

Marriage



Where God Builds Two Hearts a Home

Marriage: Where God Builds Two Hearts a Home



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Course Introduction: Marriage— Where God Builds Two Hearts a Home

Course Introduction

Marriage is the most significant voluntary relationship that two people can enter. It has great potential for happiness but also for pain and disappointment. So, a study of marriage is worth your time. But where can you find good teaching about marriage? Amazon.com, a bookseller on the Internet, lists 370,321 volumes on the subject of marriage—and those are just the English language ones! Which books give good advice? Every culture around the world has all kinds of advice—good and bad—about how to choose a spouse and how to live contentedly in marriage. But no culture has universally happy couples. Therefore, we chose to base this course on the Bible—a universal source given by the Creator of mankind and the Author of marriage. How does the Bible talk about marriage?

Marriage in the Bible



The Jordan River

Marriage runs through the Bible like a river system that waters a vast continent. It is the first human relationship described, and it is mentioned or illustrated in nearly every book.

- The Bible begins with the marriage of Adam and Eve.
- The New Testament begins with the marriage of Mary and Joseph.
- Jesus' ministry begins with the wedding at Cana.
- At the end of the Bible, eternity future begins with the wedding supper of the Lamb and the presentation of the bride to Christ.

The Bible often describes man's intimacy with God in marriage terms like "betrothal" (Jer 2:2), and the betrayal of faith is often called "adultery" (Jas 4:4). Biblical characters often have their flaws and strengths exposed by marriage. Whether it is Solomon writing his best poetry for his Shulamite bride or Job's wife urging him to "curse God and die," marriage often reveals the best and worst in every human who experiences it. The pressures of married life and its ability to press out and reveal impurity are perhaps unmatched among God's methods of discipling His people. Like old age, marriage has the power to distill and reveal who you really are. It is both a test and a demonstration of your life as a Christian.

As leaders and as parents, what you teach and what you demonstrate about marriage will influence others for generations. So come along and consider how much God has given in His Word to help you build faithful marriages that will please Him. The verse below, Philippians 2:2, will serve as your outline through the four units of study. While the author of Philippians was the apostle Paul, he was speaking for the Lord, too, when he penned these words. When a marriage follows these principles, it brings God joy as well.

*Make my joy complete by
being of the same **mind**,
maintaining the same **love**,
united in spirit,
intent on one **purpose**.*
—Philippians 2:2 (NASB,
emphasis and outline form added)

What Will You Learn?

By the end of this course you will have completed the following:

- Examined many Scripture passages, articles, and stories. The questions and writing assignments based on your readings will have developed your understanding of God’s instructions for relationships, especially the closest relationship of marriage.
- Worked with your spouse to decide together how you will apply these biblical principles of behavior and attitude to your marriage relationship. If you are single, you will find guidance to apply these principles to other close relationships as well.
- Practiced rooting out lies, vows, and traumatic memories that inhibit the perfecting of your marriage.
- Analyzed biological and emotional aspects of sex in marriage.



- Applied the particular needs of each gender to the way you relate to your spouse.
- Practiced biblical models of healthy communication.
- Developed perspectives and guidelines for handling your areas of mutual responsibility, which include money, ministry, and your parents. (Raising children is addressed in a separate course.)
- Thoughtfully planned ways to be able to teach, counsel, and display to others how to live well in marriage and how to be an excellent spouse.
- Spent time thinking about the ways that single, divorced, or widowed people, or those who are married to non-Christians may glorify God in their own living situations, and how you can better support them in the Body of Christ.

While the following objectives are more difficult to measure, our prayer for you is that as you continue to put these principles into practice over time, you will begin to do the following:

- Develop greater holiness in your own life
- Better portray the love between Christ and the church in your own marriage relationship
- Experience greater joy, greater worship, and more effective service to God together
- Bring pleasure to our Lord Jesus Christ
- Build your spouse’s heart and your heart a safe home together

How Long Will This Take?

This course contains twelve lessons. Each one is designed to be completed in three or four separate study sessions during one week, NOT all in one sitting. If you invest one hour per day, four days per week for your own study, and another few minutes with your spouse each day to complete the Marriage Building Activities, you should be able to complete this course in twelve weeks. *Take a look at your calendar and plan out which twelve weeks you will spend working on this course. You will also need to plan the days and times.* You should not try to work more than four hours per week to complete the course in a shorter time, unless you are in a situation where you and your spouse have longer blocks of unrestricted time to interact with each other. In most normal home situations, the interactions with your spouse need to be spread out over time so that the activities can be assimilated into your relationship.

Change is difficult for most everyone, sometimes even uncomfortable. It will take consistent effort, over time, to build up and improve your marriage. *Will the effort be worth it?* There are no guarantees, but think of the potential for good. An intimate marriage can meet some of your spouse’s deepest human needs, as well as your own. Marriage can provide not only sexual satisfaction but also true oneness—where mind, body, and spirit come together. It can dispel the dark of loneliness and can create in your relationship the “heart home,” where you can each feel safe to share your deepest selves. The one who sees your weaknesses and mistakes and loves you anyway can bless you with

that deep-seated sense of security and well-being that we all crave. Your spouse has the power to spread a warm covering of God’s grace and acceptance over you, like no other human being can do.

In a good marriage, your spouse is your bravest ally, your truest friend, your most effective co-laborer, and your closest sibling in Christ. These are just a few of the personal benefits you may experience from investing time, energy, and prayer into this course and into deepening your relationship with your spouse through the relationship exercises.



The pleasure you bring to God’s heart by your obedience to His design is more difficult to calculate but far more important. We hope you will consider God’s pleasure to be the primary benefit as you consider your time investment in this course.

QUESTION 1

After weighing the benefits and looking at my schedule, I can schedule 3–4 hours per week for twelve weeks to work through this course.

YES. Great! If you are ready to begin, please read on.

NO. If you are unable to invest time, you will receive limited benefit from the course, so it would be better to create a personalized schedule that is achievable for you and your spouse. Could you schedule quarterly three-week periods over the next year to do each of the four units?

In this next section, you will become more acquainted with the different parts of the course.

Course Components

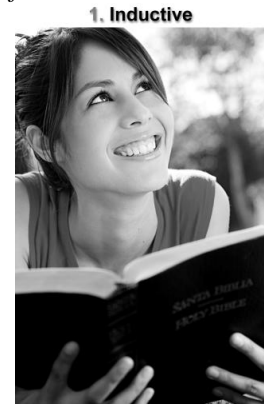
2. Personal



This course contains three aspects that will work together to help encourage marriage transformation. The course is more than just knowledge about marriage (although you will learn a lot of information too!). The three aspects of the course are as follows:

1. It is based on an *inductive* study of the Bible, which is God’s guide to human relationships. In some cases, you will be drawing principles from studying the Scripture yourselves. Whenever we, the authors, have drawn principles from our own inductive study of Scripture, we will give you the Scripture references so that you can study them to your own satisfaction (Acts 17:11).

2. It is *personal*, based on the assumption that marriage is set in the context of your discipleship under Christ. Therefore, many of the Scripture passages that you study will not directly mention marriage. Problems in marriage usually stem from problems in the heart—such as pride, stubbornness, and selfishness.



3. LIFE ACTIVITIES

Life Notebook



Worship



Marriage Building



3. It contains *life activities*. These will include the following:

-The **Life Notebook**—to write about the truths you are learning and how they apply to your life situation. *If you are not taking the course with a computer, you will need to purchase a notebook to use as a Life Notebook.*

-**Worship Activities**—to respond to the Lord about what you are learning

-**Marriage Building Activities**—to be done with your spouse. If you are single, you will be instructed about how to do the activity with someone else, usually a friend or relative.

The *life activities* highlight where the course intersects with your life, so please do not skip over them! If you have a wound, merely

- (1) Learning about the right medicine to apply,
- (2) Waving it over your skin, or



(3) Recommending the medicine to others will *not* benefit you.

In the same way, life activity assignments, such as Marriage Building activities, will help you to apply what you are learning to the areas of your life that need the most work. If you are taking this course within a facilitated class, you will need to have completed these activities by the time you come to your seminar, as they will form the basis of your interactions there.



A special concern for SINGLE students

This course on marriage frequently assumes that you, the student, are married and have a spouse nearby with whom to do the Marriage Building activities. However, the authors realize that this is not the case for many of you. So, if you are not married or your spouse is not available, whenever an assignment requires a spouse, there will be an exercise prepared for you, the single student. You will, however, need a friend or family member who

will do these exercises with you. Before the course begins, you should schedule this time with friends or family members. They will need to be available to meet with you during the next twelve weeks. As is the case for married people, you cannot skip over the life activities part of this course, or you will receive little benefit from your study.



A special concern for MARRIED students

Married students may have a different problem with this course. As you work through the marriage issues in this course, you will find it very easy to recognize where your spouse falls short. If you are like us, you are more practiced at evaluating your spouse's performance and in applying grace to your own faults than in extending grace to your spouse and in repenting where *you* need change! Keep corralling your mind to focus on what you need to do to bring your own heart and actions into line with God's truth. God's greatest desire for your marriage is for it to be a catalyst for making you the "perfect and complete" person He desires to see (Jas 1:4).

Authors and Stories

This course was prepared by Tom and Debbie Wood and Craig and Darlene Kordic (Lesson 7). Through God's grace, we have had the privilege of living in intimate and joyful fellowship in marriage for many years. However, you are also receiving the benefit of wisdom and of stories from many people—most significantly, Jody and Linda Dillow and Doug and JoAnn Radunzel. Together we represent more than 120 years of marital wisdom! Because Debbie Wood did the majority of the actual writing, when the course says "I" or "we" without explanation, it is a story from Debbie's or Debbie and Tom's point of view. In Lesson 7, the point of view is Darlene Kordic's unless otherwise indicated.

The stories found in this course are occasionally fiction, but mostly true. The factual ones have been altered or combined to protect the privacy of those who shared their stories.

Course Outline

Please take a moment to examine what is ahead.

You see that there are three lessons within each unit, each one relating to the theme of that unit, which is drawn from one of the four phrases of Philippians 2:2.

Course Outline

Unit 1: “Being of the Same Mind”—Coming Together in Understanding

Lesson 1: Understanding the Design of Marriage from Genesis 1-2

Lesson 2: Understanding the Effects of the Fall on Marriage

Lesson 3: Understanding a Redeemed Marriage

Unit 2: “Maintaining the Same Love”—Coming Together in Mutual Love

Lesson 4: Love

Lesson 5: Men and How to Love Them

Lesson 6: Women and How to Love Them

Unit 3: “United in Spirit”—Coming Together in Unity

Lesson 7: Communication Builds Unity

Lesson 8: Sexual Lovemaking Builds Unity

Lesson 9: Healthy Habits of Unity

Unit 4: “Intent on One Purpose”—Coming Together in Glorifying God

Lesson 10: One Purpose in Every Situation

Lesson 11: One Purpose in Stewardship

Lesson 12: One Purpose in Marriage and Ministry

Appendix: Articles and Diagrams on Special Topics. These items may not apply to everyone, but they may be critical to some readers.

Unit 1: “Being of the Same Mind”— Coming Together in Understanding

*Make my joy complete by
being of the same mind,
maintaining the same love,
united in spirit,
intent on one purpose.*

—Philippians 2:2 (NASB, emphasis added)

Unit Introduction

“Everyone who hears these words of mine and does them is like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the flood came, and the winds beat against that house.”—Matthew 7:24-25

We used to live in the Philippines, where many people built homes using bamboo and woven palm leaves. These picturesque “*nipa* huts” did a good job of shading the family inside from the tropical sun and rain. Poorer people built homes from whatever building materials they could find—boards, branches, or corrugated metal “G.I. sheets.” At least once a year, a typhoon would blow in. Then, hundreds of thousands of both types of homes collapsed, were blown away by the strong winds or were swept away by monsoon-swollen rivers. Often the people hiding inside their homes were killed. I could only imagine the terror of the millions of people waiting through the storm inside, and



hoping their homes would protect them until the sun came out again.

Those people who could afford it built concrete or concrete block buildings, like the one we lived in. When the storms came, we mopped water from the floor as it sprayed in through any cracks in the concrete walls, but all the time we knew that the house had been built to survive the typhoons.

How much damage your marriage sustains from the storms of life is not determined by luck. It is determined by the strength that you build into your marriage relationship.

Most people understand a little about what is needed for a strong physical structure, but how do you build a strong relationship with a marriage partner? A funny saying reads:

When all else fails, read the directions.

And if that doesn't work, follow them!

How would it work if George and Peggy started building a mansion by showing up for work one day with their toolboxes, ordering a pile of lumber and cement, and beginning to work? Read what each one is thinking. How do you think their project will turn out?

Peggy: “I think I can just figure it out as I go.”

George: “I think we should be able to get this done over the weekend and just move inside next week.”

Peggy: “Let's see, how does this work?”

George: “I'll bet I can figure out how to install this light. I don't need to read the instructions.”



Peggy: “My partner sure isn’t doing a very good job!”

George: “Wow! That looks a little crooked. I guess I’d better prop up this end here. Oops, sorry. I didn’t mean to knock you down.”

Poor George and Peggy! They had such good intentions, and they seemed to be working so hard. What were they missing?

- They had no **blueprints**.
- They didn’t **plan enough time or effort into building the house**.
- They didn’t worry about **learning the skills that would help them build**.
- They didn’t **ask for any help from those who had greater experience**.

God gives you instructions about the design and materials to use in building a marriage relationship. If you “figure it out as you go,” your marriage relationship may not be the kind of safe and attractive place your heart will want to call “home.” How much effort should you put into building quality into this home? How important is it that you follow God’s blueprints?

- Please read the story “The Opportunity of a Lifetime” in *Readings in Marriage*. It is about Chang’s opportunity to build a home for his uncle. Be prepared to discuss the correlations of this story to marriage in your seminar.

The opportunity Chang received is like the great opportunity God is giving you in marriage. As you work to please God by building your relationship as He desires, you will discover great benefit for yourself and for generations to come. In this unit, you will first look at how the Lord designed marriage. In Lesson 2, you will discover how this first home was damaged by a dry rot called sin. Finally, in Lesson 3, you will see how your redemption in Christ can build strength into your marriage relationship.

Unit 1 Outline

Unit 1: “Being of the Same Mind”—Coming Together in Understanding

Lesson 1: Understanding the Design of Marriage from Genesis 1-2

Lesson 2: Understanding the Effects of the Fall on Marriage

Lesson 3: Understanding a Redeemed Marriage

Lesson 1: Understanding the Design of Marriage from Genesis 1-2

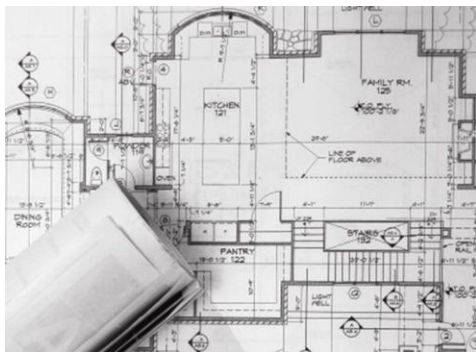
Lesson Introduction

“You know Sue and I are planning on getting married in three months, Pastor Jonathan.” The young man, who was sitting in the pastor’s house, looked very pleased at the prospect. Next to him, his bride-to-be, Sue, also had a happy smile on her cute face. Nathan continued with eagerness: “We want to have a good marriage. We don’t want to fight all the time. We want others to see God’s love in our relationship over fifty or sixty years, not just for the first few months!” Pastor Jonathan smiled as Nathan continued. The pastor was thinking of all the couples who had started out with good intentions like this couple. “Now, I figure there must be a three-step plan or a twelve-step process we can do to make sure that our marriage stays solid. Can you help us, Pastor?”



Pastor Jonathan and his wife, Esther, laughed, “Well, we can’t offer you a three-step plan, but I think we can help you.

“You know that when a builder begins his work, he must first prepare a site plan and understand the blueprints provided by the architect. As he lays the foundation of the building and swings the first large beams into place for the frame, he must make certain that each one is set exactly right, because all else will depend on them. Then, he needs to build each part carefully so that it all works together properly. I’m afraid he can’t learn all that in just three or even twelve easy steps.”



Sue and Nathan glanced at each other. The pastor was saying this was *not* going to be a quick process.

Pastor Jonathan continued, “I would like you both to work through the study I am going to give you. We can meet together every week until your wedding. Just like a builder, you need to create a firm foundation for your marriage relationship. I’m willing to commit the time to meet with you, if you are willing to put in an hour at least four days per week to study and then also to do some activities together. Are you willing to invest time for the next three months in building a strong marriage for the rest of your lives?”

Again, Sue and Nathan looked at each other and smiled. “Yes, we will do it!”

“Good! We can start right now. To understand marriage, we must go back to the beginning of time. We need to understand why God created man and woman in the first place, and why He invented this sometimes strange and often wonderful relationship of marriage. We need to see what went wrong when our first parents sinned. We need to understand how our new lives in Christ give us special opportunities and responsibilities to each other. And how about your parents? Have you thought about your new relationship to them? The Bible talks about them, too!

“Let’s pray and ask God to guide us as we build this foundation together.”

As the four bowed their heads to pray, the angels in the room nodded solemnly at each other. This was a good beginning for these two that the Lord had ordained should be joined together in marriage. And the pastor was doing more good than he could know. Nathan and Sue were not only preparing for a lifetime of effective ministry but also preparing a home for some special children whom the Lord was planning to bring into it in just a few short years. Many, many lives would be affected by their marriage. The angels smiled. The King would take joy in these servants.



Lesson Outline

Lesson 1: Understanding the Design of Marriage

Topic 1: Created With Purpose

Purpose: Worshipping the Creator

Purpose: Living Rightly

Purpose: Reflecting His Image

Purpose: Accomplishing the Great Commission

Topic 2: The Creation of Marriage

Leaving Father and Mother

Letting Adult Children Leave

Cleaving to a Spouse

Benefiting Spiritually From Cleaving

Becoming One Flesh

Topic 1: Created With Purpose

No one but God and the angels was present when God began creation. Not even Adam and Eve saw God make the heavens and the earth and all the creatures, including man and woman. Only God could reveal what happened so that we could understand. He revealed this story to Moses, who wrote it down for posterity. Chapter 1 of Genesis is a broad overview, as if Moses is watching creation happen in a movie. Chapter 2 zooms in on the creation of two people who will play critical roles in the unfolding drama of history.



- Please stop now and read Genesis 1–2, and note places where God states His purposes for the man and the woman.

Did you see in Genesis 1 and 2 some of the reasons why *you* were created? The Bible goes on to reveal many purposes for both man and woman and for the image He created when they became one in marriage.

By understanding God’s purposes for mankind before people sinned, you can better learn how to live in your marriage relationship so as to fulfill God’s purposes for you.

QUESTION 1

What were some of the purposes for men, women, and marriage in Genesis 1–2? Match each verse below with its purpose.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Purpose</i> |
|------------------|---|
| Genesis 1:26 | To rule as God’s representatives over the earth and everything in it |
| Genesis 1:27a | To model the image and likeness of God |
| Genesis 1:27b | To eat plants and fruit* [*note: this expands in Gen 9:3 to include meat] |
| Genesis 1:28 | To be either male or female |
| Genesis 1:29 | To work and care for a particular area of responsibility |
| Genesis 2:15 | To form a one-flesh union in marriage |
| Genesis 2:24 | To procreate and fill the earth in order to extend God’s representative rule everywhere |

So, you see that God designed marriage as part of His perfect plan for mankind. It was not a later addition. Marriage was meant to help support these and other purposes that He revealed through time. Some of these purposes relate to your marriage too.

Purpose: Worshipping the Creator

God told you about His creation of the heavens and earth not only so that you would know who



you are but also so that you would know who He is. Your reasonable response to seeing His glory and wisdom revealed must be to be amazed—to thank and to glorify Him. The Westminster Catechism (a document describing the Christian faith, which was developed in 1646) described the chief purpose of man as “to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.” One way you glorify and

enjoy Him is by taking the time to notice His creation in more detail, with appreciation for the intelligence and care found in everything He designed—from the tiniest cell to the largest ocean. You can appreciate God’s design most in your own body and in those people closest and dearest to you.

- Please read Psalm 139.

Notice how in verses 13, 14, 17, and on through verse 24, the Psalmist turns from the recognition of his own body’s intricate design to concentrate on the amazing God who made his body. How can this passage lead you to worship?

QUESTION 2

Thankfulness Project

MARRIED Students: Imagine your spouse’s design by God. Think of when your spouse was a baby being formed by God where no one else could see. Then, think of him/her as a child growing up into adulthood according to God’s purpose.

1. List five or more things that you appreciate about your spouse. You may want to consider the following areas:

- History
- Family
- Talents/Gifts



- Body/Appearance
- Personality/Character

Hopefully, your list is very long. One student, who was asked to do this assignment in one of our classes, ended up with several pages of entries. She said, “I used to think that there was nothing good about my husband. But now I realize that he is a wonderful man!”

2. Thank God for each aspect. Write a letter of thanks to God for this miracle of creation that He designed especially as your husband or wife. *If you prefer, you may create a song, poem, or story instead.*

SINGLE Students: Follow instructions 1 and 2 above. Either look forward to the character qualities you hope for in a spouse or look on the miracle of your own design, as David did in Psalm 139. Feel free to change the column titles above to suit your situation. Don’t forget to finish the letter (or poem, or story, or song) by thanking God.

Appreciating your spouse is not a *distraction* from fulfilling your purpose of worshipping God as Creator. When you enjoy and thank God for how He made your husband or wife, you glorify Him and show gratefulness for His thoughtful gift.



Purpose: Living Rightly

Man was intended to worship and glorify God. However, Romans 1:18–2:2 describes that when



men and women fell away from these original purposes for mankind, they wandered into many evil distortions. The sexual relationship, which should be a blessing of marriage, was among the hardest hit by these distortions. How did God maintain a witness of the truth about what He is like when the image that man portrayed was so distorted?

In order to maintain a witness of truth, God chose the nation of Israel and gave them the Law through Moses. He set them apart both geographically and spiritually to be able to relate to Him. Through the Mosaic Law, God restored a modicum of righteousness to one society—the Jews. Their inability to keep the Law perfectly was to prepare them to recognize their need of a Savior who could transform them from the heart. Of course, Jesus is the Savior that God sent. Jesus condensed all of the details of the Law into two principles of behavior and attitude. What are they?

- Please read Mark 12:28-31.

QUESTION 3

What were the two commandments that Jesus said form the basis for the entire Old Testament Law?

Jesus explained that the second commandment is closely connected to the first. When you love God with your whole being, it shows itself in loving your neighbor as God loves.

Sometimes it can be a bit confusing to figure out who your “neighbors” are. Offhand, you might suppose that your neighbors are the ones who live next door, neither too close nor too far away. But the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:33-36) shows that your neighbors include those who are not like you and are not in your sphere of relationship. It is difficult to love people whom you do not know and do not understand. At the other end of the spectrum, however, it is sometimes even more difficult to love the people with whom you live. These people are also your neighbors.



- Please read Genesis 2:24.

QUESTION 4

According to this verse, when you are married, who is your closest neighbor?

- A. Your mother
- B. Your father
- C. Your child
- D. Your pastor
- E. Anyone in need
- F. Your spouse

Purpose: Reflecting His Image

“God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.”—Genesis 1:27



Of all the creatures, only mankind was created in the image of God. This has a far-reaching effect on every part of your being. What does it mean to be made in God’s image? How does this image relate to God’s purposes in your marriage?

- Please read the article “*Tselem, The Image of God*” in *Readings in Marriage*. Then, return here to answer some questions about your reading.

QUESTION 5

According to Genesis 1:27, only men (males) display the image of God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Which one of these is **NOT** mentioned in the article as being part of bearing God's image in marriage?

- A. Choosing to enter a marriage covenant together
- B. Working together to rule earth, like God rules and works
- C. Relating to each other, like God relates within the Trinity
- D. Producing and raising children together, like God parents you
- E. Modeling attributes toward each other that portray God's character
- F. Dressing in an attractive way, just as God is beautiful

What will it look like for you to bear His image?

As you begin to resemble God's image to your spouse, what will your characteristics be? The New Testament gives a useful list. As the Holy Spirit restores in you the image of God that was lost by sin, you will produce what the New Testament calls the "fruit of the Spirit" (Gal 5:22-23). It is no surprise, then, that this "fruit" resembles the attributes of God. The fruit of the Spirit is evidence that He is restoring you to bear God's image. Begin this exercise by reading the list of the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23 and then by thinking about how God displays each characteristic in His actions toward you.



QUESTION 7

Please open your Life Notebook.

Please list the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23, and next to each one, write a way in which *God* reveals this characteristic to you, or to someone you know.

Example:

Joy: God rejoices over me (Isa 62:4-5, Zeph 3:17) and responds positively when I approach Him. When you have completed this, stop and thank Him for each one.

How well do most unbelievers understand God's character? Hardly at all, if they do not believe or study the Bible. As Romans 1:21 points out, their perceptions are clouded. They cannot see God's attributes through observing nature the way Romans 1 insists that they should be able to do. When they observe the natural world, they come to the wrong conclusions.



Would they know better about what God is like from observing your marriage? Through the fruit of the Spirit, God intends that you and your spouse portray His attributes in a way that may be clearly seen by others so that they may come to salvation. As someone wisely said, "You are the only Bible that some people will ever read."

QUESTION 8

Please open your Life Notebook.

MARRIED Students: Please describe the following:

1. Which of the attributes/fruit of the Spirit do you observe in your spouse? For each one that you see, give an example or explain.
2. Which of these do you think needs improvement in the way YOU relate to your spouse? Please give an example and express how you would like to see this area change.

SINGLE Students: Give examples using a relationship with any person who is close to you.

A list of the fruit of the Spirit with examples is provided for you here.

Love example: When my wife stays up late on Saturday night to help with my sermon, I see God's love in her.

Joy example: I often feel tired and not joyful when I see my wife at the end of the day. I pray that God will help me to release my problems to Him so that I can experience joy and show this fruit to my wife and children.

- **Peace**
- **Patience**
- **Kindness**
- **Goodness**
- **Faithfulness**
- **Gentleness**
- **Self-Control**

You cannot, just by wishing it, begin to exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. It must be a work of God's Spirit in you. But you can cooperate with Him in this process by taking these three steps:

1. Submit your heart and will to God, undoing on a personal level what Adam and Eve did for all mankind through insubordination (Jas 4:7).
2. Accept the job that you are God's ambassador, His representative (2 Cor 5:20). You will show God's love, peace, joy, and patience to strengthen your spouse on His behalf.
3. Look frequently to Jesus, not to your spouse's performance. Jesus is the perfect image of God (Heb 1:3; 12:1-2)—a perfect model for your actions and attitudes. Do not let your actions come as a result of merely reacting (either positively or negatively) to your spouse's actions.

Now, see if you can close your eyes and restate these three steps in your own words. Can you do it?

Purpose: Accomplishing the Great Commission

“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”—Matthew 28:18

While the Great Commission is not addressed in Genesis 1–2, Jesus gave His disciples this very important purpose after His resurrection, in Matthew 28:18 and Acts 1:8. Do you know one or both of these verses by heart? As you read these verses in the context of a marriage course, do you sense some conflict? Does marriage



enhance your ability to fulfill this purpose or compete with it? You will be considering these questions throughout the course. For now, bring any concerns you may have about this conflict to God.

- Please do the following *Worship Activity: ACTS*.

Lesson 1 Worship Activity: ACTS



Perhaps you have used the acronym ACTS in your private worship time. Take some time right now to speak with God about the purposes for you and your spouse that you have looked at so far. We suggest using the ACTS guide:

A=Adoration. Praise God for who He is—the creator of marriage, the one who commands your total obedience, who desires your highest good, who loves you with an everlasting love.

C=Confession. Confess what is on your heart. Perhaps you will confess your inability to perfectly follow His instructions and ask Him to guide you through the competing priorities of everyday life.

T=Thanksgiving. Thank Him for His provision of marriage for mankind and His specific provisions for your life and relationships.

S=Supplication. Ask Him how He wants to use your marriage for His glory and to fulfill His purposes for you. Bring Him any concerns or conflicts that you have about your marriage and about your other purposes in life, such as ministry. Record in your Life Notebook any wisdom that comes to mind as you are praying.

Part of the upcoming Marriage Building exercise involves praising your spouse. Is this difficult for you to do? Do you hesitate to give strong compliments to your spouse on the grounds that it will make him/her too proud? We have sometimes heard this excuse for withholding praise. If we think about this carefully, we realize that people do not become proud from the kind words that they hear from others. They become proud from the arrogant sin bubbling up from within (Mt 15:18). Praise will not make your spouse any more or less humble than he/she was before, but it will help you practice humility to notice and praise the things that you appreciate.



If praising your spouse is difficult for you, do you think your “humility muscle” just needs some additional exercise? Like any muscle, it can become healthier with frequent use. Note that even the Lord of the universe, who had every reason to be proud, chose to humble Himself (Phil 2:8). Lesson 9 will deal more with the healthy habit of humility in marriage.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Fruit of the Spirit*

Marriage Building Activity: Fruit of the Spirit



For **MARRIED** students:

1. Choose an act of service you can do for your spouse this week or arrange an activity that your spouse will enjoy. Choose one that you know he/she will value, not merely one that *you* would enjoy doing. Set a date and time and follow through with your good intention. Ask God to help you exhibit the fruit of the Spirit as you do your act of service for or with your spouse.
2. During or after the activity, share with him/her in detail from Question 2 how you are thankful for the ways God designed him/her. From your response to Question 8, praise your spouse for the areas where you see the fruit of the Spirit reflected in his/her life. If you would prefer, you may share these things in a written letter to your spouse. Take five minutes to do so.

For **SINGLE** students:

1. Choose the parent, sibling, friend, or other person you thought of in Questions 2 or 8 to fulfill this assignment.

Topic 2: The Creation of Marriage

“A man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”—Genesis 2:24 (NASB)

In Genesis 1:1–2:8, you saw that all humankind, designed as males and females, were intended to display God’s image. Like a symphony of many instruments, which can play low and high notes, the capabilities and strengths of males and females expand the display of God’s multifaceted nature.



In marriage between a man and a woman, you see a picture that God is, at His core, a relationship. A marriage contains complementary differences, yet it is one in purpose, in substance, and in nature. Does this sound like a familiar theological definition? Yes, it defines the



Trinity. In marriage, then, you can see a portrayal of God’s difficult-to-understand Trinity.

When an individual man and woman become one flesh in marriage (Gen 2:24), you can see that “one flesh” can be made up of more than one person. So then, when Deuteronomy 6:4 says “the LORD is one,” you can understand from marriage that oneness can involve at least two persons.

In the Trinity, there are three persons—Father, Son, Holy Spirit—not two. How can marriage exemplify this? For a marriage to bear the complete image of the Trinity, the couple must invite the Holy Spirit to become a full and intimate member of the marriage union. In the last topic, you saw how the Holy Spirit brings the character of God into the marriage relationship through the fruit of the Spirit.

The relationship within the Trinity is intensely intimate and unbreakably eternal. The members of the Trinity love and serve one another with joy. God intends marriage partners to display these aspects of the Trinity by remaining intimate and faithful and by serving one another throughout life.

In order to do this, Genesis 2:24 describes marriage as a process of leaving, cleaving, and becoming one. Is this a one-time event, a point of view, or a process?

Leaving Father and Mother

“A man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”—Genesis 2:24 (NASB)

How tight is the bond between the husband and the wife? The word “cleave” in Genesis 2:24 refers literally to glue or laminate. It is a bond so tight that nothing can seep in between the two pieces. In construction, boards are often laminated (cleaved) together in order to create the strongest beams for support of the main roof, such as in this church ceiling.



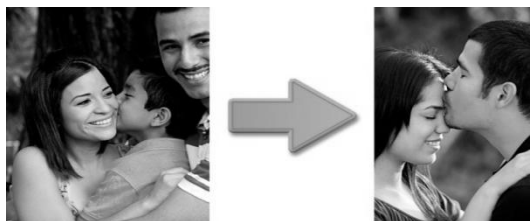
Perhaps this tight, permanent bond raises some questions in your mind, such as the following:

- In Genesis 2:24, what does it mean to leave parents?
- Does not the Bible say to honor and obey parents?
- How can you honor your parents if you *leave* them or favor your spouse above them?
- What if a couple is unable to leave parents for financial reasons or other good reasons?
- What if your culture teaches that the relationship to one’s parents is more important or stronger than the relationship to a spouse?

The next sections will help you solve these apparent contradictions.

The Relationship to Parents

The closest relationship that most people experience prior to marriage is the relationship with parents—a relationship usually characterized by love and submission to the parents’ authority. This is a good thing. If a child has had a loving and communicative relationship with parents, he/she is better prepared to communicate and relate well to a husband or a wife. There is no reason why the adult child should not continue to have a warm relationship with the parents.



The leaving of Genesis 2:24 may include physical leaving, of course, but departure is not its primary meaning. The biblical reference demands that you shift the focus from your parents to your spouse, as your primary focal point of love and loyalty. The marriage relationship usurps the relationship with parents as both your closest relationship and your highest loyalty on earth. If you fail to “leave” your parents and continue to give them first place in your love and loyalties after marriage, you will not be able to cleave to your spouse. This is why Genesis 2:24 emphasizes the order of beginning a marriage as first, leave; then, cleave. There are at least five areas where a couple needs to leave parents and cleave to each other. Can you guess what they are?

Leave and Cleave How?

Physically: The couple must take up residence together. They should not live separately as they did before marriage. They may live together wherever they choose and can afford. Just as Adam and Eve reigned in the garden, a married couple must have their own space—a private “home” for their marriage, both for intimate conversation and sexual relations. To honor the marriage, the parents may not enter this “garden” without permission, even if it is temporarily a single room in the parents’ residence. If parents and married children decide to live together, both must agree to honor this privacy boundary.

Spiritually: The couple should have times of private prayer that are for the two of them alone. They may act on instructions that God gives them without needing permission from Mom and Dad, including what church to attend. Even if they live with Mom and Dad, the couple must worship and seek God alone together as part of their cleaving as one in God’s eyes.

Mentally: The couple must be able to have conversations and activities that remain private between the two of them. Parents do not have the right to ask their child to divulge what a spouse has said in private or to purposefully eavesdrop on their conversations. Also, the child should not run to Mom and Dad whenever the spouse disappoints him/her or a disagreement occurs. One area where mental boundaries are particularly important is in the couple’s sexual relationship. The couple should not talk about the details of their sexual relationship with parents, siblings, children, friends, or anyone else, unless it is for the purpose of solving a sexual problem with a counselor or a doctor.

Emotionally: The couple must turn first to each other, not to their parents, for comfort and encouragement.

Financially: The couple must have finances separate from their parents and be in control of their own funds. Since they are a separate family, they should support themselves and not expect their parents to support them. If parents do provide some financial help, it must be a gift and not used to control the young couple.

Can you close your eyes and picture the five areas of leaving and cleaving? Which area is most challenging in your family’s history? How does a young couple enforce these ideals if their parents have different ideas about their role?

- Please read the article “Setting Boundaries in Relation to Parents” in *Readings in Marriage*. Make some notes as you read, so that you can discuss this article in your seminar.

How close is your bond with your spouse? You have seen how God calls husband and wife to bond together, like glue bonds two boards into one strong beam. An improper relationship with parents is like rocks sitting on one of the boards.

As long as the rocks are there, can the boards bond tightly to another?



Setting proper boundaries in your relationship to your parents helps to ensure that you will have no obstacles in cleaving to your spouse throughout life.

Honor

If you are setting these boundaries, how can you continue to honor your parents as the fifth commandment instructs?

- Please read the article “Honoring Mom and Dad Through the Seasons of Life” in *Readings in Marriage*. Then return here to reflect on your reading.

QUESTION 9

What are some of the ways mentioned in the article that the Bible teaches people to honor their parents? Match the instruction with the corresponding reference.

| <i>Instruction</i> | <i>Reference</i> |
|---|-------------------|
| Do outstanding good deeds. | Proverbs 6:20-23 |
| Remember the wise things that your parents taught you. | Proverbs 23:24-25 |
| Help care for parents in their old age. | 1 Samuel 17:58 |
| Become a wise and righteous person yourself. | 1 Timothy 5:4-8 |
| Listen to your parents’ perspective even when they are old. | Proverbs 23:22 |

QUESTION 10

Please open your Life Notebook.

Read Ephesians 4:14-15, and write in your Life Notebook a plan of action and words for how you will “practice the truth in love” when parents overstep their boundaries and expect or even try to coerce you or your spouse to obey their wishes. If you are married, find out what your spouse thinks of your plan. See if you can come to a unified plan together. If you are single, ask a mature person whom you respect to evaluate your plan.

Letting Adult Children Leave

If you are a parent of adult children, you have an extremely important task: to know how to provide encouragement and support to your children but to also recognize which rights and privileges of parenting are finished.

- Please read the article “Letting Go of Grown Children” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 11

Select the appropriate actions of an older parent toward their adult offspring. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. "Since you have stopped coming to our church, you are not invited to Sunday dinner anymore."
- B. "If you do not join in the family business, we will write you out of our will."
- C. "Son, we really want you to do what the Lord has put on your heart."
- D. "Your husband is so messy. You should not have to put up with that. You should refuse to cook his meals until he starts picking up after himself."
- E. "I remember when your mother and I got married, I liked to stay up late and she liked to go to bed early. We worked out a solution by . . ."
- F. "You have done such a creative job in decorating your home beautifully without much money."

QUESTION 12

If an adult son and his wife live with his parents, the son's primary love and attention must be directed toward whom?

- A. Mother
- B. Wife
- C. Brother
- D. Sister
- E. Father

QUESTION 13

Please open your Life Notebook.

How have you been preparing your children or encouraging your adult offspring to mature in each of the five areas of "leaving and cleaving" discussed earlier: mentally, emotionally, physically, financially, spiritually? If you have no children, think of an adolescent among your relatives (imaginary if necessary). For each of the five areas, give at least one example of how parents can help their adolescent children to develop maturity and to be prepared to cleave to a spouse. If you can think of any other important aspects in which a parent in your culture should relinquish control, include that category as well and be prepared to share it in your seminar.

Personal Project:

The article "Questions about Leaving and Cleaving," is a list of discussion questions designed for people at various life stages. It includes questions to ask the following people:

- Your spouse
- Your parents
- Your adolescent children
- Your adult children

Please read this article and decide which sections apply to your situation. Then make an appointment to discuss with each person or people the questions that are appropriate. You should begin with your spouse, if you are married. Select the sets of questions that suit your life situation. Complete the assignment by preparing the statement of commitment described in the article. **Note: You must complete this personal project before you can move forward to the next question.**

QUESTION 14

Please open your Life Notebook.

Consider the discussions you had about “leaving and cleaving” with your family. Evaluate your current stage in life.

- Have you successfully left your parents?
- Have your adult children successfully left you and your spouse?
- Are your growing children on pace to leave you at the proper time?

If the answer to any of these questions is no, prayerfully write in your Life Notebook what steps that you will take to change your answer. Decide with your spouse when you will evaluate again.

QUESTION 15

Project Follow Up: Letter Writing

Write a letter to each of your children. If you have no children, write one to an imaginary son and another to an imaginary daughter. If you have adult married children, address the letters to each couple.

These letters should include the following:

- Your realization that it is necessary for your child to “leave” when he/she marries
- An explanation of what “leaving” means
- Your acceptance of the new relationship that exists (or will exist) between you and your child and between your child and his/her spouse
- Your desire to support and encourage your child’s independence from you
- Your desire to see the couple depend on each other and on the Lord
- End the letter with a reassurance of your love for both of them and of your commitment to respect and support their marriage



If you are currently single, or for some reason, do not expect to have children, please use your imagination to complete this assignment.

Cleaving to a Spouse

“A man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.”—Genesis 2:24 (NASB)

As we saw in the introduction to this topic, the concept of cleaving refers to a bond that is both intimately one and permanent. Genesis 2:8-25 describes in more detail God’s creation of man and woman, including His institution of a unique relationship between them. Review this passage as you think about why God said that it was not good for man to be alone. Look carefully at Genesis 2:18 as God begins the process of acquainting the man with his need.

- Please read the article “Adam’s Side” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 16

What did God do to prepare Adam to receive his wife?

- A. He opened the way to the Tree of Life.
- B. He caused him to begin to speak.
- C. He made him stronger than before.
- D. He gave him a new job of naming the animals.

QUESTION 17

In Genesis 2:23, it mentions a cause for which a man would leave his father and mother and join with his wife to become one flesh. What does the article “Adam’s Side” say is the cause?

QUESTION 18

Please open your Life Notebook.

If you are **MARRIED**, think back to what your life was like when you were single. God had a process for Adam to realize his need for a wife. Did God put you through a process of recognizing your need in order to fully appreciate His gift of your spouse? If so, write about those events or changes in your thinking.

If you are **SINGLE**, has God been doing anything that helps you to realize your need for a mate and to prepare you to receive one? How has God been meeting you in your singleness?

Jesus’ Teaching on Cleaving

Jesus raises some eyebrows when He teaches on this concept from Genesis 2:24. The Pharisees want to know what Jesus thinks would be sufficient grounds for a divorce. Please read what He has to say in Matthew 19:3-8. Jesus answers their question by drawing their focus to God’s original design for marriage. Jesus says that their question is wrong. They should not be focusing on how to get out of marriage. They should be focusing on the truth that God makes a couple one and intends that oneness to last until death. Jesus says that it is man’s hard heart that caused Moses to allow divorce. Divorce was apparently better than the alternative (perhaps the local custom of sending her away without the legal paper. The certificate of divorce would allow her to remarry and thus be able to survive), but it was not God’s design or intent. You will study the Bible’s teaching on divorce more in Lesson 10.

Jesus’ teaching causes His disciples to wonder if anyone should ever get married. How could one be certain that he would not *want* a new wife after a while? Jesus was once again making a righteous life much more difficult to achieve than the Pharisees portrayed by their careful religion. As was so often true with Jesus’ teachings, He reveals that the problem is not with the Law, but with hardened hearts (Ezk 36:26).

QUESTION 19

What concepts does Jesus emphasize in His teaching on marriage in Matthew 19:3-8? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He warns that wives are not supposed to leave their husbands or they could be stoned.
- B. He emphasizes the permanence of marriage.
- C. He shows that the type of righteousness God desires is greater than the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.
- D. He emphasizes the oneness that God ordains in marriage.
- E. He gives the words for a new marriage ceremony.

So you see that Jesus brings marriage to a higher level than was typical in that culture, even among religious people. He says that the cleaving in marriage is to last throughout life.

Benefiting Spiritually From Cleaving

Cleaving is not only an important aspect of the image of the Trinity, but it is also an important tool in God's hand in shaping you. Cleaving to your spouse forces you to face your own flaws, without being able to sidestep or to ignore them. From God's point of view, marriage does its best work when its abrasions force change. If you let God direct, the pressure shapes an improved character and makes you more like Christ (Jas 1:3-4). In fact, God may have designed your spouse's rough edges perfectly—to rub abrasively and specifically on your particular rough edges until your gears mesh together smoothly! (Prov 27:17)



In order to achieve harmony while cleaving, some people mistakenly try to make their spouses think and behave just like themselves. This is wrong thinking. As someone once said, "If two people agree on everything, one of them is not necessary!" Being identical would defeat God's purposes for displaying His character more broadly. Cleaving does not mean sameness. The different points of view between you and your spouse that sometimes cause conflict do not negate

His desire for you to mesh together in intimate unity. You can have that intimate unity only when you relax some of your "right to be right" and respect your spouse's "right to be different" and to think differently from you. When you allow his/her differing point of view to affect your own perspective, then you can experience the complementary strength that God intended for marriage.

The permanence God designed in marriage means that there is no quick escape from this uncomfortable but important sanctifying and growing process.

QUESTION 20

Please open your Life Notebook and describe at least one way in which your spouse's characteristics (either flaws or strengths) expose or wear on your rough edges in order to make you more like Christ. For instance, if your spouse is perpetually late, does this expose your lack of patience (forbearance)? What fruit is He trying to bring from you through your spouse's strengths and weaknesses? If you are single, how have the annoying habits of those you have lived with up until now helped to expose your flaws?

Becoming One Flesh

"A man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."—Genesis 2:24 (NASB)

You saw in this lesson how marriage is a relationship of leaving one's closest former relationships in order to cleave to a spouse and establish a new unity. One-flesh unity is both a one-time event as the couple joins sexually for the first time in marriage and also a purposeful merger over time. Just as a human being is made up of things that may be seen (a body) and things that are unseen (spirit and soul), the one-flesh relationship grows closer in both physical and spiritual ways. Physical oneness may include things like setting up a home together, having sex, raising children, sharing meals, working together, and caring for others. It is important that married couples share these practical things. But the marriage is not really experiencing "one flesh" unity if this is the extent of the couple's oneness. Becoming one in the unseen realm of soul and spirit involves both spouses developing and experiencing deep and intimate love. In some cultures, love may be seen as superfluous, but there are many biblical reasons why loving each other in marriage is absolutely necessary.

1. Love portrays the image of the Trinity. The Trinity's work toward common goals springs from a deep and intimate love (Jn 5:20; 10:17-18; 1 Cor 2:10-11). In marriage, a cool, business-like relationship; a kind but guarded friendship; or a spouse performing role-oriented duty for the benefit of children fails in this important purpose for marriage.



2. Love is the hallmark of one who has been transformed from death to life. Love is the main way you know that you have been born again (1 Jn 4:16-17). It is also the main way the world recognizes that we are believers (Jn 17:23). The Bible says that if you cannot love, you do not yet know God (1 Jn 4:8). Because you live in close proximity to your spouse, love is an important test to show God's love to him/her. If you cannot love your spouse whom you have seen, how can you love God whom you have not seen (1 Jn 4:20)?

3. God has made love an essential craving from the moment you were born. You crave it as much as air, water, or food—perhaps more. Just look at the great lengths to which people will go to find love. What toxic substitutes will they swallow to assuage the hunger for it? Marriage is one of the ways that God has designed for this deep need to be met safely.

4. Love portrays the deep and intimate relationship between Christ and His bride. This relationship is made up of all believers (Eph 5:31-33). To have oneness in marriage's practical areas but no heart of love is a blasphemous image. Such an image is saying that either Christ does not love the church or that the church does not love Christ.

The fact that many marriages seem to survive without love does not mean that you should give up hoping and working toward developing love. A starving bride may still breathe, but she will not be able to excel in the role that God intended for her. "Barely breathing" is not how God wants you to portray the passionate love between Christ and the church (Eph 5:32).

5. God commands you to love your spouse. Husbands are to love their wives (Eph 5:25). Wives are to love their husbands (Tit 2:4). And both must love each other (Jn 13:34).

QUESTION 21

What are the five reasons why love is necessary in marriage?

Oneness in marriage comes through love. How is this love distinct from the love experienced in other relationships? Only married love is described as “one flesh.” Married love is designed by God to be more intimate, more passionate than the other types of love. Also married love is the only one that includes a physical unity in sexual relations. The rest of this course is aimed at developing all aspects of the one-flesh love that Genesis 2:24 introduces.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Hoping Together*.

Marriage Building Activity: Hoping Together



For **MARRIED** students:

1. Get together with your spouse and describe for each other what you think a one-flesh love relationship in marriage should be like. Bring a story, photograph, or drawing that epitomizes this relationship, or tell about a couple you have known who demonstrates this relationship for each of you.
2. Describe for your spouse what you hope you will learn to do better in your marriage relationship through taking this course. (Do *not* talk about how you think your marriage, or your spouse, falls short of the ideal.)

For **SINGLE** students:

1. Talk to a friend or family member. Share your own ideas about the above two areas, as well as listen to the other person’s ideas about the ideal relationship of oneness in marriage.

Make sure that you have completed every *Marriage Building Activity* for Lesson 1 (and recorded your experience in your Life Notebook) before proceeding to Lesson 2. Completion of these activities will form 40 percent of your grade. The Marriage Building Activities that you should have completed for this lesson were the following:

- *Fruit of the Spirit*
- *Hoping Together*

Lesson 1 Self Check

QUESTION 1

When you enjoy the way your spouse looks, it is a distraction from your worship of God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

The purposes for all creation, including humankind, may be summed up in the objective “to glorify God.” *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

One reason why man and woman are given the responsibility in Genesis 1:28 to procreate and to fill the earth with people is because they are God’s representatives. They needed to extend God’s representative rule everywhere. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Which one of these aspects is NOT one of the five ways in which marriage reflects the image of God?

- A. Producing children
- B. Showing each other His character attributes
- C. Entering into a covenant by choice
- D. Ruling the earth through working together
- E. Causing each other to do the right thing

QUESTION 5

What are two examples of adults in the Bible who honored but did not obey their parents?

- A. Jesus and Jonathan
- B. Mary and Martha
- C. King Saul and Paul
- D. Abraham and David
- E. James and John

QUESTION 6

When you submit your heart and will to God, the Holy Spirit exhibits God’s characteristics through you to your spouse and to others. The attributes of God as exhibited through the Holy Spirit’s activity in humans are also known as_____.

- A. The goodness of the Creator
- B. The faith of believers
- C. The gifts of the Spirit
- D. The fruit of the Spirit

QUESTION 7

Which is NOT given as a biblical way to honor parents?

- A. Do outstanding good deeds
- B. Help care for aged parents
- C. Give them a lavish funeral
- D. Become wise and righteous
- E. Listen to your parents' perspective even when you're old
- F. Remember the wise things they taught you

QUESTION 8

As a parent, what must your main goal be toward decisions that your adult children make?

- A. For them to honor you by asking your advice
- B. For them to be guided by God
- C. For them to obey your desires as parents
- D. For them to live according to your family traditions
- E. For them to do what you did in their situation

QUESTION 9

How does marriage portray the image of the Trinity?

- A. Being the same, having equal education
- B. Having the same rights, responsibilities, and roles
- C. Through complementary differences yet one in purpose, in substance, and in nature
- D. Each spouse promoting his/her own interests against the other

QUESTION 10

What two concepts did Jesus emphasize about marriage?

- A. Dominance and submission
- B. Oneness and permanence
- C. Kindness and love
- D. Holiness and faithfulness

Lesson 1 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Purpose</i> |
|------------------|---|
| Genesis 1:26 | To rule as God's representatives over the earth and everything in it |
| Genesis 1:27a | To model the image and likeness of God |
| Genesis 1:27b | To be either male or female |
| Genesis 1:28 | To procreate and fill the earth in order to extend God's representative rule everywhere |
| Genesis 1:29 | To eat plants and fruit [note: this expands in Gen 9:3 to include meat] |
| Genesis 2:15 | To work and care for a particular area of responsibility |
| Genesis 2:24 | To form a one-flesh union in marriage |

QUESTION 2: *Your answer*

QUESTION 3:

(1) To love God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength and (2) To love your neighbor as yourself.

QUESTION 4:

F. Your spouse

Loving your closest neighbor—your spouse—is part of living rightly and an important purpose for your existence.

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6:

F. Dressing in an attractive way, just as God is beautiful

QUESTION 7: *Your answer*

| <i>Fruit and Reference</i> | <i>One Way God Revealed This Fruit in History</i> |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Peace (Eph 2:14) | He removed the dividing wall to make Jews and Gentiles one in Christ. |
| Patience (Heb 12:3, 2 Pet 3:9) | He endured hostility from wicked people. |
| Kindness (Eph 2:7) | He does good for you through Christ. |
| Goodness (Ps 34:8; 145:9) | He created a good world for His creatures to enjoy. |
| Faithfulness (Deut 7:9) | He keeps His promises for generations. |
| Gentleness (Mt 11:29, 30) | He gives you only a light load of responsibility and helps you to carry it. This brings rest to your soul. |
| Self-Control (Jas 1:13, 17) | He does not change His character and, therefore, cannot ever be swayed toward evil. |

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9:

| <i>Instruction</i> | <i>Reference</i> |
|--|-------------------|
| Do outstanding good deeds | 1 Samuel 17:58 |
| Remember the wise things that your parents taught you | Proverbs 6:20-23 |
| Help care for parents in their old age | 1 Timothy 5:4-8 |
| Become a wise and righteous person yourself | Proverbs 23:24-25 |
| Listen to your parents' perspective even when they are old | Proverbs 23:22 |

QUESTION 10: *Your answer***QUESTION 11:**

C. "Son, we really want you to do what the Lord has put on your heart."

E. "I remember when your mother and I first moved in together. I liked to stay up late and she liked to go to bed early. We worked out a solution by . . ."

F. "You have done such a creative job in decorating your home beautifully without much money."

QUESTION 12:

B. Wife

QUESTION 13: *Your answer***QUESTION 14:** *Your answer***QUESTION 15:** *Your answer***QUESTION 16:**

D. He gave him a new job of naming the animals.

QUESTION 17:

Since woman was taken from Adam's side, there would be a restlessness—an incompleteness—until a man had a woman pressed against his side again. So you see how intimate unity was integral to the initial design of marriage. Adam only got his flesh and bone "back" when Eve was tucked protectively under his arm (Song 8:5).

QUESTION 18: *Your answer***QUESTION 19:**

B. He emphasizes the permanence of marriage.

C. He shows that the type of righteousness God desires is greater than the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

D. He emphasizes the oneness that God ordains in marriage.

QUESTION 20: *Your answer***QUESTION 21:**

(1) Love portrays the Trinity, (2) Love is the hallmark of a Christian, (3) God designed people to need love, (4) Love pictures Christ and His bride, the Church, (5) God commands it in John 13, Ephesians 5, and Titus 2.

Lesson 1 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: False

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4:

E. Causing each other to do the right thing

QUESTION 5:

A. Jesus and Jonathan

QUESTION 6:

D. The fruit of the Spirit

QUESTION 7:

C. Give them a lavish funeral

QUESTION 8:

B. For them to be guided by God

QUESTION 9:

C. Through complementary differences yet one in purpose, in substance, and in nature

QUESTION 10:

B. Oneness and permanence

Lesson 2: Understanding the Effects of the Fall on Marriage

Lesson Introduction



“Mom, why is marriage so hard?” Cora sighed as she took a sip of tea, wincing as it burned her tongue. “I love Stephen so much, but we disagree in areas I never expected—like he wants me to keep Joshua quiet so that he can watch the ball game, and I think that he should play ball with Joshua. Sometimes he acts so *selfish!*”

Mary, her mother, nodded thoughtfully: “He *is* selfish. But so are you. I had to learn about my own selfishness before our marriage could grow stronger. Everyone will tell you that marriage is ‘work,’ but it took me a while to realize what that means. Sometimes it meant giving up what I thought was fair or even what I thought our marriage should be.” She turned and looked at Cora. “Do you remember when you were in ninth grade?”

Cora nodded. “Of course. The factory closed, and Daddy just moped around the house. You went to work at the school. You were both so unhappy. It really scared me because I thought that you might get divorced.”

“I’m sorry you had anxiety. We were both committed to our marriage, but it was pretty bad before it got better. Ultimately, God used that hard time to teach me something that I needed to learn.”

“Like . . .?”

“Well, like when I got married, I had packed up all my expectations right along with my clothes. I just expected your dad to meet all my needs—emotional, physical, even spiritual. I had a really long list, and I blamed him whenever things didn’t go right. So, when he wasn’t living up to my expectations anymore, I felt betrayed and angry with him—even at God. I thought, ‘This isn’t the man I married!’”

“Then God showed me that the biggest thing I had packed was my selfishness. I had to learn to see myself as God’s agent for good toward your father, even if he *wasn’t* meeting my needs.”

Cora laughed, “It’s easy to see how much you love each other now. You’re like a couple of newlyweds!”

“Now that Dad is not depressed, it’s easy. But I don’t take the things that he does for me for granted anymore. I am so grateful that he still loves me after all these years. Good times come, and bad times come. It’s being faithful through both the good and the bad times and loving each other through it all that pleases God.”

“But I get upset over such little things, Mom. Like when Stephen starts snoring at midnight, I just want to slug him! How petty is that?”

“That’s pretty bad!” Mary laughed. “But we’re all in the same boat. Ever since Eve took the fruit, we’ve thought that we should be able to control everything, even our husband’s snoring! And of course you and Stephen are not the only ones involved in your marriage. The enemy is right there



shooting you lies about each other. If you believe the lies, he can establish a beachhead in your relationship.”

“You mean kind of like those little devils in the cartoons that perch on your shoulder and tell you to think bad thoughts?”

“No, it’s worse than that. The real demons try to convince you that you’re hearing your own thoughts. You’ve got to replace those lies with the truth.”



Cora shook her head. “You mean when I hear the lie that I made a big mistake in marrying a man who snores and that I should have married Lance Whipple, I should affirm that I love Stephen and talk to the Lord about what to do about the snoring?”

Mary laughed. “That’s exactly right. It deflates the enemy’s plan when you replace the lies with the truth and turn over everything that is bothering you to the Lord ... besides you haven’t seen Lance Whipple since he moved away in first grade. I’ll bet he snores too!”

Mary and Cora are discussing sin issues that every couple faces: expectations, blame, anger, selfishness, control, and encountering lies that we are tempted to believe. In Lesson 2, you will examine Genesis 3, which chronicles the first time that sin damaged a marriage. How did the enemy’s attack cause a rift between the husband and wife? How can you effectively defend your marriage from his attacks and mitigate the many effects of sin in your relationship?

Lesson Outline

Lesson 2: Understanding the Effects of the Fall on Marriage

Topic 1: Disbelieving Lies

Who Is Your Enemy?

What Satan Does to Marriages

Identifying Lies

Removing Old Lies and Old Vows

Resisting New Lies

The Insufficiency of Laws

Topic 2: United We Stand, Divided We Fall

Betrayal and Retreat

Shame and Hiding

Guilt and Blame

More Than Conquerors

Strengthening Each Other

Topic 3: Responding to Your Spouse’s Sins and Failures

Expectations and Performance

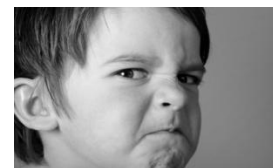
Your Response to Failure

Your Response When Your Spouse Causes Pain

Topic 1: Disbelieving Lies

“No, Joshua, you may not go outside anymore today. It’s time to eat and then get ready for bed.” Five-year-old Joshua had just been brought in from play by his father, Stephen. His face reddened and his lips pursed as he jutted his tiny chin higher in the air. “I want to eat dinner outside!”

Stephen said, “Joshua, sit down.” Joshua bent his little frame into the



chair but muttered to no one in particular, “I’m sitting down on the outside, but I’m still standing up on the inside!”

The problem of pride and insubordination shows up first in your relationship to your parents, but it doesn’t stop there, does it? You know that Joshua will grow up to explore other realms of rebellion, even if Cora and Stephen are excellent parents. At its root, sin stems from our rebellion against God, the perfect parent. Sinful rebellion continues throughout life, not only in your relationship to parents but also in your relationship to your spouse. Sometimes deep inside you, there is that little child with fists clenched, still wishing to judge for yourself about obeying your Father’s instructions. As you will see, your deep issues of selfishness and pride make you an easy target for Satan’s temptations.

As you read in Genesis 1 and 2, man was set over a beautiful, thriving creation in total harmony and peace. But Genesis 3 describes a single decision, which, like flesh-eating bacteria, quickly distorted every aspect of all that God had created. How did this happen?

Into the scene of the peaceful joy of the Garden of Eden, a being enters with a very different role in mind for the image-bearers than the good one God had given them. Through cleverly devised deceit, he persuades the humans to join him in distrusting and rebelling against God and triggers a self-destruct switch that will prevent man from eating from the Tree of Life and living forever. Mankind is swept into a cosmic rebellion that will affect every aspect of every marriage from that point onward.

This enemy—Satan—and the evil angels who follow him, are still alive and well and attacking your marriage just as he attacked Adam and Eve’s. In this topic, you will examine his tactics both in the Garden and today. You will learn ways to strengthen yourself and each other in order to neutralize his plans against you and your marriage.

- Please read the article “An Overview of the Problem” in *Readings in Marriage*. Then return here.

QUESTION 1

The article said, “The creation is (1) estranged from the Creator and (2) at odds with itself,” so the whole natural world now accurately reflects these two truths. Please open your Life Notebook and briefly describe how the conflicts between husbands and wives often depict these two facets of the Fall.

Who Is Your Enemy?

Have you ever been in the middle of a big argument with someone whom you love and suddenly wonder how in the world you got there? Little misunderstandings or small annoyances trigger



blow-ups of atomic proportions. You start out by making the mistake of leaving a jacket lying carelessly in the wrong place and end up arguing over whether or not you love your mother more than your spouse. In Lesson 7, you will learn practical ways of diffusing those situations. In this lesson, you will see who often plants these land mines in marriages in the first place—and how and why. You must understand your enemy, the devil.

- Please read Genesis 3:1-15 for the Bible’s description of the first temptation.

Is everything the serpent says untrue? Or does he use some truth as a kind of sugar coating to get Eve to swallow a lie? What does this say about his character and his activities?

- Please read “Eve’s Encounter” in *Readings in Marriage*, a story built on the facts of Genesis 1–3.

QUESTION 2

Observations about Satan

Please open your Life Notebook.

Draw a three-column table. Title it *Satan's Characteristics*. Using this chart, you will write down everything that you notice in the Scriptures below about Satan's attitudes and how he works. Prepare the chart by labeling the first column "Verse" and labeling the second column "Characteristic or Action." You will use the third column later. Give yourself plenty of room for rows under the headings as you will easily discover twenty or more characteristics of Satan in the passages below.

Start by observing Genesis 3, the passage you just read. When you have completed all of the observations you can find about Satan's personality and how he works in Genesis 3, go to the additional passages listed below to add new observations about his characteristics or actions. Try to come up with at least twenty observations.

- Ezekiel 28:16-18
- Isaiah 14:12-15
- 1 Timothy 3:6
- 1 John 5:19-20
- Luke 4:5-7

Now please complete the third column. First, title it "Our Relationship." Think about your relationship with your spouse (with an imaginary spouse or past spouse if you are unmarried). Put an X by any characteristics or actions of Satan that have influenced or could influence you, your spouse, or your marriage. Circle or in some way highlight the one characteristic that concerns you the most. Stop and talk to God about this evil characteristic's effect on your marriage and/or other relationships. Be prepared to discuss your observations from this table in your seminar. Be sure to bring your work to class.

Despite his might and intelligence, Satan is not God's equal in any way. It is essential to remember this point.

- Please read the brief but important article, "Satan's Limits" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 3

According to the article, which are **FALSE** statements? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Satan is God's equal opposite.
- B. God had a war with Satan in heaven and threw him out.
- C. It will be difficult for God to destroy Satan.
- D. God allows Satan to exist for His good purposes.
- E. Satan has always existed and will exist forever.

What Satan Does to Marriages



You won't encounter Satan as a jewel-studded serpent that is lurking in your garden waiting to carry on a conversation, but the Bible says that he constantly schemes against you. Marriage is a special target. If he can destroy a marriage, he can devastate the spouses, derail their ministries, wound their children, and harm their children's marriages for generations. If he destroys many families, he destroys whole communities. If

he destroys enough communities for enough generations, he ruins cultures.

You have already listed many of his activities in your observation worksheet. Scripture gives many more descriptions of his work against people.

QUESTION 4

Read each verse and match the reference to the verbs, which describe how Satan acts against people.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Satan's Activity</i> |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Ephesians 6:11 | Deceives |
| John 8:44 | Blinds |
| 1 Corinthians 7:5 | Hinders |
| 1 Thessalonians 2:18 | Devours |
| 1 Peter 5:8 | Schemes |
| 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 | Murders |
| Acts 5:3 | Tempts |

The primary method of destruction that your enemy employs is to spread lies—whispered in your ears, broadcasted on your television, written in books and magazines, and even spoken or portrayed by people whom you trusted to tell you the truth, such as your parents. Satan works hard to get married people today to believe lies, just as he did to Adam and Eve. In fact, he never stops working to get people and groups to believe what is false in order to subvert and destroy those who are created as God's image-bearers.

Your enemy's first attack is rarely to tempt you toward blatant sin, such as saying, "Hit your wife!" His attack on your marriage begins more subtly, often in the form of appealing to your flesh and pride, just as he did to Eve. "I am so sick of my wife's nagging. Nag, nag, nag—just like Mom nagged Dad. My dad was too weak. I don't want to be weak. I must make her stop."



His lies are often disguised as if they were your own thoughts, not his. He appeals to your selfishness, pride, fears, and past hurts. Step by step he crumbles and removes your resistance to doing his will. When he gets you to that place, it will feel like you are doing your own will rather than his.

Lies are like heavy chains.

Once your enemy can convince you to accept enough of them, he has only to throw you into a sea of temptation and you will not be able to swim. You will sink and drown, often drowning your marriage, too. But he need not be successful!



QUESTION 5

Please open your Life Notebook.

Based on what you have learned in this section, write a short essay of 1–3 pages, which includes (but is not limited to) answers to the following questions:

- How extensive is Satan's influence on the world? What motivates him?
- Why do you think Satan is seeking to destroy marriage relationships? What methods is he employing?

- If you are **MARRIED**, which of the methods has been the most successful in undermining your own marriage relationship so far?
- If you are **SINGLE**, which of the methods do you think has been the most successful in undermining the future marriages of single people?

Identifying Lies

Satan chooses his lies for each individual, just as an archer chooses specific arrows for specific animals. Lies are among what the Bible calls the “flaming arrows” of the evil one (Eph 6:16). In biblical times, a flaming arrow was used to start a fire and destroy a building. Have Satan’s flaming arrows set fire to you or to your relationship? Some arrows may have been burning for a long time.

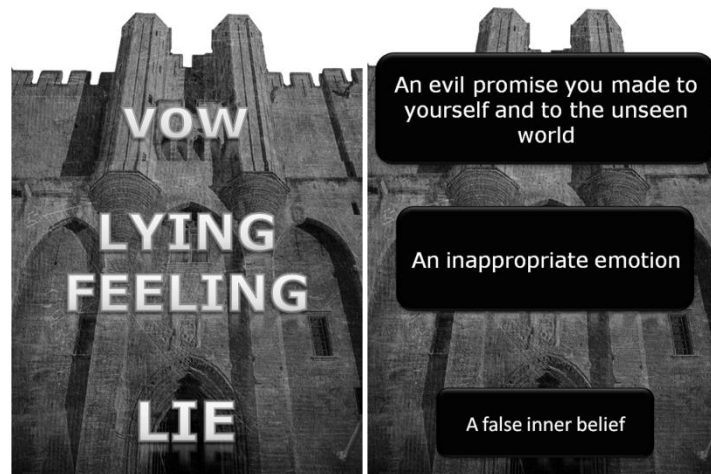
- Please read the article “Better Off Single” in *Readings in Marriage*. Then return here.

Can you see that previous to this story, Juan had probably believed old lies that he now viewed as truth? These assumptions were things like the following:

- “All our money belongs to me.”
- “My wife should save money for what I want.”
- “My sister-in-law looks down at me.”

Then the enemy sends new lies and knits all the lies together until Juan’s marriage is bound up with them. Scripture calls these systems of lies *strongholds*. Strongholds make it easy for Satan to tempt people to sin again and again.

Lies can take several forms. As you have already seen, Satan works his will through getting people to accept lies that are contrary to the truth of God. Sometimes these strongholds are also made up of lying feelings and vows. These three components of strongholds—lies, feelings, and vows—cause many of the problems people experience in marriage. Please examine this diagram below to better understand the difference between the three parts of a stronghold.



- Please read the article entitled “Lies, Feelings, and Vows” in *Readings in Marriage*, which includes examples of each type of deceit.

As you read, write down or mark any lies that you have heard, believed, or struggled with in your life. You will be working with this list later on.

QUESTION 6

Based on this article, please define lies, lying feelings, vows, and strongholds.

You are not normally aware of the strongholds that are woven into the fabric of your thoughts. One signal that they exist, though, is how you react to your spouse, particularly in a conflict. Like John in the example below, when your spouse does or says something to trigger a painful lie, you will react with emotions stronger than the situation warrants.

For instance, John gets ready to go out and Mary asks, “What time will you be home?”



What old lies may be triggering John’s angry outburst?



If John has adopted these lies, can you see how any one of them would cause him to respond with anger when Mary asks what time he will be home?

Mary is confused about John’s explosive reaction. It feels like John hates her. If Mary has a stronghold of *lying feelings*, she might experience the following:



- Terror**
- Numbness**
- Faintness**
- Extreme anxiety**
- Fear of abandonment**

Both John’s old lies and Mary’s lying feelings are part of strongholds, which have entangled them in harmful patterns in their relationship.

QUESTION 7

Please read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 and Paul’s description of strongholds. Look up the word *stronghold* in a dictionary. Match the questions and answers about strongholds.

| <i>Question</i> | <i>Answer</i> |
|--|---|
| What is a stronghold? | God’s truth |
| What is its purpose? | Protection |
| What do the strongholds Paul mentions here oppose? | Take every thought captive in obedience to Christ |
| What does God want to do with these strongholds? | Destroy them |
| How? | A thick wall or fort |

Did you notice how strongholds are taken captive? By capturing false thoughts and bringing them to conformity with Christ. People develop strongholds because they think that the lies and vows keep them safe from future pain. But God wants to become your protection *Himself* by building walls of truth and by bringing every thought under God’s control inside.

Removing Old Lies and Vows

In Psalm 139:23-24, David invites God to probe, uncover, and remove any evil or harmful things inside his mind. How does God remove them?

Hannah’s stronghold was built when she was fifteen. One night as they were asleep in her home, her family was stricken with carbon monoxide poisoning from a faulty heater. After several weeks, she recovered but her brother died. She believed the lie that she should have died, too. In order to stop the pain, she stopped feeling anything. Her inability to feel any emotion distanced those who cared about her. When she got married, she remained aloof from her husband. Her husband could not understand why she was so barren inside.

Hannah attended a marriage retreat conducted by Dr. Daniel Oh, who conducts marriage seminars throughout Asia. There, he asked Hannah to reconstruct the details of her brother’s death by drawing a picture of it and writing about it. As she worked on this, the Lord brought to her mind the vow she had made that day, “I will never feel anything again.” Dr. Oh asked her to read Psalm 139.

She began to cry uncontrollably, her emotions rushing out like water through a broken dam. She realized that God knew her fully and was right with her during that terrible event. She renounced the vow that had stifled her emotions for all these years.

The changes in her marriage were profound. She said later, "As my husband witnessed my transformational healing right before his eyes, he began to understand me from the depth of his heart. My husband's love for me has grown more since then, and we have experienced deeper intimacy. I realize more than ever the power and preciousness of His Word. I made a fresh decision to memorize the Scripture and be immersed in His Word. Praise be to God the Father, for He has shown mercy and grace to me, His daughter."



Hannah was able to release her pain by drawing a picture and writing about what had happened to her. The Psalms give another way of bringing the hidden things, which damage your marriage, out into the light of God's truth.

Psalm 10 is a *song of lament* written by someone who was being persecuted by a wicked person. The Psalm lists many lies that the wicked man believes and the vows he has made that have resulted in his evil deeds.

- Please read the whole Psalm thoughtfully. Can you see how these lies and vows have worked together to cause the wicked man's cruel actions?

QUESTION 8

Each of the statements below is a thought of the wicked man from Psalm 10. Match the label "Lie" or "Vow" with the accompanying reference above each thought of the wicked man.

Question 8

| Instructions | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Vow (Ps. 10:3c) | | | | | | | | | |
| Vow (Ps. 10:6b) | | | | | | | | | |
| Lie (Ps. 10:11b) | God doesn't care | God overlooks [my cruelty] | God does not pay attention | God never notices | "I will never be upended" | "I will experience no calamity" | "I will get everything I want" | "I don't need God" | "I curse you, God" |
| Vow (Ps. 10:6a) | | | | | | | | | |
| Vow (Ps. 10:3b) | | | | | | | | | |
| Lie (Ps. 10:11a) | | | | | | | | | |
| Lie (Ps. 10:4) | | | | | | | | | |
| Lie (Ps. 10:11c) | | | | | | | | | |
| Vow (Ps. 10:3a) | | | | | | | | | |

As the wicked man accepted these lies and made these vows, his character became so hard that he persecuted the person who is writing the Psalm. But the writer is *also* being tempted to believe lies.

QUESTION 9

Can you see at least two lies that the writer is being tempted to believe? Look at verse 1. In his lament, he is asking God whether these two lies are true or not. What are they?

Have you ever asked God these two questions, or felt that He was distant and hidden?

Having these thoughts is not a sin, but you must answer them quickly with the truth so that they do not have a chance to become part of your character. The latter part of the Psalm, from verses 12-15, shows how the psalmist turns the wounds that he experienced from this wicked man into a cry for God to act on his behalf. In verses 16-18, he ends by affirming his trust in God's good character, by replacing the lies with the truth. He looks forward with hope to the future.

Perhaps you have never told anyone about some of the bad things that have happened to you, but God knows. Perhaps you still have bad dreams or strong reactions to your spouse that indicate deep wounds are still affecting your heart.

QUESTION 10

Writing a Lament

Please open your Life Notebook or use a separate piece of paper.

Write your pain in a lament similar to Psalm 10. The lament should have the four following ingredients:

1. What happened (the event)
2. The lies you were given to believe
3. A cry to God for His deliverance
4. An affirmation of God's character and the truth about the situation



You may also want to include a promise of how you will act on the basis of truth. You may accompany your lament with a drawing, a song, or a dance, which shows how you feel. Come prepared to share at least part of your lament in your seminar.

- Here is an example from another student, "Lito's Lament" in *Readings in Marriage*.

Resisting New Lies

As you read earlier, the Bible calls Satan's attacks "flaming arrows" (Eph 6:16). Satan is clever and knows you very well. Because of your sinful nature, you have many soft spots at which he will aim. For instance, the arrow may aim at your "rights" and ignite your pride. Or the arrow may aim at your fears and ignite a lack of trust in God. You can become confused or totally deceived, just as Eve was, without even realizing you are on fire. Ephesians describes a whole set of defensive armor, specifically saying that *faith* will extinguish his arrows. But faith in what?

Faith in your own skill? No. It is trusting faith in God's character and in the truth of His revealed Word.

The book of James has two passages that can help us. Read James 4:7, a passage that gives two steps on how to fight against Satan's arrows.



Defense 1: Submit to God

Your first step in resisting the enemy's arrows is to submit your will to God's. The choice to submit, even if it goes against strong emotions, is not hypocrisy. Submitting to God is the essential first step whenever you are confused, angry, or not sure what is right and wrong. It puts the Holy Spirit's power at your disposal to resist sin.

He begins to reorient your thoughts according to God's truth. When you submit to God, the deception begins to dispel and truth becomes more evident.

What if Eve had said in her heart, "What the serpent is saying seems to be true; however, I choose to believe that God is good. I choose to submit to God's rule over me, even if I don't understand why this fruit is forbidden"?

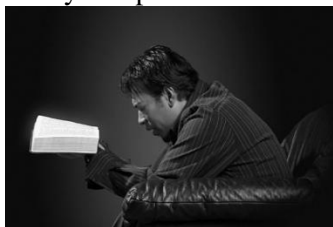
The author's experience: It has amazed me how taking this step of choosing submission to God, especially when my spouse is angry, causes my whole outlook to turn around. The evil, judgmental attitude against my spouse, which seemed so justified just a few minutes before, begins to be revealed for the evil that it really is. Instead, I now begin to see the situation as an opportunity to love and serve God by asking Him what to do and what to think about the situation. God shows me how to have compassion for my spouse's problem or hurt. It is not my role to accuse my spouse of mistakes. Accusing is the behavior of my spouse's enemy, the accuser of the brethren (Rev 12:10). I do not want to be the devil's accomplice, but God's! My role is to encourage my spouse toward love and good works (Heb 10:24).

Defense 2: Resist

After you have taken the first step of submitting to God, you can "resist" new lies, according to James 4:7.

How would Juan apply these steps of submitting to God and resisting lies to his situation?

"God, all that I have is yours. I submit to You all my rights to money. Help me to be faithful in the use of the money that I manage and to use it in the way You choose."



As Juan submits his will and his mind to God's truth, his bitterness will leave and God will give him wisdom about what to do about the bills. If he needs to talk with Flora about not spending more than their income will allow, he will be able to do it in a loving spirit of cooperation and self-sacrifice, not criticism and judgment.

To resist the enemy, you must recognize that some thoughts are in error and affirm the truth against them. It should be an instant reaction, like an archer raising his shield to deflect an arrow. If you have committed God's Word to heart and have absorbed its principles, you may instantly know that something is not true; or the Lord may reveal it as you pray, as He did for Juan.

But what if you don't know? You cannot always take the time to search God's Word right away. You certainly do not want the



flaming arrow to stick in your heart and set it on fire. So another useful way to recognize error is by comparing a thought to God’s character. You evaluate it by asking, “Is this really something God’s Spirit would say in my heart?” In other words, is it in line with His character? Or is it more like something the enemy would say? You have already seen what the enemy’s character is like.

James gives a helpful list of the kinds of thoughts that come from God and those that come from the enemy.

- Please read James 3:14-17.

QUESTION 11

The following chart is **INCORRECT**. In your Life Notebook, copy the list and place each characteristic under its corresponding category of either the **Characteristics of God’s Thoughts** or the **Characteristics of Evil Thoughts** from James 3:14-17.

| <i>Characteristics of Evil Thoughts</i> | <i>Characteristics of God’s Thoughts</i> |
|---|--|
| Selfish | Jealous |
| Bitter | Pure |
| Arrogant | Peaceable |
| Gentle | Reasonable |
| Earthly | Natural |
| Full of mercy and good fruit | Unwavering |
| Demonic | Without hypocrisy |

Do you remember how Juan used God’s Word to effectively combat the evil thoughts he had? He could also have compared his thoughts with God’s character. Which of these characteristics apply to Juan’s thought that women spend money like water? Was it gentle, merciful, and unwavering? Or selfish, jealous, and bitter? Can you see how Juan may identify and extinguish that fiery dart by comparing it to God’s character? Do you think this would also work for John and Mary?

Sudden lies are a part of the enemy’s method to destroy you and your marriage. You must be alert to defend yourself when you first hear them, especially during a time when your emotions are high. This is the most important time to (1) submit and (2) resist as James 4 says. Do not accept the worthless and evil means of protecting yourself that the enemy may offer.

The Insufficiency of Laws

One traditional way of removing lies is by following detailed laws and rules. In fact, the Jews of



Jesus’ time spent most of their time trying to quantify questions such as, “How many footsteps can I take without breaking the law of not working on the Sabbath?” This method of combating sin does not work well because laws only deal with surface behaviors and not the deeper roots of sin, such as rebellion to God or a lack of love. Sinful roots will just sprout new growth.

It is helpful to imagine that lies are like weeds with underground runners. If you have ever worked in a garden, you know what happens when you try to cover up or break off runner weeds. They still spread and will pop up elsewhere. If what you say you believe or know you should believe is different from what you really believe in your secret heart, you have not pulled up the root, only broken off the visible shoot. You fight a losing battle to control your actions and especially your reactions when you are under stress. Since marriage provides plenty of stressful situations, the evidence of those lies—sin—will keep cropping up like new weeds popping up from the same root over and over. You may recite many Bible verses, try

to avoid tempting situations, and go to church more, but as long as your heart has the same point of view, it will keep sprouting sins.

- Please read Genesis 2:16-17 and 3:1-7.
- Please read the article “Fighting Sin With Legalism” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 12

Open your Life Notebook.

Please read Colossians 2:20–3:5, and answer the following questions:

1. In what ways have you observed your relatives or your church try to oppose sins related to marriage (lust, battery, fornication, or adultery, for instance) by using legalism—that is, by developing detailed, specific rules to try to stop the sin from happening again?
2. What rules have you tried in dealing with your own thought life, your own behavior, or your spouse’s behavior?
3. How are laws and rules helpful? When are they useless?
4. Contrast the differences between legalism’s way to restrain sin and the way Paul recommends by stating in your own words the principles of Colossians 2:20–3:5.

Throughout history, God’s people spoke creeds and confessions together and alone as part of their worship. They knew that affirming truth was a healthy spiritual exercise (1 Kgs 8:33; Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9).

- Please read 2 Corinthians 4:2.

The word “reject” here (Gr. *apeipon*) is translated “to speak away from,” or to disown something out loud. According to language scholars (Vine’s Expository Dictionary), the word also includes “to **forbid the approach** of the things disowned” (emphasis mine). In the verse above, Paul says to *reject* your “shameful hidden deeds.” By exposing a lie out loud, you help loosen its roots in your mind so that it can be pulled out. Then by replacing it with truth, you prevent it from returning and “forbid its approach” to your mind again. In the following Marriage Building Activity, you will practice renouncing lies and affirming truth.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Lies*.

Marriage Building Activity: Lies



Plan some time alone with someone you trust—your spouse, if possible, or else a close friend or relative, a counselor, or completely alone with God

1. Start your time by reading prayerfully and meditatively through the list of lies, lying feelings, and vows you made earlier on paper or in your Life Notebook.
2. Start with one item and ask God, in prayer, when you **first began** to believe this lie or first made this vow. Pause in the Lord’s presence and wait for the Holy Spirit to bring this to your mind. Often the event in which you first believed the lie will be a time in your life of great pain or disappointment, which occurred perhaps many years ago. Often the event will involve the words of a parent.

3. When the Lord brings it to your mind, do the following:

- Draw a picture of the scene, and remember as much as possible about what happened
- Write the truth about the situation
- Write or say an “I refuse ... I choose” statement

Example: You may believe the lie that you are ugly. You remember that at your fifteenth birthday party your father made a cruel joke, “My daughter has the face of a truck compared to her sister.” So you draw the birthday party and say or write, “I refuse to accept any longer the lie that I am ugly. I choose to accept Your truth according to Psalm 139, that you have made me wonderfully in a design that pleases You.”

4. Ask God to confirm in your heart that what He says is true. He can and will bring your feelings to conform to the truth over time as you keep choosing to believe His truth. If you are with another person, ask him/her to pray with you and affirm the truth about each situation. Do not worry if the lie or vow still feels true in your emotions. For instance, you may still feel ugly, even though you have refused to accept that lie. Using the Scripture you found, you can choose to agree with God, even if your emotions resist.

You will need to go through this process for each lie, so it may take a number of occasions of going back to the list, perhaps doing one or more each day during your quiet time with God. This may become a spiritual discipline that you do regularly—either privately, with your spouse, or with another close friend.

As a spiritual leader, you will have the opportunity to practice this process with those you minister to.

Topic 2: United We Stand, Divided We Fall

“Although an assailant may overpower one person who is alone, two would be able to withstand him. Moreover, a three-fold cord is not quickly broken.”—Ecclesiastes 4:12

“Eve! Stop listening to that serpent! Remember, God has cared for us so well. We can trust Him, Eve!” Have you ever considered that if Adam had strengthened Eve with the truth, the outcome



might have changed? It was only by dividing Eve from Adam that the serpent managed to work his plot against them both. In the last topic, you saw how the Fall distorted everything in creation. Satan’s successful mission distorted the image of God in both the man and the woman individually. Their rebellious natures began to resemble his own twisted nature in the way that they related to God. In Genesis 3, you will observe that Adam’s

and Eve’s ways of relating to each other begin to reflect Satan’s ways, too. Later, their son will pick up this twisted nature in the way that he relates to his brother.

The Bible says in 1 John 5:19 that the whole world is under the control of the enemy! Believers are the sole exceptions to his reign of darkness. He loses control of your eternity when you come to salvation and enter Christ’s kingdom. But that loss does not stop Satan from trying to limit your effectiveness against him and his evil purposes. Jesus says that a house divided against itself will not stand. So the devil tries to divide couples and get them so entangled in their own problems that they will not interfere with him and his plans for ruling the world. In the next two sections, you will examine some of the ways that Satan tries to divide couples and immobilize them. How has he worked his schemes against your marriage?

Betrayal and Retreat

Eve's Betrayal

Your one-flesh relationship with your spouse can be a blessing if it is used for good, but it also has an equal and opposite danger. Notice that as Eve succumbs to the enemy's plan, she tempts her husband, as well. This shows a typical human relationship cycle. The victim becomes a perpetrator. Have you seen evil cycles in other relationships?

- A child whose father harshly berated him grows up to berate his own wife and children.
- A woman who was not loved by her parents belittles and criticizes her husband or children.
- Children who are abused by parents torment younger siblings and, later, their own children.



As someone has said, "Hurt people hurt other people." The cycle can be stopped in your progeny, but it will not fully stop unless it stops with you. When you choose to sin, you harm others, even if you don't intend to. Whenever you choose sin instead of righteousness, you betray your marriage vows to bless your spouse, and instead you bring evil to your home¹.

Adam's Retreat

Please review Genesis 3 again. How does Adam react to the serpent's temptation of Eve? Notice verse 6 says he is "with her." Why doesn't he attack the serpent? Why doesn't he stop Eve from eating?

1. Adam might have been intimidated by the serpent. Remember, it was not a slithering sidewinder until after God's judgment (Gen 3:14; Ezk 28:19). Lucifer was a perfectly beautiful, jewel-studded cherub, splendid in heaven (Ex 25:20; Ezk 28:12-17). A cherub has no correlation to the smarmy cupid-clones that we often see depicted in art (These came from Greek mythology, not from the Bible). The real cherubs were upright, winged protectors of God's glory (Ex 25:20, Ezk 10:1-7). We don't know exactly what Lucifer looked like when he appeared to Adam and Eve, but he was magnificent and awe-inspiring.
2. Perhaps Adam nursed a secret desire to eat the fruit, too, but waited to see what would happen to Eve before making his choice. Would she die as God had said she would?

No matter what his reasons were, Adam withdrew from helping Eve resist sin, and they both fell to temptation.

When David ordered the execution of Bathsheba's husband, he had his men pull Uriah into fierce fighting, then withdraw from him. Similarly, one way that the enemy orders your destruction is to tempt you into a skirmish with sin, and then he causes you and your spouse to withdraw from each other. He often tempts people to disengage from a battle just when they should spring into

¹ **Lies:** When you sin, you may tempt your spouse or children, at least by your example, to sin, too (Acts 5:2). Bathsheba suffered for David's sin of lust and his tempting her into adultery. If bathing where he could see her was deliberate, she was the one who led him into sin. Either way, the lust of one spread to the other and blossomed into adultery. The innocent ones you love may end up suffering consequences for your sin, as well. David's baby died because of his parents' sin. Other members of the family, and even the whole nation, were harmed. Judah, Achan, and King Saul are other examples of men who brought harm to their families through their sin.



action by defending each other, or he tempts them to spring into the wrong action just when they should stop and ask God what to do next.

Stopping the Beast at Your Door

- Please read Genesis 4:5-9.

Adam and Eve's children perpetuate some of the same problems that we saw in their parents and grow them into new types of sin. When Cain fails to bring a blood sacrifice, God rejects his grain sacrifice. Cain becomes sullen and jealous. God explains to Cain that, just like a predatory beast, sin is lying at the door, waiting to devour him. He suggests that Cain has the power to overcome the beast, but he must choose to act decisively to slay it. But like his dad at another critical point, Cain retreats. Sin had spread. He withdraws from killing the beast of sin, and, as a result, he instead kills his brother. Unfortunately, instead of attacking their own sin, many people turn to attack the person who exposed their sin or failure, just as when Cain killed Abel. In Christ, you have the strength to overcome and quickly spring to attack the beast, not your spouse.

Shame and Hiding

One way that Satan separates you from your spouse is through making you feel ashamed. People all have done bad things for which they are ashamed and for which they must ask forgiveness. More difficult, though, is that you might be ashamed of someone else's sins over which you had no control. For instance, you might feel shame at evil things someone did to you or did to someone close to you (such as incest), ashamed of something another family member did (such as a parent who stole something), or ashamed of a physical characteristic (such as a cleft palate). In a marriage partner, you hope to find someone who will accept you fully—your deepest insecurities, fears, thoughts, dreams, and your entire physical body. But shame can block this. You fear that your partner will mock or reject you, so you fail to open yourself fully to your partner. If you cannot share yourself, you cannot achieve the intimacy and oneness that God wants you to develop.

In a minute, you will read an article revealing a marriage in which fear and shame war against unity. As you read about Jeremy and June, think—how does shame undermine their unity? Can you see how one lie leads to another? Are the lies that Jeremy believes harming his marriage? How do you think June feels as he withdraws from closeness with her? What lies could his actions develop in her mind?

- Please read "Marriage Shame" in *Readings in Marriage*.

The First Shame

Where did shame start?

- Please read Genesis 3:7-19, then read the article "Shame in the Garden" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 13

Please read Genesis 2:17. Instead of nakedness, what should Adam and Eve really have been afraid of when they heard God walking in the garden?

- A. Punishment for their sin
- B. Satan
- C. Eating more fruit
- D. Loneliness
- E. Getting cold

Their thinking is now so confused that they feel ashamed of the wrong thing! God created them naked and never told them to put on clothing. This is the first example of a lying feeling, which we talked about in the last section. In a lying feeling, guilt, anger, shame, or another emotion is inappropriate for the situation.

Removing Shame

In our glimpse into the marriage of Jeremy and June, we saw that Jeremy had a shameful secret, which he was afraid to reveal to June. This secret was harming their marital unity as Jeremy became more and more entangled in lies about his shame.

- Now read the rest of their story in the article “Shame Exposed” in *Readings in Marriage*.

How did June help fight the lies in Jeremy’s heart? How did she make it safe for Jeremy to share his secret? Did telling her about the evil memory increase his shame or help remove it?

A spouse does not need to know everything shameful that happened before you came to Christ. But many times the Lord will lead you to confess your secret shames to your spouse or to another believer. The Bible says that when Jesus took our sins on the Cross, He also took shame (Isa 53:4). As your closest brother or sister in Christ, your spouse is often the one who can assure you of God’s and his/her own acceptance (Rom 15:7).

Building a Trusting Relationship

How can you make it safe for your spouse to share shameful things with you—to be emotionally “naked”? When your spouse has told you something of which he/she is ashamed—a sin, failure, or shameful experience—what was in your heart? Did you feel acceptance toward him/her? Did you feel judgmental and superior? Or have you said things that make him/her more ashamed, like “I certainly wouldn’t have felt that way” or “No wonder you feel ashamed—you are disgusting!” In order to develop safety in your relationship, when you are having a disagreement, make sure to never bring up your spouse’s secrets as a weapon. Never share your spouse’s shameful past to amuse your family or friends or to help them pity you. If after reading this section, you realize that you have increased rather than released your spouse’s shame, stop right now and ask forgiveness of both God and your spouse. Promise before God that you will be gentle and safe in the future. You will study more about dealing with communicating safely in Chapter 7.

Guilt and Blame

You may feel shame even when you are innocent, but what about *true* guilt? Under Adam’s false shame at nakedness was *true* guilt for sin. What did Adam do about it? When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they assumed that they would be able to rely on themselves. Did not the serpent say they would be “divine beings”? Divine beings are powerful and in control. The fact that Adam and Eve hide from God shows that they do not feel powerful any longer. Adam’s load of guilt feels heavy and unfamiliar. He looks for somewhere to unload its uncomfortable weight. The serpent who had actually hatched the evil plan was perhaps himself intimidating, so Adam starts to blame

Eve in his heart. But blaming her does not remove his own guilt. To make matters worse, God shows up, just as Adam’s guilty heart fears.

- “Eden Judgment” is an imaginary story telling Adam’s view of the disaster in Genesis 3. Do you see how Satan successfully divides the first couple? Adam fails and then turns against his wife and against God. Adam seems to blame both of them for his sin. Please read this article now.



Can you see how this sin affects God’s image in this couple?

Satan’s successful scheme has now distorted the image of God in the man and the woman individually. Their twisted nature now resembles his nature. In Genesis 3:10-12, their ways of relating to each other also reflect Satan’s ways. Satan does not enjoy intimate fellowship with others, loving and serving them. He uses his subordinates for his own purposes by dominating and manipulating them. There is no peace or love in his household! Adam’s guilt toward God and his blame of the woman cuts him off from them both, his two closest friends. He once again is lonely because he is not fully intimate with anyone and fully trusts no one—neither God, Eve, nor even himself. The innocent animal that God kills shows the vast change in the earth now that sin has entered.

What is your typical response when your spouse makes you feel “caught” in doing something wrong? Is it to defend your actions and blame someone else? This is the flesh’s way of dealing with the problem of guilt (Gal 5:20).

Instead of blaming your partner, what is the godly response?

- Please read 2 Samuel 12:7-14, 22-24; and Psalm 51.

In these passages, we see that King David has committed adultery with his general’s wife Bathsheba. To hide her subsequent pregnancy, he abuses his kingly authority by arranging for her husband to be killed in war. He has a big load of guilt, does he not? David’s sin seems much worse than Adam’s eating a piece of forbidden fruit. Just like in the garden, God shows up and exposes David’s sin. Through the prophet Nathan, God confronts David, just as He had confronted Adam. When God exposes his sin, what is different about David’s response compared to Adam’s, especially in the way he treats his woman?

QUESTION 14

The passages you read show David’s reaction when his sin is exposed. Adam’s reaction as you read in Genesis is shown in the left column. Match David’s reactions in the right column

| <i>Adam’s Reaction</i> | <i>David’s Reaction</i> |
|--|---|
| He hides from God | He protects the woman from shame. He comforts the woman. |
| He blames the woman | His biggest concern is the loss of fellowship with God. He pleads for fellowship with God to be restored. |
| He indirectly blames God | He comes to God and humbles himself to ask for mercy and forgiveness |
| His biggest concern is feeling less guilty | He recognizes God’s righteous character and agrees with God’s righteous judgment. |

Can you see the difference in the way David treats Bathsheba compared to Adam’s treatment of Eve? Which one has the better response?

- Please do the following *Worship Activity*.

Lesson 2 Worship Activity



1. Close your eyes and think of something you did or said wrong in relationship to your spouse (or someone else, if you are single). It could be something small or large. What did you do with your guilt? Did you blame someone else, like Adam? Or did you respond like David did? How did your proper or improper reaction to guilt help or harm your relationship?
2. If you have not yet done so, go and ask for forgiveness (Jas 5:16). Pray for the humility to accept reproof and turn to God just as David did in Psalm 51.
3. Read Psalm 51 as a prayer to God.

More Than Conquerors

“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.”
—Romans 8:37 (NASB)

Satan tries to divide you from your spouse, but by keeping united and working together you can thwart him. How do you and your spouse enter spiritual battle together? How can you defend your spouse from attack? In the article “Standing Together Against a Problem” you will learn how to stop blaming each other.

QUESTION 15

Which is the best first step when problems arise for one or both of you?

- A. Figure out who is responsible for the problem.
- B. Strengthen your unity.
- C. Pray together and ask God what should be the next step.
- D. Remember what your parents would do in a similar situation.
- E. Go alone, without your spouse, to ask advice or help from your parents or elders.
- F. Start fixing it yourself.

Is your spouse currently going through any tests? How are you fighting this problem together?

- Please read the article “Ransack” in *Readings in Marriage*. Then, return here.

QUESTION 16

Please open your Life Notebook.

How do Pastor Eng and his wife, Li, strengthen each other? What lies do they replace with truth? How is this scenario different from a fleshly or typical response to this kind of stress?

In the story of Pastor Eng, you can see how encouragement helps during a crisis, but what about on ordinary days? How do you keep alert and counteract Satan’s lies and attacks on your family? Our family has found that we can all help each other keep watch for new lies and encourage each other. Understanding the role of lies and the work of the enemy has changed the way that we relate to each other in our home.

- Please read the article “Helping Each Other Resist Lies” in *Readings in Marriage*. Then return here.

Strengthening Each Other

It is essential for marriage partners to fight problems together rather than fighting with each other over the problems. You may do this very well and work beside your spouse each day and fight battles side by side. But when you are busy working and concentrating on ministry goals, you may forget the ministry goal of being attentive to your spouse’s emotional and spiritual condition. You cannot help someone that you only half notice.

- Please read Ephesians 6:18 and Hebrews 3:12-13.

QUESTION 17

According to these verses, what three things can you do to protect and strengthen your spouse from the deception that leads to “falling away from the living God”? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Keep alert to spiritual danger that approaches your spouse.
- B. Remind your spouse what he/she did wrong in the past.
- C. Exhort your spouse.
- D. Pray for your spouse.
- E. Act coldly to your spouse whenever he/she sins.



Exhort

It is important to understand what it means to exhort someone else, as we have learned that Scripture instructs us to do. The word “exhort” in Greek is *parakaleo*. It means “calling to one’s side” and includes

- Encouraging
- Comforting
- Interceding
- Consoling
- Advocating

It is the verb form of the noun *parakletos*, which is used for “the Holy Spirit” in John 14:26 and other places where it is translated “comforter.” *Parakletos* is also the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *ezer*, or “companion,” as used for “woman” at her creation in Genesis 2:18. A wife is a husband’s special encourager, his *parakletos*. It is not a sign of inferior status any more than the Holy Spirit, our helper, is inferior! We will talk more about this special design for woman in Lessons 5–6. When you exhort your spouse, it should resemble the strengthening work of the Holy Spirit. Examine this list showing actions of Satan and actions of the Holy Spirit:

Satan

- Criticizing
- Condemning
- Accusing
- Blaming
- Tempting towards sin

- Betraying

Holy Spirit

- Strengthening
- Helping
- Interceding
- Consoling
- Encouraging
- Advocating

The Holy Spirit, the *Parakletos*, wants to encourage your spouse through you. Which items are most typical of your actions toward your spouse? If you are like most couples, it will be a combination of the lists from Satan and from the Holy Spirit.

Do you know what is concerning your spouse today? How well have you learned your spouse's heart?

QUESTION 18

- Take the quiz in the article "My Spouse's Heart" in *Readings in Marriage* to see how well you know your spouse's heart and current condition.

How did you do? Write an assessment in your Life Notebook of how well you knew your spouse's current interests and concerns. What activities might help you keep current in your understanding? List these activities and prepare to share these ideas in your seminar.

Alternative for the **SINGLE** student: Choose someone whom you know well—a parent, sibling, or friend—in order to complete the above quiz. Complete the rest of the assignment as it pertains to the person you selected and be sure to prepare your activities list to share in your seminar.

Wise Defense

- Please read 2 Corinthians 2:11 and 1 Peter 5:8-9.

Satan designs his attacks where your spouse is most vulnerable. Do you know where those vulnerable spots are and how Satan might attack him/her?

QUESTION 19

Please open your Life Notebook.

If you are **MARRIED**, pray and ask God to reveal the schemes that the enemy is using against your spouse right now and how you might intervene. In your Life Notebook, please write the following:

1. What you think are the enemy's schemes against your spouse.
2. At least three ways that you will strengthen and defend your spouse.
3. A promise to God that you will not retreat nor allow yourself to be distracted but will move forward to defend your spouse from the enemy's schemes. The enemy is wise and will often attack your spouse when he thinks that you are too distracted to notice or when you are feeling cross with your spouse. Do not allow his scheme to succeed!

Alternative for the **SINGLE** student: Choose someone whom you know well—a parent, sibling, or friend—in order to complete the above exercise. It is sometimes a new skill for singles to learn how to be alert to defending others spiritually.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Trusting Each Other*.

Marriage Building Activity: Trusting Each Other



Arrange for some private moments with your spouse (or parent, friend, employer, if you are single). Promise that no matter what he/she says next, you will not interrupt or defend yourself.

1. Ask: “What was the hardest thing you have ever had to tell me?” “What made it so hard?” “How did I react?” “Did my reaction improve or diminish our relationship?” “Do you find it hard to tell me certain types of things?”

Do not seek to justify or explain yourself or urge your spouse to reveal more than he/she feels safe. Since this is all about trust, it does not matter that you are really trustworthy, if your spouse is uncertain.

2. If the answers reveal that your spouse does not fully trust you, ask him or her to forgive you and ask God’s forgiveness in prayer together. Commit together before God to start building trust together.

3. Show your spouse your response to Question 19 from your Life Notebook. Ask your spouse’s opinion of your listed responses. Be willing to change your answers if your spouse suggests better ways. **Read your promise (Question 19, part 3) out loud to your spouse or friend.**

Topic 3: Responding to Your Spouse’s Sins and Failures

“When I married Joseph, I thought I had found the person that You had chosen for me, God. I thought my life would be happy.” Sarah wiped her eyes. “But he doesn’t even see me anymore. He just walks past me to the television and calls out, ‘What’s for supper?’” Her mouth turned downward in a trembling frown. “I wanted our marriage to be so much better than this. I feel so lonely and angry. Help me!”



When Adam and Eve fell from intimacy with God through sin, it did not just affect them. From that point on, every child would be born with no ability and little desire to live a truly good life the way God defines good. Instead, self is in the center of our orbits. All natural motivations—even good ones—usually serve self in one way or another. When you have a difficult situation, it is always easy to see how your spouse has failed, but it is much harder to recognize how you have failed, too.

This selfish point of view is part of “original sin,” and people are powerless to change themselves (should they even want to). The biggest confirmation of this in marriage is that instead of feeling remorse over your own sin, what is often the most frustrating is your inability to change your spouse’s sin.



Expectations and Performance

Just like Sarah in our introduction, you may arrive in marriage with a whole hope chest full of expectations of how your spouse will behave. You expect your spouse to take on certain roles and perform certain duties. Perhaps you gathered these expectations from seeing your parents, from studying the Bible, or from another marriage that you have observed.

For instance: Husbands, did you think that your wife would keep the house clean like your mother did? Wives, did you expect that your husband would repair things around the house? One of you may have expected a particular type of child discipline, a certain type of vacation, or a certain frequency of sex.

You may not have realized that those expectations were there until your spouse failed to meet them. Then, you may have been shocked, disappointed, or even angry that he/she did something so totally contrary to what you thought was proper. Without a proper response to disappointment, a marriage can be severely wounded.

- Please read the article “Performance Please” in *Readings in Marriage*. Then return here.

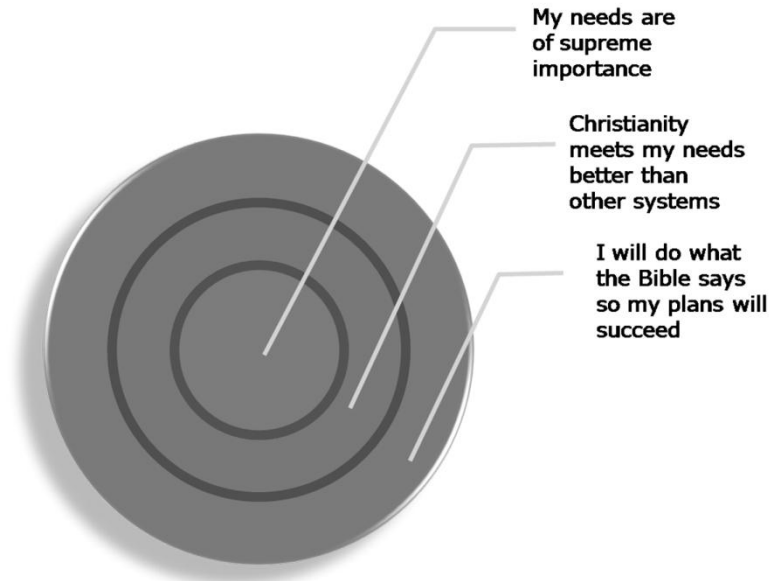
QUESTION 20

Correctly match the labels to the steps of the Performance Cycle from the article “Performance Please.”

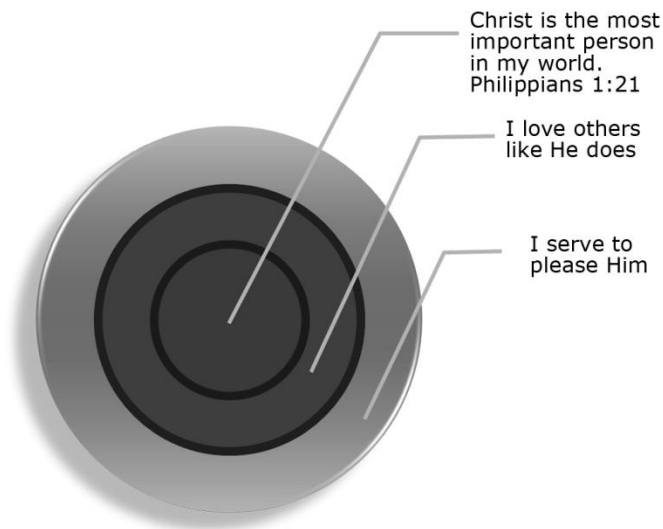
| <i>Steps</i> | <i>Descriptions</i> |
|--------------|---|
| 1 | I am disappointed. |
| 2 | I do my part only as I see fit. |
| 3 | I show anger or silence. |
| 4 | My spouse fails to meet my expectations. |
| 5 | There is distance instead of harmony. |
| 6 | I increase pressure on my spouse or reject him/her. |

What makes it a cycle? How does #6 increase the likelihood of your #1, or of starting a cycle where you fail to meet your spouse’s expectations? Prepare to discuss in your seminar the usefulness of the diagram “The Expectation Cycle” in counseling and in your own relationships.

What is the root cause of the expectation cycle? **Selfishness.** Since mankind is fallen and universally selfish, often our root motivation, even for behaving like a Christian, is the antithesis of faith. The logic looks something like this:



When Christians commonly think this way, it is no wonder Christian marriages break up at the same rate as unbelievers' marriages. The invitation to receive Christ as Savior in recent years has been shaped into a sales-like strategy of a Christ who meets needs. We may not realize the subtle difference in purpose from what the Bible invites us to. Christ invites us to recognize that our guilt is worthy of death, to accept God's forgiveness, and to place ourselves back into His orbit. As we serve Him in grateful love, we shed our selfishness as a butterfly sheds its dead cocoon.



In Christ, we do not gain significance by getting others to serve our goals. Instead, we gain real significance when we lose our small stories (self-centeredness) by becoming consumed with His story and His glory. As Paul said, "For to me, to live is Christ" (Phil 1:21).

My Needs

So who is going to meet my needs if my spouse does not? Is that not why I got married?

- Please read the article "Who Meets My Needs" in *Readings in Marriage* and return here.

QUESTION 21

Please open your Life Notebook and answer the following questions:

If you are **MARRIED**, think about your spouse as you write your answers.

If you are **SINGLE**, think about an imaginary spouse as you complete these questions.

1. How would your relationship change if you began to see your spouse primarily as your sibling in Christ? Would it bring more freedom or create problems?
2. How would this view affect a surviving spouse when the other dies?
3. Describe how you will go about “giving your needs to God” during times when your spouse is not able or willing to meet your needs. Give an example of a need and what you would do to meet it.

Your Response to Failure

“He made me so angry!” How many times have you heard that phrase? You have probably said it yourself. In reality, you make yourself angry, not any other person. The other person’s infraction of your ideals is only a trigger (Jas 3:10-11). If an angry outburst is the result when confronting your spouse’s failure, it is a clue to your inner motives (Gal 5:22-23).

Occasionally, your anger is godly—like a parent who becomes angry at a child’s life-threatening foolishness (Mt 16:22-23) or like God’s wrath, which executes fierce judgment without malice (Jn 2:14-17). More often than not, though, your anger at your spouse is triggered by lies or unmet expectations.

- Please read the article “A Natural Response to Your Spouse’s Failure” in the *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 22

Match the natural response from Galatians 5:19-20 in the left column with an application to marriage in the right column.

| <i>Natural Response</i> | <i>Application to Marriage</i> |
|--------------------------|--|
| Strife | You find others who agree with you. |
| Hostilities | You are quick to disagree and argue frequently. |
| Dissensions and factions | You look with lust at others. |
| Sexual immorality | You do something to hurt your spouse. |
| Jealousy | You try to suppress your anger, but it bursts out. |
| Outbursts of anger | You compare your spouse to others. |

Exercise: Plank Removal

Jesus said that it is important for you to learn how to remove the planks from your own eyes *before* you deal with your spouse’s issues. Get a piece of paper and make two columns. List as many of your spouse’s faults as you can (if you are **single**, choose a family member or roommate with whom you often have conflict). In the second column, list your wrong responses to your spouse’s faults. You may be surprised that your responses look as bad (or worse) than your spouse’s failures.

When you are finished, do the following:

1. Confess your wrong attitudes to God and ask for His forgiveness.
2. Confess your wrong attitude to your spouse.
3. Burn or tear up the paper.

At the end of the article you read earlier, “Who Meets My Needs?” it says that you can respond to your unmet needs supernaturally. How can you learn to love your spouse as God wants you to, even if your needs still feel unmet?

- Please read Luke 6:33-38, and think about your response to your spouse’s failure to meet your needs or to behave in a way you approve.

QUESTION 23

Please open your Life Notebook.

1. List the specific commands given in Luke 6:33-38, and insert your spouse’s name. (If you are unmarried, choose someone close to you.) For instance: “Do not judge Tom.”
2. Mark which commands will be the hardest for you to do.

These reactions in Luke 6 do not describe natural behavior in marriage, do they? Your natural response to most situations, as we saw in Galatians, is in opposition to the Christian life (1 Cor 2:14). The responses Jesus describes in Luke 6 are supernatural, but not impossible. How?

In the last topic, you saw a shift from allowing problems to come between you and your spouse to facing problems together. Luke 6 says that you must make a similar shift when a spouse fails.

When failures happen, turn around!

1. Turn away from focusing on your spouse’s poor performance.
2. Quickly turn to focus on God.
3. Look at God’s grace toward your own failures.
4. Act on the basis of grace rather than your spouse’s performance.

Can you show these 4 steps with arm or body movements? Be prepared to share your movements in your seminar. This four-step process from Luke 6 will enable you to respond by doing good when your spouse fails, without criticism or manipulation. When you respond this way, it shows that your objective has changed from immediate gratification to something that you value higher. What is your new objective?

- Please read Luke 6:35, 38.

QUESTION 24

If you consider God’s grace for you and continue to do good whenever your spouse fails you, what does Jesus say will be the result (Lk 6:33-38)? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. I will have great reward.
- B. I will show myself to be God’s child, resembling Him.
- C. Others will respect me.
- D. I will be happy and peaceful within myself.
- E. Those who abuse me will change their minds.
- F. My spouse will start meeting my needs.

What do you think the reward is that Jesus promises?

Your Response When Your Spouse Causes Pain

What do you do when a spouse not only sins but also hurts you deeply? Such as when the following happens:

- Your spouse walks away from the Lord.
- Your spouse commits adultery.

- Your spouse abuses you or the children.
- Your spouse files for divorce.

These traumatic situations and others can wound like a knife. What are you to do? Your first reaction must be to throw yourself fully on God to sustain you.

- Please read the article “Trusting God in a Marriage Crisis” in *Readings in Marriage*.

A trauma in your marriage will test you like few other things. God does not promise that you will understand everything, but He asks that you trust and obey Him. You may not see the great value of your testimony of God through painful circumstances until you look back from the vantage point of eternity (Prov 13:22; Lk 1:49-50).



My good friend Amanda has walked this difficult road. Married to a wonderful Christian man, Arnie, Amanda wanted nothing more than a Christian family. When we first met, they were both active in the church and raising their children to follow Christ. But Arnie shattered her dreams.

- Please read the article “Amanda’s Story” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 25

Please open your Life Notebook.

1. Describe the spiritual benefits that you see in Amanda’s hard experience.
2. How else could she have responded? How might a faithless response have influenced others?
3. If you have seen others deal well with marriage trauma of any type, describe the benefits you have seen. Consider sharing your testimony in your seminar.

Remember Job went through horrific trials but had no idea of what was going on behind the scenes in heaven as his life fell apart. His suffering seemed pointless. God did not tell him until afterward so that he could share his experience with others. Job’s most important task during the time of extreme suffering was to keep on trusting God. Because he succeeded, his story instructs believers to remember what is transpiring in the unseen world as Satan tempts and God tests them through difficult circumstances.

Similarly, Joseph (Gen 37–44) did not know the value of his painful suffering. Notice the change in Joseph himself—from a proud and bragging child to a loving and forgiving leader. God valued the man Joseph became enough to subject Joseph to the heat of suffering. His example was so striking, so encouraging, that God devoted seven chapters of His Word to understanding Joseph’s story. Millions of people through the ages have been encouraged by it. Joseph, like Job, had no way of knowing the long-term and widespread value of his faithfulness.

QUESTION 26

Please read James 1:2-6, 12. Memorize at least verses 2, 3, and 12 and write them from memory in your Life Notebook. Be prepared to recite these verses in your seminar.

If the heat is on right now in your relationship, God’s intent is to *purify* you, not to *destroy* you. Marital traumas are one of the most stressful and heartbreaking types of difficulties that one can experience. But every difficulty, no matter how severe, can be used by God for good for the one who walks closely with Him through it. If you are made of pure gold (i.e., you have a sincere faith), then no amount of heat will change you into a lesser metal.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: The Results of the Fall in Our Relationship*.

Marriage Building Activity: The Results of the Fall in Our Relationship



For **MARRIED** students:

1. Reflect on the various negatives, which began at the Fall, that you have studied in this lesson: selfishness, failures, expectations, rebellion, lack of love, disunity, trauma, guilt, blame, shame, legalism, lies, and disappointment. Can you add others to the list? Which items do you think affect your marriage most severely? Plan some time with your spouse.
2. Give your list to your spouse. Ask your spouse to circle or add the items he/she thinks are of greatest concern in your marriage. Listen compassionately if his/her perception is different from yours. Ask questions to better understand his/her point of view, not to challenge it.
3. Discuss together what you will do to attack each problem that you have both decided is important. (As you are doing this, remember to model the concepts of keeping the problem apart from your relationship and of standing in unity to decide what to do. You can model physical unity by touching with affection and by looking with love at your spouse. Ask God to help your inner thoughts to be loving and positive, not judgmental, defensive, or critical.)
4. End your time together by reading Genesis 45:8 and 50:20. Write in your own words a succinct statement like Joseph's, which will help you keep focused on God's goodness through difficult situations. Be prepared to share your statement in your seminar.

For **SINGLE** students:

Do the above exercise alone or with a friend, sibling, or roommate, adapting as necessary to consider those negatives that have affected your thoughts about marriage. For #3, decide how you will learn to attack problems in relationships in a way that does not harm the relationship itself. Be sure to complete #4.

Make sure that you have completed every *Marriage Building Activity* for Lesson 2 (and recorded your experience in your Life Notebook) before proceeding to Lesson 3. Completion of these activities will form 40 percent of your grade. The Marriage Building Activities for this lesson were:

- *Lies*
- *Trusting Each Other*
- *The Results of the Fall in Our Relationship*

Lesson 2 Self Check

QUESTION 1

Which statement is true?

- A. Satan is God's equal opposite being.
- B. Satan hates marriage's image of God and seeks to destroy it.
- C. Christians cannot be deceived by Satan.
- D. Satan has become too strong for God to destroy.
- E. Satan knows everything.
- F. God cannot stop Satan.

QUESTION 2

According to James 4:7, the first step in repelling lies is to_____.

- A. Memorize Scripture
- B. Say a verse out loud
- C. Make the sign of the cross
- D. Submit to God
- E. Go call your spouse

QUESTION 3

After the Fall, humans began to reflect the image of Satan in the way that they relate to God and in their marriage relationships. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

One of Satan's methods is to draw your spouse into temptation and then coax you to withdraw so that you do not support or defend him/her. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

You can prevent sin in your heart by (1) memorizing Scripture and (2) going to church more. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

If I have a strong emotional response that is not appropriate for the incident that caused it, it may be an indication that_____.

- A. I should withdraw from my spouse.
- B. I am secretly believing lies.
- C. I am a passionate person.
- D. My spouse gets on my nerves.

QUESTION 7

Which is **NOT** true about vows?

- A. A vow is a statement of what you will do, will never do, or will never let happen again.
- B. People make vows during trauma because they think that the vow will keep them safe from harm.
- C. Vows contribute to the enemy's schemes and strongholds against your marriage.
- D. The statement "I will never trust a woman again" is an example of a vow.
- E. The statement "God doesn't care about me" is an example of a vow.

QUESTION 8

When a husband and wife have a problem, they should first figure out which partner is to blame.
True or False?

QUESTION 9

Jealousy, strife, angry outbursts, and hostility in a marriage are signs that the couple is living in what kind of marriage?

- A. A natural 50/50 marriage
- B. A godly marriage
- C. A marriage that may be appropriate for their culture
- D. A disappointed marriage
- E. An old-fashioned marriage

QUESTION 10

Which statement is true?

- A. A wife's relationship with God comes through her husband.
- B. A husband must be like Christ in order to earn his wife's love and respect.
- C. A wife should look to her husband to meet all her needs.
- D. A Christian husband and wife are brother and sister in Christ.
- E. True love means becoming so "lost in each other" that you could not survive alone.

Lesson 2 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: *Your answer*

QUESTION 2: *Your answer*

QUESTION 3:

- A. Satan is God's equal opposite.
- B. God had a war with Satan in heaven and threw him out.
- C. It will be difficult for God to destroy Satan.
- E. Satan has always existed and will exist forever.

QUESTION 4:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Satan's Activity</i> |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Ephesians 6:11 | Schemes |
| John 8:44 | Murders |
| 1 Corinthians 7:5 | Tempts |
| 1 Thessalonians 2:18 | Hinders |
| 1 Peter 5:8 | Devours |
| 2 Corinthians 4:3-4 | Blinds |
| Acts 5:3 | Deceives |

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6:

Lies are inner statements that are untrue. A lying feeling is an inappropriate emotion based on past experience. Vows are a statement of intent, usually of what you will never do. All types of lies may be woven into debilitating systems called strongholds.

QUESTION 7:

| <i>Question</i> | <i>Answer</i> |
|--|---|
| What is a stronghold? | A thick wall or fort |
| What is its purpose? | Protection |
| What do the strongholds Paul mentions here oppose? | God's truth |
| What does God want to do with these strongholds? | Destroy them |
| How? | Take every thought captive in obedience to Christ |

QUESTION 8:

| Question 8 | | | | | | | | |
|------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Instructions | | | | | | | | |
| Lie (Ps. 10:4) | Lie (Ps. 10:11a) | Lie (Ps. 10:11b) | Lie (Ps. 10:11c) | Vow (Ps. 10:6a) | Vow (Ps. 10:6b) | Vow (Ps. 10:3a) | Vow (Ps. 10:3c) | Vow (Ps. 10:3b) |
| God doesn't care | God overlooks [my cruelty] | God does not pay attention | God never notices | "I will never be upended" | "I will experience no calamity" | "I will get everything I want" | "I don't need God" | "I curse you, God" |

QUESTION 9:

(1) God is far away. (2) God hides Himself when I am in trouble.

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

QUESTION 11:

| <i>Characteristics of Evil Thoughts</i> | <i>Characteristics of God's Thoughts</i> |
|---|--|
| Selfish | Pure |
| Jealous | Peaceable |
| Bitter | Gentle |
| Arrogant | Reasonable |
| Earthly | Full of mercy |
| Natural | Unwavering |
| Demonic | Without hypocrisy |

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13:

A. Punishment for their sin

QUESTION 14:

| <i>Adam's Reaction</i> | <i>David's Reaction</i> |
|--|---|
| He hides from God | He comes to God and humbles himself to ask for mercy and forgiveness |
| He blames the woman | He protects the woman from shame. He comforts the woman. |
| He indirectly blames God | He recognizes God's righteous character and agrees with God's righteous judgment. |
| His biggest concern is feeling less guilty | His biggest concern is the loss of fellowship with God. He pleads for fellowship with God to be restored. |

QUESTION 15:

B. Strengthen your unity.

QUESTION 16: *Your answer*

QUESTION 17:

A. Keep alert to spiritual danger that approaches your spouse.

C. Exhort your spouse.

D. Pray for your spouse.

QUESTION 18: *Your answer*

QUESTION 19: *Your answer*

QUESTION 20:

| <i>Steps</i> | <i>Descriptions</i> |
|--------------|---|
| 1 | My spouse fails to meet my expectations. |
| 2 | I am disappointed. |
| 3 | I show anger or silence. |
| 4 | There is distance instead of harmony. |
| 5 | I increase pressure on my spouse or reject him/her. |
| 6 | I do my part only as I see fit. |

QUESTION 21: *Your answer*

QUESTION 22:

| <i>Natural Response</i> | <i>Application to Marriage</i> |
|--------------------------|--|
| Strife | You are quick to disagree and argue frequently. |
| Hostilities | You do something to hurt your spouse. |
| Dissensions and factions | You find others who agree with you. |
| Sexual immorality | You look with lust to others. |
| Jealousy | You compare your spouse to others. |
| Outbursts of anger | You try to suppress your anger, but it bursts out. |

QUESTION 23: *Your answer*

QUESTION 24:

A. I will have great reward.

B. I will show myself to be God's child, resembling Him.

QUESTION 25: *Your answer*

Lesson 2 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

B. Satan hates marriage's image of God and seeks to destroy it.

QUESTION 2:

D. Submit to God

QUESTION 3: True

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6:

B. I am secretly believing lies.

QUESTION 7:

E. The statement "God doesn't care about me" is an example of a vow.

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9:

A. A natural 50/50 marriage

QUESTION 10:

D. A Christian husband and wife are brother and sister in Christ.

Lesson 3: Understanding a Redeemed Marriage

Lesson Introduction

Pastor Jonathan sat once again across from Nathan and Sue. They had done well at their homework and were rapidly developing a good foundation for their upcoming marriage. They understood how they would need to fight for their marriage if they wanted it to succeed, and they were already establishing good habits by praying for each other and by keeping alert to each other's struggles. But Sue looked concerned.



“Pastor, I understand now how both our selfishness and Satan conspire against us to ruin our marriage. Sometimes I feel hopeless that anyone can have a good marriage! I mean, what makes us better than the thousands of couples who are miserable? How can selfish people become anything different?”

“I’ve been thinking too,” Nathan said. “As we’ve been studying, I see whole new aspects of my heart that I had never realized were so damaged. I’m worried that no matter how hard I try, sooner or later, I am going to hurt Sue with those broken pieces. I sure don’t want to hurt her. I sometimes wonder if it would be better to stay single. Then we could just devote ourselves to winning people to Christ without distraction. Won’t being married hinder our witness?”



Pastor Jonathan smiled. “I understand your concerns. It is rather difficult to believe that we really can act like who the Bible says we are: new creatures in Christ. Tell me, do you have any good, close friends in Christ that you’ve had for a long time?”

Both Nathan and Sue nodded yes.

“In some ways, maintaining a good relationship in marriage is not all that different from maintaining a close Christian friendship—just more intense and with some important additions, such as the sexual relationship. All those ‘one another’ passages in Scripture about how to treat each other apply doubly in marriage. So if you already know how to maintain a close friendship over a long period of time, you are probably practicing many of the principles we will look at as we continue our study of marriage.



“As far as soul-winning is concerned, it is perhaps true that you will not have as much time for ministry outside the home as you would if you were single. Paul says in Corinthians that a married person must also work to please his or her spouse. So it is proper to invest time in your relationship. But in marriage, you have opportunities to

demonstrate some tremendous truths from Scripture so that others will see Christ more clearly, which can powerfully enhance your witness.

“You mean if we do it right, people will be drawn to Christ because of our marriage?” Nathan asked.

“Yes. Good marriages where both spouses honor Christ and love each other are rare in today’s world. But the Bible says that marriages portray in flesh and blood the love between Christ and

the Church. Don't you think that if you were able to show Christlike love and respect to each other through fifty or sixty years of marriage, you would be a powerful witness of the truth of the gospel?"

Nathan was perched on the edge of his seat again. "Yes, but in order to do that, we'd have to really do it right. Frankly, I've barely paid attention to all those 'one another' passages. I've just done what came naturally with my friends."

Pastor Jonathan laughed. "I can guarantee that acting 'naturally' will not be good enough. I think we need to help you take a closer look at those 'one anothers' again and some other things that the Bible says. Shall we get started?"

Nathan and Sue opened their Bibles. "Where should we look?"

"Let's start with understanding who each of you have become in Christ. The way you treat each other should proceed directly from those truths."



Lesson Outline

Lesson 3: Understanding a Redeemed Marriage

Topic 1: Who Are You?

- Crucified Ones
- Resurrected Ones
- Exalted Ones
- Temples of the Holy Spirit
- Gifted Ones

Topic 2: How Do You Relate to Each Other at Home?

- In Fellowship in Christ
- In Truth
- In Prayer
- In Scripture

Topic 3: How Has God Exalted Marriage?

- Stewards of a Mystery
- Mystery in the Vows

Topic 1: Who Are You?

"So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away, see, what is new has come!"—2 Corinthians 5:17

In Lessons 1 and 2, you saw that the first couple lost their marriage harmony in the garden. They chose a seemingly small infraction of eating some fruit that God had forbidden them to eat. Because the wages of all disobedience to God is death, they now had a death sentence hanging over them. Because they refused to obey God, they spoiled the relationship that they had with Him and with nature. They also spoiled their relationship with each other by criticizing, blaming, betraying, and trying to control each other. The amazing news of the gospel, however, is that because Christ died for all sin, it is possible to be delivered from that death sentence. It is also possible to be delivered from the selfishness that spoils relationships. God says that with cleansing in Christ, He places within each man and each woman who loves Him a new heart that loves good rather than evil. Changes in behavior must spring from this new heart.

When you come to Christ and the Holy Spirit takes up residence in your heart, the first transformation can happen very quickly. This transformation can have a profound impact on your marriage. In the story you will read, Paul exemplifies this type of instant transformation.

- Please read the true story of my friends, which is entitled “Paul and Priscilla” in *Readings in Marriage*.

What transformed Paul from a self-centered adulterer to a faithful husband? It was more than just a change of ideals. It was a change of identity. In this topic, you will explore the implications of assuming a new identity and of living with a new person in a redeemed marriage relationship.

Crucified Ones

“I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So the life I now live in the body, I live because of the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.”—Galatians 2:20

When you identify with Christ, there are, no doubt, many things you aspire to emulate—perhaps His kindness, His gentleness, His honesty, His wisdom, and His leadership skills. One other characteristic is more important than the others, but it is the one we resist doing the most. Without this one aspect, you miss emulating Christ entirely.

- Please read Philippians 2:6-8.

What does this passage say the Son chose to do? His sacrificial death was the culmination of sacrificing His position in heaven and of living an earthly life constructed of constant sacrifice for those on whom the Father had set His love. The Bible says that Christ still wears His wounds in eternity. They were not healed, because they are the marks of His identity. He is eternally the Crucified One (Jn 20:27; Rev 5:6; 13:8). In eternity, you will never grow tired of seeing those wounds and recounting the story of how you, a condemned sinner, came to join God’s family and to live in God’s kingdom.



But is each believer really called to live in the *same spirit of sacrifice* as Christ did—to be “crucified with Christ”? Yes. Your death on the cross with Him is at the central core of who you are in Him. This truth that you and your spouse are each crucified with Christ must be allowed to transform how you think about yourselves in relation to each other in marriage. Your close relationship in marriage gives you an opportunity to demonstrate that crucifixion as you relate to each other.

- Please read Romans 12:1 and 1 Peter 2:21-24. Then read the article “From Bargain Hunters to Crucified Ones” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 1

What did the article say was the definition of a relational “bargain hunter”?

- A. To pretend to care more than you do so that the other person will care for you
- B. To give more in hopes of receiving less
- C. To look for relationships where you can get a lot of benefit
- D. To sacrifice your life as Christ sacrificed Himself
- E. To be thankful for opportunities to sacrifice yourself
- F. To deny yourself and take up your cross daily

Jesus had all power at His disposal. Satan tempted Him to use this power during His temptation in the wilderness (Mt 4:2-10) and again at the Cross (Mt 27:40). But as you saw in 1 Peter 2:23,

Jesus refused to lash out at His tormentors even though He would have been justified in defending His life. He denied Himself even basic rights.

QUESTION 2

Please open your Life Notebook.

Notice the characteristics that Peter mentions of Jesus' example in 1 Peter 2:21-24. For EACH characteristic, write an application to your own behavior. There are many equally correct ways to complete this exercise. Come to your seminar prepared to share your own answers. Here is one example:

V 21 Christ suffered to meet my needs, so I will suffer, if necessary, to meet my spouse's needs.

On the list of items you created, mark the ones that seem to be the most important to remember.

When you accept that you are crucified with Christ, it transforms the ways that you think about yourself and how you behave toward others, particularly toward your spouse.

- Please do the following *Worship Activity*.

Lesson 3: Worship Activity



Ask God to help you imagine the things that the Father and the Son sacrificed when the Son left heaven and died on earth.

1. Write a letter to Jesus, describing each of these sacrifices that He made in order that you might have salvation. If you are creative, you may wish to write a poem or a song instead.

You will be asked to share this at your seminar, but you may keep it private if you wish.

Your response to His sacrifice:

Read these three verses and **memorize one** of them:

1. Galatians 2:20
2. Romans 12:1
3. Matthew 16:24

Write down your chosen verse in your Life Notebook, and mark the parts that are the most difficult for you. Write down your thoughts about the point of view these verses describe and how having this point of view would change your marriage. Talk to God about your difficulty, and stop to listen to His encouragement for you. Even Jesus did not go to the cross without spending the night in prayer beforehand. You cannot live a crucified life without the empowering of His Holy Spirit.

Resurrected Ones

“If you have been raised with Christ, keep seeking the things above.”—Colossians 3:1

The Resurrection was the good news that followed Christ’s crucifixion. In Christ, you not only have been crucified but also have been resurrected to a new life hidden with Him in heaven. How can that perspective about where your life really exists change your marriage?

- Please read Colossians 3:1-9

QUESTION 3

If you are “seeking the things above” as Colossians 3:1 instructs, what does the text say about you? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. You keep your thoughts focused on pleasing God.
- B. You shed your old ways of defending your self-interest.
- C. You seek the rewards that God promises to those who are faithful.
- D. You consider all other believers as equals.
- E. You speak only the truth.
- F. You draw wealth to yourself like a magnet.

“Keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Keep thinking about things above, not things on the earth, for you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God.”—Colossians 3:1-3

The next part of Colossians 3 suggests that because your life is in heaven, you now seek the “things above.” The fact that your life is all about heaven allows you to choose to invest in your eternal heavenly future rather than demanding that everything in this life please you. In heaven’s economy, both the poor and the rich have the same opportunity to invest! God even says that He keeps your investment perfectly secure and pays tremendous interest (Mt 6:20; Mk 10:30). You can make eternal investments *above* in the way that you deal with your spouse’s unfairness, lack of love, and mistakes here *below*.



- Please read Ephesians 6:5-9.

This passage gives practical ways that we can seek Christ in the way we serve each other. This is talking about slaves and masters. What are some principles here that would apply to husbands and wives?

QUESTION 4

Which is **NOT** a principle for marriage that you can draw from Ephesians 6:5-9?

- A. I serve my spouse in sincere love for Christ.
- B. I serve my spouse with happy enthusiasm.
- C. When my spouse will not do what I want, it is okay for me to threaten him/her.
- D. I do good for my spouse even when no one is watching.
- E. A sincere love, not just good actions, is necessary to be rewarded for serving Christ.
- F. I eagerly anticipate a reward from Christ for my good service to my spouse.

What are other implications of the resurrected life? You may have memorized Galatians 2:20 in the first subtopic of this section. Take time to read or recite it now. Because you are risen with Christ and seek things above, He now lives His life on earth in and through you. This affects

everything you do, but your spouse most acutely. In your home, He wants to encourage your spouse in a personal way—through you!

QUESTION 5

Please open your Life Notebook.

Close your eyes for a few seconds. Imagine that you are the Lord, who loves your spouse dearly. What would He want to do to show His love? Ask Him: “Lord, how do *You* want to show love to _____ through me? Please allow me to be Your hands and feet.” Write down in your Life Notebook the ways that come to mind. As you live with your spouse this week, keep on thinking about being Christ’s hands and feet to him/her. This is something God can only do through you. If you are single, think of one of your parents, or someone else—a child, a sibling, or a roommate.

This point of view affects both large and small things in the way that you interact with your spouse.

- Please read “A Cup of Water in the Night” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 6

Please open your Life Notebook.

Please choose *one* of these topics and write a page about it in your Life Notebook.

1. What is the correlation between getting your spouse a cup of water and the cup that Jesus gave at the Last Supper, which you just read about?
2. How does the serving attitude which VanAuken calls “courtesy” go beyond politeness or good manners?
3. How would *you* react if your spouse asked *you* to get up out of bed to bring him/her a cup of water? Why? How would your perspective change if Jesus asked you for the water?
4. Why is asking someone to suffer hardship on your behalf not *opposed* to loving him/her? What must the sufferer understand?

It is easy, when you serve, to focus on the hope that your spouse will notice and appreciate you for your good deeds. It is more of a challenge to focus on serving God and on His promise that your reward in heaven will be greater than any reward that you might receive here on earth (Mt 6:5-6). While the Lord would want your spouse to notice and thank you for your service, this cannot be your aim.

- For a real-life example of this principle, please read “My Dirty Sink” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 7

Please open your Life Notebook.

What is an act of service that you could offer to the Lord through serving your spouse?

Hebrews 12:28 says to serve God out of gratitude, with reverence and awe. Your perspective on serving your spouse changes when you deliberately look past your spouse to focus on serving a worthy and holy God. You serve with joy, not reluctance. You bring to bear all your creativity to do not just an adequate job, but a delighted offering of love. You feel awed and grateful at the fact that God has entrusted to you the care of His son or daughter. If He sees that your act of service is for Him, you can rejoice that you are laying up rewards in heaven, which will please God to give and will someday make you supremely happy to receive.

You have already been crucified and resurrected. What other changes have been made in who you really are, and how do they bless your marriage?

Exalted Ones

When you consider your own position as an heir in the kingdom, it is easy to be very thankful to



God and to look forward with awe and anticipation to what that might mean for your future. But have you ever stopped to consider the implications of your spouse's position in Christ and his/her future reign with Him? This is not some vague, ethereal promise, but something that will happen in reality. Your self-centered heart may value your spouse mainly in terms of how well or inadequately your spouse meets *your* needs. But God values your spouse infinitely more and plans a future for him/her that will be beyond anyone's imagination. Both men and women will execute judgment with Him (1 Cor 6:3) and rule with Him in His

coming kingdom (Gal 3:26-28; Rev 5:10). Have you ever thought of your spouse as a future ruler? What implications might this truth have for your marriage? C.S. Lewis asserts that one of the astounding facts about life is that each person is extraordinary. One of the most exciting things about being married to a Christian is the opportunity to minister to and alongside an extremely important person in the eternal kingdom.

- Please read "No Ordinary People" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 8

Please summarize the perspectives given in the article for how you should treat your Christian spouse and why.

The chart titled "The Believer in Christ" (in *Readings in Marriage*) shows scriptural examples of several aspects of who you are, who your spouse is, and what you both receive through Christ. Please read this chart thoroughly enough to remember many of the principles that are true of you.

QUESTION 9

Please open your Life Notebook.

1. Choose five things that seem to be the *most significant* about you, and write them in your Life Notebook, and insert "I" to make complete sentences. For instance: "I am a joint-heir with Christ."
2. Choose five things that seem to be most significant about *your spouse* and write these down, inserting his/her name in each sentence. "[John] is ..." (If you are single, choose a Christian friend or relative).
3. Examine your ten statements. What are the implications of these facts for *your relationship with each other*? Pick a minimum of five of the ten principles and write at least one sentence describing how that fact affects your marriage relationship. Write more, if you can. See an example here:

Because Tom is Christ's sheep, he has a primary obligation to listen to the Shepherd, which is greater than his obligation to listen to me, another sheep. Because we are both sheep, Tom and I need to ask the Shepherd for guidance before we make decisions.

4. Do any of these implications go against your cultural norms, roles for men and women, or things that you thought were true? When culture and Scripture collide in your heart, which one wins? Write down your thoughts and questions in your Life Notebook. End in prayer by thanking God for these amazing truths that He bought for both of you on the Cross. If your spouse is not yet a believer, pray that he/she will come to Christ for salvation and will reign with Him, too.

QUESTION 10

Imagine that you are talking with various people about their marriages. How might these facts about identity in Christ be useful for you in teaching and in counseling others about how to treat each other in marriage? If the couples were to make the following statements, what Scriptures might you bring up, and how might you point out the error in their thinking? Match the concepts and Scripture you could use from the chart "The Believer in Christ" to correct their thinking.

| <i>Comment</i> | <i>How I would refute this lie from Scripture</i> |
|--|---|
| "I have the right to hit my wife, if she doesn't do what I say" | 1 Corinthians 6:20: Your spouse is valuable. 2 Corinthians 5:20: Your spouse is an ambassador. 2 Corinthians 3:3-6: Your spouse is an adequate servant. Ephesians 4:11-14: Your spouse is a saint. |
| "Because my wife is a woman, she doesn't need to develop any skills at leading or thinking deeply." | Romans 8:15-17: Your spouse is not a slave—he/she is a joint heir with Christ and must be treated as you would treat Him. |
| "My husband wasted the money that my family gave him, and I frequently mention it. He should always feel ashamed of what he did." | Ephesians 4:11-14: Your spouse is to be an adult, not a child, in his or her thinking. A believer should be wise, not easily deceived. 1 Corinthians 6:3: Your spouse will judge angels, so should develop the wisdom to do this. |
| "My husband is a failure and never achieves anything important." | 1 Corinthians 6:20: Your spouse is valuable. 2 Corinthians 5:20: Your spouse is an ambassador. Ephesians 4:11-14: Your spouse is a saint. Romans 8:15-17: Your spouse is not a slave. |
| "As a pastor, it is right for me to pray over my wife, but she should never pray out loud for me." | 2 Corinthians 5:21: Your spouse has the righteousness of God in Christ and has been forgiven. |
| "I cannot let my spouse do anything dangerous for the Lord." | 1 Peter 2:5, 9: Your spouse is a priest. Therefore, he/she can pray over you, bless you, and intercede for you before God. |
| "My wife belongs to me in the same way that my cow or bicycle belongs to me. I have the right to decide everything she does. She must always be available to meet my needs." | John 10:27-29: Your spouse must follow the Master's voice, even if sometimes it looks dangerous. You need to trust the Lord for security. |

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Seeing Your Spouse With New Eyes*.

Marriage Building Activity: Seeing Your Spouse With New Eyes



(Essential for those *not* attending a live, in-person seminar).

We have included an exciting marriage building exercise entitled “Seeing Your Spouse Through God’s Eyes” in *Readings in Marriage*. This exercise, developed by Dr. Daniel Oh, has been a powerful vehicle for breaking down barriers and increasing unity not only among married couples but also for unmarried coworkers in a ministry team together. In order to do this exercise, you need to have a coach to guide you through the steps, so this exercise will be part of your seminar. If you will *not* be attending a live seminar together, you should ask someone else to read the coach’s script to lead you and your spouse (or ministry teammate) through this exercise. This is an extremely valuable tool, but it is important to experience it yourself before you begin to use it as a coach to help others.

Temples of the Holy Spirit

In the “Ransack” story from Lesson 2, someone destroyed Pastor Eng’s house-church meeting room. If it were your church, how would that destruction make you feel? Would it seem that the holy wrath of God should be unleashed against the perpetrators because of this sacrilege of a holy place? Where *does* God’s glory dwell today?



Let’s look at a scene from the Old Testament, when God’s people did commit sacrilege. Please read 2 Samuel 6:6-7. Here, King David is going to bring the Ark of the Covenant, both the symbol of God’s presence with Israel and the place where His glory is always present, back to its proper place in Jerusalem. But rather than carry it according to God’s instructions, with poles strung through rings on the Ark and carried on the shoulders by a team of priests (Ex 25:14-15, Deut 10:8), David expediently places it on an oxcart. When the Ark starts to topple over, one of the Israelites, Uzzah, reaches out to steady it, and God strikes him dead! Because David had not treated the place where God’s glory dwelt with the deference that God had instructed, Uzzah paid with his life.

What would have happened if David’s men had hit the Ark, kicked it, or abused it in any way? They would not have drawn another breath! God is dead set against those who show dishonor to the place where His glory dwells.

- Please read 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

A Christian’s body is the temple where the Holy Spirit dwells today, and God demands the same sort of honor for it. It is holy, just as the Ark was holy, because of the presence of the Holy Spirit within.

QUESTION 11

According to this passage, if someone harms the physical body of a Christian, God will destroy him. *True or False?*

This statement is hard to understand. What kind(s) of destruction will God inflict on someone who destroys a Christian's physical body? Do you see evidence of God's destruction in your experience? This passage's context refers to the way that a Christian treats his/her own body. Christians may not engage in unhealthy or immoral practices, and they should honor their bodies and take good care of them. God is very serious about the consequences of disregard and sacrilege. In marriage, this command may also be applied to your treatment of your spouse's body. Can you see why?

- Please read 1 Corinthians 7:4 and Ephesians 5:28-29.

QUESTION 12

What two words are used in Ephesians 5 to express how a husband is to feel about and treat his wife's body?

- A. He is to nourish and cherish it.
- B. He is to discipline and disdain it.
- C. He is to demand and use it.
- D. He is to serve and worship it.

QUESTION 13

Please open your Life Notebook.

Reflect in writing on the following questions about these passages:

1. Does this principle apply to a wife's care for her husband's body also?
2. How does this differ from the way that your culture traditionally treats the body of a spouse?
3. How do you care for your spouse's body? (If you are **single**, imagine a spouse.)
4. What is your favorite way that your spouse cares for your body? For **singles**: How can you honor your future spouse's body by the way you behave now?
5. How does this principle affect the responsibility of the church leaders to step in and protect a spouse when the abuse of one of His temples is taking place?

Gifted Ones



Tom got up from the chair where he prays each day and looked intently at me. "The Lord reminded me again that I am responsible to see that you are using the gifts that He gave you to serve Him." My husband's words surprised me. "You see, if you use up all of your energy in serving me—keeping the house spotless, doing my laundry and everything, but you never have time to write, I will answer to Him. He has given you a special gift, and I know He will judge me about how I have stewarded the gift that is in you."

His words made my heart sing. Even though I enjoy caring for him and our children, the Lord has also given me a strong desire to write about biblical principles. Sometimes, the conflict between how much time it takes to keep our household running smoothly and how much time it takes to write and teach pulls me in two different directions. I am very thankful that my husband and I can sit down and pray together that the Lord will help us to order our time and our home in a way that pleases Him. Tom has been willing to put up with imperfect housekeeping so that I may be involved in ministering God's Word in writing. I am certain the Lord will reward him for this sacrifice.

You and your spouse both have abilities and spiritual gifts. These include specific offices, such as preaching and teaching, and support functions, such as helping and administrating. How does the Lord intend these gifts to be used?

- Please read 1 Corinthians 12:7 and 14:12.

QUESTION 14

In these passages, how does the Lord instruct that spiritual gifts be used?

- A. Primarily in the family
- B. To instruct children
- C. To build up the other believers
- D. For everyone's good
- E. Only after the work of cleaning and fixing your possessions is completed

One way that you serve the Lord is by helping your spouse to identify and to use the spiritual gifts that the Lord has given him/her. Building a Christian home is of high importance, so there may be periods of time when one partner will lay aside all outside ministries in order to give marriage and/or children exclusive attention. But such a sacrifice should only be temporary. Most people today do not have the benefit of living in a happy Christian home. One of the reasons to have a happy, encouraging marriage relationship is so that both husband and wife are well equipped emotionally to minister to people outside the family, too. This includes service in the church and in reaching unbelievers with the gospel. It may include going outside the home, as well as inviting people into your home to minister to them there.

- Please read Ephesians 4:15-16.

The analogy of the church as a body says that every body part has a necessary function, even if it is as a small finger or toe. How handicapped would your body be if your knee would not bend, if the tendons were broken in your right shoulder, and if your tongue refused to move? Many important body parts are invisible, yet the body cannot function without such important players as the heart, the lungs, the liver, and the intestines. Do you know what your spouse's part is in God's purposes for the world? Are you encouraging him/her to fulfill his/her own commission from God?

Hebrews 10:24 says to think how to "spur one another on to love and good works." One of the ways that you can do this is to release your spouse to both use and develop his/her spiritual gifts and talents for the Lord. What do you think about this idea? Is your spouse currently serving in areas where he/she is gifted by God? If your spouse has never taken a spiritual gifts inventory to determine what his/her spiritual gifts are, one is provided for you in the discipleship course or online at http://www.internetseminary.org/cms/survey_gifts.php.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Spiritual Gifts*.

Marriage Building Activity: Spiritual Gifts



For **MARRIED** students:

1. Invite your spouse to discuss his/her perspective on what gifts he/she has, and how well they are being used. Which ones need more development? Prayerfully think and discuss how you might help that to happen. For instance, husbands, if your wife has a gift in showing mercy and shepherding, it might involve you babysitting at a regular time so that your wife can disciple a group of young troubled women. Wives, if your husband has a gift of serving, it might involve you going with him as he repairs widows' homes. Pray together and ask God for ideas about how you might better work together to steward all of your corporate gifts.
2. Write down what you discover about your spouse's gifts and desires to serve the Lord so that you may pray about these regularly.

For **SINGLE** students:

1. Do you know your own spiritual gifts and those of your friends? Discuss with your spiritual friends how you and they can serve each other to enable all of you to serve God better? For instance, could one with a serving gift cook supper for the others to enable them to go out and do evangelism together? How can your spiritual gifts benefit the Body of Christ both locally and in a wider circle? Pray with your spiritual friends about how you may serve each other so that each one can exercise his/her gifts and callings.

In these last five subtopics, you looked at the implications of identity in light of how Christian spouses should be thought about and treated. In the next topic, you will learn more about relating to one another in Christ.

Topic 2: How Do You Relate to Each Other at Home?

As our facilitators and courses teach Christian leaders about marriage in various countries, many couples declare: "I wish I had understood this sooner." The husbands and wives have a new joy that stands out. They describe a very different atmosphere in their homes than before. As one student, Nehemiah, said, "This is almost as important as the gospel! I had been married thirty-five years and never knew what my wife could mean to me." He wiped away happy tears as he shared about how his marriage had become so full of love. When husband and wife begin to relate to each other in new ways, they sometimes discover joy in their homes for the first time. We will learn more of Nehemiah's story in Lesson 4, but first let's look at how the Lord wants to sweeten the atmosphere in your home.

In Fellowship in Christ

"But through love serve one another."—Galatians 5:13

In a Christian marriage, the harmony of serving one another in love stems first from your fellowship and brotherhood in the Body of Christ. Even though marriage is a unique relationship, as Pastor Jonathan said in our introduction, the ways of relating warmly to a spouse are not totally different from the love between friends or close siblings. It should be a more intense and more

intimate version of those love relationships, especially with the unique addition of sexual relations. But the same biblical principles of relating with kindness and thoughtful service apply to your marriage partner, just as they do to other fellow believers. In order to be an excellent spouse, you must first be an excellent brother or sister in Christ to your spouse. Woe to the man or woman who treats other brothers and sisters in Christ with greater respect and love than his/her own closest sibling.



There are at least fifty different instructions in the New Testament about relating as brothers and sisters in Christ that use the phrase “one another.” Over one hundred verses use the term “brother” or a derivative (brotherhood, brotherly, brothers). Even more passages instruct us about how to treat one another, but do not use the phrase “one another.” So, instead of only a handful of passages to instruct you about how to treat one another in marriage, you actually have hundreds. One couple we know exemplifies well what this attitude looks like in a long-term marriage.

- Please read their story: “Luis and Doris” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 15

Please open your Life Notebook.

Reflect in writing on the following:

1. What stands out to you from this story of Luis and Doris Bush’s marriage?
2. Have you observed a marriage that exemplifies these same aspects of mutual respect and service? Please describe what made the marriage special. Be prepared to share about this couple in your seminar.

What else exemplifies a marriage in which the couple enjoys fellowship in their home? One basis of fellowship is mutual control by the Holy Spirit. You had a chance to study Galatians 5:16-26 in Lesson 1. Please review it and complete the following assignment.

QUESTION 16

Please open your Life Notebook.

This passage (Gal 5:17) says that either the Holy Spirit *or* the flesh is ruling your actions in your relationships to both your spouse and everyone else. If someone were to make a secret movie of your home and show it to an audience, which characteristics would they see? Some of the items in the following chart have been placed in the wrong columns. Copy this list into your Life Notebook and place the items in the correct columns underneath their appropriate headings of “Evidence of Flesh Rule” and “Evidence of Holy Spirit Rule.”

| <i>Evidence of Holy Spirit Rule</i> | <i>Evidence of Flesh Rule</i> |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Love | Joy |
| Sexual immorality | Impurity |
| Depravity | Peace |
| Idolatry | Kindness |
| Sorcery | Patience |
| Hostility | Strife |
| Jealousy | Goodness |
| Angry outbursts | Selfish rivalries |
| Dissensions | Self-Control |
| Factions | Envy |
| Murder | Drunkenness |
| Carousing | Conceit |
| Provoking, irritating, challenging | |

QUESTION 17

Please open your Life Notebook.

1. Do you see a correlation between these two lists and the characteristics of Satan and God that we studied in Lessons 1 and 2? What forces are at work to produce these characteristics? As you saw, your sinful flesh behaves like the second list, while the rule of the Holy Spirit produces the first.
2. How does this passage instruct you to move from the second list to the first? How could you do this to affect the atmosphere in your home?

In Truth

When you squeeze an orange, what comes out? Orange juice. When you squeeze a lemon, what comes out? Lemon juice. Under pressure, whatever is inside comes out, does it not?



What should come out when you squeeze a Christian?

No person on earth may produce pressure, or at least witness your pressures, more than your spouse. Your spouse sees you during many of life's most crucial situations—death, birth, job frustrations, problems with children, conflicts with others. Your display of a redeemed nature in your home is a far more



reliable measure of the amount of your heart that you have truly surrendered to Christ than how courteous you are to your spouse when friends or leaders are present. Those others only see you part of the time, and usually in pleasant social situations. But your spouse sees you at your worst, as well as at your best. What does the way you act at home reveal about you?

- Please read 1 Timothy 3:4-5; 3:12 and Titus 1:6.

QUESTION 18

What does Paul instruct Timothy and Titus to observe in order to assess whether someone will be a good church leader or not?

- A. His relationship to his supervisor at work
- B. His relationship to his parents and siblings
- C. His relationship to his friends and neighbors
- D. His relationship to the rulers and authorities
- E. His relationship to his wife and children

Your objective once Christ has shined on you (Eph 5:14) must be to allow Christ to shine through you in every place, especially in your home (2 Cor 2:14). That objective means not only being frank with your family about your failures but also revealing the growing fruit of the Spirit's presence in you at the times when no one "important" is watching (Gal 5:22-23). One of the blessings of a Christian home is that you can be yourself, without pretending. But such freedom does not mean that you should be any less courteous and kind than you are outside the home.

In Prayer

The families in which each of you was raised could not be more different. He likes bland food, and you like spicy food. He wants to have a big family, but you want to have only two children. You like the city, and he likes the country. How will you ever choose where to live and what to do?

Some people would say that it is the role of the husband as leader to decide alone, and the wife's role is to submit and follow. Some wives think that because they are smarter, they should make the decisions and convince or manipulate the husbands to comply with their ideas. But we have found that there is a "more excellent way" (1 Cor 12:31). It is by bringing our decisions to God and by letting Him bring our understanding of what to do next into unity. As God draws us to Himself and gives us a united vision of His will, we also grow closer to each other.

If you ask Christian couples around the world what keeps them close, most of them will describe their regular prayer time together. When we come before the Lord, He bonds our hearts together in the same way that the sexual relationship bonds our bodies. When and how do we pray as a couple?

- Please read "Prayer Builds Unity and Intimacy" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 19

Which of the following describes a situation in which a couple can pray together about what to do? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The husband is offered a job in another city.
- B. The sexual intercourse is physically painful.
- C. The decision needs to be made about whether a mother-in-law should move in.
- D. The husband and wife disagree about anything.
- E. A phone call brings bad news.

QUESTION 20

When you need to pray about something that bothers you about your spouse, what should you do *beforehand*?

QUESTION 21

DEVELOPING YOUR MARRIAGE PRAYER LIST

Please open your Life Notebook.

For **MARRIED** students:

1. Write down several ways in which you would like the Lord to bless your spouse. Stop and ask God to bless your spouse in these ways right now.
2. Ask God, “What is threatening or negatively influencing our marriage unity?” As He gives you insight, pray about these things too. If He also reveals things that you should do to counteract the dangers, write them down.
3. Ask your spouse, “What do you think are the biggest dangers to our marriage?” Add these items to your prayer list.
4. List the days of the week on a piece of paper or refer to a calendar.
5. Every day for the next week or longer, pray for these blessings and concerns. Put a check mark on every day that you pray for these things.

For **SINGLE** students:

Choose a friend or family member and pray through a list of blessings for that person. List any dangers that you see to you and your friend or family member that could prevent you or the other person from becoming all that God would want for you. Pray about both the blessings and concerns daily in the same way as above. At the end of the week, record any changes or understanding.

In Scripture

The Bible is God’s Word. As God’s people read His Word, the Holy Spirit applies its truth to their needs and their wounds. He also guides them in their walk forward. As brothers and sisters in Christ, you can have the privilege of experiencing God’s communication with you through His Word, together as well as separately. While many people listen to God’s Word read out loud in congregational worship, and meditate on God’s Word in private devotional time, one of the most profitable ways to experience God’s communication is by coming to His Word as a couple. In marriage, the practice of listening to God in His Word and meditating on it together can bond you and prepare you and your spouse for every good work together as partners in ministry (2 Tim 3:16-17).

While an intellectual study of Scripture can be very valuable, such a study is not what this exercise is about. In an intellectual study, differences in education or intellect between marriage

partners may separate them. One partner may spend the whole time teaching the other what the passage means, the historical background, literary form, cross references, etc. The type of worshipful hearing of God's Word that this section is about is designed for a different purpose. It has the capacity to change your experience of God and of marriage. Dr. Daniel Oh, whom we heard from earlier in this lesson, has developed a form of the ancient Christian practice of "*lectio divina*" that has been very helpful to married couples.

- Please read "Feeding on God's Word Together" in *Readings in Marriage*.
- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: God's Word*.

Marriage Building Activity: God's Word



1. Find someone willing to coach you and your spouse through the steps given in the article you just read, "Feeding on God's Word Together." Read one of the following passages: Psalm 18; 71; 139; John 15; or a chapter of your own choosing. If you cannot find a coach, read the steps and the Scripture for each other.

If you are **SINGLE**, do this exercise with a friend or family member. If possible, choose someone with whom an embrace would not be awkward or inappropriate.

Both **MARRIED** couples and **SINGLES**, please write your thoughts about this experience in your Life Notebook. How did God minister to your situation from His Word? How did this affect your relationship?

Do you feel this might be a helpful component of a closer and more Spirit-filled marriage relationship? What time of day might you be able to practice this regularly?

Topic 3: How Has God Exalted Marriage?

What was your wedding like? Short or long? Expensive or simple? In most cultures, a wedding is a lengthy and important affair, which indicates that something is happening that is more significant than what meets the eye. Ceremonies are performed by the local religious spokesman, and the couple is both blessed in prayer and celebrated with festivities.

Every culture has **customs** that accompany the joining of two people in marriage. The actions may involve the extended family or the whole community. In Egypt, the wedding "zaffa," or wedding march, includes drums, horns, belly dancers, bagpipes, and even men carrying flaming swords! In Indonesia, the wedding is preceded by many ceremonies joining the two families by exchanging gifts. In Malaysia, the groom sends gifts of food and money to the bride in a parade of costumed children.



Wedding ceremonies are full of **symbolism**. In Scotland, the friends wash the feet of the bride and groom to prepare them for their new path together. A Greek bride carries a lump of sugar in her glove to be sure of a “sweet” life, and the couple dances over money, which the guests throw for them to ensure prosperity. In Korea, ducks are included in the wedding procession because ducks mate for life.



In many cultures, the climax of the ceremony is when the bride and groom make **vows** to each other. Here is a small excerpt from the lengthy Indian ceremony:

Groom: “I will love you and you alone as my wife. I will fill your heart with strength and courage. This is my commitment and my pledge to you ... I offer my total self to you. May our marriage last forever.”

Bride: “I love you with single-minded devotion as my husband. I will treat all other men as my brothers. My devotion to you is pure and you are my joy. This is my commitment and pledge to you. I shall never deceive you, nor will I let you down. Forever I shall love you.”

Why is it that wedding ceremonies hold such a unique place in nearly every culture? Is there some mystery within marriage that *God designed* to point to transcendent spiritual truth?

Stewards of a Mystery

“People should think about us this way—as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”—1 Corinthians 4:1

The most amazing thing that the New Testament tells us about marriage is that it is not only to do something for you and in you, but it is also to be something all by itself! You saw in Lesson 1



that one part of marriage is the image of the Trinity, which is designed in the intimacy of marriage. There is another wonderful image that God tells us that Christian marriage is designed to display. Do you remember what it is? As a Christian married couple, you have an important truth to steward. As you saw in Ephesians 5, marriage is designed to portray the love relationship between Christ and the church.

- Please read the greater context of this concept in Ephesians 5:21-33.

Notice that Paul calls this picture in marriage a *mystery*, something that transcends space and time. And lest we think that we fully understand this, Paul says that this is so difficult for us to fully grasp that it is a “great” mystery, which places it above other perhaps more ordinary mysteries (if any mystery could ever be called ordinary!).

- Please read the article “Life in a Great Mystery” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 22

For what reason does Paul imply in Ephesians 5 that husbands and wives should carry out certain duties in marriage?

- A. A happier marriage
- B. A good example for children
- C. To stabilize society
- D. To enter into a great mystery
- E. To strengthen the church
- F. To eliminate sexual sin

We see that the concept of a great mystery is important as we examine how we should live in our marriages. We will look more in detail at the practical outworking of love and submission in the next two lessons. In this last topic for Lesson 3, let's take a deeper look at the symbolic significance of marriage in God's Word. Jesus gave marriage a prophetic place in His ministry by linking the two mysteries together.

- Please read John 2:1-11, and then read the article “The Wedding at Cana” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 23

What were the results of Jesus turning water into wine? Review John 2:1-11 and match the subject as listed on the left to what happened as listed on the right as a result of the miraculous sign of turning the water into wine.

| <i>The Subject</i> | <i>What Happened</i> |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Jesus' disciples | He displayed His glory. |
| Jesus | He was astonished. |
| The Master of the Feast | The church was portrayed. |
| The groom | He was spared embarrassment. |
| The wine | It replaced the Jewish purification water. |
| Jesus' wedding to His bride | They believed in Him. |

So what does this mean to you in the twenty-first century? There is yet another way to look at the symbols in this story. Perhaps your own marriage has “run out of wine” and is no longer a joyous relationship but is a duty. Follow Jesus' mother's advice to “do whatever He tells you.” Just as the servants had to work hard to carry more than 120 gallons² of water to the wedding, your marriage may also take some hard work. But if your work is in obedience to doing whatever Jesus tells you to do, you may be surprised at the miraculous results. You may discover new wine, where before there was only water.

Mystery in the Vows

In this lesson, you have seen that marriage is full of significance—prophetically, practically, and spiritually. Neither the people involved nor the relationship itself is merely what it seems at first. Everything about the great adventure of marriage has the capacity to be filled with wonder, even while subtly disguised as paying bills and snoring side by side at night. Even your wedding vows contain spiritual truths about your salvation in Christ.

Wedding vows in a Christian ceremony typically have the following five aspects:

1. Faithfulness
2. Exclusivity
3. Permanent companionship
4. Intimacy
5. Love

Does Jesus' marriage to the Church also have these five aspects? Look up the verses found in Question 24 to determine how each of the five promises depicts a spiritual truth about the relationship between Christ and the Church.

² 450 liters

QUESTION 24

Match the Five Aspects to the corresponding spiritual truth about Christ's relationship toward the Church.

| <i>Five Aspects</i> | <i>Exhibited by Christ Toward His Bride, the Church</i> |
|-------------------------|---|
| Faithfulness | Acts 15:8: God knows the believer's deepest heart. |
| Exclusivity | Ephesians 5:25: Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. |
| Permanent Companionship | Philippians 1:6: He is faithful to complete the work He started in transforming her. |
| Intimacy | Matthew 28:20: Christ stays with His church forever. |
| Love | Revelation 21:27: Only those who have entered into this special relationship may come into His kingdom. |

God not only wants you to know about the spiritual truths in these vows, but He also wants you to practice them in your marriage relationship.

QUESTION 25

Match the Five Aspects to the corresponding spiritual truth about the Church's relationship toward Christ.

| <i>Five Aspects</i> | <i>Exhibited by the Bride, the Church, Toward Christ</i> |
|-------------------------|---|
| Faithfulness | 1 Corinthians 2:10-13: Believers know God's heart and always try to learn more about His point of view. |
| Exclusivity | Exodus 20:3: Believers may have no other gods and no idols. |
| Permanent Companionship | Matthew 25:23: She is a good and faithful servant in investing time and talents for God's purposes. |
| Intimacy | 1 Peter 1:8a: The church loves Him. |
| Love | 1 Thessalonians 4:17: The church lives forever with her Lord. |

QUESTION 26

Please open your Life Notebook.

In your Life Notebook, write your own ideas about how a husband or wife can fulfill each of the five vows. Then, if you are married, add an example from your own marriage. If you are single, you may write an example from a marriage that you have observed. One example is given, but please replace it with your *own* example instead. Be prepared to share your answers in your seminar about how you completed this exercise.

EXAMPLE

Faithfulness: Exhibited by husbands and wives

The husband keeps his heart and body exclusively for his wife, just as the wife does for the husband. Each is faithful to keep promises to each other in practical areas as well, such as coming home on time, running errands for the other, or paying the bills.

Personal Example:

I can depend on my husband, Tom, to pay our bills. He can depend on me to cook good food for him. We keep our bodies only for each other and keep our sexual thoughts focused on each other.

Thus marriage is important not just on a practical, but also on a spiritual, level. A false representation in the marriage relationship—such as a rebellious, surly, or unhappy wife or an angry, abusive, or unfaithful husband or a divorce—is more serious than just the unhappiness of two people. It is a blasphemous misrepresentation of a holy mystery.



Since Roman times, one wedding custom in many countries is the wedding cake. Just as the cake’s ingredients cannot be separated, the couple now will share one life together in unity. In the introduction to this lesson, Pastor Jonathan mentioned that having a good relationship in marriage proceeds from who you are as individuals in Christ. Throughout this lesson, you have seen that your relationship as brother and sister in Christ is the first level of unity, and it causes you to behave with kindness and love toward one another. You have also looked at many different aspects of who you and your spouse are in Christ. Finally, you have examined the distinctive mystery of marriage—its portrayal of the marriage of Christ and the Church.

QUESTION 27

Examine this three-layer wedding cake, representing the three aspects that we have learned about the proper Christian marriage relationship. Match each label to the corresponding layer, which shows how each layer is built on the foundation of the other.

| <i>Layer</i> | <i>Label</i> |
|--------------|---|
| 1 Foundation | Relating as siblings in God’s family |
| 2 Middle | Understanding who we are in Christ |
| 3 Top | Portraying the mystery of Christ and the church |

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Purpose for Your Marriage*.

Marriage Building Activity: Purpose for Your Marriage



For **MARRIED** students: This lesson has revealed many distinctives of a Christian marriage. Meet with your spouse and discuss the following questions:

1. What have we learned so far that reveals *why* God brought us to be married to each other? Together, develop a list of purposes for your own marriage, by using the principles that you have learned so far in this course and by adding other reasons that are special to you, as well. (Even if you feel that you may have made a mistake in whom you married, you can be certain that this is now God’s will for you.) **You will do more with your list later in the course, so do not lose it!**

(continued on next page)

2. Pray together about your stewardship of the mystery of marriage and thank Him for the purposes you have listed.

For **SINGLE** students:

1. Make two lists—one of purposes you see for marriage generally and another of good purposes for your own singleness now. Include reasons why you would like to be married or why you would like to remain single. If you desire to be married, but are not, or if you would like to remain single, but are feeling pressured to get married, offer your situation to Him, just as the servants at the wedding asked Jesus what to do about the lack of wine.
2. Write down any ideas or Scriptures that come to you about your situation. He has your best interest at heart, as well as His kingdom, and you can trust Him fully. Lessons 10 and 12 will deal more with the subject of singleness.

In the next lesson, we will explore how Christ set an example of love and how He empowers us to love one another in supernatural ways.

Make sure that you have completed every *Marriage Building Activity* for Lesson 3 (and recorded your experience in your Life Notebook) before proceeding to Lesson 4. Completion of these activities will form 40 percent of your grade. The Marriage Building Activities for this lesson were:

- *Seeing Your Spouse With New Eyes*
- *Spiritual Gifts*
- *God's Word*
- *Purpose for Your Marriage*

Lesson 3 Self Check

QUESTION 1

God uses the marriage relationship to help transform believers to be more Christlike. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

What is a “relational bargain”?

- A. When you give as little as possible and attempt to get as much as possible
- B. When you look for the best-looking spouse you can find
- C. When you freely offer your marriage to the Lord
- D. When you give your spouse your best effort, asking little in return
- E. When the Lord blesses your relationship

QUESTION 3

As long as we serve our spouses well, our thoughts are not too important, and we will receive a good reward from God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Which statement is **NOT** true of a Christian spouse?

- A. My spouse will decide the fate or rewards of angelic beings.
- B. I own my spouse in the same way that I own livestock.
- C. My spouse can intercede for me as a priest.
- D. God has given my spouse one or more special abilities.
- E. My spouse is a royal heir.

QUESTION 5

What is the Holy Spirit’s temple that a Christian spouse should honor?

- A. The Wailing Wall in Jerusalem
- B. Church buildings worldwide
- C. The physical body of his/her spouse
- D. The buried Ark of the Covenant
- E. The church worship service

QUESTION 6

Arguments, pride, and selfish ambitions are all signs that my actions are being ruled by my_____.

- A. Heart
- B. Flesh
- C. Mind
- D. Mother

QUESTION 7

One way that you serve the Lord is by helping your spouse to identify and use what?

- A. Nature
- B. Money
- C. Beauty
- D. Cooking ability
- E. Spiritual gifts

QUESTION 8

A Christian wedding typically includes vows in five areas. Which is NOT one of them?

- A. Faithfulness
- B. Agreeableness
- C. Exclusivity
- D. Permanent companionship
- E. Intimacy
- F. Love

QUESTION 9

The only way a husband and wife can model the attitude of Christ and the Church in both loving and serving each other is through_____.

- A. Studying the Bible more
- B. Empowering of the Holy Spirit
- C. Going to church
- D. Having children
- E. Getting a Bible education

QUESTION 10

A Christian marriage that ends in divorce is a blasphemous portrayal of a holy mystery. *True or False?*

Unit 1 Exam

QUESTION 1

One reason why man and woman are given the responsibility in Genesis 1:28 to procreate and fill the earth with people is because they are God's representatives. They needed to extend God's representative rule everywhere. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Marriage only occurred after the Fall as a result of sin. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Which relationship did God design to be the closest and most intimate in a person's life?

- A. With mother
- B. With father
- C. With spouse
- D. With spiritual mentor
- E. With children

QUESTION 4

In Genesis 2:23, it mentions a *cause* for which a man would leave his father and mother and join with his wife to become one flesh. What is the cause that inspires this move?

- A. The man will wish to have a wife close against his side as if his own rib is returning to him.
- B. He needs to be able to produce children.
- C. He needs a wife in order to help take care of his aging parents.
- D. He needs a wife to take care of all of his needs, spiritual, emotional and physical.

QUESTION 5

Even after you are married, it is more important to obey your parents than to listen to your spouse. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

When the Bible says to honor parents, it means that as an adult, you must obey their wishes. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

An important goal of parenting is to prepare your children to leave you and to follow God's plan for their lives. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

According to James 4:7, the first step in repelling lies is to_____.

- A. Memorize Scripture
- B. Go call your spouse
- C. Say a verse out loud
- D. Make the sign of the cross
- E. Submit to God

QUESTION 9

When you realize your spouse is being tempted, it is important to withdraw so that you are not also tempted. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

When you praise your spouse, you will cause him/her to stop respecting you and will cause pride. *True or False?*

QUESTION 11

During a traumatic instance, people adopt lies and make vows in order to try to protect themselves. *True or False?*

QUESTION 12

Satan manipulates lies and vows to harm marriages. *True or False?*

QUESTION 13

“I will never trust a man again” is an example of a stronghold. *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

A wife’s access to God is through her husband. *True or False?*

QUESTION 15

Where does God’s Spirit dwell today?

- A. Jerusalem
- B. The local church building
- C. A believer’s heart
- D. In the Ark of the Covenant

QUESTION 16

The fruit of the Spirit and the gifts of the Spirit are the same thing. *True or False?*

QUESTION 17

When your spouse sins or fails, you must focus your attention on God's grace with your own sins and failures. *True or False?*

QUESTION 18

In order to keep my spouse from falling away from God, Hebrews 3:13 says to exhort him/her. What is **NOT** an aspect of exhortation?

- A. Correcting
- B. Encouraging
- C. Interceding
- D. Consoling
- E. Advocating

QUESTION 19

When you are married, and one of you realizes there is a problem, it is important to strengthen the unity between you and then take on the problem as a united team. *True or False?*

QUESTION 20

When God accuses David of his sin with Bathsheba, which was **NOT** one of his responses?

- A. He humbles himself before God and asks for mercy.
- B. He blames the woman for tempting him.
- C. He protects the woman from shame.
- D. He comforts the woman.
- E. His biggest concern is a loss of fellowship with God.

QUESTION 21

When your spouse shares something bad that happened that makes him/her feel ashamed, you should:

- A. Seek to assure him/her of God's and your acceptance.
- B. Refuse to listen because it will damage the respect you have for your spouse.
- C. Tell someone else about it.
- D. Say "it's all in the past so it should not bother you anymore."

QUESTION 22

Hebrews 10:24 says to think how to "spur one another on to love and good works." This may involve helping your spouse identify and use his/her spiritual gifts to serve the body of Christ. *True or False?*

QUESTION 23

When facing a decision about where you and your spouse will live together it is not really healthy to ask God to give you and your spouse a unified vision. The husband should make the decision by himself in prayer. *True or False?*

QUESTION 24

The way that you behave toward your spouse and children when no one else is observing is a good measurement of your maturity in Christ. *True or False?*

QUESTION 25

Your Christian spouse is royalty and the King will hold you accountable for the way that you treat His child. *True or False?*

Lesson 3 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

A. To pretend to care more than you do so that the other person will care for you

QUESTION 2: *Your answer*

QUESTION 3:

A. You keep your thoughts focused on pleasing God.

B. You shed your old ways of defending your self-interest.

C. You seek the rewards that God promises to those who are faithful.

D. You consider all other believers as equals.

E. You speak only the truth.

QUESTION 4:

C. When my spouse will not do what I want, it is okay for me to threaten him/her.

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6: *Your answer*

QUESTION 7: *Your answer*

QUESTION 8:

A Christian spouse is a child of the King. Therefore, I should treat him/her like a prince or princess. The King will someday judge the way that I treat His son or daughter and will give me rewards based on how well I discharge this stewardship.

QUESTION 9: *Your answer*

QUESTION 10:

| <i>Comment</i> | <i>How I would refute this lie from Scripture</i> |
|--|---|
| “I have the right to hit my wife if she doesn’t do what I say.” | Romans 8:15-17: Your spouse is not a slave—he/she is a joint heir with Christ and must be treated as you would treat Him. |
| “Because my wife is a woman, she doesn’t need to develop any skills at leading or thinking deeply.” | Ephesians 4:11-14: Your spouse is to be an adult, not a child, in his or her thinking. A believer should be wise, not easily deceived. 1 Corinthians 6:3: Your spouse will judge angels, so should develop the wisdom to do this. |
| “My husband wasted the money that my family gave him and I frequently mention it. He should always feel ashamed of what he did.” | 2 Corinthians 5:21: Your spouse has the righteousness of God in Christ and has been forgiven. |
| “My husband is a failure and never achieves anything important.” | 1 Corinthians 6:20: Your spouse is valuable. 2 Corinthians 5:21: Your spouse is an ambassador. 2 Corinthians 3:3-6: Your spouse is an adequate servant. Ephesians 4:11-14: Your spouse is a saint. |
| “As a pastor, it is right for me to pray over my wife, but she should never pray out loud for me.” | 1 Peter 2:5, 9: Your spouse is a priest. Therefore, he/she can pray over you, bless you, and intercede for you before God. |
| “I cannot let my spouse do anything dangerous for the Lord.” | John 10:27-29: Your spouse must follow the Master’s voice, even if sometimes it looks dangerous. You need to trust the Lord for security. |

| | |
|--|--|
| “My wife belongs to me in the same way that my cow or bicycle belongs to me. I have the right to decide everything she does. She must always be available to meet my needs.” | 1 Corinthians 6:20: Your spouse is valuable. 2 Corinthians 5:21: Your spouse is an ambassador. Ephesians 4:11-14: Your spouse is saint. Romans 8:15-17: Your spouse is not a slave. |
|--|--|

QUESTION 11: True

QUESTION 12:

A. He is to nourish and cherish it.

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14:

D. For everyone’s good

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16:

| <i>Evidence of Holy Spirit Rule</i> | <i>Evidence of Flesh Rule</i> |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Love | Sexual Immorality |
| Joy | Impurity |
| Peace | Depravity |
| Patience | Idolatry |
| Kindness | Sorcery |
| Goodness | Hostility |
| Self-Control | Strife |
| | Jealousy |
| | Angry Outbursts |
| | Selfish Rivalries |
| | Dissensions |
| | Factions |
| | Envy |
| | Murder |
| | Drunkenness |
| | Carousing |
| | Conceit |
| | Provoking, irritating, challenging |

QUESTION 17: *Your answer*

QUESTION 18:

E. His relationship to his wife and children

QUESTION 19:

A. The husband is offered a job in another city.

B. The sexual intercourse is physically painful.

C. The decision needs to be made about whether a mother-in-law should move in.

D. The husband and wife disagree about anything.

E. A phone call brings bad news.

QUESTION 20:

Thank God first for the good things about your spouse, for each blessing that you receive from him/her, and for the things that you admire about him/her.

QUESTION 21: *Your answer*

QUESTION 22:

D. To enter into a great mystery

QUESTION 23:

| <i>The Subject</i> | <i>What Happened</i> |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Jesus' disciples | They believed in Him. |
| Jesus | He displayed His glory. |
| The Master of the Feast | He was astonished. |
| The groom | He was spared embarrassment. |
| The wine | It replaced the Jewish purification water. |
| Jesus' wedding to His bride | The church was portrayed. |

QUESTION 24:

| <i>Five Aspects</i> | <i>Exhibited by Christ Toward His Bride, the Church</i> |
|-------------------------|---|
| Faithfulness | Philippians 1:6: He is faithful to complete the work He started in transforming her. |
| Exclusivity | Revelation 21:27: Only those who have entered into this special relationship may come into His kingdom. |
| Permanent Companionship | Matthew 28:20: Christ stays with His church forever. |
| Intimacy | Acts 15:8: God knows the believer's deepest heart. |
| Love | Ephesians 5:25: Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. |

QUESTION 25:

| <i>Five Aspects</i> | <i>Exhibited by the Bride, the Church, Toward Christ</i> |
|-------------------------|---|
| Faithfulness | Matthew 25:23: She is a good and faithful servant in investing time and talents for God's purposes. |
| Exclusivity | Exodus 20:3: Believers may have no other gods and no idols. |
| Permanent Companionship | 1 Thessalonians 4:17: The church lives forever with her Lord. |
| Intimacy | 1 Corinthians 2:10-13: Believers know God's heart and always try to learn more about His point of view. |
| Love | 1 Peter 1:8a: The church loves Him. |

QUESTION 26: *Your answer***QUESTION 27**

| <i>Layer</i> | <i>Label</i> |
|--------------|---|
| 1 Foundation | Understanding who we are in Christ |
| 2 Middle | Relating as siblings in God's family |
| 3 Top | Portraying the mystery of Christ and the church |

Lesson 3 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:True

QUESTION 2:

A. When you give as little as possible and attempt to get as much as possible

QUESTION 3:False

QUESTION 4:

B. I own my spouse in the same way that I own livestock.

QUESTION 5:

C. The physical body of his/her spouse

QUESTION 6:

B. Flesh

QUESTION 7:

E. Spiritual gifts

QUESTION 8:

B. Agreeableness

QUESTION 9:

B. Empowering of the Holy Spirit

QUESTION 10:True

Unit 1 Exam Answers

Question 1: True

Question 2: False

Question 3:

C. Spouse

Question 4:

A. The man will wish to have a wife close against his side as if his own rib is returning to him.

Question 5: False

Question 6: False

Question 7: True

Question 8:

E. Submit to God

Question 9: False

Question 10: False

Question 11: True

Question 12: True

Question 13: False

Question 14: False

Question 15:

C. A believer's heart

Question 16: False

Question 17: True

Question 18:

A. Correcting

Question 19: True

Question 20:

B. He blames the woman for tempting him.

Question 21:

A. Seek to assure him/her of God's and your acceptance.

Question 22: True

Question 23: False

Question 24: True

Question 25: True

Unit 2: “Maintaining the Same Love”— Coming Together in Mutual Love

*Make my joy complete by
being of the same mind,
maintaining the same love,
united in spirit,
intent on one purpose.*
—Philippians 2:2 (NASB, emphasis added)

Unit Introduction

Pastor Samuel sat in his living room with the Wednesday night Bible study, introducing their new course. “Every culture at every time has recognized the concept of love. More songs, books, plays, and operas have been written about love than about any other subject in human



history. Love has been the motive for many of the world’s greatest heroics and greatest achievements. God commands us to love, and that includes loving your spouse.”



Don, a middle-aged man, sat silently staring at his book but not really seeing it. He was thinking, “It’s too late for us. We’ve grown too distant. When I try to ignite the spark again, the battery is dead. I just don’t understand what my wife is looking for.”

Meanwhile, his wife, Sheila, had similar hopeless thoughts, “I guess when I hear about great love, it makes me incredibly sad. I think I have married the wrong person. I’m not sure if we’ve ever REALLY been in love. If we were, we have fallen out of it.”

Don spoke up, “But I don’t see how God can command us to do something that is out of our control! Isn’t love a surprising, but wonderful, *accident* that just happens from situations and personal characteristics?”



Pastor Samuel nodded thoughtfully, “There are deadly lies about love that the enemy has been multiplying for years, such as the idea that you fall into and out of love with no control over it. As we will see in our study, you can actually *develop and increase* love by deliberate thoughts and actions. Some of these actions come from understanding the differences between men and women. You can even



develop some kinds of love when your spouse does not love you, when your spouse is unlovable, or when earlier love has faded away.”

Erin, a younger single woman in the group, spoke her concerns, “‘Faded away.’ That’s what I’m worried about! I’m not married yet. What I want to know is how *not* to wake up



one morning trapped in a marriage where we don’t love one another anymore.”



“Love is *not* something that just comes and goes,” Pastor Samuel replied. “Like a flame kept well stocked with fuel, love can burn on and on indefinitely. One particular kind of love can even survive without fuel! It carries its own fuel source inside the one who chooses to acquire it. I hope you will be excited about the usefulness of what

you will learn about love in marriage.”

Barbara, a thirty-something married woman, shifted uncomfortably in her chair. “Falling in love was great in its time, but it just doesn’t seem very important now. We’re too busy with other things—building our careers and raising our children. Those things seem like what’s most important for *this* part of our lives. If we are committed to each other, and we don’t fight, isn’t that enough?”



Her husband, Bob, wasn’t with her tonight, but Pastor Samuel knew that he was struggling in ways that Barbara didn’t realize because of her preoccupation with constant work. The pastor replied, “God gives us all types of love, not just the type that put Jesus on the cross. He is the source of it, the author, the initiator. It is NOT just ‘one possible option’ for a Christian couple to love each other. If we don’t love, we are failing to do the *first* thing that Jesus commanded us to do. Passages like Colossians 3:19 and Titus 2:4 clearly say that Christian spouses *must* love each other. Both 1 John 3:10 and 1 John 4:8 say that your transformation as a new creature in Christ will be *demonstrated* by your love for Christ and your neighbor. If you think about it, your spouse is your closest neighbor!”

Nelson, the oldest person in the group, said, “My wife passed away last year, and I just don’t think I will marry again. So, I’m not sure I really need to be here. We went through fifty years together and raised five children. We could have written a book about love!”



Pastor Samuel knew that Nelson could add a lot to the group dynamics. He hoped that he would come back and stay with the study. “Then, we’re really glad you’re here. Your experiences will bless all of us. If you teach others or have grown children, some of the exercises here will help you help them to develop love where it does not exist or to improve the expression of love that they show to each other. No matter how adept or inadequate any of you feel at expressing love right now, this study will have

something that you can apply to strengthen your closest relationships, especially in marriage. You can use this knowledge to extend God’s love to others as well.”

If you have a spouse, is your relationship currently providing the intimate and affectionate relationship that you had hoped for when you married? If not, this lesson will help you develop it. If you already enjoy a close, loving relationship with your spouse, this lesson will help you to deepen and broaden your love in new and satisfying ways. First you will look at four Greek words that describe different types of love and learn how you can develop all four of these types.

Even if you've studied them before, you will see new things here. Then you will consider people's individual ways of *perceiving* love. You can feel all the love in the world, but if the one you love *cannot feel* what you are communicating, your efforts are meaningless. You will see how learning to speak your spouse's "heart language" can increase your love for each other.

In Lessons 5 and 6, you will look at the ways that men and woman tend to be different from each other, and how they often have different needs for giving and receiving love. If you fail to adapt your actions to your spouse's underlying needs, you can accidentally communicate "un-love," even when your intent was exactly the opposite! After your study in this unit, you will understand better how you can strengthen and build each other up *with* love.

Unit 2 Outline

Unit 2: "Maintaining the Same Love"—Coming Together in Mutual Love

Lesson 4: Love

Lesson 5: Men and How to Love Them

Lesson 6: Women and How to Love Them

Lesson 4: Love

Now this is his commandment: that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another—1 John 3:23

Lesson Introduction

If we're going to love, it may be helpful to define what love is. Is it when you feel warm and safe? Thrilled from head to toe? Eager to spend time with someone? Or when your spouse does the dishes and tells you to go put your feet up?



We start pondering love about as early as we begin to think about life. Even young children can be remarkably astute. Mrs. Carter asked her elementary class to define love. Here are their replies:

When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love.

Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of your French fries without making them give you any of theirs.

When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth.

There are two kinds of love: Our love and God's love. But God makes both kinds of them.

If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate.

When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you.

You really shouldn't say "I love you" unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget.

Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it every day.

Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well.

We may chuckle, but the children described love as a number of very different things. Which one is *real* love? The Greeks would say all of them. In fact, the Greek language that was used to write the New Testament has **four** words for love, and each one has different motivations and behaviors.

Just as God made a wide variety of foods and created us to be able to digest each one, He also created us able to "digest" each type of love. While a steady diet of even one type of love will help a marriage survive, a "balanced diet" of all four types of love will help make your relationship vibrantly healthy. In this lesson, you will study how to strengthen your marriage by



developing each type of love. Even if you have never seen the example of complete love in your parents or any other married partners, God can show you how to develop abundant and varied love in your home. He is love's Author and Perfecter.

Lesson Outline

Lesson 4: Love

Topic 1: The Four Love Groups

Storge, the Belonging Love

Phileo, the Cherishing Love

Eros, the Romantic Love

Agape, the Unconditional Love

Topic 2: Receiving God's Love

Topic 3: Communicating Love Through Heart Languages

Understanding Heart Languages

Using Heart Languages

Topic 1: The Four Love Groups

John had been fixing his Uncle Bartholomew's car all morning while Uncle Bartholomew worked in his yard. The talkative young man had been unusually quiet. Uncle Bartholomew finally stopped his digging and asked, "So, nephew, you haven't said two words all morning long. What's up?"



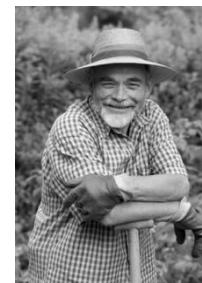
John sighed. "Oh, I guess I've been thinking about when I got engaged last week, Uncle Bart. I know I am spoiling something that is really perfect by thinking too much. But sometimes I worry about the future, you know? I want so much for Leah and me to always love each other

like we do now, but, secretly, I know we will end up like our parents and all of their friends. I doubt if they really love each other. And maybe that's just to be expected. Maybe love is not really necessary in the long run." He closed the car hood and turned to his uncle.

Uncle Bart grinned. "You think *old* people like your Aunt Beth and I don't love each other anymore, is that what I'm hearing? You're worried that thirty years from now you and your sweet little wife will be throwing pots and pans at each other?"

"Something like that." John laughed. "Doesn't love just get tired and die from all the things you suffer through in a long marriage?"

"That shows how much you know!" laughed Uncle Bart. "You know we Greeks have four different words for love, not just one like there is in English. The kind of love that you feel at the beginning of marriage—you know, the one where you can hardly wait for the wedding night? That love isn't the only kind." John blushed and looked down. "But, let me tell you, son, that kind of love is still alive and well even after thirty-five years of marriage." Uncle Bart smiled. "There are other types of love, too. They are just as important to having a good marriage as romantic love. In order for a marriage to live up to its potential, each of the four types of love should be operating, just like my car needs all four tires." He tapped the car's tire with his foot. "Would you rather be driving this car on a trip across the country, or would you rather try it on a tricycle or bicycle? Having only one type of love in a relationship is like driving a unicycle! It's not the best way to get around, especially when the road turns rocky. You need to keep all four tires on the road."



John smiled. "You are more of an expert on love than I gave you credit for, Uncle Bart."

“There’s a lot you don’t know, son. Like—do you know the four Greek words for love and how you can develop each one of them in your marriage?”

“Actually, I do know them,” John said. “We learned them in church.

Storge,

Phileo,

Eros,

and ... that other one. But I didn’t think they all applied to marriage.”



“Like I said before, there’s a lot you don’t know, son. That ‘other one’ is *Agape*. It’s the most important one of all.”

Just then, Aunt Beth came outside and Uncle Bart gave her an affectionate squeeze.

“You see this smile on your Aunt Beth’s face?” Maybe you’d like to hear how you and Leah can be this much in love after thirty-five years of marriage. Like I was saying, all four types of love are necessary, but they don’t just happen by magic. It takes practice.”

***Storge*, the Belonging Love**

“Love is what makes you smile when you’re tired.”—Terri, age 7

The Greek word *storge* means the love for home and kin. The lack of *storge* is translated in Romans 1:31 as “unloving” and in 2 Timothy 3:3 as “heartless.” It has both an outward and an inward focus.

- To better understand *storge* love, please read “*Storge*, the Belonging Love” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 1

Which is **NOT** one of the chief characteristics of *storge* love?

- A. Loyalty
- B. Security
- C. Kindness
- D. Help
- E. Sexual attraction
- F. Acceptance

QUESTION 2

Please briefly explain *storge*’s two types of expression of anger, as explained in the article.

QUESTION 3

What behaviors are compatible with *storge* in a marriage? (Select all that apply.)

- A. A husband who beats or slugs his wife.
- B. A wife who leaves home with another man whom she finds more handsome.
- C. A husband who is bored with his wife’s inane conversation, but listens anyway.
- D. When a wife accidentally burns the house down, the husband is thankful for her safety and is not angry at her about the loss.
- E. A wife who frequently tells her husband that he is a failure and that she regrets marrying him.
- F. A wife who is filled with anger because her husband is involved with another woman.

- Please read 2 Timothy 3:1-6, in which the word *storge* is found in the New Testament.

It says that in the end times, people will lack *storge*. Do you think that this is happening today between husbands and wives, between parents and children, and between siblings? Can you see how *storge*’s absence leads to many of the other lacks and sins described here in this passage? As the enemy seeks to destroy mankind’s image of God, all types of love are his targets, but *storge*, the most natural and basic of all the loves, is often the last one to deteriorate in a crumbling society.

How is *storge* portrayed in the Bible?

QUESTION 4

Match the illustration of *storge* love with the verses that contain its description.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Illustration of Storge</i> |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Deuteronomy 29:18-21 | A young bride warns her husband never to betray her because her strong love could turn to jealous hatred, and no amount of wealth could buy it back. |
| Song of Solomon 8:6 | God warns His people that if anyone violates the covenant with Him by worshiping other gods, His jealousy will burn like fire and He will bring curses on that person. |
| Genesis 24:64-67 | A wife takes her husband’s side against her father. |
| Proverbs 6:32-35 | A young bride’s love comforts her husband after his beloved mother dies. |
| 1 Samuel 19:11-14 | A man praises his wife because she starts and operates a business so he can serve his community as a judge. |
| Proverbs 31:10-12, 16, 23, 29 | A man returns to his father’s home to furnish a place for his bride to come and live there with him. |
| John 14:2-3 | A father warns his son about the unappeasable jealous rage of a husband whose wife has betrayed him. |

Can you build *storge* love into your marriage? *Storge* is **driven primarily by the will**, so you can develop it by your choices and your actions.

- Please read the article “Keeping *Storge* Love Alive” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 5

Please open your Life Notebook.

As you think about *storge* love's protective nature, think for a moment about the people and institutions that impact your marriage from the outside. Do you see any threats to your marriage relationship from the outside—job, relationships, time, pornography, other? Write down your thoughts about these concerns.

Now look at the quality of your *own* thoughts about your spouse. Are you disciplining your mind to dwell on what is best about him/her? Write down what you will do to improve the *storge* point of view in your thought life.

Now think about the interactions between you and your spouse. Is there anything that violates the safety of *storge* in the way you talk and behave toward one another? Do either of you have a problem with yelling loudly, saying cruel things, or physically acting out your frustration, such as by hitting or breaking things? What things can you do to improve the qualities of *storge* in your marriage?

If you are **single**, describe a marriage where you have seen *storge* love in action and how you would want your own marriage and other relationships to display this safe, belonging love.

***Phileo*, the Cherishing Love**

“When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth.”—Billy, age 4

Mariko and Hiro are introduced at a church function and strike up a conversation about the current rainy weather. Mariko mentions, “You will think I am silly, but I don’t mind the rain the way most people do. In fact, I often go outside just to let it splash on my face.”

At this statement, Hiro smiles with delight. “You’re kidding! I enjoy rain too. My parents used to think I was a strange child because I would never cover my head when it rained.” Soon Mariko and Hiro are swapping stories of their enjoyment of rain, and a friendship begins based on their common enjoyment. As they talk on other occasions, they discover a shared and unusual way of perceiving many other things in life. They think, “I have found a rare treasure—someone who really understands me.” *Phileo* love is building.

Mariko and Hiro decide to go with other members of their church on an outreach mission to a remote area. During this trip, they spend hours talking and watching each other’s reactions to difficulties, their kindness under stress, their self-discipline, and their prayer life. These observations intensify the respect and close feelings that they have developed. They now see the other person as a fascinating wellspring of delightful interaction and can hardly wait for the opportunity to talk again. Everything about the other person is seen to be good and admirable. They have developed *phileo* love for one another.



Who is your best earthly friend? The person you can talk with for hours or say relatively little—and yet feel that he/she really understands? This person may have characteristics vastly different from yours, but you admire those strengths and chuckle affectionately at the weaknesses. When you are together, you experience a sense of pleasure and delight in the other’s companionship. Just about any activity you enjoy alone is made even more enjoyable by the presence of your friend. The Greeks would call this kind of love *phileo*.

- Please read “*Phileo*, the Cherishing Love” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 6

Which one of the steps to keeping *phileo* love alive is **different** from keeping *storge* love alive?

- A. Share activities
- B. Share thoughts
- C. Practice mutual respect
- D. Touch affectionately
- E. Behave admirably
- F. Think kindly

QUESTION 7

When a spouse does something his/her mate sees as repulsive, the spouse chooses to continue to act with kindness for the good of the marriage. This is an example of *phileo* love. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Which statement is **NOT** true of *phileo*? *Phileo* love _____.

- A. May exist even between evil people, such as thieves
- B. Enjoys each other's success without jealousy
- C. Must meet certain conditions in order to exist and grow
- D. Thrives regardless of behavior
- E. Is often developed through shared interests and activities
- F. Thrives on time spent together

While *phileo* is a highly desirable condition in marriage, it cannot be a requirement because it is a feeling. God never requires us to have certain feelings. He only asks us to make certain choices about what we think and do toward another. Further, *phileo* is a feeling in response to character qualities that reside in another person and are, therefore, outside our control.

By the choices that we make and the thoughts that we think, however, we can encourage *phileo* to grow in our marriage relationships. The distinction is subtle but important. God recognizes that He created us with unique personalities, which will naturally develop rapport with some people more easily than with others. Their personalities are pleasing to us; perhaps they make up for a lack we see in ourselves. This particularity is not sin. Even the Lord Jesus had a special *phileo* love for one of His disciples more than the others. John called himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn 21:20). We often see John in closer fellowship with the Lord and in closer proximity to the Lord than the other disciples (Lk 8:51, Jn 13:23).

If you are able to develop a strong *phileo* love with your spouse in addition to the other three types of love, your marriage will become much closer, more satisfying, and more enjoyable.

- Please read the article "Keeping *Phileo* Love Alive" to learn how to cultivate this pleasurable, but sometimes demanding, type of love in your marriage.

QUESTION 9

Please open your Life Notebook.

Using a few words each, list the six ways, which are given in the article "Keeping *Phileo* Love Alive," to both develop and maintain *phileo* love in your marriage. State them as a personal to-do list: "I will ...". Give at least one idea in each category of how you might apply this.

Eros, the Romantic Love

“When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you”

—Karen, age 7

When someone you find attractive looks deep into your eyes, touches your cheek tenderly, and



whispers how wonderful you are, what happens in your heart? Does it beat a little faster? What happens to your thoughts and your body? Is this love, or is it lust? While the world spends much of its energy trying to stimulate the energy of this experience, Christians through the centuries have felt a great deal of ambivalence toward it or even rejected it wholesale. The type of love that is stimulated by our physical senses—sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste—the Greeks called *eros*.

Is it safe to desire *eros* love? Since her parents’ marriage was primarily a somewhat disillusioned *storge* love, my friend Lisa has held the view that romantic love is a farce based only on physical and chemical sexual appetites. Real love, she thought, is based only on duty and on meeting needs. One evening, Lisa and I watched the movie *Pride and Prejudice* together. Based on a book from eighteenth-century author Jane Austen, the film tells the story of Elizabeth, a lower-class young woman who must learn to appreciate the self-sacrificing kindness and heroic qualities of the rich Mr. Darcy, despite her prejudices against wealthy people. Mr. Darcy, similarly, has to overcome his prejudices against lower-class people in order to love her. Typical of *eros* love, the couple must endure a magnetic pull toward each other that they cannot gratify through most of the story, and overcome many barriers before they can finally enjoy the expression of their love together in marriage.

During the last scene, which shows the happily married couple caressing each other’s faces tenderly, my friend squashed her hopes for such a loving relationship for herself. “Romantic love doesn’t exist anyway,” she told her heart. She was surprised when the Holy Spirit answered back, “Yes it does, Lisa. Who do you think invented it?” You will read more of Lisa’s story later in this lesson.

- Please read about this third type of love in the article “*Eros*, the Romantic Love.”

QUESTION 10

Who invented romantic love?

QUESTION 11

Match the reference with the illustration of romantic love.

| <i>Reference</i> | <i>Illustration</i> |
|----------------------|--|
| Genesis 29:19-20 | A bridegroom dies for his bride. |
| Proverbs 5:19 | A woman finds her husband physically attractive. |
| 2 Samuel 13:2 | A wife puts on perfume so that her husband will desire to have sex with her. |
| Ephesians 5:25 | A man works for seven years without pay to gain his bride, but it seems like a short time. |
| Song of Solomon 5:10 | A wife longs for her husband to join her in bed. |
| Song of Solomon 3:1 | A man is thrilled to touch his wife's breasts, even though she is old. |
| Song of Solomon 4:16 | A man thinks so much about a woman he cannot have that he becomes physically sick. |

God created romantic love as one of the most deliriously enjoyable of all experiences. He meant it to be used only for good purposes. But sin has distorted it to the destructive form of lust. When we learn to direct its energizing properties as God intended—toward loving and being loved by a spouse—it becomes a powerful ally in building a marriage that both pleases God and builds up each partner.

If you have not fallen in love with your partner, you are missing an exquisitely satisfying experience that God designed for you to enjoy. Further, if you reject *eros*, your enactment of the love between Christ and the Church will fall short of portraying the ecstasy and unity that will be found spiritually at the wedding supper of the Lamb.

If *eros* is not currently, and perhaps has never been, part of your marriage, how do you encourage its growth? Even though it cannot be invoked by doing one's duty, it is not unpredictable and, like *phileo*, will grow only in certain conditions. Fortunately, God has considered this type of love important enough to provide a book, which gives us a wealth of instruction about how to kindle *eros* love in marriage.

- Please read "Advice on *Eros* From the Song of Solomon" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 12

Which activity might **decrease** *eros* in a marriage?

- Going away together to a beautiful place
- Preparing candles, fruit, and music in the bedroom
- Making love always in the same place and in the same way
- Getting a babysitter during the day so you can take a nap
- Kissing for thirty seconds or longer when you first see each other in the evening
- Telling your spouse how much you desire him/her sexually

Compared to the Old Testament, the New Testament places greater emphasis on doing good rather than on avoiding evil. We have said that lust is the negative form of *eros*, while romance is the positive form. A correct expression of *eros* in marriage actually helps to curb immoral lust.

QUESTION 13

Match the instruction regarding sinful or negative behavior with the positive action that should replace it.

| <i>Negative Behavior</i> | <i>Positive Behavior</i> |
|---|---|
| 1 Corinthians 7:1-2: It is bad for a man to caress a woman. | 1 Corinthians 10:30-31: We should thank God for every appropriate physical pleasure in marriage and enjoy it to His glory. |
| Matthew 5:28: A man may not think lustfully about a woman that is not his wife. | Matthew 19:9-12: Some people were born or became unable to experience sexual relations with a person of the opposite sex. These people have a special gift from God: to remain unmarried, chaste “eunuchs” who focus all of their energies on their ministries for God. |
| Luke 12:19-21: It is foolish to enjoy the riches of sensual pleasures without developing a rich relationship with God. | Song of Solomon 2:14: A man should have an enticing mental picture of his wife. |
| Romans 1:26-27: If you were born unable to have normal <i>eros</i> feelings toward someone of the opposite sex, to engage in sexual acts with someone of the same gender is a shameful, evil act. | Song of Solomon 2:6; 5:16: It is good for a husband and a wife to caress each other. |

Many teachers in the church have said that experiencing pleasure with the senses (*eros*) is evil.

Read the following verses and write or just think about the observations and questions listed after each reference.

- Matthew 3:4: Notice what John wore and ate.
- Matthew 3:13-17: Notice what John saw and heard at Jesus’ baptism.
- Luke 5:29-30: How did Jesus live that was different from John?
- Luke 7:18-20: Why do you think John the Baptist doubted Jesus after he heard and saw the miracles at Jesus’ baptism?
- Luke 7:23: What was one reason John may have been offended by Jesus?

Jesus and John the Baptist had very different approaches to sensory enjoyment in life. John the Baptist was the epitome of the Old Testament’s methods of restraining sin—austerity and a solitary life. Jesus’ enjoyment of the pleasures of life was apparently disturbing to John, yet Jesus was without sin. Jesus gave a new model of understanding the difference between lust (which He never did) and enjoying life (which He did fully).

QUESTION 14

Please open your Life Notebook and read Romans 13:14; 2 Corinthians 6:17; and Colossians 2:20-23. Using these or other passages in the New Testament, develop your thinking about how to enjoy sensory experiences while curbing lust. How do Paul's writings help us to understand how to live in freedom as Jesus did without giving in to sinful lust? Write an outline for teaching another person in the same life situation as you are now—a husband, a wife, a single man, a single woman—about scripturally enjoying sensory experiences. If you are married, emphasize the role of marriage *eros* and how to surrender to the Holy Spirit in practical ways to avoid the sin of lust.

Like my friend Lisa, we each have the desire for romantic love. God built it into us. Even if it is His will for us to remain unmarried, it does no good to pretend the desire does not exist. Our hearts will keep insisting that it does, until the only way we can silence the desire is to stop feeling our hearts altogether. Pushing down unwelcome feelings does not encourage the growth of wanted feelings. No, pushing down feelings deadens all feeling, so that you begin to experience everything with a sort of dull numbness.

When you admit the truth, that you do desire love, you can talk to God truthfully about it. Not every desire that God created in us can be fulfilled in this life. If we are married, we can, like Solomon and his bride, do what we can to increase romance in our marriage. If we are single, we can offer that unmet desire up as a sweet sacrifice to Him (1 Cor 9:4-5).

Agape, the Unconditional Love

“If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate.”—Nikka, age 6

This last type of love is the one most under your control, yet the most difficult one to perform well. On one hand, this love does not depend on your spouse to be lovable, or even likeable. It is not an emotion, and you do not need to have warm feelings toward one you choose to love. In *agape*, the lover makes a deliberate decision to act in the best interest of the beloved no matter what. But *agape* is difficult to exhibit, because it is contrary to putting myself first, and it is often contrary to one's internal “fairness meter.”



Therefore, it is the love that, in striving to achieve it, causes me to throw myself on God completely

and to admit that I desperately need Him to love *through* me. I cannot do it alone. The Holy Spirit must enliven what may start out as a dry and very hard decision to do genuine good when everything inside me screams for “payback” (1 Pet 3:9).

God's *agape* love toward us is shown in His grace, which gives us *undeserved good* in place of *well-deserved retribution* (Mt 5:44-46). When we exhibit *agape* love, we are most like Jesus Christ. But even *agape* love has boundaries that we must learn to respect in our relationships too.

- Please read about this unique love in “Agape, the Unconditional Love” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 15

Please read Matthew 5:44. Which of the following statements is an expression of *agape* love?

- A. I love to look at my husband's beautiful eyes.
- B. When my wife leaves to visit her relatives, I miss her deeply.
- C. My beloved makes me happy.
- D. My husband will never hurt me or allow anyone else to hurt me.
- E. I always do good for my wife, even when she is crabby and unattractive.

QUESTION 16

According to the article "*Agape, the Unconditional Love*," how is *agape* love like an antiseptic agent in a marriage? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It stops the "germs" of selfishness, disappointment, and anger from incubating the diseases of resentment, bitterness, and lack of love.
- B. It stimulates sexual attraction so that the couple can more easily forgive each other.
- C. It brings healing and peace.
- D. It causes the husband and wife to avoid sin.

QUESTION 17

Place these facts about God's *agape* love in chronological order.

1. God sent Christ to die for man's sins.
2. If man continues to reject the offer of salvation until his death, God honors his choice by allowing him to spend eternity separated from God.
3. God loves mankind.
4. God offers salvation to men through receiving Christ's atonement.
5. If man rejects the offer of salvation, God still pursues his heart.

QUESTION 18

Please open your Life Notebook.

Please read Luke 15:11-24. Describe how the various aspects of *agape* love are displayed by the father's actions in this parable. Pay particular attention to the *boundaries* that he sets. Then describe how these aspects might be seen in a marriage, particularly a difficult marriage.

One place in Scripture describes *agape* love very well.

- Please read the article "1 Corinthians 13: The *Agape* Passage" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 19

Please open your Life Notebook.

Even though Jesus was worthy of causing everyone else to serve Him, He relinquished that right and instead sought to serve the best good of His beloved. The article "1 Corinthians 13: The *Agape* Passage" gives five ways that Jesus exhibits *agape* love in a way which can be emulated by husbands and wives who follow Him. Review the five things (which may be found half way through the article under "not self serving"), and then write them as personal "I will" statements toward your spouse on a piece of paper. Place the statements in your Bible or someplace where you will see them frequently, and ask God to give you the strength to perform them.

QUESTION 20

Please open your Life Notebook.

List the fifteen characteristics of *agape* love. Of the fifteen characteristics listed in 1 Corinthians 13, mark the ones that your spouse would say you are *least* likely to exhibit.

Since *agape* is a choice, with God’s power you can change your behavior. How will you begin to demonstrate these aspects of *agape* love to your spouse?

Unlike the other types of love, *agape* is not something that you cultivate in your *relationship*, but rather something you cultivate in *your own heart*. In fact, biblically, it is the chief characteristic of a Christian heart—the characteristic that sets us apart from the world (Jn 13:34-35). How do we cultivate it? What do we do when we no longer see any love in our own hearts? Here is a twelve-step plan, which can recover and help release this love into your relationship.

