

# BUILDING

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a solid foundation for marriage

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# WELCOME!

## Why are we here?

- To understand the amazing grace of God through Jesus, our Savior
- To rejoice in the certainty of knowing our sins are forgiven and heaven is ours
- To see how God's love and forgiveness create a solid foundation for marriage

## What should you expect?

- You should expect a study on the spiritual, physical, and emotional aspects of marriage
- You should expect that we will use the Bible as our source for information, as well as current research on communication and marriage (the Bible will take precedence)
- You should expect your questions to be taken seriously and answered honestly, to the best ability of your teacher

## What is expected of you?

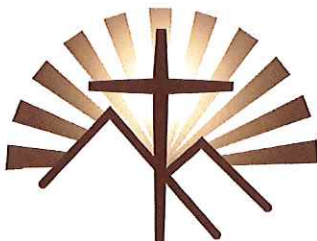
- We hope that you will feel comfortable enough to participate in the questions, answers, and discussions
- We hope that you will choose a level of participation that suits you best
- We hope that you are able to commit the time to each other to work on building a solid foundation for your marriage

## What happens at the end of this course?

- This course serves as a good overview of some of the important aspects of marriage, and it *could* serve as a helpful prerequisite to your pastor marrying you
- The bottom line: we are here to study the Bible with *no hidden agendas*

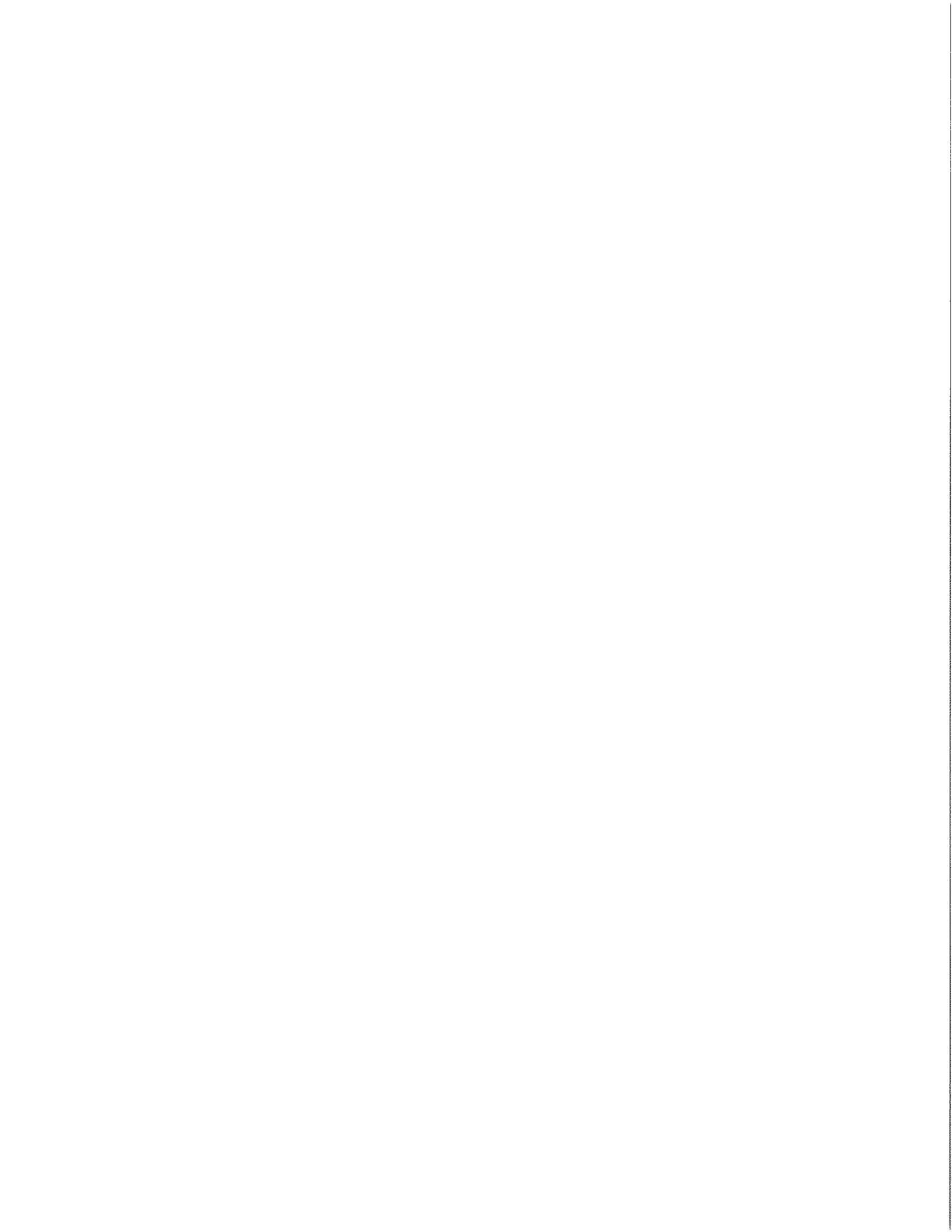
## What are the class "rules"?

