

PRACTICAL  
FAITH SERIES

# The Heart of Marriage

SIX BIBLE STUDY LESSONS  
FOR GROUP DISCIPLESHIP



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FOR GROUP DISCIPLESHIP



**EVERY NATION**  
PRODUCTIONS

# How to Use this Material

In Victory, the primary venue for discipleship happens in a small group. It is called a Victory group. We strongly encourage everyone to be involved since these groups are specifically designed to help disciples grow spiritually.

A Victory group meeting has three sections: **Connect**, **Word**, and **Prayer**, and ideally lasts from forty to sixty minutes.

## **CONNECT** (5-10 minutes)

Victory group meetings begin with a time to relate with one another. Depending on the people who comprise the group, this can be done through a variety of ways:

- Fun—such as an icebreaker activity
- Answered prayers—sharing of testimonies and updates
- Questions—such as those provided in the material, learning each other’s personal stories, and sharing feedback from the weekly message

### *Effective Questions During the Connect Portion:*

- Are deliberately friendly to first-timers
- Ask for opinion or experiences
- Require no Bible knowledge
- Have no right or wrong answer
- Are not controversial
- Are preferably connected to the meeting’s topic

## **THE HEART OF MARRIAGE**

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## **WORD** (20-30 minutes)

Teach the truth and relevance of God's Word for life application. The Victory group meeting is not primarily a Bible study. Although teaching and explanation of Scripture is involved, the goal is to minister, not finish a material.

There is no need to teach all the points in a material.

Within this section, we look at what the Bible says, its relevance to us today, and its application in our lives.

### **What:** *What does the Bible say?*

Communicate and impart biblical truth clearly and concisely.

*<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* 2 TIMOTHY 3:16,17

### *Tips for Sharing the Word Effectively*

- Let the Bible speak for itself.
- Use illustrations and tell stories to explain Bible verses.
- When entertaining clarifications, be watchful not to allow the discussion to go off-tangent.
- The primary goal is to minister to the needs of the people, not to finish a Bible lesson.
- Be led by the Spirit when using the material.

### **So What:** *What is the relevance of the Word to my life?*

Give participants the opportunity to discuss how the Word impacts the way they live.

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

ROMANS 12:2

### **Now What:** *How do I apply the Word to my life?*

Our primary reason for sharing the Bible is so that people will know who God is and what He has done. In doing so, the participants will begin to discover who they are and what they should do.

If it is a promise, teach them to claim it. If it is a command or a principle, encourage them to put it to action by God's grace. If it is a truth, let them embrace it willingly and not under compulsion. Allow God's grace and love to win them by the way you teach God's Word.

Encourage specific, measurable action steps that are consistent with the life change that the Scripture is bringing about. We do not command people, but we spur them on toward love and good deeds.

*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves.*

*Do what it says.* JAMES 1:22

### *Tips for Life-Changing Application*

- You may choose one of the "So What" and "Now What" questions or you may add your own.
- An effective standby application question is: "What one action step are you going to take as a result of what you heard today?"
- Designate who will be the first to answer the question asked.
- Do not allow someone to argue or be critical of others.
- Remind everyone to apply the lesson to their own lives, not to someone else's.
- Ask God for wisdom to know when to balance or correct strange or unbiblical applications. Insensitive correction or criticism can kill the group, as can unchecked heresy.
- Remind everyone that transformation is God's work, not ours, and our obedience is a response to who He is and His love for us. It is God's grace that enables us to apply and obey His Word.

**PRAY** (15-20 minutes)

Prayer is the most important part of the Victory group meeting. Make sure you have plenty of time left so your prayer time is not rushed. This is not a “closing prayer,” but a time for everyone in the group to take specific requests to God. This is where the action is. The goal is to create a venue where people will see God move on their behalf.

*“Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.” MATTHEW 18:19*

*Tips for Powerful Prayer*

- Listen to the Holy Spirit carefully during the Connect and Word sections for things that may need prayer.
- Spend your time praying for one another, not sharing and discussing prayer requests.
- Keep your prayers simple, sincere, and short. Most non-believers have never heard an ordinary Christian just talk to God and will be touched by the sincerity and simplicity of the prayer.
- Pray, don’t preach. Pray in simple and short sentences, not long “sermon prayers.”
- Use conversational prayer, not complicated or profound, intercessory prayer.
- Expect God to answer your prayers.

