

## Chapter 3

# Three Key Ingredients

Even though marriage carries with it tremendous responsibilities and produces its own unique problems, it can still be exciting, rewarding, and wonderful. By applying God's marriage pattern and His Biblical principles to your relationship, you can make it what you want it to be. As you will see, God is extremely interested in your life, your marriage, and your family, because He wants you be happy and to enjoy life.

I believe that three of the most important ingredients that can ensure the success of any marriage are attitude, God's love, and a relationship with Jesus Christ. Any couple who applies these three ingredients to their relationship can experience a marriage that is far beyond their greatest expectations. If I did not believe this, I would not have spent 18 months and over 1000 hours preparing this book. If both husbands and wives will apply the godly principles and simple suggestions that I have listed in this book, marriages will succeed.

**1. The Right Attitude** A person's attitude is probably the most dominating aspect of his or her life. Everything we say, do, think, and believe are in many ways controlled by our attitude. People who are happy, productive, and have a good outlook on life, most likely possesses a positive attitude. However, if a person lacks joy, has a poor outlook on life, and is critical of others, chances are that he or she possesses a negative attitude. In most cases, a person's attitude will be evident in his or her life, because attitudes dictate behavior.

Attitudes are learned from parents, friends, co-workers, and school mates, and they become deeply embedded in a person's life. In addition, the environment that we live in plays a major role in the formation of our attitudes. We can become a pessimist who finds everything wrong with life, or an optimist who searches for the good. We can follow the path of least resistance and do nothing or tackle the challenges of life and make a positive difference. Attitudes can become our worst enemy, or our greatest asset, and that choice is always ours.

In the marriage relationship, one's attitude will be a key ingredient in promoting its success or causing its destruction. For this reason, it is a good idea to routinely take an inventory of your attitude to see if you are helping or hurting your marriage relationship. Every marriage will have its growing pains, but they should not become long term problems. It is essential that every husband and wife strive to possess the type of attitude that promotes love, joy, peace, and unity to ensure that the relationship remains intact.

Attitude adjustments are sometimes necessary to get your marriage back on track. Life's pressures produce stress that can cause each of us to react inappropriately at times and hurt the ones we love. If we do our best to maintain a positive attitude, we can prevent unnecessary pain for our spouses by dealing wisely with every situation. As I stated earlier, negative attitudes can slowly surface, and become a major problem in our relationships before we even realize it is happening. We must realize that Satan, rather than our spouse, is our real enemy, then work together to defeat him as we strengthen our marriage. With a **50.4%** divorce rate in America, it is evident that husbands and wives need to adjust their attitudes. Many marriages and homes can be saved if couples will just change their attitudes toward their spouses.

Possessing the right attitude is one attribute that can help husbands and wives to maintain their focus on the marriage regardless of the situation. I will be the first to tell you that maintaining control in the face of adversity is not an easy task. However, when a person possesses a positive attitude, it will be

much easier to do. Positive attitudes can motivate couples to deal with their problems together and find workable solutions instead of fighting against one another.

The marriage relationship is not armor plated but encased in an eggshell that is easily broken. If it is not treasured and protected, it can break apart and destroy the contents. The benefit of a positive attitude is that it puts you in the driver's seat with full control of your actions. By choosing to do the right things, you help to alleviate unnecessary burdens that strain your relationship. In addition, a positive attitude can motivate couples to seek ways to alleviate the problems instead of alleviating the marriage.

On the other hand, negative attitudes produce just the opposite results. Negative attitudes prevent couples from seeing the obvious good in their situations. They can prevent couples from finding workable solutions to their problems because they complain about them instead of seizing the opportunity to work through them. When problems arise, some people sense the pressure and acknowledge defeat without ever dealing with the problem. In addition, they will often procrastinate in searching for solutions to a better marriage. People with negative attitudes tend to find themselves in the back seat of the car where they have no control of their lives or their marriages.

The irony of attitudes is that most individuals can determine the type of attitude he or she will possess. They can choose to look at life with optimism or refuse to believe that anything good can come out of it. They can work together with others to accomplish great tasks, or they can drag their feet and cause the task to become a burden. There is no doubt in my mind that a person with a positive attitude will achieve successes far above those of a person with a negative attitude. In comparison, couples with positive attitudes will have more successful marriages than those who are negative.

Attitudes can work to open your eyes to see good things in bad situations or cause you to see only the bad things in good situations. Attitudes can set the stage for a life of joy and harmony or one of misery and strife. The right attitude can help you to control your words and actions and prevent you from hurting those you love. The right attitude can help you to put your mate first instead of yourself and cause you to be a blessing to them. On the other hand, you can possess a self-centered attitude that puts the desires of self above those of your mate and makes everybody miserable. Your attitude is entirely your choice, but keep in mind that whichever one you choose, you will reap the consequences of your actions according to the Bible.