- Please read “How to Love When the Well Runs Dry: A Twelve-Step Program” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 21

Please open your Life Notebook.

Rewrite *in your own words* the list of twelve steps contained in the article “How to Love When the Well Runs Dry.” Write notes for each step on some ways you might use these steps yourself, and how you might use this list to counsel someone else in a difficult marriage. Be prepared to discuss this in your seminar.

Now that you have studied the four types of love described in the Bible, can you describe the differences between each one and see how each one strengthens a marriage?

Please read the stories of three couples from different countries, which exhibit three different types of love in their relationships. In Question 22, at the end of the stories, you will label the *primary* type of love expressed by each couple.



Couple 1: The Hwongs, Hui and Yi

Yi: I would say our home is very loving. We always speak kindly to each other, and my husband takes good care of me and the baby to come. He always sees that we have enough to eat. He listens thoughtfully to me when I have a need and suggests wise actions. I am thankful that I married such a good and hard-working man.

Hui: We have a good marriage. We work together in our restaurant—long hours sometimes, but we get a lot of satisfaction in sharing our life together. When we come home, my wife, Yi, prepares a hot bath for me, and we talk about the events of the day before going to sleep. Someday, I hope that we will have a big family and that all of us will share in the rewards of our efforts to establish our business.

Couple 2: The Forets, Amaud and Anne

Anne: My husband means everything to me. He is so handsome and strong. It makes my heart sing just to see him. To have him come home and take me in his arms and tenderly kiss me makes all the cares of the day disappear. His voice is like music when he whispers in my ear and says how much he has missed me. I hope our love never ends.



Amaud: My wife is the most delightful woman I can imagine. I have a photo of her on my desk at the office, and when I look at her sweet smile, I start counting the minutes until we can be alone together again. I have to discipline my thoughts, or I will not get any work done! At lunch, I call her on the phone, just to hear her voice. I am so lucky to have such a desirable wife.

Couple 3: The Balcescus, Petre and Lidya



Petre: My wife, Lidya, is an invalid. She had a stroke on our second anniversary. She could not speak or move, so I sat next to her bed in the hospital and tried to understand from her eyes what she wanted and to anticipate what she needed. The doctors did not think she would recover, but I prayed and fasted and begged God that He would not take her away from me. He was gracious, so I still enjoy being near her every day. God has taught me to rely on Him, and I trust Him in ways I never would have been able to before this happened to us. I am happy to report that she has improved a great deal since that day two years ago. Now she can say some words and move her left arm a little bit. She works very hard with a therapy nurse each week, and I think that soon she will be able to hold her own drinking glass. I have to go to work each day, of course, so I have hired a girl to stay with her. When I come home, I tell her all about my clients as I bathe her and help her change her clothing. I keep a list of each person I see in my store all day and try to make stories for her about every person I meet—I entertain her by showing how they act and the funny things they say. It makes me so happy to see her laugh. Her life is so difficult and limited now, but I have promised God that I will try to make it as happy as possible. The best gift I can imagine would be to see her be able to sit up in a chair by herself.

Lidya: My husband, Petre, was almost a stranger to me when we got married. Our fathers are both pastors from different areas of our country. They met and as they shared about their families, they thought we would be a good match for each other. They did not force us to marry, but urged us to meet and consider it. We met several times and I thought he was a good man, so we decided to marry. But I had assumed that we would talk and get to know each other after the wedding. I also assumed that we would be involved in the Lord's work together as much as we could, even though he works in a shipping company. But he always seemed to be so busy with his career that he never seemed to want to spend time with me or talk with me. It was like I was an invisible servant. I felt very lonely and the Lord seemed far away. But one day I took to heart Proverbs 31:12 and vowed to always do my husband good, and not evil, all the days of my life. This gave me new purpose and I drew closer to God in this quest. I prayed for him every morning and asked God to show me how to love him, even if he never noticed me. I learned to fix his favorite foods, tried to make our home pleasant, and asked him to teach me about the shipping business so he could talk to me about what had happened during his day. Over time, it was like his eyes opened and I think he began to really see me, rather than look through me. When I became pregnant, we were both so happy. We looked forward to happy years together. When I miscarried, I had a stroke, so now I can do very little to help him or anyone else. But I know the Lord kept me alive for a reason. I pray for Petre and others all day long and worship the Lord by singing in my heart. I cannot talk yet, but someday I hope I can tell Petre how much I have loved him.

QUESTION 22

Can you match each of the words for love with the couple that best exemplified it? One of the words for love will be unused.

| <i>Couple</i> | <i>Words for Love</i> |
|--|-----------------------|
| Couple 3: The Balcescus, Petre and Lidya | <i>Storge</i> |
| Couple 2: The Forets, Amaud and Anne | <i>Eros</i> |
| Couple 1: The Hwongs, Hui and Yi | <i>Phileo</i> |
| Not used | <i>Agape</i> |

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Speaking Love*.

Marriage Building Activity: Speaking Love



It is important not only to feel love but also to tell your spouse “I love you.” We realize that this is not always the cultural norm in many places. It wasn’t normal for Nehemiah’s culture either.

Please read “Nehemiah’s Story” in *Readings in Marriage* and compare it to your own experience.

For **MARRIED** students:

Today, or as soon as humanly possible, *tell* your husband or wife that you love him/her. This may not be a common practice in your culture, and may not follow your emotions yet, but it may be **the most important assignment of this course**. While it is more important to be loving than to say it, if you have never said these words before and choose to mean them, “I love you” will be the sweetest words your spouse has ever heard. If God loved you but never told you, how would that limit your understanding of God? Would you have the assurance and peace in your relationship with Him if He kept His love a secret? Be brave and do the assignment! If you have never told your spouse “I love you,” the results may be surprising.

For **SINGLE** students:

Tell a dear friend, parent, or other relative that you love him/her.

I hope you are eager to cultivate and practice the four types of love in your marriage. In the next two topics, you will look more at *how* we receive love and then how we best give it to someone who may view life differently.

Topic 2: Receiving God’s Love

Can you think of a person who is difficult to get along with? Do you think that this person believes that God loves him/her? Do you think there is a correlation between receiving God’s love and being able to love others?

The Bible tells us that God is love. But perhaps you have a hard time believing that deep in your heart. If you do not believe that God loves you unequivocally, how does that affect your ability to give and receive love in marriage?

- Please read the very important article, “Trusting God’s Love” in *Readings in Marriage*.

Can you see how your past experience affects what you currently believe about God’s love, and how those beliefs can affect how you interpret your experiences in married life? Not only married people struggle to believe that God loves them. Lisa faces this problem as a single person.

- Please read “Lisa’s Story” in *Readings in Marriage*.

Can you relate to Lisa’s difficulty in accepting the truth of God’s love, because of experiences in your childhood? How do you think this affects your marriage or other relationships?

QUESTION 23

How can we reconcile God’s love and our experience of suffering? Select the true answers based on Scripture: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. We do not believe that God loves us because we look in the wrong place for evidence.
 - B. We cannot interpret our experience of famine, nakedness, or other suffering to mean that God does not love us.
 - C. We must choose to believe that God loves us because He says so in His Word.
 - D. Sending Jesus Christ for us is the main evidence of God’s love.
 - E. Our greatest needs are safety, food, and shelter.
- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Believing God’s Love*.

Marriage Building Activity: Believing God’s Love



Open your Life Notebook and review the six core truths about God’s love as found in the article “Trusting God’s Love,” and think about your experience.

1. Have you found it difficult to love others because of a difficulty to believe in one of these six core areas?
2. Write down which areas are difficult and how you think it has affected you.

If you are **MARRIED**, read the list to your spouse. Share your own areas where it is difficult for you, then, ask your spouse, “Do you find it difficult to believe God loves you in one or more of these areas?”

If your spouse answers that yes, he/she does find it difficult in one or more areas, ask, “What effect do you think this might be having on our marriage?”

If you are **SINGLE**, reflect on your parent’s marriage as you consider the six truths. Write in your Life Notebook what effects you think that doubt in one or more of these areas has, or had, on their relationship. Be prepared to share your paragraph in your seminar.

We have seen that when we accept the truth that God loves us, the Bible says that we will be better equipped to love others, even through difficult situations.

Topic 3: Communicating Love Through Heart Languages

There are, perhaps, a great many kinds of languages in the world, and no kind is without meaning. If then I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be to the one who speaks a barbarian, and the one who speaks will be a barbarian to me. —1 Corinthians 14:10-11, NASB

John walked in the door with a bouquet of flowers hidden behind his back. His wife, Sarah, was washing dishes, her shoulders slumped. He heard her heave a big sigh. He looked around, sadly shaking his head. The house was a mess, but he knew she was exhausted because the baby had been sick for three days, and she had not been sleeping much. Of course she hadn't had time yet for cleaning. The quiet house meant that the baby must finally be asleep. He was glad that she was having a break from caring for John Jr. Even though John, who was very sensitive to beauty, was disgusted by the untidy condition of the house, he knew it wasn't really her fault for letting it get so ugly.

He had been thinking all day about how he could help her. He had purchased flowers on his way home from work. His beautiful gift would certainly cheer her up. He wanted her to know that he loved her no matter how messy the house got, or how plain she looked in her faded dress and frowning face. Maybe now that the baby was getting well they could take him to her sister's house next door for a few hours, and they could finally have sex together. Maybe that would help her get over the crabby mood she had been in and take an interest in her appearance and surroundings again. He started humming the song they had played the night he had asked her to marry him five years earlier, and he waited for her to turn around. But she didn't seem to hear. Was she trying to ignore him? He tapped her on the shoulder and she finally turned around. Sarah smiled slightly, but her eyes did not meet his as she took the flowers and got a vase off the shelf to put them in, and handed the flowers back to him. She kept looking at the floor. "Thank you," she said as she returned to the dishes.

John's sunny smile faded. As her eyes finally met his, they were dull, not shiny like they had been when they had listened to this music on the night that they had promised to love each other forever. *She really does not love me anymore*, he thought with dejection. He turned and walked away, devastated by her reaction. She didn't kiss me or hug me, and she was really quite unmoved by my surprise. As he walked upstairs into John Jr.'s room, his head drooped. *Maybe keeping love alive is a hopeless dream*, he thought. I wanted Johnnie to have a happier home life than I had. But I guess this is what happens naturally. After a while, love just dies.



Sarah's tears dripped down her cheeks and mingled with the dishwater as she washed. She had felt like throwing the flowers in his face. What was John thinking? Get her into bed to make love while the baby slept? Here she was barely able to stand upright from exhaustion, and he wanted her to work even harder by having sex too. He didn't even seem to see the mess in the house, or offer to take over while she put her feet up. He never did. Couldn't he see how tired she was? Didn't he care that she was working like a slave? How could he think that flowers would make up for the fact that he had slept right through her getting up over and over with Johnnie to give him medicine and walk with

him, never once offering to take a turn. She had given her heart to John, but she saw clearly now that he no longer loved her. She had never felt so lonely and so unloved.

In Genesis 11, God caused people to speak different languages to prevent them from building a blasphemous tower. It was a certain way to cause misunderstanding and confusion and an inability to work together. In marriage, miscommunications of our most tender feelings can cause similar alienation. In this topic, we will examine the ways in which miscommunication in love can occur, and we will learn how to identify the most meaningful ways to communicate love to our partners.

What was wrong with John and Sarah's communication? They were each trying to show love in the way they would like to *receive* it, but not giving love in the way *their mate could receive* it. The result was a sense of feeling unloved and lost. Can you learn to communicate love clearly in a way your spouse understands?

Understanding Heart Languages

As you have seen, God commands love in marriage. Furthermore, He commands that love is to be the primary way in which believers should relate to each other and the world. But what happens when two people do not perceive love in the same way?

- Please read 1 Corinthians 14:10-17.

Here we see a person worshipping God in one language, while someone who does not understand that language is unable to enter into the worship. How does the one who cannot understand feel? Mystified, alienated, insulted, confused? Rather than inspiring the second person to join in the worship, the language barrier may cause him to just walk away.

Je t'aime (French)

Te dua (Albanian)

Aishiteru (Japanese)

Each of these phrases expresses the same thought. But, if you cannot speak the same language as the speaker, you may not recognize that someone is saying to you, "I love you."

Not Just Words

Just as we may recognize many different words that communicate a similar thought, we each perceive love itself in many different ways. The things that communicate love, however, are not just words. For your spouse to believe your love is genuine, and for it to feel satisfying and nourishing, it must be communicated in the ways of expression that your spouse's heart recognizes. We will call all the ways that we each perceive love, our "heart languages." In marriage, we each instinctively look for love to be expressed to us in our own heart languages. Just as two people who grew up in different tribes need to learn to speak each other's language in order to have a close relationship, our ways of expressing love to our husbands or wives must utilize their primary heart languages.

What causes confusion is that, in most cases, your partner's heart language is different from yours. You keep on "speaking" love in the way you most easily understand it yourself, not realizing your message is not getting through. Your spouse may not understand your language. To add to the miscommunication, your spouse also communicates love in the heart language that is meaningful to him/her. If the languages are very different, such as in the story you just read about John and Sarah, the result is that both parties feel unloved and lonely, even though they are each trying hard to express love. What seems an obvious expression of love to one makes little sense to the other.



You can learn to speak your partner's heart language. When you include that "mother tongue" then you can communicate love in a way that your spouse's heart is nourished deeply by it.

How We Perceive Love

What makes up a heart language? People learn in three different ways: hearing, seeing, and doing. People can take in information from any of the three ways, but if material is presented in their primary learning style, they will learn faster and better. Also, people have innate abilities, which help them to perceive things or to feel things more deeply in certain areas. These “multiple intelligences,” or more finely tuned abilities, might express themselves in mathematics, music, spoken words, drama, art, nature, or written words, to name a few. These two things—learning styles and multiple intelligences—help us to quickly absorb and make sense of information. They greatly influence the ways that we perceive love. Perhaps the greatest influence on our heart language, however, is our personal *history*, that is, the way we experienced love in the home in which we grew up. Understanding how your spouse perceives love can help you communicate love in the best and clearest ways possible.

- Please read the article “Understanding Heart Languages” in *Readings in Marriage*. As you read, try to figure out which of the heart languages are your spouse’s “mother tongue.”

How successful have you been at communicating love to your spouse in satisfying ways? This is by no means a complete list.

QUESTION 24

Please open your Life Notebook.

For each heart language listed below, give at least one example from life OR from Scripture. One example is given for each, but you should describe at least one more, and be prepared to share your answers in your seminar.

Heart Language Examples

| | |
|----------------------|--|
| Saying loving words | Saying “I love you” |
| Gifts | God gave His Son (Jn 3:16). |
| Appearing attractive | Get a haircut in a way that pleases your spouse. |
| Remembering | Create a photo album of your courtship. |
| Facial expressions | Use your face to express pleasure and happiness when you first meet your spouse at the end of each day. |
| Quality time | Take your spouse for a walk so that you can talk privately. |
| Promises | Ask your spouse to not schedule anything for Friday night because you have planned a special activity for him/her. Fulfill your promise. |
| Service | Cook a favorite meal for your spouse. |
| Non-sexual touch | Brush your spouse’s hair. |
| Sexual touch | Take a shower or bath together. |
| Dramatic Heroism | Jesus died to save His bride (Colossians 2:14-15) |
| Visual Expression | Write a note telling about your tender feelings or about your spouse’s admirable qualities. |

Using Heart Languages

Fortunately, you are not limited to hearing in only one “heart language,” even though one may remain your “mother tongue.” Even more important, you can learn to speak a heart language that

is totally foreign to you. You can give and receive love in multiple ways, although they may not be as nourishing as your “mother tongue.”

- Please read “Using Heart Languages to Communicate Love” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 25

According to the article, you should express love to your spouse in which heart language(s)?

- A. Your own heart language only
- B. Your spouse’s primary heart language only
- C. Any combination of them, as long as you *frequently* include one of your spouse’s heart languages
- D. An affectionate expression and touch
- E. Any language, as long as you say, “I love you”

So, by being careful to express love in many different ways, especially in those ways that are most meaningful to your spouse, you can greatly increase your spouse’s sense of peace and safety in your relationship. You can better fulfill the Law of Christ, which is love.

- Please do the *Marriage Building Activity: Giving Love to Each Other*.

Marriage Building Activity: Giving Love to Each Other



For **MARRIED** students:

1. Please take the survey “Discovering Your Heart Language” in *Readings in Marriage*, and ask your spouse to take it as well. The last part may be done in writing or verbally.
2. Trade the finished surveys with your spouse. Reflect on your spouse’s answers and think about ways that you have or have not yet shown love in a way your spouse can receive.
3. Describe for your spouse what you have learned about his/her heart languages. Has miscommunication because of differences in your different perceptions of love caused wounding or decreased your unity?
4. Ask God for at least one new thing you could do to communicate love in one of your spouse’s primary heart languages. Describe for your spouse one new idea (perhaps just similar to what you are *really* planning) and ask, “How would you feel if I did [or said] that?” Fine tune your idea as necessary.

For **SINGLE** students:

Do you have a difficult time getting along with one or more of your parents or siblings? If possible, ask one of the people with whom you have difficulty communicating love to complete the survey. Use the questions above to discuss the results and design a way to express love better.

In this lesson, you have studied how to love each other through understanding four types of biblical love, through receiving God’s love, and through speaking heart languages. We hope you

will enjoy a rich feast of all types of love in your marriage! In the next lesson, we will look at how a wife can better understand and demonstrate love to her husband.

Please make sure that you have completed every *Marriage Building Activity* for Lesson 4 (and recorded your experience in your Life Notebook) before proceeding to Lesson 5. Completion of these activities will form 40 percent of your grade. The Marriage Building Activities for this lesson were:

- *Speaking Love*
- *Believing God's Love*
- *Giving Love to Each Other*

Lesson 4 Self Check

QUESTION 1

In 1 John 3:23, the apostle John says that two things sum up all of Christ's commandments. They are _____.

- A. Believing in God's Son and resisting sin
- B. Believing in God's Son and loving one another
- C. Repenting from sin and obeying God's Son
- D. Loving and serving one another
- E. Resisting sin and loving one another

QUESTION 2

Fill in the missing word. The four different types of love described in the Greek New Testament are: *Storge*, the belonging love; *Phileo*, the cherishing love; *Eros*, the romantic love; and *Agape*, the _____ love.

QUESTION 3

Storge, or belonging love, can be destroyed by a lack of self-control in handling which emotion?

QUESTION 4

Couples can increase *phileo* love in their relationship by _____.

- A. Affectionate touch
- B. Sexual relations
- C. Choosing to do good despite cruel treatment
- D. Silence
- E. Separate activities

QUESTION 5

Which aspect of a relationship is **NOT** a part of *phileo* love?

- A. Spending time talking and doing activities together
- B. Enjoying both talking a lot and respecting each other's thoughts
- C. Emphasizing that one partner is subordinate
- D. Thriving when each party admires the other's character
- E. Enjoying both worshipping and fellowshiping together

QUESTION 6

Eros love was designed by God as a deeply pleasurable part of life. Because of sin, however, it can sometimes be experienced as _____.

QUESTION 7

Agape love sets boundaries because it is too fragile to bear up under rejection. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Which Scripture (book and chapter) says that we should never look at our experience of suffering as evidence that God does not love us?

QUESTION 9

It is important to find your spouse's heart language and tell or show your love *only* in that way. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

While there are many different heart languages, they may be grouped in three broad categories. What are the three categories?

- A. Hearing, Seeing, Actions
- B. Giving Gifts, Spending Time, Listening
- C. Touch, Listen, Learn
- D. Serving, Sharing, Providing

Lesson 4 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

E. Sexual attraction

QUESTION 2:

(1) *Storge* may become fierce when defending the family from outside threats. (2) Since loyalty is an important component of *storge*, if it feels betrayed, *storge*'s anger can turn also toward the spouse as well. This is like God's jealous anger over the adultery of His bride, Israel.

QUESTION 3:

C. A husband who is bored with his wife's inane conversation, but listens anyway

D. When a wife accidentally burns the house down, the husband is thankful for her safety and is not angry at her about the loss.

F. A wife who is filled with anger because her husband is involved with another woman

QUESTION 4:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Illustration of Storge</i> |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Deuteronomy 29:18-21 | God warns His people that if anyone violates the covenant with Him by worshipping other gods, His jealousy will burn like fire and He will bring curses on that person. |
| Song of Solomon 8:6 | A young bride warns her husband never to betray her because her strong love could turn to jealous hatred, and no amount of wealth could buy it back. |
| Genesis 24:64-67 | A young bride's love comforts her husband after his beloved mother dies. |
| Proverbs 6:32-35 | A father warns his son about the unappeasable jealous rage of a husband whose wife has betrayed him. |
| 1 Samuel 19:11-14 | A wife takes her husband's side against her father. |
| Proverbs 31:10-12, 16, 23, 29 | A man praises his wife because she starts and operates a business so he can serve his community as a judge. |
| John 14:2-3 | A man returns to his father's home to furnish a place for his bride to come and live there with him. |

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6:

E. Behave admirably

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8:

D. Thrives regardless of behavior

QUESTION 9: *Your answer*

QUESTION 10: God

QUESTION 11:

| <i>Reference</i> | <i>Illustration</i> |
|----------------------|--|
| Genesis 29:19-20 | A man works for seven years without pay to gain his bride, but it seems like a short time. |
| Proverbs 5:19 | A man is thrilled to touch his wife's breasts, even though she is old. |
| 2 Samuel 13:2 | A man thinks so much about a woman he cannot have that he becomes physically sick. |
| Ephesians 5:25 | A bridegroom dies for his bride. |
| Song of Solomon 5:10 | A woman finds her husband physically attractive. |
| Song of Solomon 3:1 | A wife longs for her husband to join her in bed. |
| Song of Solomon 4:16 | A wife puts on perfume so that her husband will desire to have sex with her. |

QUESTION 12:

C. Making love always in the same place and in the same way

QUESTION 13:

| <i>Negative Behavior</i> | <i>Positive Behavior</i> |
|---|---|
| 1 Corinthians 7:1-2: It is bad for a man to caress a woman. | Song of Solomon 2:6; 5:16: It is good for a husband and a wife to caress each other. |
| Matthew 5:28: A man may not think lustfully about a woman that is not his wife. | Song of Solomon 2:14: A man should have an enticing mental picture of his wife. |
| Luke 12:19-21: It is foolish to enjoy the riches of sensual pleasures without developing a rich relationship with God. | 1 Corinthians 10:30-31: We should thank God for every appropriate physical pleasure in marriage and enjoy it to His glory. |
| Romans 1:26-27: If you were born unable to have normal <i>eros</i> feelings toward someone of the opposite sex, to engage in sexual acts with someone of the same gender is a shameful, evil act. | Matthew 19:9-12: Some people were born or became unable to experience sexual relations with a person of the opposite sex. These people have a special gift from God: to remain unmarried, chaste “eunuchs” who focus all of their energies on their ministries for God. |

QUESTION 14: *Your answer*

QUESTION 15:

E. I always do good for my wife, even when she is crabby and unattractive.

QUESTION 16:

A. It stops the “germs” of selfishness, disappointment, and anger from incubating the diseases of resentment, bitterness, and lack of love.

C. It brings healing and peace.

QUESTION 17:

(1) God loves mankind. (2) God sent Christ to die for man’s sins. (3) God offers salvation to men through receiving Christ’s atonement. (4) If man rejects the offer of salvation, God still pursues his heart. (5) If man continues to reject the offer of salvation until his death, God honors his choice by allowing him to spend eternity separated from God.

QUESTION 18: *Your answer*

QUESTION 19:

Your answer should look something like this:

I will set aside my privileges and rights.

I will take on the form of a servant.

I will pray for my beloved.

I will give up earthly comforts to serve my beloved.

I will act in my beloved’s best interest, even when we are apart.

QUESTION 20: *Your answer*

QUESTION 21: *Your answer*

QUESTION 22:

| <i>Couple</i> | <i>Words for Love</i> |
|---|-----------------------|
| Couple 3 The Balcescus, Petre and Lidya | <i>Agape</i> |
| Couple 2 The Forets, Amaud and Anne | <i>Eros</i> |
| Couple 1: The Hwongs, Hui and Yi | <i>Storge</i> |
| Not used | <i>Phileo</i> |

QUESTION 23:

- A. We do not believe that God loves us because we look in the wrong place for evidence.
- B. We cannot interpret our experience of famine, nakedness, or other suffering to mean that God does not love us.
- C. We must choose to believe that God loves us because He says so in His Word.
- D. Sending Jesus Christ for us is the main evidence of God's love.

QUESTION 24: *Your answer*

QUESTION 25:

- C. Any combination of them, as long as you frequently include one of your spouse's heart languages

Lesson 4 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

B. Believing in God's Son and loving one another

QUESTION 2:

Unconditional

QUESTION 3:

Anger

QUESTION 4:

A. Affectionate touch

QUESTION 5:

C. Emphasizing that one partner is subordinate

QUESTION 6:

Lust

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8:

Romans 8

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10:

A. Hearing, Seeing, Actions

Lesson 5: Men and How to Love Them

Lesson Introduction



It was a warm afternoon in California as our daughter Allison sat in the medical school classroom and listened to a professor lecture on the differences between baby boys and baby girls.

“Here you can see a baby girl who is about three months old,” explained the Professor. “She is enjoying the interaction with the researcher’s face.

Notice that she is smiling, cooing, and

relating constantly. As long as there is a face that is interacting with her, you will notice that her attention will not stray from the face.”



“Now, let’s look at the *same*

experiment done with a baby boy.”



“Notice here that the baby boy is also interested in the face, *until* he notices the ceiling fan! You can just hear his little brain working—what is that? How does it work? What is it for? Once he has discovered the ceiling fan, the researcher cannot get his attention back into relationship.”

“So, you can see that men and women are different right from their early development. During gestation, their brains start out the same, but very early on, the male child’s brain is flooded with testosterone produced in the testicles. This hormone causes parts of his brain to enlarge, and other parts to shrink.”

“A typical little girl talks earlier than a little boy, but a little boy will learn to use tools earlier than a little girl. Boys and girls are really very different in their outlooks. It’s really a wonder men and women can even talk to each other! Can you see the ramifications of this difference later in life when these two get married?”

Allison’s enjoyment of this fascinating presentation was slightly diminished by the competing noise of a large machine, which was digging just outside the building. She wished that the noise would stop so that she could hear the presentation more easily. But the male students became restless and could not pay attention to the lecturer. One by

one, the young men slipped out the back door.



After the lecture was over, the female students got up and looked out the window. Their male counterparts were all standing around the trench and raptly watching this machine scoop up the earth. Not one girl had left the

lecture, but not one male had escaped the call of the machinery. Not only were *baby* boys drawn by interesting machinery, *big* boys were too!

This difference in points of view causes untold amounts of friction, misunderstandings, and tension in relationships between men and women. In marriage, the differences were designed not to drive people crazy, but for them to help each other and to manifest a more complete image of God.

In Lesson 5, you will consider a man's unique role in creation. Then, you will look at how a woman was designed to respond to his manliness, and you will see how this benefits her as well. In Lesson 6, we will look at the distinctives of a woman and how her man can relate to her so as to encourage and bless her.

- Please begin by reading the article “What’s the Difference?” in *Readings in Marriage* before continuing with this lesson.

Lesson Outline

Lesson 5: Men and How to Love Them

Topic 1: Understanding a Man

Manly Strength

The Call

The Charge

The Servant Leader

The Mercenary Leader

Two Bodies, One Head?

Topic 2: How Can a Woman Love Her Man?

Showing Unconditional Respect

Getting Off the Throne

Accommodating Differing Desires

Topic 1: Understanding a Man

What is a man? More specifically, what makes a man “manly”? Is Joey a good example of a man? Joey is a construction worker. His arms bulge with muscles. He is quick to get angry. His wife is afraid of him. Is he a “real” man? What characteristics do men feel denote a “manly” man? What do women think? What does God’s Word say?



Manly Strength

Our daughter Meredith’s teacher asked her high school class to read *Hamlet*, a play written in 1601 by William Shakespeare. In the play, one man goads another by saying that



he is acting like a girl. The teacher pointed out that it was strange how men in literature (and in real life) often use that comparison to insult each other. “What’s so bad,” she asked the class, “about being ‘like a girl’? Aren’t girls just as valuable as boys?”

What the teacher had noticed is that God has given all males a desire for something—the opposite of what men think girls are like.

Throughout history, it has been an insult for a man to be called “a girl” because girls are seen (by men) as *weak*. Their perception is not only of physical weakness, but emotional weakness—fearfulness, frivolousness, and a tendency to giggle. A man wants more than anything else to be seen as *strong* in as many ways as possible.

So calling him “a girl” is an insult because it is the same as calling him an un-masculine weakling.

Even back in the days of the Old Testament, *strength* was recognized as the chief feature of maleness.

- Please read 1 Kings 2:1-2.

Here you see in David’s charge to his adolescent son, Solomon, the encouragement to “Be strong and be a man!” The two thoughts are given as one concept. This recognition of strength as a man’s core value is repeated in other places in Scripture as well. In 1 Samuel 4:9, the two thoughts are linked the same way. Paul picks up this theme in the New Testament when he writes, “Act like men, be strong!” (1 Cor 16:13, NASB). The term in the Greek, *andrizomai*, which is used in the first half of this verse, means “be manly.”

No matter which aspects or roles of manliness you examine, they seem to have a common thread of inner or outer strength. Each man, however, may rate areas and focuses of strength as having more or less importance to him. Areas of strength a man might value in himself and other men might include the following:

- **Physical** strength, such as muscles or stature
- Strength of **purpose**, or to not be dissuaded by intimidation or temptation
- Strength of **character**, to speak truth, live transparently, and to not succumb to temptation toward evil
- Strength of **courage**, especially to not show fear in threatening situations
- Strength of **self-control**, to not allow emotions to show at an inappropriate time
- Strength of **skill** or **cleverness**, to achieve wisely and adeptly, and to not be bested by another
- Strength of **protecting and providing well** for those under his care
- Strength to **dominate** both his environment and the people around him
- Strength to **pioneer**, to go where no one has gone, to clear new ground, or to transform his environment

A man feels very motivated to constantly use and prove his strength through competition. He generally sees life and his pursuits as battles, which must be won—whether that battle is against a soldier, a politician, or a broken computer. If all areas of strength are strong within a man, and he regularly wins his battles, he feels generally satisfied with his life. If some areas are weak within a man, he feels vulnerable—as if there are missing pieces in his armor just waiting for a stray arrow to take him out. This has profound consequences in a married couple’s interactions.

A man also looks to those around him for a response to his strength. He desires respect. In particular, he wants to be respected as adequate for everything that he is asked to do in life *as a man*. He wants to be “enough of a man.” A married man often sees his wife’s demonstrations of respect as a prime measure of his “enough-ness.”

This question: “Am I *enough*?” has influenced most of his actions while growing up. Especially as a teenager, this question may have caused him to act with recklessness to prove his lack of fear. How many parents have asked their son, while standing next to a hospital bed, “What in the world were you *thinking*?” The answer, of course, is that he *wasn’t* thinking; he was allowing the desire to demonstrate strength to propel him into danger.



Is this desire for strength and respect good, or sinful? Some women would be quick to label it as sinful; however, the Bible does not agree. In themselves, strength and the desire for respect are not sinful. They are characteristics of God Himself.

- Please read Psalm 45:2-9.

QUESTION 1

What aspects of a strong man are described here? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. His wife wears expensive jewelry, revealing his strength in providing for her.
- B. He is never angry, always soft-spoken.
- C. He kills the King's enemies.
- D. He achieves victory in just and righteous causes.
- E. He dresses in simple, humble clothing.
- F. God elevates him to a position above his companions.

Who is this guy?

- Please read "The Sword of Strength" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 2

What is one reason given in the article that man's quest for strength may cause him to erect barriers against God?

- A. God might expose his sin and weakness.
- B. His wife might ridicule him.
- C. He is afraid God is undependable.
- D. He does not want God to anoint him for battle.
- E. He fears God does not love him.

Strength, and the desire for it, is both a good design feature and a stumbling block for a man. The question, "Am I a *real* man?" (by that, he means a "strong-enough" man) influences many of his actions, both good and bad. Let's look more closely at manly strength. When does a boy know that he has it?



The Call

One person in particular in a boy's life is designed by God to prepare him for manhood: his father. When the boy has succeeded, the father must pronounce with authority, "You are a real man, my son!"

- Please read "Called Out by the Father" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 3

What are the three parts of God's public affirmation, as listed in the article? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Do all that I have commanded you.
- B. I love you.
- C. If you obey me, then you are my son.
- D. You are my son.
- E. I'm proud of you.
- F. Preach the gospel.

Does it seem strange or unfair that mere words spoken by a father, or silence when words were needed, could have such long-lasting consequences? Our daughter learned this important rhyme in elementary school:

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will tear my guts out.

The Bible reveals that **words** have immense power.

- It was through words, “Let there be...” that God created the earth and everything in it (Gen 1).
- Satan’s words of rebellion, “I will be like the Most High,” led an army of angels astray (Isa 14:14).
- Jesus Christ is called the Word, the ultimate expression of all that God is (Jn 1:1).

When this Word spoke amazing things happened:

- Lazarus walked out of a tomb (Jn 11:43).
- A storm disappeared (Mk 4:39).
- A group of soldiers was thrown to the ground (Jn 18:6).

Similarly, the words of a father can arouse a life of strength. If your father gave you these strong affirming words, you may not even find it easy to relate to those who missed this gift. If you are a pastor, or in some way shepherd others, you need to know that if a father neglects to affirm his son, or typically criticizes and shames him, it can throw the son to the ground with terrible, long-lasting, or even permanent, uncertainty about himself. Even if you do not experience this uncertainty within yourself, you will certainly deal with the results among others.

- Please read “A Wound Instead of a Call” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 4

If a father fails to call out his son, what are the five steps that the son can take to be called out by God?

Men, your journey into your own strength is closely linked to your journey to faith. Your strength is like that of a lion; it calls you to release it from captivity to be busy in the Lord’s work.

Satan’s lies will keep trying to refresh your father-wounds in order to keep your strength captive, unable to work against Satan’s evil. Faith in God as your Father, and confidence in the truth of what He says about you are your weapons against Satan. In Ephesians 6:16, Paul says, “taking up the shield of *faith* with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one” (emphasis added).



Wives, if your husband's heart has been wounded, he may sometimes wound you as well, in the same way that an injured pet will sometimes bite one who is trying to help. Both husbands and wives must realize the deep effect this wound has on their marriage relationship and go through the process of releasing their wounds and their pain to God, who will replace them with forgiveness. This is often a gradual process. We will deal more with forgiveness and with a woman's wounds in future lessons.

The Charge

I put this charge before you, Timothy my child, in keeping with the prophecies once spoken about you, in order that with such encouragement you may fight the good fight. —1 Timothy 1:18

According to God's intent, the strength of a man does not exist for its own benefit. Every man was born as a character in the middle chapters of an epic story that started before Genesis and will continue on into eternity. There is a war raging and God is calling you to take your place in the battle lines. Did you know that your *marriage* is your first battle station—not to fight *with* your wife, but to fight *for* her?

- Please read “Joining the Great Battle” in *Readings in Marriage* and return here to answer some questions.

QUESTION 5

Is this statement true? Please comment briefly: “The first test of manhood is often to see whether the man will use his strength to serve Satan.”

If you are a husband, your charge from God is to protect and keep your wife—physically, spiritually, and emotionally. Keep your charge well, man of God.

The Servant Leader

As we have seen, being a real man involves expending strength for others by taking up their needs as your own. A man is not a hero by great displays of strength alone; a man becomes a hero by exhibiting strength *for a great cause*.

- Please read “Strength Enough to Share: Becoming a Servant Leader” in *Readings in Marriage*.

Are you the leader in showing loving servanthood in your home, or is someone better at serving or better at leading than you are? If you are a husband, how can you become the best example of a servant leader to your wife, children, and others?

QUESTION 6



1. Please write in your Life Notebook the *three facts* in Jesus' mind that were mentioned in the Bible and in the article. Should you have these same facts in mind as you seek to lead? Or should they be somewhat different in your situation?
2. What **inner quality** does believing these three facts restore to your heart, if it has been lost?

3. Please list the two focuses of a *servant* mentioned in the article.
4. Which principle from the article did you find to be the most significant? Which one is the most difficult for you in your current situation? Why?
5. If you were able to fully adapt the principles of servant leadership to your own life, how would your life change?

Think about the relationships or situations in which you need to offer your strength as a servant leader (both men and women will probably have arenas in which this is true). Stop and ask God to help you use your strength to do what is needed in these situations.

In the following chart, observe which of Jesus' actions are typical of a good leader and which are typical of a good servant. See how these two aspects work together through this scene.

Jesus, Servant-Leader and Leader-Servant

| <i>As Leader</i> | <i>As Servant</i> |
|--|---|
| 1. Notices the problem: dirty feet. | |
| 2. Figures out what needs to be done: feet need washing.  | 3. Forfeits own comfort: He gets up from the meal. |
| | 4. Relinquishes His position as equal to or superior to His comrades and His rights to be waited on: He takes off His robe. |
| | 5. Humbles Himself before those He is serving: He kneels before them. |
| 7. Meets His own needs last: He returns to eating His meal, no doubt allowing others to serve Him and clean up afterward. | 6. Meets their need, even in doing an unpleasant task: He washes their dirty feet and dries them with a towel from around His waist. |
| 8. Teaches them by words after an example: He talks to them about what they will need to know, which reflects on His own actions as an example. |  |

This chart shows the balance between Jesus as a servant and as a leader. A passive man would not have the *initiative* to lead. He would not do the things in column one. A domineering man would not have the *humility* to serve by doing the things in column two.

QUESTION 7

Please open your Life Notebook.

1. Please list the eight principles of a servant leader from the chart above. The first two are filled in for you.
 1. Notice the problem
 2. Figure out what needs to be done

2. Now imagine this situation. It is 3 a.m., and Barnabas and Ruth are in bed, asleep. Suddenly, Barnabas wakes up because he hears the baby crying. Ruth stays sound asleep.

- How would Barnabas apply *each* of these eight principles from the previous chart to his decision about what to do? Look at each one and decide what might apply to this situation. How might he act both as a servant *and* as a leader?
- Now think of one problem that has arisen in your home, perhaps a frequent one that diminishes everyone's comfort in some way. How can you apply each of the eight principles to addressing your family's problem? Write your ideas for each area in your Life Notebook.

Example:

I must take the time to notice a problem: We are always late leaving for church.

I must figure out what needs to be done:

3. Write a bit about the balance between servant and leader in your own situation. Which of these eight principles have been most difficult for you in the past? How must you grow in order to reflect the servant leadership style of Christ?

The Mercenary Leader

Sometimes it is helpful to analyze the opposite of something so that we can understand it better by contrast. This analysis roots out blind spots in our own thinking. The opposite of servant leadership was the style of leadership exhibited by the Pharisees. They apparently never did things for God or others without thinking in the back of their minds, "What's in it for me?" Their strength of character, to teach, to pray, and even to fast, was a waste as far as God was concerned. God told us about them in His Word so that we would not become like them.

- Please read "The Leadership Style of the Pharisees" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 8

Open your Life Notebook and answer briefly:

1. According to the article, what does it mean to "use God"?
2. How does the enemy use the one who tries to use God?

A servant leader does not strive after the honor his leadership might bring. Yet a man who relinquishes his right to be honored and offers his strength to serve his wife for her best good, will usually discover that her respect for him increases.

- Please read "Husbands and Egos" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 9

According to the article, if a husband shows disregard for his wife and seeks after the praise of men, the wife should disrespect him to cause him to be more humble. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

Let's compare the two styles of leadership. Please open your Life Notebook and follow these instructions. Be prepared to share your findings in your seminar.

1. Create two lists of *characteristics* (characteristics include motives, attitudes, typical actions). Title one list "Jesus as a servant leader," and the other list "Pharisees as selfish leaders." Observe them from the articles and from other Bible stories you know. They could be long lists! Think about what motivated them. How did they react in different circumstances? What made them angry? What made them rejoice? When someone failed

or sinned, what was their attitude? Your list/chart could look something like this (see answer section when you are finished with the question).

2. If your spouse, children, and/or others whom you deal with regularly looked at this combined list, what do you think they would say was part of your style of relating to them and to God?
3. Write your own name: “[Your name], the Servant Leader.” Mark or list separately the Servant-Leader characteristics you want to develop or increase. If you desire it, the Holy Spirit can make you more and more like Jesus. Talk to God about what you can do to become more of a servant leader like Jesus, especially in your marriage. As you meditate and pray on this, write down what you will do differently or think differently in order to achieve servant leadership.
4. Show these lists to your spouse (a trusted friend or family member, if you are single) and discuss the ways in which you want to improve as a servant leader, especially in your own home. Write a few lines in your Life Notebook about how this discussion went³.

We have seen that God has created a man to have a full complement of strengths—not only physical strength, but strength of character, will, virtue, and purpose, to name a few. In a servant leader, all of these strengths are offered for the good of those around him, especially for those under his care. A husband is called by God to be the strongest example of a servant leader in his own home (Eph 5:25).

Two Bodies, One Head?

While Jesus exemplifies a servant leader who willingly took the lowest position, He is also referred to in the New Testament as the “head” of the church. The church is referred to in these passages as His “body.” Similarly, husbands are called the “head” of their wives.

- Please read 1 Corinthians 11:2-3 and Ephesians 5:23-4.



At first glance, these might sound like the husband is the brain and mouthpiece, who barks out commands like a drill sergeant to a woman who has no brain at all. This type of interpretation, and its resulting abuse and disrespect for women, has caused many to turn away from the traditional interpretation of the passages about headship. In fact, one pastor with whom we discussed this issue

said he could not, in good conscience, support the view of male leadership in marriage because men use this as an excuse to abuse women, contrary to the Bible’s other teachings about love and equality.

- Please read and carefully complete the study project, “Study Project: The Head of the Wife” in *Readings in Marriage* and return here to answer some questions.

³ QUESTION 10: How did this question go?

The hallmark of the servant leader is humility. This includes the ability to seek and welcome the suggestions for improvement from others. Only pride thinks that you need no feedback to improve. If this exercise’s results were that you refused to do it, you became angry or defensive, you pointed out your spouse’s flaws, or your spouse was afraid to speak freely, then you have a great deal of work ahead in becoming a servant leader. We will be talking more about the necessity of forgiveness and humility in marriage in Lesson 7.

QUESTION 11

Please answer the following questions in your Life Notebook based on your study of the word “head” in the article.

1. Do you see any places where the word “head” should obviously be translated “source”?
2. Which passage makes the meaning of the “head” most clear to you, and why?
3. Do any of these passages change your former thinking about the relationship between a husband and wife? We hope you have seen that there is no basis for the claim that a husband is his wife’s “source.” However, it is essential to understand the correlation God is making between a head and a body, and a husband and a wife.

As we have seen, a more careful examination of the examples in the New Testament of the relationship between the head and the body shows a very different image than a despotic autocrat and a mindless slave. Understanding headship can help us understand the biblical relationship between husbands and wives. Let’s look at one of these passages in more depth.

- Please study the article and diagrams in “Study Project: 1 Corinthians 11:3—Three Heads Are Better Than One” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 12

Which is an **incorrect** statement?

- A. Women are called “sons of God” in Galatians.
- B. The relationship between the head and the body refers to intimacy, unity, and permanence.
- C. The head and body serve each other with love and honor.
- D. The relationship between a man and his wife is to be similar to the relationship between the Father and the Son, Jesus.
- E. One who is the head has superior value to the one he is head over.

Why does God use the analogy of a head and a body to describe marriage? While you might prefer to think of your own physical head as more important than your body, it would be “nowhere” without your body, wouldn’t it? In fact, if a head and a body become separated, what happens to them? How integral are they to each other’s survival, health, and happiness? The two must stay joined, stay in close communication, and serve each other faithfully. This is one of the chief messages of the analogy of marriage as the joining of a head and a body.

QUESTION 13

Please open your Life Notebook.

Think about poor relationships between the head and the body. What analogies could you draw that might be useful in teaching about the close relationship between a man and a woman? For instance, how does your head take care of your body when the eyes see a sharp object on your path? How does the body take care of the head when the eyes are very tired? Conversely, how could an analogy of various diseases or tragedies help to illustrate the problems within some marriages? For instance, how would insanity, senility, paralysis, or decapitation be appropriate analogies of some problem marriages?

The analogy between a head and a body gives us a great deal of helpful instruction about the responsibility of a husband’s loving leadership to his wife, and about the many aspects of the intimate connection between a head and a body.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: The Head and the Body*.

Marriage Building Activity: The Head and the Body



The relationship between a head and a body includes constant attention to *meeting the needs* of the other.

For **MARRIED** students:

1. Please write in your Life Notebook the name of your spouse. Create a three-column chart and list in the first column at least two or three things that this person *wants from you* that you have been reluctant to give, or to give as often as desired.
2. In the second column, next to each item, describe *why* you have not met each desire. Would it be sinful? Do you feel that you would lose power in the relationship? Does it seem unimportant? Are you unable to do so for some other reason? Also, in this second column write how you have responded in the past to your spouse's requests/demands.
3. For the third column, ask God whether it is His will for you to now begin to meet that desire or need. Write how you intend to address this issue: either to meet the need, *why* you will not meet it, or what you will do *instead* to try to meet your spouse's need.

Within the next week, do at least one of the things in your third column and write in your Life Notebook a brief report on what happened. A sample of the chart is given below.

For **SINGLE** students: Perform the above exercise with a person you live with or with whom you relate closely.

| [Lisa] wants me to: | Why I have not done this: | Ideas of what God might want me to do about this: |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Spend time with her and the children on Sunday afternoons instead of watching sports on TV</p> | <p>-I like watching football and feel it is my right to do what I want. I deserve to rest after preaching on Sunday morning.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ask Lisa to forgive me for my selfishness. -Play with the children on Sunday while Lisa makes me lunch. -After the children go down for their nap on Sunday afternoon, help her clean up the lunch dishes and talk about what is on her heart from the week. Then ask her if she minds if I watch football. |
| <p>Get a better job that pays more than being a pastor.</p> | <p>-I know God has called me to be a pastor, but it makes me feel ashamed when she suggests that I do not provide enough money for our family and should get a "better" job. -I usually just get angry and do not talk about this.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Tell Lisa my story about my calling as a pastor. -Show her from Scripture the parallels between living as a pastor and living as a Levite, the privilege of existing on the offerings of God's people. -Begin keeping a family journal to build our faith, proving how God has provided for our needs. -Make sure I bring home all the money I receive in order to decide together how it should be spent. -Stop hoarding money secretly to spend it on my private pleasures, such as good coffee. -Pray with Lisa and the children every day and make sure we thank God for His every provision for us. -Pray more for Lisa, that she will experience more joy as a pastor's wife. -Be alert to other ways that I can help her life to be better. |

Topic 2: How Can a Woman Love Her Man?

Women, if someone were to ask you about your ministries, how would you reply?

“I teach a Bible study.”

“I do evangelism.”

“I intercede in prayer for others.”

How many of you would say, “One of my most important ministries is to strengthen and assist the men in my life, especially my husband.”

Woman, as we will see, was created to complement and help man, specifically her husband, if she is married (Gen 2:18; 1 Cor 11:8-9). Therefore, God gave her gifts that tend to be strong where a man is weak. Couples who have a choice in selecting a mate tend to naturally choose someone who has different gifts and abilities. This means that as the woman pulls in the same direction that her husband is pulling and as she helps to encourage his strength, they can, in their unity, accomplish much in a wide variety of areas.



When a man feels his inner strength, he is able to take his rightful role as the champion, protector, provider, servant leader, and loving head of his family. Many of the ways that women frequently interact with men work against this strengthening. From the previous topic, we should have a better understanding of what makes a man feel strong, how important his strength is to him. How can women, particularly wives, encourage and help develop the good strengths of the men in their lives?

Showing Unconditional Respect

What does a woman want more than anything else? Most women would answer: love. Some might add: security. From her husband, she wants the security of being loved consistently and unconditionally—whether she has a pimple on her nose or her hair falls out, whether she is having a happy day or a grouchy one, whether she keeps the house tidy or the dirty dishes are in a pile. What if her husband were to come home and say, “Because the house is messy and you haven’t fixed your hair today, I don’t love you today. Let me know when things improve!”



She would be deeply hurt! Does he not know that she requires **unconditional love** in order to feel safe and happy?

But ask the same woman about her husband’s need for **unconditional respect** in order to feel safe and happy with her, and you might get a blank stare. She usually links respect with many conditions: “I will respect him if he makes a good living, if he is kind, if he treats the children well.” If she is a Christian, her list may be even longer and more difficult for him to achieve! *If* he follows God, *if* he keeps his temper in check, *if* he leads spiritually, *if* he is a good example to the kids.

Shaunti Feldhahn, an author, was preparing to write a Christian fiction book. In order to make her male characters as realistic as possible, she surveyed several hundred men. What she discovered was so surprising to her that she went on to survey thousands of men. The results were published in a best-selling book titled *For Women Only*, by Shaunti Feldhahn. Of course, these results were only surprising to women. The men who read the survey results not only knew what she was talking about but also were *amazed* that women did not understand these things about their husbands!

Feldhahn’s discovery was a result of asking men this question:

“If you had to choose between two bad things, would you rather feel alone and unloved in the world, or would you rather feel inadequate and disrespected by everyone?” She thought their answer would be the same as her own, but it was not.

As a woman, the worst thing she could imagine would be to be alone and unloved in the world. But three out of every four men that she surveyed would rather feel alone and unloved than inadequate and disrespected. In fact, many men who responded said that the question itself was confusing. They could not divide the concepts of feeling unloved and feeling disrespected. In a man’s mind, the two concepts are joined intimately. If a wife does not show respect to her husband, he feels that her other expressions of love are meaningless.

- Please read Ephesians 5:33.

These instructions are a golden rule for couples:

1. Every husband must love his wife.
2. Every wife must respect her husband.

Understanding the link between love and respect in a man’s mind helps to explain this difference in Paul’s commands for men and women. When a wife respects her husband, she is showing him love—but she is doing it *in the way that he can receive it best*.

What if Paul had said instead, “Wives *love* your husbands”? The wife would naturally love her husband in the way she wants to be loved—perhaps by touching him tenderly, making his favorite foods, maybe even bringing him flowers or singing him a song. While a man might appreciate these things, Paul’s instruction makes it clear that the *primary* way that a wife needs to love her husband is through showing him *respect*.

Just as a husband may not feel the emotion of love all the time, but is required by the Bible to choose to love his wife, so also a wife is required to choose to respect her husband all the time, despite her emotions or her current opinion of his performance. Her respect, freely given, will help to release the godly strengths that God is building into him. She submits to the proper role of the Holy Spirit to improve the qualities that need further strengthening.



By showing him respect, she is saying, “I trust you. I have confidence in you.” Even though she knows that her husband could fail, a Christian wife knows that the foundation for the respect she shows her husband is her trust in a powerful God who is always working for good.

In marriage, the woman’s ability to express respect will help to allay the two things men often fear the most: a lack of respect and a feeling of inadequacy.

Many women tend to see a man’s desire for respect as feeding his problem with pride. “I’m not giving in to his male ego!” she might say. She takes on the job of keeping him humble, either by insulting him frequently, or at least by not praising him when he does well. But a lack of respect is not only disobedient to Scripture, but it is also counter-productive. By not providing him with the respect that he needs first, she cuts the legs out from under his strength. And his ability to do the things that she needs is diminished.

His need for respect comes from a sense of inadequacy, not from his strength. A woman’s demonstration of respect shows that she understands that his strength is precious and that she is a *trustworthy* teammate. Rather than take advantage of her respect, most men will treasure and give her as much latitude as she desires. “The heart of her husband has confidence in her” (Prov 31:11).

- Please read “A Woman’s Gift to Her Husband” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 14

In Ephesians 5:33, the apostle Paul instructs a wife to respect her husband. According to the author, what are the purposes of this? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. From a man’s point of view, love and respect are inseparable.
- B. A wife’s respect strengthens her husband.
- C. It is part of the punishment of Eve for sinning.
- D. Having respect is more important to most men than having love.
- E. A wife’s respect shows her husband that she is trustworthy and on his side.

QUESTION 15

Which of these things wives can do to show they respect their husbands was **NOT** recommended in this article?

- A. Always agreeing with him
- B. Speaking in a respectful tone of voice when offering a different point of view
- C. Showing others that you respect your husband
- D. Having a cheerful and thankful attitude
- E. Doing him good even when he does not recognize it

Getting Off the Throne

While it is a God-given need of women to feel loved, it is a mark of sin that women can enjoy the power that a man’s love brings, when she uses it to feed her own pride and to manipulate him to serve her. When a woman mounts the throne and allows her man to worship her as the source of all goodness, she becomes an idol. In most idol-worshipping fertility religions, including the Ashtoreth and Diana worship mentioned in the Bible, the deities are female—because females are seen as bringing life and fertility. But a real woman will not find ultimate satisfaction in this role.



- Please read “The Beauty Held Prisoner” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 16

Why did the article say that some women want to take the role of a goddess in a man’s life? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They love men.
- B. They want proof that they are delightful and lovable.
- C. This allows them to exercise control over the man.
- D. They feel guilty.
- E. They believe they are goddesses.

One of our students said, “We [people group] women do not like to show affection to our husbands. We are reserved, critical, and hard to please because this gives us more power in the relationship.” This woman’s husband was noteworthy for tenderly and openly expressing his love to her in a culture that did not commonly do this, but her cold rejection was ruining their

marriage. This woman realized that God was calling her to repent of her haughty spirit. She asked her husband to forgive her, and he was delighted to reaffirm how much he was looking forward to showing her his love. They are both happier than ever before.

This student said that pride and control were typical motives in her culture (where women are not always valued highly). What motives can you think of for a woman's "goddess attitude"?

When a woman climbs down off the god shelf and submits to God, God can bring great healing and joy in her marriage.

- Please read "Eileen's Key to Happiness" in *Readings in Marriage* and return to answer the following question.

QUESTION 17

When Eileen's husband asked her to do something, what verse helped her to visualize that God had asked her for that service, rather than her husband?

- A. Colossians 3:23
- B. John 3:16
- C. Romans 10:9
- D. Genesis 2:24
- E. Revelation 3:20

If you do not know it already, memorize this verse and be prepared to recite it in your seminar.

Accommodating Differing Desires



Since we live in a world made up of men and women, it is sometimes a bit of a shock to get married and learn more about the opposite sex than we were probably aware of in our family of origin. For women, it often comes as a surprise how much their husbands prize sexual relations and how frequently their husbands want to have sexual intercourse. For some couples, it is the other way around, and it is the wife who desires sexual relations more than her husband. When there is a mismatch, each partner may wonder if it is quite normal for their spouse to have such a strong (or such a weak) desire. Is a strong desire the sin of lust? Is a weak desire abnormal? Differing levels of libido is often a source of frustration and tension in a marriage relationship. In this section, we make the assumption that it is the husband who has the higher libido, because this is more common. However, the principles for dealing with this problem work either way.

In this section, you will look at the aspect of desire in a husband's life, as well as how a wife can increase her desire for her husband.

- Please read "What Men Want" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 18

What two reasons does the article give about why sex is usually a motivation for a good man to get married? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He wants a regular sexual outlet to decrease his temptation toward sinful relationships and activities.
- B. He wants to dominate and control a woman.
- C. His sense of strength and well-being is expressed in sexual intercourse with a woman who loves him.
- D. He wants to hear his wife say how good-looking he is.

As we have seen, women often do not match their husbands in the area of sexual desire. How should a wife respond to this disparity? Should she try to *decrease* his desire or *increase* her own?

- Please read “A Wife’s Sexual Desire” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 19

Match the concept with the Scripture passage that you could use to share with someone else about having a right perspective on disparate sexual desire.

| <i>Concept</i> | <i>Scripture</i> |
|--|---------------------|
| Sexual relations between a husband and wife were a part of God’s original design before sin entered the world. | Genesis 2:20-25 |
| When a man has sexual relations outside marriage, it depletes his strength. | Song of Solomon 1:2 |
| Sexual love is designed to be a regular activity of marriage. | Proverbs 31:3 |
| A couple’s nakedness and uniting with each other is designed to be an antidote to a man’s loneliness. | Genesis 1:28; 2:24 |
| The thirty-second kiss | 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 |

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: What You Hoped For in a Spouse*.

Marriage Building Activity: What You Hoped For in a Spouse



For **MARRIED** students:

Write down the top five things that your spouse would say are the things he/she hoped for in a wife/husband before marriage.

Show your spouse your list. Was it accurate in reflecting what he/she thinks? What would he/she say differently? How has this affected your relationship?

For **SINGLE** students:

If you are a **single man**, make a list of what you think the kind of woman you admire would list as the top five things she is hoping for in a husband.

Show an older woman whom you respect your list and invite her feedback about your thoughts.

If you are a **single woman**, make a list of what you think the kind of man you respect would list as the top five things he is hoping for in a wife.

Show an older man whom you respect your list and invite his perspective about your thoughts.

In this lesson, we have looked at some of the aspects of manhood that affect marriage, and how a wife can love her man in a way that strengthens his masculine heart. In Lesson 6, we will examine the feminine heart and learn how a husband can love his wife in the way she needs as well.

Please make sure that you have completed every *Marriage Building Activity* for Lesson 5 (and recorded your experience in your Life Notebook) before proceeding to Lesson 6. Completion of these activities will form 40 percent of your grade. The Marriage Building Activities for this lesson were:

- *The Head and the Body*
- *What You Hoped For in a Spouse*

Lesson 5 Self Check

QUESTION 1

What is the common factor of all the things a man wants to be?

- A. Compassion
- B. Aloofness
- C. Recklessness
- D. Rebelliousness
- E. Strength

QUESTION 2

A man who demonstrates godly strength is hopeful of a response of respect from those around him. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

If a man was never called out by his father, what is the *first* of the five steps to being called out by God?

- A. Give up the pain and bitterness to God.
- B. Contradict the lies he believed about himself.
- C. Believe what God says.
- D. Recall and feel the wound.
- E. Set aside personal plans of saving himself.

QUESTION 4

A man's strength is no threat to Satan's kingdom if Satan can tempt the man to serve only himself. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

A Servant Leader uses his strength for the best good of his wife, but not if it means doing a task he finds totally humiliating. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Which is **NOT** a description of Pharisees?

- A. Pride in religious behavior and personal credentials
- B. Telling other people how to act (especially without acting that way themselves)
- C. Feeling no compassion for the needs and problems of others
- D. Speaking religious words coming from a faithful heart
- E. Noticing keenly the errors of others, while blind to their own mistakes

QUESTION 7

When a man becomes a servant leader who forgets himself and strives after the best good of his wife and family, he will often find that his wife develops deep respect for him—the type that a weak, self-important man would give everything to have. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

The primary way that a wife shows love to her husband in a way that he can receive it is by showing him respect. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

In “Eileen’s Key to Happiness,” what did Eileen **NOT** mean when she said that Randy, her husband, “Can’t be my Jesus”?

- A. I have to keep my direct relationship with God strong.
- B. I do not expect my husband to solve all my problems.
- C. I do not expect my husband to completely fill my need for love.
- D. I do not expect my husband to give me my significance in life.
- E. I do not have to submit to my husband.

QUESTION 10

When a wife desires and initiates sex with her husband, she communicates that she loves, honors, and trusts him. *True or False?*

Lesson 5 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

- A. His wife wears expensive jewelry, revealing his strength in providing for her.
- C. He kills the King's enemies.
- D. He achieves victory in just and righteous causes.
- F. God elevates him to a position above his companions.

QUESTION 2:

- A. God might expose his sin and weakness.

QUESTION 3:

- B. I love you.
- D. You are my son.
- E. I'm proud of you.

QUESTION 4:

1. Recall and feel the wound.
2. Give up the pain and bitterness to God.
3. Contradict the lies he believed about himself.
4. Set aside personal plans of saving himself.
5. Believe what God says.

QUESTION 5: This statement is false. The first test is to see if he will serve himself. This subverts the man's strength so that he poses no threat to Satan and his evil rule over the earth.

QUESTION 6: *Your answer*

QUESTION 7: *Your answer*

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

For part 1 your answer should look something like this:

| Jesus, the Servant Leader | The Pharisees, the Selfish Leaders |
|---|---|
| Focused on loving others | Focused on their own holiness |
| Served God | Used people's faith in God for their own purposes |
| Prayed because He loved God and in order to encourage His followers to pray | Prayed to impress others and to develop a good reputation |

QUESTION 11: *Your answer*

QUESTION 12:

- E. One who is the head has superior value to the one he is head over.

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14:

- A. From a man's point of view, love and respect are inseparable.
- B. A wife's respect strengthens her husband.
- D. Having respect is more important to most men than having love.
- E. A wife's respect shows her husband that she is trustworthy and on his side.

QUESTION 15:

- A. Always agreeing with him

QUESTION 16:

- B. They want proof that they are delightful and lovable.
- C. This allows them to exercise control over the man.

QUESTION 17:

A. Colossians 3:23

QUESTION 18:

A. He wants a regular sexual outlet to decrease his temptation toward sinful relationships and activities.

C. His sense of strength and well-being is expressed in sexual intercourse with a woman who loves him.

QUESTION 19:

| <i>Concept</i> | <i>Scripture</i> |
|--|------------------------|
| Sexual relations between a husband and wife were part of God's original design before sin entered the world. | Genesis 1:28; 2:24 |
| When a man has sexual relations outside marriage, it depletes his strength. | Proverbs 31:3 |
| Sexual love is designed to be a regular activity of marriage. | 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 |
| A couple's nakedness and uniting with each other is designed to be an antidote to a man's loneliness. | Genesis 2:20-25 |
| The thirty-second kiss | Song of Solomon 1:2 |

Lesson 5 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

E. Strength

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3:

D. Recall and feel the wound.

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6:

D. Speaking religious words coming from a faithful heart

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9:

E. I do not have to submit to my husband.

QUESTION 10: True

Lesson 6: Women and How to Love Them

Note: This Lesson will take about one and a half times the normal amount to complete compared to the other lessons. You may want to spread it out over two weeks instead of one.

Lesson Introduction

“Diana, I love you so much. I would climb the highest mountain for you!” Ryan knelt in the snow with the open ring box held out before him. But Diana didn’t take the ring.

“I would swim the deepest ocean for you!” She looked away. This wasn’t going as well as Ryan had planned. He wiped perspiration from his brow, even though the cold made his breath come in little clouds.

“Diana, I love you so much, I would *die* for you!” he exclaimed.

She only smiled faintly and shook her head. “That’s all very nice, Ryan,” Diana replied. “But what I need to know is—will you wash the dishes?”



What *does* a woman *want* anyway? In this lesson, you will look at what makes a woman different from a man, not physically, but in her heart and mind. The mental and emotional characteristics of women came from God, and you will consider *what* woman portrays about Him. You will examine not only how a woman was designed to *benefit* a husband but also how she can be a helpmeet to a greater world.

You will also see how a woman has particular vulnerabilities that make her an easy target for evil men and evil systems, which are backed by a deceiver who has special reasons for hating her. She can have profound wounds, when the men whom God designed to protect her, instead desert or wound her heart. How does God want to heal the wounds of His daughter and become Abba, Father, to her?

In the second half of this lesson, you will look at how a husband can understand and love his wife. How can a husband make it safe for his wife to develop all of her strengths and yet shelter her tender heart from becoming cold and hardened?

Lesson Outline

Lesson 6: Women and How to Love Them

Topic 1: Understanding a Woman

A Woman’s Beauty

A Woman’s Reign

Designed to Matter Intensely to Someone

A Special Target

A Woman of Strength: *Ezer*

A Woman Who Adorns the Gospel

Topic 2: How Can a Man Love His Woman?

Unconditionally

Offering Her Protection and Safety

Nourishing and Cherishing Her

With Understanding

Showing Her Honor

Topic 1: Understanding a Woman

Wan is a prostitute. She wears heavy makeup and tight clothing. She has learned to smile encouragingly when a man leers at her, to pose in a tantalizing way, and to offer her body with an enthusiasm that she doesn't feel. Sex is the closest thing to love that she has ever experienced, but it falls dismally short of what her heart was made for. She lives in constant fear of abuse, disease, and abandonment.



The married women, who run market stalls in Wan's neighborhood, hate the sight of her young, partly exposed body as she draws every man's eyes after her on her route to the district. After bearing children and working from dawn to midnight for year after year, the market wives know that they are not beautiful. But they excel at usefulness. They get up every morning before dawn and work hard alongside their husbands to pick and to bring in their produce from the countryside in heavy crates, then they reverse the process every night. Their few close women friends are the only ones who really know anything about their hearts. They would say that their husbands and customers see them like useful oxen.

Since her birth from Adam's side, Eve (and each one of her daughters) has known that she is *designed to matter deeply to someone*. From this desire comes both her strength and her extreme vulnerability, as both the shop wives and Wan know well. In a place where a woman must work hard to survive, her longing for something more seems like an unnecessary luxury. Why should a woman let herself have longings, if they only cause pain?



What is a woman? More specifically, when you think, "now that's a *real* woman," whom do you picture? A supermodel or Mother Teresa? Ahn Suu Kyi or a belly dancer? A strong mother of twelve or a delicate beauty? While the concept of manliness has been recognizably similar throughout the ages and in various cultures, the vision of womanliness has been remarkably varied. Is she strong or weak? Naturally sexual or naturally disinterested? Smart or stupid? Delightful or merely useful?

Both in the church and in the rest of society, the distinctiveness of what women should be has shifted like blowing sand, which leaves young women off balance and uncertain. While young men have become disconnected from their strength and, instead, have felt driven toward pleasure, young women have despaired at the inconsistent or unattainable vision of the ideal woman. It has outgrown what any one woman can achieve, except perhaps on film. So adolescent girls anguish they will never be

- thin enough,
- beautiful enough,
- stylish enough,
- popular enough,
- strong enough,
- powerful enough, or
- smart enough...to matter enough to anyone.



In the West, anorexia and bulimia are symptoms of this despair. Not even the most beautiful of women is quite enough for a prince to offer his undivided heart.

A Woman's Beauty



God has designed many good-looking men, but taken as a whole, women seem to have been fashioned with an artist's eye. We know from Genesis 2:22 that God Himself was the artist who designed fuller lips, a more curved form, more delicate bones. Why? What was he revealing about Himself in His creation of woman?

An Overlooked Attribute

On a list of God's primary attributes, one is frequently overlooked.

- Please read Psalm 27:4.

Did you realize that one of God's chief attributes is that He is beautiful! When we consider all of His perfections, it is *His beauty* that draws us to worship. Such worship is not a chore, based on a sense of duty, but because we cannot help but be delighted with Him. When we finally step into God's throne room some day, previous visitors report that we will be enthralled with His beauty and the beauty of the city that He has created (Isa 6:1-2; Ezk 10:1; Rev 4:3; 21:19).

When we look at a vibrant sunset, a flower, or a beautiful woman's face, we are seeing a reflection of God's beauty. We recognize beauty because God appreciates it, and He made us to appreciate it, even to *crave* it. But because of sin, woman's desire for beauty is often spent only on the superficial. Women spend billions in baht, lira, yen, dollars, and every other currency on cosmetics, clothing, and hair products. An obsession with outer appearance may spring from insecurity or pride, but a woman's essential desire for beauty is part of her design by God. God's call to woman to be beautiful, however, envelops far deeper qualities than merely clear skin and glistening lips.

More Than Skin Deep

Just as a man's strength takes various forms, a woman's beauty may be expressed in the following ways:

- Graceful movements
- A sweet voice
- A caring facial expression
- Kind and loving touch
- Cheerfulness and optimism

These beauties and more express facets of God's beauty and will never wrinkle!

Even physical beauty is more than cosmetic. Does God's Word say anything else about a woman's beauty?

- Please read the article "Priceless Beauty" in *Readings in Marriage*.



QUESTION 1

What aspect of Sarah makes her Peter's example of enduring beauty?

- A. She wouldn't back down if she was right.
- B. She refused to go along with a foolish plot.
- C. She knew how to dress in a way that drew attention to her face.
- D. She had long thick hair and large eyes.
- E. She had a gentle and quiet spirit.
- F. She had a graceful neck that Egyptians admired.

QUESTION 2

Please read 1 Peter 3:3-5, then match the principle about beauty in column 1 with its illustration in column 2.

| <i>Beauty Principle</i> | <i>Concept That Illustrates or Enlarges It</i> |
|---|---|
| Verse 3: Beauty is primarily external. | Sarah obeyed Abraham. |
| Verse 4: Beauty is primarily internal. | Verse 6: Do what is right and have no fear in doing it. |
| Verse 5: Holy women who hoped in God became beautiful through submission to their husbands. | A gentle and tranquil spirit is more beautiful and more precious in the sight of God. |
| Verse 3: Don't emphasize external beauty. | Outer beauty is wearing fine clothes, gold jewelry, and braided hair. |

QUESTION 3

Please open your Life Notebook.

Woman displays many of the other characteristics and motivations of God that relate to beauty. Study one passage below or choose another passage and write about it. Come prepared to share your results in your seminar.

- Creativity (Job 40:15-19)
- Culinary (Ps 104:14-15; 145:15)
- Rich emotions (Zeph 3:17)
- The desire for relationship and interaction (Deut 8:2-5; Jn 10:14-15)

Take a few moments to look around you and thank the Lord for the beauty that He has created in your life.

A Woman's Reign

A woman often reigns on the earth with particular interest in certain areas. These motivations may be somewhat mystifying to her husband if he does not share them. When he can learn to recognize that these are motivations that she shares with God, he may find it easier to understand why she gets so "worked up" about things that he finds uninspiring. Let's look at some of the areas that are sometimes perplexing to men.

Reigning in Her Environment

The first place where a woman seeks to reign is at her own home. A woman enjoys making her home and garden beautiful and comfortable for others. Should a Christian woman have authority to direct the running of her home?

- Please read “A Woman’s Home” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 4

Please open your Life Notebook.

Based on the three Scriptures that you examined by using forms of the word *oikodespoteo*, please describe the differences between a man’s and a woman’s reign over their home, which are implied by the uses of this Greek word. If you are married, how do your differing abilities work together for the good of all in your home?

A woman is generally more motivated than her husband to reign over life’s *quality*. This may extend to her office, her community, or wherever she has influence. This desire to improve quality enriches all of society. Even if he is not naturally interested, a wise husband will encourage his wife’s motivation. It is part of how she has been designed to improve his life.

QUESTION 5

Please open your Life Notebook.

Write about one woman you know—your wife, if you are a married man (your mother, grandmother, or another woman whom you have observed—if you are single). What does she do that spreads life and beauty to those around her? How does she minister to you and to others through her actions? Tell the woman whom you wrote about, what you see that she does, and thank her for this. Be prepared to share this story in your seminar. Had anyone expressed thanks to her before?

Reigning in Her Relationships

Husbands, do your wives talk with their friends about relationships more than you talk with your friends about that subject? Many women feel a compelling need to help others have good relationships, and they have keen insight into what makes relationships run smoothly and what makes them “misfire.” This insight into relationships can be a help to her husband. As one man said, “My wife comes with a built-in guidebook about relationships.” Here are three ways a woman is motivated to be involved in helping others with relationships:

- **Understanding:** A woman often helps people understand and appreciate each other. How many men have come home from a gathering and asked their wife to explain what was going on in the undercurrent? This strong interest in understanding relationships is one of the reasons that women talk with each other so much. A Vietnamese friend recently told me a proverb that her husband often repeats, “Two women make a market.”
- **Reconciliation:** Both women and men desire harmony, but women are often very good at helping others sort out the issues, at making sure everyone is heard, and at seeing the value in each point of view. These abilities enable her to help members of her family resolve differences.
- **Warning:** Sometimes, a woman doesn’t even know why she does not trust someone, but her perceptions are often correct. Studies show that a woman is often able to pick up subtle nuances of body language that reveal deception, perhaps without even knowing exactly what “feels wrong” about the person. A wise man will heed his wife’s warnings about others and ask her opinion before trusting someone fully in a “yoked” relationship, such as a business partnership.

Reigning Over the Weak and the Helpless

In certain situations even the mildest women can demonstrate fierce strength.

- Please read “She Reigns” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 6

What animal did the author liken a woman to?

- A. A lion
- B. A leopard
- C. A snake
- D. A bear
- E. A fox
- F. A deer

So we have seen that a woman often reigns in her environment through a different set of strengths than her husband has. But do her motivations *matter*? Often people think that a woman’s desire to reign in these areas is not as important as the part of the human reign that involves making wars and building skyscrapers (something both men and women can do). But if woman relinquishes her womanly reign, all creation suffers. Her efforts matter deeply, especially to the next generations who will deal with the consequences of her faithfulness or abdication.

Designed to Matter Intensely to Someone



Though women desire beauty, what feels even more important to each individual woman is knowing that she *matters* to the people whom she loves. When she was a child, it was essential to matter to one special man. In the same way that the boy asks his father in so many ways, “Dad, am I a man?” his daughter asks, “Do you like what you see? Will you delight in me and protect me? Do I matter deeply to you?” A little girl will dance, dress up, cuddle, and do everything that she can to use her

winsomeness to delight her father. Many little girls win their father’s hearts in a profound way.

Through her parents, and especially through her father’s words and actions, she should get the following messages:

- You are beautiful.
- We love you.
- You are amazing.
- You are so important to me.
- The world is much better because you are in it.

Such girls more easily grow up to find loving husbands who appreciate and delight in them too.

Reflecting God’s Heart

This desire to be delighted in is one of the ways a woman mirrors God’s own heart.

- Please read Jeremiah 29:13.

Like God, a woman wants a man to pursue her wholeheartedly. She does not want to join a harem of other similar interests or to be ignored and taken for granted. A good woman wants her most intimate beauty to be searched out and revealed in through a committed, singular relationship in marriage. As we will see more in Lesson 8, a woman cannot open physically to a man until he has

delighted in her. Then, when a man has given himself to please her and enjoy her, she wants her beauty to totally satisfy him. Only when a man is willing to give up his freedom for her in marriage can he be rewarded with the level of intimate, satisfying pleasure that God intended (Prov 5:19; Song 8:6).

In a similar way, God does not display His deep beauty to a casual visitor. In fact, the lukewarm cannot even recognize it. Only those who offer everything they own (Mk 8:34), offer themselves as living sacrifices (Rom 12:1), and make every other relationship secondary (Mt 10:37), may enjoy an intimate relationship with Him. In marriage and in our relationship to God, when we give ourselves wholly to the mental and emotional relationship with our beloved, the result is great personal pleasure (Ps 63:1-2).

The Impact of a Father on a Woman's Marriage

- Please read Luke 8:41-42, the story of Jairus and his daughter.



Notice the details here. This twelve-year-old girl is very sick to the point of death. She is an only daughter. Her father is a synagogue official, so he is part of the religious establishment that increasingly wants to bring Jesus down. But Jairus's little girl matters to him so deeply that he is willing to humiliate himself publicly by falling at Jesus' feet to beg Jesus to come heal his little girl.

Such is the strength of a good man's tender heart for his daughter! But not every little girl has a father like Jairus.

- Please read "Broken Dreams" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 7

In Lesson 5, we learned that a father is the most important one to tell a boy that he is a man, but here we learned that a mother is the most important one to validate a girl's femininity. *True or False?*

We see how essential it is for a little girl to have a loving father as she is growing up. Physical, sexual, or emotional abuse by her father wounds her to the core. But you can't change what kind of father you had, or what kind of memories you have to deal with, can you? Is a woman who has not known a father's love ruined? Can she ever believe that she matters, that she is delightful? What's more important, how can she learn to recognize real love when it is offered by a good man?

- If you or your spouse suffered harshness or trauma, please read the Appendix article, "Overcoming an Abusive Past."

A Subtle Failure

For most little girls, a father's failure to delight in her is not a gaping wound, but a gnawing doubt. And, as you saw earlier, if her father failed to tell her she was lovely, she will often seek for that reassurance in the love of her husband. But not even a good husband is equipped to answer this question fully. Only her heavenly Father can completely fill and heal. She must let God, through His Word, mend her heart.

Has your father wounded you by cruel words? What does God say that is different?

QUESTION 8

Match the lies of an earthly father with the message from the heavenly Father, which counteracts each one.

| <i>Lies of an Earthly Father</i> | <i>Messages from the Heavenly Father</i> |
|----------------------------------|---|
| You're not worth my time. | Psalm 45:13: You are a beautiful princess. |
| No one delights in you. | 1 John 3:16: I gave my life to rescue you. |
| You are not worth rescuing. | Hebrews 13:5: I never leave your side for an instant. |
| You are not beautiful. | Isaiah 62:2-4: I delight in you. |
| You are not my daughter. | Isaiah 43:1: You are mine. |

QUESTION 9

Please open your Life Notebook.

Are you afraid that your heavenly Father feels the same way about you as your natural father did? Which of these “God messages” from question 8 was the hardest to believe? Memorize or write down any verses that you need to absorb into your aching or numb heart. Stop right now and ask your heavenly Father what He thinks of you.

Write down what you think God wants you to know.



A Special Target

“I will put enmity between you and the woman”—Genesis 3:15

Rape, sexual slavery, sexual rituals, female genital mutilation, wife burning, acid throwing, female infanticide, sex-selected murder of unborn baby girls—every week it seems a news report exposes some heinous crime against women or little girls. Does it seem like some unseen force is targeting women for special abuse? Why is it that worldwide at least sixty million females are unaccounted for in the United Nations’ demographics statistics?⁴ Where did they go?

- Please read “The Enemy Targets Women” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 10

What qualities of woman did the article say that the devil especially hates? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Beautiful
- B. Proud
- C. Well-spoken
- D. Submissive to the authority over her
- E. Life-saving
- F. Life-giving

⁴ Source Information:

- <http://www.iht.com/articles/2006/03/24/opinion/edali.php>
- <http://www.lifesite.net/ldn/2006/dec/06121401.htm>
- <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/index.html>
- <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2000/english/ch03.html>

One of the things that causes Satan to prey upon women is that they seem to be more easily deceived. Satan singled Eve out for temptation because he knew that she was an easier target than Adam. In 1 Timothy 2:14-15, Paul affirms this characteristic in women. This vulnerability could not be a design flaw, because Satan tempted Eve before the fall. So why in the world would God design her this way?

This vulnerability is actually a great asset in a woman and helps fit her for the role that God created her for in marriage and family. Unless she has been wounded or defrauded, a woman is



often eager to expect the best, to keep hoping when others have given up. Isn't that a wonderful characteristic in a mother and a wife? Scripture records many times when a woman was the first to perceive a spiritual truth. A woman was the first evangelist to proclaim Jesus as the Messiah (Jn 4:29), the first to realize that Christ came to die (Jn 12:3, 7), the first to believe in the Resurrection and to tell others (Jn 20:16). This perhaps explains why worldwide there are more women church members. But this readiness to believe can also give woman a vulnerability to deception that Paul noted. What does this mean in marriage?

Please notice that we are not saying that women are any less intelligent than men. In Proverbs, wisdom itself is pictured as female! But men in general were designed with tougher skin than women, both literally and figuratively. Men disbelieve first. They believe only with adequate proof (or maybe a blinding lightning from heaven). Look at Thomas's reaction to the Resurrection: "Unless I see the wounds from the nails in his hands, and put my finger into the wounds from the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe it!" (Jn 20:25). Look at Saul of Tarsus's first reaction to the gospel (Acts 9:1-5). And look at King Agrippa's reaction to Paul, "You're very persuasive, Paul, but it's going to take more than this to get me to believe," (adapted from Acts 26:28).

The world is a dangerous place, with many deceivers, but a woman can keep safe from Satan's plots. A wife can go to a particular place of safety.

- Please read "Women: Keeping Safe in a Dangerous World" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 11

The article said that a woman is often quicker to exercise faith, and a man is often more skeptical and harder to convince. What are the assets/drawbacks given of each characteristic, and what should a couple do about this?

A Woman of Strength: *Ezer*

As we have seen, a woman is designed to have a soft outer shell, to be vulnerable and hopeful. But inside, she must have the heart of strength. The Proverbs 31 woman is said to wear "strength and dignity" (Prov 31:25, NASB). How is a woman's strength different from a man's strength?

A man's physical strength tends to be called forth first by the attack or the threat of other men. Little boys endlessly challenge each other and wrestle to prove who is stronger, as you saw in Lesson 5. But a good woman's strength often reveals itself when there is a threat to those she



cares for. An ancient Chinese poem tells the story of Mu Lan, a girl who dresses as a boy to fight in the army so her aged father doesn't have to (<http://www.chinapage.com/mulan.html>). In more recent history, at least 250 women fought dressed as men during the American Civil War (1861–65)⁵, most often to be close to men that they loved. Yet the Bible in 1 Peter 3:7 calls them “weaker.” How can this be? Her type of strength fits her for the unique role for which she was created.

- Please carefully read and complete the study project in “The *Ezer*” in *Readings in Marriage* and make sure you thoroughly understand the important concepts in that article. Then return here.

QUESTION 12

The woman in Genesis 2 is introduced as an *ezer kenegdo*. The other places in the Bible where this term is used reveal that the role of an *ezer kenegdo* may fulfill the following roles: (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Strong deliverer
- B. Cook
- C. Life saver
- D. Intimate companion
- E. Corresponding one
- F. Servant

Better understanding of the role of the *ezer kenegdo* should help a wife to realize the vital importance of her ministry. God has made her a strong deliverer from all sorts of evil things. The world desperately needs what she is designed by God to offer.

Even though we have said that a woman has an important mission in her home, Scripture never suggests she should offer *only* those gifts and strengths that are domestic. A strong *ezer*, filled with the Holy Spirit of God, invests *all* of her abilities enthusiastically on behalf of those whom God has called her to help, particularly her husband if she is married. If we need any proof of this, we have only to look at the judge Deborah (Jdg 4:4-14), Nabal's wife Abigail (1 Sam 25:18-28), or the ideal wife of Proverbs 31:10-31. See how many different arenas these women excelled at: art, business, farming, homemaking, judging, leading, diplomacy, teaching. What skills are you developing for the good of the kingdom?

Developing Ezer Talents

Most of us are familiar with the parable of the talents of Matthew 25:14-30. Review it if you



haven't read it recently. If you are a wife, then your talents, gifts, time, and skills are among the possessions of the Master, which He has entrusted to your stewardship. Are you being faithful to build His kingdom with all that He has given you? Or are you hiding them in fear, like the evil servant of verse 25, and hoping not to get into trouble by taking some risk to accomplish more for the Master?

Husbands, have you hidden your wife's talents in the ground? Or are you helping to develop them as a multiplied offering for the King of kings when He returns? Let your understanding of her calling as an *ezer* help you to respect your wife's abilities and strengths. She is never to be treated as a servant, slave, or child.

⁵ DeAnne Blanton and Lauren Cook. *They Fought Like Demons, Women Soldiers in the Civil War*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002. As reported in the Smithsonian Associates Civil War E-Mail Newsletter, Vol5, Number 6. http://civilwarstudies.org/articles/Vol_5/deamons.shtm

She is God’s gift to strongly help you and to help the world. As you assist her to develop her strengths, you are helping yourself and the kingdom of God.

A Man’s Glory

A woman does not need to become like a man in order to fulfill an important place in God’s economy. The fact that many people see women as less important than men is a clear contradiction to Scripture. Tragically when women try to be men in order to gain more respect, no one is left to fulfill the niche of women in reigning over life’s quality, with special emphasis on relationships and concern for the weak and helpless.

It is the mouth of the evil one that says if a husband makes his wife lowly, his own value increases. The contrary is true. Men, since your wife is your *glory* (1 Cor 11:7), as you help to develop her strengths, you increase your glory! Her success in God’s calling is your success. Further, when you are in despair because the path that God is calling you to walk is overwhelming, all of your *ezer*’s strength can come to your aid. Encourage your wife to be what God created her to be—a strong deliverer, close by your side, your *ezer kenegdo*.

The Esteem of God

How many stories about good women can you remember from the Old Testament? Why were these women included? Most of the time when God gives us an example of a good woman, she exemplifies a strong *ezer*. Look at each story. What was it about the situation and about each woman’s motives that caused her to act with strength and courage?

God’s Examples of a Good Woman

| <i>References</i> | <i>Stories</i> |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Exodus 1:13-20 | The Hebrew midwives saved a whole generation of baby boys. |
| Exodus 2:2-10; 6:20; 15:20 | Miriam, Jochebed, and the Pharaoh’s daughter together delivered Moses from death. |
| Joshua 2:8-14; 6:23; Hebrews 11:31 | Rahab delivered the Hebrew spies, then delivered her whole family from the destruction of Jericho and secured for them a place among Israel. |
| Judges 4:6-10; 4:21 | Jael and Deborah delivered Israel from oppression by the Canaanites. |
| Ruth 1:16-18; 2:2; 4:15 | Ruth delivered her mother-in-law from starvation and won a place of honor. She became an ancestor of Jesus. |
| 1 Samuel 25:3-35 | Abigail delivered her servants from execution by David and won royalty for her children. |
| Esther 4:16; 7:4–8:17 | Esther delivered her adopted father and all Israel from extinction while captive in Babylon. |
| Luke 1:38 | Mary was willing to give up her good reputation in order to give birth to the One who would deliver the world from sin. |

Notice how many of these strong women were in the ancestral line of Jesus: Rahab, Ruth, and, of course, Mary.

QUESTION 13

Read any of the Bible passages from the chart above that you are not very familiar with. Answer briefly for the women as a group: (1) What characteristics do you see that these women shared? (2) What kind of *situation* motivated them to act strongly?

Note how many of these biblical *ezer* women above were *single* when they acted courageously. Many times in history, God has used a single woman's strength to protect and bring life to people both inside and outside her family. Some people may remember Corrie ten Boom, a Dutch Christian who became famous for going to prison for protecting Jews during World War II. She survived a Nazi concentration camp and ministered for God there. But I also know a modern "Corrie ten Boom" in an Asian country. Her name is Julie. I would like you to meet her, too.

- Please read "Julie's Story" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 14

Please open your Life Notebook and answer the following questions:

1. How did God call forth Julie's *ezer* strength?
2. Please write down a principle from Julie's story that can help strengthen you when your life is challenging.

It is easy to understand how God is our *ezer*. He is immensely powerful to deliver us from sin, from death, from destruction. He gives us everything we need for life and godliness (2 Pet 1:3). Why does anyone need a woman so profoundly that God says she is a deliverer? That question cannot be answered in one sweeping statement. But you can answer it for your own life.

QUESTION 15

Please open your Life Notebook and answer the following questions:

1. If you are **MARRIED**, what does your spouse bring to your life that you need? If you are **SINGLE**, are there things you need that a spouse could give? Is God meeting that need through others?
2. What women in your life (not a spouse) stepped in and offered help at a critical time—perhaps a mother, teacher, sister, friend? Please note in your Life Notebook the **names** of *ezer* women who have made a key difference in your life.
3. Write a note to God thanking Him for sending you *ezer*s to help you and describing what they did for you. Show your note or other thanks to those on your list whom you can still contact.

A Woman Who Adorns the Gospel

How does Scripture describe what being a Christian woman is all about? We have already looked at one example of a great wife in Proverbs 31. Now let's look at a New Testament description of strong, good women.



QUESTION 16

- Please read Titus 2:3-4. Observe the passage by using the inductive Bible study method. Make sure that you include the following:
 - The characteristics for older women
 - The characteristics for younger women
 - How do you think the older are to influence the younger?*

Put these two lists and the relationship between the older and younger women *in a diagram of your own design*.

Be prepared to share your observations and study this passage further in your seminar.

This description of the relationship between an older woman and a young wife as mentioned in Titus is particularly appropriate between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law, like Naomi and Ruth. Please skim-read the Old Testament book of Ruth, if you are not familiar with this story. This model of love and mutual respect is very different from what many young women experience.

- Please read “The Mother-in-Law” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 17

Please open your Life Notebook.

In your Life Notebook, create an outline for a message or Bible study for a group of mothers-in-law. Use the characteristics of an older and a younger woman, as given in Titus 2:3-5, to help mothers-in-law understand how God has prepared them as a special help to their daughters-in-law. Please include the following information:

1. Practical examples of how a mother-in-law could *model* each characteristic for her daughter-in-law.
2. What characteristics in her *own* attitude toward her daughter-in-law and her son would make the daughter-in-law welcome a closer relationship with her?
3. What activities could the mother-in-law design to promote a *phileo* love relationship with her daughter-in-law?
4. Which characteristic will be the most difficult for most mothers-in-law, and how can they overcome this?
5. Make note of the personal stories or learning tasks that you will use to illustrate your presentation.

Be prepared to share your outline or message in your seminar.

So in this topic, we have seen that a Christian *ezer* woman brings to her husband and to her world a strength and beauty that helps him fulfill his design as well as hers.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Goodness, Beauty, and Strength*.

Marriage Building Activity: Goodness, Beauty, and Strength



If you are **MARRIED**, schedule about 20 minutes together with your spouse with a pen and paper for each of you.

For 5 minutes:

Wife: Please write the answer to this question. What are the things that you feel drawn to do, to beautify, to protect?

Husband: While she is doing this, please describe the goodness, beauty, and strength that you see in your wife.

For 5 minutes:

Together: Share with each other what you wrote. Make sure you understand what the other person is saying.

For 5 minutes:

Wife: Write down a mission statement that helps to reveal who you are, including both the aspects that you listed and those that your husband listed about you.

Husband: How many of the things she does each week relate in some way to the things that she feels are her special calling in life? Is your wife spending enough time ministering in the areas where she feels most called? Is there some way that *both* your schedules and/or responsibilities can be rearranged either to permit the development of her native abilities in these areas, or to permit her more time to minister in the areas she feels drawn to?

For 10 minutes:

Together: Share with each other what you wrote. Make sure you understand what the other person is saying. Make plans to change your lifestyle or schedules as necessary.

Be prepared to share about your results in your seminar.

If you are a **SINGLE WOMAN**, meet with an older woman to complete the above assignment by reflecting on your mutual beauties and strengths. Adapt the husband assignments to ask this older woman to advise you about developing your strengths and callings. Be prepared to share your story in your seminar.

If you are a **SINGLE MAN**, write up a description of the kind of woman you would want to marry, especially the inner beauties you are seeking. Meet with an older woman in your life, such as a mother, aunt, or elder's wife to discuss whether your description is a reasonable portrait of one woman. Ask them to help you think through your expectations for a wife. Be prepared to share your story in your seminar.

Topic 2: How Can a Man Love His Woman?

“We call it CQI, here at the Gigantic Shoe Company—Continuous Quality Improvement.” Mr. Juliano, the personnel director, smiled at young Ben, the new clerk. “Every day you need to be thinking: ‘How can I do my job better? How can Gigantic please its customers more? Is there anything in my area that needs to be corrected, and how can I help correct it?’ If you keep asking and answering questions like this, son, you’ll have a long and prosperous career at our company.” Ben nodded eagerly, anxious to prove himself. In fact, he already had some great ideas that he was eager to put into place.



Many men work very hard to continually improve their skill in their vocation, their ministry, or to keep up their home or farm. In order to do this, they frequently analyze the situation (Prov 27:23) and decide on a plan of action. They act on their plan before decay or hardening sets in. But the same man, who is striving for excellence in his business or in the performance of his motorcycle, may not realize that these same principles apply in his marriage. He fails to do the frequent analysis and the timely action essential to keeping it healthy. At home, he eases into passivity like an old pair of slippers and expects his marriage to run like a perpetual motion machine without fuel or maintenance. This inactive point of view would quickly mean failure in all of his other areas of responsibility. What he doesn’t realize is that it spells disrepair and perhaps disaster for his relationship with his wife as well. An excellent husband pays close attention to the current condition of his marriage and works to improve in husbanding his wife.

One of the greatest images of Himself, which God has written into mankind, is the way that a husband’s initiatives toward his wife portray Christ’s love for His wife, the church. Husbands, does your portrayal still need a little CQI, some quality improvement? In this topic, we will look at some of the ways that Scripture describes how a man may improve his husbanding skills.

Unconditionally

“Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her.”
—Ephesians 5:25

George’s face was pensive as he talked to Pastor Rick. “I just don’t love my wife anymore. I don’t want to *waste* the rest of my life with a woman that I don’t enjoy being around.”



We have seen that a wife reveals the church’s love for Christ in the way that she responds to and adores her husband. But what if this wife is doing a *poor* job of respecting and loving her husband? How can her husband possibly love her when she doesn’t stimulate his loving impulses? George went on to describe some of his grievances.

“Pastor, she criticizes everything I do. I make a good living, but she compares me to her friends’ husbands and always wants nicer things. She complains that I am never around, but when I am home, she only wants to talk about her friends or her job or decorating our house, but nothing I’m interested in.” He lowered his voice, “She doesn’t like sex anymore, so we don’t do it that often. After five years, she’s still not sure she’s ready to have children—and that’s important to me. I want to have a real family before it’s too late. This life we’re living doesn’t seem like a *real* marriage anymore, so I just think it’s better to end it now and move on before we get any older.”

If George is typical of most men who are seeking a divorce, he already has someone else whom he wishes to marry. What should Pastor Rick say to him? Some pastors would say, “Stick with your wife, even if you don’t love her. It’s your duty as a Christian.” Is this God’s answer? What is a husband’s responsibility to a *disrespectful, uninteresting* wife?

- Please read the article “Husbands, Love Your Wives” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 18

If you have a complaint against your spouse, what does the Bible passage analyzed in the article say to do about it?

- A. Bear with and forgive.
- B. Talk about it together and explain your feelings.
- C. Forgive and forget.
- D. Tell your pastor and then tell it to the church.
- E. Think of a fair punishment.
- F. Don’t do anything, but realize you are a martyr for Christ.

Would your wife say that you love her in a way she can receive? Sometimes even a loving action is overshadowed by a history of unloving communication that reveals disinterest or criticism. The apostle Paul describes an ongoing process to remove these flaws and produce a clear and consistent message and demonstration of love.

- Please read the “Wardrobe Project” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 19

FUN WITH THE WARDROBE PROJECT

In the article “Wardrobe Project,” you made a chart of things to put off and to put on in your relationship with your spouse. Draw at least one pair of simple stick-figure cartoons. The first frame should show an instance in your marriage where you have shown a characteristic from the first column of your chart, and a second frame needs to show how you will replace it by “putting on” a characteristic from the second column. Make your cartoon situations as real to your life as possible. Don’t worry about your lack of artistic ability. Stick figures are quite acceptable!

If you don’t want to draw at all, you may create a script for a short skit that would demonstrate how to change your inner wardrobe from this passage in the context of marriage. Prepare the script so that you can share it with the class during your seminar.

Come prepared to share your cartoon or your skit in your seminar. **Be sure to bring your completed chart to your seminar as well.**

Did you see in this passage any instances in Scripture where a husband is *not* required to love his wife? There aren’t any—just as Christ would never stop loving His wife, the church. So what should Pastor Rick, in the beginning of this subtopic, say to George about wasting the rest of his life with a woman he doesn’t love? I would suggest that he say something like, “Well then, clean your inner wardrobe—throw out your old “underwear” of bitterness, and by drawing on God’s grace, start loving her.”

Offering Her Protection and Safety

“And gave himself for her.” —Ephesians 5:25

One of the things most of us pray is that *God* will keep us physically safe, isn’t it? Protection is one of the promises that God made to Israel, His wife, if she would remain faithfully under His care (Deut 28:7; Isa 31:4-5). Israel’s safety is one reason that God wiped out all of the nations

that might threaten Israel’s faith or her safety in the Promised Land. Jesus died so that we would be physically and spiritually delivered from hell (Rom 6:23). One way that a husband protects his wife is by his willingness to lay down his life for her, just as Christ did (Eph 5:25). Instinctively in every culture, men know that one of their roles is to protect their wives from physical danger. This is one of the main uses of the strength that God has given them. Finding safety and security for herself and for her children is a basic reason why a woman desires marriage.

But a husband’s protection of his wife encompasses much more than just her physical safety. We have seen that God designed a woman’s nature to be heavily invested in relationships, usually more so than her husband. These abilities enable her to best serve those who most need her strengths, often those who have no voice for themselves. As we saw, her strengths are called forth by need, and if life has not hardened her heart, it remains responsive to listen for cries for help, from an orphaned baby to an aged parent, from war refugees to endangered wildlife. But this nurturing instinct has downsides that make it important for a woman to have certain types of protection around her. In order to keep her tender heart from becoming wounded or hard, one way that a husband needs to protect his wife is through guarding her heart and spirit.

- Please read “Protecting a Woman’s Heart” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 20

Match the Scripture with the type of husbandly protection the article suggested it supports.

| <i>Husband Protection</i> | <i>Scripture</i> |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| From cleaving to others | 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 |
| From toxic people | Genesis 2:24 |
| From too many responsibilities | Ruth 3:9 |
| From deceitful teaching | Titus 3:10-11 |
| From evil | Numbers 30:13-15 |

So a man’s protection of his wife encompasses physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects. Can you think of more areas where a man protects his wife? Come prepared to discuss this question in your seminar.

Nourishing and Cherishing Her

“Husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one has ever hated his own body but he feeds it and takes care of it, just as Christ also does the church.”—Ephesians 5:28-29

What does it mean for a man to “nourish and cherish” his wife? Please review the whole passage, Ephesians 5:25-33. Note the phrases that show what Christ did for the church and think about how that is portrayed by a husband.

You have already looked at what it means for a husband to love his wife unconditionally and lay down his life for her (v 25). Earlier you looked at what it might mean for a husband to wash his wife with the Word of God (v 26). Now in verses 28-29, Paul establishes a metaphor, which helps husbands to understand how tenderly he must care for his wife. He says that a husband must care for her *as he cares for his own body, feeding and taking care of her*. As you will see, the words for feeding and caring have much more to say than just meeting her physical needs.

The first word, *ektrepo*, translated “feed,” means to “rear up to maturity.” It refers not only to feeding but also *helping to develop*. As you read earlier, when the Master returns, one of the reports a husband will be asked to give Him is what he did to help his wife *develop* her potential for His glory.

The second word, *thalpo*, translated “takes care,” literally means to “warm” like a mother hen broods her eggs or her chicks under her wings. This goes back to the safety and protection that we talked about in the last subtopic. But it also refers to warmth, intimacy, and provision. Just as a mother hen works hard to provide all that is needed for her chicks—warmth, protection, food—so a husband understands and provides what his wife needs.



In that famous scene outside Jerusalem, Jesus says that he deeply desired to gather the people of the city under his wings like a hen gathers chicks (Lk 13:34). The psalmist many times says that he wants to hide in the “shadow” of God’s wings (Ps 57:1). Paul uses this same word in 1 Thessalonians 2:7 when he describes the tender way that he had treated the believers at Thessalonica. So when a husband nurtures his wife, cares for her protectively, and loves her like a mother hen, he is portraying Christ’s tender care for His people and fulfilling this command.

- For one stunning example of one husband’s tenderness to his ill wife, please read “Robertson McQuilkin” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 21

What question did McQuilkin ask himself about bloody feet?

Questions for discussion in your seminar: Thinking back to the four types of love that you studied in Lesson 4, which type was McQuilkin showing to his ill wife? For which ministry do you think McQuilkin will receive the greater reward—his public ministry with the university or his private ministry to his wife? Be prepared to discuss your answers to these questions in your seminar, citing biblical principles to support your answer.

With Understanding

“You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way”—1 Peter 3:7, NASB



“But you SAID you wanted me to be more romantic, so I brought you flowers. Now you are saying you STILL don’t feel loved because they were left over from the office party? What difference does it make? I give up!” Jason stomped out of the room, taking the flowers with him.

Men, are women confusing to you? Mysterious? Strange? As author Jeff Feldhahn expresses it, “Guys tend to think that women are random. We think, ‘I pulled this lever last week and got a certain reaction. But when I pulled that same lever this week, I got a totally different reaction.’”

Some men have adopted false views from culture or family, which say that women are un-knowable. It is a total waste of time to even *try* to understand one. Do you know any old sayings that say this? The enemy introduces this lie into cultures so that he can weaken the unity between men and women, which can threaten his power and plans. While men and women do think differently, it is very possible to understand your wife. In fact, God commands it (1 Pet 3:7)! You can succeed by applying the same effort and prayer to it that you apply to other things that are important to you.

- Please read “Unwrapping the Mystery of Women” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 22

Match the motivations of women with the ways that men misunderstand them, as described in the article.

| <i>The Way God Made Women</i> | <i>The Way Men Misjudge Women</i> |
|--|---|
| Women are motivated to portray and to bring beauty to the world, especially those they love. | A woman who asks her husband too many questions is prying, is trying to control him, or is just being annoying. |
| Women's sexual needs are emotionally, not physically motivated. So if a relationship is sour, or a husband says something cruel, it is difficult for her to find him sexually attractive. The women portrayed in pornography are only pretending in order to get paid. | A woman is irrational and unintelligent because she does not use logic all the time. |
| A woman's strongest sexual desire toward a husband she loves is often the need to be embraced and shown love. | She wants sex physically just like a man. The women in the pornographic magazines all appear to want it, so it must be true. A woman who says that she doesn't want sex is just being proud, lying, or cruel. |
| A woman is often able to correctly sense things that are true, even though she does not use logic to perceive them. | Security means a big house and lots of money. |
| A woman mentions problems partly so that her husband can better understand what she is thinking, and they can achieve closer unity. | Women are frivolous and waste time and money on things that don't matter. |
| The most important kind of security is the knowledge that her husband is faithful, will never do anything to hurt her, and loves her deeply. | A woman should feel a physical desire for sexual intercourse as often as her husband. |
| A woman asks questions to deepen intimacy and stay connected to her husband. | A woman talks about her problems because she expects her husband to fix them. |

Peter's Command

So men, what is your reaction to these facts about women? Would you be likely to say, at least in your heart—"women shouldn't be that way!" Does understanding these things help you to be able to live with your wife in an "understanding way" as Peter says?

In 1 Peter 3:7 on which this section is based, please notice the very first phrase, "Husbands, in the same way..." What "same way" is this referring to? This phrase is used in the first verse of the chapter as well, which introduces the subject of a wife submitting to her husband. 1 Peter 3:1, "*In the same way*, wives, be subject to your own husbands" (emphasis added). The *same* as what? So we have to go back even further.

Finally in 1 Peter 2:13, you see that the introduction of the main subject, to which both of these "in the same way" phrases refer is "Be subject to every human institution for the Lord's sake." Every instance that follows is something about "be subject to."

- Please read this whole passage from 1 Peter 2:13-25.

Here is submission to the government, to an employer, to a husband, and “in the same way” a husband is to *understand and honor* his wife. How could this be “in the same way” when all the other instances are talking of submission? How does a husband submit by *understanding and honor*?

The type of humble attitude that takes the effort to *understand* his wife’s differing nature and to honor her as Peter commands is a manly form of submission. In this case, a husband submits to understand the complex way that God made her. He submits his own opinions about the way a woman “should” be, to the way she actually is. If he has a cultural prerogative and the physical ability to dominate and control her, he submits these to God and honors her instead.

“As to the weaker vessel” (1 Pet 3:7a, NKJV)

While a woman is more delicate, she is not totally weak as we saw in the previous section. In whatever ways a particular woman is weaker than her husband, how should her husband respond?

- Please read Romans 15:1-3 thoroughly, and notice the instructions for someone who is *stronger*. Are you the stronger partner in your relationship? How should you behave toward your weaker spouse?

QUESTION 23

Please open your Life Notebook.

1. Describe what you think a “reproach” might be in the life of a woman.
2. Why does Paul describe this as the opposite of “just pleasing ourselves.”
3. If you are a married man, describe some reproaches that you could or do take for your own wife that show Christ’s love to her.
4. If you are a wife, describe a time that your husband took a reproach for you.
5. If you are single, think of someone who is weaker than you in some way, and describe a reproach you might take on for this person.
6. Be prepared to observe and discuss this passage in more detail in your seminar.

Showing Her Honor

“Show them honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life. In this way nothing will hinder your prayers.”—1 Peter 3:7b

God said in Genesis 2:24 that a husband is to cleave to his wife. As we’ve pointed out before, this is not limited to sex. One of the most important things that a man must understand about his wife



is how closely *he* is linked to his wife’s sense of contentment! If a woman does not feel honored by her husband, it is very difficult for her to feel an overall sense of well-being, even if she is trusting God. Because God has designed the woman to cleave to her husband as the answer to *his* aloneness, she is instinctively very “tuned in” to his emotions and attitudes. If he is angry, she feels it deeply, even if he is not angry directly with her. If he is anxious, she may feel anxious too.

Because of this close emotional link and her more delicate nature, a wife can be deeply discouraged, wounded, and/or disheartened by her husband’s disregard. She can also be greatly encouraged, healed, and/or strengthened by her husband’s honor. If a wife is behaving in a negative manner, it is often a reaction, sometimes an unconscious one, to her husband’s dishonor.

So we see that it is important to a wife that she feel honored by her husband, but God also mentions a penalty for a husband who will not honor his wife. How is your prayer life today? Do you delight in your times of prayer with God, or are you finding it difficult? Does heaven seem

like no one is listening (Ps 66:18; Isa 59:2)? Scripture says one possible cause is that you are not honoring your spouse.⁶ Let's explore how a husband honors his wife.

- Please read "Honor" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 24

How did the article say that one could tell how valuable someone is to you?

Is honoring a wife foreign to your culture?

- Please read "John's Story" in *Readings in Marriage* for a story about a man who honored his wife in a society that routinely dishonors women as owned property.

QUESTION 25

Please open your Life Notebook.

1. If you are a husband, which ways of granting honor, described in the two articles that you just read, would your wife say would be the most significant to her?
2. The last part of the verse in 1 Peter 3:7 describes a barrier that happens to a man's prayers when he fails to honor his wife. Examine these five passages in order to determine why *not* granting honor to a wife causes a barrier and hinders prayer. Each reference suggests a different possibility. If you have another idea from Scripture, feel free to use that passage in your answer.
 - Isaiah 59:2
 - Isaiah 66:2
 - Ephesians 4:29-32
 - Matthew 18:10
 - Psalm 66:18

The way a man treats his wife not only elevates her but also will begin to elevate a whole culture. Think about this quote from nineteenth-century East Indian scholar, Pandita Ramabai.

How true is the claim of many Western scholars that a civilization should be judged by the conditions of its women! Women are inherently physically weaker than men, and possess innate powers of endurance; men therefore find it very easy to wrest their natural rights and reduce them to a state that suits the men. But, from a moral point of view, physical might is not real strength, nor is it a sign of nobility of character to deprive the weak of their rights.... [A]s men gain wisdom and progress further, they begin to disregard women's lack of strength to honor their good qualities, and elevate them to a high state. Their low opinion of women and of other such matters undergoes a change and gives way to respect. Thus, one can accurately assess a country's progress from the condition of its women. —from "Pandita Ramabhai's American Encounter," trans. *Meera Kosambi*, Viking, 2003, as quoted at <http://tripatlas.com/Pandita_Ramabai>.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Husbanding a Woman*.

6. **Honoring your Spouse:** While it is not mentioned in Scripture, I have personally found that this principle goes in reverse too. A wife who dishonors her husband, either in her relationship or in her mind, will similarly discover her relationship with God hindered until it is made right.

Marriage Building Activity: Husbanding a Woman



In this topic, you studied several instructions from Ephesians 5 and 1 Peter 3 about how husbands should treat their wives:

- Unconditional love
- Offering protection
- Nourishing and cherishing
- Understanding
- Honoring

If you are a **HUSBAND**, please ask your wife the following two questions:

1. “Which of these things do I already accomplish with the greatest degree of blessing to you?”
2. “Which one would be the most meaningful for me to start doing, or to improve on?”

Write down her answer to #2 on a slip of paper to keep in your Bible. Pray each day about ways that you can express this type of honor. Make a date to meet with her in one month to check your progress.

If you are a **WIFE**,

1. Write down the ways in which your husband has blessed you by fulfilling any of these items.
2. Thank your husband for the way that he has cared for you in these ways.

If you are **SINGLE**, please read Romans 12:10. A person does not *suddenly* begin to honor others when he/she gets married. The Christlike habit of granting honor should be functioning in every relationship so that marriage is just another opportunity to honor someone else. If you are single, choose someone you know well and do the following:

1. Ask, “In what ways can I improve on the way that I show honor to you?”
2. Write down the answer on a slip of paper to carry in your Bible and pray about ways that you will improve.
3. Make a date in one month to check on your progress in this area.

We hope that these two lessons on men and women have helped you to come to a better understanding of your spouse and others of the opposite sex.

Please make sure that you have completed every *Marriage Building Activity* for Lesson 6 (and recorded your experience in your Life Notebook) before proceeding to Lesson 7. Completion of these activities will form 40 percent of your grade. The Marriage Building Activities for this lesson were:

- *Goodness, Beauty, and Strength*
- *Husbanding a Woman*

Lesson 6 Self Check

QUESTION 1

What two Bible verses instruct husbands to “love your wives” unconditionally with *agape* love?

- A. Genesis 2:24 and 1 Corinthians 7
- B. Ephesians 5:25 and Colossians 3:19
- C. John 3:16 and John 10:9
- D. Romans 8:28 and 1 John 1:9

QUESTION 2

What did Sarah’s extraordinary beauty in old age come from?

- A. The angels who visited her at Mamre anointed her with youth.
- B. She drank water from a spring that God revealed to her and Abraham.
- C. She had a charming personality.
- D. She trusted that God’s sovereignty and care for her could not be thwarted by man.
- E. She had great skill in applying cosmetics from Egypt.
- F. Her husband loved her.

QUESTION 3

It is important that a wife always submit her plans for managing the home to her husband so that he can approve or deny her decisions. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

Which is **NOT** one of the questions a little girl seeks to know from her father?

- A. Am I fearless?
- B. Am I beautiful?
- C. Am I worth rescuing?
- D. Do I matter?
- E. Am I lovable?

QUESTION 5

One of Satan’s methods of defeating a husband and a wife is by dividing them through mistrust so that they do not stand together against him using each other’s strengths. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

The meaning of the Hebrew word “*ezer kenegdo*” translated “helpmeet” in Genesis 2:18 is “a strong deliverer corresponding to you and standing close by your side.” *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

A husband is supposed to protect his wife from anything that would harm her, which may include false teaching, cleaving to others, too tiring a schedule, and parental criticism. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Which of these is **NOT** a way that the Bible in Ephesians 5:25-33 commands a husband to take care of his wife?

- A. Warming like a mother hen
- B. Helping to develop her potential in God's kingdom
- C. Intimacy and provision
- D. Critiquing her behavior so that she refrains from sin
- E. Laying down his physical life for her
- F. Washing her from lies and past hurts using God's Word

QUESTION 9

A woman who trusts in Christ will not be affected when her husband is in a bad mood. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

A husband honors his wife with his eyes by not looking at his wife's nakedness. *True or False?*

Unit 2 Exam

QUESTION 1

Storge, the belonging love, will be damaged in a relationship if one of the partners harms the other. True or False?

QUESTION 2

Phileo, the cherishing love can survive even if the couple never spends time together. True or False?

QUESTION 3

God loves sinners with *phileo* love. True or False?

QUESTION 4

Romantic love is sinful and should not be experienced by Christian couples. True or False?

QUESTION 5

Agape love has no boundaries, therefore God will never stop offering salvation and ultimately will never cut off relationship with anyone. True or False?

QUESTION 6

You can choose to exhibit *storge* and *agape*. But *eros* and *phileo* are primarily responses to certain conditions, so couples must cultivate the conditions for them to occur. True or False?

QUESTION 7

The primary way that we should know that God loves us is by protecting us from suffering. True or False?

QUESTION 8

Deep seated unbelief in God's goodness and love for you will negatively affect your ability to love an unpleasant spouse. True or False?

QUESTION 9

Which of these things is **NOT** typically the way a man wants others to view his strength?

- A. Having strength of character
- B. Commanding respect
- C. Being competent to do whatever is required
- D. Being courageous
- E. Being dependent on others

QUESTION 10

The term “called out” means being affirmed as a man and a son of whom the father is proud. Where do we see Jesus being “called out” by his Heavenly Father?

- A. At the transfiguration
- B. At His baptism
- C. When He prays in the garden
- D. At His birth
- E. When He feeds the 5,000

QUESTION 11

If a man was never “called out” by his father, what is **NOT** one of the five steps to being called out by God?

- A. Give up the pain and bitterness to God.
- B. Contradict the lies he believed about himself.
- C. Believe what God says.
- D. Go to his wife for anointing with strength.
- E. Recall and feel the wound.
- F. Set aside personal plans of saving himself.

QUESTION 12

Satan wants to sidetrack a man into using his strength for serving himself so that he will not fight against Satan’s plans for the world. *True or False?*

QUESTION 13

A servant leader should understand what needs to be done in order to meet the needs of those he cares for and then should be willing to do whatever is best for them. *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

Which is **NOT** a description of selfish leaders like the Pharisees?

- A. Speaking religious words but having no real faith and trust in God
- B. Feeling little compassion for the needs and problems of others
- C. Pride in religious behavior and personal credentials
- D. Telling other people how to act (especially without acting that way themselves)
- E. Keen awareness of your own faults but showing grace to the errors of others

QUESTION 15

The analogy of marriage as a head and a body shows intimacy and attentive service to one another, but it does not show that one is more valuable than the other. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

The primary way that a wife shows love to her husband in a way that he can receive it is by showing him unconditional respect. *True or False?*

QUESTION 17

It is right for a wife to expect her husband to meet all of her needs, emotional, spiritual and physical. *True or False?*

QUESTION 18

When a wife desires and initiates sex with her husband, she communicates that she loves, honors, and trusts him. *True or False?*

QUESTION 19

What two Bible verses instruct husbands to "love your wives" unconditionally with *agape* love?

- A. Genesis 2:24 and 1 Corinthians 7
- B. Ephesians 5:25 and Colossians 3:19
- C. John 3:16 and John 10:9
- D. Romans 8:28 and 1 John 1:9

QUESTION 20

Sarah's beauty came from her husband's deep love for her. *True or False?*

QUESTION 21

A woman's strength is often brought forth by danger to someone or something weak or helpless. *True or False?*

QUESTION 22

Both little girls and little boys need affirmation from their fathers more than from anyone else, but the type of affirmation is somewhat different. *True or False?*

QUESTION 23

What is **NOT** part of the meaning of the term *ezer kenegdo*?

- A. One who rescues
- B. One who is close to you
- C. One who is inferior to you
- D. One who is strong and can help you
- E. One who stands by you

QUESTION 24

Which is **NOT** one of the ways that Scripture tells a man to treat his wife?

- A. Unconditionally and sacrificially loving her, even when she acts grumpy or does not meet his needs
- B. Helping her to mature and grow
- C. Granting her honor
- D. Understanding her
- E. Making her submit to his authority

QUESTION 25

A man can treat his wife with disrespect and still have a strong and effective prayer life. *True or False?*

Lesson 6 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

E. She exhibited a gentle and quiet spirit

QUESTION 2:

| <i>Beauty Principle</i> | <i>Concept That Illustrates or Enlarges on It</i> |
|--|---|
| Verse 3: Beauty is primarily external | Outer beauty is wearing fine clothes, gold jewelry, and braided hair |
| Verse 4: Beauty is primarily internal | A gentle and tranquil spirit is more beautiful, and more precious in the sight of God |
| Verse 5: Holy women who hoped in God became beautiful through submission to their husbands | Sarah obeyed Abraham. |
| Verse 3: Don't emphasize external beauty | Verse 6: Do what is right and have no fear in doing it. |

QUESTION 3: *Your answer*

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6:

D. A bear

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8:

| <i>Lies of an Earthly Father</i> | <i>Messages from the Heavenly Father</i> |
|----------------------------------|---|
| You're not worth my time. | Hebrews 13:5: I never leave your side for an instant. |
| No one delights in you. | Isaiah 62:2-4: I delight in you. |
| You are not worth rescuing. | 1 John 3:16: I gave my life to rescue you. |
| You are not beautiful. | Psalms 45:13: You are a beautiful princess. |
| You are not my daughter. | Isaiah 43:1: You are mine. |

QUESTION 9: *Your answer*

QUESTION 10:

A. Beautiful

D. Submissive to the authority over her

E. Life-saving

F. Life-giving

QUESTION 11:

Asset 1: A man may resist deception better. Drawback: A man may disbelieve the truth.

Asset 2: A woman may believe the truth more quickly. Drawback: A woman may be fooled. But talking together with mutual respect, they can discover the truth together and resist deception.

QUESTION 12:

A. Strong deliverer

C. Life saver

D. Intimate companion

E. Corresponding one

QUESTION 13:

(1) The women were very brave because they had faith in God. They were creative in using the skills and abilities they already had: prophesying, cooking, beautifying, serving, hosting, praying, even delivering babies, to help and defend those who needed them. (2) Their strength was brought out by the need of others for deliverance.

QUESTION 14: *Your answer*

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16: *Your answer*

QUESTION 17: *Your answer*

QUESTION 18:

A. Bear with and forgive.

QUESTION 19: *Your answer*

QUESTION 20:

| <i>Husband Protection</i> | <i>Scripture</i> |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| From cleaving to others | Genesis 2:24 |
| From toxic people | Titus 3:10-11 |
| From too many responsibilities | Numbers 30:13-15 |
| From deceitful teaching | 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 |
| From evil | Ruth 3:9 |

QUESTION 21: Would I have bloodied my feet to be with God just as my wife bloodied her feet to be with me?

QUESTION 22:

| <i>The Way God Made Women</i> | <i>The Way Men Misjudge Women</i> |
|--|--|
| Women are motivated to portray and to bring beauty to the world, especially those they love. | Women are frivolous and waste time and money on things that don't matter. |
| Women's sexual needs are emotionally, not physically motivated. So if a relationship is sour, or a husband says something cruel, it is difficult for her to find him sexually attractive. The women portrayed in pornography are only pretending in order to get paid. | She wants sex physically just like a man. The women in the pornographic magazines all appear to want it, so it must be true. A woman who says she doesn't want sex is just being proud, lying, or cruel. |
| A woman's strongest sexual desire toward a husband she loves is often the need to be embraced and shown love. | A woman should feel a physical desire for sexual intercourse as often as her husband. |
| A woman is often able to correctly sense things that are true, even though she does not use logic to perceive them | A woman is irrational and unintelligent because she does not use logic all the time. |
| A woman mentions problems partly so that her husband can better understand what she is thinking, and they can achieve closer unity. | A woman talks about her problems because she expects her husband to fix them. |
| The most important kind of security is knowing that her husband is faithful, will never do anything to hurt her, and loves her deeply. | Security means a big house and lots of money. |
| A woman asks questions to deepen intimacy and stay connected to her husband. | A woman who asks her husband too many questions is prying, trying to control him, or just being annoying. |

QUESTION 23: *Your answer*

QUESTION 24:

By what activities you were willing to trade for time with that person.

QUESTION 25: *Your answer*

Lesson 6 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

B. Ephesians 5:25 and Colossians 3:19

QUESTION 2:

D. She trusted that God's sovereignty and care for her could not be thwarted by man.

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4:

A. Am I fearless?

QUESTION 5: True

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8:

D. Critiquing her behavior so that she refrains from sin

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10: False

Unit 2 Exam Answers

Question 1: True

Question 2: False

Question 3: False

Question 4: False

Question 5: False

Question 6: True

Question 7: False

Question 8: True

Question 9:

E. Being dependent on others

Question 10:

B. At His baptism

Question 11:

D. Go to his wife for anointing with strength.

Question 12: True

Question 13: True

Question 14:

E. Keen awareness of your own faults but showing grace to the errors of others

Question 15: True

Question 16: True

Question 17: False

Question 18: True

Question 19:

B. Ephesians 5:25 and Colossians 3:19

Question 20: False

Question 21: True

Question 22: True

Question 23:

C. One who is inferior to you

Question 24:

E. Making her submit to his authority

Question 25: False

Unit 3: “United in Spirit”—Coming Together in Unity

*Make my joy complete by:
being of the same mind,
maintaining the same love,
united in spirit,
intent on one purpose.*

—Philippians 2:2 (NASB, emphasis added)

Unit Introduction

From Genesis 2:22-24, you saw that the unity between a husband and a wife was God’s antidote for aloneness. But, once they fell into sin, their own selfishness would block true unity at every turn. Perhaps divorce is not as common an occurrence in your culture as it is in ours, but I would guess that intimate *unity* in marriage is just as rare. How many couples do you know who share a deep connection in the *Holy Spirit*?

Couples who enjoy the delight of the *physical* union of sexual communion and affectionate touch? Who search and know each other’s *minds* intimately? These couples stand out because of their rarity in any country, yet this is the type of freedom from loneliness that God intended for all married couples to enjoy.



How do you achieve the unity of mind, body, and spirit that God offers as a gift to every married couple? As the Holy Spirit restores God’s image within the minds of His people, it makes unity in marriage once again possible. But, it is not inevitable! You do not achieve unity automatically by exchanging marriage vows, by hoping for the best, or even by developing spiritual disciplines. No, your marriage unity itself has needs that are different from your individual needs or your spouse’s needs. If you want to stay close and unified, you must know what these needs are and do what is best for your marriage, regardless of how you feel or whatever other important activities compete for your time and attention.

In this unit, you will explore several ways that the Bible describes to develop and to increase the unity that God offers your marriage: through communication in Lesson 7, through sexual relations in Lesson 8, and through humility, integrity, forgiveness, and more in Lesson 9. As you both submit your own thoughts and behavior to work toward God’s intentions, you will reap the benefit of an increasingly rich and satisfying marriage relationship. But that’s not all the benefit. The Bible says, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens his friend” (Prov 27:17). As you work to improve unity with your spouse, the burrs and barbs of your personality will be revealed and smoothed away until your Master can see His face reflected in you, and smile. Do you want to bring a smile of joy to God’s face? Then read on.

Unit Outline

- Lesson 7: Communication Builds Unity
- Lesson 8: Sexual Lovemaking Builds Unity
- Lesson 9: Healthy Habits of Unity

Lesson 7: Communication Builds Unity

Please Note: This lesson was provided by Darlene Kordic, a biblical counselor.

Lesson Introduction



May and Henry were such a promising couple. For as long as they could remember, they had been best friends. They had similar interests, they were both Christians, their families knew each other well, they both graduated from a prestigious college, and they both had similar life goals and ambitions. When they decided to get married, everyone seemed sure that theirs would be a happy marriage!

For the first few years after the wedding, things went along fairly smoothly. Slowly and insidiously, however, May and Henry began to drift apart. Little things started to come between them. Henry refused to turn the TV off when they ate meals together. May thought she was being spiritual by keeping her lonely and sad feelings to herself. Bigger issues soon stressed their marriage further. Henry's new job required him to travel. They had their first child, which exhausted most of May's emotional energy. Before long there was a wall between them that kept them from any meaningful communication.



Everyone in the family was shocked, when one day May stunned Henry by saying that she didn't love him anymore and that she wanted a divorce.

Henry was devastated. For three days he didn't eat or sleep. He just cried out to the Lord to help him know how to save his marriage. He determined before God that he would do whatever it took to tear down the walls in their marriage and to rebuild their love and communication. He went to May and begged her to give him six months for their relationship to change. He explained that, with God's help, he was determined to make things right between them. She reluctantly agreed but told him that he should not expect any feelings of love from her, because she did not have any to give.

What had gone wrong? Because of Henry's travel and TV-watching, he had stopped communicating with his wife. May's tiredness and her unwillingness to share her deep feelings had also stopped her from communicating with her husband. The result was an invisible wall between them. May and Henry's story is not fictional. Theirs is a true story that started out promising but turned sour. The good news is that May and Henry did learn how to tear down the wall and to begin communicating with each other again. Today, their marriage is happy and thriving. Divorce is the farthest thing from their minds!



If May and Henry could learn to communicate with one another and tear down the walls between them, you and your spouse can learn how, too. With God all things are possible! Further, you can learn ways to help others understand and benefit from good communication in their marriages too. Good communication is the key to both tearing down walls and keeping them down so that marriages can thrive.

In this lesson, you will study how communication works. You will learn to define communication and to assess how it impacts every area of married life. You will investigate how and why communication breaks down, why certain forms of communication

trigger explosive responses, and how to master and maintain Christlike communication in your own marriage so that you can then help others as well.

Lesson Outline

Lesson 7: Communication Builds Unity

Topic 1: Effective Communication

What Is Communication?

Ways That We Communicate

How Does Communication Work?

Topic 2: Christlike Communication

Effective Communication Compared to Christlike Communication

Core Motives Affect Communication

Jesus, the Master Communicator!

The Importance of Listening

Topic 3: Walls That Hinder Communication

Baggage From the Past

Differences Between Men and Women in Communication

Unresolved Conflicts

Anger

Topic 4: A Marriage Without Walls

Restoring Hope

Creating a Safe Bridge for Communication

Resolving Conflict

Keeping Communication Open and Healthy

Topic 1: Effective Communication

Communication is essential to humankind and to relationship. This should not be a surprise,



because people were made in the image of a God who dwells as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in unbroken communication with one another.

Communication is integral to your marriage relationship as well. In fact, communication is to marriage what your heart is to your body.

Every sixty seconds, your heart propels blood through your arteries out to the network of tiny capillaries, which carry the building blocks of life to every cell. When that blood has permeated the body, the heart pushes it farther along the loop into the veins, which carry it back toward the heart. On the return trip, the blood carries your body's harmful wastes to trade for fresh oxygen in the lungs before passing through the heart again. If the heart stops beating, the life of the body comes to a halt and all becomes static, stagnant. The body begins to decay. So, a healthy heart is an essential feature of a healthy body.

In the same way as a heart is the central pump of an effective circulatory system, effective communication is central to a healthy marriage. Communication lies at the "heart" of how everything else functions. Effective communication feeds the "cells" of your relationship, helps rid it of contaminants, maintains balance, nourishes, and keeps your relationship thriving and strong.

What Is Communication?

Do you know people who have been married for many years but hardly know one another? Like May and Henry in the story above, they rarely experience the unity that Scripture sets forth. How did their communication break down or perhaps fail to be established in the first place? In this

topic, you will unravel this mystery from the beginning by discovering the *heart* of clear communication. You will then identify some different *aspects* of communication. Finally, you will examine the *process* of communication itself.

QUESTION 1

Please open your Life Notebook and write down how you would define *communication*.

Which of the following did you include in your definition?

- An exchange of words and meanings
- An exchange of looks
- A skill that can be learned and improved with practice
- Make someone understand my meaning
- Involves at least two people

All of these aspects and more may be involved in a detailed definition of communication. For this lesson, however, you will use the following, more concise definition:

Communication is the fusion of words and actions, which are expressed in a way that enables another person to understand the meaning intended by the communicator.



Hearing words, even understanding the meaning of particular words, does not guarantee that the listener has understood the intended meaning that the communicator intended to convey. According to this definition, communication has not occurred until the meaning intended by the communicator is the same meaning that the listener has understood. As you will see, things other than words affect the clear transmission of meaning.

Ways That We Communicate

Have you ever noticed that words are not the only way to communicate meaning? We all communicate in many different ways each day, without ever speaking a word. These other components that are involved in communicating our thoughts can increase the clarity of communication. But if these components conflict with the words, they can supersede them or cause misunderstandings to occur.

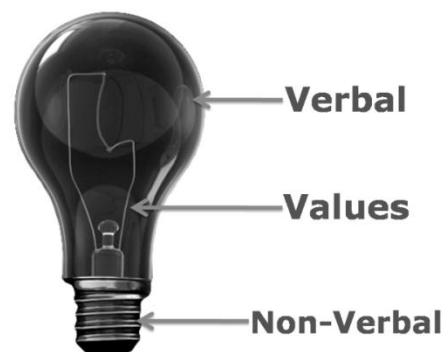
Think of communication as being composed of three main parts.

Although each part has many different expressions, all forms of communication can be placed in one of the following three parts:

1. Verbal communication—any form of communication that uses the following:

- Speech
- Sounds
- Written words

Verbal communication includes not only speaking to



one another but also such things as screaming, groaning, or whispering. Verbal communication can convey positive, negative, or neutral meanings.

2. Nonverbal communication—any form of communication that uses the following:

- Body postures
- Spatial arrangements (i.e., where and how you position yourself in a room)
- Gestures
- Actions

Nonverbal communication includes such things as looking away, slamming a door, or turning your back on someone who is trying to speak to you. Like verbal communication, nonverbal communication can also convey positive, negative, or neutral meanings.

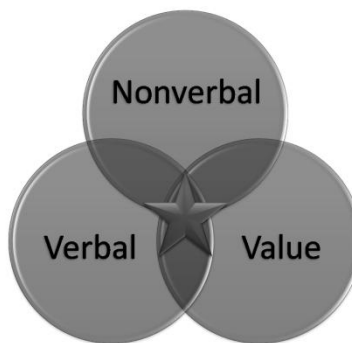
Nonverbal communication is often a very clear form of communication. In a classic study done at the University of California at Los Angeles, researchers found that when someone's thoughts and feelings conflict with their words, it is the body language that speaks the loudest. When you are speaking about your attitudes or feelings, the listener gleans 38% of your meaning from your tone of voice and 55% from your face, leaving only 7% of meaning coming from the words themselves.⁷

3. Value communication—any action that reveals the following:

- Values
- Needs
- Desires

Value communication includes the kind of church you attend, what you enjoy doing in your spare time, what school you choose for your children, how you spend your money. Like the other two categories, *value communication* communicates positive, negative, or neutral meanings. Perhaps this is the first time that you have thought of acting on your values as a form of communication.

While almost all forms of communication fall into one of these three categories, we rarely communicate using just one of the three forms. Usually, we combine two or all three forms of communication together when we want to express our meaning. This diagram shows how all three forms of communication can work together to express one meaning.



★ *Clearest meaning*

A meaning may be found in one or more parts, but is clearest when all three parts work together.

⁷ Mehrabian, A. *Silent Messages--A Wealth of Information About Nonverbal Communication (Body Language)* at <http://www.kaaj.com/psych/smorder.html>. Accessed 10/20/09.

- Please read the article “Three Main Components of Communication” in *Readings in Marriage* and see if you can identify the various components of communication exhibited by the couples in these stories.

Were you able to identify the three components in these stories? Each story utilized more than one type of communication.

In the story of John and Beth, John wants to communicate verbally in a less conventional way, so he writes Beth a poem. That he took the time and effort to write his wife a poem is a type of *values* communication. The written words in the poem are a form of *verbal communication*. Beth responds with *nonverbal* communication by shedding tears.

In the story of Juan and Eva, they have an argument, which is *verbal communication*. We don’t know how clearly they communicated with each other or what nonverbal communication may have accompanied that argument. But when Juan comes home, he communicates clearly without words. It is amazing that a person can cause another person such great anxiety without speaking. Does Juan truly communicate? Yes. He uses *nonverbal communication* to get his message across. What was his message to Eva?

In the third story, Caleb and Deborah pray together. They communicate their thoughts to God and to each other with *verbal communication*. But later they communicate to the people around them that obeying God is more important than obeying man and more important than their own security. Their communication uses the third component, *value communication*.

Can you see how couples use all three forms of communication?

QUESTION 2

Which of these are types of verbal communication? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The style of your clothes
- B. Whistling
- C. Saying I love you
- D. Clapping your hands
- E. A grunt

QUESTION 3

Which of these are examples of *nonverbal* communication? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Your hobbies
- B. Screaming
- C. A frowning expression
- D. Folding your arms
- E. Nodding your head

QUESTION 4

Which of these are examples of *value* communications? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Buying an expensive car
- B. Doing things to help others
- C. Attending a particular church
- D. Looking into someone’s eyes as they speak
- E. What you do in your spare time

You can discern the three components of communication in the Bible.

- Please read Proverbs 31:10-20.

QUESTION 5

Please open your Life Notebook. For each set of verses indicated below,

- Proverbs 31:12-22
- Proverbs 31:25
- Proverbs 31:26
- Proverbs 31:28

Please answer the following questions:

- **Who** communicated?
- **Which type** of communication was used?
- **What** message was communicated?

You may want create a chart similar to the following and fill it in with the answers to the questions for each section.

| Section of Proverbs 31 | WHO communicated? | Which TYPE(S) of communication was used? | WHAT message was communicated? |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| verses 12-22, 27 | | | |
| verse 25 | | | |
| verse 26 | | | |
| verse 28 | | | |

You can understand quite a bit about the Proverbs 31 woman and her family by observing how they communicate and what was communicated. Not only does this woman communicate by what she says but also by what she does. Her verbal communication expresses wisdom and love. Her value communication expresses her values, goals, and desires.

Now try a more challenging passage.

- Please read Job 1.

QUESTION 6

Please open your Life Notebook and answer the following questions about your reading in Job 1. Look specifically at each of the verses and answer the same three questions about them as you did for Question 5:

- Job 1:1-3
- Job 1:4, 13
- Job 1:5
- Job 1:8, 12
- Job 1:9-11
- Job 1:13-19
- Job 1:20
- Job 1:21

Please answer the following questions:

- **Who** communicated?
- **Which type** of communication was used?
- **What** message was communicated?

You may want to create a chart similar to the following and fill it in with the answers to the questions for each section.

| Section of Job 1 | WHO communicated? | Which TYPE(S) of communication was used? | WHAT message was communicated? |
|---------------------|-------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| verses 1-3 | | | |
| verses 4, 13 | | | |
| verse 5 | | | |
| verses 8, 12 | | | |
| verses 9-11 | | | |
| verses 13-19 | | | |
| verse 20 | | | |
| verse 21 | | | |

This passage has a very interesting interchange that shows all three components of communication expressed by several different characters. You can also observe some very intense forms of each component. Can you see how all three types work together?

As a result of your brief study of verbal, nonverbal, and value communication, you can see how communication is more than merely the words that you speak. If couples miss this fact, they can easily get “stuck” in a cycle of misunderstanding each other. Having identified a few components of communication, let’s focus on how communication actually works in marriage.

How Does Communication Work?

Have you been thinking about the many ways in which communication is expressed in your marriage and in other relationships? In this section, you will examine the process that occurs each time something is communicated. As you read the stories in the following article, try to think of a time when you have had a similar experience. Later, you will be asked to write it down.

- Please read the article “The Process of Communication” in *Readings in Marriage*.

Did you see that each time something is communicated, there is either a correct or an incorrect picture drawn in the mind of the person who is receiving the information? Feedback helps to correct an incorrect picture or to sharpen a blurry one.

QUESTION 7

The term “feedback,” as it was used in the article, includes which of the following actions:
(Select all that apply.)

- A. The listener restates in his own words what he thinks the speaker said.
- B. The listener gives his opinion about whether the speaker’s request is good.
- C. The listener asks the speaker questions to clarify the speaker’s meaning.
- D. The listener agrees to do what the speaker asks.

Even though there are some definite challenges associated with the process of communication, God’s Word tells us that effective communication is possible and achievable. But precise communication is not the only goal that you need in marriage. In the next section, you will learn how to communicate more like Jesus—in what you say (verbal communication), in how you act (nonverbal communication), and in the choices you make (value communication).

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Effective Communication*.

Marriage Building Activity: Effective Communication



For **MARRIED** students: If your spouse is not studying this material, please share with him/her the things that you have learned thus far about communication, especially the three types of communication and the usefulness of feedback. Then, think back over the most recent time that you spent together and identify together the ways that you communicated *verbally*, *nonverbally*, and with *value communication*. See if you can identify the *typical* ways that you communicate with each other. Write down and share your observations about your typical communication methods. How effective are they?

Especially focus on any miscommunications that you remember. Do you often miscommunicate because you typically use and understand differing ways of communication? Perhaps one of you writes notes while the other doesn’t notice them. Perhaps you state a situation (“It’s dark in here”) with the hope that it will suggest an action to your spouse (turning on the light). How do the issues of communication relate to the heart languages, which you each identified in Lesson 4?

How might using feedback improve your communication in the future? Discuss together your ideas for communicating better. Look back through the time that you examined to see how different ways of communicating might have helped the day and your relationship to go more smoothly.

For **SINGLE** students: Complete the above assignment with someone with whom you live, or have lived in the past—a parent, a roommate, or a sibling. What did you learn that might be helpful in marriage?

Topic 2: Christlike Communication

At the beginning of this lesson, effective communication was compared to a physical heart. We said that effective communication is the heart of a thriving marriage. While this is true, it is

important to go one step further. Since the goal of the Christian life is to become like Christ, you must learn to not only be *effective* communicators, but also to be *like Christ* in the way in which you communicate with each other in marriage.

Effective Communication Compared to Christlike Communication

How is *effective* communication different from *Christlike* communication? You may think, “If my spouse understands the meaning of what I am truthfully trying to communicate, am I not being Christlike?” This question is a valid one. Effective communication is when a person can clearly communicate meaning in a way that another person understands. But *Christlike* communication goes beyond clear meaning to heart intention. *Christlike* communication is when a person communicates **in a way that personifies the character of Christ**.

Think back to the story of Juan and Eva from the article that you read earlier, “Three Main Components of Communication.” You may remember that Juan expressed himself through silence. Juan was being clear in his nonverbal communication. But was he being Christlike?

- Please read the article “Christlike and Effective Communication” in *Readings in Marriage*.

How would you describe the difference between *effective* and *Christlike*? Do you understand it better now? If you have the attitude of Christ, it will profoundly affect the way you communicate with each other in marriage.

How do you know if you are communicating in a way that personifies the character of Jesus? What distinguished His character?

- Please read Philippians 2:3-8.

QUESTION 8

In what ways is the reader told to imitate Christ? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Do not be motivated by selfish ambition.
- B. Be humble.
- C. Keep the Sabbath.
- D. Pray for one another.
- E. Treat others as more important than yourself.
- F. Be concerned about the things that concern others.

Do these attitudes and actions apply to the way that you communicate with your spouse?

- Please reread this passage out loud and substitute “your spouse” for “others” or “one another.”

If you take on these attitudes and actions in the way that you communicate with each other, how might it change the dynamics of your marriage?

As you have seen, couples can learn to communicate their meanings by adding body language to enhance clear and specific words and through using feedback. The greater challenge is not only to be sure that you are communicating effectively but that you are also communicating in a Christlike way. It is inevitable that there will be misunderstandings that occur in marriage because of ineffective communication. It is when one of you responds with an attitude that is *not* like Jesus that walls of separation are built up between you. If, however, you maintain an attitude of gentleness and humility in how you react and respond, you will do much to keep your lines of communication open.

Core Motives Affect Communication

While miscommunication can be a problem in marriage, the greater problem is when the point that someone wants to make is cruel, self-centered, and unkind. The greater need, then, is to be Christlike in communication. However, you will *never* be Christlike in your communication, if your primary motivation is self-centered. As we saw in Lesson 2, if your goal in marriage is to get your own needs met, to obtain love, and to find significance, you will place an unbearable burden upon your spouse. Your words will also tend to support that illegitimate purpose. If your spouses' motives are likewise self-centered, your spouse's words will also tend to try to motivate or force you into meeting those deeper emotional needs.

You can see a good example of how communication stems from motivation in the life of Rachel and the way that she communicated with her husband, Jacob.

- Please read Genesis 29:30–30:2.

As you saw, Leah and Rachel are sisters who are married to the same man, Jacob. The elder sister, Leah, is very fertile and has borne several children. Rachel is the wife who is most beloved by Jacob, but she cannot bear children. Rachel's infertility makes her very jealous of her sister. In fact, she is so jealous that she demands from her husband something that only God can give. Her emotional reaction in Genesis 30:1 is almost humorous.

When Rachel saw that she could not bear children for Jacob, she became jealous of her sister. And she said to Jacob, "Give me children or else I will die!"

And Jacob got angry with her and said, "Am I in the place of God who has kept from you the fruit of the womb?"

What effect did Rachel's demand have on her relationship with her husband?

Do you ever communicate unreasonable demands to your spouse, like Rachel did?

What does this kind of communication do to your relationship with each other?

As you saw in Lesson 4, a better way in which you may meet your needs for love and significance is through trusting God's love.

QUESTION 9

Please read Romans 5:8. How did God demonstrate His love for us?



You will never communicate truly Christlike love in your marriage until you accept and embrace what is already yours in your relationship with Jesus. Once you fully embrace His unfathomable love, you will be free to begin to love and to serve your spouse in the same way that Jesus was able to love and to serve others while He lived in this world. When your spouse accepts God's love fully, your spouse, too, will be much more able to give you the very things that you once longed for and insisted upon. As both of you begin to embrace and experience His love, there will be a renewed freedom to love and to serve one another, because you will both be filled by the One whose well never runs dry. It is optimal for both of you to experience this love from God and each other. But even if your spouse never gives you the love and affirmation that you need, it does not prevent you from demonstrating Jesus' love. You can still communicate love and serve your spouse because *you* are finding the love and significance that you need in your most intimate relationship with your primary love, Jesus Christ.



Jesus, the Master Communicator!

Jesus knew who He was and enjoyed love and significance in close fellowship with His Father. Because of this relationship, He was able to come to earth and communicate an undefiled love for all mankind—even those who would, in the end, put Him to death!

When Jesus interacted with people, He always knew how to say the right thing at the right time. He never seemed to fear how His words or actions would be taken, and He freely gave to others without worrying about whether or not they would take advantage of Him. How was He able to do these things? He lived this way because He was not motivated to earn the praise and glory of men. Instead, He lived to please the Father. We can adopt this motivation ourselves and can learn much from observing how Jesus communicated while He walked the earth.

- Please read “Jesus, the Master Communicator” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 10

Without looking back at the article, how many of the seven things that you read about how Jesus communicated can you list? Don't move on until you can list at least three.

QUESTION 11

What is the essential phrase that the article recommended using to introduce the topic of sharing emotions?

QUESTION 12

Please open your Life Notebook.

Which of the seven aspects of Jesus' communication is currently the most lacking in your relationship with your spouse? Are there any emotions that you are unable to express at all? Are there emotions you think your spouse is suppressing? Please write down what you think the reasons are for this exclusion. If you think this is a serious or frequent problem in your marriage, make time this week to discuss this with your spouse, utilizing the phrases you learned in the article.

As mentioned earlier in the lesson, Christlike communication is our goal. Christ has left us an example that we should follow. Thus, we must not only learn to communicate effectively but also learn to emulate Jesus. He is the master communicator in how we relate in our marriages.

The Importance of Listening

"That's not what I said!"

"You never listen to me!"

"I have already told you that three times!"

"I can't believe that you're asking me the same question again!"

"I tried to tell you, but you were too busy talking!"

"Don't cut me off ... I was talking!"

"Maybe that's what you heard, but that's not what I said!"

Have you ever heard any of these statements? Has your spouse ever said any of them to you? When someone uses statements such as these, they are trying to communicate, "How I feel and what I have to say are important. Please listen to me!" Your spouse should not need to use these kinds of expressions in order for you to hear him/her. Part of knowing how to communicate in a Christlike way is learning how to *listen* in a way that demonstrates genuine interest and concern.

Few people know how to listen. The motto today seems to be: "It's all about me! Let's talk about me." This may be especially true in the marriage relationship. A dialogue is when two people share a conversation. A monologue is when just one person speaks and the other listens. The goal in marriage is for dialogue to occur. One of the best ways to show that you want to dialogue is by asking good, open questions and then by being quiet and attentive long enough to hear the answer. Most people know this principle well but fail at putting it into practice on a regular basis, especially in a marriage relationship. It is easier to say than to do. In the following article, you will discover what causes this problem. Later in this lesson, you will study more about the difference between monologue and dialogue.



- Please read this article, "Why Are People Such Poor Listeners?" in *Readings in Marriage*.

Perhaps you could see the several most common reasons that people are such poor listeners, which were featured in these scenarios.

Did you notice that Tony, even though he was silent, had the same problem as the new employee in Peter's Dilemma who talked all the time? Tony was eager to meet his own desire to watch TV and assumed that what Ruth was saying was unimportant. So he disengaged from listening while still acting like he was. This flunks the test of Christlike communication.

Can you relate to any of these scenarios? If you are guilty of not listening attentively when your spouse is talking to you, hopefully this topic will increase your awareness of how important good listening truly is in this area of communication in marriage. If you are the one who has tried to communicate, only to be ignored or cut off by your spouse, hopefully as you learn to be a better listener yourself, your example will “rub off” on your spouse.

What does the Bible say about listening?

- Please read James 1:19-27.

QUESTION 13

What are the commands in this passage? If we don’t obey these commands, what are we like?

Remember that to be quick to listen and slow to speak is a command, not an option! The following article will help you learn how to be a better listener.

- Please read “How to Be a Good Listener” in *Readings in Marriage* and then return here to demonstrate your understanding of good listening skills.

QUESTION 14

Match the following statements with the good listening principle or type of question it illustrates.

| <i>Statement</i> | <i>Good Listening Skill/Question</i> |
|--|--|
| What is your favorite TV show?” | This is a question to avoid. |
| “Why can’t you keep the house clean like your sister, Linda?” | Stop what you are doing and pay attention. |
| “Let me see if I understand what you are saying ...” | This is a reflective question. |
| I’ve been talking too much. It looks like you really want to share something you feel strongly about. Please go ahead, I’m listening!” | Listen not only to the words but also to the emotions. |
| “Wait just a minute until I dry these dishes, then I will stop what I am doing so I can listen to you.” | Stop talking. |
| “You said that what I did does not bother you, but I sense you truly are hurt.” | This is an “okay” question. |

Think of good listening as being the door that either opens or closes the possibilities of Christlike communication in your marriage. Sometimes, before you ever speak a word, your attentiveness in wanting to listen bridges the gap to healthy dialogue. Let’s learn not only to be hearers of God’s Word but also to be doers when it comes to being quick to listen and slow to speak. If you will be attending one of our seminars, you will have the opportunity to practice listening skills in more detail.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Christlike Communication*.

Marriage Building Activity: Christlike Communication



For **MARRIED** students: Please share with your spouse what you have learned in this topic about Christlike communication. Take a few minutes to write down three good questions that you would like to ask your spouse. Explain what you have been learning about asking good questions and then ask your spouse at least one of them.

For **SINGLE** students: Complete the above assignment with someone who is close to you.

Topic 3: Walls That Hinder Communication

Daniel and Malee are sitting turned away from each other. Malee is bent over, distraught, and weeping softly. Daniel is seething, and the veins on his neck are protruding. Both of them are thinking: How could we be in this place again? How will we ever break down the invisible wall that separates us?



Have you and your spouse ever felt like Daniel and Malee? Have you ever felt so distant, so removed, that it is like you are standing on the edge of a precipice with a great gulf between you and your spouse—a gulf that spans so wide that it appears virtually impossible to ever experience true oneness?

In this topic, you will look at how and why walls are built in relationships. You will investigate some of the “bricks” that pile up to become walls that hinder communication—“bricks” such as baggage from the past, differences in gender, unresolved conflicts, and anger. In the next topic, you will examine the process of tearing down these walls so that you can restore and maintain intimate and unhindered communication in your marriage.

Baggage From the Past

When you got married, you probably packed your bags of personal belongings and left the home of your father and mother to begin a new life with your spouse. The bag that you packed was full of tangible things, such as your clothes, books, shoes, perhaps kitchen things or tools. Perhaps you also packed some things of significance, like your favorite picture or a valued piece of jewelry. You might have even carried with you a few items of furniture, like a desk or a chest of drawers. Whatever you packed, those tangible, concrete things represent a part of who you were in the past and who you will continue to be in the future.



You might not have realized that you also packed another bag when you left home. This bag and its contents, though invisible, are just as valid and real. This bag is full of unseen things, such as your belief system, your habits of personal hygiene and tidiness, your ways of communicating, your methods of

handling stress, your flexibility to life's circumstances, your values and morals, and your ideals about what makes life worthwhile. All of the things in this bag came by way of your life experiences up to that point, both good and bad. These invisible belongings make you who you are and impact how you relate and interact in your marriage, even more than the physical items that you packed.

Your spouse also packed a similar bag of unseen belongings that affect how he/she interacts and relates to you. For some couples, conflict occurs shortly after the wedding, when both of them bring their "bags" together and begin to unpack them, only to realize that they do not see "eye to eye" as to how things in their life together should be arranged. For instance, perhaps you grew up thinking that the house should be perfectly tidy every evening before going to bed. Your spouse, however, is of the opinion that the tidying should be done in the morning, when you are not so tired (in reality, the tidying never gets done in the morning either, because his/her habit when growing up was to not care if the house is tidy at all). For some couples, these "bricks" of baggage begin piling up right after the wedding and have remained piled up until today. The baggage forms a wall, which inhibits your intimacy.

How do you learn to live together with unhindered communication in spite of such vast differences in your individual baggage?

The first two steps in dealing with baggage from your past are (1) being aware of it and (2) being willing to openly discuss how this baggage impacts your marriage.

- The article, "Adjusting Your Baggage," in *Readings in Marriage* will help you learn how to adjust to the differences in baggage between you and your spouse. Please read the article now and be prepared to answer the question below.

QUESTION 15

Please open your Life Notebook.

Think of your relationship with your spouse, or if you are unmarried, a relative or roommate. Please make a list of some things that have been easy to agree on in your relationship, and some which have been difficult to agree on *because of the baggage from your past*. Make sure that you list any areas where a disagreement about "how things should be" has caused frequent conflict.

Now, meet with your spouse (or if you are single, the person with whom you live) and seek to reach a compromise. With a lot of reassurance of affection and, perhaps, physically touching, see if you can develop a compromise in each of the areas. You may have to work hard by sacrificing many of your preferences for the sake of oneness. For instance, let's say your spouse likes to go to bed early, but you like to stay up late. It doesn't bother you if each of you goes to bed at different times, but your spouse likes both of you to go to bed at the same time. See if you can agree on certain nights where you will come to bed early and some nights on which you will stay up late. Try to understand why it is important to each of you—what you each enjoy about going to bed or staying up, and what it means to your spouse for you to go to bed at the same time.

I hope that learning about how to deal with baggage from the past has heightened your determination to use these differences to improve understanding and not to hinder communication. Baggage does not always need to be a hindrance, if you are aware of it and have determined to live in oneness. Unity may, however, involve yielding some of your preferences and giving up some of your rights (Rom 12:10).

Differences Between Men and Women in Communication

In Lessons 5 and 6, you examined some of the common characteristics of men and of women.



Sometimes walls are built in marriages, because couples are not aware of how differently men and women sometimes approach communication. This lack of awareness can cause misunderstanding and resentment. For instance, a wife may think that her husband doesn't love her anymore, because he doesn't regularly share his deepest feelings with her. A husband may feel resentful of a wife who is always nagging him to communicate more. He may conclude that she must not like him for who he is.

Many of these misunderstandings could be avoided by being aware of and working with the differences between you in this area of communication.

In this section, you will look at some of these differences and try to figure out how God wants you to work through them in order to have oneness in communication with your spouse. Please keep in mind, however, that when we talk about the differences between men and women, these differences are merely general patterns about men and women and will not be true of all men or all women. For instance, perhaps in one marriage relationship, the wife has more difficulty trying to communicate, while the husband is able to more easily express his feelings. Each couple is unique. The tendencies highlighted in this subtopic are only guidelines that are more often true of men and of women. In fact, among the couples who are collaborating to write this course, several of us do not fit the typical male/female differences in this area.

- Please read the article “How Men and Women Approach Communication Differently (and How to Bridge the Gap)” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 16

Please open your Life Notebook and write down the differences that you see between your and your spouse's perspective on communication. Write down some areas that you will work on, now that you are aware of these differences. Set some specific goals in these areas. For instance: “When I come home, I will ask my wife questions about her day and sit down and direct my attention toward her before getting involved in my own activities.”

Understanding the differences of how men and women approach communication will go a long way in helping you to avoid unnecessary misunderstanding in marriage.

Unresolved Conflicts

Just as a mason builds a wall one brick at a time, sometimes couples allow the “bricks” of unresolved conflicts to build walls in their communication. The challenge, just as in the previous subtopic, is to take preventative action before these conflicts begin to develop into walls, and also to learn God's way of tearing them down. In this subtopic you will examine why conflicts occur and how to deal with them.

A physical brick is a neutral object. It can be used for either good or bad purposes. Bricks are good when you use them to build the walls of a safe home. They are also good when you use them to build bridges. The same bricks are bad, however, if you use them to build a wall to keep out those you love or if you throw them at people. In the same way, communication is like a brick. It is neutral in and of itself, but you can choose to use it to do good or evil. You have the capacity with your communication to kill and destroy or to build up and encourage. The Scripture says that a wise woman builds her house, but the foolish tears hers down (Prov 14:1). This principle applies to how you use communication in your marriage. All through Scripture, you can

observe men and women who use the power of communication for either good or evil in their marriages.

- Please read the following passages to see how these individuals used communication to either tear down or build up.

Michal, David's wife: 1 Samuel 18:20, 27-28; 2 Samuel 6:16-23

In the first several verses, you see that Michal loves David. In the last passages, however, she is filled with contempt and disgust toward him. What had happened? She had the opportunity to use her position as David's *ezer* to speak words of support and encouragement to her husband. Instead, she uses her words like bricks, which divide David and her so completely that it is probable that they no longer had sexual relations.

Job's wife: Job 2:9-10

Job's wife may have loved her husband a great deal. After all, she had borne him ten children and had stayed with him through the whole grueling ordeal of their suffering. She also may have been the same woman who bears him ten more children in the second half of their lives. But she has not learned how to use her words, has she? On the day that Job's children are killed and his wealth is lost, she loses everything too. Job is not the only one who is grieving. Her pain causes her to become bitter and attack her husband. Rather than trusting God and encouraging her husband, she says, "Are you still holding firm to your integrity? Curse God, and die." Wow! Talk about the power of life and death in a word! Just like Michal, Job's wife uses her words like rows of bricks to build a huge wall of division between them.

Nabal: 1 Samuel 25:1-25

Here is a man whose harsh communication has effectively walled himself off, not only from his wife but also from his own staff. They say, "no one can tell him anything" (1 Sam 25:17). He is not receptive to anyone's thoughts but his own and those around him have learned not to even try to communicate with him (vv 17, 19, 25).

The couple in the Song of Solomon: Song of Solomon 1:1-4; 4:1-7.

This young couple gives us a beautiful picture of how to use communication to build up rather than to tear down. It is interesting that this man and his wife are newly married. When a couple is engaged or newly married, communication between them tends to be sweet and tender. If you have been married for many years, remember how you communicated with one another at the beginning, and ask God to help you restore the sweetness of those days.

From the first three examples, you can see how negative communication can cause conflicts. If conflicts remain unresolved, they build walls between people. Scripture gives a great deal of information about why conflicts occur and can help you make sure that they do not become walls in your marriage.

- Please read the article "What Causes Conflicts?" in *Readings in Marriage* to examine what the book of James has to say about conflict.

QUESTION 17

Which item on the list of six bricks of destruction did the article say was at the foundation of all of the others?

You have now examined how the six bricks of destruction from James 4 can cause conflicts that build walls against healthy communication in marriage. You also looked at what needs to be done to eliminate these from your communication. In the next subtopic, you will look at one kind of brick that builds walls in marriages, perhaps more often than any other.

Anger

Although we have touched upon the destructive nature of anger in the previous subtopic, it is worthy of more study, as it tends to create many barriers to healthy communication. First of all, it is important to understand that anger is a human version of a characteristic of God, wrath. Like other emotions, human anger may be motivated by and used for good or for evil. It is possible for someone to become angry and yet not sin, but most typically, anger does not work God's righteousness (Eph 4:26; Jas 1:20). Instead anger wounds and alienates people. How do you properly handle this volatile emotion?

- Please read the article "Why Anger?" in *Readings in Marriage* and be prepared to answer the following question.

QUESTION 18

Why does man have the emotion of anger? What is its purpose?

Christlike communication, as it was discussed in an earlier topic, is the key to venting your anger in God's way. Rather than attacking your spouse in your anger, God's design is for you to exercise self-control (Gal 5:23; 2 Pet 1:6) and to vent your anger by attacking and destroying the problem or conflict between you. How do you do this? By communicating in a Christlike way to demolish the problem, not by allowing anger to break down the communication between you.

Communication can be compared to a circuit breaker in your house.

If you are communicating in a Christlike way, the circuits are open between you and the electricity has free flow. The moment *anger* is introduced into your communication, it breaks the circuit, which turns off the power and the vital communication, which you once had. Keep your connection intact. Don't allow anger to short-circuit your relationship.



QUESTION 19

How do you vent your anger in God's way?

- A. Internalizing your anger
- B. Letting your anger out
- C. Practicing Christlike communication
- D. Figuring out if fear is at the core of your anger

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Addressing Problem Areas*.

Marriage Building Activity: Addressing Problem Areas



For **MARRIED** students: Discuss with your spouse the things that you have learned from this topic that you think will be the most beneficial to your marriage. What roles do baggage and anger play in your relationship? If baggage is a common source of conflict, review the advice in “Adjusting Your Baggage” and decide which activities you might be able to do together.

For **SINGLE** students: Pray and ask God to reveal any baggage you have that would be a threat to the health of your future marriage or other relationships. Discuss this issue with someone whom you trust and see if there are ways that you can reduce the impact of your baggage on your relationships.

Topic 4: A Marriage Without Walls

What is the communication in your marriage currently like? If you are honest, your answer will probably fall somewhere between these two assessments: “The walls are so thick there is basically no healthy communication going on” and “Our communication is good, but I’d like to learn ways to make it even better.” If you have walls of any kind blocking Christlike communication between you and your spouse, in the next topic you will learn ways to tear them down and to seek the One who is the greatest expert at demolishing walls.

Restoring Hope

Are you looking at the walls in your own marriage relationship and feeling hopeless? Do the walls between you seem too historic, too big, and too strong to even imagine your marriage without them? If it feels hopeless, then your first need is for the courage to *believe* God for the victory. In this subtopic, you will draw courage from God’s Word to do the things that are necessary to tear down the walls and to build the bridges that will enable you to communicate in a Christlike way in your marriage. Your study in this subtopic will be in the book of Joshua. This story is not just history. From Israel’s experience, you can also draw principles to better understand how God works in dismantling even the biggest walls.

- Please begin by reading Joshua 5:10–6:27.

QUESTION 20

What was never seen again after the people of Israel crossed over the Jordan River?

- A. Circumcision
- B. God’s presence
- C. Manna
- D. The Ark of the Covenant
- E. The Hittites

The very first morning after the people of Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered the land of Canaan, manna no longer appeared on the ground, and they never ate it again. Even though manna was a wonderful provision from God to sustain them through the wilderness, it did not

reflect the wonderful variety of foods that God had designed for them. From the Jordan forward, the people ate from the “produce of the land” (Josh 5:12).

Perhaps until now, your marriage has been surviving because it has been “feeding on manna.” God is keeping your marriage intact through His grace, but you know you are not experiencing God’s best yet. In fact, there still seems to be a wall that looms tall and intimidating between you and your spouse. Today can be the day that you give up the manna in your marriage in order to begin eating the crops of promise. Today can be the day to knock down the walls that hinder your communication.

- Please read “See the Wall Come Down” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 21

The six principles in this article are as follows:

1. Believe that only God can tear down walls (Josh 6:6).
2. Victory can only be won when God is on center stage (Josh 6:9).
3. Victory won’t happen unless you mean business (Josh 6:15).
4. Victory flows out of obedience and humility (Josh 6:6-21).
5. You must work to keep the walls down and maintain your unity (Josh 6:21).
6. Victory will only come as we cry out to the Lord for His deliverance (Josh 6:20).

In your Life Notebook, record which principles are the most important in your life right now and why they are important.

- Please do the following *Worship Activity*.

Lesson 7: Worship Activity



If you have walls in your relationship, go before the Lord and spend some time crying out to Him for deliverance. Then, spend time in praise and worship, while thanking Him that the battle is His and that through His grace and power the walls in your marriage can and will come down.

As you reflect on the previous parts of this course, ask Him what you should do to implement His plan to tear down the walls. Listen quietly for His answer. Write down the specific things you will do and when you plan to do them. As you complete the remainder of this lesson, keep adding to your list the actions that are appropriate for your relationship.

Creating a Safe Bridge for Communication



You read earlier that the bricks of communication may be used for good or for evil in your relationship. As you have seen, when one of the marriage partners breaches trust, the communication bricks construct a wall in the marriage. One objective of Christlike communication is to dismantle any walls. But as a wall is broken down, you also use the bricks of good communication to build a bridge for Christlike communication. In this subtopic, you will learn how to establish a firm foundation for this bridge. We will call this foundation a “safe footing for communication.” You need this footing in order to sustain the weight of your communication back and forth. Creating a safe footing for communication simply means

that you do everything possible to make your spouse feel that it is *safe* to extend his/her innermost thoughts, fears, and emotions with you over the bridge. If you love your spouse, as God has commanded, you will want to provide this kind of safe basis for your spouse’s communication.

Begin your study by examining six principles from 1 Corinthians 13 that build safety in communication.

- Please read the article “Six Elements in Creating a Safe Basis for Communication.”

QUESTION 22

Please match each of the six elements for creating a safe basis for communication with an example of how this might be displayed in your relationship.

| <i>Element of Communication</i> | <i>Example</i> |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Element 1: Attentiveness | You affirm that what your spouse is thinking or doing is good in your eyes. |
| Element 2: Respect | No matter what your spouse says or does, you continue to want the best for him/her. |
| Element 3: Genuineness | You state your own point of view without belittling your spouse’s point of view. |
| Element 4: Empathy | You try to put yourself in the place of your spouse and imagine how he/she felt when the event he/she is describing happened. |
| Element 5: Supportiveness | You look at your spouse’s face and react appropriately to what your spouse is saying. |
| Element 6: Unconditional love | You show the real love and concern that you have for your spouse, even if your defensive emotions tempt you to hide this. |

You have seen how love creates an atmosphere of safety and how safety creates a strong platform for communication. If you do not foster this in your marriage, neither of you will be able to reveal who you truly are—weaknesses and all. Another way you can help your spouse feel safe is by practicing *two-way communication*.

- To understand how to do this, please read, “One-Way Versus Two-Way Communication” in *Readings in Marriage*. As you read, think about whether Ray used two-way communication in his conversation with his wife.



QUESTION 23

Please open your Life Notebook.

Please explain what message “one-way” communication conveys and what message “two-way” communication conveys. How did Ray’s two-way communication with Mary in the earlier article demonstrate not only good communication but also Christlike communication? If he had practiced one-way communication by disregarding Mary’s sigh, what could have ultimately happened to their marriage?

Now that you have analyzed some of the elements that help create a safe platform for communication, how do you think that you are doing in this area? We have prepared a short survey to help you find out. If your spouse is unavailable right now, please answer the following questions according to how you think your spouse would answer, and ask your spouse to complete it at a later time. If you are single, answer the questions according to how you think your closest friend would respond, or ask your friend to complete it about you.

- Please do the survey, “Do You Feel Safe With Me?” which is provided in *Readings in Marriage*.

So, how safe does your spouse feel when communicating with you?

QUESTION 24

If you were not pleased with your score, was this a surprise? What can you do differently to help create a safe basis for communication?

If you create safe and Christlike communications, then your spouse will feel safe to share intimate thoughts with you. Not only will this improve your enjoyment of your marriage, but others may also notice both the loving interaction and the peace in your marriage and be drawn to Christ as a result.

Resolving Conflict

People can’t avoid having differences in any relationship. Why? Because people are all different! Differences are not wrong. Differences give life its variety. But differences can—and often do—lead to conflict. Conflict is another type of brick that can be used either to build walls that hinder communication or to build communication bridges that enhance it. How you respond when you have a conflict will determine whether a bridge of understanding or a wall of division will begin to be built between you.

You no doubt have recognized that suffering is a normal part of everyone’s life, which God can use for good. Conflict is a type of suffering, but on a relational, rather than an individual level. If the marriage conflict involves unfair treatment, the experience of conflict may also cause individual suffering. Just as with individual suffering, God can use relational suffering in a positive way in your marriage.

QUESTION 25

Please read the following passages and match each one with what it says about suffering.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Suffering</i> |
|---------------------|---|
| James 1:2-4, 12 | Rejoice because suffering brings endurance and reward. |
| 1 Peter 1:6-7 | Those who suffer are less drawn into sin. |
| 1 Peter 2:19-21 | God's favor rests upon you when you endure suffering. |
| 1 Peter 4:1-2 | Suffering results in purity and refinement. |
| 1 Peter 4:12-16, 19 | The fruit of suffering is more precious than gold. |
| Isaiah 48:10 | Those who suffer share in Christ's suffering and glory. |

Suffering is never fun or easy, but God can use it as a powerful tool to sharpen and refine your character. In a similar way, conflicts in marriage can sharpen and refine your relationship. They need not damage it.

Unfortunately, just as conflict can be used by God, it can also be used by the enemy. God always desires to use conflict to refine you and to prove your faith. By contrast, the enemy always desires to use conflict to build walls, to create offenses, and eventually to destroy your marriage. You must choose carefully what you will build with this "brick" of conflict. Will you build walls that divide, as the enemy desires? Or will you build bridges that serve Christlike communication? The whole world is watching, and there is much at stake.

What are some practical ways of resolving conflicts in your marriage to create bridges instead of walls?

- Please read the article "Resolving Conflict" now, and be prepared to answer some questions.

QUESTION 26

Which "brick" was **NOT** mentioned in the article as a way to resolve conflicts?

- A. Humility
- B. Prayer
- C. Trusting God
- D. Drawing near to God
- E. Cleaning your spiritual house
- F. Resisting the devil

So you have now seen how you can destroy the bricks of anger, selfishness, evil desires, out-of-control behavior, jealousy, and pride that cause conflict in communication. You tear them down by laying a different foundation—a foundation consisting of prayer, humility, drawing near to God, resisting the devil, and spiritual house cleaning. Does this eliminate conflict? No. Conflict is inevitable in a healthy relationship. Conflict gives both of you the opportunity to become more Christlike, by having to work through it. In the next subtopic, you will see some ways to keep the walls in your communication down, so that you can experience authentic oneness in the communication between you.

Keeping Communication Open and Healthy

When there are no walls between you and your spouse, you should be able to enjoy talking and spending time together.

If you are getting used to this openness for the first time in a while, however, you need to guard and cultivate this unhindered flow of communication, so that the walls do not ever grow again between you. This subtopic contains practical exercises and methods to help you nurture and improve healthy communication. Whether you have previously had problems, or whether your communication has always been good, you will learn four helpful strategies for communicating well.



Strategy 1: How to diffuse an argument. One of the things that you can learn and practice is what to say to diffuse an argument.

- Please read the article “Things to Say to Diffuse an Argument.”

Now, take a moment to memorize one of the phrases that you feel that you could use next time your spouse becomes angry.

Strategy 2: How to show loving concern. Another way to improve your communication is by actively showing your spouse that you are interested in what he/she is saying. This can be communicated in a thousand different ways, but the following is a list of suggestions.

- Please read “Twenty-Five Ways to Communicate Love” in *Readings in Marriage*.

Strategy 3: How to talk about a difficult issue. When you must discuss something where you know that strong emotions are involved, you need to take special care of each other. The following article will explain a method that you can use when you need to discuss a heated issue, or whenever you feel that a wall is going up between you.

- Please read “The Communication Game.”

Is this something that you think you could use when you perceive that a conflict is arising? This game may not need to be implemented often, but it can become an important tool, especially when you need to communicate about a sensitive issue that would normally stir your emotions. If you typically counsel people in conflict, you may find this game is a useful tool to use in helping them to learn to communicate properly.

Strategy 4: How to stimulate engaging discussions. You won’t communicate much, if you have nothing interesting to talk about. Interesting discussions will help keep your communication alive and thriving. The following article will give you some ideas on how to start an interesting discussion.

- Please read “Discussion Starters” in *Readings in Marriage* and be prepared to complete the Marriage Building Activity that follows.
- Please do the *Marriage Building Activity: Sharpening Your Communication Tools*.

Marriage Building Activity: Sharpening Your Communication Tools



For **MARRIED** students: Arrange to go out with your spouse to someplace where you will have relative privacy, such as a coffee shop or restaurant. Pre-select some questions from “Discussion Starters” or from “Twenty-Five Ways to Communicate Love.” Share with your spouse some of the things that you have learned from this lesson. If your discussion begins to turn heated, practice some of the phrases from “Things to Say to Diffuse an Argument.”

For **SINGLE** students: Initiate a coffee date with a close friend or family member in order to do the above building block. Remember to share what you have learned from this lesson.

Please make sure that you have completed every *Marriage Building Activity* for Lesson 7 (and recorded your experience in your Life Notebook) before proceeding to Lesson 8. Completion of these activities will form 40 percent of your grade. The Marriage Building Activities for this lesson were:

- *Effective Communication*
- *Christlike Communication*
- *Addressing Problem Areas*
- *Sharpening Your Communication Tools*

Before we end this lesson on communication, I want to encourage you to reaffirm your commitment to do whatever it takes to build healthy communication in your marriage. Remember that healthy communication is to marriage what a healthy heart is to the body. Just like physical exercise, communication takes consistent practice, and no matter how “fit” you are, you can always improve your communication technique. Healthy communication skills will help your marriage to “run the distance” and will increase the unity of spirit that will bring joy to God’s heart. —Darlene Kordic

Lesson 7 Self Check

QUESTION 1

It is essential to choose your words carefully because 93 percent of what you communicate comes from your words. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

Feedback includes giving your opinion about what the person speaking said. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Christ-like communication happens when which of the following takes place?

- A. The listener feels blessed.
- B. The speaker tries to tear down the walls of communication.
- C. The meaning is very clear to the listener.
- D. The speaker personifies the character of Christ.
- E. The speaker quotes the Scriptures.

QUESTION 4

Which of these things was **NOT** true of Jesus' communication?

- A. Jesus was not afraid to show vulnerable emotions, such as sadness.
- B. Jesus communicated humility.
- C. Jesus communicated by using Scripture.
- D. Jesus knew how and when to keep silent.
- E. Jesus said only what people wanted to hear.

QUESTION 5

Which question below is an example of a *good* question?

- A. Can you help me better understand what happened?
- B. Why can't you be here on time?
- C. What is it about "4 p.m." that you did *not* understand?
- D. Where are the directions to the school?
- E. What time is it?

QUESTION 6

Which items are **NOT** part of the baggage that this lesson said you bring to marriage from the past, that affects your communication?

- A. Your sins and shortcomings
- B. Your values and morals
- C. Your methods of handling stress
- D. Your habits of personal hygiene and tidiness
- E. Your flexibility and ideals

QUESTION 7

The only legitimate direction for holy anger is against sin and/or the violation of God's sovereign will. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Part of creating a safe basis for communicating with your spouse is to imagine how he/she felt when the event he/she is describing happened. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

When you have successfully taken down the walls that hinder communication, what did the lesson say would be the result?

- A. You won't get angry very often anymore.
- B. Your spouse will respect you more.
- C. You should be able to enjoy talking and spending time together.
- D. Your spouse will never build a wall again.
- E. The wall will start to build itself up again naturally.

QUESTION 10

One of the steps in tearing down the bricks of destruction was called "anticipation." This anticipation refers to which of the following?

- A. Avoidance of talking about a subject where you know your opinions differ
- B. Thinking ahead to the next time a conflict might surface and asking God to prepare you to respond differently than your typical response
- C. Knowing your partner well enough to anticipate his/her next comment
- D. Looking forward to when the wall is down in order to keep motivated

Lesson 7 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: *Your answer*

QUESTION 2:

- B. Whistling
- C. Saying I love you
- E. A grunt

QUESTION 3:

- C. A frowning expression
- D. Folding your arms
- E. Nodding your head

QUESTION 4

- A. Buying an expensive car
- B. Doing things to help others
- C. Attending a particular church
- E. What you do in your spare time

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6: *Your answer*

QUESTION 7:

- A. The listener restates in his own words what he thinks the speaker said.
- C. The listener asks the speaker questions to clarify the speaker's meaning.

QUESTION 8:

- A. Do not be motivated by selfish ambition.
- B. Be humble.
- E. Treat others as more important than yourself.
- F. Be concerned about the things that concern others.

QUESTION 9:

Christ died for us.

QUESTION 10:

Your answer should include at least three of the following: (1) Jesus communicates what people need to hear. (2) Jesus is not afraid to show His vulnerable emotions. (3) Jesus communicates humility and servanthood. (4) Jesus communicates Scripture from the heart. (5) Jesus does not allow negative circumstances to influence His communication. (6) Jesus' communication springs from His moment-by-moment communication with His Father. (7) Jesus knows how and when to keep silent.

QUESTION 11:

"May I share how it makes me feel when you ...?"

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13:

Commands: Be quick to listen. Be slow to speak. Be slow to get angry. Get rid of all filth from our lives. Humbly accept God's commands. What we are like: If we don't obey, we are like those who look at ourselves in the mirror, see the flaws, then walk away, and do nothing about it.

QUESTION 14

| <i>Statement</i> | <i>Good Listening Skill/Question</i> |
|--|--|
| What is your favorite TV show?" | This is an "okay" question. |
| "Why can't you keep the house clean like your sister, Linda?" | This is a question to avoid. |
| "Let me see if I understand what you are saying..." | This is a reflective question. |
| I've been talking too much. It looks like you really want to share something you feel strongly about. Please go ahead, I'm listening!" | Stop talking. |
| "Wait just a minute until I dry these dishes, then I will stop what I am doing so I can listen to you." | Stop what you are doing and pay attention. |
| "You said that what I did does not bother you, but I sense you truly are hurt." | Listen not only to the words but also to the emotions as well. |

QUESTION 15: *Your answer***QUESTION 16:** *Your answer***QUESTION 17:**

Pride

QUESTION 18:

Man has anger because God has it. Man was made in the image of God. God's anger arouses the action necessary to destroy sin or anything that opposes His will.

QUESTION 19:

C. Practicing Christlike communication

QUESTION 20:

C. Manna

QUESTION 21: *Your answer***QUESTION 22:**

| <i>Element of Communication</i> | <i>Example</i> |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Element 1: Attentiveness | You look at your spouse's face and react appropriately to what your spouse is saying. |
| Element 2: Respect | You state your own point of view without belittling your spouse's point of view. |
| Element 3: Genuineness | You show the real love and concern that you have for your spouse, even if your defensive emotions tempt you to hide this. |
| Element 4: Empathy | You try to put yourself in the place of your spouse and imagine how he/she felt when the event he/she is describing happened. |
| Element 5: Supportiveness | You affirm that what your spouse is thinking or doing is good in your eyes. |
| Element 6: Unconditional love | No matter what your spouse says or does, you continue to want the best for him/her. |

QUESTION 23: *Your answer***QUESTION 24:** *Your answer*

QUESTION 25

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Suffering</i> |
|---------------------|---|
| James 1:2-4, 12 | Rejoice because suffering brings endurance and reward. |
| 1 Peter 1:6-7 | The fruit of suffering is more precious than gold. |
| 1 Peter 2:19-21 | God's favor rests upon you when you endure suffering. |
| 1 Peter 4:1-2 | Those who suffer are less drawn into sin. |
| 1 Peter 4:12-16, 19 | Those who suffer share in Christ's suffering and glory. |
| Isaiah 48:10 | Suffering results in purity and refinement. |

QUESTION 26:

C. Trusting God

Lesson 7 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: False

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3:

D. The speaker personifies the character of Christ.

QUESTION 4:

E. Jesus said only what people wanted to hear.

QUESTION 5:

A. Can you help me better understand what happened?

QUESTION 6:

A. Your sins and shortcomings

QUESTION 7: True

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9:

C. You should be able to enjoy talking and spending time together

QUESTION 10:

B. Thinking ahead to the next time a conflict might surface and asking God to prepare you to respond differently than your typical response

Lesson 8: Sexual Lovemaking Builds Unity

“Love one another from the heart fervently”—1 Peter 1:22, ASV

Lesson Introduction

It’s been several weeks since Nathan and Sue embarked on their preparations for marriage. For this session on sexuality, Pastor Jonathan arranged for his wife, Esther, to meet privately with Sue, while he met with Nathan.

Esther looked at the young woman across from her and smiled. “I’m happy to meet with you, Sue. My husband says that you and Nathan have been very faithful to study God’s Word and to prepare for your marriage, but I’m thinking there are some personal things that you might want to ask another woman.”



Sue heaved a big sigh. “Oh, Sister Esther! Our wedding is just a few weeks away, and I don’t know what to think about the wedding night. Married women say things sometimes that I *think* I should understand, but honestly ... Most of the time, I haven’t a clue what they’re talking about! It’s like a secret club! But from what I’ve heard, I don’t know if I WANT to be in the club or not! No one will tell me the truth about marital relations. I asked my mom and she said, ‘You’ll find out just like I did. It’s not fun for a woman like it is for a man, but you get to have babies and that makes it all worthwhile. Once you have your family, you don’t have to put up with it anymore.’ I hadn’t been afraid before, but now I am *really* worried.” Sue’s voice lowered to a whisper, “How often is it necessary?”

Esther’s expression clouded. “Women over the years have had a lot of suffering related to sex, so it doesn’t surprise me that your mom has mixed feelings about it. But most of those feelings come from confusion and misinformation. God designed your body and your heart to experience pleasure just as intense and delightful as your husband can experience. The problem is that the pleasure doesn’t come as easily as it does for a man, so some women never experience it. It takes skill to bring it out. You remember how much effort it took to learn to play the violin well? Well, you’ll be relieved to know that becoming good at pleasing each other in sex isn’t THAT difficult—but it still takes intentional time, just like it did for you to learn the violin.”



Sue was shocked. “You mean God wants us to ... practice?”

“Exactly! Like musicians, you and your husband will need to learn some skills and then delight in playing your music together



regularly! You will improve with practice. I’m so sorry your mom has not enjoyed that part of her marriage, but it doesn’t need to be that way for you and Nathan. You know how many of the most skilled musicians have grey hair? You can be “making music” together just as beautifully at sixty as you will be at twenty-five, because God says that sex isn’t primarily about making babies, it’s about becoming one

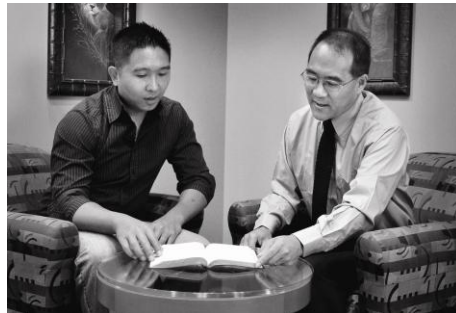
flesh! Let’s see what God’s Word says about it.”

In the pastor's office, Nathan, the young groom-to-be sat across the table from Pastor Jonathan. "You know, Pastor, I've tried to keep myself pure because I thought that was what God wanted,



but now I feel, well, unprepared. I know that Sue is depending on me to know what should happen on the wedding night, but I don't know—not really—just what I have picked up from here and there and it doesn't all make sense. My older brother just said, 'When the time comes, you'll know.' What is *that* supposed to mean? Am I going to get an instruction manual with my wedding license? I feel really embarrassed to ask a *pastor* about sex, but I didn't know who else to talk to. I'm afraid I will hurt Sue."

Pastor Jonathan shook his head. "Never feel apologetic that you have kept yourself pure. You have kept your marriage bed holy and that is as it should be. But you are a wise man to also realize that you need to know more in order to be a good husband to Sue. The first weeks of married lovemaking will be a foundation for all the weeks that follow." Pastor Jonathan opened his Bible. "You said that you were embarrassed to talk to a pastor about this—would it surprise you that God has given even the kind of sexual information you are looking for in His Word? It's hidden in poetry from thousands of years ago, but it is just as good advice today as when Solomon wrote it! Let's see if you can find some instructions for your wedding night here in this recounting of Solomon's first night with his new bride."



How does this compare with your experience? Do you identify with Nathan or Sue that you need more information about sex in marriage than you have available in your country? Or perhaps you are more like Jonathan or Esther who counsel young couples about developing a strong sexual relationship in their marriage. Or, perhaps you have children whom you will someday need to teach about God's perspectives on sex. Perhaps your own sexual relationship in your marriage could improve. Maybe you are single and feel somewhat left out, the way Sue said she felt, or even pressured to engage in activities that you're not sure are right. This lesson will be applicable to all of these life situations and more. It will help you discover the secrets that are contained in the Song of Solomon, as well as give you some practical information about the sexual relationship in marriage. You will have the opportunity to see how this applies to your own marriage relationship to learn better how to enjoy God's gift of sexual love. If you are single, there will be some articles that you should not read until you are about to be married (and these will be labeled), but you too will benefit from letting your mind be renewed by a study of sexuality in God's Word. So get ready to learn things from God's Word that you may not have known were there. You will lay a foundation by focusing for a few minutes on the Song of Solomon itself.

Lesson Outline

Lesson 8: Sexual Lovemaking Builds Unity

Topic 1: The Song for All Seasons
Who Wrote the Book and Why?
The Structure and Images

Topic 2: A Good Gift From God

A Blessed Gift
The Gift of Sensory Pleasure
God's Gift of Bodies
Giving Your Gift to Your Spouse

Topic 3: The Gift That Keeps on Loving
Preparation for Lovemaking
Down the Garden Path

Topic 4: The Gift of Chastity
Chastity During Marriage
Chastity Before Marriage
Semi-Chaste?
Renewed Chastity

Topic 5: The Gift of Love Through the Seasons of Marriage

Topic 1: The Song for All Seasons

Within marriage, sex is so important that God has given us an entire book in the Bible to learn how to understand and enjoy it. When was the last time you read this book all the way through? You read parts of it in Lesson 4, but perhaps you haven't ever read the whole book straight through.

- Please read through Song of Solomon 1–8 right now.



It is only a few pages. What stands out to you? It is not like any other book in the Bible, is it? Perhaps you find it a bit confusing—goats? Spices? Lilies? Coconuts? What is this couple talking about?

How can all these poetic images from nature help your marriage in the twenty-first century? If you are engaged or if you have been married for a long time, you can still learn much from Solomon and his bride. It is truly a song for all seasons of married life.

Who Wrote the Book and Why?

“I wonder, wonder who, who-oo-who? Who wrote The Book of Love? Was it someone from above?”⁸

The songwriter penning the words above wondered about the book of love. He would perhaps be surprised to learn that the book of love is found in the Bible and that the book had both a divine and human authors. The first line of the Song of Solomon says that this book is “Solomon’s Most Excellent Love Song.” Solomon was the son of King David. He lived about 1,000 years before Christ, or about 3,000 years ago. What do we know about him? You can read many stories about Solomon’s life in 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles. His wife, “the Shulamite,” is a nickname, not a proper name, so scholars aren’t sure of her identity, but we have some clues about her. Many of the poems are written from her point of view.



- Please read about our young couple in “Solomon and the Shulamite” in *Readings in Marriage*.

⁸ The Monotones, “Book of Love” 1958.

QUESTION 1

How was Solomon qualified to write a book of the Bible about marriage? Please open your Life Notebook and answer the following questions. In the article above, you started reading Solomon's temple dedication prayer in 2 Chronicles 6:14-33.

- What did you see in Solomon's prayer that shows that he knew God personally?
- We know from other passages, that by this time, Solomon was married to Naamah, the Ammonite. What do you see in 2 Chronicles 6:32-33 that addresses this issue?
- What is the difference between what he says about a foreigner in Israel in his prayer, compared to what later happened in 1 Kings 11:4-8? Write a few sentences about the spiritual transition between this early part of Solomon's life and the later part. What do you think may have led to this decline?

Solomon and his bride are not the only characters in the Song of Solomon. There are also the "daughters of Jerusalem"—a chorus or group of attendants around the wife (Song 1:5), the bride's brothers (Song 8:8), and an unnamed observer in the couple's bridal chamber (Song 5:1). This person, as you will see, is highly significant to a correct understanding of married sexual love.

Perhaps, as you have been reading, you have been disturbed. Have you been taught that the Song of Solomon is only an allegory about Christ and the church, rather than having anything to do *really* with sex and marriage? This is a very ancient and common view, but if you view the book only as allegory, you will miss out on much of what God wants to communicate to you.

- Please read "What Is the Song of Solomon?" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 2

Which of these is a true statement about the Song of Solomon? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It is a foreshadowing of the union of the wedding supper of the Lamb, which is mentioned in Revelation.
- B. It is a practical guidebook, which can help couples begin their sexual relationship in marriage.
- C. It is the best poetry that Solomon ever wrote.
- D. It was not inspired by God in the same way that other books of the Bible were.
- E. It opposes the view of some who teach that the body is evil, only the spirit is good.

So, in this lesson, you will be looking at the Song of Solomon as God's instruction manual about sex in marriage and applying the principles to improve your sexual relationship with your spouse.

The Structure and Images

How did you enjoy your first read through of the Song of Solomon? Sometimes people find it hard to figure out exactly what is going on. Part of that confusion is due to the structure of the book. One minute the couple is obviously in each other's arms, then they seem to be back at their wedding ceremony, then back at the bride's family farm. It is helpful if you remember that the style is not linear through time. It is a collection of a bride's *reflections* on her courtship, wedding, and first years of marriage, and it jumps back and forth between each of these events. It even includes one, and possibly two, reflections on the bride's dreams (Song 3:1-3; 5:2-8).

Another challenge for the reader is that the images in the Song of Solomon are not all plain, but metaphoric. God disguised them for some very wise reasons.

(1) The poetic images are designed to “go over the head” of a child. If a child were to pick up and read the book, he/she might be startled by the word “breasts” (Song 4:5), but most of the more explicit images are hidden in relatively safe images of food, flowers, and livestock.

(2) Beautiful, poetic images raise sexual imagery and practice to a level of art. The terms are neither scientific, nor crass. It is erotic, but it is not pornography.

(3) Poetic images arouse the five senses. Some of the descriptions might leave a modern woman turned off, such as “your hair is like a flock of goats” (Song 6:5), but these were “turn *ons*” for a bride of that culture and era.

(4) Poetic images carry multiple meanings. You may have noticed in your read through that many of the allusions, similes, and metaphors refer to fruit. What does fruit have to do with sex? In the language of the Middle East, fruit has sexual connotations. Pomegranates (Song 6:11), raisins (Song 2:5), and grapes (Song 2:15) were all seen as being “sexy” fruit, because they were full of small seeds. Other fruits had erotic shapes. Before the advent of scientific research, people examined the shape of a plant to try to guess what it was good for treating. The mandrakes (Song 7:13) were thought to improve fertility because the shape of the fruit and root was said to resemble a man. Perhaps you remember that in Genesis, Rachel “sold” her sister a night with their mutual husband in exchange for mandrakes to treat her infertility, but it didn’t work (Gen 30:15). One’s brain is the most powerful aphrodisiac, so just *believing* that the fruit will improve sexual performance probably had some effect and led to the continued faith in the fruit as medicine. Here in the Song of Solomon, Mrs. Solomon’s mention of mandrakes in the bedroom was a sexy incentive to her husband to accept her offer of a whole day of pleasure both out in the vineyards and again back home in their bedroom (Song 7:12-13). Wives, what would your husband think if you made a similar offer (maybe with new perfume or lingerie instead of mandrakes)?

Further obscuring of the meanings happened during translation from the ancient Hebrew language in which it was originally written. When the couple describes each other’s bodies, most translations are squeamish about using the anatomical term and substitute a nearby body part. For instance, read Solomon’s description of the beauty of his bride’s body in Song of Solomon 7:1-5. He begins at her feet in verse 1 and works his way up to her hair in verse 5. Along the way, between her upper thighs and her belly, he mentions a vague word translated “navel,” a body part that he says is like a round goblet, which never lacks “mixed wine.” Since wine is a symbol of sexual pleasure, Solomon is undoubtedly naming a body part that is moist and pleasurable to him—probably not the navel, as the translators choose to call it.

As you read the Song of Solomon, you will need to cultivate your imagination to think about what each of the images might represent, before the sexual images and techniques will become clear to you. It is also a mark of God’s wonderful wisdom that 3,000 years later, we can still understand these metaphors. Let’s see if you can perceive the simile in one passage.

- Please read Song of Solomon 4:2.

QUESTION 3

What is Solomon describing poetically about his bride’s teeth?

If you didn't catch that one, don't worry. You will have many opportunities to practice interpreting other images from the Song of Solomon. Now that you understand some more about our primary textbook, you will enter more deeply into this Song of Solomon and see what God is communicating about sexual love in marriage.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: My Memories and Thoughts About Sex*.

Marriage Building Activity: My Memories and Thoughts About Sex



If you are **MARRIED**, please ask your spouse the following two questions:

1. What is your favorite memory of sex *with me*?
2. What made it so special to you?

If your spouse has any questions that he/she would like addressed in your study of lesson 8, please write them down. If they are not answered by the end of your personal study here, be sure to bring them to your seminar.

If you are **SINGLE**, ask yourself the following two questions:

1. What are my impressions of sex from my past?
2. What concerns would I have about engaging in sex with a spouse?

Topic 2: A Good Gift From God



When God observed Adam's aloneness and said that it was "not good," He gave humankind a gift. This gift sets the married relationship apart from all others by allowing the husband and the wife to join physically as "one flesh" (Gen 2:24). This intimate joining was referred to in the Old Testament as "knowing." Adam's *emotional* sense of aloneness was removed by *physically and emotionally* "knowing" his wife, Eve. The implication is that when they open God's gift, a husband and a wife come to "know" each other in a unique way, which is different from how they know anyone else. This experience bonds them together in a way that

assuages their sense of aloneness.

In Lesson 3, you also saw how marriage enacts a *spiritual* mystery that is too deep to fully understand—the unity that the Son will have with His bride, the church, in eternity (Eph 5:31-32). But that does not contradict the fact that the spiritual mystery, which mirrors heaven, has at its heart on earth a *physical* expression of that mystery—sexual union.

Solomon puts this *physical* experience in his catalog of *four* amazing mysteries that God created in nature.

- Please read Proverbs 30:18-19.

QUESTION 4

Please open your Life Notebook.

List each of the four mysteries from Proverbs 30:18-19, and write a brief statement about what is amazing about each one. Why does sexual relations between a man and woman *belong* with these other amazing natural wonders?

But you can read all of this and still question, is sex really a *good* gift? Does God really approve of it, or just put up with it because it is sadly necessary for human procreation? Wouldn't He really prefer if people all lived as nuns and monks?

- Continue your exploration of these questions by reading Song of Solomon 4:1–5:1. This is a poetic description of the couple's words during their first sexual encounter after their wedding.
- *If you are married*, or about to be married, please *also* read more details about this sexual encounter between Solomon and his new bride in "After the Wedding" in *Readings in Marriage*.

A Blessed Gift

How did you feel when you read of this couple's first sexual encounter in the Song of Solomon? Confused, guilty, angry, shocked, or eager? Take a look again at the bedroom where the couple is resting in each other's arms, sated and relaxed after their lovemaking. Someone seems to be in the room with them. Please notice his words at the end of Song of Solomon 5:1. Who is talking here?



Just in case any reader thought that what has just happened was in any way shameful or ungodly, the Lord reveals His presence in the room. It is as if He stretches His hand out over the bed and pronounces His blessing on everything that the couple has done and will do again and again throughout their married lives together, "Eat, O friends, and drink! Eat your fill, O lovers!"

The Hebrew literally means "get drunk on *this!*" It is an extension on His evaluation of the creation of man and woman in Genesis 1:31, "God saw all that he had made—and it was good!" He created the gift that this couple has just unwrapped in their bedchamber. He invites them to feast on it, to be intoxicated with this experience for the rest of their lives. This is a gift that He gives to every married couple, rich or poor, young or old. All may enjoy it.

If sex is *not* sin, then why is there no sex in heaven? Many of us with good marriages feel sad that there will be no marriage there (Mt 22:29-30). If we have a close and happy marriage, we cannot *imagine* being reunited with our spouse in heaven, perhaps after a long time apart, without feeling disappointed that we will not be able to join with that beloved one sexually as we did on earth. Some have imagined that this omission in heaven is because sex was designed only for procreation or that it is inherently sinful. But these thoughts reveal the weakness of our imagination and a misunderstanding of the goodness of our God. The reason there is no sex in heaven is not because it is sinful, but because it will be *superseded* by a greater reality (1 Cor 2:9; 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2). In heaven there will be more thrilling and engaging fellowship and worship that we cannot now imagine—deeply satisfying experiences that will make us say, "I was blind, but now I see."

Does this seem like a different God than the one that you have heard about before? Many people have heard a negative explanation of God's view on sexuality from Christian leaders of both

genders. As one pastor's wife wrote about sex in an 1890s manual for brides⁹, "give little, give seldom, and *above all*, give grudgingly." What a lie from the enemy of our souls about the very nature of our God, who gives good gifts generously for us to enjoy by using our physical senses (Ps 104:15; 1 Tim 6:17). Have you heard this kind of negative teaching on sex? What did it make you think about God's view of your own sexual feelings?

- Please read "The Doubting Prince" (another fairy tale for grownups) in *Readings in Marriage* and then return here.

Can you see the meaning behind the tale? Like the loving father, God is no miser in the way He designed sexual expression, but He gives us all *good* things richly to enjoy in marriage.

QUESTION 5

Why did the prince hesitate to go in to the party that you had prepared for him? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. He couldn't afford the entry fee.
- B. He misjudged your intentions.
- C. He feared it was a trap.
- D. He doubted your love for him.
- E. He wasn't hungry.

Could you relate to being the father or the prince in the story? If you have believed lies about your heavenly Father's gift of sex, how can you give yourself permission to feast in the private garden that God has given you? Some of you who are married will have no problem surrendering yourself to passionate lovemaking with your spouse. But some of you keep hearing negative voices from your past that seem to drown out the voice of God's blessing. Whose voice is it?

- A mother
- A father
- A story
- A pastor
- Someone who introduced you to sexuality in a wrong situation
- Your own conscience, which says "you don't deserve to enjoy this"

What can you do about these voices that keep stealing the gift of sexual passion from your fingers?

Mind-set

You need a mind makeover to put these thoughts in their proper place!

- Please read Colossians 3:2.

In this passage, Paul is urging readers to change their mind-set. A mind-set is a collection of individual thoughts that, over a period of time, influences the way in which you perceive and evaluate things in your life. What is your *sexual* mind-set like? Where does it come from—your history and experiences—or God's Word?

- Please review Romans 12:2.

⁹ Manual for the Bride:

Ruth Smythers, "Instruction and Advice for the Young Bride," *The Madison Institute Newsletter* (New York: Spiritual Guidance Press, Fall 1894).

God says that your mind-set is not hardened concrete! If your mind-set comes from voices that contradict His, He wants to *transform* your mind into something new—not according to the “pattern of the world,” that sex is dirty or shameful, but according to His thoughts in Song of Solomon 5:1, that you can “drink deeply” and fully love your spouse sexually.

You may also review the Appendix article mentioned in Lesson 6, “Overcoming an Abusive Past.”

QUESTION 6

THREE PRINCIPLES FOR OVERCOMING NEGATIVE THOUGHTS ABOUT SEX

Principle 1: Acts 10:9-16

The apostle Peter had a list of things that, as an observant Jew, he would never eat. The Gentiles ate everything. But one night he had a vision.

- Please read Acts 10:9-16

What does God say about the foods Peter had been trained never to eat because they were “unclean” (Acts 10:15)?

- Write God's words as principle #1 in your Life Notebook.



Is this principle *only* about eating food? In the next scene, we see that Peter is summoned to the house of a Gentile (someone who is not Jewish). Normally, a Jew would never willingly enter the home of a Gentile. He might be asked to touch something or eat something that he considered unclean. But because of the vision, Peter's mind-set has been transformed (Acts 10:28). He goes to Cornelius's house and finds a houseful of people eager to hear the gospel (Acts 10:27). He preaches the gospel and the Gentile listeners come to Christ. His mind-set has changed so completely that he goes on to eat and sleep with those he formerly would have avoided completely (Acts 10:48). At the end of the story, he realizes that God was much greater and more loving than he ever expected (Acts 10:47). How does the principle #1 that you wrote pertain to negative thoughts about sex?

- Write your thoughts about this principle in your notebook.

Principle 2: 1 Timothy 4:3-5

In this passage, Paul says some people wrongly teach others to abstain from marriage and from certain foods.

- Please read 1 Timothy 4:3-5.

In verse 4, you should have seen a principle similar to the one that you just wrote in your Life Notebook. Did you see the principle? Note that not only food is in mind here. The Greek says “everything God created” which refers to not only the food but also the marriage mentioned in verse 3 as well.

- Write this down as principle #2, from verse 4, in your Life Notebook.
- How does principle #2 pertain to negative thoughts about sex? Write your thoughts about this principle in your Life Notebook.

Principle 3: Hebrews 13:4

In this third passage, the writer of Hebrews uses two words to show God's opinion of marriage and the sexual relationship.

- Please read Hebrews 13:4. (Remember as we said earlier, the term translated “marriage bed” is actually referring to “married sex.”)

Did you see the two terms and understand what they convey?

- Write down the principle from this verse as #3.

Now please, read the three principles you wrote down out loud. Do you believe they are true? For those of you who are married--when God sees you and your spouse delighting each other sexually, does He say, “Stop that!”? No, He blesses your lovemaking and says, “Drink freely, O lovers.”

Other Voices

Now that you know God’s thoughts on the subject, let’s deal with what other voices you might still be hearing, which are trying to drown Him out. What messages do you hear?

If you hear a voice that says, “You have sinned. You don’t *deserve* joyous passion in your marriage,” God says Romans 8:1. Read this verse out loud. **Reject the lie from the accuser** (Rev 12:10), **and believe and memorize this verse to answer when the lie hisses in your ear.**

If you hear the voice that says, “You were sexually abused. You can *never* be whole and enjoy the sexual part of marriage. You are too broken and damaged,” God says 2 Corinthians 5:17. Read this verse out loud. **Reject the lie, believe and memorize this verse.**

Do you hear other messages that contradict God’s blessing for you? Don’t agree with them— resist them! Use the sword of truth! Ask God for Scripture to memorize as a rebuttal whenever a lie about your sexuality comes up. One of God’s names is *Jehovah Rapha*. He is *your* healer. As you renew your mind by choosing to believe and accept God’s blessing on your marriage’s sexual relationship, He will heal your mind-set.

The Gift of Sensory Pleasure



While God designed sex, as you have seen, to combat loneliness (Gen 2:18), to spiritually describe Christ and the church (Eph 5:31-32), and to produce children (Gen 4:1), the Song of Solomon never mentions any of these things! Solomon and his wife are not having sex merely because it is good for them (like medicine), or because they want to have children. The reason that they find it so appealing is mainly because they delight in its pleasure! Is this “worldly” thinking, instigated by the flesh or the devil? By including this book in the Bible, God shows us that He, not the devil, designed the experience of sexual love to be a feast for all the senses. Within the boundaries of a lifelong commitment in marriage, the desire for and the experience of sensual pleasure is *not at all* the same as sinful lust.

QUESTION 7

Please open your Life Notebook.

For **MARRIED** couples: The Song of Solomon shows clearly that, in sexual love, all of your physical senses should come alive. The husband and the wife in the Song are masterful at noticing and finding pleasure in every part of each other’s body.

Please read any *two* chapters of the Song of Solomon. On a separate piece of paper create an observation chart with six columns. Title each column with one of the five senses. On the chart, note how each of the five senses is involved in sexual lovemaking in your two chapters. Find as many examples as you can. The first example, from chapter 1, is given for you below, so you could continue with that chapter, but you may choose any two chapters that you wish.

| Reference | Sight | Hearing | Touch | Smell | Taste |
|-----------|-------|---------|--------|-------|-------------------------|
| Song 1:2 | | | Kisses | | Kisses compared to wine |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

Solomon and his bride do not hold themselves back, do they? Their minds are not someplace else while they are making love. They engage every sense and enjoy this experience wholly.

- Which sense in your chart has the *most* entries? Is this a sense that you typically appreciate when loving your spouse sexually?
- Were any senses neglected? For instance, did the couple make love in the dark so that the sense of sight was eliminated?
- Mark or list any of the analogies or sensory descriptions that are true of *your* spouse. Then think of and write at least one sensory analogy that is NOT from the Song of Solomon, but expresses your experience of pleasure in your spouse's body. You will not need to share this with anyone else (except your spouse, if you wish), but stop and thank God for this feature of loving your spouse.

SINGLES, please create a similar six column chart with the five senses labeled across the top.

| Stage of Relationship | Sight | Hearing | Touch | Smell | Taste |
|-----------------------|-------|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| | | | | | |

In the first column, list stages of relationship with a potential spouse as defined by your culture. For instance you might list down the column

- Stage 1 Casual friendship in the context of a group
- Stage 2 Personal friendship
- Stage 3 Courtship
- Stage 4 Engagement

In the intersection square between each sense and the stage of relationship, describe or give examples of what an appropriate experience of that sense might be (if any) *for yourself*. For instance, under the column labeled "touch" describe what you think is an appropriate type and frequency of *touching* for each stage of relationship you would be in.

This may be a handy reference for you to keep in order to share your thoughts with a potential mate. It is normal that you may each have different views of what is appropriate. Therefore, by being frank and specific with each other, you have the opportunity to protect each other's conscience and increase trust in your relationship.

God's Gift of Bodies

Who gave you your body? How do you feel about this gift? James 1:17 says that God only gives *good* gifts. Do you often wish God's gift of your body were different than it is? The other body, which you have been given if you are married, is your spouse's body. Is your spouse's body beautiful enough to satisfy you? As long as you heed the world's messages about bodies, you will never be satisfied with either your body or your spouse's. Surveys of very beautiful people reveal that they all would change some feature, if they could. Current trends prefer very thin, toned women, but in previous generations, a soft, plump woman was thought beautiful. Current trends favor broad-shouldered men with bulky, defined muscles. But in the 1960s, in the West, most of the young men whose photos girls pinned on their walls were thin, not particularly muscular. Now, many images in media are computer enhanced to where they are anatomically impossible in real life. If you chase after the popular body image, either in yourself or in a mate, you are setting yourself up for constant anxiety and dissatisfaction.



If your spouse says that he/she finds your body more attractive than all others, that compliment is a powerful aphrodisiac and a secure foundation for enthusiastic lovemaking. Similarly, if you have the most beautiful spouse, you see yourself as the luckiest person alive! You are overwhelmed with passion. Conversely, if you criticize your spouse's appearance, it will lead to hesitancy and embarrassment in bed for both of you. But how can you say, like Solomon or his wife, that your spouse is more attractive than *all* others, when you know very well that somewhere in Hollywood there is a more perfect specimen of manhood or feminine beauty? Are you supposed to tell a *lie* just to make your spouse feel better? What did Solomon and the Shulamite do?

- Please read "The Body Beautiful."

QUESTION 8

According to the pattern of Solomon and the Shulamite, what two perspectives help you to love your spouse as the "most beautiful" man or woman on earth, even if he/she might not be considered supremely attractive by the rest of the world?

QUESTION 9

Solomon recognized a woman's frequent tendency to be uncertain about her own beauty. He also realized that other women might criticize her. How did he build up his wife's image that her body was beautiful enough? Find at least three examples of this.

When Solomon said to his wife, "you are like my mare would be among Pharaoh's stallions" (Song 1:9), he was not saying that she was a horse.

The Bible tells us that Solomon had 4,000 horses that were valuable enough to be kept in stalls, 12,000 other horses, and 1,400 chariots (1 Kgs 10:26; 2 Chr 9:25).



Archeologists have discovered five of his stables in different locations around Israel. By comparing his wife in this way, Solomon is saying that she is very exciting! Other men would strongly desire to be in his place.

As you have seen, your body and your spouse's body are beautiful gifts from God with a great capacity for pleasure in sexual expression. To learn more about the sexual parts of a man and a woman and their functions, before you go to the next subtopic, you may want to examine the articles and diagrams in the Appendix documents: "Understanding the Male Body," "Understanding the Female Body," and the drawings "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made Male and Female." Singles should be cautioned that these are frank and specific descriptions of the sexual organs and sexual functions of men and women, followed by practical advice about giving and receiving pleasure during sex.

- Stop and thank God for His extraordinary gift of a body *designed* to experience sexual pleasure.

Giving Your Gift to Your Spouse

What is the best present that you can imagine to give your spouse? For a single person, one of the greatest gifts you can give to a future spouse is a body that has not been shared with others intimately and an undivided heart. But even those who are married may not have fully given these gifts to their spouses. After studying God's Word in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7, Katie realized that she needed to give the authority over her own body to her husband as a gift. It would be a permanent gift for him to keep, not just for one night of pleasure. In the past, she had sometimes avoided sexual relations by thinking only about what *she* felt like doing. But now, she wrote to God in her journal about her plan:



February 14: "Today is the day when I will give my body to my husband as a gift. Honestly, I am nervous. Why? This is what You desire of me, God, why am I so nervous?"

