

The Healthy Marriage Toolkit

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What is a toolkit?

“a set of tools designed to be used together or for a particular purpose”

(Collins English Dictionary)

About the toolkit we'll create together today...

In marriage, many things belong to both of you—many things are “one”

But the toolkit we create today is yours personally (i.e., individually)

You may already have some of these tools, but they might be stronger or weaker than some of the ones that your spouse has

All the tools in your toolkit are available to you,
even if your spouse isn't using theirs.

Just imagine having two toolboxes. The work
doesn't stop when one toolbox is missing or
incomplete.

The 6 core tools for your toolkit

How I think



#1

My experience
≠ my spouse's
experience



#2

I am
contributing to
the challenge



#3

My spouse is
good, and is my
teammate

What I do



#4

Invest in
yourself



#5

Help your
spouse flourish



#6

Pray with the
right mindset



#1: My experience \neq my spouse's experience

Why a saw?

You need to split your perspective of there being one experience into two. Have two perspectives!

No matter how powerful your feelings are, no matter how obvious or clear your perspective is...

...there is another one that is equally valid.



At least 95% of the time...

- If you are hurt and offended, so is your spouse
- If you are scared, so is your spouse
- If you feel like your needs are not being considered, your spouse feels the same way

**I have never met a spouse that wants a bad marriage!
Every spouse wants a good marriage, and wants the
pain to stop!**



How to embrace two perspectives

1. Say to yourself, “My spouse has a different point-of-view about what’s happening, and my spouse is trying to protect themselves from hurt.”
2. Before demanding that your spouse understand your perspective, or asserting your own perspective, ask about theirs.
 - Calmly say, “I think we have two different points-of-view. Can you explain yours to me and then I’ll explain mine to you?”
3. Play back what you’re hearing, and then say, “Do you feel like I understand what you’ve explained to me?”
4. Then say, “Is there anything else that you’d like me to understand?”



#2: I am contributing to the challenge

Why a jackhammer?

This is the most powerful tool in the toolkit, and it's used to address the most powerful obstacle in marital conflict

Every conflict has at least two people contributing to it

If you fail to see your contribution to the challenges in your marriage, you will never fully resolve them—they will always come back in some form



It's often hard to see that you're contributing to your own problems. Some examples...

Scenario	Obvious contribution	Less obvious contribution
Wife makes criticism of husband, so husband withdraws emotionally and physically	Wife is critical	Husband's withdrawal feels like a punishment to wife, which leads her to "pursue" his attention more and become more critical
Husband says emotionally abusive things to wife, and this has been going on for years	Husband is saying abusive things to wife	Wife has failed to establish healthy boundaries and reasonable consequences for harmful behavior
Husband continues to resist regular church attendance and prayer at home, and both partners fight almost daily about spiritual practices and children's spiritual development	Husband is resistant	Wife has framed spirituality as a source of tension for the entire family and has failed to create other ways to invest in children's spirituality
Wife is usually "not in the mood" to be sexually intimate with husband, and husband is angry	Wife does not want to be intimate	Husband has failed to see that sexual intimacy is deeply connected with other kinds of intimacy in marriage (emotional, spiritual, etc.), and has become demanding rather than empathetic



Why is full resolution of issues dependent on both spouses acknowledging their contribution?

- Not seeing your contribution keeps you in the victim position versus putting you in a position of empowerment and healthy control
- If you don't know your contribution, you can't prevent it from happening again
- Your spouse cannot fully reconcile with you if it's clear that you don't know how to prevent your contribution from recurring
 - It's also much harder for your spouse to forgive you if you're not apologetic



How to identify and address your contribution to tension

1. Identify the negative pattern in the relationship
2. Identify what you do in that pattern
3. Ask yourself
 - “If I stop doing what I usually do in that pattern, what will happen?”
 - “What could I do instead of what I usually do?”
4. Repeat these questions until you come up with something more constructive
 - A credible person may also be able to help!
5. Meet with your spouse at a time when tension is very low, and apologize for your contribution
6. Tell your spouse what you plan to do based on steps 3 and 4



#3: My spouse is good, and is my teammate

Why a paint roller?

When we are offended, our emotions drive us to paint an incomplete and bad picture of our spouse. We need to paint a more accurate picture!

It is not an exaggeration to say that we can see our spouse as a manipulative and evil monster sometimes.

