

*12 Keys for Marriage Success*

**12 KEYS  
FOR  
MARRIAGE  
SUCCESS**

A Christian Perspective for Wives

**Joyce Zook**

## *12 Keys for Marriage Success*

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This book is dedicated  
to my loving husband, Aaron,  
who has supported and encouraged me  
throughout our marriage.

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True love is not a feeling by  
which we are overwhelmed. It is a  
committed, thoughtful decision.

~M. SCOTT PECK

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## Praise

Joyce Zook has given the reader the keys to unlock love, romance, intimacy, unity, and the makings of a long-lasting marriage. *12 Keys for Marriage Success* is a must read for all who want the best in love and life.

~PAM and BILL FARREL

Authors of over 50 books including bestselling  
*Men Are Like Waffles, Women Are Like Spaghetti*

Joyce Zook's, *12 Keys for Marriage Success* challenges us, as wives, to consider married-life beyond ourselves. I found it challenging and rewarding. I recommend this book to wives who are ready to embrace and succeed in a biblically-based marriage.

~LINDA GOLDFARB

International Speaker, Award-winning Author, and  
Certified Life Coach

If you need an honest, loving, and nurturing approach that gets to the root of marriage problems and offers real-life, achievable solutions, Joyce Zook has created a way back to the loving relationship you desire. Her openness, sound theoretical explanations, and beautiful insight into the dynamics of marital issues ensure this book will be the answer to prayer for many couples.

~ DEBORAH M. MAXEY, PhD

Licensed Professional Counselor, and  
Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

## *12 Keys for Marriage Success*

Joyce's experience, her spirituality, and her knowledge of Godly relationships intertwine together as a must-read for anyone contemplating marriage or married for several years.

~TOSCHIA MOFFETT  
National Best Selling Author and Attorney

Joyce Zook shares her wisdom through the lens of God, the love she has for Him, and the sacrament of marriage. *12 Keys for Marriage Success* is a must-read. It's easy to latch onto and most importantly, implement.

~KATHRYN RICH BONNER  
Artist, Biz, Life and Creativity Coach

A practical resource for anyone, whether they plan to get married or are a veteran wife. The book is excellent, written in real terms and everyday life experiences. It is a must-read for married couples. Both of our children will have a copy. I am a chaplain's wife and find Joyce's book an invaluable asset to our ministry.

~TERRI RUSSELL  
Chaplain's Wife

Joyce's step by step recommendations coupled beautifully with Bible verses points wives in the right direction and provides details on the way our Heavenly Father intended marriage. This book is a real blessing for every woman who seeks to enhance her connection with her husband.

~ELIZABETH WILLIAMS



## *12 Keys for Marriage Success*

Military Spouse and Entrepreneur

## **Introduction**

A virtuous and excellent wife, worthy of honor, is the crown of her husband, but she who shames him with her foolishness, is like rottenness in his bones.

~PROVERBS 12:4 AMP

I thought I was a wonderful wife, but when I told my husband how to eat his cereal, drive the car, and manage his time, he avoided me. When I discovered biblical principles for relationships and applied them in our marriage, I learned to love my spouse unconditionally. That's when I got my miracle. The man who courted me returned and I loved my life again.

My loving husband, Aaron, and I have been married for forty years. However, in my early twenties, I married an abusive man. After the hurt and pain, I went through in my first marriage, I craved a love based on commitment and honesty. God provided that in Aaron, whom I adore. We have a successful marriage now, but we had to practice the skills involved in a good relationship.

### **Love God's Way**

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When Aaron and I married, neither of us were Christians. I accepted Christ as my Savior a year after our wedding, and my husband did the same six months later. We loved to study the Bible. When we tried to obey the commands we found in it, our devotion to one another grew stronger. We fought less frequently, and our friendship deepened as we implemented what we discovered.

Life has not always been easy. I survived depression, brain surgery, and my husband's deployments to war. I homeschooled our two ADHD sons through eighth grade and helped facilitate twenty-six moves to locations around the world.

God never left me alone. In each situation, He showered me with His love and compassion. He taught me how to find joy and contentment wherever we lived. It took effort on my part and dedicated godly mentors, but I eventually reached a place of inner peace with the assurance of God's unrestricted love.

