “old” anger left over from childhood or adolescence. Gary Smalley says, “When you are in a relationship with someone who retains old anger you feel as if you have just eaten a meal at a restaurant and then been handed a bill for \$10,000. You explain to the waiter that there is absolutely no way your bill could be that high or that you could have possibly eaten that much. But the waiter says, ‘Your bill is \$10,000 because we want you to pay for everyone who has eaten here today.’ That is exactly what people with unresolved anger do. They make the people in their life today pay for all those in the past who have offended them.”

Unresolved anger freezes your emotional maturity level near where it was when a hurtful offense occurred. For example, say your parents divorced when you were twelve-years-old. You were hurt, fearful, frustrated, and angry but you never dealt with that offense or the anger, so you got stuck at that emotional level. You may have an adult body today but act like a wounded twelve-year-old. The problem is that twelve-year-olds make terrible husbands and wives.

This is how unresolved anger can play out in your life today. For example:

- When you were a child, your mother always made you feel that everything bad that happened in your home was your fault. That made you feel unloved, insecure, and inadequate. You grow up and get married, and one day your wife brings to your attention, a mistake you made or something you forgot to do. The little boy inside you hurts all over again, and the big man explodes.
- Or perhaps your father used to look at you a certain way, or use a certain tone of voice with you that made you feel rejected, worthless and unloved. You grow up and get married, and one day your husband does or says something in a certain way and for a moment you are not standing in front of your husband, but your father. All those old, painful feelings resurface and you fall apart.

You may have had an experience, or multiple experiences in your past where you were abused, rejected, or humiliated. Sometimes it only takes a look, a word, a joke or a silence to have those experiences come rushing back. Dr. Smalley says that when something bad happens,

anger is not the feeling you will experience first. Anger is always born out of fear, frustration, hurt, or some combination of the three. When anger is dissected, it is all about unfulfilled expectations. Frustration comes from not receiving what you had expected from other people or from life. Hurt comes when you don't hear the words or receive the actions you expected, or you get fearful because you expect something bad to happen, or because you fear that what you expect, won't happen. Anger is really a control issue. You don't like being fearful because it makes you feel out of control, so you use anger as a way to cope with your fears and try to regain the control you feel you have lost.

Anger can take many forms. It is not always aggressive and explosive. You may be passive, sarcastic, or detached, but still be very angry.

Allowing unresolved anger a place in your life is a choice that comes with some serious consequences:

- Unresolved anger causes relational problems because it doesn't allow you to let other people get close to you. It blocks your ability to give and receive love, so it becomes impossible for you to ever be intimate emotionally with your mate as God intends for you to be. This is miserable for the one who loves you, because it is impossible to please, or get close to a person who has unresolved anger in their life.



...near where it was when a hurtful offense occurred.

• Unresolved anger will distance you from God, as well. God offers you an intimate, loving, personal relationship with Himself, but that will be very hard for you to enjoy or accept, if anger has darkened and hardened your heart.

• Unresolved anger also results in a lowered sense of self-worth. The cycle of anger and low self-esteem fueling each other, can produce emotional problems. The greater the pain you carry inside from past offenses, the greater the temptation to engage in addictive behaviors like drugs, alcohol, sex, food, or work to get relief.

• Unresolved anger can also cause physical problems like backaches, headaches, neck pains, ulcers, stomach and digestive problems, as well as heart disease.

Unresolved anger is like a videotape of past offenses which keeps playing over and over in your mind, doing enormous damage to you and to everyone around you. Unresolved anger can imprison you, and make you miserable and miserable to live with. Now please don't misunderstand, anger is not a sin. In Ephesians 4:26 says, "In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry." God is saying that it is okay to get angry, it just isn't okay to stay angry. After a hurtful, fearful, or frustrating experience, you can move in one of two directions: toward getting better or getting bitter—your choice. But don't allow unresolved anger to destroy your marriage.

~ Disrespect ~

A lack of respect is a deadly termite in any marriage. You are a uniquely created by God and worthy of having the respect of others and respect for yourself. You should value yourself enough to let your spouse know when you aren't receiving the respect you deserve. Avoiding hurt in a relationship is your responsibility. If you are not strong enough to keep your spouse from speaking to you or treating you in a disrespectful matter, then you must come to the realization you are the one who needs to be fixed first. Always remember: the opinions of others are powerless in your life unless you validate them. A lack of self-respect is always going to be an invitation to let others use and abuse you.