Is this the way you would feel if you were about to offer your body unreservedly to your spouse? Was this what you were thinking as you said "I do"? Many people, women especially, might hesitate to give their bodies to their husbands because they fear that their bodies would be misused. Did you notice that this authority mentioned in 1 Corinthians 7 is not just for women to give to their husbands, but for husbands to give to their wives as well? Other spouses fear losing one of their main sources of leverage in an endless power struggle. In

Romans 12:1, Paul says that your body belongs to God. In marriage, that belonging expands and God says that your body also belongs to your spouse.

- Please read 1 Corinthians 7:1-7. (Please note: If your version says “touch” in v 1, it refers not just to shaking hands, but to “attaching to,” i.e., getting married). Why do you think this passage motivated Katie to give her body to her husband as a gift?

QUESTION 10

Many principles about sexual relationship are contained in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7. In your Life Notebook, complete a brief two-column chart that states the principles found in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7, which you just read. In the first column restate *in your own words* the principle that you found and the reference verse. In column two, see if you can condense that principle into a short title. When you have completed your chart, answer the questions below.

Example:

| <i>Principle</i> | <i>Title</i> |
|--|---------------|
| 7:1 “I need to keep my hands to myself when single.” | Sexual Purity |
| | |

(Question 10 continued)

So, what do you think about what you recorded on the chart and how it applies to you and your spouse (or possible future spouse, if you are single)? Record your thoughts in your Life Notebook about the following questions:

- Who is the rightful steward of your “vineyard”?
- Does this allow for misuse of your bodies? What other Scriptures apply?
- Based on this passage, what do you think about using sex to get your spouse to do something that you want? What about withholding sex as a punishment when your spouse does something that you don’t like?
- If you are **MARRIED**, how do these verses compare or contrast with your typical ways of interacting with each other sexually? If you are **SINGLE**, how do these verses compare or contrast with your thinking about your body both as a single person and as a future marriage partner?

How would these principles pertain to couples who decide to separate for the Lord’s work, to go to school, to take a distant job, or are ordered to another place in the military? Paul says (in 1 Cor 7:5) that separating, even for a good reason such as fasting and prayer, should only be for a limited amount of time. Who knows the number of Christian men and women who have left home for military service, because of job requirements, or to go to school, and either they or their spouse have been tempted into the arms of someone else? In each case, the one who left probably assumed that their marriage was strong enough to stand up to the temptation that each one would face. You are encouraged in 1 Corinthians 10:12 not to *overestimate* your own ability to resist. Perhaps more important, don’t overestimate *your spouse’s* ability to resist temptation, by removing the body (yours) that you vowed would be his/hers sexually “for as long as you both shall live.” Especially if you have, or your spouse has struggled with unchastity in the past, ask God for a creative alternative. Some absences are truly unavoidable. But don’t separate unless you have first sought God together and asked Him for His plans for you. Do what you can to keep your hearts close, despite the separation.

Even the apostles didn’t overestimate their ability to resist temptation when lonely. When away from home for extended times, the married apostles brought along their wives (1 Cor 9:5). Is

there any way that your spouse can accompany you or vice versa? If not, what can you do to help each other overcome temptation during the absence? God can both change situations and/or help you and your spouse to endure unavoidable separations while remaining faithful to each other in every way. You will reflect more on the subject of chastity in an upcoming topic.

There is one thing that 1 Corinthians 7 is *not* saying. Even though your body belongs to your spouse, and vice versa, 1 Corinthians 7:4 does not mean that you have a right to *dishonor* your bodies through perversions. Romans 1:26-27 suggests that there is a *natural* use that must guide sexual expression. Both of your bodies always belong to the Lord first. You will be pointed to an Appendix article about permissible sexual practices near the end of this lesson.



So, how did Katie's gift-giving session go? Here's her journal from the next morning:

February 15: "Last night was a sweet evening. I told John when I gave my body to him that I never really fully gave my body when we were married—there were lots of 'ifs and no's.' Depending on my mood, I would give a little of my body or all of my body but always it was MY decision for it was MY body. So with a ribbon on and nothing else, I stood before him and offered myself. He wept. Do I feel different? Yes! It is a constant reminder that this body belongs to John."

A few years later, Katie and John still have a closer and more intimate relationship because of Katie's decision to give John her body.

So, now you have thought about the Song of Solomon in regard to the beauty of lovemaking in marriage, and the gifts that God has given. You have also considered giving your own body to your spouse as a gift. In the next topic, you will study more about the details of married lovemaking.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Gifting Your Body*.

Marriage Building Activity: Gifting Your Body



For MARRIED WOMEN:

Do you feel the Holy Spirit prompting you to offer your body as a gift sexually as Katie did? Or, do you need to give your spouse the gift of letting yourself experience the pleasure he wants to give you? Or do you have other areas of yourself you have withheld, such as not saving time and energy for him, or hiding your body from your husband's eyes?

For MARRIED MEN:

Prayerfully decide what kind of gift you need to offer your spouse. Putting a bow on yourself and standing before your wife "*ala carte*" might bring more laughter than the tender tears of Katie's husband. Instead, a more meaningful gift might be to offer your body to your wife with the vow that from now on, your body will be working to bring pleasure to her during sex. Do you need to offer the gift of tenderness? Of time? Of privacy? Of romance? How will *you* wrap your gift?

For BOTH: Make a plan for privacy (arrange a babysitter? Plan an early dinner? Set an alarm clock for 3 a.m.?) to offer your gift this week.

For SINGLES:

Since your body does not belong to a spouse, it belongs solely to God (1 Cor 6:20). If you have never done so, offer your body, especially your sexual parts, to God to be kept holy and sinless for Him. Let Him be the pouch of myrrh and your henna blossoms that protect your “vineyard” (Song 1:13-14)—the One whose constant aroma keeps your body set apart for Him and reserved for the spouse to whom you can give your body as a gift if you marry.

Topic 3: The Gift That Keeps on Loving

Note: This topic contains detailed sexual information. Single students may choose to skip forward to Topic 4. There are, however, some sections labeled here for single adults, should they wish to understand more about the sexual relationship of marriage. Some sections are labeled “for marrieds only.”

Peter was scowling at Brenda, his wife. “What do you mean our sex life could be better? I can’t believe you’re saying that! Don’t I take time to make sure you’ve enjoyed it every single time? When have you not been satisfied?”

“It’s not that we’re not good at it, Peter, we are. And your technique is perfect. You’re a wonderful lover. After ten years of marriage, Pete, you know exactly what to do. But, perhaps, we’re *too* good at it. I just would like to have it be more beautiful, more *sweet and tender*, somehow. Don’t *you* think it was better when it took an hour instead of fifteen minutes?”



Peter rolled his eyes. “You say it’s not good enough anymore because it’s perfect? I don’t understand. How can you improve on perfection? It doesn’t make any sense! You want to go back to where it wasn’t as good because then it will be better? What do you mean, more *sweet and tender*? It sounds like you’re talking about steak, not sex!”

Pete is having a hard time understanding Brenda’s point of view about their sexual relationship. It sounds like they have a happy and well-adjusted sex life. So why is Brenda wanting to “improve on perfection” by making it less efficient? Pete is not alone in his confusion. Brenda is not alone in her desire either.

Preparation for Lovemaking

Every gem, in order to be fully appreciated, must be placed in a setting that reflects its value. You would not take a priceless diamond and set it in a plastic ring or put a real gold ring in the nose of a pig (Prov 11:22). Similarly your sexual relationship merits a *context*, both physically and emotionally that suggests its value. Solomon and his bride made love on a “luxuriant” couch in a room made from aromatic cedar and cypress (Song 1:17). Later they make love in a beautiful place outdoors at least twice (Song 2:10-14; 7:11-12). But the most important context that set apart their lovemaking as special was the way in which they prepared in their relationship with each other. Sexual intimacy proceeds **from** emotional, spiritual, and intellectual intimacy. What kind of a context does your spouse need to fully enjoy sexual relations with you?

An intimate, romantic climate for lovemaking does not happen by itself, even if you have married the most desirable person. A woman usually has a slower preparation phase than a man and she

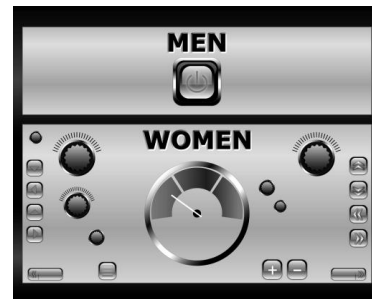
sees lovemaking as the climax of a process of a romantic encounter. Her husband may see the climax as the target, and he wants to hit the target as quickly and efficiently as possible. That is why the majority of the Song of Solomon is devoted to Solomon mentally and physically arousing his wife more than the other way around. As authors Jody and Linda Dillow are fond of saying, “a man is a microwave, while a woman is a slow cooker.” But even that analogy is limited because even a slow cooker has a power switch. Many men are still looking for their wife’s power switch! Perhaps a better analogy would be, “a man is a wok over a gas flame, while a woman is a stewpot over a wood fire.”



This is a better analogy because both pots get equally hot, but it takes more skill and effort to start the stew cooking over the fire. Someone must know how to build and tend to the fire to heat the iron pot.

But frustratingly, what kindles a woman’s fire one day may have no effect the next. Are women just fickle? Maybe this engineer’s view of male and female sexual arousal will make more sense to you.

While a man becomes aroused quickly from either physical or visual stimulation, what arouses a woman varies, as does her hormone level. Specific compliments and gifts will have little effect if the overall relationship has shut off the power! If he has hurt her feelings by criticizing her at noon, and never repented or apologized to restore their emotional intimacy, she will not be able to find his sexual innuendos appealing at 9 p.m. As someone once pointed out, “a woman needs intimacy before she desires sex. A man desires sex to achieve intimacy.” A man’s sexual ardor is built mostly on the woman’s body and movements. Unless his perspective has been twisted by outside influences, it will be heightened if he feels that she respects him. The woman’s sexual ardor, unless her perspective has been reprogrammed, is built on all aspects of their *relationship*.



Even if there is a good foundation of a safe and loving emotional intimacy, a woman’s sexual ardor must be aroused each time for her to produce the physical changes necessary for pain-free intercourse. Like the illustration above, she has many things that might arouse her, but women tend to relate everything together. Therefore, a woman is likely to still be thinking about the problems of the day when she is supposed to be joining her husband in thinking about sex. Her husband can help her to make the transition both to feeling beautiful and to desiring intercourse through her five *pleasure* senses (taste, touch, vision, hearing, smell) and by drawing beautiful *mental* images, just as Solomon did. Communicating love in her heart language (Lesson 4, topic 2) is one way to help her refocus. The thirty-second kiss, which we mentioned in Lesson 4, is another. Like Solomon, his body must smell clean (Song 1:3), not like dirty underwear or old sweat. If a man invests his time in arousing his wife’s desire for lovemaking, he will increase his own pleasure in the experience as well as hers.

QUESTION 11

What have you noticed so far in your reading that Solomon and the Shulamite have done to prepare for their sexual encounters together? Please open your Life Notebook.

If you are a man,

- List at least five things that you have noticed that Solomon has done to *prepare* for a sexual encounter with his wife, and to arouse her to be ready to receive him sexually. Notice both what he **does**, such as preparing a beautiful room (Song 1:16) and putting on cologne (Song 1:3), and what he **says**, such as praising her in different ways. Make sure to note the verse references.
- What ideas does this give you for *preparing* for sexual relations with your own wife? (If you are a **single man**, think of an imaginary relationship.)

If you are a woman,

- Please read Song of Solomon 7:10-13. Sometimes women wrongly get the idea that preparing a romantic getaway is the responsibility only of a husband, but here you can see that a woman can plan this as well. How has Mrs. Solomon prepared for and planned a romantic tryst with her husband?
- What ideas does this give you for *preparing* for your sexual encounters with your husband? (If you are **single woman**, think of an imaginary relationship).

If you are married,

- Can you imagine yourself doing these things to prepare? One of the reasons that we often do not enjoy our sexual relationship as God intended is that we fail to invest the time and creativity that God shows us in His Word is appropriate. As we are married longer, the tendency is to become lazier. Yet as our hormones decrease, our efforts must increase! What would your spouse's reaction be if you prepared your body and your surroundings more carefully? Why not find out?

All Students

- If you were coaching a man or a woman who was getting married next week (someone the same gender as you), how would you describe in a few sentences what this person should know about **preparing** for sexual relations? What questions would you ask him/her? Be sure that your answer includes various aspects of preparation: mental, physical, emotional, spiritual.

Down the Garden Path

Did you observe the different things that Solomon and the Shulamite did during their time in each other's arms in chapter 4, their first time of lovemaking? They did not start immediately with coitus did they? Many times, they began either at the head or sometimes the feet, and they appreciated (and no doubt, touched) each other's body in many places before joining physically.

Couples typically go through a process of twelve steps of increasing intimacy before joining as one flesh sexually. This is an overview to show how the relationship itself progresses physically from initial eye contact to sexual contact—from first meeting, through courtship, to marriage. But it also should describe a cycle of an ongoing physical intimacy in marriage. If you go through these stages of physical intimacy each time that you plan to have intercourse, neither of you will feel rushed or will lag behind, and both of you will progress to the next stage on pace together. As you will see



as you read about the twelve steps in the following articles, you can accomplish some of them in your normal daily life together. A wise couple may keep cycling through the first steps whenever they are together so that both are eager for the few remaining steps to the “garden” gate.

- If you are **married, or about to be married**, please read about the twelve steps in “The Path to the Garden for Married Adults—Twelve Markers From the Living Room to the Bedroom” in *Readings in Marriage*.
- If you are **single**, you may read the version in *Readings in Marriage* that is designed for you, “The Path to the Garden for Single Adults—Twelve Markers From the Living Room to the Bedroom.” Keep in mind that this contains specific and detailed information about sex, so take a moment to ask God if it is good for you to study this now.

QUESTION 12

Please open your Life Notebook.

Find a Scripture reference and illustration in the Song of Solomon for *each* of the twelve signposts of physical intimacy as listed in the article, “From the Living Room to the Bedroom.” The first one is given for you. There are many places to find each of the twelve steps, so there is not a single correct answer.

EXAMPLE

Step:

Step 1-Observation

What Happened:

Song of Solomon 1:10: The groom observes the bride’s beautiful cheeks and neck, which are adorned with jewelry.

Why Go Down the Path?

Are there various reasons why a couple has sexual intercourse? I hope by now you realize that oneness and pleasure are two reasons. But Scripture describes others. Look up each verse in the following question to find some others. Do any of them surprise you?

QUESTION 13

Which principle and reference is **incorrect**?

- A. 1 Corinthians 7:3-5: To help you and your spouse resist temptation
- B. Genesis 24:67: For a wife to comfort her husband
- C. Genesis 4:1: To conceive a baby
- D. 2 Samuel 12:24: For a husband to comfort his wife
- E. Hosea 3:3: To prevent serious health problems

Comforting With Physical Love

Think about the five reasons that you have now examined for having sex: **oneness, pleasure, resisting temptation, comfort, procreation**. Were any of them a new thought for you? For many people, the next to last one, comfort, is a new thought. *Comforting* sex may feel a little different than other types. Even in a good relationship, the energy that is put into sex need not always be mutual. If your spouse is sad, he/she may not have the emotional energy to be an enthusiastic partner. But you can sexually love your spouse, even if it is a one-sided ministry. Tom, my husband, ministered to me this way one day last month:

It had been a rotten week for me. Two good friends were angry with me over two different issues, and I understood why. Even though I had not done anything wrong intentionally, I had failed both of them, and now they were hurt and lashing out. I realized that there was little I could do in either case to improve the situation, and I felt like there were wild animals clawing at my heart. I had to keep up with my responsibilities, so I didn't stop to admit how much my heart hurt. Tom coaxed me into bed and tenderly loved me until I broke down sobbing into his chest.

In the book by Linda Dillow and Lorraine Pintus, *Intimate Issues*, a woman named Ginny describes a similar gift that she gave to her husband:

My husband was heaped in a chair, deeply discouraged. A friend had betrayed him. "Honey, take off your shirt and lie on the bed. I've got hot oil and am going to massage the tension out of your muscles." As I rubbed his shoulders and back, I could feel his tension evaporate. I took off his remaining clothes and massaged the rest of his body. Then I comforted him with my love. It wasn't a sensuous time of lovemaking or a glorious time of intimate oneness. It was a time of giving comfort. When he sighed deeply and fell asleep, I felt such joy because of the love I had been able to give.

So, you have read two examples of both a man and a woman comforting a spouse. Can you imagine using sexual love in this way to comfort *your* spouse?

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: The Gift of Touch*.

Marriage Building Activity: The Gift of Touch



If you are **MARRIED**, plan this week to have a relaxing "touch date." Rather than setting the objective of sexual intercourse, spend some time in steps 1–8, the land of physical affection. Sit with your back against a wall or the head of the bed. Ask your spouse to sit in front of you with your spouse's back against your chest. See how you can creatively bring pleasure to your spouse merely through caressing *non-sexual* areas. Trade positions. Give plenty of praise to your partner about what touch you enjoy. This exercise can improve anyone's sexual expression by enhancing your understanding of what pleases your mate and by learning to enjoy your spouse's touch without worrying about your own performance. (It's also really fun.) This exercise can be a remedy for many sexual dysfunctions, because it removes the anxiety that people have about whether they can perform sexually.

While they must remain free from sexual activity until married, single people need affectionate human touch as well. Encourage an unmarried person this week with a hug, a back rub, a hand on the shoulder—or whatever touch would be appropriate in your culture between friends or family members.

(Continued on next page)

If you are **SINGLE**, how can you help to meet this basic human need for touch in yourself? Corrie ten Boom, while spending many years as a single traveling speaker, said that when she grew hungry for physical affection, she prayed and asked God to hug her. Often that hug came through someone else. Ask God to meet your needs for touch, and be quick to offer the touch of encouragement and comfort to others.

Topic 4: The Gift of Chastity

Chastity: *Purity, cleanness. To be sexually committed to one's spouse, or in singleness, to abstain from physical expression of sexual desire.*—Author's definition

The Greek word that is translated “chastity” in the New Testament, *sophrosyne*, denotes moderation, self-mastery, and patience for God's timing. While Solomon and his bride are free and expressive in their lovemaking, they also warn us about the preciousness of chastity and the importance of God's timing. Why is chastity a good gift of God?

Chastity During Marriage

As you saw earlier, the Song of Solomon begins with a picture of chastity in marriage. The Shulamite talks about how, on her bed at night (Song 1:13-14), she remains devoted to her husband. His *preciousness* to her on her bed acts as a guard against an inappropriate relationship with someone else. As you will see, saving herself for one man has been the practice of her life. At the end of the Song of Solomon, the couple again picks up the theme of chastity—both before and during marriage.



- Please read Song of Solomon 8:6-10 now.

In Song of Solomon 8:6, the Shulamite urges her husband to put *her* “like a seal” on *his* heart.

The seal she mentions was a signet stone, usually with words or a symbol engraved on it, which meant “belonging to the king.” If the king wanted to mark something as belonging to him, he would drop wet wax on it and would emboss the wax with his seal. Often this was done on a letter so that no one could open it except the one to whom it was addressed.

Just as she kept herself for him, the Shulamite asks Solomon to keep himself only for her. Then she asks him to place this seal on his *wrist*. Archeologists have unearthed some of the seals that she is describing. The engraved stone was hung by a pin from a bracelet. She wants to always be as close to him and as precious as his signet. Then she draws three strong analogies in Song of Solomon 8:6.

- To understand them, please read “The Flame of the Lord” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 14

Which statements does the article make about the sexual relationship in marriage as it parallels the flame of God? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It is holy.
- B. It destroys those who misuse it.
- C. It is beneficial to those who use it within God's guidelines.
- D. It is like a garden.
- E. It must be kept alive by careful tending.
- F. It is more precious than all your possessions.

Did Solomon heed the pleading of his bride to remain faithful to her? We know he didn't. Eventually he took wives for political expediency and then apparently degraded into sexual obsession and idolatry (1 Kgs 11:1-8). Just as Paul describes in Romans 1:24-32, the two practices—illicit sex and illicit worship—went together.¹⁰

The Strange Fire of Adultery

“More bitter than death is the kind of woman who is like a hunter’s snare, her heart is like a hunter’s net and her hands are like prison chains.”—Ecclesiastes 7:26

Sex, even with a stranger, is never casual. God says it is fully invested with meaning, whether the participants acknowledge it or not.

- Please read 1 Corinthians 6:9–7:1. (You will be working with this passage in a few minutes.)

God intends that a husband and a wife give themselves fully to each other, body, soul, and spirit, so He designed all of these parts of being to come together in sexual love. In marriage, whole-self sex builds the relationship and deepens it so that the couple is uniquely and joyfully one flesh.

But what if it is trivialized or brought outside the holy place of marriage through premarital sex or adultery? Illicit sex at first gives a burst of pleasure (Heb 11:25). Eventually, though, the road leads to pain and grief for all—not only the couple but also the whole family, and ultimately the whole society becomes weakened.



Just like the flame of God, sexual passion is highly destructive when mishandled. In order to engage in sex with someone other than a spouse, you must disengage your soul from the physical pleasure and build walls and barriers between parts of your heart that should not be alienated from one another. You become less integrated—have less and less integrity. Sometimes, just as it was for Nadab and Abihu who dashed into the temple with “strange fire,” death is the result. In Israel, God required the death penalty for both the man and the woman engaged in adultery (Lev 20:10). In the New Testament, when the woman was caught in “the very act,” it was a significant miscarriage of justice that the man was not dragged publicly to Jesus’ feet along with her (Jn 8:4). As you know, Christ refused to condemn her to death as the Law required, but extended mercy and admonished her not to sin any more (Jn 8:11). Do you think that she learned chastity from her near-death experience?

- Please read Proverbs 2:16-19.

¹⁰ Illicit Sex and Illicit Worship Went Together

The idols of Canaan listed in 1 Kings 11 were fertility gods, worshipped through sexual acts as well as sacrifices. Ashtoreth was the fertility goddess of the Phoenicians, and she was worshipped by performing sexual rites with prostitutes. Milcom/Malcam is another name for Molech, another idol worshipped through sex and the ritual sacrifice of babies (Lev 18:21; 20:2; 2 Kgs 23:10). Chemosh was a god of death, which fed on human sacrifice (2 Kgs 3:26-27). The pairing of idolatry and sexual immorality is easy to understand when one remembers the demonic entities behind idols who delight in the debasement of humans and the corruption of God’s glory (1 Cor 10:20). As the text says, these idols were detestable, and worship of them was especially wicked from one who had received a visit from the true God twice (1 Kgs 11:9).

QUESTION 15

What does it say about getting caught up in an adulterous relationship in verses 18 and 19?
(Select all that apply.)

- A. It is a phase and soon passes.
- B. The path leads to death.
- C. As long as it is a secret, it won't hurt anyone.
- D. It is not a pathway of life.
- E. You do not return from it.
- F. It's worse for a woman than a man.

Some people return to sexual sin over and over. It is a sin that easily ensnares. When they are caught, they repent and promise to be faithful, but keep getting involved in extramarital or premarital sexual relationships. Christ has the power to pull a repentant adulterer or fornicator back from the path of death and set him/her on the path of life (1 Cor 6:9-11), but God is not mocked. A Christian may not live in continual sin without consequences (Rom 6:1-2; Gal 6:7). Even though Christ can forgive sexual sin, it is an outrage to God and to a spouse (1 Cor 6:9; Heb 13:4). Paul turned one sexual sinner “over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh”—strong measures to help him control his unchastity before facing eternity (1 Cor 5:5). Can you imagine what the result of Paul's decree might have looked like to others or felt like to the man who was involved?



Just as God became enraged at Israel's adultery in worshipping idols (Ezk 16:32-39), it is holy and right for you to be outraged and deeply hurt if your spouse betrays your marriage by relating to another person the way that he/she should only relate to you. Submitting to it would be condoning the sin. While physical violence is not an option, it is righteous to show strong emotions and to refuse to participate in sex while your bed is defiled (Heb 13:4). Not only are you at risk for a deadly disease, but also your marriage covenant has been violated. Adultery is a legal, moral, physical, and spiritual failure. We will deal more with this issue in Lesson 9.

How hard is it to remain faithful? Chastity may be no problem when your marriage relationship is going well, when you are both physically healthy and attractive to each other, and when you have time and privacy to express your love to each other sexually. But real life has many challenges that make chastity more difficult. What do you do if your sexual desires go unmet? What if you know someone who is overwhelmingly more attractive than your spouse, and you know you could satisfy your sexual desire with that person? How can you remain faithful, when your body screams for satisfaction and your spouse does not seem to care?

QUESTION 16

Please open your Life Notebook.

What different reasons and motivations for sexual faithfulness in marriage can you find in Proverbs 7:6-27 and 1 Peter 2:11-12? List these, then the additional reasons from the passages you just read, Proverbs 2:16-19 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-7:1. List as many as you can find in the four passages. Can you now arrange them in different categories? Which ones are the most compelling to you? Mark them. Be prepared to discuss these reasons in your seminars.

Fueling the Flame of Chastity in Marriage

Note that 1 Corinthians 7 describes the main principle of regular sexual expression in marriage as a deterrent to fornication and adultery. But the dynamics are usually different for a man and for a woman.

A **woman** tends to see sex as an integral part of, or even the culmination of, a greater pattern of the couple's relationship. A woman will typically only commit adultery when her emotional relationship with her husband is weak. Therefore, a man can help his wife to not be tempted by other men. He not only loves her regularly, as Paul admonishes, but he learns all of her heart languages and makes sure that *he is the one* speaking them most clearly in her life. The woman herself cultivates a positive mental picture of her husband's character and body. She does not entertain constant critical thoughts about him and avoids others who belittle him. She does not choose as friends women who are disrespectful of their own husbands.

A **man** may also be tempted into adultery because his relationship with his wife is not strong. However, a man may also be tempted purely for the experience of sex itself. A woman is often shocked to learn about her husband's unfaithfulness because their marriage seemed so happy, even their sex life. How could he seek out another woman when their *relationship* was so good? A wife needs to understand that a man's temptation often begins with his natural "eye hunger." A husband and wife can work together to make sure that this hunger for the sight of a woman's body is satisfied at home. A single man must understand this natural instinct and work deliberately to remain pure until his eye hunger can be satisfied in marriage.

- Please read "Eye Hunger" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 17

Please match the principle about cultivating chastity with an illustration or example of this in real life.

| <i>Principle</i> | <i>Example</i> |
|--|--|
| A person should flee evil. | He goes a longer way to work to avoid a particular billboard. |
| A person should avoid doing something that appears to others to be evil, even if it is innocent. | She does not eat lunch alone with an attractive man who is not her husband. |
| A man should bounce his eyes. | He looks away from the prostitutes outside the bus window and turns to focus on talking with someone standing next to him. |
| A woman should allow her husband to feast on her with his eyes. | If he loses his temper, he does not allow the offense to grow overnight without making peace before bedtime (Eph 4:26). |
| A man should help his wife to remain chaste by keeping their relationship strong and sweet. | She leaves some light on while making love to her husband. |

Chastity Before Marriage

Jennifer and Andy talked in the park, as bicycles whizzed past in the afternoon sun. Usually they found it easy to talk with one another as they enjoyed the park together, but now they were strangely silent. In his pocket, Andy felt the hard box that contained the gold ring that he wanted to offer to Jennifer. He had planned this moment carefully, but now his eyes were riveted to the silver band already on her hand. He knew that her parents had given it to her on her birthday when she turned sixteen, and she had kept her promise to remain pure until she could give her body to her husband on her wedding night. He had hoped that he would be the man who would receive it. Suddenly he realized that she would be getting a poor trade, and he felt ashamed. Could he ask her to give her body to



someone who had betrayed her with other women? As he looked into her innocent and open face, he blinked back tears. “Jen, I want to ask you something, but first I have to tell you that I have not always lived as a Christian man. I desperately wish that I could undo the pictures in my mind and the sin I tempted others into while I was in college. I convinced myself that it was okay on a technicality. Now I realize that I squandered the purity that I wish I still had to offer you. But for the past four years, I have kept myself pure. I still struggle with the pictures I put in my mind, but by God’s grace, it is less and less often. I have not been intimate physically with anyone since then. Jen, can you forgive me? Could you trust me to be faithful to you?”

One of the greatest gifts that a man and a woman can give each other is their purity. A chaste heart is a priceless gift to bring to your marriage bed. Your mind is not adulterated with mental pictures and habits learned from other sexual partners. Like Solomon’s signet ring pressed on smooth wax, the two of you are able to make a unique imprint of each other’s bodies and sexual responses.

But how can you remain chaste when there is not even a fiancé on the horizon and your desires demand satisfaction? How does the Song of Solomon describe this time of life and how to handle it?

- Please read “Purity and Penalty” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 18

Please recount the article’s explanation of the logic of Song of Solomon 8:11-12. How did the Shulamite’s virginity affect the way that she valued herself? How does she compare her value to one of Solomon’s rented vineyards?

Semi-Chaste?

Many of you reading this lesson are like Andy in our introduction and have already engaged in varying levels of sexual expression before marriage. Perhaps you have not “gone all the way” to coitus but have intimately experienced someone else’s sexual response. Many Americans remember a leader who said “I did not have sex with that woman!” He didn’t consider it sex because he had practiced a method of sexual expression other than coitus. But he went down in history as a liar because he eventually admitted that he had shared a sexual encounter, other than coitus, with another woman (Lev 20:17 and others). Adultery and fornication involve sharing sexual response outside of marriage, *not only* coitus.

So you can see that the Shulamite, a “wall,” waited for her husband and experienced great sexual delight and freedom in their relationship. The people who are “doors” open themselves to sexual passion “before its time” (Song 8:4). These may suffer great emotional pain when these intimate sexual relationships end. They suffer spiritually from guilt and shame and inhibit their relationship with God. Their sexual sin leads to other sins, such as hatred, revenge, suicide, or murder of an unborn child through abortion. They will bring the memory of another person’s sexual passion into their own marriage bed. They also may physically defile their marriage bed by transmitting a disease. Do you know the various ways that you can catch a sexual disease—even without engaging in coitus?

- To learn more about medical consequences of sexual immorality, you may read the Appendix article “Sexually Transmitted Diseases.”

QUESTION 19

According to the article, if my sexual partner has genital warts, which of the following activities will **keep me** from catching the disease?

- A. Using a male or female condom.
- B. Touching my partner's sexual area only with my hands.
- C. Washing carefully after sexual activity.
- D. Any sexual expression other than coitus.
- E. None of the above. It is highly contagious through all types of skin contact with affected tissue.

In the article, you saw that every one of the diseases has tens of millions of sufferers, many of them in the town where you live and among people whom you might not suspect. It is a false notion that using a condom will prevent you from catching or giving a sexual disease. Condoms break, fall off, have flaws, and don't cover every part of your body where you can be infected. Condoms slow down, but do not eliminate, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. Some diseases, such as warts, can be transmitted by any skin contact with an affected area. The only solid methods of being sure you will not contract a sexually transmitted disease are either remaining single and avoiding all types of sexual intimacy (which includes foreplay), or marrying as healthy virgins and then maintaining a faithful, monogamous relationship throughout life.

During marriage, a couple may be surprised to find that sex is *not* always readily available. There will be many times where they need to practice the same self-control as in singleness—such as when a spouse is ill, exhausted, or absent. Statistically, one who was faithful to wait for marriage struggles less with temptation toward adultery later. The chaste ones associate sexual pleasure with only one person, and so don't quickly think of extramarital attractions as leading to sex. If you are willing to eat the tart fruit of chastity in singleness, it will encourage the sweet fruits of self-control and trust when you are married.

Renewed Chastity

- Please read Hebrews 12:16-17.

Here the author tells us that there is a parallel between those who are sexually active before marriage and Esau's tears over his lost birthright. Esau was unable to regain the blessing that he had lost, and history for his progeny changed as a result. Is it pointless, then, once your purity is lost, to say "no" to sex from then on? Can one who has been sexually immoral ever be considered pure by God?

- Please read "Recovering Your Lost Purity" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 20

What is God's intention for you now? The article described a three-step process from the book of Titus, which are God's objectives for recovering your sexual purity. What are these three steps and how do they apply to sexual sin?

- Please read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

The sinful lifestyles were as common in the stories of church members in Paul’s day as they are today. Maybe some on the list are sins that you have struggled with in your own life. Paul is saying that all of these types of people—homosexuals, fornicators, swindlers, thieves, idolaters, cross-dressers, greedy folks, and adulterers—had all come to Christ and had been washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of Christ and in the Spirit. While abstaining from sexual sin is absolutely necessary for *walking* with Christ (1 Cor 5:9-13; 6:10; Rev 21:8; 22:15), purity is not a necessary *prerequisite* for coming to Him. It is the very reason why you must come to Him. He died to take the punishment for these very things. But if your sexual sins remain secret, and the ties with other partners unbroken, the enemy will use them to maintain a grip on you and to attack your mind. If you have past sexual sins, the following cleansing exercise is very important for you to silence him. You may want to ask a trusted friend to pray with you as you complete this exercise.

- Please begin by reading Romans 6:12-14, then complete the “Cleansing Exercise” in *Readings in Marriage*.

“Do you have only that one blessing, my father? Bless me, also me!”—Esau, Genesis 27:38

Even if you trust that God will forgive you, do you hesitate to believe that God would now want to *bless* you after the evil that you have done? Do you fear that God is like Isaac toward Esau, and that, even though He can forgive you, there is no more opportunity for a blessing?

- Please read Romans 8:28-34.

Whose idea was it that you should come to Christ and become like Him? When the voices come that say you are not worthy, what will you say to them? According to this passage, whom can you ask for help? If you struggle with letting go of your guilt and shame, memorize and believe this passage. According to verse 32 what does He want to give you now? If you are **MARRIED**, part of the “all things” that He wants to give you is the sexual pleasure that He designed for you (Song 5:1). Everything in this lesson is for you. If you are **SINGLE**, the gift that He offers you is the privilege of worshipping Him with an undistracted heart as well as drinking and imbibing Him in a deep and precious way (1 Cor 7:34-35). Don’t waste your singleness by failing to love Him completely.



- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Sexual Chastity*.

Marriage Building Activity: Sexual Chastity



If you are **MARRIED**, meet with your spouse privately to share your thoughts on the following two questions:

1. Has unchaste behavior affected our relationship in any way? This includes not only your own thoughts and deeds, but also others’ behavior—a parent’s defection, a sibling’s example,

a pastor's condemning words, for example. If you have never asked your spouse's forgiveness for your sexual sins, this is the time to cleanse that guilt and shame from your relationship. You only need to give as much detail as the Lord would lead you to share, but if you have secrets, you need to "come clean" with your spouse and ask for his/her mercy. Similarly, this is the time to offer and emphasize your forgiveness to your spouse for his/her past sexual sin against you. You will consider forgiveness in more detail in Lesson 9.

2. What can we each do to help each other remain faithful in our thoughts and actions?

Draw out whether there is anything that you are doing or not doing that makes it more difficult for your spouse. End your conversation by praying together.

If you are **SINGLE**:

1. Journal your thoughts about the way that both chastity and unchastity have affected your story, especially your relationship with God. This may include your parents or other family members whose behavior or words have influenced you. Ask God to cleanse you of any sins that you have not previously confessed or to cleanse you if you feel unclean because of sexual sins against you.

2. If you have a close friend of the same sex, discuss how you can help each other remain pure in mind and behavior. Pray for each other to honor God with your bodies.

Topic 5: The Gift of Love Through the Seasons of Marriage

"The love of each one of you toward one another grows ever greater; therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you."—2 Thessalonians 1:3b-4a, NASB



So far in this lesson, you have seen how God created sexual love to bless and to bond married couples. You have considered many aspects of giving and receiving sensual love. But you may be asking—at what age is it normal for the sexual fire to go out? You may be surprised to know that sex is a part of marriage through every season. Sexual love that endures and matures through the decades of marriage is a powerful testimony to the presence of the Holy Spirit. The image of "happily ever after" is one that the world is hungry to believe really exists. But life has many different seasons, and the sexual flame must adapt to each one by overcoming various challenges, in order to stay burning. In Song of Solomon 2:15, the Shulamite calls these challenges, the "little foxes that ruin the vineyards." Foxes can pop up at any time, but here we have arranged them according to the four seasons of married life. The articles that follow will help you to identify and

to keep them from harming your relationship. Even if your marriage is in the “spring” season, you will find information in the “winter” section that will help your marriage now.

Note: This section is designed for married couples. Singles may wish to skip forward to the end of this Lesson.

“Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards—for our vineyard is in bloom.”
—Song of Solomon 2:15

The Spring of Marriage

Spring is the first months of the couple’s married life. It begins with the honeymoon. These can be some of the happiest days of your life. After years of abstinence, the locked gate, you are free to enter the garden and enjoy its fruit and flowers. But there are a few things that a young couple must consider. The following article surveys such topics as honeymoons, fear of pregnancy, and sexual diseases.

- Please read “Catching Spring Foxes” in *Readings in Marriage*.

As you read in the article, there are several issues that are related to fertility in this phase of married life. How should believers think about limiting or increasing the size of their families?

- You can read more about this subject in the Appendix articles “The Ethics of Limiting Fertility” and “Methods of Limiting Fertility.”

QUESTION 21

Please read Deuteronomy 24:5. What is the most important objective for planning the place and schedule for a honeymoon?

The Summer of Marriage

During this phase of your life, you have entered a period of early fruitfulness. You may have young children, or you may struggle with infertility as you are working to establish yourselves in one or more careers. Life at this stage takes a great deal of energy. The foxes nibbling on your sex life may include pregnancy, infertility, work, postpartum depression, and children.

- Please read the article “Catching Summer Foxes.”

QUESTION 22

Please open your Life Notebook and respond to the following questions in a few sentences. (1) How does the inability to have a child stress a marriage? Describe several *good* ways that a couple may respond to this painful situation. (2) How might you, as a Christian leader, help childless couples deal with their grief? (3) How might you influence cultural prejudice against adoption in your sphere of influence or publicly?

The Autumn of Marriage

The Autumn Garden is the phase of your marriage where perhaps you have the greatest fruitfulness. Children are older and are beginning to turn into young men and women with questions. You sense that it is your last chance to influence them. Your career is firmly established and your marriage has perhaps weathered several storms. Issues of this season include lack of privacy, boredom, and sexual dysfunction.

- Please read “Catching Autumn Foxes” in *Readings in Marriage*.

If you wish to think more about how the five principles that you read about in the article apply to specific sexual practices, you may read the Appendix article, “What Sexual Practices Does God Permit in Marriage?” which goes into more detail on these five items. It is written to married couples, not singles. You may benefit from reading it with your spouse and analyzing the list of sexual practices near the end of the article. Which ones are *prohibited* on the basis of the five criteria? Would any of the *permitted* ones be pleasant for you to try out together?

QUESTION 23

Planning a love affair. Please open your Life Notebook and also read Proverbs 7:6-27. Do you see what the immoral wife does and says to start a sexual affair with a man? While married people often decrease their efforts in preparing for a romantic sexual relationship with their spouses, notice how this adulteress prepares and entices someone else’s spouse.

1. Describe how a couple that is having a secret romance may act. Respond to the following questions by jotting down brief phrases or making lists:

How do they treat each other?

Where and how do they meet?

What do they do when they are apart?

What do they do when they are together?

Why is this so exciting and pleasurable for them that they would risk their reputation and purity?

2. Do you think that *neglecting* these ways of romantically enticing one another in marriage could make an illicit affair more likely? Could married couples keep their marriages stronger by doing some of these things? How could a *married* couple have an affair *with each other*? Describe what a secret love affair *between you and your spouse* might be like. What could you do first to get it started? How could this benefit your marriage?

The Winter of Marriage

During the winter of your life, the children have left home and perhaps you are tempted to think that the best part of your sexual life is over. But this is the time where you reap the benefits of the good things that you have invested during the earlier years of your marriage. No longer do you have listening ears at the bedroom door. You know what pleases the other. Perhaps work is no longer as demanding, or you are retired. Let these winter years be ones of bringing pleasure to your spouse even more expressively. Studies show that an active, loving sex life with a lifetime partner can keep your body and mind healthy and positive. But like all the seasons, this one has some common foxes to catch.

- Please read about them in “Catching Winter Foxes” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 24

When did the article say that the instruction of 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, to have regular sexual relations, ceases to apply for an older married couple?

- A. When one or the other is no longer able to have normal intercourse.
- B. When one or the other is no longer interested in sex.
- C. When the woman starts menopause.
- D. When they reach age sixty-five or seventy.
- E. When the woman’s vagina begins to atrophy.
- F. Never. The instruction never stops applying to a married couple.

The Appendix article “Improving Physical Function in Sex” gives married couples of all ages a number of exercises that can strengthen physical aspects of sex and correct some common problems.

So, now that you have had a chance to think through all of these aspects of sexual relationship in marriage, what effect will this have on your own life?

QUESTION 25

Please record in your Life Notebook your answer to the following questions.

1. How would you describe the model of sexual relationship given in the Song of Solomon (which includes chastity before marriage) compared to the relationships that are typical among your relatives or in your culture?
2. What changes have you been sensing that the Lord would want you to make in your thinking and practices related to sex? What has prevented you in the past? How will you overcome these deterrents?
 - Please do the *Marriage Building Activity: Improving Our Sexual Relationship*.

Marriage Building Activity: Improving Our Sexual Relationship



If you are **MARRIED**, share with your spouse your responses to Life Notebook Question 25. Share any convictions that you have come to in regard to changing your own behavior. Pray together about any areas of sexual discord or dysfunction.

If you are **SINGLE**, talk to God in prayer about your responses for Question 25.

Please make sure that you have completed every *Marriage Building Activity* for Lesson 8 (and recorded your experience in your Life Notebook) before proceeding to Lesson 9. Completion of these activities will form 40 percent of your grade. The Marriage Building Activities for this lesson were the following:

- *My Memories and Thoughts About Sex*
- *Gifting Your Body*.
- *The Gift of Touch*.
- *Sexual Chastity*
- *Improving Our Sexual Relationship*

Appendix articles related to this lesson were the following:

- Overcoming an Abusive Past
- The Ethics of Limiting Fertility
- Methods of Limiting Fertility
- Fearfully and Wonderfully Made Male and Female
- Sexually Transmitted Diseases

- Understanding the Female Body
- Understanding the Male Body
- Kathy's Story: Vaginismus
- What Sexual Practices Does God Permit in Marriage?
- Overcoming Impotence
- Improving Physical Function in Sex

Lesson 8 Self Check

QUESTION 1

What is one of the four reasons given that God hid sexual instructions in poetry?

- A. It kept the information safe from children, who do not need to know about sexual intercourse.
- B. He considers sex sin, so He wants to minimize it.
- C. Mentioning sexual body parts is immoral.
- D. It is not about a real husband and wife.
- E. It is only a picture of Christ and the church.

QUESTION 2

What is the main subject matter in Song of Solomon chapter 4?

- A. Solomon is admiring his wife's beauty at their wedding.
- B. Solomon is coaching his new bride through her first sexual experience with him.
- C. Solomon and the Shulamite are singing and dancing together.
- D. Solomon is introducing his foreign bride to the natural beauty of Israel's mountains.
- E. Solomon is warning his bride about wild animals.

QUESTION 3

Who is in the honeymoon suite with the newlyweds and what does he tell them?

- A. The keeper of the hotel tells them to be quieter.
- B. The bride's father tells her not to be afraid.
- C. God tells them to try to make a baby.
- D. A friend of the groom tells them that he is jealous.
- E. God tells them to get drunk on lovemaking.

QUESTION 4

Which one of the five senses is never stimulated by Solomon or his wife in the Song of Solomon?

- A. Hearing
- B. Touch
- C. Taste
- D. Smell
- E. Sight
- F. None of the above

QUESTION 5

What was **NOT** one of the things that the Shulamite says made her husband attractive?

- A. His scent
- B. His black hair
- C. His gentle eyes
- D. His kisses
- E. His perfect teeth
- F. The way he aroused her sexually

QUESTION 6

What chapter of Scripture says that authority over your body sexually belongs to your spouse?

- A. Leviticus 21:7
- B. 1 Corinthians 7
- C. 1 Peter 3
- D. Ephesians 5
- E. Genesis 2:23

QUESTION 7

Pleasure is **NOT** a reason given in the Bible for having sex. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

Both men and women can have an orgasm at the height of sexual pleasure. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

Chastity does **NOT** include which concept?

- A. Wearing a ring or belt
- B. Sexual faithfulness in marriage
- C. Refraining from sexual intimacy while unmarried
- D. Self-control
- E. Patience for God's timing

QUESTION 10

If an older woman begins to find sex more painful, what is one thing she should NOT do?

- A. Get an estrogen crème from her doctor
- B. Have sex frequently
- C. Use a "spoon" position for sex
- D. Tell her husband that she can't have sex with him anymore
- E. Use extra lubrication when she has sex

Lesson 8 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: *Your answer*

QUESTION 2:

- A. It is a foreshadowing of the union of the wedding supper of the Lamb, which is mentioned in Revelation.
- B. It is a practical guidebook, which can help couples begin their sexual relationship in marriage.
- C. It is the best poetry that Solomon ever wrote.
- E. It opposes the view of some who teach that the body is evil, only the spirit is good.

QUESTION 3:

Her smile is white, freshly clean, and no teeth are missing—every top one has a bottom “twin” and no areas are “barren.”

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

QUESTION 5:

- B. He misjudged your intentions.
- C. He feared it was a trap.
- D. He doubted your love for him.

QUESTION 6: *Your answer*

QUESTION 7: *Your answer*

QUESTION 8:

Considering your spouse’s body supremely beautiful comes from (1) recognizing the pleasure you receive from it, and (2) loving the person inside.

QUESTION 9:

By telling her over and over again how beautiful he found her, especially that he found her more beautiful than others, such as 1:8: most beautiful among women; 1:9: my mare among a herd of Pharaoh’s finest horses; 1:15: How beautiful you are! 2:2: A lily among thorns is my darling among the maidens; (others).

QUESTION 10: *Your answer should look something like the following:*

| <i>The Principle</i> | <i>Principle Title</i> |
|--|-------------------------------|
| An unmarried man should not have sex with a woman (1 Cor 7:1). | Purity |
| In order to deter immorality, a married man should have sex with his wife, and a wife with her husband (1 Cor 7:2). | Frequency encourages fidelity |
| A husband should give his wife sexual love, and a wife should also give this to her husband (1 Cor 7:3). | Marital rights and duties |
| Your body belongs to your spouse (1 Cor 7:4). | Ownership |
| Do not withhold your body from your spouse. Even if you mutually decide to be apart for the Lord’s work, don’t be apart for too long or it makes you vulnerable to Satan’s temptation (1 Cor 7:5). | Regularity |

QUESTION 11: *Your answer*

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13:

- E. Hosea 3:3: To prevent serious health problems

QUESTION 14:

- A. It is holy.
- B. It destroys those who misuse it.
- C. It is beneficial to those who use it within God’s guidelines.
- E. It must be kept alive by careful tending.
- F. It is more precious than all your possessions.

QUESTION 15:

- B. The path leads to death.
- D. It is not a pathway of life.
- E. You do not return from it.

QUESTION 16: *Your answer*

QUESTION 17:

| <i>Principle</i> | <i>Example</i> |
|--|--|
| A person should flee evil. | He goes a longer way to work to avoid a particular billboard. |
| A person should avoid doing something that appears to others to be evil, even if it is innocent. | She does not eat lunch alone with an attractive man who is not her husband. |
| A man should bounce his eyes. | He looks away from the prostitutes outside the bus window and turns to focus on talking with someone standing next to him. |
| A woman should allow her husband to feast on her with his eyes. | She leaves some light on while making love to her husband. |
| A man should help his wife to remain chaste by keeping their relationship strong and sweet. | If he loses his temper, he does not allow the offense to grow overnight without making peace before bedtime (Eph 4:26). |

QUESTION 18:

She was not for sale at any price. She has great self-respect because she has kept her body pure and can give it freely to whomever she chooses. She offers her body and her sexual love as a priceless gift, which could never be purchased, even by his great wealth.

QUESTION 19:

E. None of the above. It is highly contagious through all types of skin contact with affected tissue.

QUESTION 20:

God wants to (1) Redeem me from every lawless action, (2) Purify me so that I can belong to Him, and (3) Inspire me to be enthusiastically engaged in doing good deeds instead of lawless ones. It relates to sexual sins because God wants to remove the impurity from my sexual sins and instead of sinning anymore and leading someone else to sin, I can do good works that bless others.

QUESTION 21:

The most important objectives are plenty of time together and privacy so a couple can focus on developing a delightful and expressive sexual relationship without having too many other activities or expectations.

QUESTION 22: *Your answer*

QUESTION 23: *Your answer*

QUESTION 24:

F. Never. The instruction never stops applying to a married couple.

QUESTION 25: *Your answer*

Lesson 8 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

A. It kept the information safe from children, who do not need to know about sexual intercourse.

QUESTION 2:

B. Solomon is coaching his new bride through her first sexual experience with him.

QUESTION 3:

E. God tells them to get drunk on lovemaking.

QUESTION 4:

F. None of the above

QUESTION 5:

E. His perfect teeth

QUESTION 6:

B. 1 Corinthians 7

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9:

A. Wearing a ring or belt

QUESTION 10:

D. Tell her husband that she can't have sex with him anymore

Lesson 9: Healthy Habits of Unity

Lesson Introduction

“Please come in and close the door, Ben.” Mr. Juliano held out his hand and Ben shook it heartily.

“So, what is your decision? I’m sure it wasn’t too difficult when you and Precy sat down and considered what an important opportunity this is.”



“It is a very generous offer, Mr. Juliano, but I’m afraid I’m going to have to turn it down.”

“What!?” Mr. Juliano’s face turned red and his eyes narrowed. “You can’t be serious!”

“I’m quite serious, sir. Precy and I prayed together last night and thought about the things we know that the Lord is calling us to do: adopting a baby, raising our sons, serving the Lord together. If Precy and the children are not part of the relocation package, I cannot go.”

“Don’t be a fool. You know this job will give you more opportunities for advancement, for a higher salary, and will also let you attend seminary, something you’ve said you’ve always wanted. The seminary in Singapore has a weekend plus Monday program, and I’ve already gotten permission for you to have every Monday off and to work longer hours Tuesday through Friday instead. I stuck my neck out for you, and now you waste my time!”



“I’m sorry, sir, I do appreciate so much your trying to help me, but I just cannot leave my family for so long.”

“But it’s only for three years, and the apartment is shared with other staff, not appropriate for a family. You know dozens of people who have been away from their families for longer than that. It’s our people’s tradition to live away to establish a career! Julie stayed here for five years while I was in Singapore and she was fine. The kids kept her busy enough that she barely noticed I was gone. Can’t Precy move home with her parents?”

“Her parents aren’t married to her, sir, I am. When we were married, we promised before God to live together until death. I didn’t see anything in those vows about a waiver for advancing my career or going to seminary.”

Mr. Juliano’s eyes flashed with anger. “I can see that your wife has too much control over you. You must stand up to her! Even if she doesn’t like it now, she would forgive you after a while, especially when the bigger paychecks started coming in.”



“Precy doesn’t try to control me, sir, and I know she would forgive me if I went, just like she forgave me when I used to eat, sleep, and breathe this company when I first started working here. But God says we are a team, and I don’t want her ‘getting over’ not having me around. I’m sorry, sir.”

“I still think you are a fool, Ben. But I have to respect you for having the courage of your convictions.”

“Thank you, sir.”

Living together in the same place as much as possible is an important aspect of a thriving marriage relationship. There are also many more aspects of marriage that help maintain unity and intimacy. Just as with a physical body, all parts of a marriage relationship must be functioning well for it to be healthy. Sickness in the stomach will make the whole body feel sick. A small hole pierced through the heart will kill the whole body, even though the liver and stomach may be functioning splendidly. One good thing does not make the bad part well: for instance, a wife who says, “We communicate with each other very well, but I can’t forgive him for what he did”; or a husband who says, “I always pray with my wife, but sometimes I lie to her.” One good aspect of a marriage does not prevent a bad one from damaging it.

As you have seen in Lessons 7 and 8, good communication and sexual intimacy are two essential ways to increase and maintain unity in marriage. But there are many other habits that are essential to a healthy relationship. Some of these habits are so critical that they, if missing, are like a bleeding wound and must be addressed immediately before health can come to the marriage. In this lesson, you will consider five additional aspects of a healthy, intimate marriage.

Lesson Outline

Lesson 9: Healthy Habits of Unity

Topic 1: The Virtue No One Wants

Pride

Humility

How to Open the Door to Humility

Topic 2: My Greatest Need

Needing Forgiveness and Grace

The New Ability of the Forgiven

Practicing Forgiveness

Refusing to Forgive

Topic 3: Trust and Integrity

Topic 4: Releasing Control

Controlling My Spouse

Releasing Desires

Topic 5: Time Alone Together

Topic 1: The Virtue No One Wants

The overall subject of this three-lesson unit is unity. Even though we have devoted a whole lesson each to communication and to sex, the biggest threat to marital unity is something far more



difficult to address than failures in those areas. Like air, this threat is around us and within us, but we rarely notice it—at least in ourselves. It is so much a part of our world that it is inconceivable to us that it *should not* exist, and it *will not* exist in heaven. Can you guess what it is? The *greatest* threat to unity in marriage is pride.

Pride is so much of the center of what fallen human beings are that we would perhaps barely recognize ourselves without it. We cling to it with the tenacity of our own skin. We believe the lie of the enemy that without our pride we would surely die or cease to be fully human. Yet it is this sin that Jesus was most concerned about, even more than the “big” sins, which we might think are more significant. Pride damages a marriage relationship quickly and provides fertile soil for many other seeds of sin to grow. In this topic, you will look at replacing roots of pride with seeds of humility, especially in marriage.

Pride

A surrender of pride is the first essential of the Christian life. God says no one can find forgiveness for sin without it (Lk 18:13-17). Yet I cannot remember when I last heard a serious sermon on the deadliness and pervasiveness of human pride. Can you? Most of us don't teach much about pride, but not necessarily because we are so humble. Most of us miscalculate the *importance* of humility, or we think one can have humility *and still retain* pride, or we think God should be content with *superficial* humility, called politeness. Because pride is so common in all "normal" people, and especially in leaders we admire, we reason that it cannot be a very odious flaw. In fact, we might joke about pride, "I'm humble and proud of it!" Imagine joking about the other sins that we readily understand are serious. We wouldn't think these jokes are very funny:

"Oh, my wife's the *faithful* one. I'm just an *adulterer*."

"I know it'll scare the *life* out of you, but I'm just a *murderer*."

"To tell the *truth*, I'm just a terrific *liar*."

Name any sin that affects marriage: adultery, lying, cheating, stealing, jealousy, laziness, or failing to follow God, and you can easily trace it to its root of pride. Our glib blindness to the seriousness of pride is frightening because of its critical consequences. So, we disdain pride with our words and clean up our act as much we remember to. But, we secretly feed and protect it. What happens to our marriages when we do this?

- Please read "Pride Destroys Marriage" in *Readings in Marriage*.



QUESTION 1

God treats pride with special revulsion, and He uses as much suffering as necessary to refine it out of His people so that humility can grow. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

When my husband points out that I failed to remember to pick up a package for him on the way home from work, which response does **NOT** reveal a prideful heart?

- A. "You should have called me to remind me before I left work."
- B. "Don't I have enough to do without doing your work too?"
- C. "I'm too stupid to remember."
- D. "And I suppose you want *me* to go back now and get it?"
- E. "I'm sorry I forgot. I will go get it right now."

Perhaps it surprised you that # 3, "I'm too stupid to remember" was a statement of pride. It sounds so humble! When we attack ourselves outlandishly, we do it so that the other person will stop attacking us. Maybe he/she will even say, "No, of course you're not stupid. You are very smart."

QUESTION 3

In the article, “Pride Destroys Marriage,” which item below was **NOT** an example of God trying to develop humility in His people through suffering?

- A. Paul in Philippians 3:8
- B. Jesus in Matthew 11:29
- C. Abel in Genesis 4:3-8
- D. Paul in 2 Corinthians 12:7
- E. Israel in Deuteronomy 8:2, 16

For most of us, we excuse, justify, and rationalize our own selfish actions as *understandable*, but we judge our spouse’s self-serving behavior harshly as sin. Our double standard should make us weep. Only when we finally realize how far our hearts are from the characteristic of humility that God loves so much, can we begin to appreciate and deeply desire the humility of Christ.

QUESTION 4

Please open your Life Notebook.

Take a few moments to be totally alone with God. Do you think pride is a serious problem for you? Is it a problem in your relationships, particularly in your marriage? Journal your thoughts about your own heart. The people who have pride the worst are the most blind to it because it is often accompanied by insecurity and fear, which doesn’t feel “proud.” Ask your spouse, a close friend, or one of your children if they think you have a problem with being proud.

Humility

“But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.”—Isaiah 66:2, NASB

Have you spoiled your marriage relationship by your pride? Even though pride gets us into deep trouble, *humility* can sometimes get us out.



God Himself has a “soft spot” in His heart for the humble. He is willing to show mercy to even the most intensely wicked person who will approach Him in abject humility. Look at the Bible examples below.

Can you remember the names of the bad kings of Judah and Israel? If you can, on your mental list are no doubt the names of Rehoboam, Ahab, and Manasseh. But did you know that even though these were very wicked men who led God’s people into idolatry, they were each *spared* when God’s judgment caused them to totally humble themselves before Him (1 Kgs 21:29; 2 Chr 12:12; 2 Chr 33:12-13).

Then, there was wicked and prideful Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king who took God’s people away into slavery. What did God do to save him from his pride? Perhaps in answer to Daniel’s intercession for him, he was driven to madness in God’s powerful offer of humility and salvation. He accepted God’s offer and humbled himself. As a result, He came to know God and was restored (Dan 4:33-37).

Even though we see David as a good king, he seemed to sin even more often and perhaps more spectacularly than his predecessor, Saul. Yet God dismissed Saul from ruling and exalted David! Why? It was because of the difference in their hearts that God’s assessment of them was exactly opposite (1 Sam 28:16; 1 Kings 14:8). When Saul’s sin was exposed by the prophet Samuel, Saul defended himself and blamed others (1 Sam 15:19-21). He hung onto power even after Samuel

told him that the kingdom was no longer his, and eventually Saul compelled someone else to help him commit suicide (1 Sam 15:26; 31:4). By contrast, when David’s sin was exposed by the prophet Nathan, and God pronounced a stiff sentence, David reacted with humble repentance (2 Sam 12:13).

New Testament Examples

A New Testament example of the contrast between differing reactions of pride and humility is Judas and Peter. Both Judas and Peter sinned against Jesus. Peter denied Him, and Judas betrayed Him. But the contrast between the two is clear in the ways that they reacted and the eventual outcomes for them.

| Peter Responds With Humility | Judas Responds With Pride |
|--|--|
| <p>Peter responds to his defection with repentant tears (Lk 22:62). He humbly accepts Christ’s forgiveness and reconciliation (Jn 21:15-18) and goes on in a few short weeks to preach the sermon that begins the church! He becomes, along with James, Paul, and John, one of the main leaders of the early church (Gal 2:9). He goes from being the disciple known for brashness, to one known for humility. Later, when Paul points out Peter’s hypocritical behavior with some Jews, Peter repents, rather than attacking Paul (Gal 2:14; 2 Pet 3:15).</p> | <p>When Judas realizes that he has sinned, he tries feebly to repair the damage himself by returning the thirty pieces of silver. When he cannot “fix” his guilt himself, he does not throw himself on God’s mercy. Instead, he throws down the money and takes on the prerogative of God as judge and executioner (Mt 27:5). Suicide is not an act of humility, but of pride.</p> |

Humility in Marriage

As we have seen, a marriage where one or both partners are motivated by selfishness and pride can never experience *unity*. Pride bars the door to all sorts of good things that the Lord wants to do through our marriages. Pride builds walls and shoots off blame and justification. Humility allows us to expose our weaknesses and fears to one another. We have no false image to project, nothing to hide, no commitment to self-defense. Humility brings marriage partners closer than they could have ever imagined. It equips them to deal with any problems or sins through working together in unity, without hurting or blaming each other. Once humility removes pride from the door of our interchanges with one another, there is no limit to the amount of Christlike love and unity that can develop in our marriages.

- Please read “How Does Humility Bless a Marriage?” in the Article section.

Wouldn’t it be wonderful to have a spouse who felt and acted in the ways the article described? Can’t you just imagine what some of those humble words would do for you if your spouse would just say them *and mean them*? Those words would meet your needs for love and significance in such a powerful way, wouldn’t they?

But your spouse’s heart is not your responsibility nor under your control. Fortunately, you can affect something just as powerful, which *is* under your control. You can seek to become that humble servant to your spouse that you would desire for yourself. You can bring that level of encouragement and love to your spouse that you imagined would minister to you so deeply. The question is, do you really want to?

Enough to surrender your pride? And if you do want to, how can you remove pride from barring the door?



QUESTION 5

Please open your Life Notebook.

Which three of the seven attitudes of humility in marriage described in the article would you say are most often lacking in your attitude toward your spouse? Which ones would mean the most to your spouse to experience from you?

How to Open the Door to Humility

Do you feel that it would be difficult to change your attitudes toward your spouse after years of a different pattern? Like the faith of a mustard seed, God seems to be pleased when our humility is even a tiny sprout. He promises to keep perfecting us as long as we live (Phil 1:6).

One way to work toward humility is by seeing Jesus' humility more clearly.

- Please read "Desiring to Be Like Jesus" in *Readings in Marriage*.



QUESTION 6

Please complete the phrases from Philippians 2:2-8 in order to reveal how the humility of Jesus can be portrayed in your marriage.

| <i>Phrase Part 1</i> | <i>Phrase Part 2</i> |
|--|--|
| Complete my joy and be of the same mind | but about the interests of others as well. |
| Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, | by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature. |
| Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests | by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross! |
| You should have the same attitude toward one another | did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped. |
| Though [Jesus] existed in the form of God, He | that Christ Jesus had. |
| [Jesus] emptied himself | be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself. |
| He humbled himself | by having the same love, being united in spirit, and having one purpose. |

- If you are married, please read through Philippians 2:2-8 out loud, substituting your spouse's name each time you read "one another" or "others." Please do this now.

Sometimes progress seems slow. I admire and appreciate others who have genuine humility toward me. But when troubles come, my own mask of love and humility slips off to reveal that ugly face of pride and selfishness once again. I get so tired of seeing it in the mirror! What can we do about our perennial pride?

- Please read "Overcoming Pride" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 7

Please open your Life Notebook.

As you saw in the article, Jesus' cleansing of the temple represents what He wants to do in your heart. What things does Jesus want to do in your temple that correspond to these six things, which He did in cleansing the temple at Jerusalem in Mark 11:15-17? Please read each one prayerfully and ask God how He wants to cleanse the temple of your heart in each area. Write these applications to your life and your marriage in your Life Notebook. Be prepared to share some of your thoughts in your seminar.

| Jesus' Action | What I Want Him to Do in My Heart |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. He entered the temple with intention. | |
| 2. He cast out those who were buying and selling. | |
| 3. He overturned the money-changing tables. | |
| 4. He overturned the seats of those selling doves for the offering. | |
| 5. He stopped the temple system of worship. | |
| 6. He instructed "Is it not written: 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers!" | |

If you have received Christ as your Savior, the Holy Spirit is already working to transform you. But God made you with the right to choose evil as well as good. He let Eve and then Adam eat the fruit. He let the rich young ruler walk away. You must unlock the doors to the rooms within your prideful heart and humbly ask Him to cleanse them. If you thirst for humility like His, He is already at work developing humility in your heart. Any problems and suffering that you have experienced in life are for the good purpose of helping you accept His invitation to greater humility.



Do you want Him to work in your heart? Then cry out to Him! If you are so afraid of letting go of your pride that you cannot even ask for it to be removed, tell Him, "Lord, make me willing to be willing." He only needs that little assent, and He will go to work on your behalf. He loves you and will only do what is truly best in you.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Humility Exercise*.

Marriage Building Activity: Humility Exercise



Open your Life Notebook and find your notes from your reading of Mark 11:15-17 and from the article “How Does Humility Bless a Marriage?”

If you are **MARRIED**: Share with your spouse a few areas that you feel most in need of Jesus’ cleansing so that you can exhibit humility in your marriage. Ask him/her to pray together with you about developing these characteristics. Choose together one verse on pride from this lesson and memorize it. Be prepared to share your verse and what it means to you in your seminar.

If you are **SINGLE**: Ask God to give you a supportive and trusting friendship. Give that friend permission to ask hard questions and to probe the selfish and prideful attitudes he/she sees in you. Memorize one verse on pride from this lesson. Be prepared to share your verse and what it means to you in your seminar.

Understanding our frequent failure in humility, and *loving*, not despising, the humility of Christ prepares us to understand our greatest need, which we will examine in the next topic.

Topic 2: My Greatest Need

What would you say your own greatest need is? Understanding from others? Love? Significance? While these are important, we hope that the last topic’s discussion about pride helped you to get an inkling that these other needs are really subordinate to a greater need—one which we rarely feel as intensely as our situation warrants. Like our typical disregard of our own pride, this great need often eludes our notice too. If we think of this need at all, it is with only a weak inclination, not the intense hunger and thirst that we would have if we understood our serious plight correctly. Our greatest need is for forgiveness, from God and from each other.



From the time that Adam fell and was barred from the garden, God started revealing plans made from eternity past to meet this greatest need. Without God’s forgiveness, we were doomed to a future cut off from everything good, to suffer unbearable anguish. Worse, we intensely deserved our fate, because we resembled God’s prideful, rebellious enemy more than His Son’s righteousness, humility, and love. Even adherence to a system of laws and sacrifices could not solve our innate wickedness, but rather exposed it (Heb 10:4). Christ presented His lifeblood on an altar in heaven to buy something few of us today even realize that we need more than air and water. Because of our sins and failures, we often need forgiveness in our relationship with God. We also often need forgiveness in our relationship in marriage.

Needing Forgiveness and Grace

Do you agree that your greatest need in your marriage is forgiveness? Without giving and receiving forgiveness you have no hope of ever having a unified relationship with your spouse. That your spouse stays with you, perhaps even loves you despite your profound failure to be what

God has called you to be, is a wonder of grace. How do I know? Because I need grace and forgiveness desperately on a regular basis.

- Please read “Do I Really Need Forgiveness?” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 8

Why did Jesus say that God’s judgment of Capernaum would be harsher than Sodom’s judgment?

What changes in a marriage when you recognize your deep need for forgiveness?

- Please read “The Forgiven Heart” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 9

Open your Life Notebook.

Jesus says in Luke 7:47 that “her sins (which were many) are forgiven, thus she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.” Do you understand why this principle is true in marriage? How would you say the principle in these two passages in Luke 7 and Luke 18 pertains to your relationship to your spouse? Do you have deep feelings of love and appreciation? How have you demonstrated this?

If you are *single*, write in your Life Notebook about needing or receiving forgiveness from someone dear to you.

The New Ability of the Forgiven

Do you remember that in the Lesson 6 article “The Mother-in-Law,” you read about a woman named Grace? Her husband left her at his widowed mother’s home during a period of famine. She was tormented by her mother-in-law and despaired of living. There is more to Grace’s story. One night as Grace lay sleeping, she was awakened by a bright light in her room. The Lord Jesus stood before her.

Now, as Grace told me her story, I was thinking, “How wonderful that the Lord would appear and comfort Grace. He will tell her that He sees her suffering and loves her all the same.” But I was



wrong. Instead of comforting her, the Lord began to reveal Grace’s sins that He had died for—in detail! She said that she stayed up for several hours, confessing each sin and receiving His assurance of forgiveness. Her bitter focus on the wrongs her mother-in-law had done had obscured in her mind the many things that Grace had done wrong herself, starting with her failure to love her harsh mother-in-law. When she had finished confessing and knew that Jesus had forgiven the whole load of sin, she said that she felt clean and light and ecstatically happy.

When she went out at 4 a.m. to start the fire, she still felt happy. But her mother-in-law harshly criticized the work that she had done and then gave her a long list of tasks. This time, instead of acting sullen, Grace smiled broadly at her mother-in-law. “Yes I will!” She told me that even her mother-in-law’s bad attitude could not drown out the joy in her

heart from being forgiven. From then on, she only thought about loving her mother-in-law, no matter how nasty and crabby she was. Because Grace was so aware of how much Christ had forgiven her, she was eager to forgive even the one who tormented her.

Many people reading this page live with daily criticism and harshness from their spouses. If you are one of those people, let recognizing how much Christ has forgiven you strengthen you to overcome with patient endurance and overcoming love (Heb 12:3; 1 Pet 2:20).

When we realize how great a debt we owe and how badly we fall short, we can also thrill at the great love that the Father has shown us by being willing to forgive us. Only then can the Father begin to open our eyes to what it really means to commit love to someone in addition to ourselves.

- Please do the following *Worship Activity*.

Lesson 9 Worship Activity



Please read 2 Corinthians 13:5 again.

Close your eyes and ask the Holy Spirit to help you “examine yourself.” What do you see in the way you treat your spouse that resembles the heart of Christ? Because it is your primary relationship on earth, your true heart should be most visible there. If you see some things there that you know have been developed by the Spirit of God, not merely your own self-seeking for good treatment, breathe a sigh of relief because you have evidence of living faith. If you see things in your heart and in the ways you interact with your spouse that are selfish and sinful, confess and turn away from them. Ask God’s forgiveness, and then go find your spouse and ask his/her forgiveness too. If it is granted, don’t forget to feel the pleasure of receiving it!

If you are **SINGLE**, prayerfully examine your relationship with your parents or ask the Lord to bring to mind a particular relationship to examine for this exercise. .

Practicing Forgiveness

Couples who have a strong sense of unity with each other preserve it by offering forgiveness even *before* it is asked. Because they realize how much they have been forgiven, it is not difficult to extend it. If the wound is deep and painful, however, forgiveness may be very difficult. It may take time for the “fruits of repentance” to be demonstrated (Lk 3:8). But forgiveness must be accomplished before there can be restoration and unity. In this subtopic we will look more at offering forgiveness to your mate.

Remember Corrie ten Boom whom we mentioned briefly in Lesson 6? One of Corrie’s most difficult tests of faith did not come in the death camp that she endured, but afterward.

- Please read what happened to her in “Corrie’s Forgiveness” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 10

What did Corrie mean “the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart”? What did she do in order to obey this principle?

Even if the man never really understood how deeply he had hurt Corrie and her sister, Jesus was pleased at her offer of forgiveness and responded by flooding her with feelings of God’s love greater than any that she had felt before. When you choose to forgive your spouse for a serious offense, you can identify more deeply with God’s heart.

If you are reticent to forgive, sometimes it is because you misunderstand some aspect of forgiveness. The first big misunderstanding we can have about forgiveness is discerning the difference between *excusing* and *forgiving*. Most of us do more excusing than real forgiving. What difference does it make?

Forgiveness Is Not Excusing.

Excusing suggests that there was no real intent to offend. It was an accident. For example, if I accidentally stumble and fall while carrying my husband’s cup of coffee to the table, I may ask for forgiveness and my husband may grant it. But really, my actions were not sin. I didn’t intend to spill the coffee. So rather than forgiveness, my husband was really *excusing* me from blame on the basis that I didn’t spill his coffee intentionally. But when I say “I’m so sorry” and he excuses me, unity is re-established in our relationship. Such scenes are very common in happy households.

But forgiveness is a much stronger medicine than excusing, for a much worse condition. When my spouse deliberately sins against me is when God asks me to forgive. In order for forgiveness to be real, the sin has to be an *inexcusable* one. If there is an inadvertent mistake, it needs to be excused, but it doesn’t really need forgiveness.



Unfortunately in most relationships, the point of establishing that it is inexcusable is the point where forgiveness stops, just when it should be starting! Some of us have had no real experience of forgiving others. We have excused others when they didn’t mean any harm (commending ourselves for our generosity) and borne a grudge against them for the remainder.

We resist forgiveness because it feels unjust. How can we say that a deliberate mean-spirited attack “doesn’t matter” by forgiving the one who did the evil intentionally? That brings us to another main point about forgiveness: Forgiveness says that the offense DOES matter. It is because the offense was important that forgiveness, not excusing, is the only antidote strong enough to counteract the poison in the relationship. Forgiveness implies that the wound was serious and real enough to need the most serious treatment. When Jesus hung on the cross, He said, “Father, forgive them” (Lk 23:34). Their offense was too serious for “Father, excuse them.”

Forgiveness Is Not Pardon.

Pardon is when a judge, or one in authority, says that the person is released from guilt. Authorities have the right and responsibility to punish evil in order to protect society and curb

evildoing (1 Pet 2:13-15). Only the legal authority over someone has the right to pardon him. The person may be guilty and will bear consequences or even punishment, but you are not the judge and you will not be the one to exact the punishment. If a law has been broken, you defer to the appropriate arm of government for judgment. You may participate in bringing the law-breaker into custody of the law, which is especially important if you need to protect yourself or others from being hurt. You defer the sentence ultimately to God, who judges justly by understanding the intentions of the heart.

Forgiveness Is Not Participating in or Hiding Evil.

One elderly Christian wife whom I knew “forgave” her husband for his adultery even though he was not repentant, and then she permitted the other woman to share their bed on vacations. Another woman kept her husband’s sexual abuse of their daughter a secret. A third wife whom we know of kept her husband’s affairs a secret. She forgave him over and over until he finally left her for another woman. Is it biblical forgiveness to *hide* a sin that involves adultery, deceit, or abuse? NO! A Christian must never participate in the “deeds of darkness,” but must instead expose them to the proper authorities (Eph 5:11). This is biblical citizenship in the Body of Christ.

Forgiveness Is Not Reconciliation.

Not only does forgiveness release the person to God’s judgment, but true forgiveness also prays that God will be merciful and will forgive the person too, just as Christ did from the cross! True forgiveness often culminates in reconciliation, a restoration of a good relationship. This is the outcome of forgiveness according to biblical examples of it (Mt 5:24; 18:15; Lk 15:11-27). Yet there may be instances where reconciliation is not possible for a variety of reasons. Reconciliation takes two people who both want it and have reason to trust each other again.



OK, you may be saying, it’s well and good for Christ to forgive like that, but it is too difficult for me. Forgiveness may be very hard, but it is always possible through the power of the Holy Spirit for those who will yield their wounded hearts to Him. When believers down through history were able to forgive those who persecuted or even killed them or their families, it was so unsettling to those who saw it that it changed the world (Acts 7:60; Heb 10:34).

“Lord, do not hold this sin against them!”—Acts 7:60b

Forgiveness can change your world too.

- Please read “Understanding and Practicing Biblical Forgiveness in Marriage” in *Readings in Marriage*.

Please imagine this scene. Samuel got very angry and threw Rebekkah’s music box against the wall, breaking it to pieces. His action was cruel and inexcusable. He knew that the box was a gift from her parents and was very precious to her. What should Rebekkah do? She cannot excuse him because his actions were a deliberate sin against her.

QUESTION 11

If Rebekkah decides to forgive Samuel, what are appropriate actions, according to the article? (Select all that apply.)

- A. She decides in her heart to forgive Samuel.
- B. She asks God to forgive and bless Samuel.
- C. She tells others about his breaking the box.
- D. She goes to Samuel to tell him: "I have decided to forgive you."
- E. She feels compassion for how guilty Samuel is probably feeling.
- F. She acknowledges God's hand in allowing this and looks for the good that He will bring out of it.

Because forgiveness includes wanting the best for Samuel, it does not mean that Rebekkah should excuse him for his foul behavior. Sin offends the Lord and harms the person who commits it. So, if someone we care about sins, it is a serious situation! Forgiveness does not bury its head in the sand and pretend everything is fine! It does not mean that Rebekkah should lie to others about what happened or lie to herself about how hurt she was by his cruel action.

Obviously a relationship where one party is angry and dangerous is not a safe or pleasant one, is it? What constructive things can Rebekkah do both to help Samuel and to help strengthen their relationship? First of all, she may pray about understanding why Samuel is so angry. She may talk gently to him about the situation when he is not angry. Also she might introduce him to a counselor who can help him. Chances are, whatever caused his "blow-up" of anger is a more long-standing issue, just as you saw in Lesson 2, and the incident in the home was a trigger of some deep-seated lies. Sometimes a man shows anger because his real feeling, fear, is too weak



an emotion to show (remember "strength" from Lesson 6?) So when a man feels afraid, he will often display anger instead. A counselor may be able to help Samuel tell himself the truth about how he is feeling and allow him to show fear instead of only anger.

If Rebekkah feels that she or her children are in danger from Samuel's anger, she might temporarily leave the situation and ask the pastor or someone Samuel respects for help. Forgiveness does not mean continuing to suffer abuse over and over. It looks at what is best for Samuel, for herself, for God's reputation, for children, and prayerfully figures out what to do in order to curb sin, to bring healing to the situation, and to bring growth to their relationship. Forgiveness does not stop Rebekkah from taking courageous, even bold action. A strong response can help Samuel to respect her.

So, to review, we must discern when it is right to excuse and when it is right to forgive. If there is no intentional sin against us, we should excuse it. If it is intentional sin, we choose to forgive. We *must not* merely excuse. To excuse would fail to match up with God's principles of truth and justice and would fail to make the relationship ready for reconciliation.

Refusing to Forgive

But what if I do not want to forgive? As we said before, forgiveness often seems unfair. It violates my sense of justice. Don't thieves and murderers, for instance, deserve justice, not mercy? Otherwise society would fall apart, wouldn't it?

This is a serious danger. In reality, we must forgive or else the danger to ourselves is great on a number of levels. It has been said that refusing to forgive is like drinking poison and expecting someone else to die.

General Oglethorpe once told John Wesley: "I'll never forgive," to which Wesley replied, "Then I hope, sir, you never sin!"¹¹ Scripture gives us no alternative to forgiving others if we expect our own sins to be forgiven. We *must* forgive our spouses as our Savior forgave those who sinned against Him. In what situations must we forgive?



QUESTION 12

Match the questions and Scripture to the principles that discuss forgiveness.

| <i>References</i> | <i>Principles</i> |
|--|--|
| Must I forgive if the person has not asked me to forgive him/her? Must I forgive if the person is continuing to sin against me? Luke 23:34 | Everyone who is not an enemy is not automatically a close friend. While we do not harbor a grudge or wish ill to the one who hurt us, we do not have to develop a close relationship with everyone. But if this person is your spouse, you already have a close relationship according to Genesis 2:24. In order to fulfill God's intention of a one-flesh closeness, your forgiveness can make way for a loving friendship. |
| Should I forgive those who have not sinned directly against me, but against God or against someone else? John 8:7-11 | Jesus forgave while His abuse was going on without any sign of repentance on the part of the Roman executioners or the Jews who had arranged it. |
| Isn't it righteous for me to punish my spouse if he/she does something wrong? Romans 12:19 | God does not need our help in punishing sin among His children. If your spouse needs chastening, it is not your responsibility to give it. |
| If I forgive, must I also forget? 1 Corinthians 13:5; Hebrews 10:17 | We must refuse to take up an offense, to adopt an unforgiving attitude towards someone who has sinned against another, but we cannot forgive on behalf of one who was offended. However, we should protect someone who is being harmed. |
| Do I have to become friends with the person who wronged me? Proverbs 18:24 | Once we release our demand for punishment, we then must refuse to keep reviewing the memory of the sin anymore. We may not be able to totally forget, but we refuse to dwell on it anymore. |

Prayer Aids Forgiveness.

In Christ's Sermon on the Mount, He instructs us to "pray for those who persecute you" (Mt 5:44). Prayer is the first, middle, and last step of totally forgiving one who has wronged you. Prayer strengthens us to do what we have said is an "unnatural" act of forgiving when we instinctively want revenge or, at least, justice. When we pray, we are able to become more like God, who constantly gives good things to those who don't deserve it (Mt 5:45).

¹¹ Thaddeus Mason Harris, *Biographical Memorials of James Oglethorpe: Founder of the Colony of Georgia in North America*. Boston: Printed for the Author, 1844, p. 124.

But how do we pray? Do we pray for vengeance and judgment on our enemies?

No.

- First we become aware of our own sins and pray: “Father, forgive *me*” (Lk 11:4, paraphrase, emphasis added).
- Like Jesus, we then pray “Father, forgive *them*” (Lk 23:34, emphasis added).
- Then, as Jesus also instructed in Matthew 5, we pray “Father, *bless* them” (Lk 6:28, paraphrased, emphasis added).

As we enter in prayer to the heart of Jesus, we lose our desire to harm, to judge, and to condemn. We see that we are both in the same situation of desperately needing God’s mercy. Instead, we can begin to love the person who wronged us. We desire to see God’s kingdom and His righteousness come to the person to bless him/her and honor God (Mt 6:33).

There are many benefits to you of forgiving in prayer the one who wronged you or wronged someone you love.

1. You spit out the “poison” of unforgiveness, which sickens you physically, mentally, and spiritually.
2. You “assure your heart” before Him that you are becoming like Jesus and are truly “in the faith” (1 Jn 3:18-19).

Forgiveness must be a *normal* habit of your married life together, or you can have no hope of having a happy, unified marriage.

How Forgiveness Relates to Security and Significance.

As you saw earlier, everyone has needs for security and significance. The difference between one who is acting in faith and one who is depending on the flesh is where each one goes to have those needs met. When there is an offense in marriage, the differences are sharply delineated.

QUESTION 13

Review your understanding of forgiveness. Examine the items in the chart on the next page, which lists the possible responses of two different spouses to the same painful offense. In your Life Notebook, fill in a Christlike response for the missing items. Think of someone who is the same gender as you are.

What if your spouse says: “I don’t love you anymore. In fact, you disgust me!”?

Responses to Painful Offense

| Response A: unbiblical, immature Ephesians 4:31 | Response B: Christlike, mature Romans 12:10-21 |
|--|--|
| “I see my spouse as the primary person who is responsible to meet my needs for security and significance.” | “Christ meets all of my needs, so my spouse’s cruel words hurt but do not decimate my security and significance.” |
| “I can’t stop thinking about how my spouse hurt me.” | |
| “I deserve better because I have done so much for my spouse” | |
| “Since I need my spouse to make me feel secure and significant, I must overlook what my spouse said, but I can’t help feeling bitter.” | “I will minister to my spouse in a way that I hope will touch deep needs in a positive way, but only God can fully meet them.” |
| “I’d better make sure that my spouse never does that again. I will make my spouse pay for that cruel remark.” | |
| “I need to tell others what my spouse said that was so unfair and undeserved.” | “Christ has forgiven me so much, so I will forgive.” |
| “I am so angry and wounded, I don’t think I will ever get over it.” | “I will do good for my spouse and pray that God will bless my spouse too.” |

Even though an offense may be painful and evil, when you forgive, you show that you value the person and the relationship as even more important than the offense.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Forgiveness Practice*.

Marriage Building Activity: Forgiveness Practice



If you are **MARRIED**:

1. Is there anything that your spouse has done that made you unhappy or angry, which you have not forgiven? Or have you forgiven in the past only to re-take up the offense? In prayer, forgive that offense.
2. Establish a physical sign of your forgiveness that you can see each day to remind you that you have let go of that offense. It could be one of the following:
 - Drinking together from a “Forgiveness Cup” (1)
 - Writing a verse from Lesson 9 about forgiveness and posting it in your house, on a bookmark in your Bible, or on your computer

(Continued on next page)

-Putting a stick in a plant pot with the verse reference written or etched on it

3. Can you think of anything that you have done to harm or to fail your spouse? Ask your spouse to forgive you. Evaluate how well you communicated humility and repentance and write your spouse's response in your Life Notebook. Be prepared to discuss this in your seminar. If your spouse refused to forgive you, did you handle it like Spouse A or Spouse B in Question 13?

If you are **SINGLE**, please follow the same instructions above but for another family member or friend.

(1) A forgiveness cup is a cup set aside for making peace with one another. When you drink together from the cup, you agree to forgive each other. It makes a wonderful gift to a new bride and groom, with an explanation of how to use it.

Topic 3: Trust and Integrity

"Jeremy, this baby is not yours."

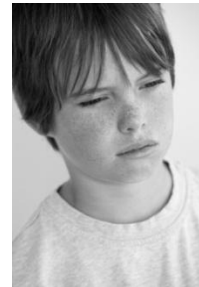


"I'm your husband and I can treat you however I please. No one will believe you anyway."



"Michael, don't ever tell anyone at church what Daddy is like at home."

So far in this lesson, you have looked at two important ingredients that build unity and strength in a marriage. Now let's look at a third: trust, and its flip side, integrity. Intimacy with anyone must be built on trust. If you have integrity, your mate learns to trust you by observing your integrity. Your mate sees that you will never lie, cheat, steal, deceive, betray, or harm anyone. You will do whatever you say you will do. You think privately the same way that you behave in front of others. Your spouse can trust that you will respond to him/her and to your children in a predictably kind way.



If you do not have integrity, you may sometimes *act* faithful, kind, loyal, honest, but only when it serves your advantage. You are just as likely to do evil whenever it suits you, especially in your thoughts, in your home, wherever you think no one important can see. In Scripture, one without character is called a "deceiver."

- Please read Proverbs 26:23-28 about the heart of a deceiver.

QUESTION 14

Match the corresponding items from Proverbs 26:23-28 to reveal what is inside a deceiver.

| <i>Seen by Others</i> | <i>Actually Inside</i> |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Fervent lips, verse 23 | Secretly hates others |
| Disguising lips, verse 24 | Working to ruin |
| A shiny coating, verse 23 | An evil heart |
| Lying tongue, verse 28 | Hates and wants to crush |
| Flattering mouth, verse 28 | Dull pottery |

Which ones describe you? Which ones describe your spouse?

Some people think that Christians are the most stupidly trusting people on earth (especially those who start fictitious e-mailed stories aimed at Christians). But the Bible does not ever urge Christians to be gullible. Verse 25, in the Proverbs 26 passage, says that when someone who has deceived before speaks graciously, you should not automatically believe him/her. Jesus says that we are to be innocent of doing wrong but wary of people's bent toward sin, just as He was (Mt 10:16). The Bible says that Christ did not trust people (Jn 2:24-25). If your spouse has proven to be a liar or a deceiver, do not be foolish and believe that your spouse has changed, just because he/she says, "Honey, this time it will be different—really!" It is not evil to require evidence of change. Likewise, if you have betrayed your spouse's trust, it will take time and demonstrations of change in order to rebuild the unity in your relationship, just as John the Baptist demanded the "fruits" of repentance from the Pharisees who came to be baptized (Lk 3:8).

Forgiveness prepares the ground for reconciliation. But your marriage can be reconciled and develop unity only when you are each fully trustworthy *all the time and in every situation*.

- Please read about three areas of specific concern in "Becoming a Trustworthy Spouse" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 15

Please open your Life Notebook.

Using at least three of these four Scriptures, (Rom 14:21; 1 Cor 7:5; 9:5; Heb 13:4) outline your main points to advise a married couple who are considering separating for a year, so that one of them can attend Bible school in a different country.

Do you have a problem maintaining integrity? Whether your problem is pornography, illicit relationships, anger, impure thoughts, smoking, drunkenness, or other sinful behavior, the key to deliverance for many people is to establish a covenant with another person who holds you accountable.

- Please read "Carson's Story" in *Readings in Marriage*, about one man's deliverance from pornographic addiction.

QUESTION 16

Select the four things that Carson said were integral to his continual deliverance from pornographic addiction. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Regularly reporting to a mentor
 - B. Prayer
 - C. Bible memory
 - D. Speaking respectfully but honestly when things upset him
 - E. Playing word games on the computer to de-stress
 - F. Making a daily commitment to pure thoughts
- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Building or Rebuilding Trust*.

Marriage Building Activity: Building or Rebuilding Trust



1. Ask your spouse (or if you are **SINGLE**, someone else who should be able to trust you): “When have I betrayed your trust?” Listen carefully to the answer.
 2. Ask, “How is that affecting our relationship?”
 3. If you have violated this person’s trust in you, discuss together what steps you will take to rebuild trust and to prevent such damage to unity from happening again.
- If your spouse has done something to lose your trust, do not bring this up now. Stay focused on your *own* trustworthiness, because this is under your control and what you will answer to God for.

Topic 4: Releasing Control

Scene 1: “Joy can’t go with you tomorrow afternoon. She has other plans.” Caleb hung up the phone and went back into the living room where his wife, Joy was reading.

“Who was on the phone?” she asked.

“It was just your sister. I told her you couldn’t go shopping with her tomorrow. We can’t afford to spend any money right now.”

Scene 2: “But John, I told my father that you would come to work at his store this weekend! You would not want to disappoint my father, would you? You know how good he has been to you.”

Scene 3: “Kim, you know that a pastor’s wife must keep the house clean. This room is not acceptable.” John scowled at his wife.



Scene 4: “My father always kept things repaired, David. Is it asking too much that you should fix this door? Why is it still broken after all these weeks?” Jane shook her head in disappointment.

What was wrong with these scenes? In each case, one spouse is trying to control the other and is bypassing the will of the other by demanding, demeaning, using guilt, or making decisions for the spouse. Why is that so bad?

According to 1 Corinthians 13:5, love is not “self-serving.” Therefore, control is a sign of *hypocrisy*. If you control, you may pretend to love, but it is only a tactic for using, which is the antithesis of love.

Satan *uses* us.

God *loves* us.

- Control is selfish, because it says my will is more important than my spouse’s will.
- Control is devoted not to caring for my spouse, but to caring for myself.
- Control is not eager to bring honor to my spouse, but to use my spouse as a tool for bringing honor to me.

But many of us have developed this evil habit in the way that we relate to a spouse, particularly if we saw it modeled between our parents. How do you get rid of this nasty habit?

Controlling My Spouse

The Bible says “In everything, do to others as you would want them to do to you” (Mt 7:12). How would you feel if your husband or wife did the following:

- Insisted on what you should and should not like to eat
- Answered when someone asked you a question
- Told you what to wear
- Selected your friends

You would feel, and correctly so, that your spouse had trespassed. This is *controlling* behavior. Funny thing, though, I notice keenly when someone else tries to control me, but I am sometimes oblivious when I do it to my spouse.

When you try to control your spouse, you undermine the qualities that you admire, you block free communication, and you spoil the unity in your marriage.

- Please read “Rotten Fruit: Spouse Control” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 17

According to the article, if you do not respect your spouse, what is the likely outcome?

QUESTION 18

Self-control, not “spouse control” is necessary in order for the law of love to operate in a marriage.

- Please read Romans 12:9-10 and put the five parts of this verse in proper order.

| <i>Number</i> | <i>Verse</i> |
|---------------|---|
| 1 | Love must be without hypocrisy. |
| 2 | Cling to what is good. |
| 3 | Abhor what is evil. |
| 4 | Show eagerness in honoring one another. |
| 5 | Be devoted to one another with mutual love. |

Eagerness to honor one another will eliminate controlling behavior.

QUESTION 19

Open your Life Notebook and write the definition of controlling behavior. Then discuss in writing your own reflections on at least one person’s controlling behavior that has affected your marriage. If there has been no sign of controlling behavior in your life anywhere, or if you are single, write about another relationship that you have seen where this is a problem.

Releasing Desires

At the root of controlling behavior is a lack of trust in God to achieve proper results. In order to respect your spouse, it is essential to know whether the thing you want is a desire or a goal. What is the difference?

- Please read “Discerning Between Desires and Goals” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 20

Please open your Life Notebook and write your answer to the following: Use the decision tree in the article “Discerning Desires and Goals” to decide whether these objectives below are desires or goals. Based on the diagram, how should you proceed with each one?

1. I want my spouse to understand me better.
2. I want my spouse to respect me.
3. I want my spouse to stop feeling afraid of me.
4. I want to be more considerate to my spouse.

QUESTION 21

Which of these statements are actually misstated desires, not goals? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. My goal is to exercise every day.
- B. My goal is for my spouse to exercise every day.
- C. My goal is for nice weather tomorrow.
- D. My goal is for my spouse to take me to the store.
- E. My goal is for my spouse to make my favorite meal tonight.
- F. My goal is for my spouse to believe in Christ.

QUESTION 22

Please open your Life Notebook.

Write the definitions of both a goal and a desire. What is the godly response if your appropriate goals and prayers still fail to cause your desires to be realized and if you are left with unmet longings? Can you find any examples of unmet desires in Scripture?

Has your relationship with your spouse been damaged by one of you trying to achieve desires through controlling, manipulative behavior? We talked in Lesson 1 about the way to develop unity if the person trying to control is a parent. But what if the problem is either you or your spouse? What can you do to change the way that you relate?

- Please read “Steps to Deliverance from Control” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 23

According to the article, when your spouse tries to control you, it is best to stop acting affectionately so that your spouse realizes that you have been wronged. *True or False?*

In marriage, you must shift your orientation from trying to get your needs met by your spouse, to asking and seeing how your needs are met in Christ. God wants to meet many of your spouse’s needs and desires through you. Your main goal in marriage must be to please God by ministering to your spouse. This fosters the kind of marriage where both partners are strengthened by all types of intimacy: sexual, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Desires and Goals*.

Marriage Building Activity: Desires and Goals



1. Write down one thing that you desire from your spouse or want him/her to do (or if you are **SINGLE**, from someone else).
2. Pray and ask God for wisdom and insight about this desire. Does God say that this is a good desire?
3. If it is not a good desire, offer it to God and confess sin if necessary. If it is a good desire, determine how often you will pray about this. Setting a time for daily prayer is a good goal toward a sincere desire.
4. Ask God if there are some other goals you should make (depending only on you) that may help achieve this desire. Nagging, pleading, whining, and complaining may be in your control, but such activities are not good goals!

Topic 5: Time Alone Together

Time is the most expensive thing you have. It is expensive because you cannot reuse it or spend more than you have. When it is gone, it is gone. If I look at how you spend your time, I can easily tell what you value the most, no matter what



you say otherwise. Many people think that by spending time doing the things that support the family's survival, such as:

- Working for an income
- Cooking
- Housework
- Repairing things
- Caring for children

that they have invested time in their *marriage*. While these things are important, they do not contribute toward building an intimate marriage. You can easily do all these things and remain virtual strangers. Time is the most precious thing that you can invest in your marriage. There is no substitute for it. How can you invest valuable time to develop and maintain unity with your spouse?

Have you ever heard the saying: "Two is company. Three is a crowd"?

No matter how beloved a third person is to both of you, such as a parent, a dear friend, or a child, in order to maintain unity, you and your spouse *must* spend time alone together to communicate on a regular basis. Your marriage is not a group experience but an intimate one, between two people and God. This is a nonnegotiable law of marriage, as real as gravity is a law of nature. No matter how inconvenient or costly it is to you personally to regularly invest time alone together, it is *essential* to the health of your marriage. In this way, your marriage pictures the relationship between Christ and the church, which also needs privacy. But how can couples make this time, if they have little money and/or many responsibilities?

- Please read "Closet Time Produces Unity" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 24

Which of the following is **NOT** suitable for a marriage-building "closet"?

- A. The middle of a field
- B. Your bedroom with the door locked
- C. The playground where your children are playing
- D. A bench by a river
- E. The roof of a house

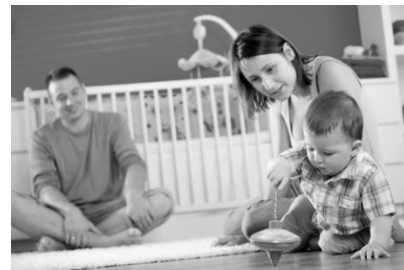
Many couples enjoy sports, playing music, working together, caring together for the poor or ill, gardening, art, or pets.

There are many possibilities of ways to enjoy time together. Spending time doing enjoyable or meaningful things is part of *phileo* love and is an important part of maintaining unity.

But time privately communicating is the most essential element of your closet time. Making time to be alone to talk privately on a regular basis may be easier or harder,

depending on your living situation and the amount of money you have. But creativity and prayerful determination to keep trying to find ways to be alone can overcome the difficulties of your situation. Please come prepared to share in your seminar some ideas that you have thought of or seen work to make private "closets" for your marriage unity to grow.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Finding Our Closet*.



Marriage Building Activity: Finding Our Closet



If you are **MARRIED**:

If you do not have a “marriage closet” and find it difficult to have a private conversation with your spouse, brainstorm together some options. Over the next week or two, try each possibility out to see how well it suits your situation and personalities.

If you are **SINGLE**, ask some happily married couples that you know where they find opportunities to talk privately.

Come to the seminar prepared to share your ideas and how well they worked.

In this Lesson we have explored six different ways of developing and establishing unity through daily “marriage health” habits. These habits were humility, forgiveness, trust, integrity, releasing control, and time alone together.

QUESTION 25

Please open your Life Notebook.

If you are **MARRIED**, write down which of these six things will be the greatest challenge for you personally and as a couple. If you are **SINGLE**, write down which one you think may be the biggest challenge for you if you marry. A challenge is something that will require more deliberate and consistent effort. What goals can you set to overcome this challenge step by step? Please write them down.

Please make sure that you have completed every *Marriage Building Activity* for Lesson 9 (and recorded your experience in your Life Notebook) before proceeding to Lesson 10. Completion of these activities will form 40 percent of your grade. The Marriage Building Activities for this lesson were the following:

- *Humility Exercise*
- *Forgiveness Practice*
- *Building or Rebuilding Trust*
- *Desires and Goals*
- *Finding Our Closet*

Lesson 9 Self Check

QUESTION 1

When my spouse exposes that I have failed, which response does **NOT** reveal pride in my heart?

- A. Blaming my spouse
- B. Attacking myself
- C. Explaining why I failed
- D. Justifying myself that I did nothing to deserve this
- E. Planning to be more careful next time
- F. Feeling compassion for the hurt that I caused my spouse

QUESTION 2

Which one of these is **NOT** true about humility?

- A. It becomes less necessary as we become more perfect.
- B. God used a handicap “thorn” to develop it in Paul.
- C. It is essential to our unity in marriage.
- D. God forgave even very wicked kings because of it.
- E. It is at the root of other sins that infect marriage.
- F. It is a necessary precursor to answered prayer.

QUESTION 3

In the passages you read about pride and humility, which character was **NOT** shown mercy by God after he humbled himself?

- A. King Saul
- B. Peter
- C. Nebuchadnezzar
- D. David
- E. King Ahab
- F. Saul of Tarsus

QUESTION 4

If a couple is treating each other as more important than themselves, they are obeying an instruction from what chapter?

- A. 2 Corinthians 12
- B. Philippians 2
- C. Luke 22
- D. Mark 11

QUESTION 5

Christ’s cleansing of the Jewish temple in Mark 11:15-17 is a picture of what?

- A. A Christian husband cleansing evil from his wife’s life
- B. Christ cleansing the heart of the believer
- C. The believers cleansing evil religion from the earth
- D. God driving Satan and his angels out of heaven
- E. God driving Adam and Eve from the Garden

QUESTION 6

Down through the ages, what has been even more effective at planting a new church in a hostile, pagan culture than people giving up their lives for the gospel?

- A. Widespread preaching
- B. Bible translation
- C. Learning the people's language
- D. Forgiving those who killed loved ones
- E. Showing a Christian marriage
- F. Standing up for civil rights

QUESTION 7

Which of the following contains the three steps of praying for someone who has wronged you?

- A. Father, bless me; Father, bless them; Father, they don't know what they are doing.
- B. Father, help me; Father, help them; Father, help others.
- C. Father, heal my sickness; Father, heal their sickness; Father, I relinquish all doubt.
- D. Father, heal me; Father, judge them; Father, deliver us both.
- E. Father, forgive me; Father, forgive them; Father, bless them.

QUESTION 8

Which is **NOT** one of the four steps to keeping trust with your spouse?

- A. Being careful with words
- B. Behaving with righteousness in secret as well as in public
- C. Avoiding tempting situations and relationships
- D. Asking your spouse to trust you
- E. Honoring your spouse

QUESTION 9

Which is a **FALSE** statement about control?

- A. God wants us to exercise self-control, not spouse control.
- B. When we attempt to control someone, we try to bypass that person's will to get him/her to do what we want.
- C. God made us to rule in some sphere.
- D. A good leader controls every aspect of those under him/her.
- E. A controlling person often doesn't realize how evil and disrespectful it is to his/her spouse.
- F. Controlling is the opposite of serving each other.

QUESTION 10

A couple who loves Christ can keep their marriage unified and healthy, even if they don't have privacy or time to communicate. *True or False?*

Unit 3 Exam

QUESTION 1

Communication has not occurred until the meaning intended by the communicator is the same meaning that the listener understands. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

The three components of communication are

- A. Values, verbal, non-verbal
- B. Verbal, non-verbal, feedback
- C. Speech, sounds, written words
- D. Values, needs, desires

QUESTION 3

When the listener restates what the speaker said in his/her own words, it disrespects the speaker and often causes further confusion. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

When a speaker communicates effectively, it proves his communication is Christlike. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

Jesus models that true strength is demonstrated partly by one's willingness to become vulnerable by revealing true emotions. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

Part of creating a safe basis for communicating with your spouse is to imagine how he/she felt when the event he/she is describing happened. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

When a Christian husband feels angry at his spouse, he needs to evaluate whether the anger has a good basis, and then to direct it in a Christlike way, by chastening her with a stick. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

A supportive person causes his/her spouse to feel safe--willing to be honest and vulnerable about weakness. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

In order to resolve a conflict, couples need to humbly involve God in the process of working out the conflict, through praying separately and together. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

Which is the one true statement about sexual relationship in marriage?

- A. God created sex for married couples to enjoy richly.
- B. Satan added the pleasurable aspects of the sexual relationship.
- C. Sex was designed after the fall of man as a result of sin.
- D. Sex's only purpose is to create children.
- E. Couples should have sex as little as possible.
- F. When a couple has sex, God looks away because it is unholy.

QUESTION 11

The Song of Solomon is a non-chronological collection of poems where primarily the bride reflects on her courtship and early marriage. *True or False?*

QUESTION 12

Part of how Solomon prepares his wife to receive him sexually is by reminding her of her duty. *True or False?*

QUESTION 13

A person who was sexually abused must accept the fact that he/she will never enjoy sex in marriage. *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

The Shulamite finds her husband very handsome partially because of the physical sensations they share sexually. *True or False?*

QUESTION 15

Only men are designed to have an orgasm at the height of sexual pleasure. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

Once you are too old to have children you should not engage in sexual relations any longer. *True or False?*

QUESTION 17

An unmarried couple may engage in foreplay by stimulating each other's bodies. It is not wrong if they avoid actual intercourse. *True or False?*

QUESTION 18

Even though you may not be able to escape the earthly consequences of sexual sins you have committed or that were committed against you, Christ can grant you a fresh sexual purity for you to guard. *True or False?*

QUESTION 19

Which was **NOT** one of the five reasons given for which God created sexual relations

- A. Punishment
- B. Oneness
- C. Pleasure
- D. Resisting temptation
- E. Comfort
- F. Procreation

QUESTION 20

If someone is prideful, God often uses suffering to remove it. *True or False?*

QUESTION 21

You can tell that you have a problem with pride when your spouse expresses dissatisfaction and you react with self-defense, attack, blame, or attack yourself. *True or False?*

QUESTION 22

Which is the one true statement about forgiveness?

- A. Forgiveness is a decision.
- B. Forgiveness is the same as excusing someone because they didn't mean to hurt you.
- C. Forgiveness is the same as pardon.
- D. Forgiveness is a feeling.
- E. Forgiveness allows you to participate in evil without sharing the blame.
- F. Forgiveness always involves reconciling your relationship.

QUESTION 23

Someone who is controlling *uses* another person for their own purposes by demanding, demeaning, using guilt, or limiting their choices. *True or False?*

QUESTION 24

If your spouse thinks you have too intimate a friendship with a person of the opposite sex, you should

- A. Tell your spouse it is none of his/her business as long as you know the relationship is good
- B. Tone down the relationship to honor your spouse
- C. Increase the friendship to prove you are not to be controlled
- D. Hide the relationship so your spouse is not bothered by it
- E. Talk to your pastor or others to determine whether or not the friendship is appropriate

QUESTION 25

A married couple having time alone together to talk without anyone else overhearing is a luxury, not a necessity. *True or False?*

Lesson 9 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2:

E. “I’m sorry I forgot. I will go get it right now.”

QUESTION 3:

C. Abel in Genesis 4:3-8

QUESTION 4: *Your answer*

QUESTION 5: *Your answer*

QUESTION 6:

| <i>Phrase Part 1</i> | <i>Phrase Part 2</i> |
|--|--|
| Complete my joy and be of the same mind | by having the same love, being united in spirit, and having one purpose. |
| Instead of being motivated by selfish ambition or vanity, each of you should, in humility, | be moved to treat one another as more important than yourself. |
| Each of you should be concerned not only about your own interests | but about the interests of others as well. |
| You should have the same attitude toward one another | that Christ Jesus had. |
| Though [Jesus] existed in the form of God | did not regard equality with God as something to be grasped. |
| [Jesus] emptied himself | by taking on the form of a slave, by looking like other men, and by sharing in human nature. |
| He humbled himself | by becoming obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross! |

QUESTION 7: *Your answer*

QUESTION 8:

Because Capernaum had greater opportunity to see Jesus’ miracles, to believe, and to ask His forgiveness; but they did not repent. Jesus knew that Sodom would have given up their sins if given the same opportunity as Capernaum.

QUESTION 9: *Your answer*

QUESTION 10:

She meant that forgiveness is an act of the will, not the emotions, so she could choose to forgive even if she didn’t feel like it. To show her obedience to God’s principle of forgiveness, she reached out to shake the hand of the guard, while praying that God would help her to feel the forgiveness she extended to him.

QUESTION 11:

A. She decides in her heart to forgive Samuel.

B. She asks God to forgive and bless Samuel.

E. She feels compassion for how guilty Samuel is probably feeling.

F. She acknowledges God’s hand in allowing this, and looks for the good that He will bring out of it.

QUESTION 12:

| <i>References</i> | <i>Principles</i> |
|--|--|
| Must I forgive if the person has not asked me to forgive him/her? Must I forgive if the person is continuing to sin against me? Luke 23:24 | Jesus forgave while his abuse was going on without any sign of repentance on the part of the Roman executioners or the Jews who had arranged it. |
| Should I forgive those who have not sinned directly against me, but against God or against someone else? John 8:7-11 | We must refuse to take up an attitude of unforgiveness and judgment, even if the sin was against someone else. However, we should protect someone who is being harmed. |
| Isn't it righteous for me to punish my spouse if he/she does something wrong? Romans 12:19 | God does not need our help in punishing sin among his children. If your spouse needs chastening, it is not your responsibility to give it. |
| If I forgive, must I also forget? 1 Corinthians 13:5; Hebrews 10:17 | Once we release our demand for punishment, we then must refuse to keep reviewing the memory of the sin anymore. We may not be able to totally forget, but we refuse to dwell on it anymore. |
| Do I have to become friends with the person who wronged me? Proverbs 18:24 | Everyone who is not an enemy is not automatically a close friend. While we do not harbor a grudge or wish ill to the one who hurt us, we do not have to develop a close relationship with everyone. But if this person is your spouse, you already have a close relationship according to Genesis 2:24. In order to fulfill God's intention of a one-flesh closeness, your forgiveness can make way for a loving friendship. |

QUESTION 13: *Your answer***QUESTION 14:**

| <i>Seen by Others</i> | <i>Actually Inside</i> |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Fervent lips verse 23 | An evil heart |
| Disguising lips verse 24 | Secretly hates others |
| A shiny coating verse 23 | Dull pottery |
| Lying tongue verse 28 | Hates and wants to crush |
| Flattering mouth verse 28 | Working to ruin |

QUESTION 15: *Your answer***QUESTION 16:**

- A. Regularly reporting to a mentor
- D. Speaking respectfully but honestly when things upset him
- E. Playing word games on the computer to de-stress
- F. Making a daily commitment to pure thoughts

QUESTION 17:

You will try to control your spouse

QUESTION 18:

| <i>Number</i> | <i>Verse</i> |
|---------------|---|
| 1 | Love must be without hypocrisy. |
| 2 | Abhor what is evil. |
| 3 | Cling to what is good. |
| 4 | Be devoted to one another with mutual love. |
| 5 | Show eagerness in honoring one another (Rom 12:9-10). |

QUESTION 19: *Your answer***QUESTION 20:** *Your answer***QUESTION 21:**

- B. My goal is for my spouse to exercise every day.
- C. My goal is for nice weather tomorrow.
- D. My goal is for my spouse to take me to the store.
- E. My goal is for my spouse to make my favorite meal tonight.
- F. My goal is for my spouse to believe in Christ.

QUESTION 22: *Your answer***QUESTION 23:** False**QUESTION 24:**

- C. The playground where your children are playing

QUESTION 25: *Your answer*

Lesson 9 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

F. Feeling compassion for the hurt I caused my spouse

QUESTION 2:

A. It becomes less necessary as we become more perfect.

QUESTION 3:

A. King Saul

QUESTION 4:

B. Philippians 2

QUESTION 5:

B. Christ cleansing the heart of the believer

QUESTION 6:

D. Forgiving those who killed loved ones

QUESTION 7:

E. Father, forgive me; Father, forgive them; Father, bless them.

QUESTION 8:

D. Asking your spouse to trust you

QUESTION 9:

D. A good leader controls every aspect of those under him/her.

QUESTION 10: False

Unit 3 Exam Answers

Question 1: True

Question 2:

A. Values, verbal, non-verbal

Question 3: False

Question 4: False

Question 5: True

Question 6: True

Question 7: False

Question 8: True

Question 9: True

Question 10:

A. God created sex for married couples to enjoy richly.

Question 11: True

Question 12: False

Question 13: False

Question 14: True

Question 15: False

Question 16: False

Question 17: False

Question 18: True

Question 19:

A. Punishment

Question 20: True

Question 21: True

Question 22:

A. Forgiveness is a decision.

Question 23: True

Question 24:

B. Tone down the relationship to honor your spouse

Question 25: False

Unit 4: “Intent on One Purpose”— Coming Together in Glorifying God

*Make my joy complete by
being of the same mind,
maintaining the same love,
united in spirit,
intent on one purpose*
—Philippians 2:2 (NASB, emphasis added)

Unit Introduction

“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”—Matthew 5:16, NASB

If someone asked you to describe the **single, most important** purpose of your life, what would you say? We hope that you would sound something like the apostle Paul by describing the purpose of your life in the following ways:

- To glorify God (1 Cor 6:20)
- To know Him (Phil 3:10)
- To strive toward the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:14)
- To do all these things because of the gospel (1 Cor 9:23).



Are you shining in your purpose, as the verse above from Matthew 5 says? How does the life you lead in your marriage or in singleness contribute to the purpose that you say is most important to you? In this unit, you will look at additional ways in which your life situation and your ministry interact with each other toward a life purpose of glorifying God.



Perhaps, as you have been reading and studying in this course on marriage, you have felt hidden under a bushel, not shining at all.

You are divorced, widowed, single, or live with an unbelieving or disobedient spouse. While Christian marriage is a good gift, it is not the only type of life wherein you can glorify God. So in Lesson 10, you will examine what the Bible has to say about types of life situations other than a Christian marriage. What is God’s will for you right now? If you are in a happy Christian marriage, this lesson will help you to better minister to and alongside those who are not. In Lesson 11, you will examine the subject of money and possessions. How do you glorify God with earthly possessions? In Lesson 12, you will look at the special stresses of life in a Christian worker’s marriage. How can these high-stress marriages press forward to make their relationship a clear portrayal of the gospel (Phil 3:2)? In this final lesson, you will also review what you have studied and select those parts of the course that you want to make sure and “take with you.”

Unit Outline

- Lesson 10: One Purpose in Every Situation
- Lesson 11: One Purpose in Stewardship
- Lesson 12: One Purpose in Marriage and Ministry

Lesson 10: One Purpose in Every Situation

Lesson Introduction

On a warm Saturday afternoon, Miriam enjoyed the warm sunshine at the Renaissance Festival. While she watched the knights jousting across the field, her brother, Joshua, milled around the picnic grounds dressed as Robin Hood, the famous medieval archer. He pretended that he could shoot arrows, and he doled out candy to the children from his leather pouch.



She smiled. “He’s really enjoying himself,” Miriam thought to herself about her charming brother. Nearby a jester made funny faces to make the children laugh. Suddenly a black figure slipped through the crowd behind “Robin” and brandished a rubber knife.



A mock struggle ensued, but soon the evil Sheriff of Nottingham had tied Robin’s hands with leather thongs. The crowd booed and the sheriff laughed melodramatically as he started to drag Robin off to jail.

“But wait!” Robin cried out loudly. “I know you are a fine archer sir. I challenge you to a duel, a test! The one who can send the first arrow to the center of the target will win the King’s treasure and the hand of the lovely Maid Marian.” He gestured to his wife, Katrina, who was standing nearby. “The loser will go to jail.”



This will be no contest, Miriam thought. Joshua, her brother, could barely shoot his bow and arrow, while Brian, his best friend who played the Sheriff, had won the college championship. “I accept!” Brian shouted, to the cheers of the crowd. “I can beat you on any terms from any place in this field. Then you will die!” He snickered wickedly. The crowd laughed and ran ahead to where the archery target was already set up.



“On any terms?” Robin queried. “Even wearing a suit of armor?”

“Of course,” said the Sheriff. “I can hit the target any time!”

“Does anyone have such a suit?” Robin called to the crowd. Not surprisingly someone “happened” to have one and the Sheriff was properly fitted into the heavy armor.

“Robin Hood will never beat me,” he boasted, reeling slightly in the heavy metal coat. But he wasn’t so confident when they placed the helmet on his head. It had only peepholes for eyes, and the holes were too far from his face. The Sheriff had little sense of depth and perspective anymore.



Each time the Sheriff fitted a string to the bow, the jester jostled him or twisted his helmet so that he could not see clearly.

The crowd laughed uproariously as the plucky jester's antics caused each of the Sheriff's shots to go awry. The jester himself darted out of the way so that the Sheriff couldn't see that he was the cause. The clumsy Sheriff was normally a



crack shot, but because of the distractions, he failed to hit the target. It was Robin who won the day, finally landing one bright arrow in the center of the target to wild applause. He was given the hand of Maid Marian and the two were loaded onto chairs and carried off as King and Queen of the Picnic while the Sheriff was bundled off to jail.

Miriam smiled and clapped at her brother's success, but she wondered if she was like the Sheriff, blind and not quite sure how to hit the target for a happy life. She had thought her goal was to get married and have a wonderful Christian family. But since discovering that she was infertile and experiencing her husband's leaving her and marrying someone else, what could she hope for? It seemed there could be no happy ending ahead.



What target are you focused on? Is it an "all weather" goal, good for storms as well as sunshine? Good even if your original dreams are shipwrecked? As we said in the introduction, Paul kept his focus on a goal that transcended all circumstances. This focus kept him faithfully persevering through the following events:

- The loss of his spouse ¹²
- A physical disability (2 Cor 12:7)
- Desertion (2 Tim 4:10)
- Betrayal (2 Tim 4:14)
- Imprisonment (Phil 1:7)
- Shipwrecks (2 Cor 11:25)
- Torture (2 Cor 11:25)

If your goal is to glorify and serve God, every situation will give opportunities for new service, just as you saw with the stories of Corrie, Julie, and the apostle Paul. In this lesson, you will look at life situations other than Christian marriage and consider how you can glorify God through them.

Lesson Outline

Lesson 10: One Purpose in Every Situation

Topic 1: Contentment

Enduring Hardship
Working for Change

Topic 2: Singleness

Remaining Single
Discerning God's Will for Marriage

¹² Note about spouse: We know that Paul was a Pharisee from Philippians 3:5 and all Pharisees were married at a young age. But we know that he no longer had a wife from his comments in 1 Corinthians 7:8 and 1 Corinthians 9:5. But we do not know if he was widowed or divorced.

- Why Not an Unbeliever?
- Topic 3: Divorce and Remarriage
 - Permanence
 - Bible Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage
- Topic 4: Illness and Death of a Spouse
 - Illness and Injury
 - Death
 - Widowhood
- Topic 5: Relating to a Spouse Who Disobeys God

Topic 1: Contentment

“I have learned to be content in any circumstance. I have experienced times of need and times of abundance. In any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of contentment, whether I go satisfied or hungry, have plenty or nothing. I am able to do all things through the one who strengthens me.”—Paul, Philippians 4:11b-13

What is the worst possible thing that you dread happening to you? Singleness? Being abandoned by a spouse? Being unloved? Cut off from family? Illness? Disablement? These dreads may seem to be the worst possible situations that could ever happen. But when you change your target from comfort and security to glorifying Christ, suddenly the experiences that you thought could only mean a life of misery, can take on new meaning. They do not magically become pain-free, but the unexpected turns in your life’s road also produce unexpected opportunities. How can you change your mind-set to successfully face difficult situations in marriage, such as adultery, divorce, or death of a spouse?



Enduring Hardship

“You, however, be self-controlled in all things, suffer hardship, do an evangelist’s work, fulfill your ministry.”—2 Timothy 4:5

What gave Paul the strength to endure without complaint?

- Please read 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 16-18.

QUESTION 1

Read the list under “Seen.” Match the contrasts as given in the two passages you read, 2 Corinthians 4:8-9, 16-18, that show how Paul’s focus shifted from the seen to the unseen in order to endure unwanted circumstances with a changed attitude.

| <i>Seen</i> | <i>Unseen</i> |
|--|--|
| We are experiencing trouble on every side. | We keep our focus on the unseen. |
| We are persecuted. | Producing an eternal weight of glory for us. |
| Our physical body is wearing away. | We are not abandoned. |
| Momentary light suffering. | Our inner person is renewed daily. |
| We do not keep looking at what is seen. | What is not seen is eternal. |
| Because what is seen is temporary. | We are not crushed. |

Now read the list of the “Unseen.” Which one of these encouragements from Paul is most helpful to you as you consider your own life situation?

Consider the life of Christ Himself. Could He have become discouraged by the way His life turned out? Look at the following evidences:

- He did not marry, even though He had friendships with single women whom He could have married (Mk 15:41; Jn 11:5).
- He did not establish Himself in a secure business, but lived from offerings (Lk 8:3).
- He did not own a home or amass wealth (Mt 8:20).
- His worth was belittled by His own village and family (Mt 13:57-58; Jn 1:11; 7:5).
- His closest friends lost faith in Him and left (Mk 14:27).
- He was judged unjustly by the court system (Mt 26:59)
- He died the death of a criminal (Mk 15:27).

This was not what we would consider a successful life, was it? In fact, it might seem to us quite pitiful, a total failure. Yet God says (Heb 4:15; 1 Pet 1:19) it was the only perfect life that was ever lived!

What caused Him to persevere perfectly?

- Please read these four verses from the gospel of John, noticing each reason: John 6:38; 12:27, 46; 18:37.



QUESTION 2

According to these verses, where did Jesus' ability to endure hardship come from?

What about you? Are you waiting to begin a life fully consecrated to serving God until God changes something about your situation?

- *Until* you get married
- *Until* you complete school
- *Until* your health improves
- *Until* your spouse becomes a believer
- *Until* you have more money
- *Until* you have a better home

Any objective that you serve, wait for, or hope in instead of the Lord is an idol. If you put an idol in front of you and fix your hope on it before Christ, you tie the Lord's hands at even being able to give you that gift which you desire! He is a good Father and is reluctant to give His children a snake (an idol), even if they beg for it daily (Num 11:4-10, 13, 31-34; Lk 11:11).

The fastest way to allow the Lord to bless you is to love Him first, without any rivals in your heart, to ask earnestly for what you desire, but to leave the choice to Him. He sorts the good gifts

from the best ones from an eternal perspective (Mt 5:12; 6:33). He sees that the gifts that cause great success in heaven are not usually the most comfortable ones to receive on earth. For instance, I believe that my cancer was a good gift. My heavenly Father allowed it, but it was not one that I would have chosen for myself. Through cancer, I had a wonderful opportunity to experience Him in a deeper way and to share the message that physical comfort is not the most important thing in life. Knowing and serving God is primary.

- Please read John 21:18-19.

Here you see that John viewed Peter's crucifixion as a gift that God would give Peter. Peter's gift was the privilege of dying for Christ. It was not a pleasant gift, but it was a good gift nevertheless, because by it, he would glorify Christ and receive a martyr's reward (Jn 21:18-19). Peter proved the value of the gift by portraying to the world the message that his own body, the most precious thing he had, was not dearer than His Lord.

PROJECT: Read these verses about Paul's contentment: 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 and Philippians 4:12-13.

If you struggle with contentment in your current life situation, write one of your discontented areas on a card and meditate on it each day this week. Write in your Life Notebook as God gives you a new perspective on your situation.

Or,

If contentment is not a problem for you, write ten open¹³ questions in your Life Notebook that you might use to lead a discussion on contentment.

If you struggle with contentment in your marriage or singleness, take a moment to pray this prayer:

"Holy Father, You know the joys, the heartaches of my role. I confess that I have fought against what You have given. Grant me the courage to be a servant. Oh, God, I long to be faithful to You. I accept my assigned role as a gift. Teach me to "cease striving and know that You are God."

Working for Change

"Lord grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

—Reinhold Niebuhr

"When life hands you lemons, make lemonade."—unknown

Even though the Bible urges us to be content in everything (Phil 4:11), contentment is not the same as being passive. Many times it is very appropriate to work for the changes that we want to happen.

¹³ Open Questions

"Open" questions are those that encourage multiple responses from class participants. The group leader should prepare the questions before the class begins. Three types of open questions are used in inductive Bible study discussions.

1. Observation questions encourage the student to think about what the Bible text actually says. Example: What do we know about the author that might give us a clue as to why he would write this?
2. Interpretation questions look for the timeless principles in the text. Example: How would you restate this idea in your own words for today?
3. Application questions encourage the students to respond to the material by thinking about how the concepts apply to others, to general thinking, to their own relationships. Example: Why would this principle be difficult to apply for someone in your church?

Even though Paul had learned to be content in every area, he did not stop praying and working actively toward his goals and desires. Many times the work toward our desires makes us stronger and wiser, even if we don't reach them. Finding the balance where we rightly perceive how God is directing us and working toward appropriate goals, while still having a content heart at each stage, is a mark of Christian maturity.

- Please read each of these passages about Paul's actions toward hindered goals and desires. In your Life Notebook, write down the principles that apply best to your own life right now.
 - 2 Corinthians 12:7-10
 - 1 Timothy 6:6-11
 - Acts 25:10-11
 - Romans 15:22-29
-
- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Balancing Contentment and Work*.

Marriage Building Activity: Balancing Contentment and Work



1. List one or more things about your life about which you are troubled or discontent. How do the principles that you wrote down in your Life Notebook about Paul's actions toward his goals apply to you?
 - 2a. If you are **MARRIED**, what do you think *your spouse* is most troubled or unhappy about? Ask him/her—were you correct?
 - 2b. If you are **SINGLE**, what is your closest friend most discontented about? Ask him/her—were you correct?
3. For both **MARRIED** and **UNMARRIED** students: Pray together and ask God to show you the following answers:
 - Is this something that can be or should be changed? Ask the Lord how you can both be content until change occurs.
 - If it is something that should not or cannot be changed, pray together about learning contentment.
 - If it would be a good change, ask how you can work *together* toward it.

Topic 2: Singleness

One of the areas where it is sometimes difficult for even strong believers to be content is in involuntary singleness. Most of us have a strong desire to relate intimately with another person of the opposite sex. Not all people will have the opportunity to marry according to God's will. Have singles missed out on the most important thing in life? Or does God have a good path for them as well?

- Please read the parable, “An Olympic Fairy Tale” in *Readings in Marriage* and think about how these characters portray single people that you know who desire to be married.

All three characters had the desire to be on their country’s Olympic team. As you read in Lesson 9, it is essential to recognize and behave differently about desires than about goals. Which characters understood the difference between desires and goals? Which characters made appropriate goals to work toward their desires?

Remaining Single

In the story, both Joseph and Solomon were unable to achieve the dream that they had to go to the Olympics. Solomon wasted his life while waiting for it to begin, but Joseph developed skills and discipline. Can you see how Solomon portrays singles who wait and pray without learning any of the characteristics and skills that would make them an excellent spouse *AND* an excellent servant of Christ? How is Joseph an important picture of a healthy single?

From the beginning of the church, the Lord has frequently used single Christian men and women to accomplish great things for His kingdom, from the apostle Paul to Amy Carmichael and Mary Slessor. Many of the men and women who have helped to bring the gospel to people who have never heard the name of Christ have been single.

It is hard for someone who married at a young age to truly understand what it is like to be a single, mature adult. We asked a couple of our single friends who are effectively serving the Lord as missionaries to share some perspective on their lives.

- Please read their stories and thoughtfully compare them to your own: “Wesley, My Life as a Single Man” and “Mary, A Greater Love” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 3

Please open your Life Notebook.

If you are single or were single after adolescence, do you relate to any of these perspectives? How is your situation different or similar? Write a few lines of your thoughts about singleness.

Marriage Is Not a Panacea.

Contrary to many beautiful fairy tales, marriage is not a cure-all for whatever is wrong with you. Even when you get married, your core identity doesn’t change. Like it or not, you will still be the same person with the same problems, only now you will be coping with another person’s problems, too, and creating some new ones together! Only a strong and well-equipped person can succeed at marriage or at singleness.

Everyone Is Single Sometimes.

None of us are born married. God calls everyone to be single for at least a part of his/her life. Some people remain single for many years before getting married. Others never marry. While



God calls us to marry “till death do us part,” no marriage is forever. There will be no marriage in heaven (Mt 22:30). Even people who marry early may live alone for years after a spouse leaves through death or divorce.

Marriage Is Only a Partial Answer for Loneliness.

Although God’s answer for Adam’s aloneness was a spouse, even marriage relationships of the best kind cannot bear the full weight of all of our needs. It is an unhealthy and unfair burden to expect your spouse to do so. Married and single people need close relationships with relatives, friends, and most especially with brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ. But, no human

relationships can fully satisfy your need. Thanks to the indwelling Holy Spirit, we have One who knows our every thought (Ps 139). Even singles are never alone, any more than Jesus, who never married, was alone. Relationship to Christ must be your primary antidote for loneliness and insignificance. His love will not fail through the most discouraging and frustrating times in other relationships.

So while marriage is one gift of God, the gift of singleness has many advantages, as Wesley pointed out, especially for serving the Lord. What did Paul say about his singleness?

- Please read “Singleness in the Bible” in *Readings in Marriage* and return here to answer the following question.

QUESTION 4

Please select the three types of single adults that Jesus describes in Scripture. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Those who were born without the capacity for a normal sexual relationship
- B. Those who are designed to be married but cannot find a spouse, so are permitted to find sexual fulfillment outside of marriage
- C. Those who have experienced something to prevent them from being able to marry
- D. Those who are single and use the situation for the sake of God’s kingdom
- E. Those who are homosexual and permitted to marry someone of the same sex

Singles Are Promised a Blessing

Did you know that God promises a blessing of children for those who serve Him but are single?—a blessing that He says is even better than having a spouse and children?

- Please carefully read Isaiah 54:1 and 56:3-5.

How can these promises be true? To a Jew, the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant was many children. How could the barren woman or a eunuch experience this?

This strange phenomenon that Isaiah describes is true because the fulfillment of Abraham’s promise was not that people of Jewish descent would have many children, as they thought. The New Testament says that the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham happens when people come to faith in Christ, just as Abraham believed God. These people become the “children of Abraham” and the “heirs of promise” (Rom 4:16; Gal 3:7). So, in the same way that believers become children of Abraham through faith, the ones we disciple and care for in Christ are our real children (1 Cor 4:15; 1 Thess 2:7).

Physical relatives, however much we love them, are temporary (Mt 12:48-49). When Paul calls Timothy and Titus his “true” children this is not just a metaphor (1 Tim 1:2; Tit 1:4), **it is the true and eternal relationship between them.** So you who are giving yourself to the Lord’s service through singleness have the opportunity to have many children, perhaps (because of your undivided time), even more children than one who is married. God turns what would seem to be a negative situation into an overwhelmingly positive one! While some people’s experience of eternity might be lonely because they never became spiritual parents when they had the chance, others, many of them single, will have heirs “like the sand of the sea” because of their faithfulness in evangelizing and discipling others.



Do you have parents in Christ? Do you have children in Christ? Stop and thank God for them.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Marriage and Singleness*.

Marriage Building Activity: Marriage and Singleness



Five minutes:

If you are **MARRIED**, please write down the following lists:

- Three things that you like about being married and three things that you don't like
- Three things that you liked about being single and three things that you disliked

If you are **SINGLE**, please list the following:

- Three things that you would look forward to in marriage and three things that you worry about
- Three things that you like about being single and three things that you don't like

Ten minutes: If you are **MARRIED**, tell your spouse about the three things that you like about being married to him/her. Write down his/her response in your Life Notebook.

If you are **SINGLE**, show your list to a relative or close friend and invite his/her perspective about how these things are affecting your life as a single. Write in your Life Notebook what he/she said and whether or not you agreed.

Five minutes: Consider all twelve of the things that you listed and ask God if any of these is preventing you from growing right now. Write down any insights that God shows you about how these things have affected you and if He wants you to think differently about any of them. Come to your seminar prepared to share your thoughts and insights about marriage and singleness.

Discerning God's Will for Marriage

How do you choose the right person to marry? Here's some wisdom from those who have



obviously given it lots of thought. Let's hear what our school kids have to say.

"No person really decides before they grow up who they're going to marry. God decides it all way before, and you get to find out later who you're stuck with."

"The rule goes like this: If you kiss someone, then you should marry them and have kids with them. It's the right

thing to do."

"It's better for girls to be single, but not for boys. Boys need someone to clean up after them."

“Dates are for having fun, and people should use them to get to know each other. Even boys have something to say if you listen long enough.”

“On the first date, they just tell each other lies and that usually gets them interested enough to go for a second date.”

The children may express views that many people have, but fortunately, the Bible gives us better ways to determine whether or not to get married. If you are single, how will you know if a specific individual would be a good choice? How do you know God’s will? In this topic, we will explore the ways that the Bible tells us to answer this question.

- Please read “Choosing a Spouse” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 5

When you are thinking about marrying a particular person, why does the author suggest you should consider if he/she is cruel to animals?

QUESTION 6

It is unimportant if your proposed spouse does not exhibit love for you. Love may grow in time, but if it doesn’t, it is not essential to the marriage relationship. *True or False?*

What does the Bible say are the type of people you can or cannot consider marrying?

QUESTION 7

Read any verses that you are not familiar with, and then match the verse with the type of person who would be acceptable or unacceptable as a spouse.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Type of person</i> |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| No prohibition, Numbers 12:1, 9-10 | An older or younger person |
| No prohibition, Ruth 3:10 | A different skin color or nationality |
| No prohibition, James 2:5-7 | One who is characterized by anger |
| Prohibited, Leviticus 18:22-24 | A poor person |
| Prohibited, 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 | Someone of the same sex as you |
| Prohibited, Proverbs 22:24 | One who does not follow Jesus as Lord |

So, now you can recognize the type of person who would make a suitable life partner. Perhaps you even have someone in mind. How can you know if it is God’s will right now?

- Please read “Discerning God’s Will” in *Readings in Marriage*.



QUESTION 8

Which one of these reasons is **NOT** a valid way of knowing whether God is leading you to get married?

- A. Asking the advice of parents and elders who know you well
- B. Praying and fasting
- C. Reading God's Word and asking God to reveal applicable principles
- D. Considering your own desires
- E. Asking God to give you a sign through rolling dice, drawing straws, or pulling cards

So we have seen how to know God's principles and God's will in thinking about whether to marry someone and when. But what if there is no one suitable on the horizon? Is it appropriate to use a matchmaker or to accept an arranged marriage?

Meeting an appropriate marriage partner can be a challenge, particularly in areas where there are few believers. One of our staff, who lives in a country where there are only a handful of evangelical believers, traveled across the globe in search of a compatible mate of his own language and similar culture. But his journey was fruitless. He ended up finding a wonderful wife near home through extended family (a little like Isaac's son, Jacob). But even in a place where there are plenty of eligible believers, how do you go about finding someone to consider? What about arranged courtship or marriage?

- Please read "Your Culture and Finding a Spouse" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 9

How can the custom of arranged marriage wound the heart, particularly of women? What did the article suggest as an alternative? How can a couple overcome the heart wounds of an arranged marriage?

So culture and biblical insight must influence the way that you find a spouse. Here are two stories of couples who now love and serve the Lord. The first, Rajiv and Sonia, honored tradition and family in their courtship in India, but altered custom. Allison and Brinton in the USA also altered the typical pattern. Both honored God and both now have solid Christian marriages.

- Please read "Rajiv and Sonia's Story (India)" and "Brinton and Allison's Story (USA)" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 10

Please open your Life Notebook and reflect on the previous two articles.

- What do you see is the same between the two couples?
- What is “Christian” courtship?
- Are there courtship customs in your culture that are anti-Christian? How would you redesign them to better reflect the courtship of Christ and the church?
- What benefits do you see in praying for the welfare of your future spouse even before you know whom you will marry?

Why Not an Unbeliever?

There are many circumstances where Christians feel that it is all right to marry an unbeliever.

“In our country, the Christian women outnumber the Christian men three to one. Isn’t it reasonable in those situations for a woman to marry a non-believer? In our culture it would be too great a shame for the whole family for a woman to remain single!”



“Our parents agreed that we would marry when we were still children.

She is not a believer, but she is a hard worker. She will do her duty and I must do mine and marry her, or it would be extremely shameful for our family. I must keep my faith a secret from her, though, or it could be very dangerous for me.”

“We love each other so much that I can’t imagine spending my life without him! If we couldn’t be together, I’d just want to die. He doesn’t know the Lord yet, but he loves me and I’m sure over time he will come to Christ. Don’t you think it’s all right for us to get married, and then I will just pray him into God’s kingdom?”



Both men and women may experience inner and outer pressures to marry unbelievers. In 2 Corinthians 6:14, the Lord makes it clear that in close relationships, such as marriage, believers may not seek partnership with unbelievers. The term for partnership in the original Greek language refers to two animals yoked together. They are “unequally” yoked, that is, they are not the same size, disposition, or pace. The relationship will not be a happy one for either the oxen or for the farmer. What can the relationship pictured by this term teach us about marriage?

QUESTION 11

Please open your Life Notebook and answer these questions.

How would the prohibition against being “unequally yoked” apply to your marriage to the following person?

- A believer who does not obey the Lord consistently
- One who was baptized as an infant or attends church, but does not know Christ personally

- Someone who was raised in a Christian family, but who does not currently follow Christ
- Someone who will let you practice your Christian faith, but does not have any religion
- Someone who belongs to a different denomination from you (example: Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, Lutheran) but sincerely believes and follows Christ
- Someone who says he/she believes in Jesus, but has different views on who He is and a different way of salvation (Mormon/Latter Day Saints, Jehovah's Witnesses, Catholic)
- A good person who believes in God but follows a different religion (example: Islam, Hindu, Buddhism).
- Please read "Su Lan's Story" in *Readings in Marriage*.

When there is a conflict between obeying Scripture and obeying parents, obeying the Lord must take precedence. But our situations are never a "closed system," are they? God responds to our prayers and can change situations and stubborn hearts (Prov 21:1).

Daniel and his friends were in a similar predicament to Su Lan. These young captives were being asked to eat meat that they felt would defile them, perhaps because of the type of animal or because it had been strangled or because it had been offered to idols. They felt strongly that they must disobey the orders of the ones who had control of them, but they also knew that God wanted them to submit to His authority. What did they do to solve this problem?

- Please read Daniel 1:8-17.

How can this example help you advise Su Lan how to deal with her parents and with her elders?

On the other hand, sometimes people are physically forced to do things that they would not choose for themselves, including in some cases, marrying someone contrary to God's instructions about whom to marry. Esther was forced to marry the pagan king Ahasuerus (Xerxes) (Est 2:3-4). The Lord blessed her and used her to save the Jews (Est 4:14; 8:1-11).

QUESTION 12

Imagine Su Lan has come to you for advice. Please list in your Life Notebook the key principles and stories you would share with Su Lan. In addition to the Scriptures already mentioned in this subtopic, here are some additional ones that you may find helpful:

- 1 Corinthians 7:8, 9, 20-28
- Matthew 12:46-50
- Amos 3:3
- Acts 5:29
- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Knowing Your Future Mate*.

Marriage Building Activity: Knowing Your Future Mate



For **MARRIED** students, answer the following questions with your spouse. If you are **SINGLE**, ask your parents or an older couple their answers to these questions. Write in your Life Notebook what you learned from these discussions and come prepared to share some things in your seminar.

1. What did you each *not* realize about each other before you married?
2. What effect has this had on your relationship?
3. How will you recommend your children or others pursue getting to know someone for the purpose of developing a relationship that perhaps leads to marriage?

If you have **teen-age children**, have you discussed with them your expectations and desires for them in choosing a mate? If not, set a time to do this (if you are married, with your spouse too).

If you are **SINGLE**, stop and pray now for your future spouse. If you have children, pray for their mates or future mates.

Topic 3: Divorce and Remarriage

Writing on the subject of divorce and remarriage is perhaps the most difficult in this course. On the one hand are all the things we know about what God's Word says, but on the other hand are the things we do not know about what He would say if there were Scriptures dealing with the exact issues that we face in our churches. We can only draw principles from what He does say and hope prayerfully to apply them correctly to the sinful situations that make divorce an issue.

You will look at what the Bible says about permanence. It is only then that you can make sense of the various comments about divorce. First, you will read Christ's words on divorce. Since He pointed to Moses, next you will look at what the Old Testament Law said. Finally you will look at what the apostle Paul taught in the more complex situation of Gentile converts who were sometimes married to unbelievers who practiced idolatrous sexual perversions. These teachings are especially valuable for us today.

Permanence

In the historical vows of the Christian wedding ceremony, there was always a vow to be faithful to this one person until death. It was expressed "till death do us part." A sweet version I once heard was "till one lays the other in the arms of Jesus."

But many people take vows while secretly keeping divorce as a possible escape clause. In contrast to a Christian ceremony, some have changed vows not to mention anything about permanence. In Buddhist and Chinese weddings, no one makes vows at all. In China, communist couples used to bow three times to a photo of Chairman Mao. Now they bow to



each other! Are there vows of permanence in your culture? What was God's original design for marriage?

- Please read "Honoring Marriage" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 13

Please open your Life Notebook and write one or more sentences about how you will honor marriage in your circumstances that are similar to the items in the article. Stop and talk to God about this intention.

Despite clear instructions from God about how He designed human hearts to be kept safe in a permanent marriage relationship, the divorce rate keeps going up throughout the world. Society's response of removing marriage as a prerequisite for sexual activity has only made the problem worse. Studies in the U.S. show that a woman who has been involved in sex before marriage is three times more likely to commit adultery during marriage. (Reference: *The Family in America: New Research*, June 1996, p. 3; Renata Forste and Koray Tanfer, "Sexual Exclusivity Among Dating, Cohabiting and Married Women," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 58 [1996]: 33–47.)

Even Christians are getting caught in sexual immorality. Yesterday I received a phone call from a young woman looking for a room to rent because her Christian roommate had been secretly hosting her boyfriend overnight in their apartment. Hedonist philosopher Hugh Hefner's statement, shocking in the 1960s, that sex has little more meaning than taking a drink of water when you are thirsty, seems to now be a common view. But licentiousness fails to improve the divorce statistics at all. In fact, sexual relationship before marriage is a strong predictor of adultery and divorce. What does make a marriage endure?

- Please read the article, "What Will Make a Christian Marriage Endure?" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 14

Open your Life Notebook. Let's see how walking in the Spirit affects how a marriage weathers periods of extreme stress.

1. Make two columns: the characteristics of A, a fleshly marriage; and B, a Christian marriage. Gather your list of characteristics from Galatians 5:17-26.

2. Now imagine two couples. Both attend church and believe in Christ. Couple A is living in a marriage with the characteristics of the flesh as a frequent part of the way that they relate to each other. Choose from the list two of the strongest fleshly characteristics that you have seen infect Christians in marriage and circle or highlight them on the A list. Couple B is living in a Christian marriage with all of the fruit of the Spirit characterizing the way they relate to each other most of the time. Choose two of these characteristics that might be their most prevalent characteristics and circle or highlight them on the B list.

Now, imagine that each couple had a son attending the same college. One day the two boys were in a bus accident and both died. Both couples are in shock and grief. In a crisis situation, the best and the worst of the way that they related to each other before will become much stronger.



3. Write a paragraph that answers the following questions. You can either answer each question with a single sentence, or you may write a fictional story, which includes answers to all of the questions.

- How did each of these couples react to the news of their son's death?
- Based on the prevailing characteristics you circled, and others on the list, how might each wife treat her husband during this time of grieving and trauma?
- How might each husband treat his wife?
- What effect could this tragedy have on each marriage over the following year?

4. If you have seen a couple go through the death of a child, write something in your Life Notebook about what effect this trauma had on their marriage relationship.

In this subtopic, we have seen that a Christian marriage is insoluble. However, it only takes one spouse walking according to the flesh to spoil a Christian marriage and cause it to become a fleshly marriage and very vulnerable to decay. The strength that the couple has built into their marriage by walking in the Spirit bears its sweetest fruit during times of crisis. Through the Spirit, they can draw closer together rather than letting the crisis pull them apart.

Bible Teaching on Divorce and Remarriage

Jesus first taught on divorce and remarriage in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:31-32. What he said so stunned the Pharisees that they went home, reflected on it, then asked Him to reiterate His teaching later in Matthew 19:3. Was Jesus serious? You looked at this incident briefly in Lesson 1, but in this subtopic you will look at divorce and remarriage throughout Scripture.

- Please read "Jesus' Teaching on Divorce" in *Readings in Marriage* and then answer the following questions from the article.

QUESTION 15

Why is Jesus' teaching on divorce especially important as it relates to your relationship with Christ through eternity?

During the founding of the church, the apostles had the challenge of applying Jesus' principles to complicated human situations in many different cultures, both Jewish and Gentile. The Gentile cultures were extremely licentious by Jewish standards. Adultery and fornication were common. Homosexual relationships, both short- and long-term were also common. While there were some virgin female groups, no male group in that society practiced celibacy. How would the apostles teach the new believers, who had become accustomed to these sinful sexual habits, how God wanted His people to live in purity? How could they live in purity if their spouses were still involved in the pagan culture? The church at Corinth sent a letter asking these questions. What did Paul say?

- Please read "Paul's Teaching on Marriage, Divorce, and Purity" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 16

What are the six categories of people addressed in 1 Corinthians 7?

QUESTION 17

Paul said that a married person must not give attention to pleasing the spouse, or else he is dividing his attention from the Lord. *True or False?*

So we have seen that while divorce is common in the modern world, it is never God's best for His children. It may be necessary, or even advisable in certain circumstances, but only as the lesser evil. However, as we have seen, divorce is not the unforgivable sin. It cannot keep you from the love of God or from being able to serve God in some way. In 1 Corinthians 7:8, 24, 32, Paul admonishes that, just as for those who have never been married, a divorced person will have opportunities for loving and serving Christ that involve every aspect of mind, soul, and body.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Making Changes*.

Marriage Building Activity: Making Changes



For **MARRIED** students: In 1 Corinthians 7:2-5, 33-34, Paul gives two important concepts that can help “divorce proof” your marriage. Did you see them? The first is to have regular sexual intercourse with your spouse. The second is to try to please your spouse. Do you know what pleases your spouse? Sometimes when we are married for a long time, we stop trying to please. Life gets too busy and the thought doesn’t even cross our minds, except perhaps on special occasions.

1. List the three things that you could do or do differently that you think would please your spouse most. Don’t forget the admonitions of 1 Corinthians 7:5.
2. Ask your spouse to see if your ideas are correct. What three things would he/she list? Write the results of your comparison in your Life Notebook. How well do you try to understand and accommodate the differences in what pleases your spouse and what pleases you?
3. Sometimes, the areas where it would please my spouse the most for me to change are also the most difficult for me to change myself. Ask God what He thinks about the changes that would please your spouse. Does He want you to change? If you decide that the desired changes are not opposed to God’s will, pray and ask Him where to begin.

For **SINGLE** Students: Compare 1 Corinthians 10:33, Galatians 1:10, and Colossians 3:22-24. Discuss with someone you know well the difference between pleasing someone and being a “man/woman pleaser.”

1. Why is seeking to please someone a good thing and being a “man/woman pleaser” a sin?
2. Why are people tempted to be “man/woman pleasers”?
3. How are the objectives different between these two types of pleasing?
4. What would a marriage look like if the bad type of pleasing was operating? How would the good type bless a marriage?
5. How might this sin harm relationships in the Body of Christ?

Prepare some notes or a short writing in your Life Notebook to report to your seminar the important distinctions between these two concepts. Be careful to note the Scripture that pertains to each of your thoughts.

Topic 4: Illness and Death of a Spouse

“When Nancy got sick, I never thought it would lead to her being in a wheelchair. She is in pain so much of the time that it is hard for me to watch. I wish I could do more to help her, but I don’t know how. Plus I am so busy now, taking care of the kids, helping Nancy, dealing with the doctor’s appointments and medical bills, going to work each day. It seems like this illness is a big monster that has seized control of everything in our lives.”

When your spouse gets seriously sick, injured, or permanently handicapped, what kinds of things go through your mind? How do I ease his/her suffering? How do I encourage my spouse to have

strength and courage to get through this? How long can I possibly work this hard before I fall apart? When you are the one who is ill, you have questions too. How do I help my spouse to not be overwhelmed? How can we take courage and strength from the Lord? There are also many practical concerns— financial, sexual, perhaps even spiritual questions that illness stimulates.



Illness and Injury

At some point in your marriage, your spouse will become ill, perhaps seriously ill. So will you. At least one of you may be injured or even be disabled. Scripture shows that these are normal occurrences in the fallen world, which Christians are not prevented from experiencing. But when these things happen, it puts great pressure on the relationship and exposes all the flaws and imperfections in the couple's characters and ways of relating. Therefore, sickness also holds great opportunity for spiritual growth and for growth in your marriage.

- Please read "The Opportunities of Illness" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 18

What are four of the opportunities of sickness mentioned in the article? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. It helps you realize how much your partner means to you.
- B. It gives you the chance to minister to the Lord.
- C. It encourages you to feel thankful.
- D. It tests whether you have enough faith to be healed.
- E. It tests and proves your faithfulness.

Suffering seems to be a normal activity for every great man or woman of God, and many of them have written about it for us. When we are sick or our spouse is sick, we can find many passages in Psalms to pray back to the Lord to comfort us.

- Please do the following *Worship Activity*.

Lesson 10 Worship Activity



Choose a Psalm. Personalize it by praying it back to the Lord and using your own point of view as you think about a sickness, loss, or a difficult situation in your life recently.

Suggested: Psalm 18:1-19

If you only have happy things happening in your life right now, pray back a happy Psalm.

Suggested: Psalm 103:1-22

Death

The Bible says that some sickness leads to death (Jn 11:4). Perhaps you even now are having to stand by as a spouse slips further and further from you and will soon leave you alone. Accidents, suicide, murder, or sudden illness can snatch a spouse without warning. It is rare that a husband and wife die simultaneously, so in God's good plan, either you or your spouse will probably someday be left behind. Perhaps you are already a widow or widower. Whether or not the relationship was a happy one, the death of a spouse is a cataclysmic event. How can you think about and live through death and dying in a way that increases your ability to glorify the Lord? Mae is a friend of mine who has walked this hard road.



- Please read her story, “Mae’s Story” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 19

What Bible promise was most important to Mae during her husband’s illness and death?

- A. Jeremiah 29:11 “For I know what I have planned for you ...”
- B. Psalm 37:3 “Trust in the LORD ...”
- C. Psalm 34:18 “The LORD is near the brokenhearted ...”
- D. Psalm 18:2 “The LORD is my high ridge, my stronghold, my deliverer.
- E. Isaiah 42:3 “A crushed reed he will not break ...”

While more women become widows than men become widowers, men are not exempt from the pain of loss. Gerald Sittser watched his mother, his wife, and his daughter die around him in the minutes following a car accident. He wrote about his grief in the book *A Grace Disguised*¹⁴. He says that it is not our loss that is most important, but how we respond to it. The way that we respond will help set the course for the rest of our lives.

- Please read “Growing From Grief” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 20

According to the article, which is the **FALSE** statement about the loss of a spouse?

- A. Life can be better in many ways after a tragic loss.
- B. When we ask, “God, why did You allow this tragedy?” He is usually silent.
- C. God only offers Himself for our comfort.
- D. When we heal, life returns to the way it was before.
- E. Death is an enemy.
- F. Christians each experience loss differently.

Widowhood

In establishing the laws for justice for Israel, God shows that He has a special tenderness toward those without a protector. He is concerned for the way that His people should treat widows, as well as others, such as foreigners and orphans, who are more vulnerable to injustice, loneliness, and poverty.



¹⁴ Gerald L. Sittser, *A Grace Disguised, How the Soul Grows Through Loss*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996.

QUESTION 21

Match the references with the warnings and instruction about widows that they contain.

| <i>Reference</i> | <i>Warnings and Instructions</i> |
|----------------------|--|
| Exodus 22:22-24 | God gives special care for foreigners, widows, and orphans. |
| Deuteronomy 24:19-21 | Farmers must allow some of their harvests to remain unpicked for widows, orphans, and foreigners to gather for themselves. |
| Psalms 146:9 | Israel was supposed to give every third year's tithe of their harvest to the priests, aliens, foreigners, and widows. |
| Isaiah 1:17 | If you mistreat the blind, orphans, widows, or foreigners, you are cursed. |
| Deuteronomy 26:12 | If you hurt a widow or orphan, she/he can cry out to God and God will cause your wife to become a widow and your children orphans. |
| Deuteronomy 27:18-19 | God wants His people to protect orphans and act on behalf of widows. |

First Timothy 5 contrasts different types of widows, righteous ones and unrighteous ones, young ones and old ones, and gives many instructions about and for them.

- Please read 1 Timothy 5:3-16.

Please notice all of the instructions for the church's care for widows. We know from the book of Acts (Acts 6:1) that very early on, the church began providing food for the widows among them. But apparently by this time, the church at Ephesus had more widows than resources. Here we see Paul giving Timothy some instructions on how to reduce the number of widows the church supported.

The first principle was that the church was to be a support only for those widows who were alone in the world. In 1 Timothy 5:16, we see that the care for a dependent widow falls first to the children and grandchildren as a group (1 Tim 5:3-4), but he emphasizes that care for widows was the special responsibility of the mature *daughters and granddaughters* (1 Tim 5:16). Can you see why it could be less disruptive to marriages if daughters, rather than sons, are the ones to care for their widowed mothers? As we have pointed out earlier, as per Genesis 2:23, it is necessary for the mother/son bond to be fully superseded by the son's new bond with his wife. This instruction about widows strongly supports that concept.

To further shorten the list, Paul describes the kind of exemplary widow who should receive the church's financial help. What are the activities and attitudes of a widow whom the apostle says to "honor" (1 Tim 5:3) by giving financial assistance?

QUESTION 22

Match to complete the phrases from 1 Timothy 5:5, 10.

| <i>Phrase Part 1</i> | <i>Phrase Part 2</i> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Sets her hope | those in distress (v 10) |
| Continues in her pleas and prayers | all kinds of good works (v 10) |
| Practices | night and day (v 5) |
| Helps | on God (v 5) |
| Has exhibited | good works (v 10) |
| Has a reputation for | Hospitality (v 10) |

If you are a widow, would these phrases describe you?

In this passage, we also see that Paul is very concerned about *young* widows bringing discredit to the church. This is not a new problem. In our country, sexual sin is common among unattached



men and women, even among Christians. Looking at 1 Timothy 5:11-15, Paul describes a similar phenomenon in the church of his day: young women forgetting their vow of celibacy (probably a vow for single-minded devotion for service to Christ, like we saw Paul recommend in 1 Cor 7:8, 32-35, 40). Paul saw the younger widows losing their focus for ministry and being lazy when it came to their Christian service. Through their desire for relationships with men, they get caught up in gossip and personal

dramas among their friends. Does this sound anything like today?

Paul's solution was for younger women to go ahead and get married and focus all that emotional energy on a relationship with a husband and children. His perspective for singles seems to have changed somewhat over time. Instead of just *permission* to marry, as he suggested for widows in 1 Corinthians 7:39, Paul here strongly *instructs* the young widows to get married (1 Tim 5:14). He does not suggest how they are to find good husbands—a serious problem in today's world.

QUESTION 23

We see that Paul's instructions to young widows had changed between 1 Corinthians 7 and 1 Timothy 5, a period of 7–10 years. What had some young widows done that Paul had observed (1 Tim 5:15) that caused this change? What kind of lifestyle do you think he was referring to? How do you think this principle applies to wives who are abandoned by husbands?

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Bereavement*.

Marriage Building Activity: Bereavement



Get together with your spouse, or if you are single, a close friend. Share each of your answers to the following questions:

1. How can the church help in finding good husbands for young widows?
2. If you are married, how can you prepare each other for the possibility of suddenly being left as a widow or widower? Do you understand the finances, the care of the children and the house, where important documents and money are kept? Discuss what things you would need to know if you were suddenly responsible for all of it alone. Make a list of what you each need to learn, and make a point during the next few weeks to show each other the things that you normally take responsibility for.
3. In the event of your death, your spouse will not be thinking clearly or remember exactly what you said, so *write everything down* and put the instructions in a safe place.

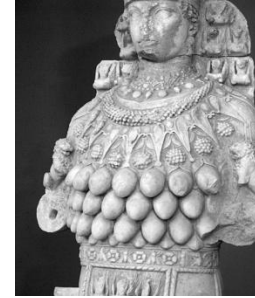
Keep your spouse updated on any changes, and make sure to remind your spouse to keep you updated.

Topic 5: Relating to a Spouse Who Disobeys God

According to Jesus, marriage is intended as a permanent union between one man and one woman (Mt 19:6). But in the Roman world when the New Testament was written, many aberrations in that design flourished, just as they do today: homosexuality, divorce, adultery, fornication, pedophilia, polygamy, sexual rituals used in pagan worship. When a woman became a disciple of Christ in Corinth, she might be married to a person who regularly visited the temple to be involved in pagan sexual acts, or he might have a homosexual lover as well as a wife.

The following picture is of the fertility idol that the Ephesians worshipped, Artemis.

On the other hand, the unbelieving husband might be sexually faithful to the marriage covenant. What is a Christian man or woman to do when the spouse is not a believer? Should the believer divorce the unbeliever in order to find someone more compatible? Should married couples avoid sexual relations to avoid joining with someone who is not part of Christ? Does the Christian's faith actually save the unbelieving spouse, or does the unbelief contaminate the Christian spouse and the children?



The Corinthians were eager to hear Paul's wisdom on these complicated marital situations in their city. As we learned earlier, they had written him a letter (1 Cor 7:1) full of questions and/or perplexing situations, for which the passage beginning with 1 Corinthians 7 was his response. It would have been helpful to have the exact text of their questions, but his responses give us some guidelines that we can apply to our own complicated marital situations. In this subtopic, we will look further at the ways that God directs us to relate to an unbelieving spouse or one who is not obedient to the Lord.

QUESTION 24

Look one more time at 1 Corinthians 7:12-16. Here Paul addresses the question of what to do about mixed marriages (marriage with an unbeliever). How would you briefly describe his instruction?

Some Christians have mistakenly tried to make home as cold and uncomfortable as possible in an effort to motivate the unbeliever to "depart." But this is contrary to the clear teaching of Scripture. What attitude should the Christian have in a mixed marriage?

- Please read Philippians 2:5-8 and 1 Peter 3:1-9, and then read "Susan's Story" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 25

Please open your Life Notebook.

Please reflect on Susan's story and answer the following questions.

1. What various possible outcomes would you see of Susan's course of action?
2. Do you think she made a wise or a foolish plan?
3. If you have known Christians who have non-Christian spouses, how does this compare with the ways that they have felt and acted toward their unsaved spouses?
4. Does Susan's method of relating to her husband cause her to become stronger or weaker spiritually?
5. What did this course of action require from Susan every day?

Imagine if Susan were a member of the church at Philippi who received the instruction of Philippians 2:5-8. If Paul heard about what she was doing, what would he say to her?

If Susan were a member of the church at Pontus who received the instruction of 1 Peter 3:1-9, what do you think Peter might have said to her?

QUESTION 26

In 1 Peter 3:1-9, Peter recommends several attitudes for believing women married to unbelievers. Please list them.

Notice that this passage does not suggest a mousy personality or servile silence. This wife moves toward her husband in warmth as well as strength. She refuses to be afraid as she sets about doing good.

QUESTION 27

From what you have learned in Lessons 5 and 6 about the nature and fears of males, what might a non-Christian husband fear about coming to Christ after his wife is already a Christian? How do Peter's instructions counteract those fears?

Even though Peter recommends this attitude as the best, most winsome way to win your husband to Christ, God never guarantees that if the wife behaves this way, she will be successful in winning her spouse to Christ. In fact in 1 Corinthians 7:16, Paul says that we are never sure whether our best efforts will be effective in bringing salvation to an unsaved spouse.

- Please read the next few verses, 1 Peter 3:7-8.

QUESTION 28

Please open your Life Notebook.

1. What attitudes are described in verse 7 for a Christian husband in dealing with his wife, (possibly from the context, a non-Christian one)? From what you have observed about the needs of women, particularly a wife whose husband has become a believer, why might these two attitudes be very important in the way the believing husband behaves toward his unsaved or disobedient-to-Christ wife?
2. What characteristic, attitudes, and actions are described in verses 8-10 that are particularly important in a marriage where one party is not a believer?
3. Which ones of these are characteristics that will cause the believer to become more like Christ?

Is this easy to do, if the spouse is disagreeable, as mentioned in verse 9? Of course not.

4. Where does the power come from to transform a natural reaction to a difficult spouse, such as fear, anger, anxiety, or criticism, to a supernatural display of the attributes of Jesus?
5. How would these attitudes affect children? A mixed marriage can be confusing for children. If you are interested in thinking more about growing children to follow Christ in a marriage where a spouse is giving a different message, please read this note¹⁵.

Does this seem unfair or unjust that God would keep a person in a relationship with a difficult spouse, or that the spouse is instructed to respond from heart attitudes that are the opposite of what the difficult spouse seems to deserve? According to Romans 8:29 and 12:2 and many other passages, one of God's main objectives is to transform the believer into the image of Christ. So in this lesson, you saw that there are many different situations in which Christians may live out their faith other than in a marriage where both husband and wife are walking with Christ. Each situation contains different opportunities to grow as a believer and to experience the sufficiency of Christ.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: The Unbelieving Spouse*

¹⁵ Note about raising children in a mixed marriage. Please read Acts 16:1-2 and 2 Timothy 1:5. In these passages, we learn about a home where the wife was a believer, but her husband was not. Their son went on to become a great man of God. We only learn one characteristic of the mother, Eunice: She had sincere faith. Why was that so important to raising a godly son? Children, particularly teens, are quick to observe any inconsistencies, any fraudulence in what we say we believe and how we live. Eunice's sincerity was a very important aspect of her influencing her son to follow Christ. When Mom and Grandma are the only believers in the family, while Dad remains unbelieving, it is possible that a son will see faith as only feminine and reject it or will himself become feminized. If Eunice had the attitudes that Peter describes in 1 Peter 3, can you see how those attitudes would have allowed Timothy to develop sincere faith, proven character, and leadership abilities, without either rejecting her faith or becoming feminized himself?

What did the Lord provide for Timothy in order to mentor him in becoming a manly Christian? A mentor, Paul (1 Tim 1:2, 18; 2 Tim 2:1-6). Relationships with mature Christian men are important in the life of a boy whose father is not a believer. The influence of mature Christian women is important in the life of a girl whose mother is not a believer. Can you seek out these kids and help in this way?

Marriage Building Activity: The Unbelieving Spouse



If you are a **WOMAN** who is married to an unbeliever or a disobedient spouse, list on paper the characteristics that you gave in Question 26. First, ask your husband, “Do you think that my faith is sincere?” After he answers, show him the list. “These are the characteristics that my Bible says I am to be showing toward you in order to reveal that my faith is sincere.” Ask forgiveness for the ways in which you have failed to do this and indicate your intention to exhibit these in the future.

If you are a **MAN** who is married to an unbelieving or disobedient wife, write on paper the characteristics that you listed for Question 28, part one. Ask your wife, “Do you think my faith is sincere?” Show the list to your wife. “These are the characteristics that my Bible says I am to be showing toward you in order to reveal that I have a sincere faith.” Ask forgiveness for the ways in which you have failed to do this and indicate your intention to exhibit these in the future.

If you are **SINGLE** or have a **CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE**, think of someone you know who is married to an unbeliever. List at least three ways that you might reach out in friendship to the couple, especially the unbelieving spouse, if appropriate. If the couple has children, is someone of the same sex mentoring them? How might you see that this important role is filled?

Please make sure that you have completed every *Marriage Building Activity* for Lesson 10 (and recorded your experience in your Life Notebook) before proceeding to Lesson 11. Completion of these activities will form 40 percent of your grade. The Marriage Building Activities for this lesson were the following:

- *Balancing Contentment and Work.*
- *Marriage and Singleness*
- *Knowing Your Future Mate*
- *Making Changes.*
- *Bereavement*
- *The Unbelieving Spouse*

Lesson 10 Self Check

QUESTION 1

What kept the apostle Paul persevering through great sufferings and disappointment?

- A. A happy marriage
- B. Optimism
- C. Prayer and fasting
- D. A Bible education
- E. Keeping his focus on his goals

QUESTION 2

When God said that it was not good for Adam to be alone, it meant that everyone should get married. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

If someone has the gift of singleness, it means that he/she will *not* struggle much with a desire to have sexual relations or a desire to be married. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

The relationship between a believer and those whom he/she disciples in Christ is the fulfillment of the promises for the barren and eunuchs in Isaiah 54:1 and 56:3-5. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

It is wrong to marry someone whose parents are unbelievers. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

If a boy pressures his fiancée by saying that “we must get married right away or I cannot resist having sex with you,” what is this **NOT** a sign of?

- A. Strong love
- B. Lack of self-control
- C. Lack of trust in the Lord
- D. Self-centeredness
- E. A misunderstanding about self-control in marriage

QUESTION 7

Which person is *dishonoring* marriage?

- A. A girl who accidentally sees a poster of a sexual act
- B. A woman who was touched sexually as a little girl
- C. A single person who hides a few pornographic photos under the bed
- D. A single woman who used to be immoral but now waits for her bridegroom in purity
- E. Someone who prays for the welfare of his/her future spouse

QUESTION 8

A Christian marriage is defined primarily by (1) a commitment to remain faithful to each other, to stay together until death, and (2) to raise children to love Christ. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

The best advice for someone who has lost a loved one is to try not to think about it and to get busy with activities. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

When a woman has an unbelieving spouse, which characteristic is NOT recommended by Peter?

- A. Fearlessness in continuing to do good
- B. Purity
- C. Gentleness
- D. Tranquility
- E. Silence
- F. A beautiful heart

In Lesson 11, we will look at how stewardship of all that we possess together as a married couple can strengthen our unity and strengthen the Body of Christ.

Lesson 10 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1:

| <i>Seen</i> | <i>Unseen</i> |
|--|--|
| We are experiencing trouble on every side. | We are not crushed. |
| We are persecuted. | We are not abandoned. |
| Our physical body is wearing away. | Our inner person is renewed daily. |
| Momentary light suffering. | Producing an eternal weight of glory for us. |
| We do not keep looking at seen. | We keep our focus on the unseen. |
| Because what is seen is temporary. | What is not seen is eternal. |

QUESTION 2:

Your answer should be similar to the following: Jesus persevered because of His undistracted focus. Jesus lived His life with great purpose, no matter what difficulty He encountered. He enjoyed a close personal relationship with His Father as they worked together toward this purpose. No situation was so difficult that it could not contribute in some way toward the purpose that He kept in mind.

QUESTION 3: *Your answer*

QUESTION 4:

- A. Those who were born without the capacity for a normal sexual relationship
- C. Those who have experienced something to prevent them from being able to marry
- D. Those who are single and use the situation for the sake of God's kingdom

QUESTION 5:

Because Proverbs 12:10 says that an evil person is cruel to animals, while a righteous person is concerned for the welfare of animals. A person who is cruel to animals may also be cruel to children or other people that are weak.

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Type of person</i> |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| No prohibition. Numbers 12:1; 12:9-10 | A different skin color or nationality |
| No prohibition. Ruth 3:10 | An older or younger person |
| No prohibition. James 2:5-7 | A poor person |
| Prohibited. Leviticus 18:22-24 | Someone of the same sex as you |
| Prohibited. 2 Corinthians 6:14-15 | One who does not follow Jesus as Lord |
| Prohibited. Proverbs 22:24 | One who is characterized by anger |

QUESTION 8:

E. Asking God to give you a sign through rolling dice, drawing straws, or pulling cards

QUESTION 9:

A woman's core need is to be delighted in and loved, so an arranged marriage brings a sense of enduring shame that she was not delightful enough for someone to pursue her. An alternative suggestion is for parents to arrange an introduction between suitable young people but to allow enough time for them to get to know each other and to seek God, based on this knowledge before making a final decision about marriage. A couple may be able to overcome the heart wounds of an arranged marriage by expressing their delight in each other.

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

QUESTION 11: *Your answer*

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14: *Your answer*

QUESTION 15:

Because marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. Permanence in marriage is important to believers because Christ will never cast His bride, the church, out of heaven. He will never find any “uncleanness” in His church because He paid for it with His own blood. She will never separate herself from Him.

QUESTION 16: The six categories of people addressed in 1 Corinthians 7: (1) Married people, verses 2-5, 10-11; (2) “Unmarried” people, verses 8-9, 27-28; (3) Widows, verses 8, 39, 40; (4) One married to an unbeliever, verses 12-16; (5) Everyone, verses 17-24; (6) Virgins, verses 25; 28.

QUESTION 17: False

QUESTION 18:

- A. It helps you realize how much your partner means to you.
- B. It gives you the chance to minister to the Lord.
- C. It encourages you to feel thankful.
- E. It tests and proves your faithfulness.

QUESTION 19:

- A. Jeremiah 29:11: “For I know what I have planned for you . . .”

QUESTION 20:

- D. When we heal, life returns to the way it was before.

QUESTION 21:

| <i>Reference</i> | <i>Warnings and Instructions</i> |
|----------------------|--|
| Exodus 22:22-24 | If you hurt a widow or orphan, she/he can cry out to God and God will cause your wife to become a widow and your children orphans. |
| Deuteronomy 24:19-21 | Farmers must allow some of their harvests to remain unpicked for widows, orphans, and foreigners to gather for themselves. |
| Psalms 146:9 | God give special care for foreigners, widows, and orphans. |
| Isaiah 1:17 | God wants His people to protect orphans and act on behalf of widows. |
| Deuteronomy 26:12 | Israel was supposed to give every third year’s tithe of their harvest to the priests, aliens, foreigners, and widows. |
| Deuteronomy 27:18-19 | If you mistreat the blind, orphans, widows, or foreigners, you are cursed. |

QUESTION 22:

| <i>Phrase Part 1</i> | <i>Phrase Part 2</i> |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Sets her hope | on God (v 5) |
| Continues in her pleas and prayers | night and day (v 5) |
| Practices | hospitality (v 10) |
| Helps | those in distress (v 10) |
| Has exhibited | all kinds of good works (v 10) |
| Has a reputation for | good works (v 10) |

QUESTION 23:

Their adversaries were spreading the news of a bad reputation because some of the young widows had followed Satan away from righteousness, probably being tempted away to sexual sin or to marry an unbeliever and to fall back into paganism.

QUESTION 24:

If the unsaved spouse is willing to be faithful to the marriage, the Christian spouse should not seek a divorce. But if the spouse abandons the marriage, then the Christian is loosed from the marriage covenant.

QUESTION 25: *Your answer*

QUESTION 26:

Pure, reverent, beautiful heart, gentle spirit, tranquil spirit, fearless while doing good

QUESTION 27:

He might fear that she would lose respect for him. He would fear being shamed or subordinate to her because she was more spiritually mature. He would fear having her lord it over him that she was right. Her quiet and submissive spirit would put his fears to rest about her demeaning him by purporting to be spiritually superior.

QUESTION 28: *Your answer*

Lesson 10 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1:

E. Keeping his focus on his goals

QUESTION 2: False

QUESTION 3: False

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6:

A. Strong love

QUESTION 7:

C. A single person who hides a few pornographic photos under the bed

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9: False

QUESTION 10:

E. Silence

Lesson 11: One Purpose in Stewardship

“But we don’t need a new table, Dinah!” Mark’s voice had an edge to it and he was breathing hard. “What’s wrong with the one we have? You know the payment for school is due in just a few weeks. I was seeing this money as an answer from God on paying that bill!”

“This table is not big enough for when my family all visit, dear.” Dinah smiled, but her voice also seemed strained. “I want us all to be able to sit together. We have this additional money because of the work that I have been doing at your brother’s store. I have been working all these months and dreaming of buying that table. Please don’t take my dream away from me.”



Mark and Dinah said little to each other as they sat across the table at dinner that night. They did not meet each other’s gaze, and the air was heavy with a sad silence.

In many countries, discord over finances is the number one reason given for marital disharmony and even divorce. But how can Christian couples overcome this? How can they understand what God’s Word says about how to use money and possessions and how to come to agreement about the principles that they will use in making financial decisions?

Ignoring money, avoiding managing it, or just letting finances “happen” are not faithful options. As Jesus says, “If then you haven’t been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will entrust you with the true riches?” (Lk 16:11). In this lesson, you will use wisdom from Scripture to work through several financial exercises. Among the most useful will be constructing your “Guiding Principles and Goals for Our Finances” document and developing a family budget. These agreements about how you will handle money should make each individual financial decision easier. Whether you have little or much, you can still make good financial decisions, which are according to biblical principles and which will reduce your stress about money. When your stewardship lines up with God’s principles for finance, you will be able to teach your children and share with others how to bring God glory through godly management of material wealth.

- Begin by reading the instructions, “Guiding Principles and Goals for Our Finances” in *Readings in Marriage*.

Lesson Outline

Lesson 11: One Purpose in Stewardship

Topic 1: Right Thinking on Money and Possessions

Finances and Faith

Jesus’ Teaching on Money

Three Legs of Financial Wisdom: God Owns Everything, Unequal Provision, Contentment and Security in Christ

Topic 2: Handling Money and Possessions

Giving to God

Saving

Borrowing and Lending

Spending and Budgeting

Topic 3: Work

The Goodness of Work

Working Enough or Working Too Much

Financing Vocational Ministry

Topic 4: Three Practical Exercises in Stewardship

Exercise 1: Purchasing Practice

Exercise 2: Appreciation Practice

Exercise 3: Budgeting Practice

Topic 1: Right Thinking on Money and Possessions

Are money and possessions sinful? What do we know about the godly people of the New Testament and their use of money?



John the Baptist lived on locusts and wild honey and perhaps owned no more than his camel hair robe and his leather sandals. He probably only thought about his finances when his sandals needed new soles! Some Christians through the centuries have tried to follow John's example of simple living. They believe it to be the best way to avoid getting tangled in sinful desires. But John is not our only biblical example of a godly life.

Jesus, also single, worked as a carpenter until the time of His ministry, but then lived on support from offerings (Jn 12:6) and stayed most often in shelter provided by others (Lk 10:38), although it appears that He may have owned or rented a home in Capernaum (Mt 4:13; Mk 2:1, Lk 8:3). Unlike John, Jesus did not adopt an ascetic lifestyle. In fact, He was accused of

being a "glutton and a drunkard" (Mt 11:19).

Paul supported himself by his trade of tent making. He traveled for the gospel and did not seem to settle permanently in one place. He said that he knew how to live both in affluence and in poverty (Phil 4:12).

Peter was a family man and kept a house and a family of unknown size, including a mother-in-law (Mt 8:14). He later traveled in ministry with his wife (1 Cor 9:5).

Paul tells us that in the early church there were not many rich people (1 Cor 1:26). But he doesn't say that there were *no* rich people. In fact, some of the problems in the early church in understanding and in honoring one another were because of the vast difference between those who were wealthy and those who were poor (Jas 2:1-6; 1 Cor 11:21).

So what should our attitude be toward money and possessions? Does the Bible help us to understand? In Luke 14:28-30, Jesus tells the sad parable of a man who became a laughingstock because of his failure to properly gauge how much money his tower project would cost. Jesus ridicules the foolishness of those who attempt to build without analyzing the cost and planning carefully. This was a story about spiritual riches that was built squarely on a truth about handling material riches. The implication is that both the material and the spiritual principles are true and important.

The Bible is an immensely practical book. Rather than seeing a dualism between the spirit and the material worlds, the Bible reveals that they are closely intertwined. What we do in one affects the other. So it should not surprise us, then, that one of every three parables Jesus told is about the subject of money and possessions. One of every five verses in the New Testament is on these subjects, too. In fact, in the entire Bible, there are more than 1,000 verses on money and possessions and our management of them (Larry Burkett, *The Word on Finances* [Chicago: Moody Press, 1994], 11). The Bible often points out that our use of money demonstrates our real

values, no matter what we say. More important than how *much* money we do or do not have is how we *think* about money and possessions—both our own things and as we look at and esteem other people’s wealth. Our attitudes lead to a use of money that may be righteous or evil, wise or foolish.

But some of the Bible’s principles seem confusing to apply, don’t they? In one passage, Jesus tells His disciples to go empty-handed on their mission trip, and later tells them to go buy a suitcase and a sword (Lk 22:35-36). Perhaps that is why there are so many conflicting teachings today about money. Have you heard some teachers say that God wants all Christians to be wealthy? Have you heard others say that God is most glorified by poverty? Another group teaches that great attentiveness to money and possessions shows gratefulness and wise stewardship. There is an aspect of truth in all of these points of view, and we have good friends who fall into all three of these groups. But taking any extreme view on money can lead to spiritual weakness and problems in marriage.

Finances and Faith

What does the way you handle money say about your marriage and about your faith? If you handle worldly wealth for the love of God and according to His purposes, you will be utilizing principles that will also help you to handle the spiritual wealth of the gospel well.

- Please read 1 Timothy 6:3-11, and pay special attention to verse 10.

QUESTION 1

Please open your Life Notebook. In this passage, Paul describes two types of individuals who call themselves believers. What are the two types? List them at the head of a two-column chart or two lists. Under each title, list the characteristics of each type. As you work, ask yourself which characteristics on both lists your spouse might use to describe you.

Now, which one of these people is rich and which one is poor? Notice that it doesn’t say! The difference is not in their net worth, but in their faithful or faithless attitudes, which include the way they view money and possessions.

Now look at the items on this list again, and think of them within your marriage. How many of your arguments and discussions are about money, or about the quality of your food, shelter, or possessions? How much of your communication with each other about your possessions is gentle and lovingly encourages each other toward godliness, righteousness, faithfulness, and endurance? How do you as a couple together portray the godly mind of the second list in the way that you make financial decisions together?

A godly couple is content and thankful when God provides the necessities of life, such as food, shelter, and clothing, which help them to pursue the more important goals that the Holy Spirit may give them. But according to this passage, a “corrupted mind” reverses this order and tries to use godly living to serve self-centered purposes. A couple may reverse this goal order just as much as an individual. A “corrupted mind” couple’s real aim in life is to gain esteem, power, and wealth for themselves. In fact, they may work together quite happily toward these common purposes. After all, a couple with a reputation for good character, faithfulness, and charity will be respected not only by Christians but by the world as well. This good reputation may benefit them in business and social relationships. So the “corrupt mind’s” secret thought is that developing a reputation for godliness is merely a means to more success and more wealth.



The outside behavior may not appear that different between the two couples. Both are living good lives. But their motivation for doing so is worlds apart. One is serving God, the other is using godliness to serve self.



What is your motivation for living a godly life? Is it because life “works better” and you have the probability of greater affluence? Or is Christ Himself the riches that you desire? Paul warns us that the people who use godliness will end up tangled and finally trapped and ruined by their sinful desires. As he says in Galatians 6:7, “God will not be made a fool.”

Perhaps Paul was thinking of Ananias and Sapphira when he wrote these words. You may remember that they were a married couple who were blessed financially, but things did not go well for them.

- Please read their story in Acts 5:1-10.

QUESTION 2

What was true about their perspective? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. They wanted the church to think highly of them.
- B. They thought that God wouldn't mind if they pretended a little.
- C. They were condemned because they did not give the whole sales amount to God.
- D. They did not try to stop each other from sinning.
- E. Sapphira did the right thing by submitting to her husband.
- F. They thought God was a fool.

Jesus' Teaching on Money

In Luke 15 and 16, Jesus tells the following five parables in which money and riches are major elements:

- The Lost Sheep
- The Lost Coin
- The Lost Son
- The Unrighteous Steward
- The Rich man and Lazarus

In Luke 15:1, we see that His audience included tax gatherers (Jews who worked for the foreign Roman occupation), Pharisees (religious rulers), scribes (who copied Scripture), and sinners. In Jewish idiom a “sinner” was a Jew who was not religious or didn't follow the Jewish Law. The Bible says that the Pharisees especially loved money (Lk 16:14).

- Please skim Luke 15 and read Luke 16 more thoroughly, and imagine what each of these groups of listeners were thinking as Jesus spoke.

Make notes about any observations you have or questions you would like to discuss at your seminar.

Before the last parable in this section, the story of a rich man and a poor man named Lazarus, Jesus explicitly states two important principles about wealth that the listeners were supposed to understand from the stories. Did you see them?

QUESTION 3

In Luke 16:10-13, what are the two principles that Jesus gives about money?

If God is not your supreme value, you will automatically try to orient your worship and service to Him to actually serve what you value higher. Your actions with money will reveal this, just as they did for Ananias and Sapphira. But God only accepts first offerings, not leftovers. As one saying goes “Either He is Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all.” So then, before you can develop a financial plan, you and your spouse will need to ask God individually and then together whether your motives are free from this desire to use Him to acquire that which you value higher, such as “worldly wealth,” influence, reputation, self-righteousness, or being loved.



When we value anything more than God, we not only distance ourselves from Him, but we invite the enemy to establish more strongholds in our lives and we open ourselves to more forms of evil. This is what Paul means in 1 Timothy 6:10 when Scripture calls the love of money the “root of all evils.” The corollary principle might be that the true love of the true God is the root of all good. We will serve whatever we truly love. Do we seek to honor God in everything we do? If not, we are right to question whether or not we truly love God with our whole heart.

- Please do the following *Worship Activity: Hidden Sins*.

Lesson 11 Worship Activity: Hidden Sins



We are often blind to our own hidden sins in the area of money, but if we humbly ask in prayer, the Holy Spirit will begin to expose and root them out. A suggested prayer might look something like this “Lord, we repent of trying to use You to achieve our own purposes in these areas [list them]. We want You to reign supreme in our hearts. We submit all of our possessions and all that we are to be fully at Your disposal for Your purposes. Thank You for entrusting us with possessions that we can steward for Your kingdom.”

Three Legs of Financial Wisdom

When scientists design vehicles to traverse rocky terrain or platforms to remain stable, they often design three legs. This tripod shape is always on a plane, always sitting securely, no matter how uneven or crooked the situation.



In order to develop a correct perspective on money and possessions, there are three principles, or legs, that will keep your financial household in order on the uneven situations of life.

Leg 1



- Please read “Leg 1: God Owns Everything” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 4

Based on your reading, which statements best express God's rule? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. God rules everything in heaven.
- B. God rules everything on earth.
- C. God rules in heaven only while man rules on earth.
- D. God rules only obedient men.
- E. God has relinquished rule of the earth to Satan to do whatever he wants.

Leg 2



Handling finances is not a simple matter, because God seems to delight in variety. He calls both rich and poor into His kingdom, and He doesn't always see fit that the rich give away their wealth or that the poor gain it.

- Please read "Leg 2: Unequal Provision" in *Readings in Marriage*.
- Please do the following *Worship Activity: Unequal Provision*.

Worship Activity: Unequal Provision



Spend time in prayer (preferably with your spouse) asking God whether you have had a bad attitude about the poverty or wealth of others. Have you wronged anyone in your heart by having a judgmental spirit about his/her financial situation or lifestyle? If you've answered yes to either or both of these questions, ask God to forgive your attitude and give you a fresh perspective about this issue.

Make a covenant with your spouse not to malign or be jealous of those with a different income and lifestyle than you. Hold each other accountable for this decision and agree to (lovingly) remind each other of your covenant if ever your talk about others turns to evil comments about their wealth or poverty.

The first two legs of financial wisdom—God’s ownership of our possessions and our acceptance of His unequal provision for us and others—prepare us for the third and most stabilizing leg. When this leg is firmly placed, our faith cannot easily be toppled.

Leg 3



- Please read “Leg 3: Contentment and Security in Christ” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 5

If we pray motivated by strong desires for more: more possessions, more comfort, and more pleasure, what did the article say will happen? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. We will be continually thirsty, never satisfied.
- B. We will miss out on a closer intimacy with God, the only thing that will satisfy us.
- C. Our prayers may not be answered.
- D. We will be insecure and worried.
- E. We will get rich.

As we saw in this article, God asks us to bring not only our needs but also our “wants” to Him in prayer. Because He is gracious, He often grants these requests as well our requests for the things that we need.

- Please read “Radu’s Story” about someone who learned to trust God through prayer for a “want” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 6

According to what you observed in James 4 in the article on “Leg 3: Contentment and Security in Christ,” what kind of attitude might have made it impossible for God to lovingly grant Radu’s request?

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Our Stewardship*.

Marriage Building Activity: Our Stewardship



Materials needed: pen and Life Notebook

Get together with your spouse if you are **MARRIED** or, if you are **SINGLE**, with anyone else with whom you own things jointly. If you own things alone, you may work alone.

1. Make a list of all your possessions, or if you own many things, groups or rooms of possessions.
2. List all the things that you manage or use but do not own. Include not only physical things, like “my room,” but also things like “my time,” “my hands and feet,” “my smile.”
3. List the areas of responsibility, power, or influence that you have, e.g., “I am a pastor. I am a mother. I am a husband. I am a wife. I am a street-crossing guard. I am a store clerk.”

Did you realize how *rich* you really are?

4. Together, get on your knees before God and hold this list in your open hands. Thank God for entrusting you with each item or group, then give ownership of each one back to Him. Ask Him to use them for His glory, especially while they are in your care.
5. God says to seek first His kingdom (Mt 6:33). Together, write down some ideas about how these things could better be used for His kingdom. Since they belong to the Lord, you will want to take good care of them as He would want, but not to the extent that they become an idol, which must be served rather than used to serve others. How can you make these things more available for the Lord’s work? How can you practice hospitality by using them?

Were there some passages and concepts in this lesson that you have not thought much about before? Discuss them with your spouse, roommate, or friend. Keep writing the principles that you are learning into your “Guiding Principles” document.

Topic 2: Handling Money and Possessions

In building their marriage, a couple cannot “live on love” alone. Finances are a necessary component to establish a household and to prepare for children. But the couple’s use of their money and possessions—earning, saving, giving, and purchasing—can either glorify God or grieve Him. Mishandling money can drive a wedge between husband and wife and threaten a collapse of their marital unity. Disagreements can create hurt feelings and bitterness.

Since we often marry someone quite different from ourselves, it should come as no surprise that our perspectives on how to handle our finances will differ. Can you see how differing personalities and motivations were affecting the perspective of Dinah and Mark in the first story in this lesson? Ultimately we may both be “right,” but we are each giving importance to different principles. So, in order to make financial decisions in unity, we need to examine what Scripture says, agree on financial principles, and ask the Holy Spirit to guide us into the truth that applies to

us in a given situation. In the remainder of this lesson, you will examine what the Scriptures say about finances in more detail.

Giving to God

God is a giving God. Even though He is the King of the universe, He chooses to give to His creation, not tax it. In fact, the Bible says that there is nothing we have that was not a gift from God (1 Cor 4:7). From our food and clothing to our relationships, to our own bodies, to the air we



breathe, there is little of value that was not originally a gift of His unmerited grace. In addition to giving to believers, God even gives good gifts to evil people (Mt 5:45). One of the ways that Judas revealed his alignment with the enemy was by reacting negatively to someone's extravagant generosity (Jn 12:5-6)! As we become more like our Lord, we will become more generous to all, just as He is.

What can we learn about giving that will help us to give wisely and generously?

Under the Jewish Law, the faithful were to give regularly and in prescribed amounts. Under the New Covenant in Christ, the rules for giving are different. Instead of rote amounts and percentages, we are invited to experience giving as an overflow of the heart. In Luke 11:42, Jesus emphasizes that we can give a portion of everything we have to God, even the herbs we grow in our gardens, and still have missed the whole point of giving: justice to others and loving Him.

QUESTION 7

INDUCTIVE OBSERVATION PROJECT:

In this project, you will briefly observe giving throughout the span of Bible history to see how giving has both changed and remained the same over time. You will find that comparing these passages will give you a good basis for teaching on the subject of money and giving in the future.

- Please create an observation chart from the instructions in “Giving Throughout Bible History,” found in *Readings in Marriage*. Please read each passage in the chart, and enter the basic information requested by the titles across the top. You may have to look at the context of other verses in the same passage to find some of the responses. Then return here to answer some questions about your observations.

In the Old Testament, you saw that God instructed that His people should give a tenth of the increase every year (money, livestock, and crops). This tenth was given to the Levites to carry out the ministry in the temple, for the Levite's support of their families, for the poor, and for everyone to celebrate holy days.

QUESTION 8

Did the Levites themselves give a tenth to the Lord? Please answer and give the verse from your chart where you made your observation.

How do you think this principle applies to pastors, missionaries, and other Christian workers today? Should they give to the Lord even though they are recipients of people's offerings? Prepare to discuss this question in your seminar.

Did you notice in the chart that the Bible describes many very different ways to give to the Lord? How has giving changed between the Old and the New Covenants?

- Please read “The Old and New Temple” in *Readings in Marriage* and return here.

Where Should We Give?

So, as the article asked, where is the temple of God now? Many people mistakenly think that the local church building is their new temple, and therefore, that is where all of their offerings must go. But the Bible describes a very different principle.

- Please read John 2:19-21, 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, and Ephesians 2:21. You will see that three different things are called “the temple” in the New Testament.

QUESTION 9

Please select the places that are called temples of God in the New Testament. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. A Christian marriage
- B. A believer’s home
- C. Jesus’ body
- D. A church building
- E. A believer’s body
- F. The church, made up of all believers

- Please read John 4:20-24.

Here Jesus predicts this change from worship centered in a place, to worship centered in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Since we no longer have one of the three things, that is, Jesus’ physical body, God’s temples today are the believer’s individual body and believers as a group—embodying the Holy Spirit and performing the worship and service of God. Therefore, this is the place where our offerings may go. This includes supporting pastors and missionaries and funding other ministry where God’s work, directed by God’s Spirit, is going forward through His people. We see different examples in the New Testament of offerings given toward these three things (1 Cor 16:2-3; Phil 4:15-17; 1 Tim 5:17).

What Should We Give?

In Exodus 34:19, 26, God directed that His people give the first of their income, the first of their crops, and the first of their flocks. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, we see that this principle continues in the New Testament. We are not to give God whatever is left over after we have met our own needs, but we are to set aside an amount to give to God when we first receive increase, and meet our own needs with the remainder.

We recommend that you follow the example of God’s people in the Old Testament and give a percentage of your income. Taking time to figure out together the percentage you wish to set aside gives you the opportunity to realize how blessed you are and to thank God for all that you have been given to steward! How can you determine the amount?

- Please read “What Percentage Shall We Give to God” in *Readings in Marriage*.
- Then please read “Lin’s Story” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 10

Which are true statements about how much to give? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. We should give enough that we feel its effects personally.
- B. Giving a tenth of income should be the rule for all believers.
- C. Giving a tenth is a good place to start.
- D. God really wants us to give everything away to the poor, but few will obey this.
- E. God wants us to be willing to surrender anything He asks.

As we have seen, sometimes the things that are the most difficult to give are not just money.

- Please read “Giving Generously Beyond Money” in *Readings in Marriage*, and return here to complete the following project.

QUESTION 11

Please open your Life Notebook.

From the passage in Luke 6, which you read as part of the above article, list all the different good things mentioned in this passage that you could give to your spouse. Next to each item, explain what situation in marriage would be an important time to give this and how this would bless your partner.

So, we have seen that God asks us to give much more than merely money. Yet it is not a case of “either/or” but of “both.” Giving money is a key part of a lifestyle of generosity that also includes the giving of time, goods, food, and service, in both spontaneous and systematic ways. Only then can we keep the weeds of greed and possessiveness from growing up and choking out our love for the Lord and our ready availability for His service.

Remember, the more you trust God with your worldly treasure, the more He will entrust you with His spiritual treasure (Lk 16:11).

Before leaving this subtopic, be sure to meet with your spouse to discuss the principles of giving that you want to add to your document. Write down the principles that you want to include in your “Guiding Principles and Goals for Our Finances” document.

Saving

A poor family with a little money in savings is much freer than a rich family who is enslaved by their debt. Is it not true? Saving before need arises is like a vaccination for the disease of debt. After you have given a portion of your income back to the Lord, the second use of your funds and other wealth needs to be to put some of it away for future need.

- Please read “Saving Encourages Righteousness” in *Readings in Marriage*, and return here to answer Question 12.



QUESTION 12

What regular action will help prevent us from going into debt?

In Bible times, the definition of a poor person was one who must be paid his wages daily in order to have food to eat. The rich were those who had some money saved up and could still eat even if they did not work. How much savings is enough?

- Please read “Big Enough Barns” in *Readings in Marriage*, and return here to answer Question 13.

QUESTION 13

What are the three types of savings that the article mentioned? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Material things, such as food or jewelry
- B. Money
- C. Treasures in heaven
- D. Water
- E. Sand

Is this problem of having no heavenly savings limited to unbelievers? In 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, we see that someone can be saved from hell but enter heaven naked and without any savings in heaven at all. There is a strong correlation between the way we invest for heaven and the way we invest on earth (Lk 16:9; 19:23). So, we see that saving is a biblical, not a worldly practice. We must understand and anticipate the ways in which we will need provision in the future and save wisely, both on earth and in heaven.

Borrowing and Lending

The writer of Proverbs wisely observes that a borrower is enslaved to a lender (Prov 22:7). This causes the prudent to take action to prevent going into debt. In the past, and in many cultures, much of a man’s preparation before courting and between the engagement and the marriage had to do with saving money and preparing a home. In the English language, the word “husband” meant originally a “house-bond” or a man with a house! The Bible gives us the picture of the bridegroom going to make a home for His bride, the church, and returning to bring her to His home (Jn 14:3). You saw in the story about Rajiv and Sonia, in Lesson 10, that Rajiv had to go earn money before he could return to India to



claim Sonia as his wife.

In the past, not just the future groom, but the future bride, too, prepared by sewing linens and accumulating other things to use in her future home. Society expected that the first years of their marriage might be poor ones, but with careful management, their standard of living would rise over time. It would be based on solid savings and assets, and not on unsubstantial clouds of debt.

In many countries, though, going into debt has taken the place of preparing financially before marriage. The couple spends all their money that they earn as singles and do not save anything for their marriage. They even may already have accumulated debt through education and credit card purchases. After they marry, they gain more debt by furnishing their house with new items, buying entertainment items, and taking expensive vacations. They learn that there is no immediate penalty for their debt, so they continually buy more than they earn each month. They continue paying on debt throughout life until they have no resources to help their children pay for their education or to support themselves in retirement. They find it impossible to turn the cycle around in order to save money, because every penny of what they earn now pays the interest on their debt. The only way that they can pay for even needed items in an emergency is to borrow more and accumulate more debt. In our country, debt has become an unhealthy epidemic.

When we choose to go into debt to buy new items that we have not saved up for, we are rejecting the standard of living that the Lord is providing for us in favor of the lifestyle that the salesmen tell us we “deserve.”

Because of debt’s enslaving nature, the Bible warns us about both borrowing and lending. There are two kinds of loans we can get into. While both have potential pitfalls, one is far more dangerous than the other.

- Please read about the different types of loans in “Understanding Loans” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 14

What are the two basic types of loans?

- A. Home loans and vehicle loans
- B. Bad loans and good loans
- C. Mortgages and personal loans
- D. High interest loans and low interest loans
- E. Secured loans and unsecured loans

Lending to Others

When you take out a loan, you put yourself under the power of the person to whom you owe money. Should you give other people this kind of power over you? Should you put people under your power like this?

Luke 6:35 describes a new principle that prevents this slavery.

- Please read Luke 6:35.

QUESTION 15

Open your Life Notebook.



Write a paragraph about lending based on these four passages: Matthew 10:16, Luke 6:35, Romans 13:10, and 2 Corinthians 9:7. In your paragraph, make sure that you respond to the following questions.

- How should we think about the money or things that we lend (Lk 6:35)?
- What does it mean to be “wise and harmless” in lending (Mt 10:16)?
- How could choosing *not* to give a loan be what is best for someone (Rom 13:10)?
- If we cannot give cheerfully but are responding to pressure from others, should we give anyway (2 Cor 9:7)?

Hospitality With Boundaries

Another type of lending is to lend shelter and food to someone outside your immediate family. Scripture holds this up as an important Christian practice (Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2; 1 Pet 4:9) and it is even a prerequisite for leadership (1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:8). If a family is without enough income, renting out a room in their house may be a good option to help balance the budget. But inviting someone to live with you can pose risks for a marriage and family, if adequate boundaries are not set ahead of time.



In a country where we used to live, unemployment was widespread. Once someone found a job in the city, many poor relatives came from the countryside where they had been farming. These relatives moved in and ate from his table rather than working or contributing to the family budget. The result was that the family home was as poor as before they had an income. But now it was more crowded with people sitting around all day while the employed person worked harder and harder to feed all of them.

In another country, people told me about adulterous affairs which began after a sibling moved in with a young married couple.

An acquaintance in my neighborhood was a single mom of several children. She began to date an older man who seemed stable and kind. She invited him to move into her home in an immoral relationship with her and act as a father to the children. After several years, they decided to get married. But just before the wedding, her daughter revealed that the man had been sexually abusing her. Now the man is in jail, but the girl has severe emotional wounds. It is a typical ploy for a man who has a sexual attraction to children to pretend interest in a lonely woman with children, so that he can move in and abuse the children. So if you are a single mom, be extra cautious if you decide to have a house guest.

When we have offered a room for people to stay with us, it was important for our marriage that everyone in our family agreed on boundaries together, such as:

- *Whom* we invite to stay
- The *duration* of their stay
- What rooms or times will remain private
- What the person's behavior must be in order to stay
- How he/she will help the family through work or payment

These kinds of boundaries are needed to protect family and marriage relationships.

In our case, if any one of our family feels uncomfortable with the effect that the person is having on our home, we ask him/her to find another place to live. Most of the time, however, our "guests" remained for over a year. It helped them to have a cheap and safe place to live with other believers, and we have remained friends for life.

While the New Testament emphasizes offering shelter to people, you may not have extra room. Not everyone is a good houseguest (Prov 30:15). How might you and your spouse wisely make a decision about permitting a cousin or other relative to move in with you? What limitations and guidelines might you set *before* allowing him/her entry?

Talk with your spouse about what boundaries and rules you would set for someone coming to live in your home. Be sure to include these "Guidelines for Guests and Boarders" in your "Guiding Principles and Goals for Our Finances" document.

Security

Proverbs 6:1-5 describes another type of debt—cosigning as security for someone else's loan. The reason a bank would require a cosigner is usually because the one who wants the money doesn't qualify for a loan. He/she doesn't make enough money to likely be able to make all of the payments, and the bank is concerned that they will not be repaid. So, you sign your name that, if your friend cannot pay, you will pay the debt instead. Because you have a good financial



reputation (sometimes called a “credit rating”), the bank trusts your word and will approve the loan for your friend. In Genesis 44:32, Judah himself was security for Benjamin when the brothers took him to Egypt.

Proverbs 11:15 and 17:18 strongly warn against being security for someone. Please read these passages and be able to describe what security is and the danger it entails. Under what situations might giving security be appropriate? How would you have to think about it? Add your decisions to your “Guiding Principles” document.

How might you help a friend without signing as security and endangering your reputation or your assets, if he/she cannot pay?

Micro-Loans

One positive way to help without enslaving a needy person is by investing money directly into something that will help him to earn a living. Sometimes churches have banded together to do this as a ministry, often in other countries where poverty is widespread.

- They purchase an income-producing animal, such as a goat or cow, which gives milk and babies, and lend it to the needy person until he can pay for the animal from the money he receives for the milk and babies.
- They offer a scholarship for a poor person to learn a profession, or offer training directly.
- They purchase the stock for a shop or stand.
- They buy equipment that can produce income, such as a knitting machine.

The income-producing item—the cow or knitting machine—is the security for the loan. If the person is unwilling to work hard, the group can easily repossess the item. Normally, though, as the person begins to make money, he/she pays back the loan, little by little *with no interest*, until he/she owns the income-producing item completely and is financially independent. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if there is a way that you can help someone become self-supporting with dignity.

QUESTION 16

Match the financial term with the definition.

| <i>Term</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
|---------------|---|
| Interest | Your financial reputation based on your history of making loan payments as promised. |
| Security | A type of loan used to finance a house. |
| Micro-loan | The “rent” that you pay to use borrowed money. |
| Credit Rating | Signing your name, which means if your friend cannot do what he/she promised, you will do it. Or, a valuable object that you agree the lender may take if you cannot make the payments on a loan. |
| Credit | Giving a small amount of “seed-money” or purchasing a money-making item so that a poor person can make a living and pay it back out of the earnings (without interest). |
| Mortgage | Purchasing something with a promise to pay for it later. |

The Bible approves giving to others more than lending to them, although certain types of mini-investments may help a destitute person begin to earn a living. Lending and borrowing is risky

business. Be cautious, be prayerful, and always seek counsel when you consider taking on debt of any kind.

Spending and Budgeting

After you have invested in the kingdom of God through giving and in your family's future by saving and/or investing, the rest of your income will be exchanged for the necessities of life and for enjoyment. How do you spend wisely so that your purchases do not exceed your income and that you do not run out of money before the next paycheck arrives?



The best way to get control of your finances, especially if you have had some problems in this area, is by setting up a monthly budget.

- Please read the article “Thinking About Budgeting” in *Readings in Marriage*.
- Now please read James 1:5-8 and 4:7-8. You will be working with these passages more in a few moments.



God promises to give wisdom in any situation, when your heart is pure and you are not “double-minded.” As we have said before, a single-minded person is fully committed to the Lord's glory. If both partners in a marriage are listening to the Spirit of God, is it reasonable that you would quarrel about how the Lord wants His money spent? Perhaps initially a husband and wife might have a different perspective, but because we readily have access to the mind of Christ, we can submit to God and gradually come to a single decision.

When one partner is uncomfortable with a prospective purchase, for instance, one of you is not listening to the Lord yet! He/she is still double-minded and has some part of the mind that is not in line with God's point of view. Is it sometimes hard to tell which one of you is not in sync with the Lord? Of course. And it is natural to think that the one in error is our spouse! Because we are imperfect, neither of us will be perfectly in tune with the Lord's wisdom all the time. But together in humility, we can help each other toward the goal of “tuning in” to the mind of Christ.

How can you develop one mind, the mind of Christ, with regard to making a major purchase?

QUESTION 17

Write the steps from James 4:7-8 in your Life Notebook.

Did you notice in the passage you read, that the devil is mentioned? His workers are always at hand to whisper discord and critical thoughts in the mind of a husband and a wife. Don't let money and purchases be the enemy's tool to chisel apart the unity in your marriage.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Spending Wisdom*.

Marriage Building Activity: Spending Wisdom



If you are **MARRIED**, is there something that you or your spouse would like to spend money on but have had a differing opinion about? Follow the steps above from James 4:7-8. Then discuss this issue once again.

If you are **SINGLE**, you may work alone or with a friend or family member to seek God's wisdom regarding spending money using these steps.

You will be studying more about purchasing in Topic 4.

Have you discovered any more financial principles applicable to your long-term situation? Before leaving this section, make sure you have added these items to your "Guiding Principles" document.

Topic 3: Work

Work. It's hardwired into our design.

We work in our homes, and in paid employment.

We work for the Lord and for a paycheck.

Sometimes we work for the love of a particular job.

Sometimes we work in a job we hate for a family we love.

Sometimes we work just to survive.

But can a job sweeping floors glorify the Lord like a job preaching the gospel?

How much should we work? Should we take a vacation, limit our hours of work, or work until we "burn out for Jesus"? Does the Lord want one or both of us to quit a paid job and live "on faith" in order to work full time in Christian service? How much is too much work and how much is too little?



If you've been married for more than a few months, you probably have had discussions or even arguments about issues like this. In fact, work is a frequent point of conflict for many married couples. This section will help you to discover biblical principles that will guide you and your spouse as you make decisions about work and rest.

In this topic, we will look at the issue of finding a healthy balance. We will also talk about the issue of full-time service and see the different ways that a Christian worker may finance his/her ministry.

The Goodness of Work

Work is a healthy and necessary part of life. Providing for oneself and one's family is a righteous act, which both Old and New Testaments endorse. The Ten Commandments tell us that we are to work six days in a normal, non-holiday week. Where did work come from?

- Please read the article "Working" in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 18

Please select the **FALSE** statements. (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. Work came as a result of the Fall.
- B. Every member of the Trinity works.
- C. In heaven there will be no work.
- D. The cycle of work and rest came because we are made in the image of God.
- E. It would still be heaven even if God were not there.
- F. Even a slave has the honor of working to earn an inheritance of reigning with Christ.

So you can see that work is an important part of our Christian life. We should see evidence of our faith expressed in everything we do, including the hearty and loving way we carry out the most mundane job (Col 3:23). It is the Lord Christ whom we serve! (Col 3:24).

The attitudes and instructions about work changed during the course of the founding of the church. In the beginning of the church, the book of Acts tells us that the believers were all together in the temple, only leaving to eat their meals at one person's house or another (Acts 2:44-47). But eventually, everyone had to get back to work earning a living!

Many years later, Paul wrote many stern things about God's people's need to work.

- Please read 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15.

Here Paul makes a strong admonition. He told believers to lead disciplined, productive lives. He said that his ministry team had the right to live on their donations (v 9) but instead set them a strong example (v 10) by working "night and day" in front of them.

The situation that called for this demonstration of hard work was a serious one.

QUESTION 19

How were some people living, and what did Paul say to do about them?

If the church was to survive, its members needed to work to support not only themselves and their families but also the ministry and mission that Christ had given them to spread the gospel and make disciples among all people (Mt 28:19-20).

Why do we work and earn money? Please answer the following question. Four examples are given for you to examine first.

- To provide one’s own support, 2 Thessalonians 3:12
- To support one’s own family, 1 Timothy 5:8
- To care for needy parents, Mark 7:11-13
- To support a widowed relative, 1 Timothy 5:16

QUESTION 20

Match the verses on the left with a principle on the right about purposes for earning money.

| <i>Verse</i> | <i>Principle</i> |
|--|--|
| Philippians 4:16; Romans 16:1-2 | To show mercy for medical needs |
| 1 Timothy 5:17-18; Galatians 6:6; 1 Corinthians 9:14 | To help other believers |
| Proverbs 20:4 | To support pastors, teachers, and evangelists |
| Colossians 4:15; Acts 12:12; 16:15 | To buy or rent a home as a place of hospitality and prayer |
| Luke 10:35 | To sponsor missionaries |
| 2 Corinthians 8:14; Galatians 6:10 | To prepare for the future |

In these and other passages of Scripture, the reason given for work is so that you may have the *privilege* of sharing with others who have need.

This is a shift from the natural man that reveals a new heart in Christ. Rather than seeing work as primarily a way of getting what you want, you see work as giving you the opportunity to do good with your money. We see this perhaps most clearly in Ephesians 4:28. Here Paul instructs someone who once used his hands for evil by stealing to retrain his hands to work and to give generously to others. What a transformation, from selfishly taking to generously giving. How much this contrasts the redemptive heart of our God with a religious system that would order cutting off the thief’s hand.