If you fail to balance negative—although valid—thoughts about your spouse with the positive truths about your spouse, you will lose access to happiness in marriage



Examples of common emotionally-driven negative and incomplete thoughts, and how to repaint the image of your spouse

Emotionally-driven negative and incomplete thought	More accurately repainted image of your spouse
My husband wants to control me	He is insecure in my love for him and afraid that he'll lose me if I become more independent
Every time she sees me being happy, she interrupts and destroys my happiness	She feels burnt out, neglected, and unfulfilled in her life, and needs care for herself
He always chooses his family over me. He doesn't prioritize me, or love me as much as he loves his family.	He's never really had healthy boundaries with his parents. It's hard for him to bond more to me because he doesn't feel safe with me or trust me due to the conflict in our relationship.
Whenever we agree on how we'll manage our money, she doesn't follow through on what we agreed to do and continues to spend irresponsibly—she is an immature child and doesn't care about our family	She is using money to compensate for an emotional insecurity, feels ashamed about our financial situation, and has never really bought into our "agreements"



How to paint a more accurate picture of your spouse

1. Acknowledge unhealthy behaviors in your spouse
2. Identify and reject any labels and assumptions about your spouse and their intentions
 - Reject thoughts like, “He/she is [negative quality],” and, “He/she wants to [bad intention] me.”
3. Say to yourself
 - “My spouse is a good person and wants good things even if he/she doesn’t know how to make good things happen.”
 - “We both brought character flaws and misconceptions into the marriage. How can I support my spouse while protecting myself?”
4. If your negative thoughts have persisted for more than 3 weeks, speak with a credible person about them



#4: Invest in yourself

Why a hammer?

You are being pulled in so many directions, and will lose touch with who you are and where your life is headed. You need to nail down the direction of your life!

Marriage, parenting, work, friends, extended family, finances, service—when is there time for you?

If you do not invest in yourself (i.e., personally, as an individual) you will become bitter, resentful, less resilient to normal stressors, and ultimately less effective as a person.



“The invest in yourself conversation”

1. Get a good night's sleep
2. Schedule 2 hours to sit with yourself the next day, with a pen and paper, or a computer (with all notifications turned off)
3. Pray for God to be with you and guide you in this exercise
4. Create a table with the following items in the left-most column, in any order:
 - Spiritually, physically, emotionally, intellectually, relationally (marriage, family, friends), professionally, and financially
5. Create three more columns:
 - How am I doing, what could be better, what will I do differently in the next two weeks to make things better?
6. Fill out the table
7. Do the things in the last column, and review again in 2-3 weeks

Sample table

My life...	How am I doing?	What could be better?	What will I do differently in the next two weeks to make things better?
Spiritually			
Physically			
Emotionally			
Intellectually			
Relationally (marriage, family, friends)			
Professionally			
Financially			



#5: Help your spouse flourish

Why a flashlight?

To help your spouse flourish you need to search carefully for something that may not be easy to see.

What your spouse needs to flourish—to live up to their fullest potential in Christ—may be very different from what you need.

If your spouse isn't flourishing, then they are probably slowly languishing.



Signs of flourishing or languishing

Flourishing	Languishing
Comfortable pace of change and improvement, with things getting completed before moving on to the next change	Little change in life over an extended period, or many change efforts starting but never completing
On average, more positively-charged interactions (e.g., compliments, words of affirmation, optimism, low fixation on regret)	On average, more negatively-charged interactions (e.g., criticism, low motivation, pessimism, a sense of “trying to survive” over an extended period)
3 or more healthy friendships with a balance of “light” and “heavy” discussions, and frequent interaction	1-2 friendships, mostly “heavy” discussions, with less frequent interactions or ones where the friends may feel burdened



How to help your spouse flourish

1. Be encouraging (that includes “lifting their spirits” even when they’re not feeling down)
 - Contribute positive energy (e.g., smile, compliment, hug, help, be present, appreciate their person)
2. Support your spouse’s interests
 - If you don’t know what they are, ask them or help them explore interests
 - You don’t necessarily have to participate in all their interests, but support them appropriately
3. Spend one-on-one quality time with your spouse very regularly
 - When you are together, focus on your spouse (avoid distractions), slow down, be a great listener, and seek to understand and learn more about them

In all the above, pay close attention to what works best with your spouse!



#6: Pray with the right mindset

Why a ruler?

When you pray correctly, it puts your heart in the proper posture for God to do His miraculous work. Prayer gives you an accurate measurement of where you stand.

Prayer should humble you, give you compassion toward your spouse, and give you comfort in God's care for you






If we approach God simply so that He can change our spouse, without openness to His work on our hearts, we will miss the point of prayer



The complete prayer for your marriage

1. Ask God to help you see your flaws, and your contribution to the challenges in your marriage
2. Admit your sins and mistakes to God
3. If there is an area in your heart that you know needs to change, or a bad habit, admit this to God
4. Ask God to help your spouse thrive and grow in accordance with His will, *not* yours
5. Ask God to give you both the courage to make the changes that you need to make
6. Tell God that you want to grow in your love for Him

Summary of the healthy marriage toolkit

#	Tool	Name	Why this tool?
1		My experience ≠ my spouse's experience	Split your perspective of there being one experience into two
2		I am contributing to the challenge	Most powerful tool, for the most powerful obstacle
3		My spouse is good, and is my teammate	Paint a more accurate picture of your spouse
4		Invest in yourself	Nail down the direction of your life
5		Help your spouse flourish	Search carefully for what will help your spouse flourish
6		Pray with the right mindset	Pray correctly for an accurate measurement of where you stand

GOT QUESTIONS?

