
COVENANT KEEPERS

"Dedicated To Strengthening Marriages Through Biblical Principles"

Volume 15 – Issue 2

Winter Edition

The Spark Plug of Your Marriage.

One of the smallest parts of every car on the road today is a spark plug. Though it seems insignificant, it is essential to the function of the car. Without your spark plugs your car will not work. Why is this? It is very simple. The spark plug ignites the fuel mixture that produces the power that ultimately moves your car. Apply this simple illustration to your marriage relationship.

Have you ever wondered what keeps the spark of passion in your marriage? What makes your relationship work? There is a power source to your marriage just like a spark plug. This source of power keeps your marriage moving forward. Do you know what it is? Are you at a place where you don't sense the excitement in your relationship anymore? Are you looking for something to motivate you again in your relationship? Is it possible to get that spark back again that you once had? I believe it is very possible, if you know what to do.

When your car won't start in the morning what do you do? Of course you would take your car to a mechanic. He knows just where to look to find the problem and fix it. One of the first things any mechanic will check is your spark plugs to determine if they are firing properly. Why? Because the spark plugs are one of the most fundamental items that make your engine run efficiently.

So, if you have lost the passion for your spouse or he or she has lost that spark of love for you, you need to allow the Lord, the divine mechanic,

to have a look under your hood. He can fix what is needed. Are you willing?

If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, before He can begin to fix your marriage you need to allow Him to first fix you. The biggest problem you have is that you are living independent of God and His moral laws. You are fighting against the God who made you and knows how your life and marriage work best. What you first must do is ask God to forgive you and turn your life over to His control. You can do that by simply calling out to God in the name of Jesus and surrender to Him now. John said, *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9).

If you are a believer, I want to encourage you to ask God to reveal to you what your faults are in your marriage. Then surrender to Him and commit yourself to continue reading this publication and putting into practice whatever He shows you needs to change in your life. Only then will you sense the love and passion for your spouse return.

What is the spark plug?

The spark plug of your marriage is a very simple thing that couples forget; it is the regular and daily expression of affection for each other. You must give and receive affection if you want the passion and excitement to continue and grow deeper in your marriage. Now you may be wondering, *How can I be so sure that affection is the key to solving my passionless marriage?* Let me give you some examples from the Word of God that reveal the importance of affection in our relationships.

Affection is revealed in Scripture as necessary for all activities in all relationships. Paul commanded us to, *"Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love"* (Rom. 12:10). If this is the way we are to behave toward other believers, how much more should this kindness and affection be shown in your marriage?



Show affection to one another!

Consider these examples where you need affection within your marriage. Many couples rarely touch and hold one another and if they do many times one person turns the touching into an opportunity to ask for sex, which was not the intent of the other person. Affectionate non-sexual touching is an essential part of any healthy marriage. Affection for one another is what should be the motivating factor in these embraces; not just when you want sexual relations. Do you have these affectionate embraces often with your mate? Or, is there little if any touching, holding, kissing in your relationship? If these are missing then you have disconnected the spark plug from your relationship.

"She is your companion and your wife by covenant" Mal. 2:14

Paul also revealed what the real problem was in the sexually passionless marriages of the Corinthians. He commanded them to demonstrate their affection toward each other to remedy this problem. He taught: *“Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband”* (1 Cor. 7:3). Paul believed that there must be a mutual expression of real affection during sexual relations to keep this part of a marriage alive. I counsel couples regularly that are experiencing just the opposite. They are just doing their duty, going through the motions, with little passion or affection for each other. Affection while engaged in sexual intimacy is what makes the sexual act what God intended it to be. Many don’t realize that the word *affection* in this passage means to show good will or kindness. In fact, ill will and unkindness exhibited in your relationship is what quenches the affection and passion between you. Have you ever had sexual relations with your spouse when there was ill will between you due to an unresolved conflict? If so, then you know that sexual relations without affection, good will, or kindness is very unsatisfying. This intimate time is missing the spark plug of affection.

You must give and receive affection if you want the passion and excitement to continue and grow deeper in your marriage.

Likewise, some couples regularly communicate with each other but, there is little or no affection expressed when they do talk. There are just angry or sarcastic exchanges between them. The lack of affectionate communication only deepens the lack of friendship and the passion between them continues to die. Other couples rarely talk because of the lack of affection or constant belit-

ling and harsh words. Why would anyone want to talk with someone who is not kind and affectionate? Only kindness and affection demonstrate good will.

