

# Marriage



*Catalyst*™

A Practical Study for

Groups, Couples and Individuals

Designed to Transform Marriages

DREAM, CONNECT, BUILD

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MARCEL SANCHEZ





**ONLINE COURSE**

**Build a Stronger and Healthier  
Marriage**

**Participant Guide**

## **MARRIAGE CATALYST ONLINE COURSE**

### **Build a Stronger and Healthier Marriage**

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## **Build a Stronger and Healthier Marriage**

### **GROW Your Marriage**

Growing your marriage should be only second to growing your relationship with God. It should be on the list of top priorities for your life. If your marriage is suffering, rest assured, every part of your life will suffer as well. Now is the time to invest in your marriage.

Now more than ever you need to focus on growing your marriage and establishing a vision for what could be and should be. When you grow your marriage, the capacity to influence family, friends, business relationships, co-workers, and even complete strangers, multiplies.

Ready or not your marriage will face hard times. Life's challenges often arrive without warning. You can't track them on radar and know the precise time of their arrival. But you can prepare by building a strong foundation to keep your marriage standing when unexpected struggles arrive.

**Now more than ever you need to focus on growing your marriage and establishing a vision for what could be and should be.**

Is your marriage ready for the storms of life? If not, the time to get ready is now! You can't have a healthy marriage without making significant investments of time, energy, and resources.

If you want to make a difference within your marriage and leave a strong legacy for future generations, grow your marriage. We truly believe the Marriage Catalyst Online Course will help you laugh a little more, increase your knowledge of God's Word, and provide a strong foundation for your marriage to thrive. It will help you make the right changes within your marriage to position your relationship for growth.

You and your spouse will walk away with practical action steps to build a thriving marriage and take your relationship to the next level. Our three-fold theme: Dream, Connect and Build will help your marriage thrive and arrive at its proper destination.

Our Marriage Catalyst Online 12-Week Master Class is a proven course designed to build your marriage. You and your spouse can start seeing positive results in your marriage in only four-weeks of consistently applying the principles.

**You can't have a healthy marriage without making significant investments of time, energy, and resources.**

# **Session 1**

## **Remembering the Dream for Your Marriage**

**Reigniting the Passion for Your Spouse**



## What is the Marriage Catalyst Study?

A Practical Study for Groups, Couples and Individuals Designed to Transform Marriages.

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**Growing your marriage should be only second to growing your relationship with God. It should be on the list of top priorities for your life.**

## How do you define a Catalyst?

A catalyst is best defined as an agent for \_\_\_\_\_.

**A \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship with God is the Catalyst for Building a Great Marriage.**

- Growing Your Marriage Impacts Your Life!
- What will Marriage Catalyst Course do for my marriage?
- Why is it important?
- What makes the Marriage Catalyst Course different?
- How will I benefit?

**Key Scripture:** Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:8)

**BIG Idea:** Reigniting your marriage requires a clear \_\_\_\_\_ for the \_\_\_\_\_.

- Couples who \_\_\_\_\_ together \_\_\_\_\_ together.
- A great marriage requires great \_\_\_\_\_.

### Broken Dreams

The contentions of a wife are a continual dripping. (Proverbs 19:13)

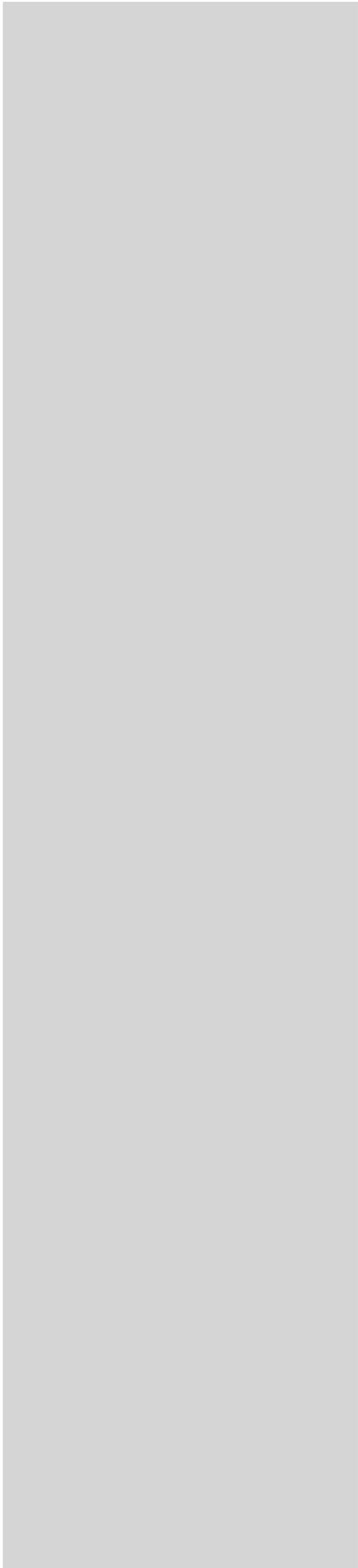
**A great marriage requires great effort. The dream must be evaluated and shaped overtime to sharpen the focus of the marriage. It's not going to happen automatically.**

### Melanie and James

Every marriage has equal opportunity to create an environment for their relationship to \_\_\_\_\_.

<b>Average U.S. Divorces for every 1,000 people</b>	_____
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Source: [www.CDC.gov](http://www.CDC.gov)



- The negative effect that divorce places on our economy is \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ out of \_\_\_\_\_ marriages are preceded by cohabitation.

**Marriage and happiness are \_\_\_\_\_.**

- Marriage contributes to the \_\_\_\_\_ sex.
- Marriage helps people feel \_\_\_\_\_.
- Marriage \_\_\_\_\_ women from multiple forms of violence.
- Marriage gives children the \_\_\_\_\_ opportunity to live a \_\_\_\_\_ life.
- Marriage leads to a more consistent and \_\_\_\_\_ worker.
- Marriage significantly \_\_\_\_\_ your net worth.
- Married men and women contribute to society \_\_\_\_\_ than their unmarried peers.

## A King's Dream of Love

**1. \_\_\_\_\_: Anticipation is when you are \_\_\_\_\_ the seconds before you see them again...an emerging eagerness that grows with time.**

*Beloved: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is more delightful than wine. Pleasing is the fragrance of your perfumes; your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the maidens love you! Take me away with you—let us hurry! Let the king bring me into his chambers... How right they are to adore you . . . Tell me, you whom I love, where you graze your flock and where you rest your sheep at midday. Why should I be like a veiled woman beside the flocks of your friends? (Song of Solomon, 1:2-4, 7, NIV)*

**2. \_\_\_\_\_: Praise is when you \_\_\_\_\_ the characteristics of the one whom you love.**

*Lover: I liken you, my darling, to a mare harnessed to one of the chariots of Pharaoh. Your cheeks are beautiful with earrings, your neck with strings of jewels. We will make you earrings of gold, studded with silver... How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes are doves... Like a lily among thorns is my darling among the maidens. (Song of Solomon 1:9-11, 15, 2:2, NIV)*

*Beloved: While the king was at his table, my perfume spread its fragrance. My lover is to me a cluster of henna blossoms from the vineyards of En Gedi . . . How handsome you are, my lover! Oh, how charming... I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys. (Song of Solomon 1:12, 16)*

**3. \_\_\_\_\_: Delight is when you find the time with the one you love thoroughly \_\_\_\_\_.**

*Beloved: Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest is my lover among the young men. I delight to sit in his shade, and his fruit is sweet to my taste. He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love. Strengthen me with raisins, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love. His left arm is under my head, and his right arm embraces me. (Song of Songs 2:3-6, NIV)*

**4. \_\_\_\_\_: Desire is a strong and compelling \_\_\_\_\_ that leads you to the one you love.**

*Beloved: All night long on my bed I looked for the one my heart loves; I looked for him but did not find him. 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. The watchmen found me as they made their rounds in the city. "Have you seen the one my heart loves?" 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. Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you by the gazelles and by the does of the field: Do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires. (Song of Songs 3:1-5, NIV)*

## Marriage Catalyst Activity

Reigniting your marriage requires a clear vision for the future. What action steps or goals best describe the desired destination in the following eight areas for your marriage through the years indicated? Next, compare your answers with those of your spouse and agree on the top action steps or goals for each section.

	<b>2-5 Years</b>	<b>6-10 Years</b>	<b>11-25 Years</b>
<b>Spiritual</b>			
<b>Personal</b>			
<b>Relational</b>			
<b>Family</b>			
<b>Physical</b>			
<b>Educational</b>			
<b>Career</b>			
<b>Financial</b>			

## The BIG Application

What are the top three applications gained from this session for you to immediately put into practice within your marriage?

**Application #1:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #2:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #3:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

## Application Questions

Separate ample time as a couple to answer each of the following application questions. Use these questions to increase your communication and grow your understanding of one another.

1. Reflect back on the research regarding "Divorce in America." What were two of the most alarming statistics for you personally? Explain your answers.
2. What would you say are the three greatest benefits of a marriage between a man and a woman? How would you rate these in descending order?
3. How can a commitment to our Key Scripture, "Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:8), help reignite the dream for your marriage? What problems can be avoided as a result of making this commitment?
4. What connection can you make with focusing your attention on the right things, as in Philippians 4:8, and growing in Anticipation, Praise, Delight and Desire for your spouse?
5. What reminds you about your spouse? In other words, what builds anticipation during the regular flow of your day? What do you do when they come to mind?
6. What do you really appreciate about your spouse? What things does your spouse do very well? Which of these do you need to spend more time praising?
7. When you think of your relationship with your spouse, what would you say brings the most delight to your soul? What actions or words refresh your spirit?
8. Reigniting your marriage requires a clear vision for the future. What do you desire the most for your relationship? What three milestones do you think about most often? Why is it so important for you personally to reach these milestones as a couple?
9. What characteristics about your mate draw you closer to them? What do they do that makes you feel special, loved, appreciated, valued, or important?
10. Where is your favorite place to spend time with the one you love? What plans are you making to return to your special place?

*Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:8)*

# **Session 2**

## **Establishing a Strong Foundation for Your Marriage**

**Understanding the Purpose for Your Marriage**



**Key Scripture:** And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." (Genesis 2:18)

**BIG Idea:** Your marriage is \_\_\_\_\_ to fulfill a specific \_\_\_\_\_.

### Peter and Iris

Realizing your purpose as a couple involves understanding and embracing \_\_\_\_\_ for your marriage.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

*The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." And the LORD God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him." (Genesis 2:15-18)*

**Marriage was originally designed to serve as a \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ within the husband and wife relationship.**

- God designed marriage to \_\_\_\_\_ His \_\_\_\_\_ on earth.
- God takes it upon Himself to \_\_\_\_\_ the relational \_\_\_\_\_ in your life.
- Your spouse is exactly who you need to \_\_\_\_\_ you into the person God wants you to be.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_

**Marriage is a formal agreement, a \_\_\_\_\_ relationship before God between a man and a woman.**

**Leaving and cleaving is about starting \_\_\_\_\_ that will impact the next generation and keep your focus on the Lord and on one another.**

*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. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:23-24, 32)*

- For your marriage to grow, you must become \_\_\_\_\_.
- If you \_\_\_\_\_ leave your family, you \_\_\_\_\_ cleave to your spouse.

*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame. (Genesis 2:24-25, NIV)*

3. \_\_\_\_\_

*So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Genesis 1:27-28)*

- The foundation for a great marriage is built by a work of God \_\_\_\_\_ us and \_\_\_\_\_ us.
- A strong marriage has God in His proper place, \_\_\_\_\_.
- Your marriage is designed to clearly \_\_\_\_\_ the characteristics of God to others.

*You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16)*

4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Your marriage is designed to \_\_\_\_\_ your unique individual blueprint to \_\_\_\_\_ one another's differences for the greatest possible impact.**

- A synchronized marriage, where husband and wife \_\_\_\_\_ one another's strengths creates greater opportunities for growth and impact.

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Your marriage is designed to reproduce \_\_\_\_\_.**

*Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them. (Psalm 127:3-5)*

- A \_\_\_\_\_ marriage is the best environment for children to flourish.
- Your marriage is designed to prepare your children to become \_\_\_\_\_ adults.

6. \_\_\_\_\_

- Your marriage is designed to have a \_\_\_\_\_ influence.
- God wants to use your marriage as a \_\_\_\_\_ to point people to Him.

**Regardless of how your marriage started, regardless of the pain,  
God can transform it and create something fresh, new,  
and exciting.**

7. \_\_\_\_\_

*Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— 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 20:25-28, NIV)*

1. Help

2. Leave and Cleave

3. Radiate

4. Leverage

5. Procreate

6. Influence

7. Serve

## Marriage Catalyst Activity

Consider our seven-fold purpose for your marriage based on the scriptures we reviewed in this session. Take a few minutes and write out a purpose statement for your marriage using at least 2-3 of the characteristics as described already. An example is provided for you below. For the second portion, write down a joint definition by combining your definition with that of your spouse. Afterwards, take a few minutes and share with your spouse the reasons for your response.

**Example:** The Purpose for MY Marriage is to help my spouse radiate God's great love to a world without hope by helping others grow.

**Example:** The Purpose for OUR Marriage is to serve one another in love in such an uncommon way that we help encourage other couples to grow their marriage.

**The Purpose for MY Marriage is to:**

**The Purpose for OUR Marriage is to:**

## The BIG Application

What are the top three applications gained from this session for you to immediately put into practice within your marriage?

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**Application #2:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

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**Application #3:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

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## Application Questions

Separate ample time as a couple to answer each of the following application questions. Use these questions to increase your communication and grow your understanding of one another.

1. Reflect back on the research regarding "Divorce in America." What were two of the most alarming statistics for you personally? Explain your answers.
2. What would you say are the three greatest benefits of a marriage between a man and a woman? How would you rate these in descending order?
3. How can a commitment to our Key Scripture, "Love never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:8), help reignite the dream for your marriage? What problems can be avoided as a result of making this commitment?
4. What connection can you make with focusing your attention on the right things, as in Philippians 4:8, and growing in Anticipation, Praise, Delight and Desire for your spouse?
5. What reminds you about your spouse? In other words, what builds anticipation during the regular flow of your day? What do you do when they come to mind?
6. What do you really appreciate about your spouse? What things does your spouse do very well? Which of these do you need to spend more time praising?
7. When you think of your relationship with your spouse, what would you say brings the most delight to your soul? What actions or words refresh your spirit?
8. Reigniting your marriage requires a clear vision for the future. What do you desire the most for your relationship? What three milestones do you think about most often? Why is it so important for you personally to reach these milestones as a couple?
9. What characteristics about your mate draw you closer to them? What do they do that makes you feel special, loved, appreciated, valued, or important?
10. Where is your favorite place to spend time with the one you love? What plans are you making to return to your special place?