**“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Galatians 6:7 (NIV).”**

David learned this painful yet valuable lesson about attitudes when he walked away from God after committing sin with Bathsheba in **2 Samuel 11**. The attitude he possessed prior to committing his sins was one of respect, love, and honor for God, his creator and friend. When he committed the sins however, his heart changed, his eyes were blinded by sin, and he grew cold and indifferent towards God. As a result, his relationship with God was no longer a positive one. As time passed, David's loving God sent Nathan His prophet to tell him an interesting story that caused David to realize his sin, repent, and change his attitude toward God. David asked God to renew his spirit and help him to have a right attitude so he could once again enjoy a relationship with God. David's desire to possess a positive attitude was the key to renewing his relationship with God and regaining his joy.

**“Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast (right) spirit within me. Psalm 51:10 (NIV).”**

This story has strong application to the marriage relationship. It proves how a bad attitude can wreck a good thing and cause much grief and pain in the process. In addition, it also proves how a right attitude can help to rebuild and reestablish a right relationship. With positive attitudes, couples can renew their love, friendship, and fellowship with one another. Attitudes are a critical key to producing relationships that are full of joy, or ones that are full of sorrow. Attitudes can weaken a marriage or make it stronger. They can produce excitement or boredom, love or hate, peace or turmoil, and the choice is yours. A positive attitude goes hand in hand with the choice to have a better marriage relationship. If both the

husband and the wife choose to possess positive attitudes, both the husband and the wife can reap great rewards. Always remember that the choice of attitudes is yours, but so are the consequences.

If your marriage relationship is lacking essential ingredients such as love, joy, peace, excitement, and companionship, it may be time to take a serious look at your attitude. Taking an inventory of your current situation and determining if you are doing your part to improve it, is the first step. Since you determine the kind of marriage relationship that you want to have, it is in your best interest to choose the right attitude. You establish a communication link with your mate because you choose to do so. You give your love to your spouse because you choose to give it. You become a part of your mate's life because you desire to have him or her a part of yours.

In most cases, you make the choices to do and have whatever you desire. Choosing to possess a positive attitude and develop a beautiful, blossoming relationship with your husband or wife is up to you. On the other hand, choosing to destroy your relationship by refusing to rid yourself of a negative, pessimistic attitude is also up to you. You can put all the blame for your miserable marriage on your spouse, but that will never make it better. Until you choose to do the things in life that you know are right, you will never experience a wonderful relationship with your spouse. It will always take two to build a successful marriage relationship, but it will only take one to destroy it.

Because of the sinful nature that all of us are born with, we all have our faults. Like it or not, every one of us must accept the blame for those things we do or fail to do in our marriage relationships. If things are going well, we accept some of the credit, so if things are falling apart, we must also accept some of the blame. It may only require us to give a little more of ourselves, love our spouse a little more, or put aside our selfish desires to please our spouse to improve our relationships.

The problems facing couples today can be worked out with a little help from both the husband and the wife. God has made sure that we have all the tools necessary to build a great marriage relationship. We also have the opportunity for God to assist us in making our relationships the best they can be. Whether you choose to nurture your marriage relationship or to let it fall by the wayside, it is still your marriage. You made the choice to establish it, and God expects you to maintain it.

The marriage relationship is not some incurable disease, nor is it some enormous problem that cannot be solved. I am confident that one of the many reasons people are not successful in their marriage relationships is because they do not want to be successful. If a spouse perceives that the marriage relationship is not progressing as he or she thinks it should, they may very well look for a way to end the relationship. It is evident by the **50.4%** divorce rate that one out of every two marriages fall prey to negative attitudes. "It will never work," is number one excuse. "I do not love him or her anymore," is another excuse.

It is time for husbands and wives stop making excuses for their troubled marriages, and start accepting the responsibility for making them better. The attitude that marriage is fine as long as there are no problems is a coward's attitude. Couples need to get a grip on reality. Life is not perfect, and it will not be so until Christians enter the gates of Heaven, so stop expecting your marriage to be perfect. When two people come together to establish close relationships, they will experience problems in some form or fashion. That is life!

The curse of sin on humanity causes the many frustrations and anxieties that we experience today. It is unfortunate, but we have to learn that in this life nothing comes our way without us putting forth an effort to make it happen. Every marriage will experience stormy waters as well as peaceful seas, but the key to making the marriage work is to look at the big picture. Set goals for your relationship, then work to achieve them. Even though things get out of hand sometimes, do not forget what your goals are. You do not have to be a divorce statistic just because **50.4%** of the marriages end that way.

It will always take two to build the marriage, but someone must possess the right attitude to get the process started and at the same time encourage the other one to join them. This may seem impossible to do, or not worth the effort, but that is a pessimistic attitude. Nothing is impossible with God! Always remember your goal of building a successful marriage relationship. Use the good times to build and strengthen your relationship, so when trouble comes you have a strong enough foundation to weather the storm. Protect your relationship at all cost with a positive attitude, and prevent Satan from destroying it.