Working Enough or Working Too Much

So we have seen that work is an integral part of what it means to be human. But sometimes finding the appropriate amount of work is a challenge. As we mentioned earlier, man was created to work, not to be idle. In the garden, the work that God gave Adam to do was interesting, challenging, and fruitful. But because of man’s rebellion against God, the earth became cursed and man’s labor now often involved great frustration.

- Please read this curse in Genesis 3:17-19.



Do you relate to the “thorns and thistles” in your work?

At the Fall, man’s character, too, became distorted. He would have to contend not only with frustrating work but also with sinful propensities within himself: laziness, dishonesty, coveting, greed. Combine those propensities with the frustration factor and you have a recipe for an out-of-balance life. Also, because he was now separated from the Creator, man would have the tendency toward asking work to do more than it was intended to do: to tell him who he is.

If we are asking work to give us the meaning and purpose that we crave, we may work too much. If we are depressed, despairing, or self-satisfying, we may work too little or in a lackadaisical manner. Either way, believing lies about our work puts a great strain on a marriage. Either way, we are unfulfilled.

Laziness

Laziness is one of the sins that the church historically has called “deadly.” In our leisure-oriented societies, however, few even realize that laziness is wrong.

QUESTION 21

Read the following verses and then make a simple drawing or cartoon of a sluggard and be ready to share this at your seminar. Under the drawing, write the universal principle about laziness that the drawing and the proverb illustrate.

- Proverbs 10:4, 5, 26
- Proverbs 26:14-16
- Proverbs 22:13

What are the underlying motives for the sin of laziness? One telling verse is Proverbs 13:4, which says, “The soul of the sluggard craves but has nothing.” So, a lazy person has deep desires, which go unfulfilled. Perhaps he/she has a physical problem such as diabetes, which depletes energy. Perhaps he/she has an emotional problem of depression. Fortunately when a person who is lazy for whatever reason, begins to work, not even necessarily because he/she feels like it, these physical and emotional conditions often start to improve.

Rest

So if these were the only verses on not working, we might get the idea that work is good, and rest or recreation is bad. But the Bible distinguishes between laziness and rest. The Bible promotes regular rest and recreation. If we get out of balance and work too much, we lose sight of the relationships most important to us: our spouse, our children, our friends, and most important, the Lord. We lose what the Hebrews called *shalom*, a sense of wholeness and peace. What does the Bible say about working too much?

- Please read Psalm 127:1-2.



QUESTION 22

While this passage does not negate the importance of diligent work, it suggests a partnership with God as we work. What are the things mentioned that the Lord does? (*Select all that apply.*)

- A. The Lord builds the house.
- B. The Lord sleeps securely.
- C. The Lord condemns the lazy.
- D. The Lord guards the city.
- E. The Lord gives to His beloved ones even while they are sleeping.

So here God says that the compulsion we feel toward being frantic in our work and depriving ourselves of adequate sleep is unnecessary. He has the world under control, even in our own lives! If we are partnering with the Lord, He works when we cannot. If we invite the Lord to guide us in our projects and our labors, He blesses and enhances what we do, in some ways undoing the curse of the ground from Genesis 3:18. His power and His will are irresistible, so we

can be assured that as we work according to His will, our results will also be according to His will. Even apparent failures can take on new meaning as we look for the Lord's message and mercies in everything. We will talk more about the role of rest and retreat in marriage in Lesson 12.

How will you know if you are working too little or too much? Perhaps the best way to know is to ask your spouse, your child, or if you are single, a close friend or relative, to speak frankly about the impact that your work has on him/her and others. Is there anything you can do differently to respond to his/her concerns?

- Please do the following *Worship Activity: Self-Evaluation*.

Lesson 11 Worship Activity: Self-Evaluation



Throughout history, the way that the Christians live their daily lives affects whether people see the truth of Christ or are influenced toward doubt. How are you bringing credit to the gospel in your job and in your home?

Please complete the form “Self-Evaluation of My Work” in “Readings in Marriage” by following the instructions given above the form. When you are finished, bring your results before God in prayer. Lay it out before Him, perhaps by literally spreading it before Him.

- Ask Him to forgive you for the ways in which you have fallen short of His instructions.
- Thank Him for the areas that you can see Him working good through you.
- Worship Him for giving you the high privilege of revealing His character to a watching world.
- Ask Him to partner with you and to live His beautiful life through you.

Wait on Him for any insights or instructions about your life and work.

Financing Vocational Ministry



All believers are called to be in full-time Christian service, whether they are working at sweeping the streets or leading people to Christ. In the New Testament, there is no real distinction in value between those who work vocationally as pastors, teachers, or missionaries and those who work at

a trade or secular vocation. The Bible calls all believers priests (Rev 1:6). So you might say that a believer who is working in a secular environment is called a “job-supported full-time Christian worker.” God only asks each one to be obedient to the call that He gives him/her and to seek to glorify Him completely within that role. If you are called into full-time vocational ministry, however, you will not always have the opportunity to earn money directly from those for whom you work, as in a secular job. How, then, will you support yourself and your family? There is not just one answer to this question.

See what you can discover about the various ways that the Lord has supported those who work for Him vocationally.

QUESTION 23

Read these passages and match each method of supporting vocational ministry to a person or group who was supported this way.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Method</i> |
|--|---|
| Mark 6:7-10: Twelve apostles on a short-term mission trip | Received donations from people who had savings, who also traveled with them to help out in practical ways. |
| Philippians 4:16: Paul | Were supported by hosts in the place where they went to preach. |
| 1 Corinthians 9:3-5, 11-14: The Lord’s brothers and the original eleven apostles | Worked at a trade in order to support themselves while doing church planting and discipleship training. |
| Acts 18:3-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:8-9: Paul and ministry partners | (1) Were supported by the churches who received the ministry and (2) included husband and wife. |
| Galatians 6:6: Those who teach God’s Word | Received support directly from their students, with money, food, shelter, and all the good things that the students themselves enjoyed. |
| Luke 8:3; Mark 15:40-41: Jesus and the disciples | Was supported from distant church friends. |
| 1 Timothy 5:17-18: Elders of the church who work especially hard in leading, preaching, and teaching | Received double support from church. |

If you make your living from the gospel, either as a pastor or as a missionary, it is a high privilege, partly because the funds that you receive for your needs were dedicated as offerings to the Lord. In that way, you resemble the Levites and priests of the Old Testament (Deut 18:3-5). Take care to treat the Lord’s provision with thankfulness and honor.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Vocational Ministry*.

Marriage Building Activity: Vocational Ministry



Have you or your spouse considered entering full-time vocational Christian work? If you are not currently serving in this way, discuss with your spouse how you would respond if you began sensing the Lord's call to vocational ministry.

1. What steps would you take to discern the Lord's will?
2. What different ways might you be supported to do this?
3. What resources has the Lord already provided for this, such as savings, property, relationships with individuals or groups that might provide support for your ministry?

God does not call everyone to go into vocational ministry, but He does ask everyone to be willing to do whatever He asks. If you are currently unwilling, due to fear, to shame of not working for a salary, or something else, confess your lack of trust to the Lord. Ask Him to help you to become willing. He may never ask you to give up your salaried job, but He will delight in your willingness to trust Him fully.

If you are already in full-time vocational Christian work, spend some time reflecting with your spouse on how the Lord has met your needs. In what ways has He blessed you both financially and in other ways? Pray together, thanking God for your privilege of making your living in His service.

Topic 4: Three Practical Exercises in Stewardship

In an attempt to avoid temptations and enslavements with money, some couples tend toward not wanting to think about their finances at all. They may have a genuine desire for holiness, or they may show a false front, which obscures a sin of laziness and carelessness. While God calls some couples to ministries where they are supported by offerings from God's people (Lk 10:1, 4-9), these people are diligently working in their ministries, not asking God's people to support them while being idle.

- Please read 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.

Unless someone is unable to work due to illness, handicap, or advanced age, Paul's instructions here are clear: no work = no food. Even if we cannot find or do not need a job, we can work to improve something or to benefit someone. Living only for constant pleasure is not an option for a servant of the Most High God (Lk 12:19-20; 1 Tim 5:6).

The gospel challenges us to use everything at our disposal, including labor, money, and possessions, to serve God's purposes on earth. We can squander our charge carelessly, or we can get the most return from them for God's service. In this last section, you will practice some useful exercises in managing your stewardship of your money and resources.

Exercise 1: Purchasing Practice

This exercise can help you to determine if a major purchase is a wise one.

- Please read "Three Questions Before You Buy" in *Readings in Marriage*.

Think of something that one or both of you would like to own. Use the list in the above article to analyze whether or not to buy it, to save toward it, or to forget it. In your Life Notebook, make note of the item, how you compared it to the questions on the list, and what you decided about buying it. If you thought of other factors from Scripture, be sure to jot them down too. Be prepared to share these notes at your seminar.

Exercise 2: Appreciation Practice

One example of a prudent person who manages money well is found in Proverbs 31:10-31. You may remember that we looked at this woman in an earlier lesson. Though this passage describes a noble wife, anyone can glean principles of good finance and good living from this passage. Use the chart below to determine how her activities could set an example for your handling of finances.

QUESTION 24

Create a five-column observation chart. You will wish to have many horizontal rows. See the following example:

| Verse | Action | How or Why it was beneficial | Timeless Principle | Application to My Situation |
|-------|--------|------------------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

Start with the second column. In the second column, observe and list the ways that the noble wife handled her wealth well or raised her family’s quality of living. Then fill in the answers to the remaining columns.

In the first column, give the verse number reference for your observation.

In the third column, describe how or why this action might have benefited someone.

In the fourth column, describe the principle that would apply to people at any time.

In the fifth column, describe how this principle could apply to your situation.

QUESTION 25

Did you notice the husband in Proverbs 31:28-31? What did he do to reward his wife for all of her creativity and activity in benefiting their family?

- A. Smiled at her
- B. Kept silent so she wouldn’t become too proud
- C. Apologized for not helping more around the house
- D. Praised her publicly and in detail and promised to tell his friends at work all about her
- E. Was jealous because she had a better reputation than he did
- F. Got angry because she was showing off too much

In our marriage relationships, it is easy to forget how hard our spouse works to benefit us and our family. We must become more like the husband of Proverbs 31 by praising our spouses generously.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Appreciation Practice*.



Marriage Building Activity: Appreciation Practice



Rewrite this passage from Proverbs 31:10-31.

If you are **MARRIED**, tell about your spouse. Describe the ways in which this person acts wisely and benefits others. If you would appreciate some help preparing this, see “A Tribute” in *Readings in Marriage* for a version where you may just fill in the blanks in order to personalize it for your loved one.

Rewrite your work in an attractive way, perhaps with illustrations of some sort. Save your work to present at a special occasion, such as your anniversary or your spouse’s birthday. Better yet, design a marriage retreat and read it to your spouse before giving it to him/her to remember your esteem. This is a perfect example of a gift that is very meaningful and costs no money.

If you are **SINGLE**, tell about someone special to you and do the same exercise.

Exercise 3: Budgeting Practice

The last project in this lesson will be to actually work out a budget. The thought makes most of us terrified, especially me! However, Rick Rose, a financial planner, has developed a simplified budget form that is much less intimidating than a typical budget. He has helped many families and singles to gain control of their finances by using this very easy method. As you examine the systems in “Budgeting for Spending and Savings,” change any category labels to suit your own situation and make a blank copy to use to fill in your own financial information.

Follow the instructions in the article to record on the form where your money has been spent over the past three months. If you cannot reconstruct these exactly, because you have no records, try to estimate about how much you spent in each category.

- Please read and complete the instructions for “Budgeting for Spending and Savings” in *Readings in Marriage* and return here.

Beginning with prayer and a full stomach, discuss the past three months of spending as recorded on the budget with your spouse or if you are single, with the Lord. Is it according to how you both think it should be?

In our experience, times of discussing finances and the budget are among the tensest times of our marriage. Submit to the Lord and ask Him to allow you to walk in the Spirit, so that you will have a humble and listening point of view, neither attacking your mate nor defending your opinions too

strongly. Each time that you experience a disagreement, stop and pray again, especially if one of you begins to feel defensive or angry. Practice the good communication skills that you learned in Lesson 7. Seek to understand and repeat back what you think you heard from your spouse.

Plan a budget together for next month. At the end of the month, compare your spending to your budget.

For the following month, either adjust your budget or adjust your spending using the form. By the time you come to your next seminar, your budget and your spending should match.

One essential skill in bringing a budget into balance is to recognize the difference between needs and wants. Sometimes those with limited resources are much better at managing money than those with more. Some people who make plenty of money do not know how to limit their lifestyle to fit their budget and can get caught up in the lifestyle *just beyond* what they can afford.

If you do need to cut back on your expenses in order to fit your income, the worst thing for your marriage is for *one* person to choose single-handedly where to make the budget cuts. That leaves the other person feeling devalued. Honor one another by taking turns choosing which items you think are “wants” rather than “needs.” Listen carefully and respectfully to your partner’s explanation about why any line item is important to him/her. Pray and discuss until you can come to an agreement.

Come prepared to share your experience with these three exercises in your seminar. How did working on your finances together strengthen or test your marriage?

- Please do the *Marriage Building Activity: Our Guiding Principles*.

Marriage Building Activity: Our Guiding Principles



Finish work on your “Guiding Principles” document. Make certain that you have listed all the financial principles that are the most important to you and your spouse.

Take time to review your document with your spouse, making certain you both agree with it. Decide when you will meet again to look at it and see how your use of money is lining up with the principles that you determined would be your guide. Monthly? Weekly? Yearly? Make a date to do this when you are both likely to be rested and in a good mood, perhaps at a marriage weekend, which you will learn more about in Lesson 12.

Make sure that you have completed every *Marriage Building Activity* for Lesson 11 (and recorded your experience in your Life Notebook) before proceeding to Lesson 12. Completion of these activities will form 40 percent of your grade. The Marriage Building Activities for this lesson were:

- *Our Stewardship*
- *Spending Wisdom*
- *Vocational ministry*

- *Appreciation Practice*
- *Our Guiding Principles*

Lesson 11 Self Check

QUESTION 1

God wants every believer to have a similar standard of living. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

A corrupted mind is one who uses godly living to serve self-centered gain. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

When we notice that others who do not love or follow the Lord have better provision than we have, what is the **WRONG** response?

- A. To thank God that others *also* have been blessed by the God of grace, who gives good things to both the just and the unjust
- B. To seek to cooperate with God's purposes for that person
- C. To pray that the blessings will lead the evil person to repentance and faith
- D. To ask God for the same blessings because we deserve it more than an evil person

QUESTION 4

According to Jesus, when we have too great a focus on money, what is the result in our heart?

- A. Happiness
- B. Contentment
- C. Worry
- D. Anger
- E. Despair

QUESTION 5

God grants our needs, but not our wants, so we should **NOT** pray for things we don't clearly need for survival. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

The Lord is no longer present in an earthly temple, so giving to God today should be to the places where the Holy Spirit is present and is working and directing service to God. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

Saving up money or food shows a lack of faith that God will take care of me tomorrow. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

It is always a bad idea to borrow money or to take out a loan. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

Pastors and missionaries have the right to receive their income from working for the gospel, but may also choose to support themselves some by working for a living. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

I have prepared a budget and created a Guiding Principles document. *True or False?*

Lesson 11 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: Your answer could look something like the following:

| The Corrupted Mind | The Godly Mind |
|--|--|
| Is conceited Understands nothing Has an unhealthy interest in controversies and verbal disputes Envy others, Argues Slanders Often suspects others have evil motives Constantly bickers with others Thinks that godly living is a way of making a profit Longs to be rich Stumbles into temptation and is trapped Has many senseless and harmful desires Is eventually plunged into ruin and destruction Loves money and reaches for it May stray from the faith Is stabbed with many pains | Combines godliness and contentment Discovers true profit Realizes he/she can't take riches to heaven Is satisfied with food and shelter Avoids everything of the corrupted mind Pursues righteousness, godliness, faithfulness, love, endurance, and gentleness |

QUESTION 2:

- A. They wanted the church to think highly of them.
- B. They thought God wouldn't mind if they pretended a little.
- D. They did not try to stop each other from sinning.
- F. They thought God was a fool.

QUESTION 3:

1. The way we handle money will reveal our faithfulness to God or our unrighteousness. 2. We can't serve two masters, God and money

QUESTION 4:

- A. God rules everything in heaven.
- B. God rules everything on earth.

QUESTION 5:

- A. We will be continually thirsty, never satisfied.
- B. We will miss out on a closer intimacy with God, the only thing that will satisfy us.
- C. Our prayers may not be answered.
- D. We will be insecure and worried.

QUESTION 6: Your answer should be similar to the following:

If he misunderstood God's character and purposes, if he sought only to fulfill a passionate pursuit of pleasure and if the bicycle had become an idol in Radu's life, which usurped the place of God.

QUESTION 7: *Your Answer*

QUESTION 8:

Yes. Numbers 18:26.

QUESTION 9:

- C. Jesus' body
- E. A believer's body
- F. The church, made up of all believers

QUESTION 10:

- A. We should give enough that we feel its effects personally.
- C. Giving a tenth is a good place to start.
- E. God wants us to be willing to surrender anything He asks.

QUESTION 11: *Your answer*

QUESTION 12:

Saving money regularly

QUESTION 13:

- A. Material things, such as food or jewelry
- B. Money
- C. Treasures in heaven

QUESTION 14:

- E. Secured loans and unsecured loans

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16:

| <i>Term</i> | <i>Definition</i> |
|---------------|---|
| Interest | The “rent” you pay to use borrowed money. |
| Security | Signing your name, which means if your friend cannot do what he/she promised, you will do it. Or, a valuable object that you agree the lender may take if you cannot make the payments on a loan. |
| Micro-loan | Giving a small amount of “seed-money,” or purchasing a money-making item so that a poor person can make a living and pay it back out of his earnings (without interest). |
| Credit Rating | Your financial reputation based on your history of making loan payments as promised. |
| Credit | Purchasing something with a promise to pay for it later. |
| Mortgage | A type of loan used to finance a house. |

QUESTION 17: Suggested Answer to Question 17

- Pray and submit to God.
- Resist the devil by recognizing and resisting his temptations.
- Ask the Lord to forgive our sinful actions (our hands).
- Ask him to purify our hearts from wrong motives so that we have only a single purpose to follow Him.

QUESTION 18:

- A. Work came as a result of the Fall.
- C. In heaven there will be no work.
- E. It would still be heaven even if God were not there.

QUESTION 19:

They were living unruly lives and not working at all (v 11). He commanded and exhorted them to get a job and support themselves (v 12). He told the others to stop feeding the freeloaders (v 10) and, if necessary, to pull away from them in hopes of making them feel ashamed (v 14).

QUESTION 20:

| <i>Verse</i> | <i>Principle</i> |
|--|--|
| Philippians 4:16; Romans 16:1-2 | To sponsor missionaries |
| 1 Timothy 5:17-18; Galatians 6:6; 1 Corinthians 9:14 | To support pastors, teachers, and evangelists |
| Proverbs 20:4 | To prepare for the future |
| Colossians 4:15; Acts 12:12; 16:15 | To buy or rent a home as a place of hospitality and prayer |
| Luke 10:35 | To show mercy for medical needs |
| 2 Corinthians 8:14; Galatians 6:10 | To help other believers |

QUESTION 21: *Your answer***QUESTION 22:**

- A. The Lord builds the house.
- D. The Lord guards the city.
- E. The Lord gives to His beloved ones even while they are sleeping.

QUESTION 23:

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>Method</i> |
|--|---|
| Mark 6:7-10: Twelve apostles on a short-term mission trip | Were supported by hosts in the place where they went to preach. |
| Philippians 4:16: Paul | Was sent support from distant church friends. |
| 1 Corinthians 9:3-5; 9:11-14: The Lord's brothers and the original eleven apostles | (1) Were supported by the churches who received the ministry and (2) included husband and wife. |
| Acts 18:3-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:8-9: Paul and ministry partners | Worked at a trade in order to support themselves while doing church planting and discipleship training. |
| Galatians 6:6: Those who teach God's word | Received support directly from their students, with money, food, shelter, and all the good things that the students themselves enjoyed. |
| Luke 8:3; Mark 15:40-41: Jesus and the disciples | Received donations from people who had savings, who also traveled with them to help out in practical ways. |
| 1 Timothy 5:17-18: Elders of the church who work especially hard in leading, preaching, and teaching | Received double support from church. |

QUESTION 24: *Your answer***QUESTION 25:**

- D. Praised her publicly and in detail and promised to tell his friends at work all about her

Lesson 11 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: False

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3:

D. To ask God for the same blessings because we deserve it more than an evil person

QUESTION 4:

C. Worry

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6: True

QUESTION 7: False

QUESTION 8: False

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10: True

Lesson 12: One Purpose in Marriage and Ministry

Pastor Ben and his wife, Luci, came in the door from the marriage conference holding hands. Their bright smiles and secret glances at each other showed how wonderful the weekend had been. They had talked about issues that had been troubling them, praised each other, and enjoyed long uninterrupted conversations and leisurely sexual love. Even though they had felt a lot of tension before going to the conference, now it was all gone.



...That is, until they opened their front door.



“Mommy!” Beth Ann waddled into her mother’s embrace, sobbing and hiccupping. “Justin cut dolly’s hair off!” Justin stood in the corner with arms folded crossly, as Luci and Ben looked at him with narrowed eyes.

Just then Aunt Martha came around the corner. “You’re back! Not a moment too soon. Your cell phone’s been ringing all afternoon, and the kids have been fussing to high heaven. There was a man here on Friday afternoon, right after you left, who said that if you don’t pay your electric bill by Friday, he’s going to shut off the power. I didn’t want to worry you, and besides you said only to call if the roof caved in.



He left his card, see? Oh, and a bunch of people from the church called and wanted to know when you would be back. Someone said you missed the meeting on Saturday and the congregation had voted on some things you should know about. Oh, and Mary called to say that she couldn’t watch the kids next Friday. Now don’t look at me—that’s my day to go to lunch with my friends...” Then, Aunt Martha took a breath and smiled. “Did you two have a nice time?”

Luci looked around for Ben, but as soon as Aunt Martha had started her tirade, he had quietly escaped to the television. Now he was sitting with his face turned away from her. “Ben?” Luci enquired loudly.



“Yeah!” Ben slapped his hand and his fist together. “Score!”

“Ben!” Luci called louder, now clearly annoyed.

“Huh?” Ben still sounded as if he were only half listening. “Can’t you wait a few minutes, honey?

The game’s almost over.” Luci suddenly felt hopeless. All of the good feelings they had developed between them over the weekend were gone. She wanted to strangle Ben. When the confusion level went up in the house, he resorted to TV, or his books, or his study at church. Now she felt abandoned once again to face all of the problems of real life alone. What good had it done to go to the marriage conference if nothing really changed?



In our Course Verse, Philippians 2:2, (NASB), the apostle Paul said,

*Make my joy complete by
being of the same mind,
maintaining the same love,
united in spirit,
intent on one purpose.*

Over the past eleven weeks, you have looked at many things that would bring God joy—things that reveal a continual unity in marriage. These practices also create a marriage that better withstands the attacks of everyday problems. The changes that you have made as a result of your study on marriage will be tested under stress. You will be tempted to rely on methods of coping that are destructive to your marriage, such as masks, hypocrisy, withdrawal, and busyness, to name a few. If you or your spouse go right back to familiar but destructive ways of handling pressure or conflict, the “complete joy” of a wonderful study together may be replaced by frustration or even despair.

Ephesians 4:3 says “making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” In Lesson 12, you will look at the efforts that you need to make to *keep* the ground you have hopefully gained in the past eleven lessons. You will focus on some different kinds of stress that you may encounter, particularly the stresses of active ministry. You will examine some ways to help keep stress from damaging your marriage. You will analyze what you have learned in this course that can help you strengthen the weak parts and capitalize on the strong parts of your own relationship.

Since you know better than we do about the stresses of your own situation, much of this lesson will be reflection and personal projects. Most of this lesson should be done together with your spouse, so you will need to plan some evenings or a half day to spend together on this. If you are single, you will work also with the special stresses that you as a single person may be experiencing, especially if you are in ministry. You, too, will benefit from having a close friend to help you process some of the concepts in this lesson.

Lesson Outline

Lesson 12: One Purpose in Marriage and Ministry

Topic 1: Stewarding Your Ministry (Without Losing Your Marriage or Your Mind)

- A Fishbowl on a Pedestal
- The Needs of Singles in Ministry
- Rest and Recuperation
- Keeping Your Heart Healthy

Topic 2: Examining Your Progress

- Reading Your Story
- Reviewing Your Life Reading
- Redeeming Your Life Reading

Topic 3: Maintaining New Ground

- Evaluating Your Investment
- Vigilance

Topic 4: Scenes From Your Future

- Beginning With Your End in View
- Building Bridges to the Future You Desire

Topic 1: Stewarding Your Ministry (Without Losing Your Marriage or Your Mind)

As you have seen throughout the course, every marriage needs time and attention to stay healthy. But when you are working in ministry, especially full-time ministry, many responsibilities compete for time, or may even attack the marriage. Some of you may feel that you cannot afford the time or effort to deliberately care for your marriage; instead you typically care for it only with an attitude of benign neglect.

As you did at the outset of this course, take a moment to weigh the investment of time for a happy marriage with the long-range costs of a poor relationship. While you alone are not responsible for everything that goes on in your marriage, you are responsible for doing everything that you can do to help to make it healthy. You have already persevered through eleven lessons of study. In this lesson, you will try to ensure that the good changes you have hopefully seen will also last over time when other priorities challenge them.

QUESTION 1

Take a moment to retake the quiz “My Spouse’s Heart” in *Readings in Marriage* of Lesson 2. Is your score better today than when you took it several weeks ago? If so, you can be happy that your marriage is in a better place than it was then. If you scored poorly, and there is not much change, what might be preventing you from making progress in this area? Is there anything competing for your time and attention to your marriage? Before your marriage can improve, you need to properly balance these competing priorities. Record your response in your Life Notebook.

A Fishbowl on a Pedestal

“The pastor and his wife should be an example to everyone in the congregation about what an ideal Christian couple should be.”

Have you ever heard this? Do you agree with this statement? What kind of pressure does this create for the pastor and his family? Perhaps you are very familiar with the pressures of living up to other people’s high expectations and/or your own high expectations for leaders and their families. Perfection is not a healthy goal for relationships. Because we are imperfect people, there is no such thing as an “ideal” Christian marriage, is there? There are only imperfect people in this world, even among Christian leaders, and these imperfect people create imperfect marriages. In fact, the marriages of Christian leaders may be more stressed than those of their secular counterparts because of the unrealistic expectations placed on them by living in a “fishbowl” where everyone’s eyes are on them all the time.



When you are not able to focus on meeting the needs of your own marriage or even of yourself, and only concentrate on trying to meet the expectations of others, it causes the worst kind of performance pressure. When the pressures cause marital problems, Christian leaders may not seek counsel and assistance as quickly as someone from among those they lead.

What do Christian leaders do when their marriage begins to deteriorate? Often, they resort to washing “the outside of the cup” while allowing the inside to get more and more ugly (Lk 11:39). That is, they concentrate on looking “ideal” to those they lead, rather than doing the interior work that would actually repair and strengthen their relationship.

- Please read “Sam and Sue’s Story” in *Readings in Marriage*.

Can you identify with Sam and Sue or any of their issues?

Here is Sue’s list of ministry frustrations:

1. Lack of intimate fellowship and friendships with others
2. No privacy at home
3. Expectations and restrictions
4. Overwhelming physical responsibilities; exhaustion
5. Insufficient finances; wife not permitted to work
6. Competitive spirit; fear of failure
7. No time for marriage and family

Those of us from different cultures than the Asian one that Sam and Sue belong to might have a different list, but most people in ministry report problems worldwide in similar areas.

QUESTION 2

Please open your Life Notebook.

Which of these seven things are problems in your situation? How do the results in your marriage and home compare to Sam and Sue’s crisis? Begin your own list and add the things that concern you about the ways that your ministry (full-time or part-time volunteer ministry) affects your marriage, or if you are single, affects your close relationships and your own peace of mind.

The Needs of Singles in Ministry

God did not create us like baby deer, which can run a few minutes after birth and are independent within a few months. Baby humans depend on parents for years and years. Even when they are grown, God made all humans to need help and fellowship throughout life. As God said in Genesis 1, it is not good for anyone to be alone in the world. But what if you are single and coping with the stresses of ministry without the intimacy of a spouse? You have already considered the topic of singleness in Lesson 10 and read two stories of single people. What challenges does being single add to the stress of serving in ministry? How does being in ministry make the challenges of being single even greater? Are there ways in which married people need to change their views of single adults in the church?



- Please read the article “Single in Ministry” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 3

Please open your Life Notebook and write a short paragraph on the following topic:

Think about the last question in the article. How could your congregation (1) better minister to the needs of single adults and (2) open up more ministry through single adult leaders?

Rest and Recuperation

Sometimes congregations will “take” as much as you, as a leader, are willing to give and then demand even more, which can make you feel powerless to meet your own needs and those of your marriage. You may feel constantly guilty because someone is always demanding something

from you—your superiors, your congregation, your children, or your spouse. You cannot meet all of the needs. God knew this would be a problem and put some instructions in His Word that can help keep your ministry from overwhelming you.



From the beginning, God created periods of rest for His people. It was one of the things that made His people distinct from the nations around them. By resting from work one day each week, as well as taking months and even years of rest from planting crops (Lev 25:4, 11, 20-22), the Jews of the Old Testament were to express their trust that God

would provide for their needs (Ps 127:2). Historically, Jews have always understood that these Sabbaths were a time to relax and enjoy family and marriage. The Pharisees in the New Testament followed the seventh day commandment scrupulously and with exactitude. The leaders decided how many steps a Jew could take on the Sabbath (Acts 1:12) and what constituted work (Lk 13:14-17), but it is doubtful that they knew how to relax and refresh themselves. Jesus did not obey these exacting Sabbath regulations and refused to recognize their authority to add to the Law (Mk 7:7-23). He said that Sabbath rest was to be a gift to man, not a heavy burden (Mk 2:27). And of course, because He was Lord of the Sabbath (Lk 6:5), the one who dreamed up the idea in the first place, He should know!

The Sabbath rest as a religious practice was designed to point the believer toward a permanent rest under Jesus' reign (Heb 4:9). The New Testament writers suggest that the Old Testament laws and practices were not to be abolished, but superseded by a new faithful heart that responds directly to the leading of the Spirit of God (2 Cor 3:6). Therefore, some believers in the early church observed a literal Sabbath, and some did not (Col 2:16). After Jesus' resurrection, believers met for worship on the first day of the week instead of on the seventh "Sabbath" (Acts 20:7; Rev 1:10; 1 Cor 16:2). The strict Sabbath-keeping was not one of the rules that the apostles said must be observed by the Gentile believers (Acts 15:28-29). But the principle of taking regular rest, and the trust in God that Sabbath implies, applies to all believers at all times and is expressed in two ways. First, the reign of Jesus in our hearts should bring rest to our souls, weary of trying to measure up. Jesus asks us to walk under a yoke that is not too heavy, offering to Him the heavy anxiety which causes us to feel weighted down (Mt 11:28-30; Mk 2:27; Phil 4:6; 1 Pet 5:7). Second, we accept the periods of rest that we need as a gift from God, not regulated by the Old Testament cycles of days, months, and years, but led by the Spirit of God. This is particularly important to pastors, who often have the greatest amount of work to do on the Lord's Day, a time when their brothers and sisters are able to rest.

But when people feel the most burdened and discouraged, they may be the least likely to seek the Sabbath rest that they need until a collapse forces it on them!

People doing God's work are sometimes the most susceptible to keeping going long past when they should stop and rest. Elijah was one of the most dynamic prophets of God in history, but he often needed rest and needed someone to minister to him. Please read about three situations where God met Elijah's needs.

- First, please read 1 Kings 17:2-16.

In the two situations described in this passage, Elijah is confident and full of spiritual power. He is not worried about what others might do to him or think of him. He is listening to God and understands that God intends to meet his needs, so he does not hesitate to ask for and accept care. In the second story starting with 1 Kings 17:7, he even asks a



starving widow (an unlikely benefactor) to take care of his needs for food and water. He tells her not to be afraid because he knows that as she helps him, God will bless her as well. This is an important principle for those of us in ministry—not to be afraid to ask for help or accept help, even from those who are not wealthy.

- Now please read the third story in 1 Kings 19:1-18.

What do you observe is different about Elijah’s perspective here compared to the other two episodes? Does it even seem like the same man? He has just come through a period of successful ministry, but is he courageous and confident now? What does Elijah say that he wants this time? How does Elijah handle his exhaustion? He has given too much of himself without any time of refreshment, so he just collapses and cannot go on. But he does do some things right. For one thing, he is frank with God about how he feels.

QUESTION 4

Match the numbers to the statements that Elijah makes in 1 Kings 19:1-10 so that they are in the order in which they are given in the Bible. Have you ever felt like Elijah says that he feels here?

| <i>Number</i> | <i>Statement</i> |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | I want to die. |
| 2 | I have had enough. |
| 3 | I have no fellowship. |
| 4 | I am not special. |
| 5 | Someone wishes I were dead. |
| 6 | I have worked hard for God. |

Does God rebuke him for his depression, or accuse him of a lack of faith? Does the angel poke him with his toe and tell him “Stop being so lazy! God’s work needs you!”? What all does God do for Elijah?

QUESTION 5

List the things that God does to refresh Elijah.

Which of these responses by God to Elijah’s exhaustion were most surprising to you? Write this in your Life Notebook. Sometimes when you are exhausted, it is very hard to ask for what you need, or even to think that He would feel compassion for your situation. The situation may seem bleaker than it really is. Elijah feels all alone, not realizing that he has 7,000 allies. When you are in the state that Elijah was in, you too need to get away to rest as Elijah did in order for God to refresh you. More important, if you observe periods of Sabbath rest, you will not usually get to the point of despair that Elijah experienced.

The word “angel” means only “messenger.” In this case, the angel was a supernatural messenger from God. If your spouse begins to look and act overworked and exhausted like Elijah, can you also be God’s messenger to minister to him/her? How can you help your spouse come to God’s presence in order to be strengthened and restored? One way to do this is to plan a personal or marriage retreat.

- For a brief guide to planning a marriage retreat, you may read “Designing a Marriage Retreat” in *Readings in Marriage*.

Keeping Your Heart Healthy

If a leader spends too much effort in a futile task, such as trying to live up to too many people’s expectations, he will become heartsick (Prov 13:12; Ps 69:20). You may know very well what the people of your congregation and your superiors expect, but hopefully, you realize that Jesus doesn’t have such unrealistic expectations of you. He says that His yoke is easy and His burden light (Mt 11:30). Trying fretfully to meet your group’s expectations does not show them how to walk in grace either. You are a more powerful witness by showing grace to and accepting grace from an imperfect spouse than by both of you trying to be perfect, especially in the externals. Your goal cannot be perfection, but pleasing God. You can only walk like this and show your congregation how to walk like this if you are honest about your own needs.



- Please read the article, “Accepting Your Needs” in *Readings in Marriage*.

QUESTION 6

Please open your Life Notebook.

Which character in the two New Testament stories that you examined in the article, did you identify most with? What all do you need right now that would help make your marriage, your heart, and your relationship with God healthier? Make your list carefully, because you will be using it in the exercises below. Compare your list to Sue and Sam’s list, (given at the end of the “Accepting Your Needs” article). Make a note of the things on your list that are similar to Sam and Sue’s list.

How does God feel about the needs list that you have just prepared? Does your list annoy Him, especially if meeting them keeps you from perpetual ministry?

- Please read Matthew 7:9-11 and Hebrews 4:15-16.

Is God pleased to hear from you about your needs, even those that are painful or embarrassing for you to share? This is part of what love is! He invites you to express all of your needs to Him, because He loves you as a parent loves a dear child (Rom 8:15-16) and as a close friend loves spending time conversing with you (Jn 15:15; Rev 3:20).

So you have seen that God wants you to express all of your felt needs to Him, and to trust that His love will motivate His response to you. Who in your life has He provided to help meet your needs? Do you remember who God instructed to meet Elijah’s needs—ravens, a widow, and an angel? Elijah did not criticize God’s choices for how to meet his needs, even though they may have seemed a bit bizarre. After all, an observant Jew would not normally even touch “road kill” brought by ravens (Ex 22:31; Lev 11:1-8) or live in a house with a single widow. Be looking for the responses that God has prepared for you, even if they do not look exactly like what you had in mind.

How do you and your spouse feel about each other’s needs? Will you try to understand and accept your spouse’s needs as legitimate? Don’t be like Martha and insist that your spouse’s

needs should be the same as yours, or at least be understandable. Perhaps your spouse doesn't even know about your deepest needs. Have you tried describing your needs to your spouse? Even if your spouse is very busy or seems unable to help (like Elijah's widow seemed unable to help at first), it is an important part of intimacy to be able to express your needs to each other and pray together about them.

You may remember that in the Old Testament, when someone hurt or offended someone else by accident, the perpetrator could flee to a place of safety called a "city of refuge," where the Levites would keep the person safe until his/her case came for trial. One job of the rulers of the Jews, the Sanhedrin, was to make the roads wide¹⁶ (48 feet¹⁷!) and in good repair to these cities, which were spaced throughout Israel. At every turn, there were guideposts, so that the person on the run knew quickly which way to go. When your spouse is hounded by trouble, is the road *to you* wide and obstacle-free? Have you created a safe city of refuge in your marriage? You must become each other's "city of refuge" (Josh 20:2-3).

While your spouse can and should be an advisor and helper in your ministry, every leader needs others as well. Who else has God prepared to meet your needs? One opportunity that you have as a Christian leader is to be frequently teaching all those whom you lead about the priesthood of all believers and about the functioning of the entire Body of Christ, not just the leaders (1 Cor 12; Eph 4; 1 Pet 2). Remember, even if you are a senior pastor, Jesus is the head of your church, not you. You are part of the body and



need ministry from the various parts as much as the rest of your congregation does. As a leader, you can help equip others to recognize and meet the needs of their spouses, their children, and each other, as well as the needs of their leaders. The Body of Christ needs to be constantly taught to function as a healthy, moving body, which lovingly expresses needs and meets needs with loving concern for each part. This is a powerful witness to a self-absorbed, too-busy world.

QUESTION 7

What other kinds of help does a leader need? Look up these passages and see if you can see what they had in common: Moses (Ex 17:12; 24:13-14; Josh 1:1); Jesus (Mt 26:37-38); Esther (Est 4:4-5, 13-17); Paul (Phil 2:22-27; 2 Tim 4:11); Daniel (Dan 2:17-18); Nehemiah (Neh 4:23).

¹⁶ Mishneh Torah, Laws Regarding Murder and the Preservation of Life, 8:5., cited at http://www.Chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/298381/jewish/Signpost.htm

¹⁷ 14 meters

If you are in leadership, you will also benefit from drawing around you a circle (maybe just two or three) of trusted people. This is a biblical principle, not a sign of weakness.

These partners, as you may have noted in the Bible passages, provide at least three components to aid you in your ministry: coaching and accountability, shelter and refuge, and help. Examine the chart below to understand the distinctives of these three roles.

Role Distinctives

| Partners in Ministry | Description of Role |
|-------------------------|--|
| Coaching/Accountability | Monitoring your health in all areas: spiritual, mental, relational, and emotional by asking questions, such as “How are you keeping your walk with the Lord vital?” “What are you doing to keep your relationship with your spouse healthy?” “Are you keeping to a schedule that contains a good balance of work, exercise, and rest?” |
| Help | Make their gifts available to you so that you can call on them for help in everything from fixing a sticky door, to substitute teaching a Bible study so that you can retreat. |
| Shelter/Refuge | Provide encouragement when you are discouraged, wisdom when you are confused, prayer covering for you, your family, and your ministry. |

For some of you, these three functions will be in one circle, while others will have two or three different ones. Do you already have people filling these roles in your life? Who are they? If you don't already have the help you need, stop now and ask God to prepare them, just as he prepared the heart of the widow to help Elijah (1 Kgs 17:9). Remember when Elijah first asked the widow for help, her response was negative (1 Kgs 17:12), even though God said that He had prepared her for this work. Because God had revealed His intent to Elijah, Elijah could persist in encouraging her to meet his need, even after she protested that she was not equipped to help. When you ask God to point out those whom He is calling to be part of your team, be bold to ask, but patient for God to work if their first response is that they cannot.

Before you meet with your spouse for the Marriage Building Activity below, share your list of needs from Question 6 with God by reading them through one by one in prayer now, just as you would with a loving parent or a close friend.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: God's Compassion for Your Needs*.

Marriage Building Activity: God's Compassion for Your Needs



Romans 8:38 says that no amount of pain or inner turmoil can separate you from God's love. You looked at 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 earlier in this course in order to understand how to love your spouse. But do you realize that this is also the way that God loves you all the time?

Take a moment to read this passage out loud beginning with verse 4, but substituting the words "*My love for you*" whenever you see the word "love." Imagine *God* saying these words to you.

If you are **MARRIED**, take turns reading these verses out loud for each other on behalf of the heavenly Father who loves you both so much. Does it seem unbelievable that God feels this way toward you and your needs? Remember, He is the one who wrote that this is what love is like! It is not "too good to be true." As you read this for your spouse, think about how you can exemplify this kind of love in your ministry to your spouse.

- Then please read 1 John 4:16 out loud together.
- Read each other's lists of needs.
- What are the implications of God's love on the things that you listed?

Combine your two lists into one and offer these to God in conversational prayer together.

If you are **SINGLE**, either read the verses out loud on behalf of the Lord who loves you, or, if possible, meet with someone else to complete this Marriage Building Activity together.

Topic 2: Examining Your Progress

As you saw in the first story in this lesson, any new ground that you take in your marriage will certainly be tested in many ways. It will be easy, like Pastor Ben, to revert to old habits. As you saw in Topic 1, one necessity in order to succeed in keeping the new ground is to properly steward your ministry and your own needs with appropriate boundaries, help, accountability, and rest. Another necessity for success in keeping the new ground is to uproot any unhealthy habits in the way in which you interact with your spouse, particularly at home. You have learned many new ways of interacting in this course. Let's see how you are doing at applying them in your marriage on a daily basis. If you are single, you will need to adapt the following exercises as necessary for a relationship with someone with whom you live or work closely.

NOTE: Much of the information and exercises in the following sections have been provided through the kindness and permission of Dr. Daniel Oh and have been adapted from his Safe Haven Ministries.

Reading Your Story

The Bible is God's Word, written over a period of many centuries and completed nearly two thousand years ago. But it reveals that the written words are not the only ones that witness to the works of God on earth. Another kind of writing also tells of the works and power of God.

- Please read 2 Corinthians 3:2-3.

Here, Paul calls you a “living epistle.” An epistle is a letter. He says that the living “epistle of you” is being written, not with ink on a page but by the Spirit of the living God on your heart. In verse 2 he says that this message from the Spirit is written so that all men can know and read it. So, if all men can see it, the message must not be written in a hidden place in your heart. It is read by others, when the things that are written in your heart come out in your actions. Your life story expresses a message that others regularly read. What does yours say? You will be looking at how to read your own message in a few minutes.

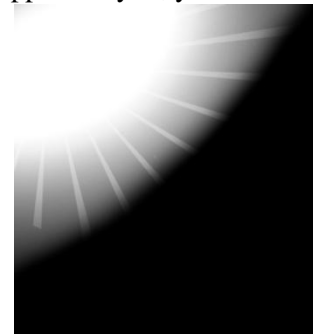
This concept is also mentioned by the writer of Hebrews.

- Please read Hebrews 12:1-2. What is Jesus called here in relation to your life story? Jesus is the author of your faith story. He will finish and perfect the story that He is writing in your life.



If Jesus is writing in your life in a way that should be visible to all, how can you stand back to “read” it? One way is through studying your life in a way similar to how you study the Bible. The Bible is a power-filled environment where God’s Spirit is working in mighty ways to carry out His purposes. Your life can be the same sort of Spirit-filled environment. No matter what happens to you, you have the opportunity to let the Spirit speak and work through you to bring consolation to those around you. The situations themselves do not dictate your responses.

Throughout Scripture, in fact, whenever the situation is very dark, those who choose light become the heroes of the faith! From Eden onward, however, humans have the ability to choose darkness and desolation instead of light. You are going to read the “letter of your life” over the last seventy-two hours to see which you are choosing, as you face the situations of life—darkness or light.



QUESTION 8

Please open your Life Notebook.

Create a two-column chart. Label the first column “Light” and the second, “Darkness,” and title it “Seventy-two-hour Life Reading.” Now think, what was the date and time seventy-two hours (three days) ago? Record that date and time with the title. Close your eyes and ask God to help you remember the sequence of events and the interchanges with people, especially your spouse, that have happened in the past seventy-two hours. As you think of each particular scene that you lived through, in what ways did you choose darkness, and in what ways did you choose light?

List in the “Light” column the things that you did or said that showed that you were choosing the light of God’s grace and were being filled with His Spirit to minister consolation to those around you. Were there also some ways in which you chose darkness in your thinking and your actions? Record these in the Darkness column.

For example:

| Light/Consolation | Darkness/Desolation |
|--|--|
| On Saturday afternoon when Su came home from the market, I helped her carry her load and put away the food, even though I was interrupted from working on my sermon. | On Saturday at dinner, Mark was playing in his food and spilled it on his lap. I looked at Su and Mark with disgust, picked up my plate, and ate in the other room. |
| On Sunday morning, I told Mark I was sorry for getting angry and leaving him at the table and asked him to forgive me. | I did not ever ask Su to forgive me, even though my body language clearly held her to blame for Mark's spill. During the worship service, I evaluated the musicians and mentally critiqued their good and bad points, rather than allowing the music to draw me into worshipping and praising God in my heart. |

Be sure to spend plenty of time in preparing this chart, because you will be using it for the next few questions.

Reviewing Your Life Reading

What do you see in your choices over the past seventy-two hours?

QUESTION 9

As you examine this reading of three days in your life, ask God to show you any patterns that hint at why you sometimes choose to respond to situations with darkness/desolation. Write in your Life Notebook your observations of any recurring patterns or themes that you see in your living letter over the past seventy-two hours. As we saw in Lesson 2, most of us have unrecognized core values, lies, and motivations that come out as acts or words of desolation. We recognize that in these times, the love of Christ did not control us (2 Cor 5:14), and we did not minister the comfort of the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:31) to our spouse or others at that time. As long as these core beliefs and motives remain hidden, they continue to spur us to respond with harmful desolation. These responses eat at and decay our marriage closeness.

If you are married and are taking this course together, share your chart with your partner. What was happening in your thoughts during your choices of light and your choices of desolation? What do you think might be the core values that dictated these patterns? Ask your partner to share his/her observations on your chart. Listen carefully as your spouse shares about the chart he/she prepared. As you listen to your spouse speak about the core values and motives that he/she has identified, practice both drawing out and listening skills.

Dr. Oh, whom we have mentioned before, uses this practice of “reading a life” in his seminars and interventions among Asian pastors and their wives. He refers to the negative inner motives as “spirits,” not necessarily in terms of a separate evil personality, but as an unrecognized motive. He shares that in his experience, some of the common spirits among the pastors and their wives who attend his seminars have been the following:

- Control
- Fear
- Complacency (“I am comfortable and don’t want to change”)
- Fleshly desire to advance
- Competitiveness
- Jealousy

- Anger
- Lust
- Laziness
- Litigiousness (the compulsion to prosecute and win an argument)
- Refusal to forgive
- Legalism
- Retribution (“If you hurt me, I will punish you”)
- Entitlement (“I deserve better”)
- Self-punishment (“I must suffer for my sins indefinitely”)

Dr. Oh also says that many times, among Christian leaders with troubled marriages, the way that they treat each other exhibits bondage to a system of legalism and retribution rather than walking in the age of grace. They may preach and teach a gospel of grace, but they do not live in the New Covenant in their homes.



When undetected core motives or spirits are present in a relationship, they prevent married couples from being able to fully appropriate the good things that they have learned from a marriage course such as this one.

Before you move to the next subtopic, practice saying whatever words are needed to begin to heal the wounds of your spouse or others you have hurt or wronged—“I’m sorry. Please forgive me. I love you.”

Redeeming Your Life Reading

Look once again over the descriptions of each event where you chose to respond with darkness in the past seventy-two hours.

QUESTION 10

Please open your Life Notebook and answer the questions for each instance:

- What was God’s desire for me in this situation?
- How did He want me to be His messenger by speaking encouragement?
- What should I have been thinking instead of what I *was* thinking?
- If there was a lie involved, what was the truth?
- If there was an evil motivation, what motivations would God want to expand in my heart through the Spirit? Write about each occasion where you chose darkness, then describe what the Holy Spirit wanted you to do, say, and feel instead of choosing darkness.



Share with each other what the Holy Spirit would have wanted to do through you in each of the wrong choices that you wrote about.

This gap between what the Holy Spirit wanted you to bring to the situation and the darkness that you did bring is all sin. It is falling short of God’s glory (Rom 3:23). James 5:16 says that as you confess your sins to one another, you can pray for each other’s healing. Ask your spouse to pray for you by asking God to heal those broken and sinful places inside you. If your spouse has also been doing this exercise, pray for your spouse in the same way.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Evaluating Your Life Reading*.

Marriage Building Activity: Evaluating Your Life Reading



Debrief with each other by sharing how you each felt about doing this process of life reading. Scripture says that you must bring every thought captive to Christ (2 Cor 10:5). Do you think this process of taking a "life reading" would be a tool that you could use together on a regular basis to heal your un-Christlike patterns?

In most cases, people can benefit from reading their life epistles regularly, not just from a seventy-two-hour period, but looking for broader patterns in a month, six months, or in the past year. Reading the epistle of the whole past year in your lives is a very profitable way to spend a day on a retreat. Think about how you could plan retreats throughout the year, even if some are just a half day of prayer, reflection, and planning.

Topic 3: Maintaining New Ground

Since you did not do a "reading" to reveal what your marriage interaction was like when you first started Lesson 1, you probably do not have a baseline except in your memory about what your marriage was like before you began this study. Hopefully, you can identify some areas in your marriage that are now stronger and more intimate. Hopefully, you are finding it easier to communicate with your spouse and to look more insightfully at your own behavior and thoughts than when you first began.

Evaluating Your Investment

Many of the positive changes in the way that you relate to your spouse will probably have occurred as a result of completing the Marriage Building Activities and the other interactive exercises. As we said in the introduction to the course, just reading this course without completing the Marriage Building Activities and other personal assignments would be something like receiving medicine from a doctor, but just waving it over your body, rather than applying it. What have you gained from this investment?

If you are married, please complete the next four questions in collaboration with your spouse.

QUESTION 11

Please open your Life Notebook.

Please review the course outline and think about the lessons that you have completed. In your Life Notebook, please write down which ones you liked the best or gained the most from. Which ones did your spouse like the best? Which ones do you still need to work on the most? You may need to make some plans that will ensure that you will continue to grow in those areas.

QUESTION 12

Please open your Life Notebook and write about the Marriage Building Activities in which you participated. How did you or your relationship change as a result of these activities? Which activities were most helpful in producing good changes? Which activities will be useful in your own ministry? If you will be attending a seminar, be prepared to share your experiences.

- A Excellent. We grew a lot from this activity.
- B Good. This was a helpful activity.
- C OK. This activity was only mildly helpful.
- D Not sure if this was a worthwhile investment of time.
- E This was a waste of time.

QUESTION 13

Please open your Life Notebook.

Another feature of this course has been your writings in your Life Notebook. By now you should have many pages of work in which you analyzed Scripture and applied the principles of the course to your own thinking and your own marriage. Take a few moments to review your own writing. What are some of the main principles and thoughts you have written that were new to you? Mark the most significant.

Please share your responses with your spouse and be prepared to share these in your seminar.

QUESTION 14

Please open your Life Notebook.

The course has had other features as well—worship exercises, articles, lessons on various subjects, questions—which all have tried to influence your marriage. Please write a story, skit, or essay in your Life Notebook, which shows how you formerly related to one another and how things have changed now.

QUESTION 15

Please open your Life Notebook.

Please describe in your Life Notebook the way in which your ministry will change as a result of this study. Especially, describe any changes in your marriage ministry and ministry to single people. Be prepared to share this in your seminar.

Vigilance

As you studied more thoroughly in Lesson 2, Satan is compared to a lion, who is constantly roaring and “roaming around” looking for marriages to “devour.” But in the same passage, 1 Peter 5:8, Peter commands you to resist him and stand firm in the faith. What do these threats look like in practical terms at your house? Do you recognize the lion’s methods of operation in your own marriage? What should you do about it?



QUESTION 16

Compare these stories about lions. Match the men to their responses.

| <i>Men</i> | <i>Response</i> |
|--|---|
| Judges 14:5-7: Samson | The Spirit filled him so that he killed the lion with his bare hands. |
| 1 Samuel 17:34-37: David | When His attackers surrounded Him like lions roaring, He cried out to God to be close to Him. |
| Psalms 22:11-13: Jesus | He told people there was a lion outside so that he wouldn’t have to go outside to work. |
| Proverbs 26:13-14: a lazy person | When the devil tried to frighten him like a lion roaring, he resisted by staying firm in trusting and obeying God. |
| 1 Peter 5:8: the believer in Christ | He killed many lions to rescue lambs in his flock. Therefore, when a person who resembled a lion in his fierceness came against God’s people, he knew he could count on God to allow him to kill that person. |

It is easy to see which of these examples is the negative one that you don’t want to emulate, isn’t it? If you behave like the sluggard who ignores the lion and just wishes it would go away, your family and your marriage may be attacked. On the other hand, if you are bold to use the weapons of your warfare against him (2 Cor 10:4), you may defend your marriage against anything and anyone that wants to harm it by deflecting the attack appropriately.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity: Threats and Weaknesses*.

Marriage Building Activity: Threats and Weaknesses



Discuss the following with your spouse.

- As you review your marriage right now, what do you see as the **threats** and **weaknesses** in your marriage unity? A threat is a danger or attack. A weakness is a place where an attack might be more easily successful.
- What do you think might be the next threats and weaknesses as your life together progresses into the next season?

(Continued on next page)

- How will each of you know if the other is being attacked? How can you better communicate this to each other?
- Which of the exercises that you tried out during the course might help to combat these threats?
- What other things can you think of that would also address these problems, both the ones that you feel are threatening your unity now and those that may arise in the near future?
- How can you continue to build strength into your marriage?

If you are **SINGLE**, please use this activity to assess the strengths and weaknesses of your closest relationships, including your relationship to God.

Topic 4: Scenes From Your Future

“So teach us to consider our mortality, so that we might live wisely”
—Psalm 90:12

It is a date sometime in the future, perhaps next week, next year, or many years from now. You are with your spouse on earth for the last time. One of you sits at the bedside of the other, holding a weak hand. As you look into each other’s eyes, what will you see? Regret? Or the bittersweet joy of being faithful best friends and serving the Lord through good times and bad? At those moments, what will be your most cherished memories together? What will you wish that you had spent more time together doing?

Now fast forward to another day a little further in the future. Your family and friends have gathered to pay tribute to your life. During the memorial service and sharing over tea afterward, they talk about the glimpses of you that they remember. Later, after the crowd has gone and your spouse is alone, he/she thumbs the pages of a picture album and leafs through your certificates and memorabilia. What will all of these say about you? What will people reveal was the impact of your life and example on their lives? How did you inspire your spouse to serve the Lord with joy? How did you inspire others to love their spouses better? How will your children and your spouse describe you? What favorite memories will they share? What words of yours will comfort their hearts and give them



courage for the days ahead?

Now imagine the scene is heaven. While those on earth are weeping over your departure from them, you have arrived to be welcomed into the arms of your Lord Jesus Christ. Later, as scenes of your life and the works you did for the love of Christ are brought up on display, how long will the movie be—a short story, or an epic that holds the angels spellbound in rapt attention? When the presentation of your life is complete, will they burst into praise and rejoice at what the Lord was able to demonstrate of His character through you? Will they see that your faithful work was a pure and worthy sacrifice to the Lamb—perhaps glorious because of the progress you led for the kingdom, or perhaps precious because you were faithful in relative obscurity? It matters not whether anyone on earth noticed your labor for Him (Mt 6:2-5). As obscure but faithful Brother Lawrence said, God “regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed.” While man looks on the outward appearance, the Spirit of God looks on the heart



motivations (1 Sam 16:7; Prov 16:2). What will be significant in God’s judgment of your reward is whether or not you responded to the Spirit and took your own place in the Body of Christ—the one to which you were called—and whether or not you fulfilled it to the best of the Holy Spirit’s ability in you. The great leaders and martyrs of the faith that we know about now will no doubt be rewarded richly, but there will be many others whose sacrifices and labor will be revealed for the first time and produce even richer praise. When the Lord reviews the life that you lived for Him and gives you your secret new name for all eternity, one that perhaps sums up your life message (Rev 2:17), what do you want your new name to be? “Champion of the Downtrodden”? “Always Faithful”? “Excelled in Love”? Think for a moment about what you aspire to be named at that time.



Beginning With Your End in View

- Please read Ecclesiastes 7:1-4.

Why does the writer of Ecclesiastes suggest that it is a wise pursuit to think about your own death? Do you think that most people do this? Or are they like the second group of people whom he mentions, those who think only about filling their lives with pleasure and “merrymaking.” In 1 Corinthians 15:32, Paul quotes Ecclesiastes in saying that there are only two possibilities for life—either it is meaningless, in which case you might as well live for your own comforts, or it is rich with meaning because of the resurrection of Christ and the hope of glory with Him. Which way are you living your life today?

QUESTION 17

Please open your Life Notebook.

Beginning with your own end and the end of your marriage in view, what will you want others on earth and in heaven to say about you? What accomplishments and activities will be important? Meditate on these three scenes and write down in your Life Notebook what you see and what you will want to be true of your life on earth. Hopefully, many of these accomplishments are still possible for you as individuals and as a couple. If you are married, share this with your spouse as well.

The purpose of a Christian marriage is not static. God called you together as one flesh—His flesh, the vessels of His Spirit on earth. You two are a critical squad in a great cause. The purpose for which you serve your marriage is not just your own comfort and pleasure. It is for the higher purposes of serving Christ in each other and for you to strengthen each other to serve God’s purposes together. As you saw in Lesson 10, no matter what stage of life you are in, you always have the opportunity to glorify God. What will be the bridges to get you from where you are now to where you want to be at the end of your life?

Building Bridges to the Future You Desire

“Be strong and brave! Don’t be afraid and don’t panic, for I, the LORD your God, am with you in all you do.”—Joshua 1:9

What did you hope would be true in your future? When God looks at you and compares your life to what He had called you to do and be, will it be in line with how you actually have been

spending your time? Some people live with fiction. They forget to ask God who He is calling them to be, and instead accept the call of lesser gods for what they should do and accomplish. Some people end up living the life of someone else, and, at the end, they feel little satisfaction in how they spent the moments of their lives.

In a moment, you will be guided to set goals for your life. Is this a good spiritual exercise? Some of you may be tempted to think that it is improper to presume on God by making goals, citing James 4:13-16.

- Stop and read this passage right now.

If you read this carefully, you can see that it was not making a plan that was said to be evil. It was presupposing one could make a plan independently from discerning God's will and recognizing His prerogative to intervene.

While it is, of course, essential to be led by the Spirit moment by moment, you can see throughout Scripture that setting goals was an important part of the lives of both Jesus and the apostle Paul. Look first at Jesus. Did He plan to accomplish certain things in His life, or just let life happen?

- Please read at least one of the following: Matthew 10:5-9; 16:21-23; Luke 4:43; 13:33. What do you think? Did Jesus have plans?

Now look at the apostle Paul. His life was a little different from Jesus' because he could not know the future, so he could not know if his plans would be successful. Sometimes his plans did not go forward as he thought they would. Did that stop him from making them?

- Please read at least one of these passages: Acts 13:2-4; Romans 1:13; 2 Corinthians 1:15-17.

Paul's calling from God was to plant the church among the Gentiles. What would have happened to Paul had he not had any goals, or if he had not made any plans toward reaching his goals? As Dr. Ralph Winter once said to me, "God can only steer a moving ship." Without goals and plans, Paul would have achieved little or nothing toward planting the church among the Gentiles.

But what assurance do we have that our work or our plans will accomplish anything of lasting value? When Paul sat on the damp cement floor in the Mammertine Prison, a dark cistern in Rome, awaiting his execution, he did not know whether all of his work toward establishing the church would outlive him. Would the church die with the last apostle? Would the Romans succeed in executing the last faithful Christian? What Paul did not realize then is that his goal and the plans that he made would impact all of our lives today. The church is very much alive 2,000 years later! Almost everyone reading this has heard the gospel because of Paul's faithfulness in trying to establish the church in Europe and in writing the letters, which became much of the New Testament. You, too, will not know until you enter eternity, of the effect of your faithfulness to make plans and execute them toward the goals that God gives you. As Luis Palau challenged the student body at my school: "Dream big dreams; pray big prayers!"

QUESTION 18

In prayer, ask God, "Who am I, and who am I called to be? When have I felt in my life that what I was doing was most myself?" Is your life's work now reflecting that calling? Write down in your Life Notebook some of the things you want to be, especially by the end of your life.

Then ask God, "What am I called to do?" Write down what you want to have accomplished.

- Please do the following *Marriage Building Activity*: *Charting the Course to Your Goals*.

Marriage Building Activity: Charting the Course to Your Goals



If you are **MARRIED**:

Step 1: Ask your spouse to share his/her responses to Question 18. Practice listening to your spouse in complete silence for five minutes, except for brief questions to draw out more of what your spouse is thinking or feeling. Do not, at any point, interrupt your spouse to talk about similar experiences or your own goals. As you listen, jot down a list of what your spouse is saying about his/her gifts, desires, goals, feelings. Try to empathize and fully understand how your spouse feels. When your spouse is finished, describe for your spouse the things that you listed, so your spouse knows you fully understood all that he/she said. Then reverse your roles and share about your own list from Question 18.

If you are **SINGLE**, choose someone with whom you can share your responses to Question 18, and who can also do the following with you.

Step 2: Brainstorm together. What **opportunities** do you have as individuals and as a couple that might contribute to the life that you each will have wanted to live? What could you do that might be a blessing to the Lord, to each other, to others? List (together if possible) as many ideas as you can of opportunities—things you could do or achieve in the next three months, the next year, the next three years, the next ten years or more.

Not everything that you think of will be a good idea *or* the Lord's will for you. Don't take time right now to critique your ideas or to decide whether or not they are reasonable, just write them all down. Some examples might be places you want to go, languages you want to learn, parts of Scripture you want to memorize, classes you want to take, children you want to adopt, people you want to help, ministries you want to enter, a place you want to move, ways you want to relate to each other differently.

Step 3: Stop and ask God together to help you sift the ideas. Mark the ideas that seem to have the most merit. Discuss and pray about the ones you marked. Do any of them seem wonderful but frightening in their awesome potential? Perhaps these are the ones you want to look at the most closely.

Step 4: List together some goals that you believe God would have for each of you:

- For the next 3 months
- For the next 1 year
- For the next 3 years

Step 5: Evaluate your resources. What resources do you already have that can help you toward the goals you listed? What will you need to do, and/or what does God need to provide?

For each goal, draw a three-column chart somewhere that you will have access to over time. List your current resources in one column and your needed resources in another. Your current resources may include things like relationships, training, preparation, finances, intellectual accomplishments, spiritual disciplines, core values, time, health, and the exercises you have

learned in this course. In the third column, you may note, over time, the ways in which God supplies the resources you need. See the chart example below.

Example: Dr Oh, whom we have learned from often in this course, periodically sets aside a day or a weekend to pray with his wife, Ellen, for the purpose of setting life goals and going through this process of evaluating present and needed resources. During one of these goal-setting retreats, he determined that it would greatly contribute to his ministry effectiveness to memorize the entire New Testament in both English and Korean. Here is a sample chart related to that goal.

| Goal: To Memorize the New Testament | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| Resources I have | Resources I need | God's answers |
| A quiet location | Time | |
| A Bible | Self-discipline to work every day | |
| Blank cards | A recording of the Bible | |
| A supportive wife | A schedule | 1/25/08 I found a Bible reading program for the New Testament, which I can adapt for this memorization project. |

He and his wife prayed together and worked out the ways that they could together help him achieve this goal. He set aside two hours every day for this purpose. After ten months, he finished memorizing the New Testament in English. He is nearly finished memorizing it in Korean as well.

Can you see why it is important to complete these charts as a couple, prayerfully together? What might have happened if Ellen were not committed to supporting Daniel's goals for memorization? She could have become frustrated at his unavailability for two hours per day or even resented the large chunk of time that this took. Instead, she was part of his team and helped him to achieve this goal. Does this example help you see the value of writing down your goals together as partners?

Building Bridges to the Future for Your People

While the emphasis in this course has been on your own marriage, you are now better equipped to also impact the marriages in your group or congregation. Spend time praying about and planning for the group of believers that you belong to as well. What has God called them to be and to do? What is your role to be in those goals?

Final Project: Building Other Marriages and Singles

Part I: Analysis

Prepare this analysis and plan to bring it to your next seminar.

Think through your congregation's (or any other group in which you fellowship) attitudes and actions toward the objectives of developing (1) strong marriages and (2) healthy single leaders by answering the following questions:

- 1. Strength.** What are my group's strengths in doing this already? What do they do well? What have they done well in the past? What are some ideas where we might use these strengths to better serve marriages and encourage singles in their personal lives?

2. Weakness. What are my group's weaknesses in these two areas? What can the leaders do to improve our areas of weakness?

3. Opportunities. What opportunities do we have in these two areas? What needs can we meet in our group? In our neighborhood? Our community? Our mission fields?

4. Threats. What obstacles must we overcome in order to minister more effectively in these two areas?

Part II: Planning

Design a plan for a group-wide or congregation-wide project to improve marriages and to better meet the needs of single people.

1. Give the project a name.

2. Working with others if possible, develop one or more programs to support this project. What components will it include—pulpit preaching, Bible study, retreats, projects for people to do in their own homes? If there are a number of different types of programs, you will need to answer the following questions for each one.

a. **Who** will be the participants? The leaders? Who must be involved in the planning? **Who needs to give permission and/or endorsement?** How many people will be involved in the program?

b. **Why.** How does this program meet a need?

c. **When.** When will this project begin and end? At what time(s) of day?

d. **Where.** What rooms, supplies, equipment will be needed?

e. **What.** What will be taught? What knowledge, skills, attitudes will you seek to instill in the students?

f. **What for.** Make a list of what you want to have accomplished when the project is completed. How will you assess whether or not the project has helped marriages and singles?

Make sure that you have completed every *Marriage Building Activity* for Lesson 12 (and recorded your experience in your Life Notebook). Completion of these activities will form 40 percent of your grade. The Marriage Building Activities for this lesson were:

- *God's Compassion for Your Needs*
- *Evaluating Your Life Reading*
- *Threats and Weaknesses*
- *Charting the Course to Your Goals*

Lesson 12 Self Check

QUESTION 1

I have completed a list of the concerns about the way my ministry affects my marriage or other close relationships and my own peace of mind. *True or False?*

QUESTION 2

In my Life Notebook, I described some possible ways in which my congregation could improve the way that it ministers to the needs of single adults and gives ministry opportunities to single adults. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

Which of the following is **NOT** a true principle about Sabbath rest?

- A. Sabbath points the believer toward a permanent rest to our souls because we no longer have to work for salvation.
- B. Some early believers observed a weekly Sabbath day and some did not.
- C. Sabbath implies that we trust God for our provision.
- D. Pastors who preach on Sunday need to have another time of regular rest.
- E. We should work until we collapse and then rest.

QUESTION 4

When someone talks about feeling like he/she wants to die, it may be an indication that that person is in desperate need of complete rest. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

When people are talking negatively about how they feel, it is important to make them stop talking and only express positive things that indicate trust in God, because their talk will only make their feelings more negative. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

In order for a marriage retreat to be truly spiritual, it should not include frequent sexual relations. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

What was **NOT** one of the similarities in the way that Martha and the elder brother in the prodigal son story handled their own needs?

- A. Both admitted their need and asked humbly for their leader to meet it
- B. Both worked hard
- C. Both accused their leader of failure to love them
- D. Both could not identify with their leader's thinking
- E. Both felt that they were disregarded by their leader
- F. Both resented a sibling's undutiful behavior and the leader's response

QUESTION 8

The purpose of the accountability/coaching partners is to monitor a leader's health in personal areas such as his/her intimacy with God and with his/her spouse. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

I have completed a seventy-two-hour Life Reading of my life and noted the ways that I chose darkness and the ways that I chose light during that time. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

I have asked God what I am called to be and to do by the end of my life. If I am married, I know my spouse's response to that question too. *True or False?*

Unit 4 Exam

QUESTION 1

How was the apostle Paul able to persevere through painful circumstances without despair?

- A. By keeping his focus on his goals
- B. By having good fellowship
- C. By drinking wine
- D. By not having a wife and family
- E. By traveling to new places frequently

QUESTION 2

If you have problems and flaws in your personality, marriage will make them better. *True or False?*

QUESTION 3

If you make the best of every situation and concentrate on training to glorify God, you will be best equipped for every good work, whether or not the work God has for you includes marriage or singleness. *True or False?*

QUESTION 4

When someone is single, they are called to abstain from sexual relations, even if they still experience a strong desire for it. *True or False?*

QUESTION 5

When Isaiah 54:1 says that singles can have more children even than married people, it is fulfilled when singles become spiritual parents by leading people to Christ and discipling them. *True or False?*

QUESTION 6

It is forbidden for a believer to marry a believer whose parents are not believers. *True or False?*

QUESTION 7

When you lose someone you love, your experience of loss is part of God preparing you for the future He intends for you. *True or False?*

QUESTION 8

According to 1 Peter 3:7, a Christian man who is married to an unbelieving wife must be careful to treat her with consideration and respect. *True or False?*

QUESTION 9

According to 1 Timothy 6:3-11, rich people have corrupted minds, while poor people have godly minds. *True or False?*

QUESTION 10

God blesses people by making them rich, so if someone is poor, it is a sign that God is not pleased with them. *True or False?*

QUESTION 11

Comparing my financial status to someone else's financial status can lead to serious sins, such as pride, coveting, and greed. *True or False?*

QUESTION 12

Being content means not asking God for anything beyond food and shelter. *True or False?*

QUESTION 13

The local church has replaced the Temple in Jerusalem as the only place where you should give tithes and offerings. *True or False?*

QUESTION 14

The Bible recommends saving up resources on earth for future physical needs and also saving up riches in heaven. *True or False?*

QUESTION 15

One of the dangers of borrowing money for a depreciating item is that you may need to continue to make payments on it even after it is ruined. *True or False?*

QUESTION 16

A credit card is a form of loan. *True or False?*

QUESTION 17

If you have a credit card, a certain way to financial bondage is to make only the minimum payment each month. *True or False?*

QUESTION 18

When you see someone in need, which is **NOT** a biblical principle?

- A. You should loan them money and expect to be paid back.
- B. You may give them money if you can do it cheerfully.
- C. You may give them money if it would genuinely help their situation.
- D. When you give money to someone who is not grateful, you are being like God.
- E. When you give money to someone you consider an enemy, God will reward you.

QUESTION 19

While it is important to offer hospitality by letting someone stay in your home, you should not charge rent or make any rules for that person's behavior, since they are an adult. *True or False?*

QUESTION 20

Which is **NOT** a true statement?

- A. Buying on credit is when you take an item home, promising to pay for it later.
- B. A mortgage is a loan that pays for a house.
- C. Security or surety means that a one person agrees to take responsibility for the debt of another if the debtor cannot pay.
- D. Debt is the money you have paid back on a loan.
- E. Interest is rent you pay on money you borrow.

QUESTION 21

If both husband and wife agree that they want something, it is surely God's will for them to save up to buy it. *True or False?*

QUESTION 22

Service motivated by a need for God to accept you is actually an act of unbelief. *True or False?*

QUESTION 23

Setting goals is a sin of presumption. *True or False?*

QUESTION 24

In comparing the story of Mary and Martha and the story of the prodigal son, what was **NOT** a characteristic of both Martha and the elder brother?

- A. They were both resentful not to get a reward for their hard work.
- B. They never asked humbly for what they wanted.
- C. They compared themselves to someone whom they saw as not doing the right thing.
- D. They missed out on intimate fellowship.
- E. They thought their leader was being unfair.
- F. They didn't work hard to serve their leader.

QUESTION 25

When doing group or individual planning, it is helpful to assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the group or individual. *True or False?*

Hopes and Blessings From the Authors:

We hope that as a result of this course, you are furnishing your marriage as the heart home where God ministers to you in a deep and satisfying way. Moreover, as you have invested consistent time of study over these past twelve weeks or more, we trust that God has been looking at you and seeing, as in a mirror, His own reflection growing in color and clarity. May you continue to bring joy to each other and to God's heart by fulfilling Paul's wish in Philippians 2:2 (NASB):

“Make my joy complete by
being of the same mind
maintaining the same love,
united in spirit,
intent on one purpose.”

And like the apostle Paul, may you invest your lives well in the lives of others by helping others to bring joy to God's heart as well.

Lesson 12 Answers to Questions

QUESTION 1: *Your answer*

QUESTION 2: *Your answer*

QUESTION 3: *Your answer*

QUESTION 4:

| <i>Number</i> | <i>Statement</i> |
|---------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 | I have had enough. |
| 2 | I want to die. |
| 3 | I am not special. |
| 4 | I have worked hard for God. |
| 5 | I have no fellowship. |
| 6 | Someone wishes I were dead. |

QUESTION 5: Lets him sleep. Sends him an angel with food and water. Draws him to the mountain of God to meet with Him. Asks probing, but not condemning questions. Lets him express himself, including his negative emotions. Reveals Himself in a gentle way. Speaks to him. Gives him a job to do. Tells him to take an apprentice, Elisha. Reveals that Elijah is not alone.

QUESTION 6: *Your answer*

QUESTION 7:

They all had a circle of closer comrades who helped them in their ministry in various ways.

QUESTION 8: *Your answer*

QUESTION 9: *Your answer*

QUESTION 10: *Your answer*

QUESTION 11: *Your answer*

QUESTION 12: *Your answer*

QUESTION 13: *Your answer*

QUESTION 14: *Your answer*

QUESTION 15: *Your answer*

QUESTION 16:

| <i>Men</i> | <i>Response</i> |
|--|---|
| Judges 14:5-7: Samson | The Spirit filled him so that he killed the lion with his bare hands. |
| 1 Samuel 17:34-37: David | He killed many lions to rescue lambs in his flock. Therefore, when a person who resembled a lion in his fierceness came against God's people, he knew he could count on God to allow him to kill that person. |
| Psalms 22:11-13: Jesus | When his attackers surrounded him like lions roaring, He cried out to God to be close to him. |
| Proverbs 26:13-14: a lazy person | He told people there was a lion outside so that he wouldn't have to go outside to work." |
| 1 Peter 5:8: the believer in Christ | When the devil tried to frighten him like a lion roaring, he resisted by staying firm in trusting and obeying God. |

QUESTION 17: *Your answer*

QUESTION 18: *Your answer*

Lesson 12 Self Check Answers

QUESTION 1: True

QUESTION 2: True

QUESTION 3:

E. We should work until we collapse and then rest.

QUESTION 4: True

QUESTION 5: False

QUESTION 6: False

QUESTION 7:

A. Both admitted their need and asked humbly for their leader to meet it

QUESTION 8: True

QUESTION 9: True

QUESTION 10: True

Unit 4 Exam Answers

Question 1:

A. By keeping his focus on his goals

Question 2: False

Question 3: True

Question 4: True

Question 5: True

Question 6: False

Question 7: True

Question 8: True

Question 9: False

Question 10: False

Question 11: True

Question 12: False

Question 13: False

Question 14: True

Question 15: True

Question 16: True

Question 17: True

Question 18:

A. You should loan them money and expect to be paid back.

Question 19: False

Question 20:

D. Debt is the money you have paid back on a loan.

Question 21: False

Question 22: True

Question 23: False

Question 24:

F. They didn't work hard to serve their leader.

Question 25: True

Marriage



Readings in Marriage

Readings in Marriage



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Articles for Lesson 1: Understanding the Design of Marriage from Genesis 1–2

The Opportunity of a Lifetime

A Fairy Tale for Grownups

Once upon a time, a rich businessman sent a message to his nephew, Chang. The message said: “As you



know, since you were a baby, I have been away living in Canada and have been very successful in business. Now that both of your parents have died and you are old enough to have a family of your own, I want to come back to my home country and live closer to you. I intend to move back just as soon as I can get my affairs here in order. But here’s what I need you to do for me: I want you to build me a house. You will be the general contractor.

“I’m sending you the layout for the house and an unlimited bank account. I’m also sending plans created by an award-winning architect. But I want you to exercise your own creativity and skill to actually build a house that will make me proud to own. Find the choicest piece of land, hire the most skilled tradesmen, and select the best materials. Furnish beautiful rooms for guests, for recreation, a nursery, a family room, and servants’ quarters. Make the master suite as elegant as you’ve ever dreamed. Build me the most beautiful house you can imagine according to these plans, let me know when you are finished, and someday I will come to collect the keys.”

Now Chang was a little uncomfortable with his uncle’s instructions, especially since there was no mention of a reward for all this hard labor. He had other things going on in his life that were more important than just building his uncle’s house. Chang was building his own career and was going to school in the evenings, so this additional task was not the top thing on his priority list. He wanted to be able to get a position someday where he could earn enough to get married and have a family himself. He wanted to be able to buy a house of his own with rooms for his children and a garden to play in. His plans kept his mind and his schedule very busy, but on weekends Chang occasionally took out the blueprints. They didn’t make sense, but he didn’t want to take the time to understand them better. He bought a piece of land, hired some workers, and went back to the more important things in his life.

He thought his uncle should understand that Chang was a busy man and that Uncle was asking an awful lot of effort for him to be a general contractor, too. He supposed Uncle Jack should be grateful that he was taking the time to build him a house at all, and Chang really couldn’t see why he had to supervise the building process or follow his uncle’s elaborate blueprints. So he left all the decisions about the house to others as he pursued his own career and education. The work went along as well as could be expected with such an uninterested supervisor. Chang stopped in occasionally on weekends to complain to the workers that the house didn’t look very attractive. In fact, he was ashamed to be seen there. He knew this was not the quality home that his uncle had requested, but it would take too much time and energy away from the things that he really cared about to get deeply involved in the project. It was probably too late anyway. So he did not give the project much attention or thought ... until one day he had an idea.

That Friday afternoon Chang had been presented with a bill that he could not pay at the school where he was pursuing an advanced degree. He did not have any money in his account to pay his school bill because he did not make enough money at his current job washing dishes. He did not want to drop out of school because all of his hopes for a home and family of his own depended on getting the better job his education would afford. He did not think that he should ask his uncle for money since he felt ashamed

that he had not written to his uncle with a status report on the house, as his uncle had requested. So Chang came up with a selfish plan. He ordered materials for the house that one of the workers could get cheaply because they were remnants of other jobs. Perhaps the plumbing might not last as long as new pipes, and maybe the circuit panel would short out if too many things were running at the same time, but these things would not show. Since Uncle Jack had provided plenty of money for all aspects of the building, Chang could give an accounting of the price of new materials, while substituting inferior, used materials. He put the difference in his own pocket and thought that no one would ever know. He rationalized that Uncle Jack should be rewarding him for building this house, so he only felt a little guilt as he took the stolen money to pay his overdue school bill. Later, it became easier and easier to take money from his uncle's building project for school. Then, when the pattern was established, the extra money came in handy for other things he wanted too. The house was looking very shabby, but at least it was nearly finished, and soon he wouldn't have to think about it at all.

Finally, the day came that the house was complete, and Chang received a message that Uncle Jack would be arriving to inspect it and receive the keys. Chang quickly hired a painter to give the house a fresh coat of paint. Perhaps Uncle Jack would not notice the old materials that had been used to build the house. As Chang waited outside the house, he began to feel ashamed that he had not really given the project the attention and quality his uncle had asked for. He could see that the frame was not square. He remembered that the contractor had warned him that it might sag when Chang had instructed the builder to use extra sand in the concrete foundation to save some money. Then, there were leaks in the roof when it rained, because the framers had not constructed the gables properly. Rainy season was coming. But it was too late now. It only rained for a few months, he thought, and he could put some patches on the leaks before his uncle actually moved in. But at least, he thought with some satisfaction, with the fresh paint, the house looked good on the outside, and his uncle was a rich man. His uncle could fix the things that didn't suit him, or move someplace else if the house deteriorated. Why would he want to live in this town anyway?

Uncle Jack drove up in a big black car, and a chauffeur stepped out to open the door for him. Uncle Jack smiled warmly at Chang and held out his arms. Chang was surprised to see tears on his kind face. "Your eyes remind me of my sister," he said. "I missed seeing you grow up, but I hope to make that up to you. You are my only relative now, and I want to get to know you as my son." Chang hung his head, filled with shame at the way he had treated his uncle's request and misused his money. Would his uncle complain or reprimand him?

"Let's see the house," Uncle said brightly, taking his arm and motioning toward the front door.

As Chang walked through each room of the house, it was as if he were seeing it for the first time. Perhaps the colors in the family room were not very pleasant, but he had not been the one to select them. Perhaps the plastic light fixtures were not exactly the luxury models his uncle would expect, but he only gave the designer a small budget for the rooms and had told her just to get the job finished as quickly as possible. He just wanted the house to be done and to quit demanding his time. Thankfully, Uncle Jack didn't seem to care about the ugly decorations. His smiling eyes hardly left Chang's face as Chang searched in his mind to make up explanations for the odd designs in each room as they walked through together.

Finally, when the tour was done, and they were standing beside the long, black limousine, again Uncle Jack turned to face him. "Are you happy with the house, Chang?" Uncle asked thoughtfully, studying Chang's face.

"Yes, yes of course," Chang stammered, looking down. "I built it as you told me." He fished the keys from his pocket and handed them to his uncle with a deep bow.

Uncle Jack smiled and took the keys. He looked at them for a moment, and then smiled and handed them back. "Then the house is yours. I love you just as I loved your mother, my sister. I promised her when we were children that someday when I was a rich man, I would build her a house where she could enjoy raising her children. Since she didn't live long enough for me to fulfill my promise, the house is yours."

Chang gasped and his knees felt as if they would not support him. All along he was building his *own* house? He couldn't believe it! Uncle Jack wrapped his arm around his shoulders: "And if you don't mind, I would like to select one of the rooms for myself. I still need to travel much of the time for my business, but when I am in the area, I want to stay with you and enjoy your growing family around me. You do want a family, don't you?"



As he nodded yes, Chang's mind was a whirlwind of emotions. This shabby house that he had built was where his children would play in the yard he had dreamed of. But he had allowed rubbish to be buried in the yard as fill, and they might eventually hurt themselves on the jagged objects hidden under the green sod. This house had a master bedroom, but he knew that the plumbing made loud noises at night, which would interrupt their sleep. His uncle had provided all the money necessary to build a fabulous home that would have been a delight to all under its roof, but he had dishonored his uncle and guaranteed frustration for himself and his future wife and children. He now had a house and the fellowship of a wonderful uncle who loved him more than he deserved, but he had missed the opportunity of a lifetime.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

***Tselem*, The Image of God**



In Genesis, you read that God created man in His image (Gen 1:26) and established that mankind should reflect His image in many ways. The word "image" in the original language of the Old Testament, Hebrew, is *tselem*. This word is used many other times in Scripture. By looking at those other instances, you will better understand how humans portray the "image" of God.

Please look at the use of *tselem* in 2 Kings 11:18. Here it is used for idols, which are images, visible representations, of invisible spirits, which we call demons (1 Cor 10:20). In a similar sense, God designed people to reveal, in a physical way (but not primarily visual), Himself—One who is Spirit (1 Tim 6:16).

The word *tselem* is used in Psalm 39:6 in a slightly different way, and it acts as a modifier for man as the image bearers. This passage translates *tselem* as a ghost or shadow, a very imprecise and hazy representation of the original. Since God is infinitely more powerful and more perfect than humans (other than our Lord Jesus, who is the **exact** image of His nature, Heb 1:3), people's representation of Him is also imprecise.

In what ways do people reveal God's image? How are these shown in marriage?

- Please read Genesis 1:26-28.

1. People share the image of God in aspects of His personhood. The core aspect is the ability to make a choice, called free will. Other aspects of personhood include the following:

- Rational thoughts
- Individual personality
- A moral sense of right and wrong
- The ability and need to communicate
- Emotions with which to respond to things and situations (See Note 1 at the end of the Article.)

God allowed Adam and Eve to exercise these aspects of His image in order to make a choice about whether or not to obey Him in regard to eating the forbidden fruit. Adam and Eve could gather and order information rationally, reflect, communicate with each other, and choose whether or not to eat from the forbidden tree (Gen 2:17). Understanding free choice as a primary aspect of personhood helps us to understand why God did not interfere with Adam and Eve's choice, even though they ultimately made a horrible one.

Because you share the image of God, your freely-made decisions are legally binding. In marriage, you choose to join yourself in a legal covenant with God and another person and obligate yourself to do certain things. According to Jesus, God ratifies that marriage covenant (Mk 10:9).

2. You reveal His image by work that mimics God's work, such as the following:

- Ruling
- Ordering
- Making
- Caretaking the earth

In Genesis 1:26, you saw that the first purpose mentioned for mankind, who was made in God's image, was to rule and take care of the earth. This purpose includes all human professions—art, business, service, construction, invention. A husband and wife reflect God's image in the way that they order and take care of a home, their land, or a business together.

3. You reveal His image by relating to others and to Him.

God is not aloof but eternally relating both within the Trinity and with His creation. In Genesis 1:26 (NASB), this relationship between the persons of the Godhead is suggested by the use of plural pronouns: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." As the persons of the Trinity have a relationship with one another, so God designed you to live in relationship.

As you saw in Genesis 2:18, man's great need for an intimate, satisfying relationship is most directly fulfilled by marriage. God recognized that it was not good for Adam to be alone. This was not a design flaw, but rather the way that God often works, illustrated in the following ways.

First, He designs a need.

Second, He allows the needy one to experience the lack until it becomes acute.

Third, He fulfills the need.

This is illustrated in the barrenness of Hannah (1 Sam 1:7), the desire of Nehemiah for Israel to rebuild Jerusalem (Neh 1:4), and in the longing of the believer for a new existence (Rom 8:23-25). God fulfilled Adam's need by making a wife analogous to him whom he could relate to intimately. A husband and wife reflect God's image when they relate intimately with each other.

4. You display God's image by raising children.

Just as God desired to make humans in His own image (Gen 1:26-27), God commands humans to be fruitful and multiply (Gen 1:28). This command is because God expresses Himself in creating those who share His image and characteristics, both man and angels (Job 1:6, Lk 20:36). You share His image when you bear and raise children.

5. You display God's image through showing His character.

In Genesis 5:3, you will find the word *tselem* again. After Cain and Abel, the Bible says that Adam had a son "according to his own image" named Seth. This was not said about his other sons, but marked the first of thousands of selections (see Note 2 at the end of the Article) that God made throughout history to culminate in the Son who would display God's image perfectly. This image probably referred more to

Seth's nature being like Adam's, rather than to his appearance. In English, we would say that Seth was "a chip off the old block."

Similarly, because you have become God's child through adoption in Christ, you are in the process of developing a likeness to your adopted Father (Rom 8:14-17) and of becoming less like your old, wicked stepfather (Jn 8:44). As you relate to other people and take care of the rest of His creation, you reveal how much of the family characteristics you have taken on.

It is easy to put on a false front for those outside of your family, but your spouse knows if the image of God in you is only "skin deep" or if you are allowing Him to transform you "from one degree of glory to another."

My fondest images of my husband are of times when he has appeared the most like the Lord Jesus—defending me, leading me according to God's will, perceiving my innermost thoughts, tenderly caring for me. A man can also discern the image of Christ in his wife as she walks in the Spirit and seeks to bless his life. "And we all, with unveiled faces reflecting the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another, which is from the Lord, who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:18).

So in marriage you have the opportunity to engage in these five aspects of bearing God's image:

1. **Expressing personhood** by choosing to enter a marriage covenant together, appreciating each other's uniqueness, and sharing intimate communication and emotion
2. **Working** together to rule the earth in the same way that God rules and works
3. **Relating** intimately with each other, just as God relates in the Trinity
4. **Producing and raising** children, just as God parents us
5. **Behaving** toward each other and behaving together toward the world in ways that reveal God's character

Note 1: This is never to say that one who is mentally handicapped or an infant, and therefore undeveloped in some of these areas, is any less worthy of protection and respect as a human being created in God's image. None of us will fully reflect God's image as He intended until we see Him face to face (1 Jn 3:2).

Note 2: Understanding free will as part of personhood also helps us to understand how God works in history. The Scriptures describe a series of selections as God exercises His will in choosing the people through whom He will bring forth His Son, for example, Seth, not Cain (Lk 3:38); Abraham, not Nahor (Gen 11:32–12:1); David, not his older brother, Eliab (1 Sam 16:6–13); Mary, not her cousin Elizabeth (Lk 1:43); the selection of you to be a member of Christ's Bride (2 Thess 2:13).

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Setting Boundaries in Relation to Parents

"Marriage must be honored among all"—Hebrews 13:4

While Scripture commands that children of every age must honor their parents, obedience to any human authority always has limits. Any person is first and foremost a child of God and must obey God's principles and leadership. One of those principles is to honor his/her own marriage (Heb 13:4). Therefore, it is necessary to set appropriate boundaries to protect the marriage from harmful intrusions. Cleaving must happen in each area of the married couple's personhood—physical, mental, emotional, and



spiritual. Therefore, the couple must set proper boundaries to reinforce their entity as a couple and to encourage a warm, not painful, relationship with their parents and others.

Is It Right to Set Boundaries?

Is it right to set boundaries and insist that the parents respect them? What examples does the Bible give us?

Example 1: Jonathan and Saul. We don't know where Jonathan learned his godly wisdom (1 Sam 14:6), but it was certainly not from his father, King Saul. Notice that as an adult, Jonathan did not hesitate to set boundaries for his father.

- He spoke truth about his father's errors (1 Sam 14:29).
- He acted independently of his father and did not tell his father everything that he did (1 Sam 14:1).
- He behaved contrary to his father's wishes when he knew that his father's intentions were sinful (1 Sam 20:13).
- He hoped that his father would improve (1 Sam 20:2).
- He tried to share the truth with his father (1 Sam 19:4-5; 20:30-33).
- Ultimately, his loyalty to David superseded his loyalty to his father: first, because David exemplified the godliness that Jonathan admired, and second, because he knew that David was the Lord's anointed (1 Sam 20:13-15).
- Jonathan refused to listen to his father's instructions to kill David to secure his own ascension to the throne (1 Sam 20:30-32).

Jonathan's independence from his father was righteous, but it did ruin the closeness that he had enjoyed with his father (compare 1 Sam 20:2 to 1 Sam 20:30-34). As Jonathan sought the Lord and Saul turned to darkness, they could no longer enjoy the close relationship that they once had together (2 Cor 6:14-16).

Unfortunately, like Jonathan, some children grow up hearing ungodly perspectives from their parents and seeing bad examples. Both 1 Peter 1:18 and Jeremiah 16:19 show that sometimes what children inherit is not truth and a righteous example, but lies and an unrighteous example. It is not wrong to turn away from this inheritance toward a new inheritance in Christ. If you have this kind of background, you will need to develop friendships with mature Christians, read good books, and, especially, read God's Word. Let the stories from godly families begin to replace the false and evil stories that you heard while you were growing up.

Example 2: Jesus. While it is wise to seek the counsel of your parents, sometimes God calls an adult to depart from the preferences of even godly parents. Does this surprise you? Jesus sets an example that even perfect behavior does not always please parents!

- Please read Luke 2:42-51; Mark 3:21, 31-35; John 19:26-27.

These passages show three different occasions when Jesus related to His mother, and also His growing independence from her as He matured. It is part of God's design that a maturing child make more and more decisions with the parent's desires being only one part of seeking God's will.

In the first passage, you saw that Jesus went to the Temple at Jerusalem at the age of twelve. It was at this time that He did something startling for one who was sinless (Lk 2:42-52). He knew that His parents expected Him to join the caravan for the 150-mile trip back to Nazareth, but He did not fulfill their wishes. He stayed behind at the temple and discussed the Scripture with the scholars. How could He do such an independent and inconvenient act to His parents yet be without sin? Why was He not a rebellious, disobedient son?

The detail of His age is given in Scripture because what occurred on this trip to the temple is important to our understanding of this act of independence. In Jewish culture, a boy who is leading up to this age enters a period of study and memorization of the Scripture and then celebrates the occasion of being recognized as a man with a bar mitzvah (“son of the commandments”) ceremony. During the ceremony, he reads or recites Scripture in front of the congregation and affirms publicly that he is now fully responsible for his own actions before God and according to God’s commandments. During the ceremony, the father accepts him as his son and heir but also releases him to his own culpability directly under the commandments of God.

At this time, Jesus passes from strict obedience to His parents to the less defined “honoring” His parents in the Law of Moses. Before the bar mitzvah, the parents, particularly the father, were seen as fully responsible for the boy’s sins and would bear the penalty for them. Therefore, before the age of twelve Jesus would have obeyed His parents in everything, because they were responsible for His actions. At the bar mitzvah ceremony, Joseph released his son into this direct relationship with God and the Law by saying, “Blessed is He who has now freed me from the responsibility of this one.”¹ Jesus was, therefore, no longer required to obey His parents. He was recognized as an adult male, responsible to obey God. Jesus apparently did not hesitate to immediately use His newfound freedom to act independently of His parents’ wishes. Yet at the end of this passage, He subjected himself to His parents and returned to their home (Lk 2:51).

In the second scene (Mk 3:21, 31-35), Jesus is around thirty years old, certainly a full adult. Mary and His brothers decide that He has become mentally unbalanced and set out to bring Him home. They go to where He is staying and call for Him to come outside so they can take Him away. Knowing their intentions, Jesus stays right where He is and refuses to even meet them. He no longer submits to His mother.

In the third scene, we see Jesus assuming His responsibility as the eldest child to provide care for His mother. Even though Jesus had younger brothers and sisters (Mk 6:3), He gave His disciple John charge of her care. It is unknown why He would not want Mary to live with her younger children. Perhaps living with John gave Mary a position of greater opportunity for ministry (see the note at the end of this article). Perhaps John was unmarried and they would comfort each other in Jesus’ absence.

How to Insist That Parents Respect Boundaries

So with Jesus as your example and Genesis 2:24 and Hebrews 13:4 as your guide, how can you determine what to do when parents overstep these boundaries? Sometimes it seems easiest to give in just as you did when you were a child. Usually this capitulation just makes things worse and sets a precedent that is difficult to break later. Being obedient to the Lord requires that you not allow parents to dishonor your marriage just to keep peace with them, any more than Jesus or Jonathan submitted to their parents.

If your parents are prone to overstepping the boundaries, it is essential to reinforce loyalty to your spouse kindly but firmly. When parents try to control you or invade your marriage privacy, tell them firmly but lovingly that you honor them, but that your primary relationship is now to God and to your marriage. If necessary, gently describe for them (repeatedly if necessary) what the appropriate boundaries are. If done early in the marriage, it will become easier over time as parents learn that you intend to remain firm. You have a responsibility under God to insist that they honor your marriage (Heb 13:4).

Meeting Parents’ Needs

Sometimes the “leaving” process is easier if you reassure your parents that you will not abandon them, especially when they have a need. But that does not always mean that your parent must be brought to live

¹Karen-Marie Yust, *Nurturing Child and Adolescent Spirituality*. (Oxford: The Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006.) p 381

under the same roof with you and your spouse. Some parents have aspects to their personality or habits of life that can be detrimental to your marriage if brought into your home. These might include:

- Continuing to claim first place in their child’s affections
- Criticizing, giving too much advice, or usurping either the husband or wife’s leadership in the home
- Harmful habits, such as smoking, drunkenness, using evil language
- Practices that attract demons into the home, such as idol worship, astrology, or pornography

When each of my parents needed us, we helped them in different ways because of their differing personalities. When my father became terminally ill, my mother was ill also and could not care for him, so he came to live with us for several weeks until his death. A year after he died, my mother moved in with us for a longer time. Their personalities were very different, so the living arrangements were different.

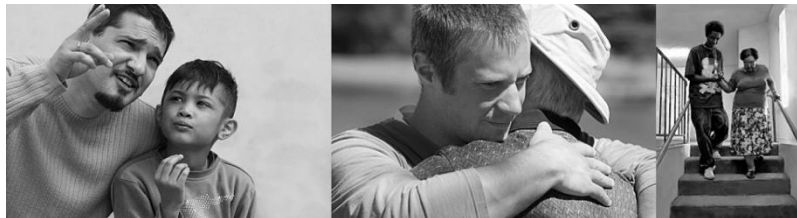
My father tended to be quiet and compliant and was often too sick to leave his bed. We enjoyed taking care of him each day. After his death, when my mother joined us, she was active and talkative. We knew that her strong personality and frequent need to interact with us could be disruptive. So we came up with a plan and presented it to her as an offer, which she accepted. We moved to a larger house where she could have her own rooms, including a sitting room and a small kitchen. Even though this was in the same house, we agreed to treat her rooms as her home and vice versa. She could not walk into our home and we could not walk into hers without permission, just as if we lived under two roofs. This proved to be a good balance between honoring and caring for her without sacrificing our marriage unity.

Other couples we know moved their parents or grandparents into rooms a short distance from their homes. In that way, they and the grandchildren visited and helped the elderly parents each day, which avoided conflict in their homes. If there must be a choice between caring for a parent or sacrificing the unity of marriage, Genesis 2:24 says that the marriage unity must be primary. Scripture calls us to honor, but never to cleave to our parents throughout life.

Note: Mary went on to become a primary character in the early church. She was one of those who publicly declared God’s works on the day of Pentecost along with Jesus’ brothers (Acts 1:14; 2:4, 17-18). She, no doubt, provided for Luke and Matthew the eyewitness accounts of the events prior to Jesus’ birth and early life. According to early church history, she moved to Ephesus with John and lived with him until the end of her life.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Honoring Mom and Dad Through the Seasons of Life



“Honor your father and your mother”—Exodus 20:12

As we saw in Genesis 2:24, each husband and wife is to leave father and mother in order to cleave to a spouse. If you are required to leave parents, at least emotionally, how can you still follow the fifth commandment (Ex 20:12)? At different stages in life, honoring your parents means different things.

Stage 1: Childhood

- Please read and compare Ephesians 6:1-4 with the commandment of Exodus 20:12.

Are these commandments addressed to different groups? Ephesians 6:1 tells immature children to obey parents. We know this verse is not referring to grown children because verse 4 says that fathers are still bringing them up. In Exodus 20, the Law instructs all people to honor their parents. What is the difference between *honoring* and *obeying*? We will see that obeying is only one way of bringing honor to parents and is clearly mandated only for children. If we had any doubt about this difference, we will see it clearly in the life of Christ, the perfect son. If you are married and have left father and mother as Genesis 2:24 describes, you are certainly no longer a child. Therefore, you are obligated to honor your parents but no longer obliged to obey them.

Two passages in the New Testament might be used to contradict the principle that only immature children must obey parents, but adults are free to act independently.

- Please read them in Romans 1:30 and 2 Timothy 3:1-5 (especially v 2).

Both of these passages list “disobedient to parents” as one characteristic of an evil, rebellious adult. So is this saying that Jesus was sinful by disobeying Mary when he was thirty years old in Mark 3:31-35? That cannot be, as Jesus was sinless! The Greek word used in both Romans and 2 Timothy for “disobedient” is *apeithes*. It means, more specifically, “unable to be persuaded.” In his prideful rebellion against God, this person won’t listen to anyone, even parents who try to dissuade him from the debauched lifestyle described in the rest of the list. It is the opposite from the person described in Proverbs 23:22, who continues to listen with respect to his parents’ aged wisdom and to bring honor to his parents by his noble life.

Stage 2: Adolescence

The parents of a small child are responsible for teaching righteous behavior. As the child matures, though, the parents begin instruction in the underlying reasons and principles for right behavior—to teach wisdom. Eventually, the parents hope that the growing child will develop a wise way of seeing life. These instructions in wise perspective are often told as stories, which illustrate scriptural principles. This is described for us in Deuteronomy 6:7, as the child walks alongside the parent through life.

These stories come from the parents’ longer lifetime of observations about the devastating fruit of small bad decisions or the blessings of small good decisions, which will guide a grown child through adulthood. We see this throughout the book of Proverbs. The parent is preparing the child to be a wise and righteous adult—able to make good decisions without the parent.

Our daughter Allison said that when she went away to live at Bible school, our stories helped guide her to good relationships. She said that situations would trigger the memory of a story we had told her and that this memory would help her to see the potential implications of certain situations and relationships. We were not there to tell her where to go, whom to talk to, and whom to avoid, but our teaching both verbally and by example guided her to good friendships, and, eventually, to bring home a wonderful man whom we approved to become her husband.

As these principles become part of the growing child’s personality, an adolescent brings honor to parents through distinguished behavior. I just hung up the telephone from talking to the administrator at an elementary school where our teenage daughter, Meredith, volunteers several times a week. As soon as I mentioned that I was “Meredith’s mother,” the administrator exclaimed what a nice girl she is. When our offspring go out into the larger community and behave in ways that others admire, it brings us honor as parents. In the Bible, when David killed Goliath in 1 Samuel 17:58, King Saul asked who David’s father was. David had honored his father Jesse’s reputation.

Stage 3: Adulthood

- Please read Proverbs 6:20-23.

As you grow up and move away from your parents' immediate home and influence, Proverbs, in this passage, advises you not to forget the wisdom that your parents taught you. Note, however, that it is not talking about obedience but about remembering principles of wisdom. It is the principles, not the parents, which you must "tie around your neck." When you remember what your parents taught you both in words and by their good example, you honor them.

What is the result of remembering a parent's wisdom throughout life?

- Please read Proverbs 23:24-25. When parents look at a "finished product" adult whom they have raised and see a righteous and wise individual, it brings great pleasure and satisfaction that their own labor was not in vain. Proverbs 22:6 suggests that this is the hope of every parent.

Stage 4: In a parent's old age

Several times in Scripture the Lord makes it clear that it is first the responsibility of adult children, not the church or the state, to care for aging parents (Mk 7:10-13; Jn 19:26-27; 1 Tim 5:4-8). This care is not only practical but also refers to the loneliness parents feel as they lose their mate, slow down physically, and can no longer be as active in the community. So an important way of honoring an aging parent is through providing emotional and financial support, especially through illness or loneliness. Proverbs 23:22 says that adult children should listen to both mother's and father's wisdom, even when they are old. You can learn much from your parents' vantage point as they near the conclusion of their earthly life.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Letting Go of Grown Children



"Let My people go, that they may serve Me"—Exodus 7:16 (NASB)

How can you communicate to your children the importance of their leaving without making them feel that you are rejecting them? Lovingly helping your child to leave you should be one of your major contributions to your child's marriage. If you have been gearing your parenting all along to prepare your offspring to be independent adults, this separation should not require a great deviation in course or any surprises for the child. There are many things you can do to help prepare your children for adulthood and marriage. The greatest of these things is to recognize the decreasing amount of control you should have in their lives as they mature. As we saw in learning about Jesus' bar mitzvah, at some point you must relinquish the right to control your children's choices.

Why would we want to control our adult children? Many times it is because we hope that they will fulfill the dreams that we, the parents, failed to achieve. If our hopes and dreams for them are primarily oriented toward fulfilling unrealized dreams of our own, this issue needs to be identified and eliminated early. How do we know when our dreams for our children are in accordance with God's plans for them or from our own desires? One way this idea is tested is when our children take a path we never expected.

Dr. Paul Brand

One of our dear friends and mentors, Dr. Paul Brand, was known worldwide as a missionary statesman, an author, and a surgeon. When Dr. Brand was a young man in England, though, he thought he would

rather be anything but a missionary doctor. His father had died on the mission field in India, and at that time his mother still ministered in India as a missionary. His family hoped that he would study medicine. Even though his uncle had bequeathed him funds, which would only be available to him if he studied medicine, young Paul refused the money. He wanted to be a builder, not a doctor. The uncle died without seeing his dream for Paul realized.

Paul's family did not force him to follow their dreams for him, but they prayed for God's will to be done in his life. Paul felt God leading him to become a master builder who would work in the mission field. In order to become a master builder, he apprenticed in each of the home-building crafts—electricity, masonry, carpentry, etc. As part of his training for missionary work, he worked in a hospital emergency room to learn basic first aid. One day, a woman was brought in who looked dead. The doctor administered blood, and Paul saw the woman's eyes flutter and open. He said later that it felt like watching Eve come to life. Suddenly Paul's plans all changed. He wanted to be a *doctor*! He went to school and became a surgeon.

His foray into learning all about building was not wasted. It was all part of God's special plan for him. Because of his training in all the crafts of building, he had a special insight into the mechanics of how the human body moves. Combined with his medical training, this insight caused him to understand how hands and feet move and how to restore movement when it is lost. He became a pioneer in the field of leprosy reconstruction at a hospital in Vellore, India. He wrote the "bible" of hand surgery, *Clinical Mechanics of the Hand*, and he restored movement to thousands of patients during his long career in India and the United States. He was given medals and other honors in the U.S., England, India, and throughout the world. But his mother only saw her dreams for her son to work in India fulfilled after he had pursued his own dreams. These two dreams coming together prepared him for what God had in mind for his excellent life.

Our Dreams versus God's Desires

Similar stories with less happy endings can be told about mothers who wanted their daughters to become ballet dancers because the mother had wanted to be one. Or fathers who wanted their sons to become doctors because the father had failed his entrance exams.

If you and your spouse have worked hard to build up a family business or a family farm, it may be a great disappointment when your children have no interest in inheriting it. Ultimately, godly parents will want what God wants for their child. How did Joseph and Mary feel when Jesus did not choose to keep the family carpentry business but rather chose to become an itinerant rabbi instead? They had to look beyond their own disappointment to God's greater plans for their child.

What if your Christian child tries to honor you by going in a direction that is not how God designed him/her? Children pick up the desires of their parents for them and may start trying to earn your love by living up to expectations that they are unsuited for. The Bible says that a parent must train a child in the way he should go (Prov 22:6), recognizing the unique design of every individual. A wise parent may encourage certain talents while the child is young, but when the child becomes an adult, a godly parent wants God to have His rightful place in directly guiding the adult offspring. So a wise parent offers wisdom, but leaves the final decisions to the adult child.

The Effect on Marriage

If you as a parent can see the good in only your own desires for your adolescent or adult child and belittle the child's own desires, many troubles may arise. Sooner or later the child will wake up to what he himself wants or what he senses God wants for his life, and it will cause a rift between you. Your child's spouse may even be the one who helps uncover the adult child's personal desires. The child may even choose a marriage partner of whom you do not approve. This choice strains both the unity of the new marriage and your relationship to your married children.

Shared Housing

As we said earlier, leaving does not always involve a big geographic change. Financially, the young couple may need to live under your own roof. But in God’s eyes, the couple is now a new family. How can you help reinforce the one-flesh unity of grown children who live with you?

When our daughter Allison was first married, I was about to start with cancer treatment, so she and her new husband volunteered to move into our home so that they could help care for me and the other members of the family. While this situation might have been very hard for many families—and it was not painless for us—it was overall a very blessed time, which we all remember fondly.

In order to emphasize their unity under God, we as parents had to make a conscious effort to treat Allison and Brinton as equal adults and as a separate family unit. We could not treat her any longer as a child under our authority. We had to refrain from exercising any control over her or her husband. Even though they shared only a single room together, we all treated that space as if it were their own home. They set their own hours each day and went out whenever they chose. Since Allison cooked meals for all of us, she also selected the groceries. Recognizing her new role as Brinton’s wife, she planned the menus primarily to please him and our tastes were a secondary consideration. She wore clothing and a hairstyle to please him, not us. Some evenings the newlyweds joined us in the main room for prayer and conversation. But many evenings they chose to retire to the privacy of their own room, reading, listening to music, and talking together.

Because we respected their privacy and their rights as adults to make all their own decisions, our relationship with them did not suffer from the close quarters. Despite the fact that they were living in our home, they bonded as husband and wife and laid a strong foundation for their life together since then. Yesterday, Brinton called from California just to tell us how much he loves our daughter and how happy they are together. What a blessing!

When a parent honors the young couple’s marriage and respects their right to make their own decisions and follow their own dreams, it encourages the kind of harmonious relationship the parent is actually seeking to have with them. The young couple learns they can enjoy their parents’ friendship without needing to defend the honor of their own relationship. It sets the stage for a happy relationship with grandchildren and for the time when the parent needs care in old age.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Questions About Leaving and Cleaving

As explained in the Student Workbook, these are the questions for you to use to start a discussion about the changing roles and relationships with members of your family, which include your spouse, your parents, and/or your older children.

For Married Students

Questions for my spouse:

- Do you have the assurance that you have the first place of love and affection in my life? Why or why not? What can I begin to do differently?
- Do you have the assurance that if there were a conflict between you and my parents, you would have my support? Why or why not? What can I begin to do differently?



- If one of my parents encouraged me to act in violation of your wishes for me, do you think I would respond to your desires, all other things being equal? (This is not to suggest that poor advice from a spouse should automatically take precedence over good advice from a parent.)

Questions for my parents

- Do you feel that I respect and honor you?
- Do you feel sure that I will never abandon you if you are in need?
- Do you concur that I must, according to the Bible, “leave father and mother and cleave to my spouse”?

Commitment to Leaving and Cleaving

Next, write out the following statement of commitment regarding “leaving.” Share this commitment with your parents and anyone else it affects.

1. I promise to follow God’s direction as my final authority in making my life choices. However, as part of the process of seeking His will, whenever possible, I intend to honor my parents by listening to their wisdom.
2. I promise by God’s grace to give my spouse the first place of love and affection in my life.
3. If there is a conflict between my spouse and my parents, my spouse will receive my primary support.

For Students With Adult Children

Questions for my children

- Do you feel that we, as your parents, are committed to the success of your marriage (perhaps in the future)?
- Do you believe that we are taking the proper role of giving you wise counsel and encouragement without insisting on our own way in your life as an adult under God’s leadership? If not, what can we begin to do differently?
- Do you feel that you have “left” us appropriately? How can we help you accomplish this?

Commitment to Leaving and Cleaving

Next, write out the following statement of commitment regarding “leaving.” Share this commitment with your children and their spouses or others it involves.

1. I (We) promise to support you in following God’s direction as your final authority for making life choices. However, as part of the process of seeking His will, whenever possible, I (we) will be available to offer wisdom and encouragement.
2. I (We) promise by God’s grace to encourage you to give your spouse the first place of love and affection in your life.
3. If there is a conflict between your spouse and us, we understand that you will need to support your spouse. In giving advice that conflicts with your spouse’s wishes, even when we believe that we are right, we will support you when you choose to follow your spouse’s wishes.
4. We promise never to force you to follow our preferences for your life choices by using force or emotional blackmail (threatening to disinherit you, not speaking to you, not including you in family gatherings, etc.).

For Single Students

Questions for my parents

- What stage of life do you feel I am at?
 - On schedule for becoming an adult,
 - Have achieved adulthood, or
 - Lagging behind in taking adult responsibilities? (If appropriate, discuss two specific, practical ways in which your parents can help you become more independent, capable, and responsible.)
- Do you feel that I respect and honor you?
- Do you feel sure that I will never abandon you if you are in need?

Commitment to Leaving and Cleaving

Next, write out the following statement of commitment regarding “leaving.” This will help prepare you for the proper attitudes before you marry. Share this commitment with your parents and anyone else it affects.

1. I promise to follow God’s direction as my final authority in making my life choices. However, as part of the process of seeking His will, whenever possible, I intend to honor my parents by listening to their wisdom.
2. I promise by God’s grace to give my future spouse the first place of love and affection in my life.
3. If there is a conflict between my spouse and my parents, my spouse will receive my primary support.
4. If one of my parents encourages me to act in violation of my spouse’s wishes for me, I will respond to my spouse’s wishes, all other things being equal. (This is not to suggest that poor advice from a spouse should automatically take precedence over good advice from a parent.)

The results of this project are confidential. You should be prepared to share some of this project at your next seminar. This discussion will be profitable to the group as a whole.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Adam’s Side



In the Garden of Eden, God sets up a well-designed habitat for humankind to live. There are rivers, trees for beauty and fruit, even an irrigation system that operates automatically (Gen 2:6). It sounds a bit like an elegant zoo. God places the man in the garden so that he will work in it and watch over it. Then He decides there is a certain incompleteness about having just one solitary human. In fact, after saying seven times how everything that He has created is good (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18-21, 25, 31), this is the first time that God has said that anything is “not good” (Gen 2:18). Instead of just whipping up a duplicate man from some mud to be a buddy for Adam, God prepares the man for something new, which He had in mind from the beginning (Gen 1:27).

Preparing Adam

First, God gives Adam a new job. His old job, as you recall, was to keep the garden that God Himself had planted. Adam's new job is to become a taxonomist—to give each animal an appropriate name—a species name. God brings all different types of animals to Adam and invites him to observe and analyze their characteristics. Did God point out to Adam their interesting features to help him devise an appropriate name? Were the names related to the sounds they made? How they looked?

In Genesis 9:2-3, we learn that the animals were not afraid of each other or of Adam. So we can imagine Adam's delight at taking a ride on a lion, swimming with a dolphin, or napping snuggled up to a snow leopard. Despite pleasures relating to nature that we can only imagine in our dreams, Adam realizes that he is not satisfied. Every male animal had a female at his side, but the Bible says that there was none found that correlated to Adam. None satisfied the ache in his heart.

Have you experienced this ache for yourself? God created it in each one of us. For men, the ache tends to be first physical and second emotional. For women, it is often the emotional needs that she feels the most keenly. For both man and woman, though, the desire for an intimate partner is profound.

God's Answer for Adam's Need

In most—but not all—cases, God creates not only the need for a spouse but eventually supplies the answer. In Adam's case, as perhaps in yours, the answer solved one problem but also caused some new problems. In Genesis 2:21, the Bible describes modern surgery, right down to putting the patient to sleep and closing up the incision afterward—something man could not do successfully until the 1800s. Man still cannot quite do what God did with Adam's cells (although scientists are getting close). God takes “from Adam's side” (the Hebrew language doesn't specify what part from his side). Using Adam's own tissue, God replicates the DNA, shifts the X chromosomes, and builds a new similar-but-different human being. This new human was to be an *ezer kenegdo* to Adam. The term *ezer kenegdo* is translated “companion” and is highly significant. We will study this term more in Lesson 6, “Women and How to Love Them.”

The Significance of Adam's Side

Why did God use a piece of Adam's side? God could have chosen any nonessential body part from Adam in order to create the woman—an appendix perhaps? A foot? A piece of the scalp? Why did He not go back to the ground and create her from the basic elements of the earth, as He had created Adam? Does this tell you anything about their relationship?

Perhaps if she were taken from his feet, it would suggest that she was to be servile, like his dog. If she were taken from his liver, she would be intimate but invisible. If she were taken from his appendix, she would not be very necessary. Taken from his side, though, suggests a close partnership. He would not have missed his appendix, but if it was a rib (as tradition states), Adam probably noticed that missing piece.

My mother-in-law had to have lung surgery. Her ribs at the side were cut open and then wired shut to heal. While they eventually mended, they never stopped feeling sore. I imagine Adam's experience was a bit the same. Eve's creation was a bittersweet experience, but when he thought of his loneliness and what she had brought into his life, he knew she was worth the price.

The most significant thing about the wound in Adam's side was that this is the first picture in Scripture of the creation of the Church, the bride of Christ. After Jesus died on the cross, the soldiers pierced His side. This wound in His side pointed back to the moment in time when God created a wife for Adam. Paul points out that Adam was a type of Jesus (Rom 5:14), calling Him the “last Adam” in 1 Corinthians 15:45. Adam's sleep and awakening foreshadowed Christ's death and resurrection. This is why Christ's side was not wounded until after He was “asleep” (Jn 19:33-34).

The First Father of the Bride

Now back to our story in Genesis. God, the archetype Father of the bride, brings His beautiful daughter to the man. Did He hold His breath in excitement as Adam's eyes first glimpsed his counterpart? Can you see God taking Eve's hand and placing it in Adam's? Can you imagine the deep feelings which God, Eve's loving Father, must have had as He entrusted one precious soul to the other?

When our daughter Allison was married last year, Tom became acutely aware of the trepidation and intense protective love a father feels at such times. He described it as feeling somewhat like a maestro gifting his Stradivarius violin to a gorilla! Fortunately, in our case, he did have utmost trust in our son-in-law's love for our daughter. We knew Brinton's character to be faithful to his vows to honor and cherish her always. We also prayed that Allison would be a blessing and would love Brinton the way that he needed to be loved. Just as Tom and I had these hopes for our daughter and new son-in-law at the time of their wedding, God wanted Adam and Eve to treasure and care for one another tenderly. Now as we see our daughter and son-in-law love each other well, it gives us great joy. (Unfortunately God did not have such a good experience with Adam and Eve!)

Adam's Response

How do we know that Adam was happy with his new companion? Adam's exclamation upon his first sight of Eve is not fully translatable from the Hebrew, at least in English, but scholars say that a loose translation might be "WOW!" He catches on to the unity and family relationship that Eve will have with him and exclaims, "Bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh!" (Gen 2:23). Throughout Scripture, this phrase *flesh and bone* is used for those related by blood in a family (Gen 29:14; 2 Sam 5:1).

Notice Adam's poetic exaltation about the woman in Genesis 2:23. It ends with the phrase "she was taken out of man," and goes on to say that "for *this reason* a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh" (NIV, emphasis added). This *reason* refers to the fact that she was taken out of the man's side. It is suggesting that since the woman proceeded from the man, there will be a restlessness in them both until that intimate unity can be restored in marriage.

Becoming One Flesh

The relationship of sexual union described in Genesis 2:23 is the culmination of God's answer to Adam's aloneness. By God's marvelous design, Adam and Eve discover that their bodies are designed to fit together as one. Imagine their delighted exploration of the sexual equipment God has given them, especially the discovery of sexual orgasm! You can imagine that there was more than a little bit of surprised rejoicing in God's generous goodness upon that discovery.

How do you think that God felt about the ecstatic experience, which He had created for them in sex? God did not need to create sex to be so enjoyable in order to propagate the species. I once read an article in a secular science magazine that scientists can find no "evolutionary" reason for sexual orgasm in women. It is purely an extravagant gift from God for the joy of His children. In Song of Solomon 5:1, we see Him urging the couple to "drink deeply" of sexual enjoyment. One can imagine Him smiling at Adam and Eve and every pair of virgin newlyweds since. He was probably like a parent who buys a gift well beyond his beloved child's wildest expectations, hides it, and chuckles with joy at the amazed expression on the child's face when he/she discovers it.

In Genesis 2:24, God now calls the two who are united physically in the marriage "one flesh." This unity through sexual intercourse was designed to be not only the most pleasurable but also the most loneliness-dispelling thing that a couple can do. Because it is so emotionally intimate, God reserves it *only* for the safe haven of marriage.

Procreation

Notice that the sexual relationship as first described has only to do with aloneness vs. unity. Nothing is said here about producing children. This idea is borne out in our own experience. Man's psychological desire for sexual union is generally much greater than his desire to produce children. This image also pictures for us God's strong desire for intimate fellowship with us through eternity as His bride (Jn 10:27; 1 Thess 4:17).

We often see, though, that He does not satisfy this desire, but directs its energies in other ways. In fact, everyone will spend part of life unmarried. As with the apostle Paul, you may offer up that strong desire for marriage in holy sacrifice to God's service (see Jesus' comments on this in Mt 19:12). We will study much more about singleness, divorce, and loss of a spouse in Lesson 10.

Articles for Lesson 2: Understanding the Effects of the Fall on Marriage

An Overview of the Problem

As you saw in Lesson 1, God created the entire natural world as an overflow of joy in His own character and His fellowship in the Trinity. He created humans in His own image and placed them in a magnificent home. He gave them the regal role of displaying His character in the way that they reign over nature and in their relationships with each other. He created an infinitely rich complexity of things and personalities for them to discover, understand, and enjoy together forever (Eccl 3:11; 5:20). He created a unique, intimate relationship, called marriage, with the corporate task of raising children to rule the earth well and to utilize all of the man's and woman's abilities to the fullest. They would never be bored or lonely. It was a perfectly designed system.

As each man and wife discovered and enjoyed these inexhaustible pleasures and accomplished the work that God gave them to do, they were to grow in joy through an ever-expanding realization of His beauty through all that He made to reveal His wonderful nature. Their response would be delighted worship, just as the angels in heaven now respond to God's glory revealed there.

If all creation still declares His glory today (Isa 6:3), why do most people not see it or respond by worshipping the true God? Why do disease and birth defects distort the correct function of bodies and minds? Why does man's rule of the earth and its creatures not line up with God's character of love or justice? We know that humans were originally created in God's image, yet one has only to read the newspaper or look in the mirror to see humans acting more like the offspring of someone other than a good and holy God.

For the unbeliever, observations about the world lead them to believe that either

1. God is not in control,
2. God is not good, or
3. Evil is equal to good, and they will always struggle against one another.

Fortunately, nothing could be farther from the truth!

What Went Wrong With Marriage?

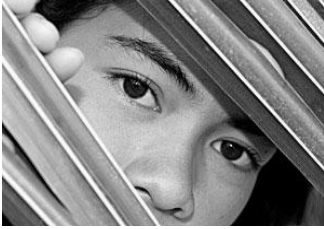
While the original creation displayed a world in submission to God with man and woman in harmony with each other, the fallen world accurately depicts new realities just as truthful. The creation is (1) estranged from the Creator and (2) at odds with itself, so God has allowed the world after the Fall to accurately reflect these truths. You see this especially in man and woman's closest relationship—marriage. Fallen man uses a woman to try to meet his sexual, domestic, and respect needs. Fallen woman uses a man to try to meet her own needs for affection and security. Neither operates for long motivated by true love for the other.

When your relationship with your spouse is based only on mutual usefulness, you will experience an ongoing struggle to get your husband or wife to meet your needs—through “top dog” dominance or “underdog” manipulation. If your spouse repeatedly fails to or is physically unable to be useful for meeting your needs, you may be quick to withdraw from your spouse (at least emotionally), or even to look for another one who will meet your needs. In a fallen world, selfishness and independence often preempt loving service, unity, self-sacrifice, and dependence on God. But you do not have to settle for the status quo. Your marriage can be different.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Eve's Encounter

The glistening Eden sun warms



Eve's hair and skin as she pulls fresh fruit from the branches in the orchard on the highlands. Her husband Adam leans against a nearby tree trunk, surveying the animals that graze in the valley below. He bites into a golden mango, and with the back of his forearm he wipes away the juice that dribbles off his chin. As rulers of the earth, both Adam and Eve care deeply about the animals under their rule, just as the Lord Creator who gave them this royal position cares for them. The Creator designed them to be perfectly-fitting puzzle pieces of the Creation so that all created

things would have what they needed to sustain life perfectly.

Adam and Eve often stand together in this place, absorbed in the pleasure of the beautiful scene, discussing the day's observations about each species. Today, the gazelles graze among the fruit trees around them, while monkeys chatter and play in the trees. The elephant Adam and Eve have named Maki waits within calling distance to carry them wherever they have a mind to go. Maybe, Eve thinks with a little smile, Adam will nudge Maki to run, and then Eve will need to cling tightly to him to stay on the elephant's back.

The upper meadow, their current favorite place for sleep, hosts a bubbling hot spring near the base of a majestic waterfall. Last night, in a warm pool, Eve had counted Adam's ribs with her fingers and teased him about the indentation on his side. As her fingers explored his body, their passion rose, and they joined together in delight. Later, on the mossy bank, they fell asleep in each other's arms. She smiles at the memory.

The smile fades as a question enters her mind. This morning, the Lord awakened Adam, and the two walked together in the cool while she slept. Adam hasn't told her yet what the Lord said. "Adam, what are you thinking?" Eve whispers to herself. He clambers gracefully up into the tree, toward the sweetest sun-reddened mangos at the top, and the virility of his rippling muscles makes her mouth go dry and her heart thud. "I always tell you everything. Why can't I share everything you are thinking, too?" Sometimes Adam seems so different. Eve sighs and turns back to her fruit.

Persimmons, dates, oranges, and... She examines the contents of her basket, imagining the meal they will share that evening. What could balance the flavors? Almonds! She smiles and strides quickly toward the nut grove on the next plateau. She wonders how long it will take Adam to notice that she has gone. Will he ride Maki to pursue her and scoop her up, threatening never to let her out of his sight again? She chuckles to herself and starts running up into the shady grove. The rushing Eden River seems to drown out her thoughts and gives her a sense of quiet isolation. She begins searching the branches of the almond tree for ripe fruit, picking and husking the plumpest ones and adding them to her basket. Later, she will crack the ripe nuts between two large stones.

She pauses for a moment at the end of the row of nut trees, her eyes on two trees that stand apart, side by side like marriage partners, in a center clearing. Though these trees are ordinary in appearance, Eve knows that they are unique in this world. One of her earliest memories is of the Lord Himself kneeling over her husband's bleeding side and applying a leaf from the Tree of Life. He had motioned her to take notice of the procedure and the tree from which the leaf had come. So later, when Adam cut his foot on a sharp rock, Eve had remembered and hurried here to snatch off a leaf from the tree to treat the gash. The wound had stopped bleeding and soon disappeared as if it had never existed. When a giraffe had broken its leg, a leaf poultice had mended the bone, and the great beast clambered to its feet and ran off as if nothing had happened. Now she always carries a few of the leaves in a pouch around her neck. When any creature is hurt, Mother Eve is prepared.

But she scowls as she considers the other tree, almost a duplicate of the first. The first tree's leaves bring healing, but God has told them that the second tree brings death. She has never seen death, but from

Adam's sober description, it sounds almost too strange to be true. Falling to the ground, breath going out but not coming in again? The body dissolving into dust? She shudders slightly. How could this shining red fruit, so much like the other, safe fruits in the garden, bring such a terrible thing?

Suddenly, she becomes aware of a voice murmuring softly just behind her left shoulder. "Is it really true?" Deep and lustrous as panther fur, the voice sinks into her heart and she draws in a short breath. She turns around slowly and her eyes widen.

A masculine creature a foot taller than herself stands on two legs before her, his muscular shoulders squared. Enormous white wings spread out majestically on each side of his body, and multi-colored jewels stud his skin and sparkle in the sunlight. He bows, sweeping one powerful wing in front of his face and away again with a flourish that takes her breath away.

The beast meets her gaze boldly, his charming smile and twinkling, intelligent blue eyes utterly different from the docile expressions of all the other animals. Eve gulps. Only the Lord Himself and the angels accompanying Him have ever inspired this sense of awe. This creature must be like the angels, yet there is something very different in his manner.

He motions toward the tree and repeats his question. "Is it really true? Did God say, 'You must not eat from any tree of the orchard?'" The beast arches one graceful eyebrow.

Eve's face registers confusion and she glances over her shoulder, but Adam and Maki are nowhere to be seen. She has never encountered a talking beast before, much less any creature this beautiful or intelligent. She turns back to him and sets her jaw. Several of the creatures had awed her at first meeting—the lion and the elephant, for instance—but though they were powerful, they had proven to be submissive and harmless. It would be foolish to be intimidated now just because Adam is not at her side. She can handle this herself. Is she not the Queen of all creatures?

She raises her chin and her voice. "We may eat of the fruit from the trees of the orchard; but concerning the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the orchard, God said, 'You must not eat from it, and you must not touch it, or else you will die.'"

The creature breaks into a soft chuckle that makes the hairs on her neck prickle uncomfortably. "Surely you will not die." He smiles indulgently. "For God knows that when you eat from it, your eyes will open and you will be like divine beings who know good and evil."

Eve gulps. Divine beings? If this is true, why wouldn't God want their eyes to be opened so they could be like Him? Confusion registers on Eve's face as she considers. Her eyes widen as full realization dawns. *God wants to keep me inferior, not only to Himself, but to Adam!* A slight frown crosses her features. *He told us we were rulers. But we are pets, kept for His own enjoyment just like we keep Maki!* Suddenly, she feels indignant. Their very existence, completely dependent upon God, only designed for His pleasure, is a truly dreary one.

But what if...what if we seize the same right to decide about what is good and what is evil as Creator has? As this divine creature obviously does? Look how regal it makes him! What if I affirm that my purposes are just as good as God's purposes? Certainly I should have the right to judge for myself what is good and evil! If I do that, I will no longer be inferior. I will be free and independent—just like the Most High!

Watching Eve's widening eyes, Satan smiles in crafty delight. She sees! Just as he himself saw ages ago. She sees, just as the angels saw, once Lucifer had exposed the Creator's selfishness to them and urged them to rise up!

With this seeing and this doubt, Eve has loosed herself from God's protection, and now Satan can have his way with her. He can whisper into her mind whenever he wishes, and she will willingly believe that whatever he chooses to convey comes from within herself—her "true self." Oh, the lies his forces will whisper to every one of her offspring to ruin every relationship—with God, with others, even with

themselves! “I am worthless. I can’t trust anyone. I’ve got to look out for myself or no one else will. I need pleasure. God only wants to spoil my fun. Only what I decide really exists.” The possibilities are endless, and this “special creation” in God’s image will be completely ignorant of his schemes! In pursuing freedom, they have enslaved themselves to him forever.

Of course, subverting humankind is not Satan’s ultimate aim. Using humans, he will torment God forever. Satan can hold these “special creations” hostage to sin, reprogramming them with lies about the world and about each other so that they will hate, use, torture, and kill one another. They will use their position as rulers of the earth to abuse the animals and the planet’s resources.

God’s image? Ha! Satan will remodel every one of them in his own image, an image that will make them odious to God and lonely to the core of their beings. But he can answer that, too! He will offer cures for loneliness that will ultimately only deepen the pain—alcohol, sexual perversions, drugs, pleasure, lust, workaholism. The innate design of these humans is to worship the Creator, so let them worship! Satan can offer them substitute systems to keep them from searching for their God—they may worship animals, plants, demons, stars, objects, and even other humans in every perverse way. God’s stomach will turn, and His wrath will burn against those that He has created. If, somehow, He continues to love them, it will break His heart. Either way, Lucifer will win!

So what if God has created hell for Satan and the angels who follow him? Now, if the Almighty tries to cast them into hell for rebellion, He will have to condemn every human with them. Even God cannot satisfy His own nature to love and to be just; in these humans, Satan would prove it.

Eve hesitates only a moment longer as the doubt takes hold of her mind. Nearly hypnotized by the glowing red fruit, she steps forward, hand outstretched. Her fingers caress the smooth skin. A gentle tug, and it lies in the palm of her hand.

Surely there is no harm in this! But still... Once more she glances around the clearing. The beautiful beast is still here—but behind him, Adam has arrived on Maki. Her husband’s hand is raised, his eyes darkened in alarm, but he says nothing. He jumps to the ground and sprints toward her.

Eve raises the fruit to her nose, and the delicious aroma fills her nostrils, a foretaste of delight. Her senses only reaffirm what her mind already knows. They have been fools *not* to eat. She will be a fool no more. God will never be able to trick them or insult their intelligence again.

Her eyes meet Adam’s calmly as she opens her mouth and sinks her teeth into the soft flesh. He stops in front of her with shock and horror. A smile lights up her face and she giggles, slurping the juice hungrily and wiping it from her chin. The fruit is delicious! Unlike any other in the garden, but it is good for food, just as she thought. She has found a new food all by herself. Her own judgment was right. She is powerful, acting independently from her husband and from the Creator of the universe. In fact, this divine beast was right: it is independence that makes her feel like a god!

Eve sees the confusion in Adam’s face, and grins at him. She barely sees Lucifer nod with pleasure as she picks another fruit and offers it to her husband. As Adam takes it in his hand, his eyes alternate between the fruit and Eve’s face. Her eyes sparkle with delight as she continues to munch.

Lucifer nods his bejeweled head encouragingly, and watches with anticipation as Adam raises the fruit to his mouth. With Adam’s first juicy bite, Lucifer’s heart leaps, and he nearly faints with ecstasy. He has won! His victory is complete! The humans, and with them, the dethroning of the Creator, are ripe fruit in his hands. While they bumble around, tangled, trapped and dying from their lies and schemes, he will rule the earth through them.

A person who jumps from a tall building, believing he can fly, may indeed have the exhilarating feeling of free-falling unencumbered. Eve experiences this exhilaration as she makes her own decision to rebel against God and her husband. But that freedom is only an illusion—a matter of time. At this moment, the delicious nectar of knowledge dribbling down her fingers as she fills her stomach with forbidden fruit, she

doesn't notice the ground looming up below her at an alarming rate. God, who lives outside the limits of time, sees her loss of His glory and her rotting corpse immediately. In that mere second of time, Eve and Adam have become dust once again, and all of their offspring now carry the DNA of rebellion.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Satan's Limits

In some false systems of thought, God and Satan, good and evil, are seen as equal and opposite forces. This system was obviously created by Satan to inflate his own reputation! Even though Satan's power is greater than ours alone, we must never believe that his power is even a fraction of the infinite power of Almighty God.

God created everything that is not Himself (Jn 1:3). Satan is only a cherub (Ezk 28:14, 16), infinitely beneath God in every way. He was created by God (Ezk 28:15), and he will be destroyed by God. When God decides to destroy Satan, there will be NO contest, even for an instant (Rev 20:10).

There has never been a direct war between Satan and God. For instance, God did not make war in heaven to throw Satan out of heaven. It was the other angels that thrust him out (Rev 12:7).

Satan does not have the same abilities as God—he is not omniscient, omnipresent, or omnipotent. He must work through other wicked spirits and their influence on man to achieve his will (Eph 6:12; 1 Tim 4:1).

God created Satan and will certainly bring an end to his influence. He only allows Satan to have freedom temporarily for His ultimately good purposes. Among those purposes is testing believers to prove their faithfulness and proving that a weak human being, when submitted to God, is superior to a more powerful creature.

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Better Off Single

Juan added up the bills for the month and shook his head. There just was not enough money to pay them all. What was he to do? He examined them more closely and his face turned hot. He realized that the reason there was not enough to pay the bills was because his wife, Flora, had purchased an expensive gift for her sister's birthday. Juan scowled and his annoyance with Flora grew. He thought with disgust, "Women let money slide through their fingers as if it was water. I'd be better off single."



Where did Juan's thoughts come from? Were they the truth from God's point of view? Is it possible he is being tempted to believe a lie to move him to sin? Perhaps some of Juan's thoughts are old lies he has heard before. Just as with the serpent's temptation of Eve, our temptations most often come disguised as lies, half-truths, and misapplied truth, which appeal to our lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, or pride (1 Jn 2:16). These little unkind thoughts toward your spouse may seem small and harmless enough, but, like a spark, they can burn your house down.

No matter whether the lies come from old "recordings" that you remember or are new temptations, lies hurt you only if you believe them. If you reject them, you neutralize their effect. How does that work?

In the scene above about Juan and Flora's many bills, look again at Juan's thought, "I'd be better off single." How does this compare to God's Word of truth? We know that God loves Flora and wants to express His love to her through Juan. Colossians 3:19 says, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be embittered against them." Since Juan is being tempted to become bitter against Flora, we recognize that this thought is not from God.

So God, on one side, wants to bless and strengthen Juan and Flora's marriage. He has told Juan his role in this plan in Colossians 3:19 and other places in Scripture.

The enemy, on the other hand, hates Flora and Juan and wants to destroy their marriage. He is hoping that Juan will believe the first lying thought, "I'd be better off single," so that it will be natural for Juan to disobey God's clear command in Colossians 3:19. Perhaps through a story on television he can convince Juan of another lie that love is something that "just happens" and is totally outside his control. Then Satan can get him to stop loving Flora. After that, maybe he can get Juan to share his problem with his brother, who says, "You have every right to be angry. Does she think you are made out of money?" This makes Juan feel justified in his bitterness against Flora. Meanwhile, the enemy is also working behind the scenes in Flora's mind to make her bitter against her husband's criticism.

So all Juan needs to do to block the enemy's progress is to recite Colossians 3:19, right?

Not necessarily.

When he focuses on Flora's mistakes, Juan may feel very justified in being annoyed. The enemy thus distracts Juan from applying what he already knows of God's truth to love his wife as Christ loved the church. The more Juan judges Flora for her gift to her sister, the more he is filled with turmoil. If he reacts to the lies he hears with self-righteousness rather than humility, he may momentarily not care if the voice in his head does not really sound like the Holy Spirit!

If Juan is choosing to think independently from God, as Eve did, it will not matter if he has memorized Colossians 3:19, will it? If in his heart Juan reserves the right to decide for himself about his own role in his marriage and his attitude toward his wife, he may not be gracious to Flora in his thoughts.

Christians sin every day while knowing that God's Word says what they are thinking or doing is wrong. Eve knew that God forbade them from eating the fruit, but she ate and shared it anyway. So just knowing God's Word is not enough. In order to deflect the enemy's attacks, one step comes even before knowing God's Word. Without this crucial first step, you can memorize all the verses in the Bible and still fall to temptation. Can you guess what this first step is? You will find it in James 4:7, which you will look at soon to devise a defense plan.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Lies, Feelings, and Vows

Lies

As you saw, a lie is a statement that is in conflict with what the Bible says. What lies affect marriage? Please read the list below. Do you recognize any of these statements or assumptions in your own secret thoughts? Read the list again, slowly, and write in your Life Notebook any that you often think. This is not an exhaustive list, so add any others that you struggle with. While you are thinking about it, note any lies that you have observed in your parents or others that would be good to discuss in your seminar.

Common Lies That Affect Marriage

Men/women can never be trusted.

God hates me.

God is "out to get" me.

No one will ever love me the way I need to be loved.
I can never say, "I love you."
God did not design me to be satisfied with only one sexual partner.
I must always be perfect.
No one understands me.
It's all hopeless!
Talking about a problem never changes anything.
If I keep my distance, no one will get hurt.
I cannot change.
My spouse will never change.
Other people get what they want, but I never do.
God does not care.
Emotions are not valid, logical, or safe.
I am just a doormat.
Men must never show their emotions.
I have to take care of everyone else, so I cannot take care of myself.
I am just a bad person.
It's the way it's always been and always will be.
There is nothing I can do to make this relationship better.
My spouse always ...
My spouse never ...
Love hurts, so it is better not to love.
If I give in, people will always take advantage of me.
If I want anything done right, I have to do it myself.
I cannot love anyone.
No one understands me or cares what I think.
Some sins are just worth it.
No one cares if I live or die.
If I can control everything around me, I will be safe.
When I stop taking care of things, someone gets hurt.

The lies that we secretly believe deep inside may not be something that we admit easily, even to ourselves. You may know that you should not believe them, but that does not in itself remove them. You will see in a few minutes how to begin uprooting them.

Lying Feelings

Lying feelings are inarticulate emotions that are not appropriate for the situation when they occur. They may have come from an experience that happened to you as a child, perhaps one that you no longer consciously remember. It is similar to a lie, but the words and concepts are missing. Here are some examples of a lying feeling.

Common Lying Feelings That Affect Marriage

Whenever my wife (or husband) looks at me with desire, I feel ashamed.
When I am with any man (or woman), I feel afraid.
When I do something to hurt my spouse, I feel happy.
When my spouse lies on top of me, even gently, I feel like I will be smothered.

Whenever my spouse touches me, I feel dirty.

In this kind of lie, your spouse has not done anything wrong. Nevertheless, you have unexplained negative emotions, especially in certain situations.

For example, Ruth's husband was confused because before they were married she seemed eager to show him affection. He thought she would be a happy and enjoyable sexual partner after they were married. But when she first saw his naked body, she curled up into a fetal position, crying. Something evil had happened to Ruth as a child that suddenly caused her to feel afraid when she saw a similar sight.

Sometimes a lying feeling is an emotion you are afraid to direct honestly. You choose not to direct anger or hurt at the person responsible for your pain, so you lie to yourself about the truth of what happened and direct the emotion elsewhere, perhaps at yourself. For example:

- When her husband beats her, a wife feels ashamed and angry with herself for causing his cruelty because she is afraid to be angry with her husband.
- A man feels angry at his boss's unfair criticism, so later he kicks his dog or gets angry with his wife.
- A child feels powerless to stop his parents from divorcing, but he cannot hate the parents whom he needs, so he cuts himself or takes illegal drugs.

If you have strong feelings in certain situations that you think may be lying feelings, make a note of them now so that you can remember to talk to God and with a trusted friend or counselor about where they came from.

Vows

When people are faced with a dangerous or harmful situation, especially one where they feel powerless, one of the ways they "fight back" is to make a vow. A vow is a promise to yourself about the following:

- What you *will* do,
- What you will *never* do, and
- What you will never *let* happen again.

Vows are a fleshly way of trying to be in control when life seems out of control. Unless they are consciously removed, these vows continue to influence you for the rest of your life. They contribute powerfully to the schemes and strongholds that the enemy works against your marriage.

"I'll never be hungry again!" If you are familiar with the fiction book or movie *Gone with the Wind*, you may recognize this famous vow. During the American Civil War (1863–1869), a haughty and formerly spoiled woman named Scarlett is starving. She finds an old garden and digs in the ground with her hands to try to find a root vegetable to eat. She finds a dirty carrot and gnaws on it, then falls to the ground as it makes her stomach cramp. She is horrified at her humble circumstance and makes an evil vow.

"If I have to lie, steal, cheat, or kill. As God is my witness, I'll never be hungry again!" This vow drives the rest of her life, destroying many people, including herself and two husbands.

Most people will not stand outside and shake a fist at heaven like Scarlett. Nevertheless, vows propel you toward harm in your marriage. One young husband realized that when his mother had divorced his father, he had felt powerless to stop it. In his hurt, he had secretly vowed, "I will never marry a girl like my mother!" Now, as a new husband, when his wife does anything that reminds him of his mother (and it is impossible for her not to resemble his mother in some ways), he becomes suddenly angry and feels alienated from her. He is confused by his own reaction to innocuous situations, and she is hurt by his emotional withdrawal. He had forgiven his mother long ago, but had forgotten about making this vow until he saw it on the list of common vows below when the Lord helped him to remember it.

Examples of some vows that affect marriage:

I will never allow myself to be intimate with anyone again.
 I will not let anyone laugh at me ever again.
 Whenever anyone touches me sexually, I will hide away inside myself.
 I will never marry someone like my mother/father.
 I will prove to them all that I am not stupid (replace with any characteristic).
 Even God cannot make me love anyone.
 I will never love that much again.
 I will never be like my mother/father.
 I will never be someone's slave!
 I am finished with trying.
 From now on, I will look out for myself.
 I have to do whatever it takes to keep the peace.
 If she does not like it, she can just leave, for I will never change.
 Add any of your own vows to this list.

Considering the Sources

Where do these lies, feelings, and vows about relationships come from?

1. The first source is often Mom's or Dad's **words**. A parent's false words are very deep-seated lies because you swallowed them whole with total trust—the same trust with which you accepted information about your name and the fact that the earth is round.

Example: George's father often told him the story of his own betrayal by his first wife, adding, "You can never trust women." George made a secret vow: "I'll never trust a woman." George married but could never stop being suspicious of his wife—always wanting to know where she was going and secretly wondering if she were being unfaithful to him. When he did not know where his wife was, he felt fearful and angry.

2. A second time when you accept lies and make vows is during a toxic interaction that you **observed** either in real life or even on television or in a movie.

Example: Sarah often watched her parents argue until her father began to hit her mother. She realized that if her mother tried to defend herself by talking about whatever had made him angry, he would hit her across the mouth. Sarah believed the lie "talking causes abuse." She vowed, "I will be silent so that I will never be hurt." So whenever a friendship became close, she suddenly went numb and became silent. She had nearly become engaged twice, but when they became very close in sharing thoughts and feelings, she suddenly withdrew and became silent. Eventually, the man broke off the relationship.

3. A third way that we adopt lies or make vows is from painful **experiences** from which we extrapolated a general principle—one that is either not true in our current relationship or not true at all.

Example: Gino's mother often told him, "Girls are so much tidier than boys. I wish you'd been born a girl." She never touched or spoke to him lovingly, but she did wash his clothing and cook his meals meticulously, insisting, "No one can say I wasn't a good mother." So when Gino married, his wife loved him and showed it partly by caring for his needs, such as by doing his laundry and cooking his favorite foods. In his mind, the lie kept popping up that his wife was just doing her job so that everyone would say what a good wife she was. Secretly, he believed she detested him. When she cleaned the house, he became irritable.

Lies, feelings, and vows inhibit your marriage relationship from becoming all that God wants it to be. If you allow strongholds in your thoughts, you form yourself into their shape (Prov 23:7a). But thank God

that is not the end of your story! Soon we will look at specific ways to receive cleansing from lies, feelings, and vows.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Lito's Lament

By Carlito Dumatog

Translated from the Kalinga language

My loving Father

When will you turn your face on me?

When I was lost, you promised if I will come to you, you will be a father to me through Jesus your son.

So I did and I serve you knowing that I will enjoy a father's love.

But then why is it that sufferings keep piling up one after another?

When will you turn your face on me?

Please look down on me.

O my Father!

My heart!

Please return my well-being so enemies and unbelievers won't say "where is his God?"

Don't let my enemies have victory over my life.

You are the only Rock to lean on.

You are the only mother hen to hover around me.

I rejoice O God for how wonderful you are to me.

What a faithful God have I

Now I have all the reason to praise you throughout my life, because of your goodness to me.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Fighting Sin With Legalism

Did you notice that Eve makes God's law stricter than what God had said? She said that they should not even *touch* the fruit. Did she invent this change herself? Or did her husband add this additional prohibition? Why would anyone change a rule to be more strict? Eve, or perhaps Adam, was throwing up a bulwark forward of where God had placed the line. This is the error of legalism. She or Adam thought that moving the line forward would help them to avoid crossing it.



As I was growing up, I had trouble getting to places on time. Because my mother herself had a problem with being late, she used to set the clock at our house five minutes later. She thought that when I looked at the clock I would think, "Wow I'm REALLY late!" and would get ready to go out more quickly. But when I arrived at my destination, I would discover to my relief that I was really on time and be thankful that her clock had tricked me. She hoped we would never be late anywhere.

This actually had little effect on our family's lateness. Because we all knew that the clock was inaccurate, we learned instead that we could have an additional five-minute margin of time to prepare. We were still often late. One bad result was that if someone asked me the time, I did not know how to respond. I had to stop and think which clock I was looking at and whether it was one my mother had set or not. Did I answer by what the clock said or what I thought the time really was? Had I set my wristwatch by the

clock at school or the one at home? Making my clocks “stricter” had no benefit to my tardiness. My mother’s own example had a much stronger influence. She could not teach me how to plan my time to get places on time because she had not learned how to do it herself.

Sin has its source in the mind. Jesus says that lust in the heart is the same sin as sexual promiscuity (Mt 5:28). One is the root, the other is the above-ground shoots, but they both are the same plant. Sin will not be stopped by removing eyes to prevent lust or by removing a hand to prevent stealing. The sinful heart remains, only the ability to act on the desire is restricted. The stricter rule about not touching forbidden fruit did not stop Eve’s eager trot down Satan’s path. Once she decided to turn against God, she didn’t even slow as she quickly leaped over (1) the secondary barrier not to touch the fruit and (2) the barrier not to eat it.

Paul points out that the Law is perfect (Rom 7:12), but he describes it as cursing us (Gal 3:13). Why? Because without a heart-change we are unable to keep laws, no matter how hard we try. It will condemn us as failures every time. It cannot empower us to do the right things (Rom 8:3), neither can it remove the guilt of our sin (Gal 2:16). Legalism is a human strategy to restrain sin. It was used in the Garden of Eden, it was used in the New Testament among the Pharisees, and it is widely used today.

When you are dealing with problems of sin in your marriage, such as pornography, adultery, abuse, or argumentativeness, avoid just making new rules to try to stop it. Instead, deal with the deeper heart issues that are causing the evil behavior. When the heart is healthy and full of the fruit of the Spirit, the behavior will be good and godly (Jas 3:11). Rules and regulations themselves will never cause goodness to flourish.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Marriage Shame

“I can’t tell my wife, Lord. She would walk out the door and I would never see her again. Or if she stayed, it would only be out of obedience to You. She would find me repulsive and could never love someone who had done what I did.” As Jeremy stood taking his marriage vows, his mind replayed in his mind for the millionth time the scene at summer camp when an older boy had come to his bed in the middle of the night. He was so afraid and stunned by the situation that he had remained quiet and pretended to be asleep during the whole time that the bigger boy reached under the blanket and touched his penis, while forcing Jeremy’s hand to touch him as well. When the stimulation and fear had caused him to finally ejaculate, the older boy said, “Now you’re gay, too.” Jeremy had turned over and pretended to murmur something in his sleep. But the boy only laughed, “I know you heard” and left.



After that summer, Jeremy was plagued with fear that because he had responded physically, he was really a homosexual. Jeremy was smaller and more slender than many of the other boys. When bullies teased him, calling him a “fag,” he thought that somehow they could see the truth about what had happened. As he became a young man, he had only natural interest in relationships with girls, but he still worried that someday he might suddenly be attracted to men. Sometimes in his dreams, he was sexually aroused by the memories of the same boy who had molested him, and he woke up feeling ashamed. But he was terrified of confessing what had happened to anyone. He pushed the memory so far back that he could almost believe it never happened. When he came to know Jesus Christ as his Savior as a young man, he confessed his shameful experience to God, but no one else. He also realized that he would never willingly choose to join the homosexual lifestyle, but the shame and fear of exposure of what he had done never went away.

He met June when he was twenty-three and they fell in love and prepared for a life of ministry together. He was unafraid to share many confidences with June because she was very loving and accepting. But she had known Christ all her life and had grown up in a Christian home. He thought that she had no need to know about his shameful secret. But during their wedding ceremony, he broke out in a heavy sweat, as he realized that he was deceiving her. She thought he was a righteous man of faith, when in reality he was dirty.

Afterward, it felt like he was living a lie. Whenever June said that she loved him, Jeremy knew it was not true. She did not know the real him. If he ever told her what kind of man he really was, surely she would no longer love or respect him. Her love was the most important relationship in his life next to the Lord, and he could not risk losing it. So he kept his secret hidden. But when they had even small difficulties in their sexual relationship, the thought tormented him that it was because he was secretly homosexual. He began thinking that June deserved someone better. He pulled away into his own thoughts and wished that he could die so that she could marry someone better.

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Shame in the Garden

As we read in Genesis 3, after sinning Adam and Eve hide from God for the first time. Why? Because they are naked. In the first mention of nakedness, you may remember that (Gen 2:25) the man and his wife are not ashamed. They enjoy each other's bodies the way God intends. The temperature in the garden is perfect. They do not need leather or armor for protection. They trust each other and the God who gave them everything.



Now after the fruit causes their eyes to be “opened” (really closed), they are afraid of nakedness (Gen 3:10). Now that they are trying to figure out for themselves what is good and bad, every behavior becomes suspect. Is our enjoyment when looking at each other's naked bodies good or bad? They worry that it is bad, so they sew fig leaves together to hide themselves. The fig leaves are more than just physical barriers. They show that the husband and the wife no longer completely trust each other or God.

In following Satan off the righteous path, humankind loses its way. The Bible says that they stumble around in the dark and do evil continually (Rom 3:12). When Adam and Eve sinned, they fell into the mire of shame for the first time. Adam and Eve's marriage unity dissolves, and shame and fear replace love and trust. Soon blame will follow.

I remember making leaf apparel when I was a child. I laid out laurel leaves roughly in the shape of belts, hats, and bracelets. I overlapped the edges of the leaves, and then I pinned them together with small twigs. It took a friend to help me put them on. My clothing looked lovely only so long as I did not try to walk!

Fig leaves, such as Adam and Eve sewed together, are fairly large but not strong. I can imagine the man and wife dressing each other, only to have their clothing flaking off as soon as they stood up. When God calls them, one can imagine them clutching at their drafty and disintegrating outfits as they gingerly waddle out of the bushes, trying to keep their leaves on. What had seemed like a good idea when Satan described it—knowing “good and evil” and being a “heavenly being”—did not sound quite so heavenly when they realized their tender skin had no scales or fur to protect it from scratches or scrutiny.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Shame Exposed

“So confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you may be healed”

—James 5:16

As Jeremy grew in his relationship with the Lord, the Holy Spirit kept nudging him to confess his past to June. But he was tormented that if he did she would lose all respect and love for him. Finally one day as they lay in bed together snuggling closely, June said, “Isn’t it wonderful that God created sex so that we could really feel the oneness that we have together. We don’t have any secrets from each other and I feel totally safe with you.”



Jeremy gulped. “Well, there is one thing that I haven’t ever told you, and I feel like that if I did, you wouldn’t love me anymore.” He felt like he’d just plunged into ice water.

June’s heart thudded to a stop and she turned over to look at Jeremy. Had he killed someone? Robbed a bank? She couldn’t imagine him doing any of those things. “I think you’d better tell me and let me decide that.” He had not ever deceived her about anything before. She could not imagine him telling her anything that would change her view of his basic kind nature. But she was worried about what he might tell her.

He began to shake and perspiration dripped down his face as he described the whole ugly episode with the older boy and his subsequent dreams. “Now I know you can’t love me anymore, but I could not stand living a lie. You deserve better than me, and I’m so sorry.”

June smiled, relieved. “I was worried you were going to tell me that you had killed someone or stolen something, but I couldn’t believe you would do those things, so I was worried for a second that I didn’t really know you after all.”

“How can you say that? Aren’t you worried that I am a secret homosexual?”

“Did you ever seek out a sexual relationship with a boy?” Jeremy shook his head no. “I wouldn’t do that. I think it sounds repulsive.”

“Didn’t you tell me that men can become aroused just from being touched or being afraid, no matter if they find a person attractive or not?” He nodded again.

“It sounds like you were too young and too afraid to reject the boy’s advances, and your body responded in a natural way to being touched. You have a choice about whether to pursue a homosexual lifestyle, and you have not chosen that. You don’t just fall into homosexuality accidentally—you have to choose it.

Furthermore, I still love you and respect you, especially for telling me about this because I know it was hard and you chose to do it anyway. I’m just thankful you didn’t tell me something that I would really have a hard time forgiving!”

The relief that Jeremy felt at that moment made him cry and he hugged June fiercely. He felt free! She knew his shame, and she still loved him. It was almost too much to imagine. Plus, he realized that she was right—he could choose whether he was going to pursue a sinful relationship with men, and he would not. He didn’t even want to.

June interrupted his thoughts with a kiss. While she felt sorry that he had carried this load of guilt around for so long and concerned that it had tormented him, she was certain that by revealing it to her, the enemy’s grip had been loosened and this stronghold was being dissolved.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Eden Judgment

When Adam saw the woman raise the fruit to her mouth, everything in his mind stopped. She seemed to hang in midair, the fruit in her hand, his words caught in his throat. “Say something!” A voice inside seemed to shout for his tongue to move. He raised his hand, but the words would not come. He felt frozen in place.



He recognized right away that this was the ex-angel that the Creator had warned him about that very morning. He was not deceived by the glittering appearance. That was not God’s glory he saw glimmering around the creature, but some sort of disguise. The woman had apparently been deceived, though, and now she was preparing to do the very thing God had warned him about. What had the creature told her?

He jumped off Maki and ran up to her. She looked at him and sank her teeth into the fruit. God had said that they would die if they ate the fruit, but she just looked at him and giggled, the juice dripping off her chin as she munched more and more fruit. Why was she alive? Could the fruit be bad and good at the same time? Was God not serious about the consequences of eating it? Would she die later? His mind was filled with confusion.

Perhaps if he had talked to the woman more—told her what God had been explaining to him, suggested that she take more walks with God herself. No, instead he had added his own injunction to God’s law: “Do not even *touch* that fruit, woman.” A lot of good that had done! Now it was too late. He felt powerless. Where could he go for help? He couldn’t very well run to his Creator. God would not just be angry with the woman. He would be angry with him for not trying to stop her. Nor could he ask this gloating, glittering monster for help. Talking to him was how the woman had gotten them into this mess. Adam knew this was his responsibility to fix, but what could he do?

“Do something!” his mind screamed. But he hadn’t a clue what to do. He looked helplessly at the woman for an answer. She seemed so distant now, munching on the fruit with a self-satisfied smile. The woman reached up and picked another fruit and handed it to him. “It’s delicious, Adam. The serpent here told me that if we eat it, it will actually make us wise, just like Creator. Now see, he was right. You can see for yourself that I’m fine!” She held up her hands as if inviting him to look her over. “And I do feel much, much wiser than before. I chose and I feel better for it. I think Creator knew we would all along—really I do.”

Adam was paralyzed. He did not want to disobey Creator, but neither did he want the woman to know things that he did not know. Already she was lording over him with that smug condescending tone in her voice. Her cheery smirk detestably matched the one on the serpent standing nearby. Adam hated feeling separate from her, excluded from the secret that she shared with the serpent. What could he do? He gulped and focused on the fruit in his hand, as if it had the answers he needed.

The red fruit glistened in the bright sun. He smelled the rich aroma and felt the petal-soft skin when he rubbed it under his thumb. It did look delicious. Okay, what was the worst-case scenario? They might die. But what if he just ate a little bit? Maybe he could just take a taste and then decide for himself whether it was safe. He wouldn’t eat much ...

The moment his teeth pierced the fruit, he knew he had made the wrong choice. A cloud of loneliness rolled over him and his confusion turned to despair. He felt anger, rage, and self-loathing like he had never felt before. The woman had led him astray, and he had followed her. Suddenly, he wanted to lash out in fury. He threw the fruit on the ground and his face shrank into a glower. He suddenly wanted to destroy something. He turned toward the serpent, ready to strangle him with his bare hands. But the serpent only smiled even broader and winked at him. Suddenly, Adam’s mind was filled with sordid pictures of the woman. In the picture, he was hurting her, making her pay for what she had done. He

cursed under his breath. He'd never trust her again, that was certain. The creature chuckled and looked at Adam as if he could see the violent sexual image in his mind. Adam felt sudden shame and his face turned red as he glanced down at the swelling flesh he now wished he could hide. The beast's chuckles turned into full-fledged, loud laughter. Adam grabbed the woman's hand and jerked her roughly. "Let's get out of here!" They fled into the thick brush.

It was later in the afternoon, as the breeze picked up, that Adam and the woman heard God walking in the orchard. Instead of their usual joy at seeing Him, they shrank deeper into the shadows and watched from a distance. "Adam!" He cringed as he heard his name. He tightened his grip on the woman's hand. Her hand trembled, but he felt no pity. This was all her fault! The Lord called again: "Where are you?"

Adam thought that Creator knew everything, but maybe that was not entirely true. They had washed off the sticky fruit juice and had made coverings out of leaves. There was now no evidence of their forbidden meal, nor evidence of the thoughts, which had come to Adam several times that afternoon already since eating. If Creator didn't find out what they had done, maybe they wouldn't die. "Let me do the talking," he hissed at the woman through clenched teeth. "If you can keep your mouth shut now, maybe I can keep us from getting killed." Adam pushed the woman out ahead of him. He cleared his throat, "I heard you moving about in the orchard, and I was afraid because I was naked, so I hid."

The Lord looked at him a long time with a sad expression until Adam thought he might break down and reveal everything. But he was too afraid. The penalty if he admitted his sin was surely death. When God finally spoke, it was barely a whisper: "Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

Adam closed his eyes. They were going to die. But wait! It wasn't his fault. Eating the fruit wasn't his idea. He hadn't talked to the serpent. He hadn't even picked the fruit. It was the woman's fault! Let her be punished. He pointed at her. "The woman whom you gave me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it."

Adam saw with relief that the Lord turned to the woman. "What have you done?"

The woman hung her head, then looked up at Him. "The serpent tricked me, and I ate it."

The Lord faced the serpent, wrath blazing in his face. "Now we're getting somewhere!" Adam thought. Let him be punished for the trouble that he caused. It's not really our fault at all! Furthermore, he was sure this time that they had learned their lesson. They would promise not to eat the fruit again even if a hundred serpents tried to trick them!

The Lord spoke to the serpent. "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the wild beasts and all the living creatures of the field! On your belly you will crawl and dust you will eat all the days of your life." As He spoke the words, Adam saw the creature's glittering body stumble onto the ground, its arms and legs pressed against its body until they disappeared altogether. It began writhing on the ground like an earthworm removed from the soil.

"And I will put hostility between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring; her offspring will attack your head, and you will attack her offspring's heel." The creature opened its mouth with a fierce expression, but instead of intelligent speech, it only hissed.

Adam drew back in revulsion. The colored patterns on its scales were merely a reminder of the glittering gems, which had adorned its upright body. Its tongue lapped in and out, a reminder of the lies it had told. Adam jerked as it hissed at him again and slithered away.

There was silence in the meadow after the serpent was gone. Was that the end? Were they dismissed? No, for now the Lord was looking at the woman. A low moan escaped her lips. He felt sorry for her now, feebly clutching her leaves in front of her and sinking down. She couldn't look at the Lord or at him now, but kept her eyes fastened to the ground. He knew now that soon she would sink into it and her body

would turn to dust, just as the Lord had predicted. And then Adam would be alone again. The thought was suddenly overwhelming. What would he do without the woman? He needed her!

Then the Lord said, “I will greatly increase your labor pains; with pain you will give birth to children.”

Adam’s head snapped to attention. Children? Creator had explained what children were. Did He mean that she would continue to live in order to produce them? Hope began to kindle in Adam’s heart.

“You will want to control your husband, but he will dominate you.” Adam knew that this part was already true. The instinct to subdue her was almost overwhelming. She had tried to control him by giving him the fruit. But he would never let that happen again. If he could dominate her, then everything would go back to the peace they had before. He’d make sure she never ate anything without asking him. It would be all right. He was so relieved. They could go back to the waterfall together and everything would be all right.

But no! The Lord was turning to him, and he suddenly had a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach that it was not over. There was more.

“Because you obeyed your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, ‘You must not eat from it,’ cursed is the ground thanks to you; in painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, but you will eat the grain of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat food until you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you will return.”

Adam’s mind reeled with the pronouncement. Why was the Lord laying the biggest blame of this on him? It wasn’t his fault—not really. And now he would have to work until sweat rolled down his forehead—not from the sheer joy of running with the animals like before, but for daily food to eat until he died and went back to dust.

What were thorns and thistles, anyway? Why would the ground produce them? His brow was furrowed as he considered the Lord’s words, and the Lord seemed to have nothing more to say.

The silence grew so profound that he finally looked up. What he saw stunned him, for the Lord was momentarily transformed. Around His own brow, sweat and blood poured down, like the sweat he had predicted for Adam. A bundle of sticks covered in points was pressed tightly into the flesh of his head like a crown. His face looked immeasurably sad, as if an immense weight pressed down on Him with every point. Adam nodded, understanding. He saw what thorns were. He and his wife should have represented the Lord and produced His character everywhere they went, like the good plants and fruit they ate each day. But they had failed. Instead of bearing good fruit, he had produced wickedness— independence, selfishness, even hatred for the wife the Lord had given him. He and Eve were the thorns. Jagged, painful thorns like those in the Lord’s forehead. He hung his head in shame. “Was everything broken then? Where will it end? What can stop this disaster I have caused?”

The Lord turned away from the couple and seized one of the lambs grazing peacefully nearby. He drew from his belt a knife and quickly slit its neck. The woman screamed and then began to sob as the creature kicked and blood gushed from its wound. She turned her face into Adam’s shoulder to shield herself from the horrific sight. The Lord held the creature firmly as it thrashed grotesquely and then went limp over a pool of its own blood.

The Lord threw it on the ground in front of Adam as if laying the blame at his feet as well. “This is death. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins.” Woman hated this death with all the strength in her. Adam could see that written clearly on her face. Weeping, she knelt down to stroke the still-warm creature and looked at the Lord questioningly with deep, convulsing sobs. She began to untie the bundle of leaves from the Tree of Life from around her neck, but the Lord shook his head “No” and took the leaves from her trembling hands.

Adam looked at the woman thoughtfully. Something deep inside her would hate death and use all her strength to preserve life. Adam, however, knew that he could kill now, just as the Lord had killed this

beast. But the woman would not easily kill. Adam had never given the woman a name, as he had the other creatures and as the Lord had named him “Adam.” It had seemed well enough that she was part of him: wo-man. But now he understood something of her uniqueness. While he gave his strength to raise food and subdue thorns, she would use her strength to give life to children, always working against death.

“Life-giver,” he said. “Woman, your name shall be Life-giver—Eve—for you will be mother of all living.”

Kneeling down, the Creator slit the creature’s belly and peeled off its warm skin. He cut three slits in the hide and lowered it over Adam’s head. Adam understood and poked his arms through the other two slits. The hide felt warm and sticky against his skin, but now he was thoroughly clothed. The Creator killed again and this time covered Eve with the bloody garment. His expression was a mixture of sternness, love, and the same sadness from before, but He said nothing more.

Now He turned His back on them and walked away toward the angels who were always with Him. Adam heard what he said to them: “Now that the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, he must not be allowed to stretch out his hand and take also from the Tree of Life and eat and live forever.” The angels nodded and sailed toward Adam and Eve with their swords drawn. The pair looked in vain at their Creator, but the Lord kept His back turned, walking away.

As the angelic beings began to glow with holiness and their faces assumed the glowing fierceness of wrath, Adam and Eve suddenly felt the wave of intense heat, and the terror of death surged through them.

They whirled around and hurtled down the hill toward the sunset, away from the Lord’s wrath. They splashed across the river and up the bank on the other side, the angels and their glory still pursuing at their heels like a consuming fire. They sped across the meadow where the herds of animals scattered in all directions. They ran through forests and over hills, the angels of the Lord driving them forward mile after weary mile until they felt like their lungs would explode. They ran until suddenly they realized no one was pursuing them anymore. Instead of heat they felt a cold wind at their backs. They turned in the twilight. The pursuing angels had turned back. But now a new creature—immense, a terrifying combination of wings and faces, with a whirling sword which burned with fire—blocked the trail behind them. They shuddered with exhaustion and walked wearily from the awful sight, their limbs trembling, no longer able to run. The meaning was clear. They would never return to the meadow or the waterfall again. They had lost their home, too.

They kept walking farther away from the garden, leaning on each other as the moon rose and the night grew colder. Toward morning, they found a small cave set into a hillside and climbed inside out of the wind. They fell asleep clinging together for warmth, with the bloody skins spread over them.

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Standing Together Against a Problem

Whenever a problem of any sort arises in your marriage, Satan wants to place it between you and begin to pry you apart, just as he did with Adam and Eve. He not only wants to destroy your unity so you cannot threaten him, but he also wants to use you to cause your spouse to sin. But you need not submit to his plans. You can instead submit to God and resist the enemy.

"It's your problem"



When a problem arises in your marriage—a disagreement, a financial problem, a problem with a child or relative, for instance—your first line of defense is unity in submission to the Lord.

1. Strengthen your unity by physical touch, good words, and prayer together. Ask and receive forgiveness if you have offended your

spouse, and close any gap between you. (Remember, the problem is the problem. Your spouse is not the problem.)

2. Place the problem in front of both of you (not between) to ask what the Lord would want you to know and do about it.
3. Decide together how to view the problem truthfully and what to do about it.

When you are married, any problem is not “my problem” or “your problem.” Because of your unity in marriage, any problem either of you now faces is “our problem.” The priority must never be affixing blame, but rather: “What will we do about solving the problem?”

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Ransack

Pastor Eng swung open the doors and looked again at the debris that had once been his congregation’s meeting room. Even after a fitful night’s sleep, the scene was as bad as he had remembered from the night



before. The smashed clock told the time of the attack, 12:03 a.m. The sound system control buttons had been ripped off and thrown around the room like marbles. The gaping holes on the speakers scowled at him like mocking faces, probably similar to those who had done this. All that the underground house church had possessed—a few folding chairs, a lectern, and its most recent acquisition, an electric piano with two amplifiers—were either missing or smashed. The electric piano was gone. His wife, Li, had played the instrument only once to lead the singing last Sunday morning. She had been filled with such joy as her fingers remembered the notes, and she had led them in happy praise until everyone’s cheeks were red and their eyes were bright with joy. Even Brother Tu and Brother Hu had exchanged kindly looks in the midst of such happy worship.

It had taken years of special offerings to purchase the set, and now, no doubt, in the home of some corrupt policeman. The songbooks they had copied one by one were in shreds around his ankles like rubbish. He picked up a torn page and gave a sarcastic snort. “Jesus, our hope in time of trouble. Why were there no angels guarding the door, Lord? Where were you in time of trouble?” He shook his head.

True enough, his children, who had cowered upstairs with his mother while the thugs went about their work, had remained hidden and safe. It could have been much worse. But he felt so tired and too weak to struggle any more for this little congregation, as fractured within as oppressed from without. They had prayed that this new instrument would glorify God and help bring peace, like David playing his harp for the troubled King Saul. But after only one Sunday, it was gone, the amplifiers broken and useless. Perhaps his hope for peace between the two factions was also useless. What else could he do? He had preached messages on forgiveness and brotherhood, talked to Tu and Hu privately, and even led them to pray with each other. But they were still adamant in their condemnation of the other’s point of view on what he knew was only a cultural custom, not a doctrine of faith.

He sighed. They would have to move on again. The congregation needed to find a neighborhood where none of them were known or where someone had an uncle or cousin official willing to turn a blind eye to their worship. “I’m getting too old for this,” Pastor Eng said to no one in particular. What would life have been like if he had never entered the ministry? Maybe his children would have good shoes and his wife would not have to sew day and night to try to keep food on the table. He was so lost in his thoughts that he hardly noticed when Eng Li entered the room.

She reached out and put her hand on her husband's shoulder, but it felt stiff. He did not turn around. "Remember how the Lord delivered us last year when we didn't have any money? We never went hungry. He provided clothing and a place to live just when we needed it." Her husband turned to look at her dully. She could tell by his impassive face that he was not able to trust God right now and was struggling inside. "We can't know why He allowed this. But we know He will provide for us."

His expression softened as he looked at her. His eyes welled with tears. "But you looked so beautiful playing the electric piano for us. I have never seen you so happy. One more loss when we already have had so many."

She looked at the spot where the keyboard had been and silently refused the feeling of discouragement that seemed to taunt her too. She had looked forward to having a piano to play in this room off their home whenever she wanted. She could wear earphones so no one would hear except her and the Lord. "I still have my voice. We can still sing. It does not matter as long as our hearts are worshipping." She smiled. "But this is too big for us right now. I think we need to give this problem to the Lord. He may never tell us why this happened, but He will be pleased if we worship Him now." Her husband nodded and they took each other's hands.

As they knelt together in the ruined room and lifted up their concerns to the Lord, the angels in the room began rejoicing. Their praise lifted to the throne in joy as the pastor and his wife spoke faithful words of submission and trust. Pastor Eng felt the darkness around his soul lift. When he opened his eyes, the ruined room did not look so gloomy. His dark mood had been replaced with one of quiet strength. Surely the Lord would not waste this—He would bring good out of evil. "Perhaps He is answering our prayer that our congregation will stop fighting and realize who the real enemy is—not one another." He smiled. Then he had an idea. "Dear, perhaps He wants you to write a new song for our worship. A song that has two parts and doesn't need a piano." Li looked at her husband in surprise. With all of her work sewing, she had not found the solitude to write music for years.

"How about if you call your parents and see if you can go there for a while. I will get this cleaned up and make your sewing deliveries here in town. And you will use your parents' piano to write music to the Lord. I know you have been writing down song lyrics in your journal ... even when you are supposed to be paying attention to my sermons." He squeezed her hand, but it felt as if he had squeezed her heart. It skipped a beat. She thought he had been too busy to notice or to care that she deeply longed to write music again for the Lord. "I will look for a place where we might move after you get back."

"Yes, I would like that very much." Li lowered her head and wiped her tearful eyes. "The Lord has given me a very kind husband." She rested her forehead against his cheek for a moment before she hurried out of the room to call her parents.

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Helping Each Other Resist Lies

Tom and I had planned to go to a nearby city for two days of retreat. For nine months, I had been sick with surgeries and then chemotherapy for cancer. We had hoped that when the treatment was over, and I was finally well enough, we would get away together and begin rebuilding our marriage intimacy. On the Friday afternoon before we were to leave, however, everything in the house seemed to be conspiring against us. The laundry was piled up and the house was very messy. Tom was not finished with an important project for the ministry. A woman who was living with us was very sick and would need much help. It would be too much for my daughters and son-in-law, who were slated to take responsibility for the household over the weekend. "I knew this would happen," I moaned. "We just can't go."



“That sounds like a lie from the enemy.” My older daughter, Allison, took my hand. “And you know what to do with lies.” My teen-age daughter, Meredith, took my other hand and they both led me to sit down and dried my tears.

“This home is not your responsibility right now,” they said. “You have given that responsibility to us. The Lord has called you to go away and work on your marriage, so that is your responsibility. You are believing the lie that only you can deal with problems, when we are quite capable of handling everything that is needed this weekend.”

My daughters were correct, but the enemy had tapped into a lie that I believed frequently—that only I was capable of doing everything that needed to be done in the home. If I let go of control, bad things would happen. I had adopted this lie from growing up in my parents’ home. Because I had learned not to always trust my parents’ judgment, I had often taken over the parent role and had felt responsible for things that were really not my responsibility.

Now, my wise daughters continued their gentle probing: “Now, tell us, what is the truth?”

I sighed. “The truth is that the Lord can handle problems without my help right now. The truth is that you all can handle whatever comes up with the Lord’s help. The truth is that you don’t mind taking care of everything, even though it may be difficult. The truth is that cleaning the house is not the most important thing for me to do right now. The truth is that this time alone together with your father is very important to invest in our marriage.”

As I affirmed each truth, I felt like a big weight was being lifted from my shoulders. Instead of fretting about the problems I was leaving behind, I looked forward to restoring a close relationship with Tom. I downloaded the responsibility that I felt. We stayed away for the weekend, and the Lord blessed our marriage with wonderful times of intimacy, worship, prayer, and relaxation. When we returned, we discovered that our daughters and son-in-law had handled everything well, including taking the sick woman to the hospital.

We were much strengthened from our mini-marriage retreat and were able to return to our responsibilities with more energy and much more happiness in our unity together. By encouraging me to see the truth in a difficult situation, my sisters in Christ, my daughters, had prevented Satan’s scheme from being successful.

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Quiz: My Spouse’s Heart

1. What is the happiest thing that my spouse can remember?
2. What was the hardest thing my spouse has experienced?
3. What are his/her secret ambitions or goals?
4. What is my spouse most afraid of?
5. What about me does my spouse appreciate the most?
6. What about me would he/she most like to see changed?
7. What person, living or dead, does he/she most admire and why?
8. What are the biggest concerns my spouse has today?
9. What would my spouse say I can do to help with those concerns?

Write your answers on a sheet of paper, and then ask your spouse whether your answers were correct. Every student has been surprised at some of their spouse's responses. Seek the real answers in order to know your spouse's heart.

Every person has a deep need to be known and understood intimately. The unity in marriage is designed to help meet this deep need. How will you learn to better understand your spouse's deep thoughts and feelings?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Performance Please

If your spouse must do certain things or look a certain way in order for you to love him/her, you are believing at least two lies:

“I only can be happy when my spouse does what I want.”

“I should never have to do anything that I don't want to do.”

Conditional love, one that demands a certain performance, places your marriage on an unstable foundation of sand.

Conditional love can collapse not only from big problems but from little ones. It is often what the Song of Solomon calls the “little foxes” (Song 2:15)—the small repetitive habits, failures, and quirks that will cause you to begin to see your spouse without the rose-colored glasses of attractiveness. Your spouse's prideful attitudes, bursts of temper, small lies, and failure to listen carefully when you explain what time and where to pick up Junior from school can cause your esteem to develop serious cracks.

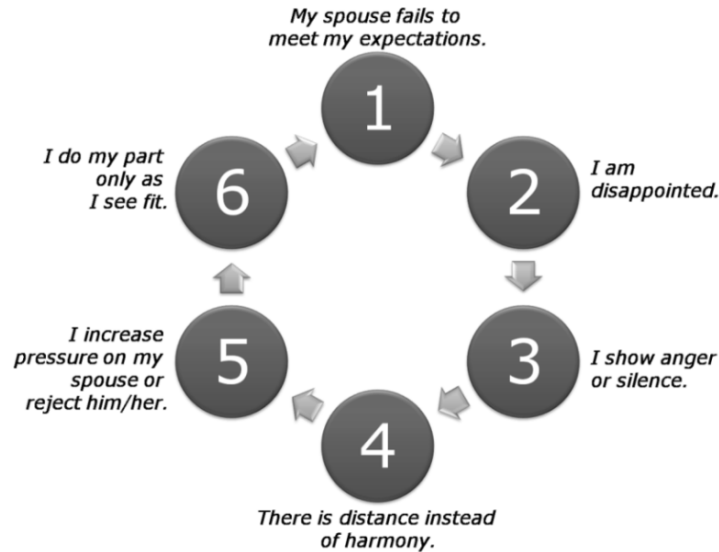
Dissatisfaction

Because we struggle against self-centeredness, we constantly want to know what our spouse has done for us lately. As time passes, you may begin to compare your spouse's performance with other spouses you know. You become dissatisfied. Not only is this the evil judging the Bible warns you against (Jas 4:11), but it will also destroy your happiness in marriage.

One night when we were first married, we invited two other newlywed couples to our home for dinner and a board game. In this game, players buy and sell real estate and charge each other rent. One of the young husbands, Matt, was a kind-natured carpenter. I had often thought how lucky his wife, Mara, was that he worked so hard to please her. She was unsatisfied with his house, so he had remodeled it. He made her beautiful pieces of furniture with his own hands by working for hours in our garage to surprise her. So we were shocked that when Matt caused Mara to lose points in the game that evening, she punched him hard on the shoulder and snapped “no huggies for you tonight!” If she could not win, she was not happy. We all laughed, but as we looked at her angry eyes, we saw that she was not making a joke at all. Matt looked down, embarrassed, while she fumed with anger. Within a year, she had left him to search for someone who could please her. Undoubtedly, there were many problems in the marriage, but her attitude was at least one of the factors. Expectation and performance are not only heavy burdens for a spouse but also a cycle that drives a relationship quickly to alienation.

The Expectation Cycle

Examine the diagram below, beginning with step 1.



Do you see how this cycle gets started? Do you think you ever go through this cycle in your relationship? Think of some way your spouse disappoints you, and create a cycle that you have seen in your own relationship.

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Who Meets My Needs?

You have already looked at the subjects of expectations and disappointment, and how they can propel a marriage into places neither person wants it to go. But what is underneath those expectations? *Needs*. You have genuine needs for love, significance, respect, and safety. Is that not why God invented marriage—to have all those needs met?

Why Can't Marriage Meet All My Needs?

When you place the burden of your needs on your partner, you cause the marriage to bear a very heavy burden that it was not designed to carry. What's worse, when it is not able to carry the burden, you feel disillusioned. "If my spouse cannot love me in the way I need, who else will? I truly feel hopeless and unlovable."

So what can you do with those needs?

- Give up in despair.
- Look for someone else to meet them.
- Live in constant disappointment, polishing a martyr's halo.
- Become bitter and cynical.



None of these things is the right answer.

Impossible Standards

As Christians, we don't place burdens on each other like that, do we? No, sometimes for Christians it is even worse! Your image of how a Christian husband or wife should meet your needs may be even loftier

than similar expectations of your counterparts in the world. You want your spouse to not only meet both society's and your image of a good spouse but also to be like Christ—or at least like your favorite hero or heroine of the faith. You expect *agape* love all the time. Even though you may struggle with sin and selfishness, you are amazed and disappointed when your spouse turns out to be just another weak and flawed human being who cannot fully meet your needs. So then you are doubly disappointed. You may even be like Adam and be disappointed with God for giving you a flawed spouse (Gen 3:12).

In my own marriage, I am blessed that my husband loves me and also loves God. But he is not perfect and sometimes he does very imperfect things and has imperfect reactions to my needs. In the first years of our marriage, his imperfections made me feel very insecure. How was I to respect him (Eph 5:23-33) if he seemed at times to be so unChristlike? Should I not expect him to meet all my needs, just as the church looks to Christ for all her needs? I was even unconsciously viewing my relationship with God as existing mainly through my husband, just as Christ is the mediator for the church. This put a terrible burden on Tom because he wanted to live up to my impossible standards of being Christ in my life.

It has taken twenty-five years to learn that there is still only one mediator between God and man (1 Tim 2:5). My husband is not Him! My relationship to God had not changed when I got married. I am not God's daughter-in-law. I am His child! I remained His child even though I had taken on a new earthly role of wife to my husband. My husband may be, in a sense, my lord, as Sarah referred to Abraham (1 Pet 3:6), but he is not my Lord God. That would be idolatry. When I find myself being manipulative to make sure my spouse meets my needs or becoming bitter when my spouse fails, it is a sign that I have transferred my hope and faith to an idol. God makes sure that idols topple.

A Brother and Sister in Christ

One key concept changed—even revolutionized—my relationship with my husband. God showed me that not only am I my husband's bride, but in Christ I am also his *sister* (Jas 2:15). That subtle shift energized me to be the kind of wife my husband really needs.

No longer was my service to “the Body of Christ” only in the church, it was also to my husband as my closest member of that body. Being his sister in Christ means the following:

- I can pray for him and minister to him in love.
- I do not need to load onto him the unbearable weight of all my needs.
- I do not expect him to always behave like the model of Christ.

He is a *brother* in Christ, needing my understanding, my help, my love, and sometimes my sympathy as we follow Christ as His children together.

This change in perspective freed me to grow up in my direct relationship with God, our Father. I asked Him for direction on how to be the best encourager to the husband He created for me. I asked Him to meet my needs before asking my husband. The change was freeing to both of us. Tom stopped feeling guilty for not measuring up to my impossible standards. I stopped unconsciously expecting him to be perfect. Instead, I looked for ways to serve him. Our love and ministry together began to thrive in new ways.

My perspective on whether or not Tom met my needs also changed. I no longer waited for him to figure out what I needed. He was not omniscient like God. I told him more openly what I needed, and I gave him the opportunity to meet my needs. I was no longer afraid that he would not or could not meet them, because I was ultimately trusting God to meet them or give me strength to have them unmet. I was grateful when Tom tried to meet them, but was not bitter if he did not. I felt much less anxiety and was less wounded when he forgot or failed. God, not Tom, was returned to His rightful place as my Good Shepherd.

In Christ, God’s ability to meet my needs is not dependent on my spouse’s weaknesses or strengths. If I am continuing to rely on Christ to meet my needs, while focusing on doing my own assigned task of loving and serving my spouse, Tom cannot seriously disappoint me. I realize that he fails—just as I do. I pray for him and encourage him. While I delight in his love as a gift from God, I do not need it to survive. I trust God to show His love in many ways. I understand that the love I experience is not being generated only by my husband but is also coming through Tom from God. God is the One who meets my needs.

No Need to Hide Your Needs

It is not godly to be silent about your needs to your spouse. Your spouse cannot read your mind and may not realize that he/she has an opportunity to express love to you. Faith gives you courage to reveal your needs to your spouse.

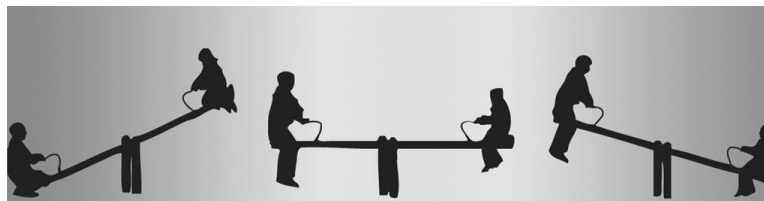
- It is right to ask your spouse to meet your needs.
“I need for you not to yell at me right now.”
- It is right to tell your spouse frankly what effect his/her current actions are having on you.
“When you yell at me, it makes me feel that you do not respect me.”
- It is right to draw boundaries to encourage a good relationship.
“I love you so much, but when you yell at me, I am unable to hear what you are really saying. I do not want to ruin the closeness in our relationship, because you are so important to me. I want to understand your point of view. Can we discuss this issue after dinner?²”

If your spouse does not respond positively when you make your request, you may respond supernaturally because you are trusting God to meet your needs.

- Not overwhelmed with anxiety (1 Pet 5:7)
- Actively placing trust in God to meet your needs in His time (Phil 4:19)
- Trusting God to righteously judge the situation (1 Pet 4:5)
- Trusting that God cannot be dissuaded from His ultimately good purposes in your life (Jer 32:27)
- Continuing to act in love (1 Pet 4:19).

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

A Natural Response to Your Spouse’s Failure



Failure is a normal part of marriage. We know that we all fail, but when we are faced with our spouse’s failures every day without improvement, it is easy to become discouraged.

² If you and/or your spouse are hungry and tired, it is not a good time to discuss touchy issues. Try again after you are both fed and rested.

The 50/50 Split

Many people bring into the marriage a mental ideal of a 50/50 relationship—one in which each partner gives approximately the same percentage of effort to the relationship and to the responsibilities. This results in a natural marriage of uneven quality, with the couple struggling and suffering to stay together. No one is a good judge of what equality is, and sooner or later both spouses fail to meet each other's expectations.

In a natural 50/50 marriage, when failure happens, it produces certain results. Galatians 5:19-20 gives a list of the characteristics of people who are living according to their natural reactions. Please read this passage carefully. Let us look at each of them as a possible reaction after a spouse fails. Make sure you understand each one.

Natural Responses

- 1. Sexual immorality.** Because your spouse does not satisfy your desires, you look with lust at others, perhaps online or in print. You justify yourself because your spouse fails to meet your sexual needs. This may be only mental adultery, but Jesus says it is just as sinful (Mt 5:28).
- 2. Hostilities.** This literally means “acts of enemies.” Because your spouse has failed and perhaps hurt you, you do something to hurt him/her. You are no longer on the same side—you have become your spouse's enemy.
- 3. Strife.** This is discord, arguing. Because your spouse has failed you, you are quick to disagree and argue frequently.
- 4. Jealousy.** You turn to something or someone else outside the relationship to satisfy your unmet desires. Perhaps you feel jealous and compare your spouse with others whom you feel are doing a better job.
- 5. Outbursts of anger.** An outburst of anger indicates simmering rage just under the surface. You suppress your disappointment with your spouse, but the disappointment is still present. It roils in the pit of your stomach like bad food, waiting for a trigger to come up and spew forth.
- 6. Selfish rivalries.** Also used in James 3:14, 16. This is the desire to put oneself forward as more important than someone else. In marriage, this might be to say, “Fine, if you won't take care of my needs, I'll just take care of my own needs from now on, and you can take care of yourself.”
- 7. Dissensions and factions.** This response to your spouse's failure looks for companionship in dissatisfaction, perhaps enlisting the children, your relatives, or your friends to side with you against your spouse or against your spouse's failure to meet your needs or expectations.

Who Is Really to Blame?

Which of these seven responses are sin? Who does God hold responsible for them—the spouse who disappointed the other, thus triggering them—or the spouse who reacts in one of these ways? Even though a spouse may have behaved wickedly or selfishly, you are still responsible to not react to sin with more sin.

Swallowing Camels

Jesus said that it is typical for us to strain out gnats and swallow camels (Mt 23:24), or to see the sliver in our brother's eye and ignore the log in our own (Mt 7:3-5). The following chart, adapted from the book *Creative Counterparts* by Linda Dillow, describes a wife's reaction to her husband's failure. Remember Sarah and Joseph from our first illustration in Topic 3? Remember how Joseph just breezes past Sarah each night to the TV set? She feels hurt, angry, and disillusioned by her marriage.

Examine the following chart to see what methods Sarah *might* use to express her anger at Joseph, or to try to force Joseph to meet her needs.

Joseph and Sarah

| Joseph's Fault | Sarah's Possible Responses |
|----------------------------|---|
| He takes Sarah for granted | Nags and belittles Sighs and moans Compares Joseph with other men Criticizes and neglects Rejects Joseph as a person Cools down sexually Gets angry and shows indifference Gossips with others and publicly tears him down Quotes Bible verses and feels self-righteous Feels bitter and resentful Stops talking to him |

While Joseph's fault toward Sarah is a selfish sin, Sarah's reaction to the hurt she feels may motivate her toward many sins herself.

Stop and Think: Do any of the items on this list, or on the one above from Galatians 5, describe your mother's response when your father failed? How about your father's response to your mother's failures? Do any of Sarah's responses resemble your own response when your spouse (or someone else) fails you?

While natural marriage produces a sinful response to failure, the Lord does not want us trapped in this kind of negative cycle. Jesus describes a different basis to determine our responses.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Trusting God in a Marriage Crisis

If you do everything right—loving your spouse to the best of your ability and serving God with your whole heart—will God somehow cause your spouse to walk in obedience to God and to love you? Remember that an important part of being created in the image of God is having free will. God allows people to make evil choices, and that includes your spouse's evil choice to sin, to harm, or to leave the marriage. Even though God will not prevent your spouse from exercising free will, God can still use it for good in your life.

- Please read Romans 8:28.

If you are loving God and listening to His calling, you can be completely assured that all will work together for good—both your good and His. This is not a glib promise but a true fact that you can count on. Any crisis, or even hopeless situation, will work for the eternal benefit of you who love Him.

Who's Holding the Knife?

If a crazy man holding a knife were to run up to me and cut open my stomach, what would be the result? I would probably die. Certainly I would be damaged and in severe need of medical rescue.

What if the person holding the knife was not a crazy person, but my own Father who loves me? He is a skilled surgeon. He knows that I have a tumor in my stomach that must be removed or it will kill me. His

knife strokes are swift and sure. As he cuts into my abdomen, he makes sure that others are present to cauterize my blood vessels so that I do not bleed to death. He creates large wounds to get access to my most vital regions. Then he carefully goes to work, removing only those things that will harm me if left alone. When he is finished, he stitches my wounds back up so that I may begin the process of recovery.

While the operating room is a dangerous place, the recovery period is perhaps even more dangerous. It is when the raw wound is most open to germs, which also try to destroy me by infecting the wound and making it poison the rest of my body. Then, my whole bloodstream can become infected, and I could die. My Father, the surgeon, covers my wounds with bandages to try to keep germs out, but a few always get in anyway. He tells me that it is my responsibility to put antibiotic cream on the wound each day to kill any germs so that nothing can infect the wound while it heals. The wounds are extremely painful, but if I obey my Father in treating my wound the way He instructs, my wound will heal with only a scar and a story behind it of my Father's love and skill.

John Eldredge has said, "The shortest route to the heart is through a wound."³ God seeks to refine your heart. The greatest traumas of life, particularly traumas in your marriage, expose your heart like a surgeon's scalpel. You can be assured that your Father is wielding the scalpel, not some madman. He only has ultimately good purposes for you.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Amanda's Story

We met at a Sunday school class for single adults. I was attracted to Arnie because he was so hardworking, kind, thoughtful, and responsible. He was a new believer, and I had grown up in a Christian home, but we were both actively pursuing a closer relationship to the Lord. As our friendship grew, we took evening classes together at the church and enjoyed discussing what we were learning. I treasured the cards that he wrote to encourage me in the Lord. We fell in love with each other and decided to marry.



For our wedding, we each prepared a prayer for the other that was tape-recorded and played at the wedding. In each one, we thanked God for bringing us together. My prayer thanked God for providing me with such a wonderful life companion. I asked for strength to be "a loving and supportive wife to Arnie, to strive to consider his needs, interests, and desires before my own." I asked for God's help "to always look for and believe the best in each other. To apologize when I failed and to forgive freely." I never imagined how that promise would be tested.

Early in our marriage we established good "Christian marriage habits" together. We went on spiritual retreats, prayed, and loved together. We studied books on Christian marriage and discussed them. As time passed, we had three children together and sought to raise them to follow Christ. Our marriage and family fulfilled my greatest desire for a happy Christian home.

Ten years into our marriage, however, Arnie began to withdraw from the Lord and from me. One day I realized that I was the only one initiating spiritual conversations and reading spiritual books. He developed back pain and had to give up running, which had been one of his favorite activities. As his pain and inactivity grew, he questioned why a good God would not deliver him from this severe and prolonged pain. He shared his doubts, "I'm not sure God ever speaks to me." I was worried. I talked and reasoned with him, prayed with others, and tried to love him back to a strong faith.

³ John Eldredge "Every man's a poser." *Wild at Heart Live!* [sound recording] Colorado Springs: Ransomed Heart Ministries, 2002

Discussions with our pastor and the man who had led him to Christ failed to bring him back. Friends recommended various books, which he dutifully read. But the books offered no solutions to his problems unless he had faith in God, and Arnie's faith was ebbing away. He felt powerless to stop it.

When our son became a teenager, I wanted Arnie to read the books that we had picked out together in preparation for this day and to talk to his son about God's perspective on his sexuality. But he kept "forgetting" to do this. Finally, he admitted, "I don't know how to talk to him about this because I'm not sure I believe it anymore. In fact, I'm not sure if I believe in God anymore."

At first my pain seemed unbearable. I cried, prayed, and could not sleep. This was not the kind of home I had thought we would have! I waited for Arnie to "snap out of it" and come back to faith. It took a few years for me to accept that he was not going to come back to Christ anytime soon. I had to make a hard transition from mutual encouragement with my husband to a relationship with Christ that was solely my own.

The children's first reaction was confusion. Our younger son gave his father Scripture to read. Our daughter developed nighttime fears and was afraid to sleep alone. All three kids prayed for him. As the years passed, one by one each of the children lost their close relationship with him and with God. Arnie still did things with them, but there were no deep talks anymore. Our eldest son reached out to his dad for closeness again, but was rebuffed. Arnie had nothing to offer and gave our son only silence. My heart broke. Our son developed depression and began seeing a counselor. I kept praying.

Even though I tried to share with the kids about God's reality in my own life, Arnie's despair permeated the house. Both Arnie and I assured them that we would not divorce, but they saw that our home was not the happy place it used to be.

A biblical counselor I visited helped me to see that I was failing in my own spiritual walk by waiting for my husband and children to join me on the path. She challenged me: "When you stand before God, He's not going to say, 'Your spiritual weakness is not your fault because your family didn't want to follow Me.'"

Miraculously, in 2004, Arnie heard God speaking to his heart and came back to faith. He shared it with all of our Christian friends. Everyone rejoiced that the lost was found. His faith soared and his depression disappeared, but it was short-lived. Two-and-a-half months later, he began downplaying his return to God and denying that it had ever happened. His faith was lost once again. My unsteady hope was dashed to bits. My disappointment hardened into bitterness.

In my turmoil, I developed depression, too. Then one day I hit a turning point. I admitted that I could not change Arnie. I could not convince him to go to counseling. I could not relieve his depression. I knew that I needed God in a way that I had never needed Him before. He had to become my all in all. Even though God had not answered my prayers for Arnie's restoration, I had to believe that God was still good and still sovereign. I had to throw myself on Christ alone and let Him be all I needed to get through each day.

Around that time, I had a dream that Jesus and I were carrying the cross up the hill to Golgotha together. It was so heavy that I stumbled and could not lift it any more. Jesus said, "Climb on My shoulders, Amanda." The cross was so big and heavy that I could not imagine He would have the strength to bear its weight and me, too, but I had no choice. I could not carry it any longer. I pulled myself up on His strong shoulders, and he said, "I will be with you and your children, and you will make it through this." He gave me a vision that He had set extra angels guarding our house. Scripture, too, held special promises: "The LORD is near the brokenhearted, he delivers those who are discouraged" (Ps 34:18). He felt closer.

When I realized that divorce was creeping into my thoughts more frequently, I began meeting with two friends for an hour and a half of prayer every week. They helped me realize that I could not have a close relationship with God if I held onto bitterness and anger. When I was able to give up control to Him, my bitterness lifted. One Scripture that we often prayed for Arnie is Psalm 40:1-3:

I waited patiently for the LORD; he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; he set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD. (NIV)

He is helping me develop long-haul faith. I am praying even when I cannot see the answers. My life is punctuated with various surrenders along the way. Surrendering expectations was the hardest, but most important, thing I had to do. My repeated prayer is: “Help me to love Arnie with Your pure love.” I fail miserably. Since I surrendered my husband to God, it has been much easier. As I let go of trying to control people and situations, I am able to commit to God that no matter what Arnie does, I will still love him. I let go of all the strings in my love that are conditional on his behavior. I no longer give love as a reward. I give it because God loves Arnie and shows it through me. Slow steps, not perfect.

Arnie told me that his relationship with God had often been vicarious through me. Thus I am learning the art of a quiet spirit, according to the apostle Peter (1 Pet 3:1-2). If I need to talk a lot, I put it into prayer instead. I let Arnie bring up and talk about spiritual issues if and when he desires. I feel like God has put duct tape over my mouth! I am being quiet, praying, and waiting expectantly to see what He is going to do in our family.

Before, when our marriage was happy, I would have said that I was depending on Him. When He stripped away the things that I valued so highly and thought I had to have—like a Christian family and a Christian marriage—I was left with the choice of going to Jesus and letting Him be my life, instead of living in despair and anger. When I chose Him, I saw Him in a new way. I saw Him pull us through when we seemed to be hanging by a thread. I have seen that God was taking things away so that I would run to Him and wrap my whole self around Him.

The loss of close fellowship within my family forces me to seek a stronger relationship with God. I have learned to say with the psalmist that “your love is better than life” (Ps 63:3, NIV). It is better than the life that I thought I would have. Instead, God alone is my sustenance. *And He is enough.*

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Articles for Lesson 3: Understanding a Redeemed Marriage

Paul and Priscilla

Paul, one of our students, was raised in a wealthy home in a poor country. He felt driven to experience spiritual peace and enlightenment. He became a Buddhist monk and, like his Bible namesake, hated Christ and all He stood for. His zeal for Buddhism led him to tattoo his whole body with symbols, which, he said, gave him power over some lesser evil spirits but bound him as a servant to greater ones. These symbols did not relieve his striving for a greater religious experience. He tried meditation and retreat, and later he experimented with sexual orgies and drunkenness. But none of these things brought the inner enlightenment that he was searching for.



When his mother became a Christian, Paul was outraged that she had betrayed her Buddhist heritage. “Christianity is for foreigners and inferior tribal people!” He zealously persecuted her. One time he ordered her from his dinner table because she had asked a blessing on the food. Another time he picked up her Bible and threw it across the room in fury. When he realized his torment could not change her, he refused to speak to her for two years.

As he became frustrated with the futility of his search, he began to read the Bible, just to prove it was wrong. In the Gospels, he saw in Jesus Christ a man who exhibited the integrity and self-control that he had failed to achieve through all of his rituals, meditations, and sensual experiences. Paul says, “I came to realize that He was the true God. Everything that He had promised came true and He rose again after they put Him to death on the cross.” Paul accepted Christ as Lord and Savior. This was the peace that he had been searching for his whole life—and now he had forgiveness for the evil of his heart!

When he told his wife, Priscilla, who was already fed up with his debauched lifestyle, she said, “I’ve put up with so much from you, but Christianity? This I will *not* tolerate!” Buddhism had been the one thing they could agree on. “I’m leaving!” As she went upstairs to pack, Paul prayed all night that she would stay and give him a chance to demonstrate the transformation that he felt in his heart. In the morning, she agreed to a one-month trial.

Later, Priscilla said, “After one month, I decided I had to believe in a God who was so powerful that He could change my husband this much! He had completely stopped drinking. Women came to our door and he told them that he no longer wanted to have any relationship with them.” For the first time, he was kind and patient, both with her and their son. “So I also received Christ and became his partner in ministry.”

Now Paul is an evangelist. He goes door to door in Buddhist neighborhoods and reasons with the monks at shrines and temples. He offers Bible studies for inquirers. In his first eighteen months as a believer, Paul led 130 people to Christ. He and Priscilla, also one of our students, are discipling them. Because of the fanatical Buddhism of the monks and the government in their country, Paul and Priscilla risk their lives daily for the gospel.

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From Bargain Hunters to Crucified Ones

One of the manifestations of sin in an unredeemed marriage is our tendency to seek a relational *bargain*.



That is, we give only as much as absolutely necessary to get as much as possible. At worst, we offer a relational fraud: We promise or pretend to give something of great value, such as love, when in fact we give only that which costs us little or nothing. We offer empty words or empty actions without real concern for our spouse, just to motivate the response we want. For instance, we groom carefully and do kind deeds to attract a mate. We imply that this is what life will be like married to us, but after the wedding, we move on to other pursuits. Or we listen and smile when

our spouse tells us his/her problems, but inside we are thinking of something else. We are “users,” satisfied most of the time to give the appearance of loving concern in hopes that it will stimulate genuine loving care from others. This applies in many relationships, but most keenly in marriage.

As we saw before, Christ did just the opposite. He gave His whole heart, His whole life, and suffered in death for those who gave Him nothing in exchange and even hurt Him.

The Heart of the Disciple’s Life: Crucified

In the passages you have just read (Rom 12:1; Gal 2:20; 1 Pet 2:19-24), you have seen both Peter’s and Paul’s description of a concept that is at the heart of the disciple’s life: death to self and a life of self-service. In Romans 12:1, Paul describes our bodies as “living” sacrifices. This means that we are like little lambs on the altar, yet instead of being led there, we go voluntarily. Instead of being killed, we live as constant offerings of worship to God!

Did the disciples invent this concept? No. Jesus Himself told us that we would need to die to self.

- Please read Matthew 16:24-25.

In Jesus’ time of Roman occupation, telling someone to “take up his cross” was a shocking thing to say. Crosses were reserved for those who had committed offenses worthy of the most degrading execution possible. It was the ultimate public punishment—naked shame and maximum torture. Jesus had just finished telling His apostles that He Himself was going to suffer and die this way (Mt 16:21). So no wonder Peter rebuked Him for suggesting it. But the Lord rebuked Peter. Jesus said the cross was essential, both for the Master and for His disciples.

Many of those listening to Him that day later died on crosses themselves. But this is not the only meaning when Jesus told them that they must take up the cross. Notice that there are three instructions Jesus gives here:

1. Deny yourself
2. Take up your cross
3. Follow Me

How do we do this in our marriages? Does it mean that we are to die for our spouses? Not usually in a literal sense. According to Galatians 2:20, Christ now lives His life on earth *in* and *through* you. Christ loves your spouse deeply and gave up His life for him/her. One way that He now wants to continue to show His sacrificial love to your spouse is through you. Furthermore, according to the apostle Paul in Romans 12, Christ counts your surrender of your body to Him (your “crucifixion”) for His purposes of loving and serving others, which includes your spouse, as worship to God. When you worship God this way, you stop considering your own needs as the primary focus of your life. You now consider the needs of others and the opportunities that you have to follow Christ. This worship invests even the most tedious jobs with meaning.

Some Practical Examples

So what does your worship to God look like just before the main meal of the day, when everyone is tired and hungry? Do you offer a sacrifice of help, or do you run past your spouse en route to the newspaper or the TV set? How do you react at 3 AM when your spouse is sad? Or when one of you needs to get up to tend to a sick child? Or when your family needs more money and someone has to take an additional job? Are you the first to volunteer, thankful for an opportunity to sacrifice your body to God? Or do you preserve self and fade into the background, as you hope for, or even expect, someone else to do the uncomfortable task? Our opportunities for worship occur not just on Sundays or in our quiet times with God, but they also occur *any time our bodies can do what Christ would want done because of His love for those around us.*

Are You Afraid of Becoming a Shadow?

Galatians 2:20 describes dying to self. What fears do you have when you hear this? One of the fears that I have is that my uniqueness will die. I will become only a shadow, which serves other people's desires and expectations and is pulled in so many directions that I do not know who I am anymore.

That idea is a lie. Christ, who now lives His life through me, had a vibrant personality. Every word and every action was striking, not bland. He was a servant of God first and did not live in fear of men. Therefore, He served people—not according to their every expectation, but according to their real needs, as God directed. He did not always grant their desires or requests (Mt 12:47-48; Mk 10:37; Lk 12:13). His disciples did not always submit to the desires of others (Acts 4:20). Thus my fear of fading away does not hold up to God's Word.

Furthermore, God created my innate personality as it pleased Him and does not want to erase it. He wants to redeem and perfect it by nailing my old self-centered person to the cross and causing a new me to grow—a strong and courageous person who will serve Him sacrificially in a resurrected life. Whenever you need to get your bearings about what it means to be a crucified one, consider Jesus.

