

GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE

	CHAPTER	<u>Page</u>
1	Prerequisites For God's Design	1
2	Creating A Husband and Wife	17
3	Leave to Become One Flesh	33
4	Cleave to Become One Flesh	49
5	Divine Forgiveness in Marriage	69
6	The 'S' Word is for Everyone	87
7	The Role of the Wife	103
8	The Role of the Husband	117
9	Living in Our Roles	131
10	Communication – PT 1	147
11	Communication – PT 2	161
	Romance and Loyalty	177

CALVARY CHAPEL NUEVO

P.O. Box 1347 • Nuevo, CA 92567 (951) 928-8582 – INFO@CALVARYNUEVO.ORG

FOR RESOURCES GO TO WORDBYMAIL.COM
OR CALVARYNUEVO.ORG - OR CALL (951) 928-8582

ജാ†ഏശ്ര

© 2016 BY CALVARY CHAPEL NUEVO, PASTOR DAVE SHEPARDSON PRINTED AUG 2016

SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS INDICATED AS 'ESV' TAKEN FROM THE HOLY BIBLE, ENGLISH STANDARD VERSION COPYRIGHT © 2001 BY CROSSWAY BIBLE, A PUBLISHING MINISTRY OF GOOD NEWS PUBLISHERS

SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS INDICATED AS 'NLT' TAKEN FROM THE HOLY BIBLE: NEW LIVING TRANSLATION, 1997. TYNDALE HOUSE: WHEATON, ILL

SCRIPTURE QUOTATIONS INDICATED AS 'NKJV' TAKEN FROM THE NEW KING JAMES VERSION, 1996, C1982. THOMAS NELSON: NASHVILLE

Prerequisites for GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE

SESSION 1

Welcome to "God's Design for Marriage." Congratulations on making the commitment to this 12-week course.

Let's begin by praying.

Lord God, you know where we are; married, single, divorced, engaged... Father we can all use this counsel from your Word. We pray that you would open our hearts to receive what you have for us in this course. Help us to make these commitments and follow through, Lord. Help us, Holy Spirit, to understand what God's design for marriage is, and give us your grace to be transformed in the area of our marriage. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

COMMITMENT

We need to begin with some basic understanding and some initial commitments.

I Promise you - if you will keep your COMMITMENT

- to **BE** here
- to **RECEIVE** God's Word AND
- to **DO** your homework . . .

God will give you the tools and the power to TRANSFORM your marriage.

We are going to go through twelve weeks of critical truths right out of God's Word and I assure you we will see how God designed our marriages to work. However, unless you commit to **Be** here - to **Receive** God's Word - and to **Do** your homework you probably will not see any improvement in your marriage at all!

If you will keep your commitment to;

(1) Be here (2) Receive God's Word (3) Do your homework God will give you the tools and the power to transform your marriage.

HOMEWORK

Honestly, the homework portion is the *most important* part of this entire series. There really is something special, even supernatural, about doing the homework with your spouse. It is *unquestionably* the most important part of the twelve weeks. The homework is not just fill in the blanks homework that you can breeze through. The homework is designed to create a meaningful time of interaction with your spouse, focused on God's Word.

You may not be a "homework type" person, and you may even feel a bit awkward going through the homework with your spouse, but you have got to do it - it really is **CRITICALLY** important.

In your homework - I ask you to:

- 1) INTERACT with each other
- 2) WRITE down your thoughts from that interaction
- 3) **JOURNAL** a little bit on your own

For many of us - this might be the first time we have ever done anything like this with our spouse; if so, I promise it will be significantly meaningful. You'll only have two or three nights of homework a week, and that's a small price to pay for God to *transform* your marriage! Plus - it could start the marriage-transforming habit of devotional time with your spouse . . .

So - will you COMMIT to DO your homework? _____



We are going to be going over the subject matter addressed in the homework during each session. However, the homework is designed for meaningful interaction between you and your spouse later. So, Make notes on these pages as we go through the session, then do your homework together at the end of each session.

PASTOR DAVE'S STORY

While we're just getting started, let me tell you a bit about myself and my wife. When I was in the 8th grade - I fell in love with a beautiful 14 year old girl - and we've been married 36 years. We didn't get married when we were 14! That's just when we started dating. We went through high school together and we went through some very difficult times together.

After high school I left home for the streets of Hollywood and the music industry - and she wouldn't have any part of that. But on April 29, 1979, God not only *saved me* from the streets of Hollywood, but from an eternity separated from Him. And three days later He saved my love from the 8th grade. A year and a half later - when we were 20 years old - that rocky high school romance turned into a God-ordained marriage. (1980)

In addition to my incredible wife, God has blessed us with the greatest children in the world... two daughters and a son who are all married, and 8 incredible grandchildren! My daughters and their families live very close to us and are involved in our church in Nuevo. They are both fully committed to being wives and mothers, like the role model they had growing up. And my son and his family serve God and our country in the U.S. Navy. David is an FMF Corpsman with 2 tours in Afghanistan and currently serving with the SEALS near us in San Diego, CA.

All three of my kids are married, and all three have had struggles in their young marriages. And Pam and I have had plenty of struggles in our old marriage. We've had some very difficult times in our 40+ years together. *Including* times when we were *in* the ministry.

Marriages in the ministry are NOT exempt from marriage problems - - in fact - - quite the opposite. The ministry is actually a huge source of *marital conflict* - and is often used *by the enemy* - to damage or destroy marriages.

So, all that to say - we've been there. We've lived through the good and the bad and we've seen God do miraculous things in our marriage and in our family. So as I share God's design for marriage with you, I'll try to illustrate it a bit with over 36 years of real life marriage testimony. Okay?

There is so much that can be said (and has been said) on marriage. So many books, tapes, videos and conferences... and some of them are really good and Biblical - and I'll be pointing you toward some of them as we go on. But I think the reason that there's *so much* material on marriage is because our marriages are so often not functioning the way God designed them to.

There are people in marriages at every level reading these words. There are Pre-Marriages - New Marriages - Old Marriages. Marriages on the brink of divorce and those who have already been divorced. In fact, we know that the divorce rate <u>inside</u> the church is basically the same as outside the church - and it's for the exact same reason!!

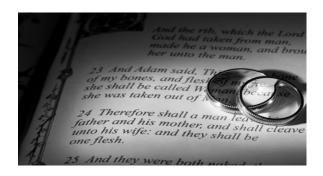
Marriages fail both outside the church, and inside the church because we are not following God's design for marriage!! God designed marriage. He's the one who created it, and he designed it to work his way. And so whether we are outside the church and not following God's design for marriage or inside the church and not following God's design for marriage... Either way - our marriage is in the same rocky boat, because we're not following the design of the One who created marriage.

THIS IS NOT A SELF-HELP MARRIAGE IMPROVEMENT SERIES

The next thing we have got to understand before diving in is: This is not a "self-help" marriage improvement course. Our purpose here is not for you to improve your marriage your way. It's us doing what we think is best for us that's gotten us into the mess we're in. The very worst thing you can do for your marriage is for you to continue to do what you think is best - for you.

We have got to put all our own ideas and all of our own opinions aside, and we've got to turn to God's design manual for the answers. And if we'll be open to *his* plan - and if we'll begin to put *his* plan to work in our marriages -- <u>truly great things can happen!</u>

We must put all our own ideas and opinions aside, and seek to know and receive God's design for marriage *only*.



INTERACTION

Let's talk about the interaction. Interaction is critical. You will be presented with a question like: "Will you commit to seek God's will and God's design ALONE for your marriage?" Then...

