

Marriage Education and Enrichment Reading List for Couples (* study guide included)

(See also “Resources for Couples Preparing for Marriage” in the Marriage Preparation section of Best Practices Articles and Recommended Resources at www.marriagelovepower.net or search by title or topic at www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/intergenerational-family-ministries).

This annotated list of books includes some classics, as well as newer works based on more recent research and program development. Some address marriage in general, while others focus on specific marital issues. Even just reading these reviews will, I hope, provide marriage-strengthening information. Many of these would also work well as a resource for group study, including those marked with an asterisk to indicate that they include a study guide.

Unless otherwise indicated, these books are available through popular booksellers. An online search for a book title will tell you where it is being sold. New or used copies, e-books, or audio editions, as well as copies of those indicated to be Out-of-Print may be obtained through online booksellers or may be available at your local library or through inter-library loan.

These are books recommended and reviewed by United Methodists, not by any means a full list of all that are available. Please submit to me your reviews of other books you would recommend for inclusion in this list.

Jane P. Ives, United Methodist Marriage and Family Ministries Consultant
10 Quaker Lane, Portland, ME 04103, 207-797-8930, Janepives@gmail.com

Categories:

General – covering many aspects of the marriage relationship
Communication and Conflict Management
Sexual Intimacy
Specific Needs

General

10 Great Dates to Energize Your Marriage (formerly “... Revitalize Your Marriage,”) by Claudia and David Arp, MSW (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997.) Spark romance with memory-making dates built on key, marriage-enriching themes. The book includes his and her copies of tear-out dating guides. Enjoy your dates alone as a couple or use this resource in a marriage enrichment group for your church or community.

A Lasting Promise: A Christian Guide to Fighting for Your Marriage, by Scott Stanley, Daniel Trathen, Savanna McCain, and Milt Bryan,. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1998. The relationship principles of PREP (Prevention and Enhancement Program), which are also presented in *Fighting for Your Marriage*, are linked to Scripture in this book. Based on solid research, this work shows couples how they can make their marriages stronger and happier.

Couples and the Art of Playing: Three Easy and Enjoyable Ways to Nurture and Heal Relationships, by Keith Hackett (Lincoln, Nebraska: iUniverse, Inc., 2003). The author, a United Methodist pastor and Marriage and Family Therapist, encourages couples to develop playful, creative habits to enrich and strengthen their marriages.

C Through Marriage, by Jim Hughes (Mustang, OK: Tate Publishing, LLC, 2009). The author shares a collection of essays exploring topics relevant to marriage, weaving together scripture, practical advice, and discussion questions for use by individuals and couples who want to strengthen and find more joy in their relationships.

Do-It-Yourself Marriage Enrichment, by Warren and Mary Ebinger (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1998). The authors provide a chance for couples to enrich their marriages “on their own time, on their own terms, and on their own turf.” Issues include communication, priorities, short-and-long term goals, keeping the spark alive, children, finances, and more. The text includes step-by-step instructions, practical exercises, and devotional materials. [out-of-print]

****Empowering Couples: Building on Your Strengths***, by David H. Olson and Amy K. Olson (Minneapolis, MN: Life Innovations, Inc., 2000). Each chapter begins with a quiz about a particular relationship topic to help couples or individuals assess their strengths and needs for growth in that area. Clarifying information is followed by couple exercises to help turn “stumbling blocks into stepping stones” (p. ix). Chapter topics include “Communication,” “Conflict Resolution,” role Relationship,” “Managing Finances,” “Sexual Relationship,” “Children and Parenting,” “Personal, Couple, and Family Goals.”

Fighting for Your Marriage: A Deluxe Revised Edition of the Classic Best Seller for Enhancing Marriage and Preventing Divorce, by Howard Markman, Scott Stanley, and Susan L. Blumberg (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 2010). This book teaches effective skills for handling conflict and disagreements, explains the attitudes and behaviors that promote a healthy relationship, and shows couples how to enhance and protect their love. Straightforward and easy-to-understand content includes helpful exercises and suggestions for practice. The same information is linked to Scripture and expressed with religious language in *A Lasting Promise: A Christian Guide to Fighting for Your Marriage*, reviewed above.