Ask anonymously!



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Meeting Code: 241102

Let's talk Resources: The "why" and "how"

By: Dr. Christina Salama PsyD, LMFT

Licensed Psychologist

Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist

Clinical Supervisor

Why Therapy?



to improve their
mental health



to cope with
life transitions



to increase
self-awareness



to increase self-
acceptance



to practice
vulnerability



to learn healthy
coping skills



to process difficult
experiences



to speak with a
neutral person



to work through
relationship issues



to unlearn
harmful cycles



to express
themselves freely

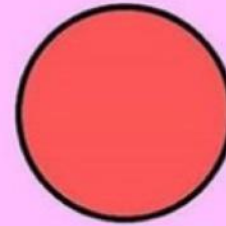


to heal from
pain and loss

When to seek Services?

- Versus talking to Abouna
- When the issue causes an impairment in your functioning
- When you're ready to do the work
- Not recommended as a "last resort"

When Most People Start Therapy:



When they are in crisis at a breaking point

When We Should Start Therapy:



Before we reach crisis

When we want to learn more about ourselves

When we want to start having better relationships

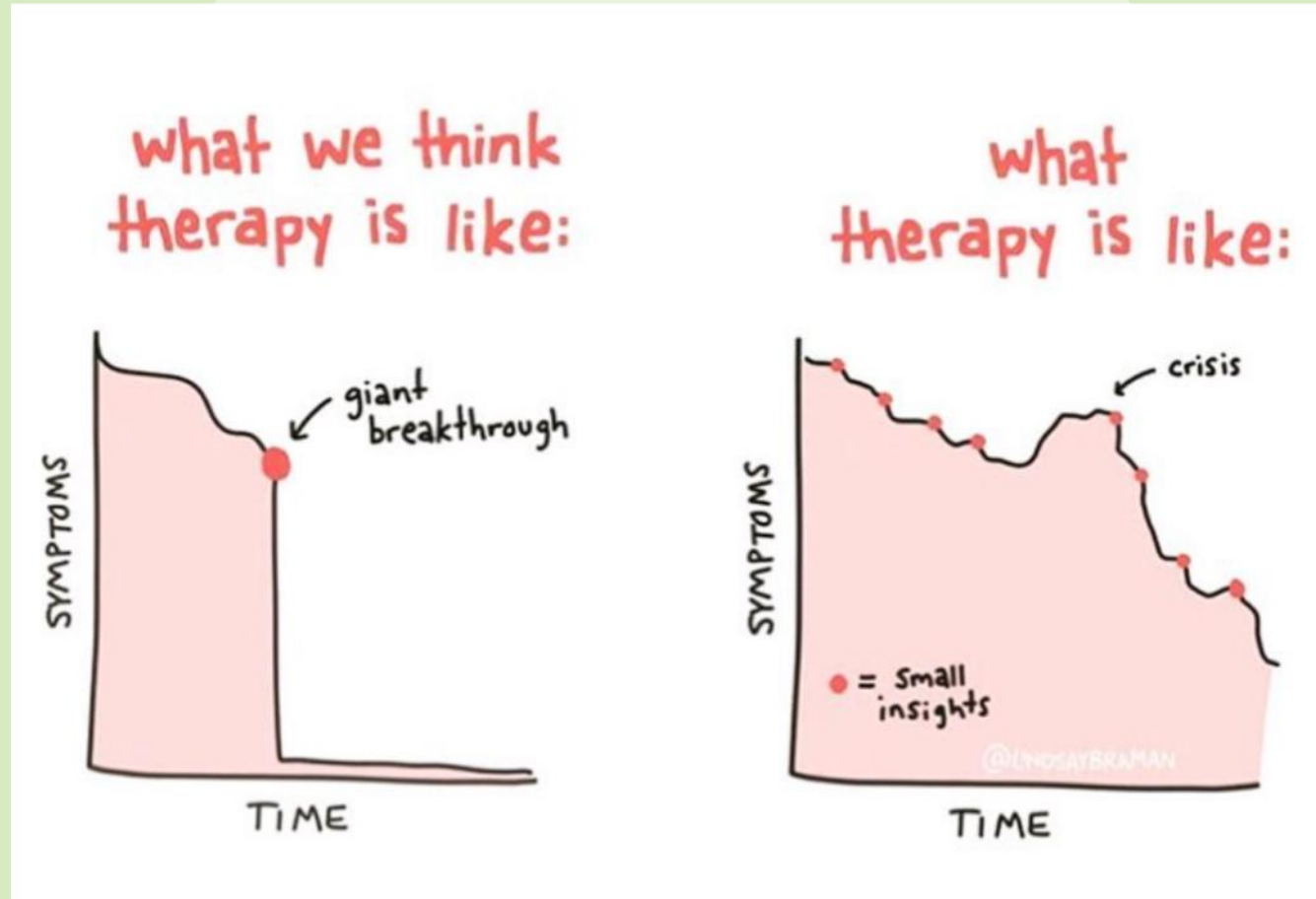
When we feel interested

@letstalk.mentalhealth

What can I expect?

