

Appendix 1

Identity statements for the home.

Here is a sample of marriage and family “Who we are” statements. You can use these, ‘add or subtract’, or create your own from scripture. They need to be written as definitive measurable statements. Each of you (and your children) should regularly review these with the attitude, “As a member of this home, I will strive to live up to this standard.” God’s Word says it, I will obey it.

When one fails in some way, you can avoid the pain of, “you always...”, “you’re a loser...”, or the dreaded silent treatment. First, I recommend pray it don’t say it. Pray until you have a peace that controls the emotions. (Appendix 3 will cover these prayer tips.)

Second, begin with “we.” We need to review who we are as gospel presenters. You have forgotten who we are when you lied to me about where you were. We are people who share honestly and openly. Let’s discuss why this happened and put guards in place so that it won’t happen again.

As gospel presenters in our marriage, we are people who...

- Pray for each other seeking God’s best for our marriage
- Keep marriage pure and satisfying
- Pray, Hear, Do and Seek God’s will in all things, and then obey His voice.
- Wait for God to speak when we are not in unity.
- Speak truth that encourages and builds each other up.
- Never hold grudges but forgive as God forgives.
- Esteem the other higher with our desire to serve his/her needs.
- Listen when he/she speaks. Share honestly and openly.
- Control emotions of fear, sadness, anger, shame, disgust, and despair.
- Discern works of Satan and repent of anything that could harm family.
- Are wise with resources. Give generously.
- Exhort each other to live by the fruit of the Spirit.
- Never self-justify when held accountable to our sin.
- Create sacred space in the home for others to experience Jesus. Be hospitable.
- Encourage each other’s gifts and talents for His glory.
- Worship together in home and corporately.
- Verbalize blessings not curses.

As gospel presenters in our family we will...

- Pray for each other daily.
- Study and memorize scripture together.
- Practice family worship.
- Attend corporate worship with family.
- Speak truth even when we are at fault.
- Be careful with our words, only speaking what pleases God.
- Never hold grudges but forgive as Jesus forgives.
- Give more than we receive.
- Practice regular acts of kindness to each other.
- Never slander.
- Not worry. Trust Jesus!
- Share without strings attached.
- Help each other when in need.
- Love our neighbors.
- Pray for our enemies.
- Protect each other from bullies.
- Make family time fun events a priority.
- Live like God's royal children by speaking and acting with maturity of faith.

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) can be the resource for others. Start with a short list for children and add to it as they age. Allow them to participate in the creation of the identity statements.

We recommend you display a copy in your home and regularly discuss them. As your spouse or children leave each day for work, school, or play, remind them who they are.

“You are an Image Bearer, Child of the King, Gospel Presenter, Warrior of the Kingdom. Go and conquer in His Name.”

Appendix 2

Communication tips from our home to yours.

When our marriage was at its worse, we stumbled onto the teachings of Gary Smalley. The following two techniques are from *Hidden Keys to Loving Relationships*.

Create a word picture of how the offense made you feel. Mike gave an example in the video. It's like talking in parables. When a person hears a story, especially one that relates to their interest, then the full brain becomes activated. Emotions engage and yet reasoning is involved. Here's an example from Smalley and I paraphrase.

He often came in from work, exhausted, grumpy, and unwilling to talk with his wife who was eager to share about the day. She created this story knowing his love for his favorite food.

You know that Philly-steak sandwich at Joe's that you love so much? When you can't finish the sandwich, they always box it up in that little brown box and you anticipate it as a snack later. But you are in a hurry and toss it in the backseat. Forgetting about it, you throw your briefcase on it and then your coat. All day it rides around, getting jarred about with the curves and bumps of the road. By time you get home that delectable sandwich is nothing more than a smashed mess, totally unappealing.

At this point in the story Gary is picturing the sad state of his sandwich. He's totally engaged. Then she gives the moral of the story, *"That's how I feel when you come home. I get the leftover smashed up mess."*

Mike and I have never had a word picture fail to make the desired point. Probably because it's the method Jesus used when He spoke in parables to teach the people. Word pictures may take time to create but they are so well worth the effort.