- Relax...and be yourself!
- Ask questions! Participate as you feel comfortable!
- Feel free to grab a drink or take a break whenever you need one!
- Arrive and depart whenever you need to!



LIVING SHEPHERD

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## A SOLID FOUNDATION FOR MARRIAGE

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**1. The Essence of Marriage**

*How does God define and describe marriage?*

**2. Forgiveness in Marriage**

*What difference does Jesus make in a marriage?*

**3. Sex in Marriage**

*What does God have to say about the gift of sex?*

**4. Communication in Marriage**

*How do a husband and a wife speak the truth in love to each other?*

**5. Finances in Marriage**

*How do a husband and wife handle God's material blessings together?*

**6. Love in Marriage**

*What difference does God's love make in a marriage?*

**7. Worship in a Marriage**

*How does God continue to strengthen marriages?*



### *The Essence of Marriage*

#### LESSON 1

If you were going to *define* marriage, how would you do so? What are the key aspects of the definition?

#### **WHAT IS MARRIAGE?**

Before we take too much time discussing what we might think marriage is (or isn't), it's important that we take time to see what God says about marriage. How does God define marriage in the Bible, in his Word?

##### **GENESIS 2:18-24**

**<sup>18</sup>The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." <sup>19</sup> Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. <sup>21</sup> So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. <sup>22</sup> Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." <sup>24</sup> For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.**

- ✧ What declaration did God make concerning Adam?
  
- ✧ Why did God send Adam to name the animals?
  
- ✧ How did God create a "helper" for Adam?
  
- ✧ Notice: God brought Adam and Eve together. What is the lesson for us?
  
- ✧ How did Adam greet Eve, his wife?

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✧ In verse 24, we read about the three ingredients of marriage—principles which will set a firm foundation for the relationship between a husband and a wife:

- Both the man and the woman **COMMIT** to \_\_\_\_\_ their parents.
- Both the man and the woman **COMMIT** to being \_\_\_\_\_ to each other.
- Both the man and the woman **COMMIT** to becoming \_\_\_\_\_.

### THE ESSENCE OF MARRIAGE:

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### TAKING IT HOME

1. Consider each of the three “commitments.” Come up with one obstacle to putting each one into action.
  - ✧ An obstacle to commitment #1 =
  - ✧ An obstacle to commitment #2 =
  - ✧ An obstacle to commitment #3 =
2. Compare your definition of marriage (in the introduction) to what we’ve just reviewed. What differences do you note? How will understanding the essence of marriage properly help your marriage?
3. Consider the following list. How do these items help or hinder your marriage? Are they *helpful* (↑), *harmful* (↓), or *neutral* (→)?



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Your job	Weekends
Your co-workers	Your friends
Your hobbies	The TV
Computer/Cell phone	Your goals
The children	Church attendance
Reading the Bible	Your relatives
Household tasks	Money
Your reactions to your spouse	Your outlook on life

**Note:** Some things on this list you can change; others you can't. If something is hindering your growth as a Christian and as a couple, and you can change it—then do so (e.g. golf outings, shopping habits, etc.)! With those things you can't change (i.e. your relatives), try changing your approach or your reactions. There are some things that should not change. For example, if your spouse gets mad because you go to worship regularly, you should not change your action. However, you should handle your action in a tactful, wise, and loving manner.

### ROLE RELATIONSHIPS

It perhaps seems overly obvious to say: men and women are different! But this doesn't mean that one is better than the other. In fact, God makes it clear in his Word that both men and women are equal heirs of Christ and the forgiveness he gives. However, because men and women are different, God in his wisdom has given different roles to these different partners.

#### **EPHESIANS 5:22-33**

<sup>22</sup>Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup>For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup>Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. <sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup>to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup>and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup>In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup>After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— <sup>30</sup>for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup>“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup>This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup>However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

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- ✧ In the beginning, God created \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. He made them different so they would \_\_\_\_\_ each other, not \_\_\_\_\_ against one another. Husbands are to \_\_\_\_\_ their wives just as Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ the church. Wives are to \_\_\_\_\_ to their husbands just as believers \_\_\_\_\_ to Jesus.
- ✧ Write down God's concept of the following ideas according to Ephesians 5:  
*Leadership:*  
  
*Submission :*
- ✧ Agree/Disagree: It's easier to be a leader than to submit.
- ✧ Ephesians 5:21 says: "Submit to *one another* out of reverence for Christ." Note that the meaning of the word "submit" does not change from verse 21 to verse 22. It does not at all imply inferiority, but indicates a powerful role of corresponding love.

### TAKING IT HOME

Read through the following scenarios and decide whether you agree or disagree. Do this first on your own. Then, after you have both completed the chart, share your answers with each other and discuss any different responses you may have.

Scenario	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
If a husband and wife have an impasse on a major decision, the husband should make the decision based on his preferences.			
A man should have at least one night out with "the boys" every week.			
Leisure and recreation time between a husband and wife should always be spent together.			