- 1) when you answer I want you to look at your spouse (if they are here) every time I ask you to make a commitment I want you to make that commitment looking right into *their eyes*.
- 2) I want you to re-state the question as a commitment to them. In other words, I don't want you to say "Yeah, babe, sure." I want you to look into your spouse's eyes and re-state the question as a commitment.

For example:

Question: Will you commit to seek God's will and God's design ALONE for your marriage?

Answer (looking at your spouse): I will commit to seek God's will and God's design ALONE for our marriage.

This is NOT a

SELF-HELP

marriage
improvement
course. It's US
doing what's best
for US that's
gotten us into the
mess we're in.

I understand that you may not be sure that you are willing to commit to God's will and God's design for your marriage. If you're not sure; please, be honest with your spouse. I don't want you to start out this process of transformation by lying to your spouse. Please make whatever honest commitment that you can currently make to your spouse. But please, speak the truth *in love*. If you are hurting and unsure right now, try saying, "I'm hurting right now, but I will see this course through." Be honest, but speak the truth in love.

Okay, now I want you to turn to your spouse and ANSWER this question with a commitment statement. Remember to re-state the question as a commitment.



Will y	ou <u>commit</u> to seek	God's will and G	<u>God's design</u> alor	ne for your marriag	e?
					-
Did you make this commitment to your spouse?					



Now... let's get to some Bible study.

The problem will never be that God doesn't have the power, the ability, or the desire, to strengthen, heal and restore our marriages.

The problem will always be that our SELF-WILL stands in the way. God will not force us to have a marriage as he designed it. He will always <u>wait</u> until we are willing to <u>crucify our self-will</u> and <u>surrender to his will and his design</u>.

So, here is our first M.I.P. (Most Important Point): It is the refusal to crucify self-will that is at the root of EVERY marriage problem.

M.I.P.

Session 1 – Most Important Point

THE REFUSAL TO CRUCIFY SELF-WILL IS AT THE ROOT OF EVERY MARRIAGE PROBLEM!

Let's go all the way back to the beginning of self-will. Then we'll take a look at the beginning of *man's* troubles with self-will. Then we'll see if we might *still* have a problem with self-will

Let's start in <u>Isa 14:12-15</u>, in a section known as the **FALL of Lucifer**. Most scholars believe this portion of Isaiah is poetically describing the fall of Satan from Heaven.

We call this text The 5 "I Wills" of Satan

<u>Isaiah 14:12–15 (NLT)</u>

12 "How you are fallen from heaven, O shining star (NKJV says Lucifer), son of the morning! You have been thrown down to the earth, you who destroyed the nations of the world.

13 For you said to yourself, 'I will ascend to heaven and (I will) set my throne above God's stars. I will preside on the mountain of the gods far away in the north.
14 I will climb to the highest heavens and (I will) be like the Most High.'

15 Instead, you will be brought down to the place of the dead, down to its lowest depths.

Lucifer said, "I will, I will, I will, I will, I will." And God said - **NO you WON'T** and he threw him out of heaven.

What we really need to see is Lucifer's determination to choose <u>his</u> will over <u>God's</u> will. Because, that is the sin of PRIDE in its ugliest form; demanding our will over God's will. And *that* is what got Satan thrown out of heaven.

Satan wanted to be like God. He wanted to be top-dog. What we don't always realize is that the <u>self-will</u> that got Satan thrown out of heaven... is at the *very root of our own sin nature*.

Now let's look at the beginning of our sin-nature and see what role SELF-WILL played in the fall of man in Gen Chapter 3. There is much that can be taught from Gen 3, but I need us to just look at the role that SELF-WILL played in the fall.

As you read Gen 3:1-6, watch carefully for two things:

- 1) How Satan (the serpent) *subtly seduces* Adam and Eve into choosing *their own will* over God's.
- 2) Watch for Eve's *logical reasons* for choosing *her will* over God's.

Genesis 3:1–6 (NLT)

1 The serpent was the shrewdest of all the wild animals the Lord God had made. One day he asked the woman, "Did God really say you must not eat the fruit from any of the trees in the garden?"

(A conversation with Satan often starts with Satan questioning God)

2 "Of course we may eat fruit from the trees in the garden," the woman replied.

SELF-WILL WAS AT THE ROOT OF LUCIFER BEING THROWN OUT OF HEAVEN 3 "It's only the fruit from the tree in the middle of the garden that we are not allowed to eat. God said, 'You must not eat it or even touch it; if you do, you will die.' "
4 "You won't die!" the serpent replied to the woman.

(As you continue your conversation with Satan, he will always <u>deny</u> God's Word)

5 "God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."

(Satan will always try to <u>replace</u> God's will in your life with either your own will . . . or his)

6 The woman was <u>convinced</u>. (notice that Satan has influenced Eve to choose her own will) She <u>saw</u> that the tree was beautiful and its fruit <u>looked</u> delicious, and she <u>wanted</u> the wisdom it would give her. (these are the 3 classic temptations Satan uses throughout the Bible; lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, pride of life) So she took some of the fruit and ate it. Then she gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it, too.

It was self-will that got Lucifer thrown out of heaven. Then Satan seduced Adam and Eve into choosing their self-will over God's will. They were convinced that *their self-will was better for them than God's will*.

At its very root, the sin that caused the fall of Man was choosing self-will over God's will.

Self-will was at the root of Lucifer being cast out of heaven. Self-will was at the root of the fall of mankind in the garden.

And so, how about us?

Has choosing self-will over God's will ever caused a "fall" or at least a "stumble" in our marriage?

1) Has self-will ever caused problems in your marriage?
Do you see how we can say, "The refusal to crucify self-will is at the root of every marriage problem?"
2) Do you understand that self-will is at the very root of sin?

SESSION 1 M.I.P.

THE REFUSAL TO CRUCIFY SELF-WILL IS AT THE ROOT OF EVERY MARRIAGE PROBLEM!

Satan convinced Adam and Eve to choose their own will over God's will, rebelling against God in sin and causing the fall of man. Today, every man and woman suffers from sharing that sin nature and making similar sinful choices.

However, there are two words that every Christian must embrace . . .

The words are - BUT GOD!

The self-will that is damaging our marriage is at the very root of our sin nature... **BUT GOD!**

But God has provided a way - only one way;

For our sin to be **WASHED AWAY**For us to be **BORN-AGAIN** with a new nature
For us to live a **NEW LIFE** - as a new creation

And that one and only way is through a real, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. God has provided Jesus Christ as the ONLY answer to the sin of self-will.

Jesus Christ took upon Himself your sin, including your self-will, and he paid the full price required to free you from sin's penalty and to give you the power to overcome sin.

And if you will put your full faith and trust in Jesus Christ, as your Savior and Lord;

He will **WASH AWAY** your sin
He will give you **RIGHT STANDING** before God
He will give you the **POWER** to crucify your self-will every day!!

If you will put your full faith in, and completely surrender to Jesus Christ, he will give you <u>his</u> righteousness before God, and he will give you the power, by the Holy Spirit, to crucify your self-will. Which, in turn, will transform your marriage.

Through faith in, and surrender to, Jesus Christ alone, you can be <u>saved</u> and <u>transformed</u> into his image, which is exactly what your marriage needs.

Our self-will must be crucified, and we must be transformed, in order for God's design to ever become a reality in our marriage.

And that truth is what gives God's design for marriage the supernatural power to actually transform <u>you</u> and <u>your marriage</u>. We're not talking about relational psychology here. We're talking about supernatural transformation. We're talking about changes that come from a *new birth* and a *new life* in Christ Jesus.

Look at Titus 3:3

Titus 3:3 (NLT)

3 Once we, too, were foolish and disobedient. We were misled and became slaves to many lusts and pleasures. Our lives were full of evil and envy, and we hated each other.

