CELEBRATING MARRIAGE IN HARD SEASONS

(for couples walking through illness, pain, or caregiving)

A GENTLE INVITATION

When life is marked by appointments, fatigue, uncertainty, or pain, celebration may feel distant—perhaps even unnecessary. However, recognizing what is still good, meaningful, tender, and intimate can serve as a lifeline holding us together through the storm.

Celebration means recognizing the good and choosing to share it with each other. Things such as:

- a small win on a hard day.
- one moment of strength or courage.
- a kind word or a completed task.
- a brief moment of laughter amid heaviness.

When illness or caregiving shapes our days, it can slowly shift our focus to survival, crowding out connection, making us feel alone and unseen. Celebration gently pushes back against that. Over time, it can:

- deepen intimacy—helping us feel seen and known.
- rebuild safety—reminding us that we are there for each other.
- strengthen trust—anchoring our relationship in shared goodness.

Small moments become streams of steady light on hard days.

A CELEBRATION EXERCISE

- PAUSE — At the end of the day (or during a quiet moment), pause together. Even 2–5 minutes is enough.
- NOTICE — Taking turns, answer this question: What is one small thing that mattered to me today?

  Every time you answer this question, it strengthens your bond.
- RECEIVE — Respond in a way that acknowledges your spouse's response, but doesn't minimize, ridicule, or belittle. For example:
  - *I see why that mattered.*
  - *I'm so glad you shared that.*
  - *Would you like to share more?*
- THANK GOD — Close the exercise with a simple prayer: Thank You, God. Consider facing each other and holding hands or embracing.

SIMPLE CELEBRATIONS FOR HARD DAYS

- Sit together and name one good thing.
- Grasp hands and say: We made it through today.
- Step outside for a breath of fresh air and whisper: We're still here.
- Send your spouse a kind text.
- Speak a short blessing over each other: God is still with us.
- Write a short note of encouragement.

VERSES TO PRAY TOGETHER

By wisdom, a house is built, and through understanding, it is established; through knowledge, its rooms are filled with rare and beautiful treasures. (Proverbs 24:3-4)

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you. (Ephesians 4:29 GNT)

May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus, that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 15:5-6 ESV)

Don't let selfishness and prideful agendas take over. Embrace true humility, and lift your heads to extend love to others. Get beyond yourselves and protecting your own interests; be sincere, and secure your neighbors' interests first. In other words, adopt the mindset of Jesus the Anointed. Live with His attitude in your hearts. (Philippians 2:35 VOICE)

A MARRIAGE PRAYER

Lord, in the middle of what is heavy, help us notice what is still good. Grant us eyes to see one another with tenderness and hearts that remain open, even when we are tired. Teach us to celebrate small moments, and to hold them gently as gifts from You. Strengthen our love and our hearts, and remind us that You are present in every part of our story. We are so grateful, Lord.In Jesus' name, amen.