- Paperwork
 - Consent
 - Confidentiality & mandated reporting
 - Insurance
 - Release of information
 - History and information gathering
 - Tears (maybe)
- Payment
- Frequency of sessions

But really, what can I expect?



What if therapy didn't work for me before?

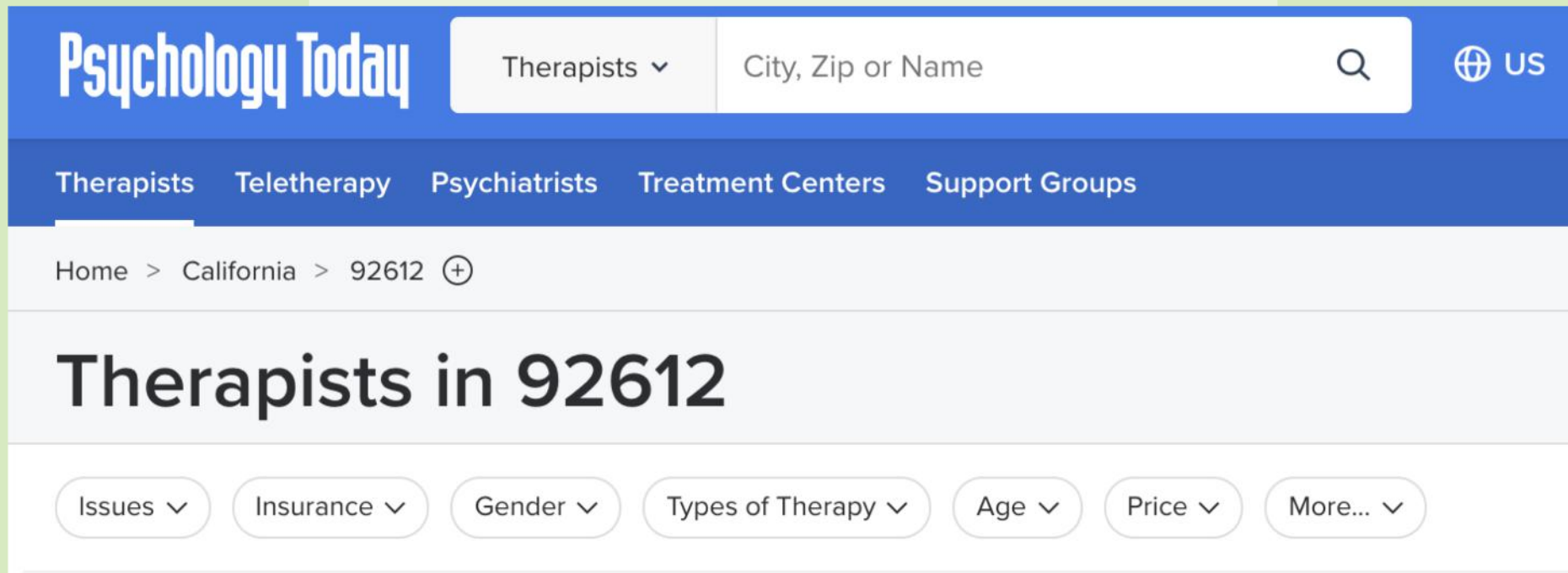
- Readiness/work
- Goodness of fit
- Different approaches for different issues
- Be honest with yourself regarding expectations

How to seek services: (insurance)

- What is covered?
 - Depends on your insurance benefits
 - Check on your insurance portal or call member services to find out
 - In network vs. out of network
 - “superbill”
- What is not covered?
 - Couples therapy
 - Group therapy (usually cash-pay per session)

How to seek services: (privately)

- Ask network for referrals
- Psychology today (ask about in-person vs. telehealth)
- Betterhelp or other online platform



The screenshot displays the Psychology Today website interface. At the top, the logo "Psychology Today" is on the left, followed by a search bar containing "Therapists" and "City, Zip or Name" with a magnifying glass icon. To the right of the search bar is a globe icon and "US". Below the search bar is a navigation menu with links for "Therapists", "Teletherapy", "Psychiatrists", "Treatment Centers", and "Support Groups". The main content area shows a breadcrumb trail: "Home > California > 92612 (+)". Below this is the heading "Therapists in 92612". At the bottom, there are several filter buttons: "Issues", "Insurance", "Gender", "Types of Therapy", "Age", "Price", and "More...".

What should I look for in a therapist?