**CONTENTS**

<b>1</b>	Marriage Defined.....	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	The Ingredients of a Covenant.....	<b>5</b>
<b>3</b>	Love and Respect .....	<b>11</b>
<b>4</b>	Intimacy: Breaking the Barriers.....	<b>19</b>
<b>5</b>	Guarding the Heart .....	<b>25</b>
<b>6</b>	Living Decisively.....	<b>29</b>

# 1 Marriage Defined

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- How did you and your spouse meet?
- What's one of the first things you noticed about your spouse?
- What's one thing you appreciate about your spouse? Recall an instance explaining this.

You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. MALACHI 2:14

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. GENESIS 2:24

## WHAT

Over the years, people have espoused a variety of ideas about what marriage is or should be. Although these ideas may seem good and practical, our standards for marriage must be based on God's Word.

Marriage is God's idea. Only He can define a godly marriage for us. Malachi 2:14 says that marriage is a covenant. In this lesson, we will answer two questions about covenants.

### 1 What is a covenant?

"I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you." GENESIS 17:7

A covenant is a sacred agreement. "Sacred" means extremely valuable, special, set apart. The purpose of a covenant is to enhance, protect, and provide. God relates to us through a covenant. Just as when we enter into a covenant with God, He enhances our lives, protects us, and provides for us, our marriages are meant to be a source of enhancement, protection, and provision.

What is the difference between a covenant and a contract?

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### 2 What are the roles in a covenant?

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.

EPHESIANS 5:23

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

GENESIS 2:18 (READ ALSO GENESIS 2:15,23.)

The Bible says that the man is the head or the leader, and the woman is the helpmate.

What is a "head"?  
What is a "helper"?

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While the leader is aggressive, the helpmate is supportive. While the man is generally objective and logical, the woman is generally subjective and emotional. And while the man is the cultivator, the woman is the incubator.

Each of the differences between a leader and a helpmate is a description of God. If man and woman will fulfill their roles in marriage, they can experience a taste of heaven on earth in their homes.

How have you appreciated your marriage more by understanding the roles of the husband and wife?

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**SO WHAT**

- How does God’s definition of marriage differ from the world’s? Why should the Word of God guide us in understanding marriage and family?
- Do you have relationships that you consider to be sacred? What are they?
- In what ways do the leader and the helpmate complement each other? In what ways do they differ? How will they come to agreement?

**NOW WHAT**

- Are you in a covenant with God? Is He the head of your life, marriage, and family? How can you grow in your relationship with God this week?
- What is your role in your marriage? How can you fulfill your God-given role this week?
- What do you need to do to protect and uphold the covenant you have made with your spouse?

- 
- Thank God for His Word and pray that it would guide you and be a lamp unto your feet.
  - Thank God for your spouse and speak a blessing over him/her.
  - Ask God to help you be the spouse He wants you to be. Pray that you would be a source of blessing and encouragement to your spouse and family every day.

**2**

# The Ingredients of a Covenant

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CONNECT

- What’s one of the sweetest things your spouse has ever done for you?
- Share about a memorable gift your spouse gave you.
- Share about something you and your spouse enjoy doing together.

*"I'm establishing my covenant between me and you, a covenant that includes your descendants, a covenant that goes on and on and on, a covenant that commits me to be your God and the God of your descendants."* GENESIS 17:7

(THE MESSAGE)

*Then God said to Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come."* GENESIS 17:9

**WHAT**

God loves us so much that He is serious about keeping His covenant with us. He has promised to bless not just us, but also the generations after us. According to Genesis 17:9, covenants must be kept. To build our marriages, we need to put into practice three ingredients of a covenant relationship: honor, commitment, and love.

**1 The Gift: Honor**

*"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."* JOHN 3:16

Every covenant has an exchange of gifts. God paid us the ultimate honor by giving us Jesus, even though we were sinners and do not deserve His mercy or grace.

