

GROWN APART

How to WIN BACK Your Spouse

Written by
Matt and Pam Loehr

Grown Apart: How to WIN BACK Your Spouse

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This book is dedicated to every person or couple
that value the sanctity of marriage and who will do
what it takes to not only have a good marriage,
but a God-honoring marriage.



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let's start this journey
together



A Word from Matt and Pam

Are you frustrated with your spouse? Are they being difficult, refusing to change, and unwilling to get help? Maybe they even believe that you're the problem? Has busy life caused one or both of you to take your eyes off the relationship, and you seem to have grown apart? Does one of you want out of the marriage? Are you separated, with thoughts of divorce looming over you? If you are looking to find out what it will take to save your marriage, this book is for you.

Perhaps you've already pursued books, seminars, workshops, and/or church activities in search of answers. But none of your efforts have been successful and you feel stuck.

Regardless of the marital strife you are encountering, this guide will equip you to fight for your marriage and win your spouse over using biblical principles based on God's promises.

First Peter 3:1 challenges wives who live with unbelieving husbands to "win them over" without words. In 1 Peter 3:7, husbands are told to "Be considerate with your wives, lest your prayers be hindered." Ephesians 5:33 encourages husbands to be loving and wives to be respectful. These concepts will be used throughout this guide, enabling you to achieve your goal.

You are about to begin what could be a life-changing journey. In

the next fifty-two weeks, you will learn what it means to fight for your marriage God's way and to be an authentic follower of Jesus Christ through what may be the most difficult time of your life.

Our Mission

Our goal is for you to strengthen or save your marriage. This fifty-two-week study guide is a starting place to strip away the clutter and help you discover (or rediscover) your identity in Christ, despite the difficult and daunting circumstances you face.

This book will put you on a path where God can work in and through you and eventually reach your spouse because of your actions, your commitment, and your prayers. Through you, your spouse may come to a saving relationship with Jesus Christ, pursuing Him like never before, eager to seek divine help for your marriage.

This process will allow you to identify some of your own issues and walk away with a solid, lifelong plan that will enable your heart to be healed and transformed.

Get the Most Out of This Experience

Each week we will give you specific instructions: *what to say*, *what to do*, *what to read*, and *what to pray* (and in some situations, *what not to do*). By following this twelve-month plan, you will see God's love and redeeming power in your marriage like never before. Commit to each week's challenge and let God do the rest.

Finding someone to hold you accountable to the process is key to your success. Meeting monthly with this person to encourage, challenge and hold you accountable to each week's requirements will not only benefit you, but also your marriage. It's recommended that they also have a copy of this book so they know what is required of you each week.

Remember the objective of this book is to win back your spouse. That means loving the unconventional way in the present moment... even when it's hard.

Need Help?

Our online marriage mentoring program is often times that extra necessary step for complete marriage restoration. As you work through this book, when you sense the time is right, ask your spouse if they will join you in getting help. If they say yes, visit refreshyourmarriage.org to get connected with a certified mentor couple who can help you. Mentoring through our online video course can be life changing, and can make your marriage everything it was meant to be.

Let's get started!

Matt and Pam Laehr

Founders of Dare to be Different

walk into the pain

Week 1

Start with Repentance

Someone once asked me (Matt), “How do I save my marriage?” I responded with, “Repent of your sins and forgive your spouse for theirs.”

This seems like an easy solution. And it is, in theory. However, it can be one of the most difficult tasks to carry out. As you begin your first week on this journey, get down on your knees and ask the Lord to forgive you for your part of the broken or strained relationship. Be specific with God as you pour out your heart to Him.

I’m guessing that you are wounded, tired, and lonely. I am sorry for the heavy burden you’re under. But I’d like to help you save your family and stop the Enemy from destroying your marriage. If you choose to be strong and fully engage in this battle, you can win it!

The first thing you must commit to is facing your pain rather than running away. Many people run away from their pain, which leads to broken relationships and allowing wounds to define their lives and spill over into their children. If you face your pain like a warrior running into battle, you can be victorious for your family. Running into your pain may seem a bit confusing. Let me break it down into

three thoughts. First, choose to remain engaged verbally with the person who wounded you. Second, remain committed to serve the person who wounded you. Third, remain soft-hearted towards the person who wounded you so you can be led by the Holy Spirit. God will shape your response to the wound so you don't act out in a way that would grieve the Holy Spirit and sabotage your mission. Applying this approach enables you to live life as a warrior for Christ rather than a wounded soul who is weary, exhausted, and rendered paralyzed. You may be thinking, "Does that make me a door mat?" No, by no means. There are ways to confront, defend and at times exit a relationship to protect your wellbeing. However, we will address that later. It's too soon to expect your spouse to be 'won over'. Let's wait one month before we try to get them to take action steps towards you or God.

