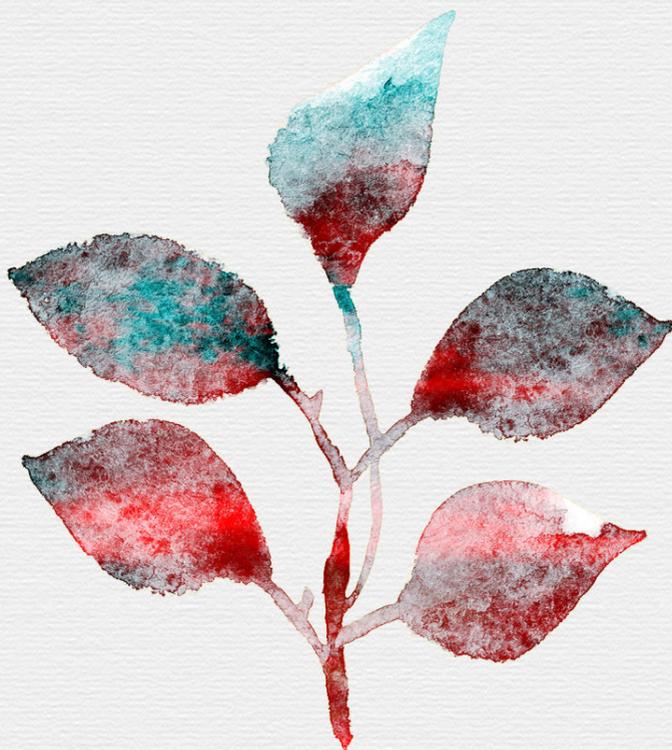


# 5 Habits

OF A HEALTHY MARRIAGE



Ryan Frederick

## 5 Habits of a Healthy Marriage

# 5 Habits of a Healthy Marriage

Copyright © 2018 by Ryan Frederick

Published by Cormens Press,  
a division of Vilicus Holdings

First Edition  
All rights reserved.

All rights reserved in all countries. No part of this material may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without prior written permission of the authors, publisher and/or copyright owners except as provided by USA copyright law.

Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are taken from THE ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION. © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers.

# *Table of Contents*

## ***first things first***

Before you go any further... 4

## ***habit 1***

Have Meaningful Conversations 9

## ***habit 2***

Pray for Each Other, Out Loud, Together 15

## ***habit 3***

Plan for Intimacy & Dating 21

## ***habit 4***

Live Beneath Your Means 27

## ***habit 5***

Serve Together 32

## ***onward***

Where do we go from here? 35

# *first things first* Before you go any further...

Everyone who picks up this book (including myself) shares one desire: we all want a better marriage. And why wouldn't we? Loving and being loved are incredible experiences. We're wired to share and express affection, couples flourish within the covenant promise their marriage embodies, and countless joys are to be had from a devoted life shared between husband and wife.

Marriage is awesome, yes. Yet we find ourselves here; I write and you read. Apparently there's still a need for marital material. (Thankfully!) The reason marriage literature will never be obsolete is clear: we are all imperfect people trying to figure out how to love each other well.

This book exists for two purposes. First, to

spark revelation in your heart and mind that will mark the beginning of something fresh. Second, I hope to help start conversations in your marriage that will bring you closer to each other and closer to Christ.

With that said, this book doesn't address what I believe is the biggest contributor in a joy-filled marriage: a deep, shared belief in the gospel. I say this because without something changing in our beliefs, all of the habits and behavioral changes we make won't stick. For behavior to change for a sustained time, something has to change with how we see the world and our place in it. And gaining that perspective must start with something—someone—much bigger than ourselves. It must start with Jesus.

If you follow Jesus and are further along in your faith, you're probably thinking, "Of course!" If you're new to your faith in Christ or a non-believer, you may be more skeptical, and in which case, you and I would have to

have a separate conversation first.

A little while ago a gentleman asked me, “If you could sit down and have coffee with every couple who reads your blog, what would you say to them?”

At the time I didn’t know my answer. Since then, I’ve figured out it out: [this is the first thing I’d share with you if we could have coffee together](#). If you’re new to your faith or don’t know much about Jesus, please take ten minutes and read that article before going further. I want to make sure we get started off on the right foot, because this book would be the second conversation we’d have with you. Without that crucial first talk, this book may do more harm than good.

