



2025 | Week 1

A Place of Love

Blog Contributors:

Rey & Annie Abarca

Before excitement and great anticipation for this new year grab our full attention, let's commit to continuously strengthening our marital relationship.

We may have encountered much during 2024, or for a few others, perhaps not as much, but we may have still made a detour that somehow raised questions about the strength of our marriages. Either way, we don't want those issues to carry over into this new year.

So, let's take a moment to reflect on "togetherness" and consider if we still have a clear vision of that "place" where we feel secure with our spouses.

DAY 1

The past year (or even before that) may have stretched your marriage in ways you never expected, and it's only now that you've become more aware of the true status of your marital relationship. Once, this relationship brought so much excitement, but now it can be hard to find the right words to define how it has turned out.

We can't underestimate the difficulties many of us may have faced over the past year. External confusion and pressure impacted many of us in one way or another. Whatever strain made us confront reality or surprisingly settle into questioning the true purpose of our

marriages—either way, both shook our deep sense of togetherness.

As we approach this new year, we pray that whatever circumstances we face may help our collective realizations and learnings contribute to a better foundation in our relationship. These circumstances may have stretched our relationships to the point where we recognize the need for greater support beyond ourselves and our spouses. We hope the experiences of the past year led us to seek God, to commit to anchoring our marriage to Christ, and to intentionally live a new life with Him.

In the end, moments like saying goodbye to the past 12 months and embracing a new year bring to light our limitations that disrupt our inner peace and comfort. At this point, we have a choice: to confront this reality and pay closer attention to our need for a Savior.

A great Savior who will restore our broken relationship with God and reshape our perspective on our marital relationship.

A great Savior who will lead us into a new life and marriage filled with genuine peace and comfort.

A great Savior who will guard our hearts and minds amid the brokenness of this world.

So let's embark on this new year with our great Savior, Jesus Christ!

'And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. ' (Philippians 4:7)

Keep Journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Couple,

Rey & Annie

DAY 2

Yesterday, we acknowledged the reality of how life's busyness and challenges can impact a couple's togetherness, eventually leading to questions about someone's sincerity in the relationship and a loss of that "peace."

By nature, we don't give much attention to potential relationship threats unless we notice their impact. In a season like the beginning of a new year, it has become the norm and an opportunity for us to pause and reflect on how things have been over the past 12 months. Such moments of reflection may not be an appealing journey, as we have to remind ourselves of the failures and shortcomings we encountered in the past year. When reflection leads us to realizations that pinch our natural pride, we face a choice: to humble ourselves and seek help for deliverance, or to take the easy route of avoiding reality and simply moving forward, thinking we can change our behavior without effort.

What will you choose?

Our spouse is God's greatest gift, allowing us to journey through life with a partner. It's a relationship that enables us to experience His gift of oneness, as seen in the creation of Adam and Eve. Yet, let's not forget that our spouse is often the person who makes us aware of our shortcomings and imperfections. When this occurs, we tend to fall into the temptation of defensiveness or the negative side of rationalization, much like what happened to Adam and Eve when God discovered they had eaten the fruit and asked them why they committed such a sin (Genesis 3:12-14).

Today, we must strive to respond more constructively to the confrontation of our shortcomings and sins. Sadly, we have even reached the point of twisting Bible passages to shift the focus away from our contributions and onto the shortcomings of others.

We're missing the important point.

We can only genuinely love our spouse while experiencing God's transformation when our hearts are fully submitted to His authority. Such submission leads us to recognize the greatness of our Savior Jesus Christ and

fosters a constant remembrance of His amazing grace, mercy, and love for us. Only in this way can we have a new heart that embraces the truth that He is the greatest foundation of marriage. Only in this way can our hearts be humbled by His grace and not for any other reason. Only in this way can we truly embrace the progressive transformation of putting Christ at the center of our marriage.

'Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ' Ezekiel 36:26

Thus, our willingness to sit down and have a conversation with our spouse to discuss new year goals—while humbly recognizing the lessons from the previous year—reflects a loving heart anchored in Christ Jesus.

Keep Journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Couple,

Rey & Annie

DAY 3 | For Husbands

There's something about the holiday season that softens our hearts and encourages us to become more appreciative, particularly toward our spouses. Yet, in the essence of the New Year and the planning for goals, tension can easily arise when discussions turn toward the challenges we experienced in the past year. In such moments, it can be difficult to share kindness, and it may put a strain on the "togetherness" that is supposed to flow within a marriage.