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*How should we respond to the gift of His Son? In a practical way, what does it mean to honor God?*

*In a practical way, what does it mean to honor your spouse?*

*Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.* <sup>1</sup> PETER 3:7

*... Honor one another above yourselves.* ROMANS 12:10

The best gift we can give our spouse in marriage is the gift of honor. It's saying: "I value you." To honor is to regard with respect or high esteem.

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**2 The Sign: Commitment**

*And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come..."*

GENESIS 9:12

Every covenant has a sign. A sign is a reminder, declaration, and warning. The best sign of our commitment in marriage is quality and quantity of time. When you spend time with your spouse, you are saying: "You are important to me."

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<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.* GENESIS 2:23,24

What is the commitment between a man and a woman in marriage?

### 3 The Sacrifice: Love

*This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.*

1 JOHN 4:10

*... 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.* EPHESIANS 5:2

Every covenant has a sacrifice. Love isn't an emotion—it's a decision. At the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus didn't want to suffer or die, but He made the decision regardless of the personal cost.

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A sacrifice is anything consecrated and offered to God. A sign of our covenant is sacrificial love. When we love our spouse (whether or not we think s/he deserves it), you are saying: "You are special to me."

*However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

EPHESIANS 5:33

What does "love" mean? What does "respect" mean?

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### 4 The Center: Jesus

*Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

ECCLESIASTES 4:12

God is committed to you, and He is committed to your marriage. Marriage, according to the Bible, is not simply about a man and a woman. It should have God at the center. Jesus forms a cord of three strands with you and your spouse. Your life, marriage, and family should be built on Jesus. Through every trial, triumph, and test, He has promised to never leave you nor forsake you.

*In what ways has your marriage been blessed as you have put Christ at the center?*

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**SO WHAT**

- How do you feel when you are honored? Why is honor an important gift in marriage?
- How do you think you can show your spouse your commitment?
- How does the world’s definition of love differ from God’s? How can we love one another?

**NOW WHAT**

- Is Jesus the center of your marriage? How can you grow in your relationship with God this week? How can you grow in your understanding of God’s covenant and love for you?
- How can you honor your spouse this week?
- Are you committed to loving your spouse? In what areas do you need to improve your relationship? What do you think you need to do?

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- Thank God for His covenant with you. Commit to follow Him and grow in your relationship with Him all the days of your life.
  - Ask God to help you honor, love, and remain committed to your spouse every day. Pray that Jesus will always be at the center of your marriage and family.
  - Pray that your marriage will be a blessing and a testimony of God’s faithfulness to your family and community.

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# Love and Respect

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CONNECT

- How many years have you been married? Share one highlight of your marriage so far.
- What does your spouse do that makes you feel appreciated and loved?
- What is one difference between you and your spouse that you have to appreciate and value? Recall a specific instance explaining this.

*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her . . .*

EPHESIANS 5:25

*However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.* EPHESIANS 5:33

## WHAT

The Word of God is our standard in defining our relationship with our spouse. The Bible teaches us that husbands should love their wives as Christ loved the church, and wives should respect their husbands. In this lesson, we will look at what this means.

### 1 Husbands, love your wives.

*<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.* EPHESIANS 5:25-28

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Love (agape) is an active type of love that has to do with sacrificial giving. Here are some ways husbands are to love their wives:

- Give yourself up for her. Jesus gave up everything for the church, including His life. His extravagant love for the church is without reservations. His love for us is not dependent on our love for Him. In the same way, husbands must ask God for creative ways to give themselves up for their wives.

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- Love her the way you love yourself. The Bible tells a husband to love his wife as his own body. Because he loves his body, he naturally feeds it and takes care of it. Likewise, a husband should take care of his wife physically, attending to her needs and providing for her financially.

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- Be considerate as you live with your wife (1 Peter 3:7). Learn to be considerate. Be sensitive of any habit you may have that may not please her. Treat her like a lady in small ways, like helping her out of a car or carrying her things for her. When she needs time for herself, take care of the house and family. Learn to serve your wife with all of your energy, understanding, consideration, and love. You may want to seek help in pointing out blind spots in your life that may affect your relationship.