- What do all these letters mean and is it relevant?
 - PhD/PsyD Doctor of Philosophy/Doctor of Psychology
 - Not all doctorates are licensed psychologists
 - Psychological testing
 - Therapy
 - LCSW/MSW/ASW- Licensed Clinical Social Worker/Master's in Social Work/Associate
 - LMFT/MFT/AMFT- Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist/Associate
- Check preferences for gender, religion, education, age, specialty, format
- See if they can offer a short, free consultation and ask about their experience/comfort in treating your presenting issue
 - Questions to ask on next slide

QUESTIONS TO ASK AT A CONSULTATION SESSION

Questions related to their practice

- > What type of therapy do you practice?
- > What kind of treatment styles do you use?
- > What experience do you have working with clients with my therapy goals?
- > How will I know if therapy is working?

Questions related to you as a client

- > How often should we meet?
- > Am I able to speak with you between sessions?

Questions related to payment

- > What is your rate per session?
- > What insurance do you take?
- > Do you offer a sliding payment scale?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF AFTER A FEW SESSIONS*

About the therapist*

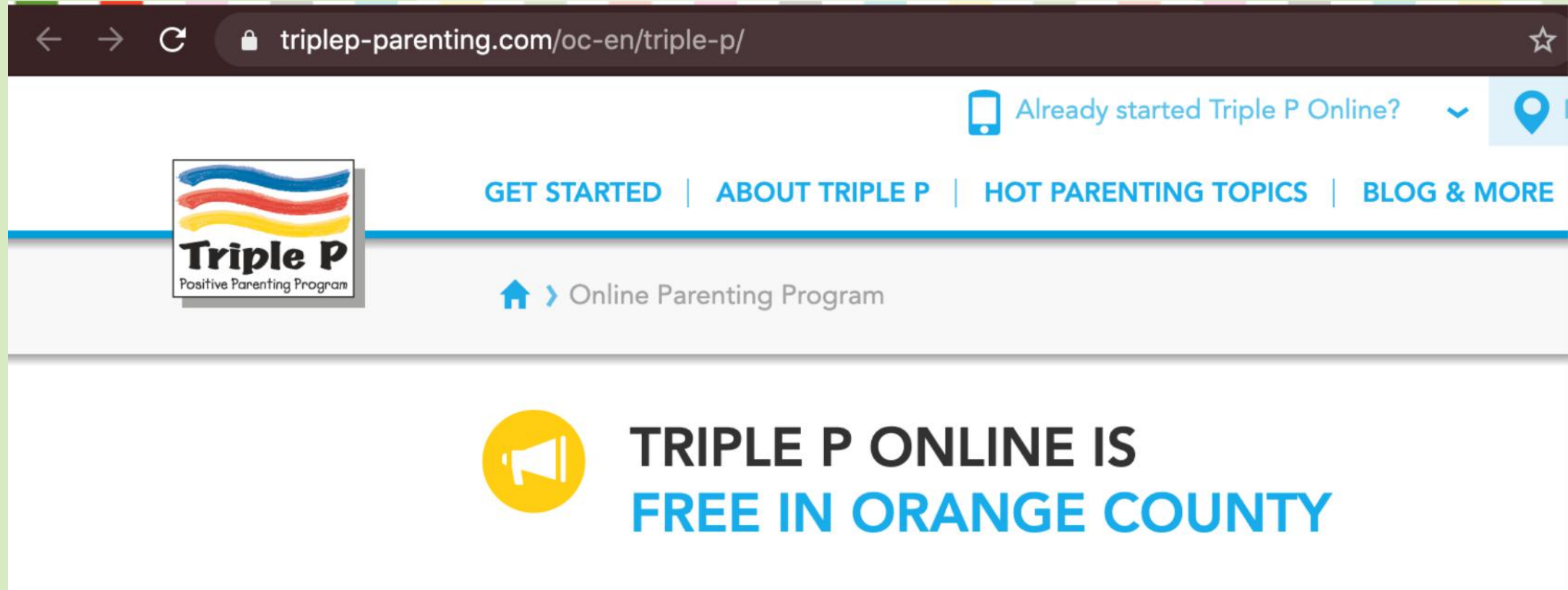
- > Do you feel emotionally and physically safe?
- > Does it seem like you could trust this person?
- > Do you like how they carry themselves?
- > Do they seem knowledgeable and competent?
- > Are they setting the right tone?

About your experience*

- > Do you like them and look forward to seeing them?
- > Do you feel distracted/not engaged during sessions?
- > Do you count down the minutes until you can leave?
- > Do you feel heard and understood?
- > Do you like the questions that are being asked?
- > Does the therapist seem empathetic?

Parenting

- Triple (Positive Parenting Program)



The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL triplep-parenting.com/oc-en/triple-p/. The page features a navigation menu with links for [GET STARTED](#), [ABOUT TRIPLE P](#), [HOT PARENTING TOPICS](#), and [BLOG & MORE](#). A logo for Triple P Positive Parenting Program is visible on the left. Below the navigation, a breadcrumb trail shows [Home](#) > [Online Parenting Program](#). A prominent yellow megaphone icon is positioned to the left of the text **TRIPLE P ONLINE IS FREE IN ORANGE COUNTY**.

