



The Pandemic Marriage

Finding Christ in Crisis

By Edward C. Lee

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Prologue

Pandemic marriage is a very real thing that many couples are facing as a result of the impact of working from home, having church in their living room and homeschooling kids who are distance learning. All of this is before they get to deal with financial uncertainty, not being able to see their loved ones, or move about like they are accustomed to doing. Even in these realities and the many more that are popping up in marriages, there is hope.

In this e-book I pray to begin to provide your marriage with the hope and perspective of Christ. God knows where you are and a renewed, deeper relationship with Christ is His plan.

In Christ's Power

Edward

Chapter 1 - Pandemic Problem

The first time I heard that COVID-19 was a global pandemic, was when the worship leader at our church called to tell me she wanted to stop having live singing during our worship service. Up to that point, “pandemic” had been a word used somewhat hyperbolically to overstate or overemphasize how big or inconvenient something was. But for the first time in my lifetime the use of the word pandemic was rightly fitting the moment. For the first time something really was happening on a global scale. With the global event that now is COVID-19 has come global realities. Masks, once thought of as unnecessary are now an essential that we keep in multiple places so as to never be caught without one. People like me who have annually resisted getting the flu shot now await a vaccine - with great anticipation. There

are plenty more revelations from the pandemic that could be pointed out, and the point is, a pandemic has been unleashed and things are and have changed. Like many of the changes wrought by our new reality, there are now significant changes going on in many of our marriage relationships. Some changes will be short lived and will fade away in time, some changes will alter the fabric of your marriage forever. In short, we now have what I call, *The Pandemic Marriage*. Which simply means the fingerprint of months of always being home together, becoming full time teachers aides, with few opportunities for a date night outside of the house that has become our office cube, movie theater, favorite restaurant, school and church - has left a mark on our marriage. To be clear, not all of these “marks” have been bad, some of the changes that couple’s are experiencing are healthy and long overdue. Still, it is the specific changes that elevate stress and therefore distress that we want to address in this e-book. In working with couples both pre and mid pandemic period, I am writing from a big premise: ***COVID-19 has not created marriage problems instead it has revealed problems that already existed.*** The problems were hidden by busyness, work ambitions, steady income, our kids sports activities and our general routines. Now, with the closeness of spending so so much more concentrated time together the irritations have nowhere else to hide. So now, without the cover of our routines, frustrations are rising and with nowhere else to put them, they are coming out on our husband or our wife.

It must also be mentioned that the problems in this pandemic season are not new problems: communication, intimacy and financial strain have been around since the beginning of time -literally. That just might be our first ray

of hope! Because, to long term problems, our God is eternal. His wisdom runs back to before, “Let there be light”, was spoken while also running ahead to the *next* that only God known and understands at this moment. God not only has the answer, but He Himself also is the answer for Pandemic Marriage. What is being revealed to us now, is what God has always known of us and our marriage. So in these pages let’s seek God for the help and insight needed to survive this pandemic marriage.

Chapter 2 - Pandemic Pressure

So then, let’s begin to look at three specific pressure points that couple’s are feeling. As said in the first chapter, it is not the problems that are new. Instead, in our current environment these old foes of healthy relationships are applying pressure in unique ways.

1. Communication: Words being spoken nor words being heard equate to communication. The communication we all want in our marriage is the ability to speak openly and clearly while also being heard with care and without judgement. It is also true that much of our communication is non-verbal.

For example, I have some weird hardwiring from my childhood: I think it a pretty big slight to leave or come into the house without saying good bye, I love you, or Honey, I am home. However, in recent months I have gotten used to coming and going without as much as a word. Just yesterday, I came home and was in the house for a good 15 minutes before I said anything to my wife. Why - because she may have been on a work call in what we used to call our basement but now is her office. Early in the pandemic I

would come home and run down with every intention of sharing with my wife. In this year, and definitely after that one time I walked in when she was on a video call with her camera on, I learned that things are different and even though my wife is home she is not really here, but at work. So by not speaking, at times, I am really communicating a love and respect that is greater than coming home and greeting my wife the way I have for the last 17 years. The point is that not every opportunity to talk is communication. In this new season we have to learn to communicate differently, there may be actions that will need to speak for us louder than our words.