Another Smalley method that we've found useful is to label the severity of your hurt at the moment it happens. (Kids do well with this.) In a highly offensive scene, the pain is deep by the words or actions of the spouse. You only need to say, "That felt like a watermelon!" In other words, I'm hurting right now. I'm going to need time alone OR we need to stop everything and talk this through now.

If it's a mild offensive yet still hurt, "That's a blueberry. Please do not say or do that again."

Of course, you can use as many levels as you'd like to name fruit or any other objects that vary in size. The idea is to openly communicate how you feel immediately at the time of the offense so that the connection is made for all parties.

While we are on communication skills, let's make sure everyone understands, "Just because you said it doesn't make it understandable." It may make perfect sense in your head with your background and your filters. But your mate isn't in your head or hasn't experienced your background and certainly doesn't share your filters.

Therefore, when in a discussion, one at a time speak how you feel it, see it, and/or how you are processing it. Pause often and ask your mate to repeat what they heard you say. Listen to him/her. If there's a breakdown, then repeat it another way. Ask questions until you can both agree that you are processing together. Always take turns starting out and listening before replying.

You practice this a few years and you'll soon be like us "older couples" who know what's in the other's head before they even verbalize it.

Shelia here: I remember many years ago seeing a plaque in a tourist shop that read, "When Mom ain't happy, ain't nobody happy." Yes, it was a hillbilly shop in our home state.

I didn't laugh. I felt a deep conviction. It's true. My moods affected the entire family. I set the tone for the home far too often. I didn't buy the plaque. Instead, I told Mike, "Any time my mood affects the family, I give you permission to rebuke me." I meant it. Still do. Even though throughout the years I've been scolded by women for such a statement.

Yet, I can tell you that my willingness to change and Mike's tender heart to lead has made that statement a blessing. The few times he had to act upon it has always been something like this, "You need some time with the Lord. I'll finish the dishes."

A wise friend once said, "The words at the beginning of the marriage ceremony and the ones at the end are the most important. I Do...Until death. Therefore, you have a choice, you can spend the next 10, 20, 40, plus years miserably fighting for your rights or you can do whatever it takes to make it work."

Choose the whatever it takes. Be willing to daily pray, "Lord, change me."

Appendix 3

Pray!

Self-awareness is a study of how I am compared to others. We can (and should) become as familiar with our strengths and weaknesses as possible. Are you an introvert or extrovert? What is your love language? Do you know your spiritual gifts? The list of tests available can be daunting. Sadly, at the end of each self-revelation we still wonder, “Why do we do the things we don’t want to do but don’t do the things we should do?”

Our problem lies in looking for the answers to ourselves in all the wrong places. Born again, Spirit-filled believers are new creations in Christ. Our old fleshly default is gone. We now have a new Christ-like default. It no longer matters who we are compared to others. The answer to our question above depends on how obedient we are to our new Christlikeness.

This obedience cannot be obtained by any self-awareness test or counseling. It comes only by prayer. Only our Creator knows why we do the things we do. He formed us in the womb, watches every second of our lives, knows every thought, every desire, every failure. Most importantly, He alone has the ability to use our past to prepare us for the future He has designed.

There are two prayers for every single day of your life. They never grow stagnant.

“Lord, change me! Don’t change the situation or the people. Just change me.”

“Teach me something new about You today as I read Your Word and walk in Your Spirit.”

The first will transform you as you make the changes He directs. The second will thrill your heart. A good face-to-face with Jesus is the ultimate joy. On the website, you will find a free downloadable book by my mentor, Onie Kittle. The six-month, *Prayer, A Way of Life* isn’t a teaching on prayer, it’s a guided template for daily prayer. Everyone who finishes the six months experiences intimacy with Jesus. Give it a try.

Amid everyday life, there are sudden chaos events that cause our emotions to surge. It often feels like a raging storm in our gut. Our thoughts then go awry in whatever emotion takes control from the six unpleasant emotions that the brain recognizes—sadness, fear, anger, shame, disgust, and hopeless despair.

Here are two praying techniques that work well for keeping the reasoning prefrontal cortex engaged. This hinders the limbic system emotions from agonizing your thoughts that often erupt from our mouths causing much damage in our relationships.