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- Praise your wife (Song of Songs 1:15) and do not be harsh with her (Colossians 3:19). Be specific in telling her how much you value her. Appreciate her physical attributes, her care for you, her hard work, and her ladylike attributes. Realize that harsh answers, angry looks, an irritated tone of voice, and impatience will deeply affect your wife. Do not be annoyed by her sensitivity. Instead, celebrate her uniqueness. Do not be harsh with the precious gift God has given you.

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- Be thankful for your wife and realize the favor you have received from God (Proverbs 18:22). A wife is a blessing from God. Just think of how lonely you'd be without her. Adam was alone, and it wasn't good for him to be alone, so God gave him a wife. You have a lifetime companion, friend, and lover to enjoy every day.

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## 2 Wives, respect your husbands.

<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.* EPHESIANS 5:22-24

*However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

EPHESIANS 5:33

To “respect” is to look with high regard; to revere, honor, esteem, and appreciate; to be devoted to, deeply love, and enjoy. At the top of any man’s list of needs is respect from his spouse. God created men that way. The husband needs respect from his wife as much as he needs air to breathe. A man who does not receive respect from his wife is a man who begins to wither on the inside. That is why God calls wives to respect their husbands.

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Some believe that respect is something we must earn, but just like love, respect for our spouses must be unconditional. First Peter 2:17,18 exhorts us to respect everyone—even those who are harsh.

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When a wife respects, nurtures, and affirms her husband, her love for him deepens. Here are some ways wives are to respect their husbands:

- Acknowledge his calling and “office” as head of the family. Respond to his leadership. Respect him with what you say and do. Restrain yourself from manipulation, control, or stepping in for him.

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- Praise and encourage him. Be his biggest fan, prayer warrior, and motivator.

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- Be a helper and co-labor with him. Be unified in purpose with him. Exercise the authority given to you with humility.

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- Love and give yourself wholly to him. Be one—spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

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### SO WHAT

- For a marriage to work, why is it important for the husband to be respected and the wife to be loved? How do these two complement and come together?
- How do you think it's possible for the husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church?
- How can the wife respect her husband?

### NOW WHAT

- On a scale of one to ten (one being the lowest and ten being the highest), based on the Bible's definition of love, how much love do you think you show your wife? How can you better love your wife this week?
- On a scale of one to ten (one being the lowest and ten being the highest), based on the Bible's definition of respect, how much respect do you think you show your husband? How can you better respect your husband this week?
- Are there areas where you need to forgive your spouse or ask for forgiveness? How do you think you should apply what you have learned in this lesson?
- How can you grow in your understanding of God's love and grace for you?

# PRAYER

- Thank God for His unconditional love and abounding grace in your life. Ask Him to help you be the spouse He wants you to be.
- If there are areas where you need to forgive your spouse or repent for your own behavior, take time to lift these up to the Lord and ask for His strength and wisdom. Choose to forgive as the Lord has forgiven you.
- Pray that you will always love and respect your spouse, choosing to honor your spouse every day, even in difficult moments or seasons.

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# Intimacy: Breaking the Barriers

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CONNECT

- How do you show appreciation for your spouse? Recall an instance explaining this.
- How do you know your spouse is upset? What does s/he do?
- When was the last time you took a trip with your spouse? Where did you go? What was the highlight of your trip?

*God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."* GENESIS 1:28

<sup>18</sup>May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. <sup>19</sup>A loving doe, a graceful deer—may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love.

PROVERBS 5:18,19

## WHAT

Everything God made has a purpose. God created sex as a wonderful gift for a husband and wife to enjoy. Though there are many barriers to intimacy (such as a wrong view of sex, stress and fatigue, fear and trauma, children, in-laws, lust and pornography, selfishness and manipulation), God intended sex to be beautiful between a man and a woman for procreation, unity, pleasure, and security. In this lesson, we will look at how to break barriers so that our marriages can be stronger.

### 1 Understand the differences.

*A man's wisdom gives him patience . . .* PROVERBS 19:11

The better we grasp the differences between men and women, the easier our relationships with our spouses will be.