*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

# **Session 3**

## **Connecting to the Right Source**

**The Power of Satisfaction**



**Key Scripture:** Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. (John 15:4-5)

**BIG Idea:** A great marriage flows from a \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

**Henry and Michelle**

## Finding our Source of Satisfaction

1. \_\_\_\_\_ people seek satisfaction . . . there are no exceptions.

- For some, this fulfillment comes in the form of \_\_\_\_\_.
- For others, personal fulfillment has to do more with their \_\_\_\_\_.
- For some, it's the drive that makes their \_\_\_\_\_ participate in more activities than they can handle.
- For many, it's reaching a particular \_\_\_\_\_ status among their friends and colleagues.
- Others pursue extreme levels of \_\_\_\_\_ and mental satisfaction through alcohol, drugs, or illegitimate sexual relationships.
- For others, the pursuit has more to do with personal relaxation and \_\_\_\_\_.

*Death and Destruction are never satisfied,  
and neither are the eyes of man. (Proverbs 27:20, NIV)*

2. The pursuit of personal satisfaction is not evil but the \_\_\_\_\_ made can lead to evil.

The reality is we don't \_\_\_\_\_ everything that we pursue.

- There are some pursuits that God desires for your life and for your marriage, but \_\_\_\_\_ right \_\_\_\_\_.
- God is more concerned with building your \_\_\_\_\_ than He is with giving you everything you want.
- He often delays to give us what we believe we need immediately to help build our \_\_\_\_\_ in Him and \_\_\_\_\_ on His provision.

**Make certain that what you and your spouse are pursuing is \_\_\_\_\_ God wants you to pursue, \_\_\_\_\_ He wants you to pursue it, and \_\_\_\_\_ He wants you to do so.**

*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. (James 1:5)*

- Understand the circumstances around you and the \_\_\_\_\_ revelation of God's work within your marriage.

**3. Choosing our \_\_\_\_\_ of satisfaction is our most significant choice in life.**

- For starters, choosing the right source of satisfaction will \_\_\_\_\_ your thought life.
- It will serve as a \_\_\_\_\_ for many important decisions.
- Your source of satisfaction will affect the \_\_\_\_\_ you establish for your home.
- It \_\_\_\_\_ your time and removes certain activities from your calendar.
- It will most certainly influence how you \_\_\_\_\_ to your spouse on a daily basis.
- Experiencing a life \_\_\_\_\_ with satisfaction and purpose was designed to begin with \_\_\_\_\_.

*The fear of the LORD leads to life, and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited with evil. (Proverbs 19:23)*

**4. The \_\_\_\_\_ of your source of satisfaction will determine the quality of your life and love.**

**The \_\_\_\_\_ source of satisfaction will lead us and our marriage right into a world of frustration and \_\_\_\_\_.**

- It will mean settling for \_\_\_\_\_ than what God originally planned for us to experience.
- The wrong source of satisfaction will \_\_\_\_\_ be enough.
- \_\_\_\_\_ is the source of \_\_\_\_\_.

*In him was life, and that life was the light of men. (John 1:4, NIV)*

**5. Jesus offered Himself as our source of \_\_\_\_\_ satisfaction and abundant life.**

- The One who is the source of life \_\_\_\_\_ His life on your behalf.
- This great sacrifice would provide the \_\_\_\_\_ required to connect us with the Father.

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit. (1 Peter 3:18)*

*Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, "Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38)*

- Jesus is the \_\_\_\_\_ for complete fulfillment, true significance, and lasting contentment.
- Jesus is the One who can \_\_\_\_\_ our spirit and \_\_\_\_\_ our soul. (John 10:10)

**6. We will be \_\_\_\_\_ and remembered by the source of our satisfaction.**

- Source drives \_\_\_\_\_.
- Your actions \_\_\_\_\_ to your source.
- The very core of who you are can be seen by the fruit of your \_\_\_\_\_ and your \_\_\_\_\_ towards others.

*Therefore by their fruits you will know them. (Matthew 7:20)*

**Connecting to the Right Source**

- A great marriage flows from a \_\_\_\_\_ heart.

*I am the true vine (John 15:1).*

- As a believer, you have been \_\_\_\_\_ to the Life to \_\_\_\_\_ life.
- The satisfaction you \_\_\_\_\_ from your connection with the Lord will greatly determine the fruit of your response to your spouse.
- When knowing God and allowing His life to flow through your life become your number one priority, your marriage will \_\_\_\_\_.

**A \_\_\_\_\_ relationship with God is the right foundation for a vibrant, maturing, impactful, and satisfying marriage.**

### Marriage Catalyst Activity

Think through the pursuits of your life as they relate to finding satisfaction. We're talking about the things you placed great effort in trying to obtain simply because you felt it would make you happy. These pursuits may have been relational, material, financial, or something totally different. If you were successful in realizing them, how long did your personal fulfillment last? What would you say was lost, either during your pursuit or when you finally conquered your objectives? Was there an unexpected outcome that created difficulties for you or others?

Pursuit	Length of Personal Fulfillment	Lost or Unexpected Outcomes
1)		
2)		
3)		
4)		
5)		

## The BIG Application

What are the top three applications gained from this session for you to immediately put into practice within your marriage?

**Application #1:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

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**Application #3:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

## Application Questions

Separate ample time as a couple to answer each of the following application questions. Use these questions to increase your communication and grow your understanding of one another.

1. How can a commitment to our Key Scripture, John 15:4-5, help reignite the dream for your marriage? What problems can be avoided by embracing this truth?
2. Reflect back on our BIG Idea, "A great marriage flows from a satisfied heart." How did your thinking change from the time you first read this statement and the time it took for you to complete this session?
3. When reading the statement, "The pursuit of personal satisfaction is not evil but the choice made can lead to evil" what hazards came to mind as it relates to your marriage?
4. Bud reminds us that "Choosing our source of satisfaction is our most significant choice." What are the implications of choosing the wrong source? What about the right source?
5. Consider this next statement, "The quality of your source of satisfaction will determine the quality of your life and love." What you pursue the most has significant implications for your marriage. Share your thoughts.
6. "Jesus offered Himself as our source of permanent satisfaction and abundant life." Since Jesus paid the full penalty for your sins by dying on the cross, what words would you use to express your gratefulness?
7. "God extends spiritual satisfaction and eternal life exclusively, through His Son, Jesus." What are the implications of not finding our source of satisfaction in the person of Jesus Christ? Why do you believe some people struggle with the idea of only one source of permanent spiritual satisfaction and eternal life?
8. You have been connected to the Life to deliver life. If you're married, let God's light through the influence of your family. Write down four families or individuals in your circle of influence and make plans this week to reach out to them with God's love.
9. How can knowing God more and allowing His life to flow through your life grow your marriage?
10. If a vibrant, growing, impactful and satisfying marriage is the direct result of growing in your love for God, what new habits should you begin?

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper. (Psalm 1:1-3)*

# **Session 4**

## **Love and Respect**

**Connecting to the core of your spouse's  
greatest need**



**Key Scripture:** However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:33, NIV)

**BIG Idea:** To connect and grow, the \_\_\_\_\_ of the husband must be to \_\_\_\_\_ his wife and the wife to \_\_\_\_\_ her husband.

**Carlos and Patricia**

## Love and Respect

Wives, you must be \_\_\_\_\_ about respecting your husband.

*Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 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. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything . . . and the wife must respect her husband.  
(Ephesians 5:22-24, 33, NIV)*

**Wives, your number one responsibility to your husband is to \_\_\_\_\_ him.**

## Honor, Value, and Recognize

- In a marriage, the idea has to do with placing great honor and value on your husband's \_\_\_\_\_ as your husband.
- You must deliberately recognize his role and seek ways to \_\_\_\_\_ him fulfill his responsibilities within your family.
- He \_\_\_\_\_ you to value him and give him his proper place both within the home and outside the home.

## Love

- If you're a husband, you must be \_\_\_\_\_ about loving your wife.
- You need to understand what it means to love, to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ that love, and be committed to loving your wife until death separates you.
- Ephesians 5:22-33

**Husbands, your number one responsibility to your wife is to \_\_\_\_\_ her.**

## Sacrifice, Holiness, and Affection

**Loving your wife involves making voluntary, deliberate, and \_\_\_\_\_ sacrifices to support, encourage, and strengthen her as a person.**

- It means that you intentionally place her needs \_\_\_\_\_.
- It means you're doing things for your wife that \_\_\_\_\_ you something.
- Every sacrifice made for your wife is an \_\_\_\_\_ in your marriage.

**The second component in our study is the reality of our relational \_\_\_\_\_ before the Lord.**

- Holiness has to do with separating ourselves from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ in the Lord Jesus.
- As husbands, we must \_\_\_\_\_ a life of holiness.
- The husband has the unique responsibility to help wash away his wife's broken past and fully \_\_\_\_\_ her relational vitality.

*Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.  
(James 5:16-17)*

- Love always chooses to \_\_\_\_\_.

## The Cycle of Destruction

**The Cycle of Destruction begins when either love or respect \_\_\_\_\_ through your marriage.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

- This is when one or both parties experience \_\_\_\_\_ with regards to their most important need.
- When the wife feels \_\_\_\_\_ in the love department and the husband in the respect department, we're in BIG trouble.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

- When your most important need as a couple is neglected, pain \_\_\_\_\_.
- It becomes very difficult to \_\_\_\_\_ this pain to your spouse.

**3. \_\_\_\_\_ Neglect**

- Internal neglect is when we begin to \_\_\_\_\_ that all of our negative feelings toward our spouse are on target.
- We start thinking of ways to \_\_\_\_\_ our spouse for their behavior.
- So what often evolves is a \_\_\_\_\_ plan that lacks grace, mercy, and kindness.

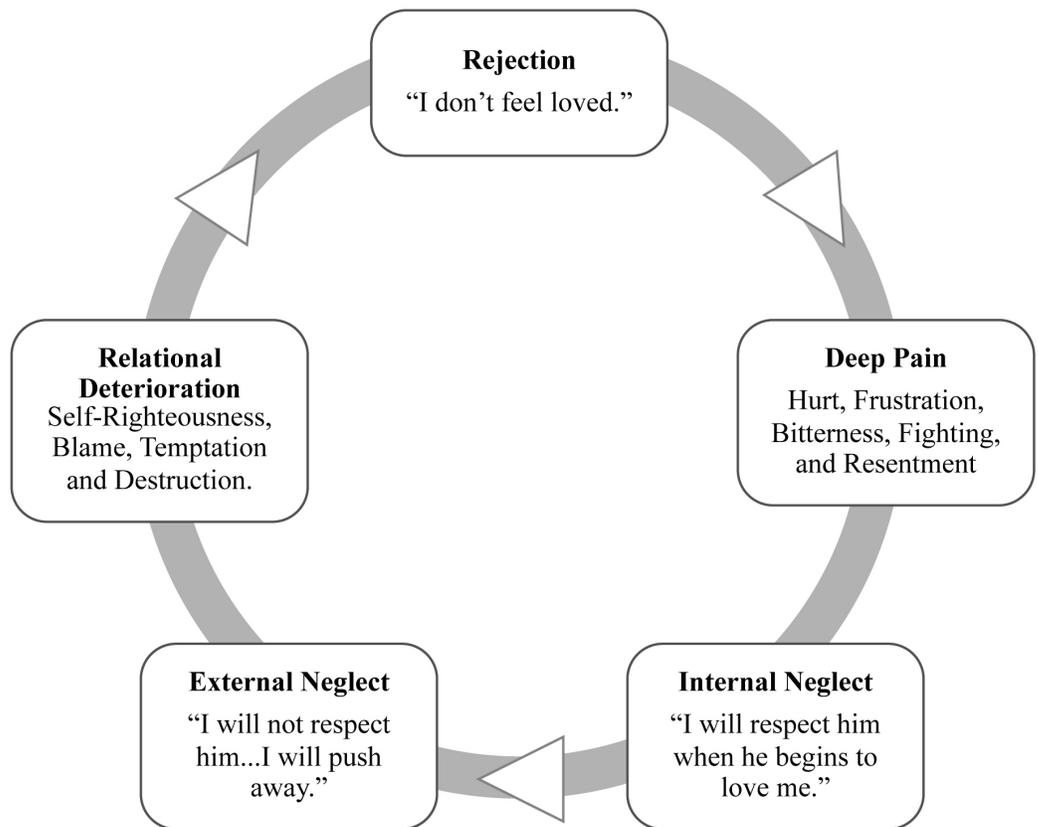
**4. \_\_\_\_\_ Neglect**

- Over time, and usually sooner rather than later, unresolved hurts will lead a spouse to manifest their pain \_\_\_\_\_.
- Husbands often begin to treat their wives in a \_\_\_\_\_ manner.
- The wife begins to replace submission with \_\_\_\_\_ and honor with \_\_\_\_\_.