### **Rekindle Romance**

Because our relationship underwent such an incredible transformation, I wanted to tell wives like you how to get the same results as they interacted with their husbands. When I showed ladies how to rekindle romance, draw closer to God, and overcome their challenges, their joy returned. Their marriages improved and many reclaimed their relationships from impending divorce.

Before I met Aaron, I graduated from college with a degree in psychology. When our kids went to high

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school, I decided to hone my skills and abilities to mentor and coach women. Over the next few years, I obtained a diploma in Women's Ministry, received my certifications as a Board Certified Biblical Counselor, a Life and Marriage Coach, and an Advanced Personality Trainer.

I've spoken to thousands of ladies around the world as God opened doors of opportunity at churches and military bases. Over the last twenty years, I've taught Bible Studies, been the keynote speaker at retreats and programs, and presented workshops at international and regional conferences. I am now the owner of Practical Christian Woman, where I continue to speak, write, and coach.

I know firsthand the pain and trauma of a problematic relationship. I've also witnessed the redemptive power of Christ in a long-term, successful marital bond built on biblical principles. My experiences supply a wealth of knowledge and wisdom to address the struggles we encounter as we interact with our husbands.

### **Skills You Need**

If you try to get along with your spouse without the necessary skills, it may feel like building a house without the architectural diagrams. You run into trials and a lot of pointless suffering along the way.

Each couple is unique, but how we create a relationship filled with love and tenderness is quite similar. The Bible contains the instructions we need to build strong and reliable marital bonds. This book

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includes practical tips and information to enhance our marriages while we apply God's truth in our everyday lives.

When you invite God into the process, remarkable transformations occur, and your marital relationship flourishes. You uncover the love and companionship the Lord intends for your marriage as you practice these principles found in His Word.

### **This Could Be Your Marriage**

When you apply the twelve keys for marriage success you change your future. As you learn to love your husband unconditionally, it strengthens the bond you have as a couple. Because you demonstrate your acceptance and admiration for your man, the delight and romance increase in your relationship.

The number of fights you have with your husband decreases when he feels respected. When you gain new communication skills your communication improves and many of the issues get resolved. Because you learn to follow your spouses' lead without losing yourself, you also enjoy regular weekly dates with your husband.

The fun, excitement and passion return to your marriage. As you figure out how to get in the mood for intimacy, the struggles in your sex life decrease. You find the joy and pleasure in celebrating your love with the man you married and even planned a romantic evening for two.

When you use the biblical principles presented in this book, you learn to build a life and marriage you

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love. While you create a long-lasting love affair with the man you married, you also deepen your relationship with God.

### **Let Me Know What You Discovered**

You, my precious friends, are why I write. My desire is for you to feel loved and cherished as you draw closer to God. Overcome the challenges with your husband and renew the love and romance in your relationship. I want you to Love Your Life and Love Your Marriage.

I like hearing from my readers and invite you to send me a question or comment at:

Joyce@JoyceZook.com.

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Most of the time, your husband  
has one friend. Guess who that is?  
You.

~DR. KEVIN LEMAN

## **Key 1**

# **Commit and Stick**

Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.

~MATTHEW 19:6

For many years I used divorce as a final option in the midst of our arguments. When I thought we had insurmountable differences, the word became a threat or a potential solution in the heat of a quarrel. The D-word didn't fix or end the disputes. Instead, I felt less secure and unsure of our ability to keep our relationship together.

Have you ever glued two pieces of paper together and tried to pull them apart? When we attempt to disconnect the two, both of them tear and leave fragments behind. The glue adheres the two together and they cannot be severed without damaging both of them. Neither remains whole.

This is an excellent example of what happens when a couple chooses to dissolve their union. The results of trying to separate the papers provide a visible



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picture of the unique bonds which connect a husband and wife.

Try this experiment:

- Glue two sheets of paper together.
- After they dry, try to pull them apart.

If a husband and wife divorce, it wrenches them apart like the paper which shredded when ripped. Bits and fragments of one-person cling to the other, which produces gaps, holes, and rough places. Divorce damages our lives and those of the people we love. It leaves broken hearts and shattered dreams in its wake.