A woman is stimulated more by touch and romantic words. She is far more attracted by a man's personality, while a man is stimulated by sight.

While a man needs little or no preparations for sex, a woman often needs hours of emotional and mental

preparation. Harsh or abusive treatment can easily remove her desire for sexual intimacy for days at a time.

*When did you begin to understand these differences and how did it improve your marriage?*

### 2 Serve one another.

<sup>3</sup>Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. PHILIPPIANS 2:3,4

Love is not selfish. It means not looking out only for your own interest, but for the interest of your spouse. It is regarding the other person as more important than yourself, and taking on the nature of a servant.

*In terms of physical intimacy, how can a husband serve his wife? How can a wife serve her husband?*

### 3 Be united with your spouse in every way.

*" . . . 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?"* MATTHEW 19:5

Life with your spouse should be enjoyable. Do not imitate couples who live together, but lead separate lives. Long to be with each other like you did when you first met. Learn, as a couple, to agree on more and more issues. Be like-minded. Spend more time alone, just talking and sharing the day's events. Show a genuine interest in each other by listening intently, giving your full attention, and making eye contact.

What does  
"one flesh" mean?

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#### 4 Honor your marriage bed.

*Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.* HEBREWS 13:4

Marriage should be kept pure by remaining true to your spouse in every way. Jesus said that lustful looks are adultery (Matthew 5:28). We will have to train our eyes and hearts to be solidly true to our spouses alone.

What does "honor" mean? How do you honor the marriage bed?

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### SO WHAT

- Why do you think God made man and woman so different?
- How can selfishness hinder physical intimacy?
- Why do you think our culture and society don't honor the marriage bed? How is this contrary to God's design for marriage?

### NOW WHAT

- How would you rate your marriage in the area of intimacy? How do you think your intimacy with your spouse can improve this coming week?
- Which aspects of today's lesson do you need to openly discuss with your spouse? Are you willing to have that discussion this week?
- How can you serve your spouse more starting today?

# PRAYER

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- Thank God for your spouse. Speak a blessing over your spouse today.
  - Ask God to strengthen your marriage and help you be more intimate with your spouse.
  - Commit to serve your spouse and be "one flesh."



*Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.*

SONG OF SONGS 2:15 (KJV)

*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.* PROVERBS 4:23

## WHAT

Just as a wise farmer protects the crops he worked hard to cultivate, we must cultivate our marriages. Little foxes can nibble away the good harvest, and little things can spoil or even ruin our marriages. In this lesson, we will look at three little foxes: wrong focus, unrealistic expectations, and unforgiveness.

### 1 Wrong Focus

*He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.*

COLOSSIANS 1:17

*Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.*

ECCLESIASTES 4:12

Instead of being centered on Christ, many marriages are focused on children, careers, other relatives (in-laws, etc.), and selves. But only Jesus should be the center of our marriages.

*How will wrong focus lead to the wrong result?*

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### 2 Unrealistic Expectations

*Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.*

COLOSSIANS 3:19

*However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

EPHESIANS 5:33

When we expect fairytale endings, when we want to compensate for past hurts, and when we are legalistic, we can hurt our spouses with unrealistic expectations. For a marriage to succeed, we will have to look to God, draw from Him, and keep growing in our relationship with Him as the most important in our lives.

*What are expectations? Why will our expectations of people never be completely met?*

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### 3 Unforgiveness

*Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.* COLOSSIANS 3:13

*Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.* LUKE 23:34

Forgiveness is the reset button of our relationships. When we forgive each other, it refreshes, restores, and rejuvenates our marriages. Jesus knew how unhealthy and detrimental bitterness and unforgiveness is—in the midst of His own pain, He chose to forgive those who crucified Him.

*Why is forgiveness not based on emotions?*

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**SO WHAT**

- How can a child-centered, career-centered, other-centered, self-centered, or money-centered marriage be destructive?
- What are some unrealistic expectations a spouse can have? How can we not have unrealistic expectations?
- How can unforgiveness and unchecked bitterness be dangerous in a marriage? Why is it possible to forgive?