This book is intentionally practical. Before writing it I asked Selena this question: What are the biggest habits we’ve formed—either by design or by default—that have contributed to the health of our marriage?

## 5 Habits of a Healthy Marriage

Her answers and our ensuing conversations resulted in this resource.

This book is not all-encompassing or exhaustive, but I do think you'll find it helpful. The initial version of this resource received over 50,000 likes, comments, and shares all around the world! So, we reworked, updated, and redesigned everything for your reading pleasure. Consider it a belated (or early?) wedding gift from the Fredericks to you!

That's it, let's do this. I hope it blesses your marriage. Selena and I are praying for you and contending for your union. Thank you for trusting us to speak into your most important human relationship.

A misty, snow-covered mountain valley with evergreen trees in the foreground. The scene is serene and atmospheric, with soft light filtering through the haze. The mountains are layered, creating a sense of depth. The foreground is filled with dense evergreen trees, some with snow on their branches. The overall color palette is muted, dominated by greys, whites, and dark greens.

*Habit 1*

---

Have Meaningful  
Conversations

# *habit 1*

## Have Meaningful Conversations

It's one thing for us to say "communicate daily" as marital advice (thanks, Captain Obvious!), but I'd like to take that recommendation one important step further. You and your husband/wife must communicate daily **about important, meaningful things**.

Small talk is fine. Playful joking is fun! And scheduling/task-related conversations are crucial. However, if you never intentionally build emotional and spiritual intimacy through deeper conversations, you risk creating a shallow communication culture in your household.

Communicating about deeper things builds honesty and vulnerability that are endearing, edifying, and strengthening in ways unique to marriage.

## Practically Speaking

How you spark up meaningful conversations is up to you, but Selena and I have found three prompts that work very well for us. The following conversation starters are also useful in breaking the ice in times when we've been arguing or feeling especially disconnected.

### **Prompt 1: Share High and Lows**

This is basic but it works: simply discuss the best and worst parts of your day. What got you excited? What made you feel defeated or frustrated? How did you feel when it happened? Why is it the best or worst part? These questions are a great dinner-time conversation starter. We've even found that the kids enjoy participating as well.

### **Prompt 2: "Daily Heart Check"**

It's important to get a pulse on what's happening in each other's heart and what may be feeding (or not feeding) their mind.

Selena and I have found these three simple questions helpful in spurring us into deeper and more meaningful conversations.

### **What book is in your hand?**

There's just something about the written word that brings our thoughts and feelings to life. This question gives each of you a place to share about whatever you've been reading, how it is affecting you, and why. Note, you don't always have to be reading non-fiction Christian books. Some of our best conversations are around other genres and literature types (fiction, sci-fi, poetry).

### **What voice is in your ear?**

What are you listening to? Music, podcasts, sermons, mentors, friends, leaders? Proverbs 10:17 states, "Whoever heeds instruction is on the path to life." We should all have someone speaking fresh truth into our lives on a regular basis. This question often gets

me going on a recent idea I've been mulling around after hearing it in a sermon etc. It has also prompted fun (but sometimes lengthy) debates about music preferences. Either way, we're talking about more than the weather!

### **What is God stirring in your heart?**

Most believers feel God doing something in their hearts fairly often. The trouble is that we rarely know how to articulate it. God is always at work: encouraging, strengthening, convicting, and prompting. This question helps start conversations about how God could be moving us individually and as a couple.

### **Prompt 3: Discuss Your Devotions**

We've found that when we ask questions about what we're reading in Scripture and praying about, it creates opportunities for explicitly gospel-centered conversations.

Take time to discuss the things of God

## 5 Habits of a Healthy Marriage

together—His Word, His truth, His character.  
This will deepen your walk with Him and your  
relationship with each other.

A scenic landscape featuring a winding road through a dense forested valley. The road curves through the lower part of the frame, leading the eye towards the horizon. The sky is a clear, vibrant blue, and the overall atmosphere is peaceful and expansive.

