Emergency Measures for Christians: A Seven Day Plan for Marital Distress

These exercises are to help you prepare to work on your relationship. They are intended to give a perspective from which to begin to problem-solve.

**Day One—Where is Christ now?**

1. No one ever sets out to build a chaotic relationship.
2. When one is in the midst of difficulties the Lord can seem far away and our faith and assurance of His healing power a distant memory.
3. Spend some time today meditating on each verse. Please write your own thoughts about how the verse applies to YOUR FAITH, here, now.
   - Hebrews 11:1
     My thoughts
   - Isaiah 42:3
     My thoughts
   - Romans 8:31, 35
     My thoughts
   - Hebrews 13:5
     My thoughts

**Day Two—What Can Christ Do?**

1. Let’s begin with your assessment of the situation. Everything considered, how sure (on a scale of 1–10) do you feel that this situation can be improved and the relationship can be saved? (Put a slash mark though the appropriate number).

Not at all   Fairly unsure   Fairly sure   Positive
1-----2-----3-----4-----5-----6-----7-----8-----9-----10
2. Next, consider this: How sure do you feel that the relationship could be salvaged if Christ began to have His way (a bit at a time, no miraculous conversions—real change takes time) with both you and your partner? (Go back up and circle the appropriate number).

3. Meditate on the following verse today: Romans 8:9–17. Please write a response. How does this passage apply to YOU, here, now?

**Day Three—Hurts**

1. It seems to be a fact that at times of distress our focus is on the hurts we have received. This is because our natural desire is to defend ourselves against further hurt.

2. What hurts do you feel you have suffered from your partner? (List and be specific)

3. Think for a moment. What hurts might you have suffered from sources other than your partner (parents, ex-spouse, boss, etc.) Which may make you more defensive toward your partner. (List and be specific)

4. Think on this today: “There is no hurt that is so deep that Christ is not deeper still” (Corrie Ten Boom).

5. What can Christ do with each of these hurts?

**Day Four—Wounding**

1. When our focus is defensive we can easily overlook those hurts that we have inflicted on the other.

2. Intentional or not these hurts constitute wounds after awhile, so that two people begin talking to each other and behaving toward each other in the defensive “language of wounds.” When this happens problems that could have solutions go unresolved.


4. Now, realistically, list those wounds you may have inflicted on your partner in your own distress. Be honest and specific.

5. Now read I John 1:9 and 2:5.

   Write your response to these verses as they apply to you now.
Day Five—Renewing
1. Do you seek peace in your relationship?
2. Read Philippians 4:8–9.
3. Now apply these verses in this way: Think back to when you first met or were first dating your partner—What qualities attracted you? (List and be specific)

4. Now for a bit more challenge. Imagine that you were another person evaluating your partner. What positive qualities would that person be likely to spot? (Be realistic and specific)

5. Now think of your partner in these terms.

Day Six—Dealing with Ongoing Angers
1. One of the chief causes of marital distress stems from a constant addition of new angers to old ones. People who are responding defensively easily take offense and add each offense to a large backlog. Soon problems become unsolvable because each partner is highly defensive.
2. Here are four questions to ask yourself each and every time your partner offends you:
   a. What did I want?
   b. Did I make it clear what I wanted?
   c. Can he/she give what I am asking for right now?
   d. What do I want to do about it?
3. If you ask these questions realistically in anger situations you may discover new sources of hope for resolving the ongoing anger.
4. Read Ephesians 4:26, 27. Now write your thoughts about how these verses apply to you now.

Day Seven—Time with Your Partner
1. You have spent six days now meditating and assessing your relationship in some new ways. Today spend a minimum of 20 minutes sharing from your work.
2. Focus on your work from Day Five first. Share your lists from items 3 and 4 on that page. MAKE NO EDITORIAL COMMENTS. Simply share what each has written.
3. Now go back to Day Four—Wounds. Simply share your lists for item 4. WITHOUT COMMENT.
4. Now spend about 5 minutes from your partner. Spend this time in thought and prayer on what you have heard. Write a brief (one paragraph) note to your partner in the space below that summarizes honestly your thoughts and hopes for the future after hearing the lists shared.

5. Get back together, exchange notes. If there are any areas needing clarification (Not
EDITORIAL COMMENT) ask about this now (e.g., “Can you explain more about what you’re trying to say here?”)

6. Spend a few moments in prayer together. Pray silently, but together unless BOTH partners agree that they are comfortable praying aloud.

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