Real self-worth comes from knowing the love, forgiveness, and acceptance of the one who created you and knows you best. The value of something is always accessed by the price that is paid for it. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, paid for you with His blood when He died on the cross. This makes you priceless—the most valuable thing on earth. Once you understand how valuable you are to God, then you can begin to understand how He wants you to value yourself. That evaluation will give you the strength to accept nothing less from your spouse. This attitude does not give you a demanding, militant spirit. It is a quiet, loving attitude that says, "I will not accept what

God calls unacceptable, and to be treated or spoken to in a disrespectful way is unacceptable to God."

A healthy marriage is one where both partners feel valued, cared for, safe, and loved. You must first respect someone before you can really love them. This is so very important to loving for a lifetime, because when you respect or honor someone, you are assigning value to that person. You will always pursue what you value, you will always provide for what you value, and you will always protect what you value. This means you will always make your relationship your focus, you will always nourish your relationship, and you will always guard your relationship at all costs. Respect is not a feeling, it is a choice.

When you make the choice to respect your spouse, you will value them above all else in life. As a result, your love will not only grow, but last for a lifetime. The way you love your spouse is a direct reflection of the degree of respect you have chosen to have for your spouse.

~ Poor Communication ~

Poor communication is a termite which can do great damage to a marriage over the years. The quality of your communication will affect every area of your relationship. Many times couples assume that being a good communicator is a skill people are born with, but it is not. Communication is an art that takes hard work and years to develop.

The opinions of others
are powerless in your life
unless you
validate them.

Communication is to marriage, what oil is to a car's engine. In order to run properly a car has to have oil. When things heat up in the engine, it is oil which keeps the parts lubricated and moving smoothly. Without oil, the intense heat would cause the engine to burn up and become irreparable. Good communication is the thing that will keep all the parts of a marriage moving smoothly when life heats up. Without it, there will be all kinds of friction in the relationship, and things will get so hot the relationship will eventually break-down and appear irreparable.

Good communication is the key to what everyone who gets married basically wants—to be understood. This is one of the deepest needs that humans have because to be understood is to be valued and to feel loved. Good communication is about feeling safe when you share your deepest feelings and needs, and everyone wants to grow old in a relationship like that. Couples who have that kind of relationship are those who have learned how to reach the deepest levels of verbal intimacy. Counselors say that there are five levels of intimacy in communication, moving from the superficial to the most meaningful. The more often a husband and wife reach and remain on the fourth and fifth levels, the more satisfying their marriage will be.

When you communicate on the first level, you speak in cliches: "How are you?" or "Have a good day," are examples of cliches. Sometimes this kind of conversation can be more than just a cliché, but often you are being as superficial in your relationships as you are with a store clerk you have never met before. People who are afraid of conflict or of intimacy spend a lot of time in the safety of this level.

The second level of communication is where you share facts—just information. "Looks like rain," "The stock market dropped today," etc. Just like level one, this is pretty shallow conversation and still relatively safe territory.

At the third level you state your opinions. Here is where communication is not quite as safe and conflicts may arise. "I can't believe you would vote for that guy, he has no experience!" If you are insecure in your marriage, you will usually steer clear of this level.

The fourth level is when you say what you are feeling. "I was really hurt by what my father said to me on the phone last night." Opening up this way can be really frightening but it is the only way to reach the deeper levels of intimacy.

The fifth level is where you reveal your needs. "I need to you hold me for a few minutes," you might say after hearing bad news. At this level of verbal intimacy, you have to feel

secure in the relationship because when you are expressing needs, you are at the deepest level of verbal intimacy.

If you are a person who is so self-sufficient that you cannot admit that you have needs in your life, then you will steer your marriage into the rocks. Marriage, the way God intended it to be, is about allowing someone else to complete you. That will not happen if you believe you are complete in yourself. Your goal in marriage should be to communicate on level four and five as often as possible. The key to deep verbal intimacy is feeling safe enough to share your feelings and needs, knowing that you are not only being heard, but understood and valued.