## *Habit 2*

---

Pray for Each Other,  
Out Loud, Together

## *habit 2*

### Pray for Each Other, Out Loud, Together

Prayer is as vital to your marriage as it is to your walk with Christ. Most couples understand prayer's importance, but few know clearly how to make prayer a deeper part of their relationship with each other. We often default to praying about things that are "outside" of the marriage: other people, current events, upcoming decisions and milestones, and so on.

What I'm suggesting here is different.

Make a habit of praying for each other, out loud, face-to-face, and holding hands. Pray for your spouse's health, concerns, peace, wisdom, safety, direction, and much more. It sounds intuitive, but you'd be surprised how few couples actively pray for each other out loud.

I'm urging you to make it a habit. God is faithful to show up and soften hearts when we gather in His name and pray in agreement.

Matthew 18:20 says, "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." The very God of the universe is among you! Hold fast to that truth and never forget the power of praying together.

## Practically Praying

If you're intimidated or unsure about how to begin praying with your spouse, consider these thoughts:

### 1. Hold hands

Holding hands is a physical way to express unity and closeness. Grab your spouse's hand to show him/her that you're actively partnering with them.

### 2. Silence is totally fine

Sometimes you don't know what to say, that's okay! Just be quiet and listen if need be. Talking to God involves Him talking to you as well, which means you should listen.

### **3. Write down prayer requests**

Your heavenly Father wants to hear your concerns and requests—He delights in them. Write them down and bring it ALL to Him. He's big enough! Writing them down also provides structure in case you're likely to forget (like me).

### **4. Pray for each other**

No one knows your spouse as well as you. Intercede on each other's behalf—for health, strength, wisdom, courage, or anything you know they need and only God can provide.

### **5. Pray for your marriage**

Don't forget that you can contend for the health of your covenant! Ask God to keep

you healthy and strong, ask for guidance, and anything else on your heart.

Selena and I have learned to consistently ask God for unity and clarity of vision. The last thing we want is to be divided and we believe that God wouldn't want that either. If we are divided, we ask for wisdom on how to reconcile our thinking with Him and each other.

### **6. Pray for your community**

Prayer isn't all about us. It's about interceding for others and hearing from God. Pray for your community and friends as you feel lead. Then listen as God challenges you on what to do to be His hands and feet in those situations.

## More Resources

If you're looking for more resources about how prayer can be practiced in marriage, here are a few additional articles we've written:

- [How do I pray with my spouse \(part 1\)](#)
- [How do I pray with my spouse \(part 2\)](#)
- [5 ways to pray intentionally FOR your spouse](#)
- [10 ways to pray for your husband](#)

## *Habit 3*

---

# Plan for Intimacy & Dating



# *habit 3*

## Plan for Intimacy & Dating

Life gets busy, I get it. But when it boils down to it, nothing illustrates your priorities better than your schedule. Would you say your spouse is a top priority in your life? Assuming you'd say yes, does your calendar reflect the same?

If your calendar is full of too much work or too many distractions, it's time to reevaluate your schedule.

If your schedule is too rigid and the demands can't be alleviated but your marriage is suffering as a result, then it might be time to make a lifestyle adjustment. That's a conversation you need to have with God.

Make sure your spouse is truly a priority by making time for them on your calendar and room for them in your day. This means

intentionally creating enough margin in your life so you can have extra time, energy, and resources to invest in your marriage. Sometimes the investment means spending a romantic night in, other times it means buying a resource (like this one) and spending time going through it together for your mutual growth.

Nothing has changed about your desire for connection between when you first met and now that you're married. You still need to date each other! You need dedicated, high-awareness time together when you're giving each other your best and engaging in meaningful communication, connection, and intimacy.

Make time for the relationship that matters most. Doing so regularly is a vital ingredient in every healthy marriage.

## Practical Passion

The following guidelines have greatly helped Selena and me make time for each other in even the busiest seasons:

### **Set aside daily time for each other**

We spend every morning together, but it wasn't always that way. We've had to figure out a rhythm that works for us.

I usually wake up first, start my devotions, and Selena comes out about when I'm finishing up. We'll have coffee together, sit, and talk. I usually share what I read and we discuss what we're doing that day.

It's become a wonderful time that we can both count on to connect quickly before the day gets too hectic.