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A Cup of Water in the Night

“And there was the principle of courtesy: whatever one of us asked the other to do—it was assumed the asker would weigh all consequences—the other would do. Thus one might wake the other in the night and ask for a cup of water; and the other would peacefully (and sleepily) fetch it. We, in fact, defined courtesy as ‘a cup of water in the night.’ And we considered it a very great courtesy to ask for the cup as well as to fetch it.”—Sheldon VanAuken, describing his marriage in the book *A Severe Mercy*. (1977, NY: Harper and Row, p 39)

What is at the heart of a resurrected life?

- Please read John 13:4-5, 13-16.

The roads in Jesus' time had as much animal traffic as people traffic, so they were covered with manure. After a long walk, the people's feet were not only hot and dirty but also foul with dung. Without running water, and only a bowl and a towel, Jesus performed one of the lowest jobs that a servant could be assigned. What was Jesus' motive in taking this role?



Remember how prone the disciples were to jockeying with each other for the best positions (Mt 20:21; Mk 9:34; Jn 21:21)? In the upper room, Jesus was giving them a final example of servanthood, which would end their lust for status. He says that if He, the Master, was

not too high to perform the most humble task, then they must serve each other, too. The greatest one, Jesus said, would be the servant of all, which includes taking the most disagreeable jobs.

In a marriage and a home, many of the chores are also humble: changing diapers, washing dishes, washing floors, peeling vegetables, scrubbing laundry, cleaning the toilet, repairing household equipment. What's worse, these chores often need to be repeated over and over again, with no end in sight! What is your least favorite job? Are you expecting a reward from your spouse when you do it well? Could it be that doing a task that you do not like to do with cheerfulness (2 Cor 9:7) is more significant to God than doing one that you do not mind as much?

VanAuken describes a relationship that allows either spouse to request sacrificial service from the other. He says that the partner that hears the request trusts fully that the one asking realizes that it is a hardship and yet is offering an opportunity to serve Christ. This is much like the service that Christ asked from His disciples—to love and die for Him. Romans 8:35-36 describes the horrible things that Christ asks His followers to endure on His behalf, yet He still asks them to trust that He loves them.

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My Dirty Sink



“Give me some water to drink”—Jesus, in John 4:7

My husband, Tom, has had damaged eyes from birth. This means that when he shaves his chin or trims his moustache, he is unable to see the little hairs that drop in and around the sink. He carefully spreads out a towel to catch the debris, but he cannot see the whiskers, so he does not know that the hairs have jumped all over the area and not landed neatly on the towel! Furthermore, there are usually little flecks of toothpaste all over the mirror, which he also cannot see. When I am very tired, I sometimes come into the room, look at the sink and the mirror, and the thought comes to me: “He just treats me like his slave to clean up after him!” This is the enemy appealing to my pride that I am too important to do such a lowly task. Another thought follows closely behind: “Day after day after day I have to clean up the same mess!” This nasty whisper appeals to my laziness, which does not like to do work, especially repetitive work. The enemy knows my weaknesses well.

It takes a deliberate effort for me to reject those lies and ask God what He wants me to understand and to do with those whiskers. I take up a cloth and begin wiping the sink as I cultivate truth in my mind. First, I affirm that I love my husband. I remind myself that Tom cannot see the whiskers or the toothpaste, and that he was trying to be careful by putting down a towel. Then I thank God that I have a wonderful husband to clean up after. How would I feel if my sink was clean but I had no husband? I thank God that Tom's eyesight was spared and that he is not blind, as the doctors thought that he might be when he was born. I thank Him for all the kindnesses my husband has done for me and how privileged I am to have a husband who loves me. Then I thank God for my own strong arms, which have the ability to move easily and without pain. I thank Him for a home with a mirror and a sink. Then (and this is the most important), *I ask God to accept my labor as an act of love for my husband and for Him.*

If I had not exposed and countered the lies of the enemy right away, the next time that I had to clean up something else after Tom, the lie's roots would grow deeper into my heart. These thoughts could grow into full-fledged bitterness, just as Satan intended. Instead, by the time I am finished thanking God as I

work, the job is done, and I am exceedingly happy with my husband and my blessed life for the rest of the day.

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No Ordinary People

“There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal. Nations, cultures, arts, civilizations—these are mortal, and their life is to ours as the life of a gnat. But it is immortals whom we joke with, work with, marry, snub, and exploit—immortal horrors or everlasting splendours.”—from a sermon *The Weight of Glory* by C.S. Lewis (p 9. <http://www.doxaweb.com/assets/doxa.pdf>)

C.S. Lewis, a British author and speaker of the twentieth century, was talking about the importance of each individual we meet. He goes on to explain that a believer is the *holiest* thing we see in life because Christ Himself is hidden inside him/her (Col 1:27). How does this description by Lewis apply to your spouse? If your spouse is a believer, is it sometimes hard to remember that he/she enshrines the Holy Spirit of God?

The American author Mark Twain (1835–1910) once wrote a story called *The Prince and the Pauper*. In this story, a beloved English prince and a poor boy (who inexplicably look identical) trade places. The prince experiences the difficulties and the blessings of poverty, while the poor boy experiences the wealth and the dangers of being a prince. Role-reversal, mistaken-identity stories like this are found in many cultures, perhaps in yours.

What I want you to focus on, however, is the way that the prince in Twain’s story, while wearing rags, is perceived and treated by those he meets on the streets of London. Since he now *appears* to be merely a poor street child, most people view him as having little value. Only one person, Miles Hendon, chooses to treat him with the respect and deference his royal blood deserves. Other people shun him, ridicule him, and disregard him as unimportant, but Hendon champions the young prince and serves him well. As a reward for his help and kindness, the prince dubs Hendon a knight. When the prince is restored to his rightful place, Hendon receives a rich reward.

Similarly, when you treat a royal offspring with the respect and love his/her blood relationship to the King suggests, you are also respecting and loving the royal Parent. No matter how others treat this royal offspring, you know who he/she really is and act accordingly. It may seem that he/she does not deserve your efforts. This offspring may not show proper appreciation. The response matters little. This is a beloved child of your beloved King, so you must be faithful. Because you love the King, you love His child and always do what is best for him/her.

Furthermore, when the King returns, He will judge your stewardship of life based partly on (1) how you treated His Son, Jesus, and (2) how you treated His children. Your spouse is the child of God closest to you. No one else has the power to honor or to disrespect your spouse as profoundly as you do. You will someday answer to the King for your faithfulness or failure to lovingly care for and respect His precious child. Perhaps on Judgment Day your spouse will be also called upon to testify on your behalf. You want to serve your spouse in such a way that your spouse will want to tell his/her Father the King what a good job you did!

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The Believer in Christ

| <i>Reference</i> | <i>A Believer</i> |
|-----------------------|--|
| Romans 8:15-17 | Is a joint-heir with Christ. Has no spirit of slavery leading to fear. Has a Spirit-confirmed adoption as a son (whether male or female). Has the right to call God "Daddy." Has the Holy Spirit to assure that he/she is God's child. Is an heir of God. Is a fellow heir with Christ if he/she suffers with Him. Will be glorified with Him. |
| John 10:27-29 | Is Christ's sheep. Is known by Him. Hears His voice. Follows Him. |
| 1 Corinthians 6:20 | Is valuable, bought with a [high] price. Glorifies God. |
| Ephesians 4:11-14 | Is a saint. Is a part of His body. Possesses a specific spiritual ability to serve the body. Needs to be growing into an adult, not remaining a child. Should not be easily deceived. |
| 1 Corinthians 6:3 | Will judge angels. |
| 1 Peter 2:5, 9 | Is a priest. Is a living stone. Is being built into a spiritual house. Is able to offer up spiritual sacrifices. Is acceptable to God through Christ. Is part of a chosen race. Is part of a royal priesthood. Is part of a holy nation. Is God's own possession. Has been called for the purpose of proclaiming the excellencies of God. Was called out of darkness into His marvelous light. |
| Colossians 2:14 | Is debt free. |
| 2 Corinthians 5:20-21 | Is an ambassador for Christ. Has the righteousness of God in Christ. |
| 2 Corinthians 3:3-6 | Is an adequate servant. Is a letter from God for others to read. |

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Seeing Your Spouse Through God's Eyes



Dr. Daniel Oh conducts seminars for pastors and Christian leaders in Asia and around the world. For his marriage renewal ministry, “Safe Harbor Ministries,” he has discovered that learning to see your spouse through God’s eyes cracks open the barricade between hostile spouses and begins the process of healing and restoration. It helps spouses who are happy in their marriages to appreciate and strengthen the unity that they have in Christ. The ideas in this article reflect the way that Dr. Oh guides couples to learn to see each other. You will find that it is a powerful tool for use in your marriage and in your own ministry with not only couples but also other types of relationships as well. This exercise can help remove barriers and strengthen the bonds of Christian unity between teammates in ministry, or in any other place where believers work or live closely together.

Here are the five steps that Dr. Oh leads couples or teams through. The instructions will be given in bold as if you are a leader who is coaching married couples through the process. You can adapt this for other situations.

Step 1: See

COACH: “I want you to arrange your chairs so that you sit facing each other, hands joined, and knees gently touching.” (The coach waits for all couples to comply.)

COACH: “Now I want you to look into each other’s eyes and lock your gaze for several minutes.” Even Asian couples who do not customarily touch each other should do this. It is normal for a couple to giggle and feel uncomfortable doing this part of the exercise and it may take them a few minutes to be able to lock gazes and enter into the exercise fully. The coach then invites the couple to see differently by saying the following:

COACH: “What do you see when you look into your partner’s eyes? Normally, we look at each other in terms of prejudice or bias—how has this person pleased or disappointed me? Instead, try to see the *core* of this person as God sees him/her. God’s Word says that this one’s heart *is* your home on earth.”

COACH: “If you feel very awkward doing this exercise, perhaps it is because you have been away from home for a long time. Just as a college student may travel away and then feel odd walking up to his own front door, you may feel strange right now looking into your own heart’s home.”

Dr. Oh reports that this step often brings out strong emotions. The coach should not continue to step 2 until the couple has been successful at step 1 for a few minutes.

Step 2: Accept

COACH: “Accept and embrace what you see without reservation, the way God has accepted this person in Christ.” (Coach waits). **“Now share with your spouse what you see and what you feel.”** (Coach waits for each spouse to share fully and waits on the Lord for whatever transactions need to occur—perhaps expressions of bitterness, pain.)

Step 3: Receive

COACH: “Continue looking at each other. Try to see in your spouse’s soul the likeness of God’s image. Set aside your past grievances for now. Let the Father’s loving compassion for your spouse well up in you.” (Coach waits)

Step 4: Pray

COACH: “Pray a blessing on each other out loud. Communicate the heart of God for this spouse you are looking at. What does he/she need? If comfort is needed, pray for comfort. If encouragement is needed, ask for that. If healing is needed, pray for healing. The Scripture says ‘pray for one another that you may be healed.’” (Read Jas 5:16 out loud, and allow the Holy Spirit to work and to make each spouse to be an instrument of blessing to the other.) Note: If you are doing this exercise in a larger group of married couples, it is a critical dynamic of the exercise for each person to bless his/her spouse out loud before others. If you are in a mixed team where not everyone is married to one another, stand in groups of four and the remaining three should pray blessings on each person in turn.

Step 5: Debrief

COACH: “How did this exercise feel? What did you gain from doing this exercise?” Allow about five minutes for each person to share how this exercise felt to them.

Many times, Dr. Oh explains, this simple exercise reopens many old wounds and allows the Lord to begin the process of repentance and reconciliation. If there are many wounds, there will be many barriers, and perhaps also many emotions expressed. Each time he has coached a couple through this, Dr Oh reports, God’s Spirit has been very evident to all, and meaningful transactions have taken place between the participants. As we have seen so far in this course, unity is God’s original intent for a husband and a wife, particularly a couple who are also a brother and a sister in Christ. So it should not surprise us that when a couple seeks to restore or increase unity that God’s Spirit would be very active.

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Luis and Doris

I used to work for a Christian organization led by Luis Bush, a pastor originally from Argentina. Dr. Bush and his wife, Doris, are very comfortable speaking for the Lord around the world, sometimes in front of thousands of people. People love Luis partly because of his humility and warmth, but sometimes his humble attitude surprises even me.



One evening at the end of a gathering of our staff at his home, he was first to pick up the used dishes, get out the vacuum, and begin cleaning the floor. He did not expect his wife to do it all. In public, as well as in private, he always shows his wife that she is his special comrade, and he treats her with honor.

For a period of time, I was working on a writing project for him, so I sat at a desk in their house each day, observing their interchange as a couple. I learned that their kindnesses toward each other never stopped, all day long. Their conversations were not only polite, but they were overflowing with affection and kind words. Even though they were both busy on different projects, they took the time to show each other that they were important.

At noon, Doris made simple lunch food she knew that he would enjoy, but she served it with a bright placemat and a small bouquet of flowers, which she had picked. He complimented her for the beauty of the meal, as well as its good taste. But the service did not go only one way.

Every afternoon, Luis stopped his work to make a special drink they both enjoyed, and served it to her. They paused to enjoy their drinks together and talk. For a few precious moments, they gave each other full attention. They delighted to serve each other with the excellence and humility that glorified the Lord (Col 3:23).

Do you think Luis's making his wife a special drink and serving her caused her to become prideful or to lose respect for him? Just the opposite. As a result of his loving behavior toward her, she always longed to be with him and traveled with him as much as possible. She was very excited when all their children grew up and went on to serve the Lord as adults, so that she could travel with him more. Now, several years later, they have more grey hair, but they still both have a twinkle in their eyes and a contented smile because of the love that they enjoy with each other in the Lord.

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Prayer Builds Unity and Intimacy

Prayer is one of the most intimate experiences a human being can have. When you pray, you strengthen your unity and intimacy with God. When you pray together, you strengthen your marriage unity and intimacy too.

Personal Prayer (Mk 6:46; Lk 18:1; Eph 1:16; Phil 4:6)

As husband and wife, you first need to invest some personal prayer time in seeking God's blessing on your spouse, thanking Him for each blessing that you receive from your spouse and the things that you admire about your spouse.

- Please read Mark 6:46.

When you talk to God about the things that disturb you about your spouse, remember to start with thanking Him for all the ways that He has blessed you through your spouse. Thankful prayer sweetens your heart. Pray for your spouse, and ask God for insight into what you can do to make your spouse's life and your relationship better. As you each invest time in prayer for the other, the Lord may impress on your heart ideas of ways to minister to your spouse that He knows would be deeply significant. When you follow through with these divine "ideas," it will build up your spouse and your marriage. If your spouse is not a believer, this may be all that you can do.

Praying Together (Eccl 4:12; Mt 18:19-20)

By praying together as a couple, you build a three-way unity that is like the threefold strands of an unbreakable rope, which is mentioned in Ecclesiastes 4:12. In marriage, God is the unbreakable strand. When the couple wraps their "strands" around Him, they depend on His strength to support them, just like an unbreakable strand of steel protects the other strands from breaking.

- Please read Matthew 18:19-20.

Here Jesus says that wherever two or three are gathered in His name, He is in the midst of them. What does this mean in your marriage? Because Christ is present between you as you pray, He grants you to know His mind. As you pray together, the Holy Spirit gives you faith to see what He wants to do and, therefore, to experience great answers. In marriage, you can invite Jesus to be in your midst frequently. The more often you make use of this benefit, the more your marriage will increase in faith, strength, and unity.

Planned Prayer Together (Mt 18:19-20; Lk 9:28; Acts 21:5)

Your daily times of prayer—at meals, in the morning, before sleep—set the tone for your relationship and strengthen each of you for your work each day. You learn what is on your partner's heart and you encourage each other's ministry. By practicing regular times of prayer, you are saying that as a couple alone, you cannot keep your marriage unified. You need God to help to overcome your natural bent for selfishness and independence to keep your marriage strong.

Instant Prayer (Neh 2:4; Eph 6:18; Col 4:2-4)

Whenever a concern comes up, draw your spouse to one side and pray together. Submit yourselves to God to act as He directs. By doing this, you put yourselves in the safest possible place for dealing with whatever trouble comes. When you pray together, you strengthen each other and present the enemy a strong “united front.” If the trouble is something bad that has happened to someone else, you can intercede together with great spiritual strength, by listening and building on the insights that the Holy Spirit grants to each of you about how to intercede for him/her.

Before Sexual Relations (Song 5:1; Phil 4:6; I Pet 5:7)

We have found that prayer together prior to coming together sexually allows us to sense the blessing of God on our relationship and removes any wrong inhibitions. In Song of Solomon, as we have seen, the Lord created sex to bless marriage and wants us to enjoy it deeply (Song 5:1). So asking for His help and blessing in carrying out this amazing joining seems very natural to us. If there is a sexual problem in the process, we again ask for His help—either silently or together.

When Facing a Big Decision (Acts 13:2)

When a big decision affects both of you, both of you need to be involved in praying and listening. For instance, when one of you is offered a new job, when considering a particular surgery or medical treatment, and, especially, when considering inviting someone to stay in your home long term. Start by praying together out loud to ask God to make the choice clear. Seek to surrender any personal will in the matter to God, rather than try to convince your partner of your point of view. Seek His guidance in the following ways:

- Reading Scripture
- Praying privately
- Writing down any insights either of you receives from God
- Coming together again to pray and then talk about what you feel the Lord is saying through His Word and impressing on your heart.

Since the same Holy Spirit is operating in both of you, you may expect that as you seek His mind, the Living Lord will draw your hearts to one accord. Then you can be certain it is His will, and your marriage will also grow stronger.

Whoever a decision affects needs to be included in the prayer about it, which includes children. This will have a long-term effect on their marriages later. For instance, when we sensed that God was calling us to move from secular work into full-time ministry, we realized that the children (ages five and twelve) would leave behind everything familiar. We wanted them to not only submit to our authority but also to know that God was calling them too. So we prayed together as a couple, as a family, and each of us prayed individually until we were all convinced that the Lord was calling us to move. In that way, when the adjustment turned out to be hard for them—entering new schools, making new friends—they offered their suffering up to the Lord as a sacrifice of doing His will. Their relationship with Him grew. Now, as adults, they tell others that it was then that they learned that God was real and active. We modeled for them a process, which helps them know how to seek God’s will together in their own marriages.

While one spouse may submit to the other’s wishes, how much more it strengthens your marriage and your faith when the Lord brings both of you to share the mind of Christ. It is a true saying, “The closer you come to Him, the closer you come to each other.”

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Feeding on God's Word Together

Just as a married couple enjoys sharing meals together, one of the great privileges of a couple in Christ is to feed on God's Word together each day. If a couple has been lacking unity or intimacy, God's Word can clear the way for healing. Dr. Daniel Oh leads seminars for couples and teams in ministry and also conducts interventions for Christian leaders from around the world whose marriages are in crisis. He has discovered that as they draw close to God in His Word together, they are drawn by the Holy Spirit closer to each other as well. But it must be more than just an intellectual exercise. In order to impact a couple's marriage, it must be an experience of God Himself in His Word.



The main ideas in this article go back to the ancient Christian times in a practice called in Latin "*lectio divina*" or spiritual reading. The particular method below reflects the way that Dr. Oh guides couples to approach Scripture together in order to improve troubled marriages as well as to maintain the health of a happy marriage.

We asked him to guide us as a couple through the practice so that we could share it with you. We are glad to report that even if your marriage is already very compatible and intimate, this practice can profoundly enrich your experience of God and each other. In this way, you can better experience the tri-unity between the married partners and God that we talked about in Lesson 1.

If you are single, this practice of listening to God in the Scripture together can help remove barriers and strengthen the bonds of Christian unity between teammates in ministry, or in any other situation where believers work or live closely together.

Here are the steps that Dr. Oh leads couples or teams through. The instructions will be given as if you are a leader who is coaching a group of married couples through the process. However, it is also effective for a couple to go through these steps themselves. In fact, even a couple who initially has a coach leading them through the steps must transition to learning to do this for themselves, in order for it to become a daily habit.

Step 1: Preparing the Meal

The couples stand close to their spouses in groups of 4.

Step 2: Taking in the Nourishment

The coach reads a passage of Scripture out loud while the couples listen quietly. Suggested passages to start with might be a chapter from Psalms, Proverbs, or the New Testament.

Step 3: Sharing Around the Table

The coach invites each person:

COACH: "**What insights do you have about what was read?**" If the group is large, they should share with their small group of four.

COACH: "**How do you imagine God's face as He shared these words with us? What was His tone?**" The coach again invites couples to share their responses.

Step 4: Savoring the Meal

COACH: "**Now place one hand on your partner's shoulder and the other hand on your own heart as you listen to God's Word again.**" The coach reads the passage a second time. Then he says "**Respond to God in prayer out loud about what He says in His Word or about something someone else shared.**" In a marriage seminar, the couples should be encouraged to seek insights about their marriage or lives together. The couples should pray together in their groups of four.

Step 5: Digesting the Meal

While the couples are touching their spouse's shoulders and their own hearts, the coach reads the same passage aloud a third time. Then the coach leads them to pray once again, in response to how this Scripture applies to them—prayers of confession, petition, thanks, etc.

Step 6: Entering His Rest

COACH: **“Now that we have been fed and nourished by God’s Word, it is time to digest His Word so that it becomes our own flesh and blood. I want you to now enter into your place of rest. Step into your partner’s embrace and let yourself be embraced by God. You don’t have to do anything but accept this gift. Enjoy the place He has given to you as I read the passage one more time.”** Then the coach should read the passage again. After the couples have listened to God’s Word while embracing, he says the following:

COACH: **“This is your home—where God created you to be.”** The coach should allow the couples to remain embracing and resting as long as they like. Dr. Oh reports that even Korean couples, who don’t typically embrace in public, will often stay in this embrace for many minutes.

Step 7: Debriefing

COACH: **“How did you feel about this exercise? How do you feel now that you are holding each other?”** (Note: Dr. Oh says that many times, even in strained marriages, the couple will say that they felt they had somehow always been in this serene place and that they indeed felt like they were at home.)

Dr. Oh suggests that every married couple, especially those in ministry, should be doing some form of this exercise of listening to God’s Word together daily. Some couples who have done this exercise in one of Dr. Oh’s seminars report that they now do it while taking a morning walk together, using a small New Testament.

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Life in a Great Mystery

Ephesians 5:22-33

In Ephesians 5:32, marriage is called a “great mystery.” What is mysterious about it? The meaning of the word “mystery” (in Greek, *musteerion*) is something that is described as the following:

- Hidden,
- Important
- Only understood by divine revelation
- Only understood incompletely

Therefore, as you try to understand this great mystery, take a moment to pray that the Holy Spirit will help you understand the wonderful revelation of spiritual truth contained in marriage. You should have just completed reading Ephesians 5:22-33.

Could You Give an Example?

The Greek word for mystery is used twenty-seven other times in the New Testament, but only one other mystery is called “great”—the plan of salvation through Christ (1 Tim 3:16). Some of the other mysteries mentioned in the New Testament are as follows:

- The Resurrection (1 Cor 15:51)
- The indwelling of Christ through the Spirit (Col 1:27)

- The grafting in of the Gentiles to the tree of faith (Rom 11:25)
- The spirit of the antichrist (2 Thess 2:7)

These are all amazing truths, which you no doubt believe because God has revealed them. Because they are beyond understanding, you can only understand them incompletely. You believe the rest by faith. For instance, how will God put back together all the molecules of your body when He resurrects it from the dead?

We can spend our whole life pondering and studying these questions and not fully understand them. Remember, not completely understood was one of the aspects of a mystery. Yet, we base our eternal future on these mysterious truths! God indicates that you must **believe** as much as you understand and **accept** the rest on faith in God's character as truthful and on God's Word as reliable.

How Does This Idea Help to Make Sense of Your Role in Marriage?

Calling marriage a mystery does not resolve all the questions that you might have about the mystery. In fact, it suggests that there are no answers that would satisfy you completely this side of eternity. The fact does not totally explain why you were given a certain emphasis in the marriage relationship. At some point, you must be able to accept that it is important to God and to trust in His good purposes.

In Ephesians 5:22-25, Paul gives some important instructions: Wives are to submit to their own husbands and husbands are to love their wives. But why should God care? Why could it not be the other way around? What if the wife is smarter than the husband? What if she is older, stronger, or makes more money? Should not her husband submit to her? What if a wife acts like a shrew? Why should her husband still love her? Paul says that there is *spiritual significance* when a man and woman join together and live within a certain pattern in their marriage. It is not because God wants all to be identical, but because marriage bears an important message that must be clear.

Understanding the spiritual significance makes it possible to fulfill your steps in the marriage dance without regard to how well your spouse is performing. Falling into step with God's pattern is a holy act of reverence that is motivated by love for God in gratefulness for your own salvation. It is worship! The ardor and enthusiasm with which you perform your steps are based on your vertical, not horizontal, relationship.

Wives Submit

Wives, when you respond gracefully to your husband and seek his best good with your whole heart, are you conscious of the precious weight on your shoulders? It is not the weight of a burden, but the weight of a crown—the weight of glory! The way you delight in him, cheerfully respond to his love, and align yourself under his leadership all portray for the heavenlies, as well as for the watching world, the response of redeemed believers throughout the ages to the leadership of Christ. It causes angels to rejoice. But is it too much to ask for delight when you are dealing with something as regularly oafish and unecstatic as a mere man? In your own strength, of course, it is too much! Through the Holy Spirit, though, you can delight to portray the joy of the church to submit to her Husband, Jesus!

Husbands Love

Husbands, when you love your wife, do you consciously realize that you are portraying a sublime mystery of the love of Christ for His church? This love caused Him to leave the comfort and worship of heaven, become a simple carpenter, and then give His life's blood to purchase His bride from the slave market. Now He is readying the marriage feast and the permanent home. That Bridegroom will return to gather the bride into His arms so that the two might be together forever. Are you, husbands, able to exhibit that kind of self-sacrificing love if your wife no longer resembles the sweet and beautiful woman whom you married? Not in a million years, in your own strength! But as a choice you make to draw on the energy of the living Holy Spirit, yes!

When both of you are willing to joyfully accept the model of Christ and the church as your service of *worship*, you bring joy to God's heart and strike fear in His enemy's. The church is never more powerful than when its husbands and wives are carrying out their spiritual mandate to accurately portray the love affair between Christ and His bride, the church.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

The Wedding at Cana

John 2:1-11

"This beginning of His signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him." —John 2:11, NASB

Why did Jesus' prophetic acts begin at a wedding?

In Jesus' time and culture, a wedding feast lasted several days. At this particular feast, which Jesus attended, the wine had run out. Any minute, the guests would learn that there was no more wine, and then what would the poor couple do? The guests would yawn and make their excuses to head home. The groom, by failing to provide for his guests, would bring shame to his new bride and upon both families. Verse 9 makes it clear that it was the **groom** who was responsible for providing the wine.

But Jesus saves the day by turning some water, used for purification rites, into wine. Verse 11 says that this act was the first of Jesus' *prophetic* signs. This means that He was signifying a symbolic truth for His actions that was an acted-out message to His onlookers, just as the Old Testament prophets performed signs that complemented their verbal message. But what primary spiritual truth was *symbolized* by turning the water into wine at a wedding? What does this sign have to do with marriage? If you want to study this symbolism for yourself, make a list of each character and each item in the story and note all the details. You can do these observations to figure it out for yourself, or you can read our observations here.

All the clues in the story point to the fact that the wine Jesus provides at this wedding feast, is a picture of Jesus' blood making possible the wedding supper of the Lamb (Jn 6:53-56; Heb 10:12-19; Rev 19:6-9). It is, therefore, no accident that Jesus' first miraculous sign was performed as part of a wedding!

Observations on the Miracle at Cana

First, observe what Jesus does. He used what was at hand: six stone pots used for ritual cleansing. He told the servants to fill each one with water. Meanwhile, the master of the feast, and perhaps the bride and groom, displayed no hope of sufficiency and waited for the inevitable discovery of their lack. Thankfully, the servants were obedient to Jesus, but perhaps they were rolling their eyes and thinking, "I can't believe He is suggesting that we serve village water to the guests who are expecting wine." Remember, Jesus had *never* yet performed a miracle, so no one had an inkling of what was to happen, except perhaps Mary, Jesus' mother. Mysteries are often like that. They begin with obedience even when you do not fully see what good it will do, or how your obedience could possibly repair a horrible situation.

You probably know the rest of the story. When the huge pots were filled to the brim with water, Jesus instructed the servants to take some of the water to the master of the feast. When the water was poured, it had turned not only into wine but into the best wine.

How can this be a **prophetic sign**? When the Old Testament prophets performed a sign, they eventually explained what their action represented and what the people were supposed to do if they believed the message. But Jesus rarely explains His prophetic acts. Instead, He often chides His disciples for not figuring out the significance of the details (Mt 16:9-10; Mk 8:18-21). The gospel writer makes it easier for his readers than for the poor disciples. He does not give extra details, like what time of day this

happened, what Jesus was wearing, what day of the week it was, how old the couple was, or even their names. The writer only gives those details that point to our understanding of why it was a prophetic sign.

Three days. One odd fact, which is given, is that this is the *third day* since Jesus left John the Baptist. Why does the author include this tidbit of information? A possible reason: Jesus Himself says that John the Baptist was the culmination of the Old Testament prophets (the Old Covenant). So you could properly surmise that John might symbolically represent the Old Covenant. Later, John dies without entering the New Covenant ratified by Jesus' death and resurrection. In fact, Jesus seems to indicate that he could not enter the new because he belonged to the old (Mt 11:11-13, Mk 6:27). Therefore, is it possible that this period of three days after leaving John *foreshadows* the three days that Jesus will be in the tomb? He fulfills the Old Covenant by completing a life that perfectly fulfills the law and then ratifies the New Covenant with His blood (Lk 22:20; Heb 7:26; 1 Pet 2:22).

Six stone water pots. What could the pots signify? The number six was symbolic to the Jews as a number that represented work, because six days were ordained for God's labor in creation. Similarly, the servants had to labor to fill these six huge heavy water pots. Since each held 20-30 gallons (75-110 liters) and was made of stone, they were too heavy to carry. The servants could not just hook up the garden hose or turn on a tap, so they probably took many trips to the village well with smaller containers—a lot of work. But the Bible says that the six days led up to a Sabbath rest. According to Hebrews 4:9-10, the Jewish Sabbath foreshadows the end of work with the New Covenant. So after all the work to fill the six pots is accomplished, the new wine is poured out. This new wine is also symbolic of the beginning of the New Covenant.

Used for cleansing from sin. Here is more evidence: The stone water pots were normally used for ritual cleansing in order to make something fit for use in a Jewish household. For a Jew, this ritual cleansing of people and utensils symbolizes his own cleansing from sin. Now, because of Jesus' miracle, this plain water, which is used for ritual cleansing, is superseded by something much better and much more precious—wine. One hundred to two hundred gallons (450–660 liters) of it! Instead of ritual bathing in mere water, He could wash in wine if He wished! This points to an Old Testament prophecy that all of the guests would have known well. Having wine so plentiful that someone could bathe in it is in one of the first prophecies of the Messiah, (called Shiloh, which means "Peace") in Genesis 49:10-11.

The wine. In Matthew 9:14-17, Jesus again compares the old and new systems as being like old and new wine. John the Baptist's disciples ask why they have to fast, but Jesus' disciples do not. Jesus uses an illustration about new wine and old wineskins, which suggests that John the Baptist was part of the old wine system, but that Jesus was bringing new wine and a new way of relating to God.

So, now that you have a good idea of what the inanimate objects in the miracle represent, you need to know how the characters themselves also have prophetic significance.

The guests. The master of the feast says that the invited guests might not notice the quality of the wine poured out on their behalf (Jn 2:10). Similarly, many of the Jews of the time were so drunk on the "old wine" of their religious system that they had little appreciation for the wonderful quality of the new wine of Jesus.

The Master of the feast represents God the Father who judges the quality of the offering.

The servant and the groom are representative of Jesus Himself. Why? The servant who poured the wine represented the groom. When Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood, Scripture tells us that He *presented* His blood of propitiation to the Father. His blood had to be found acceptable to the Father, in order for the wedding of Christ to be completed, and Christ the Groom to be able to take his Bride, the church. Just as at the feast in Cana, Jesus' presentation of His blood sacrifice (symbolized by the wine) was deemed fully acceptable by the Master of the feast (God the Father).

From the time of this wedding in Cana onward, Jesus is preparing the ultimate wedding feast for those who enter into a personal relationship with Him. All weddings and marriages from that time onward will point to your own marriage as believers to your wonderful Bridegroom. Jesus' choice to perform His first sign as part of a wedding lifts marriage itself to a higher place of honor than ever before. He introduces the deeper meanings of marriage that Paul later explains more fully in Ephesians 5:22-33.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Articles for Lesson 4: Love

Storge, the Belonging Love



The love felt between members of a family or clan describes the Greek word *storge*. It is the type of love that seeks to create **safety** both inside and outside the home.

Protection

Outwardly, *storge* protects and defends from danger that which would harm the beloved, such as:

- When their wives were taken captive (1 Sam 30:3-5, 17-18), and David's men set off in hot pursuit and killed every captor they could get their hands on.
- When a man defends his wife against a cantankerous neighbor.
- When brothers and sisters band together against bullies on the playground.

These are all examples of *storge* love.

In marriage, *storge* lovers will defend each other's reputation to outsiders and will not allow anyone, even their own parents, to say bad things about the spouse, or to treat him/her with disrespect. *Storge* love says, "It's you and me against the world, so we need to stick together."

Loyalty

Inwardly, *storge*'s emphasis is not only safety, but also loyalty. *Storge*'s loyalty helps a couple through rough times. Its strength acts like steel threads woven through the fabric of the relationship. When life's difficulties cause a couple to come to the end of their rope, *storge* allows them to tie a knot and hang on for as long as necessary. They will not fail to care for the best good of their partner. *Storge* love says no matter if you get fat, paralyzed, or senile, I am committed to you. Unlike mere duty, *storge* love will not complain or feel like a martyr. A *storge* lover, like Jesus Christ, will not leave you nor forsake you (Heb 13:5).

Safety and Security

Another inward aspect of *storge* is safety inside the marriage. *Storge* makes a secure place for the other types of love to grow. Sometimes a marriage counselor will advise a couple to be gracious and kind to each other—to treat each other as you would an important stranger. *Storge* is the type of love that the counselor is trying to grow.

Children raised in a home where *storge* is strong will not worry about their parents separating, no matter what is happening to the parents next door or down the block. *Storge* love between parents protects the home and everyone in it. *Storge* love creates bedrock safety for a child's emotional well-being.

Kindness and Comfort

Kindness is *storge*'s currency. Kindness creates a safe harbor for the heart, a sweet sense of coming home, where you will be accepted and treated well. After her husband makes a mistake at work, a wife might draw her husband a hot bath, rub his neck, and sympathize as he describes what happened.

A husband who expresses *storge* for his wife will carry a heavy suitcase to the station for her. He tells her that she will do well as he bids her goodbye for a ministry trip. When she comes home devastated because things did not go well, her husband puts his strong arms around her and pets her head like a child while she weeps on his shoulder. He encourages her that she did her best and the Lord was pleased.

Help, Not Condemnation

When a problem arises or a partner makes a mistake, *storge* will not condemn, but will do what it can to make the problem better.

When the husband loses his job, for instance, the wife does not fly into a rage. She listens and soothes his pain, as well as researching places where a new job may be found, perhaps helping to pick out his clothing for his job interviews, and praying for his calm and peace as he goes.

When the wife has invited her friend for tea and the gas tank for cooking is empty, the *storge* husband does not berate her for not noticing the gauge, but quickly goes to fill it while the wife entertains her friend. He quietly hooks up the new tank and leaves the two women to talk alone.

In *storge*, all blessings and problems are not yours or mine, they are *ours*, and we bear them together. Even though *storge* does not have a critical spirit, it sees the lover clearly. A *storge* lover notices that a husband does not have much hair or a wife has more wrinkles. But the lover is content because the beloved is “all mine” and therefore enjoyable to look at and touch.

Acceptance

Tom's *storge* accepts that I lose track of time and am often late. *Storge* allows us to adapt to each other's idiosyncrasies because he is *my* husband and I am *his* wife. Thus *storge* helps us get along smoothly. It fulfills Romans 15:7, in which God commands believers to accept one another (in the Greek, to take to yourselves). A couple with *storge* may sit quietly side by side in peace year after year, but perhaps without much discussion, except as it relates to mutual concerns.

But *storge* is not usually what great novels are written about. In fact, it can be a bit boring. It thrives on regularity and habit, rather than some new and exciting behavior.

The One Exception

As we have seen, *storge* in its outward focus is like a mother bear, potentially threatening to outsiders, but nurturing to its own family. It is important to know that *storge*'s anger can also turn toward a beloved one. *Storge* will turn against its own *if* the beloved proves unfaithful or harms another family member. Since its main organizing principle is safety, if a partner seriously betrays the family—such as by having an affair, by gambling away the family's finances, or by abusing a child—*storge* will feel a deep sense of violation and can provoke a hatred that may be very extreme. When *storge* is betrayed, it is one of the hardest loves to rebuild. The possessive aspect of passionate love is described by a wife in Song of Solomon 8:6, but also by God as He describes His jealous outrage at His faithless wife, Israel, in Jeremiah 2:1-37. In Jeremiah 12:7-8 and Hosea 9:15, God says that even though He loves Israel, He has come to hate her because of her unfaithfulness.

This type of belonging love is readily found worldwide. It extends not only between husbands and wives but also between parents and children, sisters and brothers, grandparents and grandchildren, and, to a lesser degree, cousins and neighbors. It is not often the most exciting of the four loves, but it sees that the family is safe both within and without. You are wise when you take time to invest *storge* in your family. It will reward you and your family with a God-designed sense of belonging and security throughout life.

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Keeping *Storge* Love Alive

As we have seen, *storge* both causes and is fed by a sense of safety, security, helpfulness, kindness, and loyalty. It is largely a matter of choice. In order to keep *storge* healthy, you must choose the following:

1. How you speak

- Notice, appreciate, and speak kind and encouraging words to your spouse.
- Even in the midst of a disagreement, stick with the subject and refrain from personal attack, such as saying, “You *always* ... well, you *never*.”
- Do not speak negatively about your spouse to your friends or relatives.
- Do not permit others to criticize your spouse.

2. To protect

- Restrain anything or anyone that might harm your relationship, including your own thought life (Prov 3:5-20; 6:25; 23:7).
- This includes breaking off friendships with:
 - Other friends of yours who encourage or condone flirtations or adultery
 - Those who disrespect your spouse (Prov 1:11)
 - A tempting or flattering person of the opposite sex (Prov 2:16)

3. To be content and faithful

- Even if your spouse is unable or unwilling to meet your sexual needs.
- Even if your spouse does not look like or act like the knight or princess you had dreamed about.
- Do not secretly daydream about escaping to a different life.
- Do not compare your spouse unfavorably with someone else’s spouse.
- Recognize and dwell on your spouse’s good qualities.
- Flee the temptations of sexual entertainment, impure surroundings, and pastimes that lead to impure thoughts or relationships.

4. To use self control

- Avoid selfishness and angry outbursts, which can destroy *storge* love’s sense of safety quickly, and eventually, irreparably (Gal 5:20).
- Admit your own failures and shortcomings when they are revealed, and do not become defensive.
- Make wise decisions, especially of how you will spend time, energy, or money.
- Think of your spouse’s needs before your own (Phil 2:3).

5. To serve your spouse

- With kindness and joy
- Without complaint (Gal 5:13; Jas 5:9)
- By performing menial tasks when needed (Jn 13:4-5, 14; Lk 7:44). Your spouse will respect you more, not less, for such sweet service.

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Phileo, the Cherishing Love

While *storge* love is developed by choice, *phileo* love is **an emotional response to an admirable person**. It is the kind of satisfying love all of us have hoped for when we are lonely—a person whom you like and who also likes you and wants to spend time with you. It is not sexual and it occurs between good friends of the same sex, as well as between a man and a woman. In a marriage where both parties develop it, cultivate it, and feed it, *phileo* can grow into an intensely enjoyable type of love. But *phileo* is a temperamental plant to grow because it is not grown by the will. If a person is acting in a way that disgusts you, *phileo* cannot live in your heart, no matter how much you wish it to.



God's *Phileo*

You may have heard sermons about how God's love (*agape*) loves the unworthy (Jn 3:16). But we rarely hear sermons that reveal that God has *phileo* love, too. He does not feel it universally, only toward His friends. When God the Father looked at Jesus and saw Him exhibiting His attributes on earth and serving Him willingly, His heart lifted in joy, and the Bible says that He was filled with *phileo* for His Son (Jn 5:19-20). Similarly, He has *phileo* love for believers when we love His Son (Jn 16:27). *Phileo* is a love stimulated by meeting certain conditions. Therefore, the Bible never uses it to describe God's love for unbelievers. *Phileo* can teach us about developing good relationships with God, with our brothers and sisters in Christ, and with our spouses.

Loving Touch

In the New Testament, the word *phileo* means not only love, but also “kiss.” While in many cultures today, kissing on the lips is related to sexual love, in the New Testament culture it was an act of friendship bonding, of shared breath. Thus, we see the close relationships between affectionate touching and *phileo* love. Affectionate, nonsexual touch is essential between husband and wife to develop and sustain *phileo* love. What kind of touch? Think of the touch of parent to child: holding hands, caressing the face, brushing the hair, hugs, pats, backrubs, affectionate kisses. This kind of touch is absolutely **essential** in marriage. In fact, in his book *Love Life for Every Married Couple*, Dr. Ed Wheat says, “Even though you apply every other principle I have given you in this book, it will be of little avail unless you learn to touch each other often and joyfully in *nonsexual* ways.”⁴ It is a need deeper even than sexual touch, even for men. He believes most adultery is caused by a lack of it! If boys think that “manly men” only touch other people in a handshake, in contact sports, and in sex, then some men will try to look for more sex than what their wives can provide in order to meet this need. If their wives would increase their affectionate touch, it would help satisfy this need.

⁴ Ed Wheat, MD and Gloria Okes Perkins, *Love Life for Every Married Couple*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980) pp 246-247.

Strength

Phileo love can be an easy-going friendship or just as strong as the other types of love. In 1 Samuel 18:1, the love between David and Jonathan is described as equal to “loving as his own life.” Sadly, David had never experienced *phileo* love with his many wives (2 Sam 1:26).

Development

Phileo begins by recognition of a common point of view or interest. It grows on shared communication and pleasant or meaningful experiences. It is the least jealous of all the loves, and it can grow to include a tight-knit group of friends. It often develops in the following ways:

- When two people enjoy a recreational activity together
- When a person tells another all about his/her childhood and the other understands and shares similar experiences
- When two people bravely help each other through a harrowing adventure

In *phileo* friendship between a man and woman, if there is no physical attraction, it may never grow to include another type of love. Where there is physical attractiveness, sexual attraction or *eros* may follow *phileo*.

Phileo in Marriage

Because of *phileo*'s need for specific conditions for friendship, **it takes work** to maintain *phileo* with your spouse, especially once you have children, or if you live in an extended family. Because the keys to *phileo* are intimate, thoughtful conversation and shared projects, marriage and parenthood may subjugate each of you to different roles and responsibilities that keep you from the activities you once enjoyed together. Couples begin to trade off watching children to go out with friends or to go to work. As individual activities take the place of shared activities, *phileo* dies. Often neither one knows how it disappeared or how to get it back. They have extinguished the conditions needed to sustain *phileo*.

Phileo Follows Admiration

Phileo admires a person's strengths, often those that you personally lack. But this produces one of the possible pitfalls of *phileo* love. As a newlywed, Carrie might excitedly say, “My husband, Carl, is so self-controlled, not like me.” Her esteem for his qualities might, over the years, deteriorate: “Carl is so stuffy; I just don't understand him.” A new set of characteristics that she sees might begin to seem more admirable: “Bob is so sensitive and really understands me.” If that stray branch is not quickly pruned away by resisting the temptation to talk to Bob intimately, *phileo* can develop in the wrong place and turn Carrie's heart from her husband, Carl. It is healthy for both husband and wife to develop *phileo* friendships with others. But if the friend is also physically attractive, *phileo* can lead to romantic, sexual love. The workplace, where shared projects naturally feed *phileo*, is a good place to make friends, but is also often where adultery begins.

The conditions for growing *phileo* do not change, so a married couple must invest time in shared, enjoyable activities to keep *phileo* strong throughout the life of their marriage. The growth of other *phileo* friendships must not usurp the marriage friendship's primary place. Jesus Christ must be the primary *phileo* friend of both partners, and a desire to please Him must motivate both.

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Keeping *Phileo* Love Alive

Because *phileo* is a feeling in response to an admirable person, it requires many growing conditions. It cannot exist by one's will alone. All of these conditions take time and mutual action. How can one develop *phileo* in marriage? Here are six steps:

1. Share ideas
2. Share activities
3. Practice mutual respect
4. Touch affectionately
5. Behave admirably
6. Think kindly

1. Share Ideas

Once ignited, *phileo* craves time talking together, just as fire looks for something new to consume. That is why new friends and those newly in love can hardly wait to be together and spend so much time talking. But these are not the mundane or stressful discussions about the rent, the in-laws, or the children that are part and parcel of *storge*.

Phileo thrives on enjoyable discussions about ideas bigger than your lives together. One way to stimulate these "big ideas" is to read books, Bible passages, newspapers, or magazine articles out loud together, and ask your mate's thoughts about them. Discuss sermons you have heard. After being with other people together or separately, share what you think about what you experienced. Share about what you each do when you are apart or about your spouse's childhood. Be a good conversationalist by listening attentively and asking pertinent questions. Whenever you are apart, try to spend time in conversation through phone calls or letters. While together, speak alone daily, at least before arising and before falling asleep each night.

2. Share Activities

A staple diet for feeding *phileo* love is spending time in sharing enjoyable or satisfying activities. Choose to engage in fun or worthwhile activities together. The activities together can be anything enjoyable: playing sports, exercising, listening to music, drawing, collecting things, fishing, helping someone else, painting a room together, or repairing something. If you currently have few interests in common, what do you do? It is through this separateness that your determination to obey God by loving your spouse well may be tested. You may need to sacrifice activities you currently do with other *phileo* friends to make time for things you can do together with your spouse.

One newlywed couple made it a principle that each would try at least once to experience every activity the other liked and to understand why the other enjoyed it. The thought they held in their minds during this togetherness was that if the beloved liked it, there must be something likeable about it that they could learn. This was a great idea, but their outlook required that they release existing judgments and try each new activity with an open mind.

Fellowship together; pray together, both with other believers and alone; worship together alone; read God's Word together; share with each other the insights that God has revealed to each of you in your quiet time; memorize Scripture together; serve Him as a team in ministry together.

Show an attitude of acceptance and respect. Express your thoughts and listen carefully, without distractions and with a desire to understand. Even if your spouse's perspective seems foolish at first, do not judge, but try to understand why your spouse sees it that way. Respond to what your spouse says with interest. Acknowledge that you understand and repeat the thought back, for example: "So, you think that Jesus was saying that Peter should go back to fishing? That's a

fascinating point of view. What leads you to that conclusion?” Communicate your love and respect by concentrating and looking at your partner while he/she is talking. Your spouse may have a different way of looking at things, but it is not wrong merely because it is different. Your spouse’s different perspective can enlarge and broaden your own wisdom.

As you learn to discuss objective things in a safe and respectful way, such as a particular article, you can progress to the intimate sharing that is the hallmark of the best *phileo*: sharing deep thoughts and feelings. When you are sharing your own feelings about something negative, do not blame or seek to induce your partner to feel guilty. When your partner feels judged and begins to act defensively, your communication is not part of *phileo*. The ability to share vulnerable information and have our innermost thoughts known and accepted is the most deeply satisfying part of *phileo* love.

3. Practice Mutual Respect

Another essential for *phileo* is equality. Treat your spouse not as a master or servant but as a brother or sister in Christ who will someday reign with Him. Seek his/her advice. This does not preclude differing aspects or roles of being male or female, as we will see, but recognizes the fact that in Christ your spouse is your equal sibling (Gal 3:28).

In one country where I often visit, the male students (mature pastors and Christian leaders) reported that when they realized the Bible does not instruct them to lord over their wives to force them to obey or to humiliate them in order to force them to be humble, it was a huge weight lifted from their shoulders. They realized that as they developed *phileo* love together, their wives became a valuable partner in ministry. When they adopted a respectful attitude toward their wives’ thinking and shared with them the concerns of their ministries so that they could discuss and pray together about them, it relieved much of their stress. They told me they were happier than they had ever been in their entire lives. I had only to look at these mature couples, walking hand in hand (in a country where couples typically do not touch each other in public) with huge smiles on their faces, to know it was true.

4. Touch Affectionately

Practice affectionate, nonsexual touch whenever you are together: stroking the face or hair, holding hands, putting your arm around your spouse’s shoulders, massaging each other’s feet or back. These are just a few of the ways your actions might reveal your *phileo* affection for your spouse. What are the ways you can show nonsexual physical affection to your spouse in public? In private?

Touch that gives affection, but does not request sexual response, is deeply nourishing to the human heart. Orphaned babies go insane or die without a loving touch, even if their physical needs for food and warmth are completely provided. We do not outgrow this need, but in our society it is often squashed—particularly for boys, as we have already mentioned. But if a man only experiences loving touches during sexual intercourse, it creates an extremely strong desire for sex. Studies have shown that a father’s physical affection toward his son (Lk 15:20) actually decreases his risk of developing homosexual tendencies. A daughter who does not receive affectionate touches from her father will crave touch from other men. Notice how many times Jesus touched the people whom He healed (for example, Lk 5:13). In Romans 16:16 and four other places, Paul instructs believers to kiss each other with *phileo* affection, as in a family. In our culture, hugs are a similar physical expression of the family bond between believers. What is appropriate in your culture?

5. Behave Admirably

Phileo needs not only to understand but also to admire and approve of the beloved. Therefore, it will thrive when you exhibit characteristics which your partner respects. Do you know what those characteristics are? Empathy, sympathy, kindness, self-sacrifice, strength, courage, and faithfulness are often at the top of the list, but you will need to find out what characteristics your partner admires and work to develop these characteristics. Ask forgiveness for ways in which you have disappointed your partner and failed to live up to his/her expectations and ideals of what a man or woman should be. Then seek God's help to grow in these characteristics.

In our search to kindle *phileo*, we can find ourselves becoming better people than we ever thought we could be. The poem "On Friendship," by Roy Croft, expresses this well:

I love you not only for what you are, but for what I am when I am with you.
I love you not only for what you have made of yourself,
But for what you are making of me.
I love you for the part of me that you bring out⁵

God's *phileo* love for us and our *phileo* for Him make us want to be involved in the things which concern Him, even when those things seem bigger than the sphere we would choose for ourselves. Our *phileo* from God, directed toward each other, helps us to sense deeply the pleasure God has in us when we obey Him from the heart.

6. Think Kindly

Phileo grows by thinking about the good aspects of your spouse. It is decreased by thinking about the things you dislike. Everyone has negative characteristics, but the Bible instructs us to dwell on the good ones (Phil 4:8). I have even found it a helpful exercise to list all the good qualities I admire about my husband—I use up a lot of paper!

Similarly, discipline your mental admiration for others so that they remain in a proper perspective. Do not compare your spouse to anyone else's spouse. Especially do not compare your spouse's weaknesses to the corresponding strength of someone else's spouse. When admiring a good characteristic in a male friend, for instance, or enjoying a good conversation, I have learned to thank God for his marriage and his wife and to ask God to bless and strengthen their union together. I affirm to God that with my whole heart I desire for their marriage to prosper and that I may not be a threat or stumbling block in any way. I also prize loyalty and realize that if any of the brothers that I consider friends were ever to be disloyal to their wives or to relate to me as anything other than a sister, I would instantly lose the respect and *phileo* that I have for them. In what ways can you safeguard your thoughts in friendships with the opposite sex and strengthen your appreciative thoughts about your spouse?

In Galatians 3:26-28, Paul says that in Christ Jesus, all believers are sons. In fact, there are no divisions of age, sex, or status. All of us who are His sons are siblings. While we do have differing roles as husbands and wives, it is this equality as the children of God that is the strongest basis on which to develop *phileo* love. As you come to God as His disciples, you will endeavor to love and serve Him, to fulfill His command (Rom 12:10) to "be devoted to one another with mutual love [*phileo*], showing eagerness in honoring one another." How will you honor your spouse by cultivating *phileo* in your relationship?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

⁵ <http://en.allexperts.com/q/Poetry-678/Author-poem.htm>

***Eros*, the Romantic Love**

Have you ever *fallen* in love? You're not thinking now about *choosing* to love, such as *storge*, or developing love through shared activities, such as *phileo*. For this third kind of love, the expression "falling" is entirely appropriate. Your five senses gather in qualities about someone or something, which your brain evaluates as extremely delightful. Suddenly, you crave intimate interaction with the source of this pleasure. If you love chocolate, you want to eat it. When you love a person with *eros* love, you crave the sight of the features that you find beautiful, the sound of a melodic voice, the taste of a kiss, the smell of perfume, the touch of skin.



***Eros* Is Volatile and Powerful**

Eros love is the most volatile and unstable of all the loves. It cannot be commanded to appear, but it does require a choice. It is sometimes like stepping off a cliff and freefalling through clouds of pleasurable emotion. What kind of reception you receive at the bottom—when the feelings of *eros* wane, as they characteristically do, and "real life" sets in—depends on which cliff you jumped off. *Eros* is the least able of all the love types to sustain a marriage alone, but it adds a great deal of happiness when partnered with the other three types of love.

Eros often includes a kind of temporary, light-headed insanity that has you singing between raindrops and fighting dragons, perhaps willingly risking death to be with your beloved. Its altered view of reality and personal sacrifice is what caused Jacob to work for Laban for seven years to earn Rachel as his wife, yet conclude, "But they seemed to him but a few days because of his love for her" (Gen 29:19-20).

***Eros* Is Natural**

Eros is one of the most natural types of love. It is the source of some of the human race's most beautiful accomplishments, such as the Taj Mahal and Shakespeare's sonnets. While *eros* is often seen as a base sort of love, it is actually highly complex, and it spans quite a number of feelings. It is the love that is primarily *emotional and physical*. While it may be coaxed through pleasurable and beautiful surroundings, it can never be commanded by an act of the will.

When not tempered by other types of love, *eros* may be full of contradictions and compulsions. It may inspire heroic selflessness one moment and destructive selfishness the next. In fact, its mysterious effects on human behavior have been a never-ending source of songs, poems, and stories! It is important to note that rather than being a concoction invented by chivalry in the Middle Ages, or by Hollywood even more recently, anthropologists have discovered romantic love in every culture in every era throughout history. That is because God, not men, invented romantic, *eros* love.

***Eros* Is Misunderstood**

The church has not always agreed throughout history. Some scholars in earlier centuries said *eros* love should never be found in a Christian relationship. These scholars have failed to recognize that it is the misuse of *eros* that is sin. Because Christians have historically rejected the many blessings of romantic *eros* that are so obvious to the rest of the world, Christianity has often harmed its witness to the world. How many people, both believers and nonbelievers, have accepted the lie that God hates the pleasure caused by the sensations that He created?

Eros Is Biblical

While the word *eros* is never used in the Bible, examples of it abound. The most obvious positive example is Song of Solomon. Total bodily denial is a vestige of pagan asceticism, dualism, or legalism, not biblical Christianity.

- Please read Colossians 2:20-21.

These philosophies, and the religions based on them, say that the body itself is evil, which would of course be incompatible with *eros*. But this is not what the Bible says! The Bible promotes **self-control**, which is very compatible with *eros*. Biblical self-control does the following:

- Waits for expression of eros love in a way that is good for the other, as well as for self (Mt 7:12).
- Denies self-centered thinking and seeks to please the other (Rom 15:2).
- Exhibits a grateful heart that enjoys and thanks God for the sexual and tactile pleasure that He provides in the sexual marriage relationship (Prov 5:18-19).

The way to combat sinful lust, as Paul points out in Colossians 2, is not to eliminate pleasure or to reckon the physical body as evil, but to exercise self-control and to direct *eros* love in the way God intends.

Eros Has a Good and Bad Form

Eros does have both healthy and destructive forms to which literature in every culture will attest. Because *eros* can be linked to pleasurable experiences, commercial industries use it to try to sell products by implying that if I have whiter teeth and nicer clothing, I will be more attractive and get more love. It is true that physical beauty is one of the factors that stimulates *eros*, but building a relationship on *eros* alone gives rise to weak marriages that break apart when the rains come, just like the parable of the house built on the sand (Mt 7:26-27). If our information about love comes from commercials alone, it is no wonder that our marriages are so weak. In order to be experienced safely in its creative rather than destructive form, *eros* must be anchored to more than just the five senses. A good way to think of *eros* is as mortar, which belongs between the bricks of marriage but cannot make up the entire structure.

Eros Is Fluctuating

We often love things with *eros*. I have a mango on my desk right now. I love the way it looks—green, yellow, and red colors, which are blending like a rainbow on a smooth, oblong shape, not quite an oval. This one has a cute little nose at one end. I love the perfumed, sweet way it smells when I hold it to my nose, and how cool and smooth it feels when I press it against my cheek. I love the way this mango feels in my hands—heavy and smooth. I have high hopes for enjoying the sweetness inside. I remember the last time that I ate a mango, and I imagine how delicious this one will be. I love the way the bright orange flesh glistens. I love the way the cubes of mango are cool and slippery on my tongue on a hot day. I love their unique flavor and smell as I chew—not too sweet or too sour. I expect that eating this mango will make me happy. My love for mangoes is a low-grade, but sincere, *eros*.

If this mango disappoints me with pithy, sour flesh, will I still love it? Furthermore, when I am filled with enough mango, do I want more? Not for a while. In fact, if I were forced to eat mangoes every day for every meal, how long would it be before mangoes disgusted me? Not long. *Eros* love anticipates pleasure and grows stronger the longer it must wait. But once it is satisfied, it recedes. Another love must fill in the gap until *eros* is again offered the right conditions for growth. This is why parents are rightly terrified when their children marry people they met two weeks before. It is why a woman who knows her husband chose her for beauty

alone worries incessantly about her appearance and is extremely jealous whenever he looks at another woman. No matter how much you wish it otherwise, *eros* is only constant or increases while *unsatisfied*. Once gratified, it abates. If glutted, it disappears.

Selfish Eros

For one of the saddest examples of the damage which can be done by *eros* in its sinful, destructive form, please read the story of Tamar and Amnon in 2 Samuel 13:1-20. In this story, we can see many warnings to heed. Sinful *eros*, made up of infatuation and lust, does the following:

- Looks at externals
- Imagines the personality underneath to be the way it desires
- May not have any desire to know the *real* person inside the beautiful body
- Thrives on insecurity and risky behavior
- Does not care for the well-being of the “beloved”
- Makes selfish demands, rather than offers of benefit

Infatuation fades, never to return, because it is based on a false image. In the case of Tamar, the outcome was disastrous. Once satiated, Amnon’s lust turned to hate and Tamar was sent away weeping. Evil *eros* uses and then discards a soul’s intimacy with no more esteem than the pit of my mango. For this reason, evil *eros* leaves its victims feeling used and perhaps suicidal. In any unstable relationship outside marriage, *eros* may use your body temporarily for the pleasure it yields, but it devalues your soul, the center, which is the most precious and unique part of you. It is no accident that the rise of suicide worldwide⁶ would happen at the same time as the acceptance of *eros* outside marital bounds⁷. Have you ever been bitten by this poisonous snake?

Eros as Lust

Another name for the destructive, selfish form of *eros* is lust. It is a dangerous snare both for the person who feels it and for the one who is its object. It is essential, therefore, for single people to learn to identify it and never to confuse it with genuine *eros* love. Here are some guidelines.

1. Lust will not wait to get satisfaction; good *eros* is willing to wait to get and give satisfaction.
2. Lust is based on a fantasy; good *eros* is a kind of tender realism, which improves what it sees by looking through its loving lenses.
3. Lust looks primarily for personal satisfaction, regardless of its effect on the other individual involved; good *eros* naturally ebbs and flows, but highly values the beloved’s entire well-being and would sacrifice self before causing harm to the beloved.
4. Lust may feed on the danger of discovery, intensified by the awareness of being forbidden and sinful; good *eros* blossoms in a committed relationship bounded by emotional safety.

Eros as Love

While lust destroys, *eros* love, in its creative form, gives life and heals. To those who were not loved physically as children with gentle touch, *eros* love in the context of a committed

⁶ www.voanews.com/english/2009-09-10-voa31.cfm--Suicide is up 60% in the past 50 years according to the WHO. Every year about 1 million people die by suicide, or about 3,000 deaths per day.

⁷ . www.bio-medicine.org/medicine-news/Alarming-Rise-In-Teenage-Sex-Rate-10715-1/ It says that in the last 50 years, the number of teen girls who are involved in sex has quadrupled. “In the earlier years (1950) only 13 per cent of teenage girls admitted to being sexually active, compared with more than 60 per cent of boys. But recently in the 1990s, 47 per cent of teenage girls were found to be sexually active.”

relationship can soothe those early wounds. Author/counselor Dr. Ed Wheat says that he notices it gives people a new outlook, instills a sense of well-being, calms fears, and raises low self-esteem. It is literally “good medicine.”⁸ Another marriage counselor, Anne Kristin Carroll, wrote a book, *From the Brink of Divorce* (Doubleday, 1978), describing marriages that had been saved by “falling in [*eros*] love.”

When *eros* love is genuine and tempered by the other loves, a man’s *eros*, even supercharged by his physical sexual drive, desires not only to claim the beloved physically but also to give *himself* fully to his beloved’s entire well-being. He wants her, not for a night, but for always—both in his bed and at his side. He may give her gifts and write her songs or poems. He applies his intellect and strength to solving her problems. He pledges his undying love and asks her to become his forever. He describes for her the beautiful home he wants to make for them to share loving intimacy. He makes promises: to defend her against her enemies, to wipe away her tears, and to provide her with clothing that will accentuate her beauty. He assures her that she will always be beautiful to him, even when she is old. If necessary, he will sacrifice himself to save her. The inspiration and demands of *eros* love creates heroes and artists out of ordinary men. But his ultimate aim is to win her love so that they can forever possess each other (Song 6:3). The *eros* lover models Christ’s love for His church (Eph 5:25).

Eros in Sex

Eros in a woman responds to her lover’s muscular strength, tempered by a tenderness that lets her know that his strength will only be used to defend her, never against her. This combination of strength and tenderness is a powerful aphrodisiac for a woman and causes her to relax and surrender to the delight of being aroused by his powerful love. In response to his ardor, her voice mellows and she becomes serene, her movements languid and soft. She seeks to caress and please him. Her *eros* causes her to become beautiful and sweet in voice, in spirit, and in her physical appearance, so that he will continue to desire and delight in her. She longs for time alone with him where she may give him physical pleasure and take delight in his body, as he delights in hers. She wants him to belong to her exclusively, as she does to him. In these ways and more, a wife’s *eros* models the love of the church in its spiritual response to Christ’s strength and His gentleness toward her.

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Advice on *Eros* from the Song of Solomon

The Song of Solomon, more than any other book of the Bible, describes in vivid and poetic detail the principles of *eros* in marriage. This couple sees, hears, touches, smells, and even tastes each other’s body as if it is rare cuisine (Song 7:7-9). The book holds many secrets to developing and maintaining loving *eros* in your relationship, despite its tendency to fluctuate. While poetic, Song of Solomon’s images are sensual and its descriptions of sexual organs graphic (even more in the Hebrew). Jewish men were not permitted to read it until they were thirty years old (which is a shame, because by that age, they had probably been married for some years).

It is sad fact, though, that since the time Greek and Roman culture tried to divide the body into two parts—the physical body as evil and the spirit as good (an idea still practiced in many cultures today)—“good” people did not talk about sex, even in marriage. If they *enjoyed* sex, they did so privately and perhaps guiltily. In order to avoid the plain truth of the sexual imagery in the

⁸ Ed Wheat, MD and Gloria Okes Perkins, *Love Life for Every Married Couple*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980). p 102

Song of Solomon, most ancient church leaders interpreted the book as solely an allegory of the church and Christ, with absolutely no basis in real marriage.

The fact that the marriage intimacy described in the Song of Solomon mirrors the marriage of Christ and the church does not *decrease* the truth that it was written to instruct us in the romantic and sexual facets of marriage. Many, if not most, of the events of the Old Testament are types and foreshadows of New Testament truths, without diminishing their historical reality (1 Cor 10:11; Rom 15:4). Because history has an Author, He led people to enact and then record real events that contain, for later generations, many truths and guideposts to discover—like sweeping up lost coins (Lk 15:8).

The Song of Solomon teaches us how to make the conditions right for *eros* love and how to work with it as a creative energy in our marriage relationships. We will talk about sex and the Song of Solomon more in Lesson 8, but let's look at ways to develop *eros* love in marriage. In a healthy marriage, romantic *eros* creates the positive atmosphere for sex.

1. Like *phileo*, *eros* grows only where conditions are pleasant and safe.

Root out underlying negatives in your attitude—such as bitterness, anger, or unforgiveness. Give up any interactions that attack and wound your partner; instead, practice being vulnerable and intimate about what you are thinking. This prepares a place for *eros* to grow in your relationship.

2. Your thoughts are the key to *eros*.

- Please read Song of Solomon 1:2-3.

You can have the most handsome husband or the most beautiful wife, but if your thoughts are negative toward your mate, *eros* will not grow. Here the Shulamite is thinking about her beloved's kisses, the way his body smells, his good reputation, and how lucky she is above all the women who wish that they had such a wonderful husband. Use your imagination as a gift of God to enhance your marriage relationship. Forsake any fantasy about other people or other bodies. Learn to bounce your eyes off any seductive image that is not your spouse. Instead, take your imagination to places where loving *eros* will be stimulated. Think on the parts of your beloved's body that you find appealing: the sound of your beloved's voice; intimate times you have shared together; times when your beloved did something brave or admirable. As one wise woman said, "Sex begins in the kitchen."

3. Did you know romantic kissing is biblical?

Look again at Song of Solomon 1:2. God made lips with proportionally more nerve endings than other parts of the body, so it is one of the most sensitive places to give and receive pleasure. Never kiss your spouse in an easily forgotten way. Make each kiss something that builds eagerness for the next time you will be together alone, just as the Shulamite did. Especially when we have been married for a long time, kisses can become mere expressions of greeting to mark comings and goings. Next time you leave or come home, try kissing for at least thirty to sixty seconds. You will be surprised at how long half a minute is and at how different the experience will seem compared to the one-second "peck." A thirty-second kiss will get both of your motors running and promises pleasure to come. Kiss other places of your beloved's body to express your thoughts. What can you express with a kiss on the hand? A kiss on the forehead? A kiss on the neck or shoulder?

4. Imagine your beloved through a competitor's eyes (Song 1:3).

What qualities does your spouse have that your friends wish were in their spouses? Remind yourself how fortunate you are. Tell your spouse how lucky you are.

5. Because *eros* must hold a visual picture in the mind that is beautiful, make your spouse's job easier by keeping your body attractive.

- Please read Song of Solomon 2:14; 5:10-16; 6:5.

Note what colors, scents, hairstyles, or clothing your spouse likes on you. If you do not know, ask or model various things for your spouse in order to discover his/her favorites. This is just as important for men as for women. Use your voice, eyes, and facial expressions to express beauty as well as loving desire. Do not let your spouse's mental image of you include a face and voice that is sneering, nagging, yelling, condemning, or ridiculing. Let the pictures that your spouse carries of you make him/her eager to be with you again. Use your eyes to send a secret message of love, even from across the room.

6. Practice creative touch, both sexual and nonsexual.

Especially in long marriages, habitual touch can become systematic and mechanical, designed only to produce sexual arousal rather than to inspire delight. Such stimulus may produce a physical response in preparation for intercourse, but if it is dull and results-oriented, it is not *eros* love and will not provide emotional satisfaction to either one. Dr Wheat⁹, mentioned earlier, recommends having regular "touch dates," during which a married couple spends the evening alone, touching each other all over—holding hands, stroking, massaging all non-erogenous parts of each other's body, even feet! This feast of touch helps to develop the *eros* emotions that lead naturally into sexual foreplay and turn it from bland to thrilling.

7. Enhance *eros* with other accessories that stimulate the senses: sights, sounds, smells, touches, tastes.

Look at how many accessories Solomon mentions just in the first two chapters:

- 1:3, massage oil
- 1:10, jewelry
- 1:12, perfume
- 1:16, a luxurious bed
- 2:5, sweet pastry and fruit
- 2:12, flowers
- 2:12, doves cooing

How many can you find in the remainder of the book?

8. Like other types of love, *eros* requires time together.

Unlike the other types of love, *eros* requires intense, exclusive focus on each other, not just on shared activities or possessions. It grows with pleasurable activities in which you both look attractive in a beautiful setting. Create or find places where you are both able to relax and feel beautiful.

Unlike *storge*, *eros* resists routine. In the first chapter of the Song of Solomon, the couple is enjoying love in their own home. In Song of Solomon 2:14, however, the husband scouts out a beautiful place where they can be outdoors in a lovely environment and still have enough secrecy to make love. In Song of Solomon 7:11-13, the wife also plans an overnight away in the village, then an outdoor tryst in the vineyards. How can you follow their example? God knows what your marriage needs and put these stories in His Word for you to follow their example. Plan monthly or quarterly overnights away from duties and other people, in places that you find private and

⁹ Ed Wheat, MD and Gloria Okes Perkins, *Love Life for Every Married Couple*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980).

beautiful. The more stress your marriage is under due to lack of privacy, or the greater responsibility you each have, the more frequent these trysting times need to be. If you cannot afford a hotel, can you offer to house-sit when a friend travels? Can you redecorate a room in your house into a private oasis? Can you prepare a Pasha's boudoir with blankets and pillows on the bedroom floor? Can you sleep outside in a tent?

One older couple I know decided to design a beautiful guest room. When it was finished, the wife confided in me that the room gave them a wonderful idea, and they tiptoed down the hall together to enjoy the guest room as their special trysting place. Two couples I know agreed together to provide a special evening for each other twice a month. When it was their turn, they prepared and brought a romantic dinner for two to the door. As they delivered the dinner, they picked up the couple's children for an overnight at the other home. Two weeks later, it was the other couple's turn to give the meal and take the children.

9. Make your spouse's fantasies come true.

- Please read Song of Solomon 1:4.

Here the Shulamite tells Solomon how much she desires him physically. She literally says, "I have been thinking about you until I am overflowing with desire. Let's run to where we can be alone together." Prepare the time and place for your physical relationship, cultivate the anticipation in your thoughts, and do not be afraid to tell your beloved why and how much you desire him/her.

Wives, one of the reasons for pornography's success is because those fantasy women say the things men wish they could hear from you. "Take me, I'm yours. Hurry. I can't stand it any longer." Surprise your husband by taking the lead in cultivating *eros* love, just like the Shulamite bride. Men generally do not have the same need to take time to grow into thoughts of physical love as women do. Their interest in sex is almost instantaneous. So when a man is aroused, he may misunderstand his wife's inability to respond quickly to direct sexual advances as rejection. In reality, she may just need a little more time and preparation. He does not automatically understand that a woman must actually be prepared for a sexual encounter, as the Song of Solomon models. If you are a woman, it will do no good trying to will yourself to feel immediately beautiful and responsive when your husband approaches you, when in fact you feel exhausted and ugly. You cannot circumvent the rules of *eros*. Instead, prepare! Do the things that make you feel beautiful and filled with desire.

Since a day in most women's busy lives does not promote thoughts about your husband's dazzling attractiveness, and since it may be impossible for him to whisk you away from home every time you want to enjoy each other physically, you may need to withdraw from everyone for a while to refresh—to read, bathe, or listen to music (perhaps all three)—and to relax and think *eros* thoughts about your husband before approaching him sexually.

- Please read Song of Solomon 7:10-11.

In this passage, the wife notices that her husband desires her, but she needs a refreshing situation in order to respond to him fully; she suggests a plan that will refresh her and delight him. Ask for your husband's cooperation in order to make your plan work (emphasize why you are preparing yourself, and what he can anticipate if he helps). Can he play with the children or wash the dishes in the evening, so you can refresh yourself for *eros* after the children go to bed? Can you take a nap during the day, so that you can wake him in the night? Take the initiative to *do* whatever is necessary to shift that gear. You are not being selfish! Nor are you being ungodly or unChristian. It is submitting yourself to the way God designed you in order to be able to better love your husband with *eros* love. To love well in a long-term marriage takes both effort and preparation.

Husbands (and wives), read Song of Solomon 2:2; 4:7; 6:8-10. Your wife wants to hear both *how* you find her beautiful and *why* you desire her *above all other women*. She fears that you say you love her because your hormones urge you to mate with her, and any other woman would be just as desirable. Become a student of your wife's heart. What does she most value in herself that she wants you to notice and appreciate? What love stories does she cherish in literature or film? What does the lover say to his beloved in those stories? Appreciate your wife for the unique gift that she is to you and tell her so. Later in this lesson, we will suggest the many ways that people not only express but also help themselves to believe that they are loved. Learn and practice the ways that communicate love to your wife.

Seven times Solomon calls his beloved and their love a "garden" (for example, Song 4:12). This refers to the first garden, where all was right and the couple was in harmony with God and nature. Recognize that, as with a garden, *eros* tends to wane. When you cultivate and feed it the right nutrients, it will grow up again seasonally. Do not make rash decisions or think that love is gone just because *eros* is dormant for a while. Rest in the other types of love while preparing for *eros*' reappearance. Sow with creativity and insight into your beloved's tastes, and you will reap delight for yourself, as well. When you promote a healthy *eros* in marriage, you may enjoy a sense of peace and wholeness that brings you both into the experience of Paradise.

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***Agape*, the Unconditional Love (With Some Surprising Boundaries)**

The term *agape* was not widely used in Greek and Roman literature. When Jesus needed a term for a love that was different from the types of conditional love with which people were familiar, He snatched this obscure term and then invested it with the meanings that would reveal God's love for mankind. It became the centerpiece of the shockingly good news, which Christians prize as the pearl of great price:

"For this is the way God loved [agape] the world: He gave his one and only Son that everyone who believes in him should not perish but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).



All Purpose

In marriage, this kind of love is also priceless. It can hold your marriage together through hard times when nothing else can, and it can keep those hard times shorter and farther apart. It acts as a general, cleansing antiseptic that stops the "germs" of selfishness, disappointment, and anger from incubating the diseases of resentment, bitterness, and lack of love. This kind of love brings healing and peace instead.

Agape is not just for big problems. Even in excellent marriages between two people who love God and each other, unlovable traits will show up. We will wound each other. Crises will tax our emotions to the limit. But when other kinds of love give up the race and collapse, panting, on the infield, *agape* is just getting started.

Agape begins with a deliberate choice to do what is best for the beloved. It has the capacity to go on infinitely unreciprocated and to be continually refilled from God's never-ending supply. But we would be wrong if we misunderstood this love to say that it mindlessly continues to do good forever in the face of abuse and rejection, or that it kicks in automatically without thought. If we imitate God in His demonstration of *agape* love, we learn that He loves by choice, and He limits

and makes conditions for *agape*'s expression—not because His love is too weak to sustain abuse, but because *agape* will not violate respect for the beloved's choices. *Agape* sets appropriate boundaries in order not to oppose other God-designed principles, such as not participating in sin.

Setting Boundaries Like God's

Let's look at God's *agape*—from His offer of boundless love to the establishment of boundaries that limit His expression of *agape*—and see what we can learn.

1. First, God loved us, and Jesus died for us, while we were yet sinners (Rom 5:7-9).

The Bible tells us that because of our sin and rebellion, we were under condemnation, destined for hell (Rom 6:23; Eph 2:12; Rev 20:11-15). We did not deserve His love at all. Because of *agape*, though, Christ suffered on our behalf: the just for the unjust (1 Pet 3:18). Now, He offers to forgive us and to bring us into a love relationship with Him (Rom 10:9-10). He stands with open arms, ready to forgive us, ready to welcome us into His family, and ready to lavish goodness upon us (Mt 7:11; Jn 1:12;). This is the boundless aspect of *agape*. But, as we have said before, there are some caveats.

2. We must receive this gift of salvation.

It is not automatic. He will pursue our hearts, but He will not force salvation on us if our hearts are unwilling (Jn 1:11).

3. Christ allows those who do not wish to follow Him to walk away from Him (Lk 18:22-25).

4. Those who continually turn away from the truth toward sin, He gives over to greater and greater sin and depravity (Rom 1:24, 26, 28).

5. At death, God seals the decision to turn away from Him by allowing those who did not want to receive Him to spend an eternity separated from Him in hell (Jn 3:36).

God's *agape* love never ceases, but it cannot be expressed in relationship if the person is unwilling to relate to Him.

From examining God's actions, we learn the principle that while *agape* offers generously, it always respects the dignity of the beloved by offering love in an open hand, with no compulsion or manipulation for the beloved to receive it. If the relationship is continually rejected, or a covenant is violated, it does not force what is unwanted. It is not insecure about the rejection, nor demanding that the other party accept the offered love. This is the hard aspect of love referenced in 1 Corinthians 7:12-15. Verse 15 says: "But if the unbeliever wants a divorce, let it take place. In these circumstances the brother or sister is not bound. God has called you in peace."

In Line With God's Character

We also learn that while *agape* is always in force, other principles must influence its expression. For instance, God cannot look on sin because it is incompatible with His holy nature. Similarly, we cannot, in the name of love, participate in evil just because it would please our beloved. True *agape* love's expression must always be compatible with the character of God, who hates evil. So while it is right and good for a wife to love her husband sexually, it is evil for her to participate in a three-sided adulterous relationship with her husband and another woman, just because her husband wants it. The marriage bed (sexual intercourse in marriage) must be kept pure and undefiled (Jer 3:8; 1 Cor 6:15-19; 1 Cor 7; Heb 13:4).

Because *agape* in marriage springs from God's love, it is able to offer love with great winsomeness and sacrifice; it hopes for a positive response. But it does not need the beloved to respond positively. It is very strong, both in its expression and its ability to restrain expression.

An Example

I recognized this kind of love in Tom when we were first friends. We had known each other as children and been reintroduced as young adults. He was a new believer and, while he made it clear that he had strong feelings for me, I did not take him seriously as a prospective husband and did not give him any hope that I would change my mind. He left the city and grew in his faith and maturity. As time went on, Tom realized that he could not imagine marrying anyone else. So he asked the Lord what to do. I was already spending time with a suitor who was older and more established in life, so to Tom the situation seemed hopeless. The Lord spoke to Tom's heart; He asked him to return to my area and to offer me *agape* and *phileo* love as a servant and friend, with no romantic pressure or expectations.

Instead of trying to convince me to break off the relationship with the other suitor, or pressuring me in any way, he began to look for ways to serve unobtrusively. I lived in a small house with a sister in Christ and sometimes we hosted the single adults Bible study. When Tom visited our house with the group, he noticed a broken table and made an appointment with my roommate to come while I was not there to repair it. When he noticed my lawn needed mowing, he mowed it. When I was stranded without gasoline with my gentleman friend, my roommate called him to go rescue us. She knew he would bring me gasoline without embarrassing me with my gentleman friend. Tom sometimes asked for my advice and took it to heart. He tried to understand my thoughts and often followed my suggestions. He refrained from the romantic gestures that would have been unwelcome, and instead offered me friendship that respected my thoughts and offered his strength to help me. It did not take long for me to realize that this was the man I wanted for my husband! Twenty-six years later, my opinion has not changed. He showed me and continues to show me *agape* love.

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1 Corinthians 13, the *Agape* Passage

Paul describes *agape* love in detail in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, listing the fifteen characteristics that follow:

1. Patient
2. Kind
3. Not envious
4. Does not brag
5. Not puffed up
6. Not rude
7. Not self-serving
8. Not easily made angry
9. Not resentful
10. Not glad about injustice
11. Rejoices with truth
12. Bears everything
13. Believes everything
14. Hopes everything
15. Endures everything

Notice that these characteristics include love's attitudes and actions. Let's see how they might be applied to a marriage relationship.

Patient (v 4)

The first attitude of *agape* love is patience. This word does not only mean that it will wait on a street corner for you. Instead, it is the patience that waits years, if necessary, for the fulfillment of desires. This Greek word, *makrothumeo*, means having a “long mind.” It is used in Hebrews 6:15 to describe Abraham’s patience in waiting for God’s promise to be fulfilled. It is also used to describe God’s patience in putting up with generations of evil in order for the elect to come to salvation (2 Pet 3:9). *Agape* has staying power. That same thought is picked up later in verse 7, which describes in greater detail how it waits, hoping and believing. *Agape* is optimistic.

In marriage, life may not always be pleasant. Your spouse may be unable or unwilling to meet your needs. The *agape* lover patiently waits for the fulfillment of his desires. He sets aside his needs until the needs of the beloved are met. As I have endured treatments for breast cancer over the past year and have been too ill to serve him, Tom has been the *agape* lover who perseveres in hope. Now that I am well, I rejoice to be able to give him loving service once again.

Kind (v 4)

The second characteristic mentioned in verse 4 refers to *agape*’s action-producing motivation. Love is *kind*. Notice it does not merely do kind things from time to time. Anyone can do that. Instead, love is intrinsically motivated by kindness. The Greek word translated as “kind” in 1 Corinthians 13 is the same word used in Luke 6:35 and Ephesians 4:32. In Luke 6:35, Jesus instructs us to love our enemies and lend to anyone who asks, but not to worry if the thing lent is not returned, because God is *kind* to people who are ungrateful and evil. Therefore, the kindness involved does not expect to be appreciated, noticed, or paid back with a reciprocal good deed. It even disregards the fact that its kind deed may be paid back with an evil one. The word *kind* is used again in Ephesians 4:32 and instructs us to be *kind* and forgive each other because God has forgiven us. We will talk more about forgiveness in Lesson 7.

Not Rude (v 5)

Several of the other characteristics in 1 Corinthians 13 further describe this aspect of *agape*’s kind actions: “It is not rude” (v 5). In marriage, do we stop to look at the impact our actions will have on our spouses before we act or react? Will our actions cause embarrassment, sadness, or worry? *Agape* always considers the result and adjusts its actions so that they are never rude or inappropriate. *Agape* perceives what the appropriate and loving action would be in every situation and proceeds accordingly.

Not Self-Serving (v 5)

Another characteristic of *agape*’s actions mentioned in verse 5 is that *agape* is not *self-serving*. This trait gets to the root of what is usually the most wrong with us. We are in the center of our own universe, and we see our spouse, our children, our ministry, our job, and even our God as existing mainly to serve us.

- We pray so that we can convince God to give us what we want.
- We discipline our children so that they will not annoy or embarrass us.
- We minister in the church for the security and good reputation it brings.
- We humor our spouses to make our interchanges more pleasant.

If our good actions are merely self-serving, we have made *ourselves* into false gods (Isa 14:13-14; Jer 2:13) and will find no rest until we deal with this pivotal question: “What God (or gods) do I serve?”

The *agape* lover seeks to serve with open, giving hands, not to manipulate the beloved into serving. Jesus exemplified this by giving up His life on the cross once and for all, but also by the following:

- Leaving behind His privileged position in heaven.
- Taking on the form of a servant (Phil 2:7).
- Praying for His beloved (Jn 17:1-26).
- Giving up earthly comfort to serve His beloved (Mt 8:20).
- Acting for the benefit of the beloved, even when apart (Heb 7:25).

How can you do these things for your beloved?

Not Easily Angered (v 4)

Because *agape* relinquishes its self-centeredness, it is not easily angered (v 4). If I live only for myself, when I receive an insult or my inadequacies are pointed out, I flare up with anger so that my spouse knows it is not safe to do that again. But *agape* accepts reproof, and even insult, with calculated equanimity, just like Jesus did (1 Pet 2:23).

Does Not Brag, Not Puffed Up (v 4)

When my self is on the throne, I must work to keep my self-idol big and impressive for my spouse to try to make sure he/she serves and glorifies me, too. But *agape* is not trying to impress and call attention to self; thus it does not brag (v 4). The pleasure of doing good for the beloved is enough for *agape*.

Not Resentful (v 4)

If my spouse gets credit for something I do or fails to appreciate my role in his/her success, I am no longer resentful. I no longer see everyone else as competition for the respect and adoration I want for myself.

Not Glad About Injustice, but Rejoices in the Truth (v 6)

Instead of bragging about my good deeds, resenting my spouse's good deeds, and getting angry when I miss getting the credit, I always try to make my spouse look good—if I am walking in *agape* love. *Agape* grieves when my spouse fails to behave righteously or justly, and it is happiest when the truth prevails, no matter who gets the credit. Truth, not self, is its organizing principle.

Bears All Things, Believes All Things, Hopes All Things, Endures All Things (v 7)

In maintaining its work of love, *agape* continues to bear up through whatever obstacles and attacks are thrown at it and keeps believing, hoping, and enduring (v 7). Even in the marriage mentioned earlier in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16 in which the spouse leaves and the marriage ends in divorce, *agape* does not stop praying for and desiring the best good of the beloved, even if that best good includes hard things, such as rejection on the part of false lovers (Hos 2:6-7) and an exposure of sin and lies (Eph 5:11).

In a marriage, when the going gets tough, *agape* gets to work. Have you had to use *agape* love to keep caring for your spouse when he/she did not deserve it? When have you seen your spouse show *agape* toward you? Ask God to help you remember and thank Him for those times.

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How to Love When the Well Runs Dry: A Twelve-Step Plan

“I have no love left to give you.” Kip’s words sounded leaden as she offered them to Luke apologetically. “I really wanted to make our marriage work, but I know now it is hopeless. There is nothing left anymore.”



Perhaps some of you have either heard or said something like this. Is there something we can do when love is gone, other than bury it and eulogize it? Many songs and stories have brought tears to our eyes about bygone love. It’s “the way we were,” beautiful while it lasted, but gone forever, never to be renewed. For many people, the only recourse they see is to search for a new love. But research shows that most often, if one has not found lasting love

with one partner, one will not find it with the next one either.

The Holy Spirit

The only solution to falling out of love is not to find a new mate, but to start learning how to love the one to whom you are married. But how? It may not be possible to activate any of the more natural loves, if your spouse is truly “unlovable.” If your spouse does not respect you, *phileo* will not grow. If your spouse finds you unattractive, or if you find your spouse unattractive, you will find it difficult to develop *eros*. If your spouse is perpetually angry and says cruel and hurtful things, you will not be able to feel *storge*.

Through the Holy Spirit, *agape* is always available to you. You can show *agape* toward your spouse to clear the way for the other loves to begin growing. In fact, you can start to *agape* your partner right now, no matter the current state of your relationship or even your emotions. God commands us to *agape* (Jn 15:12), so it is always His will for us to do, especially in marriage.

Priming the Pump

I grew up near the Cascade Mountains of Washington State, and in September my family often went into the mountains to pick wild blueberries. One particular summer when I was about twelve years old, I remember a hot, dusty day in the mountains, and I was thirsty. After a day of hard work picking blueberries, my father and I stopped at a campground to use the restrooms. There was no running water, but there was a pump with a handle. I ran to the pump and began levering the handle up and down the way I’d seen pioneers on television do. But even after several minutes of effort, I was dripping with sweat but water would not come. My father discovered me and pointed out the tin can sitting nearby full of water. He told me to pour the water into the well to “prime” the pump. At first, I thought he must be mistaken. The water coming back out of the pump was only the tepid water I had put into it, but slowly the water that I had put into the pump made it able to draw fresh water. Suddenly, instead of splutters and dribbles, the pump gushed out gallons of cold, refreshing water. My face and feet were soon drenched as I tried to drink. In fact, there was water enough for an entire bath if I needed it! A little sign reminded me that before walking away I needed to refill the coffee can with water for the next visitor.

Your Twelve-Step Plan

If both you and your spouse work at developing and maintaining each type of love, your love may never need priming like a dry pump. But if your love runs dry and needs priming, never manipulate or try to force your spouse to prime it. Instead, ask the Holy Spirit to bear His fruit of unmerited love (Gal 5:22) through you. Here are twelve steps for you to let *agape* restore the stream of love in your relationship.

1. Read and memorize 1 Peter 5:6-7. Recognize that if your spouse is a difficult person, this will be a spiritual battle. But the Lord can strengthen you with His Spirit and love your spouse through you.
2. Identify the expectations and conditions that have been disillusioned in your marriage and offer them to God, along with your desire to have a good marriage. Submit your “Isaacs” to Him continually (Gen 22:2). These things that you want are not necessarily wrong, but all things that are not submitted to God can become idols and can actually prevent you from obtaining your desires.
3. If you do not love your spouse, confess this sin to God (Col 3:19; 1 Jn 4:21), along with other sins the Lord brings to mind. Ask God to fill you with His Holy Spirit to enable you to love your spouse humbly and unconditionally. Realize that this may not result in any change in your emotions. *Agape* is not an emotion, but a desire followed by action. You are desiring and then giving your heart, mind, and strength to the best good of your spouse, just as Christ laid down His life for those He loved (1 Jn 3:16).
4. Cast your concerns onto God’s broad shoulders by giving Him each of the problems in prayer. Express your own helplessness to deal with them, but express your faith that He will take care of them properly. Visualize leaning back into the arms of Jesus and feeling that His strength can support your full weight. This is His problem and you are His tender concern (1 Pet 5:7). Your goal is to listen to Him and heed His instructions (Jn 2:5). Let Him carry the heavy problems in your relationship, just as if you were the smaller ox in a pair with His greater strength carrying the bulk of the load (Mt 11:29-30).
5. Humbly ask your spouse to forgive you for the sins you have committed against him/her. Describe them specifically, not generally. Do not say “*if I have ...*” or use generalities such as “for not being a good husband ...” While it may be true that your spouse has equal or greater fault, you are only responsible for your sins, so these are the only ones to mention while asking forgiveness. Ask your spouse if you have wounded or disappointed him/her with other actions or attitudes and ask forgiveness for these as well. Do not imply any blame to your spouse for these sins or any others. This is not the time to mention mitigating circumstances, either. “I did make a mistake, *but ...*” is not acceptable. Neither is it time to “work on” or “work out” problems together.
6. Express your desire to love better in the future and ask for your spouse’s patience as you try.
7. Spend time studying God’s Word daily, especially the New Testament. Ask God to give you verses and concepts, which will guide you along the way as you let Him love your spouse through you.
8. Listen to the promptings of the Lord for opportunities to do good to your spouse: service, help, prayer, affection, understanding, listening, encouraging, and speaking the truth in love. Set appropriate boundaries to keep yourself safe, if your spouse is likely to be abusive or manipulative. Keep in mind the example of Jesus, who never allowed Himself to be coerced, but followed God’s direction to serve the best good of His followers (Mt 10:19-20; Jn 5:19-20). Doing good does not always mean doing what your spouse *wants*, especially if what is wanted would be sinful (make certain you distinguish between sin and your own preferences). Rather, it means doing what he/she *needs*, or things that are truly *good for* him/her.
9. Keep your thought life under control. Choose to love in your thoughts (Mt 12:34-35; 18:35; 1 Pet 1:22), as well as your actions. Do not be a hypocrite or double-minded. If you *choose* to do good, but you do not *feel* warm and loving, you are not a hypocrite. However, if you choose to do good from self-centered or manipulative motives, that *is* hypocrisy, which you need to sort out and root out (Mt 6:16-18).

10. Realize that your love will be tested, both by your spouse, who may not believe or trust your love, and by the enemy, who wishes to dislodge it for *his* selfish motives. Put on the whole armor of God and learn how to prepare to stand firm in your commitment (Eph 6:11-18). One way you will be tested is through other people's advice. Resist outside advice that is not firmly rooted in the Bible and in accord with God's directions to you (1 Kgs 13:1-26; Prov 4:25-27). Many well-meaning people may try to make you feel like a martyr or foolish. Instead, cultivate fellowship with those who will pray with you and help strengthen your commitment to *agape* love, even when no love is coming back.

11. As often as possible, move warmly toward your spouse without fear (1 Pet 3:6, 14-17). A common way to react to a difficult person is to become passive or withdraw, and feel nothing and/or express nothing. Silence may be appropriate in some situations (Mt 27:11-14), but as the Lord directs the timing and circumstances, *agape* reaches out to talk to and relate with warmth, kindness, wisdom, and personal courage (Acts 24:10; 26:26-29). *Agape* love, rooted in God's wisdom, sees past a hostile attitude to the root needs that underlie it—a need to be loved, to handle guilt, to feel adequate.

12. Be strong, rooted in God and His Word, not leaning on people, reactions, or circumstances (Ps 1:2-3; Jer 17:7-8). *Agape* love is never weak or clingy. As 1 Corinthians 13:7 describes, *agape* is the most powerful strength in the universe because it comes from loving the God who is Love. "Let those who love Him be like the rising of the sun in its might," says Judges 5:31 (NASB).

As a woman said in Dr. Ed Wheat's book *Love Life for Every Married Couple*, "...even if there is no happy ending for our marriage, I will not regret the stand I have taken. I will know that I made the right decision and followed the only course possible for me. I will have done all that I could. But my trust is not in what I am doing, it is in God and His word ... I'm going to keep on obeying Him in my marriage and I'll leave the results with Him. I am at peace with that" (85).

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Nehemiah's Story

Nehemiah is a student in one of our classes in Asia. He tells this story about receiving an unwelcome assignment from the facilitator:

I was a guest worker in another country when I heard about a Bible class that would teach about marriage. I didn't think that I really needed such a class. After all, I had been married for thirty years. My wife was back in my home country, and we had not seen each other for four years. But I went to the class with my friends. I was shocked at all that the Bible said about marriage, about becoming one with my wife—body, soul, and spirit. I wondered if this was possible for an old man like me. Then I was even more shocked when the teachers gave us our homework assignment: to tell my wife that I loved her. After thirty years of marriage, I had never said such a thing!

Everyone in our class grumbled about the assignment. It was not the custom among our people. Plus, I wasn't sure how my wife would react. Perhaps she would laugh at me, or fail to respect me. Perhaps she would become too proud. But the teachers said we could not come back to class until we had done our assignment, so that night I called my wife on the phone. I was very nervous, but asked God to give me strength. After exchanging our news, I said, "Honey, I have something important to tell you—I love you." There was silence on the other end of the line. I wondered what had happened to her. Then I realized she was crying.

"Why didn't you tell me sooner?" She choked. I felt sad that she never knew before.

After finishing the Marriage course, I decided that God did not want my wife and me to continue to be separated anymore. I needed not only to tell her, but also to prove my love for her every day, just as Christ gave Himself to love the church. So I booked a train ticket and headed for home. I sent her a message to meet me at the station in the city on a particular date at 8 o'clock. She was so amazed at the change that had come over me that she hurried to the station to meet me. But I was not on the 8 a.m. train. She did not have any money or any water, but waited in the hot sun all day long for me. Finally, at 8 p.m., I stepped off the train and saw her. My wife and I hardly knew how to greet each other, it had been so long and it was so unfamiliar. I took a deep breath, spread my arms wide, and said, "Darling, I love you, and I want not only to tell you I love you every day, but as God gives me strength, also to show you in every way how much." My poor wife! The shock was so great, and she was so hungry and thirsty that she began crying again and nearly collapsed!

Now, I can barely describe how happy my wife and I are together. We decided that we would give our lives to helping other couples discover the happiness we discovered. So now we travel from village to village in my country. We teach about marriage and urge couples to be reconciled and to love one another. In the past two years, I have already re-married fifteen couples who were separated or divorced. Since my wife is shy, she does not choose to teach, but she sits in the back of each room and prays for me. She is my best friend and my true love. My only regret is that I waited so long to discover how wonderful love in a marriage can be. This teaching is almost as important as the message of salvation and must be urgently spread to all the couples in Asia. Love in marriage is from God!

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Trusting God's Love

We all have heard that God loves the whole world. But what does that have to do with God loving you and me as individuals? How does trusting that God loves you relate to loving your spouse?

Surface and Core Beliefs

You have no doubt learned many facts about God, including the fact that God is love. What happens when this belief is tested in your marriage? God's Word says that we are able to love *because* He first loved us (1 Jn 4:19). So, if you are not sure that He really *does* love you, it affects your ability to love others, particularly your spouse.



Often, we believe things on two levels—a surface, rational level, and a core, heart level. Like the iceberg illustrates, the core level is much more significant, even though not as quickly obvious. You may be able to quote John 3:16 and a dozen other verses revealing that God loves and greatly values you. Under the pressure that marriage brings, however, what you really feel deep in your heart is squeezed out until it shows on the surface in actions. If you fear that God doesn't love you, it can produce ugly actions and attitudes. If your heart harbors this unbelief about God's goodness, you cannot produce living fruit of love or receive love gracefully. This causes a serious problem because you know that you are *supposed* to be producing the fruit of love (Gal 5:22-23), but can't. Fruit is a natural production of abiding in the vine (Jn 15:4). When you try to produce fruit through human striving, rather than through surrender to the Spirit, you will be unsuccessful and your spouse unaffected. Everyone can recognize the difference between fresh, living fruit and painted, wooden fruit.

Jesus often pointed out the inconsistency between the Pharisees' religion and their hidden belief system. It was their false heart beliefs about God, not the religious information that they had memorized, which motivated them to act in unloving ways. So while they were able to recount from memory amazingly long passages of Scripture, and theoretically had devoted their lives to God's service and defending His truth, they were secretly filled with disdain for God and sought only to establish their own kingdoms (Jn 11:48; Rom 10:3).

- Please review the story of the talents in Matthew 25:24-30.

See how the servant perceived his master's character? The Master says that it was unbelief about the master's *goodness* that caused the servant to be unfaithful. Many of us have similar deep-seated negative beliefs about God, just as the servant saw his lord as "a hard man."

Unbelief in God's Goodness

If we look *only* at life experiences to decide whether God loves us, we are in error. Experience alone is a shaky foundation. Once we set ourselves up as judges, we can justify all sorts of unbelief because God has not made a good enough case for His love (in our opinion) to warrant our trust. The problem is that when I judge what is good or true, it is often based on my own self-centered criteria (i.e., what is beneficial to me is good; what is detrimental to me is bad). In that way, I am sinning the same way that Eve did, by saying that *my* experience and *my* benefit are the two main pillars of truth.

Of course experience can be a good teacher, but the information you gather from your experiences, which will tell you the truth about God's character, must be built on the firm foundation of what He has revealed about Himself. Because the world is at war in the unseen arena and because you cannot see the struggle with your eyes, your perceptions of the things that happen, if not viewed through the truth of God's revealed character, may be dead wrong. For example, look how wrong Potiphar was about interpreting the fact that his wife had Joseph's garment. He was wrong in his conclusion because he did not correctly interpret his experience by a correct understanding of Joseph's character and his wife's character (Gen 39:7-20).

Rightly Interpreting Negative Situations

- Please read Romans 8:28-39.

Where do you look for evidence of God's love? If you are experiencing the trials that Paul mentions in this passage—famine, nakedness, sword—can you say that they are *not* separating you from God's love? Wouldn't protecting you from those things be better proof of God's love? Don't we look to God to deliver us from evil? We are disappointed and perhaps angry if He fails to come through for us. We may then be tempted to unbelief. As one angry brother told us after going through multiple illnesses, "How can I believe that God loves me? I wouldn't treat my dog the way God has treated me!"

Where's the Proof?

If protection from suffering and provision for our comfort is *not* the way that God shows His love, what is? What does Scripture say is the proof of God's love? Romans 5:8 does not say that God demonstrates His love by protecting us, although He sometimes does that as well. What does it say? The Bible says that the demonstration of God's love is sending His Son *while we were still sinners*. When we look for proof in any other place, we are bound to eventually be disappointed. We have constructed an idol and are disappointed when it cannot deliver.

If we think God needs to prove His love in any other way than by sending Jesus Christ, we are claiming promises that do not exist! We are failing to believe what He says about us, that salvation from sin is our greatest need—not food, air, water, clothing, sex, companionship, or

even safety. He did not die to win these things for us. These requirements for physical life and the desires of this world are temporary and will pass away. But human beings are eternal. Without salvation, we would spend eternity in agony, separated from God. We were created for union with God, and through the priceless gift of Jesus Christ, we will now experience bliss with Him for all eternity. That is what God says is the demonstration of His love! From where He sits, He knows that this is exceedingly more important than all of our physical needs put together! He sent His Son to meet our greatest need. When we agree with Him that this is our greatest need and thank Him for meeting it, we are well on the way to bringing our mind to right so that we can see the truth of our experiences.

Rightly Interpreting Romans 8:28

But let's return to Romans 8. Verse 28 invites us to believe that everything that happens in our lives will ultimately turn out for good. But we must understand the verse more clearly.

- First, we need to note that this promise is only to those who *already* love God. Often, we tend to take this verse to mean that we can continue to enthrone self and that God will make everything turn out well *for us*, and *then* we will gratefully love Him. On the contrary, He asks us to love Him for who He is and what He has done in Christ first. Then we can claim the promise that all things will “work together for good.”
- Second, we need to properly define “good.” What “good” is Paul talking about in Romans 8:28? Is it that everything will be easy in our lives? We have to look at the promise in view of those people who really did love God fervently and, therefore, should have experienced this verse most fully. How did everything turn out for good in their lives?

Peter and Andrew were crucified. Thomas was speared to death in India. Matthew was hacked to death by a sword. Paul, by the time he had written 2 Corinthians, had already lost count of how many times he was whipped, and he made a brief list of his other sufferings:

Five times I received from the Jews forty lashes less one.
Three times I was beaten with a rod.
Once I received a stoning.
Three times I suffered shipwreck.
A night and a day I spent adrift in the open sea.
Sleepless nights,
In hunger and thirst, many times without food,
In cold and without enough clothing. (2 Cor 11:23-25, 27)

Notice that with all this “bad,” Paul does *not* see a conflict with the fact that God loves Him and is doing him *good*! The reason is that, because of Paul's love for God, what he calls “good” has changed. The good that Paul is experiencing is that because of suffering, he is able to experience Christ's suffering with Him, God is glorified, and the gospel is moving forward to spread God's goodness to the world. He understands God's goodness and invests his life in it.

A Changing Definition of Good

Paul is not looking in circumstances for God to *prove* His love. Paul long ago believed that God had adequately demonstrated His love for him and was instead spending all of his effort proving, through risk and suffering, *that he loved God* (Rom 5:1-11). In fact, the majority of references to “love” in all of Paul's writings have to do with us loving God or loving one another. The ultimate *good* that Paul and the other apostles are looking for is the opportunity to advance God's kingdom, with suffering for His sake a necessary part of that advancement (Acts 5:41; Phil 1:29; 1 Pet 3:14). Can we make the same claim, *especially in our marriages*?

We have only to look at all those whom God loved in Scripture and in history to see that the “good” God promises us in Romans 8:28 always has to do, not with mere personal comfort, but with ultimate “good”:

- Perfecting character (Rom 5:3-4)
- Earning rewards in heaven (Mt 5:11-12)
- Receiving a place of service in God’s kingdom as the ultimate good for the whole world (Rom 8:19-25)

As we choose to interpret what we experience in this life through the grid of the truth that God does indeed love us more than we can imagine, we will find plenty of reasons, like Peter, to “rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy” that good is prevailing, despite difficult situations (1 Pet 1:8). Do you struggle with unbelief about God’s love? The only antidote is to choose to believe based on what God says about Himself as proved by sending His Son (Rom 10:17). Allow Him to reorient your mind to see Christ and His kingdom as the ultimate good.

God’s Word Is Truth: Six Core Beliefs

So, in order to give and receive love, especially to an unpleasant spouse, I must first believe what God says is true, both in my mind and deep in my heart.

1. I must know that God is love (1 Jn 4:8) and that His love is directed toward me in Jesus Christ (Rom 5:8).
2. I must believe God is good (Ex 33:19) and has only good purposes for those who love Him (Rom 8:28).
3. I must trust that my obedience to Him will lead to good results (Rom 6:16-18). Obedience is a *privilege* bought by the death of Christ. Before I knew Christ, I was unable to obey. Now when I obey God, I have a sense of pursuing my *own* heart desires because I love Him.
4. I must be satisfied that when God asks me to do something painful, I can do it in the knowledge that He who asks it from me has something ultimately good in mind. (Rom 8:18).
5. I must believe that He has nobler objectives than my personal comfort (1 Tim 5:6). A similar verse to Romans 8:28 is Proverbs 3:5-6. Many of us have memorized it, but if you haven’t read it lately, take a look again. What we may not realize is that the promise “make your paths straight” does not refer to giving us an easy life. A “straight path” refers to a *righteous* life. Proverbs 2:15 is just one place that reveals the contrasting evil person who has “crooked” paths. He is promising that if we trust the Lord and His revealed truth, it will cause us to live righteously.
6. The test of whether I really trust in God’s love may be seen in whether or not I am able to embrace the things he chooses to bring into my life (Rom 1:21; 2 Cor 9:15).

If I do not ultimately trust God to love me adequately, I cannot love as He loves—it is that simple. When I accept by faith that God loves me, I can let go of my own needs for love and can love others as He loves. I will not be absorbed with meeting my own needs. I can interpret everything that I experience in this life through the grid of the truth—the truth that God loves me. Once I choose to believe deeply what God says about His love toward me, I am set free.

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Lisa's Story

Our friend Lisa grew up in an atmosphere of fear and abuse. She went to Sunday school and learned Bible verses, but inwardly she found it too hard to believe God loved her.

“I spent so much of my childhood praying and begging God for help to stop the violence in my home. But I only heard silence. Because I was not seeing or understanding what He was doing in my circumstances, I learned to quit asking and expect nothing. I thought, ‘He must not love me or care about me because of some sin or something wrong with me.’ I used to expect that if He were really living in my heart, something in me or my situations would change. I always tried to figure out how to prove to myself that He really was there, listening, caring, and answering my prayers.

“And that is all backward. I still remember when you were talking about the Romans 8:38-39 verses. Because I wasn't sure that God loved me, I couldn't live my life based on that. Instead, I tried to *look for evidence* that it was true by things I experienced in my life. The results were never conclusive enough to produce strong faith. Now that Romans passage is helping me reverse my thought pattern to understand that the things that happen in my life aren't *proof* of whether, or how much, God loves me.

“Because I haven't believed God loves me, it has prevented me from being able to love others fully. When I don't believe I am loved, I get wrapped up in myself—what I am feeling, what I am missing. I feel very sad, I think, because God made us to be in community with others and to be loved. But when I feel like no one loves or cares for me, it makes it hard for me to give love to others. But I am learning that I need to give love even if it is hard. Maybe it is a *greater* sacrifice to give love when you haven't been given love first as a child.

“Maybe the way we should love others is similar to the way God loved us. He didn't *wait* for humans to love Him the way He wanted them to. He loved first to inspire the reciprocal love that He desires and which He created us to reciprocate. Then by receiving His love, we learn to love Him and love others.”

Note: It has been a couple of years since Lisa shared her story. We are happy to report that she is in love with a good man and engaged to be married.

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Understanding Heart Languages

As you have already seen, heart languages are the way that each of us understand love. Let's look at some of these “heart languages,” grouped in three categories: hearing, seeing, and actions.

Category 1: Hearing

a. Encouraging Words

I like not only to be loved, but also to be told that I am loved.

I am not sure that you are of the same kind.

But the realm of silence is large enough beyond the grave.

—George Eliot



What happened as you said “I love you” to someone in the last activity? All of us appreciate being told by someone we love that we are loved too. Almost all of us will be parted from our loved ones when one dies before the other, and we will endure the silence until we can be reunited in heaven. We will be glad for every opportunity we took to tell and hear about our love

for each other. Showing love verbally requires little preparation. Instead, it requires attentiveness and discipline not to miss an opportunity to speak the words that give your spouse's heart a safe home.

The words "I love you" are not the only ones that communicate love. Other words are also essential—words of appreciation, praise, and admiration to name a few. Below are some examples of using verbal heart language to express love. Mark the ones which would please you and which would please your spouse. Each one is a little different in the way it expresses love:

"You are such a good provider for our family. I am so proud of you."

"I am so grateful that you wash my clothes. I know it is not easy."

"Your eyes are so beautiful, all I have to do is think of them, and it makes me hurry to come home to see them again."

"Our church is so blessed to have you as the pastor."

"You are such a wise mother in the way that you discipline our children. They are turning out well because of you."

To a verbal heart-language speaker, it is not just what you say to him/her that is important. It is also what he/she hears you saying to others.

"My wife always makes the most delicious food."

"My husband is so strong in a crisis that I know I can always rely on him."

To a primarily verbal heart-language speaker, one disloyal expression of criticism about your spouse to others can erase in your spouse's mind a hundred good words, and make it very difficult for you to convince him/her of your love again.

b. Music

Similar to verbal expression is the heart language of music. If you can sing or play an instrument, you are well-equipped to communicate love to a musical heart-language speaker. If your spouse receives this expression keenly, but you are not musical, you can still play a recording of beautiful music or take your spouse to a concert. Be sure to explain that this music is communicating your deepest feelings.

You can find many examples of verbal expressions of love throughout the Song of Solomon (Song 1:1 et al.). The Psalms show us that God Himself enjoys hearing love expressed in music.

Category 2: Seeing

a. Visual Aids

Most people learn well visually, either by reading words or by seeing things. Visual learners may also speak a visual heart language. These people feel treasured if a spouse communicates love in visual ways. How would you feel if your spouse painted a picture for you? Would it be deeply meaningful? The gift does not have to be big for many visual "speakers." Tom used to simply draw a heart in the condensation on the inside of my car window, so that whenever the window became steamy, the heart would be revealed. High artistic prowess is not as important as making the effort to portray your love visually. If your spouse speaks this language, you can also do the following:

- Purchase a card or a picture
- Commission an artistic friend to paint or sketch something you describe
- Give a book, perhaps underlining or writing something inside
- Copy down a poem or Bible verse

- Write a note on the bathroom mirror using a dry-erase marker
- Tuck short love notes into your spouse's lunch container or luggage

God also communicates His love visually. God spoke His love by writing the Scriptures (Jn 3:16). Jesus left us the symbol of the cross to remind us of His love (Gal 6:14).

b. Appearance

Taking time on your appearance is a communication of love that is often overlooked as your marriage progresses. Do you remember getting ready to meet your beloved during the first few weeks of courtship? You probably spent plenty of time selecting clothing, arranging your hair, bathing, brushing your teeth, trimming your fingernails, and preparing yourself to look your best. But after meeting your spouse over the breakfast table for the thousandth time, perhaps you were not so careful. If your spouse speaks this language, inattention to your appearance communicates that you no longer esteem him/her.

Fortunately, many of the things that can retain attractiveness during your senior years also encourage good health—exercise, nutritious food, good dental habits, cleanliness. A loving spouse may say, “It doesn’t matter how you look—I love you anyway.” Your spouse’s constancy should not be punished by your looking sloppy! A spouse who loves you despite your appearance will deeply appreciate it when you take the time and effort to look attractive just for him/her (Song 4:9-11).

What does love look like on your partner’s face? Hopefully, you see it often. My married daughter and I are opposites in this area. My husband smiles at everyone, but my heart skips a beat when he stops smiling and looks seriously at me. My daughter cannot imagine feeling loved unless her husband is smiling at her. I have learned that my cheerful expression is important for Tom to know that I love him. To him, an unhappy face communicates that our love is no longer bringing me joy.

What facial expression communicates love best to your partner? Is it a smile with a raised eyebrow? A secret signal across a crowded room? A serious look that says, “I need you in my life more than words can say!”? No matter the expression, how often do you pause in your busyness to communicate with your facial expression how much your spouse means to you? When your spouse rejoins you, let your face immediately communicate your love. In Psalms, God says His face “shines” on those He loves (Ps 67:1). This shining is a beautiful picture of the way your face should appear when gazing at someone you love (Prov 15:13).

Category 3: Actions

a. Gifts

Think about the last gift you gave to your spouse. If your spouse “speaks” this language, missing an opportunity to give a thoughtful gift when expected will cause your spouse to feel deep pain. Especially if you gave gifts while you were courting but no longer do, a “gift-speaking” spouse will think that love is gone.

The choice of gift and the way it is presented is particularly important if your beloved has a keen appreciation for beauty. The gift’s packaging will be as important as the gift itself. Are symbols and ceremonies important to your beloved? Then a costly, unique gift may communicate that you see him/her as valuable and unique. The frequency of unexpected gifts will communicate the thought that your beloved is often on your mind even when you are apart. Still others may be touched by a gift that you have made by hand, which requires a sacrifice of your busy time.

Gift-receiving is one of my heart languages. You know if your spouse has this language because he/she will never part with a meaningful gift. My husband built a wall sconce for an oil lamp

while he was courting me. He created the design, chose the cherry wood for its beautiful grain, cut and fitted the pieces together, and sanded it by hand until it was satin to the touch. His personal sacrifice of time and careful attention, and the quality and artistry of the finished piece, not only helped me feel loved, but also it symbolized the simple but fine quality of life we would share together.

Gift-giving is one of God's heart languages. John 3:16 says that God loved us, so He *gave* us the priceless *gift* of His Son. At the judgment seat of Christ, He promises to show us how much our gifts to Him touched His heart as well.

b. Quality Time

Relationships are not deepened through spending time with someone in a group. Loving intimacy comes from time interacting one-on-one. As families grow and responsibilities build in your job and ministry, it is a challenge to develop ways to give each other the undivided attention that will communicate undivided love. Some couples meet early in the morning to read Scripture, to pray, and to talk. When our children were young, we talked on the phone during Tom's lunch hour, because our baby was asleep. If your home is a busy place, you may need to go out for a walk together, wake up early, or stay up late in order to ask each other privately, "What's on your mind? How are you feeling right now?" Similarly, Jesus is always eager to spend quality time with His beloved, the church. He is never too busy to give you His undivided attention and to hear all that is on your heart (Lk 6:12; 1 Pet 5:7; Rev 3:20).

c. Plans, Promises, and Surprises

An integral part of expressing love is to both make promises and keep them. At the time of our marriages, we all made promises to our partners. Making and fulfilling short-term promises can bring richness to our married life as well.

My son-in-law, Brinton, is a master at this kind of love expression. For their first anniversary, he promised my daughter a weekend trip and only told her to pack for three overnights and to be prepared for travel. They only had enough money for one night in a hotel, so he had to plan and research carefully. He arranged for them to stay the first night at a friend's house on the way to their secret destination, a national park. There, they hiked the trail between waterfalls and gaped in awe at the jagged mountain peaks. They spent the second night at a motel near the park. The third night they traveled to the ocean, appreciating the beautiful scenery and noisy elephant seals, and they camped out where they could hear the crashing waves. His effort to carefully plan this surprise communicated deep love to Allison (and impressed us, as well)!

Even if it is only planning for a surprise walk after dinner, making plans and promises communicates that you have been thinking about your beloved and are preparing a way for you to enjoy a happy time together. Being faithful to do what you have promised proves that your love can be trusted. God promises good to us throughout Scripture and never fails to do what He promises (2 Cor 1:20). The best example of this is when Jesus Christ promises to prepare a place for us and then return to us (Jn 14:3).

d. Serving, Sharing, Providing, and Comforting

I always knew that my father loved my mother because he always let Mom sleep and made her breakfast. He rubbed her shoulders each evening, never let her lift anything heavy, and performed every dirty task that he did not consider appropriate for such a beautiful woman. His esteem for her was visible because he did these things cheerfully, and was always thankful for the privilege of serving the one whom he loved. Since my mother had grown up enduring poverty and physical abuse, providing physical comfort to her was one of the strongest ways my father could express

his faithful love. Jesus set an example for this kind of communication of love when He bathed the disciples' feet and took the position of the lowest slave in the house (Jn 13:5).

Like giving gifts, service must fit the personality of your partner in order to communicate love. Would your spouse feel loved if you did any of these?

- Prepared a favorite food
- Fixed something that was broken
- Offered help alongside
- Carried something heavy
- Decorated your spouse's area

This is one of my love languages, but it is not one of Tom's, so it is a frequent area of miscommunication. When I am feeling loving, I happily clean up after him, wash his clothes, and cook his favorite food. But he feels that these actions have nothing to do with him, even if I tell him. This came from his childhood home where his mother served his needs well, but with a bad attitude, and never touched him with affection. Any service performed cheerlessly or begrudgingly gives a negative message rather than communicating love. Similarly, I have to remind myself *not* to feel unloved when he wakes me up early or allows something broken to stay broken. While these were the ways I saw my father express love, they are *not* indications of a lack of love from my husband.

In Deuteronomy 11:13, the faithful are challenged to love God and to serve Him as an expression of their love. In fact, throughout Scripture, a failure to serve is seen as a failure to love.

e. Heroism

It was an act of heroism that made me suddenly realize that I was in love with Tom. Tom was in college in another town, across a mountain range from where I lived. He visited me on weekends or school breaks when he could. One Monday morning, I received a call from my doctor that I needed to have surgery the next day. It was the coldest night on record in the town where Tom was at college—40 degrees below zero (that's -40° C). Because of the cold, his car would not start—even the gasoline was frozen! He had classes during the day of my surgery, and I knew he never missed class. So, I had no hope that he would come to be with me in the hospital.

I remember beginning to wake up after my surgery and wishing that he were there. As the attendant pushed my bed down the hall back toward my hospital room, I heard Tom's voice, smiled, and fell back asleep, peaceful and secure that he loved me enough to overcome huge difficulties to be with me. Only later, I would learn that he had walked over a mile in the dark and extreme cold until his breath froze as icicles on his beard in order to get someone to come and tow his car to where it could be warmed up. He had skipped class and had risked driving across the mountains in the ice and snow—all this to be with me when I needed him. He sat next to my hospital bed throughout the evening, praying for me, reading quietly under a tiny lamp, spooning me ice chips when I awoke. He was my hero and I felt his love filling that dimly lit room. His willingness to conquer obstacles to be at my side communicated love more than all of his other expressions of love put together. I saw his heroism as laying his life down for me. I trusted that this level of love would continue throughout our lives, and it has! Colossians 2:14-15 shows that Jesus is our example of this kind of heroic love, too.

f. Touch

Jesus often touched those whom He healed as an expression of His love, even though He could have healed them just as easily without touching them (Mt 8:15). Affectionate touch is one of the most basic human needs, but it is often neglected once we are grown. A foot massage, a cheek caress, brushing hair, tending wounds—these daily expressions of love are just as important as a

sexual expression of love. To many people, they are essential. If my love language is physical touch, and the only time my spouse touches me is during sexual foreplay and intercourse, I may still feel unloved. Because touch is my husband's heart language, it is important for me to remember to hold his hand, touch his cheek, and hug him, even when I am busy. When he begins acting cross and argumentative, it signals that I may have forgotten. But when he is crabby, the last thing I want to do is hug him! Sometimes a little poem that I learned from a friend comes to mind to help me do what he needs rather than what I feel right then:

*Husbands, kids, and lesser beasts,
Need it most when they deserve it least.*

Another type of non-sexual touch that may communicate love is playing physically like children. This is a big part of Allison and Brinton's love language together. Brinton tickles Allison's foot. She screams and starts running. He chases her, perhaps ending up wrestling like puppies, until both are red-cheeked and happy. They share a kiss at the end. This was a foreign language to me and Tom, but fun to watch!

Sexual touch is the unique type of love designed for husbands and wives to share exclusively. It sets your relationship apart from all others and bonds you more deeply. Typically, a woman needs to feel loved and intimate with her husband *first* before she can respond to him sexually. A man often sees sex as his primary expression of love, thus necessary *before* he feels close to his wife. If neither party is willing to speak the other's heart language, a great deal of hurt can ensue! We will talk more in Lesson 8 about the sexual relationship that God developed for married couples to express love to each other.

Marriage should be the relationship in which our needs for loving touch are abundantly met. Yet, when someone is single, he/she still needs physical touch. Don't forget to affectionately touch your brothers and sisters in Christ, especially those who are alone.

g. Memories

(This item could be placed in each of the three categories.)

Some people can easily connect to the love that they felt at an earlier time and gain great satisfaction in knowing that the same love exists "after all these years." We (Tom and Debbie) enjoy telling others how we met and played together for one day in kindergarten. Both of us remember finding and losing the ideal playmate when our two classes were no longer allowed on the playground at the same time. When Tom says, "Little did we know what the future held—that someday we'd rediscover each other as the ideal friend," I (Debbie) understand that he is expressing pleasure in God's design to bring us together.

Tapping in to your history can strengthen your communication of love in the present. Some couples reenact their wedding ceremony after many years. My parents, like many couples, had a special song that recalled their courtship. When my mom started humming that song, or my dad wrote the words on a birthday card, it communicated that while time had passed, their love was constant. Many people appreciate mementos, photos, and other objects that refer back to when they first declared their love to one another. You might arrange a visit to the spot where you met or the place where you honeymooned. In Scripture, God calls His people to *remember* their history together, especially the love of their first encounter with Him (Jer 2:2; Eph 2:11-13).

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Using Heart Languages to Communicate Love

The purpose of learning about heart languages is to increase your communication of love, not to cause a rift or frustration. In 1 Corinthians 13 we learn that love does not insist on its own way (v 5). While it is good to explain your own perception of love to your spouse, the *purpose* of understanding about heart language is to learn how to speak your spouse's language better. If your spouse communicates love in a "foreign" language, understanding more about his/her heart language can help make you a better *interpreter* as well. You can appreciate the fact that your beloved is *trying* to communicate love, even if it does not "*feel*"



exactly like love to you.

Keep in mind that the end goal is not to force your spouse to "speak" your language, but to share love between you. Criticism will only alienate and shut down attempts to communicate love at all, so do not critique expressions of love unless your beloved asks for it, and only then with ample appreciation for the unclear communication that was offered.

Time and Directed Attention

No matter what language you choose to employ, each one must have time and attention directed *toward* your spouse, and you must make sure the communication is clear. For instance, if your loved one's heart language is visual, and you think it would please him/her to see you looking better, you may decide to buy something new to wear. But be sure to pick out something that your spouse likes and explain that you purchased it *because* you wanted to please.

The effort and time you put into any expression of love will itself communicate love, no matter how well or how badly the result comes across. An effort that takes more time may denote stronger love. On the other hand, frequent expression communicates constancy and may be more important to your spouse than infrequent, dramatic efforts at showing love. No matter what, the best gifts involve time, because your time is your life.

Emphasize Uniqueness

As marriages age, it is easy for your spouse to think that you might have been happier with someone else, or that you only see someone filling a role or set of duties. It is important, therefore, for your communications of love to reassure your spouse that you recognize and esteem the unique person God gave you to love. The prime goal of all expressions must be to single out and communicate the *uniqueness* and *superiority* of your beloved above all others, just as the husband tells his beloved in Song of Solomon 2:2: "Like a lily among the thorns, so is my darling among the maidens." The wife responds in the next verse with a similar expression of the uniqueness of her beloved husband, "Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men." Even though God wants you to love all people, he does not expect you to love all people equally.

Add—Don't Replace

If any of these languages is totally neglected in your marriage—for example, you *never* speak of your love, *never* write love notes, or *never* give your spouse gifts—you are potentially causing hurt and are missing out on golden opportunities to allow God to build your spouse's heart a stronger and safer home. We hope you will try out *every* expression of love at some time in your marriage. You may not realize how much a certain expression means to your spouse until you try it.

Expressing love in various heart languages is not an either/or situation. You do not need to stop performing the expressions of love toward your partner that are meaningful to you. For example, as I said before, I often try to communicate that I love Tom through doing acts of service for him: cleaning, doing laundry, running errands, preparing foods he likes, anticipating his needs. These *feel* more sacrificially loving when I am doing them because I am naturally lazy and drawn to sedentary pursuits, such as writing or reading, more than activities. Plus, I know that he needs these things to be done for him, whether or not he feels loved when I do them. I find that as I perform service for him with my heart “engaged” in the task by thinking about him and about my love for the Lord, it usually increases my loving feelings. But I must realize that he will probably not respond to my service with a great spark of connection. He has learned to say thank you and to be appreciative, and that must be enough for me. I know I am not speaking his heart language. Because I love him, I can enjoy serving him (my heart language) regardless of his response.

Become Multi-Lingual

While you don’t need to eliminate heart languages you like to “speak,” you *do* need to expand your loving expressions to add and to emphasize the ones that are most meaningful to your partner. It is a both/and situation. After we had been married for many years, Tom told me that he knew in his head that I loved him, but he often could not feel it and sometimes doubted my love. I was very surprised because we said every day that we loved each other. We spent quality time talking. We had a good sexual relationship. We were happy being together. Since we affirmed our love in so many ways, how could he not believe in his deepest heart that I loved him? What I quickly learned was missing from my vocabulary was that I didn’t link my other expressions of love with enough expression from his mother tongue, affectionate touch. If I added his mother tongue to other expressions, he understood I was showing love.

When the mother tongue is not present at all, there is often a voice of doubt, just as we saw in the story about John and Sarah. So, when Tom says, “I love you, Debbie,” I immediately think, “If you love me, then why haven’t you fixed the broken shelf that I asked you to fix last week?” When I say, “I love you, Tom,” he thinks, “If you love me, then why aren’t you touching me with affection?” We each have to link our words with each other’s mother tongue. I have to keep remembering how important touch is to him and leave my busyness often to go and hug him. When I remember to do this, it helps his heart to feel how loved he truly is. When I come to the kitchen and see him washing the dishes without being asked, I feel more loved than ever.

So our expression of love improves when we seek to *combine* heart languages. For example, one act of love I remember keenly was when Tom came into the living room and saw me reading a book in preparation for this course. I was feeling guilty for sitting still and not working on cleaning the house or doing something useful. But he put my feet up on the couch and placed one pillow under my knees and another pillow behind my back to make me more comfortable. Then he played a CD of beautiful music. He said, “It does my heart good to see you taking a break—you always work so hard.” I have remembered this scene and his words for years because he spoke several of my heart languages at once. It felt like every present he’d ever given me rolled into one!

Imagine if John had led Sarah to a chair and put her feet up before handing her the flowers, and then had begun to wash the dishes in her place. Imagine if Sarah had turned with a smile to hug and kiss John warmly when he came home (before asking for some help with the dishes). By recognizing and using each other’s heart language, John and Sarah could have prevented the breakdown in communication that caused them both to feel such despair.

The greatest enemy of love is not hate. Rather, it is taking your spouse for granted or making him/her feel equal with everyone else. Strengthening your spouse’s comprehension of the strength of your love will help your marriage to successfully climb over hard life events and

ease the stress of miscommunications. We all find it easier to disregard mistakes and forgive offenses from those whom we know *really* love us. As God tells us, “Love covers a multitude of sins” (1 Pet 4:8; see also Prov 10:12).

Remember, the purpose of knowing your spouse’s heart languages is to communicate the truth of your love and the reality of God’s love. As we communicate love under His guidance, we restore His image in our lives (1 Jn 4:7). He created all heart languages, and He delights to work with His children in expressing His love through each and every language.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Quiz: Discovering Your Heart Languages

This quiz is prepared to help you discern your heart language, or the way that you are best able to believe and trust that someone loves you. We hope that someone special has given you this quiz and that you are both eagerly awaiting the results in order to be more effective at communicating love to each other.

Please complete or rate these 15 statements: 1 (NO, not at all) 2 (somewhat or sometimes) 3 (YES, all the time). Then, discuss the questions at the bottom.

1. When I imagine someone revealing with words that I am loved, I imagine him/her_____.
Asking me how I am feeling and then listening carefully 1 2 3
Telling me how much he/she loves or admires me 1 2 3
Telling our parents or someone else something he/she admires about me 1 2 3
Complimenting me that I have done a great job on something 1 2 3
2. If I am carrying something very heavy, someone who truly loved me would_____.
Run up and help me 1 2 3
Rub my back afterward 1 2 3
Bring me some ibuprofen 1 2 3
Draw me a hot bath 1 2 3
Offer advice about how to do the lifting without hurting my back 1 2 3
Make me sit down and carry the load for me 1 2 3
Tell me how proud he/she is at how strong or kind I am 1 2 3
Brag about me to his/her friends 1 2 3
3. When someone says that he/she loves me, there is a little voice in my mind that says, “If you love me, show me.” 1 2 3
4. When I think of my spouse doing something to show me his/her love, I imagine him/her_____.
Making me a gift with his/her own hands 1 2 3
Giving me small surprise gifts 1 2 3
Picking a wildflower for me 1 2 3
Buying me a quality gift on my birthday 1 2 3
Buying me a piece of good jewelry 1 2 3
Mending my clothes or doing some other personal or humble task 1 2 3
Risking his/her life for my sake 1 2 3

Protecting me from danger 1 2 3

Planning a surprise activity or party for me 1 2 3

5. If someone were going to tell me in words that I am loved, it would be important that he/she_____.

Tell me while looking in my eyes with a serious expression 1 2 3

Tell me while smiling at me with a warm expression 1 2 3

Write it for me in a letter that I could look at over and over 1 2 3

Copy a love poem or verse and put it in a beautiful frame 1 2 3

Take me to a beautiful, quiet spot 1 2 3

Take me somewhere in nature, such as by a river or under a tree 1 2 3

Arrange for beautiful music to be playing 1 2 3

6. I see gifts as symbols of particular sentiments that can be discerned from the characteristics of the gift. 1 2 3

7. When my loved one saves a token of our early relationship, I know he/she still loves me. If he/she were to throw it away, I would feel like our relationship was no longer important. 1 2 3

8. If my spouse wanted to go back to the place where we were married and reenact our wedding vows, it would be deeply meaningful to me. 1 2 3

9. I don't mind waiting for my loved one to get ready because I know that he/she is preparing to look good just for me. 1 2 3

10. When my loved one wears cologne, it is a signal that he/she wants me to find him/her attractive. 1 2 3

11. When someone seeks my eyes across a crowded room, it makes me feel very special. 1 2 3

12. If my spouse spent too much time talking to friends or working, and only a little time sharing deep thoughts with me, I would think that our love was dying. 1 2 3

13. The best gift I can imagine would be_____.

A plaque listing all the thing my spouse admires about me 1 2 3

A private performance of music 1 2 3

A painting, sculpture, or other piece of art designed or chosen to express my spouse's sentiments 1 2 3

A trip alone where all I had to do was pack and set aside the time 1 2 3

A surprise 1 2 3

A gift that shows the details of my tastes to confirm that he/she fully understands me 1 2 3

14. If my spouse did the following, it would make me feel hated, not loved

Yell at me 1 2 3

Be lazy when I need help 1 2 3

Have a sour face or act angry 1 2 3

Criticize me 1 2 3

Refuse to touch me 1 2 3

Resist having sex with me 1 2 3

Leave me alone to go do something else 1 2 3

15. For a married couple, any expression of love should lead to sex or the expression is incomplete. 1 2 3

DISCUSSION SECTION

Write your answers to the following questions. Either share these answers verbally with your loved one, or write the answers in your Life Notebook to share later:

1. What has someone done for you or said to you that made you feel the most loved, that was unforgettable?
2. What has your spouse, or another close friend, done or neglected to do that made you feel sad, alienated, taken for granted, or unloved?
3. In your younger years, what wonderful things did you daydream about someone doing for you or saying to you that would make you feel very loved and appreciated?
4. What have you observed about another couple that tells you that the person with the same gender as you (i.e., husband or wife) is very loved?
5. What do you wish you could request your spouse to do for you, but are hesitant to suggest? Why do you hesitate?
6. Is there any expression of love that you feel is important to you but has not been mentioned in this survey? Please explain.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Articles for Lesson 5: Men and How to Love Them

What's the Difference?

We all recognize that there are obvious physical differences between men and women. But do differences extend beyond the physical body? In Lessons 5 and 6 we will be looking at the following questions:

1. Did God intend to express something different about His image when He created men and when He created women?
2. Is there something masculine in men that meets a lack in what is feminine in women?
3. Is there also something feminine in women that meets a lack in what is masculine in men?
4. In what ways is the “not good” that God proclaimed about man’s aloneness brought to completion when the man partners with a woman in marriage?



Some philosophies have tried to affirm that there are no meaningful differences between men’s and women’s hearts and souls. Those who promote this view say that everything that we see as differences between men and women is mere programming from parents and society. If this were true, then it would follow that it is irrelevant whether a man and a woman raise a child or whether two women or two men call themselves “parents.” If genders are interchangeable, it makes little difference whether someone is homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual.

But the Bible does not agree that men and women are interchangeable. It describes people who were designed differently, created differently, function differently, and fulfill different purposes in God’s scheme for humankind. That is never to say that one sex is *superior* to the other. Far from it! The Bible describes a good marriage relationship on earth as a mutual dependence on the unique contributions of the other gender, and yet a forward-looking mutual respect for each other as ones who will both reign with Christ.

Variations on the Theme

Of all the people I know, none are exactly like the “typical” man or the “typical” woman. Many women have characteristics that some people think of as masculine, such as the ability to lead and to think very logically. Many of our male friends have characteristics that some associate with women, such as a deep love for beauty and keen sensitivity to others’ feelings. Does this make them less feminine or less masculine? Nothing could be farther from the truth. All of the characteristics in these two chapters reflect a spectrum, with certain characteristics being more common among men or among women. If you have strong abilities that are more common among the opposite sex, you are a gift of God to the world and to your spouse, *uniquely* suited to His purposes for your life.

Also, the roles that men and women take can vary from culture to culture and from generation to generation, without violating God’s design. We need to hold our traditional cultures loosely and to be careful not to make our own *cultural* ideas about male and female roles equal with what Scripture says. Scripture itself has relatively few gender-oriented commandments. In fact, we find examples in Scripture of behavior that would not be proper, according to “correct” gender roles for many cultures, such as the following examples:

A man cooking (Gen 25:29)

- A man washing his own clothes (Lev 15:11)
- A woman head of a household, running her own business (Acts 16:13-15)
- A wife buying land and farming without direction from her husband (Prov 31:16)
- A single woman living in the temple and prophesying (Lk 2:36-37)
- Women supporting a group of men in ministry from money that was kept separate from their husbands' money (Lk 8:1-3)
- Women traveling with a group of men who were not their husbands (Lk 8:2-3; 23:49, 55)

The Trinity

As we suggested in Lesson 1, our basic understanding of maleness and femaleness and of the way husbands and wives should relate to one another comes from the commission that God expressed in Genesis 1:26-28 to portray the image of God. What can we learn from the Trinity that helps us to make sense of our different roles as men and women and of our relationship as husbands and wives? Here are some analogies.

Analogies

| | |
|---|---|
| The Godhead is a permanent relationship of oneness between three persons who are distinct, not identical. | The ones he ordained to be His image-bearers in the lifelong oneness of marriage are distinct, not identical. |
| The Members of the Godhead <i>serve</i> each other in differing ways, always seeking to bring <i>honor</i> to the other. | The man and woman use their differing strengths and talents for the purpose of serving each other's well-being and honoring each other. |
| The members of the Godhead work together to carry out shared objectives. Each has distinct, but often overlapping responsibilities. | Man and woman serve their shared objectives in non-interchangeable, but overlapping ways. |

Because men and women were made to portray God's image as they work together in marriage, the instructions to husbands and wives will show overlap and distinction similar to what we see in the Trinity. For instance, both men and women are commanded to love one another (Jn 13:34). But in Ephesians 5:33, the husband is given a primary focus to consider *love* in all he does in relation to his wife. But the wife's focus is to *respect* her husband. In a similar way, the members of the Trinity have differing emphases in the way each one carries out common goals.

The Difference Brings Joy

God designed men and women to be different in their deepest ways of thinking and relating. We hope that as you explore this difference in these two lessons, 5 and 6, you will be deeply satisfied in the way that God created you as a male or a female. We believe that you will find even more satisfaction in discovering how God created *your spouse* and in learning how you can relate to him/her in a way that allows for and enjoys the differences. Just as the members of the Trinity enjoy serving one another (Lk 3:22; Jn 5:20; 14:13), so you will find deep satisfaction in serving the deep needs of your most intimate partner.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

The Sword of Strength

When you think of a truly good man, such as the Lord Jesus, do you think of someone milder than the men you know? Some women think that it is not really “Christian” for their husbands to want to be strong and to subdue the world around them. What does the Bible say? A poet and songwriter in Israel’s court wrote a poem for his king.

- Please read Psalm 45:1-17 and leave it open as you read the rest of this section.

“*Strap your sword to your thigh, O warrior!*” (v 3). “*Ride forth for the sake of what is right*” (v 4). Is this not the kind of man every boy dreams of becoming?

The male subject of this poem is handsome, well-spoken, blessed, respected, virtuous, morally pure, athletically strong, resolute, skillful, and successful. He orders his domain masterfully. He quickly rises to and maintains a position of authority over others, both in destroying those who oppose him and in bringing honor and safety to those under his care. Those around him, especially the women (v 9), are content to bask in his manly presence. Even God is impressed with him (v 2). He is wealthy and provides luxury for his family and guests (vv 8-9). His home is the admiration of the kingdom (v 8). He feels on top of the world. Who *IS* this guy?



No king of Israel ever met this high achievement (vv 5-6), not even David or Solomon. Human men, like David and Solomon, are not able to manage total success without sin eventually tripping them up and spoiling the gilded image. So who is this ideal strong man?

Psalm 45 is a messianic psalm that gazes forward to the coming of the Messiah. Only Jesus is free of the sin that taints every other man’s quest for strength and power (Heb 4:15; Rev 5:2-5). Jesus Christ, seated on the throne at God’s right hand, wholly fulfills this ideal of total strength *and* total virtue.

This is a picture of Jesus, not as the meek “lamb to the slaughter” but as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Every Man’s Desire

Every man was designed by God to have the strength to rule (Gen 1:26), so every male is born with an innate desire to develop and to exhibit strength and success¹⁰. Some men are more successful at feeling this strength and some men less so. Because of sin, though, even the man who is successful at developing personal strength may also exhibit critical flaws, such as selfishness and pride.

Furthermore, man’s inbred desire for strength may be exhibited as a desire for autonomy, even autonomy from God. The lone wolf. The lone hero. The lone minstrel. The lone knight. These are emblems of masculinity. Worldwide, there are more women followers of Christ than men. In China, for instance, more than two-thirds of the church are women, according to researcher Paul Hattaway (<http://www.amitynewsservice.org/page.php?page=1150>). Why does a man resist coming to God?

In an *un*-regenerate heart, a man’s desire to be strong causes him to resist coming to God for at least two reasons:

1. He does not want anyone to rule over him and to impinge on his own self-determination (Ps 2:2-3; Isa 14:13-14).
2. He fears being exposed as a failure because he knows he has broken God’s clear commands (Gen 3:8-9; Jn 3:20).

¹⁰ According to Genesis, woman was designed with strength to rule, too, but it is a different kind of strength. She is not generally as interested in arrows to “penetrate the hearts of the king’s enemies” (Ps 45:5). You will learn more about her strength later.

So in order to feel strong, the un-regenerate man hides from God. His internal need to build and to protect his strength, whether developed by legitimate or illegitimate means, can become his downfall.

In the children's story "The Emperor's New Clothes," a conniving tailor promises to make a beautiful outfit for a king. He actually makes nothing, but pretends that he has created a magic suit. He convinces the king that only virtuous people can see this special suit. The king cannot see the clothing but is afraid to admit it, since he would then admit that he lacks sufficient virtue. So he goes forth in public, naked. Everyone is similarly intimidated by the pronouncement that only the wise can see the clothing, except one little boy who is too naïve and honest to be duped. He cries out, "The Emperor has NO CLOTHES!" And then everyone realizes that the emperor is indeed naked and begins to laugh, and the king is shamed. Every man lives in fear of someone who, like that little boy, will expose and shame him.

But God is not the only one who can expose him. The man's wife also has a prime vantage point to expose her man's weaknesses. In contrast to the bride in this Psalm, a typical wife is unlikely to come to his side, silently wearing her "gold of Ophir" jewelry for the approval of an admiring throng. She may be like Queen Vashti, refusing to come out at all (Est 1:12). She might ask him for things that he cannot provide. Or she might even challenge his throne herself.

Therefore, in the presence of his woman, a man may be the "strong, silent type." He conceals his intimate thoughts from her purely to protect his sense of inner strength. A woman married to a silent man may admire him, but she cannot be an *ezer*¹¹ to him until he lets himself need the help she was designed to supply. The marriage will suffer until the couple can fully trust each other as one flesh (Gen 2:24).

How can a man have the strength he craves but prevent it from becoming a barrier in his marriage or in his relationship to God?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Called Out by the Father

"Yasha, come out!" In many tribal villages, the father's voice can be heard, along with the other men, calling the boy out of the mother's hut, away from the world of women and into the world of men. In most cultures throughout history, the status of manhood was granted to a young man through a coming-of-age ceremony, which is the culmination of a period of training for manhood. In hunter-gatherer cultures, the boy tracks and kills his first wild game, bravely endures torture, or carries out a feat of skill.



In Jewish culture, the boy displays his prowess at understanding and reciting the Scriptures. Jesus was called out by two fathers—one earthly and one heavenly. As we saw in Lesson 1, Jesus went to the temple at Jerusalem for his bar mitzvah at age twelve. We saw how he began to act quite independently from his parents at this point. As for all Jewish boys, this was Jesus' third change in teachers—from his mother as primary teacher (in Jewish custom until weaning, often at age two or more) to his father as teacher (from weaning until his bar mitzvah) to the Law, the Torah, as teacher. After the bar mitzvah, the young man was admitted to adult male conversations and was to take his place in the family business. So when Jesus' parents found Him, in Luke 2:46, seated with the teachers of the Law, listening and asking questions, He was expressing His right as an adult Jewish male, but He was also suggesting that He was following in another Father's footsteps. He would not be a carpenter like Joseph, but a rabbi (teacher) like His heavenly Father. This reveals the transitions that are important to boys in all cultures: (1) from the arms of the mother at the end of infancy, (2) to working and

¹¹ The *ezer* is the Hebrew term found in Genesis 2:18, 20, which is often translated "helpmeet." As we shall see in the next section, it has many ramifications for the role of a woman.

learning at the side of the father as a child, (3) to being welcomed into the fraternity of adult manhood sometime in adolescence.

Even if a boy develops and demonstrates proficiency at the required tasks of manhood, ultimately it is not his performance that makes him see himself as a man. **Ultimately, manhood is bestowed** (see note 1). The need to be affirmed by his father or a father figure is one of the deepest and dearest things in a masculine heart. Show a grown man a movie scene of a father telling his son how much he respects him, and you will see the watcher wipe tears. It affects most men deep in their hearts to hear the words that they themselves either did or did not hear from their dads.

This single point of truth will help men and the women who love them to understand better what drives the male mind, especially if the pronouncement never came or came in an uncertain way. With the rise of divorce, absentee dads, and the perpetual adolescence of the “me generation,” no father may be available to prepare a boy for adulthood or to say, “Now, you are a man.” It is not an exaggeration to say that if he does not hear it or does not believe it, the questions “Am I a man? Am I enough?” never cease to stalk him. Ed McGlasson, author of *The Difference a Father Makes*, describes the lack this way: “There’s something in fathers that really determine how we see ourselves. If they’re there and speaking life, we feel great about ourselves. If they’re not, then there’s a question mark” (see note 2). The void a father’s affirmation should fill has a profound effect on the man’s marriage.

Fearful Men

One way this lack may impact a man’s marriage is that he may fear being overcome by a woman. Every boy begins his life in the domain of the mother—first in her womb, then in her arms, then under her protection and training. At some point, the boy must pull away from this motherly influence to assert his manhood and take his place as her champion and protector, rather than her responsibility. For some adult men, there is an abiding fear that he will be sucked in once again to a childish dependence on his mother, so he cannot enjoy a healthy, close relationship with his mother or his wife.

Homosexual Men

Craig Loving, a Christian pastor and counselor with a PhD emphasis in the issues of men and boys, describes another possible scenario in which a father’s failure affects the son’s relationship with his wife. Dr. Loving says that when the mother does not relinquish a boy to his father’s influence, or the father does not call his son into the world of men, the boy may identify with women, but be fascinated by and long for intimacy with men. His longing for that intimate male bond can result in homosexual desires, which are repugnant to himself if he is a Christian believer and highly distressing to his wife.

Angry Men

Another way that a failure to be called out affects marriage is that the man may have a sense of deep anger that is ready to spill out with only slight provocation. Countless rock stars spill their anger at the fathers who abandoned them in profane, venomous lyrics. The stunning success of rockers and rappers such as Eminem, Papa Roach, and Kurt Cobain points to their ability to express the rage of their fans in their music. Their most frequent subject is the father who never comes home. With titles like “Broken Home,” “Emotionless,” and “My Old Man,” the violent messages give clear descriptions of the state of mind of cast off young men: murder and suicide. One rocker says, “Some people who I meet after shows . . . They break down weeping . . . [saying,] ‘I went through the exact same thing!’ Sometimes it’s terrifying how much they relate to it.”¹² How many marriages are spoiled by a man’s constant, simmering anger?

¹² Article by Mary Eberstadt found at Stanford University, Hoover Institution website titled “Eminem is Right—The primal scream of teenage music” www.hoover.org/publications/policyreview/3432051.html.

Successful Men

Other men face their sense of betrayal by their fathers in more positive ways, by letting their hidden rage propel them toward highly successful careers. In this way, they may be trying to prove their worth to the father who did not respect them. But if the wounds remain unacknowledged and unhealed, these successful men may not be able to show love to their own families. Dr. Loving says, “The wound [may be] frozen in the emotions of anger, indifference, or addictive behaviors.”¹³

Can a Wife Call Her Husband Out?

No matter how much a good mother or a loving wife may want to initiate the boy as a man, no woman can meet this inner need. If there is no father, a group of adult men from the “tribe” or someone recognized as an “elder” can still initiate the boy or man into the world of men. Sometimes a grandfather can fill this role. Consider the words of this third grader:

“The dad in my life isn’t really my dad. He’s my Grandpa. But he’s been like a dad to me since before I was born. I hope that as I get older, Grandpa will teach me all the stuff he knows about wood, and first-aid, and everything else he knows about. My grandpa isn’t my father, but I wouldn’t trade him for all the dads in the world” (see note 3). Thank God this surrogate dad has assumed a critical place for helping this boy make a successful entry into manhood.

What if the wounded boy is now an adult? Perhaps you are married to him. Perhaps you are a man and you recognize this void in your own heart. The normal time for this investiture of strength has long since passed. Is it too late? Thankfully not! From Jesus, we learn that the earthly father or elder is not the only one who can call a man out. The most striking rite of passage in Jesus’ life is found not in the temple with Joseph at age twelve, but in Luke 3:21-22 when Jesus was thirty years old. Here Jesus’ heavenly Father affirms His Son in the person of the Holy Spirit. He pronounces His pleasure, and gives His verdict on Jesus’ preparation for ministry: “The heavens were opened, and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my one dear Son; with you I take great delight.’” God, the Father, tells His Son in front of everyone what every son needs to hear out loud in order to make a successful transition into complete and secure manhood: (1) You are my son; (2) I love and accept you; (3) I am proud of what you have become.

What if you are the wife of a man who was not affirmed by his father? Your husband may have taken his lingering question many wrong places: addictions, workaholicism, silence. One place he may look is to a woman, perhaps to you. A woman looks like she may have the answer to his masculinity. But God did not equip you to provide this answer, and the result may be disillusionment or an unhealthy dependency. Some men may progress through a series of relationships with other women. If a wife cannot give the affirmation, what can she do to help him?



A wife can encourage her husband’s healthy relationships with affirming older men, perhaps her father, a pastor, or an elder. The mentorship of these older, godly men may be an important part of a man’s healing. Paul was such a man for his younger friend, Timothy. A wife need not be threatened by such a relationship, but rather she must encourage it if she wants to see her husband become all that God wants him to be and to take his rightful place as her champion.

Above all, she must point him to God with his deep question about his “enough-ness.” God understands his heart better than anyone and can pronounce truth with more authority. We will learn more about this process in a few minutes.

¹³ Dr. Craig Loving, personal emailed letter, 10 January 2007.

Note 1: Dr Craig Loving recognized this deep need in the heart of his own son, Aaron, and shares this story about Aaron's graduation from high school: "The graduation diplomas were handed out by the parents, who were given a few minutes to share their thoughts and words of encouragement to their fledglings. Having been influenced by the story that one of the men at the Wild at Heart retreat told of presenting a sword to his own son at his high school graduation, Mary [Craig's wife] and I decided to do the same. We wrote a word of affirmation and each took turns reading it at his graduation. I ended the reading with something like, 'We welcome you into the world of adults; I welcome you into the world of men.' At the end of the reading, I drew the sword from the wrapping and presented it to him. Quite a few of his church buddies were there. The gasp from the group when we drew the sword was memorable. During the reception afterward, he and the sword were the center of attention of many of those who came. His sword hangs over his desk."

Wild at Heart is both a book and a conference by John Eldredge, which seeks to restore "heart" to Christian men. By "heart," he means the core of manly strength and a godly thirst for fighting God's battles. See www.ransomedheart.com. (If you have web access and can understand English, you can download and listen to Eldredge's introduction to the conferences.)

Note 2: Tim Branson, "What a Difference a Dad Makes"

From an interview on The 700 Club television show, as quoted at www.cbn.com/700club/guests/interviews/Ed_McGlasson061606.aspx

Note 3: From essays posted at The National Center for Fathering at www.fathers.com/research/essays.html

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A Wound Instead of a Call

What father among you, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? —Luke 11:11-12

If you are a man, did you ever receive the affirmation you needed from your dad?

"You are my son."

"I love and accept you."

"I'm proud of you, son."

"I'm so lucky to be your dad."

If you did, you may not have realized how truly blessed you are. But perhaps you are not one of this group. Instead of investing you with strength, did your father shame you with his words?

"You are a disgrace."

"I am ashamed of you."

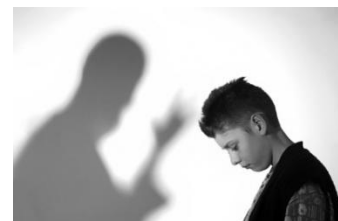
"Why can't you be like your brother?"

"You will never amount to anything."

"If you follow Christ, you are no longer my son."

Or did your father just leave, either physically or emotionally, and abandon you to try to find the answer to your question, "Am I a man?" by yourself?

If you were wounded by your father's words, or by his silence, you may have tried other means to fill up the void, such as the following:



- Sex
- Work
- Religious activities
- Power
- Success
- The love of a woman

If you did any of these things, how well did that work to fill up the feeling of lack inside?

Called Out by God

Not all of these things on the above list are wrong, of course. What is wrong with seeking the love of a good woman in marriage, or with engaging heartily in work? But if you are using these things to fill a void in yourself, you are using them for the wrong purpose and the void will remain. What will fill it? If your earthly father failed to call you out, only God, your heavenly Father, can call you out and prepare you to be a hero. Only He can tell you who you are. The process you must go through will prepare you for authentic inner strength. It takes courage, honesty, determination, and self-discipline. Even if you have not had this problem, you may benefit from looking at the steps to restoration so that you can help someone else recover from a “father wound.” Are you ready to start?

The first step is to recall and feel the wound that your father inflicted by his silence or criticism.

Most men will do everything to rationalize, trivialize, or sideline the wound in order to refuse to admit the power it has over them. But the denial of the truth just pins you down. Take some time, preferably with your wife or another trusted person, to share the truth about what happened to you. If it is hard to recall, start by scribbling a picture of you and your dad. Allow yourself to feel the impact of the wound.

Second, offer all of your wounds, and any accompanying bitterness or unforgiveness, to God. List or draw your painful memories, then offer them to God. Burn or rip the paper to shreds as a sign that you are now releasing them.

Third, contradict the lie you heard about who and what you are. This is the poison in Satan’s arrow that causes the wound to still hurt, even after many years. If your father abandoned you, you might believe the lie that you were not *worth* raising. If your father said demeaning words to you, you might still believe that you are “a piece of garbage” or “a loser.” If you are accepting these falsehoods as true, it is killing your heart and sapping your strength. God does not agree with the echoes you hear. You must choose to side with Him against the enemy of your soul. What does God say about your identity in Christ? What about your worth in Christ? Affirm the truths to silence the echoes from the past, which are the voice of the enemy.

Fourth, set aside all your personal plans of salvation. The Bible says to put off the “old man” (Eph 4:22). This involves not putting any confidence in all the things that you have done to fill the void or prop up a false self.

- Please read Philippians 3:4-7.

Here Paul lists some of his props. They included his birthright, his adherence to religious practices, his carefulness not to sin, and his religious zeal. Your list might be different. Do you have any heredity, accomplishments, or activities that you use to drown out that other voice, which says that you are worthless? These are a false self, the old man that can never fully authenticate you.

Fifth, be “renewed” in your mind (Eph 4:23-24). A man who has come into a restored relationship with his heavenly Father can ask for and receive the blessing of being “called out” into his strength as a son of God. Even though an earthly father has a certain authority in his call, it is incomplete. Only the heavenly Father has all the authority and power to say with finality, “This is my dear son; in him I take great

delight.” He sees you now *in Christ*. Ask Him to speak these same words into your heart as you read and memorize them.

This new man is who you really are now. God has called you “enough man,” and neither you nor anyone else dare to contradict Him. Ask God to strengthen you to be a hero in His kingdom and to bring greater and greater delight to the Father. Read this verse from Peter:

His divine power has bestowed on [you] everything necessary for life and godliness through the rich knowledge of the one who called [you] by his own glory and excellence. Through these things he has bestowed on [you] his precious and most magnificent promises, so that by means of what was promised you may become partakers of the divine nature. —2 Peter 1:3-4.

Let God’s Word of life and power strengthen your heart, man of God!

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Joining the Great Battle

Through faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice, gained what was promised, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, gained strength in weakness, became mighty in battle, put foreign armies to flight. —Hebrews 11:33-34

You have seen how every boy is born with an innate desire for strength. Every man wants to feel strong both inside and out. The father is designed to call the boy into manhood and to help him discover and develop his strength. But what is his strength *for*? Are there any monsters left to fight?



Yes! God’s Word reveals that the monster is real and very much alive (Rev 12:7; 20:2). That boyish desire to slay monsters is more than just a response to fairy tales. A great battle is raging in the cosmos to free the world from the monster’s claws (1 Jn 5:19). This battle extends to every corner of the world, which includes your home, your neighborhood, and your church. Like every hero, you have been introduced at a particular point in the epic story with a unique part to play. Will you rise to the challenge?

The Testing of Strength

As soon as you are called out and commissioned to the battle, the enemy will attack. As in Eden, the dragon wants to know about you: *How will this man use his strength? Is he going to be a threat to my kingdom? Can I neutralize his strength?* If the enemy can cause your strength to be squandered on a trivial cause or can bind you in sin, you are no threat to him and his plans for the world. How did Jesus respond to this first attack?

Jesus’ Test

After Jesus’ affirmation by God at His baptism, what comes immediately after? A test. Will our hero meet the challenge?

In Matthew 4:1 and Mark 1:12, we see that the Spirit impels Jesus into the wilderness for forty days of fasting and preparation to face the test that would come from Satan. At the completion of the preparation, the enemy offers three subtle temptations, all luring Jesus to turn from God’s plan for His strength and to do the following:

1. To meet legitimate needs in independent ways. Jesus is hungry, so Satan tells Jesus to turn stones to bread. It is not sin to eat when you are hungry, but there is no food, only rocks. Will He meet His need independently or wait for God’s direction and timing?

2. To seek adventure and to demonstrate His power independently. The second temptation—to jump off the high pinnacle of the temple and fly—relates to a promise in the Old Testament that God’s angels would certainly rush to protect Him (Ps 91:12). The question now is whether Jesus will seek adventure for its own sake, forcing His guarding angels to rush in and deliver Him. Satan, as we saw earlier, led other angels to act independently from God. Would Jesus?

3. To seize what God had promised without suffering for it. The enemy says that if He will bow to Satan, Jesus can rule the world immediately. This third temptation is the most subtle. Jesus knew God intended for Him to someday rule the world. But Satan’s shortcut is very attractive: no cross, no suffering. Perhaps he has offered you something like this, too: “If you serve me,” he implies, “my road to success is so much easier than God’s.” Notice here that if Satan is able to tempt Jesus to serve him, he will successfully fulfill the wicked desire of his own heart to be “like the Most High,” which we read about earlier in Isaiah 14:14. Also note that Satan claims that all the kingdoms of the world are his to give. Jesus does not dispute this claim to the earth (and John reaffirms it in 1 Jn 5:19). But our valiant Hero replies, “Go away, Satan! For it is written: *‘You are to worship the Lord your God and serve only him’*” (Mt 4:10).

His decision to serve God and to use His strength wholeheartedly for the Father’s glory sets the tone for Jesus’ whole ministry. It causes the gates of hell to tremble! Because Jesus successfully repulses the enemy’s schemes to subvert His strength, *we* have everlasting life and He wins His bride. Can you imagine *our* future if He had squandered His strength or refused to rise to Satan’s challenges? Jesus chose the way of the Cross and turned away from the easy road. As a husband, you must do this too.

Your Test

Just like Jesus, your battles may be temptations to settle for comfort or worldly power. Will you be a mercenary and offer your strength to the highest bidder for your own pleasure? Or will you expend your strength for the Great Cause? The strength God wants to build and increase in you is not meant to be squandered on lesser goals of serving pleasure, comfort, security, politics, business, or other ego-enhancing activities. You may be rightly involved in many of these things in response to God’s assignment to them, but once there, you are God’s man alone—wielding the Sword of the Spirit on behalf of others and standing firm in God’s armor (Eph 6:10). In all of your life’s arenas, the world (that is, the world system) must never get inside your heart to weaken and subvert you from fighting the dragon wherever you find him.

If you have a wife or family, the great dragon actively seeks to destroy them. What is his ploy today in your arena? Take your place as their spiritual champion and pray for them against the schemes of the devil. Be alert to speak against any lies the enemy would throw at them. Set an example of strong holiness and strong love that they can emulate. Faithfulness in this one arena may produce the greatest impact in this life and for all eternity. Take up your sword and show strength, man of God!

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Strength Enough to Share: Becoming a Servant Leader

Now I will most gladly spend and be spent for your lives. —Paul, 2 Corinthians 12:15



A man who knows who he is and knows his God is able to expend his strength for the benefit of others. He sets an example and often leads them into righteousness. This is a great contrast from those who seek leadership merely so that others may serve them. These are the “thieves” that the Lord contrasts with the good shepherds who love and lay down their lives for their sheep (Jn 10:10-15). A true shepherd is not jealous for fame, position, or power. Such people are called “Servant Leaders.”

As a husband, this type of man successfully fulfills his calling to love his wife as Christ loves the church and to lay his life down for her (Eph 5:25). What can a husband learn from Jesus that will help him know how to be a servant leader for his wife and family?

The Example of Jesus as a Servant Leader

Jesus’ servant leadership was never more explicit than during the Last Supper. Take a moment to read this description from John 13:3-5, 12. Particularly notice, and if possible, mark each active verb, which describes each thing He did:

Jesus because he knew that the Father had handed things over to him,
and that he had come from God and was going back to God,
got up from the meal,
removed his outer clothes,
took a towel and tied it around himself.
He poured water into the washbasin
and began to wash the disciples’ feet
and to dry them with the towel he had wrapped around himself.
So when Jesus had washed their feet and put his outer clothing back on,
he took his place at the table again and said to them,
“Do you understand what I have done for you?”
—John 13:3-5, 12

Let’s look closely at the way Jesus reveals servant leadership.

How a Servant Leader Thinks

Did you notice the three things that Jesus had *in his mind* (John 13:3)?

1. The Father had handed all things over to Him.
2. He had come from God.
3. He was going back to God.

How do you think this perspective affected his next actions? As these three perspectives show, a servant leader is secure in who he is and where he is going. He has nothing to prove to anyone except to prove his faithfulness to God.

What is the truth about you? Please look up these verses to decide in what way these three concepts are true of you as well.

1. Has your Father handed all things to you? — Matthew 25:34; Romans 8:32; 2 Timothy 2:12

2. Have you come from God? —Ephesians 1:4

3. Will you go to God? —Colossians 3:23-24

Are all of these concepts as true for you as they were for Jesus? In what ways are they the same and how are they different? This is what was in Jesus' mind as He had dinner with His disciples. What is in the back of your mind as you relate to your wife and family around your dinner table?

Freedom

A man who steadies his perspective on these three facts is not needy or haughty. Instead,

- He is free of the desperate need to please others.
- He is free of the desperate need to please himself.
- He is sent by God to do God's will in each situation.
- He has a desperate need to please the One who sent him.
- He expects God to reward him, even though man may not.
- He is not fearful of criticism or lack of respect if others misunderstand.

This man has lost the chains by which others jerk him around. Such a free man can expend his strength in service to others without feeling shame, whether that service involves washing feet fouled by animal dung along a dirt road or preaching to a crowd of thousands. In a family, a servant leader is free to change baby diapers or to cook a meal and serve it to a tired wife. He is also free to speak the truth in love, even when he thinks others might disagree or look down on him, and even when it might cause him to show vulnerable emotions that he would rather keep hidden.

"He that fears God fears nothing else"—John Donne

How a Servant Leader Acts

Now that we have looked at how a servant leader *thinks*, let's look at how a servant leader *acts*. How did Jesus act in John 13? "[H]e *got up* from the meal, *removed* his outer clothes, *took* a towel and *tied* it around himself. He *poured* water into the washbasin and began to *wash* the disciples' feet and to *dry* them with the towel he had wrapped around himself" (John 13:4-5, emphasis added).

No doubt Jesus was as hungry as the disciples. He knew this would be His last meal. He needed the strength the food would give Him for the ordeal ahead. Just as he surrendered during the temptation in the desert, Jesus now surrenders his right to eat, putting God's purposes first. He gets up from the meal and removes His robe. He prepares a basin and towel and kneels to wash the disciples' feet.

Why was washing their feet so important? In the custom of the times, people reclined on pillows around a low table to eat. Therefore, each diner's feet might be close to his neighbor's food, not tucked under the table out of sight and smelling distance as in the West. Plus the disciples had been walking through the dung and dust of a typical first-century road in sandals. I remember on our first visit to Japan, the delicious meal was presented on a low table similar to the style on which Jesus ate His last supper. But one of the participants was delayed and we waited for nearly an hour. When he finally arrived, I thought, "Finally we can eat!" But Japanese custom is that one must always be clean before entering the *tatami* room and taking one's place around the table. So we waited even longer while the one who had been out in public bathed and changed clothing before we could begin the meal. The thought that his uncleanness might spoil the meal was more important than any delay in eating.

In addressing the problem of dirty feet, Jesus gives a good example of a servant leader. He provides strong leadership, does He not? How does He *lead* as a *servant*?

1. He focuses on the *needs* of the people He serves, rather than on His own needs.
2. He does not guard His reputation or respect, but is willing to do *any* job that needs to be done.

Jesus was probably not the only one who noticed that the dirty, smelly feet were spoiling the aroma of the food and the experience of their Passover meal together. Why did one of the disciples not spring into action first? I suspect the disciples were guarding their positions of respect in the pecking order. Perhaps they noticed the smell but hoped someone else would deal with the unpleasant task (Lk 22:24). Have you ever had this experience with a baby's diaper at dinnertime? None of the disciples were going to admit to being the lowest among them by doing the lowliest job.

Jesus' action clearly differentiates a servant leader from a worldly leader. He could have called in a servant. He could have commanded one of the disciples to wash everyone's feet. He could have, as a modern father might do, passed around the washbowl for everyone to wash his/her own feet. No, Jesus interrupts His own meal and offers to God His own comfort and relaxation. He takes off His robe, which exposes his bare skin to the stares of others, like a common household slave. He bathes their stinky feet and dries them with a towel that He has tied around His naked waist.

As the leader, Jesus has every right to expect that others will serve Him. As a *servant* leader, though, He does not ask others to do what He is not willing to do Himself. Jesus never says, "*Do what I say, not what I do.*" Instead, He says, "*Follow me.*" He sets the example, even at the cost of His own comfort and position. Later, He will suffer the worst humiliation by hanging naked before them. He will pay the ultimate cost by offering His body for torture and death to cleanse them from another kind of filth.

It's important not to draw the wrong impression of a servant leader from this example. Jesus did not *always* wash the disciple's feet. At other times, He was quite content for the servant whose job it was to wash them, and no doubt thanked him for his good service. Nor did He try to do *every* task Himself, from finding the venue, to washing their feet, to cooking the meal, to cleaning up afterward. He often *delegated* tasks to be done by His followers. He did whatever, as a leader, He decided was *most important* for Him to do for everyone's best good. But as a *servant* leader, He did not rule out any job as being beneath His dignity.

In summary, here is a list of some of the characteristics of a servant leader you have seen here:

1. He is unconcerned about appearing masterful and important.
2. He focuses on pleasing His Father.
3. He notices the problems and needs of others.
4. He develops a plan to meet the needs and solve problems of others.
5. He sets aside His own comfort and privileges.
6. He delays meeting His own needs.
7. He does whatever is needed to serve others, including unpleasant tasks.
8. He leads by example.
9. He teaches them by words, only after an example.
10. He prepares others for leadership.
11. He cares deeply about those under His charge, willing to die for them.

How does this apply to the servant leaders in your home? Look through the steps above and see if you can see yourself in them, especially at the most stressful times of day, such as dinnertime. If there is a problem—such as a crying baby or an unset table—what do you do? Do you look to meet others' needs?

Or do you wait for problems to be solved by those who are lower in the pecking order? What would Jesus do to serve in your home?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

The Leadership Style of the Pharisees

In contrast to the humble strength that is revealed in Jesus' servant leadership, the Pharisees exhibited leadership of the opposite kind. They were:

- Selfish
- Easily offended
- Full of pride



Jesus' servant leadership did not make Him "nice." It did not keep Him from saying many insulting things to the Pharisees. As a servant leader, Jesus did not fear them and what they could do and, in fact, would do to Him. He was more concerned about their repentance and ultimately their salvation. Only truth had the power to set them free, so He constantly exposed their hypocrisy. Notice that He was very easy on humble sinners who already recognized that they were sinners: the woman caught in adultery, the prostitute who anointed his feet, the thief on the cross. The ones He condemned and challenged were those who *led* others, but did not *serve* them out of love.

While Jesus criticized many things about their leadership, six themes come out in His statements about them over and over again.

1. Pride in religious behavior and personal credentials (Mt 3:9)
2. Telling other people how to act, especially without acting that way themselves (Mt 23:3)
3. Acting to cause others to respect them (Jn 11:48)
4. Feeling no compassion for the needs and problems of others (Mt 9:11-13; Mk 3:5)
5. Speaking religious words that mask an unfaithful heart (Mt 15:7-8)
6. Noticing keenly the errors of others, while blind to their own mistakes (Mt 23:24).

In short, **the Pharisees and the other Jewish leaders were using God and their position as religious leaders to gather the esteem, position, and power they craved.** They were *mercenaries*, ones who enlisted in God's work only for their own benefit. Mercenary leaders are easy tools for the enemy to utilize to fulfill his own wicked purposes against the Lord.

This selfish leadership style is prevalent in even Christian homes among both men and women, isn't it? If we are honest with ourselves, we will notice aspects of those six errors in our own behavior and attitudes. Can you see any that you need to correct? Only an honest assessment will help us repent so that we can please our heavenly Father and encourage the growth of those we lead.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Husbands and Egos

The strong male ego is the source of many wives' consternation worldwide. While not all men are vain about their appearance, how many jokes have been made about the foibles of a man trying vainly to elicit praise and respect from others? In actuality, it is not the ego's strength, but its fragility, that makes it such a driving force in a man's life—to the point where sometimes a man is not even aware that he is making a fool of himself as he struggles to gain the esteem of others. We have already looked at some root causes for this sense of hollowness and need.

Do you know a husband who is vain about his appearance, touchy about criticism, always telling others what a great person he is? The weaker the man, the stronger and more bombastic he will appear, as he tries to get his wife and others to feed his weak and needy ego. A Christian man will sometimes hide the need under false humility when others compliment him. “Oh no, you should give all the glory to God!” In reality, he is desperate for the praise for his fragile sense of self-worth. Those who are desperate to receive respect from others will rarely receive it, and it will never be enough to satisfy. It is a continuous cycle.



A *servant leader* who feels a desperate need for respect surrenders it to God. Instead, he concentrates on serving the good of others and trusts that God will fill up his void with His Spirit. He seeks the “well done” he longs for from his Father in heaven. This type of leader often receives more than enough respect from others as a by-product of his humble service as a good leader.

King David’s servant-leadership produced extreme devotion from his band of mighty men. They were willing to fight through enemy lines just to get him a drink of water from the well at Bethlehem.

- Please read this brief story in 2 Samuel 23:13-17.

Notice we do not see David striving for esteem and loyalty as an end in itself. In fact, he hardly seems to notice their opinion of him, except to be very humbled by their devotion. David pours out their costly gift as an offering to God, which displays that he did not see himself as worthy of it.

Most people, particularly wives, will know when they are being used. As we will see in the next lesson, this lack of love causes a wife deep pain. While a wife who seeks to please the Lord will try to respect and praise her husband, his pride and selfishness make it difficult for her to do so.

A wife’s demonstrations of respect are important to every man, but they can never be enough to fill the emptiness a hollow man feels. In contrast, when a man becomes a servant leader who forgets himself and strives after the best good of his wife and family, he will often find that his wife develops deep respect for him—the type that a weak, self-important man would give everything to have. The ego-driven Pharisees were always jealous of Jesus (Mt 27:18), but Jesus, the servant leader, was never jealous of them.

When leadership springs from genuine concern and love, the leader will feel a healthy sense of satisfaction—not necessarily from receiving all of the signs of respect from his wife and family that he needs, but from seeing them thrive and grow in God’s will (3 Jn 4).

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Study Project: The Head of the Wife

One of the biggest changes that has happened in the evangelical church worldwide in the past twenty years is the change in interpretation about passages regarding male headship in the home and the church. Have such discussions reached your church?

The word for “head” in the New Testament is the Greek word *kephale*. It is used several times both to say that Christ is the head of the church and to say that a husband is “head” of his wife. This word is often the epicenter of much of the new argument that a relationship between a husband and a wife should have little distinction in role. Modern scholars, who seek to create a purely reciprocal relationship between husbands and wives, usually redefine the word “head.” They say that the word translated “head” can also mean “source,” and should be understood this way when it is applied to the wife’s role in marriage. They find this definition for the word from a usage in the Greek language outside the Bible, which refers to the source of a river as its “head.” By using this meaning for the



word, they say that there is then no requirement in Scripture for a wife to submit to her husband or for the husband to lead the family. They would say the husband is “head” of the woman only in the respect that every woman came from Adam as her source. Is this a correct interpretation of “head”?

Let’s explore this word a bit. Does it mean “head” as we would normally use the term synonymously with “leader”—the head of an organization, the head of a school, the head of the class? A head of a physical body? Or does it mean “source” like a river’s source?

The Bible was not written in your mother tongue and has come to you by translation. (Even if you are a Greek or Hebrew, only half of the Bible was written in your mother tongue, and then in ancient form.) As you know if you have taken the course in studying the Bible, the way to understand the meaning of any biblical word is to do the following:

1. Examine the context—especially the paragraph and chapter where the word is found.
2. Examine the way the same author uses this word in other places.
3. Study the way other biblical authors of the same time period use this word.
4. Look at the way this word is used in other time periods in the Bible.

If there are no similar uses of the word in these places, then the Bible scholar may do the following:

5. Research the uses in literature, outside the Bible, of the same time period.

Finally, only if there is absolutely no other choice, the scholar should do the following:

6. Research the use in literature other than the Bible in the same language, but in a *different* time period.

If the immediate context (#1) makes the meaning clear, or if there are multiple uses of a word in a similar period of Scripture (#2), it is unnecessary to go to distant authors in order to understand the word. Certainly not to #6.

In this case, there are uses of *kephale* in the Bible by the same author, in the same section of Scripture. So before we do anything else, let’s read and observe those uses.

Please open your Life Notebook. Read each passage below and for each one write the answers to the following questions:

1. How is the word “head” used?
2. *Who* is the head of *whom*?
3. *What* does the head do?
4. What then are the implications for Christian marriage?

You may need to read the context earlier or later in a passage in order to understand the verse.

The first reference shows how the word *kephale* can be used in a very literal sense. It is used many times in this literal way, but only one is given here, in Luke 7:46.

The remaining passages show *kephale* used in its figurative sense, which denotes a relationship or position.

- Colossians 2:10
- 1 Corinthians 11:3
- Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:15-16; 5:21-33
- Colossians 2:18-19

| Instances of the use of "Kephale" | Who is the head of whom or what | Observations about head and body | Implications for marriage |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Luke 7:46 | Literal head—not "head of" anything | Jesus' head and body (feet) both received anointing with oil | (none noted) |
| Col 2:10 | Christ is head over all rule and authority | When someone is the head, he has authority over that which he is head of. In this case, Christ rules over all other rulers. They rule only with his permission. They do not rule him. | Christ is the leader of all heads, including husbands |
| 1 Cor 11:3 | | | |
| Eph 1:22-23 | | | |
| Eph 4:15-16 | | | |
| Eph 5:21-33 | | | |
| Col 2:18-19 | | | |

You will find it helpful to create a blank chart on which to record your observations. Not every square will have an observation in it because not every passage has an applicable truth for every column. Mark these squares "none noted."

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Study Project: 1 Corinthians 11:3— Three Heads Are Better Than One

In this study project, you will look more closely at 1 Corinthians 11:3 and apply the principles about Bible interpretation that you learned in *Studying the Bible* or *Discovery Bible Study*.

- Please read 1 Corinthians 11:3.

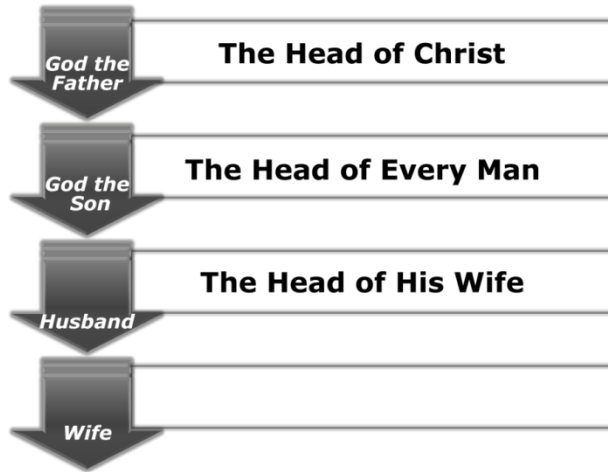
In this passage, there are three parallel statements about headship:

1. God is the head of Christ.
2. Christ is the head of every man.
3. The man is the head of a woman.

It is not difficult to understand #1 and #2. But what about #3? There are some interesting things to note about the Greek words translated "man" and "woman." The Greek word *aner*, which is used in this passage, can mean either husband or man. Similarly, *gune* may refer to either a wife or to a woman in general. To know whether a particular verse is talking about men or women in general, or specifically a husband and a wife, one must look at the context and the article ("the" or "a") used. The term "the man" is a term that means "husband," while the term "a man" often just means a male.

In this case, it is clear that the third parallel, "The man is the head of a woman," refers only to one man and one woman, not "every man," as in #2. It does *not* say "every man is the head of every woman." The term used is "the man." The first-century readers would have properly understood Paul's meaning—that #3 refers to a man and a woman who are *married* to each other. A man is not the head over *many* women,

nor is a woman relating to *many* heads, nor is *every* man the head over *every* woman (any husband would be very angry if his wife was supposed to submit to *every* man!). The Scripture is clear that a husband is the head of only *one* woman, his wife. A good cross-reference for this idea is Ephesians 5:22, which points out that a wife is to be submissive to *her own* husband, not all men. Therefore, a clear rendition would be: “A husband is the head of his wife.” (Perhaps the Bible translated into your language already translates it this way.) You can double-check our interpretation by comparing it to other Scriptures. This is in line with Ephesians 5:22.



So why are these three statements given? It is clear that Paul wants his readers to learn more about the relationship in #3 from our observation of #1 and #2. What can you learn from the first two relationships that reveal more about headship in marriage?

1. From parallel #1, you see that headship **does NOT denote superiority of person or worth**. Otherwise, Christ would be inferior to God the Father, which we know from the rest of Scripture is not at all true. Christ is fully God, as well as fully man, and enjoys all of the attributes of God (Jn 14:9-11). So the headship of a man over his wife is not based on a man’s having greater value or importance. The ground is level at the foot of the cross.

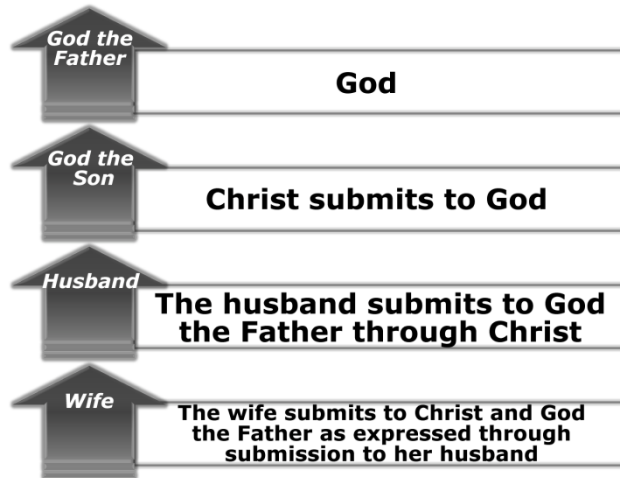
Let’s cross-check this idea with the rest of Scripture. Does it line up with other passages? Yes, this truth is also emphasized in Galatians 3:26-28, in which God’s Word says that both males and females, as well as slaves and freemen, are equally “sons” of God. When a boy child was born in a Jewish household, he was not referred to as “the son” right away, but as a “manchild.” In fact, Scripture tells us that for some time, he was no better than a slave in the household (Gal 4:1-2). Only when his father acknowledged him as his heir as a teenager did he become known as “the son.” Do you remember where we saw this pronouncement in Scripture? It was when God called Jesus his “beloved son” at His baptism (Mt 3:17).

By saying that both men and women are **sons** of God in Galatians 3, the apostle is saying that all are equally heirs of God (Rom 8:17), with the same opportunity to receive the inheritance that God promised to those who love Him. So this strengthens our interpretation of this passage.

2. Headship, as you saw it used in other contexts in the previous project, suggests a responsibility for *providing, planning, and setting direction*. In the case of a husband’s headship of his wife, it is a three-level, not a two-level, headship. A husband has another head over him (Christ) to whom he will look for directions about carrying out his responsibilities. A man, according to this passage, is to be the head over his wife *under* Christ’s headship and direction. The husband must be conscious that God is the source from which all of his authority to lead his wife emanates. God still retains all the authority to punish or to praise the husband for doing a poor or a good job in the execution of his task.

3. The three parallel headships show that the character of each **relationship** should be similar, with characteristics of **love and submission**. Just as God exercises His headship over His Son with love, so the Son exercises His headship over the man with love, and similarly, the man over his wife. Love never permits *using* the position of the head for evil or selfish purposes. In headship, a husband takes responsibility for his wife's well-being. This will often mean sacrificing his own comfort. If the husband is carrying out his role well, a wife should better understand Christ's character through her *experience* of the actions and the decisions of her husband on her behalf.

4. This loving energy flows the opposite direction, too, in each one's submission to his/her head.

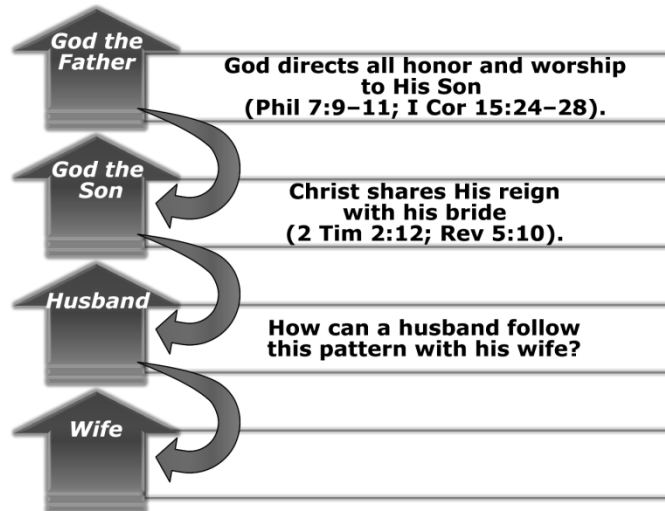


Notice that everyone, except God Himself, has someone to whom they can offer loving submission. A husband joyfully submits to God by involving himself with Christ's plans and purposes. Christ joyfully submits by involving Himself with God's plans and purposes (Jn 5:19). The Father God and Christ, the perfect example, never experienced a break in relationship while working out how the Son would carry out the Father's purposes. In the one occasion when the Son's look ahead at His suffering led Him to express a heartfelt wish to go another direction, He expressed His desires very strongly but still ultimately submitted to the will of His Father: "Father, if you are willing remove this cup from me. Nevertheless not my will but yours be done" (Lk 22:42).

While both God the Father and the Son were sinless, and thus there was never a question of whether the Son might righteously obey the Father in all things, the headship of God and Christ over her and her husband may mitigate a wife's submission to her husband's will. For instance, she is not permitted by God to submit to sin or evil, *even if her husband desires it*.

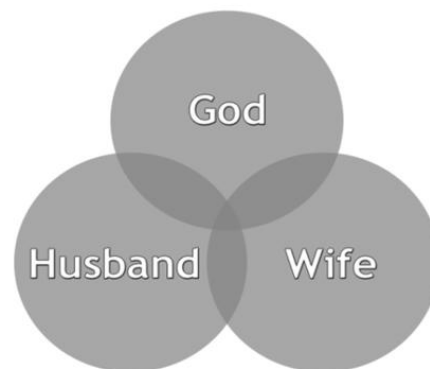
5. Headship is designed to advance the ultimate purposes of God the Father, who is the head over all relationships. The loving *will of the Father* is to be expressed through all three links of relationship because each is ultimately submitted to Him. The Son moves forward in response to the purposes of the Father, who is the Son's Head. The husband moves forward in loving response to the purposes of God the Father, as mediated through Christ, his head. The wife moves forward in loving response to the purposes of God the Father, as expressed through Christ and through her husband. All are ultimately responding to the initiative of God the Father (1 Cor 15:28).

6. All these heads treat those who honor them with honor as well. The heads delight in seeing others honor those on their team.



There is much more we can learn from the analogy of the head and the body, particularly the analogy of the relationship between Christ and God and between God and mankind. You will look some more at this passage in Lesson 6.

Before you leave this subject, it is important to realize that all analogies and parables break down at some point and fail to communicate the full truth of any situation. In this case, a wife is submitted to her husband, but she also has a direct relationship with God the Father and with His Son, Jesus. While her relationship with her husband is the vertical intersection shown in darker gray, she still has direct access to the Father, just as her husband does through Christ (the horizontal intersections in dark gray). Her *access* to God is *not* through her husband, but through Jesus Christ, just as her husband’s access is also through Jesus.



We have seen that the example of headship between God and Christ, and also between Christ and man, displays a pattern that husbands and wives are to emulate in the way that they relate to one another. Biblical headship for a husband is *the authority to do good toward and on behalf of* the wife at the direction of the ultimate head, God. Likewise, the wife has the authority to do good toward and on behalf of her head at the direction of the ultimate head, God.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

A Woman's Gift to Her Husband

How does a wife exhibit respect? Here are some ways—think about which ones would be most important for your spouse.

Respect your husband's wishes, especially when he asks you to do something.

(Col 3:18)

Ladies, when your husband asks you to do something, is your *first* inclination, because of your respect for him, to cheerfully do as he asks? This seems simple, but it runs counter to the culture in many places today.

Of course, there may be circumstances when you should not comply, such as if he asks you to participate in sin. The story of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:7-10) makes it clear that God does not permit a wife to obey her husband when he is participating in sin, such as lying, cheating, stealing, murder, illegal activities, homosexual-style sex, bringing harm to someone, multiple sexual partners, or false worship. God will not count you innocent just because you say, "My husband told me to." Your husband is not your god. Your ultimate loyalty must be to God Himself. In Colossians 3:18, believers are to submit "as to the Lord."

In my daily life, my resistance to my husband's wishes generally comes not because what he is asking me to do is morally or spiritually wrong, but because *I* want to do what *I* want to do, and in my selfishness I resist submitting to the will of someone else. This is sin.

To qualify this, respecting a husband's wishes does not mean that you should not ever give feedback or offer an opinion if you see that this is a bad idea. You are his strong *ezer* and need to advise him wisely and respectfully. There may be times when you need to say, "Honey, I understand why you would say that, but I am concerned that if we [do this], it could have a bad result [in this way]...? Is there anything we should do to eliminate that possible outcome?" If two people *always* agree, they are not taking advantage of having two brains! You must keep in mind that, as a wife, God has placed you there to help your husband and to do him good. When you suggest that he consider a different approach, you must keep recognizing his need and God's command for respect. The attitude of respect, with a heart to comply with your husband's wishes but to ultimately seek to act for his best interest, is also known as *submission*.

When two people regularly practice the "love languages" you read about in the last lesson, you will find that many differences of opinion may melt away. Howard Hendricks, a famous Bible teacher, once said that you can easily spot a couple who are in love because of the way that they handle their decision about what to do when they meet to spend time together.

He: What do you want to do?

She: I don't care; it only matters that we are together.

He: No, really, I want to do what you want to...

She: It doesn't matter. You decide.

They are more interested in looking into each other's eyes than in where they are going together. Did you sound like this couple when you were newly married? Such blissful couples may take a little longer to decide what to do, but they rightly put the *relationship* as their prime consideration. How do you apply this attitude of mutual honor and submission after the honeymoon is over? What is most important to you now: being *right* or being *together*? Keeping your priorities straight may help you to know when it is important to share your differing opinion and when it is important to defer to your spouse's wishes.

Express confidence in his abilities.

A respectful woman notices and praises her husband's abilities, both to him and to others. Read Proverbs 16:24. A wise woman builds her husband up, by saying things like this:

“God has gifted you to be a powerful preacher.”

“My husband is a very good driver.”

“I am so blessed that God gave me a husband who is really wise with our finances.”

Remember, every husband is listening for the verdict from his wife. Is he adequate? Is he doing a good job in life? If you withhold words of praise, you are diminishing him. When you speak with praise for what he is doing well, you build up his strength. A man who is strong inside is better able to meet your needs.

Now read Proverbs 14:1. Only a foolish woman tears her husband down, by saying things like this:

“My husband is such an idiot.”

Only a foolish woman jokes about or mocks his weaknesses or private aspirations to others:

“Jun flunked out of high school. He won't pass that night class...”

Just like the woman in this proverb, what you build or destroy is also the place where you and your children have to live. Your husband is your home.

Show respect in communication.

Read 1 Timothy 2:11-12 (see Note 1 at the end of this article). In verse 11, we see that when a husband is trying to explain something, his wife should be trying to understand what he is saying, calmly and without challenging him. The word translated “quiet” refers not to silence, but to calm. She should not get agitated or argumentative when her husband is explaining something to her. This is not easy to do for most women. We want to be comparing what he says to our own judgment and to be listening only if we agree. Why do women resist this? Genesis 3:16 says, “You will want to *control* your husband, but he will *dominate* you”¹⁴ (emphasis added). This is a statement of fact (not a command). Women will want to control men. Men will want to dominate women. **Both** of these are expressions of sin—trying to control your world by controlling your partner. In Christ, the new pattern—of the husband's tender love and the wife's calm respect—replaces that ugly, old pattern of competing for control.

Similarly, when a wife needs her husband to do something, she shows respect by *asking* him respectfully, rather than ordering him. No one likes to be treated like a servant, but a woman is especially foolish when she demeans her head by barking instructions to him. He will see her attitude (rightly) as disrespect.

Help him even when he is not present.

Read Proverbs 31:10-31 and notice how this woman behaves and thinks. This wife is a bundle of energy and initiative. This is one liberated woman! Her husband is not telling her what to do or how to do it—he does not have to! Verses 11-12 say that her objective is *to do him good all the days of her life*, so he safely trusts her to do whatever she thinks is best for the good of the family. Notice that the woman of Proverbs has earned her husband's trust so that independently she can do the following:

- Buy land
- Operate a vineyard
- Run her own leather businesses
- Manage a household staff

¹⁴ NetBible online: (<http://www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm>)

She does this to provide plenty for her husband (v 11) so that he can devote time to serving as a judge and ruler (that's what it means in verse 23 when it says he "sits at the gate").

Why is she able to do all these things without her husband feeling threatened and angry that she has not consulted him? Men, would *you* trust your wife to go out and buy land alone? Wives, are you astute enough at business that your husband would have confidence in your business plans? I believe that this Proverbs husband is not threatened because he is (1) confident of her abilities and (2) confident of her *respect* for him. He is not being lazy while she supports him, but they are apparently both committed to his role in the government. She takes care of the home front and income so that he is free to serve. It is as if she has this sign on her wall:

"Ask not what your husband can do for you.

Ask what you can do for your husband!"

Notice that she is teaching everyone kindness and love (v 26). She is not sitting home and complaining, "My husband is never home. I have to do all this work!" He is so proud of her that he even brags about her in the halls of government where he works (v 31). As the other men, perhaps, go home to wives who complain all the time, he thinks, "What a wonderful woman I have married!"

Have a cheerful and content attitude.

Your *face* is an advertisement for your husband's character. If you are habitually happy, what do others think of him? What do your children learn? If you are continually unhappy and always complaining, you are weakening him, and you are not improving your own situation at all. You will not arouse enough pity to cause him to love you. Others will not respect you, either. In fact, the Bible says many harsh things about a discontented and complaining wife, such as:

- Her words are no more intelligible or arousing than constant dripping (Prov 19:13).
- No house is big enough to make living with her pleasant (Prov 21:9).
- Living in a desert is better than living with her (Prov 21:19).
- She does not know when to be quiet (Prov 27:15-16).

Is this how you want your husband and others to see you?

God's Word says we are not to grumble or complain (Jas 5:9). This is not to say that you should pretend everything is terrific if your husband is truly evil. But complaining does nothing positive to improve the situation. If we study the book of Numbers, we observe that every time the nation of Israel complained against her leaders, God judged her harshly. When they cried out **to God** for deliverance, God reacted in two different ways. In Exodus 2:23-25 and Judges 10:12, God delivered the nation of Israel. But Daniel, Joseph, and Esther were not delivered from their harsh situations. They submitted to God and worked to be a blessing to ungodly leaders. Instead of delivering them, God made them trusted allies to help these pagan rulers to be better. You can study these situations, if you wish, in the context around Genesis 41:40, Daniel 2:48, and Esther 2:17.

When your husband imagines the woman he loves, you can count on the fact that she has a smile on her face. This is why, in 1 Peter 3:1-6, the most compelling thing a woman can do to win her disobedient husband to Christ is to be inwardly beautiful, calm, and fearless. The Bible says many things about the kind of joy and cheerfulness that are rooted in a trust in God. Here are some things that joy and/or cheerfulness do:

- Make people strong (Neh 8:10).
- Work like medicine (Prov 17:22).
- Are a natural effect of the Holy Spirit's control (Gal 5:22)
- Are evident even when others treat you badly (2 Cor 7:4)

- Result in a generous attitude (2 Cor 8:2)

As believers, we know that our joy comes from a deep spring of our salvation. Let your joy set the tone for your household. Such contentment and joy will strengthen your husband and increase his admiration for you, as well.

Thank him for his provision for you.

The desire to provide is one of man's strongest instincts. This is part of God's statement to Adam at the Fall. Read Genesis 3:19. Here we see that the man has primary responsibility to provide food for his family through the "sweat of his brow," but it will not be easy. Thorns and thistles will infest the good crop.

When a man works to provide for his family, he longs to hear words of thanks from his wife. This is the reward he wants that will make his difficult labor feel worthwhile. At a job, a man hears whether or not he is doing well from his boss. This feedback is very important to him. At home, though, he may be confused about whether or not he is doing a good job. The only measure he has of whether he is succeeding is when his wife smiles and tells him, "You take such good care of us. Thank you for working hard to support our family."

When the wife must be the breadwinner.

I know some wives in Asia who sew to provide for their families because their husbands receive no salary for their service as pastors. Other women must support their families because their husband is ill or handicapped. There is no shame in a woman working to provide for or to help the family, as we saw with the Proverbs woman.

Some people have misused 1 Timothy 5:8 to say that it is wrong for women to work. It says, "But if someone does not provide for his own, especially his own family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." However, in the Greek, the "he" and "his" references are really neuter, "one's own" and "one's family." In fact, the context in 1 Timothy 5:16 makes it clear that this is speaking primarily to women: "If a believing **woman** has widows in her family, let her help them [financially]. The church should not be burdened" (emphasis added). The fact that this instruction is addressed to women also suggests that a wife has the right to spend family funds.

If the wife is the family's sole financial support for any number of good reasons—such as a husband's illness or unemployment—it may be a psychological hardship for both. Women tend to feel *loved* when their husbands support them (see note 2). Men sense a God-given burden to provide for their wives. So both may feel weary and even demoralized, if he cannot work. If you are in this situation, it is important for your husband to have meaningful tasks to do. You will both need to praise and affirm each other abundantly.

Show in public, especially to other men, how you respect your husband.

When you show respect publicly, you signal to your husband that you as his wife are truly "on his team." You are committed to his good. When you tell others of your husband's good points, listen calmly when he talks, respect his wishes, express confidence in him, and show others how happy you are being married to him, you are strengthening his respect in a wide sphere. If Bill knows that John's wife respects her husband, it tells Bill that John is a good man. If John's wife publicly criticizes or disrespects him or complains to Bill's wife about him, Bill will disrespect John, too. After all, who knows him better than his wife? Wives, do you want to be married to a worthy man? Take the time to look attractive and behave graciously, as the wife of an important man would do. Treat him like a prince in front of other men. It will raise their esteem of both him and you.

Ask his forgiveness when you have failed to show (especially in front of others) that you respect him.

This is big in building trust and mutual love. It does not matter whether you have, in fact, *felt* disrespectful in what you said or did. What matters is that *he* felt disrespected. Like other apologies, emphasize your own failure and not his reaction: “I’m sorry I mentioned to your brother that you had lost the money. It was disrespectful. Will you forgive me?”

We have seen just a few of the ways that wives can show respect to their husbands. Wives, what things would your husband add to this list? Husbands, what would you add?

Note 1: Is this talking about husbands and wives or about all men and women? Remember, we said that in Greek the word for man is the same as the word for husband: *aner*. The Greek word, *gune*, is used both for a wife and for a woman. Which meaning is meant can usually be determined by the context. This is one passage in which Greek scholars disagree about whether it is talking about men and women in general, or only about wives and husbands. I find the arguments by the scholars who say that it is husbands and wives more compelling. Even if the correct understanding of this passage is all men and women in general, wives and husbands would be included within that set of men and women.

The reasons I am inclined to agree with the scholars who think that this passage is speaking specifically about husbands and wives, and not all men and women, are listed as follows:

1. It would be impossible, even wrong, for all women to listen to instruction by *all* men with calmness and submission. My husband would not want me to listen with submission to a bad man who came into my home! However, recognizing any man’s need for respect, a woman will be listened to more clearly if she speaks respectfully to men. We will learn that Paul also instructs men to honor their wives, which includes speaking respectfully to them. The focus is on the role of women here.
2. Only the husband-wife relationship is described as one of headship and submission. In the church, men and women equally are commanded to submit to the leaders (Heb 13:17).
3. The man here in 1 Timothy 2 is termed in Greek *the* man, rather than *a* man, which scholars say means that it is a husband, not just any man.
4. The context of childbearing in the next few verses indicates that it is talking about a couple in their marriage relationship.

Note 2: Sociologist Brad Wilcox, in an interview on 13 November 2006 by *Christianity Today*’s Stan Guthrie, said that studies show that one of the predictors of a woman’s happiness in marriage is whether or not the husband earns the majority of the income, and that the income is adequate. A woman who is supported well by her husband is more likely to report she spends quality time with her husband. Wilcox’s interpretation of this response is that the husband’s good support gives her the freedom to make choices about her own work and their children that are best for all concerned.

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The Beauty Held Prisoner

Within our culture are many old tales of a beautiful woman held prisoner. She may be called Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Rapunzel, Snow White, or Guinevere. The brave man must fight through some sort of barrier—a wicked witch, a high tower, a hedge, a magic spell—in order to rescue her. If through his courage and skill he is successful, he frees her and takes the beauty with him. The two ride away into the sunset to live “happily ever after.” Of course it is unclear what the future holds and perhaps wise that the story ends here. Do you have any stories like this in your culture?

Many women hope to be rescued by a strong man, as in the stories. But if the story is to have a truly happy ending, there must be more to the story than his winning her heart and “rescuing her.” That is only the beginning. It’s the “happily ever after” part that keeps a good woman’s interest long term—working together for a cause that calls forth all of her strength and creativity as well as his. If they both stay focused on her as the “main point” of the story, their relationship will spoil. She has become an idol.

Since the split second when Adam looked at Eve and knew that he had a choice—to follow God or to follow Eve—Adam has often chosen the idol. The Bible says that he was not deceived, as Eve was, but he chose to follow her anyway, just when he should have felt his strength and done the right thing. The woman who was taken from his side and brought to his side to be a faithful and true friend to him became his destruction.

A False Role

Remember the men we talked about earlier in this lesson who were never “called out” by their fathers or by God? These men who doubt their inner manly strength are often drawn to worship at an idol of femininity. Sometimes it is a real woman they adore in the wrong way, but sometimes they come to an image of woman in pornography. Or they may worship a series of pretending women, prostitutes.

A man who has never had the question “Am I a man?” answered adequately may take this question to women. Because of her sexual attractiveness, a woman looks like the source of life! She acts like she can make him feel like a “real man.” A foolish or evil woman will capitalize on this weakness and put the man into bondage to her, always flattering him that he is strong, but secretly disdaining him as she jerks him around by his invisible collar. Jezebel collared Ahab (1 Kgs 21:5-7) this way and inspired him toward evil. But no woman can deliver what these women implied. As we said earlier, a woman cannot validate a man’s masculinity.

Why does a woman even suggest that she can? Men are not the only ones to have a vulnerable spot inside. Women do too. But a woman’s heart desire and her question are different than a man’s. Her burning desire is to be loved. Her question is “Am I beautiful enough, delightful enough to be loved?” An evil or foolish woman uses the man’s need for respect to try to force him to meet her need, withholding or dispensing phony respect and phony sex to keep him interested. She wants him to fill a place in her heart that, in reality, only God can adequately fill.

The Designing Woman

Let’s look at an example of this weak woman in Proverbs 7:7-23. Please read this section. The woman here is out to catch herself another man. Look at verse 15. She manipulates him with flattery—telling him he is special, better than her husband—that she has been saving herself just for him. She wants him to prove to her aching heart that she is beautiful enough to capture him. But in his lust, based on his own weakness, the man cannot clearly see her motivation. She seduces him to his ultimate destruction (v 23). If the couple is not caught, she will eventually tire of him and look for the next man to prove her power. Ecclesiastes 7:26 describes a woman like this very picturesquely: “More bitter than death is the kind of woman who is like a hunter’s snare, her heart is like a hunter’s net and her hands are like prison chains.”

Does she feel any remorse for his destruction? Proverbs 30:20 suggests that a woman with this man-hunting mind-set doesn’t see that she has done anything wrong. The man’s weakness is enough justification for her. This woman feels only satisfaction that he loves her more than his wife. With every conquest she makes, she has gathered another “vote” that she is desirable enough to get a man to throw away everything for her—his family, his reputation, his marriage, even his life. But like a fire, she hunts down and then consumes the men who give in to her (Prov 6:26-27).

Here’s another example. Please read Judges 16:4-21. Delilah was paid big money for a challenge: “Get Samson to tell you the source of his strength.” Samson was so weak, so blind in his lust toward her, that she proved her strength over him three times until he was made literally blind and lost his physical

strength as well. She had no love for Samson, only ambition to see how far he would go in his idolatry of her.

Moral, but Deceived

But not only immoral women use manipulation like this. Moral women, too, can find a weak man and keep leading him along by promising to answer his question, to make him feel like a “real man,” all the while making sure he stays weak by reminding him subtly of his ineptness, his failures, his desperate need for her. She is not filling the place of a wife, but more like a mother. Her husband may even call her “Mama.” She thinks of him like a little boy who needs her.

This kind of woman is not wanting to be a wife, even though she has signed the papers that say she is one. She is looking for the man to be *her* wife. But he will keep disappointing her because he will not be able to come through with manly strength when she needs him to be a man. Plus, he will not answer her deep question because, even if he does adore her, a *weak* man’s opinion of her is not convincing evidence! No man is ever enough to fill up a weak woman’s aching need. Further, if he begins to chafe under her yoke, he will begin to resent the control she has over him, and they will struggle in the relationship.



Even Angels Refuse Worship

In order for her to be truly fulfilled and content in her marriage, a woman must climb down off the pedestal, and ask God to fill her deepest need for affirmation as a woman. Only then can she develop the inner beauty and womanly strength to serve God side by side as her husband’s strong help. Only then can she desire and receive the kind of healthy love a good man offers. Only when she allows her husband to develop his strength in God, and trusts God’s rule in her life, can her restless soul find the security it was falsely craving through idolatry and controlling her man.

The wise woman learns that she will never be happy taking the place of God in her husband’s heart. Both men and women must look to God to find out who they are. Only He can validate their worth as men and women, and free a weak woman from the dark dungeon of her own self-centeredness.

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Eileen’s Key to Happiness

“You’re writing a course on marriage?” The vivacious Asian woman who was sitting opposite me had a twinkle in her eye. “There is only one key: Submit to your husband.” I cocked one eyebrow with interest and waited for her to say more while her tall, handsome husband, Randy, grinned silently nearby. “My marriage was almost over. It was a disaster. But when I started to obey God by submitting to my husband, it all turned around. I now have one message that I wish I could tell every woman: submit, submit, submit!” I asked if she would share her story.

Eileen’s Story

I met my husband through work, just out of college. I was originally impressed that he was tall and handsome, but he looked like he had been in the military, somewhat stiff. I felt unattractive, so finding anyone who found me attractive was flattering. I had been married once before, for less than a year, to a man who called home one night and just said, “I don’t want to be married anymore.” I half-expected Randy to do the same, and still lived in fear of his rejection. Every time we had a fight, I ended it by saying, “If you don’t like it, just leave.” I wanted to feel that I was in control and reject him before he had

the chance to reject me. I continually acted my worst just to prove whether he loved me unconditionally and would stick around.

For instance, I affirmed that I should make all the decisions because I made more money. I thought that since I made eight times his salary, it meant that I was at least eight times better and more important than he was. It also meant that I had the right to be the leader, and I led like a cruel dictator. If he did something I did not like, I made a point to call him “stupid.” I even used to think up ways of punishing him whenever he made a mistake. If he forgot to lock the door when he left the house, I would decide that he would have to wash all the dishes for a month. No matter how kind and loyal he was, I never fully trusted him. I always expected him to leave because deep down I knew what a bad, ugly person I was, inside and out. I had been bulimic for years (vomiting food in order to remain thin) and could see my body deteriorating, but I could not quit.

Knowing my own shortcomings did not make me kind and humble. Rather, it helped me to be critical of him. I used to feel embarrassed in front of my friends about having him as my husband. I stewed that he was not funny enough or charismatic enough. Whatever he said to my friends seemed dull and uninteresting. Furthermore, I blamed him because I was so unhappy inside. I thought that as my husband, his job was to fill the big hole in my heart. When I discovered that he could not do that for me, I blamed him even more. I thought about filing for a divorce.

I was also very insecure and jealous of his relationships—even of his relationship with my daughter. Once while we were on holiday in Sydney, Australia, they made a joke together about my bad attitude. I left and walked around downtown, fuming, until 2 a.m.

After coming back from our holiday, I decided to pack my things and leave my family. I was not sure what I would do after I left, I just knew that I had to leave. As I was packing, I found a Bible that someone had given me when I left my hometown. I had just thrown it in a drawer, but now I felt compelled to start reading. In the introduction of this version, it had an article about the emptiness inside.

“That’s me!” I thought. The article went on to say that you can go through life trying to fill the empty place with mere things, but the Lord is the only one who can fill you. I got on my knees and asked God to forgive me and to come into my heart. My bulimia had gotten so bad, after struggling with it for over twenty years, that I automatically vomited twenty minutes after each meal. When Christ entered my life, the bulimia left.

