



"The Ultimate Marriage Test"

God gave us the incredibly wonderful gift of marriage to bless us and bless all the earth. However, some have taken this gift and made it something far less than God intended it to be.

According to Jennifer Baker of the Forest Institute of Professional Psychology in Springfield, Missouri, "50% percent of first marriages end in divorce, 67% of second end in divorce and 74% of third marriages end in divorce" www.divorcerate.com. If marriage was created to be such a blessing then why is it becoming more of a curse for so many people? What can be done? These statistics affect Christian marriages the same as secular marriages so what do we do?

God introduced a new type of love to those who love Him, who trust and obey Him. This love is called AGAPE (ah-gah-pay). It is a Greek word meaning sacrificial love. It is a love that makes a choice to give without limits regardless of the response to that love. This AGAPE love is the foundation God built to create marriage as a blessing from Heaven. So, why doesn't it happen more often? The problem lies in our own lack of love. We try to make our mate love sacrificially. Instead, it is each partner's responsibility to analyze their love according to God's description of AGAPE love. If each partner makes a commitment to God and to one another to measure and repair their love throughout their marriage, God will create the greatest blessing you could ever hope for in this Christ-centered relationship.

So, how do you begin? God provided the description of AGAPE love in the first letter to the Corinthians in Chapter Thirteen. He gives us fifteen steps or measuring tools to always be testing and improving our marriage. It is the ultimate marriage test. Would you love to experience a godly marriage, a marriage made in heaven? Then read the information and take the following test. Then retake it for the rest of your life and you will be blessed.

15 STEPS TO A MARRIAGE MADE IN HEAVEN

Marriage is an example of the holy relationship between Jesus and God the Father, between the Church and Jesus Christ. It is holy and to be honored. The husband and wife are joined together by their love to become complete, stronger than either one could ever be when alone. They are one flesh, one mind and one spirit, a trinity of all that God created and through their marriage they proclaim the love and glory of God.

Below are fifteen steps taken from I Corinthians 13:4-8 that will develop the love of God in your marriage. Simply insert your name in place of the word 'love' in each step. Score yourself 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent) in each area. You will see the areas where you are growing and the areas that need attention. Remember, if you want a marriage made in heaven, do not focus on what your spouse can do for you but what how you can love your spouse. Allow God to build the marriage made in heaven. Commit these to God in prayer.

1. Love is patient. Example: Harley (your name) is patient with (wife/husband's name).

2. Love is Kind

3. Love does not envy.

4. Love does not boast.

5. Love is not proud.

6. Love is not rude.

7. Love is not self-seeking.

8. Love is not easily angered.

9. Love keeps no record of wrongs.

10. Love does not delight in evil, but rejoices with truth.

11. Love always protects.

12. Love trusts.

13. Love hopes.

14. Love perseveres.

15. Love never fails.

The Road to Change:

- 1) Look over the list and pray that God will help you see where you honestly fall short and show you how to change. Set a monthly date for review.
- 2) Share with your mate a special night when you tell her/him your shortcomings and your plans to grow in each area.
- 3) Discuss ways with your spouse that you will both pray for one another and help each other in this new adventure where God creates the marriage made in heaven.
- 4) Watch for changes in your mate and let them know you see the love of God changing their life.