Mornings may not work well for you, but I encourage you to find a time does.

### **Schedule sex**

Agree on the frequency of sex needed to keep you healthy and maintain consistent emotional connection. Selena and I have learned that for us to be healthy, we need to be physically intimate about once every three days.

Only you can discover what is healthy for you. If you don't know, start by having an honest conversation. Then commit to a schedule for your intimacy that will take the guesswork out of sex.

### **Schedule regular date nights**

Our favorite part of the week is our weekly date lunch. With two young kids at home, evenings are tough and bedtimes non-negotiable. We went a very long time without regular date nights and it definitely affected our ability to communicate well and connect intimately. So, we've since hired a babysitter to take the kids every Thursday afternoon so Selena can get away to meet me for lunch!

## 5 Habits of a Healthy Marriage

It's been a game changer for us.

I highly recommend that you and your spouse figure out a date schedule that works for you. Make the time, you won't regret it. I recommend you make room for at least twice a month.

A scenic view of a snow-capped mountain range with evergreen trees in the foreground. The mountains are covered in snow and have some rocky peaks. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The trees in the foreground are dark green and appear to be evergreens. The overall scene is peaceful and serene.

*Habit 4*

---

Live Beneath  
Your Means

# *habit 4*

## Live Beneath Your Means

Finances are one of the biggest problem areas for most marriages. This isn't because money itself is problematic, but rather because of how it's managed.

Overspending is a huge problem in our culture, and consumer debt is out of control. We must be good stewards of our finances and seek to live according to God's principles, or we risk causing disorder and chaos in this area of our lives and marriages.

Create habits of living beneath your means by discussing what your budget is and how purchasing decisions will be made.

### Practical Stewardship

It can be hard making sense of dollars and cents. (Sorry for the terrible pun.) The

difficulty is amplified when money is already a contentious topic in your household.

Here are a few practical starting points we've found helpful in our own marriage.

## **1. Seek Unity**

Seek agreement on what's most important so you can filter out unwise purchases. Talk about what wise spending looks like for you and put a plan in place that you can both agree to.

## **2. Avoid Unnecessary Debt**

Credit card spending can cause trouble, so if you use them, make sure you can zero out your balance each month. If you know overspending is a problem, it's wise to cut up the credit cards (we went through a season where this is exactly what we did).

Carefully commit to new debts with great reluctance and only as needed. If that car

payment is going to be a stretch, find a car you can buy with cash or wait until you can. That sweet set of wheels is never worth it if it causes problems in your marriage.

### **3. Reduce Expenses Wherever Possible**

If you're perpetually short on money and you're living from paycheck to paycheck, something has to give. The math will never work out: if your incoming money is small than outgoing cash, something must change.

Have an honest conversation, consider what you can trim out of your budget (an expensive car? Cable package?) and take the necessary steps to do so.

### **4. Always Tithe**

Tithing is more about your heart than your money. When you tithe, you're saying that you trust God more than you trust money, your job, or your ability to earn income.

God loves you and He loves to care for his kids. Tithing is tangible evidence that you actually believe that truth.

## 5. Never forget Matthew 6:26

***“Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?”***

I've found great solace in clinging to this single promise through countless financial dry seasons. I pray you're able to do the same.



*Habit 5*

---

Serve  
Together

# *habit 5*

## Serve Together

We strongly believe that your marriage is one of the primary ways God will use you in your community for his glory. Your marriage is your ministry. First, you serve and honor each other as spouses, then together you can extend that ministry into your community. In all instances of Christ-like love, God is glorified.

Serving together is an incredibly valuable habit since it will consistently remind you that your core purpose is to bring God glory and that you can do that together.

### Practical Service

The possibilities for serving your community are vast, and you'll have to discern where you feel most called. Here are some suggestions to get you thinking:

## **Serve in your local church**

You both might not serve on the same team within your church, but you can serve at the same time. By serving together you're helping to tangibly fulfill the great commission while helping your local community through your body of believers.

Even more profoundly, serving in God's Kingdom together transforms you from "husband and wife" into partners in the gospel and co-laborers with Christ (1 Corinthians 3:9).

