

DAILY QUIET TIME GUIDE

BREVARD COMMUNITY CHURCH

FOR BETTER OR WORSE

DEVOTIONAL ADAPTED FROM: ENDURING MARRIAGE BY

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HOW TO HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME

The QT Guide is designed to help you MOVE with God through Bible Reading, reflection and prayer. It can be completed in about 7 mins.

½ Minutes Preparing Your Heart: Invest the first 30 seconds preparing your heart. You might pray, “Lord, cleanse my heart so You can speak to me through the Scriptures. Make my mind alert, my soul active, and my heart responsive. Surround me with Your presence during this time.

4 Minutes Listening To God: Take the next four minutes to read the Bible. Your greatest need is to hear a word from God. Allow the Word to strike fire in your heart. Meet the Author!

2 1/2 Talking To God (Prayer): After God has spoken through His Book, then speak to Him in prayer.

DAY 1

Really, until Death?

Joshua 1:5

Their plan had been very simple. To stay together for the rest of their lives. — Cecelia Ahern, P.S. I Love You

The day I married my wife, I made some remarkable promises. She became my lawful wedded wife from that day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, to love and cherish, till death do us part.

Yes, I actually promised to love her until one of us dies.

Since then, I’ve realized that marriage is beautiful and challenging—sometimes maddening. It’s glorious, sweet, hard, comforting, irritating, frustrating, and exhilarating. Yet behind all these ongoing fluctuations of circumstance and emotions, the promises stand. My plan when I married her was to stay married—and that plan is still going strong.

Still... was “till death do us part” really necessary?

Not only was it necessary, but I believe God designed it that way for a reason. **See, God knows that true love is experienced in the context of enduring relationship.** In fact, this is the type of relationship He offers us. From Deuteronomy to Hebrews, God tells His people, *“I will never leave you nor forsake you”* (Joshua 1:5).

Not only does He invite us into enduring relationship with Him, but He also extends opportunities for us to experience this type of relationship with one another.

Answer me this: How many deep relationships do you have that have lasted more than half your life? Not many. When God came up with the idea of marriage—and I do believe marriage is God’s idea—He did so because He knows true love is experienced in the context of an enduring relationship. So, He put in a no-out clause— “till death do us part”—so we’d stay together.

God’s idea. God’s way. In fact, I believe God’s ideas are always best when they are experienced God’s way.

Prayer: Lord, thank You for loving without leaving. If I haven’t before, I choose to see marriage as a way to learn the language of Your love, as I experience it myself through a relationship intended to last for all my days on earth. Amen.

DAY 2

Always & Never

1 Corinthians 13:7-8

After all these years, I see that I was mistaken about Eve in the beginning; it is better to live outside the garden with her than inside it without her. — Mark Twain, *The Diaries of Adam and Eve*

There are very few permanent things in this temporal world. Love can be one of those when experienced God's way. In the context of marriage, an abstract idea becomes a concrete, visible way to spend two lives.

[Love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.
(1 Corinthians 13:7-8a)

Always, always, always, always, never. These are absolute terms that tell us love has a very clear, set definition.

I want to start with the never: *Love never fails*. The Greek words translated as “fails” are *ec pipto*. *Ec* means “from” and *pipto* means “to fall.” So, when you put them together, it means “to fall from, to fall away, to fall apart.” *Ec pipto*: Love never falls away.

Ec pipto is used in Acts when Peter is thrown in prison. He's locked up in chains, sleeping, when an angel of the Lord comes. The angel kicked him and woke him up, and when Peter stood the chains fell away (12:7). They were separated from him.

Again, in Acts, Paul's ship is near destruction. To prevent this, the soldiers on board cut the cords holding the safety boats, and they fell away from the ship (Acts 27:32). That's our term—*fell away*.

So, when two individuals get married and become one, but then become two again, they fall away. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul is saying this *never* happens in true love.

When Jesus was questioned about the permanence of marriage and the permission to divorce, He answered, “*So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate*” (Mark 10:8b-9).

One plus one equals one—only God can do that. Jesus is crystal clear: Marriage is for life. But in our imperfect, broken world, that dream isn't easy to apply.

Prayer: One True God, becoming one with another person is way harder than it sounds. Some days it seems easier to quit. Separation, however, isn't what You desire for us. So, love my marriage through me. Unify it. Make us one. Amen.

DAY 3

Lose the Loopholes

Mark 10:7-9

I'm a combat specialist and marriage counselor. — Jarod Kintz, *This Book Has No Title*

When I study marriage texts, the absolutes don't bother me. It's obvious there isn't much wiggle room for the permanence of marriage, and I'm okay with that because Jesus was clear about the permanence of marriage. No, my struggle isn't theological. My struggle is applying those permanent truths to real people living real life.