Communication is not so much something that you do, as it is an environment which you create. Here are three obstacles which will keep you from creating a safe relationship and reaching that place of intimacy with your mate:

Good communication is about feeling safe when you share your deepest feelings and needs...

I. Condemnation

Are you a critical person? Are you constantly cutting other people down? Do you have a compulsive need to find someone to blame for the bad things that happen in your life? If so, this will keep you from experiencing intimacy in your relationship. Perhaps you have been programmed to believe that the only way to be worthy of love is to be perfect, so the only way to be perfect is to be right all the time. If so, then you also believe the lie which says, "The measure of a person's worth is determined by two things: never failing, and having the approval of other people."

The problem with this way of thinking is that no matter how perfect you try to be or how many people like you, you will fail at some time or the other and there will always be someone who doesn't like you. As a result, you will feel like you are a failure when you haven't performed well or when someone else doesn't approve of you.

Nowhere are difficulties with interpersonal relationships more exposed than in marriage...

Failing in your eyes will equal worthlessness and because that is too painful to accept, you will look for someone to blame for what you see as failures and mistakes. You think by blaming others you won't look so bad and that you can protect your fragile sense of self-worth if you take the spotlight off your failures by blaming and condemning others.

When the people you depend on to make you look good don't live up to your expectations, you will believe your success is being threatened by their failure, so you will react by blaming them. Remember, if you believe that to be worthy of love you have to be perfect and have the approval of others, then imperfection will equal no self-worth. If you are constantly looking for someone to blame for your own imperfections, you will create an environment of condemnation and never be a "safe" person with whom your spouse can share an intimate relationship.

II. Conditional Love

Intimacy in marriage, verbal or otherwise, cannot be built on a foundation of conditional love. It cannot say,

- I love you because
- I love you since
- I love you for as much as
- or
- I will love you if
- I will love you when
- I will love you after
- I will love you provided
- I will love you presuming

If you have never experienced unconditional love, more than likely you struggle with some or all of these feelings: guilt, self-condemnation, worthlessness, low-self esteem, emptiness, anger, anxiety, irrational fears, resentment, rage, depression, and excessive mood-swings. You may look good on the outside but on the inside you have a hurt that just won't go away. You will pass that hurt on to your spouse because hurting people, hurt people. If all you have ever known is conditional love, then that is the only kind of love you know how to give. Real intimacy can never be based on conditional love.

Nowhere are difficulties with interpersonal relationships more exposed than in marriage because marriage doesn't cause problems, it reveals problems. Pressure always introduces you to yourself and to what is really on the inside. God's wants marriage be an instrument of growth and development in your life. But in the hands of a person who has problems with interpersonal relationships, marriage becomes a weapon of dysfunction and destruction.

The foundations of all interpersonal relationships are laid during childhood. Dr. David Semands gives the four most basic concepts of life which grow out of the interpersonal relationships experienced during these developmental years:

1. Your Concept of Self. Home is like a mirror in which we see yourself. Your self-estimate will largely depend upon the worth or worthlessness you see reflected in the people

who mean the most to you. To be emotionally healthy and have healthy relationships, you must have acceptance, affection, and affirmation.

2. Your Concept of God. The home is like a skylight through which you get your first glimpse of God. Most children get God and their parents all tangled-up. So, if the home you came from and the relationship with your parents was not stable, your concept of God will usually be extremely inaccurate.

3. Your Concept of Others. The home is a window through which you look at others. It affects the way you see others, and the way you think they see you.

4. Your Concept of Life. Home is a door to the world. A home that offers affection without discipline, and love without limits, is just as bad as a home where there is neglect, legalism, cruelty, and abuse. Both extremes will distort right concepts and cause serious emotional, spiritual, and relational problems.

The home from which you come will either help or hinder you in your interpersonal relationships. Wrong concepts can be overcome, but you must first be willing to admit that you have a problem in this area before you can be helped.

III. Unforgiveness

Hurt will happen in relationships—this is a fact of life. To be human is to hurt and the only way those hurts can be healed is through forgiveness. But if you do not understand and practice scriptural forgiveness, you are putting your marriage at great risk.

