



**February 7-14**  
**National Marriage Week USA**  
*Let's Strengthen Marriage*

Better Health ■ Financial Stability ■ Healthier Kids ■ Greater Happiness

[www.NationalMarriageWeekUSA.org](http://www.NationalMarriageWeekUSA.org)

## Timely Resources for Marriage

Saturday, April 30, 2011

Many of the larger and smaller churches are already planning for the next year's sermons and church activities. Accordingly, whether you are clergy or lay people involved in your church, we are requesting whenever you start planning for next year that

- If you are clergy, you will give a sermon on marriage on February 12th, the Sunday before Valentine's Day. We also ask you to list your marriage courses on [www.nationalmarriageweekusa.org](http://www.nationalmarriageweekusa.org)
- If you are a lay person, would you ask your clergy to do the above

Regarding the Royal Wedding, we have attached

- a recent op-ed by BJ Weber and Sheila Weber on marriage;
- as well as the sermon by the Bishop of London from the Royal Wedding.

What a brilliant opening:

*"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire." So said St Catherine of Siena whose festival day it is today. Marriage is intended to be a way in which man and woman help each other to become what God meant each one to be, their deepest and truest selves. Many are full of fear for the future of the prospects of our world but the message of the celebrations in this country and far beyond its shores is the right one – this is a joyful day! It is good that people in every continent are able to share in these celebrations because this is, as every wedding day should be, a day of hope. In a sense every wedding is a royal wedding with the bride and the groom as king and queen of creation, making a new life together so that life can flow through them into the future."*

The Arch Bishop's message was a wonderful confirmation of the sanctity and purpose of marriage. Please take a few minutes to read his sermon and the article by Sheila and BJ Weber.

All the best,

Chuck Stetson  
CEO  
Let's Strengthen Marriage  
National Marriage Week USA

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For more information, contact Sheila Weber, Executive Director at [Sheila@letsstrengthenmarriage.org](mailto:Sheila@letsstrengthenmarriage.org) or 646.322.6853

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### The Bishop of London's Royal Wedding Sermon

29th April 2011

"Be who God meant you to be and you will set the world on fire."  
So said St Catherine of Siena whose festival day it is today.  
Marriage is intended to be a way in which man and woman help each other to become what God meant each one to be, their deepest and truest selves.

Many are full of fear for the future of the prospects of our world but the message of the celebrations in this country and far beyond its shores is the right one – this is a joyful day! It is good that people in every continent are able to share in these celebrations because this is, as every wedding day should be, a day of hope.

In a sense every wedding is a royal wedding with the bride and the groom as king and queen of creation, making a new life together so that life can flow through them into the future.

William and Catherine, you have chosen to be married in the sight of a generous God who so loved the world that he gave himself to us in the person of Jesus Christ.

And in the Spirit of this generous God, husband and wife are to give themselves to each another.

A spiritual life grows as love finds its centre beyond ourselves. Faithful and committed relationships offer a door into the mystery of spiritual life in which we discover this; the more we give of self, the richer we become in soul; the more we go beyond ourselves in love, the more we become our true selves and our spiritual beauty is more fully revealed. In marriage we are seeking to bring one another into fuller life.

It is of course very hard to wean ourselves away from self-centredness. And people can dream of doing such a thing but the hope should be fulfilled it is necessary a solemn decision that, whatever the difficulties, we are committed to the way of generous love.

You have both made your decision today – "I will" – and by making this new relationship, you have aligned yourselves with what we believe is the way in which life is spiritually evolving, and which will lead to a creative future for the human race.

We stand looking forward to a century which is full of promise and full of peril. Human beings are confronting the question of how to use wisely a power that has been given to us through the discoveries of the last century. We shall not be converted to the promise of the future by more knowledge, but rather by an

increase of loving wisdom and reverence, for life, for the earth and for one another.

Marriage should transform, as husband and wife make one another their work of art. It is possible to transform as long as we do not harbour ambitions to reform our partner. There must be no coercion if the Spirit is to flow; each must give the other space and freedom. Chaucer, the London poet, sums it up in a pithy phrase:

"Whan maistrie [mastery] comth, the God of Love anon,  
Beteth his wynges, and farewell, he is gon."

As the reality of God has faded from so many lives in the West, there has been a corresponding inflation of expectations that personal relations alone will supply meaning and happiness in life. This is to load our partner with too great a burden. We are all incomplete: we all need the love which is secure, rather than oppressive, we need mutual forgiveness, to thrive.

As we move towards our partner in love, following the example of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit is quickened within us and can increasingly fill our lives with light. This leads to a family life which offers the best conditions in which the next generation can practise and exchange those gifts which can overcome fear and division and incubate the coming world of the Spirit, whose fruits are love and joy and peace.

I pray that all of us present and the many millions watching this ceremony and sharing in your joy today, will do everything in our power to support and uphold you in your new life. And I pray that God will bless you in the way of life that you have chosen, that way which is expressed in the prayer that you have composed together in preparation for this day:

God our Father, we thank you for our families; for the love that we share and for the joy of our marriage.

In the busyness of each day keep our eyes fixed on what is real and important in life and help us to be generous with our time and love and energy.

Strengthened by our union help us to serve and comfort those who suffer. We ask this in the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Amen.