**NOW WHAT**

- What/who is your marriage centered on? How can your marriage be Christ-centered always? How can you guard your heart?
- Do you have any unrealistic expectations of your spouse and marriage? How can these change and what are you planning to do about them?
- Do you need to ask for forgiveness from your spouse? Do you need to forgive your spouse? How can you walk in love and forgiveness every day?

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- Pray that your life, spouse, marriage, and family would be centered on Christ.
  - Ask God to help you guard your heart and your spouse's heart. Commit to seek God every day. Ask Him to help you see the little foxes that might try to nibble away your marriage.
  - Pray that your marriage, family, and home will be filled with forgiveness, love, hope, grace, humility, and joy.

**6** Living Decisively

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- Where have you been with your spouse? What are the best memories you have of that trip?
- If you could purchase anything for your spouse, what would it be? Why?
- What marriage advice would you give a single person? Why?

<sup>19</sup>"This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live <sup>20</sup>and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob." DEUTERONOMY 30:19,20

## WHAT

The decisions we have made in the past have serious effects on our future. They could be for good or bad. Others have suffered not from making the wrong decision, but for being decisive. In this lesson, we will look at five things we need to be decisive about in our marriages, families, and homes.

### 1 Live according to God's Word.

<sup>16</sup>All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup>so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 TIMOTHY 3:16,17

*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.*

PSALM 119:105

The decision to live according to the Word of God will determine the course of our marriage and relationships for many years to come. As in a journey, the direction in which we are headed will bring us to the ultimate destination. The Word of God is to be the lamp that illuminates our way. It guards every step we take and tells us we are headed in the right direction.

How has the Word of God illuminated your marriage?

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### 2 Serve one another in love.

<sup>26</sup>"Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup>and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—<sup>28</sup>just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." MATTHEW 20:26-28

The success of Jesus' ministry and life can be attributed to His decision to serve—not to be served. If we make this decision, we too can be ascertained of success in our marriages.

How can we serve our spouses?

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### 3 Stay faithful to each other.

*Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD a man avoids evil.* PROVERBS 16:6

*In love a throne will be established; in faithfulness a man will sit on it—one from the house of David—one who in judging seeks justice and speeds the cause of righteousness.* ISAIAH 16:5

Love is what establishes a marriage union, but faithfulness keeps it. Deciding to be faithful is not an option—it is the only way to live out our vows.

What is "faithfulness"?

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### 4 Prioritize what is most valuable.

<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.*

MATTHEW 6:33,34

<sup>4</sup>*He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.* <sup>5</sup>*(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)* 1 TIMOTHY 3:4,5

Deciding to live by prioritizing God and our families will not be easy, but these priorities need to be determined ahead of time so that we do not lose what matters the most to us.

What priorities have you decided to live on?

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### 5 Agree to walk together in unity.

<sup>19</sup>*Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.* <sup>20</sup>*For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.* MATTHEW 18:19,20

*The LORD said, "If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them."* GENESIS 11:6

Living in agreement is powerful. God said that nothing is impossible for us if we walk in agreement and unity.

How is there power in agreement?

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**SO WHAT**

- What has your marriage been through? What has God taught you in the process?
- What kind of marriage do you want to have? What will it take to make that happen?
- What is faithfulness? How can we be faithful in marriage?

**NOW WHAT**

- How can you grow in your marriage this week?
- What are your priorities? How do these need to be adjusted and realigned to honor God and love your spouse?
- Together with your spouse, talk about at least two things you have decided to agree on.

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- Thank God for His Word. Pray that God's Word would always light your path.
  - Ask God to teach you to serve your spouse better. Ask Him for grace, humility, and kindness.
  - Pray that you would be faithful to your spouse, that you would prioritize well, and that you would be in agreement with your spouse to honor God with your life, marriage, and family.

<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. GENESIS 2:23,24

**The Heart of Marriage** is a series of six materials for group discipleship designed to help spouses build strong marriages on the foundation of Jesus.

TOPICS INCLUDE:

- Marriage Defined
- The Ingredients of a Covenant
- Love and Respect
- Intimacy: Breaking the Barriers
- Guarding the Heart
- Living Decisively



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