****For Better and Better: Building a Healthy Marriage for a Lifetime***, by Jeanette C. Lauer and Robert H. Lauer, Nashville: Dimensions for Living, 1995). The authors describe a healthy marriage based on a shared faith in Christ and nine relationship resources you can cultivate to enjoy a lasting, fulfilling marriage. Each chapter contains “checkup questions” and “prescription plans.” Exercises can be used by couples privately or in groups. [out-of-print]

****Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples***, by Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 2008). This classic work describes the unconscious needs which lead us to choose our mates and how learned behaviors from childhood lead to conflict; shows how to learn positive ways to meet those needs; and outlines a ten-week course in relationship therapy couples can do on their own.

His Needs, Her Needs: Building An Affair-Proof Marriage, by Willard F. Harley, Jr. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 2011). Based on the simple premise that husbands and wives can find lifelong happiness in marriage by committing themselves to meet each other’s needs, this book offers information and exercises to help couples deepen their understanding of each other and intentionally behave in ways that will nourish the relationship. The author explains that with every encounter we affect each other positively or negatively, making deposits

in or withdrawals from each other's "Love Bank." The author also clarifies the dynamics that may make spouses vulnerable to the temptation of an affair and offers strategies for healing relationships damaged by infidelity.

Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations for a Lifetime of Love, by Sue Johnson (New York: Little, Brown, & Company, 2008). This easy to understand and practical guide for couples stresses the importance of emotional attachment. The seven transforming conversations, which encourage the emotional responsiveness vital to healthy, lasting marriages, help couples recognize destructive dialogue patterns, find their emotional "raw spots," revisit rocky moments, communicate needs, connect and engage with each other, forgive and repair injuries, bond through sex and touch, and keep their love alive.

How One of You Can Bring the Two of You Together: Breakthrough Strategies to Resolve Your Conflicts and Reignite Your Love, by Susan Page (NY: Broadway Books, 1997). The author's insights and suggestions will help both those who feel stuck and frustrated with their relationships and those who, although happy and stable, feel some disillusionment or lack of connection. Page presents a series of "experiments" one person can use, based on 8 specific principles: 1) Act on your own. 2) Do the opposite of what you have been doing. 3) Reframe a power struggle. 4) Enlist your partner's help. 5) Express empathy for your partner's position. 6) Gracefully accept what you can't change. 7) Ask for what you want. 8) Men: tune in; Women: stop coaching. Detailed analysis and examples make this approach clearly understandable.

Keeping the Love You Find: A Personal Guide, by Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. (New York: Atria Books, 1992). The author provides information and exercises to help readers deepen their understanding of who they are and what they long for in their relationships, then to learn the skills to make behavior changes needed in order to achieve an intentional, "conscious" relationship.

If We're So in Love, Why Aren't We Happy? Using Spiritual Principles to Solve Real Problems and Restore Your Passion, by Susan Page (New York: Harmony Books, 2002). [The author encourages individuals and couples to treat their relationships as spiritual disciplines, practicing acceptance, compassion, restraint, and kindness. By focusing on loving each other, in a spirit of good will, couples can build a true spiritual partnership. The author's insights and "experiments" can be utilized by both or by just one party in the relationship.]

Love and Respect: The Love She Most Desires; The Respect He Desperately Needs, by Emerson Eggerichs, (Colorado Springs: Integrity Publishers, 2004). Writing from a Christian perspective and frequently quoting Scripture, the author makes a clear case for the importance of honoring the primary needs of women and men. He identifies the "Crazy Cycle" (she reacts to a perceived lack of love and he reacts to a perceived lack of respect) and recommends clear steps to move toward closeness and a mutually satisfying relationship.