My daughter gave her life to the Lord a few months later. We were in New Zealand and were reading through Proverbs every night together. One night, she started crying really hard and said that she hated the way she was. She wanted to change. She had always been very smart and had started reading at age two. Because of her intelligence, she often looked down on others and did not have any friends. She repented of her pride and asked Jesus into her heart. Each day she has grown in the Lord. She is not only my daughter but also my sister in Christ.

I met some Finnish missionaries, who began to disciple me. When they left, I began worshipping in a small congregation. After a few months, God convicted me that I needed to apologize to my husband for the thirteen years I had tormented him. My Japanese culture is so proud that I struggled for three hours before I realized the Lord was insisting, and I had to submit to Him.

I said, “Randy, I am so sorry for the way I have acted toward you, from the time we met until now. I have treated you so badly. Why have you stayed married to me?”

“I stayed because it was the right thing to do,” he said matter-of-factly. Then he totally forgave me. Suddenly, my respect for him grew! I was amazed that he could so easily forgive me when I would have held on to a grudge. I began praying for his salvation.

We went to see the movie *The Passion of the Christ*, and I hoped that this would be the moment for Randy to receive Christ and become the man I wanted him to be. But the movie had no effect on him,

which left me frustrated. Later, I fumed at God: “How can I respect someone who doesn’t even believe in You? If he’s not going to become a Christian, just make him leave!”

God spoke to my heart and said, “I asked you to be a good wife. Do it for Me, not for him. It would be easy to be a good wife if your husband were perfect. But what credit is that to you? Do this for Me.”

So I began to practice submission and to learn more about it in the Bible. Submission was totally against my nature, so whenever my husband would ask me to do something, I would have to purposefully think of Colossians 3:23: “Whatever you are doing, work at it with enthusiasm, as to the Lord and not for people.” I had to pretend that God Himself, rather than my husband, had just asked me. I came to realize that when you only do things for people, you will never receive enough appreciation or compensation, which leaves you bitter. When you do things for God, it does not matter if people are thankful or not.

Randy still did not come to Christ. I kept asking God about it, and one day He revealed to me the reason: I was asking, not because of love for God or love for my husband, but for my pride. I was embarrassed at church when people asked where he was. I envied other couples. Deep down, I believed that my husband should *respect me enough to follow me*. I had to repent of my own attitude, before the Lord would be free to work in Randy.

One day, God spoke to me about Acts 16. He told me the promise that “you and your whole household will be saved” was perfect for me. He also told me that I had not read the whole verse and that I needed to go back and read it. The whole verse says *if you believe in the Lord Jesus, you and your whole household would be saved*. God reminded me of the Hebrews, who were on their way from Egypt to the Promised Land. God promised to take them to the Promised Land, but, in the end, *only* the ones who believed received that promise. I started standing on God’s Word and thanking and praising God for Randy’s future salvation. This was two months before Randy gave his heart to the Lord.

A few days after we moved into our new home in Bangkok, Randy threw his things around the house. I had worked so hard to put things away to make our house feel like a home. I was angry but did not say anything. I prayed and asked God to help me have peace instead of arguing with my husband. Later that day, I had total peace and was able to share with Randy. We talked about how happy we were with the way our daughter was growing into a beautiful young woman, and I asked him how he felt he contributed to her life. We reflected on the past, when our daughter used to practice dancing at home. She would beg him to watch, and he would just walk into the other room to read. He had a tough time thinking about other people, even his own wife and daughter. He promised to change, to become a better father. “You’ve promised that before,” I said. “It doesn’t last, does it?” He had to agree. “The only way you can have a lasting change is through Jesus Christ.”

I really did not expect him to want to receive Christ right then, but he did! He said, “I think I need to get on my knees.” He repented, thanked Christ for dying for him, and asked God to change his life. Then he started praying for our marriage and for our friends.

God has been teaching me so much since then about marriage and about my wonderful husband. The first thing is that even though Randy is now a Christian, he cannot be my Jesus. I have to keep my relationship with Him strong and not expect Randy to solve all my problems or completely fulfill my need for love and significance.

Second, I have to make sure that I never compare Randy to other men. Last month, we were on vacation with another couple, and I felt jealous at the way the husband treated his wife. He rubbed her feet, bought her gifts, and was generally doting on her. I thought that if Randy were deeply committed to the Lord, he would act the same way. Later, I discovered that man had been committing adultery! Only God knows the motives of each person’s heart, and you can never tell what is going on inside purely by someone’s behavior.

Third, I realized that when girls are asked what kind of man they want to marry, most will say, “A fireman, or a policeman, or a doctor.” Not one will say, “I want to marry a floormat.” They want a man to be their hero, but that is not the way we women treat them. We have to put them in the role of our hero, our leader. We have to encourage them to grow into leadership by finding the things they do well and praising them for it. Notice their efforts. Appreciate what they do.

Fourth, I saw that a man cares more about what his wife thinks than everyone else put together. I can make my husband feel valuable. He does not ask for a lot, but he needs my good opinion and respect above all. Men do not have adulterous affairs only because they want sex. It is much deeper than that. They need their wives to make them feel handsome, smart, funny, loved, and needed. If we are not doing that as wives, someone else will. It is a great temptation for a man that can be avoided.

As I began to apply God’s principles and stopped trying to dominate, Randy began to change, too. He could not stop doing nice things for me! He wanted to come home from work early to spend time with us. His relationship with me and with our daughter has grown much stronger.

God is continuing to work to change us each day to be more like Him. Each day, I pray from Psalm 139:23-24: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way” (NASB). It has only been three years since we became a family under God, but each day I see new blessings from the Lord.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

What Men Want

Why do men and women get married? One of the most challenging aspects of marital harmony is that men and women tend to marry for different reasons. Several studies have compiled men’s and women’s answers to form a typical list for each. This one came from Willard Harley, in his book *His Needs, Her Needs* (as quoted in Linda Dillow, *How to Really Love Your Man*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993. pp 20-21).

Please compare the two lists.

| <i>Why a Woman Wants to Marry</i> | <i>Why a Man Wants to Marry</i> |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Affection | Sex |
| Conversation | Recreational companionship (doing enjoyable things together) |
| Honesty and openness | An attractive spouse |
| Financial support | Domestic support (the wife to assist with household and child-rearing responsibilities) |
| Family commitment | Admiration |

You can see several differences. My mother used to say that if it weren’t for the desire for sex, men probably wouldn’t get married. As a teen, I received such information with a sigh. Why couldn’t a man find me delightful enough as *a person* to want to support me, father my children, fix my faucet, protect me, and be faithful to me alone *just because he wanted to be with me*? The answer was that he can and does, but the “me” that he wants to be with includes sexual intimacy as well as emotional and mental intimacy.

What's the Big Deal?

While men would probably each have a different top five or six items list, my husband, Tom, assures me that *every* man's list will have sex near the top. It is rarely on a women's top list. Do women understand why sex is such a big deal to men?

1. It's a physical need. Testosterone, the hormone that causes men to be men, is present in both male and female bodies. It regulates sexual desire in both. It causes aggression, a desire to conquer and subdue, and competitiveness, as well as a physical urge to have sex. It increases the brain's ability to do math, increases body hair, and hardens muscles. But men's bodies produce *eight times* more testosterone than women's! This means that a typical man will be like the following:

- Eight times more aware of his sexual feelings
- Eight times more driven to want sexual intercourse
- Thinks about sex eight times more often
- Eight times more likely to have problems keeping his thoughts pure
- Eight times more likely to fall into sins through sexual temptation

Most men's physical need for sex runs on a three-day cycle, as the semen pressure builds and makes him uncomfortable and easily aroused. Therefore, one of the things that men are looking for when they marry is a healthy and regular outlet for their strong drive for sexual relations. Good men recognize that this drive is best satisfied in a single, intimate relationship in marriage. They don't want to be looking at many women with lust or to fall into sexual promiscuity. They want to sexually love one good woman for the rest of their lives (Prov 5:18-19).

2. Sex is important to a man, because his sense of strength tends to be expressed most fully in sexual intercourse. When a man has sex, he often feels powerful, masterful—at least momentarily like he has conquered his world, and that all in his world and all in himself is now right. So, then, depending on the man, sex is either a wonderful expression of his manly strength or an effort to increase strength where he is doubtful. Sex cannot confer strength if a man has none, but it gives the temporary sense of it.

So a man who succumbs to masturbating in front of a pornographic image or visiting a prostitute does not have any affection for the particular female figure before him. But he loves the rush of feeling good, not only from the physical release but also from imagining or hearing her flattery. But the Bible says that such flattery actually draws strength from him (Prov 2:16; 5:3; 7:5; 31:3). Ultimately, illicit sex leaves the man even more hollow and despairing. We see, then, that there is a strong link between a man's sexual expression and his strength. When a man expresses himself sexually with a wife who loves him and praises him for the things about him that she values, it strengthens him. If he commits adultery or fornication (either with a real or virtual woman), it weakens him.

Good or Bad?

So how should a Christian wife think about her husband's desire for sex? Let's look at who invented sex in the first place. Read Genesis 2:24-25. Notice that God's design of sex came *before* Adam and Eve fell into sin. Also notice that its design was in response to man's *aloneness*, not only to produce children.

When the Bible says in Genesis that the man and his wife cleave together and become one flesh, it refers to a oneness that includes a physical act. This act was to indicate marriage. In the earliest Bible times, we don't even see a marriage ceremony as we know it. The man paid a bride price, brought the woman into his tent, and when they had sexual intercourse, she became his wife (Gen 24:67; 29:23). Sex is essential to the marriage of the Old Testament, not a sidelight.

What about the New Testament?

- Please read Hebrews 13:4.

The word “bed” here is a euphemistic way of saying “sexual relations.” God says that in marriage, sexual relations are not defiled or dirty, but pure. In 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, Paul tells us that regular sexual relations must be a normal part of a marriage, and if sex is not happening frequently enough, it tempts both parties toward sin (perhaps for different reasons). Further, the sexual relationship in marriage is given as the picture of the ecstatic unity between Christ and the church (Eph 5:31-32). So, there can be no doubt that God approves of sex in marriage. It is part of His good design for married couples, a picture and total-body experience of the unity that He says exists between them.

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A Wife’s Sexual Desire

One of the ways that a woman can strengthen her man is to be sexually available and sexually eager for him, even if it does not come as naturally for her as it does for him. One of my dear friends recently shared with me what she had learned about her marriage during the year after the death of her husband. She told me: “I had always made it a point, or rather *prided* myself, on the fact that in the forty years we were married, I never refused my husband sex. But God has shown me now, after it is too late, that I should have eagerly *desired* to make love with my husband. I think our relationship would have been much better in every area if I had taken the initiative to desire him sexually.”

When a wife desires her husband sexually, it is a strong statement of trust and an endorsement of him as a person. Knowing how much this means to a man, this type of endorsement is something that the prostitute and adulteress promise in order to deceive and manipulate him, as we saw earlier (Prov 2:16; 5:3). They flatter him, but may secretly laugh behind his back at his gullibility. What a good man needs and wants most is to hear those expressions of desire coming from the one who knows him best and is committed to his good, his wife. As the old saying goes, “Talk is cheap, but actions are priceless.” By inviting him to physically enter her body and to share intimate pleasure with him, a wife shows her husband in a kinesthetic way that she truly loves, honors, and trusts him.

Increasing a Wife’s Desire

Thankfully, God made our bodies so that both men and women can enjoy sex, physically and emotionally. One of the aspects of our traditional Western culture, and perhaps in yours, too, is to think of sexual desire and sexual initiative as being totally in the man’s domain. Women are the passive recipients, or responders, to the man’s romantic gestures. But this is not biblical. While it is true that during courtship it is the man who should pursue the woman, a careful study of the Song of Solomon will reveal that once a couple is married, the wife, as often as the husband, prepares and initiates sexual encounters.

So how does a wife, who generally has a lower level of testosterone, adjust to the fact that she may not physically want sex as often as her husband? Practically speaking, she needs to make preparing for sex a priority in her schedule, even though she will not have a clean floor or an elaborate meal to show for the time spent. She may need to prepare herself in the three following ways:

1. Refreshing her energy. With a busy day of chasing toddlers or fighting through traffic, a wife may need to revive her energies before loving her husband. It may mean taking a nap, hiring a babysitter, or taking a warm bath to relax. Her husband probably cannot understand immediately why she needs to rest or relax in order to recharge her sexual desire. His desire is eight times higher and often quickly present! But most men, once educated about her needs, will gladly help. When he finds out *why* he needs to babysit for an hour so she can take a bath or a nap, he will likely become a willing accomplice to her plan. When his help results in a sexual encounter, she might even find that he is urging her to take more naps and baths!

2. Training her thoughts. The second challenge for women is to prepare mentally, both by rejecting critical thoughts about her husband and by emphasizing grateful ones. One of the burdens of a man is that he will become sexually aroused by the sight of any provocatively dressed woman, even if he does not know her. For women, even the most handsome man becomes ugly if she disdains him. Her thoughts, more than her eyes, are the gatekeepers for feminine desire. Thus women have greater control and, therefore, a great responsibility for their own sexual responses.

A woman prepares for sex by priming her thoughts with positive material. Sometimes reading the Song of Solomon or healthy romantic stories can help her mind transition from the concerns of the day onto her husband. There is no substitute for meditating on God's good gift to you in your mate. If you think critical thoughts about your husband, your body will respond by shutting down its sexual mechanism. Sex will be painful and unfulfilling. But when you fill your mind with the good aspects of your husband's body and character, you will prepare your body to want to unite with him physically. Your body will tell the truth about your inner thoughts about him.

While she is young, a woman's testosterone level may be sufficient for her to *physically* desire sex with her husband, even if their relationship is not strong. As hormone levels drop with age, she will find it harder and harder to respond sexually to a husband she disdains. In the case of women like me, who must take hormone-eliminating medicine for cancer, the desire for sex is almost 100 percent mental. I must focus on both how much I love my husband and my desire to express it physically, and I must use some form of external lubrication in order to eliminate painful sex (more about that in Lesson 8). Because I want to please God and to strengthen my husband with my love, I do make our sexual relations a priority in my schedule and in my thoughts. As I have made loving him physically a higher priority, I have been blessed by a sense of feeling deeply grateful that the Lord designed this intimate unity for us—with this comes pleasure that includes, but also goes beyond, body response.

3. Initiating sexual foreplay. While a man's high testosterone level keeps him thinking about sex every three seconds, a woman can use her own sense of touch and sight to direct her mind toward sex. She does this by initiating physical affection whenever she is with her husband—special looks in his eyes, holding and stroking his hand, surreptitious embraces, pulling him into the closet for a secret kiss, a touch that no one else can see. These actions not only thrill a husband and increase her desire, but also make him feel that he is the luckiest husband alive to be married to such a woman!

The Song of Solomon starts out with the wife coaxing her husband to kiss her (Song 1:1). One marriage counselor suggests that whenever a couple meets after being apart, they should share a kiss that lasts at least thirty seconds. Try this and you will discover that thirty seconds is a very long time! The length is important because at thirty seconds, a woman's hormone level rises. Seize every opportunity to caress and entice your husband, and you will find your own hormones increase. Remember, "Sex begins in the kitchen." That means, if you take the time to enjoy thirty-second kisses while doing mundane things such as working in the kitchen, you will be well on the way to enjoying a sexual interlude later when you are alone.

As wives created for a special purpose (Gen 2:18), we have a mission from God to bring "not-aloneness" to our husbands. One of the most compelling ways to do this is through sexual love. While our lower hormone levels may make us feel justified in declining sexual contact with our husbands, obedience to God's Word dictates that we work to do the things that help us to desire and to physically love our husbands regularly. When we do so, we find that both husband and wife are happier and more satisfied with life.

You will have the opportunity to learn more about the sexual relationship in marriage in Lesson 8.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Articles for Lesson 6: Women and How to Love Them

Priceless Beauty

1 Peter 3:3-6

God's Word recognizes that a woman wishes to be beautiful. People have valued women for their beauty from ancient times (Gen 12:11; 29:17; 2 Sam 11:2; Est 2:2; Song 1:15; Jer 4:30). But not every woman is naturally gifted with a beautiful face, and every face ages. Fortunately, God invests the term with greater meaning than mere appearance.

- Please read 1 Peter 3:3-6 carefully.

In this passage, to make his case about the nature of beauty, Peter first gives us the common misconception. Then he makes his main points about feminine beauty. For each of these points, he enhances our understanding with a characteristic or example. His application begins with what *not* to do in verse 3 and ends with what *to* do in verse 6. Please read the passage carefully, and let's see how each piece of 1 Peter 3:3-6 fits together.

| Beauty Tips from 1 Peter 3:3-6 | | |
|---|--|---|
| The Purpose of this Information: | The Concept: | Shown by: |
| A common misconception (in contrast to the main point). | V3 Beauty is primarily external. | Wearing fine clothes, gold jewelry, and braided hair. |
| The central truth. His main point. | V4 Beauty is primarily internal. | A gentle and tranquil spirit which is precious in the sight of God. |
| An example. Illustrates his main point. | V5 Holy women who hoped in God became beautiful through inner adornment and submission to a husband. | Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord. |
| The application to the reader. | V3 Don't emphasize external beauty. | V6 Do what is good and have no fear in doing it. |

Does Peter convince you?

What do you think about the common thinking in verse 3? Here he warns that a woman can invest money and time in adorning her body with beautiful things, but fail to achieve true beauty. Why? If the heart inside is full of turmoil, jewelry, clothing, and hairstyles¹⁵ cannot confer beauty. How does Peter first instruct that women develop beauty? By spending more attention on the *inner* condition of the heart. The

¹⁵ Why is braiding the hair an adornment in the same league as gold jewelry and expensive clothes? I once visited the ruin of a Roman temple in Bath, England. There, I saw the carved bust of a Roman woman from the first century AD, which made this verse much more clear. The guide explained that wealthy women of Rome purchased additional braids made of human hair, and sometimes wove in gold threads. They created a huge mound of braids on their head sometimes twice the size of their natural heads.

beauty that God treasures, Peter describes as a “gentle” and “tranquil” heart. What do these words mean? How could they be beautiful *to God*?

Gentle

The word used for gentle, *praus*, is found in two other places in Scripture. One of them, Matthew 5:5, says that the gentle (*praus*) will reign on the earth. So here, being *praus* merits the great reward of reigning with Him. Why? Perhaps it is because this characteristic resembles Jesus himself. The second instance is Matthew 21:5 where Jesus comes into Jerusalem, *praus*, and sitting on a donkey. From history, we know that when a general came into a city that he had just conquered, he *could* come in proudly riding a warhorse. This elevated him above the people and showed that he intended to further execute his vengeance and judgment on them. (When Jesus comes to earth again, he will ride a warhorse and judge the earth, Rev 19:11-16.) But if a conqueror trotted in bouncing on a little donkey, without pomp and splendor, he showed that he had decided to offer peace. There would be no retribution or harsh punishments, but forgiveness for their resistance. This *praus* characteristic of Jesus during his first coming is why lepers (Mt 8:2), a diseased woman (Mt 9:20), and a woman with a demonized daughter (Mk 7:25), each were drawn to come and ask for Jesus to help with their problems. A woman with a bad reputation was not too afraid to anoint his feet in a household of self-righteous Pharisees (Lk 7:37-38). These humiliated people, whom others would not want to touch, did not sense that He would condemn or berate them, but would be *praus* to them.

So a woman who is *praus* is **not judgmental or vengeful**. She is kind, humble, and approachable—not eager to show how superior she is. Women, do you know if your spouse and others see you this way? Do they readily expose their weaknesses to you and trust that you will not judge or gossip about their problems? If they do, be thankful that you are *praus* like Jesus and can look forward to a reward.

Tranquil

The second characteristic Peter gives in 1 Peter 3 as indicating inner beauty is tranquility. This word, *hesuchios*, comes from two words that mean literally to keep sitting down. It gives a word picture of someone who remains seated, rather than jumping up and striving in frantic activity. It is also used in 1 Timothy 2:2 to describe a peaceful life, as one that is not persecuted by the authorities. So *hesuchios* doesn't mean silent as it has sometimes been misunderstood. This word has often been translated as “quiet,” which has two distinct meanings. Quiet may mean silent, or it may mean unruffled, such as “quiet seas.” Which is it here?

In my cowboy area where many people have horses, people can say that a horse is “quiet.” When I moved here, I wondered if it meant that the horse did not whinny much. But I learned that it means that no matter if a child lights a firecracker nearby or another horse starts rearing, a *quiet* horse will be unperturbed. She remains attentive to her master to know whether or not she should be concerned. She will not run away unless her rider instructs her to run. The quietest horses are trained for handicapped riders.

A horse that is *not* quiet is easily panicked. A fearful horse is a dangerous horse. Sooner or later something unexpected will blow onto her path, and that horse will run away with you or pitch you onto a thorn bush.

How does this relate to women? A woman who is *hesuchios* may still be talkative and active. But she has an inner quiet, a trust that everything that is coming into her life is from the hand of God. She trusts that God will help her to respond appropriately to whatever happens, just as Joseph trusted that God was the one who had allowed his horrific experiences for a higher purpose (Gen 50:20). Therefore, the *hesuchios* woman is not filled with worry and dread, frantic activity, or the need to handle every situation herself.

Sarah

Peter gives an interesting example of this kind of beauty, Sarah. What do we know about Sarah's beauty?

- Please read Genesis 12:10-20.

Here Abraham and Sarah head to Egypt because there is a famine in the Negev where they were. On the way there, Abraham apparently hears about the customs of the land, that whenever the Pharaoh hears of a beautiful woman, he has the right to take her into his harem. If she is married, her husband is executed! He looks at Sarah and knows that she is so beautiful that Pharaoh will certainly want her. Like Esther later in Scripture, when the absolute ruler decides he wants her, she will have no choice but to accept. So Abraham feels that it is a sure thing that Sarah will end up in Pharaoh's harem—the only choice is whether or not Abraham will die when she is taken away. Abraham tells Sarah that they should hide the fact that she is his wife and discloses only that she is his sister, so that Abraham's life will be spared. Is this ethical? Genesis 20:12 reveals that she is his half sister, so he is not lying, but he is not telling everything he knows about her either. We can't fault him too much for telling a half-truth to preserve his life, because God Himself tells Samuel to do this in 1 Samuel 16:2 to protect him from King Saul's wrath. Rahab is rewarded and included in the hall of fame of faith, Hebrews 11, because of a lie she told to preserve the lives of the Jewish spies (Josh 2:3-7). These instances show that saving life is such a high value that even actions, which would in other situations be condemned, may instead be praised. This may help us to understand why God never criticizes Abraham for his actions. As expected, when Sarah and Abraham arrive in Egypt, Pharaoh's agents spot Sarah's beauty and bring her to audition at Pharaoh's palace without any blood being shed.

Wait a minute, how old was Sarah here? From Genesis 17:17, we learn that Sarah is ten years younger than Abraham. From Genesis 12:4, we learn that Abraham was seventy-five years old at the time he left Haran, and then he settled in the Negev, so at least some time has passed when this event happens. Therefore at the time that Sarah was seen by Pharaoh's agents to be a compelling beauty, Sarah is *more* than sixty-five years old! No wonder Peter gives her as our example of beauty that is "lasting" (1 Pet 3:4).

Peter goes on to tell us where Sarah's beauty came from: a trust in God that caused Sarah to submit to her husband's plan and trust that the results would be well. God has already told Abraham that He will bless him and make him a great nation (Gen 12:2). Sarah trusts that God's will is too strong to be thwarted by a mere man, even if he is Pharaoh. She goes to Pharaoh's house, not divulging the important fact that she is already married and thus saving her husband's life. Would you be terrified? Instead, Sarah makes the best of the situation. She even is so charming that Pharaoh starts sending Abraham a steady stream of expensive gifts: sheep, oxen, camels, and slaves. He sees that this woman is worth a fortune, and he is softening up Abraham so that he can ask for her company permanently as a wife or concubine. She is apparently safe from sexual advances as long as Abraham does not agree to give her as wife to the Pharaoh.

But even though Abraham is unable to defend his wife against the greater might of Pharaoh, God is strong. Her trust in Him motivates God to rescue her. So he sends a plague on Pharaoh's household. Somehow it comes out that Sarah is Abraham's wife and this is the reason for the plague. Pharaoh is furious but he also understands that some deity is watching out for this man and his wife and fears to harm either one. So God is the final hero of the story. Pharaoh sends an armed guard to see that Sarah is safely returned to Abraham and to escort the couple (now much richer because of the earlier gifts) back over the border. They return home with plenty of food that they didn't have to pay for. Sarah has had a great vacation in the most luxurious palace in the world of that era, and God works it out so that that neither she nor Abraham is harmed.

Years later when they visit Gerar, another king takes Sarah into his harem because of her beauty (Gen 20:1-18). Again God delivers her (Gen 20:4, 6) so that at age ninety, she becomes the mother of Isaac (Gen 21:5-7). Now people did live longer at this time, so that ninety then was not quite like ninety today,

but it was still too old to have a baby (Gen 18:11-13). Sarah lives to be 127 and Abraham to be 175, which the Bible comments is “a good old age” rather than phenomenal as we would see it today (Gen 25:8).

Peter commends Sarah’s beauty treatment to every woman, especially those wanting to win the heart of a husband who is not currently obeying God (1 Pet 3:1). God says here that this kind of beauty is precious, not only to husbands but to Him. How precious? The word means *very* expensive. How expensive? Jesus paid the highest price, His lifeblood, so that He could enjoy this beautiful quality *in you*. Let Jesus see *in your heart* the beautiful work of art He paid for with His life.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

A Woman’s Home

Most women enjoy making things beautiful, particularly their homes. A woman moving into even the most dismal surroundings will often find ways to improve the appearance. “Some curtains will help cover up the view of the concrete wall outside. A pot of flowers would make this room more welcoming.” Is this a godly characteristic or a silly one?

- Please read Proverbs 9:1-6.

Notice how this depiction portrays godly wisdom as a woman. What has she done? She has built a house, but it doesn’t seem to be an ordinary house, does it? No, it has seven pillars like a palatial estate. She prepares food and mixes wines. She sends out servants on her errands to beautify and enrich her palace.



Now go to Proverbs 31, the virtuous woman. What is her motivation in providing well for her home?

- Please read verses 13, 14, 21, and 22.

She brings food from far away. Why? Because the quality is better.

She spins and weaves. Why? To make high quality clothing for herself and others.

She gets up early to instruct the servants about their jobs for the day. Why? So that the home will run smoothly, and everyone in it will be cared for well.

Is it godly that a woman should have authority to run a household? The Proverbs 31 woman certainly did. What about New Testament women?

- Please read 1 Timothy 5:14.

Here, Paul tells Timothy to instruct young widows to remarry, to have children, and to “*manage a household*.” This term refers to much more than mere cleaning. It is the Greek verb, *oikodespoteo*. *Oikos* is a household—not just the physical house, but all the people in it, including servants. *Despoteo* means to rule absolutely. So you can easily picture Paul’s idea for these young widows. Instead of gossiping from house to house, they needed to take their home management more seriously and use their energy and creativity to manage servants (male and female), budgets, purchasing, meal preparation, and children, with excellence “as unto the Lord” (Eph 6:6-7).

Where is the new husband in all of this? Isn’t he the king of his castle? Shouldn’t a wife pass every decision past him first? The verb *oikodespoteo* prescribed for the young widows is very similar to a noun used in Luke 12:39, and several other places, where it calls a man the *oikodespotes* of his house. So which one is to rule it, husband or wife? When the term *oikodespotes* is used for a man, it shows a different kind of reign over the home than when it is used for his wife. In Matthew 20:1 an *oikodespotes* gives directions toward planting the fields. In Matthew 24:43, he protects the household from robbers. So it appears that perhaps the young widows of 1 Timothy 5 are to rule what goes on *inside* the house, while their husbands

pay greater attention to the farm (income) and protection. They work together in a respectful co-regency, both reigning, but in harmony with each one's abilities and motivations, which, as we saw, are somewhat unique with each couple.

As we said earlier, gender roles seem to be somewhat fluid in the Bible, but in most cases, a division of labor evolves between a couple because of their inner God-given motivations. Many men are not very motivated to invest beauty into their homes. The "bachelor pad" is often a proverbial barracks of inferior food and threadbare furniture. Why is that? Think about what we learned about the core motivations of a man. A man, as we have seen, often feels "in his element" and proves his ruggedness by foregoing comfort. Paul appealed to this desire for rugged strength when he told Timothy to **endure hardness** "like a good soldier" (2 Tim 2:3). A man appreciates beauty, but for many (not all) men, it is often not high



enough on his list to actually do much about it in his surroundings. He is too busy proving himself in his vocation. A woman walks into his place and senses right away that a "woman's touch" is needed. She pictures a place where beauty, comfort, and good food nourish and re-charge her family for their personal battles outside.

And of course through this motivation, a woman shows and administers God's provision for all of us. He created, not just our necessities, but a rich abundance of sensory experiences: tastes, smells, and sights, and intends that we enjoy them (1 Tim 6:17)—often dispensed by the hands of a woman.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

She Reigns

While we have seen that a good woman has a gentle and quiet spirit inside, it does not mean that she is not strong. Presented with something or someone in danger, needing help, or suffering abuse, a good woman can often rise up with *awesome* strength. This is part of God's design of her for her family and especially for the greater world. Her vigilant compassion is also designed to arouse her husband to *join* her in these efforts. A husband had better not betray her trust in this area, or he will find his woman's fierce wrath perhaps turned against him.

Compassion for Children, the Elderly, the Handicapped

- Please read Isaiah 49:15.

Here we see that unless it is damaged by bitterness, God has placed within woman a fierce tenderness for the weak and the helpless. This is most acute for the one with a child at her breast. I well remember the sense of realization even before my baby was big enough to expand my waist that I would do anything, even give up my life, to protect and to defend this helpless one I had not yet seen.



When we were sick as children, many of us can remember a mother who came and comforted with her gentle voice and perhaps a cool cloth on our foreheads. Her ministry said, "All will be well, I'm here." A woman is often the caregiver for elderly parents, and girls are more likely than boys to go into the helping professions such as nursing or teaching.

God has this same compassion for us. Thankfully when God sees us in our wounded and sin-handicapped state, He first offers tender understanding and then strong deliverance. He says that He takes no joy in seeing us suffer, but wants us to come to wholeness and peace. We often recoil at the harsh judgments of God, which are found in the Old Testament. Many of the fiercest judgments on the nations were for the

protection of His people, to keep them from getting swept into idolatry and from losing their relationship with Him. Ezekiel 18:23; 33:11 and Jeremiah 3:12 show that God longs to reveal the compassion in His heart, not judgment.

Compassion for Animals

In women, that sense of compassion often extends beyond people to other creatures. When a woman sees a baby bird or a wounded animal, her heart is engaged and her instinct is to nurture, protect, and aid. A country song, which we laugh at, has a man singing to his wife, “When you see a deer, you see Bambi. And I see antlers up on the wall.” Rarely do women become hunters, unless it is because of their companionship with a man or because their family is hungry. Her instinct to preserve life must be overcome by something stronger.

Does this show an aspect of the image of God in woman? Yes!

- Genesis 1:26 shows that God’s first role for humans was to be the benevolent ruler of the animals, caring for them in God’s stead.
- Jonah 4:11 reveals that He did not want to condemn and destroy the city of Nineveh, partly because of the number of innocent *animals* there.
- Matthew 6:26 and 10:29 shows that He cares about *birds*.
- Psalm 50:10-11 (NASB) shows us that God considers *all animals* as His own and knows *every* bird in a deep and personal way. *The word “know” used here is the same one used for a man knowing his wife intimately through sexual relations!* Even though God does not instruct us to be vegetarians, He is intimately involved with His whole creation and has compassion for each creature. When the earth is redesigned, the “eat and be eaten” system of suffering and death for all creatures will end. (Isa 11:6-8; Rom 8:22).

Protection

A woman’s strong compassion has a flip side. It not only gives nurture but also can take up a sword of protection. A mother bear robbed of her cubs has a frightening reputation just as she did in Old Testament times (2 Sam 17:8; Prov 17:12). She will knock down, shred, and destroy anything that threatens her babies or comes between her and them. This aspect of feminine motivation is a type of *storge* love that you studied in Lesson 4.

I, as a woman, have no desire to kill, but a powerful desire to save and protect those entrusted to my care—both animals and children. Early photos of me as a child show me often clenching my teeth as I pet my little dog. I still find myself doing that sometimes around things that arouse my protective nature. Something in me says, “I care for the helpless ones under my charge *fiercely*. I will do whatever it takes to keep them safe. *You had better not intend any harm against them or you will regret it!*” Of course there is a distinction between my level of responsibility to a child and to a puppy, but my heart has always had a hard time not rising in full ardor to protect either one. It drives my husband crazy. When we raised farm animals called alpacas, it was spring when the babies were small. Mountain lions and bears roamed our neighborhood, so I slept with one ear open and a flashlight by my bed. If the mother alpacas shrieked a warning call indicating that they sensed a predator nearby, I was quickly out the door, flashlight in hand, with our small female dog running ahead at full bark toward an adversary that could be fifty times her size. Fortunately, we never encountered a bear in our nighttime watches, but she and I were fierce she-bears on patrol!

As we have seen, humans were designed to rule the creatures, animals, fish, and birds, in the image of God, to show His kindness, justice, and compassion (Gen 1:26-30). One expression of the evil in a human heart is his cruelty or disregard for the animals that he rules. Often throughout history it has been women who have rallied efforts to defend animals, children, slaves, and other oppressed groups whom men and evil systems were exploiting. In order for the movement to be successful, it took teamwork between men

and women, but it was often women who roused the good men to begin to act. This is an expression of the co-regency of women over the earth. Certainly the world today needs strong women to walk in the compassion and fierce sense of protection that God has created in them.

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Broken Dreams

“A person’s spirit sustains him in sickness, but a crushed spirit—who can bear?”
—Proverbs 18:14



When I was a child, my mother often prepared a big beef steak for the three of us to divide for dinner. She always cut my father the biggest piece of the steak, took the other piece for herself, and gave me the bone with the narrow strip of meat clinging to it. But then my father cut from his own portion a generous piece of the most tender-looking part and placed it on my plate. It was a simple gesture, but I recognized a sacrifice that made me feel loved and highly valuable to my father. So when later a young man told me that he loved me, all I had to do was ask myself “would he give me some of the best piece of meat from his own plate?” When I answered “no,” I knew that his declaration of love was motivated by what he wanted to get, not to give.

An Evil Message

But what happens to little girls who have not ever received self-sacrificing love from their fathers? What if the kind of “love” that they have seen and experienced is twisted and violent? Women who have suffered abuse of any kind from a man may have a hard time in marriage, especially if the abuse was sexual. But it is not hopeless. The Lord Jesus has the answers for a wounded heart and for the men who are married to someone who has been hurt. You may be able to find some help in the Appendix article “Overcoming an Abusive Past.”

Other Abuse

It is easy to see how girls wounded by physical abuse or rape have deep wounds. Other women have wounds that are not quite so apparent. Their fathers were cold taskmasters, always requiring more perfection than what the girls could produce. The girls always felt stressed that they were not quite good enough to please their fathers. They may try to control their bodies through anorexia or bulimia.

When some girls looked to their fathers for love, they heard nothing at all. Some fathers die, leave, or just do not relate much to their daughters. A girl who does not hear affirmation from her father wonders about her delightfulness and often seeks an answer in relationships with men. Often these women go from relationship to relationship without hearing a validating reply loud enough to drown out her father’s silence.

Other girls had good fathers, but later a tragedy happens. She is disfigured in an accident, becomes sick, or is abused by someone. Father is not able to rescue her. In some way, the enemy sends the evil message, “You do not matter. No one will rescue you.”

The Temptation of Bad Choices

A girl who has not felt the love of a good father may find it difficult to wait for a good husband. She may accept one with the same weakness as Daddy because he seems familiar. Or she may choose a man who seems like he has opposite characteristics but is equally as un-Christlike. If a truly Christlike man begins to court her, she may not know how to respond to him because he does not have a violent undercurrent. He seems boring. Sometimes the choice is made for her through an arranged marriage. Proverbs 30:21-23

observes, “Under three things the earth trembles, and under four things it cannot bear up: . . .under an unloved woman who is married.”

The message of an abusive or distant father is like the following:

“Of course, you are not beautiful. Are you kidding? Who do you think you are?”

“You are not worth my time and attention.”

“No one delights in you.”

“No one is coming to rescue you. You’re not worth it.”

“You’re on your own.”

Healing the Wounds

Women, have you heard these evil words or impressions from someone whom you needed to tell you your value? Do they still hurt like arrows in your little-girl heart? What have you done to try to drown them out? Have you tried to hurt yourself or in some way to kill your heart? The way to counteract such evil messages is with the truth, pronounced by a Father who has greater authority and more intimate knowledge of your heart. He made you so that He could delight in you Himself. Get to know Him so that you can see what a loving Father was meant to do and say for you.

A Special Role for Husbands

Ephesians 5:26-29 describes the special role that a husband can have in helping to “cleanse” his wife using Scripture.

- Please read Ephesians 5:26-29.

What do you think this means in the context of marriage? One way that a husband can help “cleanse” his wife is to use the truth of God’s Word to wash away the damaging lies that she has accumulated, which make her feel ugly and worthless. A husband cannot ultimately bring validation to his wife, but as her closest brother in Christ, a husband is in an ideal one to reassure her of God’s love and God’s forgiveness and delight in her. His model of the tenderness, patience, and gentleness of Christ will impact her like no one else can.

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The Enemy Targets Women

Think about the most evil and unjust things you are aware of in the world. How many of them are perpetrated against women and little girls?

The Hard Facts

- Two million girls between ages five and fifteen are sold or kidnapped into the sex trade every year¹⁶.
- Six hundred thousand women die in childbirth each year.
- Every year, from 1.5 million to 3 million women and girls are murdered. They are not killed by strangers but by men whom they trusted. In Islamic countries, girls are murdered by brothers and fathers when the females “dishonor” the family by choosing their own husband or by converting to Christ. In India, brides are murdered by their new in-laws because their dowry was not large



¹⁶<http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2000/english/ch03.html>.

enough. Criminal pornographers create “snuff films” by murdering a child or a woman and filming the process¹⁷.

- Satan worship itself involves unspeakably foul defilement and rape of children, mostly little girls.
- In places where human sacrifice is practiced, the majority of sacrifices are little girls.
- In China, abortion of female babies has caused a 17 percent¹⁸ difference between the number of males and females. According to a United Nations Report in 2005, over 200 million females are missing from society worldwide, largely due to sex selective abortion and infanticide.¹⁹
- In Africa, 140 million girls²⁰ have had their outer genitals cut off so that they cannot enjoy sexual relations. An estimated 8,000 girls per day may be going through this excruciating procedure, many dying from toxic shock.
- According to the United Nations, at least one in every five women²¹ worldwide will be raped in her lifetime, one million each year in Southern Africa²² alone. In India, a woman is raped every hour²³.

Do you see something sinister behind these facts? You should. Satan seems to hate all little girls with a special animus. Why? God predicted this in the first pages of Genesis.

- Please read Genesis 3:15-16. The Lord said that there would be a special hatred between the woman and the serpent.

What are the reasons for this special hatred?

1. Because he lost his beauty

Do you remember who Satan is? He was the “perfectly beautiful” one who was covered in jewels. But obsessing on his beauty, we learn, caused him to become vain and proud and to covet the worship given to God (Ezk 28:12-13; 1 Tim 3:6). Can you see why he would despise woman? Now that he is cast out of the presence of God, he is no longer beautiful. He can only “disguise himself” as a beautiful angel of light (2 Cor 11:14). Does he hate woman because as God’s redeemed image, she still can display the beauty of God?

2. Because she represents and protects life

Do you remember what Adam said about his wife? He called her Eve, “Life-bearer.” But Satan is the bringer of death. Jesus said the devil has been a murderer from the beginning (Jn 8:44). While a woman bears children and has a strong desire to preserve life, Satan’s desire is to kill and destroy (Jn 10:10). Does he hate woman because she works against his plans for death?

¹⁷ UN Population Fund, “State of World Population 2000”. <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2000/english/ch03.html>.

¹⁸ Terry Vanderheyden, “Gendercide” Abortion and Infanticide of Girls Leading to Lop-Sided Demographics. www.lifesitenews.com/ldn/2005/nov/05112208.html

¹⁹ The star.com, Toronto edition. “How did 100,000,000 women disappear?” by Nicole Baute. Published Sat June 6, 2009. www.thestar.com/article/645832. Accessed October 6, 2009

²⁰ World Health Organization Fact Sheet “Female Genital Mutilation.” <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/>

²¹ United Nations Development Fund for Women “New Film series Takes on Culture of Silence on Violence Against Women.” April 17, 2008. <http://afghanistan.unifem.org/media/press/08/release.php?pressID=26>.

²² “Anti-rape device must be banned, say women” by Jonathan Clayton, June 8, 2005. www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/article_531013.ece

²³ The Hindu Sunday Magazine, Sept 11, 2005, “On India’s ‘rape pandemic’:A national disgrace” by Nighat Gandhi. www.global-sisterhood-network.org/content/view/498/76

3. Because of all she represents and reminds him of

Who bore the Christ child? A woman.

Who exemplifies the love of the church for her Lord? A woman.

As we pointed out earlier, evil messages from your father or another authority figure were not initiated by the one who wounded you. The one who hurt you only passed on the lies that he heard whispered in his ear from one who hated you intensely before you were born. The message of death, which you heard, was an attempt to kill you, or at least, to kill your heart. Why? What does the enemy have against you? If you are a woman, he hates you because a good woman, loving, life enhancing, and content in the place where God has placed her, is everything that he is not.

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Women: Keeping Safe in a Dangerous World

“Husbands, in the same way, treat your wives with consideration as the weaker partners and show them honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life. In this way nothing will hinder your prayers.” —1 Peter 3:7

What can a woman do to keep her heart safe? If a woman has a more trusting nature, should she become hard-headed and skeptical?

- Please read 1 Peter 3:7 above.

Peter says that a husband needs to understand the fragile qualities about his wife. But rather than look down on her because of her fragile qualities, he is to honor her as a fellow heir.

Let's imagine a woman is like a lovely china vase, and a man is like a big iron kettle. If wild savages were attacking my house and arrows were flying in all the windows, the beautiful vase is likely to get broken, while the arrows would just bounce off the tough kettle. His design makes him the perfect place for the delicate vase to hide. Ladies do you have an iron kettle in your life? Men, when there is an outside attack of any kind, let your vase know she can come to you for protection and comfort.

What If?

In Eden, Eve was faced with a big decision, but she did not turn to her husband for his advice. How would the story in Eden have played out differently if, instead of accepting everything the serpent said as truth and judging for herself what to do, Eve had paused and said: “This is a pretty big step. I had better talk to my husband first.” Scripture says that Adam was *not* deceived by the serpent. If they had remained in unity, working together, they could have easily repelled the enemy's temptation. Afterward, they could have talked and prepared for his attacks in the future. But because Eve went forward alone, Adam had to choose between her and God and made a bad choice. Satan continues to scheme, by using man's tough hide and woman's vulnerability to design his temptations for each of them. He will try to make the woman **believe the wrong things** and try to make the man **disbelieve the right things. But working together with mutual respect, they can discover the truth together and resist deception.**

Me, a Cat Treat?

“Be sober and alert. Your enemy the devil, *like a roaring lion*, is on the prowl looking for someone to devour. Resist him, strong in your faith.” 1 Peter 5:8-9

One weekend after working at a missions event, Tom and I visited Umfolozi National Park in South Africa. We stopped to spend the night in a concrete hut. At dusk, the rangers told us to lock our doors and not to venture out. Outside in the darkness, the lions, leopards, and other hungry carnivores were stalking their supper. As long as we remained inside the protection of the building, we could sleep peacefully and safe.

The next night, we traveled to a private ranch and stayed in a hut far from the main house. It was dark, but our host said that there were many antelope and giraffes, which we could see the next day. Since he didn't mention predators, I thought a walk under the stars would be a romantic way to spend our last night in Africa.

"But honey," Tom cautioned. "What about the wild animals?"

"That was only at the national park. I'm sure our hosts would have warned us if there were anything dangerous here." I smiled enticingly. Tom took my hand, and we walked past a small pond. The stars were bright and some birds made strange chattering noises in the bushes. The breeze was warm and exotic. I relished this amazing experience. But I could feel in Tom's tense hand that he was mentally rehearsing how to fling himself in front of an attacking lion. After a while, we shared a long embrace under the stars, but his stiff shoulders revealed his tension. He was eager to lead me back toward the cabin. I resisted, annoyed at his caution. "I'd like to stay out a little longer, dear." I smiled sweetly. "I don't mind being alone. I'll stay nearby." I repeated my reasons again.

"OK, but don't be too long. I just don't feel right about your being out here."

My dear, but over-cautious husband, I thought, perhaps a bit condescendingly as I wandered by the pond to meditate on the beauty of African nature and all the wonders that we had seen. Eventually, reluctantly, I went inside.

The next morning, there were early visitors by our pond. An English couple wearing thick glasses, pith helmets, and binoculars were pointing at the ground. I went out to greet them. Maybe they could tell me about the night birds I had heard. "Fascinating!" the man exclaimed, his wife nodding.

"What did you see?" I questioned with a smile.

"Leopard tracks!" The man pointed. "Right here at your pond."

I gulped. "Here?"

"Oh yes," they both nodded, "Oh, I'd say he was here drinking out of your pond just last night."

I wasn't sure why they were smiling. "They won't attack people, will they?"

"Oh yes, but not to worry. You're perfectly safe as long as you stay indoors at night."

God's message to me was clear. In order to avoid becoming dinner for a predator, I needed to listen to the leading of my husband. He was designed by God to keep me safe, both physically and spiritually. I had some apologizing to do!

Linda, our unmarried friend, had wanted some peaceful time alone and had stayed in a separate cabin overnight. During the night she heard something on her roof, pacing back and forth, but like me, she thought it couldn't possibly be anything truly dangerous. But the sound was so frightening, she kept thinking about running through the woods to join us in our cabin to get away from the noise. It was a good thing she resisted that urge. The reason the leopard was up there was that he was waiting to pounce if she walked out the door.

A single woman also has to decide what protection God has placed around her and not be alarmed into fleeing into the darkness, perhaps into a relationship designed as a snare by the enemy. If you are single, what frightening noises have you heard padding on your rooftop?

"You'll die old and alone."

"It's better to marry anybody than to be lonely and single."

"I can't live without a man's arms around me."

"If I don't get married by the time I'm thirty, everyone will make fun of me."

How Does Satan Tempt Wives?

A wife is often tempted to flee her husband's protection. Have you wives heard a voice luring you away?

"I think I know better than he does." (I'm sure there are no wild animals here.)

"Why should he get to be the top dog? I'm just as smart. In fact, I might even be *smarter* than him."

"I am an adult. Why should I have to discuss my choices with anyone else?"

"He's so incompetent."

If a wife disrespects her husband mentally, she will show it in her words and actions. This will cause the man to doubt his strength and the two of them to constantly bicker and jockey for position. Satan likes it that way. Divide and conquer is his motto! The enemy constantly stimulates a woman's *pride* so that he can coax her out from under the spiritual shield of her husband (or other protector). Then he is free to pounce on her and rip her throat out.

Is there a "battle of the sexes" going on at your house? Be assured it has the claw marks of your enemy all over it. Don't give up and don't give in to enemy ploys. If you obey what is right, without being fearful (1 Pet 3:6), by working together, employing each other's strengths and helping each other's weaknesses, you can stay safe from the enemy's schemes for your destruction.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

The Ezer

In Genesis 2:18, God says that He will create a "helper" for the man. The Hebrew word translated helper is *ezer*. This word is used twenty-one times in the Old Testament.

Pick a few of these passages and read what it says about an *ezer* (pronounced *a-zar*). It will generally be translated "help," but it may also be translated another similar way. Jot down in your Life Notebook or on a piece of paper what you learn about the *ezer*.

Why is the help needed?

When does the *ezer* come?

What kind of help does the *ezer* provide?

Who is most commonly our *ezer*?

- Exodus 18:4
- Deuteronomy 33:7
- Deuteronomy 33:26
- Deuteronomy 33:29
- Psalm 20:2
- Psalm 33:20
- Psalm 70:5
- Psalm 89:19
- Psalm 115:9
- Psalm 115:10
- Psalm 115:11
- Psalm 121:1
- Psalm 121:2

- Psalm 124:8
- Psalm 146:5
- Ezekiel 12:14
- Daniel 10:13
- Daniel 11:34
- Hosea 13:9

Which verse meant the most to you in understanding a woman's strength? The reason that you were not guided to specific verses is that we did not want you to feel that we were guiding you to some little-used or obscure meaning. The actual meaning is so surprising, so different from what we typically think of as the role of a wife, that we wanted you to see it for yourself.

Did you notice when the *ezer* comes? When the situation is serious and your life is in danger, the *ezer* is your savior, a strong deliverer.

Who was most often called our *ezer*? It is almost always used of God Himself, the one who comes to rescue us. If you looked up Daniel 10:13, you saw that Michael, the mighty angel came as an *ezer* to help Gabriel to fight through angelic enemy lines to get to Daniel.

Are you getting the picture here of what an *ezer* is?

Not once is the *ezer* the kind of helpful appendage we think of when we hear the word "helper" or "helpmeet." Not a slave who cooks meals and cleans house. Not one who fluffs your pillows and smiles decorously. You won't get those concepts from this Hebrew word, no matter how hard you try. An *ezer* is a different role entirely. It's like the difference between lightning and a lightning bug.

In each of these passages, who is the stronger and more capable, the one who is writing or the *ezer*? The *ezer*!

- Please read Genesis 2:18-25 again.

Another important word here is translated "companion." That word is *kenegdo*. The woman is not just an *ezer*. She is an *ezer kenegdo*, a savior-companion. First, by calling the woman an *ezer*, God is saying that He has invested the woman with some attributes that the man desperately needs (whether he knows it himself or not). By saying she is his *kenegdo*, God is saying that Adam's wife will be his *closest* companion. Molded from the flesh that God removed from his side to create her, God places the woman right at man's side again. She will use her strength to aid him from a position next to him. She then is his partner, his "intimate ally."

Not every woman is a *kenegdo* companion, to a *specific* man. *But* she is still called to be a strong *ezer* to the world. The world desperately needs single women who will stand up and use their unique strengths on behalf of others. Like its need for God, the world doesn't always realize its intense need for feminine strength, nor value what she has to offer. But it does not diminish the critical need nor the importance for a woman to step up to what God has called her to do and be.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Julie's Story: Freedom in Prison

by Julie

Last year, something unexpected happened to me, and I want to share it to show you how faithful God is, and why we can trust Him in even the most difficult situations in life.



A few years ago, my father, a pastor, started a project to bring electricity to the village where I grew up. Our church had heard that the Japanese embassy would help with this kind of project, and since I speak English, I was appointed to write the document to ask for the needed help. God answered our prayers, and within two years, our village had electricity to every home.

But the local official was unhappy and complained to the government. The intelligence officers came to my apartment, and told me that I must go to the capital of my province for questioning and must sign a paper saying that I would never again act independently without government permission. I went to the capital and had to wait several days to be seen. When my turn came, I was put into handcuffs and the judge sent me to jail to await trial. I was the only woman in the jail, and I cried because I was so frightened.

But one guard came to me and said, "You must try to understand God's purpose. A jail is not only a place for sinners, but also for people like Joseph, Paul, and Peter. Jail was God's purpose for them to glorify Him." He reminded me of Romans 8:28, and he chided me that I should already know this, since I am a Bible teacher. We became good friends and he encouraged me.

My sister sent me a Bible, which they allowed me to keep! I spent most of that week in Bible study and prayer. My friends and family came to bring me food and to pray for me. I could really feel the love of God in them, but I was questioning God's purpose, since I was innocent of any wrongdoing. Many people were praying for me, so I was certain I would be released.

In my trial, some urged me to lie that I had never translated the proposal to the Japanese, but I believed that if I told the truth, God would then vindicate me. But when the judge read the verdict, he sentenced me to one year in prison. I felt so sad and shocked that I cried out, "God, why have you forsaken me?" Many in the courtroom also wept. I was ashamed to be removed from the jail in handcuffs and bussed to the large prison.

I arrived at the prison in November. I was very frightened as we drove through the gates. It was a huge compound surrounded by a high wall. But because of the walls, the only thing I could see was heaven.

As I sat down on the ground for dinner, I realized that the plates had not been washed, and the rice was dirty and full of stones. The soup was full of bugs. "Lord!" I cried out. "I cannot eat this food! I cannot stand to live in this place for a year. Help me!" As night came, I worried about whether I would have to sleep beside the big plastic tub that served as latrine for all 200 women as we were locked in a big room for the night. I had heard that this was normal for the newest inmates.

But after dinner, I discovered that many of the women in the prison had been meeting for worship every night. They had been praying for a Bible teacher, and they sang me a welcome song. I realized that I was God's answer to their prayers and that He had called me to minister in this place.

I was given a good place to sleep away from the latrine. The next day, I was assigned a good job of working for a prison official. Even though we were only allowed five cups of water each day for all bathing and washing, the matron told me I could use as much as I wanted to wash my body. My Christian friends took and washed my clothes as thanks for my coming there to teach them. I was blessed.

The first night that I began to teach I taught on Psalm 23. I wanted everyone to realize that even in that hard place, the Lord is our shepherd. Many were mothers, worried about who was caring for their children while they were in prison. Others had husbands who had forsaken them because they were in prison. I

wanted them to know that the Lord would never forsake them. Even Buddhist unbelievers were listening. By the end of two weeks, I had taught them creation, sin, salvation, the Christian life, and the character of God.

One child had been in the prison with her mother for three years. She asked me to pray for their release, but I told her she needed to accept Christ as her Savior and then she could pray to Him herself. A few days later, she said Jesus had told her in a dream that she should not sleep, but needed to pray. When she awoke, she believed on Jesus. After that I taught her many children's songs and Bible verses and she would recite them in front of the group.

On Christmas, God again showed His love and kindness to me by allowing all of us women to spend the whole day in worship. All prisoners, Buddhists and Christians, came together, and I was able to teach them from John 3:16. I had taught some others how to perform a drama of the Prodigal Son. That night they performed it for the others. One woman, a lesbian drug user, accepted Christ as her personal Savior. It was one of the best Christmases I had ever spent.

On New Years, I again explained the gospel and gave an invitation. Thirty women accepted Christ. Among them were one Buddhist, one Hindu foreigner, three prostitutes, several drug dealers, and users. It was one of the happiest days of my life.

A woman who had a paralyzed leg came up to me and asked me to pray that God would heal her. We prayed together for three weeks, and God graciously answered our prayers. She began to walk very well! This encouraged the faith of others, and many came to me for prayer for their lives. Since they were prisoners, they found it hard to believe that God had forgiven their sins and would want them in heaven with Him.

I spent three days in January fasting and praying for my release. On January 17, the head official called me to her office and said, "You have been released and your sister is here to pick you up." While the others were happy for me, they were sad that I would not be able to teach them any more. They made me feel so bad, I almost wanted to stay. I encouraged them to keep trusting the Lord and that He would be faithful to them.

While the judge had said my sentence was for one year, God had decided that it was only three months long. I was so thrilled that God had sent me to prison to have this wonderful privilege of serving Him there.

Since that time, I frequently go back to this prison, this time as a visitor. But the Lord opened my eyes to the many prisons that my country has, with some of the worst conditions in the whole world.

I asked some of my friends to join me and we began visiting other prisons, bringing food, clothing, and the gospel. At first it was difficult to be admitted. The guards were suspicious and we were turned away. But we would go back to our room and pray and try again the next day. Eventually we learned that if we brought food or other gifts to the prisoners, we would not be viewed with suspicion, and we could meet with them and share the gospel. Sometimes the guards make the men prisoners sit with their faces to the ground as they listen to us, but over the past few years, thousands have received Christ! Many of them have been disowned by their families, divorced by their spouses, and they have lost hope. They cannot believe that anyone cares for them, especially a God who loves them. They receive the good news with great amazement and joy. When people become believers, we start teaching them from our curriculum. Now my friends and I travel throughout our country visiting prisons and labor camps, bringing gifts and sharing the gospel.

I want to share with the whole world about what a faithful God we have, and how they can trust Him to be faithful no matter what circumstances they are experiencing.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

The Mother-in-Law: Titus 2:3-4

In many cultures, the mother-in-law is the most difficult person in a young bride's life. Especially in cultures where marriages are arranged, the love between a mother and a son may outshine every other relationship. The mother-in-law's relationship with her husband may be guarded, with respect but no intimate love. In her son, she finally finds the champion and closeness that her heart craves and gives her whole heart to him, instead of to her husband. If a mother has this improper love for her son, she will resent the son's bride, and she will feel the kind of jealousy that a wife should only feel about a husband (Song 8:6). She jealously sees her new daughter-in-law as a usurper and is eager to put her down by insulting or abusing her and reinforcing the mother's own place in her son's heart.



This problem is exacerbated when the son and the daughter-in-law move into the parent's home. The young man may not undertake his responsibility to love and cleave to his wife and continue to cleave to his parents, especially his mother. As we saw in Lesson 1, the Bible commands a son to love his wife, but never commands him to love his mother.

If the son will not defend his new bride against his parents, the new bride may be greatly abused. In fact, a mother-in-law may treat the bride as her own personal slave. She rates her daughter-in-law as the lowest member of a household and expects her to get up earlier than everyone else and do more menial labor. I was shocked to see this situation firsthand when I was the guest of one family. In the sitting room there were huge photos, which exhibited the daughter-in-law's stunning beauty. I thought that they must really be pleased to add this lovely girl to their family. But it was not until I was there for several days that I realized that the actual daughter-in-law was kept in the back room and had to work alongside the paid servant, with no respect or appreciation apparent from either of her new parents. Further, when I complimented her in front of them for her excellent cooking, they refused to look at her or to agree that she had done well.

I know another young bride who nearly threw herself down a well rather than endure another day of torment from her mother-in-law. During a period of famine, a young teacher finally got a job in a distant area and brought his pregnant wife, Grace, to stay with his mother. This "Christian" woman made Grace work like a slave for twenty hours per day. The mother-in-law ate their small monthly meat ration herself and left Grace to forage for small shrimp in the rice paddies for the protein that her unborn baby needed to develop normally. Worse, the older woman constantly ridiculed Grace by saying that she was not good enough for her son.

But this horrific treatment was dwarfed by the story of another woman I spoke with later. She said that when she was first married, her mother-in-law threw her food on the floor and made her eat it off the ground. When it was bedtime, the younger woman was locked outside to sleep on the ground under a tree. The mother-in-law would not permit her son to have sexual relations with his new wife, and he was unwilling to stand up to his mother. Even though the woman I spoke with was over eighty years old when I spoke with her, her experience as a young bride still brought tears to her eyes.

This is the kind of "detestable" example that Paul (in his letter to Titus) says causes the Word of God to be discredited! Paul paints a very different picture of the relationship of an older Christian woman to a younger one, doesn't he?

Ladies, do you have a son? If you do, you either are or will most likely be a mother-in-law. How will you prepare to model a Christian woman and lovingly help your daughter-in-law to love your son and your grandchildren as the Scripture commands? How will you develop the kind of warm supportive relationship that welcomes your mentorship?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Husbands, Love Your Wives

“I love you” is not just a pronouncement. It conveys pleasure and delight, friendliness, safety, contentment, and much more. But talk is cheap. “I love you” is also a statement of *intention to act*.

- Please carefully read Ephesians 5:25-28 and Colossians 3:19, two places where husbands are commanded by God to love their wives. What are the differences between these two passages?



Loving Like Christ

Can these passages mean that a husband must love his wife, no matter *what* she has done or neglected?

Must a man really give himself for his wife in every way, including laying his life down for her daily, just as Christ lived to benefit the believers?

What husband, like Christ, would actually be willing to spill his life out for an ugly, critical, or lazy woman? That doesn't seem fair!

It's Not Fair!

Actually, such action is not *fair*, but it is more Christlike than a man could ever be with a delightful woman whom he had no difficulty loving. While a man sometimes wrongly sees loving his wife as an *opinion* or a *feeling* he has about her, the Bible paints a much bigger picture. The kind of love the Bible talks about in these two passages is involved in *active* sacrifice and service, just as Jesus sacrificed all of His time in life and His life's blood in death. He did this despite the fact that the ones that He was living for and dying for were *not* good or kind toward Him at all! In fact those who would become His bride were actively involved in sin and rebellion against Him. Many of those who would become His bride actually crucified Him.

Does this give you a clue as to which of the four types of love is used in the original language in both of these passages? Yes, of course, it is *agape*, the unconditional love. *Agape* is a love that hopes for a good response, but does not demand it, just as God loved us while we were yet sinners.

Impossible

But unless your heart is very hard so that you *refuse* to love your wife, you may feel discouraged, doomed to failure. No one can love like Christ!

- Please read Mark 10:25-27.

Can you see the correlation between this situation and yours? When you are asked to do something impossible, God is your *only* hope. On your own, you are indeed incapable of the type of love that caused Christ to trade the comfort and pleasure of heaven for suffering on the cross. But in God's strength you can learn to give your wife the love that she needs, regardless of her current “lovability factor.”

God has designed it so that by loving a woman, you actually benefit *yourself* (Eph 5:28). By trying to fill Christ's shoes toward a woman who is imperfect and may not even appreciate your self-sacrifice, you will become more like Christ, a huge blessing. As author Gary Thomas said, “What if God designed marriage to make us *holy* more than to make us *happy*?”²⁴ There is only *one* way to achieve perfect love, and that is to cast ourselves completely on the Holy Spirit and to ask Him to live His life through us. Jesus said in Acts 1:8, “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and [only then] you will be

²⁴ Gary Thomas, *Sacred Marriage*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), p 13.

my witnesses.” Only in the power of the Holy Spirit can you adequately portray the love of Jesus Christ to your wife.

Martyrdom

The word “witness” in Acts 1:8 is the Greek word for *martyr*, one who willingly gives up his life for Christ. The same Holy Spirit who helps you to witness the gospel of Christ in a place where it might be dangerous, also helps you witness to Christ’s life in the way you love your wife and give up your life for her each day. The Holy Spirit works the characteristics of Christ, His spiritual fruit (Gal 5:22-23) in and through you. His fruit makes *your daily sacrifice* as beautiful to God as if you were giving up your life to be executed for preaching the gospel. Both have the sweet “smell” of Christ’s love.

Bitterness

Let’s look at the second passage, Colossians 3:19, more closely. As the initiator of love in Christ’s stead, God has given the husband the responsibility to initiate love in a way that his wife *can feel it*. His attitude is one that shows no bitterness. If a husband is scowling, angry, critical, demanding, or hits her, a woman does not feel loved, no matter how often he says he loves her when he is in a better mood or is trying to persuade her to stay.

Bitterness in the Greek language means simply a sharp bad taste. When you say “bitter” in English, the corners of your mouth turn down. Have you ever known a husband who seemed to have a bitter taste in his mouth when he spoke of his wife?

A man harbors bitterness toward his wife for many possible reasons.

- She doesn’t respect him.
- She doesn’t give him sex.
- She doesn’t work hard enough.
- She doesn’t manage the kids.
- She flirts with other men.
- She has been unfaithful.

Perhaps you have observed a dozen more reasons.

A bitter man creates an impossible cycle in his marriage. No matter what his wife does right, it’s never enough to remove his bitterness for long. Often his wife is bitter too. She may seek something to make her happy outside the marriage relationship—by focusing all her energy on children, aging parents, vocation, friends, or even another man who is grateful for her companionship. Her husband’s bitterness increases. They can become locked in a stalemate, with neither able to make the first move toward breaking down the walls between them. Do you know any couples like this?

Removing Bitterness

So, what is the Lord’s antidote to bitterness? Just saying “don’t be bitter,” as Paul does here doesn’t seem like much help. Is there anything else he says here that can help explain how to remove the bitterness if your wife has sorely wounded or disappointed you? Fortunately there is. If you examine Colossians 3:3-25, you can find your answer.

There it is, just a couple of verses earlier in Colossians 3:13, “Bearing with one another and forgiving one another, if someone happens to have a complaint against anyone else. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you too forgive others.” The source of a man’s bitterness is a *complaint* against his wife, isn’t it? His wife has failed or sinned against him, and he has become bitter.

But the Lord tells him to (1) “bear with” and (2) “forgive.” What does it mean to “bear with” someone? To “bear with” is the same term that is used in 2 Thessalonians 1:4.

- Please read 2 Thessalonians 1:4.

Here it is used at the end of the verse and commends the believers for bearing with persecution. It has the idea of keeping going despite mistreatment. It is sometimes translated “endure.” So here in Colossians 3, the apostle tells the believers to keep going in relationship with each other and to avoid being bitter even if one mistreats the other. The way that we do that, he explains, is by “forgiving one another” so that the relationship can go forward. **Bitterness breaks a relationship. Forgiveness mends it.** So, if you are bitter against your spouse, God says to let go of the offense behind it.

How are you able to forgive if your spouse’s flaw or sin against you is serious?²⁵ God says here in Colossians that *your sense of violated justice is a much smaller issue than your own need for Christ’s forgiveness.* The Bible says in Matthew 6:14-15, “For if you forgive others their sins, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, your Father will not forgive you your sins.” Have you ever sinned? Of course. If you are bitter and unloving, it is a grave sin. You have violated a clear teaching of Scripture to love your wife and not to be bitter against her. If you have come to realize on a heart level the seriousness of all of your crimes against God (Col 3:13), you are more able to forgive your spouse who has sinned against you. Forgive one another for the sake of Christ, and let bitterness be wiped clean from your heart and your relationship once and for all.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Wardrobe Project

In this project, you will be creating an observation chart for understanding Colossians 3:1-9, a passage which describes a wardrobe for Christians.

- Please read Colossians 3:1-19.

Focus your attention on the beginning of the passage, which culminates in the command “husbands, love your wives,” in verse 19. Verses 5, 8, and 9 list things that cannot coexist in a heart that loves. God says these things have to continually be “put to death,” or “put off.”

Create a two-column chart in your Life Notebook or on a separate piece of paper that looks similar to the chart below.

Colossians 3:1-9 Observation Chart

| <i>Your Objective Here</i> | <i>Your Motivation Here</i> |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| | |
| | |

Titling Column 1

Earlier in the book, in Colossians 1:10-12, Paul lists a number of the results of Christian maturity for which he was praying for his friends. Take a look at this list. Which ones are objectives you might have for your own spiritual growth? Choose one reason given in Colossians 1:10-12 that would best motivate you personally to strive towards maturity. Write this reason as your **title** for column 1.

Note, answers will vary. There is not a single correct answer. From these verses, you may choose any of the phrases or concepts that will motivate you toward change.

²⁵ Forgiveness and love do not preclude taking action to protect yourself or others from harm or allowing the law to intervene. You will consider more about forgiveness in Lesson 9.

Completing Column 1

Beneath this title in column 1, list the things that Paul says must be “put to death” or “put off” in your heart from Colossians 3:5, 8-9 in order to love your spouse. Add anything more that you see in your own heart that must be put off in order for your love to be like Christ’s love.

Titling Column 2

Now examine Colossians 3:10-17. These verses describe characteristics of a loving heart and gives reasons *why* we should put on different “clothing.” Which phrase in this passage (10-17) best motivates you toward clothing yourself with these characteristics? Rephrase this one concept in your own words, and write that down as the title for column 2.

Note, answers will vary. There is not a single correct answer. From these verses, you may choose any of the phrases or concepts that will motivate you toward change.

Completing Column 2

List in column 2 the characteristics of love that you find in verses 12-17. While the items in column 1 communicate a lack of love, these characteristics in column 2 communicate love.

- Husbands, are you leading in these characteristics in your home?
- Wives, are you modeling this kind of love to your husbands?
- Single brothers and sisters, are you practicing loving others so as to be a fit representative of Jesus Christ?

What would your spouse, or someone who knows you well, say about your practice from these two lists? Which list characterizes your most frequent “clothing”?

The major part of love in marriage is the daily interchanges that make up your lives together. When your spouse experiences column 2 from you as the context of unconditional love in which you say words of love, your spouse will be better able to feel the *agape* love that you are expressing.

Check Your Wardrobe

Stop and pray and ask God to reveal where you still need to become stronger in your demonstration of love. What things do you need to put off or put on?

Rate your need for improvement for each item on the chart, using the following scale:

1 -“I need great improvement in this area.”

2 -“I still need to improve some in this area.”

3 -“I am not perfect, but by God’s grace, I think this is an area of strength.”

Pray again and ask God to help you imagine the changes that must happen in your heart and behavior for the 1’s and 2’s to become 3’s.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Protecting a Woman’s Heart

If your wife has a trusting heart, it is a great gift for you, her husband. It keeps her believing the best about you! As we said earlier, part of a woman’s beauty and vulnerability is her willingness to trust, quickness to believe. How many girls have been led into sexual encounters with teachers, pastors, government officials, counselors? This was not primarily because the girls had a strong sex drive. It was because they trusted someone that they looked up to. In prison, men outnumber women four to one. The women are most often there because they were accomplices to a crime designed by the men they trusted.



In the article “Women: Keeping Safe in a Dangerous World,” we said that a woman (“a weaker vessel” in 1 Pet 3:7) benefits from the protection of a man. A man who loves a woman has a natural desire to protect her. But his call to protection needs to extend to more than just physical safety. His wife’s heart and mind are far more often at risk than her body.

Husbands, if your wife has a natural trusting heart, you can help protect it to keep it beautiful. Here are eight ways that a husband may protect and enhance his wife’s beauty.

Be Trustworthy

Never take advantage of your wife’s natural desire to trust you by trying to deceive her in *any* area. For instance, never give her only part of your paycheck while pretending to give the whole. Never tell her that you are at your brother’s house while you are really doing something of which she doesn’t approve.

Protect Her From Deceitful Teachers

A husband has a special role in protecting his wife from deceit, according to 1 Timothy 2:11-14. If she has come to new understanding of truth, talk with her about the Scriptures and all the ramifications of what she has learned. Challenge her to think critically. But humility also requires a skeptical husband to be open to seriously considering her argument. When Mary Magdalene saw the resurrected Lord, she quickly believed and was allowed the privilege of carrying this message to the disciples. But the men didn’t believe her (Lk 24:10-11). Pilate’s wife, in Matthew 27:19, gave her husband good advice, but he didn’t believe her either. In both cases, the men were deceived and the women were not.

In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, Paul tells the noisy Corinthian women to keep silent in church. We don’t know the problems that the Corinthians had asked Paul to advise them about (1 Cor 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1), but Paul’s instructions for them to ask their husband questions at home meant that (1) the husband would have to truly understand the preaching himself, (2) their discussion at home would be about spiritual as well as household practical issues, and (3) Paul thought it was important that women as well as men understand spiritual truth, even if their lack of education meant that it would take more individual tutoring.

Protect Her From Wrong Responsibilities

Women often feel responsible for others’ well-being. For instance, if Melanie’s sister is angry at their mother, Melanie may jump in and help Mom understand her sister’s point of view and vice versa. Melanie herself may feel anxious until their relationship is better. Melanie’s husband can praise her for her efforts at peacemaking between her sister and mother, but can also help her think clearly about her proper role in their relationship.

Our friend Virginia was getting increasingly distressed at the relationship between her mother and sister. After a particularly frustrating conversation, Virginia was very upset at the way her sister was behaving to their mother. But Virginia’s husband, Wallace, helped her let go of a false sense of responsibility. If her sister had been acting this way for thirty years, he pointed out, Virginia should not be shocked when her sister acted this way once again. He helped her to set appropriate boundaries and not to feel totally responsible for the behavior of other adults. Now she is better able to be a genuine help to her sister and her mother, without feeling overwhelmed. When a woman tries to control a situation that is not in her control, it leads to physical and emotional turmoil and physical illness. A husband can help her to let go of false responsibility.

Protect Her From Conflicting Responsibilities

Because of her nature as *ezer* in many areas, a woman often has difficulty setting priorities. For instance, if her boss wants her to stay at work late, but her children need her to take them to a soccer meet, and the

house looks like a typhoon blew through it, and she hasn't had time to fix her hair properly in days, she may feel that she is a total failure. In these situations, a husband can not only help her sort out the priorities but can also help take his wife "off the hook."

- Please read Numbers 30:13-15.

In this passage, if a wife makes a promise that her husband feels is unwise, even a vow to God, he may release her from it, as long as he acts immediately. If he waits, the vow stands. In a modern context, a husband can take the time to notice that his wife has overburdened her schedule or her heart and is trying to be a Super Woman. He can share with her that God doesn't expect her to be more than what she is, and he can try to take some of the responsibilities on himself, or talk with her to see if some of her responsibilities may go to others. Most important, a husband can pray with his wife about her responsibilities.

Protect Her From Toxic People

A husband can help to limit the effect of toxic people in his wife's life, even if it means limiting the amount of time she spends with her own family, his family, or others whom they might normally spend much time with. It might mean that a husband refuses to move in together with a relative that is critical of his wife, even if it would be financially advantageous. Paul, acting as Christ's messenger to the bride, exemplified this when he told the church to cut off relationship with certain leaders (Tit 3:10-11).

One day while we were visiting Tom's parents, Tom went into the basement with his father, and I was left alone with his mother. His mother asked me a question and I said something truthful, but thoughtless. She suddenly boiled over with anger. I quickly tried to withdraw my careless comment, but she would not be placated. While I knew that she would not physically harm me, I was terrified. When I told Tom what had happened, he promised that whenever we visited at his parent's house, he would not leave me alone with his mother ever again. He would protect my heart from her. For the next ten years until his mother died, he was faithful to that promise. I tried to watch my tongue from offending her unnecessarily, and Tom remembered to check on me every once in a while to see that I was feeling safe.

Protect Her From Disrespect and Dishonor

In 1 Peter 3:7, Peter instructs a husband to grant his wife honor. He must honor her both in private and in public. When he honors her in private, just between the two of them, it shows her his sincerity. When he honors her in public, all will understand that he intends for them to honor her too. If anyone, even among his relatives, speaks disrespectfully about or to his wife, a husband is alert and lets people know that he will not tolerate this. His parents must learn that if they wish to have a close relationship with their son, they must speak respectfully of their son's wife. If children speak rudely to their mother, they must quickly learn that their father will exercise discipline.

Protect Her From Cleaving to Others

From Genesis 2:24, we know that a man and his wife are supposed to cleave to one another like glue. This is the *only* relationship described in this way in God's Word. But in reality, sometimes people cleave to people other than their spouses, especially if the marriage relationship is unhappy. As we saw in Lesson 1, they might fail to loosen the connection with their father or their mother, or re-establish too intimate a connection later. A wife may turn to a good friend and begin to invest that relationship with the intimacy that belongs only in the marriage. In the extreme, she may develop a close friendship with another person that turns into an adulterous or homosexual affair. You can help her to avoid these things by making her your intimate friend, your trusted advisor, and, of course, your only sexual partner.

Protect Her From Evil

- Please read Ruth 3:9.

Here we see Ruth, the Moabite widow, asking Boaz to spread his garment over her, i.e., to take her as his bride. The garment she references is his *talith*, a fringed shawl that Jewish men wore to symbolize their devotion to God (Deut 22:12). A Jewish man spread it over his head whenever he prayed. The *talith* symbolized the tabernacle in the wilderness where God met with men. When a man spread it over his head, it became his own private meeting place with God, just as the tabernacle was for the nation. He wrapped himself in it at night when he slept. When he married, it became the couple's bedspread. Only a wife had the right to cover herself with her husband's *talith*, so Ruth's literal request "spread your garment over me" was easily understood as a marriage proposal. But the *talith* served more than these practical purposes.

A *talith* had great meanings for spiritual authority as well. A *talith* had thirty-nine windings of fringe. Later, Jesus took thirty-nine lashes for His bride (Isa 53:5; 1 Pet. 2:24). When the woman with the issue of blood touched Jesus' "fringe" and was healed, it was probably the fringe on his *talith* that she touched (Lk 8:43). Another expression used for the *talith* was a "wing," or "shadow." So when God says in Ezekiel 16:8 that he would spread his "wing" over Israel, it looked very much like Boaz spreading his *talith* over Ruth. Several Psalms mention seeking refuge in the "shadow" of God's "wings" (Ps 17:8). When Mary was covered by the Holy Spirit in order to conceive Jesus, the angel said she would be "overshadowed" (Lk 1:35). When Peter walked by, his overshadowing delivered the sick from their illnesses (Acts 5:15). So we see in the literal piece of *talith* cloth, a spiritual truth of overshadowing, or of giving deliverance and protection to someone. For Ruth to be brought under Boaz's *talith* was to rest safely under his authority and power as her husband.

Even though Gentile men do not wear a *talith*, Christian husbands spread their spiritual wings over their wives in fervent and frequent prayer for them. This is the most important kind of protection that a husband can give. If the enemy is prowling about your house like a roaring lion and gnawing on your wife's spirit with lies and insinuations, you as her husband may intercede for her with great power. So pray with great authority to stop Satan's schemes against your wife and spread your covering of protection over her.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Robertson McQuilkin

"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?'... And the king will answer them, 'I tell you the truth, just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers of mine you did it for me.'"—Matthew 25:37, 40.



Which ministry is more important? Taking care of a sick wife, or fulfilling one's call to ministry? Robertson McQuilkin, theologian and president of Columbia Bible College and Seminary (now Columbia International University) in South Carolina, was faced with that question more than twenty-five years ago.

Years before that, McQuilkin met his wife, Muriel, while both were students at the seminary that he would later lead, Columbia Bible College and Seminary. They married in 1948 and both enjoyed years of missionary work in Japan, the raising of their children, and speaking and teaching God's Word at the school and more widely. Muriel taught on the radio.

But in 1978, she began losing her short-term memory and had to give up her speaking ministry. By 1981, it was clear that she had Alzheimer's disease. Her brain was degenerating. Over the next months and years, she lost her ability to speak sentences, but she still retained the ability to say "I love you" to her husband. When he left her side to go teach at the seminary, about one kilometer away, she could not bear

to be away from him. She walked to the school to look for him, often several times a day, back and forth. When he took off her shoes at night, sometimes he discovered that she had walked until her feet were bleeding, but she was still determined to be with the man she loved. McQuilkin wondered at the extent of her love for him, and compared it to his own love for God. Would he bloody his own feet to be with His Savior?

By 1999, she was too frightened to be left with anyone else or alone. Only when her husband was nearby could she find trust and peace. So he wrote a letter to his seminary. This is an excerpt:

...recently it has become apparent that Muriel is contented most of the time she is with me and almost none of the time I am away from her. It is not just "discontent." She is filled with fear—even terror—that she has lost me and always goes in search of me when I leave home. So it is clear to me that she needs me now, full-time...

The decision was made, in a way, 42 years ago when I promised to care for Muriel "in sickness and in health ... till death do us part." So, as I told the students and faculty, as a man of my word, integrity has something to do with it. But so does fairness. She has cared for me fully and sacrificially all these years; if I cared for her for the next 40 years I would not be out of her debt.

Duty, however, can be grim and stoic. But there is more: I love Muriel. She is a delight to me—her childlike dependence and confidence in me, her warm love, occasional flashes of that wit I used to relish so, her happy spirit and tough resilience in the face of her continual distressing frustration. I don't have to care for her. I get to! It is a high honor to care for so wonderful a person.

McQuilkin continued to care for his wife as her disease progressed and she became bedridden. When she died in 2003, after twenty-five years of his care, ten of them caring for her in a bedridden state, he wrote: "For 55 years Muriel was flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone. So it's like a ripping of my flesh and deeper—my very bones." He explained that her complete dependence on him had only deepened his love for her.

In an interview shortly after her death, he told Stan Guthrie of *Christianity Today* magazine²⁶.

"Since I've tried to base my life on bringing my choices under the authority of Scripture, and I made the decision early on that it was non-negotiable, I didn't really have struggles about what to do. As I told the students when I resigned from school, this was one of the easiest decisions I ever made."

He also shared in that interview what his daily schedule had been like for the past ten years,

"I would fix breakfast and then go in and turn on the lights, and she would awaken, although in the last year or two she didn't open her eyes much. Usually in the morning she would open her eyes and then I would feed her. And then of course, after that I had to change and clean her up.

"If it was nice weather, I would put her in the wheel chair and take her out into the yard for her to sit out there for two or three or four hours. Then lunch. She had to be changed every four hours. She had excellent health, so I usually had about six hours a day of quiet to do my own writing and business and so forth. In the evening we would again have supper, and after supper about 9:00 I'd start working on the bedtime routine. But last summer she began to choke on the food.

²⁶ "The Gradual Grief of Alzheimer's" by Stan Guthrie, posted 2/1/2004, *Christianity Today* (online) <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2004/february/8.64.htm>

You can also listen to an interview with Dr McQuilken at the Family Life Today website at <http://www.familylife.com/site/apps/nlnet/content3.aspx?c=dnJHKLNNFoG&b=3781067&ct=6808125>

[Guthrie:] It must have been difficult to care for her at that level, almost as if she were a newborn again.

“Well, she was not burdensome.”

Rather than diminish his Bible teaching, McQuilkin’s ministry to his wife brought the message of Christ into flesh and blood reality. His thoughts about his relationship with her turned to deep theological musings about the nature of our relationship with God. His book *A Promise Kept* has challenged people of all ages to portray the sacrificial love of Christ in their marriages.

One of the most famous preachers who ever lived, C.H. Spurgeon, also cared for an invalid wife from shortly after their marriage until his death. Another great Christian leader, B.B. Warfield, refused all travel so that he could personally tend his handicapped wife and, instead, devoted himself to teaching and writing. Pioneer missionary William Carey of India cared for a succession of two wives who were invalids. Did the Lord make a mistake by allowing each of these great men to be hindered by the illnesses of their wives? Or do we undervalue the impact that their humble, secret ministries had on the great men of faith that they became (Mt 6:5-6)?

When history is examined by the Judge, what will be the eternal reward for a man who fulfills Ephesians 5:25-32 so literally by doing the following:

- Laying down his public life to nourish and cherish his wife
- Washing her with water
- Tending her personal hygiene as his own body, day in and day out

Each of these men showed his obedience not only to the commands of Christ but also to the more difficult embodiment of the life of Christ.

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Unwrapping the Mystery of Women

Husbands, you brought your bride home like a wonderful gift. But as you began to explore this gift over time, you may have discovered that there are many mysterious things inside her lovely wrapping. Do you understand how she is different from you? Here are some of the needs of women that you should understand.

A Woman Needs to Feel Loved.

Just as a man feels insecure about his own strength, a woman feels insecure about her husband’s love. Therefore, it needs constant reinforcement. Just as a woman triggers her husband’s strong reactions when she disrespects him, the husband can expect a strong reaction when he communicates “un-love” to his wife. Some of his actions that she will receive as unloving may include the following:

- Anger
- Looking at other women
- Failing to protect her
- Not talking to her intimately
- Not listening to her carefully
- Expecting her to do menial tasks without appreciation



A Woman Has Many Varied Emotions.

Women's emotions are influenced by the release of various hormones into their brains on a monthly cycle. Because of this, a woman can feel several conflicting emotions all at once! This is foreign to a man's experience. When she tries to express how she feels to her husband, he may become confused, because she is talking about two opposite or at least very different things. "My mother makes me angry. I love my mother." "I love going to class. I hate going to class." She is not crazy, but more complicated, the "more delicate vessel." Some women need to talk to help sort out these emotions, because they don't make sense to her either. Some emotions may be purely hormonal, that is, not tied to any situation at all. Women are just as capable of logical thinking as men, and God calls women to make right choices, regardless of their emotions.

Women Want Security.

A woman's need for security is largely *relational*. That statement means she needs to feel secure in her husband's love, admiration, and fidelity. She will be content through even a difficult financial time, if she is certain that her husband is pleased with her and loves her. He will not disrespect her or belittle her or her opinions. We looked at this aspect in our analysis of *storge* love. A husband needs to tone down his forcefulness so as not to be harsh with his wife, or else she will not feel the safety and security that she needs in order to thrive and love him in the way that he needs. For instance, he cannot slam the door and shout "Where's my dinner? What have you been doing all day?" without expecting a silent meal and a less-than-ecstatic sexual partner.

Women Often Want Empathy More Than Problem-solving.

A man often thinks that the reason a woman is telling him about her problems is so that he will fix them. But what she often wants is for him to empathize with her. When our daughter, Allison, starts talking about a problem with her husband, he stops her near the beginning, "Just a minute. Is this one of those situations where you would just like me to understand and sympathize with what you are telling me? Or is this a situation where you would like me to be thinking as I listen about how to solve this problem?" He is happy to do either one, but it helps him to know before she gets too far into the story what he is supposed to be doing with the information that he is receiving.

A Wife May Not Want Sex as Often as Her Husband.

Both men's and women's sexual desires vary greatly. So anything we say about a woman's desire compared to a man's is a generalization. A woman's sexual desires are primarily *emotional*. Her physical desire tends to be a desire to be embraced, fondled, and cuddled more than the desire for joining with her husband. Her sexual interest is aroused by the *personality* of a man whom she admires. When she finds a man physically attractive, it is usually a combination of his physical features and the personality and characteristics that she sees etched in his face and form. To a woman, an athletic physique is not just nice to look at, but denotes protection and self-discipline. Her desire for sexual intercourse diminishes if he acts in an obnoxious way.

A Woman Has a Special Affinity for Beauty.

Men do not always realize that this may be another area of insecurity for most women. She worries that she is not as beautiful as she "should" be or that her house is not beautiful enough. This confuses her husband, especially when she frequently wants a new hairstyle or keeps rearranging the furniture. He wonders—what was wrong with the old ones? Why does she spend time doing things that seem trivial? Only you and she can figure out how much is too much emphasis on physical beauty. But husbands, remember her motivation from God is to bring beauty into your life. Even if you don't appreciate her activities, look for opportunities to thank her for her efforts and to explain to her what *would* really please you. Most important, remember she appreciates it deeply when you tell her frequently that she is beautiful and amazing to you.

A Woman Needs to Talk.

The average woman speaks more than her husband. From birth, a woman uses language more freely and for many more purposes than a man does. This has a physical basis, as the female brain has a larger area for speech than a male brain. When a woman talks, a hormone floods her brain that causes a good feeling. Because a woman has more complicated emotions, notices more subtle evidences, and has a higher interest in relationships, talking helps her to sort out all of this complicated data. It also supports her deep desire for relationships.

A Woman Needs to Listen.

One purpose for a woman's extensive use of language is to understand and to feel close to others. A woman who loves her husband will often ask many questions about his experiences and how he felt about them. If a man does not understand why she is asking, he may wrongly interpret her questions as prying, controlling, or just annoying.

He comes home from a meeting and she asks, "How was your meeting?"

"Fine."

"Who was there?"

"The usual."

"What did you talk about?"

"Stuff."

"Wasn't Bob there?"

"Yes"

"Didn't you say that his son ran away from home last week?"

"Yes, but we didn't talk about it."

"Didn't you say *anything*? How do you feel Bob is doing?"

The man at this point may be gritting his teeth at his prying wife.

"Look, can we just drop it?"

"What are you so *angry* about?"

This interchange points out the need that women have for a certain *type* of communication—thoughts and feelings, especially about relationships. When things are difficult in another man's life, such as a runaway son, most men will not bring up the issue in a meeting. He will not instantly empathize with the man whose son ran away, or be able to report to his wife how he is doing. While he may be genuinely concerned, he doesn't naturally see himself as having any bearing on the situation, except perhaps to pray about it. He may feel that his wife's questions are prying and even designed to expose his failure to relate warmly enough to his friend. He is confused and perhaps annoyed. Why is she making such a big deal about it? He needs to understand that his wife is moving toward him *because he matters to her*. By sharing his inner thoughts and feelings, he shows her that she matters to him too.

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Honor

"Husbands, in the same way, treat your wives with consideration as the weaker partners and show them honor as fellow heirs of the grace of life. In this way nothing will hinder your prayers."

—1 Peter 3:7

The word translated "honor" in 1 Peter 3 is the Greek word *time* (pronounced tee-may). This word means preciousness, esteem, value. So we might say in more common speech,

“Husbands, show your wife that she is precious to you, that you esteem and value her.”

Does this remind you of what we have said that women *need* most? To be delighted in and to matter deeply to someone. Should it amaze us that the commands of Scripture to a husband meet the deepest needs of his wife?

Why Is It Right for a Husband to Honor His Wife?

The reason a husband must honor his wife is because she is a “**fellow heir** of the grace of life” (emphasis added). If you remember, earlier we said that both men and women in Christ are equally “**sons**” and “**heirs**” of God. We saw this same principle from Paul’s writings to the Galatians (Galatians 3:26-29). In Christ, your wife is your equal. She may have different gifts, talents, roles, abilities, stature, strengths, weaknesses, and personality, but her worth to God is fully equal to your worth to God, so it is right to honor her.

What is the **grace of life** the passage mentions? Grace is unmerited. You have received God’s grace, which you do not deserve, did not earn, and can never pay back. Fully appreciating this fact should lead you to humility in your dealings with everyone, from those you consider the most powerful to those you consider the “least of these.” Jesus said “I tell you the truth, just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers [and sisters] of mine, you did it for me” (Mt 25:40). This is because the Holy Spirit resides in each believer and makes each one a temple and a manifestation of Christ. You honor your Christian wife then, because Christ says that when you do, you honor Him. Conversely if you treat her with contempt or dishonor, you are dishonoring Him.

How Do You Show Your Wife That You Honor Her?

Honor is not a small thing to a woman, but it is not always the same kind of honor that is most meaningful to a man. Just as a man feels disrespected by attacks on his strength and abilities, qualities that he values highly, a woman feels dishonored *by attacks on the qualities in herself that she values highly*. If she feels dishonored or fearful of his attacks on these precious things, she will withhold herself, and true unity will be impossible.

You *could* just ask your wife what characteristics she values most and how you can honor her. But in case she is too stunned at your question to speak, let’s look first at ways a woman *might* feel honored. These are generalizations, and it will be important for you to confirm or adjust your actions to your own wife.

Honoring Her Preferences

You honor your wife when you ask and remember her unique preferences—what kind of activities she likes, what colors, what places she likes to go, what kind of food she likes to eat. Remembering these things and adjusting your own preferences honors her. I remember one young man gave his fiancée a box of chocolate-covered raisins to enjoy on their date. I noticed the girl smiled weakly as she received the gift. As she sadly confided in me later, “I hate chocolate-covered raisins, but he loves them. He *always* forgets.” His failure to remember or perhaps even his deliberate disregard of her tastes had the double benefit to him of both appearing generous and being able to eat his own favorite treat. He got the chocolate, but lost something more valuable.

Honoring Her Ability to Think

Another fear many women have is that because of her domestic role as the mother of children, her brain will shrivel! So a husband honors his wife by encouraging her as a student of truth. Jesus exemplified this when he refused to allow Martha to pull Mary back into the kitchen when Mary wanted to learn (Lk 10:39-42), by holding a theological conversation with an outcast woman (Jn 4:10-26), and by revealing His resurrection first to a woman (Jn 20:17). As we mentioned earlier, when Paul suggested that a wife ask a husband questions at home about the teaching at the worship meeting (1 Cor 14:35), he was encouraging spiritual conversations between husbands and wives, not stifling the wife’s learning.

Honoring Her With Your Eyes—Matthew 6:22-23

A wife is honored by *how* her husband looks at her and at others. The largest part of communication is facial expression, tone of voice, and body language. Husbands, when your wife looks into your eyes, what do you communicate to her? Affection, delight, sexual desire, tenderness? When you look at other women, what do your eyes reveal? A man honors his wife by keeping his sexual eyes directed toward her alone. In Job 31:1, Job says, “I made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I entertain thoughts against a virgin?”²⁷ “Does he not see my ways and count all my steps?” (Job 31: 4). It was not an easy task for Job to keep his eyes from other women, especially considering what we know of Job’s haranguing wife! (Job 2:9). Paul, who forfeited the pleasure and comfort of a wife for the sake of spreading the gospel (1 Cor 9:5), was a normal man—no stranger to temptation. He describes his own practice of taking “every thought captive to make it obey Christ” (2 Cor 10:5). While 1 Timothy 2:9 urges Christian women to dress modestly in public so as not to increase a man’s struggle in this area, Jesus holds each man responsible for his own adulterous thoughts (Mt 5:27-32). A Christian wife can help her husband honor her alone by allowing him to visually “feast” on her naked beauty.

Honoring Through Self-Control

Many women, if asked how they wish their husbands could change, would say they wish that he could learn to control his **anger**. The Lord agrees with these wives! Anger is a characteristic that we share with God, and so it is not *inherently* sinful (Eph 4:26, Rev 14:10). In humans, however, anger is often not motivated by a violation of righteousness, as God’s anger is (Jas 1:20) but by a violation of personal self-interest. Anger and rage are one of the evidences of the rule of the “flesh,” while self-control is one evidence of the rule of the Spirit of God (Gal 5:19-24). Developing self-control over a quick or harsh temper is one of the evidences of maturity in Christ and is, therefore, one of the characteristics that Paul instructed Titus and Timothy to look for when selecting leaders (1 Tim 3:3; 2 Tim 2:24; Tit 1:7).

What does anger have to do with *honor*? Have you ever been in the middle of an angry argument when the telephone rings? What happens to your anger? “Oh, hello, Pastor Rick. It’s so *nice* of you to call!” When you respect someone highly, you automatically exercise self-control over your temper. Unbridled anger dishonors and does deep harm to a relationship. A cruel word can never be recalled. A bruise on the skin may heal in a few days, but its wound to the heart will not. A broken vase may be thrown away, but the dishonor of her husband breaking it will not disappear.

Honoring With Attentiveness and Courtesy

Imagine being a worker in an office of a large company. What happens when a superior walks into the room and comes to your desk to speak with you? Do you continue to work, ignore the manager, or make him wait? Of course not. How do you show your wife that you honor her when she speaks to you? By pausing, listening, and attending to what she is saying. In the past in the West, it was customary in a group for men to stop their conversation and stand up whenever a woman entered the room. They took their seats again only after the woman was seated. Those types of customs (opening doors, removing hats, giving up a seat on the bus) came into Western culture because of Peter’s teaching of treating women with honor.

Honoring With Time

I can tell how valuable something is to you by what you are willing to trade for it. Every day all of us trade time for those things we value the most. Time may be our only common currency. When your life is over on earth, and one of you lays the other in the arms of Jesus, will you regret the amount of time that you devoted to knowing, loving, and serving your spouse? A man shows his wife how much he values her by what he is willing to give up in order to spend time with her or meet her needs. Does he love his

²⁷ Note that the word rendered “virgin” here means any female of sexual maturity, not merely those who are sexually pure. It is not saying that it is okay to entertain sexual thoughts about women who are *not* virgins.

computer more than her? Does he love watching television more than her? Would he give up his soccer match for her? What would your wife say that you love *more* than her? In the story of the wedding feast (Mt 22:1-7), some guests would not come because they were too busy. Other things were more important than the son's wedding. The dishonor was clear (and in this case, deadly, see v 7).

Honoring With Words

The wise wife in Proverbs 31 had an equally wise husband who honored her out loud: "Many daughters have done valiantly, but you surpass them all!" (Prov 31:29). A husband honors his wife by looking for opportunities to tell others what a wonderful wife the Lord has given him and in what ways she excels. He also tells her frequently how pleased and proud he is to be married to her.

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John's Story: A Man Who Granted His Wife Honor

John was the leader of a Bible school in an Asian country where Christians are a minority, and the government and the culture were hostile toward them. I had heard of this remarkable man's treatment of his wife with honor, quite contrary to most of his countrymen. Upon his sudden death, I had a chance to interview his daughter, Grace, and son-in-law, Matthew, about her father's life. What emerged was a portrait of a man who fulfilled 1 Peter 3:7.

Grace described her parents this way:

My parents were from same village and knew each other well and loved each other early. But my mom, Sarah, was not educated. She had to work hard on a farm. When they married, my dad was already a pastor. Mom is simple and shy, but he always lifted her up and shared whatever he learned with her.

Dad spent years studying remotely, and Mom had to take on more work to allow him to study. So when Dad got his PhD, he stood up and announced during the ceremony, "I want to honor my wife who made this possible." He had arranged ahead of time that the traditional ritual of having his professor put the stole conferring the degree on him be changed. He asked Sarah to come up before the crowd that was assembled to share with the professor in putting the stole over his head.

But John's displays of honor were not just on special occasions or in public. His daughter said that he honored his wife daily in little and big ways.

He was the leader in our home, but he always listened and discussed every decision with Mom. If she disagreed, he generally would not go forward. If they had any sharp disagreement, I never saw it. They never argued in front of us children.

Every morning he took Mom to a coffee shop near the house to talk. Even if he had visitors, he asked them to wait while he enjoyed their time alone, from 6:30 to 7:00 a.m. First, they prayed together at home. Then they walked down the street, holding hands. Sometimes, he put his arm around her as they walked. [In this country, public affection between married adults is simply not done.] At the coffee shop, they discussed upcoming events, and he asked for Sarah's wisdom and advice. In our culture, women are also not respected, especially a woman without a formal education.

Even the way he addressed her was counter-cultural. Grace said,

He called her by her name, not using the common term in our culture, "Grace's mother." It was a sign of the sweet, close relationship between them to call her using her own name.

Grace said she herself was perhaps a spoiled child, but also a strong-willed natural leader. John gave her a great deal of freedom, but he warned her that when she married, she must not try to dominate her husband.

Once I yelled at Matthew in Dad's presence. Dad called me aside and said, "You must not ever do this again, Grace. You must respect your husband."

Matthew had been a student in the school, when he came to know John and his beautiful daughter. After he and Grace married, he was amazed that the man teaching in front of the school was just as loving and cheerful in his own home as in front of others.

I was amazed by how much he led the family in laughter. He was so friendly to his wife, children, and to me. When he was home, everyone was always happy. He taught and joked with each one of us. But what struck me most was that he was always respectful to his wife's opinions. He always got her point of view before proceeding. She always prayed for him and with him. They decided things together because they both wanted to make sure that they were listening to the Lord.

As I watched this young couple, I was impressed at the tenderness and affection that this young man showed to his grieving wife, John's daughter. John's legacy would certainly pass down through many generations through the young couple before me, clear in their understanding of a Christian husband because of John's godly example.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Articles for Lesson 7: Communication Builds Unity

Three Main Components of Communication

Let's review the three main components of communication:

Verbal communication – any form of communication that uses:

Speech

Sounds

Written words

Nonverbal communication – any form of communication that uses:

Body postures

Spatial arrangements
(i.e. where and how you position yourself in a room)

Gestures

Actions

Value communication – any action that reveals:

Values

Needs

Desires

Please read the following stories. See if you can identify the components of communication revealed in each one.

John's Poem

John wanted this year to be the best birthday for his wife, Beth. He had already purchased a gift and planned a birthday party for her with their closest friends, but he wanted to do more. John wanted to somehow express to Beth just how much he loved her. So he spent many hours the week before her

birthday writing a poem, which expressed his love for her in words. When he read his poem out loud to Beth on her birthday, she was so touched that she began to cry.

Juan and Eva

Juan and Eva had a big argument before going to bed one evening. The next day, Eva was filled with anxiety about whether or not Juan would come home from work. She was afraid that he would do the same thing he often did to “punish” her for not giving in to his desires. Juan returned home from work, but he did not speak a word to Eva for the rest of the evening. He stomped his feet when he walked in the house, banged things loudly, and slammed doors. When she spoke to him, he refused to look at her. Although Juan never said a word, the tension between them was tangible.

Whom Should They Obey?

Caleb and Deborah live in a country where it is against the law to have a home Bible study. While they did not want to disobey their government, they felt a tremendous need to gather a group of believers together for this purpose. After talking and praying about it, they decided to hold the Bible study in their home. They knew that they must ultimately obey God rather than man. They were willing to suffer whatever consequences might result from their decision.

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The Process of Communication

This illustrates the initial steps in the process of communication.

1. Lee has a request that he would like to communicate with Anna. In this case, he wants her to buy an incandescent light bulb at the store.
2. Lee uses words to tell Anna what he wants, “Please get me a new light bulb.”



3. Anna hears the words, and a corresponding idea comes to her mind as to what she believes she heard Lee say.

As the first frame shows, however, their ideas were different. Lee meant an incandescent light bulb. Anna thought he meant a fluorescent light. Therefore, Anna went to the store and bought a light, but it was not the kind that Lee needed.

The first frame of the cartoon illustrates how miscommunication happens. A thought occurred, words were spoken, but true communication did not take place because Anna did not understand Lee's meaning exactly enough. In this situation, there must be further interaction for effective communication to occur. The following frame shows what needs to be added to ensure clear understanding.



4. As we reconstruct the situation, we add another step: *feedback*. *Feedback* is simply the process of asking a question or restating what you think you heard. Feedback provides a way to clarify meaning. Feedback is vital. If couples can easily misunderstand something as simple as purchasing a light bulb, it is easy to see how critical feedback is when the need is something more complex, or less tangible, such as “I

need to know that you care about me.” When we are listening, we cannot assume that the mental picture we have is perfectly what the speaker is trying to convey.

Clear communication will take place more often if the listener “feeds back” to the speaker what he thinks he heard. In order to eliminate confusion, Anna said, “So you want me to get you a replacement when I go to the store this afternoon. Which light is burned out—the one overhead?” Feedback, then, includes statements and/or questions designed to clarify for the listener what the speaker actually intends.

5. Because of Anna’s feedback, Lee is now aware that she has misunderstood his meaning.
6. Lee then clarifies, this time choosing words that specify his meaning.
7. Anna correctly understands the second time and true communication occurs.

This simple illustration demonstrates how easily miscommunication can occur. Feedback aids in clear communication.

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Christlike and Effective Communication

So how does being Christlike influence our communications with one another in marriage? How does this differ from effective communication? Let’s review the two definitions:

Communication is the fusion of words and actions expressed in a way that enables another person to understand the meaning intended by the communicator.

Christlike communication is when a person communicates in a way that *personifies the character of Christ*.

In the following scenarios, you will examine similar incidents. As you read the scenarios, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Was this effective communication?
2. Was this Christlike communication?
3. Was this both effective and Christlike?

Scenario One:

Ed lets the front door slam behind him and stomps to the kitchen to glare at Mary, who’s making dinner. He pauses for a moment, then says accusingly, “I thought I told you to meet me at the store at 5 p.m. What’s your problem? Is that too hard? I waited an hour for you.”

Mary turns from the stove to look angrily back at him. “I *was* at the store at 5 p.m., idiot! You never showed up!”

Ed raises an eyebrow, scowling darkly. “And what store was that?”

Mary’s hands rest on her hips. “Kroger’s, *of course*. That’s where I always shop.”

“Well, Sam’s is the one closest to my office!” Ed shouts. “You should have known I would meet you there. Thanks. Thanks for wasting an hour of my day!”

Would you agree that Ed and Mary’s communication was neither effective nor Christlike? Mary misunderstood Ed’s instructions, so effective communication did not occur. Not only did they misunderstand each other, but they were also not Christlike in the way that they interacted. Unfortunately, however, there was one thing that they did communicate effectively. What was it? It was Ed’s and Mary’s disrespect and contempt for one another.

Let’s take a look at a second scenario.

Scenario Two:

Mary arrives at Sam's at exactly 5 p.m. and walks up to the entrance, where Ed is waiting. "Hurry up, Mary," he says. "I don't have all day. I've been waiting for you here for ten minutes already!"

Mary blinks, confused. "But... didn't you say to meet you here at 5 p.m.?" she asks.

"So what? I told you, I've already been here ten minutes. You should have come earlier, just in case."

In this dialogue, there is no misunderstanding. Ed effectively communicates that he and Mary were to meet at 5 p.m. (even though he arrived early). Unfortunately, he also effectively communicates his disrespect for Mary. Thus, in this example, even though effective communication occurs, Christlike communication does not.

Let's evaluate a third scenario.

Scenario Three:

Ed closes the door behind him and makes his way to the kitchen, where Mary is preparing dinner. He sets his briefcase down by the wall. "Hi, honey."

Mary looks up at him with a little smile. "Hi. Glad you're home."

"Thanks..." Ed's expression is slightly confused. "Weren't we supposed to meet at the store at 5 p.m.? I waited for you for quite a while."

"I'm so sorry!" Mary exclaims with an apologetic look. "I don't know what happened. I did get there at 5 p.m., and I looked everywhere for you. But when I didn't find you, I figured I must have misunderstood, so I just came home again."

"Well... what store did you wait at?" Ed asks, puzzled.

"Kroger's. The one we usually shop at."

Ed blinks, then laughs. "No wonder we didn't find each other! I went to Sam's. It's the closest store to my office, so I meant for you to meet me there. But I didn't say that... and I can see why you thought I meant Kroger's. I'm so sorry I didn't communicate that more clearly." He reaches for her hand with a hopeful, sincere expression. "Forgive me for wasting your time?"

Mary smiles back at him. "Of course I forgive you." She shakes her head. "I should have asked for clarification instead of just assuming that I knew where you meant for us to meet."

This time, Ed does not communicate effectively with Mary about where to meet, but they are both clear and Christlike in what they say and in how they say it afterward. They communicate respect and regard for each other as they discuss a misunderstanding that could have turned into an argument.

Let's investigate one more scenario.

Scenario Four:

Right at 5 p.m., Mary arrives at Sam's and walks up to the entrance, where Ed is waiting for her. She smiles and greets him with a hug. "Hi, honey. Have you been here for very long?"

Ed smiles back at her. "I've been here a while, but don't worry about it. You're right on time. Thanks so much for meeting me. Ready to go inside?"

Did you notice that, in this scenario, Ed and Mary have been both effective and Christlike in their communication?

Clarity in communication is very important, because when you misunderstand each other, it may lead to various problems. But when you are both Christlike in your communication, it enhances your relationship, even when your communication is not perfect. Although it is important to be effective in your communication, it is paramount to be Christlike!

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Jesus, the Master Communicator

In this article, fix your eyes on Jesus, the master communicator. In order to learn to be a Christlike and effective communicator in your marriage, you must catch a glimpse of how He communicated while He was here on earth.

Jesus Communicates What People Need to Hear

- Please read Matthew 23:24-30 and John 4:1-26.

Here, you will look at some comparisons between these two passages.

In both passages, Jesus always communicates in a way that meets the need of the listener. He seeks to respond not only to what people say but also to the condition of their hearts.

In the Matthew passage, Jesus speaks harshly to the Pharisees. Why? Because He knows that their hearts are hardened and that their pride is keeping them from believing the truth. There may be times when you, too, may have to speak the truth boldly to your spouse, because you see that he/she is making wrong choices or is becoming hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

As a counselor, I have had to do this as well. I remember one situation in particular, when I had to speak very boldly to a Christian woman who was involved in an adulterous relationship. She was so deceived by the evil one that she actually believed that it was God's will for her to be in this relationship because her "lover" had become a Christian and she was discipling him! In this situation, she needed a sober wake-up call as to the consequences of her sin. I confronted her with the truth in a way that she could understand. When you do have to confront, it must always be done for the benefit of the person and never from a motive of revenge or retribution.

In contrast to His boldness and forthrightness in the Matthew passage, Jesus is sweet and tender in the John passage. Here He is speaking to a woman who comes to draw water from the well. Why is it that He is so harsh and bold with the religious leaders but so gentle and tender with this woman? Isn't living in an adulterous relationship *worse* than the sins of the law-abiding Pharisees? The difference is in the condition of their hearts. The Pharisees had little sense of their own sinfulness. The woman in John 4, though sinful as well, longed for the water that could truly quench her thirst. She did not try to defend herself when Jesus pointed out her degraded situation. Instead, she invited Him to her village and into her life. He is always tender toward those whose hearts are open to Him.

It is important in your marriage to learn how to discern not only the meaning of what your spouse says but also what he/she truly needs to hear from you. Rather than being quick to react, think about what might have motivated his/her words. Then you have a better opportunity to respond with what he/she needs to hear.

Jesus Is Not Afraid to Show His Vulnerable Emotions.

- Please read John 11:1-44, especially verses 33-35.

In the passage from John, we see that Jesus is not afraid to cry. Jesus models that true strength is demonstrated partly in one's willingness to become vulnerable.

In marriage, communication is hindered when one or both partners are unable to express their deepest feelings. Sometimes couples are so out of touch with their own emotions that they cannot possibly communicate how they feel. At other times, a spouse may be unwilling to share vulnerable feelings for fear of rejection. A husband may have learned from observing his father that anger is the only "manly" emotion. He may express more vulnerable emotions, such as fear, embarrassment, or sadness, as anger. On the other hand, a woman may have learned that it is essential never to show anger, because she may be rejected by others. Because the emotion of anger makes her feel vulnerable, she expresses it as



criticalness or sexual coldness. In marriage, however, it is important to remember that since Jesus showed His vulnerable emotions, it is appropriate for you to also communicate how you truly feel to your partner.

In order to begin sharing more on an emotional level, it might be helpful to begin conversations with the following phrase:

“May I share how it makes me feel when you ... ?” This phrase is an important one to introduce the topic of feelings. You are asking your spouse for attentiveness and receptiveness.

Other phrases also help your spouse know the effect his/her actions have on your emotions, both positively and negatively. For example:

“When you do ... it makes me feel unloved and alienated from you.”

“I feel so sad when you ...”

“When you say...it makes me feel afraid that ...”

“I feel cherished when you say...”

“I feel respected when you...”

“I really love it when you ... because it makes me feel ...”

If you are a person who has learned that showing emotion is a sign of weakness, allow the example of Jesus to motivate you to begin to express your true feelings to your spouse.

Jesus Communicates Humility and Servanthood.

- Please read John 13:1-17.

Has the thought ever occurred to you that the same spirit of servanthood, which compelled Jesus to wash the feet of His disciples, should compel your communication with your spouse? After He communicates with His disciples through His poignant demonstration of servanthood, He tells them (and us) to follow in His steps. Is this spirit of humility evident when you communicate with your spouse? Because humility and servanthood are so vital in all areas of our marriages, we will study more about these virtues in Lesson 9.

Jesus Communicates Scripture From the Heart.

- Please read Matthew 4:1-11.

Here you see that when Jesus spoke, He communicated the Scripture that was in His heart. The Bible says that out of the heart man speaks (Mt 12:34-35). What is in your heart when you communicate with your spouse? Is it the principles found in Scripture? You will know what is in your heart by what comes out of your mouth. If there are some things in your heart that you would like to get rid of, one excellent way to do it is to read and memorize God’s Word. You may say, “I’m too old to memorize Scripture” or “It is just too difficult.” Allow our daughter’s story to be an example to you that memorization is never beyond reach!

Amber is currently eighteen years old. She was born with autism and mental retardation. Although she began to speak much later than an average child and still cannot read above a first grade level, she has always loved to listen to both Scripture and worship songs. Not too long ago, she went through a very dark and frightening time. It was God’s Word, which she spoke out loud from memory that kept her (and often the rest of the family) from being overwhelmed by life’s circumstances. This past year, she has encouraged many people by fearlessly sharing God’s Word or some type of expression of praise to those around her. If Amber can commit God’s Word to memory, when she doesn’t even know how to read, then certainly you can do it too!

Jesus Does Not Allow Negative Circumstances to Influence His Communication.

- Please read Luke 23:32-43.

It is so easy to allow circumstances to affect how you treat the people around you. If you are stressed from a bad day, for instance, you might lash out and then rationalize that your selfish behavior was caused by the circumstances of the day. Many people bottle up their frustrations at work, and then dump them on their families at home. But there is always a choice. Circumstances do not choose your responses. You choose your responses. Jesus, in the midst of His grueling pain, speaks tenderly and with assurance to a repentant dying man. What a tender example He sets for us. Could your day be any worse than hanging on a cross? Of course not. Jesus shows that no matter what you are going through, you can still choose to communicate in a kind and compassionate way just as He did.

Jesus' Communication Springs From His Moment-by-Moment Communication With His Father.

The following verses all illustrate this principle: John 5:19, 22; 6:38; 8:26, 28-29; 14:9-11; 17:4. Please read at least three of them.

Have you ever noticed in the gospel of John how many references talk about Jesus living in moment-by-moment communion with His Father? There are many throughout the entire book. Ultimately, this is how believers are to live as well. How would your communication with your spouse be different if, like Jesus, you determined to be constantly listening to the Father's voice and to be speaking what the Holy Spirit prompts you? There is no greater goal in marriage communication than this.

Jesus Knows How and When to Keep Silent.

- Please read Isaiah 53:7 and 1 Peter 2:21-25.

Sometimes a vital part of communication in marriage is to keep your mouth shut. One time that this might be important is when you feel under attack from your spouse, or when you have tried but cannot convince your spouse to share your point of view. Sometimes it is the wrong time to share your point of view, because your spouse is not receptive. In the Scripture you read, it is incredible to think that Jesus remained silent in the midst of an unjust personal attack. How was He able to silently endure it all? The key for Him and for you is found in 1 Peter 2:23. He left His case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly. If you truly trust your life and your circumstances to the Father's care, you will have no need to verbally defend yourself, to retaliate, or to seek revenge. You will be able to trust that one day all wrongs will be made right and all things will be judged fairly, both in your marriage and in the world.

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Why Are People Such Poor Listeners?

There are actually many reasons why people are poor listeners, but here we will only mention some of the most common. Would your spouse say that any of these apply to you?

- 1. People are generally self-absorbed.** In other words, people are very interested in telling someone else what they think. They are less interested in valuing another's opinion as important. This self-absorption produces a basic disrespect that displays itself in poor listening.
- 2. People are impatient.** Research shows that a person has the capacity to listen five to ten times faster in a given timeframe than another has time to talk. So while you listen, there is a lag time. During those seconds after you understand the speaker's last point, but before he has completed the next point, you may allow your mind to wander, to think about how you are going to answer, or to just tune out what the other person is saying.
- 3. People anticipate.** You may miss the point of a message because you think you know what the person will say and jump to a premature conclusion. While the person is still talking, you may formulate a response in your mind. As a result, you might miss the person's meaning altogether.

4. People are distracted. Interruptions bombard you constantly. The telephone rings; the dog barks; people knock on the door; the kids cry or interrupt your conversation. Sometimes these interruptions make it hard to focus on what someone is saying.

See if you can match the following scenarios with the barriers mentioned above.

Vince and Grace

All day Vince had anticipated a time to talk to Grace about his desire to find another job. That evening, after the kids were asleep and all was quiet, Vince decided to communicate what was on his heart. About five minutes into it, the telephone rang. Grace told Vince that she had to get the phone, because she had been waiting for this particular call all day. She assured him that it would only take a moment. A few minutes later, Grace returned and Vince continued sharing. About three minutes later, their youngest child, Lee, began to cry from his bedroom. Grace again apologized and said that she would be right back. After Grace returned, Vince tried once again. Just then it started to rain hard outside, when Grace all of a sudden realized that all of her clean clothes were hanging on the line. So she and Vince ran out to quickly gather the clothes out of the rain. After that, Vince told Grace that he was tired and was going to bed.

Peter’s Dilemma

Peter sat down to have lunch with a man who would soon be taking over his job. Peter was anxious to encourage him and hoped that he could give him some helpful tips, which he had learned from many years on the job. When they sat down to have lunch together, however, Peter could hardly speak. The other man talked incessantly about his own accomplishments, his experience in other jobs, and his skills that made him fit for this job. The man was so anxious to impress Peter that he never asked Peter one question about himself or about the job.

Sukuru’s Thoughts Run Wild

Sukuru asked Mai how her day was. Mai began sharing what seemed to Sukuru to be every unimportant detail of what she had done that day. While she was talking, Sukuru began thinking, “I still need to gather my files for work tomorrow. Oh, and I can’t forget to repair the hole in the fence. I wonder why my brother isn’t here yet...”

Tony and Ruth

Tony knew that he was going to be bored when Ruth began the conversation with, “I know that I have said this to you before ...” She proceeded to share what was on her mind, but Tony did not listen. He figured that he had heard it many times before, so while he kept an attentive expression, he spent his time thinking how he could cut this conversation short so he could go watch TV.

Barbara and Ken

Barbara greeted Ken warmly at the door. “How was your day, honey?”

“Oh, I guess it was okay, but I ...”

“That’s great, I made some bean soup for dinner.”

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How to Be a Good Listener

Think about this riddle:

“Earthly brother have I none but this man’s father is my father’s son.”

Who is the man?

Can you figure out the answer to this riddle?²⁸

Many people do not like to solve riddles because it takes too much effort, too much focus, and too much concentration. Many people do not like to work on the skill of listening for the same reason. Why? Because being a good listener, like solving a riddle, is hard work. A person who wants to listen well will have to heighten and intensify a sense of attentiveness and learn to decrease the habits that block good listening. That is why, unfortunately, most people spend far more time talking or being distracted, than in attentive listening.



Not long ago, my husband, Craig, and I invited a friend to our home whom we had not seen for over fifteen years. In the three hours that we were together, he did not ask us one question about our lives. Rather, he talked about himself the entire time. Craig and I asked him a lot of questions and tried to practice good listening skills, because we wanted him to know that what he had to say was important to us. However, afterward we were stunned and hurt to realize that he was not interested in knowing what had taken place in our lives after the many years that we had been separated. Perhaps he was a prime example of the self-absorption that we identified in the last article. Or, perhaps he did not know how or did not think to initiate questions that would reveal our story. Perhaps he took our eager questions for him to mean that we were not wishing to share our own story as well.

I wish I could say that this was rare, but it is not. This is extremely common, especially in marriage. How about in your marriage? When you are communicating with your spouse, do you make it a point to ask questions that help to draw out your spouse’s story? Or are you like Tony in the last story, eager to get on to something that you find more interesting? One of the best ways to show that you really care about your spouse is to ask good questions and then to be quiet long enough to truly hear the answer.

The principles in this article will greatly enhance your communication with your spouse as well as your relationships with people in general. When applying the skill of good listening, remember this key principle: People love to hear themselves talk. Rather than always being the one who is talking, encourage your spouse to talk by asking good questions.

1. Asking Good Questions

The first principle in good listening is to learn *how to ask good questions*.

What is a good question?

A good question does the following:

- Encourages discussion and interaction,
- Encourages your spouse to reveal something on his/her heart, and
- Makes your spouse understand that you care about his/her feelings and opinions.

Some questions—more than others—will encourage the things mentioned above. Let’s look at some examples of these.

Questions that promote discussion and interaction are like the following:

²⁸ Answer to the riddle: The man is my son.

- Questions that encourage more than one answer, such as: “What are your three favorite memories since we have been married?”
- Questions that encourage dialogue, such as: “What goals do you think we can set this next year that will draw us closer in our marriage?”

Questions that encourage intimate heart revelation are similar to the following:

- What was your most difficult experience growing up?
- What is your biggest frustration right now in our marriage?

Questions that help your spouse to understand that you value his/her feelings and opinions are like the next examples:

- How do you feel about that ...?
- How do *you* think I should respond...? (After describing a situation)

These are all examples of good questions, which show that you enjoy hearing what your spouse thinks and want him/her to talk more. But not all questions have the same good effect on improving your relationship.

“Okay” Questions

“Okay” questions are questions that have a limited response. You ask these questions to fulfill your own curiosity or to gain knowledge. These are often necessary to ask, but they do not usually promote conversation or increase intimacy. “Okay” questions request a specific answer, such as the following:

- Do you want another drink?
- What’s for dinner?
- When will you be home?

“Okay” questions are necessary in any relationship, especially when two people live together, but they will not draw you closer. When you want to encourage dialogue, “okay” questions are usually neutral.

Questions to Avoid

Finally, there are some questions that are better left unspoken because they cause alienation. The following are examples of the kinds of questions to avoid in your married relationship:

- Questions that trigger defensiveness and combativeness, which includes questions that use the words “always,” “never,” or “ever.” “Why do you *always* bite your nails?” “Why don’t you *ever* tell me that you love me?”
- Questions that assume the negative, such as “You don’t respect me, *do you?*” “Why *didn’t* you remember to call me?”
- Questions that attack character, personality, physical appearance, or talent, like the following:
 Attacking character: “You’re lying, aren’t you?”
 Attacking personality: “Are you going to embarrass me again by talking too much?”
 Attacking physical appearance: “Why didn’t you fix your hair today? You look horrible.”
 Attacking talent: “Are you sure you don’t want to give up playing? You really haven’t improved in months.”
- Questions that seek to entrap, manipulate, or judge, such as the following:
 Entrapping: “Who were you with last night?”
 Manipulating: “Do you want me to come home from work earlier? Then you had better stop nagging me as soon as I come in the door.”
 Judging: “Why didn’t you give that money to the church instead of spending it on a new dress?”

The next time you are talking with your spouse, try to use questions that show interest and/or encourage interaction, the “good” questions. Consciously avoid using questions that decrease your intimacy and safety with one another. If you are tempted to ask a destructive question, try to reword it in a way that will promote healthy interaction. If your spouse was out late every night last week, you do not have to ignore it in order to promote unity. For example, rather than asking your spouse where he/she was last night, you might reword the question by asking, “May I explain to you how it makes me feel when you go out three or four nights a week?”

2. Listening Reflectively

The next principle in being a good listener is learning how to *listen reflectively* and to ask *reflective questions*. Reflective listening means to listen in order to understand, *even if* you do not agree with what is being said. The goal in reflective listening is to understand your spouse’s point of view, not to attack it or to defend your own. In reflective listening, you allow your spouse to express an opinion without interrupting, even if you disagree. One tip that might help you to listen reflectively is to think of yourself as an objective arbitrator whose goal is to gather facts. You picture yourself as an outside party, one who does not have an emotional investment in the issue, but must learn what the issue is.

Once you have gathered the facts by listening, and your spouse has stopped talking, you may ask reflective questions (feedback) in order to determine if you truly understand what your spouse is trying to communicate. A *reflective question* clarifies your understanding of what your spouse is saying. Many times it involves restating your spouse’s words in your own way. A good reflective question might be: “Let me see if I understand what you are saying. Did you say that it made you feel lonely when I take a nap on Sunday afternoons?” This summarizes what you heard and confirms that you heard it correctly. A reflective question may also ask for clarification of terms. For instance, “When you say “beat up,” do you mean that when I ask you for more help, it makes you feel overworked and taken for granted?” After you ask reflective questions, allow your spouse to confirm or clarify the meaning that he/she intended. Reflective listening is much the same as *feedback* in the article “The Process of Communication.” It is a key both in showing that you are interested and in making sure misunderstandings do not occur.

3. Using Positive Nonverbal Communication

A third principle in being a good listener is to convey attentiveness through the use of nonverbal communication. Do you remember the statistic that was mentioned earlier in our lesson? When we are expressing how we feel, only 7 percent of communication is verbal while 93 percent is nonverbal. Thus, it is paramount to recognize that the majority of what you communicate about what you are feeling will be communicated nonverbally.

The following are ways to convey attentiveness with nonverbal communication:

1. Good eye contact (unless of course it is inappropriate or offensive in your culture to look someone in the eyes).
2. Stop what you are doing with your hands, look up, and focus on the speaker.
3. Lean into the conversation by sitting on the edge of your seat or just moving toward your spouse so you are directing your full attention.
4. Move your head affirmingly.
5. Don’t look at your watch, turn your back, begin to walk away, turn on the TV, or answer your cell phone while your spouse is talking to you.

4. Being Quiet

Our next principle in being a good listener is knowing when to be quiet. It is impossible for you to listen well unless you stop talking and invite the other person to speak. Just be quiet and listen intently. As you are quiet, notice not only what is being said, but also what is not being said. Listen for the emotions

behind the person's verbal and nonverbal communication by observing body language. Ask a reflective question periodically to be sure that you understand the meaning of what is being communicated.

5. Respecting and Responding

The final principle in being a good listener is to respect what your spouse has shared and also to respond by sharing yourself on a similar level. Respect includes keeping intimate confidences private, not entertaining your friends or family with them, and not bringing them up the next time that you are arguing. Instead, when your spouse shares deeply, try to be transparent and share your own deep thoughts. If one spouse refuses to reciprocate intimacy, it can leave the spouse who has shared feeling naked and vulnerable. Thus, when deep sharing takes place, it must be kept private and also reciprocated.

In summary, learn to listen to your spouse as thoughtfully as you would listen to a riddle that you want to solve. Be attentive. Ask good questions and pay special attention to "reading between the lines" for the person's intended meaning. Then, do your best to willingly reciprocate the depth of intimacy that your spouse has shared with you.

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Adjusting Your Baggage

What does it mean to bring "baggage" into a marriage relationship? Baggage can be anything that you learned from your past, which impacts who you are and how you relate in marriage. When a couple gets married, both parties bring many things into the relationship, such as their values, beliefs, habits, manner of dealing with stress or conflict, and style of communication.

Although it is impossible to fully prepare yourselves to adjust to each other's baggage, there are some specific things you can do that will help make the adjustment more manageable. If you are already married and still find it difficult to deal with the baggage from your spouse's past, you will find these tools valuable. If you are single, all of these principles can be applied to help you adjust to life with a roommate or to prepare for your future marriage.

1. When you are engaged or already married, spend a good deal of time with your spouse's family.

Observe the interaction of your spouse or future spouse in the family. How do they handle stress? Free time? Conflicts? How do they communicate with each other? Particularly notice how your spouse treats a family member he is upset with. Chances are this is the same way he/she will treat you when in the same situation. Spending time with your spouse's family will tell you a great deal about his/her habits, why he/she relates a certain way, and why he/she holds certain values. Although God says that we are certainly not victims of our past, there is a correlation between the two. Being aware of both the positive and negative features of your spouse's family can greatly heighten your awareness of what you are getting into, if you are not already married. If you are married, it helps you to understand why your spouse responds the way he/she does in certain situations. I believe this saying is true: "You don't only marry a person; you marry his/her family as well."

2. If you are not married, seek premarital counseling. If you are married and suspect that each of your "baggage" is causing conflict, consider some marriage counseling.

Premarital counseling is one of the most significant things that you can do to promote the health of your marriage. If you are engaged, but do not have access to this kind of counseling, determine to do it yourselves. Both engaged and married people can benefit from doing the following assignments:

(a) Read many books on marriage together.

(b) List every issue that you can think of that you will bring into marriage from your past. Then, bring your separate lists together and spend time talking, discussing, and praying about how these things have

affected or will affect you in your marriage. The following are areas where couples may typically view things differently from one another:

- Finances
- Who will work and how much
- Religious beliefs
- Where you will go to church
- Habits of personal hygiene and cleanliness
- How you will handle conflict
- In-law relationships
- What you will do during holidays
- The structure of mealtimes
- Hobbies
- Time with and away from each other
- Ministry goals
- Goals for having children
- Childrearing principles
- Bible reading and devotional habits, both individually and together

3. Talk about the strengths and weaknesses that you acquired from your family.

Assess and discuss the strengths and weaknesses that you absorbed from your family of origin. List as many positive and negative things from your past as you can, especially those that you believe currently impact your relationship. Then, spend some time discussing how some of the weaknesses can be overcome in specific, tangible ways. Next, spend some time in prayer together, thanking God for the positive strengths and yielding the negative to Him.

4. Be truthful about your past.

Deal with your past truthfully and openly. The Scriptures encourage God's people to speak the truth and walk as people of the light with a clear conscience before God and man (1 Tim. 1:19). As we saw in Lesson 2, keeping secrets is like keeping part of your lives hidden in darkness, the place where your enemy does all of his work. If all things are brought into the light of God's judgment and forgiveness, then Satan has absolutely no advantage over you. There is nothing that he can use to blackmail or influence you. His tactics are nullified, if you walk in the light. As a counselor, I have seen many married couples face huge challenges because one of the spouses fails to reveal past sins and/or habits. It is vitally important to be frank with each other, so that there are few surprises after marriage. As we have said before, marriage problems are never only mine or yours, but ours!

5. Deal with present strongholds and be candid about them.

Perhaps you are frightened to tell your spouse about your past, because you know some negative habits or fears still hold you in chains. I want you to understand something. As long as you keep these things in the darkness, Satan will never release his grip on you. As difficult as it may be, bring the stronghold into the light, where God can deliver you. Go back to Lesson 2, topic 1, where we discussed how to release the lies that hold you captive. If your problem was abuse of some sort, read the article in the Appendix entitled "Overcoming an Abusive Past." If you have access to a Christian counselor, seek that help. But most of all, cry out to God for His deliverance until you see Him come in His power. God can only deliver you when you walk in the light. In 1 John 1:5-7, the Bible says, "God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him and yet keep on walking in the darkness, we are

lying and not practicing the truth. But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”

In my history as a counselor, I remember one situation in which a couple had been married for seven years, when the husband confessed that he had had a serious addiction to pornography, even before they were married. He explained to his wife that he did not tell her about his problem because he was sure that once they got married and his sexual needs were met, the problem would go away. Unfortunately, his problem did not go away. As a matter of fact, it grew worse. At the time of his confession, he had already had several adulterous interludes with prostitutes. He truly loved God and wanted desperately to serve Him and to be free of sexual sin, yet the more he tried to free himself, the more he cycled in and out of a pattern of sin-confess-fail. His sin so consumed him that he finally went to his wife and church to confess his sin. He humbly placed himself under their care and support. His church placed him in a rigorous discipleship program and set up accountability partners to meet with him regularly. Through this arrangement, plus the authentic love and care of his wife, this man has walked in freedom for the past three years.

You may feel very discouraged because, like the man mentioned above, you also are carrying sinful patterns from your past that are hidden from your spouse and everyone else. I encourage you, today, to take the steps necessary to bring the sins of the past into His light so that freedom can become a reality in your life.

6. Recognize that marriage might be the greatest challenge of your life.

There is nothing easy about living with a person who comes from another family, with a different set of values and habits, and who is ingrained in his/her ways. The goal of marriage is Christlikeness, not mere happiness. As both spouses learn to give and take, happiness can and will result, but it usually does not occur without a great deal of sacrifice, commitment, and selflessness. You must be willing to *work* for a happy marriage. The sooner you accept and embrace this elemental principle, the sooner you can enjoy the benefits of a Christlike marriage.

7. Study your spouse.

Be a student of your spouse. Determine to know what causes him/her to act in the following ways:

- Feel motivated
- Feel sad
- Get angry
- Feel insecure

Learn what your spouse likes and does not like. Discern why he/she acts and feels in certain ways. If you can't figure this out by mere observation, ask your spouse detailed and specific questions that will help you to understand.

I remember a time when my husband reacted with anger, when I asked him why he had not kept an issue we were dealing with confidential. I asked the question casually, and I certainly did not think it warranted an angry response. Later, he apologized and asked my forgiveness for his strong reaction. Out of curiosity, I gently asked him why he had reacted the way that he did. He told me that when he was growing up, his two older brothers used to yell at him all the time for not being able to keep a secret, especially when he would tell his mother things that they did not want her to know. Understanding this about my husband's past helped me to understand why he reacted as he did.

8. Don't react when your spouse reacts with strong emotions. Instead, ask questions that might reveal your spouse's motives and/or insecurities.

Sometimes couples cannot even talk to each other without arguing because communication becomes a series of explosions. One says something, and the other reacts. The first one reacts to that reaction, which

in turn causes another reaction. Thus, the cycle continues. Only one party is needed to short-circuit this negative cycle by asking a question to help reveal why both spouses are feeling so threatened and insecure. The next time you and your spouse begin to argue, stop reacting with a similar force of emotion and ask a question like, “Why do you think we are reacting so strongly to this issue? Will you share with me what I said that makes you feel insecure? Then I would like to share as well.”

9. Try to reach compromises.

In marriage, you will encounter many things that are neither immoral nor sinful in nature but are preferences, often learned from your pasts. These preferences include the following:

- Keeping the house clean
- The way to squeeze the toothpaste tube
- Whether or not you take off your shoes before entering the house
- How often you like to eat out
- How warm or cool to keep the house
- How you will spend your money
- Whether or not you will own a pet and what role it will have in the family

In these preferences, seek to reach a compromise. A compromise is an agreement that you reach together about an issue in which you disagree. Usually it involves neither party getting all of his/her preferences. Both have to sacrifice something in order for the compromise to work.

10. Understand that you cannot and will not change your spouse.

What a vital and freeing lesson it is to learn that you do not need to change your spouse! If you have been trying, you may stop. Accept the fact that no matter how much you try, it will not work. Instead, redirect your energy to change yourself while focusing your attention on accepting and embracing your spouse—weaknesses and all. It is not wrong to cry out to God in prayer about your spouse’s weaknesses, since God is able to change him/her. Even more profitable, however, is to cry out to God on behalf of your own weaknesses. Ask God how He wants to change you and how you can be more filled with the fruit of the Spirit in your relationship.

11. Live to serve, not to be served.

As we have already mentioned several times in this course, one of the most life-changing principles to learn in marriage is to live to serve, not to be served. If you have no desire to serve your spouse, ask God to change your heart. Ask Him to give you the courage to serve whether or not you receive anything in return. If you begin to do this, you will experience a tremendous freedom and blessing in your marriage. Why? Because God says it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

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How Men and Women Approach Communication Differently (and How to Bridge the Gap)

As you have perhaps observed, men and women tend to approach the topic of communication differently. In your own marriage, perhaps this has caused some problems. This article will explore the typical differences between male and female approaches to communication. Some men enjoy details and some women want to get quickly to the main point, but typically, it is the other way around. Whether your issues are the typical ones, or whether you are among the sizeable part of the population that has more

unique issues, let this analysis of the most common profiles spur your thinking about your partner's communication and your own.

How Men Approach Communication

Men often approach communication as a means to an end—the end being the accomplishment of some task. As you may have observed in Lesson 5, men tend to be focused on the goal at hand. They seek conversation, if it is a necessary step in accomplishing their goal. However, communication that seems to have no purpose is often difficult for a man to understand and/or appreciate. He does not instinctively grasp, as his wife often does, that communication by itself can serve the goal of unity.

Not only do men generally see communication as a means to an end, but they also find the process of communication difficult, if it requires them to be open and vulnerable with their feelings and emotions. Many men find it hard to articulate verbally something that is bothering them or causing stress. Some men would rather not talk at all than try to verbalize what is bothering them. They instinctively feel (even though they might not be able to verbalize it) that trying to come up with the right words adds more stress to an already stressful situation. If they are able to verbalize at all, their expression is often succinct and not extremely emotive. Wives, if your husband is like this, you may falsely assume that it is an indication of his lack of interest or investment in your relationship. These characteristics, however, may just be part of the way that God designed him.

Because of this focus on the end result, when a man listens to his wife talk about a situation, he will assume that she wants a solution. He presupposes that, like him, his wife has an end in mind and a specific purpose in why she is communicating. He may try to provide a solution to what he perceives as her problem or need. He does not understand why his wife then feels cut off or marginalized.

How Women Approach Communication

Whereas men approach communication as a means to an end, women often approach it as an end in itself. God created woman to be first and foremost relational. She is created to complete the man, to bear and raise children, and to cultivate family life. For this reason, one can see that for a woman, communication is not simply a means to an end. Rather, it is fundamental to all that she is and all that she does. A woman knows innately that a relationship cannot survive without healthy communication. She understands that the extent to which two people communicate is the extent that they will or will not experience relational intimacy. Since relationships are so important to her, communication is a prominent drive.

Not only is communication central in a woman's life, but the process of communication is therapeutic and calming for her. We have seen that a man often has trouble verbalizing his innermost feelings and sometimes would prefer to remain silent rather than try to communicate. Conversely, a woman more often thrives on being able to express her inner thoughts and feelings. For her, the ability to verbalize is curative and comforting. Because of this, she may want to talk about the same issue over and over again. Not because it has not been resolved in her mind, but because talking about it again comforts her. A man, however, may interpret this rehashing as an indication that the issue is not resolved, and since his goal is to "solve the problem," this may raise his stress level. He wants to be done with it and put it in the past, while she wants to talk about it some more, because talking about it helps her to eventually let it go.

So can you imagine how these dynamics affect a particular instance of communication? When the husband is not willing to communicate his feelings, or when he cuts his wife short because he is wishing that she would "get to the point," a warning signal goes off in her spirit that something is about to sabotage their intimacy. She may react by trying harder to force her husband to communicate with her. But the more she tries, the more he closes down, because he perceives her insistence that he communicate as trying to dominate him (remember from Lesson 5 about a man's fear of being dominated). How does this dead-end cycle compare to the communication in your own marriage relationship?

Obviously, there is tremendous potential for misunderstanding simply because men and women do not understand or adapt to the differences in how they approach communication. If you are a man, you might be thinking: “You’re right. I don’t even enjoy conversing. It is hard for me to verbalize my feelings and to express myself openly. So how am I supposed to do all these things that I am learning in this lesson?” Please don’t feel discouraged. The following lists will give practical suggestions that can help men and women communicate better with each other.

How to Bridge the Communication Gap

Suggestions to Wives

- 1. Don’t exhaust your husband or try to talk when he is already exhausted.** Learn self-control and wait for an opportune moment. If you are by nature someone who has an intense need to communicate but you know that your husband does not, ask the Lord to help you to know when you’ve crossed the line of either exhausting or exasperating him.
- 2. Remind your husband that talking about things makes you feel better.** This will help him to realize that conversation has a real purpose. If you do want to rehash old issues, don’t forget to remind your husband that you are not bringing things up because you are still angry, but because it helps you to be able to talk about it.
- 3. Bring your communication to the Lord.** Sometimes it is better to converse with the Lord than to rehash old issues with your husband. The Lord never grows weary or tired of hearing from you, and it is within His power to help you bring closure to an issue.
- 4. Use a journal to help you sort out your thoughts with words.** If you sense that your need to communicate far exceeds your husband’s ability to listen, write in a journal to express your thoughts and feelings.
- 5. Share with a trusted friend.** It is not wise to share family matters with others, because of people’s propensity to gossip. But if your husband has limited patience for listening to issues, it may be appropriate to ask God to give you a friend or a mentor whom you can talk to and whom you can trust to keep a confidence.
- 6. Do not be overly sensitive if your husband does not share his thoughts as much as you would like him to do.** Keep reminding yourself of what you have learned from this subtopic. While it is right for you to *want* your husband to share intimately with you, it would be *wrong* for you to demand it. Ask the Lord to give you wisdom as to how much to expect according to who he is and how God designed him.
- 7. Create a safe relational environment between you.** You will be learning what this involves in a later topic.

Suggestions to Husbands

- 1. Make your wife’s happiness your primary goal when you are with her.** Since communication is a means to a goal for you—make your wife’s happiness your goal. When you were first getting to know your wife, you more than likely had all kinds of things to talk about. Why? Because one of your goals was to please her and to understand each other. This is still an important goal, even after you have been married for a long time, and it is a biblical one (Rom 12:10). Since you know that communication is vital to your wife’s emotional well-being, do what it takes to please her in this area.
- 2. Realize that, just as with habits and activities in other areas of life, the more you practice, the more proficient you will become.** The more you learn to practice Christlike communication, the more proficient you will become, and the sooner you will enjoy the pleasing fruit of intimacy with your spouse. If you wait to cultivate this area of your life until you feel like it, it will never happen. By an act of your will, you must choose to cultivate more intimate communication with your wife. Why? Because you know that this is the will of God, and you understand that no relationship can thrive without it.

3. Try to let your wife express herself freely and without time limits. Remind yourself often that your wife is not necessarily looking for answers when she is talking to you. She often just wants you to understand *her*. Remember talking about things and knowing that you understand her concerns will often help her to feel more calm. Avoid cutting off her communication. Rather, allow her to express herself freely and feed back your understanding of the situation and your solidarity with her.

4. Respect your wife's commitment to relationship. God created your wife to understand relationships, perhaps better than you do. This is how she was made and what she is good at. Ask the Lord to help you to value this God-given role and to realize how much it benefits you.

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What Causes Conflicts?



When Jay and Maylin came into my office for counseling, the tension between them was oppressive. I knew almost instantly that they were close to divorce. As I looked at them, I saw two people full of pride and bitterness. After several minutes of introductions, I found out that he was a businessman and she was a travel agent. They were expecting their first baby, and they were living with his father and mother. They both had good jobs and had everything they needed financially, yet it did not take long to realize that sitting before me were two very miserable individuals.

They had both become Christians three years earlier. At that time, God had done amazing things in both their lives and in their marriage. So I asked, "What happened between then and now that brings you to

this place today?” That question triggered a tirade that lasted nearly thirty minutes. It felt like I was in a war zone with hostilities and abuses hurled back and forth like hand grenades. If words could kill, they both would have been blown apart, with blood everywhere. Tears of compassion stung my eyes. Silently I prayed, “Oh God, would you do something huge in this couple’s life? Humanly speaking this is impossible, but with You *all things are possible!*” God be praised! I am thrilled to tell you that their story does not end there. God has done an incredible, miraculous work in their lives since that time. I look forward to finishing their story later in this lesson.

In a situation as bad as theirs was, you would expect that something very evil, such as adultery or the death of a child, had happened to them. But as I listened, I discovered that it was not one big thing, but rather lots of little things. They had learned destructive ways to slowly build walls between them—ways to hurt, to isolate, and to wound each other. I am sad to say that this is true very often among the couples I counsel. Most couples divorce over seemingly insignificant things. Over time, these seemingly insignificant things had built up, layer by layer, until the walls between them seemed impenetrable.

What was the basis of the rift in Jay and Maylin’s marriage, which is typical of all marital breakdowns? The first verses of James 4 can help you find the answer.

- Please read James 4:1-6.

James 4 begins by asking this question: “What causes quarrels and fights among you?” The next five verses answer the question by listing six “bricks” that build dividing walls of conflict between you. What are they?”

Brick 1: Anger (v 1)

Quarrels and fights, mentioned here, always occur in an environment of anger. Whenever anger is involved, conflicts result. Both Colossians and Ephesians say to *put off* anger and every form of it, such as rage, malice, and hatred (Eph 4:25-31; Col 3:5-11). Anger is a “brick” that constructs walls, which hinder good communication.

One form of anger that manifests itself differently than an outburst of anger, but is equally destructive, is “the silent treatment.” This is a passive form of aggression, when a person uses silence to punish or fight back. Even though this form of anger is quiet, at times it can be so deafening that it seems worse than an explosive outburst. I had a client who wielded extremely painful blows with this deadly weapon. Every time his wife did something that hurt him or angered him, he would literally say nothing to her for days. He would talk to the kids and talk to whomever she was with, but he would not talk to her. Can you imagine how painful this would be? This toxic form of anger can quickly incapacitate any marriage and is not a fitting form to be used by a child of God. The next subtopic will deal more with anger.

Brick 2: Selfishness (v 1-2)

Ask yourself this question: “What causes conflicts (quarrels and fights) in my relationships?” God’s Word says it is the whole army of evil desires at war inside and between you. You want what you do not have. Selfishness is at the root of every ugly conflict. You want what you want and you want it *now!* Scripture exhorts you to lay aside your selfishness and put on the mind of Christ, who did not think of Himself but considered the needs of others as more important than His own needs. The next time you begin to fight and quarrel with your spouse, ask the Holy Spirit to alert you to what selfish desires are at war. Then, put down the destructive “brick” of selfishness and yield yourself to God, as a living sacrifice. Desire to please Him more than you desire to win the argument.

Brick 3: Evil Desires (v 2)

Evil desire is the brother of selfishness. They stick together and work together. Verse two says that quarrels and fights are caused by unruly desires, also at war inside. Later in this chapter, James says that one cannot be a friend of God and love the things of the world (James 4:4).

What does your heart crave? If your marriage is full of conflicts, chances are that at least one of you is craving the evil pleasures of this world. In 1 John 2:15-16, the Bible says, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him; because all that is in the world (the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the arrogance produced by material possessions) is not from the Father, but is from the world.” Notice that these evil pleasures include more intangibles than material possessions. What do you want? To be respected? To be admired? To have power over others? Ask God to change your desires so that you will want what He wants rather than the things that the world wants.

Brick 4: Jealousy (v 2)

Why do you experience conflicts between you? God says you fight and quarrel because you are jealous of what others have that you cannot possess. In essence, these verses say that conflicts are an indication that you are discontent and dissatisfied with what God has given to you. Rather than be content, you want to take what belongs to someone else. Perhaps he is referring to not only material possessions but also a certain role, a position of strength, or a certain set of talents that you see someone else has. What are you trying to get when you fight and quarrel? Are you trying to get your own way? Are you trying to get the upper hand? Are you trying to get a superior advantage? Are you trying to get your spouse to admit you are right? Next time you experience a conflict in your marriage, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal this, then repent and lay it down at the cross.

Brick 5: Out-of-Control Behavior (v 2)

James 4:2 says that some scheme and even kill to get what they want. This is an example of out-of-control behavior. Worldwide, in many instances when one spouse kills another, it began with the choice to let go of self-control of anger. You allow your anger to motivate you to hurt your spouse. It may have started with screaming, throwing something, then a slap or a punch, and over time, the violence escalated to murder. You may be thinking, “I would never think of killing anybody. This verse does not apply to me.” But remember the words of Jesus that link murder with anger. He exacts the same judgment for the man who murders as for the man who is angry with his brother (Mt 5:21-22). There are many ways to “kill” within a marriage that are not physical. Your angry words can kill someone’s heart or spirit. Be sure that you are never guilty of out-of-control behavior.

Brick 6: Pride (v 6)

Underlying all of these reasons for fights and quarrels in your marriage is pride. Pride causes selfishness. Pride causes evil desires. Pride causes jealousy. Pride causes out-of-control behavior. Pride causes you to think of yourself as superior to your spouse, and pride keeps you dependent on yourself instead of dependent on God. Be careful to lay aside the “brick” of pride, for God says here that He is against the proud but shows favor to the humble. If there are already walls between you and your spouse that are built with bricks of anger, selfishness, evil desires, jealousy, out-of-control behavior, and pride, you must begin now to tear these out of your lives. How do you do this?

Steps in Tearing Down These Bricks of Destruction:

- 1. Confession:** Come humbly before God and your spouse. Confess your sin. Ask your spouse to forgive you as you name each sin specifically.
- 2. Repentance:** After acknowledging your sin, ask God to help you figure out what attitude and/or behavior should replace your sin. Ask for the Holy Spirit to empower you to change.
- 3. Anticipation:** Anticipate the next time that this conflict, attitude, or behavior might surface, and ask God to prepare you to respond His way instead of the way that you typically respond. The more you practice God’s responses, the more it will begin to change your habitual response.
- 4. Prayer:** Keep this matter in daily prayer.

5. Accountability: If this sin keeps surfacing, ask a trusted friend to pray with you and hold you accountable on a weekly basis.

6. Being careful how you live: If you want to become more like Jesus and have victory over your sin, you must be careful how you live. Ephesians 5:15-16 says, “Be very careful how you live—not as unwise but as wise, taking advantage of every opportunity, because the days are evil.” There is no power for true change and transformation outside the power of God working through you (Jn 15:5). Ephesians 5:17-18 continues with instructions about how to live: “Do not be foolish, but be wise by understanding what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, which is debauchery, but be filled by the Spirit.” The way that you allow the Holy Spirit to control you is by spending a lot of time with Him in the Word, in prayer, and in worship, and by consciously yielding when you are tempted to act willfully against His principles.

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Why Anger?

Why does man have the emotion of anger? The answer is not difficult. Man was made in the image of God, and God Himself gets angry. The nature of His anger, or wrath, is never vindictive or capricious, but is always directed toward the purpose of ultimately fulfilling His divine intentions, which are always good.



Anger motivates action to destroy its object. In God’s Word, there are quite a few instances when God exercises wrath and destroys people in order to destroy sin and those things that outrage His character (Lev 10:1-3; Isa 65:1-7). The only legitimate direction for holy anger is against sin and/or the violation of God’s sovereign will. Thus, God’s original intent was to grant us the emotion of anger to provoke the action necessary to do away with sin or anything that threatens His will.

If it were not for the fall of Adam and Eve, human anger would probably appear much different. Humans would be stirred to anger for the same reasons as God and would execute God’s wrath in a similar way, as the angels do (Num 22:22). But when man sinned, his motivation for anger changed. Now man’s anger was aroused over anything that violated or threatened *his own* will, not God’s (Jn 4:9). Anger became an emotion that was aimed at destroying anything that threatened his own well-being, instead of the well-being of God.

Anger’s Expression

Human anger may be expressed externally or internally. If anger is vented externally, it will usually be expressed through shouting, blaming, name-calling and profanity, sarcasm, hitting, banging, or throwing. If it is vented internally, it will usually be expressed through the silent treatment, pouting, walking away or leaving, depression, or addictions. Often anger is vented both externally and internally by the same individual. It is important to know how you and your spouse tend to vent your anger.

Fear Produces Anger

When we recognize that what arouses the emotion of anger is distorted after the Fall, it is not surprising that fear often undergirds it. When you become angry, it is often an expression of your fear—fear of losing control, fear of being hurt, fear of not being valuable, fear of insecurity, fear of abandonment, fear of physical harm, fear of neglect, fear of the unknown, fear of not being loved, and so on. Fear makes you feel weak, but anger makes you feel falsely strong. It is helpful to evaluate the things that tend to arouse your anger and ask the Lord to reveal if fear is underlying them. If so, you must offer that fear to the

Lord, who says, “Fear not!” (Isa 41:10; Mt 10:31; Lk 12:5). Ask Him what your next step should be to address the fear properly.

What to Do About Anger

Christians are to bring their anger under control and vent it through the avenue of God’s original design. How does that operate in everyday life? Let’s take a look at the following:

A husband comes home after a long, hard day at work. The moment he enters the door of his house, his wife shows him a pile of bills, by waving them in his face. She begins to harangue him about how he is not providing well enough for his family. She rants that if he really cared about the family, he would get a second job. She goes on and on. She belittles him for not being able to make enough money to provide for his family. Not surprisingly, her verbal attacks provoke his anger. As a matter of fact, as she screams at him, he feels angry enough to hit her! His anger is aroused because his very essence is threatened by his wife, the woman who is supposed to love and respect him.

But now that he feels angry, he has at least two choices. One choice is to follow his flesh by walking over to his wife and slapping her in order to make her stop. Another fleshly choice would be to say something cruel, such as “Well, you don’t deserve any better.” But the better choice is to realize that God gave him the emotion of anger in order to attack sin or anything that is a threat to the will of God. In this case, he knows that his wife’s sin is not only hurting him but is also in direct violation of the will of God for his family. He thinks, “How can I vent this anger in a way that will destroy the sin in my wife’s life, but not harm my wife?” If he yells at her, hits her, or blames her, he will not help her deal with her sin but will only provoke her to sin more. On the other hand, he knows that God’s Word says that a quiet answer turns away wrath (Prov 15:1). Because he directs his anger toward this sin that displeases God and is coming between him and his wife, he responds to his wife with a soft answer—even if that gentle answer is to let her know that he will not tolerate her verbal abuse!). He determines to examine if he is at fault, and he commits to pray for wisdom on how to deal further with the issue of the bills.

Part of dealing with the emotion of anger as a fallen, sinful human being is realizing that when anger is stirred because your own will is threatened, you can surrender your right, just as Christ did when He was attacked and threatened unjustly (1 Pet 2:21-25). When you feel angry, you need to evaluate whether the anger has a good basis, and then direct it in a Christlike way (i.e., to attack the sin in yourself or the problem in the relationship).

However, it must be said that there are occasionally times when you might need to righteously defend your life or the lives of your children. This would apply in the case of a spouse or anyone else who threatens your family’s safety. If you live with someone who is physically abusive or is constantly threatening you or your family, ask God to help you find a safe place to distance yourself from the abuser and, if necessary, to learn to defend yourself and them. This is part of the righteous use of anger (Neh 4:14).

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See the Wall Come Down

You should have already read Joshua 5:10–6:1-27. Please open your Bible now to this passage. In the story of Jericho, you can see several principles that point to the only One who can tear down walls in your marriage.

“Jericho was shut tightly....No one was allowed to leave or enter” (v 1)

Do you feel like the walls of your heart have been shut tightly and have left your spouse on the outside? Do you feel like there is no peace as you come and go from your home? Do you feel like the wall between the two of you is impossible to scale? The challenge seems insurmountable, like the challenge that the Israelites faced that day in Jericho so long ago. Archeology and history tell us that the walls around the city were at least thirty to sixty feet high (nine to eighteen meters) and twelve to forty-five feet thick (three to thirteen meters). The gates were securely shut. Defeating the city seemed impossible, yet defeating the city was what they had to do because God commanded it! Before any of the other promises of inhabiting the land were to come to fruition, they *had* to deal with this wall. The same is true for you. The wall between you and your spouse must come down before you can experience God’s blessing in other areas of your marriage. There they stood and gazed up at the wall—an impossible obstacle. Perhaps here you stand, gazing up at your wall too. As you will see, **nothing** is impossible when God arrives on the scene!



“I am handing Jericho over to you” (v 2)

Victory is God’s will, and victory belongs to the Lord (v 2). One thing is for certain: It is not God’s will for you to remain defeated in your marriage. Victory is *always* God’s will. When He says that He is about to do something, victory is sure. Perhaps He has allowed you to remain mired in despair up until this point—just long enough for you to give up trying to muster victory through your own plans and in your own strength. But make no mistake, He wants the walls in your marriage torn down. He will make victory possible in His time, and in His way, in order to make known *His* glory. Ultimately, only God can bring true, *authentic* victory. We must, therefore, look to Him and to no other!

Victory flows out of obedience and humility (vv 6-21)

No doubt the Israelites are expecting God to present a different plan for tearing down the wall. They no doubt knew about several possible military strategies for tearing down lesser walls, but none of them included marching around, blowing a horn, and shouting! God is testing both their obedience and their humility. Will they do it His way, no matter how ludicrous it seems? Will they follow His directions explicitly, or will they leave out a few humiliating details? The people follow God’s instructions to march single file around the wall. After they march around the city one time, they go home for the day and come back the next. They repeat this “silly” routine according to God’s instructions for six days. The wall has not budged. By the sixth day, I bet the people inside the city were having a good time watching. I can hear them saying, “Hey, here come our little toy soldiers. Just watch them march. Don’t they look amusing? Are we supposed to be afraid?”

On the seventh day, however, the Israelites’ routine changes. They start at the crack of dawn and march around the city—not once, but seven times. This takes them seven to fourteen hours to complete. They do not know it at the time, but this day will be their day of victory! Just as they had done every day that week, the Israelites obey God right down to the most infinitesimal detail. They realize that God is their only hope, and they trust that He is fully capable of eliminating the wall, just as He had parted the Red Sea and the Jordan River.

How about you? Are you willing to obey God's plan for eliminating the wall between you and your spouse, no matter how trying or humiliating the process might seem? Will you follow His directions obediently and humbly until victory is secured?

Victory can only be won when God is on center stage (v 9)

God tells His people to arrange themselves in battle formation. He has the warriors go both before and behind the priests who carry the Ark of the Covenant. Why? Two reasons: (1) the ark of God's presence will be protected, and (2) the *Shekinah* glory of God will shine in the midst of His people. God positioned His glory in such a way that when the victory was won, there would be no doubt Who deserved the glory.

Similarly, God will not grant you victory in your marriage until *He* becomes the focus of what you think, what you do, what you say, and how you live on a daily basis. Deliverance can only happen when God is on center stage!

Victory happens as you wait quietly before Him (v 10)

Throughout Scripture, God says to wait patiently for Him to deliver, to wait before Him in quiet anticipation until He acts (Ps 37:7; 62:5; Lam 3:25-26). God tells the people to be quiet and to be patient. When the time of His deliverance comes, then it will be time to shout. One word sums up this principle of expectant waiting: faith. Israel is supposed to demonstrate complete, unwavering faith even when it seems like nothing has changed from the day before. That is an extraordinary quality of faith. We know from Hebrews 11:6 that "without faith it is impossible to please him, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." The Israelites waited patiently for His deliverance. We, too, must diligently seek Him, as we wait in faith and follow His instructions on when to act and when to be still.



Victory will only come as you cry out to the Lord for His deliverance (v 20)

When the time is right, God tells Israel to cry out. What a battle cry it is! It is a cry that demonstrates confidence in the One who will deliver. Many times Scripture records that God hears and delivers those who cry out to Him (Ps 34:15, 17; 40:1; 77:1; 145:19). Crying out requires a certain amount of desperation, does it not? How desperate are you for God's deliverance from the walls that separate you from your spouse? Won't you cry out to Him in desperation

and believe that His deliverance draws near?

Victory won't happen unless you are desperately obedient (v 15)

The Israelites not only obey God in detail for six days, but they are up at dawn—armed, focused, and ready to do battle—on the seventh day as well. How ready are you to do battle to tear down the walls in your marriage? Do you arm yourself in the morning with the weapons of your warfare (Eph 6:10-20)? Do you seek His face at dawn in order to receive your marching orders as they relate to your spouse? Do you center yourself on Him in order to stay focused for the battle? Remember, victory will come to those who are desperate for deliverance.

When victory occurs, all glory must be His (vv 18-19)

When God finally delivers His people, He commands them not to keep any riches from the city for themselves. It is *all* to be given to the temple. Why? So that no one would take the glory for himself/herself. God makes it clear to all: "Salvation comes from the Lord." When God tears down the

walls in your marriage, the same must be true. The glory will be His, and you will delight in declaring His glory to those around you.

After God grants victory, woe to the one who rebuilds the wall (v 26)

“At that time Joshua made this solemn declaration: ‘The man who attempts to rebuild this city of Jericho will stand condemned before the LORD. He will lose his firstborn son when he lays its foundations and his youngest son when he erects its gates!’”

This is a serious warning to the one who dares to rebuild the wall after it has been torn down. Deliverance and victory is His will for you in your marriage—not just for a few weeks or a month, but for the rest of your lives. Just as He can and will deliver you by tearing down the walls that separate you, so He can keep you from falling back into the separation of your past. The wall will stay down as you continue to cultivate your oneness with Him and with your spouse.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Six Elements in Creating a Safe Basis for Communication

If you were asked what truly makes you feel safe in your marriage relationship, how would you respond? A woman might say, “What makes me feel safe is when I know my husband will love me unconditionally, no matter what I reveal about myself.” As you saw in Lesson 5, a man might describe this safety as “when I know my wife will respect me, no matter what I reveal about myself.” Christlike love produces a feeling of safety. Christlike communication expresses safe love and respect. The following six elements of Christlike love are derived from 1 Corinthians 13. They will help you to create a safe basis for communication. You will also read Ray and Mary’s story, as it is woven within each of these points. Their story will help you to see how these truths can be put into practice in everyday life.

Element 1: A safe communication partner shows attentiveness.

“Love is patient, love is kind” 1 Corinthians 13:4.

A spouse who loves will show patience in the way he/she listens and kindness in the way he/she responds. These two concepts together might be called “attentiveness.” To be attentive means that you are fully present when communicating with each other. An *attentive* spouse listens receptively and responds readily. He/she will even seek to be attentive to what is being communicated nonverbally through facial expressions and body language.

Take a look at a typical dialogue between Ray and Mary:

Mary is cleaning up the kitchen. Every so often she lets out a sigh.

Ray is attentive to Mary’s nonverbal communication as well as her words, so he invites communication.

Ray: Mary, are you all right? It seems like something is bothering you.

Mary: Do you really want to know?

Ray: Yes, I really do. Please share with me what’s bothering you.

Mary: Life is bothering me! Everything is going wrong in my life!

Element 2: A safe communication partner shows respect.

“Love ... is not envious ... it is not easily angered or resentful” 1 Corinthians 13:4-5.

To show *respect* means that you show consideration to your spouse even if you think you are right. You do not become angry or resentful about your spouse's point of view. If your spouse tries to provoke you, you maintain a spirit of servanthood and respect. This means that you do not talk down to your spouse nor insist on getting your own way.

Ray: Honey, I'm so sorry you are feeling this way. Can you share with me some of the things that are going wrong in your life?

Mary: You should know what is going wrong in my life. You're my husband! That is part of the problem. I shouldn't have to tell you. You should already know!

Ray: Perhaps you are right, I should know, but I don't know. Could you please share them with me so that I can better understand?

Notice that even though Mary tries to provoke Ray (and is not practicing safe communication), Ray responds with a spirit of servanthood and respect. He does not become angry or resentful.

Element 3: A safe communication partner shows genuineness.

"Love does not brag ... It is not rude, it is not self-serving" 1 Corinthians 13:4-5.

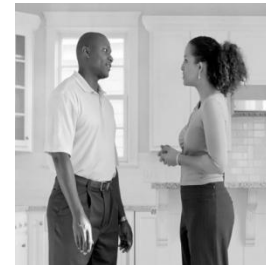
To be genuine means that you attempt to be open and honest as you communicate lovingly to your spouse about your own thoughts. Your attitude is genuinely humble, not merely projecting a humble image for your own purposes. Therefore, you attempt to esteem the needs of your spouse as more important than your own, and you are honest and teachable about your own shortcomings and sins. You seek to be receptive to all the information and feelings that are relevant to the situation.

Mary: I just don't know if I want to share these things with you, Ray. The last time I tried to share my feelings, you disregarded them. I'm not sure I believe that my feelings are important to you.

Ray: Mary, I can see that I have really hurt you in the past by my insensitivity. I am so sorry and would like for you to forgive me. The Lord has been really convicting me lately as I have been studying the marriage course. I realize now how unsafe I have made you feel in our relationship. From now on I would like for you to tell me when you feel I am being insensitive to your feelings. Would you do that?

Mary: Well, okay. I guess I can do that.

Notice that Ray shows genuineness by being open about his shortcomings.



Element 4: A safe communication partner shows empathy.

"Love ... bears all things, believes all things" 1 Corinthians 13:7.

To show empathy means that you are able to identify yourself mentally and emotionally with your spouse and so understand your spouse's feelings. This is what it means to "bear" one another's burdens (Gal 6:2). You have empathy when you seek to see an event from your spouse's point of view. In doing this, you do not evaluate your spouse's feelings by how you would act and feel if *you* were in his/her situation, but rather as though *you were your spouse* in that situation.

Ray: Thank you. Now please share with me some of the things that are bothering you.

Mary: First of all, things at work are not going well. Peggy and I were supposed to have worked together on the proposal for our new contract. Well, for the past two weeks, I have put in over ninety hours and Peggy has hardly been available. She ended up doing almost nothing on it. Today, the boss came out and went to Peggy's desk and told her how much he liked our work. He was raving about what a good job *we* did. All the while,

he only talked to Peggy and didn't even look over toward my desk or give me any eye contact.

Ray: Wow, I can't believe that happened! Didn't Peggy do anything to acknowledge that you had done most of the work?

Mary: No, and that is what's really bothering me.

Ray: I would feel horrible if that happened to me. Do you think you should say something to her?

Mary: I just don't know.

Ray: Can I pray for you about this right now? I will pray that the Lord will give you wisdom to know what you should do. I will also pray that He will reward you for the good work you did.

Notice that Ray shows empathy by trying to place himself in Mary's situation.

Element 5: A safe communication partner shows supportiveness.

"Love...rejoices in the truth" 1 Corinthians 13:6.

Supportiveness simply means that you create a climate that causes your spouse to know that he/she does not have to act like someone else. You are able to rejoice at who your spouse is. He/she doesn't have to put on a happy face when feeling sad or pretend to be calm when feeling anxious. A supportive person causes his/her spouse to feel safe—willing to be honest and vulnerable about weakness. Even when nothing appears to be going right, this characteristic will cause you to anticipate the best in your spouse. Being supportive also means that you will rejoice when something positive happens rather than feeling jealous.

Ray: Lord, thank You that You know all things. You know what an excellent job Mary does and how hard she worked on this proposal. You also see that she was not honored or appreciated for the work that she did. Lord, would you please reward Mary for the work she has done? Allow her boss to see things clearly. Most of all, help Mary to accept whatever happens in this situation and to be able to find Your comfort and peace even in the midst of her disappointment and frustration.

Mary: Thanks so much for praying for me. I really appreciate it!

Ray: I will continue to pray about this. Please keep me up-to-date on what happens at work. Do you want to share anything else that has been bothering you?

Mary: Well, I wasn't going to tell you, because it just didn't seem like you would understand. I feel so guilty about it, though. I feel like I need to say something. About two weeks ago, Dan, my old boyfriend from college, e-mailed me and we have been e-mailing back and forth every day. We haven't met or talked on the phone, but I can tell that he is interested in more than just a friendship. I have to admit, things have been going so badly lately in communication with you, that it has felt good to communicate with someone who cares about what I think and feel.

Notice that Ray's demonstration of concern for Mary frees her to be able to take a risk to share something with him that is very difficult.

Element 6: A safe communication partner shows unconditional love.

"Love ... is not glad about injustice, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends" 1 Corinthians 13:6-8.

If you have unconditional love, you will remain selflessly faithful even to the point of death. This kind of love means that you will remain steadfast, even under suffering and hardship and through difficult communication, without yielding to the temptation to escape the pain. It means that you will not hold a grudge or take offense by your spouse's wrongdoing. Rather, you will forgive and seek to restore your relationship by speaking the truth in love and by wishing only the best for your spouse.



Ray: I just want you to know that I *do* care! Oh Mary, this makes me feel awful and really hurt. It makes me feel awful, because I have not been the kind of husband that makes you feel safe enough to share your concerns with me. It makes me feel really hurt, because you are my wife and yet you are sharing your heart with another man. Will you forgive me, Mary, for not being the kind of husband that God wants me to be?

Mary: Yes, I will forgive you. Will you forgive me for being unfaithful to you by allowing this relationship to go further than I should have allowed it to go?

Ray: Yes, I forgive you. Will you promise me that you will cut off all e-mail communication with him and come to me with your desires and concerns? I know that I have been at fault, but I hope that you are willing to work with me to make our marriage better.

Mary: Yes, I will cut off my e-mail with Dan and even change my e-mail address. I really do want to work with you toward a more Christlike marriage.

Notice that Ray shows unconditional love by choosing to accept the blame and to forgive his wife instead of berating her for communicating with her old boyfriend. He has proved that he is safe by responding in this way. This will facilitate her trusting him in the future.

Can you see how safe communication is one of the main ways that you express the love that 1 Corinthians 13 describes?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

One-way Versus Two-Way Communication

Please read the following short examples of one-way communication:

Mary: "Come look out the window! Look how pretty that bird is."

Peter: *Ignoring her request:* "Did my brother ever call?"

Caleb: *Comes toward his wife with arms extended, hugs and tries to kiss her.*

Deborah: *Turns her head and pushes him away.*

Ruth: "We really need to talk about what we are going to do about Sandy's poor grades."

Bruce: "Pass the salt."

Amy: "Supper is ready!"

Chau: *Silence and no movement as he stares transfixed at the TV.*

Daniel: “I had such a discouraging day at work.”

Beth: *Does not look up when her husband speaks. She continues silently to do her handiwork.*

Paul: “I met our neighbor down the street at the grocery store today.”

Susan: “I can’t talk. I’m running late.”

Here are the same couples in the same situations. But this time, communication is two-way. Can you see the differences?

Mary: “Come look out the window! Look how pretty that bird is.”

Peter: “Oh my, it *is* beautiful, isn’t it?”

Caleb: *Comes toward his wife with arms extended, hugs and kisses her.*

Deborah: *Looks at him, extends her arms, and hugs and kisses him in return.*

Ruth: “We really need to talk about what we are going to do about Sandy’s poor grades.”

Bruce: “When do you want to talk about it? Are you free this evening after the kids are in bed?”

Amy: “Supper is ready!”

Chau: “Okay, I’m coming!”

Daniel: “I had such a discouraging day at work.”

Beth: *Beth puts her work down, looks up at him.* “Oh no, what happened?”

Paul: “I met our neighbor down the street at the grocery store today.”

Susan: “Oh really? Listen, I’m in a big rush right now, but I really want to hear about what happened. Could you tell me more at dinnertime?”

From some of these short dialogues, can you see the differences between one-way and two-way communication? In one-way communication, one spouse shares but there is either no response or an inappropriate response from the other spouse. Thus, the following messages are communicated by the spouse who responds inappropriately:

“I am important. You are not important.”

“I am worth listening to. You are not worth listening to.”

“My time is important. Your time is not important.”

“How I feel is valid. How you feel is not valid.”

Although a person may not actually say these words, these are the attitudes that are expressed by what *is* said and/or done.

There are many reasons why a person uses *one-way communication* in relating to others. Sometimes it happens unintentionally, such as when a spouse feels rushed on his/her way somewhere. It can also happen when one feels stressed by life's circumstances or insecure because of hurt or mistreatment in the past. Sometimes, however, one-way communication happens intentionally. It is an evil way of punishing and conveying disregard and disrespect. It is the result of a hard, self-centered, or bitter heart.

Whether intentional or unintentional, how you communicate with each other has a direct bearing on how safe you feel with each other, and how willing you will be to show vulnerability in the future.

In *two-way communication*, you do the following in order to fully enter the conversation:

You discontinue what you were doing.

You give attention and look up.

You respond appropriately, both verbally and nonverbally.

When you do these things, you communicate the following underlying messages:

"I value you as my sister and/or brother in Christ. Thus, you are important to me."

"I am going to listen to you because you are worth listening to."

"I will give you my time because I choose to put your needs before my own."

"I will be attentive to you because your feelings are valid."

The attitude expressed in two-way communication establishes the climate for true dialogue because it fosters an environment of safe sharing.

As you return to the lesson and read the chart, think about the way you typically communicate with your spouse. Overall, how safe do you think he/she feels in your relationship?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Do You Feel Safe With Me?

Ask **your spouse** to complete this survey and return it to you for scoring.

(If that is not possible, complete this survey as if you were your spouse as it relates to your relationship with him/her. How would your spouse answer these questions?)

Use this scale: 1=never ————— 3=sometimes ————— 5=often

1. _____ My spouse thinks that I am an interesting, exciting person to be around.
2. _____ My spouse doesn't judge or criticize me.
3. _____ My spouse rarely blames me when he/she is offended or when his/her feelings have been hurt.
4. _____ My spouse doesn't expect me to be his/her main source of love and fulfillment.
5. _____ I am not afraid to open up and share my deepest feelings, suggestions, and needs with my spouse.
6. _____ My spouse is concerned about every area of my life.
7. _____ My spouse makes my needs a high priority.
8. _____ I feel at ease and relaxed when spending time with my spouse.
9. _____ My spouse respects my opinions, ideas, concerns, expectations, feelings, and needs.
10. _____ My spouse values me as physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually unique.

11. _____ I trust my spouse's words and actions.
12. _____ My spouse gives me a sense of equality in our relationship.
13. _____ My spouse's humor never turns to sarcasm that makes me feel uncomfortable.
14. _____ My spouse praises me often for what I say and do.
15. _____ My spouse says "I'm sorry" and asks for forgiveness whenever it is needed.
16. _____ My spouse controls his/her anger so that I don't ever feel afraid.
17. _____ My spouse is very good at partnering with me to find solutions to mutual problems or disagreements.
18. _____ My spouse sees us as a team together.
19. _____ My spouse works hard to have a loving and fulfilling relationship.
20. _____ My spouse readily forgives me, if I offend him/her.

If your spouse asked you to take this survey, please return it to him/her now.

Scoring should be completed by the spouse being discussed in the survey, not the spouse who completed the survey.

Add up all the answers together to get a grand total.

Scoring:

- 71–100 Your spouse feels safe with you.
- 41–70 You need improvement for your spouse to feel safe with you.
- 20–40 Your spouse feels very unsafe with you.

What will you do about your score?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Resolving Conflicts (James 4:2-3, 6-8)

Do you remember our story about Jay and Maylin from the article *What Causes Conflicts?* When you left them, they were sitting in my office and expressing their grievances. This built up to an explosive tirade. After they calmed down, I asked them the following three questions:

- (1) "Are you happy and fulfilled in your marriage?"
- (2) "Do you desire a healthy, happy marriage?"
- (3) "If you do, are you willing to do what God says you need to do to make it happen?"

Since they answered the last two questions positively, I was able to say, "Good! Let's ask God to do this for you!" We prayed together and turned to James 4 to discover what caused their conflicts in the first place, just as you examined the six wall-building "bricks."

- Please refresh your reading of James 4:1-8.

You might remember that the six destructive "bricks" found in James 4 are anger, selfishness, evil desires, jealousy, out-of-control behavior, and pride. In this same passage, you may also discover five constructive "bricks" that can help you build bridges of Christlike communication in your marriage.

Bricks That Build Bridges

Brick 1: Prayer (v 2)

James 4:2 says that the two reasons you don't have what you want are that (1) you don't ask God for it, or (2) you want something that is not God's will for you to have. You know that God says He wants you to have a marriage that pictures Christ and the church. So, the first step when you and your spouse experience conflict is to lay the conflict out before God in prayer (Isa 37:14). This will help you to determine whether what you are arguing about is according to God's principles or contrary to them. Here is a set of instructions to help you organize this meeting with God and your spouse. If you counsel others, you will find these steps helpful in coaching couples to a resolution of their conflicts.

How to Deal With Conflicts Through Prayer

Make an appointment with your spouse (or if you are single, with a close friend) to deal with *one* conflict.

MEETING ONE:

- 1. Meet** at the appointed time with paper and pen in hand. Begin by asking God to guide you with wisdom.
- 2. Write down** the following three things about the conflict:
 - a. What you perceive the conflict is about.
 - b. What you want and why.
 - c. What you perceive your spouse wants and why.
- 3. Each of you should read** what you wrote, one at a time, without any interruption from the other person.
- 4. Without further discussion** or disagreement, bring what you wrote to God in prayer. Ask Him to reveal what His will is in this matter. Assure Him that you are both desiring to proceed according to His will.
- 5. After you finish praying**, see if you can come to an agreement. If you determine that what you are fighting about is a sinful desire on one or both of your parts, confess your sins to God and ask each other for forgiveness. If you are still not in agreement, agree to pray separately about this matter for the next week. Assure your partner that your desire is to seek God's mind, not to "win." Agree not to discuss the conflict again until you have both prayed about it every day for the next week. Set up a time in one week to meet again, and close your time in prayer.

MEETING TWO: ONE WEEK LATER

- 1. Open in prayer. Discuss anything** that the Lord revealed to you while you prayed during the week. See if anything has changed from the week before as a result of your time in prayer.
- 2. If a decision has to be made** because of some deadline, but you still cannot decide what God's will is in the matter, seek to come to a compromise that you both agree on, then go ahead and proceed with what you decide mutually.
- 3. If you still cannot decide** what God's will is and a decision does not have to be made, bring it before the Lord for another week, and follow the same procedure above until God makes His will more clear to you.

If a decision has to be made but you *cannot* come to a compromise, seek a godly third party *together*, who you believe will be impartial and who might help you to see a clearer picture of what God's will is in this matter.

Jay and Maylin used this brick of prayer by doing the exercise above with one of their unresolved conflicts. The situation was as follows:

As you may remember from the earlier description, they had been married for almost four years and were living with Jay's parents. Now, they had just had their first baby, and Maylin wanted to move into a home of their own. Maylin had been experiencing more and more conflicts with her mother-in-law, which created conflicts between Jay and her. For these reasons, Maylin felt it would be good to move out and to have a place of their own. On the other hand, Jay did not think that they could afford to live on their own, so he refused to consider a move.

In order to implement the exercise, I coached Jay and Maylin to do the prayer exercise above in my office. They focused on one section of their wall—the conflict about where to live.

1. They began by asking God to guide them with wisdom toward oneness on the question of where to live.
2. They wrote down their perspectives. The essence was as follows:
Maylin wrote: (a) We have a conflict about where we should live. (b) I want to move into our own home, because I am not getting along with my mother-in-law. I want us to raise our child without undue influence by others. (c) Jay does not want to move because he is afraid our finances are not sufficient.
Jay wrote: (a) We have a conflict about staying with my parents. (b) I do not want to move because we might not be able to afford a place of our own, especially with a new baby to care for. (c) Maylin wants to move out.
3. They read what they wrote, one at a time, without further discussion.
4. They prayed together. They discussed with God what each of them wanted and asked what His will was for them.
5. After they finished praying, they were still unsure of God's will in the matter, so they agreed to pray about it for another week.

At the next meeting, they discussed the matter again. Jay told Maylin that as he had prayed, God had convicted him about his hesitancy to trust Him for enough money. He knew that he needed to learn to trust God more and not to be afraid to do His will. Because of what God had revealed, he was willing to discuss a move. At the same meeting, Maylin told Jay that if he would be willing to rent a place of their own for a year, they would re-evaluate at the end of the year. She was willing to move back to his parents' home, if they could not afford to continue living on their own. Jay agreed to this compromise and asked Maylin to pray that he would be able to overcome his fear about God's provision for them.

In James 4:6-7, God reveals some more good “bricks” for building a bridge.

Brick 2: Humility (vv 6, 7, 10)

God says in verse 6 that He shows favor to the humble. In verse 7, He tells His people to humble themselves before Him. In verse 10, He says that if you bow down to Him and admit your dependence on Him, He will lift you up! If you are serious about dealing with communication conflicts, you will desperately need the brick of humility as a foundation stone to your bridge. One part of this humility is toward God. You must humbly desire to do His will more than your own will. You must depend on Him for the power to resolve the conflicts. The other part is a humble attitude toward your spouse. You will be studying this subject more in Lesson 10.

Brick 3: Resisting the Devil (v 7)

Another aspect of building a bridge between you is to *resist* the devil. Do you know that the Bible never says to *flee from* the devil? It says to flee from sins—youthful lusts (2 Tim 2:22), immorality (1 Cor 6:18), idolatry (1 Cor 10:14), and the love of money (1 Tim 6:10)—but never the devil. Instead of running, you are told to *resist and to stand firm* against the devil (Eph 6:11, 13-14; Jas 4:7; 1 Pet 5:9). One way to resist him, as you saw in Lesson 2, is by being aware of his schemes against you (2 Cor 2:11). You may build a communication bridge with your spouse by sharing the schemes that you see the enemy working against your unity. Another way is by being clothed fully in the armor of God so that you are

ready for his attacks (Eph 6:10-18). You may put on these armor pieces as a couple together. When you resist him and his plans for the destruction of your marriage, it is the devil, not you, who will flee!

Brick 4: Drawing Near to God (v 8)

God says in James 4:8 that one of the ways to stand against evil desires is to draw close to Him. This includes the first brick, but is also more than prayer. Jesus says that He is the vine and you are the branches who must abide consistently in Him in order to bear fruit (Jn 15:5). The branch has no power or sustenance to thrive on its own. It is only fruitful while it abides in the vine. In the same way, the only way to have victory over the selfish desires of the flesh that cause conflict is to draw constant sustenance and power from the vine. John 15:5 says that without Him, we can do nothing. The more we are with Him, the more we will become like Him. The more we become like Him, the more we will respond like Him in communicating with our spouse. We will not become more like Him until we give Him more time! There are 168 hours in every week. How many of those hours are you actively seeking to draw near to Him through prayer, His Word, worship, fellowship, etc?

Brick 5: Cleaning Your Spiritual House

James 4:8-9 says that one way to take a stand against the evil desires that cause conflict is to wash your hands and purify your hearts with a deep sense of sorrow and remorse for sin. It means that you are serious enough about your sin to do a spiritual housecleaning in order to eliminate the garbage that is causing the evil desires within you. How do you do this? Here is a suggested outline for a time of getting your spiritual house clean.

How to do a spiritual house cleaning

1. Set aside time to spend alone with the Lord.
2. Pray the following verses to Him (or something similar from your own heart):
Have mercy on me, O God, because of your loyal love!
Because of your great compassion, wipe away my rebellious acts!
Scrub away my wrongdoing! Cleanse me of my sin!
For I am aware of my rebellious acts, I am forever conscious of my sin.
Against you, especially you, I have sinned, I have done what is sinful in your sight.
So you are just when you confront me, you are right when you condemn me ...
Create for me a pure heart! Transform me and give me integrity! (Psalm 51:1-4, 10)
2. Ask Him to reveal everything in your life that is not pleasing to Him.
3. Sit quietly and patiently before Him with paper and pen in hand.
4. As you wait for Him to answer, think through the activities of a typical day and/or week in your life.
5. Ask Him to reveal any attitudes, thoughts, or activities that He wants to eliminate from your life.
6. As He begins to reveal things, write them down.
7. When you feel He is finished speaking, confess the sins that He revealed and pray again the prayer from Psalm 51, as quoted above.
8. Make a plan on how you will eliminate the things He revealed to you. Also, decide what you will put in their place. For example, perhaps God convicted you of watching too much TV. You realize that you watch TV all day on Saturdays because there are many soccer matches broadcast on that day. So now on Saturday, in place of the time you would normally watch TV, you will plan other activities, such as playing soccer with your children. If your children are not available, you will read a book or take a walk rather than turning on the TV. You will watch only one soccer match on TV each week and will choose ahead of time which one you will watch.

Through applying the truths from James 4, Jay and Maylin slowly began to see the walls in their communication come down. They began to communicate in a way that strengthened their marriage rather

than threatened it. What once seemed hopeless, God turned around for good as they humbled themselves and took the necessary steps to demolish the evil desires within that were causing their conflicts. Will you believe God can do the same for you as you begin applying the truths of James 4 in your marriage?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Things to Say to Diffuse an Argument

Sometimes communication in marriage is unappealing because neither spouse exerts any effort to make their relationship inviting. As a result, communication tends to polarize by becoming either shallow or explosive. With just a little practice and skill, however, conversations that would otherwise have become volatile can be civil and even engaging. Here is a list of phrases, which you can practice, that will help you diffuse an argument and keep your conversation flowing in a loving way:

1. "Let me finish what I'm doing, so I can really listen."
2. "I can tell that what I have said has made you angry."
3. "Let me see if I understand what you are saying."
4. "I know that this is really important to you ..."
5. "Can you tell me more ...?"
5. "How did that make you feel?"
6. "I can understand why you feel angry when I ..."
7. "What can I do to help you feel less discouraged?"
8. "It seems like you are really struggling. What can I do to help carry the load?"
9. "I do not want to make you feel angry at me, so I will try to say this in a way that will help you understand how I feel but not make you feel defensive."
10. "Thank you for sharing your concern. Can I have a little time to think about that before I respond?"
11. "Let's pray together about what we should do about that."
12. "How can I change my behavior so you do not misunderstand my motives?"
13. "How could I have communicated that better?"
14. "Will you let me know when this happens again so that I become more aware of it?"
15. "You're right. I was wrong. Will you please forgive me for ...?"
16. "May I explain what I meant by what I said? Even though I did not mean it in the way you understood it, please forgive me for hurting you with my words."
17. "Thank you for sharing that with me. Is there anything else you wanted to share?"

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Twenty-Five Ways to Communicate Love

Here are twenty-five ways to communicate loving concern to your spouse. Most of these have been mentioned at other places in the course. But they are presented here because of their effectiveness in improving communication.

1. Find out what his/her heart language is and use it regularly to communicate your concern for your spouse's well-being (see Lesson 4).
2. Ask your spouse, "What demonstrates love to you?" and then do it.
3. Write a note of appreciation for something your spouse does.
4. Thank your spouse for specific things (e.g., "Thank you for the delicious chicken dinner. It had such a great flavor!" as opposed to "Thanks for cooking.>").
5. Once a week, ask your spouse to name one thing that he/she would like to see done around the house and then do it.
6. Initiate praying every day with your spouse.
7. Tell your spouse frequently that you love him/her (both in private and in public).
8. When your spouse begins to talk to you, stop what you are doing and give him/her your attention.
9. Learn to know what especially pleases your spouse and be careful to do it often.
10. Be willing to humble yourself and ask forgiveness when you have been wrong.
11. Involve the kids in doing special things for your spouse.
12. Know what pleases your spouse sexually and do it (unless it is wrong—you will deal more with questionable practices in Lesson 8).
13. Be attentive to your spouse's nonverbal communication.
14. Do not belittle your spouse's opinion.
15. Ask your spouse's advice.
16. Ask the Lord to help you change in the areas that you know displease your spouse.
17. Try to develop a hobby that both you and your spouse enjoy doing together.
18. At least once a year, try to get away overnight, just the two of you.
19. If it is available, attend a marriage conference with your spouse at least once a year. Perhaps consider planning one in your church.
20. Plan a day of prayer and reflection each year for your anniversary. Keep a journal that records the highlights and struggles of the past year, as well as next year's goals, etc.
21. If you will be late for a meal or appointment, communicate this change as soon as possible.
22. Refuse to compare your spouse with others either verbally or in your thoughts.
23. Cultivate your own relationship with the Lord, so that you can love your spouse with His love.
24. Do not demand your own way or insist that your way is right.
25. Be patient with your spouse's questions.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

The Communication Game

When you and your spouse have an issue that you cannot resolve without intense emotions, put this game into practice.

Phase One:

1. Gather a notebook and pen for each of you.
2. On four index cards, write the following:
 - a. Card 1: I will listen actively.
 - b. Card 2: I will share feedback graciously.
 - c. Cards 3 and 4: Violation
3. Sit facing each other.
4. Pray together and commit your time of communication to God.
5. Review the rules and agree that you will not violate them.
6. Determine who will share first (usually the one who has initiated the topic of concern) and take Card 2 and either Card 3 or 4. We will call this spouse #1. The other spouse (#2) holds the remaining two cards.
7. Spouse #1 begins by saying something positive and affirming to the other.
8. Once spouse #1 begins to speak, spouse #2 cannot speak, interrupt, or ask questions until it is his/her turn. However spouse #2 can jot notes or questions to remember to ask later. If spouse #2 does interrupt, spouse #1 should hold up the "Violation" card. This will be a reminder to honor the commitment to listen.
9. Once spouse #1 is completely finished, spouse #2 can ask questions to clarify #1's meaning. If spouse #2 begins to share another point of view, to attack, or to criticize, spouse #1 should hold up the Violation card to remind him/her of the rules agreed upon.
10. After spouse #2 hears the answer to his/her questions, the next step is to reiterate in his/her own words what spouse #1 said. This step is done so that spouse #1 can gauge how well spouse #2 understood. Then #1 can simply say, "Yes, I think you understand what I am trying to say." Or else, #1 can briefly clarify further what #2 did not seem to understand, asking #2 to restate again if necessary.
11. Spouse #2 closes the time by thanking partner #1 for sharing and affirming or summarizing spouse #1's message.

Phase Two:

At this point, spouse #2 may request to become the speaking spouse, in which case Phase One is repeated but with the roles and cards reversed. Alternately, spouse #2 can request to enter Phase Three, which is the conflict resolution phase.

Phase Three:

1. Allow spouse #1 to summarize the topic of concern in one or two sentences.
2. Both spouses should write down as many possible solutions as they can think of to this problem in the order which each one believes would resolve the conflict most effectively.
3. When both spouses are finished writing, they should take turns sharing possible solutions. If either spouse begins to interrupt, gets angry, or begins violating the principles of this exercise, the other can hold up a Violation card to remind the other of their mutual commitment to resolve this conflict peacefully.
4. Compromise on one or two of the most effective solutions and discuss possible hindrances.

5. Initiate a plan to implement the solution.
6. Choose a date and time to meet again—in about a week unless the matter is urgent—to discuss progress, problems, and future solutions.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Discussion Starters

Sometimes, all a couple needs are some ideas on how to get a discussion started. Most people have, at one time or another, found themselves with nothing to say to the person who is sitting across the table. If this is sometimes a problem for you, it is a wise idea to prepare some “discussion-starter questions” in case you cannot think of what to talk about with your spouse. Can you add some engaging questions of your own to this list?

1. What is your favorite memory?
2. What is your favorite memory in our marriage?
3. What is your saddest memory?
4. What is your saddest memory in our marriage?
5. What are the top three things you would like me to do for you?
6. What three things do I do that irritate you?
7. What is your favorite color? Why?
8. What is your favorite movie? Why?
9. What is your favorite book of the Bible? Why?
10. What are your three favorite meals?
11. Where is your favorite place to eat?
12. What is your favorite Bible verse? Why?
13. What would you like to do if all hindrances were taken away?
14. Who do you respect as a Christian more than anyone else?
15. What three things make you feel inadequate?
16. What three things make you feel confident?
17. What was your most memorable vacation?
18. If money were not an issue, what kind of vacation would you like to take?
19. What is going on at work and how do you feel about it?
20. What three things frustrate you about your job?
21. What three things give you the most joy from your job?
22. What is your favorite book? Why?
23. What hobby would you start if you could?
24. What three things do you look forward to most about heaven?
25. What do you think heaven is going to be like?
26. Give me three specific ways that I can become a better spouse.
27. When you were a child, what did you really love to do?
28. Who has taught you the most about Jesus?
29. What are three characteristics that you really like about yourself?
30. What are you praying that God will do in your heart right now? How can I pray with you for that?
31. What are your dreams and goals?

32. What has God been teaching you lately?
33. How are your friends doing? (It is best to name the friends.)
34. What are your fears right now?
35. What hobbies might we get involved in together?
36. How do you think we could become a better spouse for each other?
37. How can we both become better parents to our children?
38. How is your personal ministry going?
39. What personal ministry do you think I should consider?
40. Is there some activity that you would like us to save up and plan for?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Articles for Lesson 8: Sexual Lovemaking Builds Unity

Solomon and the Shulamite

Who Were They, and Why Should We Listen to Them?

Solomon was the son of King David whom God selected to assume the throne of Israel after David became too old to rule. The Bible says that Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived.

- Please read 1 Kings 4:29-34.

Quite an impressive resume, isn't it? But the Bible also says that by the end of his life he has 700 royal wives and 300 concubines (1 Kgs 11:3). Does having 1,000 different sex partners make Solomon an expert on sex? Of course not! Why would we want to listen to what such a debauched man has to say?

Solomon's understanding of the art of lovemaking is part of the wisdom that God grants him. His knowledge on so many subjects is so astounding that people from all over the world travel to hear his observations (1 Kgs 4:34). But like many people, Solomon eventually fails to keep his own instructions on wise living, either from this book or from Proverbs or from Ecclesiastes, the other Bible books that he authored. Since all of these books are *inspired* by God, they rightly belong in our canon of Scripture, whether or not Solomon heeded God's wisdom himself.

Also consider that during the phase of Solomon's life when he is writing these poems, Solomon is very committed to worshipping the one true God, Jehovah. God loves him from birth (2 Sam 12:24) and chooses him to succeed his father, David, as king of Israel (1 Chr 28:3-10), even though he has older brothers who traditionally would assume the throne. God selects him to build the great temple that David had envisioned and equipped (2 Sam 7; 2 Chr 3:1-7:11). God is pleased with Solomon's sincere heart and promises to make him not only wise but rich as well (2 Chr 1:7-12; 6:1-42). Things go well for at least twenty years (2 Chr 8:1). God gives Solomon peace with all the nations around, and he becomes the richest man on earth (2 Chr 9:22).

- Get a sense of Solomon's good heart by reading his prayer at the dedication of the temple in 2 Chronicles 6:14-33.

The Harem

Some people have objected to this book on the basis that the Shulamite is only one wife in a harem full of women. It is important to know that the queens and concubines in a king's harem of that time (140 of them according to Song 6:8) were sent as gifts (1 Kgs 11:19), were taken for political alliance (1 Kgs 3:1), or were inherited from his father, David. As king, he feels responsible to care for them, to keep them safe, even to raise up children through them to strengthen his dynasty, even though this was not godly thinking (2 Chr 11:23). In the Song of Solomon, however, he is clear to say that his heart belongs to only one woman, the Shulamite (Song 6:9). His spiritual decline begins when he strays from a one-woman pattern to love many wives, of which the first was Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kgs 11:1-4). The original pattern, which God had given through Moses, is that a king of Israel is not to take multiple wives, not to get horses from Egypt, and not to amass great wealth (Deut 17:16-17). God's men are not to use these worldly methods to solidify their power. Instead they are to rely on God to establish their thrones (1 Kings 9:2-7). Solomon's degrading slide into idolatry begins by ignoring these principles. When God decides that Solomon has failed to keep faith with the One who placed him on the throne, none of these worldly means of hanging onto power can help him (1 Kgs 11:11).

The more detailed accounts of Solomon's life, as recorded in the extra-biblical books mentioned in 1 Kings 11:41 and 2 Chronicles 9:29, were not preserved for us, perhaps because we do not need to read about his debauchery in detail. What we do learn of his decline (1 Kgs 11:6-8) is sickening enough, especially after getting a glimpse of his unique blessings and attributes. But at the early point in his reign when the Song of Solomon was written, there is no reason to think that he is anything but the admirable young man that he portrays himself to be in this book.

The Shulamite

Who was Solomon's bride, the Shulamite? We are not sure, but there are a couple of candidates in Scripture who fit what we know about her from the Song of Solomon.

Our first contestant is Abishag.

- Please read 1 Kings 1:1-4.

Abishag was a young woman from the area of Shunem, (Josh 19:18) a Shunammite. Scripture is careful to tell us that Abishag was the most beautiful woman that David's servants could find in all of Israel. Further we see in 1 Kings 1:4, 15 that she continued to act as David's nurse during his declining health. But Scripture also tells us a particularly important fact in verse 4. David did not have sex with her. She remained a virgin.

Why would this be important enough to mention in Scripture? Why would Abishag be an important enough character to be mentioned at all? We find out a little more in chapter 2.

In the palace lived not only David and the lovely Abishag, but also David's sons, Solomon and Adonijah. Every time that they visited their father, they couldn't help but notice this beautiful, graceful, and capable woman. It doesn't take much imagination to think that both young men would want her and that the rivalry between them would focus not just on the throne itself, but also on who would marry her, once David was gone.

- We pick up the plot in 1 Kings 2:13-25. Please read this passage.

So, what do you think? Is Abishag Solomon's young bride? There are explanations for Solomon's anger other than love for Abishag. It is possible that Solomon gets angry here because by taking the woman that belonged publically to David, Adonijah is claiming the throne (as his rebellious brother Absalom did similarly in 2 Sam 16:22). Remember, whoever gets the throne also gets the harem! If our Mrs. Solomon is Abishag, why then does the Song of Solomon call her a *Shulamite* instead of a *Shunammite*? The term Shulamite, as it is used in the Song of Solomon, sounds like a blending of Shunammite and the Hebrew name for "Solomon" which is *Shalomoh* (and means "peaceful one," from the Hebrew word for peace, *shalom*). For *Shalomoh* to call his wife *Shulamite*, is probably a term of endearment, like calling her "Mrs. Solomon."

Another good candidate for the Shulamite is the mother of Rehoboam, Naamah, the Ammonitess (2 Chr 12:13). Even though she is from the line of Ammon (one of the sons of Abraham's nephew, Lot, Gen 19:38), she could still match what we know of the Shulamite as a country girl, who either lives in Israel or perhaps near the traditional settlements of the Ammonites close to what is now Amman, Jordan, east of Israel. We know that Rehoboam, Solomon's heir and thus presumably the eldest son of Solomon, is born when Solomon is eighteen (a year before he becomes king at age nineteen). If Naamah is our bride, "The Shulamite" is not a blending of Solomon and Shunammite, but simply her nickname as Mrs. Solomon. In Song of Solomon 3:11, it says that Solomon is crowned on his wedding day. If it is the wedding to Naamah that is being described, it takes place too early in Solomon's life for him to be crowned king on his wedding day.

This problem can be alleviated easily by understanding that in this era, a bride and a groom were both crowned at their wedding feast. The Shulamite is perhaps pointing out that even *before* he was crowned

king of Israel, he was crowned king at their wedding and of her heart. Since the book was written later as a reflection, he is called the King throughout the book.

Naamah has some extra appeal as the Shulamite, because, as Rehoboam's mother, we already know that Naamah is in the line of Jesus (Mt 1:7). While both Moabites and Ammonites are forbidden access to the assembly of the Lord (Deut 23:3), and while both are generally hated by Jews, the line of Jesus already contains one of these races in the person of Ruth (a Moabitess). It is sweet to think that the one, who here in the Song of Solomon foreshadows the bride of Christ (which will include many Gentiles), would be Naamah, the Ammonitess, Christ's earthly ancestor.

Historically, some people have thought that the Song of Solomon is written to either the Queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:1) or the daughter of Pharaoh (1 Kgs 3:1). However, since the girl in the Song of Solomon appears to be a poor country girl, it is unlikely that she would be either of these two high-born women. While there are some legends that the Queen of Sheba became one of Solomon's wives, there is no biblical evidence for it (1 Kgs 10:13).

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

What Is the Song of Solomon?

The Song of Solomon has no doubt perplexed scholars and intrigued teenagers since it was introduced more than 1,000 years before Christ. What does the book say about itself? By calling it "the song of songs," Solomon says it is his best work (Song 1:1)! Compare it to the wisdom of Proverbs or Ecclesiastes (his other books) or to the 1,004 other songs that he wrote (1 Kings 4:32), and Solomon still says this book comes out on top. Why is that?

Two Perspectives

Some Bible scholars down through history have looked at its theme of describing sexual intercourse between a husband and a wife, and thought that it cannot be what it appears! It is too scandalous, too sensuous in what it depicts. Because of their prejudices against sexual expression, they supposed that there must be secret meanings lurking behind every image that would replace the obvious sexual ones.

Others have looked at it as a kind of sex manual, with the images used to describe specific sexual practices. These people think that God gave this guide to sexual love so that every culture that has the Scriptures can understand more of how He wants sexual expression to be—not just a physical act, but an exalted one, which joins spirit and soul as well as body.

Which view is correct?

One Event

The New Testament tells us about an event called the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9). This will take place in the future when the believers in Christ, called His bride, will join together with their Lord in an ecstatic union and "so we will be with the Lord always" (1 Thess 4:16-17). What kind of wedding will this be?

In a traditional Jewish "marriage supper," the couple leaves in the middle of the feast to go to a separate room to enjoy their first sexual intercourse. It is the sexual consummation that ratifies the marriage (Gen 24:67). So while the term that we read in the New Testament is "supper," it refers not only to a ceremony, or a gathering of guests, but also to the sexual experience of a couple *during* a Jewish wedding supper. As believers, we are not only guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb (Lk 14:23), we are the bride (Rev 21:9)!

When the Holy Spirit drew the Song of Solomon out of the heart of its authors, only He knew that Solomon and his bride were also giving us a taste of heaven (Eph 5:32). Solomon himself would probably have known only a little of the coming Messiah (Deut 18:15; 1 Sam 2:35; 2 Sam 7:12-16). The prophets would not write their more detailed revelations of the bride of Christ for several generations yet (Isa 25:6-9). Christ himself would not come to earth for 1,000 years. The Song of Solomon pictures heaven because sex itself pictures heaven, and you may notice many parallels as you read. Don't get caught up in drawing out all the parallels and miss the main point of our study. However, reflecting on these two experiences together—ecstatic intimacy with your spouse and your future ecstatic union with Christ in heaven—can enhance your understanding of both things.

- Our first taste of worship in heaven will change everything in our hearts forever and leave us amazed that such an experience should exist! This is the same amazement a couple experiences at their first sexual climax in each other's arms. Nothing they have experienced before has been as wondrous, as satisfying as this.
- Just as going to heaven is going to a Person more than a place, a married couple finds their soul's "home," not in a particular house, but in each other's arms.
- In heaven, God's chosen ones—until that moment blocked by sin from entering fully into the glory of our true Love—now enter into worship with their whole resurrected bodies, whole souls, and whole spirits. Worship in heaven won't be a sedate, controlled event but a feast of love for every sense (and perhaps some new senses that God will invent for the occasion), as we are overwhelmed with pleasure at our unity with our Lord. The Song of Solomon describes a rich and loving sexual experience as a *feast* for us as well. We may drink and eat of rich delicacies until we are fully satisfied.
- Just as the newly married couple sheds clothing and eliminates all that stands between them, when we are allowed to join with Him, without the filthy rags of sin and a veil of sinful flesh between us, our senses will feast in His glory for the first time.
- Regular sexual delight throughout years of marriage illustrates the type of ecstatic, intimate worship that we will participate in regularly through eternity.
- A picture of its underlying meaning in heaven may help you to discern appropriate sexual behavior in marriage. Those practices, which, like worship, express love and produce delight for both husband and wife, may be enjoyed. Those practices which are debasing or demeaning to either one should be rejected. You will think more on this principle in an article in the last topic of this lesson.

So, we should view Song of Solomon as both richly symbolic and physical. It is symbolic *because* the lovemaking between man and woman in marriage itself is a foreshadowing. Both the book and the physical union carry this weight of meaning, without downplaying at all the fact that it is human brain synapses and nerve endings that illustrate it, not only then, but also in the generation after generation that are waiting for its full consummation in heaven. The married couple in this book, Solomon and the Shulamite, was a real, flesh-and-blood couple who expressed their love through sex 1,000 years before Christ and left us their God-inspired reflections to instruct us. God invites you and your spouse to paint your own unique canvas of this future feast of delight in your heavenly Lover.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

After the Wedding: Song of Solomon 4:1–5:1

(for Married Couples Only)

The Locked Garden

This section of the Song of Solomon describes a couple’s first time of lovemaking (Song 3:11). It is not first in the book because, as we said, the whole book is a collection of a bride’s reflections on her first years of marriage, not a chronological history. If you have not read this passage, please read it through now and note the changes in point of view between Solomon and his bride. Solomon is speaking from Song of Solomon 4:1 until his bride responds to him in verse 16. Then he speaks again in Song of Solomon 5:1. Did you understand the images?



In this passage, we see that everything Solomon does is to help his new bride through this first sexual union with him. He needs to help her overcome her “maidenly fears” and sweep her up on a journey of passion and delight with him. Any husband and wife can benefit from careful attention and imitation of Solomon’s methods.

From Song of Solomon 4:1-5, the groom reassures the bride that everything he sees, from her eyes and continuing down her body to her waist, is attractive to him. He examines and appreciates her beauty in detail.

In Song of Solomon 4:6, he calms her fears that he might be rough and in a hurry. He assures her that he has “all day” for this, and explains what he intends to do. He intends to touch her most intimate geography, a mountain and a hill, explaining that they are the source of very expensive, sticky perfumes, frankincense and myrrh.

In Song of Solomon 4:7, he reassures her once again that she is beautiful to him, by adding to what he said in verse 1 and by saying now that she is *altogether* beautiful and has no faults as far as he is concerned. He is not disappointed in any way by her.

In Song of Solomon 4:8, he invites her to join him in a “journey” down from the heights of Lebanon (a snow-topped mountain range in the north, known for its forest of cedar trees 1 Kgs 4:33). Three of the mountains in this range are mentioned: Amana, Hermon, and Senir.



Mount Hermon in Israel



Stream from Senir

What’s this “journey” all about? These three mountains are in the Mt Lebanon range—all famous as the source of Israel’s rushing rivers. At 9,232 feet, Mt Hermon’s snow is the source of the Jordan River. Just as the wild, rough mountain range is different from the fruit and fields of domesticated animals he likened her body to, his body is rougher than hers. He is inviting her to touch and experience his body just as he has examined hers—beginning with the forest of his thick hair (Lebanon) and continuing downward across his rugged terrain. In the symbolism of the East, a woman is seen sexually as a well or spring, a man as a river or a stream. So, just as the streams coming off these mountains flow into Israel, he wants his streams to flow into her fertile valley. His mention of these mountains as the home of dens of lions

and mountains of leopards shows that he is aware of her fears. A man's body feels somewhat "dangerous" to a young virgin. He is acknowledging that she is nervous about what his body may do to her during their first sexual encounter. But he is suggesting that with him as her guide, they will safely travel past these threats to a fertile valley below. He will protect her from the pain she fears. It is an easy "downhill" climb, not difficult if they cooperate together.

How is the bride receiving all this? The word translated "love" in the first part of Song of Solomon 4:10 actually means "boiling," as it refers to her passion. He says that he finds her passion beautiful and more intoxicating than wine. As he begins to smell the scent of her arousal, he compares it to balsam—a sweet musky odor.

In Song of Solomon 4:11, the couple is now kissing in passionate sexual foreplay, as he speaks of the sweetness of not only her lips but her mouth and tongue. He is keenly aware of the desirability of her whole body. She smells like Lebanon cedars, another pungent spicy odor.

But now in Song of Solomon 4:12, he comes to the thing that she fears. He has explored her with his fingertips and finds that she is a securely "locked garden." Her maidenhead is closed, indicating she is a virgin. The fact that he calls her a garden is very suggestive. The Hebrew word *gannah* means a "hidden place." In the ancient world, a garden was a walled place with running water, footpaths, canals, fountains, herbs, and places to sit and rest in the shade. Solomon, as a prince in Israel, no doubt had beautiful walled gardens near the palace, which were kept for his pleasure. He suggests that in order for him to enter this particular garden and for them to enjoy this place together, her garden door would have to be unlocked and opened to him. How will he accomplish this?