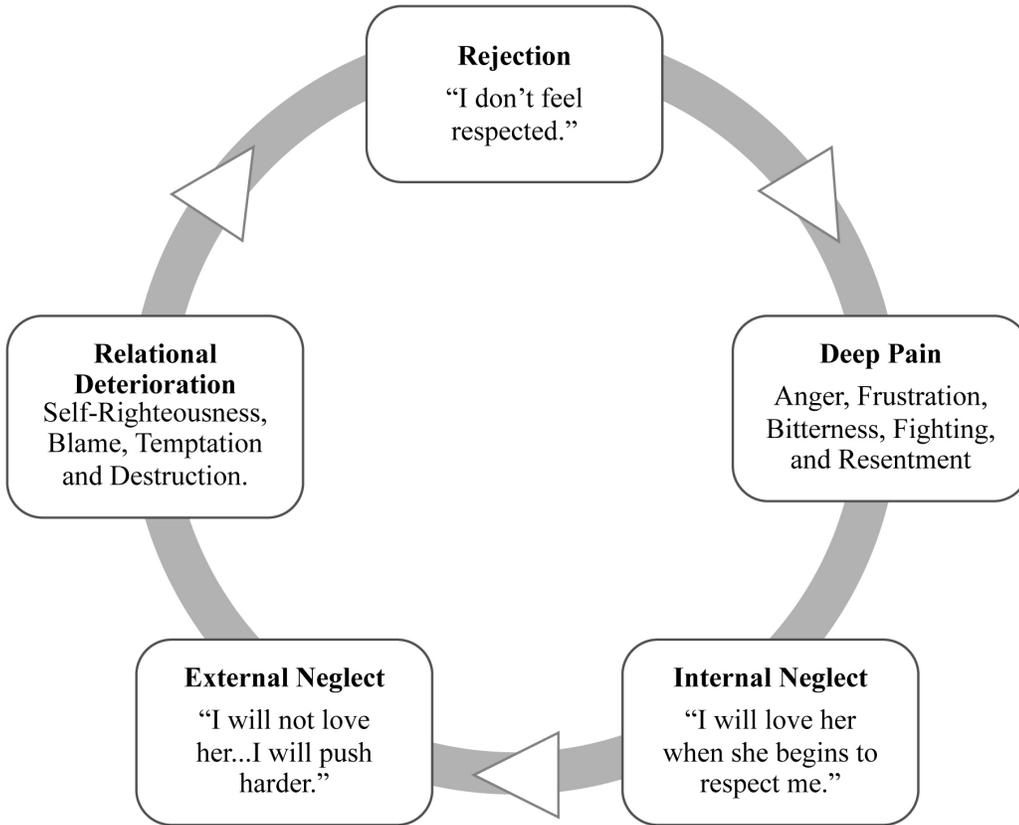
**5. Personal and Relational \_\_\_\_\_**

- When a marriage stops growing, it can only \_\_\_\_\_.
- When a marriage is weak, it paves the way for \_\_\_\_\_ to enter and destroy the relationship.
- The Cycle of Destruction is satisfied when the marriage is \_\_\_\_\_.

**Cycle of Destruction - Wives**



**Cycle of Destruction - Husbands**



**The Cycle of Growth**

**The Cycle of Growth begins when love and respect flows \_\_\_\_\_ through your marriage.**

**1. \_\_\_\_\_ Responsibility**

- This is when one or both parties take the \_\_\_\_\_ in fulfilling their spouse’s greatest need.
- Complete \_\_\_\_\_ of their responsibility to their spouse is settled once and for all within their mind and heart.
- Wives: “Even if I don’t feel loved . . . I will \_\_\_\_\_ him.”
- Husbands: “Even if I don’t feel respected . . . I will \_\_\_\_\_ her.”

**2. \_\_\_\_\_ Initiative**

- We begin to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ for opportunities to shower them with our very best.
- We take \_\_\_\_\_ and deliberate action to fulfill our responsibilities in ways that are not only practical, but also meaningful.

**3. \_\_\_\_\_ Determination**

- Wives: "I will not push away, but draw \_\_\_\_\_ to him."
- Husbands: "I will not push harder; instead I will show more \_\_\_\_\_ to her."
- \_\_\_\_\_ to give up on your marriage.
- Refuse to stop fighting for your \_\_\_\_\_.

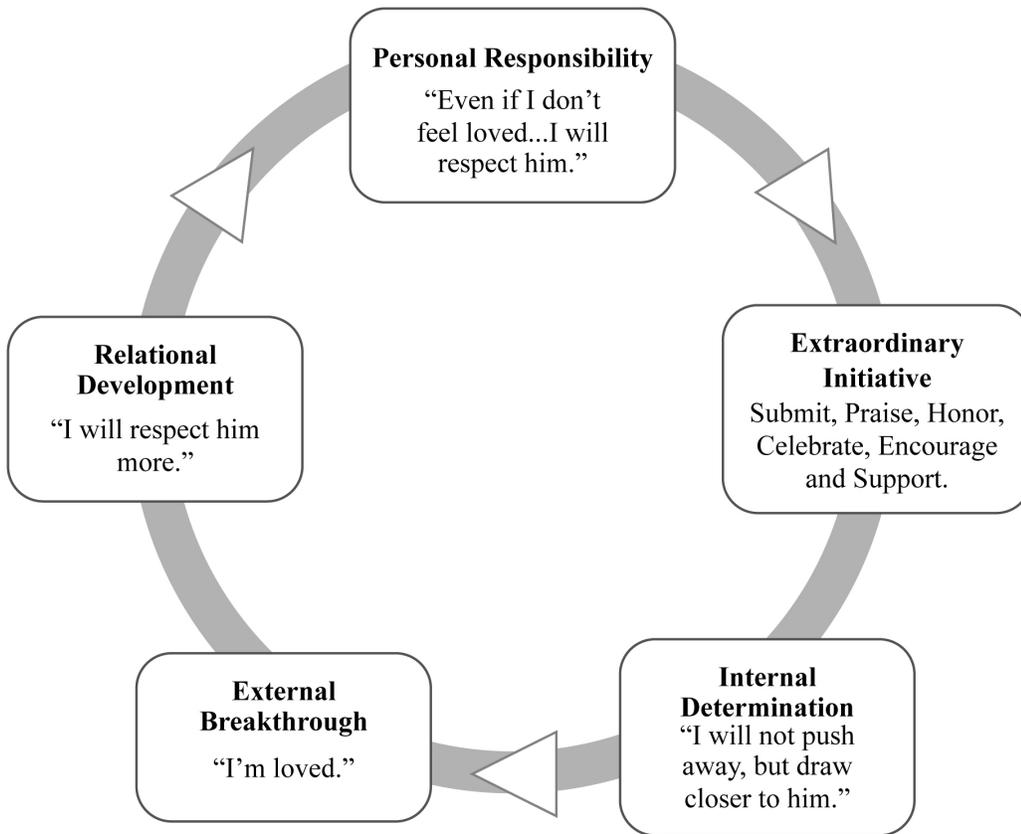
**4. \_\_\_\_\_ Breakthrough**

- This relational intersection is often marked by humility, unconditional \_\_\_\_\_, and acceptance.
- When both husband and wife fulfill their primary responsibility and accept what they are due from one another, they will experience an external breakthrough that will serve as a \_\_\_\_\_ within their relationship.

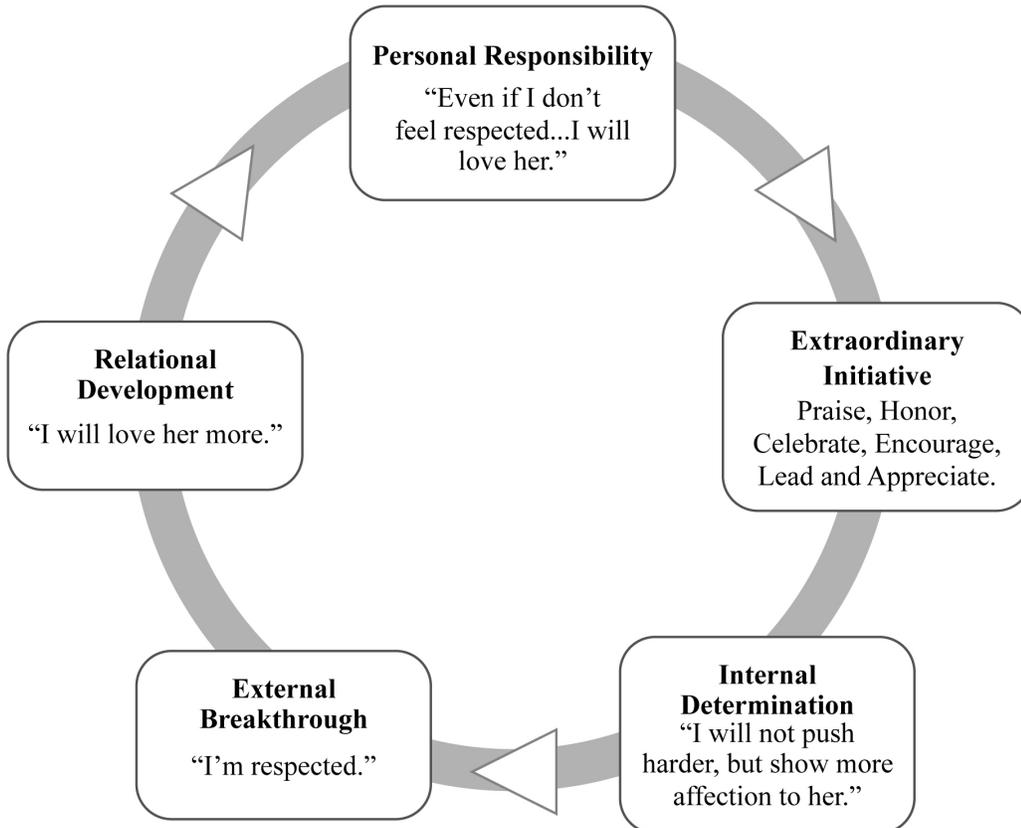
**5. Relational \_\_\_\_\_**

- The \_\_\_\_\_ for the future has been renewed and the hope for your destination is now alive and well.
- The focus of this phase is \_\_\_\_\_ edification and submission to one another.
- One word summarizes this marvelous phase—\_\_\_\_\_.

**Cycle of Growth - Wives**



**Cycle of Growth - Husbands**



## Marriage Catalyst Activity

This next activity is for your spouse to complete. Husbands have certain beliefs as to how their spouse feels loved and appreciated. Many times these beliefs are incorrect. Likewise, wives can make the same mistake when it comes to showing honor and respect towards their husband.

This next activity can help clarify what each of these mean to one another and help improve communication while sharpening your focus. Switch workbooks with your spouse and each of you “fill-in-the-blanks” as it relates to the area of your greatest need.

### Showing Love and Respect

Husbands: “I feel respected when you...”

Wives: “I feel loved when you...”

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

### Proactively Stopping Pain

Husbands / Wives: “I feel anger, frustration, bitterness, internal fighting and resentment when you...”

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

## The BIG Application

What are the top three applications gained from this session for you to immediately put into practice within your marriage?

**Application #1:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #2:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #3:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

## Application Questions

Separate ample time as a couple to answer each of the following application questions. Use these questions to increase your communication and grow your understanding of one another.

1. How does a commitment to our Key Scripture, Ephesians 5:33, help reignite the dream for your marriage? What problems can be avoided by embracing this truth?
2. Reflect back on our BIG Idea, "To connect and grow, the priority of the husband must be to love his wife and the wife to respect her husband." What happens when these two are not the priority?
3. When reading the statement, "The pursuit of personal satisfaction is not evil but the choice made can lead to evil" what hazards came to mind as it relates to your marriage?
4. Wives, what action points come to mind as you read through the section, "Honor, Value, and Recognize"? What practical things can you start doing right away to make a difference within your marriage as it relates to this section?
5. Husbands, what action points come to mind as you read through the section, "Sacrifice, Holiness, and Affection"? What practical things can you start doing right away to make a difference within your marriage as it relates to this section?
6. Read and think through 1 John 4:18. Are you holding anything over your spouse that places them in a position of fear and or anxiety? Is your lack of communication bringing confusion and turmoil to your family? Can you list the top three things your spouse fears the most and talk through each one of them in a safe environment?
7. How did King Solomon, the Lover, demonstrate love to his wife, the Shulamite woman? How did he praise his young Shulamite bride? What comparisons did he make about her beauty? What do these comparisons teach you appreciate about his approach?
8. How do you think the Shulamite woman felt after realizing her husband was gone? How did she demonstrate deep respect to her husband, King Solomon?
9. How did she protect her husband from public embarrassment?
10. Read and think through James 5:16-17. Is there any hidden sin in your life? Has your attitude been shaped by your resistance to coming clean with your spouse? Sin always affects your marriage. Have you been asking God to change your heart for your marriage to grow?

*"My lover has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to browse in the gardens and to gather lilies. I am my lover's and my lover is mine; he browses among the lilies." (Song of Solomon 6:1-3)*

# **Session 5**

## **Lost in Translation**

**How to Communicate with Your Spouse**



**Key Scripture:** 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. (Ephesians 4:29, NIV)

**BIG Idea:** Your communication \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ of your marriage.

\_\_\_\_\_ communication is the mark of a growing marriage.

- When communication is healthy, the marriage has \_\_\_\_\_.
- Learning to communicate \_\_\_\_\_ with your spouse is so important to building a strong marriage.

**Richard and Monica**

### Reduce, Reflect, Research, and Respond

*In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise.  
(Proverbs 10:19)*

**There is great wisdom in \_\_\_\_\_ your words.**

- There is a time to speak and a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
- Before you respond, take a few minutes and check your \_\_\_\_\_.
- The heart of the righteous studies how to answer (Proverbs 15:28).
- Make studying your spouse and getting to know them a \_\_\_\_\_ adventure.
- \_\_\_\_\_ in your understanding of their spiritual, physical, emotional, and relational needs.

### Rethink, Restrain, and Restore

*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, NIV)*

**Rethinking \_\_\_\_\_ you say and \_\_\_\_\_ things are said to your spouse can drastically improve your communication.**

- God's Word can completely \_\_\_\_\_ your communication.
- You have the power to control how you \_\_\_\_\_ to your spouse.
- Give God an opportunity to \_\_\_\_\_ every conversation with your spouse.

## The Power of Choosing the Right Words

**Over time, your words can help your spouse \_\_\_\_\_ from past relational hurts and life's most painful experiences.**

*A man has joy by the answer of his mouth, and a word spoken in due season, how good it is! (Proverbs 15:23)*

- The words spoken to your spouse were designed to produce \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ your spouse through life-giving words.

## Connect Intentionally

**Your connections determine \_\_\_\_\_ you build and \_\_\_\_\_ you build.**

- Sustaining a regular flow of good communication with God, others, and your spouse is \_\_\_\_\_ to the life of your marriage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ the Rules of Engagement will improve the relational connectivity with your spouse.

## Marriage Catalyst Activity

To build a great marriage, we need to filter our thoughts in light of God's Word. For this next activity, read the following scripture several times and circle the key characteristics of those things that should occupy your thought life. Afterwards, write down a few practical examples of each of these qualities on the spaces provided.