Love for All Seasons: Eight Ways to Nurture Intimacy, by John Trent, Ph.D. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1996). The author uses the Song of Songs as a framework for describing eight specific ways couples can deepen their emotional and spiritual bond. A study guide provides suggestions for self-assessment and discussion. [out of print]

Love is Never Enough, by Aaron T. Beck, M.D. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988). The author explores how couples can avoid the misunderstandings and inaccurate interpretations of each other's behavior that lead to marital conflict. This book explains how "partners can learn to be more reasonable with each other by adopting a more humble, tentative attitude about the accuracy of their mind reading, and its resulting negative conclusions; by checking out the accuracy of their mind reading; and by considering alternative explanations for what a partner does." (p. 17)

Love, Marriage, and Money: Understanding and Achieving Financial Compatibility Before-and After-You Say "I Do," by Gail Liberman and Alan Lavine ((Lincoln, NE: iUniverse, Inc., 2005). The authors blend psychological, legal, and financial information into a helpful resource for couples. Topics include financial personalities, how to compromise, renting or purchasing a home, planning for children, preparing for retirement, and estate planning.

****Love to Stay: Sex, Grace, and Commitment,*** by Adam Hamilton (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013). Marriage "has its ups and downs, its ebb and flow, and it requires perseverance, hard work and from time to time a bit of help." That's how the author describes the reality of marriage in his new book, an effort to provide that "bit of help," practical advice and encouragement for married couples or for people contemplating marriage. He explores the little things (annoyances or habits) and the big things (emotional or physical abuse; addictions to drugs, alcohol or pornography; and infidelity) that can hurt marriages, offering strategies for dealing with them. Each chapter ends with discussion questions and valuable suggestions for couples, for individuals within a marriage, and for single people. He also draws on feedback and survey results from thousands of people to help illustrate some basic truths. He encourages people to take the long view and "*do love until you feel love.*" When it is difficult to feel love, the trick is to hold on to the knowledge that it will get better and to avoid doing anything stupid in the meantime." (review by Sarah Lowther Hensley) For group use, you may also purchase a paperback Leader's Guide and a DVD containing six ten-minute video clips related to the book chapters and a downloadable leader's guide.

Making Love Last a Lifetime: Biblical Perspectives on Love, Marriage and Sex, by Adam Hamilton (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004) Based on learnings from secular research, his own experiences as a counselor, surveys, and interviews, this book provides biblical perspectives on male/female differences, sexual intimacy, the role of faith in marriage, attitudes and behaviors that strengthen marriages, and ways to rekindle love in difficult times. Each chapter contains exercises for couple or group use. [Available from popular booksellers or order through Cokesbury, 800-672-1789 or www.cokesbury.com.]

Passages of Marriage: Five Growth Stages That Will Take your Marriage to Greater Intimacy and Fulfillment, by Dr. Frank and Mary Alice Minirth, Dr. Brian and Dr. Deborah Newman, and Dr. Robert and Susan Hemfelt (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1991). These authors discuss five stages of marriage: Young Love, Realistic Love, Comfortable Love, Renewing Love, and Transcendent Love. The tasks of each stage are clearly described, with suggestions and self-assessment exercises to help couples make the most of each passage.

****Pure Gold: Encouraging Character Qualities in Marriage***, by Susanne M. Alexander, with Craig A. Farnsworth and John S. Miller (Cleveland, OH: Marriage Transformation LLC, 2005). The middle section of this book presents 56 positive character traits, listed alphabetically from *acceptance* and *assertiveness* to *wisdom*, each of which is discussed in a two-page format for deepened understanding, self-assessment, and goal setting. The first section of the book addresses issues related to character development and transformation, and the third section provides exercises for couple use. Couples could use this material for self-study; or a group, such as a Sunday School class, could use it for weekly lessons. Paperback and e-book available for purchase at www.marriagetransformation.com.

Sacred Marriage: What if God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy? by Gary Thomas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000). The author invites readers to view marriage as a spiritual discipline through which persons can come to know God more fully and intimately. Marriage teaches us to love and to respect others, exposes our sin, and encourages us to develop perseverance, forgiveness, and the ability to embrace differences.