We are utterly and completely lost without Jesus Christ. If this statement causes you to 'recoil' a bit, take some time to really dig in to these following scriptures: **Rom 3:10-12**, **Rom 3:22-23**, **Eph 2:1-10**

Before we can recognize our <u>need</u> for Jesus, we must recognize that we are <u>lost</u> without him.

But then, look at the next two verses in Titus 3

<u>Titus 3:4–5(a) (NLT)</u>

4 But - (as in BUT GOD!) "When God our Savior revealed his kindness and love, 5 he saved us, <u>not</u> because of the righteous things we had done, but <u>because</u> of his mercy...

BUT GOD gave us a way out, the only way out. Out of his kindness and love for us, he saved us, not because of anything we had done, but solely because of his mercy toward us.

Now look at the three things God will do for us through our faith in Jesus Christ.

Continuing in Titus 3:5(b) (NLT)

5... He (1) washed away our sins, (2) giving us a new birth and (3) [giving us] new life through the Holy Spirit.

That is exactly what we need for God to begin to transform our marriage;

- 1) We need our **SINS** washed away
- 2) We need a **NEW BIRTH**
- 3) We need **NEW LIFE** through the Holy Spirit

And that is exactly what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. However, we must put our **full faith** and **full trust** in him for this new life to apply to our lives.

Have you done that? Have you put your full faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord?

If we don't get this first step right, nothing in God's design for marriage will be right.

Let's look at one more scripture.

Ephesians 2:8–10 (NLT)

8 God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.

9 Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has <u>created us anew</u> in Christ Jesus, so we can <u>do the good things</u> he planned for us long ago.

Before we really begin these sessions – you must decide:

- 1. Have you truly surrendered your life to Jesus Christ as your <u>Savior</u> and <u>Lord</u>?
- 2. Have you asked him for the power of the <u>Holy Spirit</u> to transform your life, and thereby transform your marriage?

Our only hope is for our marriages to be supernaturally transformed by the God who designed them.

Ephesians 2:10 says God has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. One of those "good things" God planned for you long ago, was for you to be joined together with your spouse as one flesh. That is what God created us for. But we cannot do it outside of a *full surrender* of our lives to Jesus Christ.

We need to be created anew in Christ Jesus for us to be able to be married \underline{as} God designed us to be.

To get anything out of these twelve weeks we must make two foundational commitments:

- 1) We must truly surrender our lives to Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.
- 2) We must commit to walk daily in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If you personally have not made those foundational commitments, nothing I say in the next 12 weeks will have any effect on you.

If you haven't received Jesus Christ as your Savior and truly surrendered your life to him as your Lord, I'd like to ask you to consider doing that right now.

Let's pray that Jesus Christ would give us new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit.

"Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I'm a sinner. I know that my sin is damaging my marriage. Please forgive me of my sin. I believe that you died for me, to pay for my sin. Please come into my life, be my Savior, and be my Lord. Please give me new life through your Holy Spirit. I surrender my self-will and ask that you transform my life and my marriage. Thank you for saving me. In your name I pray, amen"

If you have just put your full faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, then he has saved you from your sin and given you the Holy Spirit to transform your life. **CONGRATULATIONS!**

Now we're ready to move into "God's Design for Marriage" . . . Next week.

But first . . . homework.

My Will Over Thy Will ?? Session 1 - Homework # 1

SCRIPTURE: Isa 14:12-15, Gen 3:1-6 Date
PRAY ~ Slow Down. Pray together. Ask God to reveal His truth to you about issues of self-will.
<u>LISTEN</u>
Read Isa 14:12-15 carefully. Read it out loud, and talk a bit about it.
How many times does the Day Star (Lucifer,) say "I WILL?" (some versions you have to also count the "ands")
Note: Lucifer is the Latin form of Day Star, meaning "Shining One."
<u>THINK</u>
Believer's Bible Commentary says; "Because this Day Star, son of the morning, proudly asserted his will above the will of God, he was cast out of heaven."
If we've put our faith in Christ we don't have to be worried about being cast out of heaven. But even so, what is the truth found in these verses that we must apply to our lives and our marriages? Discuss this and write your response.

LISTEN

Now read <u>Gen 3:1-6</u> carefully. Look for the subtle leading of the serpent, and the gradual decision made by Adam and Eve.

$T\mathcal{H}$	Ιλ	ľΚ
----------------	----	----

	Can you see that the serpent convinced Adam and Eve to make a decision similar to the one that got him (Lucifer) thrown out of heaven? (choosing their own will over God's)
	In Gen 3:6, did Eve have logical reasons for choosing her own will over God's?
	In what areas have you made similar "logical" decisions to choose your own will over God's?
<u>P1</u>	RAY
	If you see a portion of yourself in these verses (and I hope you do), repent to God. Ask him to forgive you. Commit to crucify your own will and surrender to his will. Pray together about this. Write down the highlights of your prayer.
	P.S. If you need to ask your spouse to forgive you for your self-will, now would be a good time to do that.



The Only Way to Crucify Self-Will Session 1 - Homework # 2

SCRIP	<u>TURE</u> : _	Jn 3:16-17, Ti	tus 3:3-7	<u>Date</u>	
		n. Pray together. rdship of Jesus C	•	ak to you about your personal	
LISTEN	<u>V</u>				
Re	ead <u>Jn 3:16</u>	<u>-17</u> carefully. Rea	id it out loud, and	d talk about it.	
ald	one for your		ou seek to know i	plete confidence in Jesus Chris him better and trust him	st
Re	ead <u>Titus 3:</u>	<u>3-7</u> carefully. Rea	nd it out loud, and	d talk about it.	
Re	ead <u>Titus 3:</u>	<u>3</u> again. Do you s	ee yourself here	(or having been here)?	
Yo	ou can also	read <u>Rom 3:10-1</u>	1, Rom 3:22-23	(in NLT), and <u>Eph 2:1-3</u>	
kii ha	ndness and ad done, bu	d love, ⁵ he save	d us, not becau s mercy. He <u>was</u>	d our Savior revealed his se of the righteous things we shed away our sins, giving u rit.	
<u>THINK</u>	<u>.</u>				
	_	verse 5, when we hings happen;	receive salvation	n by putting our faith in Jesus	
	2) He g	vashes away our gives us a new sp gives us new life t	iritual birth (a ne	Ο Ο,	
		-will is such a pa in Jesus Christ i		ature, the forgiveness, re-birt to overcome it.	th,
Do	you agree	e with this stater	ment?		

Why do you think this is so foundational to God's design for marriage? Discuss this together and write your response.		
LISTEN		
Read <u>Eph 2:1-7</u> together, slowly. Stop while you're reading and talk about words or phrases that jump out.		
<u>THINK</u>		
Consider together where God has brought you from and what he has done for you. Write your response.		
LISTEN		
Read Eph 2:8-10 together, slowly.		
<u>THINK</u>		
Talk about <u>verse10</u> . Do you see your marriage as one of the "good works" God has created you for and prepared beforehand for you?		
Evaluating your marriage in this light, what thoughts does this bring up?		

<u>PRAY</u>

The subject matter in this homework lesson is literally eternal life and death. Pray about your salvation with your spouse.

CREATING A HUSBAND AND WIFE

Session 2

Welcome back to "God's Design for Marriage" - Session 2. Let's pray to get started.

Father God, last session we looked at our own self-will, and as we went through this past week, many of us began to recognize it in our own lives. Thank You Lord. Thank you for your revelation. And God, we just look forward to what you have for us this session and pray you would soften our hearts to receive your Word and your truth and apply it to our lives by the power of your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REVIEW

Let's begin with some review from last session. Remember the problem will <u>NEVER</u> be that God can't *strengthen*, *and heal and restore* our marriages. The problem will most often be that our SELF-WILL stands in the way. Most often, when we find ourselves in opposition to God's design, it will be because we've chosen *self-will over God's will*.