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. (Philippians 4:8, NIV)*

### Creating an Environment for Growth

#### Key Characteristic

#### Practical Examples

*Whatever is true . . .*

*Whatever is noble (honorable) . . .*

*Whatever is right (just) . . .*

*Whatever is pure (holy) . . .*

*Whatever is lovely . . .*

*Whatever is admirable (a good report, commendable) . . .*

*Anything excellent (virtuous) . . .*

*Anything praiseworthy . . .*

## Marriage Catalyst Activity

Consider the contrast between good communication and poor communication within your marriage. When you practice poor communication by leaving your spouse in the dark and not being clear, what are the potential negative consequences? Conversely, when you practice good communication skills and maintain an environment of openness, trust and clarity, what are the potential benefits to your spouse in the areas listed below?

### The Communication Impact

<b>Areas Affected</b>	<b>Negative Consequences</b>	<b>Positive Benefits</b>
<i>Trust</i>		
<i>Confidence</i>		
<i>Plans</i>		
<i>Laughter</i>		
<i>Attitude</i>		
<i>Problems</i>		
<i>Stress</i>		
<i>Sex</i>		
<i>Finances</i>		
<i>Children</i>		
<i>Environment</i>		
<i>Intimacy</i>		
<i>Work</i>		

## The BIG Application

What are the top three applications gained from this session for you to immediately put into practice within your marriage?

**Application #1:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #2:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #3:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

## Application Questions

Separate ample time as a couple to answer each of the following application questions. Use these questions to increase your communication and grow your understanding of one another.

1. How can a commitment to our Key Scripture, Ephesians 4:29, help reignite the dream for your marriage? What problems can be avoided by embracing this truth?
2. Reflect back on our BIG Idea, "Your communication shapes the environment of your marriage." Was there a change in your thinking from the time you first read this statement and the time it took for you to complete this session? If so, how? What happens when these two are not the priority?
3. When reading the statement, "Great marriages are built on clarity rather than obscurity" how does that phrase help you understand the importance of establishing and maintaining good communication practices throughout the course of your marriage?
4. Why is this next statement true, "Poor communication can't produce a growing marriage"? How have you seen this reality within your own marriage?
5. Consider the words found in Philippians 4:8. Take a few minutes and discuss the importance of focusing our mind on the right thoughts. Afterwards, make a commitment to filter your thoughts in light of God's Word, the truth.
6. As we shared our introductory story about Richard and Monica, did you see any parallels within your own marriage? If so, what was painfully obvious and what do you need to start working on right away?
7. As we reviewed earlier, what's the danger with going overboard in your communication and wanting to unload everything on your spouse?
8. Consider the words you've delivered to your spouse over the last few days. Would you say the delivery was characterized by life and goodness or death and despair? As think through your personal communication delivery, what have you learned about the impact received from your spouse?
9. When we say, "Your connections determine what you build and how you build" what does that mean? How do your connections relate to the development of your marriage? How do they specifically create the right kind of environment where relational growth can thrive?
10. Share the three most important Rules of Engagement for you to work on and why you selected each of these?

*The tongue has the power of life and death, and those who love it will eat its fruit.  
(Proverbs 18:21, NIV)*

# **Session 6**

## **Making Decisions Together**

**Experiencing the Art of Synchronized  
Decision Making**



**Key Scripture:** 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, NIV)

**BIG Idea: Couples who make decisions together \_\_\_\_\_ together.**

- The media and other forces are working hard to portray a lifestyle of \_\_\_\_\_ thinking, even in marriage.

*A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment (Proverbs 18:1).*

**Henry and Michelle**

**Marriage Catalyst Principles**

- Making decisions together is a \_\_\_\_\_ to a growing marriage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ an environment where love and unity drive your decision-making.

**1. \_\_\_\_\_**

- Surrendering involves giving up what I want to do for what \_\_\_\_\_ wants for my life and for my marriage.

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments. His praise endures forever. (Psalm 111:10)*

- Our new life in the Lord should be characterized by \_\_\_\_\_ in His infinite ability to provide for our needs and direct our steps.

*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

**2. \_\_\_\_\_**

- Connecting involves understanding \_\_\_\_\_ God has been working in your marriage and making decisions based upon \_\_\_\_\_. He is leading you next.

*If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. (James 1:5, NIV)*

*Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:6, NIV)*

- Consider how your decisions will impact people for \_\_\_\_\_.
- Seek God's wisdom along with your spouse until His next move for your life becomes \_\_\_\_\_.

*Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16, NIV)*

### 3. \_\_\_\_\_

- Examining involves \_\_\_\_\_ every decision under the absolute authority of God's Word.

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

- God's Word shows us the \_\_\_\_\_ we should go and provides practical instruction to clarify the path before us.

### 4. \_\_\_\_\_

- It's \_\_\_\_ to seek the advice of others before making key decisions.

*Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety. (Proverbs 11:14)*

- Consulting involves proactively collecting \_\_\_\_\_ advice to help shape the direction for your decisions.

*A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel. (Proverbs 1:5)*

### 5. \_\_\_\_\_

- After surrendering the decision to the Lord, seeking His wisdom, examining His Word, and consulting with others, the time to make a \_\_\_\_\_ decision has arrived.
- Agreeing involves taking \_\_\_\_\_ action after being convinced of what God wants you to do next.

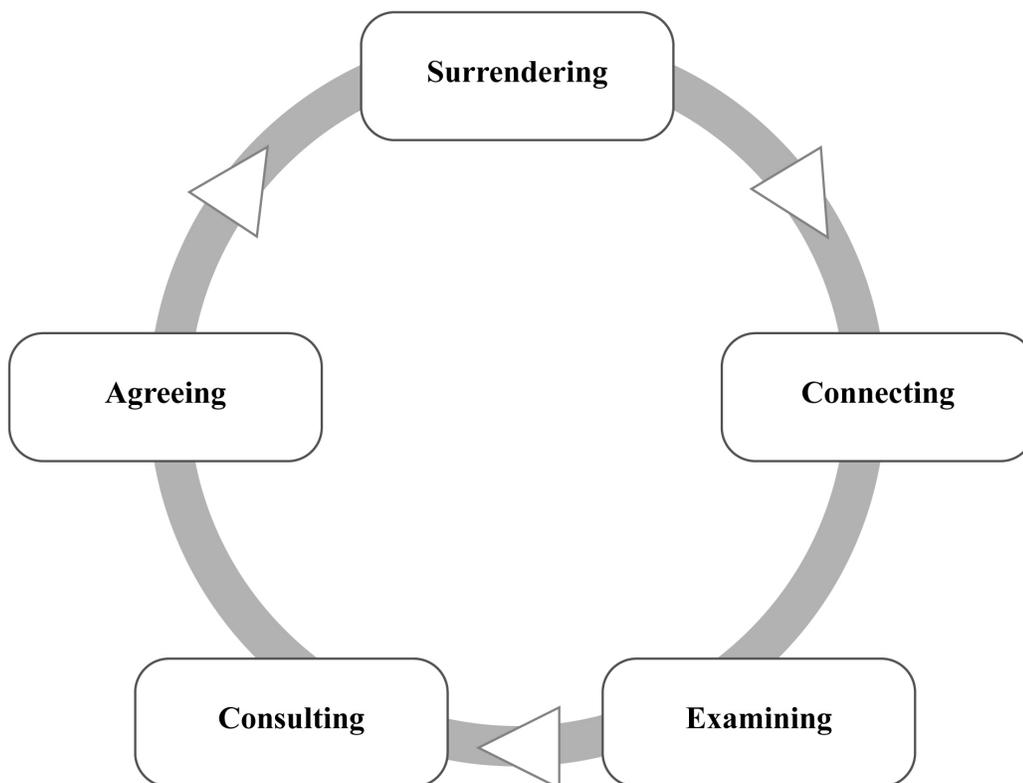
*Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. (Romans 14:19, NIV)*

In our context, agreeing means to take into consideration all of the previous findings discovered along the way. You consult with your spouse and prayerfully connect the dots of these realities. Finally, you arrive at a decision where you can see God's hand working and your relationship growing as a result of taking a step of faith and joining Him on the journey.

The result will be an environment filled with peace rather than anxiety, hope rather than despair. Once again, it won't be easy, but it will be fruitful as you and your spouse learn to depend completely on God for His gentle instruction and direction for your marriage. Once the decision is secured privately it should be announced publicly in a united manner. This display of unity is important to maintain focus, discourage opponents and follow through completely with your decisions.

When God wants you and your spouse to make an important decision, trust Him enough to lead you through the entire process. You can trust the Lord to lead you to the right decision. Don't be impatient and take shortcuts along the way. Shortcuts always cost you more in the long run. Let the process work.

Allow God to set the course for your today and for your tomorrow. You will discover more about yourself, your spouse, and how God works in every situation when you yield to His will in every decision. This process will simultaneously grow your marriage and grow your relationship with the Lord. Once you and your spouse are fully convinced as to what He wants you to do, take action, and move forward with all of your strength.



## Marriage Catalyst Activity

Think through the last three key decisions made during the last three months of your marriage. What was the decision? It may have been a large purchase, a commitment to attend an event, or how to handle a difficult problem. Did you make the decision independent of your spouse or did you get them involved in the process? How did the decision affect your relationship? Did it help build trust and confidence or did it serve as a relational wedge and push you further apart? Take a few minutes and fill-in-the-blanks accordingly.

### Examining My Decision-Making

Key Decision	Independent or Together	Relational Impact
1.		
2.		
3.		

Now imagine for just a few minutes that you could go back in time and change your approach by applying the principles learned throughout this session. What would you say or do differently? How would your decision-making process change to better understand and appreciate your spouse's contribution to the matter? Finally, what might happen to your relationship if this synchronized approach begins to weave itself into the daily fabric of your marriage? What do you believe are some of the benefits yet to be discovered by applying these principles right away?

### A Second Chance... A Different Approach

Key Decision	If given a second chance, this is the way I would approach the situation.	Relational Impact
1.		
2.		
3.		

## The BIG Application

What are the top three applications gained from this session for you to immediately put into practice within your marriage?

**Application #1:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

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How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #3:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

## Application Questions

Separate ample time as a couple to answer each of the following application questions. Use these questions to increase your communication and grow your understanding of one another.

1. How can a commitment to our Key Scripture, Genesis 2:24, help reignite the dream for your marriage? What problems can be avoided by embracing this truth?
2. Reflect back on our BIG Idea, "Couples who make decisions together stay together." Was there a change in your thinking from the time you first read this statement and the time it took for you to complete this session? If so, how? What happens when these two are not the priority?
3. When reading the statement, "You and your spouse were designed to talk through life's challenges and make decisions together, as one family unit" how does that phrase help you understand the importance of making decisions together to grow your marriage?
4. On a scale from 1-10, with ten being the highest possible score, how would you rate your level of independence before you got married? What challenges did you face specifically in this area?
5. As we reviewed the first model for making decisions together as a couple, what insights did you personally gain as a result of this study? What would you say are the two most important factors in this model and why?
6. The metaphors helping to explain the need to make decisions together with your spouse are endless. What illustration helps remind you of this important principle, even if not previously mentioned throughout our study?
7. What would you say has been your biggest error when making decisions together? What negative and unexpected result surprised you the most?
8. What would you say is the most powerful benefit of making decisions together? What would come in second and third place in your opinion?
9. As you read through the verses during the Marriage Catalyst Activity, which of these scriptures really spoke to your present reality? What changes were revealed during these exercises that need immediate attention?
10. Why is it so important to give honor and preference to your spouse when making decisions together? How exactly do you see this playing out in your marriage? What does this mean to your strong opinions and unbending desires?

*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another. (Romans 12:10)*

# **Session 7**

## **Reigniting Your Sex Life**

**Creating an Environment for Extraordinary  
Intimacy**



**Key Scripture:** Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. (1 Corinthians 7:2-3)

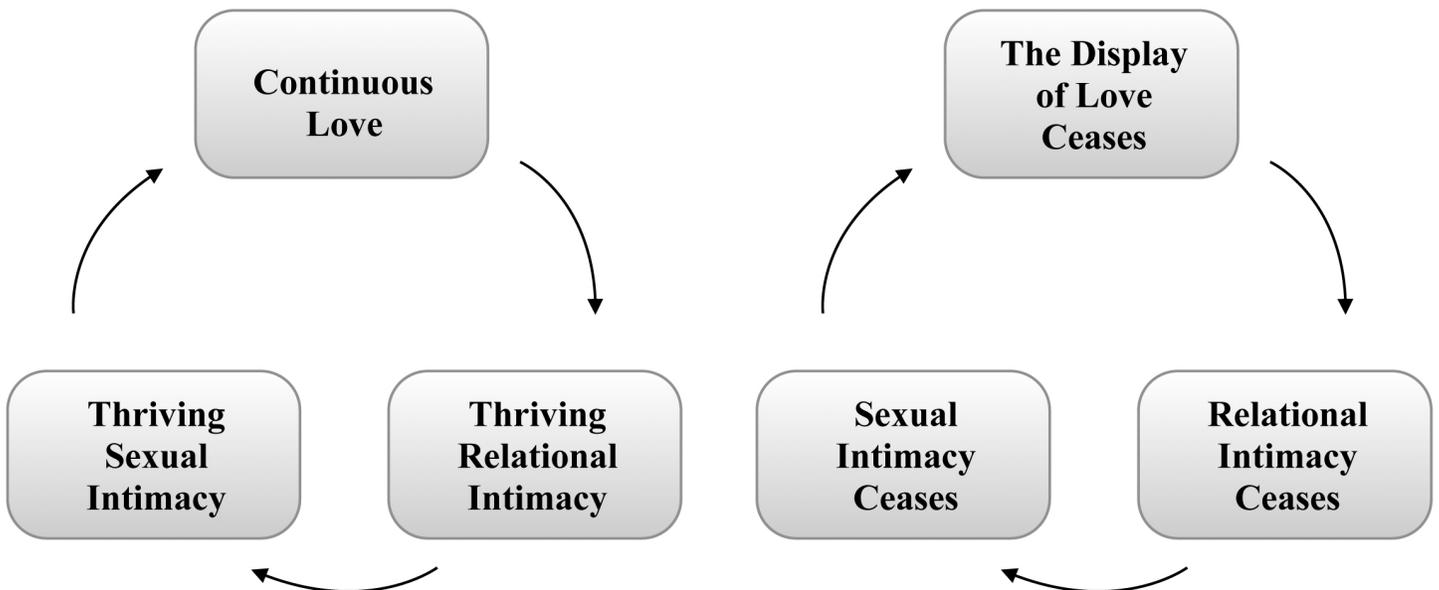
**BIG Idea:** \_\_\_\_\_ love produces \_\_\_\_\_ intimacy.