Supercouple Syndrome: How Overworked Couples Can Beat Stress Together, by Wayne M. Sotile and Mary O. Sotile, M.A. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1998). The authors challenge the myths and behavior patterns that cause stress and burnout and show busy couples how to “use their relationships as havens from outside demands, take time out to have fun, and nurture their partners,” (page x)

Surrendering to Marriage: Husbands, Wives, and Other Imperfections, by Iris Krasnow (New York: Hyperion, 2001). The author cuts through the mythology and unrealistic expectations surrounding marriage to show readers that: “The best we can do for our children, and for ourselves, is to make our own marriages go the distance, weathering waves of sadness, even rage, because we know that our grit and perseverance are going to pay off hugely in the end.” She shares the testimony of senior citizens who say “they are more in love than ever with the partner they married a half-century ago. It is not a love of lust and infatuation. It is the deepest of love, built over time, through joy and tragedy.” (pages 5, 6)

Sustaining Love: Healing and Growth in the Passages of Marriage, by David Augsberger (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1988). The author outlines four stages of marriage: The Dream, The Disillusionment, The Discovery, and The Depth, describing how to successfully negotiate these challenging transitions. Especially dangerous, of course, is the Disillusionment Stage, when the excitement of new love wears off and couples face who they really are and how they really relate. Not only is this stage inevitable, but it can also provide a doorway to deeper discovery and depth in the relationship.

The Case for Marriage: Why Married People are Happier, Healthier, and Better Off Financially, by Linda J. Waite and Maggie Gallagher (New York: Doubleday, 2000). Research reveals that marriage brings greater happiness, health, earnings, sexual satisfaction, and many other positive benefits to couples who commit to it, as well as to their children. The authors explode many negative myths about marriage, show how marriage transforms individuals and relationships, and document solid reasons for supporting marriage-strengthening initiatives.

The Essential Humility of Marriage: Honoring the Third Identity in Couple Therapy, by Terry D. Hargrave, Ph.D. (Phoenix, AZ: Zeig, Tucker, & Theisen, Inc., 2000). The author provides therapy guidelines, strategies, and exercises for helping couples strengthen the vital “us” relationship that is at the heart of a marriage.

The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts, by Gary Chapman (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2010). The author identifies five languages of love: Quality Time, Words of Affirmation, Gifts, Acts of Service, and Physical Touch. By learning to speak and understand these unique languages, persons can more effectively communicate love and feel more truly loved as well.

The Five Secrets of Marriage from the Heart, by Jack Rosenblum and Corinne Dugas (Mustang, OK: Tate Publishing, LLC, 2006) Through the engaging story of a couple whose marriage is in crisis, the authors explain and illustrate five keys to strengthening and/or healing a relationship. (**H**ear and understand me; **E**ven if you disagree, please don’t make me wrong; **A**cknowledge the greatness within me; **R**emember to look for my loving intentions; **T**ell me the truth with compassion.) This easy-to-read, well-grounded book would be an excellent gift for couples or a resource for a study group.

The Good Couple Life: A 12-Month Guide to Enriching Your Marriage, by Lynn Balster Lontos and Demetri Lontos (Winston-Salem, NC: Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment, Inc., 1982). Each chapter explores a different topic in depth, providing sound advice, discussion questions, and exercises to help couples apply the principles to their own relationship. This would make a good study guide for individual couples or a group meeting regularly.

The Heart of Commitment: Compelling Research that Reveals the Secrets of a Lifelong, Intimate Marriage, by Scott Stanley, Ph.D. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998). Research shows that couples dedicated to each other and to their relationship are happier and enjoy a deeper relationship with each other. The author of this Scripturally-based book explores ways to preserve or restore commitment in a marriage.

The Intimate Enemy: How to Fight Fair in Love and Marriage, by George R. Back and Peter Wyden (New York: Avon Books, 1968). In this insightful classic, the authors describe how to avoid or stop “gunnysacking,” the practice of holding on to grievances instead of expressing them, which sabotages intimacy and creates distance in relationships.

The Love Dare by Stephen Kendrick and Alan Kendrick (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008). Featured in the movie *Fireproof*, this book offers forty days of faith-based relationship information and challenges to be used by a spouse hoping to improve his or her marriage.