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Scenario	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
A wife should conform to her husband's preferences for hair and clothing styles.			
The husband should be mostly responsible for the strict discipline in raising children.			
The wife should have total responsibility for purchasing the children's clothing.			
Since the wife will have more time with the children, she has a greater responsibility for them.			
Sometimes a wife will have to use her children as leverage to get something from her husband.			
Submitting to her husband means that the wife must always obey the husband.			
It is the wife's responsibility to have the house neat and clean at all times.			
Cooking and cleaning are the wife's responsibilities. Yard work and maintenance are the husband's responsibilities.			
A wife should not be employed outside the home because it means she is not submitting to her husband.			
When a wife has been blessed with a special talent, she should have a career to utilize it.			
Husbands should babysit at least once a week so that wives can go out with their friends.			
A woman can mold her husband any way she wants him to be after they are married.			
The wife should be in charge of decorating the home; the husband should be in charge of fixing the home.			

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### TIME TO REFLECT

Use this page to write down any notes you want to remember or any questions you want to ask.

### *Forgiveness in Marriage*

#### LESSON 2

What do you think are the differences between men and women?

#### **WHAT THEY HAVE IN COMMON**

It can, at times, be too easy to dwell on how men and women are different. While it's important to recognize the differences between men and women, a Biblical view of both begins with understanding what they have in common. Let's see what God says about this in his Word.

##### **ROMANS 3:9-20**

<sup>9</sup> What shall we conclude then? Are we any better? Not at all! We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin. <sup>10</sup> As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; <sup>11</sup> there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. <sup>12</sup> All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." <sup>13</sup> "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips." <sup>14</sup> "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness." <sup>15</sup> "Their feet are swift to shed blood; <sup>16</sup> ruin and misery mark their ways, <sup>17</sup> and the way of peace they do not know." <sup>18</sup> "There is no fear of God before their eyes." <sup>19</sup> Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup> Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

- ◇ The problem with all people is \_\_\_\_ \_ \_\_\_\_.
- ◇ What are some of the specific sins that God mentions for all people in these verses?
- ◇ Which of these sins do you think are most damaging to marriage?

##### **ZECHARIAH 3:1, 3-5**

<sup>1</sup> Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.

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<sup>3</sup> Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. <sup>4</sup> The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes." Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you." <sup>5</sup> Then I said, "Put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by.

✧ I am a sinful human being. But God has...

✧ God pictures this gift by clothing Joshua with \_\_\_\_\_.

✧ As I look at my spouse, I now see him/her as a \_\_\_\_\_ child of God.

### MORE ABOUT THIS FORGIVENESS

God declares that men and women have this gracious gift in common: they are forgiven, redeemed, children of God. But it's important for us to remember what this gift of forgiveness is based upon. Let's look more at what God says about how and why this forgiveness applies to both men and women.

#### **HEBREWS 10:16-17**

<sup>16</sup> "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." <sup>17</sup> Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more."

✧ God's promise concerning our sins is that he...

#### **ROMANS 5:8**

<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

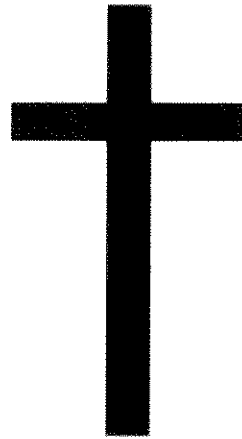
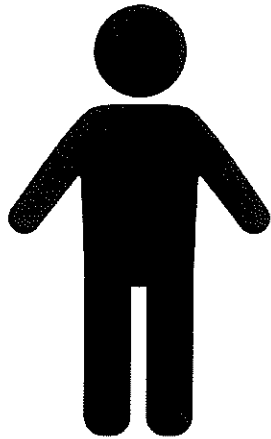
✧ Does God's forgiveness depend on how good you are or how sorry you are? \_\_\_\_\_

✧ Upon what does God's forgiveness depend? \_\_\_\_\_

#### **2 CORINTHIANS 5:21**

<sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

### GOD'S GREAT EXCHANGE



### OUR RESPONSE TO GOD'S FORGIVENESS

What a wonderful gift we have been given in God's forgiveness! But the gift does not simply end there. The power of God's gracious gift continues to shape and change our lives. Let's look and see what God's Word says about his grace leads us to respond to this forgiveness.

#### **EPHESIANS 4:31 – 5:2**

**<sup>31</sup>Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup>Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

**<sup>1</sup>Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children <sup>2</sup>and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.**

- ✧ What does God tell his forgiven, loved children to get rid of?
  
- ✧ How do God's children want to act?
  
- ✧ Why do they want to act that way?

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### COLOSSIANS 3:12-17

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. <sup>13</sup>Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>14</sup>And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. <sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

- ✧ With what types of things should we clothe ourselves as God's chosen people (v. 12)?
  
- ✧ Why should we forgive each other (v. 13)?
  
- ✧ What is the result of forgiving each other (v. 15)?
  
- ✧ In order to clothe ourselves with these virtues, what do we need to do (v. 16)?



### TAKING IT HOME

1. **EVALUATE:** *"My spouse will fill my deepest desires."*
  - ✧ What is wrong with this statement?
  
  - ✧ How could this statement hurt your marriage?
  