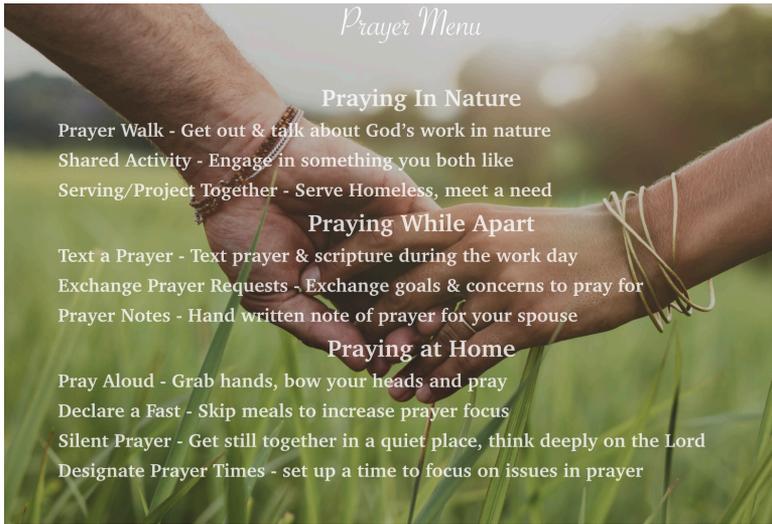
The easiest way to know what needs to be communicated to our spouse is to ask **[Grey Areas: water, soda, coffee communication analogy - <https://youtu.be/4Z6zfoRxb-8>]**

In seeking to know how to best communicate to your spouse, here are a few suggestions:

- Ask! - First and the simplest solution is to ask, try something like, “What do you need? What is the best way for me to communicate with you during this trying season?”
- Quiet times - time where we don’t need to talk or communicate so that other responsibilities like work can be met and put as little stress on our marriage as possible.
- Quiet zones - a place of retreat or solace. Both my wife and I talk to people for our “livelihood”. So when my wife said to me, “I don’t want to talk to you, I have been talking to people all day and I am really just tired of talking”. I ~~fell in the floor crying~~, I understood. It may be necessary to create quiet places in your house where you

can just be alone - as needed. Don't be shy about telling each other what you need. If it is not understood that going to your quiet zone is not a slight or insult, than say it out loud, "I just need a minute or two, and then we can talk, but right now I am going to my quiet zone".

- Schedule It - The old adage goes, "What gets scheduled, gets done". By scheduling time to talk, you afford your marriage more time to talk in healthy ways. My wife and I wanted to talk the other night, by setting a specific time to do so, we both were able to take care of our other in and outside of the house responsibilities so we could carve out some time just to catch up and talk. I had a virtual coaching session that ran a little long, so my wife did let me know I was four minutes late (LOL), but having planned time ensured that we had the talk and spent the time we both knew our marriage needed. The bottom line of communication in the Pandemic Marriage is to be intentional about understanding and expressing *specific* communication needs. Let me also say before moving on, simply saying "we need to talk more" won't work and is far different from the needed specificity of, "Can we carve out some time to talk about "**xyz**", let's catch up at 8". In my book, [Elevate Your Marriage: 7 Practices of Highly Intimate Couples](#), I shared a prayer menu, that couples can utilize to align with God in prayer, especially if it has proven difficult to pray aloud together as a couple.



In this new season we have to learn to communicate differently, there may be actions that will need to speak for us louder than our words.