- “For a marriage to \_\_\_\_\_, love must be continuous.” Bud McCord
- When love is continuous, \_\_\_\_\_ is displaced.
- Creating an environment for extraordinary intimacy is a \_\_\_\_\_, not an event.

*Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. (Proverbs 3:3, NIV)*

- The \_\_\_\_\_ levels of sexual satisfaction are designed to be experienced with your spouse.
- When the display of love to your spouse is \_\_\_\_\_, relational and sexual intimacy has a unique opportunity to flourish.

**James and Linda**



## Marriage Catalyst Principles

**Relational intimacy \_\_\_\_\_ sexual intimacy.**

### 1. \_\_\_\_\_ Words

*Gracious words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the body. (Proverbs 16:24)*

**Pleasant words, those soothing to your mate's soul, provide the \_\_\_\_\_ to create an environment for extraordinary intimacy.**

Let your words continually deliver encouragement and \_\_\_\_\_ to your spouse.

- Affirm your loving \_\_\_\_\_ both privately and publicly.
- What you say and how you say it is very \_\_\_\_\_.
- Your words have a \_\_\_\_\_ effect when seeking to create an environment for extraordinary intimacy.
- Your words \_\_\_\_\_ flow from your heart.

*For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks. (Matthew 12:34, NIV)*

### **Pleasant Words in Action (Song of Solomon 4:1-5)**

- Your words before, during and after sexual intimacy can significantly affect the \_\_\_\_\_ of your spouse.
- When intimacy is weaved throughout \_\_\_\_\_ aspect of your relationship, sexual intimacy can flourish.

### **Relational Nutrients**

- Think of the words you choose to use each day as relational nutrients being poured \_\_\_\_\_ your spouse.
- Accept personal \_\_\_\_\_ for your thoughts, attitudes, and the words you communicate to your spouse.

*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. (James 5:16)*

### 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Romance

Planned romance doesn't necessarily mean a large financial expense, but it does require research, careful planning, and attention to \_\_\_\_\_.

**For your marriage to flourish, you have to \_\_\_\_\_ separate time for romance.**

- Think \_\_\_\_\_ and days, not seconds and minutes when it comes to romance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ all distractions.
- Find reliable \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ and make sure it stays locked.
- Turn \_\_\_\_\_ all phones and electronic devices.
- \_\_\_\_\_ the bedroom.
- Play relaxing love \_\_\_\_\_.

**Make \_\_\_\_\_ time to satisfy your spouse's need for sexual intimacy.**

*Until the daybreaks and the shadows flee, I will go to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of incense. All beautiful you are, my darling; there is no flaw in you.  
(Song of Solomon 4:6-7)*

### 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Affection

*Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. (1 Corinthians 7:1-3)*

**The first part of shared affection involves providing continuous, \_\_\_\_\_ satisfaction for one another's sexual needs.**

- You were designed to \_\_\_\_\_ satisfy your spouse's need for sexual intimacy.
- Be \_\_\_\_\_ in understanding your spouse's unique sexual desires.

*I have come into my garden, my sister, my bride; I have gathered my myrrh with my spice. I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey; I have drunk my wine and my milk. Friends Eat, O friends, and drink; drink your fill, O lovers.  
(Song of Solomon 5:1)*

- Ask your spouse \_\_\_\_\_ how you can create the right environment for them to express themselves sexually without reservations.
- Your goal in creating an environment for extraordinary intimacy is to unconditionally and unreservedly \_\_\_\_\_ your spouse's sexual needs.

**The second part of shared affection involves voluntary \_\_\_\_\_.**

- Prefer the desires of your \_\_\_\_\_ ahead of your own.
- \_\_\_\_\_ their unique emotional, conversational and physical needs.
- Find \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ ways to help your spouse reach their most pleasurable sexual experience.
- Song of Solomon 4:8-16

**The third part of shared affection involves \_\_\_\_\_ responsibility.**

- Don't \_\_\_\_\_ one another sexually.

*The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. (1 Corinthians 7:4-5)*

- Your body belongs to your \_\_\_\_\_ and their body belongs to \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ give your body over to your spouse and enjoy one another sexually.
- \_\_\_\_\_ reject sexual intimacy to create weapons for manipulation.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ exception for neglect is focused prayer and fasting.
  - ❖ There has to be \_\_\_\_\_ consent—both have to be in full agreement.
  - ❖ There needs to be agreement on the \_\_\_\_\_ and on the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ❖ Sexual neglect needs to be \_\_\_\_\_-term.
  - ❖ Sexual intimacy must follow immediately to \_\_\_\_\_ against temptation.

**4. Personal \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ is characteristic of personal holiness.

*Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. (Proverbs 3:3, NIV)*

- Faithfulness \_\_\_\_\_ relational and sexual intimacy.

- Personal holiness means separating yourself from the influences of this world, the desires of your flesh and the clever schemes of the devil to completely focus your life on \_\_\_\_\_.
- The love you have for your spouse is designed to grow, endure and overcome \_\_\_\_\_ challenge and test.
- A life focused on the Lord, grows you \_\_\_\_\_.
- A marriage focused on growing spiritually grows \_\_\_\_\_.
- Your spiritual life \_\_\_\_\_ impacts your married life.
- Since you are God's temple, maintaining sexual purity is absolutely \_\_\_\_\_. (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

*Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous. (Hebrews 13:4)*

- \_\_\_\_\_ the exclusivity of your relationship and \_\_\_\_\_ your spouse. (Proverbs 5:15-20)

## Marriage Catalyst Activity

Great marriages build great memories and great memories require extensive creativity and planning. Think through some of the memories you've built already. When you think of these times spent together as a couple, what stands out the most? What did each one do for your relationship? How did they bring you closer as a couple and improve your communication? What did they solidify? And how did each one deepen the love you have for your spouse?

### Building Great Memories

List some romantic experiences shared with your spouse as a result of good planning. What did they do for your relationship? How did they strengthen your marriage?

1.

2.

3.

4.

## Marriage Catalyst Activity

Think through some of the most powerful negative influences you face in your pursuit of personal holiness. What struggles continue returning for another battle? Where is the temptation to compromise personal holiness the greatest? Understanding the importance of separating yourself for God's purposes, why not take a few minutes and write down your struggles and separate some time to share these with your spouse? Talk through these struggles and pray for one another. Remember, your spiritual life always impacts your married life.

### Personal Holiness

#### Worldly Influences Desires of the Flesh Schemes of the Devil

Unwholesome places  
where my mind drifts:

Wrong activities my friends  
want me to get involved with:

Things that arouse unholy desires:

Destructive habits:

Secret lusts:

Shows or programs I watch  
or listen to:

Lies I'm living out, covering up  
and or refusing to change:

Unforgiveness or bitterness I'm  
Holding towards others:

Activities that are negating  
my quiet time with God:

#### How can I separate more from these negative influences?

## The BIG Application

What are the top three applications gained from this session for you to immediately put into practice within your marriage?

**Application #1:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #2:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #3:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

## Application Questions

Separate ample time as a couple to answer each of the following application questions. Use these questions to increase your communication and grow your understanding of one another.

1. How can a commitment to our Key Scripture, 1 Corinthians 7:2-3, help reignite the dream for your marriage? What problems can be avoided by embracing this truth?
2. Reflect back on our BIG Idea, "Continuous love produces thriving intimacy." Was there a change in your thinking from the time you first read this statement and the time it took for you to complete this session? If so, how? What happens when these two are not the priority?
3. When reading the statement, "When the display of love to your spouse is uninterrupted, relational and sexual intimacy has a unique opportunity to flourish" how does that phrase help you understand the importance of blending relational intimacy and sexual intimacy rather than treating them as unrelated activities?
4. On a scale from 1-10, with ten being the highest possible score, how would you rate your relational intimacy with your spouse before you got married? What did you do to get to know them better?
5. After participating in this session, what alarming trends have you found that have the potential to derail both relational intimacy and sexual intimacy within your marriage?
6. Reflect back on the section titled "Pleasant Words" for a few minutes. What would you say are the two most important adjustments you need to make and why?
7. Think through the phrase, "When love is continuous, selfishness is displaced" for the next few minutes. Describe what this would look like in practical, everyday life.
8. Reflect back on the section titled "Planned Romance." What insights did you personally gain as a result of this section? What would you say are the two most important adjustments you need to create an environment where extraordinary intimacy can thrive?
9. Reflect back on the section titled "Shared Affection." What insights did you personally gain as a result of this section? What did you discover about your spouse? What would you say are the two most important adjustments you need to make and why?
10. Reflect back on the section titled "Personal Holiness." What insights did you personally gain as a result of this section? What guardrails or moral fences do you need to establish to protect your relationship from destruction?

*Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart. (Proverbs 3:3, NIV)*

# **Session 8**

## **Getting Your House in Order**

**Keys to making financial decisions  
with an eternal perspective**



**Key Scripture:** Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. (1 Corinthians 4:2, ESV)

**BIG Idea:** Prioritizing your financial life with an \_\_\_\_\_ perspective will help you give, save, eliminate debt and spend wisely.

### Joe and Joanne

- The dream of reaching great financial prosperity has the potential to \_\_\_\_\_ the original dream of keeping your marriage together forever.

*Jesus said, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions." (Luke 12:15, NIV)*

- There is a \_\_\_\_\_ between financial disagreements and divorce.

### Marriage Catalyst Principles

- Your greatest financial \_\_\_\_\_ and personal satisfaction comes from managing your finances according to \_\_\_\_\_ Word.
- Your heart \_\_\_\_\_ your treasure.

*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.  
(Matthew 6:19-21, NIV)*

#### 1. Recognize \_\_\_\_\_ as the \_\_\_\_\_ of everything you have.

*The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.  
(Psalm 24:1, NIV)*

- \_\_\_\_\_ provision given to us by God is rooted in His great love, mercy, and unlimited grace.

*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.  
(James 1:17)*

- If God is the owner, I am His \_\_\_\_\_, a faithful steward of His resources.
- A manager is one who has the \_\_\_\_\_ to make sure what needs to get done gets done.
- Maximize every opportunity to \_\_\_\_\_ God's work.
- The Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30)

**2. Honor \_\_\_\_\_ with the \_\_\_\_\_ part of your income.**

- You need to honor God \_\_\_\_\_ honoring anything or anyone else.

*Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine. (Proverbs 3:9-10)*

- Start \_\_\_\_\_ God by giving Him the first 10 percent of your income this week.

*Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, "In what way have we robbed You?" In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. (Malachi 3:8-10)*

- Giving God ten percent of the first part of our income demonstrates \_\_\_\_\_ trust in His ability to provide for our needs.

*But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33)*

- Determine to be \_\_\_\_\_ in your giving as a couple.
- Give from a \_\_\_\_\_ heart.

*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)*

- Give to \_\_\_\_\_ God's work and help those in need.

**3. Make personal \_\_\_\_\_ to increase your \_\_\_\_\_.**

*There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself. (Proverbs 11:24-25)*

- Look for opportunities to make personal \_\_\_\_\_ to allow for greater generosity.
- King David's unbending commitment to advance the Lord's work \_\_\_\_\_ Him to give cheerfully and sacrificially.

*Give and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (Luke 6:38)*

- The greater the sacrifice, the greater the \_\_\_\_\_.

**4. \_\_\_\_\_ others to do God's work globally.**

- Faithful stewardship begins within your \_\_\_\_\_ church.

*And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)*

- Studies have found that for approximately every \_\_\_\_\_ you give to support world missions, one person will come to know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

**Missions Giving and Lives Changed**

<b>Weekly Giving</b>	<b>Lives Changed 1 Year</b>	<b>Lives Changed 20 Years</b>
\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____
\$ _____	\$ _____	\$ _____

- When you enable others to do God's work globally, He will \_\_\_\_\_ take care of all your needs and produce fruit through your obedience.

*And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work... Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness. (2 Corinthians 9:8,10)*

**5. Remember those who have \_\_\_\_\_ and need \_\_\_\_\_.**

*If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered. (Proverbs 21:13, NIV)*

- Your marriage should be marked by a growing \_\_\_\_\_ to help those in need.
- Let mercy, grace and compassion flow freely towards \_\_\_\_\_.

*And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. (Matthew 14:14)*

- Find someone who has a need and take \_\_\_\_\_ to remove their lack.

#### **6. Be \_\_\_\_\_**

*I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:11-13, NIV)*

- Find your satisfaction in the \_\_\_\_\_ and be happy with what He provides.
- More \_\_\_\_\_ ≠ greater satisfaction.
- Your circumstances never change your \_\_\_\_\_.
- God has a \_\_\_\_\_ for every season we experience.
- Great \_\_\_\_\_ ≠ Great Spirituality and Great poverty ≠ Great Spirituality

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight. (Proverbs 3:5-6, NIV)*

#### **7. Develop a written \_\_\_\_\_ to give, save, eliminate debt, and spend while practicing faithfulness, obedience & generosity.**

**I. GIVE** – Your first step towards financial freedom is being \_\_\_\_\_ in giving ten percent of your income to support the ministry of your local church.

**II. SAVE** – Your second step towards financial freedom is establishing a consistent pattern of savings to adequately provide for the \_\_\_\_\_ needs of your family.

*In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil but a foolish man devours all he has. (Proverbs 21:20)*

**III. Eliminate Debt** – Your third step towards financial freedom is making deliberate \_\_\_\_\_ adjustments to get out of ALL \_\_\_\_\_ as fast as possible.

- Develop an \_\_\_\_\_ plan with your spouse to eliminate debt with high interest rates first.

*The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower are servant to the lender.  
(Proverbs 22:7)*

**IV. SPEND** – Your fourth step towards financial freedom involves \_\_\_\_\_ a written plan to give, save, eliminate debt, and spend.