2. **EVALUATE:** *"Every problem in marriage happens because there are two sinners involved."*
  
3. List some ways that you can be compassionate, kind, gentle, humble, and forgiving in your marriage.

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### TIME TO REFLECT

Use this page to write down any notes you want to remember or any questions you want to ask.

### *Sex in Marriage*

#### LESSON 3

If you had to guess what the three biggest sources of tension in marriage are, what would they be?

#### **SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES**

Our world has become hyper-sexualized. Sex is used to sell cars, to promote independence, and to justify any person's particular lifestyle choices. And so it's no wonder that sex has become a confusing and misunderstood thing in our society. Before we talk too much about what the blessing of sex looks like in a marriage, it's good for us to review God's Word and recall some of the basic principles he establishes for sex.

#### **MATTHEW 19:4-6**

**“Haven't you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’<sup>5</sup> and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?<sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”**

✧ What words does Jesus refer to as he discusses sex in marriage?

✧ **PRINCIPLE #1:** Sex is a wonderful \_\_\_\_ from God.

#### **HEBREWS 13:4**

**<sup>4</sup>Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.**

✧ What does it mean that “the marriage bed [*should be*] kept pure”?

✧ **PRINCIPLE #2:** God intends sex for \_\_\_\_\_.

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### **1 CORINTHIANS 7:3-5**

<sup>3</sup>The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. <sup>4</sup>The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. <sup>5</sup>Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

- ✧ To whom does your body belong in marriage?
  
- ✧ Why would it be wrong to use sex as a weapon or bargaining chip?
  
- ✧ What do these verses tell you about the frequency of sex in marriage?
  
- ✧ **PRINCIPLE #3:** Sex is something spouses give to \_\_\_\_\_.

### **SEX IN MARRIAGE**

In the book of *Song of Songs*, written by King Solomon, God describes the relationship between husband and wife. He does so in terms that are direct and frank. But he also describes this gift of sex in an honest and beautiful way.

### **SONG OF SONGS 3:1-4**

<sup>1</sup>All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves; I looked for him but did not find him. <sup>2</sup>I will get up now and go about the city, through its streets and squares; I will search for the one my heart loves. So I looked for him but did not find him. <sup>3</sup>The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city. "Have you seen the one my heart loves?" <sup>4</sup>Scarcely had I passed them when I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go till I had brought him to my mother's house, to the room of the one who conceived me.

- ✧ In the context here, the husband and wife have had an argument or disagreement. He husband has left, and the wife now goes to look for him. When the two are reunited, what happens (v. 4)?
  
- ✧ What does this say about when sex can be especially helpful in a marriage? Why do you think this is the case?

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### SONG OF SONGS 4:1-7

<sup>1</sup> How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes behind your veil are doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats descending from Mount Gilead. <sup>2</sup> Your teeth are like a flock of sheep just shorn, coming up from the washing. Each has its twin; not one of them is alone. <sup>3</sup> Your lips are like a scarlet ribbon; your mouth is lovely. Your temples behind your veil are like the halves of a pomegranate. <sup>4</sup> Your neck is like the tower of David, built with elegance; on it hang a thousand shields, all of them shields of warriors. <sup>5</sup> Your two breasts are like two fawns, like twin fawns of a gazelle that browse among the lilies. <sup>6</sup> Until the day breaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of incense. <sup>7</sup> All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you.

- ✧ How does the husband describe his wife in these verses?
  
- ✧ How do you think this made the wife feel?
  
- ✧ Why is this sort of talk important in marriage?

### SONG OF SONGS 4:9-11

<sup>9</sup> You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride; you have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. <sup>10</sup> How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much more pleasing is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume than any spice! <sup>11</sup> Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride; milk and honey are under your tongue. The fragrance of your garments is like that of Lebanon.

- ✧ What are some ways that the wife makes herself attractive to her husband?
  
- ✧ Why is it important to continue to do such things throughout marriage?

### SONG OF SONGS 5:10-16

<sup>10</sup> My lover is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand. <sup>11</sup> His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy and black as a raven. <sup>12</sup> His eyes are like doves by the water streams, washed in milk, mounted like jewels. <sup>13</sup> His cheeks are like beds of spice yielding perfume. His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh. <sup>14</sup> His arms are rods of gold set with chrysolite. His body is like polished ivory decorated with sapphires. <sup>15</sup> His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars. <sup>16</sup> His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my lover, this my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem.

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- ✧ What are some ways that the husband makes himself attractive to his wife?
- ✧ Why do you think God gives such a beautiful and detailed description of the relationship between husband and wife in *Song of Songs*?
- ✧ **EVALUATE:** The more intimate the marriage is, the more fulfilling the sex will be.

### TAKING IT HOME

1. Think back to the three commitments of marriage (from Lesson 1). How is each one important for the couple's sex life?
  - ◇ Commitment to leave their parents:
  
  - ◇ Commitment to being united to each other:
  
  - ◇ Commitment to being one flesh:
  
2. How did you learn about sex and reproduction?
  
3. What were your parents' attitudes about sexuality?
  
4. What are appropriate standards to set for sexual behavior during engagement? What is not appropriate?
  
5. Have you had any bad experiences concerning sexuality that may affect your attitude about others, yourself, or sex in general?
  