<http://www.officialroyalwedding2011.org/blog/2011/April/29/The-Bishop-of-London-s-Sermon>

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### 7 Tips for Every Newly Married Couple from Prince William and Kate Middleton to the Average Jane and Joe

By *B.J. and Sheila Weber*

Given the failure of marriages which were previously deemed unbreakable (think royal), we offer the following 7 tips, which are hardly inclusive of everything one needs to know, but can help couples get out of the starting gate on better footing.

#### 1. **Expect Challenges**

Unexpected conflict can surprise you when it surfaces after the wedding, or even years later. Challenges will come, so it's best to realize that they are normal. While it is unhealthy to live in a pattern of hostility, don't think that unexpected difficulty or conflict means you should start looking for the exit ramp. Find someone to help you navigate the issues and learn new ways to communicate and resolve problems. Great marriages are committed to navigating the conflicts. Marriage is the greatest tool for personal growth and maturity.

#### 2. **Listen. Talk. Find a Mentor.**

Communication is obviously the key to any great relationship and we can't do full justice to the issue except to summarize:

- 1) We don't really "hear" what another person is saying because we either react defensively or think only of what we want to say in response. Most people just want to know they have been heard and their feelings were understood.
- 2) Don't bury your feelings, but learn how to wisely make your deepest needs known.
- 3) Avoid saying "You always....You never." Use "I feel" terms instead. (This is basic Communication 101 that many have heard, but still don't practice.)
- 4) Ask directly for forgiveness, and respond with forgiveness. Holding hands when you talk helps break a cycle of anger. Research also finds that couples who pray privately and regularly together have vastly more successful marriages.
- 5) Find a trusted friend or older, wiser couple who will be supportive of your marriage (not just affirm your negativity), and will help you, ideally both of you together, work through issues of communication.

#### 3. **Maintain Intimacy**

Keep the sexual component of your marriage intact. Don't take your partner's fidelity for granted. Even if there are times of understandable sexual slow down, (raising children can cause exhaustion, aging brings changes in capacity), stay determined not to let these seasons bring intimacy to a halt. Unavoidable seasons of abstinence should not be used to create guilt or foster bitterness, but rather lead to a mutual determination that even in stressful times you will not let weeks pass without sex, because then you allow your relationship to veer into the friends zone, and that can be a challenge to work your way out of (but you can and must). No matter what, stay faithful.

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### 4. Don't use the "D" Word

Divorce should not be a part of your relationship vocabulary. It creates subconscious damage that is hard to repair. Marriage functions best when it is viewed as a covenant and not consumer relationship—meaning it is a lifelong vow, not something disposable if your needs are not met. When divorce is taken off the table, it does not give you free rein to do whatever you please—since the end result of irresponsible selfishness can be too painful to survive—but it can give couples the impetus to make the relationship as good as it can be. Protect the affection you started with—don't blow it by doing something you don't realize you will deeply regret later. Removing the option of divorce can bring security to the relationship and a deeper motivation to make the relationship as happy and rewarding as it can be.

### 5. "Date" Each Other

It may seem you have plenty of together time when you plop in front of the TV every night, but a strong marriage, like parenting, is also about quality time. Go out for dinner, take in a movie, go for a walk. Find something you might like in common—cross country skiing, book clubs, ballroom dance classes, or church study groups. Eat, Talk, Play—have regular family or two-some sit-down dinners with soothing music and candles. Talk about your day, current events, or personal challenges. Make plans to do something fun—whether it's ping pong, visiting a museum, biking, going to theater, playing games, or making a picnic.

### 6. Women Most Need Love; Men Most Need Respect

For us, this was a revolutionary concept that changed our tone and overall approach toward each other. We must give credit to Dr. Emerson Eggerichs and his best-selling book and conference, "Love and Respect." Of course, men and women need both love and respect, but our hierarchy of deepest need is different. Without love, she reacts to him without respect; without respect he reacts without love towards her, and the crazy cycle starts spinning out of control. There is a way to jump off the "crazy cycle," says Eggerichs, and we recommend you learn how.

### 7. Begin with the End in Mind

You can't imagine in younger years, but one day you will be old and potentially lonely. Your kids will have their own lives. If you carefully tend to your marriage, there will be the succor of companionship with someone who has been a witness to most of your entire life. Research shows that married people have greater financial resources, longer lives, better health, more personal happiness, and having both parents in the same home provides by far the best environment for raising children. Keep the long term goals in mind. [Research shows it is actually worth staying together for the children.](#)

We've heard countless stories of folks who worked through the seemingly impossible middle years, and came out on the other side of comfort and companionship in old age. Plus, the best way for the average Joe to build financial security for old age? Stay married.

We have no interest in making anyone feel guilty if they already have regrets or failure. No one starts at marriage, believing it will fail. Our advice is meant for helping people, whatever their current state, realize their deepest hopes for lifelong lasting love. With commitment and care, we believe newlywed princes and princesses—famous or not—can eventually reach "happily ever after."

*Married for 30 years, B.J. and Sheila Weber live in midtown Manhattan, where they raised their now grown son and married daughter. Sheila is the executive director of a new effort to strengthen marriage, [National Marriage Week USA](#) (February 7-14 each year), and Reverend William John (B.J.) Weber for many years served as chaplain to New York area professional sports teams and currently offers crisis marriage intervention as part of his work as president of the [New York Fellowship](#).*

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