## **Serve your community**

Serve the poor, orphans, and widows in your community. Homeless shelters, assisted living homes, and other organizations are all in need of consistent, engaged, help. Show love to the culturally disenfranchised, and do so in times when no one else is doing it (ex. not around the holidays).

## Open your home to other couples

Consider inviting couples over who are going through a tough season in their marriage. Prepare a meal, lead a conversation, and just be friends to them in their time of need.

You never know how God will use you to help younger couples by sharing wisdom you've learned from trials of your own.

# *onward*

## Where do we go from here?

While this little book isn't exhaustive by any means, I do believe these five habits will help keep your marriage healthy. The main idea is that we must be intentional in the important areas of life if we're to flourish in ways God intended.

Whatever we neglect will surely die or be overcome with chaos. Whatever we nurture, by God's grace, will grow and flourish—your marriage included.

No marriage can survive and thrive on its own. This includes yours! Everyone needs consistent gospel-centered help if their marriage is going to become all it was designed to be.

We've found that help typically arrives via two clear avenues: gospel-centered

community and gospel-rich resources. With that in mind, I'd like to suggest two tangible routes forward.

## 1. Find Gospel-Centered Community

If you don't have a healthy community of believers with whom you can grow and share life with, find one. We recommend connecting with a gospel-centered, Bible believing church that is actively serving your community.

**Use this link to find a gospel-centered church in your area.**

The internet is an amazing tool. It has created new ways for us to connect with likeminded people all over the world! For example, the Fierce Marriage community (Blog, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) continues to thrive and grow as people from everywhere rally around gospel-centered marriage principles. Make sure to connect with the communities

available to you there. Thousands upon thousands of men and women are active and willing to speak life and encouragement into your situation.

In an effort to facilitate deeper conversations, Selena and I created closed Facebook groups tailored to husbands and wives. You can find those here:

- [Facebook.com/Groups/FierceHusbands](https://www.facebook.com/Groups/FierceHusbands)
- [Facebook.com/Groups/FierceWives](https://www.facebook.com/Groups/FierceWives)

## 2. Invest in Gospel-Rich Resources

There are countless marriage books available. Unfortunately, very few of them adequately address the core issues most couples face. And, even if they do talk about underlying causes of marital problems, even fewer point you to the true source of transformation: Jesus.

Five years ago, Selena and I started writing

about marriage with one goal in mind: to point couples to Christ. To that end, we've created a special devotional study for couples called The 31-Day Pursuit Challenge.

The challenge includes two books: **Husband in Pursuit**, and **Wife in Pursuit**, and both are aimed at illustrating exactly how the radical pursuit of Christ changes how we love our spouses.

## Are you up for a challenge?

Every marriage begins with purpose, passion, and intentional pursuit, but few marriages stay that way. The 31 Day Pursuit Challenge aims to help change that.

Over the course of 31 days, your marriage will be transformed as you dig into God's Word, rediscover how Christ has pursued you, and take real action to intentionally each other.

WILL YOU TAKE THE  
*The 31 Day Pursuit*  
CHALLENGE?



In the 31-Day Pursuit Challenge, you will:

- Gain a deeper understanding of your identity in Christ
- Complete 31 "Pursuit Challenges" that turn gospel truths into real, tangible action

## 5 Habits of a Healthy Marriage

- Have honest conversations, initiate intimacy, plan memorable dates, devise elaborate escapes, and explore small ways to show genuine affection
- Apply the gospel to how and why you pursue each other

[The 31 Day Pursuit Challenge Bundle](#) offers a gospel-centered, practical path toward loving your spouse well. Will you take the challenge?

And, as a bonus, we've crafted a custom list of **50 fun, creative, and unconventional date ideas** (each with a twist) to help you in your pursuit. You can use them during and after your pursuit, just in case you need a boost of inspiration.

If you're looking to go deeper with your spouse, it may be time to go through a couple's study?

**[Use this link to get 10% OFF](#)**

# Thanks for reading!

Thank you so much for downloading this book. I hope it has helped you and that your marriage will continue to flourish for years to come.

Stay fierce!

Ryan (and Selena) Frederick  
Co-Founders, Fierce Marriage

Visit [FierceMarriage.com](https://FierceMarriage.com) for more marriage resources!

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

**This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.**

Ephesians 5:31–32