

Abundant Living

MINISTRIES

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I did it again! I forgot... I failed to check the **simplest, most-basic** issues when troubleshooting a problem.

I was installing a new printer, connecting it to the office's computer network. I printed the first *test copy* and was quite pleased with the result. I then clicked to print 100 copies of a letter. Was I ever disappointed! The printer's output was a little bit less than one-half the advertised speed. After two or three copies, it would pause... the screen would say something about "awaiting data" and then, after a few seconds, it would print another two or three.

Pausing the printer, I spent a couple of hours on the internet, trying to figure out why this should be happening. Frustrated, but still without solution, I figured I should at least UN-pause the printer and wait for the remaining copies to print.

As I was about to press the PRINT button, I noticed a cord lying on the floor... not plugged in to anything... just the male end of a cord. OH MY! It was the power cord to the *switch* (think "distribution box") through which the signal trafficked from my computer to the printer. I was amazed it worked at all, when not plugged in. WELL... I plugged it in and, guess what... the printer spit out those papers the way it was supposed to!

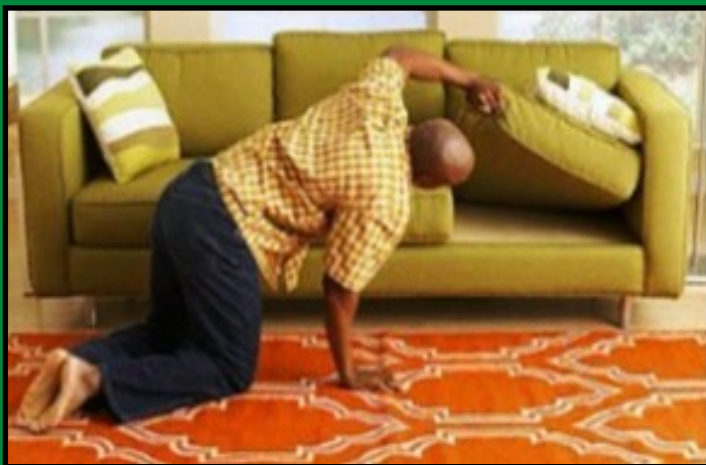
What's my point? I notice quite often in counseling (and also in myself) that we fail to start with the simple basics. We imagine there might be a serious problem to be tackled when, really, the

solution is pretty basic and simple. I was facetimeing with a church leader yesterday. He was distressed about his marriage, as he and his wife were fussing over a bunch of items. At one point, he stopped himself... he chuckled, commenting, "But really, John, the things we argue about are SO insignificant... they should be non-issues!" (So why complicate the matter, if it's a simple "non-issue?!")

At such times, I think of one of my life verses. I memorized the first part as a child in Sunday School. From Ephesians 4:32... ***Be kind to one another.*** (The rest of the verse is powerful! When the other person does NOT return the kindness, then be...) ***tenderhearted, forgiving even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you!***

Let's keep it simple!

John (for Sharon and the rest at ALM)



Finding What's Missing in Marriage

Question: I am getting married in a few months. We want our marriage to get off to a great start and be strong "til death do us part." I am all ears, for any advice you would give to a Christian couple just beginning their journey together.

Response: I recently heard a young engaged couple ask this very question to some older husbands and wives. Good suggestions were offered, and I particularly liked the counsel given by a couple married 54 years.

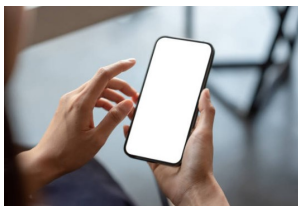
They said that, in their own marriage as well as in the relationships of many couples they have helped, they have observed that a firm *spiritual* foundation is paramount to establishing and maintaining a strong union.

Their recommendation was for the couple to daily read the Bible and pray together. As these young spouses would cultivate this habit, the older couple predicted that the pair would not only draw closer to God individually, but also become closer to each other.

What great advice! Sadly, many Christian couples have not incorporated much of a spiritual component into their relationship and have thereby lacked the benefits it brings.

Years ago my husband and I read an article by Charlie Shedd who, long before marriage teaching came into vogue, was a pioneer in helping couples strengthen their relationship. He was asked, "As you consider the wealth of marriage resources available today, do you see any areas Christians still aren't addressing very well?" He answered, "The greatest weakness in Christian family literature is that we've failed to emphasize the importance of *soul harmony* in marriage. We have books on how to get along, how to raise your kids, how to handle your money, how to have a great sex life, how to live with a perfectionist and a lot more. But we don't talk enough about the need for couples to be spiritually bonded, and we don't teach people how that can happen. Martha (his wife) and I learned that it all starts with prayer and Bible study."

As you purpose to incorporate spiritual disciplines into your relationship, here are a few simple ways to get started...



Every day, each of you **find one Scripture verse** that will be your verse for that day. Write it on paper or enter it into your cellphone. Read it repeatedly, mulling it over throughout the day.

Then, before going to bed, tell each other your verse and what it meant to you.



Going somewhere together in the car? Take a Bible along and the passenger-partner can read out loud. The book of Proverbs would be a great place to start... it is full of practical wisdom for daily life. Or, you may prefer listening to an audio version of the Bible.



Together **choose a trait** that needs to be developed in your marriage... e.g. being encouragers, not complainers. Select a verse or passage that relates to this and decide you will both memorize that verse and meditate on it throughout the week. At the

end of the week, share how you found it helpful. Rejoice together over progress you observe in each other.



Select a devotional book with daily readings which include a Scripture verse. In the morning, or when you go to bed at night, take turns reading that day's entry. Tell each other how it encouraged or challenged you.



If **praying out loud** seems intimidating (and often it is, because it is very personal), begin by praying silently together. Sit next to each other, perhaps holding hands. Take some minutes to pray silently. You could then, together, recite the Lord's Prayer or the 23rd Psalm.

But, purpose to begin praying **audibly** with each other. You could develop a prayer journal in which you list your prayer items... this will help you stay focused as you learn to pray together out loud.

Obviously, when young couples establish these kinds of habits right from the get-go, they build a wonderful foundation for their years ahead. But it is NEVER too late to begin a new habit! If your spiritual oneness is lacking, why not decide to improve it, starting today! Commit to one of these suggestions for the next six weeks and you might very well discover the "missing something" you've been longing for in your relationship.

When the Lord is at the center of your marriage, it is hard to drift apart... on the contrary, HE will draw the two of you closer and closer to each other. And that is a great way to live out your years together!

*Written by
Sharon Charles*



Contact Information

Mailing Address	400 E 4th Ave, Lititz, PA 17543
Physical Location	541 W 28th Division Hwy, Lititz
Website	www. AbundantLivingMinistries.org
Email	info@AbundantLivingMinistries.org
Phone	(717) 626-9575 (voice or text)