Phone numbers to call

- For Emergencies:
 - 911
 - CAT-Crisis Assessment Team- through the county
 - California Youth Crisis Hotline 1-800-843-5200
 - Suicide Prevention Center 1-800-784-2433
 - Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255 (TALK)
 - Crisis Text Line 741741
 - 811 (has a mental health professional on staff 24/7)
 - NAMI warmline-714-991-6412 call or text 24/7

County phone numbers to call

- Orange County
 - 855-625-4657
- Los Angeles
 - 800-854-7771
- Riverside
 - 800-499-3008
- San Bernardino
 - 888-743-1478
- San Diego
 - 888-724-7240

GOT QUESTIONS?

Ask anonymously!



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What God Wants For You

Silvia Farag

Your marriage is the most important human relationship

A STRONG MARRIAGE REQUIRES
TWO PEOPLE WHO CHOOSE
TO LOVE EACH OTHER
EVEN ON DAYS WHEN THEY
STRUGGLE TO LIKE EACH OTHER

dave willis



FOCUS ON FAMILY™

**Those who learn to die
to themselves are the
ones who get to
experience the
resurrection power that
comes with it.**

Fill Your Marriage with Grace

One of the highest
representations of the
image of God
is a husband and wife
serving each other.



1 Corinthians 10:13

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it”



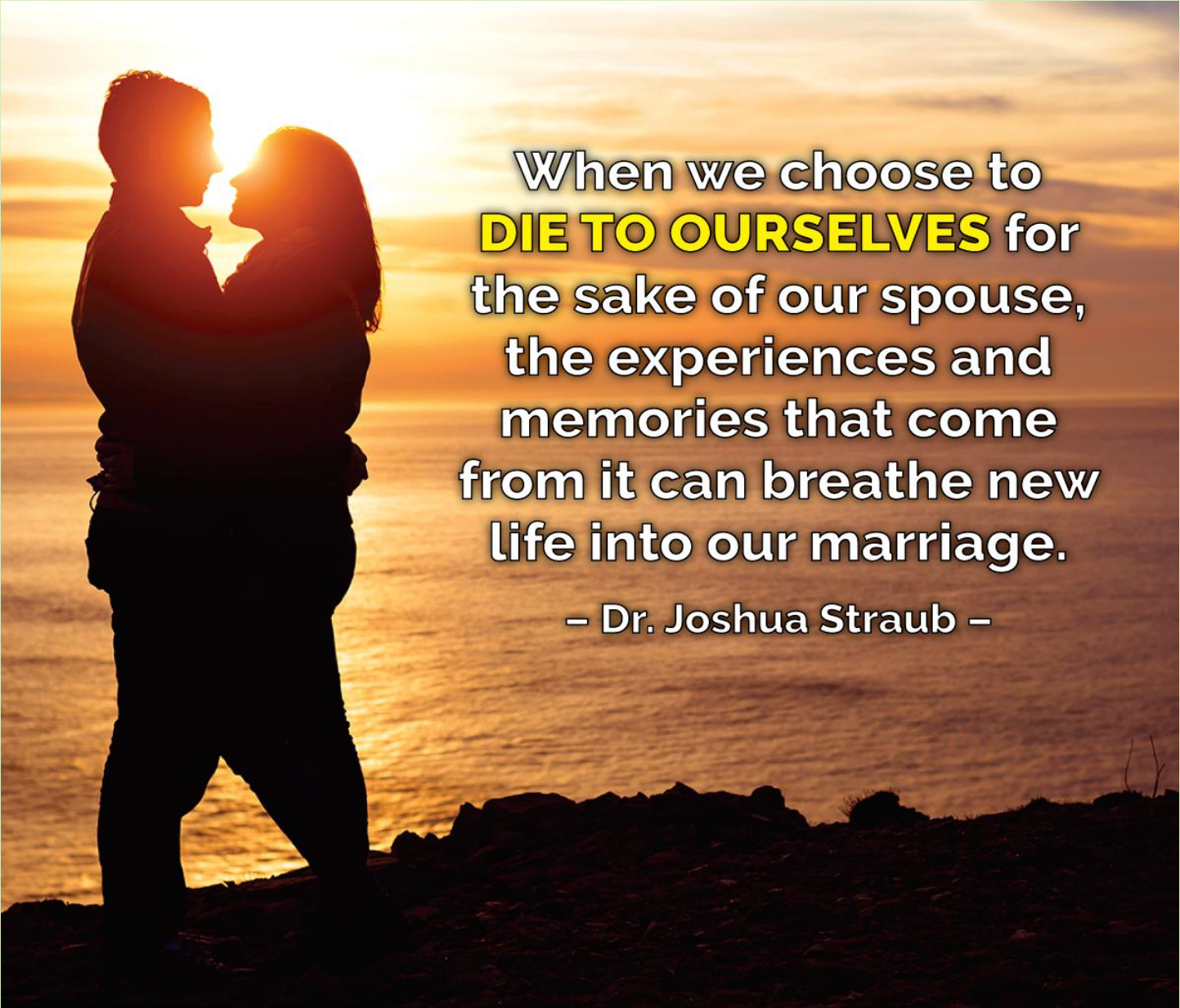
A romantic scene of a man and a woman in a field of sunflowers at sunset. The man is on the left, holding a sunflower, and the woman is on the right, holding a bouquet of sunflowers. The background is a warm, golden sunset sky. The text 'God' is at the top, 'Him' is on the left, and 'Her' is on the right. A quote is at the bottom.