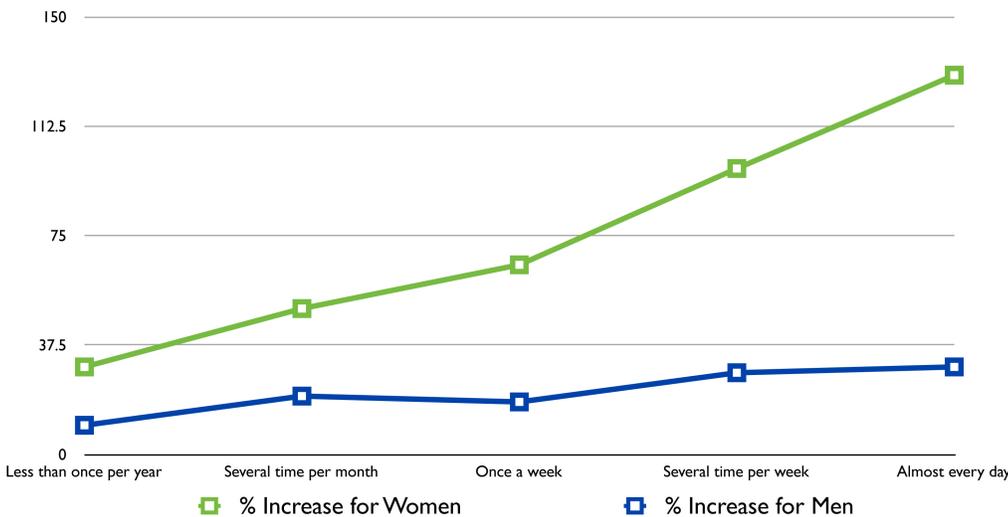
- You have to \_\_\_\_\_ where your money goes to practice sound stewardship.



**Take a moment to reflect**

- What can you do today to begin simplifying your lifestyle?
- What can you sell or give away to free up more time to serve others?
- Think through how your largest possessions have consumed an unexpected amount of time, energy, and resources.

**Financial Disagreements and Divorce**



Source: [Stateoffourunions.org](http://Stateoffourunions.org)

## Start developing your plan right now!

Developing a written plan will significantly help you track where your money is being spent. Take some time and write down where you sent your money to last month. Write what you planned to spend, what actually was spent, the positive or negative difference, and what change you plan to make this month to stay on budget. Make sure you total both worksheets. **What does your spending say about where your heart can be found?**

Average Monthly Expense	Planned	Actual	+ or -	Planned Changes
<b>Tithe / Missions/ Donations</b>				
Tithe				
Global Missions				
Projects / Other Donations				
<b>Present and Future Savings</b>				
Savings				
Emergency Fund				
Retirement Planning				
<b>Housing</b>				
Mortgage / Rent				
Property Taxes				
Homeowner's Insurance				
Flood Insurance				
Home Association Fees				
Home Alarm				
Electricity				
Water				
Internet / Cable / Home Phone				
Home Maintenance				
Lawn Services				
Other Services				
<b>Food / Household Products</b>				
Groceries (Food and Drinks)				
Restaurants				
Detergents and Toiletries				

<b>Average Monthly Expense</b>	<b>Planned</b>	<b>Actual</b>	<b>+ or -</b>	<b>Changes</b>
<b>Family Insurance</b>				
Health Insurance				
Life Insurance				
Prescriptions / Co-Payments				
<b>Transportation</b>				
Car Payments / Lease				
Ride Sharing Services				
Car Insurance				
Car Maintenance				
Gasoline				
Tolls				
<b>Education</b>				
Tuition / Books / Fees				
Educational Loans				
<b>Debt</b>				
Credit Card Payments				
Other Monthly Debt				
<b>Personal Care</b>				
Cell Phone				
Clothing				
Haircuts / Personal Care				
Gifts and Celebrations				
Gym Membership				
Entertainment / Recreation				
Vacations				
<b>Total Expenses</b>				
<b>Total Income</b>				

## The BIG Application

What are the top three applications gained from this session for you to immediately put into practice within your marriage?

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## Application Questions

Separate ample time as a couple to answer each of the following application questions. Use these questions to increase your communication and grow your understanding of one another.

1. How can a commitment to our Key Scripture, 1 Corinthians 4:2, help reignite the dream for your marriage? What problems can be avoided by embracing this truth?
2. Reflect back on our BIG Idea. Was there a change in your thinking from the time you first read this statement and the time it took for you to complete this session? If so, how?
3. When reading the statement, "Recognize God as the owner of everything you have", how does that phrase help change your perspective regarding finances and material possessions? What are the implications of such a powerful statement within the context of your marriage?
4. Personally speaking, what has been your biggest struggle with "Honoring God with the first part of your income"? On a scale from 1-10, where are you at right now and where would you like to be in the next three months?
5. What picture comes to mind when you consider "Making personal sacrifices to increase your impact" to those around you? What opportunities are you aware of right now to increase your impact? What adjustments would you need to make as you consider this and why?
6. Think through the phrase, "Enable others to do God's work globally." Do you know any missionaries on a personal level? Are there couples within your church who are preparing to leave on the mission field? What would happen if you and your spouse became regular monthly supporters?
7. Reflect back on the section titled "Remember those who have less and need help." Has God placed someone in your path that needs financial assistance? What has He burdened your heart to do to help them in this area? Have you done it? If not, why not? How would helping those in need illustrate God's heart to your children?
8. "Being content" is a small, but powerful statement. Are you content with what God has provided for you and your family? Do you find yourself complaining over what you don't have rather than being thankful for what you do have? What has God been teaching you through this study?
9. Are you faithful in your tithes to your local church? What is your biggest challenge regarding trusting God in this area? What would giving faithfully and generously look like in your life? What about saving consistently? What are some of your fears as you consider these areas?
10. When it comes to eliminating debt and spending wisely, what has this study helped clarify? What patterns of behavior will you need to adjust right away? What realistic goals can you set for these two areas over the next three months?

# **Session 9**

## **Embracing Forgiveness**

**Moving Your Marriage Forward through  
Complete Unconditional Forgiveness**



**Key Scripture:** So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you. (Colossians 3:12-13, NASB)

**BIG Idea:** For your marriage to move \_\_\_\_\_, you must \_\_\_\_\_ others, including your spouse, as God has forgiven you.

**Nelson and Maria**

## Marriage Catalyst Principles

**You \_\_\_\_\_ grow if you don't forgive.**

- A growing marriage practices \_\_\_\_\_ forgiveness.
- Total forgiveness involves forgiving others \_\_\_\_\_ and determining to move the relationship forward.
- Love prospers when a fault is forgiven. (Proverbs 17:9, NLT)
- Forgiveness is first a matter of the \_\_\_\_\_.
- Forgiving your spouse completely, unconditionally, means that you choose to not \_\_\_\_\_ on the pain or use the damage as a \_\_\_\_\_ to hurt your spouse and remind them of their mistakes.

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

\_\_\_\_\_

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

**Grace is when we deliberately choose to extend \_\_\_\_\_ to others and unconditionally forgive what they've done.**

- For your marriage to heal and grow, you have to \_\_\_\_\_ to practice and deliver unlimited grace.
- You must choose to forgive \_\_\_\_\_ previous relational \_\_\_\_\_ to grow your marriage.
- When it comes to burying unforgiveness, what you bury always comes back to the \_\_\_\_\_.

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*But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ— by grace you have been saved. (Ephesians 2:4-5)*

- God is rich in mercy and that mercy compelled Him to \_\_\_\_\_ us from our desperate condition.
- Mercy is when we choose to extend forgiveness to others for an offense or a debt that \_\_\_\_\_ be repaired or repaid.

## The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant (Matthew 18:21-27)

### The King's Response

- The King was moved \_\_\_\_\_ to choose mercy over judgment.
- The King released his servant from facing his \_\_\_\_\_.
- The King \_\_\_\_\_ removed and canceled the debt.
- God wants us to \_\_\_\_\_ our heart with His heart.

### The Servant's Response (v. 28)

- The King's servant \_\_\_\_\_ to show compassion towards his fellow servant.
- You have to \_\_\_\_\_ to show mercy, grace, and compassion towards your spouse.
- The King's servant had a debt that could \_\_\_\_\_ be repaid.
  - ❖ The King's servant was \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ forgiven of all debt.
  - ❖ The King's servant \_\_\_\_\_ his fellow servant.
- When unforgiveness is present it shows through your words, attitude, and \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ❖ When unforgiveness is present we \_\_\_\_\_ our spouse through overpowering and controlling.
  - ❖ The \_\_\_\_\_ consists of overpowering and controlling our spouse with our words.
  - ❖ Don't use \_\_\_\_\_ to overpower, control, or paralyze your spouse.

- Unforgiveness punishes through Public Dishonor towards your spouse and reduces their \_\_\_\_\_.
- The \_\_\_\_\_ Treatment is another display of unforgiveness and punishment towards our spouse.
- Punishing your spouse leads to the \_\_\_\_\_ of your marriage.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and restricting your spouse is another manifestation of unforgiveness and punishment.
- When you don't grant forgiveness, you \_\_\_\_\_ life from your spouse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ and Judging is another form of unforgiveness and punishment towards our spouse.

### The Servant's Attitude and Judgment (vs. 29-30)

- The King's servant refused to \_\_\_\_\_ and be patient.
- The King's servant refused to work out a \_\_\_\_\_ to help his servant repay the debt.
  - ❖ Create a plan to \_\_\_\_\_ the outstanding debts within your marriage.
  - ❖ The King's servant threw his servant into \_\_\_\_\_ until the debt was repaid.

### The Reaction and Response of his fellow servants (v. 31)

- Those who watched were deeply \_\_\_\_\_ by the servant's actions.
- The servants \_\_\_\_\_ everything to their master.
- The way you treat your spouse will \_\_\_\_\_ affect those around you.

### The King's Interpretation, Expectation and Judgment

*"Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'" (vs. 32-33)*

- The King described the servant's character as "\_\_\_\_\_."
- The King expected his servant to forgive in the \_\_\_\_\_ he was forgiven.

*"Remember your mercy, O LORD, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O LORD!" (Psalm 25:6-7)*

- The king now \_\_\_\_\_ full payment for his debt. (v. 34)

- When you refuse to grant forgiveness you practice the \_\_\_\_\_ form of evil.
- You \_\_\_\_\_ forgive as you have been forgiven. (v. 35)
- Like a growing \_\_\_\_\_ left alone, unforgiveness will destroy you and impact those around you.

*“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen. For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” (Matthew 6:12-15)*

- 
- You are responsible for keeping your \_\_\_\_\_ to your spouse.
  - Marriage is a covenant, a \_\_\_\_\_ before God to one another, to stay together until death.
  - You have to \_\_\_\_\_ in your marriage to keep it \_\_\_\_\_.
  - True love \_\_\_\_\_, perseveres, believes, and moves forward.

- 
- \_\_\_\_\_ in God's power to transform your marriage.

*And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. (Hebrews 11:6)*

- You can never \_\_\_\_\_ the words and actions of your spouse.
- A \_\_\_\_\_ marriage forgives and moves forward by faith.
- \_\_\_\_\_ the truth of God's Word and \_\_\_\_\_ the promises made to your spouse.

GRACE

COMMITMENT

MERCY

FAITH

## Marriage Catalyst Activity

Reflect back on these four important components for a growing marriage to keep moving forward by practicing unconditional forgiveness: Grace, Mercy, Commitment and Faith. What changes can you personally make in your approach to reinforcing each of these areas within your marriage? Practically speaking, what can you realistically plan to do this week to apply what you've just learned? Write down a few action steps for you to proactively deliver to your spouse in each of the four areas.

### Moving Your Marriage Forward

#### Grace

- Changes
- Action Steps
- By What Date?

#### Mercy

- Changes
- Action Steps
- By What Date?

#### Commitment

- Changes
- Action Steps
- By What Date?

#### Faith

- Changes
- Action Steps
- By What Date?

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**Application #2:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

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**Application #3:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

## Application Questions

Separate ample time as a couple to answer each of the following application questions. Use these questions to increase your communication and grow your understanding of one another.

1. How can a commitment to our Key Scripture, Colossians 3:12-13, help reignite the dream for your marriage? What problems can be avoided by embracing this truth?
2. Reflect back on our BIG Idea. Was there a change in your thinking from the time you first read this statement and the time it took for you to complete this session? If so, how? What happens when this principle is not practiced regularly within your marriage?
3. Describe the picture that comes to mind when you read the phrase "Embracing Forgiveness through Grace, Mercy, Commitment and Faith." Share an example of each one within your marriage.
4. Consider this important statement from our study, "You can't grow if you don't forgive." How does this identify with Nelson and Maria's marriage? How have you found this statement to be true within your own marriage?
5. "A growing marriage practices total forgiveness." What exactly does the word "total" mean? What does this imply regarding holding grudges and or remaining bitter towards our spouse?
6. "Forgiveness is a matter of the heart." What has your recent choice to forgive or hold back forgiveness taught you about your own heart? Why is it so easy for us to make up excuses and delay forgiveness rather than forgiving our spouse quickly and moving our marriage forward?
7. "You are responsible for keeping your commitment to your spouse." What are the implications of such a powerful statement within the context of your marriage? How would our culture respond to this statement?
8. What has been your biggest struggle with showing grace and mercy towards your spouse? Is there a debt you're holding tightly that is preventing your marriage from taking steps in the right direction? What does our story teach us about refusing to cancel the debts of others?
9. What happens when we practice unconditional forgiveness with our spouse? What doors of restoration can open as a result of our decision? What doors for evangelism may open as we practice God's heart in this matter. As a group, read Colossians 4:2-6.
10. As you consider God's Word and His purposes for your marriage, what are you struggling to believe God for right now? What do you want Him to change within your relationship? In each of these areas: Grace, Mercy, Commitment and Faith, which one is He wanting you to adjust the most?

*And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)*

# **Session 10**

## **Keys to a Growing Marriage: Part 1**

**Creating Habits to Protect, Direct,  
and Grow Your Marriage**



**Key Scripture:** All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17, ESV)

**BIG Idea:** Being intentional about \_\_\_\_\_ God and \_\_\_\_\_ His Word will create habits to protect, direct and grow your marriage.

**Richard and Madison**

**When it comes to your spiritual development, be \_\_\_\_\_, and take practical steps to advance your walk with the Lord.**

### 1. Make loving God and loving others your \_\_\_\_\_ priority

*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 22:37-39, NIV)*

- The more I know God \_\_\_\_\_ the more I will grow to love Him.
- Your spiritual growth is a \_\_\_\_\_ reflection of your love for God and knowledge of His Word.
- If God is not \_\_\_\_\_ in your life, He will never be second.
- The key to a great marriage is loving God and allowing His life to \_\_\_\_\_ through your life.