6. What concerns do you have about sex on your honeymoon? Do you have any fears about sexual relations?
  
7. How often should a married couple have sexual relations?
  
8. What does God say about birth control?

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### TIME TO REFLECT

Use this page to write down any notes you want to remember or any questions you want to ask.



### *Communication in Marriage*

#### LESSON 4

Sometimes it's easier to recognize bad communication than good communication. What does bad communication look like? Give at least three examples.

#### **WHAT DRIVES COMMUNICATION IN MARRIAGE**

Before we talk about the blessings of good communication and the dangers of bad communication, it's good for us to remember what it is that will drive a husband and wife's communication with each other in marriage.

##### **GALATIANS 3:26-27**

**<sup>26</sup>You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, <sup>27</sup>for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.**

- ✧ Because of my baptism, I'm clothed \_\_\_\_\_.
  
- ✧ Because my spouse is baptized, that means my spouse is clothed \_\_\_\_\_.
  
- ✧ How do these two truths lead me to speak to my spouse?

#### **GENERAL TRUTHS ABOUT COMMUNICATION**

There is an awful lot of research done in our world about good communication—how it can promote efficiency, improve morale, and foster cooperation. But there is just as much research available about how bad communication can do the opposite. And it's important that we be aware of both sides of this spectrum. Let's see what God says in his Word about communication.

##### **JAMES 3:4-6**

**<sup>4</sup>Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. <sup>5</sup>Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. <sup>6</sup>The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.**

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- ✧ God wants us to recognize that “the tongue” (i.e. communication) is...

### **JAMES 1:26**

**<sup>26</sup> If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.**

- ✧ One of the important ways a Christian shows his or her faith is by...

### **JAMES 1:19-20**

**<sup>19</sup> My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, <sup>20</sup> for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.**

- ✧ To keep a tight rein on our tongue, God urges us to be quick to \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✧ God also urges us to be slow to \_\_\_\_\_ and slow to become \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✧ For what reasons do you think this is good advice?

## **BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES ABOUT COMMUNICATION**

Good communication is often easier to talk about than it is to actually put into practice. But God also gives us some principles which will help us follow and model the godly communication he desires.

### **EPHESIANS 4:15-16**

**<sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.**

- ✧ God wants us to speak the \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.
- ✧ Why does the truth need to be spoken in love?
- ✧ What is the ultimate goal for our communication?

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### EPHESIANS 4:29-32

**<sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.**

- ✧ God wants us to use our tongue to...
  
- ✧ That means we won't speak...
  
- ✧ Instead, we will speak...

### TAKING IT HOME

1. How well and how much we praise and encourage each other can be affected by how much praise and encouragement we received in childhood. In the home where you grew up, were words of praise common or rare? What influence does that have on you and your marriage?
  
2. God communicates his love to us in a variety of ways—through his Word, through the sacraments, through pictures and symbols, etc. Besides words, what are some different ways we can communicate love to our spouses?
  
3. One study found that in healthy marriages, the ration of positive to negative communication was 5:1. For what reasons is that finding not surprising?
  
4. Every marriage has some conflict because every marriage is made up of two sinners (remember that it's not necessarily that one person sinned, but that both are sinners). So, when differences of opinion come up, it's important to focus the discussion on the issue itself and not on the person. Look at the chart below with the sample scenarios. See if you can identify the issue...so that it doesn't escalate into a personal attack.

Someone says...	What's the real issue?
<i>You're so insensitive! The next time you forget our anniversary, I'm packing my bags!</i>	
<i>When I cook the spaghetti, I take the time to break the noodles in half before I boil them.</i>	
<i>How do I know you'll keep your promise? You've made promises before and not kept them!</i>	
<i>You bought a pair of shoes for \$150?!?! Money doesn't grow on trees, you know!</i>	

### KEY FACTORS FOR GOOD COMMUNICATION

The following list is a helpful collection of key factors that can contribute to good communication. Read through each one and consider whether or not you have put this factor into practice.

#### 1. Openness

One of the most difficult things in life is to be honest with yourself. Dig deep. Know yourself. Tell the truth—always—not just about what happened but about what you feel.

#### 2. Honesty

No cold shoulder. "What's wrong, honey?" "Nothing!" Refusing to be honest does not help a situation. Now may not be the best time to talk. Emotions may be running hot. So, take some time to cool off. But, set a time to talk about it.

#### 3. Stay with what's current

There will be a temptation to bring up things that are not current. "Three months ago you said..." That is not relevant to the present situation. Deal with what is on the table now. Then ask yourself, "Is this issue really important? Am I really that upset about it, or am I making an issue out of this because of something else that is bothering me?" For example, the husband comes home from a hard day at work and finds his son's bicycle in the driveway. He has to get out of the car and move it in order to drive in the garage. When he enters the house, he blows up at his son. Is he really that angry about the bicycle, or is he upset because of the bad day at work?

#### 4. Responsibility

Are you willing to admit that you could be wrong? If you point a blaming finger at your spouse, do you realize that three other fingers are pointing back at you? If your mind is made up in advance that the problem/tension in your relationship is your spouse's fault, you very likely cannot communicate well.

