

The Journey – Part One - Joy

by Lloyd Biddle

I believe that marriage is a journey not a destination. Our marriages are always a work in progress and, as it was with the apostle Paul who had not already attained his goal but pressed on each day toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, so we as married couples should press onward and upward to glorify God by the strength, holiness and joyfulness of our marriages.

This month, we'll begin to look the word **Journey** as an acrostic for the purpose of explaining some of the key attributes of successful marriages. In your marriage travel bag, I recommend you always carry along the following seven key items to ensure you have the exciting journey of a lifetime that marriage was always intended to be.

- **J – is for Joy**
- **O – is for Oath**
- **U – is for Understanding**
- **R – is for Refresh**
- **N – is for Needs**
- **E – is for Exalt**
- **Y – Yoked**

Here we go!. The letter J in the word journey stands for **joy**. It is very important to always rejoice in the Lord for the spouse you have been given. With over 50% of American marriages ending in divorce and many single women, especially in the African American community, who would love to get married but haven't been found by a suitable mate, it is important to remember to thank the Lord for the companion He has given you.

In Genesis 2:18, God said that it is not good that we should be alone. Think about this for a moment. You could be alone or without your soul mate, but out of all the millions of single people of marriageable age, God chose you and selected a spouse just for you. So, remember to tell your spouse, “God loved me so much that He brought you into my life as a blessing.”

In Proverbs 18:22 it says, “**He who finds a wife finds a good thing and obtains favor from the Lord.**” And Proverbs 19:14 states, “**Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers, but a prudent wife is from the Lord.**” These two verses explain that a wife is a tremendous blessing to a man. She is an invaluable jewel to be cherished. But what is a husband to a wife? Song of Solomon 2:3 says, “**Like an apple tree among the trees of the woods, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down in his shade with great delight (the joy), and his fruit was sweet to my taste.**” Song of Solomon 1:2 says, “**Let him kiss me with the kisses of this mouth – For your love is better than wine.**” A husband is a wife’s shade in what could be a hot and dreary existence. He is a provider of many different blessings, like food, shelter and clothing. He is a **great delight**, for to have the undying love of a man is a tremendous gift.

Along with joy, be sure to include **appreciation** in your travel bag. Bear in mind that the joy of the Lord can engulf your marriage when you learn to **appreciate** the tremendous blessing you have in your mate. By appreciating your spouse, I am not talking about the spouse that *was* or the spouse that *will be*. I am talking very specifically about the spouse that *is* today, the one with all their strengths and all their weaknesses. That very one is your biggest blessing this side of heaven. Never forget that. This one principle alone has the power to solidify an already strong marriage or revitalize a weaker one.

But practically speaking, what things can you do to rejoice in your spouse?

- Tell them often that you love them dearly

- Celebrate their many successes
- Tell your friends and your spouses friends how much you appreciate your spouse
- Regularly thank the Lord for your mate
- Do special things for no special reason for your spouse (nice dinners, gifts, back rubs, the key is do something that your spouse loves)
- **Let the Joy of the Lord be the strength of your marriage**

In the next newsletter, I'll cover the second letter of the journey acrostic, **O** for **Oath**.