The Power of Commitment: A Guide to Active, Lifelong Love, by Scott M. Stanley (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass 2005). The author offers practical and spiritual guidance to help couples understand commitment, handle everyday pressures, deal with the pain of

disappointment and unfulfilled hopes, overcome extramarital attractions, and transform “me versus you” to “we” thinking in order to experience the joy of lifelong devotion and loyalty.

The Secrets of Happily Married Men: Eight Ways to Win Your Wife’s Heart Forever, by Scott Haltzman, M.D. with Theresa Foy Digeronimo (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006). The author shows men how to use their natural masculine talents to enhance their marriages. The determination to do a job and to do it right (focusing, prioritizing, developing strategies, problem-solving, paying attention to details, negotiating and compromising, resolving conflict, working through step-by-step processes, and achieving goals) can be used to build a strong, healthy, and lasting marriage.

The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work, by John M. Gottman, Ph.D. and Nan Silver. (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1999). The authors offer information, exercises, and strategies for nurturing the deep friendship essential to strong, happy marriages.

The Surprising Way to a Stronger Marriage: How the Power of One Changes Everything, by Michael and Amy Smalley (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2010). The authors describe how one spouse, strengthened by God and Biblical principles, can bring about positive change and growth in a marriage. The authors emphasize the importance of taking responsibility for your own emotions and reactions, focusing on what you want to have happen, and repairing hurts by asking your spouse what he/she needs in order to heal. A Study Guide in the back of the book provides scripture and discussion questions for each of the eighteen chapters.

****Unbreakable: Forging a Marriage of Contentment and Delight***, by Charles Causey and Tony Miltenberger (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2014). This seven-session scripture-based interactive guide for couples or groups of couples who want to strengthen and deepen their marriage relationships is based on five core components of love (commitment, kindness, honesty, forgiveness, and sacrifice) The first session, focused on the importance and purpose of marriage, is followed by five sessions addressing each of the core components listed above and a final session focused on sexual intimacy. The readings and exercises help each person in the focus on and take responsibility for his or her own attitudes and behavior, while offering opportunity for the couple to share insights and reflections with each other. In the first session, the "Couple Interactive Exercise" directly teaches "The Responsibility Skill." The fourth session provides instruction and a framework for communicating more effectively, and the fifth session offers a clear outline of steps for practicing forgiveness. If a couple intends to write in the book, they will both need their own copy; or they could share one copy, each recording responses in a separate journal or on sheets of paper.

Venus on Fire, Mars on Ice: Hormonal Balance-The Key to Life, Love, and Energy, by John Gray, Ph.D., (Coquitlan, BC: Mind Publishing, Inc., 2010). The author discusses how hormonal differences affect male and female behaviors and reactions to stress. While men tend to withdraw under stress, women become more anxious and driven. Increased levels of testosterone reduce stress in men, while women’s stress is eased by increased levels of oxytocin. By understanding, accepting, and respecting these differences, couples can reduce tension and build more satisfying relationships.

****What Children Learn from Their Parents' Marriage: It May Be Your Marriage, but It's Your Child's Blueprint for Intimacy***, by Judith P. Siegel, Ph.D., C.S.W. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2001). Because the marriage relationship serves as the child's "blueprint for intimacy," couples need to discover how they have been impacted by the relationship of their parents and what they, in turn, are communicating to their children. Each chapter of this book discusses and gives clear examples of an aspect of healthy intimacy ("Establishing the Priority of the Marriage," "Teaching the Value of Interdependence," "Instilling the Importance of Mutual Respect," "Maintaining Trust in Word and Deed," "Negotiating Differences Constructively," "Understanding the Long-Term Effects of Conflict," "Emphasizing the Positives," and "Building a Better Marriage." Questions at the end of each chapter encourage couples to reflect on their own relationships and to move toward healthier patterns both for their own happiness and for that of their children. This would be an excellent resource for a nine-week group study for young parents or a helpful gift for individuals or couples.

What Your Mother Couldn't Tell You and Your Father Didn't Know: Advanced Relationship Skills for Better Communication and Lasting Intimacy, by John Gray, Ph.D. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1994). The author shows how men and women, by understanding differences in male and female development, can relate more effectively to each other and build a passionate, enduring relationship.