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### 5. Deal with the problem not the person

No hitting below the belt. Don't use a word or phrase that you know will hurt your spouse. "You are just like your mother." "Boy, are you getting bald!" Sit down and talk about the things that hurt, and then put them off limits. Set a time for your discussion. Define what the problem is. Listen to your spouse, and then share how you feel. Give each other honest, calm reactions. Don't criticize each other. Build each other up.

### 6. Offer solutions

Once you have decided what the problem is, don't dwell on it. Suggest and try various ways to solve it. Don't nag. Remember that even if the solution seems obvious to you it may not be the only solution.

### 7. No dramatics

No door slamming or stomping out of the room.

### 8. Control your emotions

If you cannot control your anger, you cannot solve your problems. You have more control over your anger than you may be willing to admit (e.g. Remember when your mother was hollering at you when you were a child? The phone rang, and she calmly and sweetly answered, "Hello!"). Don't let your emotions carry you away. You can disagree without quarreling. Don't insist on having the last word.

### 9. No exaggeration allowed

The wife says, "You're *always* late for dinner!" The husband says, "You *never* want sex when I do."

### 10. Body language is important

Look at the other person when you are listening to them and speaking to them. Watch your facial expressions. Loving touches, hugs, and body contact are important.

### 11. Forgiveness

Remember Ephesians 4:32: *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*

### 12. Accept your spouse as someone worth listening to

Ever met someone who seemed like they wanted to be anywhere else than with you? Do you recall how humiliated you felt when you were talking, and that person began to look past you and focus on someone or something else? Keep your eyes on your spouse when he/she is speaking. Nothing is more aggravating or insulting or humiliating toward someone else than formulating a response to that person's statement before he/she has finished stating it. Don't jump in and finish your spouse's sentence before he/she has finished speaking.

### 13. Listen, Listen, Listen

- Listening is more important than speaking.
- Listening is an activity. It requires concentration, evaluation, and memory (you can think faster than a person can talk).

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- Listen to the words, but pay attention to the tone of voice and the body language.
- Listen and learn. Don't assume you already know where the conversation is headed.
- Don't let your mind wander. Avoid or remove distractions.
- Be aware of your own body language. Lean forward. Look at the other person.
- Don't let your own emotional reaction stifle what the other person is saying or stop you from listening.
- Don't interrupt. Stick to the speaker's subject.
- Periodically play-back in the speaker's own words what is being said in order to clarify your understanding and to let the speaker know you are listening.
- Listening shows love and concern. Most times the speaker does not need or want a response (advice, cliches, etc.)

### TAKING IT HOME

1. You have had a bad day at work. You come home. The kids are noisy. The house is a mess. You don't feel like talking, but your spouse wants to. *What will you do?*
2. Do you ever get jealous? *What will you do about that?*
3. You are having a hard time making decisions as a couple, especially when you disagree. *What will you do?*
4. You are afraid to talk to your spouse because when you bring up touchy subjects, there are frequently outbursts of anger, shouting, screaming, and violence. *What will you do?*
5. Your spouse has habits and mannerisms that annoy you. *What will you do?*
6. Your spouse won't talk to you. However, you have found someone of the opposite gender at work who understands and to whom you feel very comfortable talking. *What will you do?*

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7. You realize there is tension in your relationship. You think counseling could help, but your spouse disagrees. *What will you do?*

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### TIME TO REFLECT

Use this page to write down any notes you want to remember or any questions you want to ask.



### *Finances in Marriage*

#### LESSON 5

You can't buy groceries or pay the mortgage with all the love you have in your hearts for each other. Love doesn't buy clothing or put kids through school. So money is an important issue. How you handle it, or *how it handles both of you* will play an important part in your marriage, especially the early years. To begin our discussion on finances, indicate whether you agree (A) or disagree (D) with the following statements.

- \_\_\_ The wife's earnings are her personal funds.
- \_\_\_ If the husband earns the major portion of the family income, he should be able to spend his money on whatever he likes.
- \_\_\_ The husband should plan the budget and manage the money.
- \_\_\_ A limit on spending by each partner without consulting the other should be agreed upon.
- \_\_\_ A joint checking account is the best way to handle the couples' money.

#### **GOD'S VIEWS ON MONEY**

It might be surprising to hear, but God actually has a lot to say about how we manage and use our money. He may not tell us which TV to buy or which entree to order at a restaurant, but he gives us general principles that guide our use of his blessings.

##### **MATTHEW 25:14-30**

**<sup>14</sup>“Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. <sup>15</sup>To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. <sup>16</sup>The man who had received the five talents went at once and put his money to work and gained five more. <sup>17</sup>So also, the one with the two talents gained two more. <sup>18</sup>But the man who had received the one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.**

**<sup>19</sup>“After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. <sup>20</sup>The man who had received the five talents brought the other five. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with five talents. See, I have gained five more.’ <sup>21</sup>His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!’**

<sup>22</sup> “The man with the two talents also came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.’ <sup>23</sup> His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’

<sup>24</sup> “Then the man who had received the one talent came. ‘Master,’ he said, ‘I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. <sup>25</sup> So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.’ <sup>26</sup> His master replied, ‘You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? <sup>27</sup> Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest. <sup>28</sup> ‘Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. <sup>29</sup> For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. <sup>30</sup> And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

✧ God wants us to be \_\_\_\_\_ with the gifts he has given us.