If self-will over God's will is the problem, then the answer must be to crucify our *self-will* and walk in *God's will*. We're going to start this session with an umbrella truth about how we crucify self-will and walk in God's will.

The process of crucifying self-will and walking in God's will is:

- 1) Our daily <u>surrender</u> to Jesus Christ as our Lord
- 2) Our daily **walking** in the power of the Holy Spirit

SELF-WILL is the PROBLEM
GOD'S WILL is the ANSWER

That is how a Christian is transformed and that is how a Christian marriage is transformed.

We've got to get clear in our mind that self-will is the problem and God's will is the answer. As we learn to daily surrender to Jesus Christ as our Lord and as we learn to daily walk in the power of the Holy Spirit, then God will transform us from a self-willed life, to a God willed life, and the result of our personal transformation will be a *TRANSFORMED MARRIAGE*.

We will be talking about this daily surrender and daily walking in the Holy Spirit as we go through these sessions, and I'll also be pointing you to other valuable resources.

In this area of personal transformation, which we all desperately need in order for our marriages to be transformed, I want to suggest:

A daily surrender to
Jesus Christ as our Lord
AND a daily walk in the
power of the Holy Spirit
brings
TRANSFORMATION

"Be Ye Transformed: Understanding God's Truth" By Chuck and Nancy Missler

Romans 12:2 (ESV) says, Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind

That's the basis for this study by Chuck and Nancy Missler. I know you must be thinking you've got a lot going on with homework already. But just make a note of it. And if you would say "Yeah, I need to know how to do that!" You will then have your next study all lined up.

For this session we're heading to the key scripture we'll be using for much of this study. It's in Genesis 2, but before we get to our key scripture we've got to back up a bit to get the context.

Gen Chapters 2, 3, and 4 are actually an expansion of the creation events listed in Chapter 1. They take us through the details of the creation of mankind and the fall. So let's start with a list of creation from Gen Chapter 1 and we'll see how that leads up to our key verse on marriage.

In this list I want you to focus on the fact that after every part of creation - God said "It was good."

OD'S CREATION DESIGN

- ➤ Gen 1:4 Cod made the <u>light</u> and said "It was good."
- ➤ Gen 1:10 God made the seas and the land and said "It was good."
- ➤ Gen 1:12 God made the grass, plants, trees and said "It was good."
- ➤ Gen 1:18 God made the sun and the moon and said "It was good."
- ➤ Gen 1:20 God made sea creatures and birds and said "It was good."
- ➤ Gen 1:24 God made the <u>land animals</u> and said "It was good."
- ➤ <u>Gen 1:26</u> God made <u>Man</u> and <u>placed him</u> in the <u>Garden of Eden</u>.
- ➤ Then, in Gen 2:18 for the first time in the creation record God says "It is NOT good."

Wait a minute - for the first time in the creation process God said something was "NOT good" when he created Adam. Does that mean God fixed that mistake when He created Eve? No! God said it was not good because God was not finished yet. Mankind was a work in progress and only HALF of mankind was created so far.

Let's read the whole verse:

Genesis 2:18 (NLT)

18 Then the LORD God said, "It is <u>not good</u> for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is <u>just right</u> for him."

Now, let's look at those words - JUST RIGHT

The **ESV** says "<u>FIT</u>" for him (as in "Fit Together") The **NJKV** says "<u>COMPARABLE</u>" to him

The Hebrew word used here is not easy to translate - it means, most literally, <u>according</u> to the <u>opposite</u>. Isn't that interesting? Have you ever heard the phrase "Opposites attract?" I think the ESV comes closest to the picture of what this word means when it says "I will make a helper FIT for him."

The best picture I can give you of this word is a puzzle and a piece.



The definition "according to the opposite," in essence, means this; where the puzzle is cut out, the piece is cut in, and where the puzzle is cut in, the piece is cut out. So when you put the puzzle and piece together, they fit perfectly.

This phrase "just right" (NLT) or "fit" (ESV) actually applies to how God made *both* the puzzle and the piece. God made the cut inc. then He made the piece with the apposite out outs and

puzzle with cut outs and cut ins, then He made the piece with the opposite cut outs and cut ins, and He made them to fit perfectly together.

When we talk about God making a companion that is *just right* for us, we're talking about both the puzzle that is just right for the piece *and* the piece that is just right for the puzzle.

You're going to see this come alive in just a minute. But first, God had to show Adam that no other companion fit his need. And so God brings all the animals to Adam for him to name them, but in the process God is actually proving his puzzle and piece design to Adam.

Genesis 2:19-20 (NLT)

19 So the Lord God formed from the ground all the wild animals and all the birds of the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would call them, and the man chose a name for each one.

20 He gave names to all the livestock, all the birds of the sky, and all the wild animals. <u>But still</u> there was no helper <u>just right</u> for him.

There's that phrase again - *JUST RIGHT*. That's the same Hebrew word we just dealt with in verse 18. God proved to Adam his *need* for a "just right" companion - one that was made to fit him perfectly, and naming ALL the animals PROVED this to Adam - because obviously none of them fit.



So now God was going to <u>finish</u> His "Design Work" for mankind, and *let's watch very closely* - HOW Adam got his wife.

First, God made Adam UNCONCIOUS. Then God formed Adam's wife JUST RIGHT for him (to *FIT* him.) Then God BROUGHT Adam's wife to him!

Genesis 2:21–22 (NLT)

21 So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening.

22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

This is the **Creator of marriage** at work - and here's how He does it:

- 1) He takes Adam out of the picture
- 2) He forms Adam's wife to perfectly fit him
- 3) He <u>brings</u> his wife <u>to</u> him

Here is the question we MUST answer; Is God **still powerful enough** to do this today?

Is the SAME GOD who made Adam's wife to FIT him JUST RIGHT still the SAME GOD that makes husbands and wives 'fit together' today?
Do you believe God is <u>powerful enough</u> to create you and your spouse to FIT <u>JUST RIGHT</u> together??

Now, if you are having problems in your marriage right now, you MAY be saying ... "Yeah, God's powerful enough, but <u>maybe</u> He made a mistake with us."

Now you're talking about God's SOVEREIGNTY and God's OMNIPOTENCE. The subjects of God's sovereignty and omnipotence are about God's ABILITY to direct and orchestrate events to bring about His sovereign plan.

Here are two more questions:

- 1) What does God have sovereign control over? (everything)
- 2) What is God powerful enough to do? (everything)

If you are having trouble in your marriage, or if you have been divorced, the next question is going to be hard to answer, but I am not asking you how you *feel*, OR about decisions you've made in the past, I'm asking you what you *believe* about God!!

Do you believe God is *sovereign* enough and *powerful* enough to bring you the "JUST RIGHT" spouse that He created for you?

Again, I'm not asking you about the details of your present situation - I'm asking what you *believe*. God's design for marriage is absolutely founded on what you *believe* about God. And so the question is about *what you believe*!

Now, our free will and God's sovereign power are somehow BOTH at work in our lives and I realize this is a complicated discussion. I realize there are issues of sinful choices, non-believers and especially issues of abuse. I KNOW there are exceptions, and issues, and details. But I need you to DECIDE what you BELEVE about God!



Do you BELIEVE God is *sovereign* enough and *powerful* enough to bring you the "JUST RIGHT" spouse He created for you?

Hold your answer for a second, let's continue looking at this scripture in Gen Ch 2 before you respond.

Keep that PUZZLE and PIECE picture in your mind, and let's look at another key phrase in verse 21.