Why Marriages Succeed or Fail: What You Can Learn from the Breakthrough Research to Make Your Marriage Last, by John Gottman, Ph.D. with Nan Silver (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994). The author presents four strategies for breaking cycles of negativity and maintaining a lasting, healthy marriage: calming yourself so that you are not overwhelmed by flooding emotions; speaking and listening nondefensively; validating each other as well as your relationship; and overlearning these principles so that the new skills become automatic and can be used under stress.

Why Mars and Venus Collide: Improving Relationship by Understanding How Men and Women Cope Differently With Stress, by John Gray, Ph.D. (New York: Harper, 2008). The author expands on male/female differences, drawing on brain scan research to clarify how men and women react differently to stress and often misunderstand each other. He offers clear, concrete steps to prevent and heal the conflicts that arise from such misunderstandings.

Why Talking is Not Enough: Eight Loving Actions that Will Transform Your Marriage by Susan Page (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, A. Wiley Imprint, 2006). The author encourages individuals and couples to treat their relationships as spiritual disciplines, practicing acceptance, compassion, restraint, and kindness. By focusing on loving each other, in a spirit of good will, couples can build a true spiritual partnership. The author's insights and "experiments" can be utilized by both or by just one party in the relationship.

Communication and Conflict Management

****Anger: Handling a Powerful Emotion in a Healthy Way***, by Gary Chapman (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2007). The author states his belief that God designed human anger to motivate us to take action against injustice or wrongdoing. However, we often cause harm to

others and ourselves by reacting without thinking through what has happened and how best to address our grievances – real or perceived. He offers a process for owning our anger and processing the situation in order to choose constructive, not destructive action. A study guide at the end provides suggestions for thirteen sessions.

Talking and Listening Together: Couple Communication I, by Sherod Miller, Ph.D., Phyllis A. Miller, Ph.D., Elam W. Nunnally, Ph.D., and Daniel B. Wackman, Ph.D. (Littleton, Colorado: Interpersonal Communication Programs, Inc., 1991). www.couplecommunication.com This text/workbook, which accompanies the Couple Communication I program, deals with self-awareness, caring about your partner, resolving conflicts, and choosing communication styles for talking and listening.

Love and Anger in Marriage, by David Mace (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982). Couples can learn to accept anger as a normal function of a relationship, to communicate without attacking each other, and to work together for positive solutions to whatever produces the anger in the first place. [Available at www.bettermarriages.org]

The Dance of Anger: A Woman's Guide to Changing the Patterns of Intimate Relationships by Harriet Goldhor Lerner, Ph.D. (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1997). “Close relationships are akin to circular dances, in which the behavior of each partner provokes and maintains the behavior of the other.” (p. 12) This book helps the reader clarify her feelings, learn to communicate them effectively, and interrupt negative patterns in relationships, not only with her husband, but also with children, parents, and others.

The Five Languages of Apology, by Gary Chapman and Jennifer Thomas (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2006). The author identifies five languages of apology: Expressing Regret, Accepting Responsibility, Making Restitution, Genuinely Repenting, and Requesting Forgiveness. By understanding and using the Apology Language or Languages that are most important to each other, couples can more effectively repair and heal their relationship.

The Surprising Purpose of Anger. Beyond Anger Management: Finding the Gift, by Marshall B. Rosenberg, Ph.D (Encinitas, CA: PuddleDancer Press, 2005. Rosenberg, developer of the Nonviolent Communication program (www.nonviolentcommunication.com), challenges us to think of anger as a gift, pointing us to unmet needs, but subverted by the judgments we make about others. He describes how to create strategies focused on meeting needs and to find solutions instead of just reacting.

You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation, by Deborah Tannen, Ph.D. (New York, Ballentine Books, 1990). The author analyzes how boys and girls develop different perspectives and communication styles because of differences in how they are raised. By trying to see things from the other's perspective, rather than reacting negatively, men and women can prevent these differences from undermining their relationships.