### **Marriage God's Way**

*Marriage* magazine reported on the results of a survey funded by Fortune 500 companies. They discovered one of the latest status symbols was a long-lasting marriage. Since my husband and I have been married for forty years, I guess we and those married over thirty or forty years reached a new level of significance. We figured out how to stay together.

Our culture accepts different types of marital unions. I prefer Webster's definition of matrimony from the 1828 edition of the *American Dictionary of the English Language*. It comes closer to the description written in the Bible of the marital bond which unites a man and woman than some of the current explanations in our society.

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Marriage: the legal union of a man and woman for life... a contract both civil and religious, by which the parties engage to live together in mutual affection and fidelity, till death shall separate them.

~NOAH WEBSTER

Couples either choose to obey what the Bible says about marriage or they adopt the beliefs of our culture. When people accept God's design for husbands and wives, they heighten the chances of their unions lasting a lifetime. If men and women copy the current customs of the world, it leads to hurt and disappointment.

### **We Can't Change Him**

The biggest challenge we encounter as we work to enrich our marriages is to stop our attempts to fix our husbands. When we strive to force our spouses to perform a task the way we want, it frequently backfires. If we amend our own behavior first, we produce an atmosphere which creates a desire to change in our men.

Let's leave our men in the Lord's capable hands and concentrate on modifying our conduct. Besides, God possesses the ability to affect a miraculous transformation in our husbands which far exceeds anything we imagine.

While we strive to become the women God designed us to be, He works in our husbands' hearts

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and minds. The Lord uses His power and knowledge to alter their lives in accordance with His plans. When we pray for our spouses and focus on the Lord, we see the results of His handiwork in our relationships.

### **God Creates Adam and Eve**

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.”

~GENESIS 2:18

God formed Adam in His own image and gave him the responsibility to name the animals, till the ground, and watch over the garden. Yet with all the animals as his companions, Adam felt lonely. He needed someone to love and share his life. Adam longed for a mate who would make it possible for him to fulfill the Lord’s command to populate the earth.

The first marriage occurred when God created a woman and brought her to the man. He designed Eve to be Adam’s helpmate, keep him company, and assist him in his labors. God intended Eve to serve as his companion and partner until death parted them.

From the creation of mankind, the Lord intended for husbands and wives to remain lifelong partners. God planned for them not to break their unions until parted by death.

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Woman was made, built up, fashioned out of the man and for the man, with perfect specifications to complete him physically, intellectually, emotionally, spiritually.

~JUDY ROSSI

### **Omit the D-Word**

For the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I hate divorce and marital separation and him who covers his garment [his wife] with violence.

~MALACHI 2:16 AMP

Some people believe marriage is a temporary arrangement, which lasts until they fall out of love or until it no longer works for them. Divorce becomes a quick answer to their problems. Divorce is not God's design to solve marital crises. The Bible tells us the Lord hates divorce, yet He does permit men and women to separate under specific circumstances.

When we mention divorce in the midst of an argument, the concept becomes a possible solution. We may utter the D-word in an effort to manipulate the situation and get what we want. It might be said as a way to escape the turmoil in the relationship and leave the difficulties behind.

If we say divorce too often, the anger and instability increase the ability of our marriages falling apart. Animosity escalates and communication declines, resulting in less motivation to find answers

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for our problems. When husbands and wives consider separation, it fractures the trust which typically exists.

We remove a significant threat when we eliminate the D-word from our conversations. Without the danger of divorce hanging over our heads, it is easier to uncover answers and compromises to settle the disputes. When we don't dwell on the pros and cons of severing the marriage, we can focus on how to keep our love intact. The potential to save our marriages expands as we look for viable options to fix our problems.

### **Deteriorating or Destroyed**

But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery.

~MATTHEW 5:32

Our world is full of sin, and even Christian marriages disintegrate beyond repair and end in divorce. When couples break up, it's usually due to adultery, financial, or sexual issues. One spouse may abandon the other because of an addiction to drugs or alcohol or when they can't reconcile their conflicting religious beliefs. Some people separate when they determine it's impossible to resolve their personality differences.

If you find yourself in one of these troublesome situations, seek advice and counsel from a pastor or appropriate professional before you end your marriage. Many couples have found avenues to repair the damage in their lives and rekindle their love.

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Relationships often improve even if one person works on it alone.