For you, repentance is the first step.

If my people who are called by my name would
humble themselves and pray and seek my face and
turn from their own wicked ways, I would hear
from heaven, forgive their sin and heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14

Countless times in Scripture God connects our repentance to His healing power. There is no other bridge you can cross to find healing in your marriage, your heart, or your home. Repentance is the only way to unleash God's power in your life.

If you want to win over your spouse, begin by acknowledging the areas in your life that grieve the Lord. Then humble yourself and confess your sins to your spouse. Don't expect them to melt into your arms and forget about everything. It may take months or even years for them to accept your apologies.

My mother and father survived years of betrayal and hopeless situations. But they found God's healing power and spent the second half of their marriage thriving. Why? They believed their marriage

was worth fighting for. They humbled themselves, prayed, sought God, and turned from their selfish ways. And they received God's healing.

what to say

- Tell your spouse you are sorry for your part in the strained relationship, that you are committed to changing and working on yourself.
- Wife, tell your husband, "I'm sorry for coming across as disrespectful. I am going to work on being more respectful toward you."
- Husband, tell your wife, "I'm sorry for coming across as unloving. I am going to work on being a more loving husband."
- Be as specific as you can about what you are sorry for and how you are going to change. Your mission is to create a safe place to share concerns and frustrations. There is no doubt your spouse has issues that need to be addressed, but first you have to convince them that your marriage is worth fighting for.

what to do

- Do two things this week for your spouse that are loving and respectful.
- If you can't deliver your apology in person, write a letter of repentance. Then give it to your spouse or place it in an area you know they will find it.
- Accept your spouse's blame, even if their allegations are inaccurate. Their perceptions are reality to them, just like yours are to you. Telling them you're sorry will diffuse their attack.
- Share your concerns with unbiased believers who can help hold you accountable.

Caution: Don't use texts, email, or social media to argue,

defend, or try to resolve relational issues. The best method of conflict resolution is face-to-face.

Separation

Being separated leads to divorce far more often than it leads to reconciliation. While separated, every day that goes by, your family would get used to living separate lives, which creates an ever-higher wall between you and your spouse. It also opens the door to temptations to interact with the opposite sex.

If you are already separated, don't move back in together if it would create an unsafe environment or if one of you is battling a chronic issue, such as an addiction or serial cheating. Don't move back in together if you (or your children) are physically at risk of harm. But with the exception of such extreme circumstances, make every effort to stay together while getting help.

what not to do

- Don't retaliate.
- Don't defend yourself.
- Don't be unloving or disrespectful.
- Don't share your frustrations with family members or friends of the opposite sex.

what to read

- Proverbs 28:13
- Acts 3:19
- James 5:16
- 2 Peter 3:9
- 1 John 1:9

what to pray

Lord Jesus, I repent of all my sins against You and against my spouse. Please forgive me. I ask You to do a healing work in me

that spills over into my family. Give me a supernatural ability to love, respect, and serve my spouse. Give me a supernatural ability to endure my own pain and wounds so I can lead my family to a better place.

I lift my spouse up to You, Lord. I ask You to begin the healing process for both of us. I pray that You would soften my spouse's heart so they can hear You and feel my love as I start on this quest. I pray for our children, Lord, that they would not be wounded too deeply by what we are going through. Protect them. Give me the words to say and the things to do that would redeem this marriage.

In Your holy name I pray. Amen.

notes

Week 2

Understand Forgiveness

Forgiveness is one of the most powerful things you will ever do in your life. It leads to freedom, happiness, joy, and healthy living. I have witnessed the destruction of unforgiveness and seen the devastation it leaves behind.

I got to know Sandy and John very well as we mentored them. Things really seemed to be progressing in the right direction. After watching God perform miracles in their lives, John fell back into an alcohol addiction two years later. We attempted to help them again, but this time Sandy was done. John had broken his promise once again, which left Sandy feeling hopeless. Unforgiveness overtook her. John became remorseful and finally checked himself into rehab, but it was too late. Sandy had given up and divorced him.

You may want to punish your spouse for their sin, but resist the temptation. You may believe with all your heart that you are right and they are clearly wrong, but withhold your judgment and offer mercy instead. Don't allow your mind to obsess over their sin. Instead remember all the times God has forgiven you and extended mercy to you. It removes the sting just a little. Give them time to be transformed by God. It may take years.

God tells us to “forgive and be forgiven” (Matthew 6:14).

God tells us to “forgive seventy times seven” (Matthew 18:21-22 NASB).