Genesis 2:21 (NLT)

21 So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening.

Why did God take out a piece of the man in order to make the woman... was he all out of dirt? He made MAN from *dirt*, he made the ANIMALS from *dirt*, why didn't he make the WOMAN from *dirt*?

The Hebrew word for "TOOK OUT" means literally - "TO CARVE OUT so as TO LEAVE SOMETHING MISSING." In a very intentional action - God "carved out" a piece of man to purposefully *leave* something *missing* from him, and in doing so He made it so neither Adam nor Eve would be complete without the other.

The PUZZLE is NOT complete without the PIECE and the PIECE is NOT complete without the PUZZLE.

That is the miraculous *design* of God - in order to fully complete *mankind*.

The same God who perfectly designed the first husband and wife to "fit" one another "just right" can perfectly design you and your spouse to "fit" one another "just right."

Let's look again at verse 22:

Genesis 2:22 (NLT)

22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

After naming all the animals, and realizing there was no 'fit' for him, when Adam saw Eve, we read:

Genesis 2:23 (NLT)

23 "At last!" the man exclaimed. "This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh! (she's my 'missing piece') She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken from 'man.'

Adam understood immediately that Eve FIT Him. He knew she had be custom designed for Him. And here again, we see that phrase "taken from man," meaning that Adam understood that God had left a VOID in him, that ONLY the wife God had created for him could FILL. So Adam exclaims "AT LAST!! Here is my missing piece!"

THAT is how God designed a husband and wife to "*fit together*" - like <u>two pieces</u> of a puzzle - *both incomplete without the other*.

Now that we have the whole creation picture, let's do a response time. Remember - response is done looking at your SPOUSE.

And when you respond to them

- 1) Look right into their EYES
- 2) **Restate** the question as a **COMMITMENT**
- 3) Be **HONEST** (in love) regarding the level of **Commitment** you are willing to make right now.

This first question is NOT - "ARE you fitting 'JUST RIGHT' together?"

The first question is: "Is God POWERFUL ENOUGH to create you and your spouse to fit 'JUST RIGHT' together?"

Okay, go ahead.

There's a place for you to write your commitment on page 8.

In this second question, I'm <u>not asking</u> you if your marriage <u>SEEMS</u> right, or even if it seems like you <u>FIT JUST RIGHT</u>. I'm asking if you believe **GOD IS ABLE**?

The question is: "Is God Sovereign enough to have brought you the 'JUST RIGHT' spouse He created to FIT you?"

Okay, go ahead.

There's a place for you to write your commitment on page 8.

For the rest of this series, we're going to be talking about what God is ABLE to do in your marriage.

But, if you *don't believe* He is *POWERFUL enough* then you'll leave this series with the *same marriage you came with*.

ECOND COMMITMENT FOR YOUR MARRIAGE:

1) Do you <u>believe</u> God is <u>powerful enough</u> to create you and your spouse to <u>FIT</u> <u>JUST RIGHT together?</u>

2) Do you believe God is sovereign enough, to bring you the "JUST RIGHT" spouse He created to FIT you?



And so, finally, we read the **KEY VERSE** for our entire study - Gen 2:24.



Genesis 2:24 (ESV) 24 Therefore . . .

That's an important word - THEREFORE... It means:

- ➤ Because of everything that's gone into God's design
- ➤ <u>Because</u> of the <u>incredible way</u> God <u>created</u> man and woman
- Ecause of God's entire plan and purpose for man and woman . . .

Genesis 2:24 (ESV)

24 <u>Therefore</u> a man shall <u>leave</u> his father and his mother and hold fast (<u>cleave</u>) to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

This is how God designed marriage: a man shall LEAVE his father and mother, and CLEAVE (hold fast) to his wife and they shall BECOME one flesh. Which is perfectly illustrated in the "puzzle and piece" illustration.

THAT is God's design!!

It is difficult for me to *convey the extreme importance* of this one verse in understanding God' design for marriage. This is the *foundation verse* of God's design for marriage.

And by the way - though it says "a man" must "leave" and "cleave" - it applies equally to the women as well. There must be LEAVING and CLEAVING on *BOTH* parts in order for TWO to become ONE FLESH.

Genesis 2:24 (ESV)

Therefore a man shall <u>leave</u> his father and his mother and hold fast (<u>cleave</u>) to his wife, and they shall <u>become</u> one flesh.

Genesis 2:24 is called the "Genesis Command for Marriage."

The COMMAND is - Leave - - Cleave - - Become One Flesh

HERE is this session's **M.I.P**

M.I.P.

Session 2 – Most Important Point

Every major problem you will ever face in your marriage can be traced back to some conflict with these three commands in Genesis 2:24: LEAVE — CLEAVE — BECOME ONE FLESH

I promise you - in EVERY *major marital problem* - someone is not LEAVING, OR someone is not CLEAVING, and the *by-product* is that they are not becoming ONE FLESH. And so the marriage is disjointed, dysfunctional, and missing out on the *greatest possible blessing* of God in marriage.

No one has ever been able to really explain ALL that it means for GOD to make two oppositely made individuals into "ONE FLESH." Two merging into ONE new identity.

Becoming one flesh is a love relationship *so deep, so pure, so intimate* that it is patterned after the supernatural union of **Jesus Christ and the Church**. He is our **BRIDEGROOM** and we are His **BRIDE**.

God's miraculous design for your marriage is for you and your spouse to become "one flesh" and the process of HOW to do that is laid out in Genesis 2:24.

Let me give you some support for just how big this verse is.

<u>Dr. Ed Wheat</u> is an MD and Marriage Counselor - He's written numerous books on Biblical Marriage - He says this:

Dr. Ed Wheat

"[Gen 2:24] remains the most concise and comprehensive counseling session ever presented on marriage... These 22 words sum up the entire teaching of scripture on marriage. All else that is said emphasizes or amplifies the 3 fundamental principles originated here, but never changes them in the slightest... any real problem you face in marriage will come from ignoring some aspect of God's Genesis commandment."

<u>Bob Hoekstra</u> - a respected authority on Biblical Counseling - says this in his "FAMILY GOD'S WAY" series:

Bob Hoekstra:

Violating the principals in this verse cause <u>most</u> marriage problems. If either spouse does not completely do this, there is a time-bomb ticking and if not corrected, it will eventually bring disaster.

Remember - Session one's M.I.P.

It is the refusal to <u>crucify</u> self-will that is at <u>the root</u> of EVERY marriage problem.

In this key verse (Gen 2:24) we have (*in a practical sense*) how the "**ROOT**" of all marriage problems "**works itself out**."

The "root" of self-will "works itself out" in:

- 1) Someone **Not Leaving** someone or something OR
- 2) Someone **Not Cleaving** to their spouse . . .

and the result will be - They are NOT becoming ONE FLESH, at *least in <u>some</u> area of their marriage*. And if you are not becoming "one flesh" in ANY area of your marriage - you will have problems - because you will be in conflict with God's Design.

And you will continue to have problems;

- 1) until your self-will is crucified AND
- 2) until you allow God to make you one flesh in that specific area

Is the strong emphasis on	the Genesis Command a	a <u>NEW</u> thought to you?
---------------------------	-----------------------	------------------------------

Can you think of any <u>major marriage problem</u> that would <u>NOT</u> fall under the three key steps in Gen 2:24?

REVIEW

So this session we have done TWO things:

- 1) We've seen how God **CREATED** a husband and wife to **FIT "JUST RIGHT"** together
- 2) AND we've seen the **FOUNDATION** for how **God designed** our marriages to work **Leaving**, **Cleaving**, **Becoming One Flesh**

We have already responded to whether we believe God is able to make us to FIT together "JUST RIGHT" and whether God is able to bring us together through his sovereignty.