Still other married couples participate in recreational activities, but affection while spending this time together is missing. They do things together but it always seems to end with someone getting upset and ruining the day. All because one or both partners are not demonstrating affection, kindness, and good will. Having fun together can only occur when you affectionately enjoy someone’s company.

Therefore, you can go through the external actions of your marital relationship, but if affection and good will are missing, your time together is lacking the spark to make it enjoyable. With every occurrence of passionless sex, unaffectionate communication, joyless recreation, you will only drift further apart from one another. Ultimately, you will begin to wonder where the love has gone in your marriage. You think, *Why am I even married to this person? We have nothing of the relationship we used to have.*

Therefore, every marriage needs the spark plug of real affection that is mutually expressed by kindness and good will. This affection must also be received by your mate. This is what keeps the passion of love alive in your relationship.

How can you stir up affection and kindness in your marriage?

1. Remember God’s kindness. If you want to stir up affection and kindness in your relationship you must first remember God’s kindness toward you. Why begin here? Remembering His kindness and love for you softens your heart so you can receive what you need for your spouse. When Paul wanted to help the Philippian Church to have the right attitude toward one another he reminded them: *“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of*

the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Phil. 2:1). Notice what Paul declares should be in you; the comfort of His love, His affection, and His mercy. How much kindness and mercy has God had toward you? Remembering His love and affection toward you is always the best way to stir up your love toward others.

Affection while engaged in sexual intimacy is what makes the sexual act what God intended it to be.

Even in the Old Testament God used the remembrance of His kindness as the supreme motivation for the children of Israel to surrender their hearts and return to Him. The Prophet Joel declared: *“So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm”* (Joel 2:13).

If you want to begin showing affection and kindness in a new way toward your spouse, then stop and remember His love and kindness toward you. Take a moment right now and ask the Lord to remind you of how He has had compassion upon you (Mark 5:19).

2. Ask God to fill you. The next step is to go to the God of all compassion and kindness and ask Him to fill you with His Holy Spirit. Why should you take this action? Because, you can’t give what you don’t have. He is the source of affection and kindness, and if you will allow Him to touch your heart He will soften you and fill you full of kindness. Paul explained that this love and kindness was a fruit of the Spirit. *“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness”* (Gal. 5:22). This is also what Paul meant by putting on mercy and

kindness: “*Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering*” (Col. 3:12). In other words, there is no excuse for a believer to not be filled with merciful kindness and affection toward others, especially their spouse.

Having fun together can only occur when you affectionately enjoy someone’s company.

Again, won’t you stop for moment right now and ask the Lord to fill you to overflowing with His Spirit. Repent of your hardness and resentments and allow His kindness and good will to fill your heart. We have not because we ask not (James 4:2).

3. Choose to forgive. If you are resisting the idea of asking for His kindness to fill your heart you probably have another problem – unforgiveness. Do you realize that you can’t be resentful and affectionate at the same time? Without a truly forgiving heart you can’t expect God to answer this prayer or any prayer. Jesus said, “*Whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses*” (Mark 11:25-26). Consequently, without forgiving, you can not expect to see any change in the level of kindness or affection. Why? Forgiveness is the only thing that will truly soften your hard heart. Paul again taught the Ephesian Church this truth: “*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you*” (Eph. 4:32). The only way kindness and loving affection will come from you is if you are tenderhearted. This attitude of the heart comes directly from forgiveness. Note also that Paul’s reasoning for this encouragement is because

you remember that He has forgiven you.

Therefore, choose to forgive and let go of your resentments from the past. Erase the offenses from your mental ledger. Give your spouse the same grace as you have received. If you are still resisting this encouragement to forgive, please go to our website www.covenantkeepers.org and read my article “*What is keeping you from forgiving your spouse*” to help you further in this area.

4. Seek reconciliation. To seek reconciliation is the next step in returning to a right relationship with your spouse. Once you have forgiven, go and seek reconciliation over your past resentments. Your attempt will demonstrate that you have truly forgiven and desire to renew the spark of loving affection between you.

How should you seek this reconciliation? Simply go and ask your mate to forgive you for *your* lack of affection and *your* lack of kindness. Start with *your* failure to love instead of pointing out his or her faults. By first confessing your faults you are disarming your mate’s desire to point out your faults. This is exactly what Scripture commands us to do. James taught: “*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed*” (James 5:16). Jesus said, “*First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye*” (Matt. 7:5). Many times when you begin with your personal confession your mate will naturally then step forward and do the same.