If you use unforgiveness as a way to exercise control over your spouse—as a way for you to make your spouse feel like he or she must earn their way back into your favor—beware. You must see that for what it is—manipulation and sin which will destroy your marriage.

...because marriage doesn't
cause problems,
it reveals problems.

Forgiveness is acknowledging that what was done was wrong and inexcusable,...

If you mistakenly believe that forgiveness is a feeling, you need to know it is not. Forgiveness is an act of your will—an act of obedience. Forgiveness is giving up your right to get even. It is making a decision not to hold on to your anger, hurt, or negative emotions.

If you have a problem with forgiveness because you believe forgiving means you are excusing your spouse's behavior, nothing could be further from the truth. Forgiveness is acknowledging that what was done was wrong and inexcusable, but choosing to show someone else the same kind of forgiveness God showed you.

Colossians 3:13 says, "Bear with each other and FORGIVE whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as God forgave you." Forgiving is not a suggestion, it is a commandment, and God gives it for your own well-being. When you have been offended, you experience the pain of the offense when it happens. But the initial pain of the wrong done to you is usually small compared to the pain of reliving the offense over and over again in your mind. Unforgiveness is like a tape recorder that rewinds and plays the hurtful experience again and again.

God knows that unforgiveness is also the soil in which bitterness will grow in your life. Bitterness is a poisonous plant with deadly fruit

like depression, anger, hostility, resentment, rage, physical, mental and emotional disorders, and the inability to love and trust others. Bitterness can make you extremely vulnerable to unwise decisions and destructive patterns of living. It is like a cancer of the soul that will go on to destroy you physically, mentally, spiritually, and emotionally.

The forgiveness that Jesus offers is unconditional and complete. You didn't deserve it and He provided it for you before you ever asked for it or even knew you needed it. That is exactly the kind of forgiveness that must be active in your marriage if you are going to have a "safe" relationship and achieve the kind of intimacy that will enable you to communicate with your spouse in a fulfilling and satisfying way.

~ Unfaithfulness ~

This last termite is the easiest one to spot and the one that will do the most permanent damage to a marriage. Nothing will put a marriage on the rocks any faster than the unfaithfulness of one or both partners. Statistics show that sixty percent of all men and forty percent of all women will commit adultery in their lifetime. There may not be a person alive who hasn't been touched in one way or another by the pain and devastation caused by the unfaithfulness of a family member or friend. Most of those people never thought in

their wildest dreams that they would end up a statistic.

If you believe that you or your spouse could never be at risk for an affair, you are playing the fool. As sinful as it is, given the right set of circumstances, anyone is capable of falling into such a relationship. To keep your marriage off the rocks, here are two questions you must be able to answer:

I. How Does an Affair Happen?

I Corinthians 10:12 warns you to be on your guard, because where you think you are strong is the very place you will slip and fall if you aren't

careful. You need to be on guard all the time, but you also need to be aware that there are times in your life when you are more at risk for an affair. These are the times in life when you are the most vulnerable to temptation.

For a man this would be during a time of fatigue or a "mid-life crisis," when he has a heavy travel schedule to deal with, or when he is going through a major life transition. It could be during the "let down" time which comes after a peak experience, when there is a lack of sexual gratification, or extreme stress from job, kids, or finances.

...but choosing to show someone else the same kind of forgiveness God showed you.

For a woman it would be during times when self-esteem is low, when affection and romance are missing from her life, or during times of extreme or prolonged stress. All these factors will place you at risk, but you need to know that an affair may not have as much to do with what you are trying to escape, as what you are trying to find. Most of the time affairs are an attempt to get emotional, not sexual needs met.

All humans have three basic emotional needs:

- The need to feel loved and accepted
- The need to feel valuable and capable
- The need to feel that you are not alone

Anytime these needs are not being met in your life, you are at risk to fall into sin.