We'll close this session by asking you to PRAY together (if your spouse isn't here you can pray alone) But when I say PRAY together - I mean - you PRAY, *BOTH* of you.

This is called DIRECTED PRAYER, and here's how it works; I want you to take a moment to LOOK at Gen 2:24, absorb it, and then I'd like you to pray for your marriage, *according* to Gen 2:24. I realize this may be difficult, so just do the best you can.

Here is the subject of your prayer:

Genesis 2:24 (ESV)

24 <u>Therefore</u> a man shall <u>LEAVE</u> his father and his mother and hold fast (<u>CLEAVE</u>) to his wife, and they shall become <u>ONE FLESH</u>.

Read it, absorb it a minute, then <u>face each other</u>, <u>look</u> at this verse - and **PRAY** according to this verse.

Father God, thank you that you help us do the hard things. That you are powerful and sovereign and willing to restore our marriages. Give us the courage to stay and fight for our marriage. Give us the courage to be challenged by your Word and be convicted to pray together, to give us the commitment to hold each other, to look in one another's eyes, to dig into your Word and pray together. Inspire us Lord to do the hard things. To crucify our self-will together, to be honest with each other, and to choose your will alone together for our marriage, God. Make it happen, make us one flesh. It is in Jesus' precious name we pray, amen.

And now, your homework for this week . . .



Living Sacrifice Session 2 - Homework # 1

SCRIPTURE: Rom 12:1-2 Date
PRAY ~ Slow Down. Pray together. Ask God to speak to you through His Word.
LISTEN
Read Rom 12:1-2 carefully. Read it out loud, and talk a bit about it. If you have different Bible versions, read from at least two of them.
<u>MOTE</u> : The word "body" in verse 1 is referring to "all your members and faculties (AMP)." The MSG calls it "your everyday, ordinary life." It's more than your physical body, it's the totality of your life.
NOTE : The end of verse 1 can be translated either; "your spiritual worship" or, "your reasonable service"
THINK
Read Rom 12:1 one more time, considering the 2 notes above. Discuss with you spouse what this means, and how you may be able to better accomplish this in your marriage.
In what ways can we better present our lives to God in our marriage?
What is keeping us from doing this?

<u>THINK</u>

	Do the same thing with verse 2. Re-read verse 2 considering the following notes;
	NOTE : "be transformed" speaks of receiving a totally new nature.
	NOTE : The word "renewing" means "a full renovation," like a full renovation of the kitchen in your house. First, you tear everything old out, right down to the bare walls. Then, you install everything new. A complete renovation.
	<u>NOTE</u> : If you're reading NKJV, the word "prove" means; "to know, or discern, by testing a thing."
	Discuss with your spouse what all this means, and how you may be able to better accomplish this in your marriage.
	Are you really allowing God to transform you by the renewing of your mind (using the above explanations)?
	What regular steps can you take together, to see God continue to transform you and renew you, together?
PR	<u>AY</u>
	Really take a "Transformation Inventory." Full surrender of your life to God is your only hope for a transformed marriage.
	Pray about this together. Write down the highlights of your prayer.

The Creation of Husband and Wife Session 2 - Homework # 2

PRAY - Slow Down. Pray together. Pray for one another (each one praying for the other). Ask God to reveal to you how He has created each of you. LISTEN Read Gen 2:18. Each one of you read it out loud. Remember what was said in this session (review your notes.) Talk about the puzzle and the piece illustration from this session.
Read Gen 2:18 . Each one of you read it out loud. Remember what was said in this session (review your notes.) Talk about the puzzle and the piece illustration
this session (review your notes.) Talk about the puzzle and the piece illustration
110111 11115 56551011.
THINK.
We used the definition "Fit Just Right" by combining the ESV and the NLT versions. Remember we said the original means literally "according to the opposite."
Discuss these questions together and write your responses.
How do you think you are fitting just right together?
Do you recognize that to fit "just right" together, you must be opposites?
What conflicts has being opposites created in your marriage?

What commitments can you make to one another to better "fit together" as opposites?
<u>LISTEN</u>
Read Gen 2:21-23 together slowly, thinking (and talking) about the puzzle and the piece illustration.
<u>THINK</u>
Make this personal to your marriage. Think back on how God brought you together. Look for His hand orchestrating your marriage. Write about it.
What does this understanding of God "Creating" you as a puzzle and a piece cause you to re-think about your marriage? What different perspective does it give you on your marriage?

<u>PRAY</u>

Make sure you each have shared what you feel about these verses and these concepts. Then pray together about what you've discussed.

LEAVE TO BECOME ONE FLESH

SESSION 3



Welcome back to "God's Design for Marriage" - Session 3. Let's open up with prayer.

Father God, we come before you leaning into you, pressing into you, needing you. We give you our lives as we continue to submit our own self-will and crucify our own flesh by learning to live day-by-day in the power of the Holy Spirit. Help us to receive what you would have for us and to apply it to our own lives, so that you may transform our marriage into your design. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

We're starting off each session with some of the big picture things that apply to every

subject in God's design, and today we are continuing two thoughts we have already been addressing.

First, we mentioned previously, and it's important to mention again, that there are some "exceptions" to the general counsel we give for your marriage. For instance - in any case of physical or sexual abuse we always recommend immediate removal of a spouse and children, for safety sake. Then, if possible, we can address the situation over time while the family is safe.

However, it is still true that God's design, just as it's spelled out in the Bible, is exactly what we need to receive and apply to our marriages. In <u>most</u> cases, when we find ourselves trying to

The problem will NEVER be that
God can't strengthen, heal and
restore your marriage.
The problem will ALWAYS be
that your SELF-WILL stands in
the way.

explain why God's design does not apply to our situation, we are usually trying to justify our self-will instead of allowing our self-will to be crucified with Christ.

So let's look briefly at how self-will leads to a common break-down in our marriages. One of the classic ways we see self-will damaging a marriage is for one or both spouses to convey this statement...

"I'd be happy if my spouse would just \underline{BE} what I want them to \underline{BE} , and \underline{DO} what I want them to \underline{DO} !"

Professional therapists call this a "Performance-Based" relationship; we call this the *sin of self-will*.

"I'd be happy, if I could just get what I want!"

Do you see the self-will in that statement? We see this type of self-will in Christian marriages every day. This is the self-will that causes "The grass is greener" syndrome where we stop trusting God for our marriage and start thinking we would be happier in *another* marriage.

We've got to stop being driven by self-will and start being driven by faith in God for our marriage.

The answer to this problem, is moving from a "Performance-Based" relationship - to a "Faith-Based" Relationship (thanks to *Don & Sally Meredith in their workbook*, "Two Becoming One.")

We've got to get to where our marriage is not based on our spouse making us happy, but is based instead on our faith in God. First we have to believe God is *powerful enough* and *sovereign enough* to have fit us together with the spouse he designed for us. Then, we must believe God is powerful enough and sovereign enough to bring about his good plan in our marriage. In this way, God becomes the focus in our marriage - his grace, his mercy, his unconditional love - become our peace and fulfillment. In essence, we trust God to meet our needs and we trust God to *transform our marriage* to function as he designed it to. Which ultimately gives us his greatest blessing.

This works best if both spouses will seek God's will instead of their own self-will together. However, God is plenty powerful enough to begin that transformation with just one spouse becoming totally surrendered to Him and beginning to walk in the Spirit in your marriage.

I pray that in your marriage both of you would desire this. But if not, then YOU be the one, to begin the transformation of your marriage from *self-willed to faith-based*.

When we trust God, and look to God, for all of our marriage needs, he himself becomes our hope and strength and peace, instead of us looking to our spouse's "performance," according to our expectations, to meet those needs.

Consider carefully Rom 12:1-2.

