

# Renewing Marital Intimacy

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Closing the Gap Between  
You and Your Spouse

David Powlison



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**Y**ou started out telling each other everything. Time flew by when you were together. You listened intently when 1 Corinthians 13 was read at your wedding. “Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy...” you nodded your head. It all seemed so easy then.

But now you have nothing to say to each other. The intimacy and trust you once enjoyed are gone—replaced by bickering, long silences, and hurried conversations about your schedules.

### **Why Do Marriages Become Distant?**

Marriage is the most intimate of relationships. When a man and woman marry, they are meant to be one in heart and mind. God calls this being “one flesh.” Why do two people who have pledged to be faithful, kind, and loving to one another become separate?

Long ago in the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve enjoyed perfect intimacy with God and with each other. But when they disobeyed God, their intimate relationship with him and with each other was destroyed. When you think about it, you’ll notice

that the way you treat your spouse reflects the way you treat God. The same things that cause distance in your relationship with God cause distance in your relationship with your spouse.

Jesus told a parable that gives a graphic picture of what creates distance in our relationship with God and one another. According to Jesus, it's what's in your heart that makes intimacy with God and your spouse difficult. In the parable of the sower, he compares our hearts to four different kinds of soil. Each of these soils is a picture of what is in our hearts that creates distance in marriage:

Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew

and produced a crop, multiplying thirty, sixty, or even a hundred times. (Mark 4:3–8)

### **The Hard Heart Doesn't Know How to Love**

The first type of soil is a hard path. If a farmer drops grains of wheat on a highway it won't grow. The person whose heart is like the hard path is completely self-centered, so he can't respond to love from God, and doesn't know how to love others. When you have a hard heart, your relationship with God and your spouse is all about getting your own needs met.

The self-centered person feels affection for others, but not real love. You feel affection when your spouse is nice to you—if she makes you a good meal or if he brings you flowers—but real love is more than a feeling. Love means bearing in mind the interests of another person. Love is a lifelong commitment to your spouse's well-being and to building harmony and unity. If you and your spouse don't love each other like this—if you are both only committed to your own well-being—then there is a huge, distance-creating hindrance in your marriage. Your marriage won't flourish any better than a seed sown on the hard road.