God

Him

Her

The closer we move toward
God, the closer we move
toward each other



When we choose to **DIE TO OURSELVES** for the sake of our spouse, the experiences and memories that come from it can breathe new life into our marriage.

– Dr. Joshua Straub –

2 Corinthians 5:21

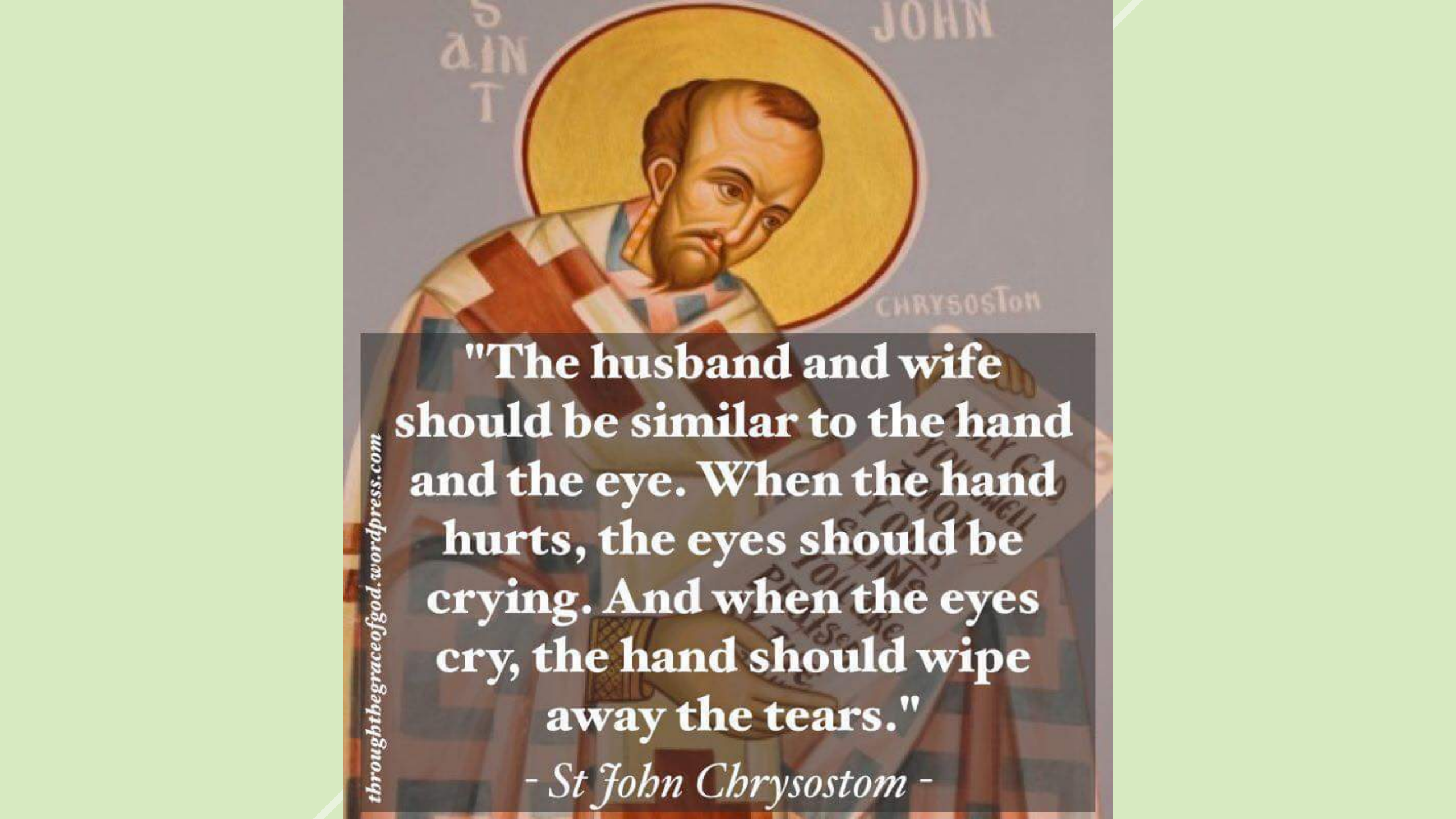
“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God”

A woman in a white, ruffled dress is shown from the waist up, with her arms outstretched horizontally. She is positioned in the center-right of the frame. The background is a soft, light blue sky. A semi-transparent grey rectangle is overlaid on the image, containing the text. The text is in white, with 'DYING TO SELF:', 'FOR', and 'AND' in a bold, sans-serif font, and 'Your' and 'His' in a cursive script font. 'GOOD' and 'GLORY' are in the same bold, sans-serif font. A thin white horizontal line is located below the text.