Initially, my wife, Annie, and I thought we were doing fine in terms of communication and planning while I was still serving in the military. However, things changed when I got out, and we started looking for the next step we needed to take. As we discussed last night and reflected on the early period after my transition, we realized we were both hungry for opportunities. Annie shared how

much hope we had placed in my career instead of leaning on God.

In our first book, “Couple’s Journey: Restore, Relearn, Rejoice,” we describe how things became complicated between us. These complications put a significant strain on our “togetherness,” and we both struggled to share kindness. Instead, we learned to live in a certain “zone” until God intervened and made us realize that we needed a Savior. Only then were our hearts changed, and our perception of life and marriage shifted.

Furthermore, our desire to obey God and follow Christ opened our eyes to process and reflect on the behaviors we once exhibited during that difficult season of living apart from God’s authority. He revealed a pattern that urged us to dig deeper. Initially, Annie didn’t understand my approach to reaching an understanding of whatever circumstances we found ourselves in. My military background had instilled in me a system where I tended to ask more probing questions. This approach is often uncomfortable, as it reveals our shortcomings and contributions to a situation. The discomfort can lead to arguments. Thank God for His continuous guidance, which helped us discover these patterns and led us to resources on how to address them practically. During this season of relearning, God led us to another restoration, and we rejoice in experiencing His presence during this educational phase.

Whether we’re gearing up for a new year with a sincere desire to make a change, it will certainly be challenging unless we learn to address the core issues—our hearts. Oftentimes, discussions can lead to reflections on past experiences. It’s not about dwelling on history but about understanding how unprocessed pain from the past has shaped our responses, which may not be pleasing to God. Until we gather the courage to face this, willing to sit down and engage in ongoing conversations, we’re merely training ourselves to sweep things under the rug. We all know that such behavior will never lead to a deeper, stronger journey with our spouse (or in any other relationship). Humility begins with submitting to God as He reveals the “baggage” that has occupied the core of our hearts. This humility can only occur when we genuinely learn to respond to God’s amazing grace through Jesus Christ.

Remember, our place of “love” can never truly be established unless we recognize and learn to respond to the unconditional love that Christ has shown us.

'We love, because He first loved us. ' (1 John 4:19)

Keep journeying with Christ Jesus.

Your Fellow Husband,

Rey

DAY 4 | For Wives

When we sincerely desire to be married, we also look forward to having someone to love and be loved. So, even with the recognition that marriage is not a “bed of roses,” we’re willing to take such a risk and hold on to what we believe about “love.” Little did we know that this “risk” would truly test our hearts, and sadly, we’re seeing many today who choose to resort to other ways when it becomes too difficult to endure.

As for me, having been exposed to knowing God and the message of the Gospel from a young age, I thought I had enough knowledge about this “love.” It wasn’t until I found myself experiencing the real lessons and the realization that we can’t remove the connection to Jesus Christ in this wonderful world.

My relationship with Rey started with a strong foundation of communication. Our previous experiences, either directly or indirectly related to relationships, formed a sincere desire and motivation to build this strong foundation between us. Initially, we were doing well. Yet, looking back now, we realize that our confidence was barely touching the inner depths of our relationship—or even our hearts. We embraced the challenges that came our way, anchored by our limited understanding of life and marriage. In every season of opportunity to bounce back, such as approaching a new year, we sincerely looked forward to turning our declared desire for change into action. That was until God intervened, and we realized that such change would not be possible apart from Him.

When we decided to come to Him through Jesus Christ, we initially thought our lack of understanding was simply due to being away from His words and the essence of His attributes. Little did we know that our commitment to come to Him was the beginning of a thorough healing process for our hearts. It took us some time to figure this out. We needed to understand that God had to reveal the negative influences that impacted and shaped our hearts. This process is not easy, but along the way, He led us to realize that understanding the “bad seasons” of our lives—when we were separated from Him—would help us embrace the “good news”: a new life anchored in Jesus Christ.

How I wish I could say that such realizations come only once and we’re good to go. But the truth is, it’s a continuous process of being shaped under God’s craftsmanship. It’s His grace, mercy, and love that bring us progressions. Practically speaking, no matter how willing we are to sincerely sit down with our husbands and plan for change anchored in Christ, there also lies the reality of temptations and ongoing brokenness. We can’t underestimate the brokenness of this world, the weakness of our flesh, and the existence of the “enemy”—the serpent, the devil.

Thus, our continuous effort to establish a place of “love” for ourselves and our spouses comes with a simultaneous reminder of the Gospel. It’s only by His grace and the power of the Holy Spirit that we can truly move forward in a life that recognizes, honors, and glorifies Him.