### 2. Be distinctly \_\_\_\_\_ in a good church

- Your faithfulness in a good church is \_\_\_\_\_ to growing your marriage.
- Among other things, the church is designed to help you become a better \_\_\_\_\_.

*And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Hebrews 10:24-25)*

- It's through the \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Word that you learn how to love your spouse sacrificially and replace your character with Christ's character.
- You were brought together to \_\_\_\_\_ and revitalize others through your marriage.

### 3. Be distinctly \_\_\_\_\_ in a small group

- Small groups will serve as an essential \_\_\_\_\_ for your marriage to grow.
- Your marriage is designed to \_\_\_\_\_ through the admonition, encouragement, and support of fellow believers.

*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)*

- Strong relationships are built over \_\_\_\_\_.
- It's important for others to have \_\_\_\_\_ to speak wisdom into your marriage.

### 4. Make key decisions \_\_\_\_\_

*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)*

- Couples who make decisions together \_\_\_\_\_ together.
- The words of the godly are a life-giving fountain (Proverbs 10:11, NLT).
- Extract \_\_\_\_\_ wisdom from others when making key decisions.
- God uses other believers to \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_ as you pursue His will for your marriage.

*Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.  
(Proverbs 15:22, NIV)*

- You and your spouse \_\_\_\_\_ bring everything to the table and consider what God has been teaching you and where He's leading your family.

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7, NIV)*

- \_\_\_\_\_ the strengths, gifts and the wisdom God has given your spouse when making key decisions (Genesis 2:18, 24).

## 5. A Growing Marriage Will Practice \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_

### Understanding Love

- \_\_\_\_\_ is the kind of love you have for a good \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ was used to describe the kind of love that one has for their \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ described physical love, more specifically, the \_\_\_\_\_ form of love.
- \_\_\_\_\_ described a love that was self-\_\_\_\_\_ and giving in nature.

*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.  
(1 John 5:12-13)*

### Without love and with love

- More than thoughts, feelings, or words, love is unfolded and delivered through purposeful, intentional \_\_\_\_\_.

*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)*

- Without love, your verbal eloquence and gifts of communication are converted into loud, meaningless, hazardous, and irritating \_\_\_\_\_.
- With love, your words are \_\_\_\_\_ and they strengthen others, including your spouse.
- Without love, your teaching and great faith amount to \_\_\_\_\_.
- With love, your instruction and visionary ability is \_\_\_\_\_.
- Without love, your generosity and self-sacrifice have \_\_\_\_\_ value.

*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing. (1 Corinthians 13:3)*

- With love, your generosity and self-sacrifice are very \_\_\_\_\_.
- Self-\_\_\_\_\_ is very important within the heart of a growing marriage.

## Marriage Catalyst Activity

Think through our key points for this session and consider how you might apply these principles to help protect, direct, and grow your marriage. First ask yourself, "What do I need to do this week to make this work within my marriage in each of these areas?" Second, "What do we need to do as a couple to live out each of these principles?" Write down at least one action step for each principle.

### 1. Make loving God and loving others your highest priority

#### Changes

#### Action Steps

- Protect -
  
- Direct -
  
- Grow -

### 2. Be distinctly faithful in a good church

#### Changes

#### Action Steps

- Protect -
  
- Direct -
  
- Grow -

### **3. Be distinctly faithful in a small group**

#### **Changes**

#### **Action Steps**

- Protect -
  
- Direct -
  
- Grow -

### **4. Make key decisions together**

#### **Changes**

#### **Action Steps**

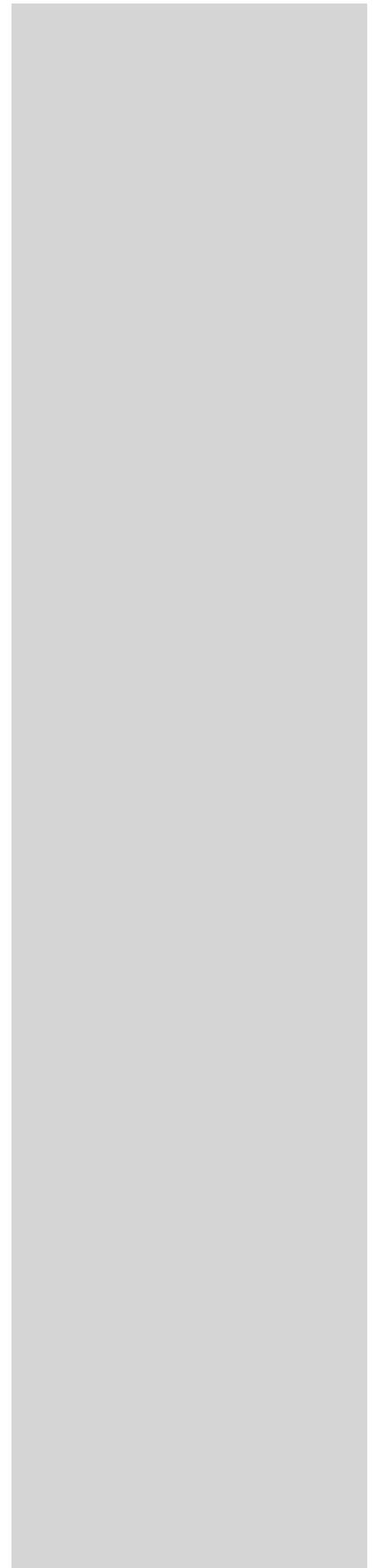
- Protect -
  
- Direct -
  
- Grow -

### **5. Practice Love in Action**

#### **Changes**

#### **Action Steps**

- Protect -
  
- Direct -
  
- Grow -



## The BIG Application

What are the top three applications gained from this session for you to immediately put into practice within your marriage?

**Application #1:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #2:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #3:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

## Application Questions

Separate ample time as a couple to answer each of the following application questions. Use these questions to increase your communication and grow your understanding of one another.

1. How will a commitment to our Key Scripture, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, help reignite the dream for your marriage? What problems can be avoided by embracing this truth?
2. Reflect back on our BIG Idea. Was there a change in your thinking from the time you first read this statement and the time it took for you to complete this session? If so, how? What happens when this principle is not practiced regularly within your marriage?
3. Personally speaking, what two things have you allowed to keep you back from knowing God more intimately and obeying His Word?
4. When you think of the principle, "Make loving God and loving others your highest priority" what will need to be adjusted or replaced for this to become a daily reality in your life. Share an example of what this might look like at home, work, church, school or in your neighborhood.
5. What would you say have been the primary reasons for not being distinctly faithful in a good church? What activities or commitments have you allowed to become obstacles for your faithfulness? What excuses have you created within your own heart to allow for spiritual detours?
6. What fears have gripped your heart in the past as you considered connecting with a small group? How have these fears changed? What benefits have you experienced from participating in a small group?
7. What significant decisions have you made without the support of your spouse? How did this affect your relationship and what did you learn?
8. What significant decisions have you made with the support of your spouse? How did this strengthen your relationship? What was the most valuable thing you learned throughout this process as it pertains to your spouse's approach to working through key decisions? What did you learn about yourself?
9. Richard and Madison help us realize how important it is to be proactive when it comes to meeting our spouse's needs and serving one another? What do you need to be more proactive in when you consider serving and meeting the needs of your spouse?
10. Describe the four ways the word love was used during the early days of the church: *Philia*, *Storge*, *Eros* and *Agape*. Which one of these should serve as the foundation for building your relationship? Explain why?

*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.  
Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.  
(1 John 5:12-13)*

# **Session 11**

## **Keys to a Growing Marriage: Part 2**

**Displaying Your Love for Your Spouse  
to Experience**



**Key Scripture:** Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth. (1 Corinthians 13:4-6)

**BIG Idea: Displaying love \_\_\_\_\_ will transform your marriage.**

**Aaron and Barbie**

**6. For your marriage to grow you must consistently demonstrate love's**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Love suffers long and is kind. (1 Corinthians 13:4)**

*Be patient with everyone. (1 Thessalonians 5:14, NIV)*

- Demonstrating love involves displaying extraordinary \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ towards your spouse.
- Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all sins (Proverbs 10:12).
- \_\_\_\_\_ your anger with kindness.

*But they and our fathers acted proudly, hardened their necks, and did not heed Your commandments. They refused to obey, and they were not mindful of Your wonders that You did among them. But they hardened their necks, and in their rebellion they appointed a leader to return to their bondage. But You are God, ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abundant in kindness, and did not forsake them. (Nehemiah 9:16-17)*

**Love does not envy**

- Envy is when you really \_\_\_\_\_ something that someone else has.
- When envy is \_\_\_\_\_ and jealousy takes over, it can become a very powerful tool in the hands of our enemy.

*Wrath is fierce and anger is a flood, but who can stand before jealousy? (Proverbs 27:4)*

- Demonstrating love involves \_\_\_\_\_ envy and choosing to work through unresolved conflict.

*But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it. (Genesis 4:7, NIV)*

- We must rule over our flesh by living in the \_\_\_\_\_.

**Love does not parade itself**

- Love does not go around \_\_\_\_\_ to others. It does not call attention or desire to be the envy of others.
- When people see your marriage growing, make sure you first give glory and credit to the \_\_\_\_\_.

*In God we have boasted continually,  
and we will give thanks to your name forever. (Psalm 44:8)*

- Demonstrating love involves removing the focus from yourself and publicly \_\_\_\_\_ the value you place on \_\_\_\_\_ and your \_\_\_\_\_.

*If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness.  
(2 Corinthians 11:30)*

- You \_\_\_\_\_ serve God and you \_\_\_\_\_ serve your spouse when your view of who you are is higher than what it should be.

**Love is not puffed up**

*The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way  
and the perverse mouth I hate. (Proverbs 8:13)*

- Demonstrating love has to with \_\_\_\_\_ yourself before God and your spouse while refusing to allow pride to gain a foothold within your heart.
- \_\_\_\_\_ always promotes fighting within a marriage.

*Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for  
"God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:5)*

- At the very core of our pride is a \_\_\_\_\_ refusing to let go of some kind of \_\_\_\_\_. (Exodus 10:3)
- \_\_\_\_\_ pride from entering your heart.

**Love does not behave rudely (1 Corinthians 13:5)**

- Rudeness is a harsh, \_\_\_\_\_ and ugly form of communication towards others.
- Demonstrating love involves \_\_\_\_\_ all forms of negative behavior while genuinely listening, caring and preferring your spouse's needs over your own.

*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving  
preference to one another. (Romans 12:10, NKJV)*

- As a believer, rudeness must \_\_\_\_\_ characterize your life.
- Rudeness can impact others for a \_\_\_\_\_ so pay attention to yourself before forming your communication or patterns of behavior.

**Love does not seek its own**

- Love does \_\_\_\_\_ demand its own way.

*Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.  
(1 Corinthians 10:23-24)*

- Demonstrating love means that you don't \_\_\_\_\_ your \_\_\_\_\_ to gain an advantage over your spouse.
- Love focuses on \_\_\_\_\_ rather than receiving.
- It focuses on \_\_\_\_\_ rather than demanding.

**Love is not provoked**

- The word translated "provoked" in the Greek is *paroxuno*, which means \_\_\_\_\_ up a sharp conflict with the intent of generating an angry response.
- It involves \_\_\_\_\_ a person beyond their ability to control their anger. (Numbers 20:2-13)
- Demonstrating love involves refusing to generate \_\_\_\_\_ and being quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

*A quick-tempered man acts foolishly. (Proverbs 14:17)*

- If the words or actions of others make us suddenly lose control of our temper, \_\_\_\_\_ is not present.

*My dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Your anger can never make things right in God's sight.  
(James 1:19-20)*

- Maybe you're overly \_\_\_\_\_ when specific topics surface.
- Love your spouse enough to share with them the things that \_\_\_\_\_ trouble you.
- Listen carefully, talk graciously, and be \_\_\_\_\_ to anger.

**Love thinks no evil**

- The word "think" in this verse carries the idea of meticulously \_\_\_\_\_ data.
- ❖ Demonstrating love involves refusing to \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ in your relationship.
- ❖ When you love your spouse, all offensive data is \_\_\_\_\_ from your relational balance sheet.
- ❖ It means you refuse to allow the hurt from your past to \_\_\_\_\_ the marriage you have today.

- It means that you don't keep a list and throw it back in your spouse's face every time they make a new \_\_\_\_\_.
- Forgiveness from past sins should never be \_\_\_\_\_.

*But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts?" (Matthew 9:4)*

- Love keeps \_\_\_\_\_ record of wrongs.

### **Love does not rejoice in iniquity (1 Corinthians 13:6)**

- Demonstrating love means that you never celebrate what is \_\_\_\_\_.

*Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. (1 Corinthians 13:6, NIV)*

- The \_\_\_\_\_ of your relationship is critical to the \_\_\_\_\_ of your marriage.

*Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles. (Proverbs 24:17)*

### **Love rejoices in the truth**

- The origin of the word "truth" carries the idea of something \_\_\_\_\_ that is made \_\_\_\_\_.

*It gave me great joy when some believers came and testified about your faithfulness to the truth, telling how you continue to walk in it. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth. (3 John 3-4, NIV)*

- The connection between your words and what is real must \_\_\_\_\_.
- Relational \_\_\_\_\_ will keep your marriage in the \_\_\_\_\_ and prevent you from creating the right environment for your relationship to thrive.
- Knowing, loving, and living the Word of God will produce spiritual and relational \_\_\_\_\_.
- Being \_\_\_\_\_ with your spouse by revealing what is unseen is important for the survival of your marriage and your own spiritual maturity.
  - ❖ Demonstrating love involves being \_\_\_\_\_ with your spouse and celebrating those things that are \_\_\_\_\_.
  - ❖ Speaking the truth to the one we love will build greater \_\_\_\_\_ and pave the way for extraordinary intimacy.

*Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)*

## Marriage Catalyst Activity

Rate the following characteristics of love in ascending order using number one as your weakest characteristic and ten as your strongest characteristic. A number one would fit a characteristic in your life that is obvious. In the next two columns give your spouse and children an opportunity to rate you without seeing how you rated yourself. Take some time after completing this exercise to expand upon the responses provided by your spouse and those of your children.

