

# Strengthening Your Marriage

## Review Lesson #1: "God's Design For Marriage"

What is God's design in a Christian marriage?

- companionship
  - without guilt/blame/shame
  - bound for life, unseparable
  - an exclusive relationship
  - complete physical enjoyment
  - oneness (mind, direction)
  - complete openness, transparency
  - only with a believer
  - to be protected, honored
  - an irrevocable covenant
- "God's kind of Marriage..." (Mack, p. 4,5)

*Matthew 19: 4-6 "He made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. They are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate." (glued together)*

- How have you left your parents? (leave)
- Is your spouse the #1 person in your life? (Ask your spouse)(cleave)
- Rate your marital oneness or intimacy (1=needs work – 10=good)
- Is there anything you are afraid to share with each other? (oneness)
- What things have tried to tear you apart?

*1 Corinthians 4:7 "What do you have that you did not receive?"*

- How have you seen God's grace in your Marriage? (1 Peter 3:7)

## Group Discussion:

1. Why did you want to get married?
2. What did you hope to receive out of marriage that you wouldn't receive by remaining single?
3. Where does the Word of God need to have more influence in your marriage?
4. What does it mean to love someone? Do you love your spouse?

## Lesson 2: Rekindling Love That Lasts

- Sign of the times
  - 2 Tim. 3:2,3 "In the last days people will be lovers of themselves... without love, irreconcilable, not lovers of the good, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God..."
  - Matt. 24:12 "(Jesus) What will be the sign of your coming? Because of increase of wickedness the love of most will

grow cold.”

- Foundational need: to love and be loved
  - We need to rekindle a fresh sense of love and adventure that lead to our getting married in the first place.
    - similar to and central to our relationship with Christ
- John 13:34,35 “Love one another as I have loved you. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (1 Jn. 3:16; 4:7-11; Rom. 5:5; 2 Cor. 5:14)
- Revelation 2:4,5; 3:15-19 “You have lost your first love, repent, and do the things you did at first.”

### Agree Or Disagree Questions:

- When you really love someone, you will always feel like you love them. (Agree/Disagree)
- If a couple is genuinely in love, hardships and circumstances will have little or no effect on them. (Agree/Disagree)
- Love is a choice or attitude, not so much a feeling. (Agree/Disagree)
- Love is more about what you say than what you do(Agree/Disagree)
- Right thinking about love reflects right action to the one loved.
- True love wants only the best for the one loved. (Agree/Disagree)

### What Does Real Love Look Like?

False love:

- based only on a feeling/can be lost (“I don’t feel like”)
- conditional, temporary (“I love you if... or because of...”)  
based on performance (“I love you as long as...” )
- worldly love, self-preoccupied, self-serving (1 Jn. 2:15-17)

### 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Love is:	Love isn't:

Genuine love is... (God’s love is unconditional – “in spite of”)

- Sincere (without wax)

Romans 12:9,10 "Love must be sincere, hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves."

- Willing to forgive when wronged
  - 1 Peter 4:8 "Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins."
  - Colossians 3:13 "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you." (Matt. 18:21-35)
- Consistent (Proverbs 17:17 "A friend loves at all times.")
- Without Fear
  - 1 John 4:18 "There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."
- Self-sacrificing
  - John 15:13 "Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." (Rom. 5:8; 1 Jn. 3:16)
- Speaks the Truth in love
  - Proverbs 27:5,6 "Better is open rebuke than love that is concealed, faithful are the wounds of a friend."
  - Ephesians 4:15 "Speaking the truth in love"
- Goes beyond words to action
  - 1 John 3:18 "Let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth."

## Leading With Love:

- God calls men (especially) to lovingly lead, nourish, and cherish their wife in the same way that Christ loves his Church. We need to love our wives in the same way as Christ loves us.

### ***Ephesians 5:25-33***

*"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members Of his body. 'Therefore a man shall leave his*

*father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. Let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”*

## **Application:**

### **1. Love her/him graciously**

- Love is not based on what one is or does or what one isn't doing or should be doing. (it should not be conditional)
- The picture of Christ (Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:1-5; Titus 3:3-7)

### **2. Love her/him sacrificially**

- Laying down one's life for the other's greatest good.
  - giving all of what one has and is
  - giving of one's self
- How can I serve you better?
- What should I give up which is hindering me from loving you?
- The picture of Christ (Matt. 20:28)

### **3. Love her/him redemptively**

- Purifying/transforming to be more like Christ  
John 13:10; Titus 3:5; 1 John 1:9
- How is she/he better off by being married to you?
- How am I encouraging her to personal holiness and a deeper walk with God? Am I praying for her? Encouraging her to a deeper study of God's Word? How are you protecting her in her weakness and struggle with sin?
- The picture of Christ

### **4. Love her/him caringly**

- Nourish – providing for their needs
- Cherish – giving them tender affection, putting them first
- With understanding (1 Peter 3:7)
  - being sensitive, considerate, courteous, protecting, honoring
- Protecting/providing security
- Comforting/encouraging
- Focused exclusively on them
- Your most precious earthly possession.
- The picture of Christ

# Ways To Communicate Love:

- No two people are the same.
- Some expressions of love are more significant than others.
- We need to seek out how to best communicate our love for our spouse.
- We must strive for a grateful heart in whatever is being expressed.
- Question: How do you know your husband or wife loves you?

## 1. Words of affirmation and encouragement

1 Cor. 8:1 "Love builds (edifies) up"

Ask yourself: Do you feel especially loved when your mate verbally expresses how grateful they are for you and the everyday things you do?

How have you affirmed your spouse this week to communicate your love for each other?

How have you expressed your gratitude of your spouse to your spouse?

## 2. Special gifts

Eph. 5:25 "he gave"; John 3:16 "God so loved... that he gave..."

Ask yourself: Do you feel especially loved when your spouse brings you gifts or gives you things to express their love to you?

What have you given to each other that communicates "I love you"?

## 3. Acts of service

Eph. 5:25 "and gave himself up for her"

Ask yourself: Do you feel especially loved and cared for when your spouse sacrifices themselves to help you with certain tasks?

What have you done self-sacrificially that communicated your love for your spouse?

## 4. Quality time to talk

Ask yourself: Do you feel especially loved when your spouse gives their undivided attention or spends quality time alone with you?

How much time have you spent together in meaningful conversation which communicated you love them? (1 Pet. 3:7)

## 5. Physical touch

Ask yourself: Do you feel especially loved and cherished when your spouse spends intimate time with you physically?

How have you expressed your love physically to each other?

How have you personally touched each other in a way that expressed your love for each other other than that which was leading to sexual time together? (Prov. 5:15-19; Heb. 13:4)