Rom 12:1-2 (NLT)

1 And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies (it means the totality of yourself) to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him.

2 Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person (giving you a new nature) by changing the way you think (meaning a renovation of your mind). Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.

Rom 12:1-2 calls us to:

- 1) Present the totality of ourselves to God as a living sacrifice
- 2) Be transformed by the total <u>renovation</u> of our minds

This involves (to a large extent);

- 1) The constant crucifying of our SELF-WILL (The Flesh)
- 2) The constant living (walking) day-by-day in the SPIRIT

As we continue, we'll be talking a lot about the battle of *crucifying the flesh and living in the spirit*.

Jesus Christ gave us the POWER to crucify SELF-WILL, but we must DAILY make the choice, in order to be transformed.

Let's look at two verses out of Romans Chapter 6 that show BOTH - the *power* to crucify self-will and the *need* to choose it every day.

Rom 6:6 (NLT)

6 We know that our old sinful selves were <u>crucified with Christ</u> so that sin might lose its power in our lives. We are no longer slaves to sin.

When <u>Jesus Christ</u> lives in you, you are no longer a slave to sin. Your sinful "self" has been crucified with Christ. However, you still have the option to choose sin.

Every time you choose self-will over God's will in your marriage, you become more of a *slave to self-will*. And every time you choose *God's will* over *self-will* in your marriage, you become more of a *slave to God's will*.

Rom 6:16 (NLT)

16 Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

In every area we discuss you will have the CHOICE: You can choose self-will leading to damage of your marriage OR you can choose God's will leading to a transformed marriage.

God has given you the POWER and the CHOICE, but you must choose wisely.

Here's two resources to help you do that.

- 1)" Be Ye Transformed" by Chuck and Nancy Missler (kingshighway.org)
- 2) "The Abide Series" (wordbymail.com)

We began looking at the key verse on marriage last session, Genesis 2:24 and we are heading back to that verse.

You'll remember from last session our KEY foundation scripture on marriage;

Gen 2:24 (ESV)

24 <u>Therefore</u> a man shall <u>leave</u> his father and his mother and hold fast (<u>cleave</u>) to his wife, and they shall <u>become</u> one flesh.

This is the John 3:16 of marriage. This verse encapsulates God's design for marriage in the same way John 3:16 encapsulates God's plan of salvation.

Session two's M.I.P. was: Every major marriage problem can be traced back to some conflict with these three commands - **Leave** - **Cleave** - **Become One Flesh**. Today we want to focus on the first of these three commands; Leave.



The first principle found in the "Genesis Command" for marriage is the word "Leave."

The reason God calls us to "<u>Leave</u>" is so that we can become one flesh (a subsequent process.) In Genesis 2:24 this principle of leaving is *applied specifically* to <u>our parents</u> - because those ties must be <u>radically changed</u> - but *by implication* this concept applies to all other relationships as well.

Dr. Ed Wheat says this:

"Marriage begins with a 'leaving:' leaving all other relationships. The closest relationship outside of marriage is specified here, implying that if it is necessary to leave your father and mother, then certainly all lesser ties must be broken, changed, or left behind."



The first thing God requires of us in order to become one flesh, is to leave in *some sense* all other relationships, beginning with our parents. The Bible calls us to always honor and care for our parents, but in the sense of *emotional*, *relational* and *physical* dependence, we must "LEAVE" that relationship with our parents.

And if that's true in our relationship with our parents, then it is certainly true in all other relationships.

So here is our Most Important Point for session three;

M.I.P.

Session 3 – **Most Important Point**

YOU MUST LOOSEN, DEPART FROM, OR ABANDON ALL OTHER RELATIONSHIPS TO BECOME ONE FLESH WITH YOUR SPOUSE

Let's look at how this word "*Leave*" is translated in Hebrew and then see how we can apply it.

The following is adapted from "A Biblical Portrait of Marriage" by Bruce Wilkinson.

Notice the *graduating levels of intensity* in these 3 definitions of the Hebrew word that we translate LEAVE.

Hebrew "*Leave*" (*AZAB*) – has 3 Key Definitions:

- 1) To Loosen
- 2) To *Depart from*
- 3) To Forsake or Abandon

Let's start with parents and then we'll move on from there.

Parents can do their children a great service by understanding the first key definition of this word LEAVE – it means "to loosen."

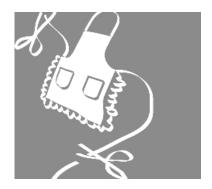
Parents must loosen the grip on their children as they prepare for marriage; they've got to "release the reigns."

Pam and I have had to do this three times. The first time we had to do it was while I was teaching God's design for marriage for the first time.

For twenty years our lives had been wrapped up in caring for the daily needs of our children; their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. We have loved every minute of those years, and it's not easy to loosen that level of care.

But there comes a time when children must be "*released*" from their parents and their primary care "*transferred*" to their spouse, in ALL areas.

That does not mean children are NOT supposed to honor their father and mother any longer. But it does mean their primary allegiance, primary relationship and primary care must *change* from *their parents* to *their spouses*.



Dr. Bruce Wilkinson suggests a formal "<u>Apron String</u> <u>Cutting</u>" ceremony in every wedding (for the parent's good) ...

In an effort to understand how serious this "*change in relationship priority*" is, let's look at the shocking quote Jesus made in Luke 14:26 about what it takes to be united to Him as His disciple.

Luke 14:26 (NLT)

26 "If you want to be my disciple, you must <u>hate everyone else by comparison</u> - your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters - yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.

Jesus is not condoning hate here, of anyone. He's setting a *clear priority* by comparison. "By comparison" our love for Him is such a higher priority that it makes our love for anyone else even look like hate.

That's a radical statement of what it looks like to follow Jesus. But it also gives a perfect example of what Genesis 2:24 means by saying we must leave to some extent, ALL other relationships in order to become one flesh with our spouse. It means that by comparison ... there is

NO comparison.

In Matt 10:37 Jesus says:

Matt 10:37 (NLT)

37 "If you love your father or mother more than you love me, you are not worthy of being mine; or if you love your son or daughter more than me, you are not worthy of being mine.

Again, this is a matter of *priority of relationships*, and the same explanation can be used for the *marriage relationship*. If someone holds their father or mother (or anyone else) in a higher priority (by comparison) to their spouse, then they are not ready to be married. If they don't "*leave*" by comparison ALL other relationships, they *cannot and will not* be able to become "*ONE FLESH*."

This doesn't mean we stop honoring our parents, it doesn't mean we stop being a part of their lives, it doesn't mean we can't have other friends and interests.

It does mean there can never be any other relationship that even compares to the *commitment and the priority* we put on our marriage relationship. In all sense of priority, we must leave every other relationship. We must be willing to "*forsake all others*" for our spouse.

This does not mean we stop honoring our parents.

And it does not mean we can't have friends and interests.

But it does mean there can never be any relationship or interest that compares to the commitment and priority we put on our marriage relationship.

The first definition for the Hebrew word "Leave" - is "To Loosen." The second definition for "Leave" is - "To Depart From."

This definition has a definite physical sense to it. It means to separate yourself "physically" or "geographically." To become one flesh you cannot be physically attached to any other person again, including your parents.

This means, in general, you really shouldn't be living with your parents after you're married, except for short-term necessities.

No **Emotional** Control – No **Financial** Control – No **Relational** Control

That doesn't mean you don't get COUNSEL and WISDOM from others. It means if there is a "control" problem, especially with your parents, sometimes you must remove yourself physically or even geographically from that control for the sake of your marriage.

You must *loosen and depart from all other relationship priorities* in order to become ONE FLESH with your spouse.

