

Marriage – Week One

HOW WELL DO YOU LOVE YOUR SPOUSE?

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**"I do so share my deepest emotions with you!
Hungry and tired are my deepest emotions."**

This verse from the book of Matthew may sound like an odd way to launch in to a series on marriage enrichment, but it is truly the key to a healthy, fulfilling, and thriving marriage. It's like this... when we stay connected to God and follow close after Him; we learn what true love really is! As He draws us into moments of intimate fellowship with Him, He teaches us how to have the same type of relationship with our spouse.

Over the past 30 years of marriage, my spouse and I have had our share of ups and downs, but God has taught me through characteristics of Himself how I need to love my partner. Christ first loved us with all His heart and He extends unbelievable grace to each of us on a daily basis no matter our mood, our acts of selfishness, or even what seem to be our disappointments in Him. Even when we fail Him, He is always there ready to forgive and forget. When we are tired and don't give Him the quality time He deserves, He waits patiently for us to return. And when we get so caught up in what we want or feel we deserve, He just listens and quietly shows us where we (not our spouse) may be missing the mark.

For me, it's been a journey to learn how to allow the Lord to love me completely. To receive that kind of unconditional love, and to share who I am with Him at the deepest level took time. But as our relationship and my trust in Him deepen, I find that I long to spend more time with Him. During this process I have realized that I need to pursue this same type of intimate and personal relationship with my spouse. I can tell you; this insight into my relationship with Christ has taken my

marriage to levels I thought it could never go! My prayer is that it will do the same for you.

A FEW THOUGHTS TO PONDER THROUGHOUT THE WEEK

- How much grace do you extend to your spouse on a daily basis?
- In what ways do you intentionally have daily communication with your spouse? – I mean “real” communication, not “your turn to drop the kids off; what’s for dinner, take out the trash, or stop snoring”, but more like “how was your day?” (Actually listening to hear their answer will score you real points!)
- When your spouse has had a bad day and their mood is not “the best”, do you take it personally, or do you ask questions and listen in an effort to discern the real reason behind their emotions?
- Are you quick to forgive when you have been offended by your spouse or do you hold a grudge and even possibly hold it over their head as some type of punishment?
- Do you have the kind of relationship where if one of you is “off the mark” the spouse can approach the issues, be honest about what they are seeing, and talk it through without the “offender” becoming irritated and defensive?
- Do you allow your spouse to love you at the level they desire? Do walls up and refuse to let them into certain arenas of your world?
- Do you put your children and their lives and schedules above time with your spouse?

All the above questions are things that can make or break a marriage over the long haul. During the next few weeks we will go deeper into some of these areas and more, so that you can begin to make your marriage the best it can be.

But for this week, the best thing you can do for your marriage is to begin by making sure that you know who your God is and work on the relationship you have with Him. As that relationship unfolds, begin to love your spouse in the same way that you have learned to love Christ and experienced His love. Your spouse wants to be respected, loved and cherished by you more than any one else on this earth. If you just pick one of the questions above that you need to work on and respond differently than normal this week, I guarantee you that your spouse will notice – and you will both reap the benefit!

DEVOTIONAL EXERCISE FOR THIS WEEK

Read the book of John separately. Come together and discuss insights that you may have never realized about Christ and how much He loves you, and in turn how that has brought you closer to Him. Then take those same principles and apply them in your marriage.

FIVE WAYS TO SAY “I LOVE YOU” TO YOUR SPOUSE THIS WEEK

- Don't compare your spouse to anyone else.
- If you offend your spouse, tell them you are sorry.
- Share with them how much you appreciate something they did for you.
- Give them a hug or a kiss for no apparent reason.
- Do a small chore for your spouse that they normally do. (Empty the dishwasher; take out the trash, etc.)

TWO DATES UNDER \$20!!!

Each week we will offer two date ideas under \$20.00 so that everyone can afford to have quality time with each other.

■ Fondue Fun...

Get dipping! Grab the crock pot and follow this easy fondue recipe!

Stir 2 cups milk chocolate chips and 2/3 cup half and half together in crock pot. Cover and cook on low heat for one hour. Stir halfway through and again when fondue is finished. Dip fresh fruit, cake, and cookies in while chatting about your day.

■ A Day at the Park. . .

Pack a lunch for you and your spouse and head off of to the park or the lake for the day. Bring a ball or Frisbee to play with.

OVERNIGHT GET-AWAY IDEAS

Need some time alone with your spouse? Send the kids to grandmas or a sitter and enjoy a day or a weekend away. It is good for your children to see that their parents enjoy time alone with each other.

- ✦ Check out Callaway Gardens and Warm Springs. Just two hours south of Lawrenceville, you can enjoy a day at Callaway Gardens. Your time can be spent walking through beautiful gardens, playing a round of golf, renting bikes, visiting a butterfly house, enjoying an 'on the water' fishing clinic, water sports or even a high flying circus. These are just a few of the many activities that Callaway has to offer. To find out more about Callaway [click here](#) to view their website.
- ✦ If you are more of a history buff or looking for some southern charm, just 25 minutes from Callaway you can stroll through the historic town of Warm Springs. This city offers a slower pace of life. Streets are lined with quaint shops, good restaurants and porches lined with rocking chairs. You can also tour Franklin D. Roosevelt's [Little White House](#) or spend some time hiking through Roosevelt State park.

MARRIAGE WORKSHOP - June 16th at 12Stone Church - [REGISTER HERE!](#)

Make plans now to join us on Monday, June 16th at 6:30 pm for the first Marriage Workshop of our 79 Day Challenge. Refreshments begin at 6:30 pm and the workshop at 7:00 pm. This will be an evening of high energy, light hors d'oeuvres and wonderful teaching. Register today. We look forward to seeing you there! Child care will not be available for this event.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Ready to go deeper? Try this resource for more insights into a holy marriage.

“Sacred Marriage: What if God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More Than to Make Us Happy” – Gary Thomas

Is happiness the ultimate goal of marriage, or is there a greater purpose? Thomas helps you understand the Lord's intention for matrimony-for husband and wife to reflect the character of Christ. See how God wants to use your marriage as a spiritual discipline to draw you closer to Him, who is happiness.