

Blog Interview by Joyce Zook for Hope in Unexpected Places

What in your life inspired you to write *12 Keys for Marriage Success*?

I love my life and my marriage, but it has not always been full of pleasant experiences. My loving husband, Aaron, and I have been married for forty years, but my first marriage ended in divorce and abuse. I wrote the book because I wanted to tell other women how they could experience the love we have found.

Where did you find the principles to guide you in your search for creating your book on marriage?

We got married in a small ceremony at my husband's family home in Pennsylvania. Over the next two years, we both accepted Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and neither of us desired a repeat of our shameful pasts. Our mentors suggested we study the Bible and reap the benefits from the wellspring of knowledge we discovered there.

When we applied what we learned, we fought less often, and our friendship and devotion for one another grew. Best of all, joy and peace-filled our hearts when we implemented the truths we discovered.

How did you come up with 12 Keys to improve marriages?

After speaking for many years on Love that Lasts a Lifetime, I got invited to do a radio interview. They wanted twelve questions they could ask me about creating long-lasting marriages. I chose to give them the main points from my talk and the specific lesson I had learned.

The subtitle of your book is “what a wife can do to create a wonderful marriage.” Can a wife change her marriage all by herself? Doesn't it take two people to make a marriage work?

Some men join their wives and put forth the effort to improve their marriages, and others refuse. Most guys won't even pick up a self-help book or visit a counselor. Therefore, wives often strive alone to revive their relationships without the assistance of their spouse.

The Lord never stops caring for us and continues to guide and show us how we can have marriages filled with His love. Just as the Lord doesn't give up on us, neither should we end our attempts to rekindle love while any spark of hope still exists.

I encourage women to press on even if it's by themselves because most marriages get better with their consistent efforts. And best of all, God will help us to repair and restore our marital relationships

How can we get our men to change their bad habits or other things we don't like?

As much as we would like to do it, we can't change our men. Fact is, we can't make anyone willingly alter their behavior by our words or our willpower. The only person we can force to modify their actions is ourselves, which is extremely hard. But we can set up circumstances which make our husbands want to adapt and adjust their lives for the better.

If we try to fix or force our spouses to perform a task our way, it frequently backfires. It is possible though to amend our behavior and thereby produce an atmosphere which influences our guys to change their reactions to us.

Can you give me an example of how this works? I thought both people had to work at changing the relationship.

Say two people are dancing together on the dance floor when one of them decides they want something to drink and walks away. The other person, now stranded in the middle of the room, has to determine what they will do. They usually do something different, often following their partner to get refreshments.

The same thing happens in our marriages. When one person makes significant changes in their actions and responses, the other person has to decide what they will do next. When our husbands experience our consistent behavior changes, they modify what they do, and marriages begin to heal.

Why doesn't nagging work?

Nagging rarely causes anyone to switch what they do without resentment. But our husbands will show a renewed interest in us as women and wives when they experience our acceptance and admiration for who they are.

Our spouses rarely exchange their behavior for a different type of response due to our nagging or critical comments. If we sound like their mother, most guys tune us out or walk away in anger. Grown men don't want to be told what to do or be treated as children.

Shifting our behavior to act like their girlfriend and lover, not their mom, causes our mates' reactions to turn for the better. We create an environment which invites them to adjust their conduct because they feel valued. Once they sense our continued support, they begin to express their appreciation and love for us more readily.

One of the keys is to "Do it His way." What does that mean?

The command to submit causes many of us to feel uncomfortable. God does not force wives to follow their husbands. Instead, we demonstrate our love for them in voluntary submission to support their God-given mission.

Susan Hunt describes submission this way, "Submission has nothing to do with equality. Men and women are equal, but we have been assigned different roles. Neither role is superior."

While we figure out how to defer to our mate's headship, we also learn to trust God to guide our men with His wisdom. Often doing it his way involves compromises, creative solutions, and determining what is truly important.

What if there is abuse? Do we still have to submit?

Please don't misunderstand me. Biblical submission never involves emotional, physical, or sexual abuse nor acts which break the civil law. Submitting to our mates never includes any immoral behavior. God condemns depraved, harmful, and illegal acts.

I see that one of the 12 Keys is Date Your Mate. How does dating our husbands help heal a damaged marriage?

We yearn for marriages packed full of passion and romance where we are cherished by our men. To maintain this type of close connection means we have to devote quality time to be with our spouses on a regular basis. Weekly dates protect our friendship with our husband, keep the passion alive, and maintain open lines of communication.

What do dates for a married couple look like?

Good dates involve three parts. First, we need time alone with our guys. Then we want to do a fun activity to enjoy ourselves while chatting and getting reconnected. Finally, dates for husbands and wives include private time to celebrate our love for one another. Sharing the pleasure of making love may happen before the date, after, or the next morning.

What's the most important thing you want women to take away when they read your book?

Marriages can and do change for the better. Suppose our guys don't show any initiative to work on the relationship or don't agree there's a problem to fix. We still have the opportunity to completely transform our marriages even if we are the only ones trying to improve it. Our consistent adjustments to our conduct set the stage for our mates to reconsider their responses and actions.

The Lord works through and alongside us as we embrace His truths to build the deep connections we crave with our husbands. We can discover greater happiness and richer intimacy with our husbands by incorporating the twelve keys for marriage success into our lives.