



*12 Keys
for
Marriage
Success*

*What a Wife Can Do to Create
a Wonderful Marriage*

Joyce Zook

Praise for *12 Keys for Marriage Success*

“Joyce Zook shares her wisdom with you through the lens of God, the love she has for Him and the sacrament of marriage. It is a MUST read. She gives practical advice and Biblical teaching which is easy to latch onto and most importantly, implement.”

KATHRYN RICH BONNER
LIFE & BIZ COACH, PASTOR’S WIFE

“Even though I have been married for 30 years, there are things in this book which can help make my marriage better. I wish I had been more intentional in these areas over the years. This is a great way to breathe life into any marriage.”

MARTIE CARTER
DIRECTOR OF BOB’S DINER YOUTH MINISTRY

“There are so many aspects of this book that I enjoyed. I know you, the reader, will appreciate Joyce’s insightful thoughts and honesty as she reveals what she and her husband have in their hearts—the love of Jesus Christ our Savior.”

MELANEE HARRISON

“Joyce’s experience, her spirituality and her knowledge of Godly relationships all intertwined together in a must-read for anyone contemplating marriage or currently married.”

TOSCHIA MOFFETT
NATIONAL BEST SELLING AUTHOR, ATTORNEY

12 Keys for Marriage Success

“*12 Keys for Marriage Success* is a great resource and study for everyone regardless of the relationship status of the couple. I love the clever keys and Scriptures which correspond to them and the recap at the end—a great quick guide.”

MICHELLE STONER
CHAPLAIN’S WIFE

“A very practical resource for anyone, whether contemplating marriage or a veteran wife. Put in real terms and everyday life experiences, this reference source is a must have for all married households. Each of our children will have one! As a chaplain’s wife, this will certainly be an invaluable asset in our ministry!”

TERRI RUSSELL
CHAPLAIN’S WIFE

“Her step by step recommendations are coupled beautifully with Bible verses that not only point wives in the right direction, but also give details on the way our Heavenly Father intended marriage to be. This is truly a blessing for any woman seeking to enhance her marriage.”

ELIZABETH WILLIAMS

12 Keys for Marriage Success

12 KEYS FOR MARRIAGE SUCCESS

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*Dedicated to my loving husband Aaron,
who has supported me and encouraged me
throughout this journey.*

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This preview contains portions of *He Chose Me*, the Introduction and Keys 1 and 2.

He Chose Me

To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair.

Isaiah 61:3

On a warm Friday evening in the fall, we met our good friends at the club on base for a few drinks. The Club wasn't a fancy place, but in a foreign country it felt more like home than any place out on the economy. A formal dinner for a military unit filled the main dining room with people and loud noise, but as we entered the bar I didn't see many people.

After sitting down at a small table in the middle of the darkened room, the guys got our order from the bar. Smiling and sipping our drinks we told funny stories from our experiences the previous week. This first part of the night was so much fun that the next part seemed surreal.

My girlfriend and I excused ourselves as we went to the restroom. I paused in the entryway in front of the mirror before we returned to the bar and reapplied my lipstick. As I sat my purse on the ledge and leaned forward my girlfriend's next words caught me totally off guard.

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In a matter of fact tone and barely above a whisper she said, “I have to tell you something.”

“Okay,” I said.

I saw the serious look on her face and my stomach tightened. My hand stopped in midair as she began to tell me an astounding tale. Stunned, unable to move, I held my breath and took in each word she said.

Did I hear her right? “Tell me again,” I said, afraid to trust what I’d heard.

In the next few minutes my girlfriend told me a story full of unbelievable indiscretions my husband had done. Fortunately, no one entered or left the bathroom as my friend talked, leaving us undisturbed.

Do I cry, scream or what do I do next? My mind raced trying to find a place of safety to land.

How could this happen without me even knowing it? Is it true? All of it?

I felt betrayed, rejected and very angry. People I used to count as my friends couldn’t be trusted any more.

Not saying a word to the girl who turned from a friend to an enemy in seconds, I grabbed my purse and strode to the table in a panic, wanting to leave as fast as I could.

Things Were Wrong, Very Wrong

As I walked into the house later, I began to shake from the inside and out. Furious, I confronted my ex-husband. “Did she tell me the truth?”

It was unbelievable, but with a slight smile and no trace of apology in his words he confirmed all that my girlfriend

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told me. Then he added fuel to the fire already burning inside me and boasted about other things he'd done.

If only I could put my fingers in my ears and drown out every word he said, maybe it would all disappear. How I wish I could erase all the horrible details of that night from my mind, but they stayed with me for years.

Over the next few days I recalled scattered incidents from the last four years that began to fall into place. Like coins sorting themselves in a coin sorter, each event held a piece of a bigger picture.

A pattern emerged of threats, unanswered questions, and unexplained times away. He even had a loaded pistol under the bed. Each comment and incident revealed just how broken and destructive our marriage had become.

