

Appreciate and Admire

By Jim Merhaut



As a child, you learned to say thank you. As an adult, you need to bump your gratitude up to the next level by adding expressions of admiration. Expressing appreciation with admiration is an essential marriage skill.

For

Couple

Season

Spring

Needed

Bible, small notebooks or sheets of paper stapled together, pens

Prepare in Advance

Mark your Bible at Matthew 9:18-29.

Activity Plan

1. Say a prayer to begin:

Holy God, be with us as we explore your Word. Fill us with your Spirit, so that we might find more to appreciate and admire in our marriage. Grant us faith to receive all the good gifts you offer. In Jesus' name. Amen.

2. Read aloud Matthew 9:18-29 from your Bible or the text at the end of this activity. How did the different people in this account indicate or express their admiration and appreciation of Jesus? How did the power of faith in Jesus transform their lives?
3. Discuss how you understand the difference between appreciation and admiration. Consider how appreciation is saying thank you. It is an essential spiritual disposition in light of God's abundant blessings. Admiration is a specific expression of appreciation that highlights the unique gifts of the other. For example, thanking a spouse for keeping a job that supports the family can go deeper when admiration is added to it: "I admire how you use your skill with mechanics to excel in your work and how much you care for your customers. Thanks for sticking with your job, even on days when it isn't very fun."
4. As a couple, discuss to what degree you agree with the following statements:
 - Our marriage can improve.
 - God wants us to be happy.
 - God will give us what we need for a joy-filled marriage.
 - Our efforts to improve our marriage will be blessed by God and will produce positive results.
 - Regular expressions of appreciation and admiration are essential for a happy marriage.

What difference might your thinking about these statements make in your marriage?

5. Commit yourselves as a couple to the following daily routine for one week. Then consider committing to it for a longer time.
 - a. At the end of each day, have each person write down the two following things in a journal or booklet made of several sheets of paper stapled together:
 - This is what I appreciated about my spouse today: _____.
 - This is what I admired about my spouse today: _____.



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- b. If you did not express your appreciation and admiration verbally when you felt it, do it now. (Over the days, take a moment to reflect on the growing number of entries and to let your appreciation and admiration for one another grow.)
- c. Offer thanks to God for blessing your marriage.
- d. Praise God for the specific way that the gift of faith is working to transform your marriage.

Matthew 9:18-29

¹⁸ While he was saying these things to them, behold, a ruler came in and knelt before him, saying, “My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her, and she will live.”

¹⁹ And Jesus rose and followed him, with his disciples. ²⁰ And behold, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, ²¹ for she said to herself, “If I only touch his garment, I will be made well.” ²² Jesus turned, and seeing her he said, “Take heart, daughter; your faith has made you well.” And instantly the woman was made well.

²³ And when Jesus came to the ruler's house and saw the flute players and the crowd making a commotion, ²⁴ he said, “Go away, for the girl is not dead but sleeping.” And they laughed at him. ²⁵ But when the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took her by the hand, and the girl arose. ²⁶ And the report of this went through all that district.

²⁷ And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, “Have mercy on us, Son of David.” ²⁸ When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him, “Yes, Lord.” ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it done to you.”