There is a new openness and acceptance today of interaction between the sexes in the workplace, in the neighborhood, and even in the church. People touch more, speak more intimately, and are closer to each other. There are advantages to this, but there are grave dangers, as well. Physical and emotional attraction is the major factor contributing to 78 percent of all extramarital relationships. So, that leads to the second question:

II. How Can You Keep an Affair From Happening in Your Marriage?

In football and basketball the game is played within boundaries. In baseball there are base

lines and in track there are lanes. If you go out-of-bounds, the play is dead, if you cross the base line the ball is foul, and if you get out of your lane, you are disqualified. Just as there are boundaries which must be respected in sports if you are going to win the game, so you must have and honor personal boundaries if you are going to succeed in life and in your marriage.

Nowhere are boundaries more important than in marriage. Boundaries are simply self-imposed safeguards that will help protect you and your marriage from the temptations you encounter every day. The couple who does not have boundaries in their personal lives and in their marriage are, again, playing the fool. A boundary is like an invisible fence you put up around all the different areas of your life. It is a way of saying, "Here are the lines I have chosen to draw and I will not cross them for any reason."

How do you decide what these boundaries are going to be in your life? How will you decide what is right and what is wrong? This is a world where the line between good and bad, and right and wrong has become very blurred. That is why the Bible must be the basis of authority in your life. You are His personal concern, so He cares about your sexual conduct. God didn't just make rules to spoil your fun.

The prohibitions He has given you in His Word are not to confine you and make you miserable, but to protect you and bring you the deepest joy you can ever experience in this life.

Teenagers are always asking, "How far is too far?" Most of the time, what they are really asking is, "How close can I get to the line between right and wrong, between pure and impure, without going out-of-bounds?" The answer really is, "If you have to ask, you have already gone too far," because when it comes to relationships, purity cannot be defined by an activity or a line to cross. Purity is not a place, it is an attitude. Unfortunately, many adults are no wiser than some teenagers.

Sexual purity includes your mind and your spirit, not just your body. That's why Jesus said in Matthew 5:27-28, "You shall not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." God is more concerned

about the attitude of your heart because He knows that your actions are always born from your attitudes. That is why you must draw boundaries, not just around your eyes and hands, but around your heart and mind, as well, if you are going to protect your marriage.

Drawing these kinds of boundaries will mean that instead of asking like a teenager, "How close can I get to the line without crossing it?" You must ask, "How far away from the line can I stay?" There is a reason that the most worn place on a playing field is the middle of the field. There isn't much wear along the boundary lines because athletes know that if they are going to win, they need to stay as far away from those lines as possible. To keep your marriage off the rocks, you need to decide where your moral boundary lines will be now. Here are some examples of personal boundaries for purity you can build into your life:

God didn't just
make rules
to spoil your fun.

No Flirting

Flirting usually begins in innocence. It is fun because the rushes, emotions, and pleasures are all sexual. It's foreplay with no payoff. It makes the heart race, the face flush, and a feeling of well-being wash over the body. Flirting may seem harmless, but it is not.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-7 says, "It is God's will that you should avoid sexual immorality: that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen who do not know God, and in this matter no one should wrong (defraud) his brother (or sister) or take advantage of him (or her). The Lord will punish such sins...for God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life."

The only person you should ever flirt with is your spouse. Most married couples have forgotten how to flirt with each other, but it needs to be relearned because this kind of flirting is legal, safe, fun, and exciting.

Never meet, travel, or dine alone with an unrelated member of the opposite sex.

1 Thessalonians 4:3 says that we are to "abstain from sexual immorality, for this is the will of God." So, you ask, what is sexually immoral about meeting, dining, or traveling

with an unrelated person of the opposite sex? Maybe nothing. But, it is also true that unless you are alone with another person, you will not engage in immorality.

1 Thessalonians 5:22 says, "abstain from even the appearance of evil." Logic says that if you abstain from the appearance of evil, you will abstain from evil itself. The principle here is: if you take care of how things look, you take care of how they are.

Be careful about touching

Hugging or embracing is only for close friends and relatives, and only in the presence of others. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 7:1 that it is wrong for a man to touch a woman in such a way as to arouse sexual passions in either one of them. You will never be tempted to make an embrace longer, or more passionate than it should be if you make this a boundary in your life.