Things were wrong. Very wrong!

My heart crumbled as I watched the remnants of my marriage dissolve into an abusive and uncommitted mess. I know it should have ended sooner, but after four years of a disastrous relationship I finally faced the facts. Over the next eleven months I continued to feel trapped as I contemplated my next move.

Introduction

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 Schlesinger

I have been married to my wonderful and loving husband, Aaron, for over thirty-five years, but my first marriage was a disaster. That relationship ruined part of my life with abuse, infidelity and lies. I endured five years of pain and disappointment before my divorce.

Five months after the divorce, Aaron and I got married in a small ceremony at his parents' home. Since neither of us wanted a marriage like my first one, we dedicated ourselves to learning what made a good relationship based on biblical principles.

Our love for each other grew when I chose to become a better wife. Watching the amazing changes in our lives, I developed a passion to help other women improve their relationships with their husbands. Now I am excited to share with you twelve actions I learned a Christian wife can take to create a wonderful marriage.

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I want you to enjoy all of the rewards and benefits that come by applying these biblically sound and practical tips to your marriage.

Plan for Success

12 Keys for Marriage Success provides easy to follow tips and information we can use to increase the love and joy in our marriages. When we also invite God into the process, amazing things begin to happen. He tenderly provides us with the right guidance and skills we need to enhance our ability to love men.

Join me as we seek to love our men unconditionally and apply biblical principles in our marriages. We'll learn to accept our husbands, admire them and adapt our behavior to fit their leadership style. We will see our relationships flourish as we increase our ability to communicate well and learn to enjoy wonderful moments of intimacy with our spouses.

Even if you strive alone without your husband's support, it's possible to enhance and rekindle the love you once felt for each other. As we work hand in hand with God positive changes often happen rather quickly to improve our marriages.

Split or Banana Split

When making a yummy, gooey banana split, we don't stop with the bananas and ice-cream. We add hot fudge, caramel and our favorite toppings. You might add a few chopped nuts, and a cherry on top. To finish my treat, I top it

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off with one of my favorites, chocolate chips. Now there is a complete banana split.

This book resembles a delicious banana split. All 12 Keys are required to experience a successful marital bond. Any Key used alone will help, but to enjoy the full benefits of our marital relationships, we must add all the necessary ingredients for success. I invite you to implement all the Keys and reap the rewards of following God's principles in your life.

Marriage Success Strategy

- Read the *12 Keys for Marriage Success* and discover the essential steps required to improve your marriage.
- Apply the principles of each *Marriage Success Key* in your relationship.
- Answer the questions at the end of each chapter in the *My Marriage* section.
- Practice the *Marriage Success Tip* at the end of each chapter.
- Watch God work as He strengthens your love and improves your marriage.

As I share some of the lessons we learned from our challenges and mistakes I pray you will feel encouraged to improve your marriage. May God give each of us the joy and loving relationships we all want as we apply these truths from His Word.

Here are some questions to start the process of improving your relationship with your husband.

My Marriage

1. How did you meet your husband?
2. What characteristics drew you to him?
3. Describe one problem in your marriage that you hope to make better.
4. Read Romans 10:9. How does one get saved from their sins? What are they saved from?
5. When did you ask Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior? How does it feel to accept His forgiveness and free gift of eternal life?

Key 1
Stick Like Glue

Commitment means making a choice to give up other choices...great marriages are based on a deep commitment that casts aside all options but one.
Scott Stanley

We all have a choice to make; we can choose to obey God's design for our marriages or follow the culture. Following God will increase the chances for our marriages to last a lifetime, but the other leads to hurt and disappointment.

One of the biggest choices and challenges we face is changing ourselves and leaving our husbands in God's capable hands. Even though we try, we can't change our men. But it's possible to change our lives and actions to provide an atmosphere which influences the choices they will make.

Besides, God possesses more ability to make miraculous transformations in our loved ones than we ever will. So let's work on ourselves first and see what God will do with the rest of our marriage.

Marriage God's Way

A survey funded by Fortune 500 companies reported in *Marriage* magazine that long-lasting marriages have become a new status symbol.

After thirty-five years of being married to Aaron I guess we have arrived. We reached a new level of significance in our society by continuing to make our relationship last.

Our culture today has multiple descriptions of marriage, but I like Webster's definition for matrimony. The 1828 edition of the *American Dictionary of the English Language* comes close to what the Bible says.

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.

God's Plan

God created Adam in His own image. Then He gave him the responsibility to name the animals and care for the earth. Yet even with the companionship of all the animals, Adam experienced a natural loneliness.

He wanted someone like himself to keep him company. He also needed a mate who would help him fulfill God's plan to populate the earth.