2. Intimacy: Intimacy isn't just sex and yet sex is a big part of intimacy. So, let's be clear that when we talk about intimacy it is and is not about sex - only. Intimacy is connection. So there can be financial intimacy, emotional intimacy, intimate conversation, and yes - physical intimacy a.k.a. sex. Perhaps the most significant intimacy is the one that stands as the glue for all the other notions of intimacy and that is spiritual intimacy. Spiritual intimacy asks and answers, how does your marriage connect with God? The answer to that question is the answer to the survival of your marriage in the pressures related to the pandemic. A marriage where the individuals are themselves intimately connected to God, finds His strength in times that seek to

suck the life out of the soul. That was the story of Adam and Eve. Having stated their intimate connection in the verses leading up to it, the last verse of Genesis 2 explains that they stood naked and unashamed before God.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his moth and hold fast to his wife, and the shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Genesis 2:24-25

Scripture paints a picture of closeness existing between a husband, wife and the God that created and brought them together. Before we can linger too long on the strength of that picture of unity the strange, outsiders voice of Satan's serpent comes in and deceives Eve. The serpent's deceit drives a wedge between Adam, Eve and God. On the strength of the serpents deceit she is now persuading her husband to eat of fruit God had forbidden and her husband is betraying God, by doing so. I bring their story up because it is the explanation of what happened to intimacy. God's original design was for husbands and wives to be "naked and unashamed" before God [Genesis 2:25]. Now, with the once foreign voice of sin entering and marring the picture of marital intimacy, we, like Adam and Eve did, are covering ourselves with "fig leaves" cf Genesis 3:7. The challenges of intimacy that exist simply weren't in God's original design. But, not as if God was without strength or understanding, in Genesis 3:21 He sacrificed some animal and used that skin to cover Adam and Eve in a durable way. That act of restoration in Genesis was foreshadowing your own relationship with Christ! The point is - strange voices still creep into marriages, they are intended to drive wedges between God and the husband and wife He has joined together. Yet, as it was then, it is now, a sacrifice has been made - Christ died for the sole point of being the

bridge to intimate connection between God and the married couples He has joined together.

So now, in our current reality, deeper relationship with Christ is that bridge between pandemic pressure and pandemic praise. The challenge of the pandemic is that couples are being forced to spend more time together than they are used to. It is like being under a magnifying glass. Every quirk and every difference is being magnified by the fact that we are now always near our spouse and they are also always near us. By growing in our relationship with Christ we begin to use a different magnifying glass. Instead of allowing our 24/7 proximity to drive a wedge between us, lets magnify Christ in our marriage and receive a more intimate relationship with our spouse. Here are three ways to magnify Christ's presence in your marriage.

Creation: Get out go for a walk and admire Christ's handiwork in all that He has created. Find places that you enjoy: a walking path in the neighborhood, a picnic or nature walk at a state park, a nice drive through the mountains, a picnic or nature walk, or a summer day at your favorite beach; or perhaps plant some seeds and watch God grow them into beautiful trees or flowers full of color. Just get out and worship God's work in creation. Your time together in this way will restore your marriage and provide it with focus and intimate harmony with God.

Our Bodies: Husbands, spend a few minutes concentrating on how God made your wife. Take a deep breath, but don't get too hot and steamy—yet. But isn't she amazingly created by God? The rhythm of her form as she moves, the depth of her eyes, the curves and contour of her body—all of them. A woman's body is delicately balanced chemically, emotionally, and hormonally. She is a nurturer, a caregiver, and yet she can be strong and fierce if

need be. All of that is crafted, formed, and fashioned by God. Worship, respect, and focus on the creativity of the God that made your wife.

Ok, wives, your turn. God made your husband for you, all that he is and that you love about him, God did that. Sorry, I don't have the same vivid insight here and I am running short of words, but I hope you get the point. Our bodies, male and female, are the work, the great work of the Lord, and our brains are hard-wired to desire the differences. When we can separate from the weightiness of life, lie in bed and take note, intimate note, of God's great work in our him or her, we find reason to worship God. Make it the habit of your marriage to hug each other daily, feel your bodies fit together, and worship the God that made you, both of you.

