



# *How Do You Build a Good Marriage?*

*A good marriage is built by two people's capacity to adjust to bad things*

What makes a good marriage? Ask most people this question and you'll probably hear something about love. But in their book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good Marriages*, Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott present extensive research that a **“good marriage is built by two people's capacity to adjust to bad things.”** And they say there are five tools every good marriage uses to battle bad things:

1) **Ownership** — taking responsibility for the good as well as the bad. It's far easier to avoid responsibility for our problems by blaming someone else, but admitting mistakes and owning up to our part of the problem is a powerful predictor of turning something bad into something good.

2) **Hope** — believing that good wins over bad. Having hope involves at least two things: desiring the kind of marriage we do not yet have and believing that the kind of marriage we want is possible.

3) **Empathy** — walking in your partner's shoes. Research has shown that 90% of our struggles in marriage would be resolved if we did nothing more than see the problem from our partner's perspective.

4) **Forgiveness** — healing the hurts you don't deserve. The failure to give or receive forgiveness accounts for most marriages that do not endure. Those simple words, “I was wrong, will you please forgive me?” are strong enough to battle bad things in marriages.

5) **Commitment** — living the love you promised. Dr. Scott Stanley at the Center for Marital Studies at the University of Denver has concluded that the term “commitment” includes constraint and dedication. Constraint keeps a couple married not because their hearts are necessarily in it, but because they gave their word “‘til death do us part.” Dedication is a couple's active, enthusiastic devotion to one another and to their marriage.

This article is based on the book, *When Bad Things Happen To Good Marriages*, by Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott.  
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