In Song of Solomon 4:13-14, he describes for her the beautiful plants inside her garden, sweet fruit, beautiful flowers, seedy (sexy) pomegranates, scented cinnamon, and more. He uses a different word for garden now—paradise! He is tantalizing her with what pleasure she will experience once her door to paradise is open to him. No doubt he is tantalizing her by caressing her as well.

In Song of Solomon 4:15, as he is caressing her garden door, he exclaims that her locked garden has a "garden spring." He tells her that inside, she has a well of bubbling water—an image of her feminine place, now brimming with moisture for him. The well suggests that he is very thirsty and she is tantalizing him. He exclaims and encourages her that she is not just producing a small amount of moisture, but a rushing stream from Lebanon like his (Song 4:8). It is time. Her body is fully ready for him to enter. He has kept his promise to take his time and to adequately prepare her. But even at this moment of extreme desire, he waits at the door for her invitation.

Finally in verse 16, she calls to him to enter her. The north wind is a forceful cold wind that brings moisture (Ps 25:23), but the south wind is a gentle warm breeze (Lk 12:55). She wants him to blow open her garden door, with moisture and heat, force and gentleness. She wants him to make her garden breathe out spices (her pleasure) and for him to come in and enjoy the fruit of her garden (his pleasure).

So, what happens next?

- Please read Song of Solomon 5:1.

How does Solomon describe his experience now? She is now fully his. Look at how many times he uses the term "my" in just one verse—*my garden, my sister, my bride, my myrrh, my balsam, my honeycomb, my honey, my wine, my milk*. Solomon and his wife are now physically one. He has experienced the ultimate in physical pleasure inside her garden. But now that her door is open, will he be as tender and unhurried next time? What about the bride? Has the bride also experienced profound delight? Will she ever want to voluntarily make love to him again, or was this all only about allowing him *his* pleasure? We will hear from her again later.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

The Doubting Prince

Imagine you are a king who loves his son very much. Ever since he was born, you have been designing a fabulous party for your son's eighteenth birthday. This party is prepared in a beautiful garden, which you had planted just for him on the day that he was born and have kept locked until this day. Inside, you have attended to every detail. A great chef has cooked banquet tables full of food, and live musicians are playing the music that you commissioned them to write for your child's pleasure. Everything seems perfect. Surely your son will realize how much you love him and accept this gift with gratefulness.



But when you invite him to come into the garden and to enjoy the party, your son peeks in the door, looks around at all of the decorations, food, and people, and says, "This is too splendid. My parents would never prepare something this wonderful just for me. It must be a trap! I will never set foot in this garden, except at night when I am famished, and then I will just snatch a small portion of food and run out so they do not see me eating." He leaves the garden quickly, ashamed and afraid that someone might have seen him there.

What would this son's perspective reveal about his opinion of your character? How did he view your love for him?

While there is an appropriate time and place where God unlocks the door for you to feast in the garden of sexual love, it insults His character and grieves His heart when Christians fear or reject His extravagant gift.

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The Body Beautiful

Think of your favorite love story. Chances are, the couple that you imagined are very good looking. In your story, did the hero fall in love with the prettiest girl in the story? Did she become attracted to him because he was very handsome? Are you as good-looking as the people in your story? The truth is, those stories make most of us feel second-rate. Few of us have a complete set of perfect features. Does that mean that if you have features that are ordinary or even irregular, you are doomed to singleness? Or if you are married, to be less sexually attractive to your spouse than your more-attractive neighbor? Will your spouse always see you as the face and the body that he/she had to "settle for," rather than the most beautiful person he/she has ever seen? Is your spouse beautiful enough for you to love wholeheartedly? What makes a body beautiful?

In the Song of Solomon, Solomon and his bride spend most of their time in expressing how beautiful they find each other. Most of you can't imagine that your beauty is attractive enough that your spouse would want to write poems about it! What if, instead of being eighteen years old like Solomon and his bride, you are sixty-five years old and have graying hair and bulges that were not there when you got married? Let's examine Solomon's and Shulamite's description of an attractive specimen of the opposite gender and see if there is anything that you can do to improve your declining attractiveness. [Note: the following section contains specific sexual references. Singles may wish to skip to the last paragraph of the article]

The Shulamite Describes Her Husband's Body

It is obvious from the beginning of the book, that Mrs. Solomon finds her husband very attractive. What does this attractive man look like? Let's look at what she says about him in chapter 1.

- Please read Song of Solomon 1:1-3. Does he have big muscles? Is he tall? Are his eyes her favorite color? We don't know from this passage. In chapter 1 we learn that she finds him attractive because of the following:
 1. She loves his kisses.
 2. He smells good
 3. She loves the sound of his name.

Are these impossible standards for beauty for the male body in your marriage?

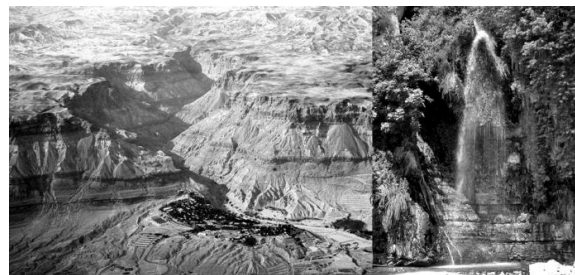
What else does she say about him? In Song of Solomon 1:16, she says that he is handsome and pleasing to her. What makes him so handsome? In Song of Solomon 1:13 she describes him as “a pouch of myrrh, which lies all night between my breasts.” Myrrh is a dried tree resin. In ancient history, it was often worth as much as pure gold. It was used to anoint priests and kings. Rather than describing anything about her husband's features, she is talking about his great preciousness to her when they lie together at night. Left untouched, myrrh has little scent. It releases a little when it is crushed, but when it is burned, it puts out a strong perfume. Unlike most other resins, myrrh expands and “blossoms” when burned instead of melting or liquefying. Similarly, her passion is kept subdued until her husband sets fire to it. He is extremely valuable to her because, in their lovemaking, he releases the expensive “scent” of her pleasure.

In the next verse, Song of Solomon 1:14 she describes him as “a cluster of henna blossoms in the vineyards of En-Gedi.” Does this help us know what he looks like? Henna blossoms were extremely fragrant and are still used to make perfumes today. A girl might wear the blossoms so that she would be saturated with their smell. Similarly, she thought of Solomon with her every breath. He had “scented” her for himself. But the henna also had thorns and so was a common hedge planted around a vineyard to *protect* it for the rightful owner. Her vineyard, (Song 1:6 indicates that this is her special word for her own body sexually), is protected by the constant aroma (thoughts) of him.

This vineyard, she says, is in “En-Gedi.” En-Gedi, as you can see in these photos below, is a green oasis set in the middle of a vast desert wilderness, not far from the Dead Sea. It is lush because of a hidden spring, which spurts out of the canyon wall and turns it into a small paradise of flowers and birds. Now can you see why the bride says that her vineyard is in En-Gedi?

She is saying that her sexual thoughts and experience of him are like her own private paradise in a world that is dry and without much to offer. *Now* do we know what he looks like? Still, no.

Let's go on to her next description of him in Song of Solomon 2:3. The other men around are an undistinguishable crowd. Only her beloved, the singular fruit tree in the forest, has the sweet fruit that she desires, another reference to their lovemaking.



En-Gedi

It seems like everything she describes as beautiful about him has nothing to do with his features! How are we to know why she finds him so handsome?

In chapter 5 of the Song of Solomon, she finally describes her husband's body for us. How would he stack up against handsome men you know?

Song of Solomon 5:10 - He is dazzling (shiny like gemstones).

Red (this word could also mean “manly”).

Song of Solomon 5:11 - His head is like pure gold (of high value).

His hair is like date clusters (curly?) and black like a raven.

Song of Solomon 5:12 - His eyes are like doves beside a stream, (gentle when they look at her).

Go on and read the rest of her description through verse 16. Most of this has to do with touching, smelling, and examining parts of his body minutely. Obviously he has spent time to make himself as attractive as possible through being groomed and scented, but can you see that you would not be able to recognize this man on the street compared to dozens of others? The only thing recognizable is his black hair—probably the majority of Hebrew men had this. His unique beauty is not something that he was born with, but something that she invests him with because she loves him and because of the pleasure she finds in making love with him. Mrs. Solomon calls him her “beloved” thirty-one times in the Song of Solomon. We don’t know if he was fat or had warts or walked with a limp, but to her, his body is altogether beautiful **because of her love for him and because of the pleasure his body gives hers** (Song 5:16).

The Shulamite’s Point of View on Her Own Body

Perhaps women are more forgiving of flaws in a man’s body. What did the Shulamite think about her own body? Where did she get her ideas? Not from her girlfriends.

- Please read Song of Solomon 1:1–2:6. (Note that the events in Song 1 take place *after* the honeymoon that you read about in chapter 4.)

What does Shulamite tell the other women about her body in Song of Solomon 1:5-6? She has heard their criticism that her skin is dark like a common worker’s skin, not pale and soft like a well-bred woman who has been protected from the sun. Inherent in this veiled criticism is that she is not beautiful enough, not *worthy* to be Solomon’s bride. Why does their criticism not devastate her? She agrees that she has had to work outdoors, and yes, that her skin is dark, but she refuses to feel ugly! She does not accept their assessment that she has to be pale in order to be beautiful. She adorns herself as if she were the most beautiful among women and insists to the others that she can be both dark *and* beautiful.

How can she “buck the tide” of popular opinion like this? How can she still see herself as a beauty when the other women rate her as second- or even third-rate? If you are a woman, how can you do this?

The answer is found in Solomon himself. Her body exists for the approval of one man alone. If he thinks she is beautiful, she is content with her appearance. How does she know that she is beautiful enough for him? The answer is that he never stops telling her! Her beauty is inextricably linked to her value to him (Song 1:9), the sensual way she looks at him (Song 4:9; 6:5), the way she moves (Song 6:13), and the pleasure he receives from looking at her and touching her (Song 7:8), which is expressed by all of his similes about sweet, soft, and spicy things. In fact, other than the fact that she has dark skin, we know nothing about her features either, except that Solomon found her body intoxicating. It was her delightfulness as a sexual partner and her use of clothing, scents, facial expression, and movement that vaulted whatever physical beauty the Shulamite may have possessed far above her competitors, to become the “*most* beautiful among women” to her husband.

So, the beauty that Solomon and his bride found in each other was not based on any criteria set by people *outside* their relationship. They themselves brought out the beauty in each other through the pleasure of their courtship and lovemaking. Similarly, the basis for finding your spouse beautiful must come not from the stingy, outside arbiters of beauty but from the pleasure that you receive from your spouse’s body, and the value of the person you love. These criteria for beauty are attainable by you and your spouse, no matter what the popular opinion is about the type of bodies in fashion this year. Your body can be beautiful to your partner, even if your body is one that age, accident, or disease has altered.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

The Path to the Garden for Married Adults—Twelve Markers From the Living Room to the Bedroom

(NOTE: This is for married couples and those about to be married. It assumes you have already established the context of a good emotional climate.)

Solomon and the Shulamite are creative but deliberate in the way that they prepare for intercourse. Even after a couple has been married many years, they still need to progress down this path of physical intimacy to arrive at the lush garden of unabashed lovemaking. There may be times when you skip together quickly through steps 1–8, change the order, or loop back through them. If you skip them, however, your spouse may feel used, lost, or even “turned off” if you have gotten to step 9 by yourself, and he/she remains emotionally outside the garden. As you read about these twelve markers along the way, be thinking about how these are expressed in the Song of Solomon. You will be completing an assignment about this following the reading.

Phase 1: The Path of Physical Affection



1. Observing each other. What does your spouse see when he/she looks at you? Do you dress and groom yourself in a way that your spouse finds attractive? If you don't know, ask questions.

2. Looking into each other's eyes. When your spouse looks in your eyes, does he/she see loving passion and a delight to please? Do you remember what Mr. and Mrs. Solomon called this eye expression?

3. Talking to each other on a gradually deepening level. Have you only talked about problems lately, or have you told your spouse how much you appreciate him/her and why? What kinds of things did Solomon and the Shulamite say to each other at this stage?

4. Holding hands. Combined with the meaningful glances, which you have exchanged before, this first level of touch sends the message of abiding friendship.

5. The man puts his arm around his wife's shoulders as they walk or sit side by side. This signifies protection, belonging, and nurture. When was the last time that you enjoyed a walk like this with your spouse, perhaps in your own back yard?

6. Walking side by side, slipping an arm around each other's waist. Since your fingertips are a clothing's thickness from each other's midsection skin, this is an intimate position, beyond casual friendship, but you are still moving forward, not focusing yet on each other's bodies.

7. Locking your gaze until you feel compelled to kiss and embrace. Where was the last place that you kissed and held each other that was *not* in bed?

8. Stroking and caressing each other's hair and face. This communicates how precious your spouse is, and demonstrates a desire to comfort and please, just like a parent caresses a beloved child. It signifies a tender emotional bond.

Phase 2: Foreplay—Inside the Garden of Delights

These activities prepare bodies for sexual intercourse.

9. Gradually undressing and caressing each other's bodies. “Solomon kisses” (with tongue, Song 4:11). Ask for and tell your spouse what feels good, either through words or sounds. Be aware that this is not a time for the Golden Rule “do unto others” (Mt 7:12), because what feels wonderful to you may be too light, too heavy, too fast, or too slow for your partner.



Practice different ways of caressing your spouse's body by using your fingertips, tongue, lips, cheek, breath, or whole body. Don't disregard your own pleasure, but if you make your spouse's pleasure a priority, you will increase your own pleasure as your spouse becomes more aroused. This is not only for a man toward his wife. Did you notice in our textbook where Mrs. Solomon promises to show her husband her new ideas for pleasuring him (Song 7:13)? Remember God's blessing to "drink and imbibe deeply." Don't rush this phase. He designed your spouse's body, so don't hesitate to ask Him for ideas about how to pleasure your spouse.

10. The husband kisses and stimulates his wife's breasts with his mouth. Most men enjoy fondling their wife's breasts (Prov 5:19) but may not realize how his wife's breasts, particularly the nipples, are "wired" to her clitoris and vagina. When he stimulates her breasts, the nerves send a message to her vagina to lubricate and for her clitoris to become enlarged and sensitive.

11. Stroking and stimulating each other's sexual organs. A wife needs to learn, with her husband's coaching, how to caress his penis and testicles to increase his pleasure, but not to unintentionally cause him to ejaculate too early. A new groom, however, needs to realize that his penis and testicles may not initially be as attractive or arousing to his bride in the same way that he finds her sexual features attractive. While a boy touches his own penis during urination and thinks it is normal, little girls are usually taught not to touch their own genital areas. They associate the genital area mainly with bad smells. So some women may have an aversion, even a revulsion, to touching her husband. She must retrain her thoughts of his penis from something dirty, to something that smells clean and brings pleasure to her. Therefore, it is *essential* that a husband always thoroughly bathe his genitals before foreplay, so that his wife can learn to think of his genitals with desire and delight.

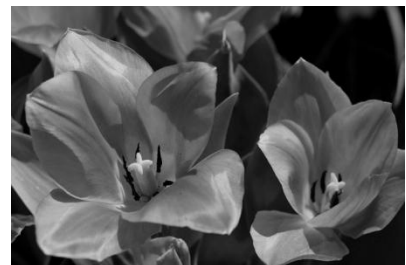
Did the virginal Shulamite ever learn to desire and delight in her husband's penis? In Song of Solomon 2:3, she describes her delight in "tasting his fruit" during their lovemaking. "His fruit" in the language of eastern poetry, means his penis. Remember, even though it is early in the book, this period of lovemaking was later in their marriage. Not every woman will feel comfortable following the Shulamite's example of caressing her husband in this way, especially while she is just getting used to sex. If you desire to "taste your husband's fruit," know that the Scripture does seem to allow for this type of intimacy. We will talk about the husband arousing his wife's sexual pleasure in the next section.

Phase 3 Intercourse: Drink and Imbibe Deeply

12. Coitus (physical joining) and orgasm. During the eleventh and twelfth steps of intimacy, a man and a woman's body have different responses, so let's look in more detail at each one.

The husband's sexual arousal

When a **man** is sexually aroused during steps 1–10, his penis will lengthen and become stiff and erect. The erection completely blocks urine (an important fact that women are relieved to know) and will allow him to enter his wife's vagina. In a longer period of foreplay, it is normal for the penis to become periodically soft and then hard again (not to worry). The head of the penis becomes increasingly sensitive. It is stimulation to this tip that causes a man to have an orgasm and to release semen (ejaculate). This experience causes him to feel a rush of physical and emotional pleasure.



The wife's sexual arousal

When a **woman** becomes sexually aroused from steps 1–10, she will produce moisture and will feel a strong desire for her husband to touch her in a certain way, although if this part of her body has never been awakened, she may not even know *what* she desires. The Shulamite mentions her desire for this touch twice. Read her request in Song of Solomon 2:6. What is she describing? Sometimes this phrase is

obscured with a vague translation, but it describes a very specific position for preparing a woman for intercourse. The Shulamite longs for Solomon to place his left hand under her head and to stimulate her with his right. Stimulate her where?

The location of a woman's sexual nerve center is in an obscure organ called the clitoris. It serves no other purpose than sexual pleasure, so a woman may not realize that she even has this tiny organ if it has never been aroused. It has the same number and kind of nerves as the head of the man's penis, but concentrated in one-tenth the space! In fact, it is shaped like a tiny penis about an inch long. Only the rounded end protrudes, which is located around an inch in front of the vagina. While this nub is the most sensitive part, the remaining shaft is also sensitive, and may be felt, almost like a tiny rope, just under the skin. The nub of the clitoris is protected by two sets of labia and may swell and become more pronounced during sexual foreplay. If undiscovered or understimulated by her husband, a woman can go through years of married life wondering "why would *any* woman enjoy sex?"

We know exactly where the Shulamite was when Solomon awakened this bud of pleasure for her.

- Please read about it in Song of Solomon 8:5.

During sexual foreplay, the clitoris becomes sensitive. A husband should follow Solomon's example (Song 5:4) by gently dipping some of the moisture from her vagina and lightly caressing his wife's clitoris with it. A young woman's body may produce abundant moisture, but most women appreciate and definitely need as they age, supplemental moisture. (There are many commercially available products based on glycerin that are very slippery and simulate the woman's natural moisture. Historically people have also used cooking oil, cocoa butter, dairy butter, or petroleum jelly, but the oil in these have a greater chance of causing infection and can degrade the rubber in a condom.) This moisture supplement may be spread on her clitoris to aid in stimulation and then later spread on his penis to lubricate for coitus. As he continues to stimulate her, the uterus will pull up and contract so that the vagina elongates in preparation to receive his penis.

If he continues stimulating her, and if the woman is able emotionally to "let go," almost all women will have an orgasm—rhythmic contractions of her sexual organs, which bring an extreme rush of pleasure throughout her body, similar to his experience of ejaculation. It is normal for a woman, during orgasm, to express her sexual release with sounds or words.

Knowing how to stimulate his wife's clitoris to help her reach orgasm is the most important skill a new husband must learn! He may be able to discover several different ways to do it before, during, and after coitus. There may be some times during marriage that mutual stimulation will be the only type of sexual activity that is available to them. During late pregnancy and after childbirth, a couple must ask their doctor when it is safe to have intercourse, and when they must use alternate ways of pleasuring each other. During pregnancy, a woman's orgasm is often much stronger because of the enlarged uterus and greater blood supply.

Coitus

A few women can experience orgasm during coitus, without any additional stimulation, but this is rare.



Most commonly, a husband will arouse his wife's clitoris with his fingers to bring her to a point just short of orgasm, and then enter her with his penis. As he moves and, as needed, continues touching her with his fingertips, and as she squeezes him with her pelvic "pc" muscles and moves her hips against him, it brings him to orgasm and he ejaculates. If the husband can refrain from ejaculating for several minutes while inside her, it will increase his pleasure as well as further stimulate his wife from inside. Many women (but not all) have a place inside the vagina (often called a "g spot"), which can also respond to stimulation toward orgasm. A

couple can discover if she has this spot through experimentation. A man who has been accustomed to quick masturbation may, in marriage, struggle with ejaculating too rapidly for maximum pleasure in intercourse. You may read the Appendix article, “Improving Physical Function in Sex,” which describes enjoyable lessons to do as a couple to help the husband learn to control and lengthen his response time. Note that these lessons *cannot* be done alone or by singles in preparation for marriage.

One question that some people ask is whether a large penis has any effect on a woman’s satisfaction. Since the clitoris is outside the woman’s body, the man’s skill is everything—the size of his penis makes *no* difference in his wife’s satisfaction.

Another question is when is the best timing for a woman to orgasm in relation to her husband’s. While some books on sex will assume that the goal is to experience orgasm simultaneously, many happy couples would not agree. Some women enjoy orgasm before, during, or after coitus, and some have all three in the same session! While men can only have one orgasm and must rest before having another, many women can have multiple orgasms with only a few minutes between. Many women are very content with just one and would not want more. Therefore, as a couple gains more skill in lovemaking, they can try different approaches.

Can you see why Esther, the pastor’s wife, advised Sue and Nathan to practice? A happily married couple will enjoy learning different skills of bringing pleasure during lovemaking over many years of learning what is pleasing to each other. By contrast, if a husband ignores or neglects stimulating his wife’s clitoris and aims for his own satisfaction alone, it turns an experience that God designed to be ecstatic for her, into one that is painful and lackluster. She will not have enough moisture for lubrication, and her vagina will not elongate so that he seems not to “fit” properly. A thoughtless or unskilled man may ejaculate inside his wife, and the wife may bear children, but *he* will not enjoy the pleasure of a wife who says that she is lovesick with desire for him to come and enjoy her (Song 2:5-6; 7:10–8:3). No wonder Solomon was called the wisest man who ever lived (1 Kgs 4:29-34)!



Phase 4: Relaxation

After orgasm, most couples will feel sleepy and should stay together and rest for a while. It is an emotionally vulnerable time, so you will want to express tender love and appreciation for one another. Solomon describes this in Song of Solomon 7:9. Read this final section of Scripture and imagine Solomon and the Shulamite satisfied and asleep in one another’s arms.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

The Path to the Garden for Single Adults—Twelve Markers From the Living Room to the Bedroom

Solomon and the Shulamite are deliberate in the way that they draw closer together to prepare for intercourse. Even after a couple has been married for many years, they still progress through similar steps to draw together for lovemaking.

Depending on your culture, your convictions, and your past experience, you should determine appropriate “boundaries” on this list as a single person. That is, you need to decide before God what level of affection is an appropriate expression of your current state of friendship with someone of the opposite sex. For example, what expressions would be appropriate with someone whom you like, with someone whom you feel strongly for, and what would be appropriate with someone whom you are engaged to marry. For some cultures, only steps 1, 2, and 3 would be appropriate before the honeymoon. It is wise to decide your boundaries well in advance of having a relationship. Be aware of the law of “diminishing returns.” The first time your hands touch may be thrilling, but later it will take a little more to get your heart racing. This “law of diminishing returns” is one reason why it is important to set your boundaries well in advance of having a relationship.



Once in a relationship, confirm your boundaries with your friend, so that you are not coaxed further down this list than you believe that God would permit before marriage. If your friend’s boundaries are more restrictive than yours, honor your friend’s conscience, not yours (1 Cor 8:9-13). If your friend has more lenient boundaries and insists on transgressing your conscience, especially after reaffirming your convictions, strongly consider leaving the relationship. This is a time for building trust and respect. Many marriages suffer for years from the lasting effects of shame and distrust because one seduced the other before marriage.

- Please read 1 Thessalonians 4:2-7.

This passage introduces the topic of **sexual defrauding**. Defrauding means “cheating.” When you are unmarried, it means stimulating someone sexually in a way that cannot righteously be satisfied outside of marriage. Any physical activity, even if it begins only as a gesture of sweet friendship, if prolonged and invested with ardor, can cross into the realm of defrauding. Certainly everything beyond step 8 is a part of foreplay, which stimulates your bodies for sexual intercourse. Foreplay either increases sexual frustration (defrauding), or leads to some type of shared sexual release (fornication). You defraud the person’s future spouse by sharing sexual responses together, no matter how you achieve it. The Shulamite alludes to this need for patience whenever she describes her desire for her husband to stimulate her sexually (Song 2:6-7). She follows her statement of longing with a warning to the single women that the sexual stimulation, which she describes, should not be “awakened” until its appropriate time, that is, by a husband in marriage (also Song 8:3-4). (Some versions say “do not awaken *my* love until *she* pleases” but this is an incorrect translation—the Hebrew language is clear.)

Caution: The following contains an overview of sexual intercourse. Therefore, it is intended for adults only. It is for unmarried adults, however, with less detail than the separate article for married adults.

Be thinking about how the couple portrays all of these steps in the Song of Solomon. You will be completing an assignment about this following the reading.

Phase 1: The Path of Physical Affection

1. Observing each other. What does someone of the opposite sex see when he/she looks at you? Do you dress and groom yourself in a way that someone that you would respect might find attractive? Women, is your provocative dress *defrauding* your brother? If your clothing causes any man who looks at you to be sexually aroused, you need to rethink your wardrobe.



2. Looking into each other's eyes. When a future spouse looks in your eyes, does he/she see loving interest and a delight to please? Do you remember what Mr. and Mrs. Solomon each called this eye expression?

3. Talking to each other on a gradually deepening level. Have you learned to talk candidly about your feelings with a friend, to be interested in understanding other people's thoughts and feelings as much as your own? Carrying a conversation on a deep level and learning to give and receive praise are essential parts of finding and being an excellent life partner.

4. Holding hands. Combined with the meaningful glances, which you have exchanged before, this first level of touch sends the message of abiding friendship.

5. The man puts his arm around the woman's shoulders as they walk or sit side by side. This signifies protection, belonging, and nurture.

6. Walking side by side, slip an arm around each other's waist. Since your fingertips are a clothing's thickness from each other's midsection skin, this is an intimate position, well beyond casual friendship, but you are still moving forward, not focusing on each other.

7. Locking your gaze until you feel compelled to kiss and embrace.

8. Stroking and caressing each other's head and face. This communicates how precious your spouse is and demonstrates a desire to comfort and please, just like a parent caresses a beloved child. It signifies a close emotional bond. In an intimate, loving relationship, such as courtship or engagement, this may be a more satisfying and appropriate expression of love than kissing and embracing. Touching the face communicates tender love without being as sexually inflaming.

Phase 2 Foreplay: Inside the Garden of Delights



These activities arouse bodies for sexual intercourse. They are all part of the sexual intimacy to be shared only by husbands and wives.

9. Gradually undressing and caressing each other's bodies. "Solomon kisses" (with tongue, Song 4:11).

10. The husband kisses and stimulates his wife's breasts.

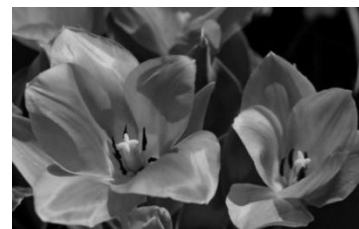
11. The couple strokes and stimulates each other's sexual organs.

Phase 3: Intercourse—Drink and Imbibe Deeply

12. Coitus (physical joining), orgasm.

A husband's sexual arousal

When a **man** is sexually aroused during steps 1–10, his penis will lengthen and become stiff and erect. During coitus when he enters his wife's body, stimulation to the tip of the penis will cause a man



to have an orgasm and release semen (ejaculate). This experience causes him to feel a rush of pleasure.

The wife's sexual arousal

When a **woman** becomes sexually aroused from steps 1–10, she will produce moisture and will feel a strong desire for her husband to touch her. By touching her in a certain way, a husband can learn how to help his wife have an orgasm just as he does. When you are ready to be married, you can read the married version of this article for a description of these techniques. Can you see why Esther, the pastor's wife, advised Sue and Nathan to practice? A happily married couple will enjoy learning different skills of bringing pleasure during lovemaking over many years.



Phase 4: Relaxation

After sex, a satisfied couple will feel peaceful and fall asleep. Solomon describes this in Song of Solomon 7:9. Read this final section of Scripture and imagine Solomon and the Shulamite satisfied and asleep in one another's arms.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

The Flame of the Lord



In Song of Solomon 8:6 the Shulamite talks about chastity in marriage. She warns Solomon to remain faithful to her just as she will remain faithful to him. Then she makes three striking statements about sexual love.

- Please read these statements in Song of Solomon 8:6.

Observing the Correlations

First she says “For love is as strong as death.” Hebrew-speaking people often expressed the *strongest amount* of an emotion by comparing it to death. Jonah says he is as angry as death (Jon 4:9), Samson says he is annoyed to death (Judg 16:16). Jesus says he is as sorrowful as death. (Mt 26:38). Shulamite is saying that passionate love is the strongest of emotions.

Then in the second phrase, she repeats and enlarges on her statement by saying that ardent passion (the word means literally “red in the face”) is as strong as Sheol (hell or the grave).

Her third analogy is most significant. She says “Its flames burst forth, it is the flame of the Lord.” (Some versions just say a “blazing” flame).

She is saying that sexual passion in marriage is like the holy flame that lit the temple day and night. Let's examine what the Bible says about the flame of God to see what He might be telling us about sexual love.

- Please read Leviticus 6:12-13; 9:24–10:3, and Deuteronomy 4:24

What can you observe about the flame of God in these passages? When was it *beneficial*? When did it become *deadly*? (You can find more information in Ex 3:1-3; 19:18; 40:34-38 if you wish to explore the fire of God more fully.) The fire of God must have been awe-inspiring to those who understood the way that holiness consumes evil (Ex 3:20; Lev 10:3; Isa 8:13). This is why the priests had to go to such preparation in cleansing ceremonies in order to approach the flame of God. The flame was deadly and “burst forth” to destroy those who treated it without the proper awe, within the guidelines God established.

Do you realize that Solomon had experienced this flame in person?

- Please read 2 Chronicles 7:1.

Here Solomon, and probably the Shulamite as his queen, witnessed firsthand the overwhelming wave of heat and power as God’s holy flame filled the temple for the first time. What would that have felt like?

Now read what you observed about God’s flame back into what the Song of Solomon says about sexual passion in 8:6-7? Can you see how this analogy was the strongest one she could devise? Can you see better now why Hebrews 13:4 says that the marriage bed is *holy*?

Beginning with v 7, the Shulamite describes this flame’s *durability*. She says that not even a flood of water can extinguish it. Can you think of when this was proven about the flame of God? Elijah demonstrates this in 1 Kings 18:36-38 when he soaks the altar with water. The water was no match for the flame of God. What kinds of things would be “water” in a couple’s sexual life that could challenge the flame of sexual passion?

Then she describes the flame’s *preciousness*. She says that no one can buy true love, even spending everything he possesses (Song 8:7).

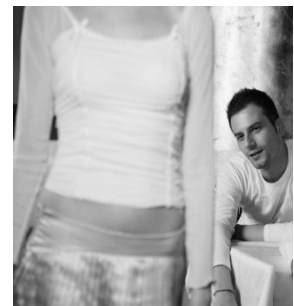
What does this indicate about the holiness, durability, and preciousness of *your* sexual relationship in your marriage? Does this also apply to your purity in singleness?

The heart of your marriage is your sexual love. This flame of passionate love distinguishes your relationship with your spouse from all other relationships, just as the temple flame consecrated and set the temple apart from all other buildings. God lights the flame when you join together physically in marriage for the first time, just as he started the fire in His temple (Ex 40:34, 38; 2 Chr 7:1). But He also told His priests that it was *their* responsibility to maintain the fire by adding wood regularly and tending it carefully (Lev 6:12). How will you feed your sexual fire in your marriage to keep it burning brightly?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Eye Hunger

Men have a profound “eye hunger” for the female body. That is one reason why pornographic images have such an appeal. When a man sees a sexually stimulating image, a hormone is released that engraves the image in his memory and causes that image to keep replaying in his mind over and over again, like a flashing neon sign. This is a physical response to the hormone, not a moral failure. Scientists have determined that most men have sexual thoughts every three seconds! The question is not *whether* he will have these thoughts, but whom he will be imagining and how he will respond when it is an inappropriate image. It is God’s original design for a man’s wife to be the one who is imprinted in his mind. God says “rejoice because of the wife of your youth ... may her breasts satisfy you at all times, may you be **captivated** by her love always. But why should you be captivated, my child, by an adulteress?” (Prov 5:18-20, emphasis added). A wise single woman avoids trying to captivate a man using sexual arousal. It does not lead to the type of love that will



ultimately satisfy her, and she is unkind to purposely kindle sexual thoughts that she cannot righteously satisfy. However, a wise wife *captivates* her husband's mind with her own sexual image.

Many wives do not understand how their bodies are designed by God to satisfy their husband's "eye hunger." In one class, a female student said that she told her husband when they became Christians that he must stop looking at her nakedness or approaching her sexually. Such things, she said, are indecent and disrespectful to her as a Christian wife. In another class, a wife confided that she would never show her naked body to her husband, even during sex. She was too embarrassed that her overweight shape was not attractive enough. I'm certain she spoke for many women who only have sex in the dark or wearing heavy clothing. But according to God's Word, these women have swallowed a lie. In the case of my overweight friend, her husband became more driven toward viewing pornography in order to satisfy his eye hunger. She took this to reinforce her own worry that he did not find her attractive (even though when they first met, he had been attracted to her full figure). He didn't understand why she seemed so unconcerned about his addiction. You can see how the enemy used each of their brokenness to cause greater pain to the other. God does not hold her responsible for his sin, but she was not helping him as only she could by allowing him to enjoy her body visually. Thankfully they have now resolved this problem and he is no longer addicted to pornography.

A Wife's Part

- Please read Song of Solomon 6:13–7:9.

What is happening here? In the Hebrew, chapter 7 actually begins with Song of Solomon 6:13. This is where the scene begins. The Shulamite is doing a sensual dance in front of her husband! How does he react to this? She is apparently only wearing one article of clothing. Can you see what it is?

Wives, God wants your husband's mental snapshots to be a sensuous postcard of you. So it is very right for him to enjoy looking at you, both with and without clothing. Virgin modesty when you are alone with your husband is a habit to be shed on the honeymoon. In fact, a godly woman invites her husband to feast his eyes on her nakedness. Perhaps you do not know how to dance like the Shulamite, but after bathing and when changing clothing, a wise wife does not hurry to clothe herself, but allows the sight of her beauty to satisfy her husband's visual hunger. But what if she is not as beautiful as the girls in pornography? It doesn't matter. As a man learns to direct all of his sexual thoughts to his wife's image, her attractiveness will actually increase. There is a hormone in the male brain, which is released during ejaculation. That hormone deeply imprints the image that he sees at that moment. Next time he sees that image, he will become sexually stimulated. God designed this hormone so that a man's wife should look more and more beautiful to him! It was not designed for a man to become "hooked" on pornography, but so that a husband can view aging hips and sagging breasts through "rose-colored glasses." This imprinting on a sexual partner is intended as a wonderful gift of God to aging women.

A Husband's Part

- Please read Matthew 5:28.

From Jesus' comments, we see that God does not permit *mental* sex outside marriage any more than He excuses the *physical* act of adultery. Job said "I have made a covenant with my eyes" (Job 31:1). But in today's sexually gorged media, and considering his brain's involuntary reaction to stimulating images, how can a man keep his thoughts from tripping him up? Should he move to a country where women dress in shapeless robes? This is not necessary, but he must still act wisely.

1. He realizes what tempts him and avoids it as much as necessary (Prov 6:18).

- He does not go into places or to Internet sites that he knows will contain sexually stimulating images.
- He does not read pornographic magazines "for the articles" or sexual books for the great plots.
- He does not watch movies that contain "adult" sexual images, even if his friends watch them.

2. He avoids the appearance of evil to avoid harming the reputation of Christ (1 Thess 5:22, 1 Tim 3:7, 1 Pet 2:15).

- He lets his friends know that he finds his wife attractive.
- He doesn't joke about sexual immorality nor laugh when others jokingly boast about their escapades.

3. He does not set an example that might cause a younger brother to stumble. (Rom 15:1; 1 Cor 8:13). Particularly, a man's son looks to him for what is appropriate behavior for a Christian man (Mt 18:6). For instance, if a father has his own sexual needs well met, he may be able to pick up a sports magazine and just read the articles and ignore the sexually provocative advertising. But when his teenage son picks up Dad's magazine, he may get swept into sexual immorality.

4. Even with good intentions, there will be times when every man inadvertently encounters enticing images. In this case, either a single or a married man can develop the habit of "*bouncing*" his eyes quickly away and, if possible, of removing himself from the situation, just as Joseph ran from Potiphar's wife (Gen 39:12). Then he moves his eyes and his attention immediately toward something good that fully engages his mind. If he likes puzzles, history, or science, he keeps a supply of this kind of book or magazine handy. If he is married, he may seek out his wife and enjoy talking with or kissing her. He forces that activity to fully engage his mind in order to overcome the illicit sexual image.

Supportive Fellowship

In order to encourage a healthy thought life, many men, especially singles, develop an accountability group or partner. This group or individual will ask regularly, "What have you been thinking about? What have you been looking at?" Knowing that he will have to answer those questions can help a man remain pure. Our son-in-law, Brinton, joined such a group during his single adulthood. Because of his commitment to chastity, and the role of this group of faithful men, he was able to give himself to his bride as a chaste groom on their wedding night, unconcerned with giving her any diseases.

We asked Brinton to give some advice about forming such a group. He says that the members of an accountability group must be those who are wholeheartedly committed to holiness, not sent by their parents or wives for a begrudging reformation. It must be a group of men who encourage *each other* toward godliness rather than men who enjoy fellowship *in* sinful habits (Heb 3:13). If the group denigrates to mutual soothing, "It's okay if you stumbled, because I stumble too," it will further harden their hearts. The group either needs to be reformed or disbanded. You will study more about integrity in Lesson 9.

As Jesus pointed out, having pure thoughts is not a sidelight of your faith in Christ—it is the core of who you are (Prov 23:7; Mt 23:25). Your marriage bed remains "undefiled" when it is kept for only the two of you to enjoy together.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Purity and Penalty

Purity

In Song of Solomon 8:8-12, the Shulamite describes herself from the point of view of her brothers, who apparently were responsible for her. They seem to mentally divide girls into two camps: the "walls" and the "doors." A wall was the term for a city fortress wall and refers to a girl who intends to keep herself pure. They say that if their sister is a wall, they will build a silver battlement over her. A battlement was a row of stones along the top of a wall that were both decorative and strengthening. A door, on the other hand, is a girl who would be easily seduced. They realize that if their sister is not committed to purity

herself, they will need to protect her from being seduced until she can be married. They say they will keep her boarded up. It doesn't sound like this girl will have much freedom to enjoy her adolescent life. So which one was the Shulamite?

- Read what she says about herself in Song of Solomon 8:10-12.

Not only was her maidenhead an impenetrable wall, but she says her breasts were kept off-limits too. No one had touched her sexually until Solomon came along (Song 8:5). How does she feel about this waiting? Despite her birth as a common country girl, the Shulamite has strong self-respect because of this important accomplishment. In Song of Solomon 8:11, she talks about a literal vineyard that Solomon owned. He rented it out and made money on it. But in Song of Solomon 8:12, she talks about another vineyard, her body. This vineyard is not for sale at any price. He may make money from others by renting his vineyards, but he can't have this vineyard just by paying money. Even his riches could not buy this vineyard or her sincere love for him (Song 8:7). Her precious vineyard is not for sale or rent. You can almost hear the stern love in her voice as she reminds him that it is her most precious possession, at her own disposal, and she has saved it all for his pleasure. It is clear from Song of Solomon 8:6-7 that she expects the same level of faithfulness from him.

Penalty

God intends for each man and each woman to remain pure until his/her marriage. But this point of view is not popular in most cultures today, is it? Sexual “hookups” find people who are engaging in sex with people whom they barely know and with no objective other than immediate pleasure. If they are afraid to have intercourse because of pregnancy, they substitute oral sex or mutual masturbation. This kind of misuse of sex is not new. It is very much like those who visited pagan fertility temples in Old and New Testament history. But unlike earlier years of the church, few speak out against premarital sexual expression. Fewer still practice chastity themselves throughout singlehood, especially if their singlehood lasts well into their twenties or beyond. Even among Christians, the voice for purity tends to be faint and conflicted. A Christian family that we know just sent their daughter off to a university armed with birth control pills, because they assume that she will have sex there. Everything in the entertainment industry and pop culture suggests that “everyone” is having sex. And what is the result? No matter what country you live in, the “strange fire” of sex outside the temple of marriage has burned patches in every area of human life. The emotional and spiritual results are perhaps the most damaging.

Like the glory denoting God's presence in the physical temple, the Holy Spirit within you seals you as belonging to God for eternity (Eph 1:13; 4:30) and sets your body apart for worshipping Him. As you have already read in 1 Corinthians 6:16-18, even a casual sexual liaison outside of marriage causes the temple of your body to be profaned.

- 1 Corinthians 3:16-17 describes the result of profaning this temple. **Please read this passage.**

What is the main consequence that God warns of? One of the ways this serious penalty is experienced is through a physical disease. One of the most common sexually transmitted diseases, pelvic inflammatory disease, affects a large percentage of the world today and causes infertility and ectopic pregnancies. But because sex is not only a physical act, the kinds of death its misuse can cause are not solely physical. The enemy is actively at work in society to promote sex outside of marriage, increasingly in the most profane and sordid ways. He does this not only because it distorts God's plan and blasphemes His holiness, but also because he hates humankind and delights to see how effectively illicit sex wounds, sears, and deadens men's and women's hearts. How does this happen?

Because, as we saw in the Song of Solomon, sexual passion is so strong and is designed to be deeply meaningful as it joins a couple together, misusing it attacks your heart. You are tied emotionally and spiritually to everyone you have “known” sexually, as if a cord still joins you, even if you no longer have a relationship. These emotional threads, which reach out to join you to relationships that do not exist anymore, can be like a toothache, which always produces pain in the back of your mind. Sometimes to

avoid the painful memories that sex stirs up, you just turn off your emotions. If you are married, you may give less and less of yourself in sex, avoid it, or attach less and less meaning to what should be one of the most meaningful things that you can do with your spouse. If you are single, you may try to protect yourself from developing close emotional ties with anyone, especially someone of the opposite sex.

Do you have any of these characteristics? Perhaps someone (either you or someone else) has misused the holy fire of sexual passion and you were burned earlier in life. If you have been wounded or scarred sexually, even if it was your own fault, take heart, God does not want to condemn you but to heal you. If you are married, He wants to heal your relationship with your spouse. He has a message and a plan.

- Please read Jeremiah 29:11 before returning to the Student Workbook. **Stop and ask God if He intends this for you.** If it touches your heart, memorize it and/or post it where you can see it daily.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Recovering Your Lost Purity

When you have been involved in immoral sexual relations, what does Jesus want to do for you?

- Please read Titus 2:14.

In this passage, Paul describes three things. He says Jesus has done or will do the following:

- *Set* you free from every kind of *lawless action*
- *Purify* you
- *Inspire* you to be eager to do good deeds (instead of lawless ones).

On the cross, this is what Jesus paid for. Is being sexually intimate with someone outside of marriage a “lawless action”? Of course. God is clear in many places that it is a serious evil (1 Cor 6:9; Heb 13:4; Rev 22:15). If you were coerced, or were a child, you are not responsible for the sexual sin—the other person sinned against you. But if you engaged in intimate sexual expression willingly, even eagerly, perhaps you now feel that this was an *unforgivable* sin, which forever contaminates you. Perhaps you feel that this sin precludes you from ever deserving a good spouse or from enjoying sex in marriage. Fortunately, God does not agree with your punishment. Instead of condemning you for breaking His law, God’s Word says that He wants to set you free from the penalty of your action, and *purify* you for fellowship with Him. Instead of forever looking back to what you did wrong in the past, He wants you to be inspired to live in a way that blesses others and glorifies Him.



What does *purify* mean, exactly? Please look at some other places where it is used. In Matthew 8:3, Jesus touches a leper, saying “Be clean!” The word “clean” is the same Greek word translated “pure” in Titus 2:14. Immediately, all of the decay of the leprosy was replaced with new skin that had never been disfigured by leprosy. Jesus wants to clean your sexual impurity as well.

Now look at another verse, Hebrews 9:14. Here he says His blood will “make pure” not only your immoral acts, but your *conscience* as well. He wants to remove your sense of shame and guilt, so that you may serve Him without worrying about the “dead” things you used to do. You are *not that person* who did those sinful things anymore. You are a new creature.

Some people come to their marriage bed pure because they have never had sex with another person. This is wonderful and is what God wants for each person. But God says that if you have failed or have been defiled by someone else, if you come to Him for cleansing, He will purify you so that spiritually, you do not pollute your sexual relationship with your spouse. He does this by the following:

- (1) Breaking that invisible tie to those other partners.
- (2) Removing your sin, shame, and guilt.

Esau's Remorse

Paul points to Esau's story as an illustration of sexual sin. What can you learn from it?

- Please read Genesis 25:30-34 and 27:34.

Your virginity is your birthright, just as Esau as the eldest son had a birthright to inherit his father's wealth and blessing. Why is Esau willing to squander his birthright for a bowl of lentil stew? He says that he is so hungry that he thinks he will *die* if he doesn't get something to eat immediately. He figures, if I am dead, what use is a birthright? If he is still walking around, was he really near death, or did it just *feel* that way because of his intense hunger pangs? Does this sound like a good parallel to sexual temptation as people experience it? Whether you lost your virginity because of your own intense sexual hunger or someone else's, your physical, mental, and emotional virginity was too precious to lose over momentary hunger. It is very appropriate for you to weep over it, just as Esau wept after his birthright was lost.

There may now be earthly consequences that you are suffering as a result of the sinful sexual activity—unwanted thoughts, disease, patterns of temptation. These results also deserve tears. If you were forced to do something that you would not have chosen for yourself, God does not hold you legally culpable. However, you may still suffer consequences similar to one who chose sexual sin. The unfairness of this situation is why God burns with holy wrath toward the sin perpetrated against you.

If you willfully chose sexual sin, God also burns with wrath against your sin. When you come to Christ, God turns His wrath toward Christ instead of against you. Every occasion where you sinned sexually was nailed to Jesus' body (2 Cor 5:17). Jesus willingly felt the searing pain of God's wrath and now offers you His purity in exchange for your sin. It's not fair at all, but it *is* grace. Even though you may not be able to escape the earthly consequences of the sexual sin, Christ can grant you a fresh sexual purity for you to guard. From now on, your body can be an agent for good, as you honor Him with your good and grace-filled actions and attitudes toward others.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Cleansing Exercise

If you deal with past sexual sins of any type, mental or physical, you may accept Christ's *imputed* purity and an assurance that God has taken your unclean acts away. You can also break the spiritual ties that bind you to each sexual partner. In prayer, follow a pattern like this, but adjust it for your particular type of sin: *"God, I know You are righteous and demand a penalty for sin. I have used my body to be an instrument of sin instead of righteousness. I know that my sin is worthy of destruction and death. I ask You now to bring to mind the times when I used my body in sexual sin so that I might receive Your cleansing and forgiveness. I thank You that Jesus paid the full price for all of my sins on the cross."*

As the Lord brings each occasion to mind, renounce the sin and the person you were involved with. You may say or write something like *"I renounce my sin of _____ with [name of person] and I ask that You break the emotional, spiritual, and physical bond with him/her. I ask that You cleanse me and make me pure once again."* If you wrote these down, burn the paper, or in some other way, destroy the paper. You can rest assured that God has cleansed you, so resist the enemy's attempts to put the guilt and shame back on you or to link you to these illicit partnerships ever again.

Commit yourself to **purity** in prayer. *"Lord, I offer my body now fully to You as an instrument of righteousness, a living sacrifice, set apart only for Your purposes. I choose to receive my body now back from you as cleansed and holy. From now on, by Your grace, through the power of the Holy Spirit, I will keep my body sexually pure and wait in hope for Your coming, Lord Jesus."* If you are single, you may

want to put on a ring or some other indication of your commitment to purity. If you are married, your wedding ring can serve this purpose.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Catching Spring Foxes

“Catch the little foxes for us.”—Song of Solomon 2:15

Your goal for the spring of your marriage is to develop a oneness and a transparency so that you feel totally safe with each other, both in bed and throughout the day. In this first season of marriage, you will develop the sexual habits that set the tone of your sexual relationship for many years. Therefore, it should be a time to build growing *expertise* in pleasing your spouse sexually and, if privacy allows, in enjoying frequent and lengthy lovemaking. There are few things more wonderful than discovering the way that God made your bodies to experience sexual delight together. But this season has a few foxes. Some of the ones you may need to stop from spoiling your vineyard are the following:

- Fear of a painful first intercourse
- Poorly planned honeymoon
- Influence from past sexual experiences
- Fear of pregnancy



Fox #1: Fear of Pain

One common fox is a bride’s fear that her first intercourse will be painful. When a woman has never had sexual intercourse, her vaginal opening is too small to receive a man without varying levels of discomfort. This is normal. Just as with a first labor, her body must do something new—to open in a way that it has never opened before. Depending on the size of her natural opening, the first time this opening is stretched may cause a burning sensation and a little bleeding.

In Bible times, the drops of blood on the sheet were an important rite of passage for a bride—they were her “tokens of virginity,” which proved that she had never been with another man sexually (Deut 22:13-19). However, several things can prepare a woman for her first intercourse so that it is not excruciating. The most important preparation is that shortly before marriage, it is essential for a woman to visit a doctor for an examination to see whether she is physically capable of intercourse. Sometimes a woman has a very thick *hymen*, the entrance to the vagina, and will need to have it removed by a doctor. Her doctor can also tell her whether she might need to do anything else to prepare, such as stretching out a small vaginal opening before the honeymoon. He can also advise her on controlling fertility. The husband can help by entering his wife for the first time very slowly and holding still until her hymen relaxes. Catching the fox here is to realize that even when first intercourse may be uncomfortable, the second one and beyond should be much better. If it continues to be painful beyond the first few days, seek medical help. This is why honeymoons are important!

Fox #2: The Poorly Planned Honeymoon

Did you know that the honeymoon is a biblical concept? In the Old Testament Law, it lasted for a whole year.

- Please read about it in Deuteronomy 24:5.

Here you can see that the purpose of a honeymoon is not to have an expensive vacation or to visit other people, but to bring happiness to one another alone. In other words, it is to have a private and relaxed time and place to enjoy the feast of sexual delights for the first time and to establish a pleasurable sexual

relationship. The way to catch this fox is to plan your honeymoon with the same attention to detail as you plan your wedding. Keep your objective in mind—time alone with each other. Even if you plan a complicated trip, think—where will we spend our first night? Will we have the opportunity to spend whole mornings in bed together along the way? Keep the main thing, the main thing. The main sightseeing you need to do will take place in your room with the door locked!

When Allison was engaged to Brinton, Brinton invited his prospective father-in-law on a survey trip of each of the hotels in our city until the two of them chose the one where they felt Allison would feel the most comfortable—not too ornate nor too plain. The two of them chuckled that perhaps Tom was the first father-in-law in history to help his son-in-law with this important task! What kind of place would your beloved want to share the first lovemaking with you? What might you want to pack for this occasion—clothing, scents, scented oils, music? You may even want to take along the phone number of a doctor or someone with whom you have pre-arranged to give sexual advice if you encounter any serious problems.

When you get to your trysting place, don't be in a hurry to engage in intercourse five minutes after the door is locked! Take time to go through all of the steps to the garden, enjoy picking the fruit and flowers along the way (Song 5:1). Enjoy bathing together, grooming, massaging, and pleasuring each other—whatever will help you get to know and feel comfortable with your spouse's body. If you are exhausted after the wedding or travel, don't aim for going all the way from steps 1–12 (from the article "Down the Path to the Garden") in one evening. I can think of one couple who, just because it was now permissible, excitedly locked the door and skipped directly to step 12 only to deeply regret their foolishness. Enjoy steps 1–8, 9, or 10 until you fall asleep the first night, and then try steps 9–12 when you are rested. If you have never been past a hug or a kiss before, it will be more delightful to unpack your wonderful gift in stages.

Fox #3: Influence of Past Sexual Experiences

This is a fox that in a perfect world wouldn't exist. But reality is that some of you may have had illicit partners, may have masturbated while viewing pornography, or may have suffered sexual abuse. These experiences have given you images and habits that may harm your sexual experience with your new spouse. For instance, a man who has masturbated, or engaged in sex when it was important to be quick before being discovered, may climax too quickly. One who has viewed pornography or been with a prostitute may be "turned on" only by activities that are extreme or debasing. One friend of ours who had recently come to Christ admitted that he had always smoked marijuana before engaging in sex with his wife. When he came to Christ, he had to learn how to appreciate sex without the enhancing effects of the drug. A woman who was subjected to incest may automatically dissociate and feel nothing, rather than being mentally present and loving her husband. Sometimes it is difficult to sort out the cause of the sexual problems that you are having with your spouse because you don't realize how your past experiences are affecting your marriage. Many problems can be solved by confession and forgiveness, tender and patient lovemaking, and by systematically identifying and replacing the falsehoods that you believe with the truth, as we did in Lesson 2, Topic 1. You may find it helpful to meet with a pastor or Christian counselor that you trust, especially if you experienced sexuality in the past in a very negative or disturbing way. Even though Christ has cleansed you, it may take time and help to heal the patterns that were caused by sins done by or against you sexually. We will deal with the fox of physical dysfunctions in the Autumn Foxes section.

Fox #4: The Fear of Pregnancy

This is a legitimate concern for many couples. Conceiving, growing, and delivering a baby is one of the most wonderful experiences of life, but pregnancy can affect the woman's life greatly. The wife may be easily nauseated, end up having to rest in bed for weeks to prevent miscarriage, have little energy, have extreme mood swings, and experience many permanent physical changes. Or she may go through pregnancy easily and feel well throughout. Taking care of a baby adequately is also a big adjustment.

Generally, a young couple needs time to “feather their nest,” not only to prepare financially but also to work out the rough places in the way that they relate to each other. Your relationship is the firm foundation that must support the weight of children. Babies are much heavier on the relationship than they appear! It is a pervasive lie that having a child will shore up a tottering relationship. Adding a child to a flawed marriage foundation is like bringing an elephant into a home founded on sticks. It is unfair and unreasonable to expect a child to somehow repair his parents’ problems. Instead, the weight of the child’s needs will further stress, and sometimes break, a poor foundation, which also takes the child’s security in its collapse. No form of reducing fertility, except sterilization, such as tubal ligation or a vasectomy, is completely foolproof, so only marry if your relationship is stable enough to support a child.

What does God’s Word say about fertility? God told humans at the beginning to *fill* the earth (Gen 1:28). Again after Noah’s flood, he instructed them to *replenish* the earth after the flood (Gen 9:1). Have these commands been fulfilled? Yes, the earth has *been replenished*, hasn’t it? It is not only replenished, it is mostly *filled*. There are few corners of the world where man has not left his mark. Sometimes he stewards the creation for its good, and sometimes he abuses it as a selfish, evil ruler. Now, just at the time that mankind has successfully filled the earth, God has allowed him to discover effective ways to limit his fertility so he can fulfill his other mandate, to rule all of the creatures of earth well (Gen 1:26). So it is appropriate for believers to limit the number of children they have. But *not every effective* method of controlling fertility is also *righteous*. Some evil methods are not preventing conception but, instead, are destroying an unborn child.

Two Appendix articles explore this issue further, “The Ethics of Limiting Fertility” and “Methods of Limiting Fertility.”

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Catching Summer Foxes

“*Catch the little foxes for us.*”—Song of Solomon 2:15

Your goal for the summer season of your marriage is to keep successes and stresses in other areas of your life from overwhelming your marriage, especially your sexual relationship. This may be a period of productivity in your ministry or business, as you try to work hard and prove your value to a ministry or work team. But this season has some foxes as the stresses outside your marriage add to the high stress job of raising young children. Some of the foxes you may need to stop from spoiling your vineyard are the following:

- Pregnancy
- Postpartum depression
- Young children
- Work
- Infertility



Fox #1: Pregnancy

Part of God’s original design for a couple’s sexual relationship is for children to be born out of their sexual intimacy. Having a baby fulfills one of a woman’s greatest innate desires. Some women have easy pregnancies, with few side effects. But for some couples, it is their first excursion into a wilderness of strange symptoms, and an emotional roller coaster caused by all of the hormonal and physical alterations in her landscape. Catching this fox involves frequently and cheerfully adjusting to continual changes. Fortunately, sex during pregnancy can be a delightful and satisfying experience. Many men feel pleasure at having the fruit of their previous

lovemaking there for all to see and find their wives doubly attractive during this time. A woman's breasts will enlarge and become more sensitive to his touch. The engorgement of blood in the uterus can cause the woman's physical pleasure to be heightened. If her hormones make her more anxious, the sexual climax can help release this emotional tension. If the couple has never experimented with various physical positions of lovemaking before, such as woman on top, or lying on their sides "spooning," the woman's growing belly gives new motivation to experiment. These alternate positions allow the woman to control her husband's penetration according to her comfort. A couple should ask their doctor for advice about whether they may enjoy coitus throughout the pregnancy, or whether at some point (such as if the amniotic sac begins to leak, or there is a concern for miscarriage), they can practice other ways of pleasuring each other that do not involve intercourse.

Fox #2: Postpartum Depression

After the birth of a baby, some women become depressed. It is a hormone imbalance that is aggravated by exhaustion from labor, lack of deep sleep, and the stress of caring for a child who did not come equipped with an owner's manual. Depression will prevent a woman from desiring sex, and her negative attitude may also cause her husband to withdraw from her. Her unstable emotions may be hard for him to understand. If their relationship and their baby are both healthy, why isn't she happy? A husband can help to catch this fox by helping his wife to get plenty of rest after the birth of a baby and by offering his body up for her, even when her attitude is poor. He may do her chores, get up in the night with the baby, and hire a house helper or a baby sitter so that his wife may nap when the baby naps. He can draw out his wife's thoughts to understand what she is thinking and feeling, even if she seems to make little sense. It helps if he assures her that she is still sexually attractive, still his best friend, still young and vital—addressing the deep fears that stretch marks, motherhood, and an extra ten or twenty pounds from pregnancy may stir up. Even though she may seem like a different person from the cheerful girl he married, his patience with her can help ease her through this difficult period. If he is concerned about her sinking into deep despair, perhaps even suicide, he should not hesitate to take her to a doctor who can prescribe medications to get her through this emotional valley. But what if you are the depressed wife? What if your husband is not responding in this helpful way but is criticizing you for not being happy and energetic? You need to work to catch these foxes yourself by doing as many things as possible to help yourself recover. Remember the cause is hormones, so don't act on your heavy emotions. To remain silent is to let the foxes spoil the vineyard. Talk to your husband of your feelings and your need for help until you can recover your equilibrium. Reach out to friends and family for help. Go to a clinic and ask for medical help. Doctors are usually well acquainted with this common condition following childbirth and can prescribe some medicine to help you.

Fox # 3: Young Children

Children are a great gift from the Lord but also have great needs, which never seem to stop. Without careful management, these sweet "little foxes" can gobble up every last crumb of energy in your marriage relationship until nearly every interaction between you and your spouse is only about the children and providing for them. If one or more of your children has a handicap or special needs, the effect can be like a tidal wave, which overwhelms everything in its wake. When the winter season comes, couples who have allowed their relationship with each other to be swept away by the needs of their children, suddenly see their relationship for the barren landscape that it is.

Don't lose your first love. Genesis 2:24 says that you are to be one with your spouse, but the verse never says to be one with your children. Seize these little foxes by making it a high priority to meet the needs of your marriage relationship, almost as if the relationship itself is a child, which you must tend more carefully than the others because it rarely speaks up! Even when you are tired, make time to be alone away from the children and renew your acquaintance as friends and lovers. Don't let your fears about the children, or your delight in them, keep you from finding privacy and from loving your spouse sexually.

How can you find the privacy and the energy for sex, when the house has one or more busy toddlers? Some actions are not difficult. Install a lock on the bedroom door. Don't let your children get in the habit of sleeping with you. If your spouse is primarily responsible for the children, make sure that he/she gets enough respite from their care to do other things that are meaningful. Childcare fatigue will deplete anyone's interest in sex. If Mom is home with children all day, let Dad play with the children in the early evening so that Mom may withdraw and refresh herself emotionally and physically for sex. Or arrange for help so that she can nap in the afternoon in order to be ready to enjoy a tryst after the kids are asleep. Plan weekly or bi-weekly nights out, even if it is just for a walk or a cup of coffee while a grandparent keeps an eye on the children.

Fox #4: Work

During the same period that couples are having their first children, one or both are often working very hard to establish themselves in a career. Like young children, many careers can absorb every drop of energy you have if you let them. This is a wily and deceitful fox because you can fool yourself that you are "doing it all for your family," or "doing it all for the Lord." But your family needs *you*, not just the money or power your work provides. The Lord has given you your spouse and children as your first area of ministry. Catching this little fox is similar to catching the little foxes of children. Schedule regular time for loving your spouse sexually and make the preparations that catch the little fox of exhaustion. Make it your business to understand your spouse's work and to stay emotionally connected by talking about your day, especially sharing your feelings. When something goes wrong at work, and your spouse's heart aches, you should be the first person whom your spouse comes to for comfort, for prayer, and for understanding. Your situation and your personalities may require unique actions, but the key is to proactively do *whatever it takes* to keep your emotional and sexual bonds strongly connected, even when your business or ministry tempts you to give it everything. Even if you are engaging in significant ministry or developing an important business, at the end of your life, it will be the love of your spouse and your children that will mean the most to you. Save the best of yourself for them.

Fox #5: Infertility

While all of your friends are happily adding children to their homes, you may be unable to have children. This little fox can be heartbreaking.

- Please read what Scripture says about this in Proverbs 30:15b-16.

When you desire children, nothing else will satisfy. Worse, Scripture seems to be full of barren women who miraculously were able to conceive—Sarah, Rachel, Hannah, and Elizabeth to name a few. The fact that He does not seem to be similarly answering your prayers may become a "fox" in your marriage that keeps you from enjoying your sexual relationship together. Every sexual act becomes important, not as an act of love, but an act of fertility. You stop thinking, "How can I please my spouse?" But you keep thinking, "Will this time produce a child or not?" Look at the relationship between Elkanah and Hannah (1 Sam 1:7-8), between Sarah and Abraham (Gen 16:1-6), and between Rachel and Jacob (Gen 30:1-2). In all cases, the wife's bitterness against her infertility was a little fox ruining their relationship, wasn't it? In each case, it motivated the couple to respond wrongly by bringing another woman into the marriage, which only added more serious foxes, worse problems.

In order to catch the fox of infertility, you must change your thinking from what you deeply desire to what God deeply desires to do through you. What is God's purpose for allowing your barrenness right now? Is it so that you can devote your life more completely to ministry? So that you can spend more time and effort in prayer? Perhaps. But there is another possibility. Look at the world from God's loving point of view. What does He hear and see?

- Please read Psalm 68:6.

There are millions of orphans in the world who are starving for what you want most to give. One or more of these children may be designed by God for you, just as thoughtfully as one He could have designed in

your womb. God hears the cries of the orphans (Ex 22:22-23) and wants to answer those cries with compassion. Perhaps He has prepared you as a special vessel for showing His mercy to these little and big ones (Mt 18:14). Just as God adopted you into His family, He may desire for you to adopt a child into yours. You may have the privilege of portraying for a watching world (especially if your culture does not typically adopt) His type of love—one that turns strangers into sons (Gal 4:3-7; Eph 2:13-19).

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Catching Autumn Foxes

“Catch the little foxes for us.”—Song of Solomon 2:15



During the third season of life, the children are older and the home is a busy place. Rather than expending a great deal of physical energy as you were when running after toddlers, now your energy tends to be more mental and emotional, as you seek to model Christ to your children and to coach them in school and other pursuits. During this phase of life, a couple may need to begin helping their own parents with greater health problems or loss of a spouse. In our case, one, then another, of our parents came to live with us before passing away. A few years ago, we were the classic “sandwich” couple—the needs of parents on one side, children on the other. There are many different kinds of

foxes, which can infest or even devastate the autumn garden. The three we list here are representative of many others that may arise in the autumn of married life.

- Lack of Privacy
- Sexual Dysfunctions
- Boredom

Fox #1: Lack of Privacy

When children are little, they usually sleep soundly. If they wake up and hear Mom and Dad making unusual noises, they think nothing of it. One of my friends told me about when her young child woke during the night to hear an unusual thumping against the common wall between their rooms. When he mentioned it the next morning, my friend told him that Mom and Dad were having fun playing a game of tickle. But when children become teenagers and know what sex is, it often shocks and dismays them to think that their “very old” parents would still be practicing the act that created them. In this phase, many families will have Grandma or Grandpa living in the same home too. Having an aware mind with irregular sleep habits in the next room is an effective “wet blanket” on a middle-aged couple’s sex life! Catching this fox involves the same sort of preparation and planning as earlier phases, only it requires even more effort and creativity. The most important rule of thumb is to be prepared and to “seize the day” whenever the teens and Grandma are out of the house. Plan half days of vacation to enjoy sex while the children are in school—but don’t be surprised if that is the very day that your teen develops a fever and stays home. Plan somewhere away from home that you can go for privacy—but be prepared for a crisis to hit just as you try to leave. Set the alarm clock for 3 a.m. and learn to make love very quietly. Ask God for other ideas. You will become very aware of how much the enemy hates this depiction of Christ’s love, when you observe the lengths to which he will go to curtail it. Keep prayerfully fighting against this aggressive little fox.

Fox #2: Sexual Dysfunctions

While these “foxes” can strike at any phase of life, we will choose to talk about them here. We’ve already talked about one of the more common problems of women, low sexual desire. A man can also wane in his desire for intercourse or lose his ability to hold an erection. The roots of these problems may be physical, such as a low level of testosterone, diabetes, or medications. The roots may be emotional, such as unresolved conflicts with his wife. Or the roots may be an addiction to pornography, in which case real life may not seem exciting enough. In any case, catching this fox involves taking action rather than hoping it will go away or feeling hopeless that nothing can be done. If you think the problem is physical, visit your doctor to rule out cancer or other medical conditions that impede blood flow. See if you can improve your overall health by eating more fruits and vegetables, exercising, getting enough sleep, decreasing stress, limiting alcohol, and stopping smoking. Your doctor can recommend various treatments or can adjust any medication that may be causing the problem. You may read an Appendix article called “Overcoming Impotence” which further addresses this problem.

A frequent sexual dysfunction for women is pain during intercourse. One common reason lies in her husband’s technique, such as not stimulating her long enough for the vagina to elongate and moisten or not applying enough lubrication. But if these are not a problem, she may have another physical problem and needs to visit a doctor for treatment. One possible diagnosis is a condition called vaginismus, an *involuntary* physical and emotional problem, which creates a physical barrier to intercourse. You can read more about this common, but rarely diagnosed, condition in the Appendix article “Kathy’s Story.”

Fox #3: Boredom

Perhaps by this time, you’ve been married for fifteen or twenty years or more. You have engaged in sex thousands of times. Your hormone levels have decreased, so it’s not on your mind quite as often, and when it is, perhaps the prospect of making love to the same person in the same bed that you’ve been using for many years makes you yawn. You realize that you are aging and that you only have a limited number of years left to make your mark on the world. You may long for the days when you were young, and then despair of ever having the same sensations of falling in love that you had when you were twenty. The answer some people try is to have an affair with someone new and exciting. But while that answer brings death and devastation to everyone involved, God’s answer gives new life to a sagging marriage.

- Please read Proverbs 5:1-23.

In the middle of this discourse on the overwhelming devastation of an extramarital affair is the mention of where to invest your sexual energies—with the same spouse that you married when you were young.

Catching this hungry fox involves changing your sexual practices to invest more creativity in your lovemaking, which can include changing your surroundings, changing the time of day, changing your clothing, and changing your sexual technique, but it does *not* involve changing your spouse! All sorts of pleasure are available to the couple that will think creatively!

While pleasure in the marriage bed is something that God created, the Bible mentions some sexual practices that are detestable to God. Most of these detestable acts can be classified as violating one of these five boundaries of sexual expression.

(1) Sex is designed for one man and one woman who are joined in marriage (Mt 19:4-8). No one else may be involved in your lovemaking (Heb 13:4).

(2) The activity/expression must be loving, pleasing to both of you and must not violate your consciences (Jn 13:34; 1 Cor 8:7-13)

(3) The activity must be respectful and healthy for both of your bodies, which are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19).

(4) You must abstain from depicting something evil (1 Thess 5:22). You do not sexually arouse one another from role-playing wickedness.

(5) Your behavior should enhance the gospel, not bring it into ill repute or harm anyone (1 Pet 2:12).

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Catching Winter Foxes

“Catch the little foxes for us.”—Song of Solomon 2:15

During this season, you may look and feel somewhat different than in the spring of your life together. Hopefully your relationship has deepened and you have learned to appreciate each other even more through the challenges that you have faced together. Sex should continue to be a normal part of your relationship, just as it was for the other seasons. Catching the foxes in this season often involves finding creative solutions for sexual problems that are caused by aging and perhaps illness.



The foxes of winter addressed here are the following:

- Menopause moodiness
- Thermostat malfunction
- Atrophy of female sexual organs and function
- Lack of desire for sex
- Decrease in physical ability

Female menopause is actually a whole family of related foxes. These winter foxes are caused by the diminishing hormones of estrogen and progesterone in a woman as she ages. In natural menopause, a woman begins to have irregular changes in her cycle and finally stops menstruating. Menopause may be also induced by treatments for cancer, such as chemotherapy or radiation, or by a complete hysterectomy, which is an operation to remove the ovaries and the uterus. A hysterectomy that removes only the uterus does not cause menopause. She will still have her monthly hormone cycle until a normal age for it to stop, but without the visual clue of monthly bleeding.

Fox #1: Menopause Moodiness

One of the menopause foxes is a personality change because of decreasing hormones. If a woman has learned earlier to catch the Pre-menstrual Syndrome (PMS) fox by not taking her emotions too seriously or by not acting rashly on them, she can capture this wily fox as well. If the emotional instability becomes too severe to manage, a doctor can prescribe estrogen medicine, but this should only be taken for a short time because of other health dangers.

Fox #2: Thermostat Malfunction

Scientists are not positive why, but the thermostat in a woman's brain apparently needs estrogen in order to function correctly. When estrogen begins to decrease, she may be alternately too cold or too hot, which makes it difficult for her husband to be close to her. Momentary fevers or “hot flashes” may be triggered whenever something raises her body temperature, either from a change in the environment or, internally, from a stirring thought. A kiss or an embrace from her husband is sure to set one off, so it is a small but persistent hindrance to sex. Don't let this small fox deter you from the far more important goal of relating sexually with each other. To catch this little fox, a woman needs to get plenty of exercise, which

diminishes hot flashes, and she also needs to find a cool environment in which to enjoy lovemaking. A doctor may also prescribe medication for this condition, if it becomes too severe.

Fox #3: Atrophy of Female Sexual Organs and Function

As the estrogen and progesterone in her system diminish, a woman's vagina may also atrophy. The tissue becomes dry, tender, delicate, and reluctant to stretch during intercourse. She can strengthen vaginal tissue in several ways. A doctor can prescribe an estrogen cream. A woman can apply oils or creams of vitamins A, D, or E, which also improve the vaginal tissue. The "spoons" position for sexual intercourse, where the couple lies on their side with the wife's back nested against her husband's chest, puts the least amount of pressure on an older woman's more delicate vagina. But the most important treatment is having sex more regularly and using additional lubrication as mentioned earlier. If a woman waits for weeks between having sex, it will often be painful for an older woman. But if she and her husband have sex after only a few days, it will feel more comfortable for her, like it did when she was younger (and everyone will wonder why she and her husband always have smiles on their faces)!

Fox #4: Lack of Desire

While this fox may be related to the lower hormones of menopause, it is as much related to your point of view about life and about sex. As we saw, God's primary reason for inventing sex was not procreation but for unity and to combat inner loneliness. This reason does not change when a married couple becomes elderly. You can make a decision to love each other, even if your hormones are no longer putting sex itself at the forefront of your mind. Scientific research has conclusively shown that women who keep loving their husbands sexually once or twice a week through menopause have far fewer physical and emotional symptoms than those who allow their diminished desire to rule their decisions.

Fox #5: Decrease in Physical Ability

A healthy couple may continue to have intercourse throughout life. However, sometimes surgery for prostate cancer, or treatment for other medical conditions, causes a man to be unable to have an erection. However, even this little fox can still be stopped from damaging the marriage relationship. If intercourse is no longer possible, and the doctor says that there is no medical treatment available, a couple may still caress each other lovingly and intimately, as they touch no one else. Even if the husband is no longer able to function sexually the way that he did in the past, 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 still is in effect. He still has a responsibility to fulfill his duty to love his wife sexually, by using the same alternate skills that he developed during other times when coitus was not possible. He will be fed emotionally by the sensual embrace and caresses of his wife and his skill at delighting her, even if he no longer is able to have an orgasm himself. The marriage union can be even more emotionally satisfying as a couple faces the end of life together. Don't miss any opportunity to show love to your spouse in every way you can, especially in the most basic way of sharing the physical love that has been the hallmark of your unique relationship with each other.

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Articles for Lesson 9: Healthy Habits of Unity

Pride Destroys Marriages

Brent and Chou-li were a handsome, wealthy couple. They were Christians and were active in Bible studies and personal devotions. But after ten years of marriage, Chou-li discovered that Brent had a girlfriend.



When she confronted him, he appeared to repent and promised never to stray again. Chou-li forgave him. But secretly, in Brent's heart, he justified his actions and purposed to be more careful. He decided that if he were more attentive to Chou-li and more faithful in his prayer and Bible reading, he could continue in sin. Secretly over the next ten years, Brent again and again had sexual affairs with other women.

When Chou-li finally discovered his adultery, she asked Brent to go talk to their pastor together. Brent finally confessed his real point of view to the pastor. "God made me to like sex! I love Chou-li, and she is a delightful sexual partner, but I could never be content with only one woman! God understands, or else He would not have allowed the men in the Old Testament so many wives! Why can't she just learn to live with it?" After months of separation and counseling, he was still unrepentant. So the church elders advised her to divorce Brent. For her to continue in the marriage with other women defiling their marriage bed would be an abomination to God.

Like Adam, Brent blamed everyone else for his sin.

- God for giving him a strong sex drive
- Chou-li for not accepting his perverted lifestyle
- The civil laws for not allowing multiple wives

His assumptions were clear: If I want something from deep within my heart, it must be right for me to have it. To be faithful to my wife, in this case, would be unnatural and wrong. Nothing ranked higher than his own deep desires. He didn't care about any of the following:

- Giving a deadly disease to his wife
- Deceiving her
- Breaking his wedding vows
- Breaking God's commands
- Blaspheming God's reputation
- Giving his sons a bad example
- Misusing young women's hearts or bodies for his own pleasure

Even the combined weight of all of these sins, and the fact that he would lose his wife, could not outweigh Brent's prideful commitment to pleasing himself.

If you are infected with pride, it affects every interaction with God and with your spouse. You never stop thinking about how any situation can be brought to improve your situation, serve your goals, make others think well of you. How do you know if you have this problem? One of the times when pride reveals itself vividly in you may be when your spouse expresses dissatisfaction. At that moment, sin "crouches at your

door” just as for Cain (Gen 4:3-8). Is your first reaction self-defense, attack, blame, or self-attack? These are all symptoms of protecting and feeding the sin of pride.

“Yes, I did have dinner with Carl while you were gone, Brad. Nothing improper happened and he was lots of fun. I would think you would be happy that your friend was looking after me. When you’re home, you never take me out anywhere!” (self-defense/blame)

“I lost the promotion. They gave it to John. I guess I just don’t measure up to the kind of husband you deserve. The kids deserve better than me too. Maybe I should just take a job somewhere else and let you live your lives without me. Or maybe I should just end it all. You’d like that, wouldn’t you?” (self-attack)

“I work hard on the farm all week. I have a right to go out for a beer with my friends if I feel like it, without you griping at me when I come home. At least I don’t just sit around all day like you. Maybe if you’d clean up around here instead of watching TV and talking to your friends about me, you wouldn’t be getting so fat and I’d want to come home after work. Barbara invited me to stay and have a drink with her, but I said ‘no, I’ve got to get home to my wife,’ like some kind of saint. But it’s obvious there’s nothing for me here! I’m going back!” (self-defense/attack)

The inner voice of pride may defend itself with the following:

- Anger
- Defense
- Frustration
- Intention to try harder
- Self-hatred
- Thoughts of suicide
- Self-justification
- Explanations
- Blaming others
- Revenge

Pride may even mouth words of repentance without meaning them. Pride is thinking, “there are plenty of good reasons why my action was the only reasonable path open to me.”

Accepting pride’s destructive voice in your heart can lead to the most serious sins and tear down even a happy marriage.

Pride Shouldn’t Fit Us

As Christians, we purport to be disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, who described Himself as gentle and humble, not prideful (Mt 11:29). Yet typically, we who claim to follow Him will give up the voice of pride only when forced. But we often shed it like a lizard sheds its tail to get away from a predator, and then grows it back again!

We relinquish just enough *appearance* of pride and selfishness to impress others and to keep our marriage intact. We direct our self-seeking toward good deeds so that others, especially our spouse, will think well of us and meet our needs. Most of us practice a “comfortable” level of selfishness that we can get away with. The worm of pride burrows in quite safe and snug in our hearts. But we have only to be denied what we want, and pride pops out alive and snarling. We may not even realize that such commitment to self is still sin. Even good deeds that are motivated by trying to impress God with our worth are worthless. Paul calls them “dung” (Phil 3:8)! Only deeds motivated by genuine love—for God or others—are worthy of being called “good.”

Fortunately for us, God will often apply suffering to break up prideful hard attitudes before they destroy us.

- The children of Israel were told that their forty years of hardship in the desert was to humble them (Deut 8:2, 16).
- Nebuchadnezzar was reduced to the state of a wild animal, exposed to the weather and chained, until he humbled himself (Dan 4:25-31).
- Saul of Tarsus was knocked off his horse on the way to Damascus and was made blind until he was humble enough to “see” clearly. Then God sent him a long-term messenger of a physical handicap. He understood from God that this “thorn in the flesh” (perhaps poor eyesight) made him dependent on others (Rom 16:22; Gal 6:11; Col 4:14) and was sent by God to reap a continual crop of humility (2 Cor 12:7).

God loves humility so much that He causes terrible, painful things to happen to us, just to try to break up our hard hearts and encourage humility’s tender growth there. He doesn’t delight in hurting us, but humility is *that* important to Him. Why? **Because it is the only basis on which we can relate properly to God and each other.** If we humble ourselves, God hears and forgives. If we cannot humble ourselves, God will not forgive (Lk 11:4).

- Please read 2 Chronicles 7:13-14.

What devastating events does God say that He causes? *Why* does it say He is doing it?

We see here that once we begin to produce the crop of humility, which He wants to see, it leads to steps of repentance—turning away from sin and toward God.

A similar principle is expressed in 1 Peter 5:6 in the New Testament.

- Please read 1 Peter 5:6-7.

Notice verse 7 goes on to say that after we humble ourselves, then we are able to cast all of our cares on Him in trust. It implies that God will respond to humility and trust with loving care.

How committed is God to removing pride from you? So much so that He will allow you to suffer in order to remove it. Many people only identify their own prideful attitudes too late, after their marriage or other significant relationship is lost. We are wise to ask God to produce humility in us now, before He must use very harsh means to do so.

The fact is that we have nothing to be proud of! The Bible says that even the good we see in ourselves came as a gift (1 Cor 4:7). A right understanding of the vast gulf between what we are and what we should be, and an even wider gulf between what we are and what God is, should cause us to abandon pride as the rag that it is and put on humility with the eagerness of putting on a warm coat in a blizzard.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

How Does Humility Bless a Marriage?

We have seen how humility is integral to an intimate relationship with God. Humility also is integral to unity in marriage. Humility brings the couple closer in the following ways:

With gratefulness, 1 Thessalonians 3:9. Humility says, “I don’t deserve you. You are an unfathomable gift to me. I don’t deserve your kind service. I am highly privileged to be living life by your side. I thank God for you every day.”

With eager service, Mark 10:45. Humility says, “My plans are not as important as your plans. What can I do right now to help you meet your goals? Also I want you to know that I have been praying for you, and I think God has been showing me that I need to release you to serve others with your spiritual gifts too.”

Your gifts and talents are so important that I want to take on some of your chores so that you will have time for the things that are most important to you.”

With a strong desire to understand and to feel empathy for the pain the other has experienced,

2 Corinthians 1:4. A humble spouse says, “It is not as important that you understand me, as that I understand you.” A humble spouse asks God to reveal more about how He created your mind and invested you with talents and beauties. Humility asks, “What do you think? Your thoughts are so important to me.” Humility enters into the pain that you have gone through, especially the pain that I, your spouse, have caused you. As humility prayerfully imagines you as a child enduring those beatings, that verbal abuse from other children, your tender heart looking for love and receiving pain, a humble spouse may sometimes be overcome and weep for you. Humility communicates the tenderness of God.

With a short memory for wrongs, Romans 12:18. A humble spouse doesn’t count the number of times he/she submits to your best good, or the number of times you forget to notice that he/she did something nice for you. It doesn’t keep track of the number of times you take your spouse for granted. When humility suffers a hurt, it does not suddenly remember all of the other hurts that you have inflicted and react based on the accumulated power of all of them. When humility sees you failing, humility prays for your deliverance from evil but will not condemn as a judge. Humility says, “I sin too, and both of us stand only by God’s grace.”

With putting goodness above appearance, Matthew 6:5. Humility doesn’t merely seek to look good, it seeks to truly be good and doesn’t care much if others misinterpret. An unbelieving spouse, for instance, may mock a humble one for spending time in prayer rather than getting right to the “real work,” but a humble spouse is not deterred. Humility says, “Praying for you is my most important ‘work at hand.’”

With courage, Galatians 2:11. A humble spouse is not afraid to speak the hard truth motivated by love. It says what God inspires and does the things that God directs, even if those things are not popular or admirable. It consistently, lovingly, and gently speaks the truth as God directs for your best good. It is not a man-pleaser that looks for affirmation from others for its worth and value. Humility says, “I love you, not just your good opinion.” Humility knows that worth and value come only from God, not from trying to live up to the expectations of people. If humility sees that you have done something illegal, humility may expose your crimes to the proper authorities, but will stand with you and, if necessary, will visit you faithfully in prison.

With yielded rights and deferred privileges, Matthew 8:2. Humility says, “I need this from you, but I leave it to you whether or not you are willing right now to give it. If you cannot, I accept your answer as my assignment from God.” This meaning is inherent in the English word “please,” short for the phrase “if you please.” This means that the person asking a favor submits to the right of the potential giver to say “no.” One little boy I saw in the market came to his mom and asked politely, “May I have cookie, please?” But Mom responded, “No, it is too close to dinner time.”

The little boy’s face turned red, and he said incredulously, “But I said *please!*”

His mother repeated her decision, and the little boy got more frantic and his face got redder. Angry tears filled his eyes. “*I said please! I said please!*” he repeated with mounting frustration, indignant that his very correctly phrased request had not produced his intended response from Mother.

You see, he had learned to say the word “please,” but had nothing in his heart that meant it. His only purpose in saying “please” was to force her to give him the cookie. By contrast, a humble spouse is not afraid to make requests, but senses no superior right that the spouse must give what is wanted. Humility’s voice always asks, “if you please?” The spirit of humility is willing to wait or go without, at the pleasure of the beloved one who could grant the request. It says, “I prefer your desires over my own.”

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Desiring to Be Like Jesus



Jesus was the only one in history who had every reason to be prideful. He had every virtue, every power, and never failed to please His Father. He could have been filled with pride. But instead Jesus yielded up every bit of His glory and chose humility instead. He loved the people who hated Him, chose to be born to an oppressed people in an undeveloped place and time in history, and willingly suffered for sins that He didn't commit. This is the humble attitude God loves. He is the antithesis of our groundless pride.

- Please read Philippians 2:5-8 carefully and pay attention to all He did.

Jesus is not only the antithesis of our pride, but also our self-justification. Not only did He not try to save or justify Himself when condemned, He did not condemn others who fully deserved to be punished. Jesus could have said, *“Peter, you especially hurt My feelings when you denied Me. Just when I really needed my friends to show they cared about Me, you abandoned Me. I’m just so angry at you that I told My Father that He should make sure that your friends all desert you and that you have only suffering and misery from now on, just so you know how I felt when you abandoned Me.”*

How marked the difference between what Jesus *could have* said and what He *did* say, “Father, forgive them.”

God commands us to be like Jesus in His humility. Would you willingly die to pay the penalty for your spouse's sin? Not just any sin, but sin against you? Let that question sink in for a moment.

What would that look like? Let's say that you have loved your spouse perfectly from the beginning and have never exhibited anything but love and care. But your spouse only sees you as limiting his/her options. In fact, your spouse hires someone to kill you so that he/she can run away with another lover. The assassin shoots you, but you don't die. You escape with your life, but are left partly paralyzed, in constant pain, and unable to walk ever again. What does your spouse deserve? Let's say the police track down and capture your spouse. At the trial, your spouse is convicted of attempted murder, and the jury gives a sentence of death by crucifixion. Humanly speaking, you would cheer when he/she died an agonizing death, wouldn't you? It was fully deserved. Your spouse had planned to kill you brutally, and had crippled you for life, so the punishment was totally fair—right?

Now, would you volunteer to take your spouse's guilt and be crucified in his/her place? Your spouse would be set free. Would you do it? Of course not! That is crazy! No one would make such sacrifice for someone who had so heinously wronged him/her and who fully deserved to die. But Jesus would and did. He's your role model for humility in marriage.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Overcoming Pride

- Please read Luke 11:21-22.

We see that the parable here is about your strong enemy, the devil, who guards his possessions like an armed strong man. What are the enemy's possessions, which he tries to keep control of? Us! In 1 John 5:19, the Bible says that the whole world lies in his power. What is his primary objective? To keep us captive in sin and engaged in his rebellion against God, or at least not fighting against him. The Bible says that your enemy is fully armed and well able to keep his possessions from being stolen.

People have possessions that they guard too. We wear pride like armor to guard a core commitment to self. Whenever we treasure a core commitment to self, then lying, cheating, stealing, and even murder may seem justified. We look and act just like the god of this world, who is ultimately committed to himself and no one else (Jn 8:44). What we do not realize is that pride is our **great leash**. It is the primary tie that binds us to Satan in his rebellion against God. It allows him ready access to our hearts in order to get us to do his will against God. We cannot have freedom in Christ without unsnapping the leash.



But one thing we quickly realize when trying to release our pride is that we are never going to “feel” like today is a good day to start. Our feelings and instincts are servants to the pride (or humility) controlling them. It takes a stronger One to overcome and subdue the pride that may be holding our hearts captive. Jesus says in Luke 11:22 that a stronger man can attack and conquer. But who is this stronger man who can breach prideful hearts? Paul talks about this stronger rescuer in the book of Romans.

- Please read Romans 7:22-25.

Who did Paul expect to deliver him from the sin of pride?

- Now please carefully read Mark 11:15-17.

Here Jesus is performing a prophetic sign. What was the meaning of it?

Jesus came not just to cleanse a physical temple, which would soon be destroyed, but ultimately to cleanse your heart, your new temple of the Living God (2 Cor 6:16; Eph 3:17). How?

Let’s list each of his actions in the physical temple:

1. He entered the temple.
2. He cast out those who were buying and selling.
3. He overturned the money-changing tables.
4. He overturned the seats of those selling doves for the offering.
5. He stopped the temple system of worship.
6. He instructed, “Is it not written: *‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’*? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers!’”

How might the unclean things in the physical temple represent things that you need to cry out to ask Him to remove from your heart (1 Cor 3:16)?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Do I Really Need Forgiveness?

We may go days or a lifetime without any sensation of our acute need for forgiveness from our spouses and from God. Our pride, as we saw, numbs us to our sins and failure to be and do what we should. But until we are acutely aware of our need for forgiveness, we will have little appreciation for it when it is granted. We will have no joy, no sense of relief, and certainly no deep understanding of why it was necessary for Christ to suffer for our sins. We also will not appreciate the grace of our spouse.



A Review of Our Lives

We know that Christ paid for all the sins we have or will commit, but that does not negate the fact that we will still answer to our heavenly Father for our works and be rewarded accordingly. For many of us, it

will not be the fully joyful meeting that we have looked forward to. We will give an answer for everything that we have done or said in our marriage to determine its value (Mt 12:36; 2 Cor 5:9-10). A review of our lives will be tested by fire, to see whether we did anything worthy of Christ (1 Cor 3:12-15; Heb 12:28-29; 1 Pet 1:7). Some people will be credited with many good works, while others will arrive at God's doorstep naked, without anything to show for their years of work for Him (1 Cor 3:13-15). Still others will discover that their displays of spiritual power were done without Him and will receive nothing but condemnation! (Mt 7:22-23).

Does this make you more than a little uneasy? It should! Paul urges us to judge and examine ourselves. The basis, according to 2 Corinthians 13:5, is to look at our motives to see the evidence of the Spirit—where are our good deeds coming from? When God asks me to report on my fulfillment of my duties as a wife, I'm afraid that there may be precious few things I have done for my husband that were not tainted by selfishness. As I see myself more clearly, I realize that I need daily grace from God and from my husband because of the way that I fall short as a wife.

Failure to Love

The first and great commandment, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind" (Mt 22:37) is the first place that I fail to meet up to God's standards, but not the last. "Love your neighbor as yourself" fully exposes my failure to love my husband as well as God commands. When I really glimpse how many of my failures Christ willingly suffered for and forgave, then I will respond like the cleansed leper of Luke 17:16 by falling on my face in worship and love. It is no coincidence, then, that when I have a weak comprehension of how much I have been forgiven, my love and worship is also weak. When I feel that "my spouse is pretty lucky to have me," rather than how fortunate I am that my husband cares for me, then my love and appreciation for him is very weak as well.

Failure to Seize Opportunities

Jesus describes the comparative sin of Capernaum as being greater than Sodom's sin (which was destroyed because of its sexual sins that people would consider very severe, Gen 13:13; 19:5, 24). Why should little Capernaum's judgment be greater than Sodom's? Capernaum was only a sleepy little Hebrew town, while Sodom sinned extravagantly. It was because Capernaum neglected the great opportunity to repent and welcome the Messiah (Mt 11:21-24). Perhaps an adulterer will be judged more favorably by God than we who have been sexually faithful, but neglected great opportunities to bless our spouses. We have all failed to live up to our opportunities.

- Please read Luke 12:47-48.

What have you been entrusted with, like the servant in this parable? Do you have a marriage, a family, friendships? Then you have been entrusted with much opportunity. Live in a way that exhibits His grace and love in the spirit of giving and receiving forgiveness and seizing new opportunities to love and bless others.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

The Forgiven Heart

What effect can realizing my need for forgiveness have on my marriage relationship and my ability to love my spouse fully?

- Please read Luke 7:36-50 thoroughly, and notice the characters and what was said.

Here we see Jesus having a meal at Simon the Pharisee's home. An immoral woman walks in and begins a shocking display of emotion and worship. Typical of the Pharisee in all of us, Simon feels uncomfortable. Does he feel ashamed at his own lack of love for Jesus, as he should? It didn't even occur to him, as it perhaps wouldn't to us. Instead, Simon compares himself with this woman and with Jesus,

and comes out quite favorably. The woman is a sinner, Jesus is a fool, while Simon is both wise and righteous. But what does Jesus think? Jesus uses different mathematics and comes up with a different value. Jesus says that all Simon's righteous living does not outweigh his lack of love for Jesus! The woman's love and humble repentance outweighs all of Simon's uprightness. The central, disturbing question of my life is this: 'How much do I love Jesus?'

Which one of these characters do you resemble?

- Lukewarm Simon
- The deeply feeling woman who knows she needs forgiveness
- The disciples who immediately turned their thoughts toward evaluating Jesus' right to forgive sins

Neither the disciples nor Simon rightly respond by repenting of their own weak love. If any of us thinks that we can impress Jesus with our right living or right doctrine alone, we are in for a rude shock when we meet him at the judgment seat of Christ. This story must help us to realize that our lukewarm, calculating hearts don't love God or others the way we should. Our only hope is to throw ourselves on Him and cry out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" As we have seen, He has a soft spot in His heart for sinners who humble themselves.

So, what if this were a good woman instead of an immoral one? This scene is similar to one told in Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9, and John 12:1-7. The second scene occurs shortly before Jesus' death. This time, the principle player is Mary of Bethany. No doubt, Mary had heard or seen the actions of the prostitute earlier. Now Mary is overwhelmed with her thoughts of what Jesus says will happen to Him very soon (Mk 10:33-34). The disciples have just heard Him say that He is going to Jerusalem to be tortured and to die, but they seem to be on another planet, for all the comfort that they are showing to Jesus in His final hours! They are squabbling about who will be the greatest in the kingdom (Mk 10:37, 41). But Mary can think only of Him. What can she do? She gets a liter bottle of nard perfume and kneels at His feet. She sat at His feet before, we remember, to listen and learn from Him while Martha cooked (Lk 10:40). She knelt there once again when her brother Lazarus died (Jn 11:32). But after Lazarus' resurrection, she has come to a new understanding of Jesus. He is not just her rabbi, teacher, He is the Lord of life!



She begins to daub His head and feet with a whole pound (half a kilo) of the wildly expensive myrrh spikenard, a sticky mixture of resin and scent. This is the kind of perfume that people used to anoint a corpse as the first step of embalming, or to anoint a priest for entering the holy place (Lev 21:10). If you have smelled oil-based perfume, you know how rich even a few drops are, and this was a half kilo! John says that the scent saturated the room. As the sinner woman did months or even years before, Mary wipes Jesus' feet with her hair (Jn 12:3) and offers complete devotion to her Lord.

The text says the nard was worth "a year's wages." How would Mary have possessed such an expensive gift? It was quite possibly her dowry, one of the few things in her home that would have belonged solely to her as a single woman. If so, this was her total savings account and all her hopes for her future marriage. As far as she is concerned, Jesus is worth everything. The anointing and wiping with her hair is the most expressive thing that she can think of to show that *her own need of forgiveness is as great as the immoral woman's had been, to prepare Jesus' body for His work as priest and for His coming death.* Perhaps the lingering scent coming from His pores over the next days was a silent comfort to Him as He suffered. Have I ever freely given that level of love to anyone?

As before, there is someone handy to criticize Mary. This time it is not Simon the Pharisee, but Judas and the rest of the disciples, who protest, "What a waste of money!" This reveals once again their weak love

for Him. Hours later, Jesus follows Mary's example of humility and reveals the depths of His love as He kneels at the disciples' feet to wash them (Jn 13:5).

Our marriages were designed to picture Christ and the church. Do we give ourselves fully to seeking reconciliation and expressing love with our whole hearts as Mary and Jesus portray in these passages? Or, do we hang back and criticize extravagant expressions of love as "wasteful?" Having cancer showed me that no matter whether you have days, months, or years left together with your spouse, the time is short. Looking back, your deep expressions of love may seem like the most important things that you did in your marriage.

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Corrie's Forgiveness

Corrie ten Boom lived through World War II in the Netherlands. Because of her work protecting Jews from the death camps instituted by Hitler and the Nazi party, she, her sister, and her father were imprisoned. She alone survived. Later Corrie wrote books and traveled around the world speaking about God's love and forgiveness.



But at one meeting in Germany, her message was put to the test. A man came to the front of the church after her message. She realized that he was a prison guard who had made her and her sister parade naked in front of him. He represented all of the shame and horror of her years in prison. He said that he had now become a believer in Christ. Christ had forgiven him, but he asked her to forgive him too.

Corrie paused ... "Now he was in front of me, hand thrust out ... [to shake hands]. It was the first time since my release that I had been face to face with one of my captors and my blood seemed to freeze ... It seemed hours as I wrestled with the most difficult thing I had ever had to do.

"For I had to do it—I knew that. The message that God forgives has a prior condition: that we forgive those who have injured us. 'If you do not forgive men their trespasses,' Jesus says, 'neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.' [Mt 6:15] ...

"But forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function regardless of the temperature of the heart. 'Jesus, help me!' I prayed silently. 'I can lift my hand. I can do that much. You supply the feeling.'

"And so woodenly, mechanically, I thrust my hand into the one stretched out to me. And as I did, an incredible thing took place. The current started in my shoulder, raced down my arm, sprang into our joined hands. And then this healing warmth seemed to flood my whole being, bringing tears to my eyes. 'I forgive you, brother!' I cried. 'With all my heart!'

"For a long moment we grasped each other's hands, the former guard and former prisoner. I had never known God's love so intensely as I did then."

—excerpted from a tract "I'm Still Learning to Forgive" by Corrie ten Boom (out of print) found on the internet at <http://www.circlegame.com/live/boom.htm>

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Understanding and Practicing Biblical Forgiveness in Marriage

The best biblical example of forgiveness is a boy whose brothers attacked him, threw him in a pit, and then sold him as a slave. This boy grows to manhood in a foreign land and spends at least twenty long years as a slave, two of which were in prison. Of course, you no doubt recognize by now that the boy is Joseph, Jacob's son. Refresh your memory of the story by skim reading Genesis 37:12-36.



Any normal man would have nursed a hefty grudge for every one of those lonely, tortured years and would have vowed that if he ever saw his attackers again, they would pay for taking away his freedom and his family. A normal man would delight in imagining how he would destroy. Revenge is the subject of many great plots in Western literature, from Alexander Dumas' *The Count of Monte Cristo* to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. We root for the hero to exact justice, as he returns to kill his adversaries and set things right. Even Christ will (at the Father's word) return at the end of the age to wreak this kind of vengeance (2 Thess 1:6-10). But Joseph does not do that. Joseph forgives.

By examining how Joseph offered forgiveness to his brothers, we can see the elements of forgiveness and how they can operate in marriage. Do you agree with each of these elements of forgiveness, as shown in Joseph's life?

Forgiveness does not seek to ruin another's opinion. In Genesis 45:1, Joseph cleared the room before revealing himself to his brothers. If what they had done to Joseph came out, his servants would feel obligated to hate or even kill them. This was a far cry from the tattletale that Joseph had started out to be (Gen 37:2). Instead he protects their secret and prepares the way for them to be heroes to the Egyptians.

When your spouse sins against you, do you often tell someone else so that person can join you in condemning your spouse and justifying you? "Yes, that was terrible! Of course you're angry. You are a saint to put up with him!" In a marriage, a husband's ruined reputation cannot help but damage the whole family. Scripture describes a foolish woman: "Every wise woman builds her household, but a foolish woman tears it down with her own hands" (Prov 14:1). If you tear down your spouse's reputation to others, you tear down your own house.

Forgiveness is first an inward decision. It is clear that Joseph had forgiven his brothers long before he met them again. It wasn't a sudden decision based on his nostalgia at seeing them again, or a reaction to them pleading for it.

Similarly, when your spouse sins against you, your inner decision to forgive can take place long before you face your spouse again. In the Lord's Prayer (Lk 11:4), Jesus says that we ask for God's forgiveness based on the fact that we have forgiven everyone.

I used to think that I only had to forgive if the person asked me for forgiveness, otherwise I was free to nurse bitterness. If that were true, God would have every right to hang onto any sin that I had not remembered to confess to Him. But He forgives the many sins that I don't even notice that I have done. Similarly, I need to forgive my mate before he even asks. This does not mean, however, that he shouldn't ask if he realizes he has sinned against me. We are both commanded by God to seek forgiveness from each other. This is so that we might have the opportunity of humbling ourselves to each other (an important ingredient of Christian unity) and of laying a foundation for reconciliation.

Forgiveness seeks to eliminate fear of retribution. In Genesis 44:16, Judah, on behalf of all of Joseph's brothers, falls before Joseph in abject humility. The guilt of the brothers' crime against Joseph weighs heavy on them. For the past twenty years, they have been waiting for God to punish them for what they did. They view their imminent punishment by this nameless Egyptian leader as only their due (Gen 42:21-22, 28; 44:16). They even have a hard time believing the genuineness of Joseph's forgiveness. How could he *not* be secretly harboring a grudge? (After all, they would if the shoe were on the other foot!) After Jacob dies, they think that Joseph will change his mind and finally settle the score. Joseph keeps reassuring them not to be afraid of him (Gen 43:23; 45:5; 50:19-21).

We may not be kings with the power to execute, but we have other forms of retribution that we demand from our spouses. Our retribution can take the form of a long memory. When we forgive our spouses for their wrongs against us, that means the next time we have a disagreement, we cannot haul this sin out of a

hidden mental closet and heat it up like a red-hot weapon to use against them. “This is just like the last time that you ...”

Forgiveness is optimistic about God’s dealings.

- Please read Genesis 50:19-21.

This is core to understanding forgiveness. Joseph tells his brothers, “God works everything out for good.” In marriage, you can trust God’s goodness in your life. His plans for you will not be foiled by a mere person.

Forgiveness feels compassion. One of the things I love about Joseph is that he has the gift of tears.

- In Genesis 42:24, Joseph weeps when he overhears his brothers arguing about who has the greater blame for selling him. They are waiting for God to punish them severely.
- In Genesis 43:30 after he meets Benjamin, he has to excuse himself to go weep privately.
- He weeps in Genesis 45:2, when he hears from Simeon how his loss has anguished his father, Jacob. This time he weeps so loudly that not only his own household but the household of Pharaoh hears it!
- He weeps when he finally gets to embrace his brothers in Genesis 45:14-15.
- And he weeps when he embraces his father in Genesis 46:29.
- He weeps when Jacob dies in Genesis 50:1.
- And he weeps when he realizes that his brothers are still frightened of him in Genesis 50:17.

We never see him weeping for feeling sorry for himself. He always cries tears of compassion. Similarly, Jesus weeps with compassion over Jerusalem who would face judgment for rejecting and crucifying Him (Lk 19:41). Jesus and Joseph were both moved by the terrible results of sin, no matter that the sin was against them.

If we can see our spouses through eyes of loving forgiveness, we will feel deeply sad about the consequences of their sin, especially if it is serious. They will answer to God for it, and they may incur His judgment or chastening. It may be detrimental to their health or damage relationships. When we forgive, we feel sadness, not bitterness.

Forgiveness wants to see God bless the perpetrator. Joseph blessed his brothers again and again, and he invited others to do the same by not telling Pharaoh or anyone else what they had done. Similarly, Jesus prayed forgiveness and blessings on the disciples who would abandon Him and on the Jews and Romans who would execute Him. He presented His blood in heaven to win them access to the Father (Heb 9:12-14), and now He lives to make intercession for us (Heb 7:25). Stephen, the first martyr, echoed the words of Christ: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” (Acts 7:60).

Many people are familiar with the five missionaries killed by the Auca people in Ecuador in 1956, Jim Elliott, Nate Saint, Pete Fleming, Ed McCully, and Roger Youderian. But what few know is that the wives and children went to live in the fierce tribe, eventually establishing a strong church among them and ending the ages of revenge killings in the tribe.

Just a few weeks ago, three Christians, a missionary and two Turkish men, were martyred in Turkey. The intent by the murderers was to spread fear and to cause missionaries to flee and the Turkish believers to abandon their faith. But at the memorial service, 500 believers publicly stood together for Christ. Ten of them shared a message of forgiveness to the murderers. Then one of the widows, weeping, said, “I know my Necati was praying for them, even while he was being tortured.” She spoke of their love and joy as a couple and as a family. She ended, “I loved my husband very, very much, but I love my Jesus even more.” The believers in Turkey are now praying, not for vengeance, but that among the murderers, God would raise up a Paul from one like Saul who participated in the killing of Stephen.

It is a common saying that the “blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” But it is actually the surviving relatives, by extending forgiveness to those who murdered their loved ones, who have had the greatest impact in breaking open cultures to understand the saving message of Jesus. In light of such amazing forgiveness among our fellow believers, how dare we blaspheme the name of Christ by holding a grudge—especially for our spouse’s repeated failure to put the cap back on the toothpaste! What is your spouse’s sin against you? It may not be so small, but is it so great that it is beyond Christ’s forgiveness? Then it cannot be beyond yours either.

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Becoming a Trustworthy Spouse

Sara used to think that she had a good marriage. But then Sara’s husband, Jonah, took a job as a salesman and started sleeping away from home three weeks per month. Now, he calls her a few times a week, but to Sara, the nights feel long. Even when he is home, he doesn’t flirt with her the way he used to and seems consumed by winning the district salesman of the year award. When they have sex, he seems in a hurry to get out of bed and get back to his computer. She wonders if he is watching porn on the Internet as he travels. Sara buys more clinging clothing, which she tells herself is to engage Jonah’s interest. But since he’s never around to appreciate it, she starts wearing it to the office. She starts taking a little more time with her makeup and hair each morning. She likes the extra attention and admiring glances that she gets from men, especially her boss, Steve. Steve is younger than Sara, but never makes her feel “motherly.”

Sara doesn’t know it, but Steve’s wife, Julie, is depressed. She can’t stop crying and some days she doesn’t even get out of bed. She is not responsive to him sexually or in conversation. Steve is sexually frustrated and thus easily aroused by Sara’s tight clothing and perfume. Finally one day, Sara puts some papers on his desk and is just turning to leave his office, when he lowers his voice to almost a whisper and says, “You are a beautiful woman, Sara. Jonah is lucky to have you.”

Whether Sara runs from the situation, like Joseph with Potiphar’s wife (Gen 39:7), or succumbs to the temptation and begins to build an adulterous relationship with Steve, is a matter of her *integrity*. Obviously, her situation and her mental state have started her down that road. What is integrity? In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word is *tamim*, which means whole, not cut up into pieces. It is used literally for a thing that is in one piece, or figuratively as a person who does not behave one way in this situation, and another way in that situation, according to his/her advantage. People of integrity do not entertain adulterous thoughts or secretly indulge in pornography. But it means more than sexual chastity. A man or woman who is *tamim* behaves with the same kindness to a spouse or child as to a head of state. People of integrity do not have a separate persona, which depends on whom they are with. The Pharisees did not have integrity. Jesus said that they were whitewashed tombs, with dead bones inside (Mt 23:27). They made sure that in public they appeared to be men who loved God deeply by following the religious customs of the day with commendable sacrifice. But what they thought and what they did in private was very different than what they showed to others.

When a man or woman does not have integrity, as soon as he/she cannot achieve the desired objectives through behaving well, he/she will switch to lying, cheating, stealing, or cruelty. People without integrity usually do both concurrently—behaving properly in public, but letting their evil, selfish nature have expression behind closed doors at home or in secret relationships elsewhere. Their objective is serving their own purposes, so they easily rationalize that their wickedness is “okay as long as no one finds out.” Their mates will always be guarded and insecure, and rightly so.

Scripture warns us against becoming companions with the following types of people:

- An angry person (Prov 22:24)
- A murderer (Prov 1:15)

- A gossip (Prov 20:19)
- A selfish person (Prov 23:6)
- A glutton or heavy drinker (Prov 23:20)
- The wicked, sinners, or scoffers (Ps 1:1)
- Seducers (Prov 7:25-27)
- Political revolutionaries (Prov 24:21)
- People who enjoy evil (Prov 4:14; 24:1)

If we are told to be careful in selecting our friends, how much more careful we must be in selecting our closest companion, our mate. We also need to develop the qualities that make us a “good catch” for a good mate, not one of those on the list to be avoided! The habits of integrity start long before marriage. If you are single and show respect, honesty, and restraint in close opposite-sex friendships, especially with your fiancée before marriage, you lay a foundation for trust after marriage. Here are four areas that deserve particular care, both before and during marriage:

1. Take care with your words. Have you ever heard a husband joke with his friends, “my wife can’t boil water,” or a wife who laughs about her husband’s fat stomach? While the insulted spouse may laugh along with the joke, inside he/she is cringing away. In a good marriage, your spouse can talk about many private thoughts, insecurities, and weaknesses and know that you will not reveal them to amuse others or criticize. You will also not bring them up during a disagreement. On the other hand, honest, complimentary words help your spouse to know that you admire him/her. Notice what your spouse has done well and tell him/her so (Prov 31:29). If you need to ask for a change of behavior, do it gently.

2. Be righteous in secret. How many times of committing adultery make you an adulterer? How many lies make you a liar? Once you cheat, steal, lie, or breach your spouse’s trust, it takes years of verified faithfulness to rebuild your integrity. If you can lie to a stranger about when a bill was paid, you can lie to your spouse about where you were when you said you were working overtime. If you try to cover up at work when you have failed to do something you promised, your spouse knows that in certain circumstances you will cover up your sins against him/her. If you succumb to gluttony, your spouse may see that your self-control toward pleasure is weak. Your spouse should observe that you will always do the right thing, especially if it is not to your own advantage. If you are frank with your spouse and ask forgiveness when you fail (Jas 5:16) and settle differences quickly (Mt 5:25), your spouse will realize you fear God and are trustworthy.

3. Avoid tempting situations and relationships. You need to know your own areas of weakness and be frank with your spouse about avoiding them. Avoid situations that promote emotional intimacy with someone whom you find attractive, both real people and virtual ones. That means, if your spouse wants to bring a relative to live in your home, and you find the person seductive, don’t allow it. If you are talking with an attractive person, include others in the conversation. If you have temptation from Internet pornography, install blocking software and use the computer only when your spouse or others are with you.

4. Honor your spouse. Please read 1 Corinthians 7:5. It says that your body (especially sexually) belongs to your spouse. Therefore, if your spouse thinks that your relationship with someone else is too close, submit to that and keep aloof from that person. Romans 14:21 suggests that we must submit our own freedom to our spouse’s opinion. That means that even if you know that the relationship between you and a friend is harmless, love puts the peace of mind of your spouse above your own rights and tones down the friendship anyway.

This verse also suggests that you can help your spouse avoid temptation



by enjoying regular sexual relations (see Note 1). Don't agree that your spouse take long missionary trips, business trips, or go to school in another country for a long time without you. It is up to you both to prayerfully decide how long is too long, but don't overestimate your self-control or get pressured into a wrong decision by others (Rom 12:3; 1 Cor 10:12). Too many people have thought that they were strong enough spiritually to attend seminary in another country, but, then, were disqualified from the Lord's service because of adultery. The apostle Paul said that he was the only apostle who traveled without a wife (because he didn't have one). The married apostles all brought their wives with them (1 Cor 9:5).

If you do end up being separated for a time, perhaps due to military service, your previous work at building integrity and developing trust will help you to overcome temptation and will keep the relationship strong. Take the opportunity to have a second courtship, try winning each other's affections through letters and dreaming of the day when you can hold each other again. Communicate in as much depth as possible about your feelings, and in as much privacy as possible to build as close an emotional relationship as the distance will allow. If you feel tempted to satisfy your desires outside the marriage through a relationship with something or someone more available, develop an accountability partner to help you maintain self-control. You will learn more about that concept in "Carson's Story" ahead.

Note 1: When someone commits adultery, the spouse is not to blame. First of all, each person is responsible for his/her own actions. Secondly, adultery may happen due to sexual addiction, which is a lust for sex that cannot be met by one person. The sinning spouse craves the thrill of the forbidden, the secret, the evil, the excitement of changing partners. Some men become addicted to better-than-real virtual partners, without the complications of a human relationship. Sexually addicted people are often in and out of adultery, despite every good effort by the spouse to be pleasing, to meet needs, and to be sexually available. According to Hebrews 13:4, when adultery takes place, the marriage has been dishonored, and the sexual relationship becomes "defiled."

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Carson's Story

I was twelve or thirteen when someone (my parents?) left a book about sexuality on the table. I have always guessed it was their version of the "birds and the bees" talk that they felt too uncomfortable to have with me. I read in that book about masturbation and tried it. That began more than thirty years of struggle with pornography.



It was like getting trapped in quicksand. Being a Christian, I struggled spiritually, emotionally, and mentally with this contradiction to my faith, but I could not seem to get free. I got married, but the problem did not go away. I talked about my struggle with my wife, but she did not seem to understand why it was "a big deal." I talked to a counselor about it, and he downplayed the issue as well. But I knew that it was sin, and I wanted to be free of it.

I kept praying that one day I would be delivered from this addiction. Sexual addiction is similar to other addictions like alcohol or cigarettes in that it has physical and emotional aspects. Like those addictions, once someone is ensnared, a person will always be tempted toward it, even if he/she is delivered from actually doing it. Thank God, I have been delivered now, not once and for all, but every day. Four things work together for my deliverance.

1. Each day, I must acknowledge that this is a stumbling block in my faith. I affirm that because I desire to please God, I will keep my thought-life pure.

2. I regularly “report in” with a Christian mentor, a man who understands the spiritual damage pornography does. Because I know I will have to answer his tough questions, I am discouraged from participating in sin.
3. I have learned to substitute other activities that help me to “de-stress.” One of those is playing word games on the computer!
4. I recognized that my addiction to pornography is tied to unresolved anger and shame. So, instead of pushing down anger and escaping to pornography when relationships get difficult, I communicate directly and respectfully. I am open about things that bother me.

The success I am finding in this battle is yielding rewards in my critical relationships: with my wife, my son, and with others. Because of the change in our family dynamic, I now feel it is OK for me to make mistakes, to be vulnerable. I thank God for delivering me from being trapped in this spiritual quicksand!

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Rotten Fruit: Spouse Control

“The fruit of the Spirit is ... self-control” —Galatians 5:22-23

Self-control is one of the most important signs of spiritual maturity and the foundation of love. Using self-control, you are able to make deliberate choices about what you will do and to limit your natural appetites, whims, and passions to only what is appropriate and good for your partner. Self-control in marriage says that my rights and abilities must submit to and be guided by my spouse’s needs. I will only do what is truly best for my spouse.

But when mutual honor and respect dies, what ensues is often a power struggle. The good fruit of self-control quickly becomes “spouse control.” I try to force my spouse to do what I want, without allowing my spouse to make an informed choice. This is rottenness that will quickly spoil the affection that you have for each other.

Scripture tells us not to voluntarily become a slave. A slave is someone who gives up control over most personal decisions (1 Cor 7:23). In the New Testament/Roman culture, a person often became a slave when he/she was captured by an invading Roman army. Many of the Jews became slaves after AD 70, when the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem. But anyone, even Roman citizens, could voluntarily sell himself as a slave, often to pay off debts. This was for a contracted period of time, at which point he would be given the agreed-upon sum of money and set free. Why would Scripture tell believers not to willingly become slaves? I believe part of the answer has to do with the original purpose for which man and woman were created: to rule in the image of God (Gen 1:26-28). At the very least, you are responsible to rule yourself (Prov 16:32; 25:28; Jer 17:10). You may have a wide or narrow area of rule, but in order to express God’s image, you must rule the natural world in some way: a business, a garden, a house, a room, a desk, a computer, your body, or at the very least, your own thoughts. People tend to feel more content if they have some domain that is theirs to rule and to shape according to their own personality. God gave Adam and Eve a garden and animals to know and to rule (Gen 2:8, 19). But just as it does with everything else in life, sin causes us to abuse the role that God gave. Instead of ruling things and especially ourselves, we try to dominate those around us. When we try to control other people or to control their rule in their own domain, it belittles their God-given design and insults their Maker. It makes them feel anxious, devalued, and inwardly angry. How does control differ from leadership or influence?

What Is Controlling Behavior?

Controlling behavior tries to bypass someone’s voluntary will. Instead of asking for compliance, a controlling person uses false methods, which will not allow the risk that the person might say “no.” They push, cajole, plead, insist, manipulate, threaten, bribe, punish or deceive. The desired result is the only

value, not the person between you and your goal. In an unhappy marriage, controlling behavior is normal. It is exhibited in the following ways:

- Displaying strong emotions (or a loud voice) in order to intimidate and “win” an argument
- Threatening (to harm, to leave, to withhold money or affection, to go to another relationship)
- Bribing with sexual favors
- Refusing to speak
- Taking actions contrary to spouse’s desires, especially in spouse’s domain or area of expertise

There are many more controlling behaviors, most of them far more subtle than these. Overall, any behavior that sidesteps your spouse’s will is controlling.

As humans under God’s rule, we have no right to force control on another adult except in extreme circumstances where we are protecting ourselves or others, such as a policeman stopping a criminal. Even in training children, the use of discipline must be aimed at helping them to develop self-control, not merely forcing them to stop annoying us!

Self-Control

Instead of trying to force your spouse to comply with your will, love seeks to control self. Self-control offers wisdom, preferences, leadership to your spouse with an open hand, and respects your spouse’s right to choose whether or not to comply. Self-control, therefore, is the opposite of spouse-control. In marriage, self-control does not “micromanage,” nor does it exert pressure in order to get its own way. Self-control is one of the most important expressions of godly love in marriage.

Think about how God relates to us. God says nature is under His full control. It cannot choose to obey or to disobey Him (Jer 10:13; Lk 8:25). But because He made people to rule in His image, He does not control us, that is, our actions, choices, and opinions (Deut 30:19-20; Josh 24:15). But He does not leave us without strong leadership. He establishes natural and spiritual laws and gives us persuasive reasons why it is best for us to obey them. But if we make a contrary choice, He does not override our will! He respects us by responding to us according to our choices. Because He is our Father, sometimes He responds with discipline.

Look at how humble this makes our God! Look how He demonstrates how to show love to each other!

- Please read Isaiah 65:1-2.

Our loving God has the power to force us to come to Him, even for our best good, but instead He allows us to choose to turn toward Him or away. **If God does not use His superior strength to control us, how much more do we need to stop trying to control each other and, instead, seek to control ourselves and our own self-driven desires.**

Control in Marriage

If you live alone and work for yourself, you may not have to limit expressing your own freedom. But in marriage, two people will have different tastes and opinions. What if my husband’s free choices are not what I want? What if my wife’s tastes are distasteful to me? What if my spouse’s decision is downright stupid! Doesn’t that ruin my God-given freedom? If a partner seems bent on a distasteful course, a loving spouse may try to persuade—using reason, appealing to God’s Word, praying, and even requesting strongly—but ultimately must respect the spouse’s right to decide what he/she will do. Even love itself cannot be demanded, only offered.

Most people who are controlling are either unaware or feel it is justified because of their low view of their spouse. Think for a moment: **Do you respect your spouse? Or do you inwardly look down on him/her? If you do not respect your spouse as a person of great worth, you may feel perfectly comfortable and justified in controlling him/her.** You may think that you hide it well through

pleasantness. But most people are poor actors. If you control, your spouse feels it and others see it. You are treating your spouse as a tool to use instead of a person to love and honor.

How is this perceived by your spouse?

If your spouse is a man, he will probably feel that you lack respect for him.

If your spouse is a woman, she will probably feel that you lack love for her.

Either way, your actions send your spouse's heart the following messages:

“I don't care about you as a person. I am more worthy than you.”

“I don't care about your needs. My needs are more important than yours.”

“I don't trust you. The way I think is right is the only right way.

“I don't respect you. You are inferior to me.”

“You are just a tool for me to get what I want.”

“I am a user, not a giver.”

The attitude of control breeds resentment, fear, and disrespect, not unity or openness. You may win the battle of getting your own way, but you will lose the “war” of having a Christlike marriage.

Special Circumstances?

People often rationalize their controlling behavior in marriage. Wives may think: “I am so much smarter (or more spiritual) than my husband, I must control this situation, or he will fail.”

Husbands may think: “The Bible gives me the right to rule over my wife, so I will make sure that she only does what I tell her.”

Both of these are unloving and disrespectful attitudes, which do not reflect our status as children in Christ (1 Pet 3:7) or the model of Christ and the church, which Ephesians 5:21-25 describes. Think about the way that Christ loves and leads the church. Each respects and loves the other. He does not force her to do His will using His greater power. Instead He knows and serves her needs by offering His loving support and guidance. The church loves and submits to her Lord, offering her perspective in prayer and asking for His help and wisdom. She happily seeks to know and do what will please Him. She does not try to control Him to do what she wants. Even when expressing her desires in prayer, the church says “not my will but yours” (Mt 6:10). This is a model of a Christian marriage that eliminates controlling behavior.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Discerning Between Desires and Goals

Everything we do is because we want to. If we are conflicted, it is because we want two different things and have to decide which we want worse. A famous old comedian, Jack Benny, often told the joke that one day a robber pointed a gun at him, saying, “Your money or your life.” When he did nothing but sit drumming his fingers on his cheek, the robber was confused. “Well?”

Jack, famous for his miserliness, responded, “I'm thinking.”

We are not machines, which are programmed to act automatically. The Bible says we cannot serve two masters. We have to choose what to do (Mt 6:24-25).

What happens, then, when you have goals for what you want your spouse to do?

Goals for Your Spouse

You may deeply long for your spouse to meet certain desires that you have: for love, significance, sexual satisfaction, respect, and so on. The idea that your spouse will meet these desires may be a main reason you got married. When you walk according to the natural man, your primary desire is not for you to do something, but for your spouse to meet your needs. This desire takes precedence over your sense of desire to meet your spouse's needs (Gen 3:16; Prov 13:12). With good reason, however, you may be afraid that your spouse will not meet your needs well enough. What are you to do? Living according to that natural man, you will try to make your spouse meet your needs. But as we have seen, making your spouse do something does not lead to unity, and it is an expression of what Paul calls, "the flesh."

So if we want to walk in the Spirit, what should we do with the longings, big and small, for all the things that we really need or want our spouses to do? Things like these:

- I want my spouse to love me.
- I want my spouse to respect me.
- I want my spouse to pick up after himself.
- I want my spouse to prepare meals on time.
- I want my spouse to love my parents.

These objectives are desires, not goals. Why? Because they involve your spouse's free choice. Just as God did not stop Adam and Eve from eating the fruit, you must respect your spouse's right to make a choice, even if it is a bad choice. A goal is something that may be achieved by your own actions. Therefore, if someone else's action is involved, it is not your goal—it is your desire.

Goals are not only under my control, but they are also measurable. If my goal is to become a faster runner, I can get up early and run every day, eat healthy food, perhaps work with a coach to learn better how to run well. Next year, my stopwatch will reveal whether I am running faster than last year. A goal is both under my control and measurable.

Desires for Your Spouse

A desire is not the same as a goal. A desire is something that I want, but *I recognize that I cannot achieve it by my own effort alone*. For example, my desire might be to win a particular race held every year in my city. To fulfill this desire, I can have the goal of training diligently, but since others are involved, I cannot control the outcome of my training. My competitors must run slower than I do. If I try to control them—such as by wounding them to make them run slower—I will be disqualified. In addition to my competitors, many other factors, such as my genetics, my health, and my age, will affect whether or not I actually win the race. So I can desire to win, and I can work toward that desire with a series of goals that are under my control, but if I feel that I must control whether I win or not, I will be frustrated and depressed if I lose. If I try to take control of the others involved, I will be hated and disqualified.

Legitimate Desires Compared to Illegitimate Goals in Marriage

Let's look at this principle of desires versus goals as it relates to marriage. Why is it not a legitimate goal for you that your spouse should respect you more? The reason is that you cannot really control whether or not your spouse respects you, however much you may desire it. It is not in your realm of responsibility. If you make it your goal, and mistakenly see yourself as responsible for achieving it, you must turn to controlling means, such as crying, pleading, shaming—or to better performance, pleasing your spouse in every way, and at all costs, to try to cause your spouse to respect you. Then if your spouse does not achieve your "goal" by respecting you the way you desired, you will see your spouse as blocking your goal. The result is that you become frustrated and angry with your spouse, or depressed and angry with yourself, because you did not achieve your goal. Your controlling actions blocked unity and probably made it less likely that your spouse would make his/her own goal one of respecting you more.

Working With Your Desires in Marriage

When you desire something that you would like your spouse to do, start by offering the desire up to God. He directs circumstances and can speak to your spouse's heart. Ask Him to help you make legitimate goals (within your own realm) to do your part. But your goals cannot lapse over into controlling your spouse by limiting his/her choices illegitimately.

Check your progress. Whenever you become angry at or frustrated with your spouse, ask yourself "Was there a goal that I had made for my spouse? Should I have recognized that as a desire?" Once you recognize it must be a desire, what do you do differently with it?

Desires in Scripture

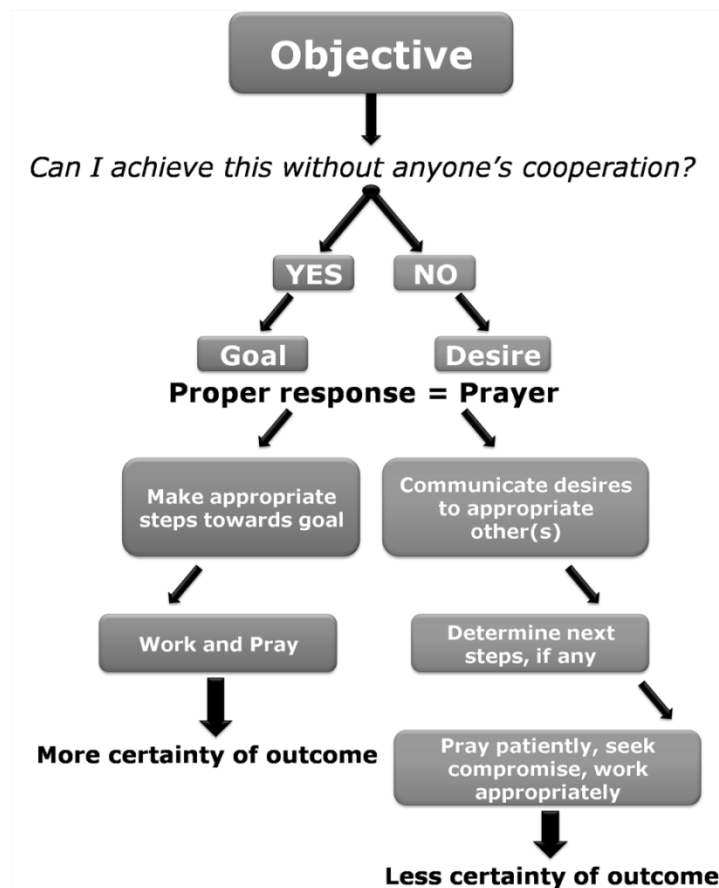
- Please read Romans 10:1.

What was Paul's desire? Can you see why this was a desire, not a goal? Was it a good desire?

According to this verse, what did he do about his desire?

According to what we know of Paul's life, what else did he do about his desire?

Please examine the following diagram:



Can you explain this chart to someone else?

Making Good Goals

Instead of making goals for your spouse, making goals for yourself can greatly improve your marriage!

For instance, if I want to have a better sexual relationship with my spouse, I can take the initiative to do many things that will help improve it. I can decide to do the following:

1. Pray and ask God to help me feel more sexually interested and to show me what is preventing it.
2. Take a nap before my spouse comes home.
3. Release any grudges in my heart by forgiving my spouse.
4. Think and pray thankfully about my spouse's good points.
5. Touch my spouse affectionately and frequently.
6. Tell my spouse what ways I would like to be touched sexually.
7. Plan a romantic environment.

All of these goals are things that are under my control and can help achieve my desire of feeling more interested in sex. The illegitimate options—to nag and complain to my spouse about our lousy sex life, to talk to my friends about it, to feel frustrated and discouraged while blaming my spouse for it—are all useless and even harmful.

Think about the things that you want in your own marriage relationship (or if you are single, in another relationship). Using the decision tree above, which ones are desires and which ones can be goals?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Steps to Deliverance From Control

How to restore unity in your marriage if controlling behavior has damaged it.

First of all, how will you know if the lack of unity in your marriage is caused, at least partly, by a problem with one or both of you trying to control the other? Please make a two-column chart headed “True About Me” and “Not True About Me.” Try to remember everything that you studied earlier about what controlling behavior is like. Go back through Topic 4 and the articles, if you need to refresh your memory. Write down symptoms on one column or the other, based on whether it is true of you or not. Underline your most common controlling behaviors. Now, what do you think? Are you controlling most of the time, none of time, or some of the time? Would your spouse say he/she feels controlled by you, at least sometimes? If you are not sure, go ask.

If you are controlling, do the following:

1. Ask God to forgive you for your lack of trust and dishonor of both Him and your spouse. Ask Him to show you what you fear that underlies your need to control.
2. Release your life to the Lord and trust that He can lead your spouse to make good choices too. You do not need to have control over every area that is important to you.
3. Ask your spouse to forgive you.
4. Ask your spouse to pray out loud that you would be delivered from this evil habit. Your prayer in itself is evidence that you are humble and truly desire change.
5. Give your spouse permission to tell you when you are transgressing in this way.

This is an essential part of your recovery from this bad habit. When your spouse tests to see if you are sincere, by admitting he/she feels controlled, don't defend yourself or try to explain it away (“I didn't mean ... You misunderstood ...”). The important thing is the way your spouse perceives it. It is not very important what you intended. If you have a history of transgressing against your spouse by being controlling, your spouse may be very sensitive about this issue. It is a “raw spot,” and even a light touch of control may feel painful. You will need frequent prayer for humility and grace to change. Consider individual counseling to help you to change.

Is Your Spouse Controlling?

Now you will look at your spouse. Based on what you have learned about controlling behavior, how often is your spouse controlling? If you are not sure, review or re-do the two-column chart that you made in the first paragraph above as it reflects your spouse's attempt to control you.

If your spouse is controlling, you can do the following:

1. Do not “fight fire with fire.” Realize that rebelling or arguing will only make it worse. Using other manipulative and controlling tactics yourself will only cause him/her to exert even greater control.
2. Decide prayerfully on appropriate boundaries for your own thoughts and behavior.
3. Pray for your spouse and ask God to show you the wounds and anxieties that are causing the need to control. Ask God to help your spouse let go of his/her habit of trying to control you. Pray for strength to be loving and courageous in dealing with your spouse.
4. Gently and humbly (without anger or animosity) tell your spouse something like, “I love you, but when you try to control me in [area], it is quenching the feelings of love and closeness that I want to have with you.” You may need to repeat and explain this several times before your spouse understands what you mean.
5. Try to meet his/her real needs—such as sexual needs, support, admiration—whatever you know them to be. Be an excellent husband or wife. Be your spouse's best ally.
6. Seek counsel from a couple who exemplifies the type of respectful and unified relationship that you want to have with your spouse. Consider individual counseling as well, to learn how to set appropriate boundaries for yourself.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Closest Time Produces Unity

- Please read Matthew 6:5-6.

Whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray while standing in synagogues and on street corners so that people can see them. Truly I say to you, they have their reward. But whenever you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.

Why is it that God insists that we talk with Him alone, away from all others? Because it is the communication during our time alone that develops intimacy and unity with Him. In our “prayer closet,” we can tell Him about our heart's concerns and listen to His wisdom and hear His tender love for us. We can enjoy our special relationship and come to unity about future plans. Closet time is essential to maintaining intimacy with Christ.

By contrast, the hypocrites mentioned in verse 5 really did not have a relationship with God at all, did they? But they used their appearance of an intimate relationship with God in order to raise their esteem in the community. Their prayers were all directed toward impressing others, not for communing with God. When we refuse to spend time with Him alone, it reveals the real state of our relationship with Him.



The Marriage Closet

Because marriage is a picture of Christ and the church, can you see the correlation between spending time in a prayer closet and developing intimacy alone as a couple? While a marriage that looks good in public is not a bad thing, it is the marriage conversation in private that reveals the true state of the relationship. The “closet time” determines if the couple is truly in unity, or if they only smile in public to give the false impression that they are close partners. Just as is true in your personal relationship with Christ, “closet time” in your marriage is absolutely necessary to developing and maintaining intimate unity.

Time alone is the centerpiece of the “one flesh” relationship described in Genesis 2:24. In the Song of Solomon, the married couple frequently retreat from public life to spend time alone together. It is a chief reason why God said that the husband must leave father and mother in order to cleave. As we saw in Lesson 1, neither Mom nor Dad can be allowed to be a pebble interrupting the close bond of husband and wife. The same could be said for sisters, brothers, children, and church elders! You cannot maintain unity if there is always someone else listening in on the relationship. In marriage, the most intimate of relationships, time alone together allows you to share intimate thoughts that others have no business overhearing.

Where’s Our Closet?

But in many situations, that “closet” is not easy to find, is it?

There are at least three primary reasons why couples neglect closet time.

1. **Too busy.** Time is your most precious commodity, and fortunately, everyone, rich and poor, old and young, has an equal amount. How you choose to spend time reflects what you value. If you consistently do not have time to spend with your spouse, it is a reflection that whatever else is taking your time is a higher priority. It is time to reevaluate your schedule and your priorities to determine what you will decrease, so that you can allow “closet” time to talk intimately with your spouse.
2. **Assuming the marriage can survive without it.** Anything valuable that you want to have will cost you in some way, and a good marriage is no exception. Marriage is like a bank account. You cannot withdraw what you have not placed in your account. Many people keep taking withdrawals, but are amazed when they suddenly realize that they are overdrawn. They need to be able to rely on the marriage when life becomes stressful, but they have not made the effort to build up the account. One of the main ways that you make deposits in your marriage account is through intimate time alone spent sharing your thoughts with each other.
3. **No private space.** It is common in most parts of the world for a number of relatives to live together, often in a small space. A young couple may, for economic reasons, live with the parents for a while and take in aging parents when they become incapacitated. As children enter the scene, it is even more difficult to find time alone, because the children need supervision. House walls may be thin, so that even if the children do not sleep in the same room, they can hear all conversation. Is it right to sacrifice marriage unity in order to meet the needs of children or parents?

Each situation is different, but cultural assumptions, such as who will live where, and who has the right of final decision, must always be subordinate to the guidelines of Scripture about unity between a husband and wife. If it is possible for a couple to live separately from parents, that is often easier on the marriage, especially if parents are not respectful of the couple’s primary allegiance to each other. If it is not possible to live separately, the couple must learn to create “closet time” in order to preserve the unity in their marriage. Even for a couple who live only with young children, these “closet times” are necessary to build intimacy.

Closet Design

What makes a good “closet”? A good marriage-building closet is a place where the following takes place:

1. No one who knows you can overhear your conversations.
2. You are both comfortable.
3. The surroundings are pleasant but not too entertaining (a movie or concert alone does not make a good “closet” because you cannot talk at length together).
4. You can concentrate on each other without big interruptions.

Here are some ideas that couples whom we know have done to create a “closet.”

- Long walks outdoors
- Long walks in a shopping mall
- Sitting in an apartment stairwell
- Gardening together away from others
- John and his wife, as you may remember from the story in Lesson 6 John’s Story, walked to a nearby tea house every morning in order to talk alone before starting the day’s ministry.

Tom and I instituted a habit of the once a week “date.” Our definition of a date was a time when we were alone in a pleasant place and could talk privately, without being interrupted or overheard by children or others. Some times in our married lives, we have had enough money to be able to go out for a meal or coffee or ice cream cones. But at other times, especially when we couldn’t afford to spend much money, we went to a park, rode on a ferryboat, walked by a river or shore, or even took the children to stay somewhere else and returned home for a pleasant time alone talking together. We also installed a lock on our bedroom door.

Couples with young children have come up with inventive ways to help each other to have closet time without spending extra money. Here are two examples:

Twelve Christian families with young children developed a “babysitting club.” Each family was referred by another family in the club, who could vouch for them as a Christ-honoring, safe family, but not all were from the same denomination. Every family who joined received fifty “tokens” to begin their membership. Anything cheap could be chosen as tokens, but we used metal washers, so we could store them on a string. The tokens were like “money” used to “buy” babysitting from other families. Every fifteen minutes of babysitting for one child cost one washer. Since I had two children, if I wanted three hours of time alone with my husband, I would need to pay twenty-four tokens. In order to arrange this, I looked at the list of members. The list gave each family’s information and how to contact them. When we agreed on a time, I would bring my daughters to the home of the other family for the evening. Of course, on different days, I also received children in my home and took care of them in order to earn more tokens. Through this, I got to know other Christian families, and my children enjoyed having new playmates.

Another set of young couples developed a “supper club.” Twice per month, one couple prepared a double amount of the evening meal, for themselves and for the other couple. They brought half of the meal to the home of the other couple. As they left the food, they picked up the other couple’s children and promised to bring them back at bedtime, or sometimes even the next morning. The next week, the other couple returned the favor. In that way, at least every other week, each couple could enjoy a pleasant meal alone together in their own home. Of course, if you have other relatives living in your home, it would take some effort in order to devise a way for them to also leave home for the same evening.

Couples “Closet” Retreat

At least a couple of times per year, or quarterly if possible, every couple should plan an extended time away alone, an overnight to several days. The agenda is to pray together, plan together, play together, rest and renew yourselves and your enjoyment as a couple so that your relationship can be strong enough to withstand the challenges ahead. If you can afford it, go to a resort or hotel, but if not, there are other ideas. To limit or eliminate expense, we have sometimes offered to stay in a friend’s house to care for it while

they were away. (When we travel in ministry, we offer our home to other couples too.) When we were young, we sometimes slept outside in a campground. If the weather is good, you don't need a tent, and the stars above are very romantic! If you have little money and great stress, pray for creative ideas. You will be guided to think more about a marriage retreat in Lesson 12.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Articles for Lesson 10: One Purpose in Every Situation

An Olympic Fairy Tale

Once upon a time there were three classmates in a small town who all dreamed of running in the Olympic games. Joseph, Miriam, and Solomon all dreamed of walking in the Olympic parade, then running down the track with other competitors from many countries. This dream motivated each of them to take different steps.

Joseph and Miriam discussed what they needed to do in order to become strong and to develop their athletic abilities. They ate only healthy food and got up before dawn to run through the hills around their town every morning. They competed in track meets around their region. Over time, and as they trained, their running speed became faster and faster. Eventually, they attracted the attention of an Olympic coach for their area. The coach offered to take them to a big city and prepare them for the Olympic tryouts.



But Solomon decided to take a different approach. He wanted to be in the Olympics too, but he would wait for God to be the one to put him there. Solomon sat at home every day dreaming and praying about being in the games. He tasted Joseph and Miriam’s healthy food, but he did not like it. It did not taste as good as the sweet and fatty foods that he ate. Nor did he like getting up early to run. In fact, he didn’t like to run once he started to perspire heavily. He would save it for when he was running in front of a crowd at the Olympics. Then, it would be worth the discomfort, but not when there was no one to watch him. So instead of running, he bought a video about the Olympics and watched it every day. He learned the names of the champions of the past and visualized himself running across the finish line, the crowd cheering as he raised his hands in the air. He prayed and prayed that God would call him to run in the Olympics, claiming Psalm 37:5, “Commit your future to the LORD! Trust in him, and he will act on your behalf.” He kept believing that God would send someone to invite him to run in the games and empower him to win. His faith faltered when Joseph and Miriam were invited to train for the Olympic tryouts. He was not happy for them, but glowered in front of the television, disillusioned with God because he had not been chosen.

At the training center, Joseph and Miriam worked harder than ever before: running all day; following the directions of the coach, lifting weights, eating only what the coach permitted. When finally the day came, they were prepared for the tryouts and ran their fastest. But Joseph was not among the top finishers. He had run well, but he would not join the Olympic team this time. Only Miriam went on to compete in the Olympics and then joined the staff of the Olympic coaching team.

Joseph returned to their small town. Solomon thought that Joseph’s failure proved his own choice not to train was a far superior choice. After all, Joseph’s work was a waste of time, Solomon thought. Just look how much he had suffered in training—and all for nothing. Joseph should have joined Solomon in watching the Olympic video and eating snacks.

But amazing to Solomon was the fact that Joseph continued running every morning. Joseph began to sense that perhaps God had a different idea for him than running in the Olympic games. He began coaching teenagers in the small-town high schools throughout the region with the running techniques that he had learned from the Olympic coach. They formed a running club, not only training but also studying God’s Word, learning healthy living habits, and praying for each other. Sometimes Miriam sent an Olympic athlete or coach to visit and inspire the kids. When one young man moved to the city, Joseph

helped him start a running club there and later a second club in the ghetto. Soon there were many running clubs all over the country teaching kids, not only how to run but also how to live as Christians.

Joseph never fulfilled his dream of running in the Olympics. But he was content and happy that he had fulfilled God's better dreams instead. Through him, God had begun a work that would help kids learn how to live healthily, stay out of trouble, and come to follow Jesus. Maybe one of them would someday fulfill Joseph's earlier dreams by going to the Olympics. Maybe Miriam would be his/her coach. And Solomon? Well, he was still watching Olympic videos and praying for someone to tap him on the shoulder to help coach at the Olympics.

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Wesley, My Life as a Single Man

A grand illusion out there says that you can't be happy unless you're married. I hear that especially of people who have recently been divorced. Their friends scurry around to find someone they can marry so that they won't be alone.

To be sure, God's norm is for people to marry, bear children, replenish the earth, and enjoy a wonderful relationship. Yet someone once said, "As wonderful as marriage is, and as much as it meets many of my needs, it isn't enough." That is, no earthly person or relationship can meet our deepest needs. Therefore, singles and marrieds alike face the same need to find their purpose and find their needs met in the Lord.

Because God's norm is for people to marry, singles face life in a different way than marrieds. Many singles find themselves often feeling sidelined in a society filled with married people. Singles are rarely invited to come to dinner at someone's home because they don't have a mate to match the couple that is inviting them. Churches have Sweetheart Dinners on Valentine's Day to which singles without partners are not welcome. On Mother's and Father's Days, singles have no place or recognition. Of all of the many days honoring different people in different stations in life, no Single's Day has yet been established to recognize the contributions that singles make to society. For these and other reasons, singles face life differently than marrieds.

How do Christian singles face their lot in life? Some put their life on hold until mates come into their lives. Others, especially younger singles, go from church to church and group to group seeking a mate. Some undoubtedly withdraw from social life because of the embarrassment it sometimes brings to be at social events as a single.

I can't name a specific time or place when I dealt with my singleness. As a non-Christian in high school, I never had the need to have a date every Friday night. I had a few girl friends, but I never felt the need to have a girl on my arm all the time. In college, after I became a Christian, I was in a fraternity that required us to have a date for all fraternity events. It was a good thing because it helped the shy men among us learn social skills and how to relate to women, even if a few dates were rather stiff and ill at ease. It was probably in seminary that I came to grips with my life as a single. Since I hadn't found a young lady in college to marry, I had to face the fact that it may not happen. Two main thoughts guided my thinking.

1. I would rather stay single than get into a bad marriage. Of course, no one knows at the outset if a marriage will succeed. But people often get married due to certain pressures, as from family. Sometimes they get married to get out of a bad situation at home. Sometimes they marry only to avoid being alone. Others have reservations about the ones they are dating or about to marry but are afraid to break off the relationship because it would be embarrassing. In other words, people often get married for something other than the loftiest reasons. I was determined not to allow that to happen. If I wasn't convinced that a person I was dating was the one I wanted to be with, I wasn't going to let other reasons overrule those feelings.

2. The more important decision that I made was to commit to God's purpose for my life. That gave me a straight-line goal to pursue that would always have eternal value. It would never be a wrong decision because all believers are expected to commit their lives to Christ with the same singular goal of serving Him, whether single or married. I trusted that, if He had someone for me, that person would come into my life at the right time and in a way that would lead to our getting married. If someone didn't come into my life, I would simply continue on with a life that had purpose in itself.

People sometimes ask if I am a "confirmed bachelor." I am not. As long as I can breathe and think and feel, I am open to the possibility of getting married. (I'm getting to the age where rich widows may become available!) But unless and until that time comes, I continue on with my life of purpose in ministry. Do I do that with a sense of resignation, with an "oh, well, if I'm not married, I might as well continue on in the same direction"? Absolutely not. I embrace my singleness and enjoy it. I think of all of the things I can *do* because I am not married. Not personally selfish things, but things in ministry, things to help others, and yes, things to enjoy. For instance, I happen to enjoy working late into the night and then getting up a little later in the morning. In my ministry, I need to travel from time to time. I can plan extra ministry or vacation activities into a trip. I can be as spontaneous as I want about anything I want.

Does that mean I wouldn't trade that in for a close relationship with a wife? No. But as Paul suggests in 1 Corinthians 7, if we are single, we are free to do anything and everything that the Lord has for us in ministry. If we are married, we have to give attention to our mates. I see giving attention to our mates as a wonderful prospect, and it can be seen as a ministry, yet it takes time away from preparing sermons, teaching lessons, and the like. I would enjoy living in Europe as I did once before. If I married, that move would have to be a shared decision. If I happened to marry a widow who had grandchildren, it would perhaps be impossible to consider living in Europe. Do I say that selfishly? No. It is merely a reality that being married entails.

I am thankful that I do not long to be married. I don't cry myself to sleep at night. I rarely feel lonely, though sometimes I recognize that I am essentially alone in life. I think this is partly because of my personality, but I also believe my commitment to God's plan for my life has given me a peace about my walk that keeps me from such yearning. Yet doesn't it sometimes hurt that I am not married? Yes. I think that is especially so when I see my brothers and sisters enjoying marriage, having the intimacy that would be wonderful to share, having children who are both their joy and legacy. I think of ways it would be fun to love a wife and encourage her, as well as to enjoy all that the femininity of a woman would bring to my life.

Mary, A Greater Love

Mary is a missionary in Africa, where she usually lives alone, except for the occasional short-term visitor. She enjoys rich and sometimes challenging relationships with the people of a different culture among whom she lives. Even though she loves the Lord deeply, she often experiences a great longing to be married.

She had enjoyed good friendships with brothers in the Lord in her home country and is attractive and cheerful. Many men have been interested in her over the years, but none have been the Lord's choice. Since her father and then her mother have died, she has been feeling quite alone in the world. Why hasn't the Lord sent her a husband to share the work in Africa? When she came back to her home country for a furlough year, she hoped that the Lord would show her a wonderful Christian man who wanted to return to Africa with her as a missionary. But at the end of several months, she returned to the base of her mission society alone. Could she go back to Africa, knowing how lonely she might be once again? She wrestled with this question in prayer with tears. On the last day of training at the mission base, she and the other missionaries stood together for their commissioning. They began to sing a familiar old song, "I have decided to follow Jesus, no turning back, no turning back."

She looked at the faces around the room. Many of them were, like herself, single women returning to mission posts alone. As they sang the third verse, they had tears rolling down their cheeks, yet their voices rose with determination and love: “Though none go with me, still I will follow; No turning back, no turning back.”

Mary returned to her work of sharing the gospel and encouraging a fledgling church in a Muslim part of Africa. In the past few years, she has undergone heat, loneliness, illness, and more than one frightening incident without having a husband at her side. I recently asked her to share her perspective. Here are some of her thoughts:

I just now read (your letter) and got choked up thinking about how worthy the Lord really is. I popped my head up and told him that with watery eyes. I’m privileged to serve him.

The only thing that comes to mind, as I think of being single, is that of Song of Solomon, and realizing that our Savior is passionate about us and is the best husband one could ask for, except of course, that He’s ‘the invisible man.’ That’s the hard part. I also have thought much this year about the fact that this world is so temporary and it seems Scripture points so much to living for the inheritance that is to come. It is indeed necessary to endure hardship on this earth. Hebrews 12:7-13 says:

Endure your suffering as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline? But if you do not experience discipline, something all sons have shared in, then you are illegitimate and are not sons. Besides, we have experienced discipline from our earthly fathers and we respected them; shall we not submit ourselves all the more to the Father of spirits and receive life? For they disciplined us for a little while as seemed good to them, but he does so for our benefit, that we may share his holiness. Now all discipline seems painful at the time, not joyful. But later it produces the fruit of peace and righteousness for those trained by it. Therefore, strengthen your listless hands and your weak knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but be healed.

I’m presently rereading a book about the good benefits of strength training by using weights on your wrists and ankles (increasing gradually the weight every week or so). You can actually build up bone (and muscle), which help with balance, thus avoiding falls, especially as you get older. My muscles are weak and thence my balance is poor. I am like an old lady when I crawl up into a truck, especially into the back seat of a 2-door Land Cruiser. Anyway, the Hebrews passage makes me think of the strength training. It can be painful and unpleasant to do, but when trained by it, the benefits are so good. You avoid becoming disabled (crippled up), but instead, you actually can bring healing, just as dumbbells and ankle weights lead to strong, healthy bodies.

Singleness and its challenges are not always easy, but can be hardships...the loneliness, not having someone to bounce ideas off of in making decisions, the shame or embarrassment of having no children and thus not being given much respect. But I now want to keep in mind the benefits of such hardships: growing a field full of stalks of righteousness and peace, and becoming spiritually strong and healthy!

Mary doesn’t realize it, but she is one of my heroes of the faith, who trusts Jesus to be both Lord and husband to her in a harsh culture and uncomfortable living conditions. But she experiences Him in a wonderfully intimate way.

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Singleness in the Bible

The Bible in 1 Corinthians 7 gives us two conflicting ideas about marriage and singleness. The two principles are as follows:

1. God designed people to be married, to have an intimate and monogamous relationship with a spouse in order to portray the relationship between Christ and the church. It is very important to have a spouse because it gives a proper outlet for the sexual desires that God created and helps one avoid sinful imaginations or actions. It provides a basis for raising up true worshippers for the next generation.
2. God designed the Christian to serve Christ as a single, with wholehearted devotion. It is good to remain single because it allows the person to serve God freely with less anxiety or concern if He sends him/her on dangerous or distant assignments. All of the emotions and service, which would be spent on pleasing a spouse, can be offered to God.

Can you find where Paul expresses these opposing points of view in 1 Corinthians 7? The fact that the apostle Paul expresses both points of view, suggests that both are true but applied at different times and in different situations to different people. Both lifestyles of singleness and marriage have joys and sorrows. An unhappily married person may wish desperately to be single and think that divorce will be happier, while an unhappily single person may wish desperately to be married and think that marriage will be happier. As Bible teacher Howard Hendricks once said, “Marriage is like flies on a screen door: those outside, want in. Those inside, want out.”

The New Testament refers to singleness as a *gift*.

- Please read Matthew 19:9-12.

Here, the disciples are confronted with Jesus’ seemingly impossible high standards for marriage. Jesus says that when you marry, it is to love and nurture one person until death. Divorcing a wife who displeases you is not permitted, contrary to the acceptable custom of saying “I divorce you” three times and sending an unwanted wife out the door. The disciples then conclude that perhaps it is better to remain single than to marry for life.

But Jesus explains that each person has one of two “gifts,” marriage or singleness. He then lists three types of people who have a gift of *singleness*. Jesus calls all three types “eunuchs,” because inherent in the call to singleness is a call to purity and to abstain from sexual activity, just as Jesus Himself did.

The three types of singleness that Jesus states are as follows:

1. Those who from birth are unable to have normal sexual relations. This appears to give some basis for homosexuality as having a genetic or congenital origin. But the solution that Christ gives is *not* homosexual marriage, but celibacy—becoming a “eunuch for Christ.”
2. Those who have “been made eunuchs by men.” That is, they experienced something in their lives that makes it impossible for them to have normal sexual relations with someone of the opposite gender. The prophet Daniel was most probably castrated by his Babylonian captors, and so would fall into this group. But this might also include other types of trauma, which make people psychologically unable to marry.
3. Those who choose to remain single and pure for the sake of God’s kingdom. Jesus was one of these. Paul was another. Can you think of others?

But why does Jesus *not* mention a fourth group—those who want to be married but have no opportunity to marry? Today, this is the largest group of single believers! Very few singles believe that they have an official “gift” of singleness. They reason that if they were gifted by God with singleness, then they would not struggle with sexual temptation. If they were gifted in this way, they would feel more natural contentment in their role and not keep wishing to be able to marry. But this is a false idea. The reason that Jesus does not list a fourth group is that everyone who is single falls into one of the other three categories.

Paul expounds on this principle in 1 Corinthians 7:1-39. He does *not* suggest that those with a “gift” of singleness (like himself) will *not* feel temptation, but that they will *not* give in to sin. Their suffering of loneliness and sexual frustration will be a good sacrifice to the Lord (1 Cor 7:1-8). He gives us the principle that it is better to marry than to “burn” with sexual desire (1 Cor 7:9). But this assumes that the person has a real choice to marry, which is not true of everyone. He would never, for any reason, say that it is permissible to have sexual relations outside marriage.

So, what if you “burn” for marriage and/or sexual expression, but have no prospects? What if you burn for someone other than your spouse? Or what if your marriage partner is unavailable or unwilling to satisfy your sexual needs? Doesn’t the fact that God designed you with a burning desire mean that you should do whatever is necessary to “stop the burn”? Of course not! Love yields all rights. Neither adultery, fornication, or sexual impurity of any kind are ever permitted for the believer (Rom 6:1-2; 1 Cor 6:12-20; Heb 13:4). Those who engage in sexual sins are listed among those who are “outside the Holy City” (Rev 22:15), so sexual promiscuity is not a small insignificant sin, which God might just overlook! Instead, God says to glorify Him with your body, which is a holy temple of a Holy Spirit. Your body no longer belongs to you (1 Cor 6:20). It was bought back from sin with an infinitely high price.

So if you find yourself among those who would like to be married, but have no good opportunity, you have at least four choices:

1. You can disobey God and marry against his will.
2. You can commit fornication through an illicit relationship or pornography.
3. You can put your life on hold while you wait for the right person.
4. Or you can recognize that you are single by God’s design for right now. It is not some accident of fate. You can choose to thrive and grow in your current situation, whether or not you eventually marry. Nothing can prevent you from glorifying God or from Him loving you, married or single.

Nothing in the Christian life suggests that all of our needs will be met on earth.

- Not all who hunger for enough food will be fed (1 Cor 4:11).
- Not all who are sick or handicapped will be healed (1 Tim 5:23).
- Not all who are falsely imprisoned will escape execution (Acts 12:2).

On the contrary, our discomfort on earth helps whet our appetite for heaven, where our desires will match exactly what God will provide for us.

Instead, this burning desire for marriage is an opportunity to surrender to the supremely powerful Holy Spirit, one of whose evidences is “self-control” and to develop increasing passion for the glory of Christ. A weak passion for Christ will not suffice, if your desires for relationship are strong! Let your strong desires prompt you to develop an even stronger spiritual passion to bring every aspect of your body and your life under Christ’s control. In an age filled with sexual images and unrestrained sexual activity, let your life demonstrate the power and the worthiness of Christ, by remaining pure and fully devoted to Him in your thoughts and actions.

Jesus said of our needs for food and clothing, that we must seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and then He will give what we need (Mt 6:33). If your singleness is temporary, you are best preparing yourself to be a marriage partner worth having.

- Someone to whom God would entrust His choicest servant to love and help through life
- One who has developed a close walk of obedience to God, proven character, skills in ministry, practical skills for domestic life, spiritual gifts
- One who has learned how to share another’s burdens, sacrificing for others, putting others’ needs before yourself

- Someone who can share thoughts in intimate friendships
- One who relates well to children

He may have someone just waiting for you to finish these and other preparations for the marriage and the ministry that He has for you together with someone else. Or, just as in our Olympic parable earlier, developing these skills and abilities will equip you for a rich and rounded single life. You will develop effective ministry and enjoy deep and satisfying friendships.

So, how do you live with the uncertainty that you do not know if you will ever be married? Or if you are married, if you will someday be alone again? You cannot live for tomorrow, either in fear of what bad might happen, or in anticipation of what you hope will happen. You can only trust God that He will be adequate for everything in the future and leave it in His hands. As someone said, “Bloom where you are planted.” Like our imaginary Joseph in the first story of the Olympic hopefuls, as you make the best of every situation and concentrate on training to glorify God, you will be best equipped for every good work, whether or not the work God has for you includes marriage (Col 1:10-12). If you are single, rest assured that it is not His will for you to be married right now. He has not lost control of your situation! It is time now to be relishing your opportunities for unfettered and wholehearted ministry.

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Choosing a Spouse

While happiness is a choice, it is much easier to be happy when you are married to someone with whom you are compatible. No one is perfect, but not everyone is designed by God to be your partner. In fact, there are more people out there who would be a poor match for you than whom you would enjoy spending your life with! In marrying, you are not only asking God to build your own heart a home, but also, more strategically, you are determining who will be the father or mother of your children. Your choice may affect many generations. If you are already married, it is wrong to look back and think about whom else you might have married. It is now God’s will for you to be faithful to and to love the spouse you have. Once you have given yourself in marriage, your vow is binding as long as he/she is willing to live faithfully with you (1 Cor 7:10-15). But if you are not married yet, how do you recognize the person that God has designed for you?

Do not look for a perfect man or woman. He/she does not exist this side of heaven! Instead look for one with the flaws that you are able to tolerate in order to enjoy the blessings of the enjoyable parts. For instance, my husband has very poor eyesight, and as a result, I must do some things that other wives do not need to do. Before I married, I had to decide if I was willing to take on those extra tasks. Once I made that decision, I have never looked back. He has been well worth any extra effort and I’m glad I married him! Ruth Graham, the wife of evangelist Billy Graham, shared that it was very difficult to be married to Billy because he was traveling so much of the time. But she said “I’d rather have Bill part-time, than anybody else full-time.”

Considering the Flaws

What if a prospective spouse has a habit of talking too much or very little? Or has a too cool or too warm personality? Or is not very smart? Or has wicked siblings? Or poor social skills? These are not biblical reasons to avoid marriage, but you must decide—if the habits never change, can you accept them with a loving attitude?

What about more serious flaws? During the courtship, you are typically seeing his/her absolute best. After you marry, you will spend plenty of time with this person at his/her worst! Make sure you know what the worst is! How will you observe them? Talk to others who have known the person for a long time. Put yourselves in stressful situations such as Christian service and work projects together, where you can observe how this person responds when he/she is tired, hungry, in a disagreement, disappointed, or

maligned by others. Some habits are more serious than mere idiosyncrasies. They indicate a sinful way of life. If the person is dishonest, greedy, hot-tempered, unreliable, sexually immoral, cruel, drunk, or takes drugs, for instance, the behavior can ruin the love and stability of your marriage and harm your children both directly and by example.

Can You Accept His/Her Parents and Siblings?

What are your potential in-laws like? There is no prohibition in Scripture about marrying a Christian person from a non-Christian or bad family, but you must observe how your potential spouse interacts with them. If there is conflict, will he/she stand with you, or continually side with his/her siblings or parents? My husband did not have Christian parents. In fact, I knew that my life of interacting with them would be difficult. But because I had no question that my husband would stand for the Lord and stand with me, we were able to deal with them together, as a united front without harming our marriage. Eventually they did receive Christ, and our relationship with them improved.

Nine Positive Characteristics of a Life Partner

So, once you've ruled out the things that you would not want to live with, what positive things are you looking for? Here are nine positive characteristics of a suitable partner. The one you marry should possess as many of these characteristics as possible:

- **Feels to you like a close relative whom you had never met before** (Gen 2:23). The term “bone of my bone” that Adam used when he first met Eve, refers to her being his nearest relative (see 2 Sam 19:12-13). When you get to know the one you are to marry, you should have a growing sense that you are kin to each other. In marriage, your one-flesh bond to each other must grow stronger and take precedence over your relationship to your parents, your siblings, and your children.
- **Seems unique and special above all others** (Song 5:16; 6:9). This should be the person that you can each introduce to your friends and family as Solomon and his wife did and say, “This person is wholly desirable. This is my beloved and my friend.”
- **Helps and encourages you to love and serve the Lord** (1 Cor 10:31). This person increases your walk with Christ and effectiveness for ministry. One of the reasons that we felt quite assured that we were to marry was that we were stronger in our faith and work for the Lord together than separately. Throughout our married life, we always spur each other onward to love and good works in Christ (Heb 10:24).
- **Demonstrates good character** (Tit 1:7-9; 2:6-8). These qualifications for a leader in the church are also appropriate qualifications for the one who will help lead your family. Your sons and daughters will look up to this person and follow his/her example. In 1 Thessalonians 5:22, Paul says that we are to avoid everything that appears evil. When you marry, it will appear to others that you approve of the things that your spouse does.
- **Exhibits the fruit of the Spirit, not the lust of the flesh** (Gal 5:19-22). Imagine your future home if one or the other of these lists is typical of your spouse's attitude. Which list do you want to have as the prevalent atmosphere in your relationship and home? How will these attitudes affect your children? Your parents as they age?
- **Is merciful and tenderhearted** (Prov 12:10). Observe the way he/she thinks about weak things who have no power to fight back. Does he/she try to protect the weak, have a hardened heart, or even enjoy harming them? William Wilberforce, the man whom God used to stop slavery in England in the 1800s, was also the founder of the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The Bible says that a person who lacks mercy to animals is an indication of an evil heart. Someday it will not be animals but your babies that your spouse must protect and nurture, not harm.

- **Honors Christ and avoids activities that bring shame to His reputation** (Eph 5:3-20). Note these say we are not to participate in things like sexual immorality, drunkenness, greed, nor to be deceived by the persuasive words of those who practice them. When we are attracted to someone, we are highly vulnerable to believe those “persuasive words,” aren’t we? If he/she says that all the bad behavior is in the past, it is of course possible that there has been a permanent change, but it is more probable that the change is motivated by a temporary desire to win your approval. If the person has hit you or hurt you, has been involved in sexual immorality (including pornography), gotten drunk, or used filthy words in the past, don’t be too quick to trust the change. Wait to make sure before you marry. Unless there is a long-term demonstration of change, these things probably will only return and intensify after a few years of marriage.
- **Loves you and is willing to lay down his/her own desires to sacrifice for you and to serve you.** Ladies, please read Ephesians 5:26, 28. Gentlemen, please read Titus 2:4-5. Love is not optional. It is the heart of Christian marriage. Some people have not learned to give themselves in love. Even in a relationship with one whom they find delightful, they marry only because of what they can get or need. These selfish types are guaranteed to bring pain to their spouses and their children.
- **Shares your core values** (Amos 3:3). In some areas of tastes, personality, or habit, you can both compromise. But you must come to agree on the values that deeply affect your life together: the Lord, children, in-laws, parents, standards of right and wrong, sexual relations, birth control, and where you will live. This means that you also need to feel comfortable enough with a prospective spouse to be able to discuss these core issues. If you cannot even discuss sensitive topics or areas of disagreement, you are not yet ready to be married.

Before engagement, you need plenty of time to talk, to observe, and to know his/her friends and family. An old English saying is “marry in haste, repent at leisure.” In Burma, the saying is “If you marry, build a pagoda, or make a tattoo, all are for life.”

Breaking Off a Relationship

What if you realize that the person you were thinking of marrying is not the right person? Breaking up is hard, but can be redemptive. Before Allison met Brinton, she met a young man whom she admired. He lived far away, so they exchanged phone calls and letters for several months. He talked like a godly man. But when he came to visit her, she quickly perceived that the man he purported to be was not who he actually was. She confronted him that his walk with the Lord was a sham. He was hurt, but went home and repented with tears before the Lord. Years later, he told her how her rejection had brought him to a complete dedication to Christ and later to full-time ministry. So don’t hesitate to say “no” until you see the walk with Christ that you desire in a marriage partner. God can use it in each person’s life for good.

Are You the Right Person?

Of course, more important than finding the right person to marry is to become the kind of person that an excellent person would want to marry! Go back through the list above and see how you meet up to these criteria for a good spouse. If you are not there yet, pray about how you will get there. Even if you are already married, it is time to step up to all that God wants for you to become.

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Discerning God’s Will

So, you have found a wonderful person. How do you discern God’s will about whether this is your intended spouse, or someone else’s? Is this the right time for marriage? The decision is not markedly different from other important decisions that you have made in your life. Only the payload is far heavier

and will change your life forever. If you have sought God's will in the past and come to a good conclusion, this may be review. If you have made some missteps, this is a good time to reevaluate how you recognize God's leading.

In Scripture, we see many ways that God's people have determined His will for their lives. Some things, like the Urim and Thummim on the high priest's vest (Lev 8:8), are no longer available to us. But we have many other ways by which God communicates His will. Let's look at some of the ways. Remember He wants you to know His will even more than you want to know it!

- **Psalm 119:105.** One way we know God's will is through a prayerful and submissive reading of Scripture. The Holy Spirit will lead us to truths that apply to our situation. If two or more people are all seeking God's will through Scripture, it is helpful to meet together to hear what verses and what principles God impressed on each of them.
- **1 Corinthians 16:12.** Sometimes we can spend time pining for something or someone that we will never have the opportunity to marry. Perhaps he/she is already married. Perhaps he/she is a famous leader who does not know you at all. If God has not made an opportunity for you to know each other, or the person has shown no interest in you, don't keep asking God if you should marry this person! This seems elementary, but I have known many people (including myself as a single, young adult) who asked God whether a certain person was destined to be my spouse long before there was even a close friendship! This is a mark of immature fancy, not mature faith.
- **Proverbs 15:22; Ephesians 6:1-3; Hebrews 13:17.** What do the wise older people in your life say? Consider the opinion of your parents. Even if you are an adult, you still need to honor them, even though, as we saw, complete obedience is no longer required. What about your pastor, elder, or teacher? If someone objects or cautions you, don't disregard the advice and wisdom. If you are still sure this is God's choice, let it be a warning that you need to wait, pray some more, and proceed very slowly. Seek to understand what would relieve the doubts and seek to change those things. Perhaps wiser heads see some character flaw in one of you more clearly than you do. You will benefit greatly from their blessing, so do not be hasty in proceeding without it.

Allison and Brinton, our married children, felt strongly that, because they had godly Christian parents who knew them well, one way that they would know if each other were God's choice was their parents' approval. They decided that if any of the parents objected to the person, they would stop seeing each other immediately. There was great confirmation in the fact that all of us parents agreed that they were perfectly suited for each other.

- **1 Peter 2:13-14.** Is it legal to marry this person? We must submit to the laws of our rulers, unless it would be sin to obey them, such as if the government commanded us to murder or commit idolatry. The godly Hebrew midwives of Exodus 1:17, for instance, disobeyed an evil government bent on murder.
- **Psalm 37:4.** Do you really want to marry this person? Sometimes in our eagerness to obey the Lord, we forget that He promises to give us our desires. This has a dual meaning. When we seek to please Him, He puts desires into our heart and then secondly He also fulfills those desires. If you do not desire to marry the person, but still think that you should marry, wait and ask God to give you the love and desire for him/her. Your future wife ought to have one who will love her as Christ loves the church. Your future husband ought to have a wife who will love him as the church loves Christ.
- **Isaiah 30:21; Acts 13:2; 15:22, 25.** God's people have often engaged in prayer and fasting individually and together in order to seek the Lord's wisdom. During these times of concentrated devotion to the Lord, He often reveals His will more clearly. So if you are unsure whether it is the right person and the right time, seek the Lord and ask others to seek the Lord with you. Consider

fasting or going away to a quiet location to ask for guidance. Share with each other your thoughts of what the Lord is impressing upon you.

- **1 Corinthians 7:26.** Consider circumstances. Paul felt that given the current circumstances, it would be more difficult to be married than to be single. What are the circumstances in your life—schooling, financial, living arrangements—that tell you that it is a good or bad time to get married?

But what if some of these indicators show that the time is not right? If your answers to the above areas are mixed, perhaps it will take more prayer and guidance from a more mature believer to understand whether God is saying “yes,” “no,” or “wait.” If the time is not right, and your beloved begins to pressure you with “We must get married right away because I cannot have sexual self-control!” this is not a sign of deep love. What he/she is saying is “I cannot be filled with the Spirit. I cannot depend on the Lord to help me remain pure. I am not willing to put myself in a situation under supervision where I will not have opportunity to sin against you.”

The pressure is an indication that he/she is most interested in marriage for self-satisfaction. This person is not yet ready for the self-sacrifice of marriage. You both must realize that having a spouse does not guarantee that your sexual desires will be always satisfied. Marriage requires frequent self-control! As Tom has often pointed out, it requires greater self-control to refrain from making sexual advances to a wife who is lying next to you when the time is not right than the self-control required before marriage. A helpful saying to remember is “Love can always wait to give. Lust will not wait to get.” What you should hear from one who will be a faithful spouse is “it is hard, but you are so worth waiting for. I will wait for you as long as is necessary.”

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Your Culture and Finding a Spouse

Is there a biblical method of selecting a spouse? The Bible gives us many unusual examples.

- How about sending a trusted friend to go “look for” a wife for your adult child (Gen 24:1-67)?
- How about seeking out a sleeping man after a drinking party and suggestively curling up at his feet in the dark (Ruth 3:6-8)?
- How about waiting for an angel to tell you whom to marry (Mt 1:20)?

God may have a unique way of introducing you to your life partner, but there is not one “biblical” method. Each culture influences the way that we interact with eligible single members of the opposite gender. In the West, the tradition for the last 100 years or more has been primarily dating, and then letting the couple choose for themselves who and when to marry. But as those in arranged marriages are quick to point out, letting people make a totally independent selection apart from family input has not improved the Western divorce statistics.

Arranged Marriage

In some cultures, parents of young children sign a marriage contract, motivated primarily by financial or political advantages. For instance, neighboring farmers might contract that their babies will someday marry so that their two adjoining farms can become one big farm. What’s wrong with this? This practice assumes that children are possessions of the parents and that being a husband or wife is just a job description. This is not a biblical point of view! In many cultures, unmarried adults feel such pressure to produce offspring to inherit land or to carry on the family name, that they go against the clear instructions of the Lord and marry an unbeliever and, thus, bring misery to themselves and their children. These ideas, while culturally common, are not in line with the Christian understanding of marriage

In Burma, one young woman I know had a marriage arranged by her parents. The prospective groom was not a believer, but was very wealthy and lived abroad. The young woman refused. Her parents beat her, reasoned with her, shamed her, and did everything they could devise to force her, yet she refused, knowing that it would not be God's will for her to marry an unbeliever, no matter how rich. Finally, the parents begrudgingly had to break the contract with the man who wanted to marry their daughter. Less than a year later, he died of AIDS. If she had married him, she would be dying too.

Christian families often arrange marriage for their grown children with the best intentions. Christian young people are scarce, and parents feel responsible to make a suitable match. In one class of middle-aged women in Asia, I inquired how many students had marriages arranged for them. About a third raised their hands. They were quick to tell me of the benefits: They had to work harder to get along with each other and just do their duty compared to couples who married for love and had higher expectations. After they were finished, I asked if they would then be arranging marriages for their kids? They looked shocked and said loudly in unison "No!" I learned later, that despite a godly effort to make the best of the situation, each woman harbored an enduring sense of shame. Her husband had not chosen her because he knew and delighted in her, but because he was told by his parents to marry her. All of them would have preferred to be chosen by their future husbands. As you saw earlier, this is important to the heart of a woman—to be seen as delightful and desirable. If couples must submit to an arranged marriage, it is important to learn to love and express delight in each other, even more than for couples who were allowed to choose each other.

An Arranged Introduction

So how can parents and other relatives and friends help Christian singles find each other, especially in a place where there are few Christians? An arranged introduction between the man and woman, with the couple and the family having plenty of time to know each other and to decide if this is God's will, is usually a better method.

Whatever method you use to meet a prospective spouse, it is essential to keep in mind a wise understanding of people and of the dynamics of marriage. Every man and every woman who love the Lord are not designed to be married to each other. Men and women are unique, not universal parts stamped out on an assembly line to fulfill certain roles as husbands or wives or links to join two bank accounts, two farms, or two ministries. Marriage in God's Word is the joining of two souls who are unique and precious in His sight, a physical, emotional, and spiritual joining in love that goes beyond sharing a home, livelihood, sexual relations, and offspring.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Rajiv and Sonia's Story: Modern Marriage in Traditional Culture

Rajiv and Sonia met in 1990 at Union Biblical Seminary in Pune, India. They were both of Indian origin and born in India, but he was a U.S. citizen and had been raised mostly in the U.S. Sonia had never been outside India. How did the Lord bring them together?

RAJIV: "I went to India in 1989 to study at the seminary. I was not looking for a wife, but was not closed to the possibility." Although Rajiv was attracted to the vivacious Sonia when he first saw her at the seminary, he did not step outside the acceptable customs of the culture there. He had learned from Indian friends that the seminary expected the unmarried men and women never to talk more than a few minutes in public and never in private. Even married couples were discouraged from being exclusive in public.

SONIA: "Rajiv had been asked to bring me regards from a friend in Mumbai, where he had been an intern at a church. But respectfully, he came to greet me with his female classmates, lest he be too

“forward” in getting to know me. He brought the message and that seemed to be the end of it. Neither one of us talked to the other after that.”

But Rajiv was intrigued. He continued to observe Sonia and to learn about her from others. Finally, he asked a male friend of Sonia’s, Raju, to become their mediator. This was not a small step. In India, you don’t show interest if you are not pursuing marriage.

SONIA: “Raju was like my big brother, so it was quite acceptable for him to talk to me. But when Raju told me that Rajiv was interested in pursuing a relationship with me, the news took me by surprise. Just by observation, one can tell that we are opposites in many ways. He is a very quiet and a “deep” person, while one would say that I cannot stop talking given the opportunity! Well, I said that I would pray about it and would inform my parents too. He was quite taken aback by that, as Indian children do not normally tell their parents about their interest in someone. It is seen as the parents’ role to arrange relationships for them.

“But I had grown up in a Christian home that had been exposed to cultures of various kinds. My father was a pastor and the head of a small Bible school. They had told me that I would be included in the momentous decision of choosing a husband. But, when I told them about Rajiv, my parents wrote back that I had gone to seminary to study, so my job was to study, not husband-hunt! I was to wait until I got back home to talk any further about it. I wasn’t offended, because I knew they only wanted the best for me. Being in ministry, my parents’ reputation is fragile, so I needed to heed what they thought appropriate. Also I knew that someday I would be in ministry, so I was also building my own reputation that I would live with for a long time.”

Sonia would not go home for three months, so to honor her parent’s wishes, she avoided Rajiv, which put him into confusion. She did ask a few friends some basic questions about him and quietly observed his manner with other people. He wrote her three letters, which introduced himself and explained what he wanted to do with his life. But she dared not reply, because of her parents’ instructions. Finally, when he realized that she would be leaving school without responding to anything that he had written, he mustered up the courage to ask her what was going on. She politely and briefly explained about her parents’ instructions. She promised to write to him at least once. She took his three letters and left.

SONIA: “After reading the letters, my parents wanted to know more about him. So, as is the custom here, they wrote to people who knew both families. The replies about Rajiv’s character were all glowing! So, my parents allowed us to begin exchanging letters and summoned Rajiv to come to “see” me at home. So for five months, we visited by letter until August, when he came to meet my family.” When word spread to Sonia’s relatives that a potential bridegroom was coming, two aunts and a cousin came too. They were eager spectators from the couch as the family made small talk with Rajiv. But when they realized that a formal engagement was not imminent, they left.

SONIA: “After bringing tea, Rajiv and I got to sit down and talk undisturbed. We already knew some things about each other from our letters, but we also had developed lists of questions. At the end of our mutual questioning, we decided that we wanted to continue the relationship. But I still can’t say that my heart was involved. There isn’t much of an emphasis on this business of having to ‘fall in love’ in our society. We are taught that we will learn to love the person we marry, and we marry intending to stay married for life. I think that’s why there are lower divorce rates in India. Both people have the mind-set that they will need to sacrifice for the other, especially the wife for the husband.”

But there was one catch. Although both wanted to settle in India, Rajiv did not want to change his citizenship from U.S. to Indian. He wanted to easily return to America, if his mother needed him. So, the couple sadly decided that it would be best not to have any contact with each other until they could find out if he could live in India as an American citizen.

SONIA: “It took him over a month to find out that he could live in India and that was probably the hardest period in our courtship. After that, he had a chance to come and visit me at home again, and this

time he was not being sized up. He was a member of the family, accepted as my future husband! So we could talk freely, pick out rings, and even hold hands when crossing the street. We were still students at the seminary, but because I was on internship, I lived away from campus. When I returned to campus in January, we had letters from our parents informing all administrative and other staff of our parents' acceptance of our relationship. Because the number of girls is way lower than boys at seminaries, any that are "picked" are not seen in a good light if all they do is spend time with their intended husband. We talked about how we would behave on campus even though we were unofficially engaged. By "unofficially" I mean that we had not had the customary betrothal ceremony. So, with the permission of our advisors, we wrote to each other once a week. We only saw each other in passing, but in our letters we could share our thoughts and our dreams for the future."

When Rajiv graduated that April (1992), the two families held the official engagement ceremony. Like the ancient Hebrews, the engagement ceremony was very much like a wedding. With Sonia's father officiating, they exchanged vows to keep themselves holy for each other and exchanged rings. The families exchanged gifts. Then Rajiv left for the U.S. to go to work and save to pay for the wedding. Sonia's budget only permitted the luxury of one postage stamp per week, but they used their weekly letter exchange to work on a premarital counseling course as well as to express their growing feelings for one another.

SONIA: "We saw each other at our wedding, one year, one week, and one day later. This past June, we celebrated fourteen years of having been married."

They have spent most of their married life in America, as Rajiv has pursued advanced degrees and is now teaching at a seminary. They sometimes travel to India to teach, and hope someday to live and minister there. When asked about the process that they used to select a mate compared to the typical American pattern of dating, Rajiv had strong opinions.

RAJIV: "There is nothing major that I regret about the process we took except that the long periods of separation were hard. Regarding my sons, I am absolutely against dating. I would like them to discuss their interest and the marriage process with us. They are welcome to mention names to us of women that they are acquainted with or would like to become acquainted with, but only if they are serious about marriage. Assuming our sons know the Lord at the time of marriage, we would seek for godly Christian women. No alone time in private with any woman. I realize all this will be difficult in the U.S., but I pray for the best outcome."

SONIA: "Even being married to 'Mr Perfect,' if it were not for my walk with the Lord, I probably would be an unhappy woman. Marriage is hard work and it doesn't come easy. We have had our share of disagreements, and my pride has come in the way of my sacrifice. On the other hand, once worked at, marriage has many rewards and is worth protecting with all it takes. To have a happy marriage, one must know that marriage is not all about oneself. And it is essential to have a solid relationship with the Lord. Those things will cause all else to fall into place."

Brinton and Allison's Story

By Brinton

My parents always prayed for the wife that God would have for me. As I grew up, I also began praying for God to bless and care for my future wife and to reveal her to me at the proper time. As I prayed, I itemized all the things that I wanted in a wife. One day, the Lord showed me that I needed to be preparing for her too, so I added preparing myself to my prayers. But as I got older and experienced friendships with young women, I began to have doubts. Was there really one special woman for me?

One night, I lay down on my bed, thinking of my doubts. I was in university, and that day I had helped to move a television. It fell from the cart and shattered. I kept mentally replaying the crashing sound the

television had made as it fell to the ground. What would happen now? Lying on my bed, I knew that I could trust God with helping me pay for the television set, but when it came to a wife, I was not so full of faith. He had not come through.

I had come to college with a half-hearted commitment to purity that had kept me from engaging in intercourse but had not prevented me from getting involved too physically with girls that I knew were not God's choice. It was only in one of those relationships that I suddenly realized the possible impact on my future marriage. I realized that God had designed these standards because they were good. I was now pursuing purity with all my heart and had learned, like David, to love God's law, Psalm 119:97. But where was my wife? Did she even exist?

I thought of the book hidden under my bed. Whenever my longings had become intense, I had written my future wife a letter, just like a soldier in a war. I shared with her the memories I wish she could have shared with me. Instead of just praying, I now wrote out prayers for her to read later. I composed songs and crafted poems to more fully express how I felt. Through my secret notebook, I had given this mystery girl my heart. But could I wait for her and believe in her long enough to find her?

I believe all people seek true love. Like the pearl of great price, it is prized above wealth, happiness, and contentment. That night on my bed, I realized that the true love I sought could only be found if I sought God first and gave him complete control in choosing my future wife. He knew me intimately. He knew exactly what I needed in a wife more than any human person. So that night, I submitted even my corners of unbelief to Him. I didn't want to date more girls just to find out that none of them was the one God had for me. I just wanted to find her. But how would I know I had found her? Would God cast a ray of light down from heaven to indicate his choice? I would just have to trust and see. I fully gave up to Him my desires to be married.

Three years later, I went to seminary to train to become a pastor. My father asked if I thought I might find a wife there. I said, "No, Dad, I have no expectations. I am going solely to study God's Word." After three years since committing my heart's desire to God, yet with no glimmer of hope, I was resigned to staying a bachelor. Isn't it funny how God likes to surprise us with something wonderful when we are least looking for it?

A week before school started, I arrived at my apartment and began to unpack. I met a young woman that I quickly felt attracted to—not just because she was pretty, but because there was something about her spirit and personality that arrested my attention. Looking back now, I believe it was the Lord, shining that ray of light from heaven just as I had imagined. I wondered, what did this girl, Allison, think about me?

In the first week of school, there were many social events for students to get to know one another. Allison and I spent a lot of time talking about our history, our family, our hopes for future ministry. I realized that she was a woman who loved the Lord very much and wanted to serve Him. But I still did not know if she was the one God had for me. Did our gifts fit well together? Were we headed in a compatible direction? Did we have similar views on politics, marriage, and theology? Would there be other issues that would constantly be a source of bitter contention? Was this the right time for her and for me to pursue a serious relationship? And the most important question for me was, would we be more effective serving the Lord together than apart? I only wanted a relationship with her if our relationship would delight God's heart and give Him glory. So I knew I must hold our friendship with an open hand and let God control it completely. If God led us to walk toward a closer friendship, we would. If He told us it was time to back away, we would do that also. I had to put aside the fact that I found her attractive until we knew His will.

I told Allison all that was in my heart, both for her and for the Lord, and I was pleased to discover that she felt the same way. I then asked if we could pray for forty days to seek God separately. We would ask Him to reveal if He would be pleased for us to develop a friendship—one that could possibly lead to marriage. We decided that during this period we would spend no time alone together so we would not become physically or emotionally attached before we knew the Lord's direction.

Allison was in the same program as I was in seminary, so we had almost every class together, lived in the same building, and shared the same group of friends. During the forty days, the Lord gave us plenty of opportunity to become acquainted without being alone. Privately, we sought the Lord in many ways. We prayed. We observed each other's character in the way we each interacted with friends, teachers, and family. We met separately with the mature Christians around us to discuss whether they saw a good fit between Allison and me, to ask the married ones questions, and to pray. I even met with the dean of the seminary. They all encouraged our relationship. From my actions, Allison could see that I was serious and was not going to suddenly lose interest. I was showing her that she could trust me to honor her, to wait, to pray, and above all, to desire what God wanted for us.

Another important component of determining God's will was our parents. If they were not in hearty approval, then I would not pursue a deeper relationship with Allison. During the forty days, my parents visited the school, and Allison met them. They liked her. She liked them too. I telephoned Allison's father asking for his permission to pursue a relationship with his daughter. (She had already told him a great deal about me, so I was not a stranger.) Both sets of parents gave us their blessing to continue the relationship, so it was another confirmation.

At the end of the forty days, we met again and talked about what God had shown us. God hadn't spoken audibly to tell us to deepen our friendship, but what we did discover was that the more we learned about one another, the more we could see how we fit well together. We complemented each other in ministry, enjoyed being together, had similar views on anything we could find to talk about, and our dreams and goals meshed. We could even see how each one's strengths balanced the other's weaknesses. For instance, I do not enjoy administrative tasks, but Allison delights in them. Allison is quiet and subdued in large groups, and I am very at ease. The result is that she feels more comfortable in crowds when we are together. The few areas where we saw things from a very different perspective were enjoyable, healthy, and made life interesting. For example, I felt that the most important thing about money was to give it away generously (Deut 15:10-11). While Allison didn't disagree, she was motivated also to have some savings and to be financially responsible (Prov 21:20). Our motivations balanced each other.

As we continued to walk forward into the next phase of our relationship, the Lord smiled on us. We began spending more time together, and we grew by relating to others as a couple. We asked a married couple, deans at the seminary, to meet with us to counsel and prepare us for marriage. They gave us some personality evaluation tests and helped us to realize our personality differences and how these differences would create conflicts in marriage. But they also showed us healthy ways of dealing with conflict so that both of us could express our points of view in order to come to an agreement peaceably. We communicated with each other's parents and visited them. When I asked her parents, they conferred their blessing for us to marry. So near the end of the school year, with a glorious God-painted backdrop of a spectacular sunset on the mountains behind us, I knelt and asked Allison to be my wife. Someone even happened to be nearby who offered to take a photo.

I was overjoyed when she said yes, not only because I would finally be married but also because I knew that she *is* the exact one the Lord had chosen for me—the one my parents had prayed for all those years ago. The relationship God had prepared for me was more beautiful than I had ever dreamed.

I am now working to earn a living as an engineer while Allison is attending medical school to become a doctor. In a few months, we plan to return to the seminary, so that I can complete my training to be a pastor. Each day as we learn to love the Lord more fully, He teaches us how to love each other better. We look forward to one day having children and watching God unfold his story for them like He did for us. Because the Lord taught me to pray for Allison before we met, we now pray for our unborn children and their future spouses. I look forward to seeing His wonderful answers for them, just as God answered my parents' prayers for me.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Su Lan's Story

Su Lan is thirty years old. She has never married, but has been busy serving the Lord for the last ten years as a traveling evangelist. Sometimes she feels lonely and wishes to have a family of her own, but when she was younger, there were few single Christian men in her church. Now all of the Christian men she knows are married.

Her farmer parents, who are not believers, are very unhappy that she has not married. She keeps saying that if God wants her to marry, He will provide a husband who is a believer. Last month, she once again declined the man they chose for her. They go to the elders of her church and explain their frustration. “Our daughter is dishonoring us. We only have one child. She must produce an heir for us to keep the land in the family. What kind of religion is this which causes her to bring shame to her family?”

The elders are sympathetic. They agree to tell Su Lan that she must marry the man her parents have picked out for her, a widower who lives adjacent to their farm. The man is not a believer, but he has a large farm with good land. Since she is an only child, she will inherit their land which could then be joined to his and would pass on to their grandchildren.

But, the elders are concerned for the work of the Lord. Su Lan is a very successful evangelist and has planted many churches throughout their country. They make an agreement that Su Lan will only be forced to live with the neighbor until she produces a son. Then she will return to her itinerant ministry. He agrees to provide for her support. The parents will help raise the son. It sounds like a successful resolution, and the parents, the elders, and the neighbor all go home satisfied with what they have worked out, which will benefit all of them.

But when Su Lan returns to the city, she is shocked that everyone has brokered this arrangement. How can she marry this farmer? She has nothing in common with him, especially her faith in Christ. If she has a son, according to their agreement, he will not be raised as a Christian. What if she becomes pregnant with a girl—will he force her to have an abortion or abandon her? What if she never becomes pregnant? These thoughts torment her. But she also wants to honor her parents and her elders, who think this is best for her. She is very torn between commands in Scripture that say to honor her parents and her elders, and the commands that say she should not marry an unbeliever. What should she do?

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Honoring Marriage

From Genesis 2:21-25, we have seen that God intends a couple not only to get married (stop being separate), but also to become “one flesh” with a spouse. This expression “flesh” is good because if you have one living creature and try to pull it or cut it in half, does it survive? No, both halves die. Similarly, if you take two pieces of paper, glue them together (remember the word “cleave” means to glue), and let them dry, what happens if you try to take them apart again? Both surfaces are a mess with clinging bits of the other half and holes torn in both. Similarly, when divorce happens, it is impossible to have a “clean break.” The memories, habits, friendships, and most important, the children, continue to join you together painfully in spots just like the torn papers. God created marriage as a permanent joining together. Honoring your marriage covenant is an expression of your love for God and your faithfulness to Him.

- Please read Hebrews 13:4.

Defiling Marriage

What should be your attitude toward marriage, both your own and others? Hebrews says to honor it in all your relationships. What does it say is the ultimate dishonoring of marriage? It is through defiling the “marriage bed.” This Greek word, *koitee*, means the sexual relationship in marriage. It goes on to describe two ways that the “bed” can be defiled. One is through adultery—that is, sexual relations when at least

one partner is married to someone else. The other way mentioned is through “sexual immorality.” In the original Greek, this word is *porneia*, the root of the English word “pornography.” *Porneia* includes any activity that is unclean and sexually immoral—homosexual behavior, lustful thoughts, viewing pornography, and specifically, sexual relations between two unmarried people.

Honoring Before Marriage

When someone does not keep himself/herself a pure virgin before marriage, it dishonors his/her marriage bed. The purity is not only emotional and spiritual, but often physical as well. Someone who has not stayed sexually pure before marriage may infect the new spouse with a deadly disease such as AIDS or an unclean disease such as herpes or vaginal warts. What a tragic ending to what should be a happy occasion of consummating a marriage. Just as Esau wept about selling his birthright because he could not reclaim it, if you are single, preserve your sexual purity. It is your precious birthright. Honor your future marriage bed.

A Capital Offense

How serious was God about keeping the marriage bed pure and the marriage intact? In ancient Israel, all these sexual sins were punishable by death:

- Leviticus 20:10-11; Deuteronomy 22:22, adultery
- Leviticus 20:13, homosexual acts
- Leviticus 20:15, bestiality (sex with an animal)
- Deuteronomy 22:24, sex before marriage when engaged to someone else
- Deuteronomy 22:25, rape (death for the attacker, not the victim)

Forgiveness

Even serious sins are not beyond God’s grace. Jesus does not insist on execution for adultery, as under the old Law. In John 8:3-11, we see Him refusing to condemn to death a clearly guilty, adulterous woman. But neither does He condone her sin. He warns her not to sin any more. In 2 Samuel 12:13-14, because of his contrite repentance, David was forgiven for his adultery with Bathsheba. The prophet said that David would not die as he deserved but that his baby would die. Yet later, another child born of this union, Solomon, became the heir to the throne. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, you can see a list of the former lifestyles of believers. Some had been homosexuals, some adulterers, and some fornicators. But when they became believers and were forgiven, they adopted a standard of purity and no longer engaged in these sexual sins, which dishonor marriage.

Cleansing From Past Experiences

Some of you may have been sexually molested by another person. Even though the physical act that happened may have made you feel defiled, in God’s eyes you have kept yourself pure. You are not under His condemnation, but His compassion. Or perhaps you have remained technically a virgin but have been impure in your thoughts or active in sexual behavior short of sexual intercourse. Or perhaps you have been one of those on the list from 1 Corinthians 6 who was fully engaged in serious sexual sin. Ask God to cleanse you from all of your sexual sins, thoughts, and memories. Purpose that you will now keep yourself pure for your marriage bed. You will be portraying the church, who was *not* spotless to begin with but enjoys a purity based on forgiveness and hope. Once saved, she keeps herself pure as she waits to be joined to her Bridegroom (Rom 8:25; Eph 5:23; 1 Thess 1:10).

Honoring Marriage in Your Thoughts

- Please read Matthew 5:27-30.

How else do you show that you honor marriage? By having the right attitude when you look at others. Lust like this passage describes is not merely noticing that someone is attractive. In verse 27, the verb translated “look” is not just to glance, but to keep on watching intentionally. It is a purposeful gazing, not just someone that happens across your path. On his way to the Bible School each morning, one of my teachers, Dr Willard Aldrich, had to pass a club with a sign showing a naked woman. He said that he kept his thoughts pure as he passed by saying “thank You God for making women beautiful.” That was enough to divert his natural interest into a proper channel. He said, “You can’t keep the birds from flying over your head, but you can keep them from nesting in your hair!” In verses 29-30, does Jesus sound serious about his condemnation of adulterous thought lives? What do you see here that indicates that?

Honoring the Representation of Christ

As we have seen in Ephesians 5:25-32, the faithfulness of a man to his wife is intended to portray Christ for the world and the heavenly audience to see. The faithfulness of a woman to her husband is intended to portray the church as she waits for her Lord’s return. The true gospel message is only portrayed by a marriage that is totally faithful and totally loving. This is the message that God has given you and your spouse to honor.

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What Will Make a Christian Marriage Endure?

One statistic that you read over and over in books and magazines is that Christian marriages, at least in America, end in divorce at the same rate or even a higher rate as among nonbelievers. But that is only partially true. I read the survey that produced that statistic and there were no questions to determine whether or not it was a Christian marriage, only that the individuals say that they had trusted Christ for their personal salvation. Even a couple who are both born-again Christians do not automatically have a Christian marriage. In order to have a Christian marriage, both partners must be living incarnations of Jesus Christ toward each other. If the couple doesn’t behave like Jesus, it isn’t a Christian marriage, no matter what each party believes about Jesus.

Legalism and Strong Intentions Are Insufficient

Just as in other areas of the Christian life, making the standards tougher, such as by having longer engagements, taking more stringent vows, getting married in a church, or even by agreeing together that divorce is sin, doesn’t automatically produce a Christian marriage or ensure endurance. The Pharisees performed rituals, memorized the Law, and added even more detailed rules. But their rituals and rules did not make them able to keep the Law because they could not transform their hearts to love God or to love others instinctively.

- Please read Romans 2:28-29.

Without that heart circumcision (consecration to God), Paul says that they are not even Jews, even if they can trace their ancestry to Moses or Aaron!

When Christians Are Not Different From Their Neighbors

No matter what religious life habits you practice, if the fruit of the Spirit and the death of selfishness (Gal 5:22-26) from the heart are not characterizing your dealings with each other, it’s not yet a Christian marriage. In fact, if your heart is still selfish, there may be little real difference between your marriage and the marriages of most everyone else on your block, even though you do a lot of “Christian” things. The flesh (Gal 5:19-21) infects your relationship like a fatal disease, just as it does that of your unsaved neighbors. Even attending church may not make you any more inwardly Christlike than their humanitarian clubs and charitable activities.

When the fruit of the Spirit has a crop failure, the lusts of the flesh swarm over the marriage like a plague. The result is often the death of the marriage—either legal divorce or emotional separation. Christians have the opportunity to build a Christian marriage and repel this plague, but it is not automatic or magic. Do you know sincere Christians who have divorced their spouses? Sadly, I do. In every case, on the wedding day they had every intention of living together faithfully 'til death. They loved each other and had many shared values and ideals. In some cases, they even entered ministry together and worked together for the cause of Christ. They didn't set out to commit adultery, to be critical of their spouses, to control, to abuse, or to dislike each other, but they ended up that way. What went wrong? In each case, there was at least one lust of the flesh from which they were not free, and eventually that lust, or perhaps a whole group of them, overwhelmed and strangled the relationship until one or the other broke the marriage vows to love, honor, and cherish until death. Many times the lust of the flesh was sexual, but sometimes it was other things:

- An *arrogant* attitude which could see no good in the partner
- *Impatience* with a partner's inability
- *Jealousy* that the partner spent so much time preoccupied with work or ministry
- Or *pride* in that work or ministry that kept the partner from walking in Christ toward his/her spouse

The Defining Experience of a Christian Marriage

- Please read Romans 8:13-14.

The Greek language here indicates strongly that one experience characterizes every true child of God: being *led by the Spirit of God*. If two people are being led by the Spirit of God, then the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) will characterize everything they do, from the way they work, to the way they relate to lesser creatures and children, to the way they relate to each other. When both partners are being led by the Spirit and serving each other in tender love and humility, then you have every right to say “we have a Christian marriage.” When love, joy, peace, patience, faithfulness and kindness are flowing from God's Spirit in abundance, and things like arguments, jealousy, outbursts of anger are rare or nonexistent, who'd ever want to get a divorce? Such a marriage relationship would be the closest thing to heaven on earth.

As we have seen throughout this course, it takes deliberate effort to say “no” to “doing what you want” and instead to cultivate the fellowship of the Holy Spirit and do what the Spirit wants (Gal 5:17). The apostle Peter calls this ability to be empowered by the Spirit and not to be overcome by self-centered desires, true freedom (2 Pet 2:19)! When two people are led by the Spirit, they can channel the sweetness and faithfulness of the Lord to the other through the difficult times as well as the good ones.

Christian Marriage Endures

Two people who are Christians may decide to divorce, and often do in this modern age. An individual who is following Christ may be led to legally end a marriage when a disobedient spouse is unrepentantly adulterous. But neither of those relationships is by definition a Christian marriage. A fully Christian marriage will go the entire distance. Just as the Lord Jesus cannot divorce the Trinity because of His very nature, so the Holy Spirit will never lead a Spirit-filled couple to decapitate their marriage by severing the head from the body. If you both have a heart consecrated to God like Jesus, if you walk in the power of the Spirit in your dealings with one another, if you sustain a relationship that portrays the love between Christ and the church, such a relationship will endure.

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Jesus' Teaching on Divorce

"It was said, 'Whoever divorces his wife must give her a legal document.' But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife except for immorality makes her commit adultery, and anyone marries a woman who has been divorced commits adultery."
—Matthew 5:31-32

Context and Greater Purpose

Jesus taught twice on divorce, the first time in Matthew 5:31-32. Look at this passage, noting what came before and what came after. The introduction to this section of teaching comes in Matthew 5:20. Please read this verse. His teaching on divorce is in the midst of several subjects here in chapter 5, in which He is showing that true righteousness goes beyond their typical interpretation of the Law. Divorce is one of many subjects that He teaches them about. He uses the same pattern for all of them: "It was said that" (citing their typical teaching). "But I say to you that" (revealing what true righteousness is). The subjects in chapter 5 are: murder (Mt 5:21-26), adultery (Mt 5:27-30), divorce (Mt 5:31-32), oaths (Mt 5:33-37), retaliation (Mt 5:38-42), enemies (Mt 5:43-48). In chapter 6, He goes on to correct their thinking about even more subjects: giving, prayer, fasting, and rewards. In every area, He sets the bar so much higher than what they had been taught. Adultery included thinking with sexual desire about someone other than your spouse. Murder included thinking evil thoughts against someone else. Love wasn't just for your friends and family, but for your enemies too! It was enough to make a good Jew's head spin!

Can you see the purpose for Jesus' teaching in the context of what He came to earth to do? It was to show them what their hard hearts needed: not more laws—they were having enough trouble keeping the surface standards they already had—but a righteous new heart that viewed the world differently. They needed a Savior. An old saying says, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." But you can feed him salt, so that he will want to drink, can't you? Can you see how by showing the futility of keeping God's standards of righteousness, Jesus is feeding the people salt? They needed to drink of the water of life that He could give (Jn 4:14; 7:37-38). He says "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. Just as the Scripture says, *'From within him will flow rivers of living water.'*"

But the Pharisees were not ready to make this leap to drinking from Jesus and to abandon their own personal plans of salvation! They still thought that they needed to establish their own righteousness (Rom 10:3; Phil 3:9) so Jesus' statements made them squirm. In Matthew 19:3, they came and questioned Him about what He said earlier: "Is it lawful to divorce a wife for any cause?"

- Please read this passage in Matthew 19:3-12.

In this, His second encounter with the Pharisees on the subject of divorce, Jesus pointed out that the very fact that they have divorces in their culture reveals a deeper problem: hard hearts (Mt 19:8). This refers to an Old Testament prophecy with which they would have been familiar: Ezekiel 11:19 and 36:26. Through Ezekiel, God said that His people have hearts of stone, but promised that some day He would replace their hard hearts with tender hearts. He would make His Spirit to dwell in them and they would enjoy a close relationship with Him. Jesus subtly reminded them that this was the big issue that they needed to deal with. Until they had a solution for their heart problem, they would not have a solution for their unrighteous behavior, including divorce. Until they could receive the Holy Spirit and walk by faith, they could not achieve God's righteousness.

The Bill of Divorce

How did Jesus differ from their typical interpretation of the Law? In Jewish law (Deut 24:1-4), a man who identified "uncleanness" in his wife could then tell her to leave. He had to then give her a written document, a "bill of divorce." The "bill of divorce" was a legal document designed to be a woman's protection. It authorized her to be married to someone else and kept her from being charged with adultery

for doing so. In a day when a woman could not easily make an honest living on her own, remarriage was essential for survival.

In Jesus' time, the husband was the arbiter of the grounds of "uncleanness." Any cause would do, even merely burning his breakfast. (I suspect it was most often because he had someone more pleasing or more fertile waiting to take her place.) The Jews were asking, didn't a husband have the right to decide what was "uncleanness" to him? What about withholding sex, or not keeping the house clean, using bad language, insulting him in public, spending too much time at the tavern, or being unable to produce a son?

It is not hard to imagine how the "easy divorce" of that era could lead men with "hard hearts" (Mt 19:8) to the abuse of women. After the first husband cast her off in divorce, her value was denigrated. With each successive divorce, she slid down the worth scale like an old goat that could no longer produce milk. Soon, in local society, she figuratively stood on the "wife auction block" and had no bidders. Since Jewish law permitted only men to divorce their wives, and not the other way around, the Samaritan woman in John 4:18 was perhaps more a victim than promiscuous. She had been unable to please a series of five husbands (perhaps because she was barren), until her primary means of support was in an illicit relationship with someone who allowed her to live under his roof for performing the duties of a wife without any status at all. She had outlived her options and reached the bottom of the social heap.

But God was not blind to the abuse of women. In Malachi 2:13-16, God describes his outrage at divorce. Jesus affirms that God's original plan was a permanent relationship between one man and one woman.

Immorality

Notice in Matthew 5:32, that Jesus says that a man who divorces his wife forces her to commit adultery. Why is that? As we saw, it was assumed that she would need to remarry, thus committing adultery against her first husband. The man she marries would also be committing adultery against him. But He seems to be saying that if she was not guilty of adultery during the marriage, her adultery with the second husband is not credited to their account, but to the first husband who divorced her without proper grounds. But Jesus gives an exception clause: *porneia*. There was only one condition, not several that made a husband absolved from forcing his wife to commit adultery when she remarried. As we saw a bit earlier, the word *porneia* can mean many different kinds of sexual impurity: homosexual, adultery, premarital sex, etc. The husband is not forcing her to commit adultery in these cases because she already has brought uncleanness to the marriage bed herself! Sexual immorality defiles the marriage bed and causes the marriage to become unholy and dishonorable, as we will see in a minute from the apostle Paul. So if a partner has defiled the marriage bed through *porneia*, the innocent partner may legally dissolve the marriage that his/her partner has defiled. Jesus affirms that this is the type of uncleanness that God was talking about back in Deuteronomy, not failing to keep the house clean or failing to produce an heir.

Jesus adjusts their understanding of the Law again when He suggests that, instead of turning an adulterous wife to the elders for stoning, as was done in John 8:3-11, a humble recognition of one's own propensity to sin suggests divorce rather than stoning, as a more merciful response (Jer 3:8; Mt 19:9; Jn 8:7; Jas 2:11-13). Perhaps He was thinking of His own parents' story, and Joseph's merciful reaction to Mary, when her unwed pregnancy made it appear that she had been sexually immoral (Mt 1:19).

The Important Picture

Jesus' teaching on divorce is particularly significant to us as believers, because marriage is designed to be a picture of Christ and the church (Eph 5:32). While God says that He did divorce Israel for a time for her prolonged and unrepentant adultery against Him (Jer 3:8), Christ will never divorce His bride, the church. Once we are "married" to Christ, He will not suddenly discover some "uncleanness" in us and cast us out. Because of the washing that He did with His blood, we are presented to Him as spotless, without any uncleanness (Eph 5:27), so He can have no grounds and no desire for divorce.

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Paul's Teaching on Marriage, Divorce, and Purity

The most detailed passage in Scripture about the subject of divorce and remarriage is 1 Corinthians 7. Paul introduces it by saying, "Now with regard to the issues you wrote about" (1 Cor 7:1). Unfortunately, we do not have a record of the questions that the church had written to Paul, so we cannot be certain of everything referred to in his reply. These were probably specific cases that the church was asking him to judge. However, using this passage and comparing his terms to other places in Scripture, we can draw some good principles that can guide us today.



First, you may read more about the city of Corinth below (see Note 1 at the end of this article). Then open your Bible to 1 Corinthians 7:12. Paul here gives his authority for giving principles on marriage and divorce. What does he mean? He says "I, not the Lord." Be sure that you understand what Paul is saying with this phrase. He is not saying that it was only his opinion, and his opinion was not as authoritative as the Lord's. He means that the Lord Jesus did not give an opinion on this in His earthly life. But Paul asserts that the authority that the Holy Spirit has given him as an apostle gives him the right to decide on these issues (1 Cor 7:40). We must also keep in mind that Paul is not discounting or contradicting what the Lord and the Law said, which was that adultery breaks the marriage covenant. Those concepts were already understood by the Corinthians. He is introducing new situations and giving his opinion as an authoritative apostle as to what should be done in these instances that the Corinthians mentioned.

There seem to be six different categories of people mentioned in this chapter. **Start your study of this passage by reading the whole passage 7:1-40 and by writing down each of the groups.** Make a note of every division in the chapter where a new category of people is addressed. You will need to refer to this list later.

One category is the married people. In this passage, there are two major instructions to the married people (in two different parts of the chapter) that will help their marriages to endure, not to end in divorce. Can you see them?

The biggest problem we have in interpreting this section is in understanding who the remaining categories are. Perhaps the most important category is in verse 2—who exactly are the "unmarried" he is addressing? Are they singles, divorced, widowed, or all three? This group is told that they should remain single if possible, but it is better to marry than to burn with sexual desire. He even says it is not sin for these to marry. Are these, as I was taught, only people who have never been married?