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*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 created the first marriage when He formed a woman and presented her to Adam as his helpmate. He designed her to meet Adam's needs, keep him company and assist him with his work. She would also be his loving companion and partner for life.

Judy Rossi, in her book, *Enhancing Your Marriage*, describes how God fulfilled Adam's desires with a wife.

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

From the very beginning of mankind God planned for marriages to remain lifelong unions, unbroken until one of the partners died. No conflict or difficulty, large or small, ought to separate the couple once they promise God to stay married as long as they both live.

*"Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together."
Matthew 19:6*

My Marriage

1. What was your view of marriage as you grew up?
2. Why do you think some couples remain married for a lifetime and others split up?
3. Name a couple whose relationship you admire. From your observations, what makes their marriage work well?
4. Contact the couple and ask them why they believe their marriage lasted when others dissolved. Record their answers below.
5. God described Adam as alone in Genesis 2:18. Why do you think Adam felt alone without a wife?

Marriage Success Tip

Key 1

Stick Like Glue

1. Text your guy and tell him you are committed to him for life no matter what ups and downs may come. Seal it with a kiss.
2. Look at your wedding pictures. Remember the marriage vows you took and the promises the two of you made. Then be a woman who keeps her promises.

Key 2

Think Like a Couple

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

M. Scott Peck

Our lives transformed the day we said “I do” and married the man of our dreams. On our wedding day we traded in our individual lives and began to act and think like a couple.

If at any point we start to take our marriages for granted, we put them in jeopardy. A strong marital bond develops between a husband and wife only if they will set aside the hours required to make their relationship work.

Leave Singleness Behind

Going from singleness to being a married couple requires that we roll the good qualities of our two separate lives into a whole new entity. Then as we begin our new life we start to sort out the details of how we want to live together.

In the first few years of marriage we determine where we will live, work and worship. We decide how to handle our money and interact with friends as married partners.

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Families of origin often play a role in the choices we make, but I don't believe they ought to be the deciding factor. The Bible says to leave our pasts behind and create a new identity as we unite with our husbands.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall become united and cleave to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Genesis 2:24 (AMP)

Parents and mentors can provide us with wise advice and counsel, but none of us should permit their ideas to keep us from determining what is best for our own marriages.

Decide as a couple if you will move closer to a new job or near your parents. Often moving to a different location other than where our families live gives us the opportunity to develop our own unique identities. A change of cities provides the freedom we need to establish our own habits and traditions without as much influence from our relatives.

It's not the right choice for every couple to move away from home. But if either of you struggle to put the other one ahead of your parents, consider if a move might be in your best interest. Giving yourselves some space may be what you need to grow together as a couple.

The first few years of marriage we decided to follow my husband's career and not mine. This choice meant we got to live many different places including Germany and Hawaii. We traveled throughout Europe, parts of the Orient and much of The United States. We've made twenty-six moves in over thirty-five years developing our own habits and traditions unique to us.

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You don't need to move that often though to develop your own couple identity.

Money and Debt

Money and sex problems are the two most common reasons people give for why they get a divorce. We'll address how to improve our sex lives in the chapter *Light the Fire*, but let's take a moment and consider a few of the common money concerns.

Three of the biggest problems we have with finances include not making joint decisions about our money, debt and budget. Don't let money problems rip your marriage apart. Work together and to find money harmony.

The first step is to combine finances. Choosing to keep separate accounts can erect an unnecessary barrier between us and our spouse. Prove your trust in each other and deposit all your money into joint bank accounts.

A few years ago I inherited what I considered a large sum of money and then struggled to put it in our joint account. I didn't want my husband helping me decide what to do with "my" money because I thought he might not consider what I wanted as very important.

I had created a needless problem between us all because of money and realized I needed to trust my husband. After I deposited the inheritance in both of our names I cried in his arms releasing the tension which had kept us apart.

Much of our stability as a couple will come when we combine our efforts and generate a joint financial plan or budget. It may not seem easy to do at first, but I encourage you to take the challenge and develop a combined budget.

Rekindle Love and Romance!

As a wife you can make a difference in your marriage and create more of what you desire even if you have to work on it by yourself. If you are about to get married or have been married many years, these 12 Keys will guide you to a great marriage.

- ✿ Find out how you can bring back the joy and romance you experienced when you first got married.
- ✿ Learn how to be a strong, independent and submissive wife all at once.
- ✿ Discover how stopping your nagging and changing yourself will improve your relationship with your husband.

This book provides you with practical ideas based on biblical guidelines that you can use to make your marriage a success. Each chapter provides a description of one of the 12 Keys, easy to follow marriage tips and thoughtful questions to help you improve your marriage.



Joyce Zook is an international speaker who has trained thousands of women through coaching, seminars and practical conferences. She is the founder of Practical Christian Woman and provides easy to implement practical guidance. Joyce and her husband, Aaron, have two married sons and three grandchildren. They live in Central Texas.