✧ What does faithfulness look like in the use of our finances?

### MATTHEW 6:25-34

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? <sup>27</sup> Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?

<sup>28</sup> “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. <sup>29</sup> Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? <sup>31</sup> So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. <sup>33</sup> But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

✧ God wants us to \_\_\_\_\_ that he will provide for us as he knows best.

✧ What are things we can do in marriage to help foster that trust?

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### **LUKE 21:34**

<sup>34</sup> **“Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap.**

- ✧ Money can weigh down your \_\_\_\_\_.
  
- ✧ In what ways does money sometimes weigh down your heart? How does money sometimes create new problems?

### **1 TIMOTHY 6:10**

<sup>10</sup> **For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.**

- ✧ \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ is a root of all kinds of evil.
  
- ✧ What does the love of money look like? Where does it start? Where does it end?

### **2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-8**

<sup>6</sup> **Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. <sup>7</sup>Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. <sup>8</sup>And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.**

- ✧ God loves a \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ giver.
  
- ✧ What does this look like in your marriage?

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### TIME TO REFLECT

Use this page to write down any notes you want to remember or any questions you want to ask.

### *Love in Marriage*

#### LESSON 6

When asked why they're getting married, every young couple says, "Because we love each other, of course!" That's fine, but what does it mean to love somebody? In our culture we use "love" to describe our preferences for pizza and baseball teams. What does the word "love" mean. In the space below, give your definition of love. Put as much of yourself into it as you can, as if your future marital happiness depended on it (by the way, it does).

#### **GOD'S LOVE AND OURS**

Not surprisingly, God is very specific about what true love actually is. Let's dig into God's Word to see how he defines love, and how that impacts our love for each other.

##### **1 PETER 1:18-19**

**<sup>18</sup> For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, <sup>19</sup> but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.**

- ✧ I am worth more than \_\_\_\_\_ to God.
  
- ✧ My spouse is worth more than \_\_\_\_\_ to God.
  
- ✧ What does these beautiful truths lead me to do and say to my spouse?

##### **JOHN 3:16-17**

**<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.**

##### **JOHN 15:12-13**

**<sup>12</sup> My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.**

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### ROMANS 5:8

<sup>8</sup> But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

- ◇ How does God define love?
  
- ◇ How does God want a husband and wife to love each other?

### 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails.

- ◇ What IS love (note seven things from the passage above)?

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- ◇ What ISN'T love (note seven things from the passage above)?

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### TAKING IT HOME

1. Consider the lists about love above. Think of the things that love **IS** as “deposits” that you can make into your marriage. Think of the things that love **ISN'T** as “withdrawals” that you can take out of your marriage. What is one “deposit” that you could do a better job of making regularly? What is one “withdrawal” that you can work on taking out of your marriage?
2. List 2 or 3 of your own character traits that make you a poor spouse. How does this lead you to more deeply appreciate God’s love for you. How does this lead you to more deeply appreciate your spouse?

### LOVE LANGUAGES

Because God has knit us together as unique individuals, each of us has a unique way of giving love, a unique way in which we prefer to receive love. Understanding that can be quite helpful. Below is listed one example of a way to understand the love people give and receive. You can even complete a survey at [5lovelanguages.com](http://5lovelanguages.com) to learn about your specific love language.

Most likely no one fits totally into one category, but it’s also likely that you prefer one or two. Also, this is only one way of describing love. You may choose a different description. Fill in the chart below. What is your primary “love language?” Your spouse’s? What could you do to communicate love to your spouse in his/her language? (After you’ve filled it in, compare with your spouse!)

Love Language	You	Your Spouse	Ways to communicate...
<i>Encouraging Words</i>			
<i>Quality Time</i>			

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<i>Receiving Gifts</i>			
<i>Acts of Service</i>			
<i>Meaningful Touch</i>			

### TAKING IT HOME

1. The nicest gift I ever received from my spouse was...
2. I gain a strong sense of inner comfort when my spouse...
3. The most meaningful thing a person could ever do for his/her spouse is...
4. I wish my spouse would more frequently...
5. When I'm "down," I like my spouse to...



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6. After an argument, I want my spouse to...
  
7. If I want to feel accepted, I will ask my spouse to...
  
8. What I like best about myself is...
  
9. What I like least about myself is...
  
10. When I want to show love to my partner, I...

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### TIME TO REFLECT

Use this page to write down any notes you want to remember or any questions you want to ask.

### *Worship in a Marriage*

#### LESSON 7

List some people that are going to help you, pray for you, and support you in your marriage.