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Salvation: Shine light on Christ's great work of salvation! Since you are spending time together, how about, magnify the time spent studying Christ - together. In 16 years of working with couples one thing I have noticed is that the biggest thing missing from most Christian marriages is CHRIST. Every month we are adding new classes to our elevateyourmarriage.com website. Of course, there are plenty of other good sites and resources too. Find healthy books and courses centered on and about Christ, to read and/or study together.

3. Money: Of the biggest pressure points couples are feeling in the pandemic, money (as always) carries the biggest emotional weight with it. Even pre-COVID I would often share with couples that if there are money issues than the other two (communication and intimacy challenges) are pretty much a guarantee. Financial challenges typically and predictably raise emotions and point fingers like nothing else a couple can face. With so many jobs being lost, mortgages and rents falling behind and just general economic uncertainty, financial pressure is at an unprecedented level. Pressure that which quite naturally has made its way into many marriages too. While financial uncertainty is doing its job and ushering financial uncertainty into many marriages here is how your marriage can regain it's footing even under this current financial pressure:

1. Give: Ok, this might seem like the first thing not to do. But let's exercise our faith in Christ in this "season", by giving to Christ centered causes. Not out of superstition or with an intention to give to get from God. Instead, find worthy causes to give to that will make a difference in the lives of others. Let's also be sensible, things are tight, there is already uncertainty staring at your marriage, so give sensibly. In both Mark 12:41-44 and Luke 21:1-4 is the story of the widow that gave a "mite". A mite is less than half a penny. Even in Jesus day, there wasn't a lot you could do with a half of penny {LOL}. Yet, when Christ saw her faithfulness to give in spite of her present reality, Christ calculated it to be

more than anyone else gave. The point I am making, is don't give some large sum of money if you are already under financial pressure (unless you feel the Lord telling you to). Rather, give a small amount - out of faith. Our money, all of it belongs to God, so He is not impressed with the amount of our giving. From a heart of trust in the Lord, give to remind yourself where your strength comes from, so that even from the place of pressure God is still using you in the life of others.

2. Pray: God is our provider, ask Him for wisdom on how to manage what He has given your family. God wants us to be good stewards over all He has given us. The truth is - we don't know how to do that, without His wisdom leading us. So pray for wisdom on how to manage what God has given you to manage. Read Matthew 25:14-30 the Parable of the Talents and let that passage lead you into prayer as a couple. How does God want you to manage what He has entrusted your marriage with?

3. Plan: One of my favorite passages in the Bible regarding money is in Proverbs 6:6-11. I really like the rhythm of those verses: *Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise. Without having any chief, officer, or ruler, she prepares her bread in summer and gathers her food in harvest. How long will you lie there, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want like an armed man.* What these verses underscore is that

like even the little ant does, we have to work, prepare and plan so that when harvest time comes there is something to be harvested. What we do now will be what we will harvest later on down the road. No one knows what's next, post-pandemic, we simply have no idea. We can, however, be sure that there will be a next. So then, how we work God's plan now will be what there is to harvest in what's next. Consider the ways of one of God's smallest creatures, the ant keeps moving without prompting, the ant works, plans and prepares knowing that it all leads to fruitful gain. Do you have a plan? Even if things are tight, ask God to develop a plan in you that will plant a hopeful outlook in your marriage.

Chapter 3 - Pandemic Promise

Yep! Things are tough, there are real points of pressure. The good news is that God has been here more times than any of us can count! He, the Lord, has always walked closely and led those that belong to Him through the calamities and tough seasons of life.

In the book of Exodus when God's people were experiencing severe mistreatment at the hands of Pharaoh and the Egyptians, God made clear that He was allowing it so that everyone would know He is the Lord. First, to Moses, God's chosen leader to lead Israel out of their oppression, *God said to Moses, "I am who I am". And He said, "Say to the people of Israel, "I am has sent me to you."* God also said to Moses, *"Say to this people of Israel, "The Lord, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you.";* This

is my name forever, and thus I am to be remembered throughout all generations... **Exodus 4:14-15**. Not only did God need Moses to know that He was the Lord, He also wanted Israel, His people to know that He was the Lord. So He told Moses to tell His people the Israelites, Say therefore to the people of Israel, “**I am the Lord**, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgement. I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and **you shall know that I am the Lord your God**, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians - **Exodus 6:6-7**. I always marvel at the number of things that God says He will do, while asking us to do nothing except to have faith (Circle or highlight each “I” statement in the above passages). In their time of being overwhelmed the Lord bore all the weight of that moment and He did so for the purpose of them knowing **He is the Lord, their God**. I pray you hear that. God is not shocked in the weightiness of the moment - we are, but He is not.