Careful observation will help us correctly identify this group. The Greek word for "unmarried" is *a-gamos*. It is made up of the word for married, *gamos*, and the prefix showing that it is undone, "*a*." We find an important clue in 1 Corinthians 7:11. In this verse, a husband leaves or divorces his wife, which leaves her *a-gamos*. The same Greek word is used in verses 8, 32, and 34, as one who was, but is no longer married. Another clue that this is not referring to those who have never been married is that it is distinct from virgins, *parthenos*²⁹ in verse 34, and distinct from widows in verse 8. The last evidence that "unmarried" does not refer to those who have never been married is that it is not until verse 25 that Paul introduces the subject of virgins. He starts the section by saying that he has not talked about them before, but will now address them. Therefore, since he has talked about the *agamos* before, that term does not include virgins. The best word to use for this group of "unmarried" people seems to be "divorced." Re-read the verses 8, 11, 32, and 34, using the word "divorced." Write down in your Life Notebook his instructions for divorced people.

²⁹ *Parthenos* is the same word as used in Matthew 1:23 about Mary, the mother of Jesus, being a virgin.

There is yet another term used here which also seems to mean a divorced person. We see it in verse 27. It is *luo* and translated “loosed.” It appears to mean loosed or unbound from the marriage covenant. Its opposite is also here, *deo*, which means “bound,” in this case, bound to a marriage covenant. Where these terms become important in our discussion of divorce is in properly interpreting verse 15, where Paul says that believers whose unbelieving spouses divorce them or leave them are “no longer bound.” In verses 39-40, the same loosing concept is used for a widow’s release from a marriage bond. It says that because a widow is “unbound,” she is free to remarry. The question arises whether this would be the same with a spouse who has been abandoned or divorced by his/her spouse? Does being similarly “loosed” in verse 27 mean that an abandoned spouse is also free to remarry? What do you think Paul is saying here in light of the whole chapter’s teaching?

A more knotty question is one Paul does not exactly address: What if the spouse who departs is not an unbeliever, but someone at least claiming to be a Christian? Was this beyond the realm of Paul’s thinking, that a true Christian would ever leave his/her spouse? Is the remaining partner still “unbound” and free to remarry like the widow? What do you think? As you think prayerfully about these issues, make sure you are using Scripture as you develop your position, not merely examples from life or the dictates of your own culture or laws.

Greek scholar Spiros Zodhiates has good insights that might also help you develop your thoughts. He says that it is essential to keep in mind the holiness of the marriage bed (coitus) (Heb 13:4). He says that it is clear that when Paul says that the unbelieving spouse is, according to 1 Corinthians 7:12-13, “happy to live” (with you) it refers to being monogamous and honoring the marriage bed. Zodhiates says that this is why the children are “sanctified” in 1 Corinthians 7:14. This essential principle of keeping the marriage bed pure is one reason Zodhiates feels that Paul instructed that a believer should not try to stop a spouse who wants to leave the marriage³⁰.

So then, verse 11 poses an intriguing circumstance. If a Christian wife divorces her husband (not vice versa as in the above case), presumably without her husband breaking the marriage covenant by “leaving” through abandonment or adultery, Paul says she must remain single or remarry him. Here, Paul seems to be saying that there may be circumstances where it may be the lesser of two evils for a woman to separate herself from her husband, even though the marriage bed has not been defiled and the marriage covenant has not apparently been broken. One could imagine an abusive spouse, a criminal spouse, or some other situation that necessitated a separation. That he is talking about actual divorce seems to be clear by the use of the phrase, “let her remain unmarried (*agamos*).” We have already established that this refers to the state of being no longer married.

Why would this be the right thing to do? In Jewish law, as well as in every modern legal structure, a person always has the right to escape or defend himself/herself and others from a deadly attack (Gen 9:6; Est 8:11). The Jews called this principle *pikuach nefesh* and considered it preeminent over all other laws. Modern laws also reflect this principle. Proverbs 6:16-17 says that God hates those who shed innocent blood. Leviticus 19:16 and Deuteronomy 22:27 reveal the principle that God wants responsible people to intervene to protect another human being from a potentially deadly situation. In this country, 57 percent of all murders of women are from husbands or boyfriends³¹. So, a wife whose life is in danger is not required to stay in a situation where she may be killed by a husband whose anger is out of control. The elders of her church, her father and other relatives, or others in authority should exercise their responsibility to defend and protect her.

One application of this principle of self-defense in marriage might be that a spouse, even if willing to forgive an adultery and not seek a divorce, has the right to refuse sexual intercourse with an adulterous

³⁰ Spiros Zodhiates, *The Hebrew–Greek Key Study Bible*, Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 1990. Page 1514.

³¹ From an analysis of the FBI’s annual homicide report of 1997 produced by the Violence Policy Center. www.vpc.org.

spouse until he/she has promised fidelity and is tested for deadly diseases such as AIDS and Hepatitis. The threat of sexually transmitted disease gives an additional reason for forbidding adultery and for separating oneself from participating in a sexual encounter that indirectly includes a third or multiple partners (through an unfaithful spouse). An innocent party who is having sexual intercourse with a spouse who is or has been unfaithful is, medically speaking, also having sexual intercourse with all of the unfaithful partner's partners. All of the unclean diseases of those partners may infect the innocent spouse. One heartbreaking testimony I heard not long ago was a whole family infected by AIDS due to one night of sin by the husband. He had been on a business trip and had visited a prostitute. He was a believer and repented of his sin, but it was too late. At the time I heard their testimony, he and his wife and children were all dying of this incurable disease.

But of course here in 1 Corinthians 7:10, the cause for a woman seeking a divorce is not given. Since Paul says she may not remarry anyone else, it appears to be more of a legal separation with the possibility of repairing the relationship in the future (1 Cor 7:10). It is important here to note that in the Old Testament, as soon as one party remarries, there can never be remarriage with the first spouse (Deut 24:1-4). God calls it an abomination and "uncleanness." It is the same word translated "indecency" in Deuteronomy 23:14. So it would seem that this forbidding to remarry someone other than the original spouse here in verse 10 would only apply as long as the original spouse himself remains unmarried. If he remarries, the spouse may also remarry, since there is no possibility of restoring the original marriage.

This brings up an interesting question about the apostle Paul himself. We know that in Phariseism, a marriage would have been arranged for every young man at an early age. Paul says that he excelled in every aspect of the life of a Pharisee (Gal 1:14). It is therefore nearly certain that Paul was at one time married. But what happened to his wife? Did she die? One possibility is that his newfound faith caused her and her family to reject him, such as happens with Christians coming out of Islam today. Is this one of the reasons why he remained unmarried (1 Cor 9:5)? As we examined 1 Corinthians 7:7, 35, 40, Paul says he prefers his situation because of the freedom it gives him for preaching the gospel. But clearly he puts himself in the group of widowers and divorced (1 Cor 7:8). Which one was he?

- Please read 1 Corinthians 7:33-34.

Is Paul criticizing the married people for trying to please their spouses? No! Instead Paul is suggesting that it is proper for a married person to invest time trying to please a spouse. In fact, he is saying that if one is going to be married, of course one will need to spend significant time pleasing his/her spouse, to the point that his/her time available for ministry and time with the Lord is "divided." Paul never suggests a third option, namely being married, but giving all of the attention to pleasing the Lord. Why not? Because that would contradict all of the Lord's and his own teaching about the love and unity of marriage.

1. Corinth was a famous city in Greece, about forty miles (sixty-four kms) west of Athens. During the time of the apostle Paul, it was ruled by Rome. It was strategically located on a narrow strip between two seas and had two harbors where trading ships would stop from throughout the world. Goods would be carried overland between the two seas to be loaded onto new ships. Small ships were often dragged along the four-mile (six and one-half km) road to the other sea. As a result of its wealth and religion, Corinth was known for its prosperity. The people built great temples and set up shops and places of entertainment. The people were well-educated. But it was also known for its vices. However, **not everything commonly taught about Corinth is accurate for Paul's time.**

The problem is that many of the most colorful reports about the debauched lifestyle of Corinth came from historians writing about the city when it was under Greek rule, many centuries before the time of Paul, who lived after Greece was no longer ruling this area. For instance, one report by the historian Sabo was that there were 1,000 beautiful prostitute slaves owned by the temple dedicated to Venus. For a fee, any man could worship Venus by having sex with one of these women. Impressed with this description, Bible

commentators will often describe this large group of temple prostitutes and talk about its influence on the church of 1 Corinthians. However, this huge temple on the top of the giant hill in the middle of the city was rubble by the first century AD when Paul visited. Several newer temples still served the worship of Venus (whom the Greeks called Aphrodite), but scholars are not certain whether or not ritual prostitution was part of the religion. Most think not. But because it was a port city, prostitution itself still flourished, even if no longer associated with Venus worship.

How had the huge temple been destroyed? Corinth was originally a Greek city, but when the Roman Empire's troops swept through the area 146 years before Christ, Roman soldiers burned Corinth to the ground, including the temples. The ruins lay vacant for 100 years. In 44 BC, Julius Caesar laid the cornerstone for a new city, Roman Corinth. *This* was the city of the Corinthian church, which we read about in the Bible. The characters that we read about in the Bible lived in the first century AD. The city existed for only a relatively short time as a Roman city. It was destroyed by an earthquake in AD 77, shortly after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and shortly after the time of Paul's life. It was never fully rebuilt. The Corinth of today is a small village. But archeologists have been digging at the site of the old city for the past 100 years and so have learned much about it.

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The Opportunities of Illness

When a spouse is ill, especially long-term, many dynamics of the relationship change. Practically speaking, if one party customarily did the cooking, the other spouse may suddenly have to learn to cook. If one handled all the finances, the other may suddenly realize that he/she has no idea how to pay the bills. Some examples of specialized roles in the marriage are as follows:

- One does all the yard work
- One "keeps track of" all the social and family relationships
- One does all the cleaning
- One does all the fixing things
- One handles all financial matters

If a couple is highly specialized in their roles, then the disruption to "normal" life caused by the illness can act like motor oil that hits a moving fan and spreads disaster everywhere. If I find myself having to do tasks that are unfamiliar and at which I am inept, I might find myself becoming angry or bitter at my spouse, just when I need to be most compassionate. How can you prepare for the times when you or your spouse will become ill?

In God's good plan for our marriage, Tom and I have had a great deal of experience with each of us being seriously ill. Fortunately, the wisdom of Scripture can help us appreciate the **opportunities** of illness. We can't eliminate the problems that illness causes, but we don't want to waste the opportunities either.

Opportunity #1: Reflection and Appreciation

In 1 Peter 1:22, the apostle Peter says,

"You have purified your souls by obeying the truth in order to show sincere mutual love. So love one another earnestly from a pure heart."

When you or your mate gets sick, it brings into clearer focus how much your partner means to you and does for you. Things that you may have started taking for granted suddenly come into sharp focus. It's time to tell your spouse how much you appreciate him/her. Sickness gives you time to appreciate, to reflect on the meaning of your marriage. Every life and every marriage has a testimony of God's actions. How has He taught you and blessed you with this unique person? As I write this, our friend Scott is very

sick with pancreatic cancer and unless the Lord intervenes, he will not survive this disease. He wrote “Today Joanne and I celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary. Each of us feels the great wonder and joy of being together with this extraordinary and difficult other person. Despite all the many difficulties, we are both still quite taken with one another, and neither of us would hesitate to do it all over again until death do us part. Our togetherness is a miracle of God for which we are both thankful.”

His wife Joanne wrote: “Scott came through the operation with flying colors: talkative, joking, and concerned about me and the kids. What an amazing man God has soooo blessed me with.” She signed her letter, “Gratefully, with tears running down my face, Joanne.”

Opportunity #2: Surrender of Sexual Expectations

“I choose the path of faithfulness.” —Psalm 119:30

Sickness gives you the opportunity to offer up all your expectations and control to the Lord who gives life, pleasure, and marriage—and takes it away again (Job 1:21). If your partner is the one who is sick, one of the ways that you may need to give up your expectations to God is by exercising sexual self-control. You realize that your sexual expression is a gift, not a right. If your sexual relationship is restored, even occasionally by a decrease of illness, you appreciate it as a most wonderful gift!

Even though our physical relationship was painful for me during and after the cancer treatment, even though I often did not feel strong enough, and even though the physical pleasure was mitigated by discomfort, it was *emotionally* strengthening. I was fighting for our marriage’s life and fighting against cancer and death and the separation it was trying to cause. Now that I am better, having a sexual relationship with my husband is more meaningful to me than before I was sick.

Opportunity #3: Serving Christ

“I was sick and you took care of Me ... Just as you did it for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me.” —Matthew 25:36, 40

Sickness gives you an opportunity to serve the Lord’s body in the person of your spouse. Especially if your spouse can no longer minister to you in any way, you have a great opportunity to show the kind of love that Christ showed on the cross, giving everything with nothing coming back.

Opportunity #4: Empathy

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we may be able to comfort those experiencing any trouble.” —2 Corinthians 1:3-4

When we have been sick, it allows us to better have empathy (that is to feel what others are feeling) when our spouses are sick. Sometimes, one partner has enjoyed good health while the other has been often sick. Healthy people can be full of advice for a sick one, “Just do what I do and you will be well like me!” But when a normally healthy spouse gets very sick, the Lord can open his/her eyes to realize the suffering of others and to be truly loving and compassionate rather than full of shallow advice.

Sickness invites us to focus our attention on our spouse’s experience and to try to understand him/her better in order to extend the comfort of the Lord. As Joanne said about previously misunderstanding Scott, “He was really discouraged about the new cancer diagnosis. Wow! In the Lord giving me peace and hope, I made the assumption that Scott was right where I was. I hadn’t even asked him ...”

Many people can minister on behalf of the “God of comfort” but there is a special sweetness when that comfort comes from your spouse. I relied on my husband’s encouragement and was comforted by his example of trusting God through my illness. I felt his tender smile and his constant prayers like a warm blanket or a shield protecting me.

- He prayed over me when we waited for each new test result.

- He prayed over me before I was wheeled away for each of my surgeries.
- He prayed for God’s blessing on the medicine before I was given my chemotherapy.
- He prayed for me when I was feeling discouraged or ugly about having no hair and no breasts.
- As my husband, he comforted me more than anyone else could have done.

Opportunity #5: Intimacy With God

“When he spoke with me, I was thereby strengthened.” —Daniel 10:19

Your sickness or the sickness of someone you love presses you close to the Lord, invites you to focus on His character and His goodness, and causes you to listen closely for His voice. When I had cancer, I told Him: “I can only bear this if You will reveal Your Presence with me.” So He sent little “love notes” that let me know that He was there and still watching over us, even though He was allowing us to go through pain.

For instance, when it was not certain yet whether I had cancer, I had to have a biopsy where the doctor inserts a needle into the tumor in several places to extract cells to study under the microscope. It was not supposed to be painful, but each puncture hurt very much. The doctor did not smile, and I felt so alone and frightened. Tears rolled from my eyes into my ears. I cried out to the Lord in my heart, “Help me!”

Immediately, the radio station in the room began playing a special song, “You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains. You raise me up to walk on stormy seas. I am strong when I am on your shoulders. You raise me up, to more than I can be.” This was not a Christian hospital or a Christian radio station, yet the Lord had sent me a love note that He had prepared beforehand to play just when He knew I would need it. The pain did not decrease, but I could focus on the words and on Him as I fought back my tears. A few weeks later, a dear friend gave me a CD with this same song. She didn’t know that it was already special to me, but she said the Lord told her to give it to me. His “love notes” told me that He was putting me through suffering for a higher purpose, so that I could be “more than I could be.” This was just the first of many times and many ways that the Lord showed us during the year that I was sick that He was deeply involved in our hearts.

Opportunity #6: Thankfulness

*“I will thank the LORD with all my heart! I will tell about all your amazing deeds!”
—Psalm 9:1*

Sickness reminds you to give thanks. One of the feelings that I had when I was going through cancer treatment was a profound sense of gratefulness! I felt blessed by my illness, by the fact that God was good all the time, by our history of blessings, by the many people who showed love to our family. I thought this was a strange reaction until I talked to Scott and Joanne. Both of them say that their first reaction at the news that he had incurable cancer was an overwhelming sense of gratefulness—for their life together, the good health that they had enjoyed, their children, their ministry, and for the sense of the Lord’s presence, which they knew would walk them through this. They bless and encourage many by the joy that they express through their fiery trial.

Opportunity #7: To Display Faith

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and run with endurance the race set out for us” —Hebrews 12:1

Is sickness, either yours or your spouse’s sickness, part of your test of faith? Many in heaven and on earth are watching your reactions to each other and to your circumstances, just as Satan watched Job’s reaction to his illness and other disasters (Job 2:3). Can God say to those looking on, “Have you considered my servants, [you]? There is no couple like them on earth.” When I was sick, I imagined that I was “shooting

the rapids” with Jesus in the stern of my canoe. In normal times, we both paddled through smooth waters, with only an occasional eddy or whitewater to get through. But when cancer hit, I felt my quiet river became a rushing torrent full of jagged rocks and terrifying waterfalls. I no sooner got past one obstacle and there was another, and another, and another, faster than I could think about how to react. I learned that Jesus is an expert guide, but I had to pay close attention and do exactly as He said immediately. My sickness was a thrilling and sometimes frightening ride, but an immensely good one, because I was so aware of the Lord’s presence guiding me. The Bible says that we are not to be surprised at all types of tests (1 Pet 4:12). It is part of the normal Christian life and the normal Christian marriage.

The most important thing to know about illness is that it will not last forever. You will recover on earth or in heaven. Sickness is a temporary condition that the Lord will not allow into the eternity that He has planned (Rev 21:4).

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Mae’s Story

The LORD is good, indeed, he is a fortress in time of distress; and he protects those who seek refuge in him. —Nahum 1:7

I will sing continually about the LORD’s faithful deeds, to future generations I will proclaim your faithfulness. —Psalm 89:1

Suffering has been a part of my life from my earliest memories. When I was unable to walk at the normal time, the doctors told my mother that I was missing my complete left hip joint. For fourteen years after that, every year my mother took me to the hospital and I had a new operation. The doctors were never able to fully fix my hip or to make my two legs the same length. But I was able to walk—a great blessing!

But an even greater blessing happened when our neighbors invited us to a wonderful church. When my Sunday school teacher told me how, I asked Jesus to save me. The next year, when I was eight, I had another operation and spent three months trapped in a body cast from my chest to toes. But for the first time, I had something new that I never had before. Even though I was all alone, I had my friend Jesus. Unlike other times in the hospital far away from my family, I wasn’t frightened! Jesus changed me from a shy, scared child into a friendly girl who cared about how others were doing and feeling. I didn’t know then, but God was preparing me to be a special helpmeet to a special man.

In 1964, God gave me Michael, a kind, loving husband. Soon we had two children—a girl and a boy. We both taught school, and he taught the Bible in our church. Our life together seemed almost perfect. But one night, I woke up suddenly. My husband was violently shaking and twisting with a massive seizure. At first, the doctors couldn’t find what was wrong. Then they discovered a tumor in Michael’s brain. He had an operation the next day. In our country, the law says that the doctor must tell you all the things that might go wrong during surgery. I listened carefully, then sobbed all the way home because I knew our happy lives were changed forever.

The doctors removed the tumor. But it was very difficult to see Michael in the intensive care room in the hospital. He looked dead. I told my mother that I couldn’t stand to visit him again. My mother reminded me of other difficult things that the Lord had strengthened me to do. She said, “Yes, you can and you will!” I discovered that I could draw on God’s strength to encourage Michael, even when it was hard.

Little by little, I realized many ways that God had been preparing us for this difficult time. For instance, several months before this happened, our children had won scholarships to go to a week at a Bible camp the week after Michael’s surgery. Although he had bandages on his head after surgery, he could talk to them. He even got out of bed and walked with them to the door of his hospital room. They were at peace and went to camp happily. I could stay with Michael in the hospital without concern for them. I memorized a new verse about God’s mercy, Jeremiah 29:11. “‘For I know what I have planned for you,’

says the LORD. ‘I have plans to prosper you not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope.’” This verse became my support for the hard years to come.

During the next fifteen years, we all suffered from Michael’s three cancerous brain tumors, one after the other. The first two were removed by surgeries, and he received radiation treatment. Through this hard time, Michael continued teaching the Bible. The men so admired his determination, prayer life, and consistent testimony to God’s love and grace. If he heard of someone who had a brain tumor, he would write a letter encouraging that person to trust God.

Even though the radiation treatments helped slow the cancer, it scarred his brain so that he began having more strokes. He had problems walking, speaking, swallowing, and writing. Sometimes, he choked on his food. Our son learned to stand behind Michael and hug him around the chest hard to make the air in his lungs dislodge the food, so I could reach into his throat and pull the food out so that Michael would not choke to death. I had to draw on the Lord for strength each time.

Michael had always taken care of our family well. He had managed our finances and material resources carefully and wisely. Spiritually, he had been a good leader. He had met with the children each night before bedtime and taught them Bible stories, verses, and prayed with them. His calm and gentle spirit had caused me to love him at the beginning of our relationship and made it easy to keep admiring him. But gradually those things that I admired slipped away.

But as he lost the ability to take care of us, the strokes also changed his personality. Instead of being kind, he became sarcastic. He eventually lost the ability to work. I had to keep teaching school to provide support for our family and medical treatment for Michael, but I was very tired. Our children were no longer peaceful. Our daughter was critical of her brother. Our son was often embarrassed by his father. Michael could no longer speak clearly, so I couldn’t always understand what he said. When he lost the ability to chew and swallow food, the doctor inserted a feeding tube directly into his stomach. Soon our whole world revolved around keeping him alive. Because our daughter was so emotionally vulnerable, a young pastor befriended her, but then sexually abused her. Where had our nearly perfect life gone?

But God blessed us in new ways. Our daughter moved to go to Bible school and met a good man. They married and had our grandson, which gave us all joy. Then, I met a Slavic family who started a mission to Eastern Europe. They invited me to go to Siberia for a few weeks to help a church with its choir. I didn’t know if I should leave my husband’s side. But the Slavic brothers came and prayed over him. Michael said that he had never been prayed for with such power in his whole life! I believe God gave him another year of life because of those prayers. Michael agreed that I should take a trip to help them. So, God added something new to my life, even while I was caring for Michael.

Michael died in the hospital at age fifty-six. I was not with him when he died, but arrived a few minutes after. When I saw his face, it was so calm and peaceful, it did not fill me with dread as when I had thought he looked dead after his first surgery. As my sister and I cleaned up the hospital room, his body was there, but it wasn’t upsetting at all.

A good husband is like the hub of the wheel of responsibility and stability in a home. So when he dies, all of the relationships and responsibilities in the family must change. Being a widow is not easy. I had to figure out all that was needed to manage our home and possessions. And I quickly realized that I did not have enough energy to work as an elementary teacher any more. But I saw that God does all things well. Because of my husband’s provision for our savings and life insurance, I only have to work part time. I work both for the Slavic mission and another mission organization, which I enjoy so much.

My husband can no longer help me with all of the problems and responsibilities of my life as parent, grandparent, and daughter to an eighty-six-year-old mother. These roles sometimes feel lonely. So I walk by faith and I pray. Being in the Word constantly brings light into my life and healing into my heart. The last nine years as a widow, I learned to know God more intimately as my Father and as my husband. Even though Michael can no longer care for us, God is still good to us.

I miss Michael, but the Lord gives me comfort in a very personal way. Sometimes when I go to bed at night, I just tell the Father “I need a hug.” He answers by enveloping me in peace and I go right to sleep. I cannot thank God enough for the life that He has given me, and I will praise Him as long as I live.

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Growing From Grief

There cannot be total recovery from the loss of a loved one. You can heal, yes, and the memory may no longer cause pain when you think of your loss in the future. But life cannot be exactly as it was before. But surprisingly, in some ways, it can be better. Not better in the sense of easier, or having less pain, or even more pleasure. Our lives may indeed be harder. But better, in that you can become more compassionate, more grateful, wiser, more godly, and more deliberate in your actions. You can be more of a lot of things that show that you have grown in your capacities and in your soul through your experience of suffering.

Two bits of advice that well-meaning people often offer a new widow or widower are (1) to get busy, and (2) to try not to think about it, which only work as temporary respites from the pain. The pain demands to be processed. Trying to “move on” before you have had a chance to process what you lost is ultimately missing one of the benefits of suffering. It is your reflection from the awkward and solitary pinnacle of grief that will yield the most valuable treasures (Eccl 7:2). But if you don’t take time to reflect, you miss out on extracting the precious harvest of high-grade wisdom that your pain has dearly earned.

When you are first going through loss, like Job’s catastrophic loss of all his children (Job 1:19), it may just seem senseless. If you start asking God why he allowed the loss, all He offers as comfort is Who He is. It is only in yielding any outraged sense of justice that we can find comfort in Him (Job 1:20). God’s right to be God is all the meaning that He initially offered to Job (Job 38:4). It was only later that God allowed to Job to understand what was happening in heaven and eventually to write a book about it. Perhaps, like Job, we will be given spiritual insight further along. As our coworker Trish said about her husband, Skip’s, death from brain cancer, “Clinging to God right now is the only thing I know how to do.”

Acknowledging Pain

Just because you have the opportunity to learn and grow from your suffering does not automatically cause your suffering to be painless or cause a seemingly senseless death to suddenly have meaning. Many losses, bombings, murders, stillbirth, and juvenile cancer are symptoms that the world is not working as God intended in the beginning. The Bible says the whole world is now screaming in childbirth! (Rom 8:22). Tragedies are among the bad things that will be wiped away when God decides it is time to remove the curse of death once and for all. God calls death our enemy (1 Cor 15:26). Having faith does not mean that we have to pretend that death is not our enemy. God says that He works everything together for good for those who love Him, not that all events are in themselves good (Rom 8:28). He does not ask us to say that our hearts are happy when we are filled with unspeakable pain. He is not a liar and does not ask us to lie either.

The pain that you feel demonstrates the value of the person you lost and the pleasure that you had in his/her presence. The evil temptation is to try to outrun the pain or to try to medicate it out of existence through some form of addiction: television, computer, sex, drugs, alcohol, gambling—something to stop from feeling anything in order to avoid pain. But you cannot really escape your pain. Don’t let something good, your love, become a stumbling block that propels you toward destruction (Rom 14:13). The only way through to the promised morning of joy is to endure the night of weeping (Ps 30:5). You cannot escape grief, but you can choose how you grieve. Do you think like the unbelievers who have no hope? Or is your world steadied by the heavy timbers of truth (1 Thess 4:13)?

Grieving Well

Scripture says that everyone's experience of grief is unique (2 Chr 6:29 and Prov 14:10). I knew a missionary wife whose dearly loved husband was shot and killed by the village witchdoctor. The Lord flooded her with such a sense of peace and joy that she did not experience overwhelming grief to match her overwhelming loss. As she explained it, the Lord just miraculously carried her through it. Others, who love the Lord just as much, and believe wholly that their spouse is in heaven, still find that they are sucked into sadness and pain so deep that, temporarily, they can hardly move, relate to people, or even go outside. One has only to read the Psalms to realize that both of those experiences and a million others are all "correct" responses. One is not a "better" Christian by experiencing loss in one particular way.

But you don't walk through the valley of the shadow alone. There is One who knows your heart intimately during grief. He breathes every breath with you, thinks every thought in your mind, feels the sting of every tear that is shed on a pillow in the middle of the night (Ps 139:1-6; Mt 28:20; Rom 8:38-39;). As Trish said, "At the moment I needed it, God extended His hand and hasn't let go. It becomes so personal to be a daughter of God."

This is not just because God the Father knows everything inside you, but also because Jesus knew what it was like to lose His father, Joseph, in death, and He did not bring him back as he did Lazarus. He experienced grief and loss as a human person. But when He finally drank the cup of suffering dry on the cross (Jn 18:11), He experienced something we as believers will *never* have to experience. When Jesus suffered, God's face turned away from Him (Mt 27:46). Now because of His suffering, that will never ever happen to us.

When Do the Tears Stop?

At first, most people who have lost a loved one experience days and weeks of tears. There are several different periods of mourning described in the Old Testament, from seven days (Gen 50:10) to thirty days (Deut 34:8). Most often, the Bible just calls it a "period" of mourning and suggests that it will go on as long as necessary (Gen 37:34-35). My experience of losing each of my parents taught me that I don't grieve much right away. I was used to living a few months without them at different times in my life, so missing them for a few weeks was not an unbearable experience. It was only later, when I wanted to talk with them and could not, wanted to go to them but could not, that the truth of my loss settled in. A chaplain helped me to see that my experience of tears would go through cycles as I lived through holidays, special events, and triggers that would remind me afresh of my loss. Now, I still feel pain when I think of something that I cannot share with my parents, but the tears are less common now.

When the tears stop, it is a grace, but it is like a second death. The tears stop because you begin to forget. As you forget, you lose your loved one in a new way. As long as you can maintain the image of the beloved sharp in your mind, hear the voice, and remember the touch, it is closest to having him/her with you, but it is painful. For some people with no hope of eternity, this is their only hope of keeping the person "alive." But this is also why the world's comfort is so worthless. People seeking to give comfort will say, "He is no more, but he lives on in our hearts." If that were true, then as we forget, our beloved would be truly disappearing, until with our own death, there would be nothing left of him/her at all. When we hold ourselves responsible for keeping a beloved one "alive" through intense memorializing, we are taking on a burden that is not our responsibility!

The truth is that our beloved has not ceased to exist! If our beloved is a child or a believer, he/she is safe and well in the Lord's presence (2 Cor 5:8; Phil 1:23). Even if we cannot remember the exact look in his eyes, the sound of his voice, whether she had two freckles on her chin or three, it doesn't matter. God knows, because our beloved still lives! God is still looking at our loved one's face, just as He did when our beloved lived with us on earth.

While we are separated, God mercifully allows our memories to fade a little to help the pain subside. But that fading does not make our beloved any less alive right now. Someday, God says that we will be

allowed to refresh our memory by counting freckles to our heart's content! Death will not have the victory. Our separation is temporary. As Trish says, "A great deal of comfort comes from my knowing that Skip is in heaven. When people say to me—"you wouldn't want him back with brain cancer"—I say that now that he has tasted heaven, I wouldn't want him here at all in this fallen world. That would only be my selfish nature talking. You wouldn't believe the dumbfounded looks and silences I've endured after saying that!"

Rebuilding

Each person's work of walking through the wreckage and of rearranging the mental furniture now that the loved one is gone, is also unique. You had a marriage relationship that God says was "one flesh." Nothing you did was totally solitary. Everything you did had some bearing on your spouse, and everything your spouse did affected you, either directly or indirectly. Sittser, who lost his wife and other members of his family in a car crash, says "At times I feel almost desperate to find just one part of my life that was not affected by her presence and does not, therefore, suffer from her absence."³² With your spouse's loss, you may feel that you have entered an alternate universe, one without that familiar and integral force in it. Sometimes just the details of living after a spouse's death are overwhelming. Sittser says he felt "punished by simply being alive."³³

Loss of a spouse causes you to have to rebuild your life in a different form. Trish, who lost her husband to brain cancer, says, "Having to think of your identity independently is definitely something that comes into play often and feels very strange every time. You must give Him the chance to weave your heart back together with His thread."

Perhaps part of your rebuilding will include realizing how the Lord has prepared you for loss and for the road ahead. Hannah and her husband, a pastor, were both students in our classes while they cared for thirty orphans in their home. I visited them and caught her husband's excitement as he showed me the land where he was laying the foundation for a bigger orphanage, so that he could take in seventy-five orphans in a country that had a deep supply of homeless children. He founded a Bible school so that when they became mature, they could learn to serve the Lord full-time. He envisioned impacting his whole nation for Christ as these trained young people spread out to share the gospel.

In the women's classes, Hannah was thrilled because it was the first time that she had been permitted to learn to teach the Bible. Since her husband was a pastor, they thought it was his role alone to teach the children. Her role was purely the practical helps of cooking and cleaning. But she learned that it was right for her also to begin to lead and teach the orphans living in her home. She grew in her skills and her confidence in understanding and teaching the Bible and loved teaching the children. Her husband loved having his wife as a ministry partner. The two of them experienced love and closeness with each other, which they never had before. Then six months later, Hannah's husband suddenly died of a stroke, and she was left to care for thirty orphans alone. She says that if it had happened just a year before, she would have had to close the orphanage and send the children away. But because God had prepared her by teaching her how to teach and lead, she was able to not only operate the orphanage but also to supervise the construction, add additional children, and hire more staff. Her husband was gone, but she realized his dreams by expanding the orphanage to take in twice as many children. When I visit Hannah today, I see a woman who is not overcome by her sadness, but who has love that shines in her face to the children and everyone she meets. Seventy-five children sing happily of the love of Jesus and know that despite their own tragic losses, God has wonderful plans for them.

Rebuilding and redefining your life goes on simultaneously with the cycles of grief. Sittser said that in the months and years following his loss, he had his surviving children to raise, classes to teach, and housework to finish. But his heart was preoccupied, reminded of his dead wife, mother, and daughter by

³² Gerald L. Sittser, *A Grace Disguised, How the Soul Grows Through Loss*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996. p 28

³³ *Ibid.* p19

every daily activity. He learned to do his necessary tasks automatically, as if someone else were doing it, because they must be done. But when the house was quiet and the children were in bed, the pain of loss was always the familiar ultimate destination. A bereaved person is often like the first dove set free from the ark in Genesis 8:9, which circled and circled in hope of finding dry ground but was never able to find a solid place to land, except for the one place she did not really want to go, back to the ark.

At first it seems wrong that the earth keeps turning and grass keeps growing in a world that no longer contains our beloved. How can this be? How can everything seem so normal in the rest of the world when inside our world, everything seems so different? Some people report that even time itself feels unfamiliar, with time shrinking and expanding in strange ways. But as Sittser explains, in the deep soil of loss, the sweetness of the life that he enjoys with his children and with the Body of Christ can grow. His loss created a keen realization of the irretrievability and importance of every minute.

New Horizons

Loss is a fearful and wonderful teacher. It teaches us about the brevity of life. It clarifies our choices within the finite number of minutes in which we will be allowed to live. It allows us to look back on our own lives from the vantage of our own surely upcoming death and see what would be most meaningful to have accomplished by then. It allows us to steer a new course toward new goals, new horizons. Life after the loss of a spouse will be a different life than what you imagined when you and your spouse sat down together and dreamed of growing old together. But it does not need to be a “smaller” life or one of less impact for the kingdom. God has important work for you, and even your loss is an important part of your preparation for that future. Those who have suffered can have deep ministry with those going through suffering. You will go into the future with all that you have experienced broadening and deepening your life’s message.

“For I know what I have planned for you,” says the LORD. “I have plans to prosper you, not to harm you. I have plans to give you a future filled with hope.”—Jeremiah 29:11.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Susan’s Story



Susan and Frank had been married only a few years when Susan accepted Christ as her Savior. Before coming to Christ, both Susan and Frank had been involved in illegal drugs and drunkenness, but now Susan was unable to join Frank in his frequent binges and drug parties. When Susan prayed for Frank, she was overcome with sadness that Frank would be condemned to hell and an eternity away from God, if he did not come to trust Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his sins. Filled with God’s love for Frank, she made a decision that she would do whatever was in her power to make his life on earth as pleasant as possible, because after this life would come judgment in the next.

She realized that for her as a Christian, the difficulty of earthly life with Frank would be “as bad as it would get,” but it would be short-lived, because heaven was her ultimate destination. But for Frank, his earthly life would be “as good as it gets.”

She said, “Frank, I know that when you die, you will not be able to go to heaven, because you have not received Christ’s forgiveness for your sins. So I am making it my goal in life to make this life as pleasant for you as I can.” She did not feel smug or judgmental, but truly loving and truly sad about the fact that he did not follow the Lord, so her sweet spirit toward him was not a mere act. It was genuine. In the evenings when Frank was out carousing, she fed the children, prayed with them (which included praying blessings and salvation for their father), and put them to bed. When Frank came home late and drunk, she would get up quickly and prepare excellent food for him and sit with him while he ate. She frequently told him how

much she loved him and touched him lovingly. She prayed for Frank and also for herself, that she would be filled with the Spirit and able to love Frank in a way that portrayed God's love.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Articles for Lesson 11: One Purpose in Stewardship

Guiding Principles and Goals for Our Finances: *Instructions for Preparing Your Document*

At this time, you need to begin writing a personal document called “Guiding Principles and Goals for Our (My) Finances.” As you proceed through this lesson, you will continue to add to this document those things that are most helpful to you. It is our hope that you will place this document in your Bible or some other readily available place. As financial decisions come up in your life, the authors hope that you will refer to your document as a basis for thinking through and praying about what is the best thing to do, so that you may avoid faulty use of finances. As you learn more about God’s principles beyond this course, and as God leads you to new financial goals, you will want to add to your document over time.

Section 1: Who Are You?

Your first step in preparing this document is to think for a moment about your situation in life and describe it here in section one. What are your assets and the things that you must steward wisely? What special challenges do you face? How many people are you responsible to help support? What has God called you to do in your vocation and/or ministry? Each couple has a particular and unique set of giftings and ministry callings, which require differing lifestyles and amounts of support. Each situation has different financial challenges. If your calling in life is to teach engineering to university students in a big city, you will have a different amount of income than someone whose calling in life is to teach poor children in a village. One calling is not easier than the other. It is as much of a challenge to be faithful with management of a great deal of wealth as to manage little wealth.

Section 2: What Is Important to You?

As you progress through this lesson, you will find many principles, which can guide you to make wise financial decisions. But it is not a once-for-all understanding. You must incorporate these principles into your decisions over time. So, after you complete each subtopic in this lesson, take a few minutes to think about and discuss with your spouse, if you are married, which principles you would like to personalize and place in your document.

So, you will fill out Section 2 incrementally as you go through the whole lesson. Write these principles in your own words and in a way that they will pertain well to your own situation. In order to keep these principles organized, we recommend that you divide your document up into several sections. Record in each section the timeless principles and/or verses that are most important or most applicable to your situation. Some topic headings are provided for you in the sample below. Use them if they are helpful, and adjust or discard them as you need.

Referring to these principles later can help you to sort out between the good uses and the best uses of your finances and possessions.

In order to personalize the principles, describe them in terms of your mutual decisions to follow them. Here is a sample of some personalized principles applying to our own marriage, under the topic “Borrowing and Lending.” Your list may (and should) look quite different.

- a. We will not take out a loan in order to purchase a depreciating item³⁴. We will work, save, and wait for the Lord's provision in His time.
- b. We will not borrow money from our parents.
- c. Because the Bible says the borrower is slave to the lender, we do not want to make people enslaved to us. So we will not loan money to our friends or relatives. If the Lord leads us to share our money with specific people who need it, we will gift money, not requiring that it be returned.

Section 3: Setting Goals

In this section of the document, you will create a list of financial goals. A goal is different from a principle, a desire, or a general purpose. A goal is measurable, is primarily under your control, and has a time element, so you can later see whether you met your goal or how close you came. For every goal, be sure to describe whether you or your spouse is responsible for the steps needed, and include when each step needs to be done.

For example, you might write in this section the following:

1. Together we will establish a budget and revise it every other month. John will fill out a record of our spending on the first of every month. The first Saturday morning of every month, we will both review it together and compare it against our budget in order to see how either our use of money or our budget needs to be changed in order for our income and our expenditures to balance.
2. We will set aside 10 percent of our income and give it to the Lord's work. We will each do this immediately whenever any income is received.
3. We will save 10 percent of our income and place it in the bank. We will set this money aside immediately whenever any income is received. We will take money from this fund only by mutual agreement for emergency or important goals. By this method we desire to have saved _____ by the end of the year.

Outlining Your Document

We suggest making an outline for your document before you start. You may use the lesson outline at the start of this lesson. Feel free to revise it to better suit your situation and convictions.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Leg 1: God Owns Everything

Whether you have little money and few goods or much wealth and many possessions, it is always a temptation to lust after more. In either case, we see those around us who have what we want and we want what they have or even better. One way to counteract this tendency to lust is to recognize the rightful owner of all that we "own."

- Please read 1 Chronicles 29:11-12.

Here we see that God rules not just in heaven but everything on earth too. He loans individuals and nations any wealth, honor, and strength that they seem to have. He continues to rule over all. What effect does this have on us?

³⁴ . A depreciating item is something that reduces in value over time. This includes vehicles, appliances, and clothing. It would generally *not* include a home, education, or seed for crops, which should increase in value over time.

The Effect on Our Actions

Since it is in His power to give and to take away, we are merely stewards of His generosity, managing for Him that which already belongs to Him and releasing it willingly when He determines, either during earthly life or at the end. At the end of our lives, we are called back to give a report to God of our stewardship.

The fact that we own nothing does not give us an excuse to take poor care of things or to misuse the resources of the earth. Our role is as a wise caretaker working for a beloved owner to care for all of His things well. In Jeremiah 12:4, 11 we see that because people thought that God would not hold them to account, they had treated the land, the animals, and the birds cruelly. Jeremiah indicates that they will be judged for believing and acting on this lie (v 13).

This change in perspective from ownership to stewardship can help us behave more righteously and make our decisions easier about the acquisition and use of possessions. But we must strive to understand the priorities and perspective of God. We must know His Word and learn to love what He loves.

The Effect on Our Attitude

Since we actually own nothing, but all belongs to God, an increase in our wealth or influence only means greater responsibility to show that we understand what the Owner wants. We use and care for all things as He would want them used and cared for. There is no room for pride in our equation.

If we learn to manage our resources as God's possessions, we will also gain greater peace. Our happiness is not determined by what we do have, nor made bitter by what we do not have. We are not worried by what we might lose. Our contentment comes from an underlying dependence on God, who will provide for us out of His vast possessions all that we need to accomplish the tasks to which He calls us (2 Cor 9:8). Instead of wealth pulling us away from God, our desire to understand His purposes and to manage His resources accordingly will draw us to depend on Him when our possessions are threatened or lost.

John Wesley was a famous evangelist of the 1800s in England and the United States. One day he received a message that his house had burned to the ground. He heard the message and then said, "No. *The Lord's* house burned to the ground. That means one less responsibility for me."

What will give us the foundation to have this attitude? As an ancient writer, Thomas à Kempis, said, "Let temporal things serve your use, but the eternal be the object of your desire."

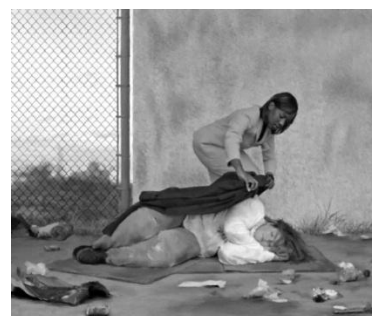
How might this change in ownership affect our responses?

- When disaster strikes our possessions?



We do not grieve as others might. Our things belong to God and if He does not choose to protect them from loss, it is for His greater purposes, Hebrews 10:34.

- When we see someone in need?



We willingly transfer stewardship to another, James 2:16.

- When God asks us to leave our vocation and change to another one that does not pay as well?



We recognize that He can still care for us out of His riches, Luke 18:29-30; Psalm 50:10.

- When we have a real need for something?



Philippians 5:19, we know He can and will provide what we need according to His will.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Leg 2: Unequal Provision

We have looked at the first leg of financial wisdom, which is God's ownership of all we possess. Now



let's look at the second leg, **which is how we view our own provision and what others possess.** A wrong perspective about these issues was a problem in the first-century church and it continues to sour fellowship today. Some people feel superior to those who have more. They argue that poverty is needed for holiness. This is a form of asceticism (see Note 1). Other people feel superior to those with less and feel that God has blessed them with riches because He is more pleased with them. This is a form of materialism (see Note 2). Do you fall into one of these groups of comparers?

God clearly tells us that there are and will continue to be differences in wealth and status (Mk 14:7; Prov 22:2). He has ordained diversity, emphasized by the natural creation. Some animals and plants are humble and some are splendid, but each glorifies Him in its own way. Similarly, God calls forth believers from every profession, every culture, and every economic level, as a witness into that group, as a testimony of His ability to redeem anyone, and to become a specified cell in the body of Christ with a specific testimony throughout eternity. But this is not to say that the roles of rich and poor are static. He gives those with financial means special opportunity to share God's love by being generous to those in need.

Judging and Pretending Not To

- Please read Romans 14:4, 10-13 and James 2:1-4.

What would you say is God's instruction about judging others as to their wealth or poverty? Be prepared to discuss these passages in your seminar.

Each person must give an account for his/her stewardship of what has been given before the judgment seat of God. Our role is to help each other according to God's direction. We are not permitted to disdain, resent, or idolize someone because of his/her poverty or wealth. We may not think that our secret attitude will show beneath a warm smile, but God always looks at our heart. Others also are aware of our critical spirits. A critical spirit does great damage to the body of Christ.

Humility and Pride

- Please read 1 Samuel 2:7 and 1 Corinthians 4:7.

How does God want us to view our own wealth or poverty?

Sometimes people may become poor because they violate financial principles, such as those given in Proverbs. Others may become rich because of following them. Sometimes people are poor because of unjust governments or financial systems. Ultimately, though, God claims that it is He who chooses who becomes rich or poor, and He says that He can quickly change your status. God's distribution of His wealth is often temporary, perhaps so that we will not trust in riches, but trust in God (1 Tim 6:17). Like Paul, we may spend part of our lives well off and part of our lives poor (Phil 4:12).

It is sinful to assume that, if you are rich, you alone are responsible for your financial success through your own cleverness and hard work. Sometimes, no matter how hard we work or how faithful we are to God, we still remain poor. Neither status indicates God's approval or disapproval.

Gratefulness

- Please read Deuteronomy 8:11-18.

When the children of Israel came into the Promised Land and experienced wealth for the first time, God warned them not to forget His role in blessing them or His history of providing for them. What should be our constant response to God's provision, whatever level of poverty or wealth it is?

Instead of focusing on what others have that might seem better, a thankful heart recognizes God's provision in every blue sky, every meal, and every time that we have a place to come inside from the dark and the weather. When others' provision comes into our minds, it is to thank God that others also have been blessed by the God of grace, who gives good things to both the just and the unjust (Mt 5:45).

Throughout Scripture, God reminds those who have wealth that they are responsible to be generous with those who are poor. A grateful attitude allows one with wealth to share freely from what he/she has.

But what about when God prospers someone who is wicked? Can we still be grateful when the wicked have plenty and we go without? When God prospers someone who is wicked, an observer with God's purposes in mind, rather than being jealous or bitter, recognizes God's abundant grace to all people who don't deserve it. This godly person seeks to cooperate with God's purpose that such abundant blessings will lead an evil person to repentance and faith (Rom 2:4).

Coveting and Resentment

Comparisons produce resentment and coveting, serious sins, which God says we must always be alert to and keep away from. Comparison caused the first murder (Gen 4:3-8) and countless sins down through history. Refraining from coveting is one of the pillars of right living with each other, which God gave in the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:17). Jesus emphasizes this when He refused to judge between two brothers who were squabbling over the family estate (Lk 12:15). The apostles constantly warned people to avoid coveting and greed and to reject those whose leadership was motivated by this (Tit 1:11; Jas 3:16; 2 Pet 2:3).

1. Asceticism: One way that we can react to our financial situation is to glorify either poverty or wealth as an end in itself. When I say that "doing without" is equal to holiness, it is called asceticism. In this way of looking at life, denying physical comfort denotes that I am godly. I am saying "I am so spiritual that I do not need the normal comforts of life in order to be happy." Buddhism, Hinduism, and Roman Catholicism all emphasize asceticism in their training of monks and priests. They see the path to spiritual strength as physical self-denial: extensive fasting from food, abstaining from sleep, abstaining from marriage's sexual relationship, or living in uncomfortable surroundings (1 Tim 4:3). They may even practice some

kind of self-torture or “test” (such as a man sleeping with a beautiful young woman without intercourse) and learn to disconnect their minds from their physical sensations, thinking this tunes them in to the spiritual realm. They might take Paul’s metaphorical statement in 1 Corinthians 9:27 literally and beat themselves, thinking it will help them learn self-control. In the New Testament, the Pharisees included the ascetic practices of fasting and repeating prayers over and over (Mt 6:7; 6:16). But while there is a benefit in some of these things in discipleship (1 Tim 4:8), asceticism may easily be practiced while one’s heart is far from God. Romans 10:3 cautions us that it is error to work on trying to impress God with one’s own righteousness through rigorous ascetics. Asceticism is a lifestyle of error, according to 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

2. **Materialism:** Materialism is the opposite extreme from asceticism. While asceticism says that the material world is evil, materialism says that the physical world is all that is real. Pleasure, comfort, and wealth are the only worthy goals. Many people who claim to put their faith in Christ have a large share of their trust invested in material wealth. They are unwilling to risk any comfort to serve God or to share their wealth generously with others. They might even translate this into a doctrine that sees God’s blessings purely in physical terms. When their wealth fails, their faith in God fails because they believe a false gospel.

You can easily see how the materialists and the ascetics can view each other with great suspicion, and even wonder if those in the other group are true believers.

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Leg 3: Contentment and Security in Christ

- Please read 1 Timothy 6:7-9.

Is Paul saying that we should not own more than food and clothing? No, the principle here is that we must be content when our needs are met. Beyond that, it is all just an overflow of blessings. The desire for the world’s riches beyond our needs can cause us to fall into temptation and pursuits that lead to ruin and destruction.

In Jesus’ parable of the lost son, which we read earlier, the prodigal discovered the value of “enough” when he suddenly didn’t have enough to eat (Lk 15:17). The writer of Proverbs asked only for “enough” and asked God to determine the amount (Prov 30:8-9). The Holy Spirit can help us understand the difference between genuine need (such as lacking food, clothing, and shelter) and wants, which may attract us but are not necessities. The ability to be content with “enough” will help us to live within a budget rather than borrowing for that which God has not provided. This is a major ingredient in the recipe for a wise use of finances that we will study more fully later in this lesson.

Anxiety and Prayer

Jesus taught the concept that “you can’t serve God and possessions” at the same time. In Matthew 6, we see it in verse 24. What is interesting, is that here He follows it with a teaching directly dependent on it. Verse 25 starts “Because of this I say to you, do not worry.” Read this section of Jesus’ teaching (Mt 6:24-25). We see here that a focus on wealth will cause us to worry. But Jesus says we must not worry about safety, food, drink, or clothing. He goes on to show us that we can trust that the nature of God is to provide for His own dear children (v 32). Therefore, instead of worrying, we are to be active in working for His kingdom, trusting Him to provide what is needed to equip our efforts (v 34).

- Please read Philippians 4:6-13.

According to verses 6-7, what are the two steps to combat the anxious thoughts about the things we need or want? The first is to thank Him for what He has given us in the past. The second is to ask Him for everything we need or want. Do you notice in what circumstances we are to do this? In every circumstance. We aren’t to wait until a crisis happens.

Notice that Philippians does not say that every request will be granted. But by bringing ourselves before God in prayer and sharing our hearts with Him about the situation that is triggering our worry, we have the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to renew our hearts and minds and give us a better perspective on the things we want or need. Peace will settle upon us when we consider who God is, that He is a good and loving provider, and when we leave the choice of what to give us to Him.

According to verses 11-12, what was the result of this type of prayer in Paul? He learned to be content in every circumstance, both rich and poor. This is not to say that Paul's difficult situations immediately vanished whenever he prayed.

- Please read 2 Corinthians 11: 24-27.

What were the different situations where Paul could have become anxious about his survival and had to apply these principles in his own life? Do you see where he had to apply the principles he wrote about in Philippians 4:12? How was he able to recover from each of these severe traumas and go back to ministering, where the same terrors might happen again and again? We see the key in verse 13. He says that Jesus Christ strengthened him to get through whatever was needed for him to endure.

Have you ever been in any of these types of circumstances and experienced deliverance like Paul? If so, write the story and prepare to share it at your seminar.

The same God who delivered Paul from his hardships can also deliver you from your difficulties today. But it doesn't mean that you will always escape going into difficulty. Believers cannot expect to escape problems because of their trust in God, any more than any of the apostles avoided suffering. But God does not waste your sufferings. Romans 8:28 says that if we truly love Him, He promises to use every situation for "good"—that may mean a good opportunity to grow in faith, to lay up rewards in heaven, or so that God may be glorified as others see our persevering faith despite going without the necessities of life for a time.

Receiving From God

- Please read James 4:3.

What prevents God from answering our prayers? James tells us that one reason our prayers may go unanswered is because we don't have the right perspective when we pray, and because we ask for the wrong things. Remember, God answers our prayers best when we are rightly recognizing His character and purposes as we ask. So if our request is only coming from a desire to serve our "passions," He says we will not receive what we ask. The word translated "passions" here is important to this lesson on material possessions. The Greek word "*hedone*" means a desire for pleasure, good times, and good things. We derive an English word "hedonist" from it, as one who lives only to have pleasure.

It's not that God does not want us to enjoy the goodness that He has created in this world. He delights in giving us all things to enjoy (1 Tim 6:17). But He does not want us to use the things of this world in a way that He did not design them to be used, as an idol that gives meaning and direction to life. Comfort and pleasure cannot be the focal point of our lives or of our prayers, or we will be continually unsatisfied. It will be a thirst that is never quenched no matter how much effort we apply. These kinds of prayers pull us from delighting in God Himself, the only place we can find true contentment.

Security

What makes you feel safe? A strong man at your side? A big bank account? The esteem of others?

- Please read Psalm 46:1-2.

Notice that this reading does not promise that trouble will not come to God's people. If we think that our salvation promises that, we will be quickly disillusioned. But God does promise that when trouble comes, He will not abandon us. He is our secure shelter. He is our helper. These promises and our experience of them is where our real safety lies. Romans 8:31-37 gives us a totally different view of our security

through difficult circumstances. It is God's loving presence, which will give us the resources that we need for cancer, for hunger, for war, for poverty.

- Please read Hebrews 13:5-6.

Here the writer instructs us to be content with what we have. What does this passage say should be the basis for our contentment and freedom from the love of money? Because Jesus will not leave us, therefore, we should not be afraid of what men can do to harm us. How does this make sense? How does being content with our provision and free from the love of money come from our trust that the Lord will not leave us?

According to Ecclesiastes 7:12, one reason we desire money is to protect ourselves—from going without food or shelter, from being taken advantage of by men, from being despised. The writer of Hebrews challenges us here not to see money as our protection from these things, but to recognize that the Lord Himself is our protection.

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Radu's Story

Radu was the young son of a pastor in Romania, an Eastern European country which, at that time, was ruled by a harsh government. Radu dreamed of having a bicycle. One day, Radu saw a photo of just the kind of bicycle he wanted in a magazine and cut it out to show his father. But Radu's father just shook his head. "Son, we don't have enough money for food most of the time. We don't have enough money to buy you a bicycle." But then, seeing his son's sad face, he put his hand on Radu's shoulder. "Radu, you can always ask your heavenly Father for a bicycle. Maybe He can provide what I cannot." So Radu began to pray diligently and in faith for the bicycle. He tried to remember what his father had taught him about praying in faith.



A thousand miles away in Munich, Germany, Stephen was preparing for a missionary trip into Romania. As he drove along the street, he saw many used items placed out on the curb. It was *Sperrmüll*, the custom in that country that once per month you could share things that you did not want anymore with someone who might be able to use them. As he passed a broken bicycle, Stephen suddenly felt the urge to put the bicycle in the back of his car. Perhaps someone in Romania could fix it and use it.

A few days later, Stephen drove up to Radu's home and lifted out the bicycle. Radu was jumping up and down with excitement. Not only was it a bicycle, but it was THE bicycle. He ran inside to show Stephen the picture he had clipped. It was the same bicycle. He ran his fingers over the red paint. The bicycle needed a few repairs, but these Radu's father was glad to do for him. Radu knew now beyond doubt that God was alive, that He loved him, and that He listened to his prayers for everything.

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Giving Throughout Bible History

Make a chart like the following example. Continue by adding the Scriptures given below to the first column.

| <i>Scripture</i> | <i>From/To</i> | <i>What Was Given</i> | <i>When/Where</i> | <i>Other Information</i> |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|--|---|--|
| Deuteronomy 14:22-27 | Israel gives to the Lord | A tenth of all farm produce and newborn animals | Every year, except every third year, when it is shared with the poor (v28) | Used to provide a feast, which they may celebrate before the Lord. They are to eat rejoicing. |

Continue filling out the chart using the following Scripture references.

- Numbers 18:26
- John 6:9
- 1 Corinthians 16:1-2
- Mark 12:43
- 2 Corinthians 8:1-5
- Matthew 25:35-40
- James 2:15-16
- Romans 12:1
- Philippians 2:6-8

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

The Old and New Temple

Under the Law, the faithful brought their sacrifices, tithes, and offerings to a physical temple where the glory of God, the *Shekinah*, presided in the Holy of Holies. When Moses' tabernacle and later, Solomon's temple were dedicated, smoke filled the room as an indicator that the glory of God came to fill the Holy of Holies (Ex 40:34; 1 Kgs 8:10). But that sign of God's presence departed with the Exile (Ezk 10:18).

So, when pagan conquerors desecrated the Holy of Holies, first in 167 BC under Antiochus Epiphanes of Greece (who even sacrificed a pig on the altar) and in AD 70 in a civil war which destroyed it, as Jesus predicted (Lk 21:5-6), no *Shekinah* fire was there to lash out and consume those who desecrated it.

What had happened to the Holy God who had destroyed those who did not follow protocol in handling the symbols of His presence (Lev 10:2; 2 Sam 6:6)? Had He decreased His holiness?

Ezra's temple, which Herod had enlarged, where Jesus worshipped, no longer evidenced the living Presence of God. If He had left the Holy of Holies, where had the sign of His presence gone? Where is the temple today? Is it still in Jerusalem, buried under the Temple Mount?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

What Percentage Shall We Give to God?



The New Testament never gives us a total percentage or amount to give to God's work, but the Bible gives us principles that can help each couple decide on an appropriate amount.

David gives us a helpful principle. In 2 Samuel 24:21-25, David wants to purchase a piece of land in order to offer a sacrifice on it. The owner offers to give him the land instead. But David insists that in order for it to be a true offering, it must cost him. He says, "I will not offer to the LORD my God offerings that haven't cost me anything." In other words, in order for it to be a gift, there must be personal cost. Jesus pointed out this principle when observing those giving offerings at the temple (Lk 21:1-4). He pointed out that the poor widow's two coins were a big offering, but the rich man's bags of gold were of little value because it didn't make a dent in his storehouse. He would hardly miss it. We determined early in our marriage always to give enough that our lifestyle was altered.

But doesn't God really want us to give 100 percent away, as He asked the rich young ruler?

- Please read Luke 18:18-23.

Many believers over time have worried about this story and whether the Lord might be asking them to also give everything to the poor. Is this a universal principle for everyone at all times? First, please notice that the young man says self-righteously that he has kept all the commandments and only needs "one thing" to be absolutely perfect. Jesus' next instruction proves the man totally wrong in his self-assessment. Which one thing did Jesus expose? It wasn't a little thing after all. It was the first commandment (Ex 20:1-17)! That his riches had become an idol was proven by the fact that he walked away.

Notice that the text says that Jesus loved this man, yet He just let him walk, didn't He? Until this young man realized how much he had failed to be perfect and how much he needed a Savior, Jesus could do nothing to help him (Mk 2:17). So Jesus was not being hard-hearted, here, but very loving at meeting the man's real need for brokenness and humility to receive salvation. We will look more at meeting real needs in a moment.

Jesus did not ask everyone who came to him to give everything away. In fact, in Mark 10:28-30, Jesus promises physical goods in this life as one of the possible blessings to those who leave their homes to follow Him. So Jesus' instructions to the rich young man were not universal. Perhaps others understood more readily that they needed a Savior. Only this young man was foolish enough to suggest that he had kept the whole Law and perhaps thought he could be saved through his own righteousness.

Scripture gives many examples of people whom God blessed by making them rich. One such man is Abraham. Genesis 13:2 says Abraham was very rich. Yet God did not ask him to give up all his riches, as Jesus later asked the rich ruler. How could Abraham have such wealth and not be unrighteous about it? The first clue is that he voluntarily gave a tithe to **Melchizedek** (Gen 14:20). What did this voluntary giving show about Abraham's attitude toward his riches? He understood it was God who had made him rich. He did not worship the riches but accepted them as a gift from God.

But Abraham did have one gift that meant more to him than anything. Do you remember what it was? While God didn't ask Abraham to give up his wealth, He did ask him to give up something even more difficult to surrender. His son Isaac was a far greater treasure to him than all his riches together. What a happy ending when Abraham revealed his faith by giving God his most precious possession and then God returned the boy to him! Similarly, when we are given something precious, it is safe for us only when we offer it to God and let Him give it back, so that it does not fester like an idol in our hearts.

In Christ, giving generously should become a way of life. We must be available for God to use all that we have for His purposes 100 percent of the time, even those things that we hold most dear. The things that God entrusts us with are to be flowing through us to meet other people's needs. When we are generous, He will often replenish so that we can give some more.

The Old Testament example of 10 percent is a good place to start as a minimum. Just as God promised blessings to Israel for tithing (Mal 3:10), believers through the centuries have attested to the blessings, spiritual and physical, when they have regularly given a tithe to the Lord's work. But 10 percent is just a beginning. Some can afford to give much more than 10 percent financially, and many have other types of wealth that they can share. Each couple must determine how much of their income the Lord intends for them to live on, and how much is for supporting the spread of the gospel and for helping those in need.

Lin's Story

When I was single, I decided, as is the custom in my area, that it was time for me to move away from my parents' home. I agreed with two of my friends that we would move out together and share the cost of the rent. But when we began looking at apartments, we were surprised that they were very expensive. After a year, all that money would be gone. My parents and I decided that it would be wiser for me to begin to purchase a small house instead. The monthly payment would be much cheaper than renting an apartment, and then I would develop equity in the house, which would act like a savings account for the future. There were two bedrooms in the house we chose, so I could rent one of the bedrooms to a friend and live in the other.

But, shortly after signing the mortgage, I became very ill with an infectious disease, and I lost my job because I could not work anymore. I had no income and only a small amount of savings.

When I had taken out the mortgage, I had counted on receiving my monthly wages and also being able to rent out half of my house to a roommate. But because of my contagious illness, no one wanted to live in my house with me. If I could not make my monthly payments, I would lose the money my family had invested in my house. I was helpless to help myself. All I could do was ask God for mercy.

But the Lord tenderly cared for me. When an anonymous brother or sister sent me enough to pay half of a month's mortgage payment, I was tempted to put it all toward my bill. It was a great struggle between faith and practical panic, but I finally gave a tenth to the Lord first. In a practical way, I was telling Him that I was counting on Him to sustain me, even though I did not have enough to make the payments and also to eat until I got better.

But the Lord sustained me. People brought food so I didn't have to buy any during the months that I was sick (I didn't have much appetite anyway). At the end of each month, there was enough to pay the house payment. I was sick for three months until I was well enough to get another job. During that time, I felt like Elijah eating from the ravens or the widow that he blessed with the inexhaustible supply of oil through the famine (1 Kgs 17:6, 16). I learned about God's faithfulness.

Later, when I married my husband, we decided that our finances would be based on the principles that two mature believers had shared about their finances. The first principle was from a woman whom I worked with. She said that when she took a job, she and her husband determined to fund their necessities of life only from her husband's income—saving her income for things that would bless and enrich the

family, and for savings. They would never increase their lifestyle in any way that obligated her to continue to work. In that way, whenever she felt that she needed to quit her job and spend more time at home with the children, she had the freedom to stop working.

Secondly, another man told us that he and his wife divided their income into three parts. The first part was the tithe, which was the Lord's automatically. Then he prayed and asked the Lord how much his family really needed to live off of and set aside that portion for their use. The third part, the remainder, they also gave to the Lord's work. Both he and his wife had high positions and together made a great deal of money, but they lived in a modest house, and instead of living wealthily, they gave generously.

These two concepts served us well. I continued to work for a year after we were married, but we spent only my husband's income for the necessities of life, such as food, house payments, and transportation. A year later, the Lord called me to quit my job and work as a volunteer to help develop a missions program at the church. Because we had not expanded our lifestyle based on two incomes, we were able to survive on one. We had to give up things like meals at restaurants or vacations for a while, but we were happy with our decision. My husband's income kept increasing each year that he worked for a manufacturing company, but we limited our lifestyle so that we could give more to the Lord's work every year. We divided our giving to our local church, to work among the poor, and to missionaries.

I thought it was a fun challenge to learn to cook better and more economically, to find ways to decrease our electricity bills, and to buy used clothing. It was a great joy to be able to invest larger and larger amounts of money in helping those who were serving the Lord. Even though we were not missionaries, we felt a great part of their work because we worked hard to finance it. We felt a great deal of freedom because we did not ever go into debt and used only a percentage of our income for ourselves. When the Lord called us to sell our home and become missionaries ourselves, it was not too difficult for us, because we had already learned about trusting God's care and how to practice economy.

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Giving Generously Beyond Money

The Lord commands us to give to everyone who asks (Lk 6:30), but money is not always what people need most, is it?

People in wealthy countries tend to think that money will solve every problem—just pay for the person to have an operation, send him to a psychiatrist, build him a bigger house. People who have little are often tempted to think that if only they were rich, then they would have everything needed to be happy.

Sometimes in our classes in poor countries, the students are amazed that people in the United States are not universally happy and, in fact, have just as many problems or more than those in poor countries. That is because the things money can buy do not meet man's deepest needs. As believers, we must always be alert to ways that the Lord calls us to be generous with things that meet deep needs.

What does the Bible show as examples of generous giving?

- In Acts 3:6, Peter says he has no money to give, so he gives a gift of healing.
- In 2 Corinthians 8, the Macedonian church gives themselves.
- In Luke 10:33-34, the Samaritan gives the wounded man comfort and medical care.
- In 1 Corinthians 9:16-18, Paul gives the gospel.

The chart, which you completed earlier, gave some other examples of giving that were not just money. In James 2:15-16, you saw that believers gave food and clothing. In Romans 12:1, Christians gave their bodies to God as a sacrifice. God is a giving God, and so it is no wonder that those who are led by His Spirit reflect His constant giving (Mt 10:8).

Now let's bring this back to living together in marriage. What can we give each other? The wife in Proverbs 31, for instance, always gave good, never evil to her husband (Prov 31:12). Her husband gave her strong praise (Prov 31:29).

- Please read Luke 6:27-36.

What are the things that this passage tells you to give each other generously? What would this kind of giving mean in daily relationship in your marriage? For instance, sometimes I find it easy to give these things to my friends but forget my closest friend, my spouse. Only when I submit to the Holy Spirit can He overcome my selfishness.

In what areas do you find it difficult to give generously to your spouse and to others? Confess your sin of withholding good gifts that would be deeply appreciated. Ask God to help you be aware of when you are motivated by selfishness and to help you give more generously of all you have to give.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Saving Encourages Righteousness

- Please read these three passages from the book of Proverbs: 6:6-11; 10:5; 21:20.

What does the writer of Proverbs say here about saving up for the future?

When sustenance comes from crops that are harvested seasonally, it is easy for farmers to realize that one must store it away and apportion it out month by month, so that the food will last until the next harvest. But when our support comes from wages from a job or profit from a business, it is all too easy to presume that our regular income will continue and spend all of it each time we get it.

But what happens if we lose our job? Or we have a sudden emergency? We need to establish the discipline of saving what we can toward major expenses that sooner or later will come, such as medical emergencies, old age, home or vehicle repairs, unemployment, weddings, funerals, or other obligations. Otherwise we can suddenly find ourselves without resources and desperate enough to enslave ourselves to debt. The Bible says that the debtor is a slave to the lender. For what would you enslave yourself to debt? A big wedding? An impressive car? A new wardrobe?

Worse, our lack of savings can cause us to be tempted to risk something precious. We know from reading the book of Job that our enemy, Satan, always assumes that every person has a price. He will try to get us into a situation where we are willing to trade away something valuable, just as Esau was willing to sell his birthright. Unfortunately, unless we cling closely to the Lord and follow His instructions for the use of our money, the devil is often correct in his assessment of us. What do you have that the enemy would press you to risk as collateral against a foolish investment? Do you know people who have lost their farm or their home because they could not pay a debt?

But even worse than trading away a valuable asset, we might be willing to trade away our righteousness itself. Last night, I was looking on the Internet and trying to locate a distant cousin. I have not been in contact with his family for many years, but I know that he was the director of a company, so I thought it would be easy to discover how he was faring. The last time I heard of him, many years ago, he had accumulated great debt, and I wondered if he had managed to be successful enough to overcome it. He was an honest, enterprising man, so I thought I would find good things about his success. But as I searched, I found a trail of failed companies. I saw that he had many creditors and former employees demanding money that he could not pay.

Finally, I found the most recent news about him that was very shocking. A government notice said that he had just been charged with a crime of cheating people out of large amounts of money through a "get rich quick" scheme. Now, I must reiterate that as far as I know, my cousin had started out as an honest man. I cannot imagine his intending to cheat people. But I suspect that because of the pressure of needing money

to pay his debts, he had perhaps been enticed into a scheme that he fooled himself into believing would net everyone some profit, including his customers. But when his scheme failed, the people who trusted him lost their money and filed charges with the police. He risks going to prison and has brought shame on his family. The Lord is always wonderful about using crises like this to bring people to receive the true gospel of Christ. I pray that by losing his own self-righteousness, he will be willing to receive the good news of salvation.

So we have seen that savings is the best antidote to debt. If we deny ourselves using all of our money when we earn it, by first setting aside a percentage for the Lord's work and a percentage for savings, it will help us avoid going into debt when a sudden need for a larger amount of money arises.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Big Enough Barns

We see that it is prudent to try to save so that if a big expense comes up, we do not need to resort to going into debt. Financial advisers often recommend trying to store enough to support yourself or your family for three to six months. That is good advice. But it may not be possible if every day you need all the money you make just to stay alive.

Savings Other Than Money

But sometimes you can save in other ways than money. In the Bible, Joseph stored up grain during seven abundant years, so that people could eat it during seven drought years. My mother grew up during the Great Depression (Note 1), and so every year she preserved some of the food that she harvested from her garden in jars, in the freezer, or by drying it in the sun. She shared this stored food with others frequently. When my father later was unable to work for many months, and they had no income, she was prepared. They ate the food that she had preserved and never went hungry. People from the church brought them food from their abundance as well.



In many of the places where our classes are held, the political and economic conditions are very unstable. An amount of money that could buy a chicken one day might not buy an egg the next! So it would be unwise for a family to keep their savings in the form of cash or in the bank. Some people I have met in Asia have transferred their savings into gold jewelry, land, or even carpets, which have retained value when a changing political situation caused money to decrease in value. Sometimes refugees must find ways of protecting their money through trading it for something valuable that is not as easily stolen or devalued.

This is not just a modern idea. In fact, in the Old Testament times, the wife actually wore the family's bank account! Much of the family's savings was invested in jewelry, which the wife wore for safekeeping or sold as necessary (Gen 24:22; Ezk 16:11-12). In the New Testament, the magi (Mt 2:11) brought Mary and Joseph gold, frankincense, and myrrh, a tree resin. These were very expensive substances that could travel in a compact and lightweight form. The gifts not only had prophetic significance, as they were used to embalm a body, but were practical as well. Jesus' parents could have sold or bartered the gifts to pay for their emergency journey to Egypt. The funds would have helped support them there until Joseph's carpentry business was established (Mt 2:14). How could you invest some savings in things other than money—things that would not be easily stolen or lose value?

Planning for Big Expenses

So we see that having savings is helpful in times of instability. But even in times when your country's politics and economy are stable, it is not faithless to plan for the future. Because we do not know when

the Lord will return, wisdom helps us to number our days and to know that difficult times will come. What major expenses do you anticipate are likely to come up in the next one, five, or ten years? Will you soon become too old to support yourself? Will your house need a new roof or a coat of paint? Prayerfully work out with your spouse how much you will need to save each month or each week in order to plan for upcoming large expenses.

Trusting God Versus Savings

Some people don't want to bother to save, but say, "I will just trust God." But sometimes this is just an excuse to spend all of our income each time God provides it. If He gives us more than we need each day for our survival, He is providing enough to save and to share. Being foolish is not the same as having godly trust, is it? Where does the Bible say that we may trust God to spare us from the same crises that all humankind faces? In fact, we should fully expect that we will face difficulties for which He expects us to prepare. The world needs to see our faith in the way that we walk through troubles, so that we might also comfort others in trouble or need (2 Cor 1:4; Eph 4:28). We can comfort and provide for others in times of trouble through saving what we can during times of plenty.

On the other hand, though, we cannot ever save enough to protect ourselves from all possible disasters. Only the Lord will give us real security by promising to be with us through good times and bad, and to take us to heaven where He has prepared and saved up for us as His bride. We must keep recognizing the difference between saving wisely and excessive worry or excessive trust in savings. While God expects us not to be foolish, our trust must ultimately be in Him. Mary and Joseph would not have had enough money to pay for the trip to Egypt, no matter how long they saved. They were so poor that their offering at the temple was only a couple of doves (Lk 2:24). They could not even afford a lamb (Lev 12:8). But the Lord provided, through the rich gifts of the magi, exactly what Mary and Joseph needed for their escape, just when they needed it (Mt 2:13, 16).

Saving for Eternity

Our friend John is a modern-day champion of savings and careful money management. For many years, he lived on only a portion of what he made over a long and successful business career. He lived comfortably, but not at the level that his high income would have allowed. The money he saved, he invested carefully, so that he was able to retire ten years early and now has plenty of money to live on comfortably without ever working again. Now John spends his time enjoying his grandchildren and traveling the world to practice his favorite hobby, fishing. He is happy and relaxed. His health is good and his family loves him. But something is wrong with John's life. What is it? Isn't this the kind of retirement most people would want to enjoy?

- Please read Luke 12:13-21, the parable of Bigger Barns, and think how this might apply to John or anyone else who is not "rich toward God."

What wrong thinking was the Lord addressing in presenting this parable?

What was the financial condition of this man before he had a successful crop?

When he had an abundant harvest, what was his immediate thought?

What should his thinking have been?

Why did the Lord call this man a fool?

What could he have done differently with his abundant harvest that would have had a different result in eternity?

- Please read Matthew 6:20.

Unfortunately, like the man in the parable, our friend John has not placed his trust in Jesus for salvation. He does not think that God exists and does not seem to have any interest in finding out. Therefore, he has never invested any treasures in heaven. Someday, like "Mr. Bigger Barns," he will need to account to the God who made him how he invested the worldly wealth and the body that God has gifted him with. He

will see for the first time that it was not his own cleverness, but God's blessing that made him rich (Deut 8:17-18). While we who love him continue to pray that he would come to Christ for salvation, if he were to meet the Lord tonight, as did the man with the bigger barns, John would discover to his shock that, despite his riches, he is poor indeed!

So we see that saving is a biblical activity by which we prepare for the future as well as we can. We may save in many ways: in money, in goods, and in heaven. Ultimately our trust must be in God, but this does not preclude being wisely prepared to support our family and others through times when current income is not enough for the need.

Note 1: Great Depression: The Great Depression was a period of economic crisis and worldwide poverty. It began in 1929 in the United States and spread to every part of the world. During this time, all types of businesses declined or stopped, and many people could not find jobs because there were so few businesses. Initially the crisis started with a severe decline in the stock market. "Stocks" are a tiny share of a big business. The stock market is how people buy and sell these shares. But in 1930, the value of the shares suddenly became less than what each person had bought their shares for. This problem was compounded when a severe drought hit American farmland, especially the wheat fields in the middle of the country. The crops died and prairie winds blew the fertile topsoil away, so the center of the country became known as "the Dust Bowl." Many people (including my father) lived by wandering from town to town in hopes of finding a job or someone who would trade food for work.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Understanding Loans

There are basically two types of loans, which are used in many different situations. One is much more dangerous than the other but is also more widely practiced.

A Secured Loan

The first category of loan is a *secured* loan. In this case, we ask a lender for money to purchase a big item. So the lender knows that the money he offers us will be repaid, we offer the item we are buying, or something else in our possession, as *security*, also known as *collateral* (in the Bible, usually called "surety"). Security means that the lender has the right to all or a portion of a valuable possession that is greater in value than the amount of money we borrow. If we are unable to make our payment, the lender may take our valuable object. This type of loan is most often seen in a mortgage.

A Mortgage

One type of secured loan is a mortgage. A mortgage is a contract for a loan where a bank or other lending institution purchases a house or other real estate for the borrower. The borrower "rents the money" and pays the bank back over time. Financial policies vary from country to country, but in a traditional mortgage in our country, the borrower pays as much money as he has saved in cash first, perhaps 10, 15, or 20 percent of the total price of the house. That is the percentage of the house that he actually owns. Then he makes payments to the bank every month for fifteen, twenty, or thirty years in order to pay back what the bank spent to purchase the real estate for him. During the course of the mortgage, the bank charges a fee every month called *interest*. The interest is the rental price of the money itself.

As the borrower makes each monthly payment, he owns a little more of the house, and the bank owns a little less. At the beginning of a thirty-year mortgage, most of the payment that the borrower pays goes to pay the interest on the money. Only a very small percentage of the payment actually goes toward the purchase price of the house. Over time, the percentage of the payment directed toward the price of the house (called the *principal*) grows, and the percentage directed to interest decreases. Near the end of the

thirty years, most of the monthly payment is going toward owning the house and comparatively little is going towards “renting” the money, since there is now less money owed for less remaining time to pay “rent” on. Therefore, if your mortgage terms permit it, it is wise to pay more than the minimum payment on the mortgage whenever possible, which goes directly to the principal, so that you own that much more of the house than if you were just making your minimum payment.

It is often a wise financial decision to buy rather than rent a home, even if it means taking out a mortgage. Wise, that is, based on the following:

- If you have enough money saved to pay for the down payment
- If you consistently have resources to make monthly payments that leaves enough leftover to support your family

But, it may not be wise to buy a house with a mortgage,

- If you are planning on owning the house for only a short time
- If the value of housing is expected to fall

If you do not qualify (cannot afford) to make the monthly payments of both interest and principal, the lender may try to offer you a mortgage that is not beneficial to you. To reduce your monthly payments, you may be offered a mortgage where you pay *only* the interest on the money and nothing on the principal. Then even after years of paying, you do not own any part of the house unless it goes up in value (in which case you would own the additional value of the house, the *appreciation*). Obviously that kind of loan is not usually a wise financial decision. In California, where our daughter lives, this kind of loan has caused many people to lose their homes as the value of houses has decreased greatly over the past couple of years.

There are several other types of “creative financing” that people selling real estate can try to give you to “help” you to buy a house. But think through the possible scenarios carefully and get advice from other people who understand finances. The lenders may be enslaving you to debt you cannot afford just to get you to purchase one of their loans. Remember, they make their money from your interest.

In any mortgage, if at any time you cannot make your monthly payments, the bank can take away your home and sell it in order to pay your debt to them. That is why a mortgage is a *secured* loan.

Unsecured Loans and Credit

In an *unsecured* loan, we promise to pay the lender back, based on money we hope to have in the future. It is not based on anything that we can give back, because the item we are borrowing to buy will decrease in value as we use it. Examples of unsecured loans are credit cards, vehicle loans, or personal loans. In this kind of loan, the risk is higher to the lender that he may not get paid. The lender cannot easily repossess something valuable and sell it to pay your debt fully, as he can with a house. So the interest rate is typically higher than for a secured loan. If you use an unsecured loan to buy a vehicle, the vehicle will usually decrease in value at a faster rate than the amount owed on the loan. If you are in a crash and the vehicle is ruined, or if the vehicle is stolen, you may have (and should have) auto insurance. But the insurance value will be based on the actual value of the vehicle at the time it was ruined, which would be less than the amount of money still owed. Therefore, you still must continue making the remaining payments on the vehicle loan. But you can’t give back the vehicle and in fact now may need to purchase another vehicle if you do not have public transportation available. If a creditor is not paid, he can secure the right from the government to come and seize things of value from you that he can then sell to pay your debt to him.

The antidote to this dire situation is to try to save ahead to pay for items that will decrease (depreciate) in value. Then you do not have to pay interest on the money, and in fact may earn interest if you save at a bank or other place, which will pay you to borrow your money. When an item that you bought with cash

is ruined or stolen, it is still a loss, but you do not find yourself in the unhappy position of making payments on something you no longer possess.

Credit cards are a stumbling block for many people. If the chargers look at the amount the card permits them to charge and make only the minimum payment required, they roll the debt over from month to month and accumulate more debt from the interest on the money owed. The debt gets bigger and bigger. That is a surefire way into financial bondage.

However, if you charge only what you have money to pay for and pay the entire amount that you charge at the end of each month, you probably do not have to pay any interest, only the amount you actually spent. So, there may be benefits to having a credit card, depending on your situation. Some people use credit cards for convenience and safety because they don't have to carry cash. Some appreciate that they receive on a statement each month a list of where their money was spent. Another benefit is that they only have to pay one bill instead of several. If you purchase things at stores online, you must use a credit card. When someone has enough money to pay the credit card bill every month, and pays it by the requested date, he is not in danger of slavery to a lender.

School loans are a difficult subject for many people. Obviously it is important for people to get a good education in order to develop the gifts and abilities God has placed within them. In many places, the cost of a college education, or even high school, is more than what they can afford with their natural income. In our country, the cost of four years of state university is often equal to two or more years of the average salary. Hopefully, if parents can begin saving for the student's education close to the time of birth, there will be enough money available to pay for the student's college by the time he/she is of age. If a school loan is necessary, the objective would be to make it as small as possible and to link the size of the loan to the "earning power" of the job for which the student is preparing.

This is where we have seen many people make choices that later caused hardship. They chose to prepare for a field that makes low wages, while running up a college debt at an expensive school. Their school loan will require high monthly payments for many years. Among some of our middle-aged friends, this burden of debt started off their married lives many years ago with such a great weight that they never were able to save money, even though they had good jobs. So instead of building savings, they went down the path of greater and greater debt.

- Psalm 19:13 warns against "presumptuous sins."
- Romans 13:8 says not to owe anyone anything.
- 1 Corinthians 7:23 says not to become anyone's slave.

How do these passages relate to loans? We can see how taking out an unsecured loan to buy something we do not need for survival and are not certain we can pay for is foolish. It is important to talk to the loan representative about what would happen if that item is ruined, or if you are unable to make the payments.

Getting Out of Debt

If you are in debt now, develop a plan to get out of debt as quickly as possible. Cut back on expenses and pay as much as possible on the debt.

- When buying groceries, look at good nutrition more than convenience or "treat" factor. Beverages such as soda or artificial juice have no nutrition and actually are harmful to health. Buying food raw to cook at home rather than processed foods to just warm up is usually cheaper and more nutritious. Eating at home is usually cheaper than eating at a café. Can you trade cooking duties with a neighbor to save time and money?
- Decrease your living costs, perhaps by temporarily sharing a home with another family who is also trying to cut costs or by decreasing your use of utilities such as electricity or gas (if you pay for them in your country).

- Take on additional jobs. If the husband typically supports the family, pray about whether the wife should find a job at a time when the husband can care for the children. If there are teen-age children, suggest that they get part-time jobs too, in order to help pay their own expenses.

Example: Getting out of debt

We just spent a few hours with a family that has had painful debt for many years. The mother, Katrina, had been home with four children. The father, Gordon, worked at a job that he had held for many years, but he did not make enough money to fully fund the family's needs and wants. In order to "make ends meet" they had used credit cards until they owed more than they could pay. The crisis came when they were in danger of losing their house because they could not afford the mortgage payment. But, they wisely got help to create a plan where every member of the family worked together to begin to pay off the debt.

The eldest son, an unmarried adult, offered to pay for his youngest sister's music lessons.

The second child, a teen-age daughter, took a job to take more responsibility for her own support. She and her younger teen-age brother shared responsibility for babysitting the youngest two children so that both Katrina and Gordon could be gone in the evenings.

Gordon took a second job in the evenings.

Katrina took an evening job (in a different store) at the same location as Gordon, so that they could travel together to and from their jobs.

As I listened, I was impressed with how much they seemed to be enjoying their new life. They had many funny stories to tell us about the people they met and worked with. Instead of feeling helpless as the bills and debt mounted, they were taking responsibility for paying off their debts, working hard, and even enjoying themselves in the process. I was excited to see them executing a plan which would get them out of debt and help them save toward their retirement and emergency needs, especially after so many years of feeling trapped and hopelessly in debt.

Is credit available in your country? Talk with your spouse about how you have seen credit used for good and how it has hurt people. Include in your "Guiding Principles and Goals" document any principles about loans that you feel are wise and good for your situation.

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Thinking About Budgeting

A budget is a projection of anticipated expenses, grouped by type. If the budget is balanced, the amount adds up to the amount of future expected income. When a budget is out of balance, you are spending more money than you are making.



You can also look at it another way. Pretend your income is like a loaf of bread. A budget shows how you will slice up the bread so that you have enough pieces for everything. You cannot slice up more pieces than you have in the bread, can you? If some of your pieces are too big, then there will not be enough for everyone to have a piece. While it is healthy to end up with some "bread" at the end of the month, grief comes when we end up with some month left at the end of the bread!

The problem with a budget is that it is never perfect. "We didn't know that Belle would break her leg, or the tire would need replacing, or that the cost of rent would go up!" But over a period of five to six months, you can compare the budget you intended to spend with where the money actually went. This can help a couple to understand and better plan for the future. It is not

important that the budget always be accurate, especially to start. But as you work together to evaluate areas where too much money is going, and others where too little, or places where unanticipated expenses surprised you, you can pray together and find solutions to regular problem areas. Sometimes if you have already gone into debt, the amount you now spend on interest each month is the same amount that you are short in being able to pay your bills. So you need to deny yourself in some areas or find a good way to earn extra money to pay, not only the expected payment on the debt, but even more, in order to pay off the debt as quickly as you can and be free of that interest.

- Please read Proverbs 16:3, 8-9.

In what spirit do we construct a budget?

- Committing our plans to the Lord
- Asking the Lord for wisdom
- Keeping a pure heart, loving God and others more than money
- Trusting Him to bring about things according to His plan

As you include the Lord in your plans and pray together about your finances, you may find Him speaking to your heart about laying aside money for something that He is planning for you to do. Preparing a budget can be an exciting time of trust and faith.

You may feel that because you earned more of the money for your family than your spouse, or because of your status in the family, or because of your education, you have every right to budget the money and to spend money in opposition to your spouse's opinion. But it would be very foolish and even ungodly to do so. Even if one of you is better at handling money than the other, and therefore develops the budget, it is important to include both marriage partners in prayer about your use of money.

You are each responsible before God for how you spend it. Therefore, both should have input in how you each feel that God is leading and how the money should be allocated. God uses both of your perspectives and backgrounds to strengthen your wisdom as a couple. Don't waste that wisdom. One will sometimes be more alert to the dangers or foolishness of a particular expense, while the other may be deceived. Listen to what each other is saying. Take what is important to both into consideration as you develop your plans together. If I looked at your budget, would I see both of your personalities in it? Or is one of you dominating your budget with his/her own likes and dislikes? Because you are one flesh, you should see a little of each one's values and gifting in the way that your income is allocated.

What are legitimate things on which to spend money? Spending is a little like voting on what goods and services you will take into your life. Scriptures describe many uses of money. Some are necessary to stay alive, and some are enriching to make us wiser and more useful in the Lord's service. Here are a few categories to get you started thinking about dividing up your bread:

- Food
- Clothing
- Shelter
- Gifts
- Education
- Travel
- Taxes

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Working

Is There Work in a Perfect World?

What is your idea of heaven? Some people envision it as a place of a thousand earthly delights—wonderful food, beautiful people, and most important, no work. We see our eternity stretching forward in kind of an eternal recline—only bestirring ourselves to perhaps request another cool drink or pick a piece of ripe fruit from an overhanging vine.

The Garden of Eden shows us a different picture of the perfect life, which man and woman were designed to lead. Here we see that God designed people to work even before the Fall. It is part of being human. Adam was given a job of tending a garden that God Himself planted. So we see that even God Himself works! He is not sleepily dozing by a pool. He is active, engaged with His creation! He enjoyed designing creation and planting a garden. What happened at the Fall was not that God suddenly created work for the man, but that the nature of work changed.



God Works

We learn from Exodus 31:16-17 that the cycle of work and rest exists because we were patterned after God. God Himself worked for six days to create the world and then rested. Think about the intricate design and craftsmanship revealed in creation, about the thoughtful way that He both rules and serves His creation.

When Jesus came to earth, it was also to work. In John 4:34, Jesus said that His job was to do the work God had sent him to do. In John 17:4, He says that He had finished the work of glorifying God on earth. Later He finished the work of salvation (Jn 19:30). He gave His full effort to carrying out the tasks and responsibilities His Father had set before Him.

The Holy Spirit, too, is at work in us as individuals and corporately as the Body of Christ (1 Cor 12:11). So even though God has no need to support Himself by work, and in fact needs nothing (Acts 17:25), every Member of the Trinity chooses to work to benefit others. He works as part of His perfection and it benefits all of us.

Man Works

Similarly God asks us to work hard and unselfishly, not just in Christian service, such as evangelism, teaching, or showing mercy, but in every honest labor.

- Please read Colossians 3:22-24.

Here Paul begins by addressing slaves, the lowest level of Roman society. They might be foreign-born people who had been captured in one of Rome's many battles, or they might be Romans who had sold themselves as slaves for a certain amount of money for a certain time frame in order to get out of debt. But a slave's life must have looked bleak. They probably didn't have a day off very often in a Roman house. They had few rights and many responsibilities. No doubt many of them worked for unappreciative or cruel masters.

Do you do some tasks that resemble slavery? What does Paul tell the slaves to help them get through each day of drudgery? To complain? Go on a hunger strike until their conditions improve? No, instead of changing their outward circumstances, Paul invites them to change their inner landscape. Instead of seeing only their taskmasters, he directs them to look at their ultimate master, God, and to do their work for Him. They are not really working for an ungrateful man after all! They may offer their human labor as a holy offering to God. How much value does that place on human work?

Being underpaid, as a slave was, feels like a great shame, but Paul says that instead of mere money, even a slave may earn an eternal inheritance through his/her service at an earthly job. What is this inheritance? It is not merely a heavenly crown, but the honor and privilege of reigning with Christ. As Christ’s several parables about returning landlords reveal (Lk 19:12-19), our faithfulness in service here on earth will prepare us for positions of greater responsibility in His kingdom.

The principles that Paul gives about serving God through your daily job apply not just to slaves, but to everyone. Do you consciously offer your work up to God as a service of worship to Him? I’ve found in my own life that the most disagreeable task becomes much lighter and happier when I offer it to Him as voluntary worship. What an exciting privilege. As our brothers from a previous generation wrote in their homes and workplaces, “Work is worship.” How much of a difference would it make in society if every person, or even every believer did his work with the kind of excellence and faithfulness that an offering to God deserves? Would we not see an improvement in the quality of every product and service? Brother Lawrence, the lowest monk in a monastery in the sixteenth century, wrote about his humble kitchen work:

“I turn the cake that is frying on the pan for love of him, and that done, if there is nothing else to call me, I prostrate myself in worship before him, who has given me grace to work; afterwards I rise happier than a king. It is enough for me to pick up but a straw from the ground for the love of God.” His soul, he said, “had come to its own home and place of rest.” He said, “we ought not to be weary of doing little things for the love of God, who regards not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is performed.”³⁵

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Self-Evaluation of My Work

This list of characteristics was drawn from the following Scripture passages: Matthew 23:3-12, Colossians 3:22-23, 1 Timothy 5:13-14, Titus 2:9-10, and 1 Peter 2:12-22; 4:15. Feel free to look up these passages to see where the principles below come from. Rate yourself for every item, both at work and at home, and evaluate how well you carry out these instructions from Scripture about how Christians need to live.

Suggested terms to use might be “Excellent,” “OK,” “Needs improvement,” or you may use any terms, symbols, or numbering scale that makes sense to you. Be sure you put a comment in every square that pertains to you. If you don’t work or volunteer outside the home, you may wish to only complete one column.

Self-Evaluation

| Principles | My Score at Home and/or Work | My Score at Work |
|--|------------------------------|------------------|
| I am subject to authority above me. | | |
| I do what the one above me wants done (unless it would be immoral or illegal). | | |
| I don’t respond negatively when someone asks me to do something. | | |
| I don’t pilfer what I have responsibility for, or steal what is not mine. | | |

³⁵ <http://www.ccel.org/l/lawrence>

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| I can be completely trusted, even when I am not supervised. | | |
| I give the gospel a good reputation. | | |
| I do not break the law. | | |
| I am not a troublemaker. | | |
| Unbelievers would say I have excellent behavior. | | |
| Unbelievers observe me doing appealing good deeds that cause them to be attracted to Christ. | | |
| If an unbeliever wanted to say that I had done something evil, he would have to make something up. | | |
| I am inwardly submitted to the institutions and rulers that have jurisdiction over me. | | |
| I use the freedoms and legal rights that I have to do God's will, not to indulge sin. | | |
| I look for opportunities to bring honor to other people. | | |
| I love all other believers in my words, deeds, and thoughts. | | |
| In my heart I am always in awe of God, as I carry out my responsibilities. | | |
| I look for opportunities to bring honor to those who rule over me. | | |
| I genuinely respect those whom God has placed over me, even when they do things that are unreasonable. | | |
| I am willing to suffer injustice with patience like Christ in order to show Him to my world. | | |
| I do not try to deceive others. | | |
| I am not idle. Even when I don't have a specific assignment, I look for some way to benefit those around me. | | |
| I do not waste time "hanging out" at other people's homes with no good purpose. | | |
| I do not pass along what I've heard that is damaging to someone's reputation. | | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| I do not talk about things that are none of my business. | | |
| Others can trust that what they tell me about their own private concerns will not be passed on for the entertainment of others. | | |
| I am willing to do any task that I ask others to do. No task is too humble for me to perform. | | |
| I only do things from a heart of love. I never do things just to impress others with what a good person I am if it is just an act. | | |
| I am not “working my way up” in my job to get more honor and respect from other people. | | |
| I am not working for a prestigious lifestyle. | | |
| I lead for the best good of those I am responsible for. I am their servant, not the other way around. | | |

In summary, our work is not only to be well done and honest, but transformed.

For instance, we may not steal from the cash box, but do we steal time by working slower than we are able or working on personal business when we are being paid hourly?

We may not gossip, but do we love to bring division among our coworkers?

We may be meticulously obedient as an employee, or meticulously fair as an employer, but do we love and pray for those who lead us and those whom we lead?

The Lord’s standards of a transformed heart stretch us beyond the Law of Moses and on to a new law of righteousness that reveals the heart of God to those around us.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Three Questions Before You Buy

This list of questions can help you together, as a couple, begin to determine if a large purchase you are thinking about is in line with God’s perspective.

Pray first and submit your heart to God before you contemplate these questions. Make sure that you are willing to accept either yes or no with equanimity. If you are married, pray together and ask the Lord together to show you the truth about this potential purchase.



1. What is my motive for buying this?
 - a. A love for things or jealousy for what others have? (1 Jn 2:15; Heb 13:5)
 - b. To look better in front of others? (Mt 6:5)
2. What will be the good and bad consequences of buying this?

- a. Could I become addicted or enslaved to it? (1 Cor 6:12)
 - b. Does it waste time? (Eph 5:15-16)
 - c. Will I spend money I do not have or which has been committed to better purposes? (Prov 22:7)
 - d. Will it help my family? (Ex 20:12; Mt 7:11; 1 Tim 5:8)
 - e. Will it help me earn a better living? (Prov 24:27)
 - f. Will it help me maintain or repair something with which the Lord has entrusted me?
3. What do others say about this purchase?
- a. Wise people (parents, experts, friends, those who own similar objects) (Prov 15:22)
 - b. My conscience, guided by the Holy Spirit? (John 16:13; Rom 14:23,)
 - c. My spouse? (Prov 31:11, 26; Mk 10:8)

Sometimes, the purchase might be a good one, but it is not the right time. If a salesman for an expensive item is telling you that you must decide right away or the price will go up tomorrow, this is most often merely a sales tactic to force you to make a hasty purchase. Do not give in to pressure! In most cases, if it is a good purchase today, it will still be a good purchase tomorrow. In our experience, when we have given in to pressure to purchase something quickly because of a persuasive salesman, we have regretted it later.

Now we tell salesmen that we have a policy of “sleeping on” our decisions if we are not certain. That is, we always go to sleep and think and pray about it again the next day before coming back to make the purchase. Many times, in the morning we will think of some aspect that we had not considered before and will feel more secure with our decision. God can protect the items you are meant to have from being sold to others.

But conversely in some cases, especially if there is a shortage, God may lead you to decide ahead of time exactly what you need and how much you are willing to pay before the item becomes available. Set aside that much money so that you are prepared and can act quickly. This is not the same as making a hasty decision, because you did your praying and evaluating ahead of time!

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

A Tribute to My Wife (or Husband, Mother, Father, Friend)

Instructions: Personalize Proverbs 31:10-31 as it pertains to your spouse or if you are not married, someone else who would benefit from your encouragement: a parent, sibling, friend, pastor, teacher etc. You may certainly work directly from the passage, or you may use this document to help you. Fill your own words into the blanks. Words in parentheses will guide you how you might fill in each blank. Words in bold show places where you may personalize. Adjust as necessary to make this tribute applicable. When you are finished, you may write this in an artistic way and present it to show your love and respect for the work this person does to benefit you and others.

Who can find a _____ of noble character? (**this person’s role**)

For **his/her** value is far more than _____ (**something of high value**).

The heart of **his/her** _____ (**your relationship to this person**) has confidence in **him/her**,

and **he/she** has no lack of gain.

He/She brings him good and not evil all the days of **his/her** life.

He/She obtains _____ (something he or she likes to do with hands),

and he/she is pleased to work with his/her hands.

He/She is like _____ (a metaphor); he/she _____ (some good work that this person does that is similar to the metaphorical item)

He/She also gets up while it is still night _____ (some thing the person does that involves getting up early),

He/She _____ (some more things the person does that shows he/she is working hard)

He/She begins his/her work vigorously, and he/she strengthens his/her arms.

He/She knows that _____ is good, and _____ (good results of work or another sign of faithfulness in work).

His/Her hands _____ (more description of another work).

He/She _____ (description of work for others that shows compassion or another good character quality)

He/She is not afraid of _____ (something others are afraid of for others) because _____ (what he/she does that helps to prevent that from happening).

He/She makes _____ (something he/she makes)
_____ (describe where that thing is used)

His/Her _____ (your relationship to this person) is well-known in _____ (the place where you work or spend time with your friends) when he/she _____ (what you do there).

He/She _____ (more description of the works this person does)

He/She is clothed with _____ (good character quality) and _____ (good character quality)

and he/she can _____ (describe satisfaction this person receives from good work and good character)

He/She opens her mouth with wisdom, and loving instruction is on his/her tongue _____ (may substitute any good characteristic in the way this person speaks to others).

He/She watches over the ways of his/her household _____ (may substitute another area of responsibility), and does **not eat the bread of idleness** _____ (may substitute another area where other people may fail to do a good job but this person excels).

His/Her _____ (children or other observer) rise up and call him/her **blessed**,

His/her _____ (your relationship) also praises her:

“Many **daughters/sons** have done **valiantly**, but you surpass them all!”

Charm is deceitful and **beauty** is fleeting, but a **man/woman** who fears the Lord will be praised.

Give **him/her** credit for what **he/she** has accomplished, and let **his/her** works praise **him/her** in _____ (where you work or where the person works or where he/she is widely respected).

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Budgeting for Spending and Savings

Preparing a budget helps you see your resources and your expenses and helps you steward them wisely.

In this document we will show you two ways to keep track of your budget and plan for upcoming expenses or save toward major purchases. The first is more detailed. The second is simpler. If you have never successfully kept a budget before, you may want to start with the easy budget. Please read about both kinds before you begin.

Type 1: Detailed Budget

In this budget, you will use different categories to track how much you are spending in each area and to develop a target amount of how much you want to spend. The form below shows suggested categories. Add and take out categories to fit your needs.

Using a detailed budget is especially helpful if you frequently do not have enough to meet your basic expenses and need to look closely at what you consider necessities of life.

Budget for [April]

| Item | Amount planned | Amount from last month + or - | Amount actually spent | Amount + or - |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Giving to the Lord | | | | |
| Housing, repairs, and utilities | | | | |
| Transportation | | | | |
| Food | | | | |
| Clothing | | | | |
| Education | | | | |
| Marriage maintenance | | | | |
| Eating out, vacation, entertainment | | | | |
| Gifts | | | | |
| Medical | | | | |
| Major purchases | | | | |
| Miscellaneous | | | | |
| Totals | | | | |

Make a five-column chart for a budget using the instructions below to see how to use this type of budget.

1. In the first column, fill in the amount that you think is reasonable for each category, hopefully close to what you are actually spending now. If you can, look in your records and receipts to find out how much you are spending. If you don't know, take a guess. Make sure that the total at the bottom of the first column is not higher than your income.

2. Figure out how you spent your money over the past three months in the second column. Divide by three to get your monthly average. Is it what you expected?

3. For the next few months, keep track of your spending. At the end of every month, fill in this form. Did you spend more, or less, than what you had planned? If the total was more or less than your goal, carry forward each total as a positive or negative item for that column in the next month.

So, the first month, your budget form will look like this. I have filled in the “food” line so that we can demonstrate what to do with it each month.

| Item | Amount planned | Amount from last month + or - | Amount actually spent | Amount + or - |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Giving to the Lord | | | | |
| Housing, repairs, and utilities | | | | |
| Transportation | | | | |
| Food | \$300 | | | |
| Clothing | | | | |
| Education | | | | |
| Marriage maintenance | | | | |
| Eating out, vacation, entertainment | | | | |
| Gifts | | | | |
| Medical | | | | |
| Major purchases | | | | |
| Miscellaneous | | | | |
| Totals | | | | |

For example if in line 4 food, you planned to spend \$300, but actually spent \$275, good for you! You get to carry forward \$25 to spend next month (or you can move that savings to another column if you wish). Enter +\$25 in the last column. See example below for May.

April Budget

| Item | Amount planned | Amount from last month + or - | Amount actually spent | Amount + or - |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Giving to the Lord | | | | |
| Housing, repairs, and utilities | | | | |
| Transportation | | | | |
| Food | \$300 | 0 | \$275 | +\$25 |

But, let’s say you overspent by \$25. Then you need to subtract \$25 from what you are permitted to spend this month. You would enter -\$25 in the third column on the food row

April Budget (with overspending)

| Item | Amount planned | Amount from last month + or - | Amount actually spent | Amount + or - |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Giving to the Lord | | | | |
| Housing, repairs, and utilities | | | | |
| Transportation | | | | |
| Food | \$300 | 0 | \$325 | -\$25 |

Now pretend it is May. Because you overspent last month, you will have \$25 less to spend on food this month.

May Budget with overspending carried over from April

| Item | Amount planned | Amount from last month + or - | Amount I can spend this month | Amount actually spent | Amount + or - |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Giving to the Lord | | | | | |
| Housing, repairs, and utilities | | | | | |
| Transportation | | | | | |
| Food | \$300 | -\$25 | \$275 | | |

But if you stayed within your budget in April, and spent less than you budgeted on food, you will have some extra to spend this month. Give yourself a bonus.

May Budget with bonus from April

| Item | Amount planned | Amount from last month + or - | Amount I can spend this month | Amount actually spent | Amount + or - |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Giving to the Lord | | | | | |
| Housing, repairs, and utilities | | | | | |
| Transportation | | | | | |
| Food | \$300 | \$25 | \$325 | | |

Major Purchases

Another aspect of learning to budget is learning to save every month toward a major purchase. You can use a budget to figure this out too.

A major purchase is anything that costs more than a half-month's income that you need to save for. An example would be a refrigerator, a new roof or floor, or a new vehicle. In order to figure out how much to

save each month for a refrigerator, we calculated the amount we need to save monthly by dividing the price (1000) by the months until purchase (60).

Major Purchases

| | |
|-----------------------|---------|
| Amount needed | \$1,000 |
| Months until purchase | 60 |
| Need to save monthly | 16.67 |

If you want to shorten the months to purchase, you will need to increase the amount saved monthly.

You can add this item as a line in your budget.

Type 2: Simple Budget

If you have never successfully kept a budget, this form is for you. It is as simple as it gets! The left column is spending (-), the right column is income (+).

| | | (-) | (+) |
|---|---|------|------|
| A | Net income after paying taxes and giving to the Lord | | 4000 |
| B | Amount needed to spend to survive | 2500 | |
| C | <i>Minimum</i> payments for debts | 200 | |
| D | Balance (Take A and subtract -B-C) | | 1300 |
| E | Savings toward major purchases | 300 | |
| F | Savings for future | 300 | |
| G | Debt payments (to get out of debt faster) | 300 | |
| H | Marriage and family investment | 100 | |
| I | Purchases to improve lifestyle | 300 | |
| | Balance (Take D and subtract -E-F-G-H-I) This balance should work as 0 | | 0 |

Description of how to use line items:

A. First determine together how much you intend to give to the Lord. Set that aside immediately when you receive income, so that you are not spending what has already been dedicated to Him. Then set aside money if needed to pay taxes. The remainder is what you have to allocate in your Simple Budget.

B. Use the detailed budget record above to figure out how much money this has been. The “need to live” amount can be estimated by looking over a few months of spending and asking yourself, “Could I live a healthy life without this?” If so, it probably isn’t a “need.” If the amount in line B is greater than the amount in line A, use the detailed budget above to help readjust.

C. Avoid going into debt for purchases, but if you have debts, be sure to pay the payment on time each month.

D. The total of B and C must be less than A. If it is not, go to the instructions for detailed budget above and figure out where you can cut back.

After you have figured out that there is money left over after paying for B and C, go on to the rest of this.

E. A major purchase is anything that costs more than a half-month's income that you need to save for. An example would be a refrigerator, a new roof or floor, or a new vehicle.

F. "Savings for future" would include retirement, illness, weddings, education, funerals, emergency loss of job. Also think ahead about how much savings will be necessary in order to keep your major investments (like a house or vehicle) in good order so they do not lose value.

H. "Marriage and family investment" refers to times of refreshment and improving relationships, such as retreat time alone with spouse.

I. "Improve lifestyle" items would include things that are not necessary but would be good and enjoyable if there is enough money for it, such as travel, furniture, jewelry. But avoid spending in this category until the amount in debt (Line C) is zero and you have no depreciating debt. If your house is being purchased on a mortgage, this is a somewhat different type of debt (see course section on borrowing and lending).

However you keep your money, whether in cash stored safely, or in the bank, you need to divide it up into the different accounts. If you save it mainly in cash, one simple way to organize it is just to put money into envelopes marked with the different categories. This method will work only if all family members agree that money is removed from the envelopes only for described expenses. If you put money into the bank, it is helpful to imagine you have many accounts, and keep the records written on paper for the different "accounts," even if you only have one bank account.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Articles for Lesson 12: One Purpose in Marriage and Ministry

Sam and Sue's Story

Sam and Sue sat across from one another in the tiny prayer cell in the hills outside Seoul, wiping tears from their eyes. When Pastor Lee gave them the assignment to come away to this place for prayer and fasting, they had no idea that this would bring forward so much pain and disappointment. What had happened to change their happy family? Ten years ago, they were thriving in the Lord so much that Sam had decided to study for full-time ministry. But now, their youngest son had left the faith, and Sue cried in secret most every day. Sam tried to placate his unsettled heart with incessant ministry tasks. It felt like they had come to this room to autopsy a happy life that had died rather than having any real hope of finding happiness once again. They knew that both of them had retreated behind smiling masks in order to get through each day. No one knew the barrenness of their inner landscape, although they knew Pastor Lee suspected. Rather than relief that they might be able to share their anxieties with him, the thought only made them more insecure.

Daniel, their son, had been thirteen when Sam had started Bible training and left his successful business behind. By the time Daniel was sixteen, Sam and Sue were both involved day and night with helping Pastor Lee shepherd a cell of new believers in a large, growing church. Ministry was exciting and the Lord was bringing people to Christ by the dozens every week. But as the church had grown, their marriage and family life had seemingly starved to death.

Sue was the first to wipe her eyes and to speak. "You asked me to list all of the things that I felt went wrong. I'm not sure that any of the things that I listed are what you had in mind, but I think these are the things that killed our family. Maybe it's just the way things are for a pastor's family, and we're just not cut out for this job—maybe I'm not cut out for being a pastor's wife, anyway. What good would it do to read my list?"

Sam spoke, "But I know that God called us to ministry together. Was it really God's will to lose Daniel in the process? Is it God's will for us to feel like strangers to one another? I don't think so. I see your eyes are red when I come to bed at night, but I never ask because I'm too tired, I just want to go to sleep. But now, I think I need to hear it. Please tell me what is on your list."

Sue opened her notebook and began reading. "Number one, fellowship and friendship. We can't have any close friends in the congregation. I know that Pastor Lee says that if we treat anyone as special, it might cause a church split, but we can't be close friends with everyone, so we have no one to talk to on more than a surface basis, no one to have fun with, no one to go to if there is a problem. I can't even share my heart with my best friend anymore. I have no best friend anymore."

"I suppose we could be friends with people outside the church," Sam suggested.

"In our spare time, maybe?" Sue laughed bitterly. "When do we have opportunity to meet them?"

Sam only nodded, accepting her point. "What's next?"

"Number two, we have no privacy. We are on stage all the time. It feels like we live in a fishbowl with faces constantly watching us, or worse, evaluating us, examining us. You never can turn off your cell phone, even at night. If someone is having a baby or dying in the hospital, you're the first person they call. Sometimes even if the phone isn't ringing, I dream that it is, and wake up to answer it! We are never allowed to go away without someone knowing exactly how to reach us."

“Number three, expectations and restrictions. Our congregation expects our way of life to be so humble all the time. No one can be *that* humble and have it be genuine! They don’t expect that of other people in the congregation. Most of our congregation, when both husband and wife work, hires house helpers, but if I, as a pastor’s wife, would hire someone, you know they would ask for your salary to be reduced! It would be a great shame for either of us to ever be seen in a shopping mall, because again it would signal that the church was paying you too much. You’re supposed to dress like a successful businessman, but I’m supposed to wear the most plain and drab dress I can find in the second-hand store. Then I have to wear it Sunday after Sunday to prove that we live simply and I’m not vain. I feel that half the women put me on a pedestal and the other half keep trying to shove me off. Either people are complimenting me about being so humble or someone is telling me that someone they know thinks I wear my hair wrong. What bothers me is that all the ladies spend so much time just watching and measuring and evaluating me. Haven’t they got anything better to do?”

“Has it really changed so much from before I was a pastor?”

“Yes! For instance, when I was just a businessman’s wife, I was allowed to play my violin in the orchestra and sometimes play solos. But as soon as you were ordained, Pastor Lee’s wife told me that it isn’t proper for me to be anywhere that people might think I am enjoying the limelight. I was so shocked. You know that music has been such a part of my ministry and worship all my life! It felt like I had to cut off something that was a part of me—like cutting off my arm. Then when I asked whether it would be all right to teach the seventh grade girls’ Sunday school, Sister Kim said it was a full-time job for a pastor’s wife to be always at his side. She said that I must avoid anything that would draw attention to myself. The only jobs I should offer to do would be the nursery or the kitchen, where I could be silent and unnoticed. It feels like when you became a pastor, I became your shadow.”

Sam nodded thoughtfully. “I guess neither one of us realized about these unwritten rules. I guess we should have looked more at what my becoming a pastor would mean for you before I went to seminary. Is there more on your list?”

“Number four, the burdens of physical caretaking. They expect you not only to feed the flock spiritually, but for us to do practical jobs in the church too—cooking, cleaning, fixing things. Neither of us was good at practical things before. Why does being a pastor suddenly make you able to fix things and me able to cook? Doesn’t it seem like there are others in the church who would be good at doing these things? Is it right for you to be sweeping the floors and for me to be washing the dishes after the Wednesday fellowship meal only to prove that we’re not too proud? By that time, we’ve been up and working for seventeen hours and I am literally falling asleep in the soapsuds.

“And then there is the financial burden. They don’t pay us enough to live, much less pay for our children’s education. But when I suggested teaching music lessons to be able to put Daniel in Hope Academy, Pastor Lee’s wife said that I needed to be satisfied with whatever the Lord provides from your salary. I keep wondering if things might have been different if Daniel would have been able to go to a Christian school like the older two.” Sue wiped away a tear and took a deep breath.

“These job expectations are too much. Not only do you have to preach and teach, counsel, visit the sick, but you have to visit ten families in their homes every week for at least a two-hour visit each. I always have to go with you so that no one can ever accuse you of doing anything improper. Since most people work, we have to spend every evening visiting, and on Tuesday and Thursday, we have to do it earlier so that we can visit before you lead the new believers’ Bible study. We were hardly ever home with Daniel in the evenings. Once we started working here, he hardly ever saw us!”

At this, Sam became more ardent. “But all of the other pastors do this! How would our people feel if their pastor didn’t call on them as regularly as their neighbor’s pastor? Can’t you see how it is important for me to maintain my position?”

“That’s my next point. I think that the competitiveness between the pastors on our staff is evil! It may be invisible, and I don’t think any of you would admit it, but you each know exactly the pecking order, and you’re always working to keep your place or to outdo each other to keep in Pastor Lee’s good graces. It’s like the disciples fighting about who would be greatest in the kingdom of Heaven!”

Sam’s face turned red, but he pursed his lips and was silent. Then he said very softly. “Is that all?”

“No. The last point is our relationship as husband and wife. We have no time for our marriage, just the way you never had time for Daniel. You were not attentive to Daniel’s life the way you were for Peter and Matthew. Neither of us were. Now that we have an empty home, we still have no time to emotionally support one another, to talk about what has been going on, even to pray together the way we used to. God forgive me, but I don’t know if I can take this any longer.” Sue’s lips trembled as she looked down.

Sam’s expression softened and he breathed a deep sigh. “You are right. We have no time even to be ourselves. One of our congregation members told me last week that her cousin, a pastor’s wife, is beaten by her husband. I’m sure he knows it is wrong, but I can understand there must be some way to vent the constant pressure I feel. Sometimes I just think I should resign and go back into business before I start beating you too!”

At that, Sue smiled a little and put her hand on her husband’s arm. “Maybe we should pray and ask God if there is any hope for us? Maybe He can help us come up with a way that we can still be in ministry, but the ministry doesn’t eat our family alive.”

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Single in Ministry: A Conversation With Singles in Ministry

“It was good of you to come, Mike, Sheila.” Jeanie smiled at the three people sitting around the coffee shop table. “My roommate, Jane, and I have appreciated the South End fellowship group for pastors and others in ministry, but we thought that maybe it would be helpful for us to occasionally meet as singles in ministry to ‘bear one another’s burdens.’ I don’t know about you, but sometimes I feel that my married counterparts really don’t understand what my life is like. They go home and talk about their day with their spouses, but because Jane works evenings, I go home to the cat. She’s a good listener, but not much of a conversationalist!”



Everyone laughed, and then paused in reflection. Sheila was the first to speak. “I think you’re right. I do need fellowship with others who understand. The couples in our church have a hard time remembering that I’m an adult too. Even though I’m the youth leader, they think of me as just one of the youth, never mind that I’m fifteen years older than the high school kids. Unless I get married, they won’t really see me as a part of the adult congregation.”

Mike nodded. “I can see that in my own life, for sure. They don’t know quite what to do with me. Every time someone new comes to our church, and after a few weeks realizes that the pastor of evangelism is single, I can just hear their thoughts, ‘What’s wrong with him? Is he gay? Is he going to hurt my children? Will he try to seduce my wife?’ It takes a while to earn their trust. I’d love to be married, but right now, I need the time and freedom I have to minister without worrying about neglecting a wife and family. With the amount of time I am away on evangelism trips, it would be unfair to them.”

Jane wrinkled her nose. “You know what I hate the most is that people think that somehow because I’m still single at forty, that I’ve voluntarily taken vows to remain single—like a nun. I don’t mind telling you that this isn’t what I had in mind for my life. I always assumed I’d be a mom for a bunch of kids, just like my mom was. Just because I haven’t married, doesn’t mean I didn’t want to! But at this stage in our lives,

I think we can all agree that there are not many Christian singles, and of that group, there are even fewer who would want to be in Christian service or support a spouse who is. We need to make the best of our singleness, rather than waiting for life to start.”

Sheila said, “I feel the same as you. Singleness is not a time for just waiting around. That’s why I went as a missionary to Togo. But while I was gone, all my friends got married. Now they seem so swallowed up in their busy lives—house stuff, kid stuff—now they don’t even have time for a cup of coffee. So I’m back, but not sure how to relate to them or where to go for deep fellowship. I live with my mom again, but that’s not really working out very well. Out in Africa, I had plenty of friends, or at least people who wanted my help. They all wanted me to homeschool and babysit their kids, and move to a different location every few months to fill in for whomever was going on furlough. They figured that since I was single I wouldn’t mind. I didn’t mind helping out, but sometimes it was their assumptions about being single that bothered me. Being single gave me plenty of energy and time for ministry, but it was hard for the Togolese to understand why I wasn’t married.”

“I can identify with that. I was in Africa until two years ago—The Gambia,” said Jeanie. “The first few months were terrible. Every time I went out in public, some Gambian was offering to marry me—so I guess I can’t say I haven’t had a chance to marry! But the married men on our team didn’t know how to behave. If we had to go to a village together, they were so afraid of appearing that they were flirting, that they went out of their way to be rude and to treat me like another man to make absolutely certain no one would get the wrong impression. They were really considerate to their own wives, and even their friends’ wives, but not to me. One time, one guy held the door for his wife and then his friend’s wife, then let it swing shut in my face. It really made me feel ugly and unfeminine. I was glad they loved their wives and intended to be faithful to them, but did they have to treat me like I was dangerous?” Jeanie’s eyes started welling up with tears.

Jane put her hand on Jeanie’s back. “Well, you can comfort yourself that they must have seen you as pretty cute to be that worried about you.” She smiled.

Jeanie stole a sidelong glance and chuckled through her tears. She wiped her eyes. “When a Gambian family took me in for language study, and everyone saw me as part of their family, then things got a little better. After that, the mission sent out another single woman to be my partner. We weren’t very compatible, so we had to really work at living together peaceably, but at least I didn’t have to live alone.”

Mike shook his head. “We’ve talked a lot about the problems with ministry as a single person, but don’t we agree that there are some big advantages too? I mean that I like the fact that I can stay up and read all night if I feel like it—at least on Sunday night, because I take my Sabbath on Mondays. I can talk out loud to God when I’m home, or sing the Hallelujah Chorus at the top of my lungs, and there’s no one to think I’m nuts! And I can invite home any homeless Joe off the street and feed him supper without having to clear it with anyone. Sure, sometimes it’s lonely, but it’s great for ministry. Don’t you really think you’re more effective single than you would be if you were married?”

Jeanie’s red splotches had almost disappeared. “I don’t know about that. But I do keep thinking that there are a whole lot more unhappy marriages out there than happy ones. I can think of very few of my married friends who aren’t dealing with some pretty big problems. I used to envy my sister, who’s married with three kids. But now she’s miserable, so I’ve realized that my life could be a lot worse. I could be married to someone who was keeping me up nights crying and wondering how I’m going to support three kids if he goes the deadbeat dad route. If I’m unhappy with my company, I only have myself to blame.”

Mike spoke up. “In my congregation, I started a group for kids where the dad isn’t around anymore. Each family is partnered with a man in the congregation. The kids who are assigned to me stop by at the church after school and we talk or throw a baseball around. We go to the Little League games, and we sit in the audience and clap for them in their band concerts. When one of them gets into trouble, someone even goes with the mom to talk to the police or the principal. We just try to step into some of the places where

a dad is important. The group's getting so big, though, I need some more men to get involved. The single men have the most time available, since they don't have kids of their own. They do an incredible job."

"That's so cool!" said Sheila. "I wonder if there are other ministries that single men and women could start. Maybe we need to think outside the box. I think our churches see singles more as a group that needs ministering to, rather than as a resource for service. Maybe singles don't "rise to the challenge" because no one is challenging them to get out from behind their computer screens and take on important roles in the church. I wonder if there are some things we can do to help develop other singles into leadership in our churches. Doesn't it seem like they are an untapped resource?" The group nodded. "What are some ideas?"

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Designing a Marriage Retreat

There are at least ten possible components to a marriage retreat. Which ones you choose depend on your needs at the time. It is wise to decide which components are most needed before you even decide the more practical matters of where you will go and for how long. The primary components should drive your selection of location and time, not the other way around.

Here are ten components that you will want to consider. Add others that you feel are vital for your own marriage. As you read this list, mark or list separately the ones that you need and those that you think your spouse needs.

Components

- Physical rest. To sleep until you wake up naturally.
- Sex. To make love without interruption as often and for as long as you both desire.
- Prayer. This may include prayer together and prayer alone.
- Recreation. Having fun together.
- Food.
- Scripture. Time enough to let Scripture speak to you.
- Assessment. Evaluation. Goal setting.
- Communication.
- Physical exercise.
- Romance. Emphasizing the *specialness* of each other in a tender and beautiful way.

In some way, highlight the one(s) that you need most. Show the list to your spouse and ask him/her to mark one that he/she most needs as well. Now, based on the list, especially of the things that you rated as primary, how can you design a retreat that will address those primary needs?

Use six W's and an H to help you plan. Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Wow!

Who can watch your home, children, or take over your ministry long enough for you to have this retreat?

What will the basic outline of your time be, so that you plan to include every component needed?

When can you go and for how long? If you can only work out single-day retreats, you will need to plan these carefully. You may need to plan a series of short retreats in order to address the needs you have.

Where can you go?

Why are you doing this? Be prepared to explain the need for this to others and to encourage each other why this is necessary, so that you do not waiver in your commitment.

How will you put this plan into action for it to really happen?

Wow! What surprise can you plan for your spouse on this retreat that will encourage or delight him/her and make the time memorable?

If you are stymied by any of these items, stop and pray, then brainstorm possible solutions.

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Accepting Your Needs

As you saw in Sue and Sam's story, a couple in ministry can be bound up in cords of expectations so tight that they feel strangled, unable to meet the needs of their marriage and family, or even of their own souls. Why is it that coming to Christ causes some people to be set free, while others are lock-stepped to the expectations of others and live in fear of transgressing? Perhaps one reason is that they have not left behind some basic assumptions about relating to their heavenly Father. They still see themselves as needing to earn their Father's love and respect by their good works. Part of the reason that the gospel is such good news is that you do not need to earn God's love, you need only accept it (Jn 3:16). Service that emanates from a need to be accepted by God is motivated by unbelief that, in Christ, He has already accepted you (Rom 10:1-6; Gal 3:10-13). Only service that springs from love through faith and led by God's Spirit will be rewarded (Mt 7:22). Religious activity, no matter how zealous, is not a substitute for service that proceeds from a heart-to-heart relationship with a loving heavenly Father whom you believe when He says, "You are accepted" (Rom 14:3).

This type of moment-by-moment relationship enabled Jesus to consistently resist the expectations of others in order to do what God was calling Him to do (Jn 7:3-9; 8:29; 18:19-23). If you doubt this, don't hesitate to look up those verses. His followers continued this pattern (Acts 4:19). But when people in ministry are so stressed that they lose sight of the Shepherd, they can quickly be pressed into molds of expectation that strangle their souls (Jn 10:9-14; Rom 12:2). They may be afraid to stop performing for others long enough to restore their relationship to God and in their marriage. They may be even more reluctant to ask others for help in restoring these vital relationships.

How did this reluctance come about? It's often a lifelong process that may have started at birth. Imagine when you were a tiny baby. A baby cries because he has no words to express the needs he feels—to be changed, fed, or just to feel comforted and safe. If when you cried, someone picked you up and comforted you, you learned that it was okay to have needs and to ask someone to meet them. You learned that someone was ready to come and comfort you. Those times of cuddling and soothing are meaningful times to a parent too. But if no one responded to your cries (perhaps for fear of spoiling you), you may have picked up the idea that it was bad to express your needs. It may even have increased your sense of abandonment. You may have learned that one only receives kindness by pretending not to need it, by not bothering people. Over time, you may have learned to shut down your needs, not to communicate needs that might trouble anyone. Or you may have learned ways to comfort yourself, some healthy ways and some unhealthy ways. Many adults like this employ various addictions—alcohol, television, fervent religious activity—to soothe their anxious feelings. Does God also expect you to deny your negative feelings before He will come to comfort you? Does He expect you just to keep doing your duty without asking help for yourself? Will He give you a greater reward if you are able to work in ministry without troubling Him? Is that what Jesus meant when He said, "Deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow me?" Nothing could be further from the truth.

Let's look at some examples in Scripture. How did people in the New Testament handle their needs? Let's start by comparing two sisters, Mary and Martha.

- Please read an episode from their lives in Luke 10:38-42.

What were their respective needs? We see that Mary's need was to spend time with Jesus and understand what He was teaching. Mary ignores her culture's rules that it was improper for her, as a woman, to sit at

Jesus' feet and learn with the men. But she knew her need to be with Jesus was a valid and healthy one, and did not worry about meeting the expectations of others.

Martha handled her needs differently. She is motivated to serve Jesus by making a special meal for everyone. We don't know whether her initial motivation was a cheerful desire to serve others, or whether she had only a rigid sense of what was a proper meal for a special guest. We only know that as she began working on the meal, she discovered that she was alone in her goal. Her sister, Mary, was not following along. Martha needs help, but she does not come right out and ask Mary, does she? She realizes that Mary would then have the option of saying "no." People like Martha can't let others have freedom to need different things. They seek to limit what others may and may not need. Mary's need to learn with the men seems unreasonable to Martha. Martha thinks Mary should be doing her womanly duty in the kitchen.

If you have been around people like Martha, you can easily imagine how she worked up to the spillover of frustration that we see next. She started by clanking the pots and utensils a little louder and louder as she worked. She hoped someone, especially Mary, would notice that she was working all alone with no one helping her. Inside her heart, she was finding no joy in her service for Jesus. She was muttering things under her breath like "Mary should know better. What is she thinking? Do I always have to bear the burden alone? Haven't I told her over and over . . ." Finally in her exasperation, she goes to Jesus. But even here, she cannot humble herself to ask Him for help. Instead she does the unthinkable. Did you notice that she tries to shame Jesus into ordering Mary back into the kitchen? She suggests that since He has not before now ordered Mary back to the kitchen, He doesn't care about Martha! This is typical manipulative behavior in marriage. There is no way to answer it safely, for the blame has already been affixed. In Martha's distorted thinking, the only thing that Jesus can possibly do now is to apologize and to send Mary in to correct this injustice right away. But Jesus refuses to submit to her expectation. Instead, he chides Martha and lets Mary stay where she is.

For modern leaders today, Jesus and Mary are good examples of those who refuse to be shamed into fulfilling someone else's expectations. Martha, on the other hand, is an example of what not to do when you have needs. How would Jesus have reacted if instead of trying to shame Him, Martha had come to Him and said, "I am really falling behind in the kitchen and cannot get the meal to the table on time. Do you think someone could come and help me?" I think Jesus would not have rejected a more humble request.

Now, let's look at another example of two siblings in Luke 15. These two brothers could not be more different in their felt needs or the way that they express them. One seems to feel a need for independence and adventure. He asks for his inheritance from his father and sets off with hardly a backward glance. His action is reprehensible. But he eventually discovers how much more he needs his father than he ever imagined, and he heads home a changed person. Meanwhile, the elder son hides his own desires. He stays home and does his duty by working month in and month out without any outward complaint. When the younger son comes home in rags and poverty, the father is delighted to see him and throws a party.

- Let's pick up the story by reading Luke 15:22-32.

What do you see that each son needs? Perhaps the older son needs a break from his incessant work schedule, or maybe he needs to hear that his father loves him. But he keeps working and working, waiting for his dad to give him what he is too proud to request. Similar to Martha, this elder child eventually tries to shame the father into meeting his need by accusing the father of unfairness.

How could have the older brother handled his needs? What if he had said earlier "Dad, I love working for you, but I think I need a break. May I throw a party for my friends?" From what we know of his dad, he would have probably said "Sure son, everything I have is yours. Here's a fatted calf. Have a great party!" But since the elder son suppresses his own needs and refuses to ask the father directly, but silently works himself to exhaustion, he is like a barrel of gunpowder waiting for someone to light a fuse.

Perhaps you know someone like this elder brother. He works very hard for the Lord. No one can ever say that he has not done his duty. But his work doesn't spring from love. Instead, he is trying to impress the Father with his own righteousness and win His love. He misses out on the close relationship with his Father that is always available to him. Because the elder brother is not close to the father's heart, he doesn't understand his father's loving response when his younger brother returns home. He certainly does not share his father's perspective. He assumes that his father's love is always based on performance, so, in his mind, his father's display of love to the younger son makes no sense at all. Much to his chagrin, his little brother now has an even deeper, sweeter relationship with his father than he does! How can this be, when he is the one who has put in all the hard work and self-denial?

It's easy to see the pattern of the two brothers among various Christian workers. There are some who tend toward the prodigal, who seem to have little conscience about wasting time and money on pleasure. Others have already lived a wild life in the past, and now walk closely with the Father, enjoying His fellowship, and the party He throws for them with gratefulness. But there are also those who tend toward the pattern of the older brother. They refuse to bring their deepest needs to the Father and to those with whom they share life, such as their spouse and children. They work and work and work some more, but develop a growing heart of resentment about their service to God. When will He give them the love they desire? They do not fellowship deeply with God and never take on His loving heart toward others. Their negative thoughts may keep seeping out in physical symptoms such as ulcers, emotional symptoms such as outbursts of anger, and spiritual symptoms such as a judgmental spirit. When you don't give yourself permission to express your need for care and comfort to God and to those around you, you can become increasingly bitter, angry, and barren inside.

Sometimes your marriage partner is the only one who realizes your true state of barrenness. Does your spouse complain that you don't feed him/her emotionally, or connect on a deep enough level? Does this complaint seem to you like an added burden to an overfull backpack? It is impossible to take time to "connect" with your spouse when there is so much work to be done.

After prayer, talking, and reading Scripture over the next few days, Sue and Sam realized that they had been suppressing their deep emotional needs. They had thought that God would be more pleased with them for trying to meet every expectation of the senior pastor and the expectations in the congregation. They also realized that they were assuming that Pastor Lee, like God, was uncaring, when they had never told him how they felt. They decided to make a list and meet with God and then Pastor Lee to see how their needs might be addressed.

We have looked at ourselves as accountable before God for our stewardship of our marriage and our own spiritual discipleship. In this stewardship, we see that we have failed. We take full responsibility for working ourselves to this place in our lives, where we are inwardly barren and not "prepared for every good work" as God commands (Col 1:10-11). We confess that we have sinned by fearing the loss of our reputation and working to gain favor with man more than God. We recognize that we have adopted the pattern of the world that is passing away, that of working without ceasing, rather than praying without ceasing (1 Thess 5:17). Our goal from now on is to abide in the Vine who is Christ (Jn 15:4). In order to do this, we see that we must ask for help to meet our needs.

1. We need to be human. We want to learn more about how to walk in grace, and then model it and teach it to the congregation. For instance, we must tell the congregation, "We are not perfect, we make mistakes (1 Tim 1:15). God does not expect us to be anything different. He knows that we are dust (Ps 103:14)." We should set the example by readily admitting our flaws and seeking others' help in overcoming them. We must seek to model (not pretend) a godly balance between home ministry and church ministry, not hyper-religiousness, but real faith that comes from a real relationship with God.

2. We need to deal with accusers directly (Mt 18:15-17). Rather than bemoaning to others about the gossip we hear, we must go directly to the person who has gossiped and seek not only to understand

their criticism but also to request that they always come directly to us rather than spreading more gossip. When they challenge us, we must not respond defensively, but genuinely seek to change if, after prayer and perhaps seeking other advice, we feel this is God's word to us (Gal 2:14; 2 Pet 3:15-16).

3. We need Sabbath rest times for intimacy in our family and with God. There should be time every day and a longer time every week when the cell phone is turned off, the door is closed, and we can spend time together without fearing interruption. Perhaps a recording on our phone can tell anyone which pastor or elder is available in an emergency, and this responsibility can rotate.

4. We need to have friends and time to spend with them (Jn 15:15; Acts 24:23). We would like to develop a pastors' and wives' fellowship from different congregations to bear one another's burdens.

5. We need strong "people of refuge" (Num 35:11), who are wise and loving with whom we can talk and pray when we need encouragement, especially when we have made mistakes. Like Aaron and Hur (Ex 17:12) or David's "mighty men" (2 Sam 23:3-19), we need people who can help us make goals to keep our hearts and our marriage alive and tender toward the influence of the Holy Spirit. We need them to hold us accountable that we are doing what we planned.

This is just the beginning of Sue and Sam's list. From their problems described earlier, what other needs can you add to their list? Who could help meet these needs?

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Appendix

Overcoming an Abusive Past

If a woman³⁶ has been abused sexually and then gets married, the sexual relationship in marriage will cause her to recall the memories of sexual abuse. This is often true even if she has suppressed the memories, and they seem to be forgotten. Married sex may also trigger whatever strategies that she used to mentally endure the abuse.

This is also true of emotional abuse. If her father was an emotionally abusive person, her husband's anger may trigger fear of abandonment or make her expect to be abused again, even if that is not the husband's intent at all. As we saw in Lesson 2, she may react explosively with "lying feelings" such as rage or fear.

When the sexual relationship in marriage is difficult because of past abuse, a woman may give up and conclude that it is impossible for her to enjoy it or that it is not worth the struggle. The truth is that she is afraid to enjoy something she doesn't feel that she deserves, or to need something (love) that could easily be removed. So some women tear their marriages down with their own hands and behave like a shrew, until their husbands reject them, as with Eileen's Story, which you read earlier.

Deadness

Sometimes an abused woman progresses through a series of unsuccessful relationships with men. After enough broken relationships, a woman's walls can become so thick and tall, that instead of hurting, her heart develops "emotional leprosy," and she feels nothing. Like a person who has that disease, she may expose her heart to toxic people and situations that wound her more. She thinks it makes no difference because she can no longer feel her own pain (Mt 13:15).

But when she deadens the ability to feel pain, she deadens all of her feelings, not just the bad ones. A woman who is actually love-starved most often acts like she doesn't care or doesn't need anyone. She can't feel pleasure, and she can't feel love—neither love for her man nor the love that he has for her.

Coming Alive Again

What is the answer? The wounded woman must begin to hope that God can heal her and to actively engage in a process of healing. Like going to the doctor for physical treatment, some parts of the process of emotional healing will be painful. But if the woman is courageous enough to process her emotional wounds with someone else, she will not only walk in more freedom in Christ, but also she will be able to walk beside others to help them heal. A Christian counselor is best equipped to help a woman like this. But in some places where this course will be used, a counselor will not be available. A caring, wise friend or husband will be the only one available to listen and help.

The following are some steps to beginning the process of healing from abuse:

1. Feel. She must let herself feel the emotional pain of her wounds once again, and ask God to come and comfort her in her memories. He can minister to her brokenness and restore her (Isa 61:1). God cannot heal the pain that she cannot feel. But when she asks in faith, He will come and begin to heal the places in her heart, which were wounded. For instance, if her earthly father dealt her a wound, "You are not worth staying here for. I am leaving. You can fight your own battles," the woman's heavenly Father can assure her, "Don't be afraid, for I will protect you. I call you by name, you are mine" (Isa 43:1).

³⁶ Men also experience sexual abuse and the symptoms and steps to healing will be similar. This is, however, more common among women, so this article is written as if the wounded person is a woman.

If you are helping a spouse or other friend to be free of control from an abusive past, encourage her to allow, not try to stop, each memory that God brings forward. She may want to draw a picture of the abuse, especially if she cannot talk about it. Ask God to show her new truth about what happened. Ask Him to show her, for instance, where He was during the abuse. Ask Him to reveal if any lies were adopted during the abuse (such as “I am not worth staying for”) that now need to be replaced with the truth. God’s truth, properly applied and reinforced by the encouragement of another believer, can begin to fill in the holes in her heart. The next steps address some of those lies.

2. Know. While no one is without sinful behavior, she must *know* that *she* did not cause her wounds by being bad or worthless (Lk 12:7). Her wounds exist because someone sinned against her (Ps 22).

3. Forgive. She must eventually forgive the sin of her attacker in order to be free. That doesn’t mean that God will let the perpetrator off the hook, but she will not be the one to require the payment (Mt 6:14-15). Forgiveness is not saying that it doesn’t matter, but that she is giving judgment to God and cutting the cord, which bound her to the perpetrator. Unforgiveness does not punish the person, only herself.

4. Perceive. She needs to perceive the spirit behind the attacks, the enemy of her soul who hated her desperately and wanted to destroy her. He fears the powerful person she can become in God’s hands—powerful to stop his work and to help others. Satan is the one who deserves hatred. Everyone else is a victim, as well as a sinner, and needs a Savior (1 Jn 5:19).

5. Receive. She must ask for and receive God’s forgiveness for any sin that she committed related to the abuse (1 Jn 1:8). Many times, a skilled perpetrator will try to get his victims to participate in some way, so that the victim shares in the guilt and will not easily reveal the crime to others. For instance, an adult who sexually abuses a child will try to get the child to experience pleasure in the sex act so that it “feels” like the child is responsible for his/her own action. Or the adult will coerce the child into killing a pet or even another child, rather than be murdered herself. Later the grown child feels guilty and ashamed for the action. But Jesus’ death on the cross was a vast enough payment for all sins (2 Cor 5:21). If she has asked God to forgive whatever part she played in the sin, God *has* forgiven her. He is *not* the one who keeps accusing her of past sin. She must close that door and stand in faith that she is forgiven any time that the enemy accuses her.

6. Listen. What does your real Father say to you?

I delight in you (Isa 62:2-4).

You are the apple of My eye (Zech 2:8).

You are wonderfully made (Ps 139:14).

I will fight for you (Heb 7:25; 1 Pet 2:24).

I lay down My life for you (1 Jn 3:16).

You are mine (Isa 43:1).

When a wounded woman believes that she delights God as His beloved (Rom 9:25) and applies truth to combat the lies that the enemy tries to whisper into her wound, she can replace the old dead words with new life-giving ones. Memorizing and meditating on the truth of Scripture can help her to think clearly about what happened and can reorient her mind in the truth (Jas 1:21). Certain passages of Scripture have been especially helpful to people recovering from severe trauma: Psalm 18; 31; 34; and Isaiah 43 are good places to start memorizing and/or meditating.

I once asked a friend who had been severely abused why she memorized so much Scripture. She had memorized hundreds of verses and kept cards with verses written on them with her all the time. When she was riding in a car, had time between college classes, woke up, went to bed, she filled her mind with the truth. She said, “You don’t understand. This Scripture is life. It’s what keeps me alive!” The verses helped combat the lies that said she was worthless and should kill herself.

No One Knows

If you have memories of being abused or if you are married to one who was abused, you may feel very lonely. You may feel that no one on earth knows how deeply you hurt. There's a bittersweet old song which black slaves in America used to sing,

“Nobody knows the trouble I've seen. Nobody knows but Jesus.”

Whatever you have suffered or are suffering, remember Jesus is no stranger to suffering (Isa 53:3) and understands, even when no earthly friend does. Also bear in mind that your suffering will certainly be temporary (1 Pet 5:10). If you are in Christ, your eternal future is already secured as a perfect one without any suffering or abuse (2 Cor 4:17).

What's the Role of a Spouse?

One way that you can be sensitive to your spouse's abusive past is to respond properly if your spouse is unable to respond sexually. What should you do?

According to 1 Corinthians 7:3-6, a wife should meet her husband's sexual needs. Please read this passage if you are unfamiliar with it. But when a wife says that she cannot yield to her husband sexually, perhaps because of frightful memories of past sexual abuse, how should a husband respond in a way that emulates Christ?

- Please read the following Scriptures before choosing the best answer for yourself. Remember you are the representative of Christ, just as your wife represents the church.
- Philippians 2:3-7
- Romans 14:21; 15:1
- Isaiah 53:4 (note what Jesus took on the cross in addition to sin)

Which are the best actions?

- Physically assert your right to have sex, even if your wife is resistant?
- Tell the pastor or her parents, so that they will pressure her to give you your sexual rights?

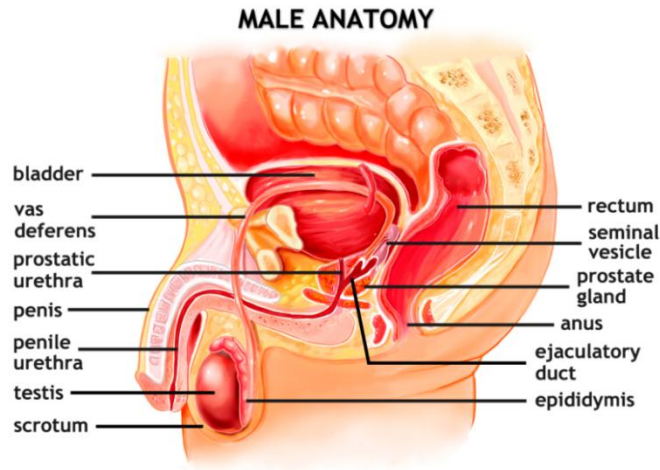
I hope you see that these would be cruel answers. The following are loving ways to deal with your wife's past abuse:

- Yield your rights to God for sexual relations, just as you did when you were single.
- Show love to her in other ways she can receive, such as affectionate touch, tender words, gifts, and acts of service.
- Be patient and sympathize with her memories and her weakness, while gently ministering the truth of Scripture to her to help reveal and heal her wounds.
- Pray against the devil's plans to destroy her.

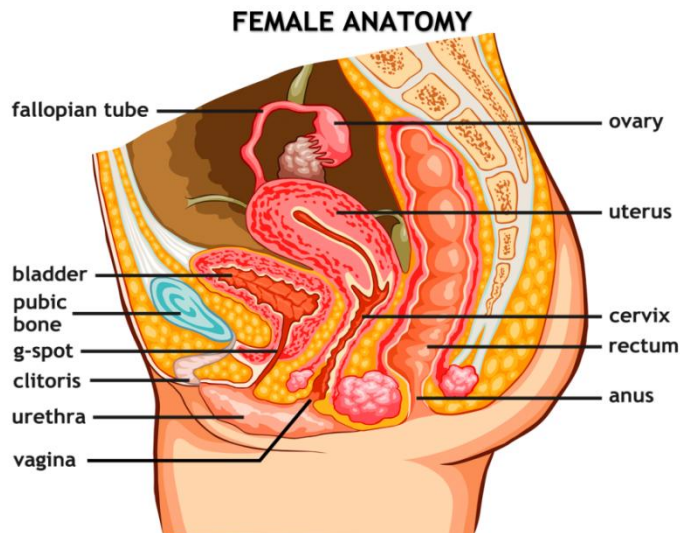
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Fearfully and Wonderfully Made

Male Body



Female Body



Understanding the Male Body

As an adult, it is important to have a basic understanding of how God designed the male body. Below you will find a description of the sexual organs of a man, including their design and function. It may be helpful to find each part on the Appendix diagram “Fearfully and Wonderfully Made Male and Female” in the previous article.

The Penis

The *penis* is the most distinguishing feature of a male. It is composed of two primary parts called *corpus cavernosa* and *corpus spongiosum*. God created these parts to fill with blood as a man becomes aroused through physical or mental stimulation. The filling with blood causes an *erection* to occur. An *erection* is when the penis becomes stiff or erect. The *urethra* is the narrow tube coming down the middle of the

penis. The *urethra* carries urine and semen from the body, but at different times. A man cannot urinate while his penis is erect. The head of the penis, also called the *glans*, has the highest concentration of nerve endings. Stimulation to the head of the penis will bring a man intense pleasure and lead to orgasm. When the penis is inserted into the vagina, the head of the penis is stimulated by both contact with the cervix and the squeezing of the vagina. This causes orgasm, the expulsion of semen from the end of the penis. When a man is unable to complete an erection and ejaculation, it is called impotence. If you wish to learn more about this subject, there is an Appendix article titled, “Overcoming Impotence.”

The Scrotum and Testicles

The *scrotum* is a single sac with two compartments housing the *testicles* or *testes*. The scrotum and testicles hang just behind the base of the penis. The purpose of the scrotum is to keep the testicles at a temperature 1–8 degrees below normal body temperature. It accomplishes this by stretching away from the body to cool and contracting against the body to keep the testicles warm. The *testicles* inside the scrotum are the glands where sperm cells are continually produced. After the sperm is produced, it is carried by a long tube called the *vas deferens* to be stored in the *prostate gland* until ejaculation. Can you find these glands on the diagram? All sperm, created by the testicles, are either male or female. If a male sperm joins with an egg in the woman, the resulting child will be a boy. If the sperm is female, the child will be a girl.

The testicles produce the man’s primary sex hormone, *testosterone*. This hormone produces the changes that develop his male sexual features, mature his organs, and create body hair when he reaches puberty. Throughout life, testosterone causes sexual desire in *both* men and women. Women have less testosterone, so their sex drive is often less than a man’s. Because a man’s testosterone level is highest in the morning, it is not uncommon for him to wake up with an erection.

Prostate Gland

On either side of the *prostate gland* are the *seminal vesicles*, two sacs where sperm is stored. While the sperm is in the seminal vesicles, they are mixed with *secretions* produced by the prostate. This is the fluid in which the sperm swim looking for an egg to fertilize inside the woman. The sperm and prostatic secretions mixed together are called *semen*. As the sacs fill with *semen*, it reminds a man physically for his need for a sexual release.

During *ejaculation*, a man’s sexual climax, the prostate’s strong muscular contractions forces the semen from the *seminal vesicles*, through the *urethra* and out the end of the penis. Sexual intercourse, also known as coitus, occurs when a man ejaculates his semen inside a woman’s vagina. Can you locate these organs on the diagram?

Pleasure During Sexual Intercourse

A man’s pleasure during intercourse is derived primarily from stimulation to the penis and from the expulsion of semen at orgasm. But he also has many other areas where he receives pleasure from his wife’s touch. It is a lifelong pursuit for a married woman to learn various ways of bringing pleasure and comfort to different parts of her husband’s body, from massaging tired shoulders, to kissing him, to touching his genitals in a way that he enjoys.

The primary organ of pleasure for both men and women is the brain. It is in your brain, not your sexual organs, that you identify a feeling as pleasant or unpleasant. Your imagination is the most powerful aphrodisiac available. How can your mind heighten anticipation with pleasurable thoughts about intercourse with your wife? How can your mind communicate love and prepare creatively for a more delightful experience together?

Applying this article:

- Can you identify all of the body parts mentioned above in the Appendix illustration “Fearfully and Wonderfully Made Male and Female”?

- If you are a wife, can you find each of the external parts next time you are loving your husband sexually?

While knowing the proper biological terms is helpful when you visit the doctor, some couples give special names to these pleasure parts just like Solomon did—naming them after fruit, flowers, children’s names, foods. If a husband calls home and says “Honey, Joey is sad because he hasn’t been home in so long. He wants to know if we can get together after dinner tonight,” his wife will smile and know that her husband is secretly asking her to love him sexually.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Understanding the Female Body

The female sexual and reproductive system is complex and affects many things in her life, not only the annoyance of menstruation and her ability to get pregnant but also fluctuations in her moods as well. As an adult, it is important to understand how a woman’s body was designed.

Reproductive and Pleasure Organs

The Pituitary Gland

The *Pituitary Gland* is a bean-sized gland located inside the center of the brain. It may be small but its function is huge! In both men and women, this gland regulates hormones controlling growth and reproduction. This is especially significant to an understanding of female sexual function. Each month from puberty to menopause, the pituitary produces two hormones, follicle-stimulating hormone [FSH] and luteinizing hormone [LH]. These signal the ovaries that it is time to ripen and release an ovum. Please take a moment and find the ovaries on the Appendix illustration, “Fearfully and Wonderfully Made Male and Female.”

The Ovaries

The *ovaries* are located inside a woman’s lower abdomen and are smaller than a human thumb. As you probably noted in the illustration, they are located on each side of the uterus and are connected to the uterus by the fallopian tubes. On the surface of the *ovaries* are thousands of tiny droplets called follicles. Each follicle contains an immature egg. When the pituitary sends the LH and FSH hormones each month, one egg will begin to ripen. (If, as sometimes happens, two eggs ripen, non-identical twins may later be the result). As the ovum is ripening, the ovaries produce two hormones, estrogen and progesterone. These signal the lining of the uterus to become thicker. High progesterone levels may produce the irritability some women experience just before their menstruation and during pregnancy. When the egg is mature, it leaves the ovary, alternating left and right ovaries with each monthly cycle. Of the more than 300,000 eggs in a woman’s body, only about 300 will ever be matured and released. Menopause occurs when hormone production decreases to where this cycle stops, not when the supply of eggs is exhausted.

The Fallopian Tubes (Oviducts)

Near the ovaries and attached to the uterus are two tubes a little longer than your longest finger called the *fallopian tubes*. When an ovary releases a mature egg, the feathery end of the fallopian tube sweeps it inside and conducts it to the uterus. If there are sperm present, one of these may join with the egg to create a baby. A woman who no longer wishes to have more children may have her fallopian tubes surgically closed (tubal ligation) to block the ovum from meeting the sperm. This blockage may occur naturally after an infection and may result in unwanted infertility. (You may read about various infections in the Appendix article “Sexually Transmitted Diseases”.)

The Uterus

The *uterus*, which you have no difficulty locating in the drawing, is also called the womb. The *uterus* is an amazing organ the size and shape of a small pear. Each month the lining of the uterus thickens. If the egg has not been fertilized, then both the egg and the lining of the uterus will be sloughed off in the woman's monthly menstrual period. If a fertilized egg is present, it will attach to the uterine lining and be nourished through an organ called a *placenta*. By the end of the first few months of pregnancy, perhaps before the mother even is certain she is pregnant, the tiny baby has all of its digits, organs, and a functioning brain. It grows in size and complexity for about nine months, when the uterus's powerful contractions expel the baby from the mother's body. One amazing fact about the uterus is that it can grow large enough to hold several babies at once, such as in the case of these quadruplets. These all came from one pregnancy!



The Cervix and Cervical Os

The *cervix* is the lower neck of the uterus and drops half way into the vagina. During sexual excitement it draws back, lengthening the vagina. *Os* is the Latin word for "mouth." The *cervical os* is the tiny opening of the cervix, often the size of a pen tip. During sexual intercourse, the sperm travel through the *os* into the uterus and up into the fallopian tubes in search of the egg. During labor, the muscles of the uterus contract over and over in order to stretch the *cervical os* wide and to push the baby out. During the days after delivery, the *os* returns to its closed position, although usually not as firmly closed as before.

The Vagina

The *vagina* is the long narrow passage leading from the uterus and cervix to outside the body. The vagina is one of the most flexible structures in all creation. At rest, it is only the diameter of a pencil lead and yet can expand during delivery to allow the head and shoulders of a baby to pass through it. While it is the individual sperm that determines the gender of a baby, a particular woman's vaginal secretions may favor the faster-swimming male sperm, or the larger, slower, but longer-living female sperm.

The Vulva

The *vulva* is another word for all of the following *external* female sexual organs. When stimulated, these can all produce sexual pleasure.

The Labia Majora and Minora

The entrance to the vagina is protected by two flaps called the *labia majora* and *labia minora*, Latin for the large and small "lips." The *labia majora* are the larger lips that cover the *labia minora* and the vaginal opening.

The Clitoris

The *clitoris* externally consists of a round piece of skin called the *glans* and a fold of skin that partially covers it called the *clitoral hood*. The clitoris is located approximately an inch above the vagina. As far as we know, the only reason God created the *clitoris* is so the woman can experience sexual pleasure.

Pleasure During Sexual Intercourse

The source of a woman's pleasure is her clitoris. Many other areas of a woman's body are also designed for sexual pleasure, not only all of the vulva area but also the inside of the vagina and the breasts as well as the skin in general. Like becoming a great musician, a husband may make it his ambition to learn and practice various ways of stimulating his wife's sexual response through all of these avenues of pleasure.

Both men and women's strongest sexual organ is the brain. It is what you think that interprets what you feel in the rest of your body. In a seminar I attended for breast cancer survivors, the instructor, an older nurse with grown children, shared how she was able to restore an enjoyable sexual relationship with her husband after cancer surgery removed her breasts. She said we could compensate for this by using our minds. She said, "Your brain is your most powerful sexual organ. I close my eyes and begin to imagine how good it will feel for my husband to stroke me there." At first, I admit I was a little uncomfortable with her frank talk in a group, even though it was all women. Then I realized that she sounded just like the Shulamite, who imagined the pleasure of her husband's stimulation (Song 2:6; 8:3). She said that by intentionally activating your imagination, you can improve your sexual relationship to overcome deficits in sexual stimulation.

Applying This Article:

- Can you identify all of the body parts mentioned above on the Appendix diagram "Fearfully and Wonderfully Made Male and Female"?
- If you are a husband, can you find each of the external parts next time you are loving your wife sexually?
- While knowing the biological terms is helpful when you visit the doctor, some couples give special names to these pleasure parts just like Solomon did—fruit, flowers, children's names, foods—especially those parts that bring pleasure. A message received at the office: "The orchid is desperate to be watered when you come home!" might cause him to blush, but no one around will ever know what "the orchid" really is.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Note: This article contains specific and detailed medical information of a sexual nature.

Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) are found in every country of the world. They are transferred from one person to another during sexual activity, such as coitus, oral-genital sex, or homosexual (anal) sex. They are also transmitted frequently, especially in some poor areas, through blood-to-blood contact, such as through using a medical needle over and over to inject several people. If a couple are both virgins when they marry, remain sexually faithful to one another, and use sanitary medical practices, such as a new needle for a vaccination, they need not fear transmitting or receiving these diseases. But if you have multiple sex partners, you are inviting one or more of these diseases to infect your own body and may later spread the illness to your spouse, children, and others. When you have sex with someone, it is like having sex with all of the people whom he/she has formerly had sex with—you may share in all of their diseases. Having sex outside of the temple of marriage is not only sinful, it is also dangerous and potentially deadly.

While these diseases are a deterrent that God uses to encourage chaste behavior, they are not a "punishment from God," since many innocent people are also harmed by these diseases. If you ask His forgiveness for your past sexual sins, He certainly forgives you on the basis of Jesus' work on the cross, but He may not remove the consequences of the action. Sometimes a consequence is a disease, such as the following:

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome

AIDS comes from the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). It prevents a body from being able to fight off infections, so the person with AIDS becomes sick with many other diseases. While new, very expensive medicines can prolong life, AIDS is ultimately a fatal disease. There is no cure. No one knows for sure how AIDS originated, but it spreads quickly wherever people have more than one sexual partner or reuse medical needles. Worldwide, more than 25 million people have died of this disease since 1981. Currently about 30 million are carrying the virus. How does that compare to the population of your city or your country? Each year, about 3 million people acquire AIDS and 2 million die. Africa has 11.6 million orphaned children due to AIDS (<http://www.avert.org/worldstats.htm>). Condoms can *reduce* the probability, but they do not completely prevent the spread of AIDS from an infected partner.

Chlamydia

Chlamydia is one of the most common of all the sexually transmitted diseases. It infects more than 92 million people worldwide (<http://www.avert.org/chlamydia.htm>). Chlamydia may cause an abnormal discharge from your vagina or penis and a burning sensation when you urinate. But 75 percent of women and 50 percent of men have no symptoms and don't realize that they have it. In women, untreated chlamydia may lead to pelvic inflammatory disease, which causes infertility. Or during the first days of pregnancy, the baby may attach somewhere outside the womb instead of inside, called an *ectopic* pregnancy. The baby cannot develop to term outside the womb, but as it grows bigger, it will kill the mother. A doctor must surgically remove the baby in order to save the mother's life and the baby dies in the process. If you are diagnosed with chlamydia, a doctor can prescribe an antibiotic to treat it. Even if a woman is cured of the active disease, the internal scarring may prevent her from being able to have children.

Genital Herpes

Genital herpes is caused by a virus called Herpes Simplex, types 1 and 2 (HSV1 and HSV2). It affects an estimated 86 million people worldwide and is most common among people with multiple sexual partners (<http://www.healthcentral.com/genital-herpes/introduction-2177-108.html>). It spreads easily. The symptoms may show up first as tingling or burning in the legs, buttocks, and genitals, then as blisters on or around your genitals or rectum. When the blisters break, they leave tender ulcers (sores), which may take two to four weeks to heal. Weeks or months later, you will have other outbreaks, which are generally less severe and shorter. The infection will stay in your body indefinitely, but you have less frequent outbreaks over time. You can spread the disease at any time but most easily during an outbreak. Many people have no symptoms at all and do not realize that they are spreading this disease. You can catch genital herpes from any sexual contact with an infected person, not only coitus but other sexual practices as well. If a woman catches the disease during pregnancy, she can transmit the virus to her baby, which can cause mental retardation and death. Like all STDs, one of the big dangers is that genital herpes causes you to be more susceptible to catching other deadly diseases such as AIDS. There are some (expensive) antiviral drugs, which can reduce the rate of transmitting this disease to a partner by about 50 percent, but nothing fully eliminates the risk of spreading it once you have it (<http://www.livestrong.com/article/14216-genital-herpes-treatment-suppression-or-not/>, and <http://www.pubmedcentral.nih.gov/articlerender.fcgi?artid=2687913>).

Genital Warts (HPV)

Genital warts are caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV). They first appear as small, hard, painless bumps in a woman's vaginal area, on a man's penis, or around the anus, or in the mouth. Later, they look like a growth of cauliflower and itch intensely and may bleed. The disease may take many years after infection before the growths show, so even visually inspecting a partner does not mean that he/she does not carry the disease. Most people who have this disease don't realize it, as many strains of HPV, including those that cause cancer, have no symptoms. If you have genital warts, a doctor can give you

medicine to put on the warts, or he can cut them out. But once the virus is in your blood, you will continue to have eruptions of them from time to time, and you can spread it to your partner. The virus may lead to several types of genital cancers, most often cancer of the woman's cervix but also cancer of the vulva, vagina, anus, or penis. HPV is the most common STD in the world (<http://oralcancernews.org/wp/2008/11/hpv-virus-helps-cervical-and-head-and-neck-cancers-resist-treatment-and-grow-and-spread/>), with an estimated 50–80 percent of sexually active adults catching this disease at some time in their lives. Its greatest danger is not the discomfort, but a high risk of developing cervical and oral cancers (<http://www.reuters.com/article/healthNews/idUSTRE54B61920090512>) from it. A report from the World Health Organization published in 2007 says that virtually 100 percent of all cervical cancers come from HPV (http://screening.iarc.fr/doc/RH_HPV_unique_challenges.pdf). The virus is extremely contagious, and a condom does not protect either partner from all parts of the body that can transmit genital and oral HPV. Only mutual chastity can protect you from this—not just refraining from sexual intercourse but also avoiding oral and other intimate contact with someone who has had other sexual partners. A new vaccine, Gardasil, has been developed to help protect girls against four strains of HPV, but there are questions about it because of side effects (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/vaers/gardasil.htm>).

Gonorrhea

Gonorrhea is an STD that is caused by a bacterium. Like chlamydia, it causes a discharge from the vagina or penis and painful or difficult urination. It survives and spreads in moist, warm areas of the body, such as the cervix, urethra, throat, or rectum. Gonorrhea is most commonly spread when genitals touch each other during sexual intercourse but can also be passed during oral-to-genital sex or during homosexual-type (anal) sex. It causes similar results as chlamydia of pelvic inflammatory disease, ectopic pregnancy, and infertility. The antibiotic penicillin used to be able to cure this disease, but now several strains of the disease have emerged which resist it. Doctors can treat these resistant germs by trying different combinations of new antibiotics. Like chlamydia, the scars remain even after the disease has been stopped, so a woman may not be able to become pregnant and will have a higher risk of ectopic pregnancy. In 1999, 62.35 million people had this disease (<http://www.avert.org/stdstatisticsworldwide.htm>).

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is an inflammation of the liver, which is caused by a virus. It has caused epidemics in parts of Asia and Africa. Hepatitis B is endemic in China and various other parts of Asia (<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs204/en/>). In these regions, 8–10 percent of the adult population are chronically infected. In the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent, the rate is 2–5 percent, compared with less than 1 percent in the West (<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs204/en/>). If you become sick with Hepatitis B, you may vomit and your skin may turn yellow because your liver is not working properly. Over time, it may cause liver cirrhosis and liver cancer. There is no specific treatment. There is an effective vaccine against Hepatitis B, but it may be expensive and takes three shots given over the course of a year. Unlike Hepatitis A, which is spread via food and other casual contact with an infected person, Hepatitis B is spread primarily through sexual intercourse.

Pubic lice

Pubic lice, also called “crabs” are small, six-legged creatures that infect the pubic (genital) hair area and lay eggs. These lice can also live in armpit hair, eyebrows, and even eyelashes. Because this creature needs blood to survive, it buries its head inside a pubic hair shaft and secretes a substance that causes itching and inflammation. Scratching may cause the skin to become raw and infected. These lice spread through having sex with an infected person as well as through shared clothing or other opportunities for

the lice to move from one person to another. The lice can be killed by using special shampoos, by carefully removing the eggs with a special comb, and by washing clothing and bedding in very hot water.

Syphilis

Syphilis is caused by bacteria that one catches during sex with an infected partner. In previous generations, it was called “the great pox,” because at one point in its cycle, it produces pustules similar to smallpox or chicken pox. Without treatment, it is a deadly disease. The first sign, which shows up ten to ninety days after having sex with an infected person, is a chancre. A chancre is a painless open sore wherever the exposure occurred, usually on the penis or inside or near the vagina, but sometimes in the mouth or rectum. Since it doesn’t hurt, may be out of view, and disappears by itself, most people disregard or don’t notice the chancre sore. Then several months after the chancre heals, syphilis produces the pox-like rash, which may come and go on different parts of the body for a year or two. Eventually, syphilis progresses to the final stage. During this stage, it is no longer contagious, but it destroys the heart and central nervous system, eyes, bones, joints, or almost any other part of the body. It may cause mental illness and death. In 1999, 12.22 million people had this disease (<http://www.avert.org/stdstatisticsworldwide.htm>). Syphilis may pass from a mother to infect her unborn child. Many of these children will die and the majority of the ones who are born will get sick in their first few weeks as the syphilis attacks their liver, brain, eyes, teeth, bones, glands, and lungs (<http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/communicable/std/syphilis.htm>). The disease germs can’t live outside the body, so you can’t catch it from a towel or toilet seat, only from some form of sexual contact. Syphilis is difficult to properly diagnose, as it mimics many other diseases, and the blood tests aren’t always accurate. It can be treated by taking penicillin, but the doctor must check your blood every so often to make sure it has not come back.

Pelvic Inflammatory Disease

Each year in the United States, the Center for Disease Control estimates that at least 1 million women have the symptoms of PID. More than 100,000 American women become infertile each year as a result of PID (<http://www.cdc.gov/std/PID/STDFact-PID.htm>). The condition may be caused by different types of bacteria, but PID is most commonly caused from one of the diseases that you just read about, or from using an IUD for birth control, or from douching. PID occurs when bacteria from a woman’s vaginal area moves upward into her reproductive organs, particularly the fallopian tubes, and causes inflammation, then scars, and adhesions. Most of the time, a woman does not realize that she has this condition until she tries to become pregnant. Then, she may be infertile because her fallopian tubes are scarred closed, or she may have an ectopic or tubal pregnancy, where the baby is not able to travel down the fallopian tubes to implant in the womb. If the baby implants outside the womb, either the baby must be killed through a medical operation, or else both the woman and the child will die. PID may not be a life-threatening disease, but it leads to great heartbreak for young families.

So what do you think? Are these diseases an accident? Or a natural boundary, which a good God allows in order to restrain sin until both sin and disease are finished (Rev 22:2)?

- Please read Romans 1:27.

Do you think that sexually transmitted diseases are the bodily penalty that Paul is talking about in this verse?

If you are concerned that you may have one of these diseases, you should go to a medical professional for proper diagnosis and treatment. Your sexual partner must also be notified and tested.

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

The Ethics of Limiting Fertility

As you saw in Genesis 1:28 and 9:1, God's commands to fill the earth and then to replenish it after the flood have been fulfilled. You also saw from 1 Corinthians 7:3-5, that abstinence in marriage is wrong, just as much as abstinence before marriage is right. How do we put these facts together? Does this mean that a wife should have as many babies as possible—one per year for her adult life? If each wife had 10–20 pregnancies, poverty, starvation, and high infant and mother death rates would result, as it already does in countries where the land is unable to sustain the population and where family planning is not widely practiced. Scripture suggests no obligation for every human to procreate. Daniel, Paul, and Jesus did not have physical children. While God says children are a gift (Ps 127:3), He never says that you must keep accepting more and more gifts until your home cannot hold them all! God tells man to take responsibility for his actions based on what is good—not just for himself, but what is good for others (Mk 12:31) and for the wider creation (Gen 1:28). You will see there are many godly reasons to limit fertility in order to be kind to others and to steward creation as God would want.

Working With the Natural Principles of Creation

Because the earth has been filled, God has put in place many effective ways to limit human fertility without violating His moral law. As rulers (Gen 1:28), man was given the ability and the drive to discover and use the mysteries of the earth (Eccl 3:11). These principles of physics and biology are given for us to use to benefit all creation. We use even very mysterious ones all the time. We fly through the air in airplanes. We use X-rays for seeing inside the body, radio waves for hearing long distances, and convert the power of flowing water into electricity. As joint-heirs with Christ, good and loving rulers, we are supposed to use all of the earth's physical principles to work against the evil rule of sin and the god of this world (2 Cor 4:4; 1 Jn 5:19), who delights in suffering and death.

But some people will say that principles of life and death are in a class by themselves. We should not influence these principles, even if we know how. We should stand back and let God choose whether or not to allow conception from sexual intercourse. If He chooses to award a family with twenty children, that is His responsibility, not the parents'. But there is nothing in Scripture that says that principles of life and death are totally off-limits to man—only that we must obey God's guidelines for using them. If God actually were the only one who could conceive a human life, I don't believe that He would create sons and daughters in lab dishes to be used only for evil experiments and then killed. People created and people killed those babies by using the principles of life and death, which God created. But those people did not understand or follow God's rules for their use.

It is not evil to work with principles of life for good. When a doctor gives medicine or performs an operation and successfully lengthens the life of your loved one, you know this is good. It was kind and merciful. It worked against the evils of suffering and death. How can you know when it is good to limit your own fertility? Where are the guidelines? You don't have to guess because God has clearly stated these rules in His Word. You may act to execute wise and merciful rule over your domain, but you may not kill a child once it has come into being, except to save another's life (Ex 20:13).

Like every human decision, the two-part question of the morality of an act is (1) whether your *motivations* are good or evil (Heb 4:12-13; 1 Sam 16:7) and (2) whether your *actions* themselves are right. Do you have a good reason for limiting or decreasing your fertility now? Is your reason wise, kind, and merciful—such as to space births for the health of mother and child? Or are your reasons selfish and evil—such as to hide premarital sex or adultery? Have you sought God's perspective in prayer about what is best for everyone involved, not just yourself? Then there are righteous and evil methods of controlling fertility. Some are more effective and some are less effective. If you only need to decrease fertility somewhat, you may choose a less effective method than if you must stop fertility altogether. You must think and study the methods before going to a clinic to request birth control. You may be offered a method that violates God's boundaries of endangering the life of another or even committing murder.

Is an Embryo Really a Human Being?

From the moment of conception, a child is a living human, precious in God's sight. People used to think that there was a time during the pregnancy, at around three months, called the "quickening" when the spirit of life came into the child. This was because at this time, the mother could begin to feel the child move inside her. People thought that up until that point, the child was an unmoving, empty shell with no soul. So some people thought it was all right to abort an unborn baby within the first three months of pregnancy. Many laws about abortion reflected this erroneous view. However, now thanks to sonograms, we know that the child is moving from the moment of conception for the rest of his/her life on earth. The mother can't feel the early movement because there is too much water buffering it. In fact, the child's own genes orchestrate all growth and development from the very beginning. The mother only provides safety and nutrition.

The idol worship in Canaan was so detestable to God partly because it involved sacrificing innocent babies. He says that this was the reason that He was taking the land away from the earlier peoples and giving it to Israel (Deut 18:9-12). Later, God says that He took the land away from Israel because they had also adopted this form of worship (2 Kgs 17:17-18). God insists that all babies are born for Him and belong to Him (Ezk 16:20-21). The Hebrew midwives in Egypt rightly refused to obey the government edict to kill newborn infants (Ex 1:16-17).

False Teachings

While it is wrong to kill a child at any stage of development, the Bible does not ever say it is wrong to prevent the sperm from meeting an egg to fertilize it. Eggs and sperm are single cells from your bodies, not human beings. Have you ever heard a preacher say that all limitation on fertility is wrong? Where did that idea come from, if not from the Bible?

Some people in the Catholic Church and in other churches historically taught that sex is sinful and that the only reason that God overlooks it is because of the possible greater good of creating children. Therefore, they say, every occasion of sexual union must have the *potential* for bringing life. Is this biblical? Of course not. You know by now that procreation is only *one* of the reasons for which God gave sexual intercourse. God first says He created sex for unity (Gen 2:24). Only later did He mention that sex was to produce children (Gen 4:1). This teaching has at its basis a false point of view about sex.

Another false teaching that you may have heard is that the sin of Onan was to spill his semen on the ground (Gen 38:9). Therefore, these teachers say that fertility should never be stopped or it is sin. Scripture is clear, however, that Onan's sin was in shaming and cheating his sister-in-law. In that era, the law required that if a widow was childless, her brother-in-law could have sex with her just until she became pregnant with a son to later care for her. But Onan, after using her for the pleasure of the sex act, cheated her of the opportunity to become pregnant by removing his penis before ejaculating his sperm. God frowns on using people for selfish reasons.

For an analysis of the ethics of the various methods of family planning, you may read the Appendix article "Methods of Limiting Fertility".

Please return to the Student Workbook now.

Methods of Limiting Fertility

As you just read, preventing conception to control fertility is part of expressing humankind's benign rule over a replenished earth. However, a couple must evaluate the methods that are available to them. Then they need to decide on the ones that are both effective enough for their situation and morally right as well.

Several methods of birth control prevent an egg and a sperm from meeting. These are called contraceptives. A contraceptive can be chemical, a physical barrier, or both. None are perfect and they work best in combination. Here are the basic types.

More Effective Methods of Contraception

Male Condom. This is a glove of latex, polyurethane, or animal membrane that must be unrolled over the man's penis after it is erect and must be kept there until after intercourse is complete and the penis is removed from the vagina (soon after ejaculation). It is inexpensive and widely available without a doctor's prescription. It is not perfect, however. A condom can fail to prevent pregnancy for the following reasons:

- (1) Holes in the material. If a couple uses a new condom each time and does not use an oil-based lubricant, the chance of holes in the condom is small. Some condoms are coated with a *spermicide*, a chemical to kill the sperm, but studies have showed no improvement in effectiveness from this coating.
- (2) Slipping off, especially as the penis becomes soft after ejaculation or during a long period of foreplay or intercourse. The couple must remember that the man must not remain inside the woman once he has ejaculated or if his penis becomes softer during a long intercourse.
- (3) The biggest problem with this method is failure to use it consistently. Some men feel it decreases their pleasure and so resist putting it on. Some people use up a package of condoms and forget to buy more, or can't find it when they need it, or don't remember the need for one until they are in the middle of sex. Some couples get caught up in their passion and fail to stop and put it on before intercourse. When a couple decides to have unprotected sex "just this once," there is a good chance that a baby will be the result. We personally know of babies born from all of these types of condom failures. The rate of success for this method is 84–98 percent.

Female Condom. This is a plastic or latex sleeve that fits inside a woman's vagina. It has the same problems as a male condom, except that it may be put in twenty-four hours before sexual intercourse. It prevents pregnancy 79–95 percent of the time.

Female diaphragm. This is a latex cap that is first coated with a spermicide gel, then inserted into the vagina to cover the cervix up to two hours before intercourse. It must be left in place for several hours afterward, until all the sperm are killed. Additional gel may be added for additional intercourse. A diaphragm must be sized and prescribed at a clinic, but may be washed and reused. The rate of success when used alone is 84–94 percent effective. When used *with* a male condom, these together create a very effective method of limiting fertility without risk of harming a baby or decreasing a woman's chance of becoming pregnant later. A **cervical cap or shield or a contraceptive sponge** is used similarly, with varied rates of success.

Sterilization. When a couple decides that they have completed their family, either the husband or the wife may have a surgical procedure to stop his/her ability to procreate. For a man, the procedure is called a vasectomy. The tiny tubes carrying sperm into the semen (vas deferens) are cut or tied surgically so that his semen no longer contains sperm. For a woman, the procedure involves cutting ("tubal ligation"), tying, or scarring ("Essure") the fallopian tubes to prevent the sperm and egg from meeting. Sometimes this procedure can be later surgically reversed, but it is often permanent. It has *no negative effect on libido or sexual pleasure*, but it may take several months after the procedure before it becomes fully effective, so a couple must use another contraceptive method until he/she can be tested by a doctor.

Pleasuring each other without coitus. This is a good temporary option in situations where the couple has no access to moral forms of birth control, yet must not become pregnant, such as when a government will force an abortion if pregnancy occurs. It is also a good option when, for medical reasons, a doctor says that you must not have intercourse, such as immediately before or immediately after having a baby.

The main guideline for the way to pleasure each other would be that it should be enjoyable for both and should not mimic the male homosexual sex.

Less Effective Methods of Contraception

The following methods can be helpful in marriage, but they are not completely reliable in preventing conception. The most serious birth defects occur in the first few weeks of development before a woman knows that she is pregnant. Therefore, a sexually active couple that is using one of these less effective methods of preventing conception should always assume that the wife might be pregnant. She should not take medicines, drink alcohol, or have an unshielded X-ray to avoid harming the developing baby in case she is pregnant. Here are the most widely used methods that diminish fertility in various degrees:

Periods of abstinence, “the rhythm method,” or “natural family planning” also called NFP. This method depends on abstaining from sex during the days (about eight days per month) around ovulation. The couple determines the wife’s ovulation by watching the calendar and/or by observing changes in her vaginal secretions and temperature. There is an old joke about this method,

Q. What do they call people who use rhythm?



A. Parents!

There are two main reasons that this method fails to work completely. The first is that many women’s cycles are atypical and they wrongly guess how long or when they are fertile. Her cycle may be different every month so fertility is hard to predict. Therefore, natural family planning, in which the woman *observes* changes in her body that indicate ovulation, is more effective than rhythm alone.

The second reason for failure (and the strongest) is that during the time a couple must abstain from sex is when the woman’s desire for sex is peaking and her pheromones (hormones expelled naturally through the air) send the message to her husband that she is the most sexually desirable.

In order for any of the methods based on abstinence during fertile periods to work successfully, the couple must have strong willpower to abstain during the very time that they have the strongest sexual urge. If a couple faithfully avoids sex during the time around ovulation, the rate of pregnancy using these methods is 5–9 percent in a year. That means that out of one hundred couples, between five and nine couples will become pregnant. The actual rate of pregnancies, which occur from using these methods is around 25 percent in a year. That is, twenty-five of one hundred couples will become pregnant. The difference between the two figures is because so many of the couples cannot maintain abstinence during the fertile period. By comparison, if a couple has unprotected sex during the woman’s period of ovulation, the chance of her becoming pregnant is about 30 percent from a single sexual act, or 85 percent from using no fertility control over the course of any given year. Of course, the fertility rates of men and women vary greatly. These are only averages. Some people joke that they can become pregnant merely from standing downwind from each other.

Coitus interruptus. In this method, the man removes his penis before he ejaculates, (like Onan in the previous article, “The Ethics of Limiting Fertility”). This is not a totally effective method because even before ejaculation, a few sperm escape and begin to swim toward the egg. Its biggest failure is not in principle but in practice, since instinctively a man will complete his orgasm rather than withdrawing.

Sometimes he cannot control it, even though he thinks he will be able to. This type of intercourse will reduce fertility some, but is emotionally unsatisfying.

Douching. In this method, the woman moves quickly from intercourse to where she can wash out most of the semen, by using either clean water or a combination of clean water and vinegar or baking soda. Even though this was the birth control favored by my grandmother, it is not a safe practice. It may actually flush the semen farther up into the uterus and encourage pregnancy or push the egg out the end of the fallopian tubes and cause an ectopic pregnancy (a life-threatening condition). It can disrupt the natural chemical balance inside the woman and sometimes causes pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).

Questionable Methods

Estrogen and Progesterone together. This can be provided as a pill (“the pill”), a ring implanted in the vagina (“Nuvaring”), a patch worn on the skin (“Ortho patch”), or a shot. These hormones are intended to work by suppressing ovulation. If the dose of estrogen is so low that breakthrough ovulation occurs, it also works by causing an early abortion, just as with the single progesterone below. That is what makes this method controversial among Christians who believe in the sanctity of human life. Each person should study and be fully convinced before using it. There are a variety of different dosages and types of hormones used—each with slightly different side effects and risks. The higher the portion of estrogen, the greater the chance that an ovum will not be released (true contraception), but there is also the higher risk of side effects. Generally a woman takes the pills or wears the patch for three weeks, then stops to allow menstruation. If she accidentally skips a pill one morning, or is taking another medication, which might interfere, she should use a barrier method of contraception, such as a condom, if she has sex within the next week, in case an ovum was released. Use of the pill can have a number of bad side effects and risks—permanent sterilization, headaches, irritability, strokes, blood clots, and female cancers. If you decide to use this form of limiting fertility, it should not be for more than a few years in your life because of the health hazards.

Unacceptable Methods

These methods don’t prevent conception, so they are not *contraception*, but rather kill or risk killing a developing baby—abortion. Some of the methods work first as contraception, but a percentage of embryos survive, and then the method kills them. A Christian cannot use these methods, as it breaks God’s law against murder.

Abortion. This method includes killing an unborn baby through any method—taking a pill to cause a miscarriage, cutting up the fetus with a curette, injecting the womb with saline or iodine, and/or sucking the baby out with a machine. All are evil forms of infanticide. Some governments promote abortion as a way to improve health or regulate periods. The opposite is true. Abortion can cause a woman to be unable to bear children later. If, after having an abortion, a woman later becomes pregnant, the new pregnancy may bring back strong memories of the dead child. Her guilt and grief may suddenly become acute. While abortion is clearly evil, the women who have had an abortion need to be led through a process of accepting God’s forgiveness and may need help emotionally in dealing with the loss of their child.

Progestin-only pill, shot, or rod implanted under the skin. Progestin is a synthetic form of progesterone. It prevents ovulation some of the time. It thickens cervical mucus to make it more difficult for the sperm to reach the egg. This would be fine if that is all it does. But if any sperm get through the mucus to fertilize an egg, progestin alone thins the walls of the uterus so that the baby dies. The **emergency contraception pill (EC) works on this principle.** These pills are widely sold on the streets in some countries or are prescribed by a doctor in others, as the solution to unwanted pregnancy after unprotected sex. But since these are taken *after conception*, this pill is designed primarily to kill a developing child by expelling it from the womb.

Intrauterine device (IUD) or Intrauterine System (IUS). This is a piece of metal or plastic, which is inserted into the uterus. Despite the deaths from pelvic inflammation (PID) that have occurred, it is still

very popular because it is easy. It works by creating an inflammation or producing a substance, which prevents conception in some cases, but at times, it kills the developing child. Christians should steer clear of this method.

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Kathy's Story: Vaginismus

The Thief of Intimacy

“Quietly, I snuck into bed and snuggled under the covers attempting not to arouse my sleeping husband. ‘Success,’ I thought to myself with relief. Then Brian rolled over and cradled me against his body, making familiar sexual gestures. My body automatically tensed and I silently cried out to God, ‘Lord, help me! Why can’t I be like other women?’ Though I went along with Brian’s sexual advances, it soon became evident that pain and fear had once again won this battle. With a heavy sigh, Brian rolled away from me, once again frustrated by another failed attempt at what should be a very natural act—sexual intercourse. As he fell asleep, silent tears once again wet my pillow.”

These words depict a glimpse into a problem that happens far too often in marital beds around the world due to a condition called vaginismus. Vaginismus is an *involuntary* spasm of the muscles surrounding the vagina, which constricts or tightens the vaginal opening making sexual penetration painful or impossible. Vaginismus varies in severity. Symptoms range from a severe burning pain upon penetration to complete inability to have intercourse due to constriction of the vaginal muscles. In the most severe cases, women can’t even insert a Q-tip. Most women with vaginismus are sexually responsive and consciously desire to make love but deep down, her body screams “No!” blocking her from experiencing sexual oneness.

My Story

For almost fourteen years, my husband and I lived in a marriage deadened by vaginismus. For the first seven years of our marriage, we enjoyed a pleasurable sex life, but after I gave birth to our second child, I experienced some postpartum pain and soon intercourse brought an intense burning pain. I told my doctor of the problem, but he could find nothing physically wrong with me and suggested I just have a glass of wine, relax, and the discomfort would subside. But it didn’t. In fact it got worse! What was wrong with me? Repeated visits to the gynecologist yielded the same answer. No physical cause was found for my pain, and since vaginismus was never considered, I remained undiagnosed and untreated for over twelve years. Vaginismus continued to cripple our marriage and drove me further into hiding and secrecy.

Due to the complications this condition had in my life, I began to see a Christian counselor. When I finally opened up about my “little sexual problem,” she was able to give me a name for my problem. At her request, I searched for books and articles about vaginismus and found little help. After months of research, I stumbled across a new Web site called Vaginismus.com where at last I received the information and tools I needed to start my journey to recovery.

Types of Vaginismus

Vaginismus falls into two categories. Primary vaginismus occurs when a woman has never been able to achieve vaginal penetration. This “penetration” refers to sexual intercourse, but most often these women are also unable to insert tampons or complete a gynecological exam. All too often women with primary vaginismus find out they have the condition on their wedding night when they realize intercourse is impossible. This was the case with Jane:

“I was a virgin on my wedding night and was horribly surprised to find sex ‘didn’t work.’ We kept trying but the pain was always horrible. Due to embarrassment, I didn’t want to see a doctor. So here I am eight years later living in an unconsummated marriage ... still a virgin. I am so ashamed.”

Secondary vaginismus, which is the condition I had, occurs in a woman who has previously been able to achieve pain-free penetration but for a variety of reasons, intercourse becomes painful. The hallmark symptom is a severe burning pain and a feeling like you want to push your partner's penis out. Left untreated, this pain/fear cycle continues to reinforce the spasm of the muscle, further tightening the opening and eventually making intercourse impossible.

Treatment

If managed correctly, vaginismus may be the most highly treatable of all the female sexual pain conditions. Therapy for vaginismus is a step-by-step process that involves retraining both the mind and body. Treatment is extremely personal for each woman and may seem a little unorthodox, but the final outcome is worth it. The first and most important step a woman can take in overcoming vaginismus is to educate herself about the condition. It is important to know how her body works and why she cannot make it respond the way she wants it to.

Due to the dual nature of vaginismus, a comprehensive treatment that considers the “whole woman” is best. The emotional, physical, and spiritual aspects of sexuality should all be addressed on a woman's journey to overcome vaginismus.

Overcoming the Physical

The most effective, cost-efficient, and long-lasting form of treatment for vaginismus is dilation therapy. Physical treatment begins by strengthening, toning, and learning to control the vaginal muscles. Then, gradually sized vaginal dilators are used to retrain the pubococcygeus, or PC muscle (the muscle surrounding the vaginal opening) to respond correctly to sexual penetration. Within a period of several weeks to several months a woman can retrain her mind and body to work together to consciously control the spasm of the muscle and eventually achieve pain-free intercourse.

Overcoming the Emotional

Vaginismus generally starts with a mind-set of wrong thinking compounded by fear, which results in pain that seems insurmountable. To overcome vaginismus, it is often necessary for a woman to replace untruths that she has learned about sexuality with right thinking. Most women can complete an emotional self-inventory and come to conclusions of why events from their past or messages they've been given have contributed to their symptoms. Other women may need some professional help to draw out their emotions and fears, which hold them in bondage to vaginismus. Some women may never be able to pinpoint any psychological aspect that causes their symptoms and find doing so is not necessary to overcome vaginismus.

Overcoming the Spiritual

For many women, especially Christians, there is also a very spiritual component to vaginismus. Like many women, I longed to experience intimacy without shame and wanted the blessing of God in our sexuality but due to misconceptions from my childhood, I assumed God and sex did not belong in the same room together. Nothing could be further from the truth! Scripture tells us that God will never leave us or forsake us (Heb 13:5) and there is nothing in parentheses saying, “Except when you close the bedroom door.” God wants us to invite Him into our most intimate moments and trust every part of our being with His goodness. In treatment for vaginismus, it is helpful for women who received the wrong spiritual messages of sexuality from their past to renew their mind to believe marital sex is wonderful and to accept God's great gift of sexual intimacy.

Vaginismus does not get better on its own. Treatment is required and the earlier that treatment is initiated, the quicker pain-free intercourse can be attained. Once a woman's body naturally adjusts to intercourse, sex should be pleasurable, fun, and mutually satisfying. It is never too late for treatment. I've seen women

healed who have struggled with this condition for over twenty years. Sex is NOT supposed to hurt and women should not accept the idea that sex will always be painful due to vaginismus.

I once asked a woman what her definition of vaginismus was. Her answer broke my heart. She simply said, “Vaginismus is the blocking of all possibility.” Far too many marriages have had intimacy stolen from them for too long due to vaginismus. I know healing is possible because the hope of sexual renewal has become a reality in my own life, and now I’ve been given the privilege of witnessing women healed one-by-one after going through treatment. It is time to break the silence and let women know they are not alone. There is hope. There is healing. With God, all things are possible.

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What Sexual Practices Does God Permit in Marriage?

This article discusses sexual practices for married couples. If you are unmarried, please refer to the discussion about sexual practices in the article “The Path to the Garden for Single Adults.”

Five Principles

When you think about different sexual practices, it is wise to remember that God has created all things richly for people to enjoy (1 Tim 6:17). But the meaning here is *good* things, not evil things. God does not create evil or sin for people to “enjoy.” In His Word, He has given guidelines, which can help you discern between good and not good. One of the clearest statements God makes is that His people must abstain from all “sexual immorality” (1 Thess 4:3). But how do you know which practices are “immoral” for married people? Here are five biblical principles that will help you:

(1) Sex is designed for one man and one woman joined in marriage (Mt 19:8). No one else may be involved in lovemaking (Heb 13:4). We see this in several specific sins mentioned in the Bible:

- No person of the opposite gender (Lev 20:10)
- No one of the same gender (Lev 18:22; 20:13; Rom 1:27; 1 Cor 6:9)
- No animals (Lev 18:23)
- Not even in your mind (Mt 5:28)

(2) The activity must be pleasing to both of you and must not violate your will or consciences (1 Cor 8:7-13).

- You must be motivated by love (Jn 13:34; 1 Pet 1:22; 1 Jn 4:7).
- Neither of you may engage in something that you are not fully convinced is acceptable to God (1 Cor 8:7-13).
- You may not insist on your own way (Rom 15:1-3; 1 Cor 13:5).

(3) The activity must be honoring and healthy for both of you (1 Cor 6:19; 1 Thess 4:4).

(4) You must abstain from depicting something evil (1 Thess 5:22). You do not sexually arouse one another from role-playing wickedness. This is using your imagination for evil rather than for good.

(5) Your behavior should enhance the gospel, not bring it into ill repute or harm anyone (1 Pet 2:12).

Using these guidelines, see if you can decide whether the following sexual practices fall inside or outside the boundaries. We will assume for this exercise that both husband and wife *want* to try this. *Which of the five principle(s) would help a married couple decide whether or not it is a good thing? (None of these would be acceptable practice for an unmarried couple.)* Answers to these questions are found at the end of this article.

1. A couple likes to dress up as a teacher and a child, and one seduces the other.
2. A husband wants to have homosexual-style sex with his wife.
3. A woman wears sensual translucent clothing for her husband when they are alone.
4. A couple has sex standing up and hiding in a locked closet where no one can find them.
5. A couple goes to a party where couples have sex with each other's spouses.
6. A man wants his wife to watch a pornographic movie and then have sex with him.
7. A wife wants her husband to pretend to be a robber and tie her up before having sex.
8. A couple wants to have sex in a dirty river.
9. A couple pleasures each other until orgasm using hands or another part of the body.
10. A man who cannot have sex normally because of an operation uses an artificial penis.
11. A man goes to a store that sells sexual paraphernalia to buy something for his wife.
12. A couple has sex where others can watch them.
13. The wife takes a position on top of her husband.
14. The husband plans a whole morning of vacation to have sexual relations with his wife.
15. The couple uses a lubricant designed to enhance sexual pleasure and reduce discomfort for the woman.
16. The couple talks in a sensual way in a private phone call where no one can overhear.
17. The wife dances in a sexual way in front of her husband.
18. The wife demeans and attacks her husband during sex because this arouses him.

As you may have discerned, some of the items on the list are always wrong based on one or more of the criteria above. Even the good expressions may be wrong if one partner feels revolted by it. But the law of love does not go only one direction. For instance, a timid spouse may need to try to accommodate a partner's desires for variety by trying out new practices or settings (but not evil ones). Sometimes trying a new sexual technique or having sex in a new setting can enliven a couple's sex life, especially during the autumn and winter periods of married life.

Sex During Menstruation

Many people wonder about sex during a wife's menstrual cycle. In the Old Testament Law (Lev 15:19-24), a woman was considered "unclean" during the seven days of her menstruation. If her husband slept beside her during this time, he shared her "uncleanness" and could not participate in religious rituals for seven days. At the end of the seven days, each person would wash with water and then was ritually clean again. Is this referring to sexual intercourse or just to sleeping next to her? Apparently it is not referring to sex, but to perhaps coming into contact with her menstrual blood, because later in the book (Lev 20:18), a couple who has intercourse while the woman is menstruating must be "cut off." "Cut off" either means to be removed from fellowship, or to be executed. Later, in Ezekiel 18:5-6, God describes the righteous man as one who does not have communal meals with idols on the mountaintops, who does not look up to them, who does not commit adultery, and who does not have sex during a woman's menstruation. Menstruation and the rags used by women to absorb the flow are symbolic of vile uncleanness in several places in Scripture (2 Kgs 17:7-18; Isa 64:6; Ezk 36:17). Is abstinence during menstruation for Jews only? Or is this binding on Christians as well? Let's examine the basis for the prohibition in the Old Testament.

Many of the Jewish practices of diet and habit were designed to separate the Jews from any relationship with the idol worship of the nations around them and to instill sanitary practices that would keep them healthy. Idolatry generally revolved around blood and sex. A sacrificial animal, for instance, was often slaughtered above a pit so that the worshippers could drink the living blood as it flowed directly from the animal. Sometimes this extended to human sacrifice blood or menstrual blood as well. Religious sex

might be performed in public while everyone watched, or in group orgies with everyone participating. This was true among the pagans in both Old Testament and New Testament times. In ancient Egypt (the predominant culture at the time Leviticus was written), the menstrual blood was seen as having special power, so it was mixed with wine and drunk ritually by the Pharaoh. It is easy to see why contact with menstrual blood would be avoided for both health and ceremonial purity. How did the believers in the New Testament interpret this prohibition from the Mosaic Law?

When the Gentiles (non-Jews) first started becoming believers, the leaders of the early church had to decide which of the Jewish ritual laws were binding for them. The moral laws would all be wrapped up in Jesus' commandment to love God and to love one's neighbor (Mt 22:37-40). Rather than following a list of rules, the believer would now be empowered by the Holy Spirit toward good behavior (Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:22-25). But would this include the ceremonial laws of the Jews? Many Jewish believers (called "The Circumcision") insisted that Gentile believers must also become proselyte Jews and keep all of the holidays, dietary laws, and ceremonies of Judaism (Acts 15:5). The apostle Paul disagreed, calling these laws a "heavy burden" (Acts 15:10-11). He brought this disagreement to the board of apostles at Jerusalem for a ruling. Read about this important conflict and the result in Acts 15:1-21. The text of this ruling is preserved for us in Acts 15:23-29. What practices did it say that Gentile believers must not engage in? Which of these are sexual? Specifically, the prohibition "from blood" (v 20) seems nonspecific. What do you think it might include? Does it include having sex involving blood, e.g., during menses? Is it referring to drinking blood? Other blood rituals?

Important to note is the reason given for this prohibition: the church's relationship with Jews (15:21). While one of the items, fornication, is stated elsewhere as forbidden at all times, we see that Paul didn't have a problem with the actual eating of an animal sacrificed to an idol, only with the possible impression that the believer was participating in the worship of an idol through eating. He tells the Corinthians not to even ask whether meat came from a sacrifice. As long as he was ignorant of its origin, the believer could eat whatever he wished (1 Cor 10:25-27). This principle of freedom, limited by conscience and witness, would logically also extend to other Jewish cleanness practices. In the lists of sinful sexual behavior found in the New Testament (Rom 1:27-32; 1 Cor 6:9; Heb 13:4; Rev 21:8; Rev 22:15), having sex during menstruation is *never* mentioned. So, if contact with menstrual blood is included in the apostles' prohibition from "blood", it was for the purpose of conscience and witness to Jews.

Medically, are there any reasons that might affect your decision? Because the capillaries of the uterus are exposed during menstruation, any diseases that a woman or a man might have, may be more likely to transfer between them when she is menstruating. Some doctors also believe that pelvic inflammatory disease might also be triggered by sex during menstruation. Most modern doctors will say that for a healthy couple, sex during menstruation is a matter of preference rather than health.

What other principles from the list above could apply? Certainly if one of you dislikes it, feels that it is demeaning, wrong, or it makes sex more painful, boundaries 2 and 3 should cause you to wait until later. If you do decide together that it is acceptable and you want to have sex at this time, the woman can insert a diaphragm or cervical cup (one called "The Instead Cup" is sold over the counter in the U.S.) to temporarily stop the flow of blood. While fertility is less likely, some women with irregular ovulation have become pregnant from sex during menstruation. Therefore, if you are not trying to increase your family size, you still want to use some form of contraception.

Answers to Questions:

The numbers below correspond to the Five Principles stated earlier.

1. No, 4
2. No, 3, 4
3. Yes

4. Yes
5. No, 1
6. No, 1
7. No, 4
8. No, 3
9. Yes
10. Yes
11. No, 4, 5
12. No, 1
13. Yes
14. Yes
15. Yes
16. Yes
17. Yes
18. No, 3, 4

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Overcoming Impotence

Impotence or erectile dysfunction is when a man cannot attain or maintain an erection long enough for successful intercourse. This is caused by decreased blood flow to the penis. This condition occurs more frequently in older men but can be a problem with men of any age. If this problem occurs with younger men, it is usually the result of some psychological problem such as tension, anxiety, depression, or fear of sexual failure. For men over fifty, there is usually a physiological cause such as a thickening of the blood vessels caused by smoking, diabetes, alcohol, cancer, or the aging process. The nerve may have been impaired due to aging, or severed during prostate surgery. Men over fifty may also experience a lowering in testosterone levels, which decreases sex drive. Some medications, such as those taken for blood pressure, can also cause impotence.

Experiencing or talking about erectile dysfunction can be embarrassing. But don't let embarrassment keep you from enjoying a healthy sexual relationship with your spouse. Work closely with your doctor and take the time to research treatments on your own. A few treatments for erectile dysfunction are listed below:

Check your medications. If you're taking any medications that may be contributing to erectile dysfunction—such as certain drugs used to treat depression or high blood pressure—ask your doctor about changing your treatment plan.

Try herbal remedies. *Some* vitamins and herbal medications may help *some* men. Studies are inconclusive, but DHEA, ginseng and propionyl-L-carnitine may be worth a try. Talk to a doctor to make sure that they are safe for you. However, be aware that most substances marketed as virility enhancers or aphrodisiacs, such as ground rhinoceros horn or elephant tusks, are based on the *false* premise that an item's shape denotes its usefulness. Scientific tests have proven these to be useless, some even harmful! The continuing superstitions about these things, despite medical proof, have fueled the poaching and near extinction of these animals. Don't fall for false claims of "ancient mystical powers in substances," and research carefully before you decide to use an herbal medication.

Stop smoking. Smoking constricts your blood vessels. This contributes to blockages that can lead to erectile dysfunction. Smoking can also decrease nitric oxide levels, which may hinder blood flow to your penis.

Limit your alcohol intake. Drinking too much alcohol (more than two drinks a day) can damage your blood vessels and make erectile dysfunction more likely.

Reduce stress. Stress can hinder your erections. To keep stress under control, evaluate and prioritize your tasks. Set realistic expectations, deadlines, and limits. Take time to pray, relax, and exercise daily.

Increase exercise. Regular exercise can keep your arteries healthy, boost your cardiovascular strength, and more. If you're not motivated to exercise on your own, make a regular date to exercise with someone else, perhaps your spouse.

Get enough sleep. If you're well rested, you're less likely to struggle with erectile dysfunction.

Deal with emotional issues. Emotional issues such as anxiety and depression can cause erectile dysfunction. Even the fear of having erectile problems can make erectile dysfunction worse. If you're struggling with these things, talk to your doctor or a counselor.

Consider medications. In some countries, a doctor may prescribe oral medication to treat erectile dysfunction. Choices may include Sildenafil (Viagra®), Tadalafil (Cialis®), or Vardenafil (Levitra®). These drugs are not safe or effective for all men so be sure to talk to a doctor before taking these medications. Never "borrow" the drug or purchase it without a doctor's instruction.

Ask about other treatment options. Oral medication isn't the only drug therapy available. A doctor can prescribe a tiny suppository that goes into the tip of your penis to help relax muscle tissue and increase blood flow to your penis. He can prescribe a medicine that you inject directly into the base of your penis to increase blood flow and cause an erection. Or he may give you a vacuum device to draw blood into your penis and create an erection. In some cases, he may recommend a device that may be implanted inside your penis.

Control diabetes. Diabetes is when the pancreas no longer can regulate sugar in the bloodstream. Men who have diabetes are three times more likely to have erectile dysfunction as are other men according to the [U.S.] National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases. The reasons are as follows:

- Excess sugar (glucose) in your blood can damage the nerves and blood vessels responsible for an erection. Your mind might be aroused to have sex, but your brain is not relaying that information to your penis.
- Conditions that can accompany diabetes, such as cardiovascular disease, can narrow your blood vessels. This may reduce blood flow to your penis, which makes it more difficult to achieve or maintain an erection.
- If your blood sugar is out of control, it inhibits the release of a chemical known as nitric oxide. Too little nitric oxide can hinder blood flow to your penis, which, again, makes it difficult to achieve or maintain an erection.

Please be sure to investigate the many possible causes and treatment options with your doctor if you are having trouble having or maintaining an erection.

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Improving Physical Function in Sex (For Married Couples Only)

Both men and women can do several things to get in better physical shape for sexual relations and to strengthen their physical response. Here are some ways that you can strengthen your body and mind for sexual intercourse with your spouse.

Strengthen PC Muscles

Both husband and wife need to have healthy pubic or “PC” muscles in order to enjoy sex to the fullest. The man’s PC muscles are involved in maintaining an erection and restraining ejaculation to build greater pleasure at orgasm. The woman’s PC muscles are involved in supporting all of her organs in their proper location, in gripping her husband’s penis during intercourse, and in having an orgasm. The problem is that many people have or develop flaccid PC muscles so that sexual function is impaired.

Where are the PC muscles? These are in the pelvic area. A woman can identify these muscles by using them to try and stop the flow of urine while knees are far apart (which prevents her from using other muscles). A man will notice that when he contracts the PC muscles while standing, his penis will lift slightly. Do not tighten any other muscles, such as buttocks, thigh, or abdomen.

Dr. Kegel, an American gynecologist in the 1940s, discovered that people could exercise these muscles in order to stop urine incontinence. His exercises worked well for this purpose and doctors still prescribe these exercises to both men and women. The surprising byproduct of these “Kegel exercises” was that not only did the incontinence stop, but also women who had never experienced orgasm were able to climax for the first time. Men with stronger PC muscles are able to experience more powerful ejaculation.

After identifying the muscles, you can make them stronger by exercising them. The exercises are easy and can be done without anyone realizing you are doing them. Just contract them throughout the day and hold for five seconds. Start with six contractions in a row, ten times per day, then gradually after several days double it, then, double it again. Develop habits to do it at certain times, such as when you first arise, when brushing your teeth, when sitting down to a meal, when urinating. You can do it sitting, lying, or standing. Make sure that you relax completely between each contraction. You can also try tightening, then tightening more, like going up stairs, holding, then releasing. Don’t try to do too many at first in order to speed up the process, or you will end up exhausting the muscle and having the opposite effect. If you practice these exercises daily, you will notice a difference in your stronger sexual response in only a few weeks. If you continue to strengthen this muscle, the sexual benefits also continue to increase.

Control Ejaculation

Some men find it difficult to maintain an erection without quickly ejaculating as soon as he enters his wife, or even before. This can be very frustrating to both husband and wife and may cause him to be reluctant to engage in sex. Typical advice, such as thinking about something else, only causes more problems and rarely works well. Fortunately, this is easy to overcome, but only when it involves both husband and wife. A man cannot solve this problem by himself. With a little help from his wife, any man may lengthen the amount of time that he and his wife can enjoy intercourse before he ejaculates. The following will help to increase his control.

1. Don’t go too long between sexual encounters with your spouse. If a man has waited for weeks to have sex, such as when one or the other has been on a trip, he is going to ejaculate very rapidly because of extreme seminal pressure. This is normal. If a couple has a more regular sexual expression of two to three times per week, he will find it easier to restrain ejaculation for longer foreplay and intercourse.
2. During sexual foreplay, both husband and wife need to be engaged in pleasuring the other. If the whole focus of foreplay is the husband pleasuring the wife to prepare her for intercourse and orgasm, it is more likely that he will ejaculate too quickly when he finally

receives sexual stimulation by entering her. If on the other hand, she is involved in stroking and pleasuring her husband during foreplay, it reduces his need to ejaculate when he enters her.

3. The husband can learn to maintain control through conditioning exercises. The following three exercises can help a man learn self-control over his ejaculation. If the couple practices weekly for six months, the husband can learn to maintain thrusting during intercourse without ejaculating for as long as fifteen minutes, or stay inside his wife without movement for as long as the wife desires him to do so. These exercises are enjoyable. Research has shown, however, that even the first exercise below will have no effect if the wife is not involved. None of them can be done by a man alone.

Exercise 1: The wife stimulates her husband's penis with her hands until he is near orgasm. When he signals her that his orgasm is imminent, she squeezes the area just below the head of his penis between her thumb and two fingers for at least four seconds. On an erect penis, this will not hurt and will cause him to lose his desire to ejaculate. His penis will become somewhat soft again. After a half minute, she can stimulate him again, and again repeat the procedure of stopping his orgasm.

Exercise 2: After learning some control using exercise 1, the husband lies on his back while the wife sits straddling him. She places his penis inside her and remains motionless. If he begins to feel that he is going to ejaculate, she removes herself and returns to the squeeze used in exercise 1 before returning to the sitting position. The goal for this exercise is for the couple to move just enough for the husband to maintain his erection but not to ejaculate for 15–20 minutes.

Exercise 3: After the husband has learned to control his orgasm with his wife sitting on him, the next position to master is one where both are lying somewhat on their sides facing one another. If the wife lies on her right side, she puts her right leg behind and leans her weight forward against his chest. The husband (lying on his left side) bends his left knee to support his wife's left leg. This position gives the most control and comfort to both parties, and many couples prefer it long term.

Other Ways to Intensify Orgasm

Merely increasing control and lengthening the amount of time the husband can maintain an erection before ejaculating will increase the strength of his orgasm. The following tips will also increase his sensation:

- The couple should lengthen the husband's arousal time with longer foreplay.
- When the husband begins orgasmic sensations, he should increase thrusting movements.
- The woman should contract and release her vaginal muscles when her husband is inside. This will strengthen orgasm for both her and her husband.
- The husband should wait at least twenty-four hours between orgasms to give his prostate gland a chance to build up a larger supply of seminal fluid.
- The husband should keep focused on his spouse's body and her sexual arousal and response to his touch. He should not let his mind wander, imagine he is watching himself, or rate their sexual performance.

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