As J.J. Packer and Gary Parrett said in the article, “What is True Christianity?”: “Every Christian thus becomes a work in progress, a lifelong reconstruction site, with the Holy Spirit as architect and craftsman at every point, first to last.” [1]

“But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.” (John 14:26)

So, keep journeying with Christ.

Keep journeying with Christ!

Your Fellow Wife,

Annie

DAY 5

Drs. Les & Leslie Parrott mentioned in their book, “Love Talk: Devotional for Couples”:

“A place of love is holy whenever mutual kindness overflows. We like to think it creates a bit of heaven on earth. And that’s exactly what happens when a husband and wife continually look out for one another’s needs within their home. When a man and a woman find reasons to extend more for the other than for themselves, they create a heavenly and holy place together—a place where, as in a temple, God is honored.”[2]

This is the kind of love that we’re all looking for as married individuals or couples. We desire it, but we often struggle to attain it when our definition of love is disconnected from God and Jesus Christ. Even in our attempts to incorporate God into our lives, we may lead a lifestyle where His existence feels more like religiosity, often confined within the walls of a “church.” Little do we realize that love is defined far beyond this or even a “church.” That’s why we continue to struggle in our responses, often unaware of the moral blindness we possess. We will not experience deliverance from this until we allow ourselves to take a pause, seek new understanding, and commit to the process of His craftsmanship.

Love that genuinely honors the true design of marriage is only possible when it is anchored in Christ. This recognition and submission embrace the role of the Holy Spirit and eventually lead us to preserve a life that obeys God. Our journey will not begin on this path until we experience firsthand the love offered to us by Jesus Christ. It is only He who can make our hearts overflow with love and enable us to share it with others, particularly our spouses. Our connection with Him through His grace, combined with the continuous

influence of the Holy Spirit, enables us to be Christ's disciples who are willing to share.

"In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."

—Luke 14:33

Thus, our commitment to change and our desire for a strong foundation of marriage based on love is not merely a checklist of tasks to accomplish or areas to improve. It begins and continuously flows from the message of the gospel—His grace, mercy, and love. It is only through this foundation that we can encounter the true love that can stand firm against the brokenness of this world, the weaknesses of our flesh, and the existence of the “enemy”—the serpent that has evolved over the years.

So keep journeying with Christ.

Your Fellow Couple,

Rey & Annie

NOTES

[1]Packer, J., Parrett, G., Knowing & Doing. “What is True Christianity”. C.S. Lewis Institute. Summer 2011

[2] Parrott, L. Dr., Parrott, L. Dr. “Love Talk: Devotional For Couples”. 1996



Let's embark on a comprehensive learning experience with this week's topic by following the **D.R.A.S.H. - 5 Steps of Learning Method!**

Step 1 | Discover the Truth

- Among the mentioned Biblical truths and testimonies, which one struck you the most and provided a different insight or realization about love and how to share it with your spouse?

Step 2 | Reflect and Meditate on the Truth

- Based on this week's topic and the truths that resonated with you, how does it relate to your current faith journey and your marriage?

Step 3 | Apply the Truth

- What old habits or practices do you need to change as a result of your discoveries and understanding of this week's topic? How do you plan to implement these changes? Set a meaningful goal that supports your spouse and strengthens your marital relationship.

Step 4 | Share

- Using a storytelling concept, compose a short story about how you will share the truths you discovered in this week's topic with your spouse or other married individuals journeying with you. You may want to consider a 1-minute or 5-minute storytelling technique. You can use the following guiding questions in your composition:

1. What truths did you discover and reflect on in this week's topic?
2. How are these truths and reflections related to yourself and your current marital status?
3. What actions do you plan to take in the coming days that relate to this week's learning?

Step 5 | Help in Navigating the Truth

- Besides your spouse, identify another person (or member/s of your small group) who will journey alongside you as you take intentional actions based on this week's learning. Consider what additional help you may need, such as further discussion or a regular prayer partner.

We pray that you encounter God through this week's topic. May His grace turn your learning experience into a transformative journey, leading to testimonies of breakthroughs that further strengthen your walk with Christ Jesus!

Let us know how this guide has helped you!

May this study tool be effective and helpful for every fellow seeker and believer who is intentionally journeying with Jesus Christ. We would be grateful to hear how this tool has significantly impacted your journey and your relationships with your spouse and others. Please share your feedback or experiences through this [link](#) (or scan QR Code)



Couples' Journey with Christ Jesus

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