

# Coaching: Marriage Matters



Week 20

## The Growth Stage of Marriage

There are for the purpose of these discussions four stages of marriage—the Establishment Phase (years 1-7), the Growth Stage (years 8-20), the Transition Stage (years 21-35), and the Mature Stage (years 36 and beyond). While many couples may feel quite comfortable during the Growth Stage of Marriage, it is within these years that some of the deepest and most profound personal and relational growth occurs.

Wouldn't it be great if after the first 7 years of marriage both you and your partner's bad habits disappeared? And all of the incorrect information you brought into the marriage was corrected? And all the mistakes you both have made were overcome and forgiven? And both of you had reached a complete understanding of one another?

Well, this just doesn't happen! Marriage is a continuing developmental process, not a destination. However, with each new insight, with each good day, with each achievement—there is cause for celebration as the relationship grows.

Admittedly, some marriages get off to a better start than others. But no matter, any marriage can improve given enough time, effort, good information, and love.

It is during the Growth Stage of Marriage that the patterns of communication and decision-making (that were developed during the first 7 years of marriage) will be tested and refined. The challenges as well as the opportunities for growth during this stage in your marriage will come from how matters are handled related to raising children, managing finances, making career choices and moves, and growing spiritually.

When trouble does raise its ugly head, effective conflict resolution will be especially important as the marriage ages because the stakes will be much higher and the losses can be so much greater than earlier in the marriage.

During the Growth Stage of Marriage, hopefully both husband and wife will continue to gain insight into how much of their time, energy, and attention are being given over to self-will and self-need, and how much of their efforts are being directed towards responding to what is best for one another and the other members of the family.

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**Some Things to Do This Week**

- Day 2: Reflect on the message and scripture reading; journal if you like
- Day 3: Pray for or meditate on what you think you need
- Day 4: Discuss the message and scripture with your spouse
- Day 5: Plan how you can best respond to the message
- Day 6: Rest; don't think about the message or the scripture; listen in the stillness
- Day 7: Recommit yourself to your marriage

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Applicable scripture listed under Discussion References