

Some are weepy drunks. Our intoxication with ourselves causes us to believe that we can't do anything right. Very few people identify our problem as pride. It expresses itself as insecurity. It's a false humility. We say things like, "Oh, I can't do anything right." "I'm no good." People run from us because of our sad stories and our need to play the role of the victim. It seems the exact opposite of the arrogant superstar, but it's just a different symptom of the same syndrome. We are intoxicated with ourselves.

When a police officer wants to test the intoxication of a driver, they ask them to do a simple task—walk a straight line, touch your nose, recite the alphabet. Intoxication has a simple effect—it makes simple tasks difficult. It impairs our ability. It makes the most routine situations difficult.

Is marriage hard or are we so intoxicated with ourselves that it has taken the easy task—to **love**—and made it difficult?

It's not hard to **give mercy** to others if we have a sober judgment about ourselves, but when we are impaired, it can be difficult.

Forgiveness is easier when we realize our mistakes, but when we live in denial of our imperfections we are tempted to hold grudges.

Service is second-nature when we understand our need for help, but when we think we are self-sufficient, we believe others shouldn't need our assistance.

A sign that we are drunk is our difficulty doing things which seem easy in God's kingdom. Love, mercy, grace, peace, forgiveness are not difficult until pride impairs our ability.

Marriage only has one enemy—pride. It's our intoxication with ourselves which hinders our ability to give and receive love. The antidote to pride is sober judgment. When we think rightly about ourselves, we understand our own need for grace.

What aspect of marriage should be easy, but because of pride has become difficult? {Kevin A. Thompson}

Changing Cleveland One By One

Bishop Stephen D. Lewis

It Can Work!

THE NUMBER ONE CAUSE OF DIVORCE

I'm convinced the number one cause of divorce is not adultery, financial problems, or irreconcilable difference. Those are most often symptoms of a deeper problem.

While these problems might be real, I believe there is a bigger issue.

The most common issue I see with couples who are struggling in marriage is a **lack of intentional investment in their marriage**.

While it's a fair debate of which comes first—did someone lose interest so they lost intention or did someone lose intention so they lost interest—either way there is a key idea:

We can influence our feelings by intentionally investing in our marriage.

As I've written before, our affections often grow toward our investments. Wherever we put our time, money, and energy also ends up receiving our passion, interest, and affection.

Think about what this means for a marriage: you will generally feel for your spouse to the extent in which you invest in your spouse.

Your feelings are often far less about them and far more about what effort you have put into your marriage.

Obviously there are exceptions. Some people have made bad choices in who they married or the spouse has made a bad choice in who they have become, but most of the time, we love our spouse to the extent that we invest in our spouse.

Consider what this means: **if your feelings of love are waning, they can be recovered.** With some effort, intention, and energy, love can grow.

Every week I interact with marriages which are suffering. I am often like a triage nurse who observes the couple, makes an initial determination of the seriousness of their illness, and then gets them with the right specialist so the expert can assist them with the issue. As the couple leaves our initial interaction, I almost always give them the same assignment: on the way home, retell the stories of your first date, how you fell in love, what first attracted you to

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the other, what you love the most about each other, and what your dreams are of a future together.

This assignment serves the purpose of unearthing long-buried feelings and memories. Just by recounting the stories, a couple is more likely to feel love for their spouse.

With a little intention, our emotions can drastically change.

Here are 5 things we can do every day which will reconnect us with our spouse:

1. **Pray about the specifics of your spouse's day.** Not only will this remind you of the work of God in your life, it will also require you to know the specifics of your spouse's day and will make you wonder how their day turned out.

2. **Always kiss goodbye and hello.** This is a physical and emotional connection which serves as a reminder of the union between a husband and wife. Make it such a habit that even if you kiss, leave, and return, you kiss again.

3. **Call, text, or email at least once a day to check-in.** You can update one another on how the day is going. You can discuss any needs for the evening and make sure everyone is on the same page regarding the schedule for the night.

4. **Have at least 5 minutes of uninterrupted conversation.** Whether it be first thing in the morning or the last thing at night, relationships demand conversation. Turn off the television, put down the phone, and talk. This might be more difficult with young children, but find a way to make it happen. Remember, if you were having an affair you find the time to engage in that affair no matter how busy you are, so make the time for your spouse.

5. **Hug for at least 30 seconds.** Before you leave for work or after you come home or as you go to bed, have an extended physical embrace which reminds your body, soul, and mind of your deep connection with this other person. Studies have shown that hugging reduces blood-pressure, but it also connects you with the person you hug. Physical touch must be more than just sex. By truly embracing every day, each partner will feel more valued and loved.

If your marriage requires anything, it requires intention. To the extent that both spouses are intentional about keeping the marriage healthy, the marriage will thrive. Apathy will slowly erode a marriage, but intention will cause it to continually grow.

PRIDE: THE ONLY ENEMY OF MARRIAGE

Marriage has but one enemy—pride. It decays a marriage from the inside out. Where pride resides, intimacy cannot be found. True connection cannot

be formed. Health cannot be developed.

Marriages flourish in humility. In the absence of self-righteousness, self-sufficiency, and self-reliance, marriages have the ability to thrive. In the presence of all the “selves” nothing but selfishness can grow.

The answer to pride is what the Apostle Paul calls “sober judgment.” It’s a call to thinking of ourselves without delusion or deception. Sober judgment is serious judgment. It’s a truthful understanding of who we are. The call to sober judgment implies that humanity often lacks that kind of thinking. It reveals to us that we are drunk on ourselves. **We are intoxicated with ourselves.**

Surely not us. We can quickly think of people who are intoxicated with themselves—the superstar athlete, the prima donna musician, the Hollywood elite. We see people who have lost all sense of reality, but we don’t see ourselves that way. Nero proclaimed himself to be god, but we don’t think we are that arrogant. Yet while our arrogance may not be as blatant, we are every bit as intoxicated with ourselves as anyone else.

- We may not claim to be god, but we act like one at the house.
- We may not see ourselves as better than everyone, but we do see ourselves as better than some.
- We may not consider ourselves above all tasks, but there are many jobs beneath us.

We are intoxicated with ourselves.

Many of us are high-functioning drunks. No one would guess our inebriation. To everyone else we look humble and others-focused. We serve, but what others can’t see is that we are serving to earn their approval. We give, but we give in order to appear giving. We are doing all the right things but for all the wrong reasons. We are drunk on ourselves and no one knows it.

Some are happy drunks. Our intoxication with ourselves causes us to believe that we can do no wrong. We enjoy ourselves and assume everyone else enjoys us as well. We are happy as long as everyone else recognizes our superiority.

Some are angry drunks. Our intoxication with ourselves causes us to believe no one else can do anything right. We are uptight and upset most of the time. No one meets our expectations, especially not our spouse or children. Everyone sees our intoxication but us. It causes them to walk softly around us. It prevents our family from telling us the truth. It causes our co-workers to avoid certain topics which could cause us to explode.