DYING TO SELF:
FOR *Your* GOOD
AND *His* GLORY

**I HAVE BEEN CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST; AND IT IS
NO LONGER I WHO LIVE, BUT CHRIST LIVES IN ME
- GALATIANS 2:20 -**





"The husband and wife should be similar to the hand and the eye. When the hand hurts, the eyes should be crying. And when the eyes cry, the hand should wipe away the tears."

- St John Chrysostom -

John 2:5

“Whoever keeps God’s word, truly the love of God is perfected in Him.”

**Marriage is not going to fulfill your desires.
It will transform them.**

**Love is an action even
more than a feeling.
It requires intention
and attention, a
practice called
*attunement.***

The Gottman Institute

nothing WILL EVER SHOW
YOU HOW SELFISH
YOU ARE, HOW BROKEN
YOU ARE, LIKE MARRIAGE CAN.

It is one of God's
ULTIMATE IDEAS FOR
REVEALING TO US OUR NEED FOR HIM.

Steven Curtis Chapman

"The two shall become one flesh" Matthew 19:5



Romans 8:28


AND WE
KNOW THAT
IN ALL
THINGS

God works

FOR THE
GOOD
OF THOSE
WHO LOVE
HIM

Romans 8:37

WE ARE MORE
THAN CONQUERORS
THROUGH **CHRIST**
WHO LOVED US



ROMANS 8:37

Watch Your Focus

What we focus on, we empower

“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report...think on these things”

Philippians 4:8

The apostle Paul wrote a whole letter about joy from a jail cell. And his big secret to having joy in jail? He focused on God, not his chains.

Let heaven fill your thoughts

“Since you have been raised to new life with Christ, set your sights on the realities of heaven, where Christ sits in the place of honor at God’s right hand. Think about the things of heaven, not the things of earth”

Colossians 3:1-2

**“Good thoughts bear good fruit, bad thoughts
bear bad fruit – and man is his own gardener”**

James Allen

Allow the Holy Spirit to renovate your mind

“Because of the LORD’s great love, we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.”

Lamentations 3:22-23

It's the people that irk you that God will use to grow you. Truth be told, you won't learn how to love well if you only love lovable folks.

**“Fill our hearts with joy and gladness, that we too,
having sufficiency in everything always, may abound
in every good deed.”**

- St. Basil Liturgy

GOT QUESTIONS?

Ask anonymously!



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Workshops

Instructions

1. Split into 3 groups
2. Each group will take one set of questions
3. Come up with an answer for each question
 - Take up to 30 minutes to come up with the answers
4. Choose one person to present your group's answers to the 3 groups at the end

Man-to-man

- **Group #1 – vulnerability**
 - What does vulnerability mean?
 - In general, how can being more vulnerable improve intimacy in your marriage?
 - How can we become more vulnerable as men?
- **Group #2 – sexual intimacy**
 - What are common differences between men and women when it comes to sexual intimacy?
 - For most couples, what do you think is the greatest obstacle to improving sexual intimacy?
 - Imagine a young man who is soon to be married. What advice would you give to help him start off his marriage on the right foot when it comes to sexual intimacy with his wife?
- **Group #3 – spirituality**
 - It is often said that the husband is the “priest” of the family. How can you carry out this responsibility if your wife seems to know more than you about God and church?
 - What are some ways that you can assess the spiritual health of each member of your family?
 - What role does the church play, if any, in supporting the spiritual growth of each family?

Woman-to-woman

- **Group #1 – accepting him**

- What are common changes that wives wish they could make in their husbands?
- How can we reconcile (1) wanting to grow and be better and (2) accepting our husbands the way they are?
- What is a common conflict pattern in your marriage, and what power do you have to break that pattern?

- **Group #2 – quality time**

- How do the average man and the average woman prefer to spend quality time?
- What difference would it make to your husband if you spent time with him doing something that he really enjoys doing?
- What are common things that sabotage time spent together as a couple?

- **Group #3 – external voices**

- What are the top factors that shaped your understanding of how marriage works and how a husband and wife should interact with each other?
- Who has the power to influence your marriage today?
- What are some ways that a husband and wife can strengthen their influence on their own marriage, and as a result weaken other influences?

Panel Discussion

GOT QUESTIONS?

Ask anonymously!



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PLEASE JOIN US FOR DINNER...

Stonefire Grill
4325 Del Amo Blvd,
Lakewood CA