Breathe easy!

Step one: When faced with a conflict, don't react. Turn away, Run if you have to. Get where you can relax. Breathe deeply, praying for God to control your reaction. Breathe rhythmically, until you can think clearly and not give in to emotion. Inhale: Christ in me. Exhale: The hope of glory.

Step two: Forgive. Forgive the offense instantly, as you are forgiven by the blood of Jesus. Picture the cross, see your sin in the situation, deal with repentance, then...

Step three: Confront the conflict. Now you can handle it with God's grace AND not have to say, "Why did I do that?" after yet another traumatizing argument.

Okay, simplistic we know, but a far better habit than fighting, yelling, or crying.

Here's another way I recommend dealing with conflict. Remember the goal is to keep the cortex engaged and reasoning.

Write it out!

When the offense comes, tell the offender you need a few minutes. Find a quiet place and make a list of every thought and emotion you are feeling. Write as fast as possible. Don't be concerned about spelling or grammar. Just write down everything: the good, bad, and ugly. This keeps the reasoning brain engaged and focused.

Once your emotions begin to recede, your handwriting slows due to the thoughts relaxing. Then go back over the list and boldly mark through everything that is a lie or cannot be proven. In emotional situations, our imaginations go wild and perceive the situation in ways that are not even evident. The offender is not a monster with horns, and he/she doesn't always do it.

Now reread the remaining list, asking God what His truth is in each. By this time, you will be completely in control of your emotions and willing to yield to the Spirit within.

Pray through questions like:

What is my part in this conflict? How can I bring glory to Jesus? What is it about *me* that needs to change? How do I now respond to the offender?

It has never failed to astound us that when we return to the offender and share our insights with a calm and loving spirit that peace is soon restored and even the offender is changed for the better.

But in cases where the offender is still emotionally charged (limbic in control over reasoning), retreat until his/her reasoning is restored. Mike was taught in seminary, "You can't share the gospel with a drunk. Sober him up first." The same is true here. You can't reason with an unreasonable brain.

FYI: Rent the animated movie, *Inside Out*. It's a perfect example of the brain's control panel. Plus, it's a great way to enjoy the evening.

Appendix 4

Suggested Resources that have blessed our marriage.

John Piper: This Momentary Marriage

This book is the foundation of Mike's teaching. It transformed our view of marriage and evangelism.

Tim Keller: The Meaning of Marriage

We've used this book as a newly married group study guide. There's good stuff in here.

Tony Evans: Guiding Your Children in a Misguided World

This book showed us what a father/husband should be in the home. The testimony of their children proves the power of a godly father.

J. Parker: Hot, Holy, & Humorous

This fun read will spice up your sex life. She has a blog by the same title.

Gary Smalley and John Trent: The Gift of the Blessing

We can't say enough about the power of the blessing. If you're like us and never received the blessing as a child. You'll see how to heal and begin a new legacy in your home.

Evelyn Christenson: Lord, Change Me

One of the most powerful women of prayer. All her books are great but this one is the foundation that changed our lives.

Onie Kittle: Prayer, A Way of Life

We learned to pray with intimate passion by doing this course. At the beginning each day takes a few minutes. By the end, you hate to leave His presence after an hour or more. Yes, do whatever it takes to clear your day for adequate time with Jesus. He deserves nothing less.

E. James Wilder: The Pandora Problem

Dr. Wilder's books are insightful for what he coins neuro-theology. Everyone must deal with narcissists. Sadly, even within our homes. There's a wealth of knowledge here.

Gary Smalley: Hidden Keys to Loving Relationships DVD series

Again, everything he shares helps strengthen marriages. He has a series on parenting as well.

Curt Thompson: Anatomy of the Soul

Dr. Thompson teaches how to rewire your brain in overcoming trauma. It's biblical content contains helpful exercises to put into practice.

Elyse Fitzpatrick and Jessica Thompson: Give Them Grace

Another wonderful tool for parenting. The appendix resources are worth the cost of the book.

There are countless more we could suggest. We will add to this website handouts, podcasts, and additional teachings in the future.