

Effort

A conscious exertion of hard work



Think of a beautiful garden for a moment. What does that garden require to remain beautiful? Water, edging, trimming, mowing; it requires a lot of work - it requires *effort* to remain beautiful. Consider also for a moment, a house that is in foreclosure; weeds grown up in the yard - the grass dead or dying. What happened there? Neglect - no *effort*. King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 24 that he had walked by the vineyard of a "sluggard," someone not willing to do the work to keep it up. Weeds, thorns, and broken down walls - thinking about it, his conclusion was; "A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest - and poverty will come on you like a thief and scarcity like an armed man."

Friends, this analogy can be made in our marriages also. A sound, healthy marriage requires *effort*; it requires *a conscious exertion of hard work*. Like the vineyard or the garden, a marriage will wither and die if a couple does not continue to work at it. The word *effort* emphasizes the importance of human responsibility in cooperation with God's grace. I think of 1Corinthians 15:10: "by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." Carmen and I have a great marriage; not perfect, but strong and vibrant and beneficial to us both. It is by God's grace, but we have also put in the effort to make it great.

I truly believe anyone can have a great marriage. I am not the smartest guy or the most spiritual; but by God's grace, I've continued the work and Carmen and I have persevered through a *lot* together. You can also have a great marriage, but it is going to require effort. It will require prioritizing your spouse, connecting with your spouse even when you don't feel like it, seeking to meet his or her needs. It will require humbling yourself and seeking the Lord instead of standing your ground and fighting about stuff that in the long run doesn't even matter. It will require seeking the Lord and His design for marriage and learning to do things His way, rather than yours or the culture's way. *You can do it!* Put the effort into your marriage and see how it transforms!

Helpful Resources:

Fortified Marriages Resource page: www.fortifiedmarriages.com - The Fortified Marriages Manual & Workbook is a great resource to help you and your spouse understand God's plan for your marriage.

Article to check out:

10 Ways To Put Effort Into Your Relationship by Travis Atkinson - www.lovingatyourbest.com