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” So, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate. (Mark 10:7-9)

Not a lot of wiggle room, right? But aren't there any exceptions to the rule? My answer to that question is, “Yes, but...”

Yes, there are exceptions. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus talks about sexual infidelity and therein grants permission to step out of the marriage. Paul also addresses believers who are married to unbelievers. When the unbeliever leaves the marriage, the believer is free to divorce. Yes, there are exceptions...But here is my concern: When we look for loopholes in the exceptions, the loopholes get bigger and bigger. And over time, the principle—truth—is washed away.

So, this passage is hard for me because some people are stuck in miserable marriages. But I still believe Jesus would say, “Stay together.” God's ideas are best expressed God's way, and marriage is one of His best ideas.

Instead of looking for a loophole to exit your marriage, learn to *fight* for your marriage. Some of the more difficult situations will require that you invite others into your life—church at its finest. Find a counselor, a pastor, and supportive family. Sometimes we need to know we have people in our corner helping us fight for permanence.

Prayer: Jesus, You say hard things because life is hard and we need guidance so we know what You're capable of doing. While staying in a miserable marriage is frightening, You said it's possible. When my relationships are struggling, I ask You to show me how to fight for a miracle. Amen.

DAY 4

Fight for Not With

1 Corinthians 13:7

The moment we decide to throw more energy into fighting for our mate than with him, the crack of a fist on the enemy's jaw splits the ears of angels. — Beth Moore

If you're stuck in a miserable marriage, then that no-out clause—till death do us part—is looming large before you, right? And since we've already covered Jesus' view on the permanence of marriage, it seems you have two options:

- You can live in this miserable marriage until one of you dies, or
- You can pray Jesus does a miracle, love breaks out, and you find you're in a great marriage.

I know what you're thinking. *Yeah, Pete, but you don't understand my messy marriage. We are two people living separate lives under the same roof. I don't even like to go home after work.*

Can Jesus really work with that? Yes, He can if you're willing to participate. It's not going to be easy, but you've got His Spirit alive in you. He's more than enough.

Since we know Jesus is in the business of taking dead things and breathing life back into them, we just need a place to start. I recommend you start by learning some basic protection skills.

[Love] always protects. (1 Corinthians 13:7)

The word *protect* comes from the root word for “roof” or “covering.” The idea is that it protects us. It's a shelter—a home. If an intruder enters your home, you defend it, right? The golf club under your bed becomes your weapon of choice to protect what is valuable.

That said, chances are good that one very dangerous intruder is stealing your marriage. It's the idea that you don't have to stick it out. You can leave. Rather than surrender to that thought, I challenge you to surrender to Jesus' power to resurrect. Both of you sit down, admit the marriage is miserable, and invite Jesus to do something miraculous. It's possible. I've seen it dozens of times.

So, what's your choice?

Prayer: Healer, it's not easy to choose to stay. Lead me into a community of friends and family that will live life with us—in good times and bad. I pray we will be a place of support and refuge for each other, so none of our marriages fall victim to the dangerous idea that we can quit. Amen.

DAY 5

Farsighted Love

1 Corinthians 13:7

When asked how their marriage lasted 65 years, a woman replied, "We were born in a time when if something was broken we would fix it, not throw it away." — Unknown

When I'm talking with a struggling couple, I like to paint a vision for them. I'll talk about a year—many years—in the future when they're sitting in rocking chairs on a wraparound porch. It's summer. They're old, all the kids are grilling and organizing the meal. He's got his sweet tea, and she has her lemonade. They look over at each other as the grandkids run circles through the yard, and he says, "You know, we've had some moments; but man, it was worth it."

Why do I do paint this vision?

Because *love always hopes* (1 Corinthians 13:7).

There's a Holy Spirit optimism to true love. Painting a vision enables us to have hope so we can endure the struggle. Why endure? Because *love always perseveres* (1 Corinthians 13:7). To persevere means to remain, to sustain, to bear up under the struggle.

God knows true love is experienced in the context of an enduring relationship—one that perseveres. So, when two people are resolutely committed to remaining together, love breaks out.

Hear me out. I know some of you are together but you're living separate lives under one roof. It doesn't have to be like that. Start praying and find help.

Some of you are divorced and remarried. When you hear Jesus wants you to stick it out, you feel guilty about your first marriage. Take that turmoil to God, but then apply this principle to your current marriage. Make this marriage the one that lasts.

Some of you are divorced and neither one of you has remarried. I ask you to pray about reconciliation. I know it was a mess back there; but maybe, just maybe, this is what God has in mind.

Whatever the circumstances, find a Spirit-led vision for your marriage and stick it out.

Prayer: God, I ask for a God-sized vision for my relationship with my spouse. May Your Spirit present it to me so clearly that I can smell it and see it, and it will sustain me in the times I wish to walk away. To hope is grace, and I am desperate for it. Amen