

Tools for a Lifetime: Build a Better Marriage

Charlie and Ida McClendon, married 63 years. They have taught and used the Dynamic Marriage "tools for a lifetime" to build a better marriage over 63 years together.

For a lot of couples, 2020 was a particularly hard year for their marriage.

But when Charlie McClendon received calls from distressed couples who had already taken a Dynamic Marriage course, he knew just what to do.

"I told them to go home and get out their Dynamic Marriage books and go back through the material," Charlie said. "And when I saw those same couples a few weeks later, they told me, 'We had what we needed all along.' And they were smiling."

Charlie and his wife Ida have been leading Dynamic Marriage courses at their church for two decades.

To do that, they had to go through training. So in 1999, they participated in Facilitator Training Seminar. The couple drove to Nashville, Tennessee for the weekend event.

At the training, they learned to facilitate marriage classes effectively. They also experienced a condensed version of the Dynamic Marriage course.

"To tell you the truth, when we took the training, we had a really good marriage," Charlie chuckled, "but the course made our marriage even better. So we were sold!"

The McClendon's took Dynamic Marriage back to their Jacksonville, Florida congregation. The church was growing quickly, adding about 200 young families a year.

Many of those young couples experienced difficulties in their marriages, Charlie said. As a senior minister, he was working hard to provide counsel to hurting couples.

Charlie thought it would help if they could work with the couples in small groups. And that's where the Dynamic Marriage course was so helpful to their ministry.

"We've had couples about to break up and go their separate ways get their marriages together and become leaders in the church!"

Those leaders recommended the course to other couples, so the word spread.

"Usually when we get ready to start a class, I have more couples than I need because of the word-of-mouth recommendations."

Dynamic Marriage classes are led in groups of 8-12 couples. The class size is limited because structured small group interaction over nine weekly meetings is an important part of the course.

During the course, couples learn the tools to build a better relationship. And Charlie is a big believer in those tools.

"Dynamic Marriage gives you tools for a lifetime. That's what I call them. Tools for a lifetime."

The practical nature of the course has made it a popular component of the ministry at his church.

"People always ask when we are going to have it again."

Charlie and Ida have led a Dynamic Marriage course almost every year since 2000, and sometimes two courses a year.

That is until 2020, when the pandemic hit. For several months, they were not able to lead classes.

But the McClendon's stayed busy with church ministry in other ways; Charlie has been a senior minister and elder at the same church for 48 years.

And they stayed busy with family. Married for 63 years, the couple has five children, 20 grandchildren, and dozens of great grandchildren.

But this summer, the McClendon's are getting ready to lead Dynamic Marriage again.

"One of our elders who has been through the course, his daughter just got married. So, he wanted to make sure she and her husband had a chance to take the class."

Charlie says they've seen so many couples on the verge of divorce turn their marriages around as they applied the tools learned in Dynamic Marriage.

His advice to married couples? "Get the tools so that when you have a problem, you know how to fix it."

Tools for a lifetime. That's what Charlie calls them. And at 83 years young, with 63 years of marriage to his credit, he should know.

This story was shared during a phone interview with Charlie McClendon in July, 2021.

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