Sexual Intimacy

A Joyful Meeting: Sexuality in Marriage, by Drs. Mike and Joyce Grace (St. Paul, Minnesota: International Marriage Encounter, 1980). The authors discuss marital sexuality both from a

spiritual viewpoint and with humor. They emphasize the importance of mature love for sexual harmony and share practical advice for overcoming the conflicts that are likely to arise because of sexual differences.

A Joyful Meeting: Sexuality in Marriage, by Drs. Mike and Joyce Grace (St. Paul, Minnesota: International Marriage Encounter, 1980). The authors discuss marital sexuality both from a spiritual viewpoint and with humor. They emphasize the importance of mature love for sexual harmony and share practical advice for overcoming the conflicts that are likely to arise because of sexual differences.

And They Were Not Ashamed: Strengthening Marriage through Sexual Fulfillment, by Laura M. Brotherson (Boise, Idaho: Inspire Book, 2004). “As three books in one, this marriage book, sex book and parenting book: Shines light and truth on the intimate marital relationship, restoring sex to its proper position as ordained of God; Effectively addresses, with self-help solutions, the emotional, spiritual and physical intimacy issues that plague so many marriages; Provides principles and practices to help parents teach and better prepare their children for intimacy and lasting fulfillment in marriage.” (back cover)

Discovering Your Couple Sexual Style, by Barry W. McCarthy and Emily McCarthy (New York: Routledge, 2009). The authors provide information, a personal assessment tool, exercises, and practical suggestions for couples to energize their relationship by developing their own unique erotic style. By cultivating positive and realistic expectations, understanding the “dimensions of touch,” and learning to communicate clearly with each other, couples can build on the romantic love that drew them together and create an enduring sexual bond.

embodiment: An Approach to Sexuality and Christian Theology, by James B. Nelson (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Augsburg Publishing House, 1978). The author reviews the history of religious thought about sex and sexuality and discusses various related ethical issues. He affirms the centrality of our sexuality to our personhood and to our ability to relate to others, and he emphasizes the capacity of sexual love to “break the self open to the true meaning of divine-human communion.”(p. 256) [out-of-print]

Hot Monogamy: Essential Steps to More Passionate, Intimate Lovemaking, by Dr. Pat Love and Jo Robinson (New York: Penguin Books USA Inc., 1994). The author helps couples understand the dynamics of sexual attraction and learn how to talk about sex, resolve differences in desire, enjoy life-long romance, and deepen intimacy.

Intended for Pleasure: Sex Technique and Sexual Fulfillment in Christian Marriage, by Ed Wheat, M.D., and Gaye Wheat (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 2010). The authors provide comprehensive and clear information about many aspects of sex and sexuality from a Christian perspective: understanding the basics, techniques of lovemaking, solutions to common problems, and suggestions for specific situations such as pregnancy and aging.

The Gift of Sex: A Christian Guide to Sexual Fulfillment, by Clifford and Joyce Penner (Waco, Texas: Word, Inc., 2003). The book offers detailed information on the physical, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of sexual relationships. It provides a Biblical perspective, advice for moving

past sexual barriers and resolving difficulties, and Sexual Enhancement Exercises for increasing awareness and pleasure.

Specific Needs

Adult Children of Divorced Parents: Making Your Marriage Work, by Beverly and Tom Rodgers, (San Jose, CA: Resource Publications, Inc., 2002). Adult children of divorced parents can overcome the negative effects of that experience and improve the odds of marital success by understanding their wounds, breaking out of reactivity patterns, and learning how to help each other heal. The authors write out of their own experience as well as that of couples with whom they have worked, offering Scripture-based insights and exercises.

The Second Half of Marriage: Facing the Eight Challenges of the Empty Nest Years, by Claudia and David Arp, MSW (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1998). When children leave home, it's time for couples to renew their love and refocus on their marriages. The second half of marriage can be a time of incredible fulfillment. No matter what challenges a couple previously faced, they can surmount them and turn this phase of their relationship into a second honeymoon!

Jane P. Ives, United Methodist Marriage and Family Ministries Consultant (9/30/2015)

10 Quaker Lane, Portland, ME 04103, 207-797-8930, Janepives@gmail.com

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