God tells us to “love your enemy and become children of the Most High” (Luke 6:35).

If forgiveness isn’t evident in your life, it’s possible you haven’t truly forgiven. Here are some visible signs that you’ve forgiven your spouse:

- You give them affection (hold their hand, give back rubs, hugs, etc.).
- You initiate romance and intimacy.
- You initiate conversation.
- You serve them (cook dinner, perform house duties, etc.).
- Your heart is tender toward them.
- You pray for them.
- You show them respect, even though they may not deserve it.
- You show them love, even if they do not earn it.

You can say you forgive your spouse but still hold unforgiveness in your heart. God knows. Some people think forgiveness should not be given unless the other person repents first. That does not line up with Jesus’s teaching. He didn’t say, “Forgive seventy times seven if they repent that often.”

Forgiveness doesn’t mean you let your spouse continue to sin. You can forgive someone, give them affection, and still verbalize your disappointment with their actions. Forgiveness doesn’t mean you endorse their sin. But it enables you to proceed with the relationship without holding them and yourself hostage.

Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself. It keeps your heart soft and open to God.

Don’t let unforgiveness become a toxic chemical that flows from you onto others. Let God avenge you. Live in the land of freedom.

You will never win your spouse over without forgiving, over and over and over.

With the power of the Holy Spirit within you, you can forgive your spouse. And when you do, you will feel a huge weight lifted.

what to say

- “I want you to know that I am truly sorry if I have hurt you or offended you in any way.
- “I choose to love you even though I don’t feel like it sometimes.”
- “I am praying for God to help me manage my anger.”

Caution: Be careful not to let anger and despair drive you to decisions you may regret.

If your spouse is physically abusing you or has a chronic behavior that causes an unsafe environment, you can still forgive them. But remove yourself from the environment to protect yourself and your children. You can love your spouse from a distance until they prove themselves trustworthy and rehabilitated from their harmful behavior.

what to do

- Choose to forgive your spouse in your heart. Then show that forgiveness by doing something kind for them: a long hug, a foot massage, giving flowers or a card, cooking a nice meal.
- Tell your spouse you have forgiven them.
- Tell your children you are choosing to forgive your spouse and ask them to do the same.
- Send your spouse a loving and respectful text message or email.
- If you fall back into unforgiveness, repent and start over.

what not to do

- Don't talk negatively about your spouse behind their back.
- Don't allow your heart to grow cold by shutting down and withholding affection.
- Don't allow your children to choose the path of unforgiveness and turn against your spouse. (Remember, your spouse is their father/mother and always will be).
- Don't create an alliance against your spouse by choosing a team of supporters who will only side with you.

what to read

- Matthew 6:12-15; 18:32-33
- Mark 11:25
- Luke 17:3-4
- 2 Corinthians 2:6-11
- Ephesians 4:31-32
- Colossians 3:12-14

what to pray

Dear merciful Lord, I thank You for the power of forgiveness. Help me to be quick to forgive and also quick to ask for forgiveness. When I forgive in words, allow Your Holy Spirit to fill my heart with peace. I pray that the peace that comes only from Jesus will rule in my heart, keeping out doubt and questions. Help me find the compassion that comes with true forgiveness.

Help me to walk in righteousness, peace, and joy, demonstrating Your love. Help my spouse to forgive me for my shortcomings and help them to have the mind of Christ. Take any ungodly thoughts captive and make them obedient to You, Lord. Your Word says to “put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Colossians 3:14 ESV). Help us both to demonstrate unconditional love toward one another. In Jesus’s name, amen.

notes

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Week 3

Plan Your Journey

We live in a world of immediate gratification and entitlement. Most people hate the word wait. Many uproot their lives and move on if someone or something doesn't serve them as well as they'd like. That was never God's design, especially regarding the covenant of marriage.

God's timing is often much slower than ours. King David was promised the crown, but he endured years of punishment from Saul before God intervened and fulfilled that promise. Moses led the Israelites through the wilderness for forty years before they entered into the Promised Land. Abraham wasn't able to have the son God promised until he was one hundred years old.