If you desire to truly renew the affection between you then forgiveness and reconciliation are definite prerequisites. If you want more help on reconciling issues go to our website and read my article “*How can you resolve conflicts in a biblical way?*”

5. Begin showing affection. If you want to rekindle the spark of affection in your marriage then you must light the fire. Don’t wait for your spouse to begin the process. Take the

first step! That is all it takes. One of you must begin to show affection. Then expect a response. This is exactly what Jesus taught His disciples in the Golden Rule: “*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets*” (Matt. 7:12). Here is the simplicity of all that the Old Testament taught about love. Whatever you want your spouse to do to you, then you must first do this toward them. How does this work? Love will stir up love. If you start speaking kindly then your spouse is much more likely to do the same. If you demonstrate affection by your service to your mate, it sparks your spouse to want to serve and give too. If you give sincere affection when you are having sex then your mate will want to be affectionate with you.

Therefore, you can go through the external actions of your marital relationship, but if affection and good will are missing, your time together is lacking the spark to make it enjoyable.

It is a simple principle. Your love and good will stir up love and good will within your mate. So, what are you waiting for? Take the next opportunity when you are together and go up to your mate and put your arms around him or her and speak kindly, serve them willingly, love passionately, give sacrificially and see what happens. The fire will be sparked.

6. Demonstrate commitment. To spark a fire is one thing, but to keep the fire going is quite another. So, to keep the passion in your relationship you must turn away from your indifference and demonstrate commitment to your relationship by your words and actions. What was Naomi’s response when Ruth verbalized her commitment to her as she was

returning home? Ruth said, *“Entreat me not to leave you, or to turn back from following after you; for wherever you go, I will go; and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; Your people shall be my people, and your God, my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be buried. The Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts you and me.”* ‘When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her’ ” (Ruth 1:16-18). This verbal commitment of love and affection touched Naomi’s heart and caused her to cease trying to send her away.

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God Himself verbalized His commitment to His people. God declared, *“For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed, “Says the Lord, who has mercy on you”* (Is. 54:10). Words like these are what you need to say to your mate. Say them today!

But, God did more than just verbally promise to never turn from His kindness toward them. He acted to prove His love by sending His Son to walk among them and redeem them. You too need to take practical steps to demonstrate that you are not leaving your mate, but are fully committed.

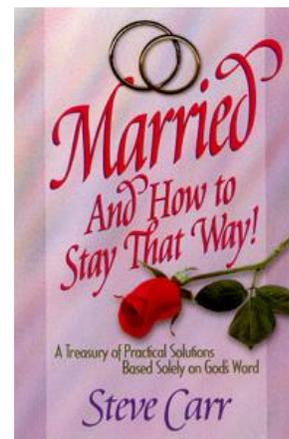
If you want to keep the spark in your marriage then verbalize regularly your commitment to never depart and to work through the hard times. Demonstrate by your actions that you mean what you say by continuing to do all the things that I have already written in this article.

7. Give honor and preference. To continue experiencing the spark plug

firing in your relationship both partners must honor and prefer the other. Paul said it this way: *“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another”* (Rom. 12:10). To give honor to your mate means that you value, esteem, and respect your spouse because he or she is precious to you. Giving preference means to take the lead by your unselfish behavior to show love. Selfishness will only quench the spark of affection; but preferring your mate is the only behavior that will motivate you to re-light the fire of affection between you. If your mate is truly valuable to you and precious in your sight, then put your mate’s needs before your own! Consider your mate’s requests before pursuing your own interests. Listen to his or her concerns before speaking your own. Put your mate’s sexual needs before your own. Put your spouse’s recreational desires before your own. This is how you practically show your spouse that you value them and the relationship. This is what it means to be kindly affectionate.

Affection and kindness are the essence of what love is and how you show it to your spouse. Paul said, *“Love suffers long and is kind”* (1 Cor. 13:4). This type of love will take you through the tough times and always keep the spark of passion for one another alive. Even though you have trials and hardships God will empower you with His own love so that you will grow in your affection for each other. Don’t miss this great privilege of showing affection to your spouse and the experience of receiving that same affection in return!

For more information concerning the ministry of Pastor Steve Carr or for additional marriage resources for couples and counselors, please contact us at our web site www.covenantkeepers.org or by email at ccag@calvaryag.org or at 805-481-2320.



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