The Bible tells us two reasons the Lord permits divorce. One is for infidelity with an unrepentant heart. The second reason to break a marriage apart occurs when a non-believer abandons their Christian spouse.

But if the husband or wife who isn't a believer insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the Christian husband or wife is no longer bound to the other.

~1 CORINTHIANS 7:15

These two situations don't describe couples who split apart because they feel unhappy or believe they can't endure their insurmountable trials. People in troubled relationships need to seek assistance from a marriage counselor, coach, or mentor first before visiting a divorce lawyer.

### **Intolerable Actions**

Do not tolerate any illegal or immoral behavior, or any physical, or sexual abuse. If you or your children are in physical danger, find a place of safety and refuge outside your home immediately.

Many cities and towns have a women's shelter or safe house for your protection in the face of an imminent threat to your personal health. Please obtain legal advice if your spouse continues to pursue or

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threaten you. Keep yourself and the kids from bodily harm of any kind.

If you don't know if your relationship qualifies as abuse, seek counsel from a professional or trusted friend. Their advice may help you clarify your situation and determine your next course of action.

For further instructions on how to leave an abusive situation and where to go, call the National Domestic Violence Hotline. Dial 800-799-7233.

### **Stuck on You**

If I'm out of sorts with my husband or we have a heated discussion, I say, "You're stuck with me." He chuckles and utters the same statement back to me. We chose to honor the vows we said at our wedding, which kept us together with the joys and the sorrows we encountered.

Think back to the passion and desire you felt for your man on the day you got married. Regardless of what difficulties you encounter in the future, stay committed to your husband. It requires effort, mercy, and sacrifice to remain united through the hardships of life, but with God's help it is possible.

Quarrels occur in our marriages—they do for everyone. Yet fights or continuous arguments don't mean we have to divorce. When we have unresolved issues, which tear our relationships apart, it indicates we need to seek advice and counsel. Let's stick it out and work it out to establish an unbreakable bond.

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Couples who build their marriage on the foundation of Jesus Christ discover how to love, support, and encourage one another. Whether we encounter happy or unfortunate circumstances, husbands and wives who stay together figure out how to obtain the best results in the situations they face.



## **Make It Personal**

1. Read Genesis 2:18. The Lord said it was not good for Adam to be alone. What did Adam miss when he didn't have a wife?
  
2. How can you fulfill your man's requests as his "helpmeet"?
  
3. What steps might you take to reinforce the close connection between you and your husband?

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4. How did you view marriage as a teenager, and how has your view changed?
5. Remember the promises you made on your wedding day? Which vow is the hardest to uphold?
6. What do you think causes some couples to stay together for life while others end in divorce?
7. Find a couple who have been married at least twenty years. What do you think makes their marriage function well?

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8. Contact the pair you named above and ask them why they think their marriage lasted. Record their answers below.
9. Read Malachi 2:16. It says the Lord hates divorce. What might cause the divorce rate to rise so high in our society?
10. Try the experiment from page fifteen for yourself. Glue two pieces of paper together. After they dry, try to pull them apart. What happens?

## **Marriage Success Tip**

### **Key 1**

#### **Commit and Stick**

1. Text your husband. Tell him you are committed until death no matter what ups and downs come your way. Seal it with a kiss.
2. Look at your wedding pictures. Remember the marriage vows you took and become a woman who keeps her promises.

The cruelest thing a wife can do to  
a husband is to never be happy.  
And don't forget, being happy is  
more an attitude than a reality.

~LAURA SCHLESSINGER

## About the Author

You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free.

~JOHN 8:38

I thought I was a wonderful wife, but when I tried to tell my husband how to eat his cereal, drive the car, and manage his time, he avoided me. I became angry, depressed, and threatened divorce.

When I learned to apply biblical principles, I discovered how to love myself and my husband unconditionally. That's when I got my miracle. The man who courted me returned and I loved my life again. Aaron and I have been married forty years, have two sons and four grandchildren.

My books *Priorities for Life* and *God and Your Closet* offer practical ideas to apply biblical principles in your daily life.

I love to hear from my readers. What did you find challenging, freeing, or too difficult in this book?

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If you want one-on-one help with your situation, schedule a free consultation with me on my website.

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