This fifty-two-week guide is a one-year plan to help you win your spouse over to Jesus and to you. One year gives God the time to work in your situation and soften your spouse's heart so they will turn toward you, your family, and God. If you faithfully follow this guide and wait on the Lord to show Himself, you too will receive God's blessings.

what to say

- “I will work on giving you the love and respect God wants me to give you.”
- “I am committed to our marriage and am sorry for how I have hurt you.”
- “I am going on a quest to find ways to improve myself, to serve you, and to strengthen our relationship.”

what to do

- Mark your calendar one year from now as a reminder of your goal. It's not the end of your journey, but it is the end of the first phase.
- Continue to give your spouse the message that you are in this for the long haul through loving greeting cards (handmade cards or handwritten notes are best), text messages, and one-on-one conversations.
- Anticipate rejection, but make a commitment to endure.

what not to do

- Don't get on an emotional roller coaster by following your feelings of despair, loneliness, anger, frustrations or lust.
- Don't give up.
- Husband, don't show your wife unloving behavior because you feel her disrespect.
- Wife, don't show your husband disrespect because of his unloving behavior.
- Don't make yourself available to the opposite sex while you are vulnerable.
- Don't forget about the impact your decisions have on your children.
- Don't spend a lot of time with people who are encouraging you to "get out, divorce, move on."

what to read

- Psalm 37:7; 40:1
- Romans 5:3-5; 12:10-12
- Philippians 4:11-13
- Hebrews 6:12, 10:35-36
- James 1:2-4
- James 5:7-8
- 2 Peter 1:5-9

what to pray

Dear Lord, I ask You to give my family and me the strength to cope during this crisis we are facing. Help us to love each other and become united through these trials. Equip me with a supernatural patience, and help me to trust in your timing rather than forcing my own schedule. Give me hope that someday we will be restored to trust, peace, and faith. In Jesus's name, amen.

notes

[illegible]

Week 4

Expect Turbulence

Your spouse may not respond positively to you for weeks, for months, or even at all. And things may get worse before they get better.

Satan is not happy with your goal because it represents the very essence of Jesus's final prayer, that we all become one so the world will know who sent Him (John 17). What you are doing has the potential to bring your spouse, your children, and all those watching your family closer to God. The Enemy hates that. He will not idly sit by and let you lead people to Jesus.

Turbulence may show up in a variety of ways; a poor response to an unmet expectation, withdrawn behavior, turning to someone or something outside of the marriage, or spiritual complacency.

If you anticipate turbulence, you can prepare for it emotionally, spiritually, and physically. Seek a godly friend that can encourage you, pray for you, and be there for you when you are having a tough day. Hopefully that friend is already going through this process with you to hold you accountable.

Your spouse may not change at all. They might reject your quest despite the conviction of the Holy Spirit in their lives. But keep in

mind, they are ultimately rejecting God, not you. Let God work. Be aware of your own shortcomings and when they surface, deny their demands. You will want to defend and avenge yourself, however, the Bible tells us God is to be our avenger (Romans 12:19). Often, your immediate feelings are driven by your flesh and not the Lord. Delay your response and then discover God's whisper. Follow His leading.

You can take the path the world takes by giving up on your marriage because it's hard. Or you can take the narrow path, led by the Holy Spirit, and receive a far greater reward.

This journey is going to be hard. But God is with you. He will go before you. And He will send people to come alongside you. Trust in Him with all your heart and don't lean on your own understanding. Then He will make your path straight (Proverbs 3:5-6).

what to say

- "We're going to have setbacks and that's okay. It's improvement that I am praying for."
- "Things may be difficult right now, but I'm trusting God and know we can endure."
- "I played a role in our situation, and I want to change any behavior that has pushed you away. Please be patient with me as I seek God and allow Him to make me into all that He wants me to be."
- "It's okay if you don't trust me. My goal is to earn your trust, and I will work hard to make that happen."

what to do

- Speak in a way that conveys respect, gentleness, and humility. When turbulence occurs, control your thoughts, words, and actions so you will draw your spouse close to you, not push them away.

- Husband, show love and kindness to your wife when things get turbulent. She is wounded, and she doesn't trust you. Your consistent behavior will inspire her to turn her heart back to you.
- Wife, show respect to your husband when things get turbulent. Your consistent respect will have a huge impact on him. He will begin to feel hopeful and trust that your respect is authentic which will increase his desire to turn his heart back to you.

what not to do

- Don't fall back into your old patterns when you're wounded.
- Don't respond in the flesh by yelling, cursing, or threatening divorce.
- Don't expect your quest to change your spouse overnight.

what to read

- 2 Chronicles 15:7
- Psalm 27:14; 37:23-24; 42:5, 138:8
- John 16:33
- 1 Corinthians 15:58
- Galatians 6:9
- 2 Thessalonians 3:13
- Hebrews 4:15-16
- James 4:7-8

what to pray

Heavenly Father, You are intimately aware of the struggle I am experiencing—the pain and the despair. Even though I feel wounded, I know my emotions don't have to control my actions. Father, may Your sweet words saturate my mind and direct my thoughts. I pray the same for my spouse. Help them release the

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