Pay compliments on something external, not on the person themself

For instance, commenting on a pretty outfit is different from telling a woman who isn't your wife that she looks pretty. All of us have emotional needs in our lives, but the goal is to have those needs met within marriage. Words

that help meet those needs in your life can be very tempting, especially if your spouse is not giving you what you need. Compliments help meet romantic needs for a woman and ego needs for a man. If the person you compliment is in a marriage where the pleasure, romance, attention, sex, and ego strokes are missing, a simple compliment can light a fire.

In the New Testament, James says that the tongue is a little member of the body that can cause big problems. James 3:5 says, "Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark." God tells us to beware of the power of the tongue for good reason.

Dress modestly ladies

1 Timothy 2:9 says, "I want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety." This is very important because men are aroused by what they see. Women must realize the problems they create for men when they wear tight blouses or

...if one
Christian
causes a
weaker
Christian to
sin, then that
person has
sinned, as
well.

pants, shorts and skirts that are too short, no bras, and skimpy bathing suits.

If a woman dresses that way on purpose to attract men, this is a sign something is very wrong in her life. Unless she is extremely naive, you can usually tell a woman's sexual morals by the way she dresses. 1 Corinthians 8:12 says if one Christian causes a weaker Christian to sin, then that person has sinned, as well. This is a very serious matter to God and

women need to realize that they can tempt a guy to sin by the way they dress.

Of course the man is the one ultimately responsible if he chooses to give into temptation, but the Bible is very clear that Christians are not to tempt others to sin. A woman who wants her own husband to stay faithful and pure should not tempt another woman's husband to stumble because she has no personal boundary in this area.

Guard your eyes and your minds men

Psalm 101:3 says, “I will set before my eyes no vile thing.” Once again, men are turned on by what they see, so guys need to be careful what they allow their eyes to see. If you are a man who is struggling with lust, you need to stay away from things, places, and circumstances that stir it up.

I Corinthians 6:18 says, “Flee immorality...” This means turn off the television, shut the magazine, leave the theater, turn off the computer, walk—no, RUN in the other direction. This is a choice you can make and a personal boundary you can set for yourself.

These are just a few examples of boundary lines you can establish in your life to protect your marriage. It is imperative that you sit down and come up with your own list of boundaries now. These need to be in writing, they need to be signed, dated, and practiced daily because boundaries must be drawn in your life if you are going to protect your marriage from the rocks of sin.

Most importantly, you must understand that sexual purity is not only about saying “no,” it is also about saying “yes.” II Timothy 2:22 says to, “flee youthful lusts,” but then it goes on to say, “pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.” It isn’t enough just to run away from what is wrong, unless you are running toward what is right. The very best way to termite-proof your marriage is to aggressively pursue the things of the Lord together.

Marriages in which the ultimate loss of trust has been suffered because of adultery can never be the same. The pain and devastation are indescribable. Most marriages which go through the trauma of an affair will end in divorce. To avoid the pain of adultery and divorce, you must be willing to acknowledge your weaknesses and draw some boundaries. Don’t worry about others who may laugh and call you Victorian or prudish. You must be willing to do things God’s way if you are going to build your marriage on The Rock.

Jerry B. Jenkins gives this suggestion in his book, *Loving Your Marriage Enough to Protect It*. His wise advice to couples is to remind each other often—in writing and in words—of your wedding vows:

- “Keeping you only unto me for as long as we both shall live.”

Repeating that vow frequently somehow helps you to understand the seriousness of it. One of the most significant problems in marriages today is that most people simply don’t understand that when they got married they didn’t just sign a contract, they made a covenant—a sacred promise, not just to their mate but to God. That pledge of lifelong faithfulness is one that needs to be repeated over and over, to keep the commitment fresh and strong in your heart. That vow is one your spouse will never tire of hearing or reading.

In closing, you need to know that it is possible to have the most perfect husband or wife on earth, and no matter how unconditionally they love you, or how much they understand and value you, that person will never be enough to meet the deepest needs of your heart. You will always be disappointed, because God never created you to be fulfilled by anything or by anyone other than Himself. He is The Rock upon which all lives and marriages must be built. When you have a relationship with God where you are totally dependent upon Him to be the only One who can make life fulfilling and meet all of your needs, you will need to make no demands on each other.

...they made a covenant—
a sacred promise,...

....not just to their mate
but to
God.