As much as God needed Moses the leader of the people as well as the people of Israel to know that He is the Lord, He also needed Pharaoh the leader of their enemy as well as the Egyptian people to know He alone is the Lord! So in **Exodus 7:5**, God explains to Moses, The Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring out the people of Israel from among them.” Then of Pharaoh, He says, Thus says the Lord, “By this you shall know that I am the Lord...” in **Exodus 7:17**. Again the clear point being, God wanted all involved and indeed all of the world to know that He is the Lord!

Similar to how we are now impacted by the pandemic in some way, the “Exodus Experience” was on a scale that

every person in the nations of Israel and Egypt was involved and impacted. By the sheer position of both of these nations, one known as God's chosen people and the other regarded as the most powerful, God was sending a message to the entire world - **He is the Lord**. What God was doing for Israel in Egypt stands to this very day that God is not only behind every headline He also continues to have a point and purpose for, His people - in it all. When plagues of flies, frogs, polluted water, etc... swept through Egypt, God knew where His people were and He alone protected those that were His. Begin to place the truth of who God was in the Exodus experience to come alongside your marriage now - in a pandemic. God is doing what He sovereignly does in the earth and yet He still knows where your family is. In what stresses and strains your marriage now, doesn't God just want you and your spouse to know - I am the Lord, with a sovereign plan and a unwavering promise!

God Knows the Plan

As mentioned earlier, God has been through this big deal calamity stuff quite a bit. There was another time when Israel was sent into exile because of their sin. God sent them into exile, but He didn't abandon them while they were in it. Read Jeremiah 29 and you will see God's encouragement to His people in the reality of the tough days they faced: *...Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters, take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters, multiply there and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare...For I know*

the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope...Jeremiah 29:4-14

It was a nationwide calamity that no one could escape. Yet, God told them to keep living, planting and planning for the future and finding peace in the problem because He knew the plan. Has that changed? God still knows the plan He has for his people - even in a pandemic. The stress your marriage is facing is real! At the same time, God's promise to never leave nor forsake you still stands, His promise of being your shepherd still stands, the promise of Christ your risen savior having all power and authority still stands. In the many promises of God toward His people He demonstrates a plan that is bigger than the moment we face. I pray that in your marriage, you and your spouse will begin to turn over your communication, intimacy and money stress over to the Lord - the Savior of your marriage. Because, the biggest promise in a pandemic is Christ Himself!

Christ alone has been, is and will be the Lord of your marriage. Where your marriage is weary, Christ is your place of rest, Matthew 11:28. Where we are without direction for our life and marriage, John 10:11-18 & Psalms 23, where we are bearing burdens that no one can understand, Christ is acquainted with our griefs and sorrows in Isaiah 53 & Hebrews 4:14-16. The point of His coming from heaven to earth was to secure relationship for His people with God the Father and the answer to the stress and strain of the Pandemic Marriage is in a deeper relationship with Christ. On the elevateyourmarriage.com site we strive to share an ever growing menu of effective Christ centered tools and resources for your marriage. Know that I am praying for your marriage and stand ready

to serve your marriage and/or ministry group as we walk
and study together to see Christ strengthen your marriage!

Love and Blessings

Edward

About the Author



Edward is an author, conference speaker and Pastor of the LongView Bible Church in Owings Mills, MD. Through his writing, Edward helps couples connect their marriage with truths found in the examples and principles of the marriages in the Bible. He believes that through a better relationship with Christ, you can have a better relationship with your spouse.