<b>Characteristics of Love</b>	<b>Self</b>	<b>Spouse</b>	<b>Children</b>
<i>Love suffers long and is kind</i>			
<i>Love does not envy</i>			
<i>Love does not parade itself</i>			
<i>Love is not puffed up</i>			
<i>Love does not behave rudely</i>			
<i>Love does not seek its own</i>			
<i>Love is not provoked</i>			
<i>Love thinks no evil</i>			
<i>Love does not rejoice in iniquity</i>			
<i>Love rejoices in the truth</i>			

## The BIG Application

What are the top three applications gained from this session for you to immediately put into practice within your marriage?

**Application #1:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

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**Application #2:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #3:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

## Application Questions

Separate ample time as a couple to answer each of the following application questions. Use these questions to increase your communication and grow your understanding of one another.

1. How can a commitment to our Key Scripture, 1 Corinthians 13:4-6, help reignite the dream for your marriage?
2. Reflect back on our BIG Idea. Share your thoughts on the Marriage Catalyst Activity you completed. What is likely to happen when the demonstration of towards your spouse is inconsistent?
3. Do you think it's common for couples to think "everything is just fine" when in actuality they are not? Did you find yourself identifying with either Barbie or Aaron? How can you respond differently? How can you respond in a display of Biblical love?
4. On a scale from 1-10, with ten being the highest possible score, how honest and transparent are you with your spouse? How has this negatively or positively affected your relationship?
5. Have you been guilty of celebrating things that are wrong? Have you taken pleasure in things that are contrary to Biblical love? What do you think happens to our spiritual sensitivity to the Holy Spirit when we entertain sin and activities that feed our flesh?
6. Would your spouse say that you are quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry? Which one of these do you struggle with the most? Why is each of these so important when creating an environment for your marriage to thrive?
7. What would you say are the top three things both you and your spouse can celebrate about your marriage? What are the most memorable experiences or milestones reached through your joint effort? If you could celebrate any one of these this next week, what could you do to make the occasion extra special and build lasting memories for your relationship?
8. How have you seen God use your spouse to provide encouragement, strength, or direction to others? What is it about their spiritual gifts, talents and abilities that attract you the most?
9. Do you consistently prefer your spouse's needs before your own? How can you be more proactive in this area? What does the following verse say to your heart, Philippians 2:4?
10. Pride is no laughing matter when it swells up within a marriage. What have you learned about yourself recently that concerns you in this area? Where in your life is humility and self-giving lacking? How can you prevent pride from controlling your anger?

*Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.  
(1 Corinthians 10:23-24)*

# **Session 12**

## **Keys to a Growing Marriage: Part 3**

**Persevering through Life's Challenges**



**Key Scripture:** Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:7-8, 13)

**BIG Idea:** Love \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_ things!

**Matthew and Ashley**

**7. For your marriage to grow you must \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ every difficulty. (1 Corinthians 13:7-8, 13)**

**Love bears all things (1 Corinthians 13:7)**

- When we say, "love bears all things" two words help place this phrase in the right context, \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- You have to protect your marriage from those who are trying to \_\_\_\_\_ your relationship \_\_\_\_\_.
- Since love \_\_\_\_\_ protects, do whatever it takes to protect your marriage.
- Since love is redemptive it proactively \_\_\_\_\_ the shame of the sinner without humiliating and exposing their sin to the world.
- \_\_\_\_\_ take a private matter and make it public without your spouse's permission.

*Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. (Colossians 3:19, NIV)*

**Protecting Your Heart**

**Allowing your heart to be shaped by \_\_\_\_\_ purposes can build a great marriage.**

*Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. (Proverbs 4:23, NIV)*

- You need to protect our heart to \_\_\_\_\_ your marriage.

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)*

**Purifying Your Heart**

- A transformed heart can \_\_\_\_\_ a marriage.
- Spiritual Transformation \_\_\_\_\_ relational transformation.
- For starters, recognize that you are \_\_\_\_\_ before a holy God.

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)*

\_\_\_\_\_ **your sins to Jesus.**

*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:8-10)*

\_\_\_\_\_ **Jesus as the mediator between God and us.**

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. (1 Peter 3:18)*

- \_\_\_\_\_ what the Bible says about Him is true.
- By \_\_\_\_\_ declare this in prayer and ask Jesus to come and change your heart for His divine purposes.

*That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)*

- Relational transformation involves living through your \_\_\_\_\_ identity in Christ Jesus.

### **Growing Your Heart**

*When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion will preserve you; understanding will keep you, to deliver you from the way of evil. (Proverbs 2:11-12)*

- Your marriage will \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ when both you and your spouse are finding complete satisfaction in the vine, Christ Jesus, moment by moment and day by day (John 15).
- Finding spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ in Jesus Christ is what allows His characteristics to unfold through your life and create an environment where your marriage can move from good to great.
- \_\_\_\_\_ your heart to grow spiritually . . . it won't happen by chance.

### **Love believes all things, hopes all things (1 Corinthians 13:7)**

- Enduring and overcoming relational obstacles requires \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- You have to believe that what God has planned for your life is the \_\_\_\_\_.
- Be convinced that God's purposes for your life have an \_\_\_\_\_ value.

*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)*

- You can trust God to \_\_\_\_\_ in the heart of your spouse.

### **Love endures all things**

- Enduring and overcoming relational obstacles requires faith, trust and \_\_\_\_\_.
- Life's challenges were designed to produce \_\_\_\_\_.

*Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. (James 1:2-4, NIV)*

*God blesses the people who patiently endure testing. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. (James 1:12, NLT)*

- \_\_\_\_\_ love patiently endures and works through every difficulty.
- Your love will find the strength to endure through the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 3:16)

### **God Has a Purpose for Your Suffering**

- Our suffering in this life serves an \_\_\_\_\_ purpose.
- If we allow God's Spirit to shape us during our suffering the results can be \_\_\_\_\_.

### **The Three Trophies of Suffering: Perseverance, Character and Hope**

*We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Romans 5:3-4, NIV)*

#### **1. Perseverance entails \_\_\_\_\_ God's Spirit to work in us as we suffer through the trials of life.**

*We know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)*

*We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. (2 Corinthians 8:1-2)*

**2. Your character is developed in the \_\_\_\_\_ of persevering through great suffering.**

**3. Experiencing the faithfulness of God throughout our trials creates an \_\_\_\_\_ confidence within us.**

**God has a purpose for everything He removes**

*He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. (John 15:2)*

- Your marriage can grow as a result of experiencing great difficulty and working \_\_\_\_\_ through the storms of life.
- Marriage is not about being happy, it's about being \_\_\_\_\_.

**Love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8)**

- Love \_\_\_\_\_ succeeds.

*And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.  
(1 Corinthians 13:13)*

- Love will not fail when \_\_\_\_\_ God with all of your heart, all of your mind, all of your soul and all of your strength is your number one priority.
- Make the commitment to your spouse \_\_\_\_\_ by your words and actions.
- Love begins and grows from a supernatural commitment to \_\_\_\_\_ together.
- Make your commitment \_\_\_\_\_ to your spouse over and over again.
- In every opportunity remind one another of this vital reality, love \_\_\_\_\_ fails.

## How Do I Become A Christian?

Here are four key words to guide you: Love, separation, provision, and connection.

1. \_\_\_\_\_:

**GOD LOVES YOU:** *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)*

2. \_\_\_\_\_: Know and admit that your SIN has separated you from God. Knowingly or unknowingly you've broken one of God's 10 commandments, His standard for perfection. Right now, you stand guilty before God for your sin.

### **SIN separates you from God**

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)*

Your personal goodness or ability to help others can't solve the separation problem. There is NOTHING you can do to pay for the penalty of your sins. Morality, religion, generosity, or good works do not satisfy God's standard.

*There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death. (Proverbs 14:12)*

3. \_\_\_\_\_: Jesus died on the cross to pay for the penalty of your sins. He is God's ONLY solution to your sin problem. Jesus died on the cross to connect you to God. He was buried and on the third day, He rose from the grave.

### **JESUS DIED TO CONNECT YOU TO GOD**

*For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God. (1 Peter 3:18)*

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (John 14:6)*

4. \_\_\_\_\_: Believing, confessing, and receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

### **You connect with God through FAITH**

By believing in Jesus' finished work on the cross and confessing your sins directly to Him through prayer. You receive Him by personal invitation.

*But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to children of God, to those who believe in His name. (John 1:12)*

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

*If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. (Romans 10:9)*

### **Starting the Christian Life**

You begin the Christian life through a prayer of faith. Here is a sample prayer to repeat out loud to the Lord if that is your desire:

Lord God, I thank You for Your great love for me. Today I understand how much You love me. I know that I have sinned against You and broken your commandments. I'm truly sorry. I ask you, Lord Jesus, to forgive me for all my sins. Cleanse my heart and make all things new. Jesus, I believe that you died on the cross to pay for my sins. I believe that you were buried and on the third day, you rose again from the grave. Today I invite you into my heart and receive you as Lord and Savior. Amen.

**GOD LOVES YOU**

**SIN separates you from God**

**JESUS DIED TO CONNECT YOU TO GOD**

**You connect with God through FAITH**

## Marriage Catalyst Activity

Many couples would agree that staying together is certainly counter cultural. There's a constant fight trying to pull us away from God's original design for our marriage. What we need to do is constantly remind ourselves of the truth and communicate this truth to our spouse on a regular basis. For this activity, respond Biblically to the following statements. These statements designed to destroy the very foundation of your marriage. Use what has been learned in this chapter to help you deliver the appropriate response.

*You should avoid suffering at all costs.*

*Don't wait for them to change . . . you deserve better.*

*There's no way your marriage can survive this tragedy.*

*Keeping secrets from your spouse is for their own good.*

*You have to take care of your needs first.*

*If the stress is more than you can handle it's understandable to call it quits.*

*If you get tired of your spouse there are others to choose from.*

## The BIG Application

What are the top three applications gained from this session for you to immediately put into practice within your marriage?

**Application #1:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #2:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

**Application #3:** What is the application? What specifically do I need to change as it relates to this application?

How will this application benefit our marriage the most?

## Application Questions

Separate ample time as a couple to answer each of the following application questions. Use these questions to increase your communication and grow your understanding of one another.

1. How can a commitment to our Key Scripture, 1 Corinthians 13:7-8, 13, help reignite the dream for your marriage?
2. Reflect back on our BIG Idea, "Love perseveres through all things." What happens when this principle is not a big priority in your marriage?
3. When reading the verse, "Love bears all things" and focusing on the importance of protecting your marriage, what areas immediately came to mind as we explored unprotected areas within your relationship? What areas would you say are most vulnerable today?
4. Protecting, purifying and growing your heart were a significant part of this chapter. Talk through the importance of each one as a group. Which one of these is your strongest right now? Which of these requires immediate attention? What adjustments will you need to make to solidify each one?
5. Spiritual transformation precedes relational transformation. Why is this true? Share an example of how this principle became a reality in the life of someone you know.
6. Think through the phrase, "Your marriage will grow and thrive when both you and your spouse are finding complete satisfaction in the vine, Christ Jesus, moment by moment and day by day." What would this look like in everyday life? What steps would you say involved in this process?
7. What has been the most difficult thing for you and your wife to work through? What would you plan to do differently to work through this challenge and minimize the damage to your relationship?
8. What things do you believe about your spouse without reservations? What can you see God doing through your spouse to bless you and those whom you love? How might God use them to make your relationship better over the next five to ten years?
9. Have you always believed that character is a trophy of suffering? How has your view of suffering changed as a result of this chapter? What unknown part of suffering has gripped your heart with fear in the past? How has God's Word delivered a renewed sense of confidence in this area?
10. Make the commitment to your spouse obvious by your words and actions. What have you typically said or done to make your commitment to your spouse obvious? What can you do that would totally shock your spouse and leave a strong imprint on their heart regarding your unflinching love?

*Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.  
Love never fails. And now abide faith, hope, love, these three;  
but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:7-8, 13)*

## Rules of Engagement: Our Relationship One to Another

Reflect daily on one of the Rules of Engagement and ask yourself the following application questions: What do I need to start believing? What do I need to stop believing? What wrong attitude do I need to remove? What right attitude do I need to implement? What is God's Word instructing me to change regarding my thoughts, approach, attitude, words and actions towards my spouse? What about towards others?

Stop grumbling about one another (John 6:43)  
 Love one another just as Jesus has loved you (John 13:34)  
 Overflow with love for one another (1 Thessalonians 3:13)  
 Overflow with love for everyone (1 Thessalonians 3:13)  
 Love one another with brotherly affection (Romans 12:10)  
 Outdo one another in showing honor (Romans 12:10)  
 Love one another (1 John 3:11)  
 Be of the same mind toward one another (Romans 12:16)

Accept one another in love (Ephesians 4:1-3)  
 Be united in Spirit with one another (Ephesians 4:1-3)  
 Be kind to one another (Ephesians 4:32)  
 Be tenderhearted to one another (Ephesians 4:32)  
 Forgive one another just as God in Christ also has forgiven you (Ephesians 4:32)  
 Do not lie to one another (Colossians 3:9)  
 Bear with one another from the heart (Colossians 3:13)

Do not complain about one another (James 5:9)  
 Be at peace with one another (Mark 9:50)  
 Do not judge one another (Romans 14:13)  
 Through love, serve one another (Galatians 5:13)  
 Stop fighting with one another (Galatians 5:15)  
 Carry one another's burdens (Galatians 6:2)  
 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (Ephesians 5:21)

Pursue the things which make for peace with one another (Romans 14:19)  
 Pursue the things which build up one another (Romans 14:19)  
 Be like-minded toward one another (Romans 15:5-7)  
 Receive one another, just as Christ also received you (Romans 15:5-7)  
 Encourage one another daily (Hebrews 3:12)  
 Stimulate one another to love and practice good works (Hebrews 10:24-25)  
 Encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24-25)  
 Teach and admonish one another with all wisdom (Colossians 3:16)

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another (1 Peter 5:5)  
 Wash one another's feet (John 13:14)  
 Submit to one another (Ephesians 5:21)  
 Be united in thought with one another (Philippians 2:1-4)  
 Have the same love for one another (Philippians 2:1-4)  
 Consider one another more important than yourself (Philippians 2:1-4)  
 Look out for the interests of one another (Philippians 2:1-4)

In humility, consider one another (Philippians 2:1-4)  
 Encourage one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)  
 Build up one another (1 Thessalonians 5:11)  
 Be hospitable to one another without complaining (1 Peter 4:9)  
 Serve one another (1 Peter 4:10)  
 Confess your sins to one another (James 5:16)  
 Pray for one another (James 5:16)