#### **GROWING TOGETHER**

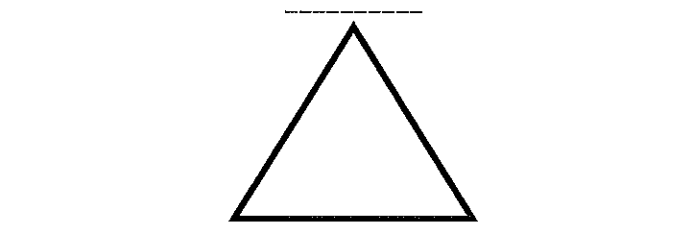
It should go without saying, but let's say it anyway: if your love for each other is fed by God's love for you both, you need to stay connected with God's love. The way we stay connected to God's love is by being in regular contact with the Word and sacraments in worship and Bible study.

#### **2 PETER 3:18**

**<sup>18</sup> But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.**

- ✧ God wants you both to grow in \_\_\_\_\_.
  
- ✧ What are some ways that you can do this together in your marriage?

#### **THE MARRIAGE PYRAMID**



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### TAKING IT HOME

1. **Agree or Disagree:** More than any other relationship between the two of you, your relationship with God will bring you closer together.
2. How are you *personally* planning on growing closer to God?
3. How are you planning on growing closer to God *as a couple*? How can our church encourage, equip, and enable you more? BE HONEST!

### GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING A SHARED DEVOTIONAL LIFE

The following are a few suggestions that might be helpful to you both as you seek to build your marriage on the solid foundation of God and his Word.

- Find a quiet, uninterrupted time for you to be together in God's Word.
- Start with a reasonable goal for time together in God's Word (e.g. 10, 15, 20 minutes).
- Try reading a psalm out loud to each other.
- Ask each other, "What are the two biggest things on your heart and mind today?" Then, take turns praying out loud for each other and these issues.
- Choose a part of the Bible to read together—out loud.
- Ask, "What does this part of the Bible say about..."
  - ...God?
  - ...us?
  - ...what God wants us to believe?
  - ...what God wants us to do?

### SOME USEFUL RESOURCES

The Bible is your greatest tool and weapon in life. With that said, though, it might be helpful to have other books and materials that can help you in your spiritual life. Listed below are some resources that you may find useful. The first group contains ideas and resources that can help you *organize* your daily Bible readings. The second group contains ideas and resources that you could use to *supplement* your daily Bible readings. For the supplemental resources, most can be ordered through our church body's publishing company (Northwestern Publishing House, [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net)).

#### Organizational Resources

- **Chapter-a-Day:** Pick a book of the Bible and read a chapter from it each day. After you finish one book of the Bible, move on to another.
- **Psalm-a-Day:** Read one Psalm a day. Some of the longer Psalms (like Psalm 119) you may wish to split it up over several days. There are 150 Psalms.
- **Proverb-a-Day:** Read one chapter of Proverbs each day. There are 31 chapters in the book of Proverbs.
- **1 Year Bible:** Some Bibles are already formatted to include an Old Testament, New Testament, and Psalm reading each day. By the time you are through, you have covered the entire Bible. There are also pamphlets and booklets that provide a handy chart to help you read the Bible over the course of one year.
- **3 Year Bible:** These readings are split up so that you can cover the entire Bible in the course of three years.
- **God's Yellow Pages:** This handy little guide helps you pick particular sections of the Bible for your reading depending on your mood or topic of interest.
- **The Audio Bible:** For those people who have difficulty reading, you can get a copy of the Bible on CD or cassette. There are recordings for virtually every translation of the Bible—some dramatized, others not. Many stores sell different versions of *The Audio Bible*, including Wal-Mart and most Christian bookstores. You can also check out a few at [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net).

#### Supplemental Resources

- **Christian Worship:** Your hymnal is a great resource for personal and family devotions. Included are personal prayers, devotions, psalms, and hymns. You can get a hymnal from your pastor, or order them online at [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net).

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- **Luther's Catechism:** Martin Luther wrote an entire book devoted to family devotions. He saw the parents as chiefly responsible for handling the spiritual education of their children. So, he wrote both the Small Catechism and the Large Catechism to summarize the main teachings of the Bible. The Large Catechism especially is helpful as a supplement to daily Bible readings. You can order a copy of the Small or Large Catechism at [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net).
- **The People's Bible:** These books are written by the pastors in our church body, and would be a great resource for not only daily Bible reading, but also daily devotions. Each book includes the text of the Bible along with a brief commentary and explanation. *The People's Bible* has a volume for each book of the Bible and is available at [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net).
- **Devotion Books:** Devotion books are incredibly popular. However, like some of the other resources here, they should include a word of caution. While many, if not all, devotion books base their devotions on Scripture, we need to remember that the devotions themselves are the words of men and not the words of God. That may mean that you need to have your Bible right there with you to stack the devotion up against God's Word. It might also be helpful for you to ask your pastor about particular devotion books. Our church body sells a number of good, solid devotion books through its own publishing company. You can check them out at [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net).
- **Meditations:** This is a small, quarterly devotional book that is written by pastors from our church body. The readings used for the devotions also correspond to the readings we use in church each Sunday. You can order a subscription for *Meditations* at [www.nph.net](http://www.nph.net).
- **Email Devotions:** At [www.wels.net](http://www.wels.net), you can sign up for a devotion to be sent to your email inbox every day. You can also read them online at the same website.