The human nature tends to give up and give in too easily when pressure is applied to one's life. Striving to possess a positive attitude can be a great asset to overcoming those pressures and maintaining your resolve to keep your relationship intact. Every one of us is striving to make our marriages work, but we have to remember that we are battling an evil force that is trying to destroy them. Satan, the author of confusion and misguided emotions, does not care who you are or what you want. His tools of deception and destruction are highly effective, and his motivation is unswerving, so we cannot afford to give up or give in to him. Giving in to your emotions and feelings can fool you and lead you astray, so try to base your actions on what you know to be right instead of what you feel.

Satan is not satisfied just because a person rejects God and commits sin. He wants people to lose all hope and joy and live their lives wallowing around in the mud of failure. He wants people to lose heart, lose hope, and lose their marriage relationships. He wants husbands and wives to blame one another for their troubled or struggling relationships and quit. He wants to destroy your spouse, your marriage, your family, and your life, and he does not care how that happens just as long as it does. If your marriage is not successful, it must be because your spouse is not doing his or her part. In that case, it must be time to give up and move on to better things. What a bunch of nonsense!

Even though the problems that we all face are common to marriage relationships, Satan wants you and I to believe that our situations are unique to us alone. He wants you to take your eyes off Jesus Christ and your marriage and focus on your problems. He wants you to lose your desire to make the relationship work and throw in the towel. If he can persuade you to do this, you have just signed a death warrant for your relationship and violated God's will for your marriage. If you give up on your marriage and allow it to be destroyed, you have lied to God and your mate by failing to fulfill your vows and your promises.

You must remember that you chose your mate and that you made vows before God to love, cherish, and live with him or her. Regardless of who you married or who performed the ceremony, you still made a promise to God through your vows that you would make it work. As a result, He holds you and your mate responsible for your collective promises to Him and each other. What does this have to do with attitudes? Everything! God is working diligently helping couples build meaningful relationships while Satan is trying to destroy them. You are the determining factor whether or not you will fulfill your promises. Your attitude has everything to do with your choice to succeed or fail.

Success never comes without a price, and it always demands that we make sacrifices to achieve it. Anything worth having, including your marriage relationship, will require your utmost dedication and willingness to make it successful. It took me ten years to get to the level that I desired to be at with the piano. I had to practice when I did not feel like it, learn the keyboard inside and out, learn the notes, and make chords. I had to practice hours and hours to succeed, and I refused to give up even when it did not sound right. Positive attitudes can motivate us to strive for success in everything we set out to do. Our Christian lives, our marriages, our relationships, our families, and our careers depend on our attitudes. When you really set your mind to accomplish something and desire it with all your heart, you will not give up even though it does not always sound right, look right, or feel right.

I am convinced that you can do whatever you set your mind to do with the right attitude and determination. You can allow your spouse to be the most important person in your life apart from Jesus Christ. You can learn to love, cherish, and adore him or her regardless of the circumstances, problems, or disagreements that arise. You can strive to build a better marriage for you and your spouse to enjoy by determining in your heart to make it work. When you make up your mind to develop a meaningful relationship with your mate, no circumstances or problems will change that. A marriage that is unexciting, undesirable, lifeless, full of resentment, frustration, anger, lacking love, joy, and peace is among the worst positions people can find themselves. The sobering fact remains that every marriage could eventually end up like that if people lose the desire and the determination to make it successful.

Every person will face obstacles in their travels through life. The attitude that a person possesses will dictate how he or she will handle each one of them. Giving up will never allow any person to achieve any goals that they have set. Continuing to give up instead of making up your mind to succeed, will always promote failure. Realistic goals can be reached if a person will give their all and refuse to give in to obstacles and discouragement. With the right attitude, you can possess a great marriage relationship.

This is a simple philosophy, but if applied, it will work wonders in most anything you set out to accomplish. Both the marriage and life in general will require a positive attitude to promote fulfillment. Everybody will face disappointments and frustrations in life, but if you have a positive attitude, it will be much easier to deal with. Learning to face life head-on, and deal with unpleasant circumstances along the way will, in most cases, work to your advantage. Some things you can change in life and some things you cannot change, but knowing the difference is the key.

Once you make up your mind to accomplish the goals you have set in life, do not become discouraged when your resolve to do so is tested. Life is not a bed of roses, and the road is not always smooth, but with the right attitude you can learn to enjoy life and help your spouse to do the same. When you possess a positive, it will make a world of difference in your relationships. By maintaining a positive focus on your marriage, you will be able to do those things that are required to ensure its success. The advantage of a right attitude is the ability to focus on solutions instead of problems and work to solve them. A positive attitude is a prerequisite to establishing unity in your marriage and making it a success.

**“Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand. Matthew 12:25 (NIV).”**

**2. God’s Love** When looking for recipes that produce successful marriage relationships, love will always be one of the key ingredients. When a positive attitude is tempered with love, marriage will become a lasting endeavor. Once again, the Bible is the best source for finding the definition of love.

**“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 record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV).”**