So – the first definition is "to loosen" (a <u>Priority</u> Change) the second definition is "to depart from" (a <u>Physical</u> Change)

The third, and strongest, definition for the Hebrew word translated "Leave" is: "To Forsake or Abandon."

In classic marriage vows we hear the words "forsaking all others," and that's exactly what this definition for the word "leave" means.

I once received a call from a newlywed couple having an argument, and they wanted me to tell them who was right. Here was the couple's question:

Was it okay for the husband to maintain a strictly friendship-relationship with a girl who used to be his high-school girlfriend??

The answer is: **absolutely - positively - without a doubt NO!** God's command is to forsake and abandon that relationship!

It is God's design for you to forsake and abandon *ANY relationship* that could be *detrimental to your marriage*. In reality, ALL individual relationships with members of the *opposite sex* must be forsaken and abandoned, in order for you to become "*one flesh*" with your spouse.

In reality, all <u>individual</u> relationships with the opposite sex should be, in effect, forsaken and abandoned.

There should be no <u>individual</u> relationships with a person of the opposite sex.

Let's look again at the graduating intensity in these definitions.

"Leave" – Hebrew word "AZAB":

- 1) To Loosen - to release, to re-prioritize
- 2) To Depart From - to pull back from, physically
- 3) To Forsake or Abandon - to utterly disregard

Some relationships you must "**Loosen**" (change Priority) Some relationships you must "**Depart From**" (Physically Change) Some relationships you must "**Forsake and Abandon**" (Run away)

I am talking specifically about ANY relationship that causes stress and conflict in your marriage.

I knew a couple where the wife's single friends would take her out dancing with other guys on a "girl's night out" - those are the kinds of relationships that must be *forsaken* and abandoned.

Most every person I know who is married - has had to *forsake and abandon* some relationships when they get married.

These definitions of the word leave apply not only to relationships but to other interests as well. Work, hobbies, even ministry. We've got to reset our priorities on all these things. At times we have to depart from them, and at times we must forsake and abandon them, for the benefit of our marriage.

Does this mean you'll never be able to do those things? NO!!

It means, from a priority standpoint, you must *be willing to re-prioritize*, and even *radically change*, ALL other relationships and interests for your spouse. That is the first step to becoming "one flesh." Unless you are willing to leave, at some level, all other relationships and interests, you will never develop the true "one flesh" relationship God designed for your marriage.

Bringing *God's design into your marriage* requires honestly responding to God and to your spouse. Here's your opportunity. This may be difficult, but *PLEASE*, hang in there and do the *HARD* things.

Please <u>trade</u> workbooks with each other, in order to write in each other's workbook.

Take your time and do this *honestly*. Write up to three relationships or interests you would like to see your spouse re-prioritize for the benefit of your marriage. Then hand your spouse's workbook back to them.

Response Time . . .

rtesponse rome			
PLEASE TRADE WORKBOOKS WITH YOUR SPOUSE. The following is to be completed by your spouse:			
Three relationships or interests I would like to see take a lower priority in our marriage (written by your spouse):			
#1			
#2			
#3			
PLEASE TAKE YOUR OWN WORKBOOK BACK FROM YOUR SPOUSE. The following is to be completed by you:			
Am I willing to take tangible steps to reprioritize the relationships my spouse listed above?			
#1 (from above) yes no			
#2 (from above) yes no			
#3 (from above) yes no			
If you checked a NO box, are you willing to bring this before the Lord and have further loving conversations with your spouse about it?			

If you desire to become one flesh with your spouse, you must be willing to loosen, depart from, or abandon all other relationships.

Spouses, IF your spouse checked a NO box, don't over react. In your homework this week I'm going to ask you to continue this discussion with your spouse.

If there are any other relationships or interests that have the potential to damage your marriage, you have got to be willing to: "<u>loosen</u>" them – or "<u>depart from</u>" them – or "<u>forsake and abandon</u>" them all together.

When you do, you will be on your way to becoming "One Flesh."

Let's pray.

Heavenly God, these are hard things to look at and talk about. But with the power of your Holy Spirit we can do these things. Help us to become one flesh. Help us to honestly look at our lives and to loosen, depart from or forsake anything in our life that has the potential to damage our relationship with our spouse. We commit to continue to crucify our self-will, and we commit to seek your will in our marriage. Please continue to reveal your design to us, and please continue to transform our marriage. In Jesus' name, amen.

Slaves to Sin or Slaves to God Session 3 - Homework # 1

<u>SCRIPTURE</u> :	Rom 6:6, Rom 6:16 Date
<u>PRAY</u> ~ Slow Do	own. Pray together. Ask God to continue to transform your marriage.
<u>LISTEN</u>	
Read Rom 6:5-11	. Talk about how this relates to a "transformed marriage."
Go back and read	Rom 6:6 carefully, repeatedly, in multiple versions if possible.
<u>THINK</u>	
The specific sin we	e've been talking about is self-will (our focus on "self").
How does this ve	erse apply to our nature of focusing on self, and serving self?
relationship (whe	e important in moving us from a "performance-based" ere we expect our spouse to make us happy) to a "faith-based" ere we rely on God instead of serving "self"?)
<u>NOTES</u>	

LISTEN

Read <u>Rom 6:15-23</u>. Talk about the idea of being a slave, either to righteousness or to sin. Make sure you understand the end result of being a slave to sin.

Remember - the specific sin we're talking about is the sin of self-will in our marriages.

Go back and read **Rom 6:16** carefully, repeatedly, in multiple versions if possible.

THI	'n	K
-----	----	---

Based on Rom 6:6 and Rom 6:16, CAN your marriage be transformed from a "performance based" relationship to a "faith-based" relationship?		
Based on Rom 6:16, what consistent choice must you make in order to see this transformation take place in your marriage?		
<u>PRAY</u>		
Each of you pray that God would give you the power to make "faith-based" choices in your marriage, instead of "performance-based" choices.		
<u>COMMIT</u>		
Write down any commitments made during this homework time.		

Leave, to some extent, all other relationships Session 3 - Homework # 2

SCRIPTURE : Eph 4:29-32, Gen 2:24 Date
<u>PRAY</u> - Slow Down. Pray together for honest, loving conversation during this time.
<u>LISTEN</u>
Read Eph 4:29-32. Each one of you read it out loud.
Make a commitment to follow these guidelines in this conversation.
In <u>Gen 2:24</u> we are commanded to LEAVE, to some extent, all other relationships (exampled by our relationship with our parents), in order to become one flesh with our spouse.
The three definitions of the Hebrew word for leave are: 1) To Loosen (to Release, or Re-Prioritize) 2) To Depart From (to Pull Back, Physically) 3) To Forsake or Abandon (to Utterly Disregard)
DISCUSS
Discuss these three definitions until you understand them.
Discuss the relationships or interests you both wrote down in this chapter of your workbook. Take turns talking about <a 4:29-32.="" and="" do="" eph="" heated,"="" href="https://www.word.ni.ni.ni.ni.ni.ni.ni.ni.ni.ni.ni.ni.ni.</td></tr><tr><td>If this conversation gets " it.<="" re-read="" really,="" stop="" td="">
What relationships or interests are you at odds about re-prioritizing?
What conflicts have these things created in your marriage?

What commitments can you make to one another to LEAVE, to some extent, the relationships or interests that are causing conflicts in your marriage?
LISTEN
Read Phil 2:2-4 together. And apologize to your spouse if necessary.
<u>PRAY</u>
Pray together about what you've discussed. Write the highlights of your prayer.

CLEAVE TO BECOME ONE FLESH

SESSION 4

Welcome back to "God's Design for Marriage" - Session 4. We're going to be looking at Genesis 2:24 again, because there's some really good truths we need to dig out. Next session we will move on from this verse, although we will continue to refer back to it. Let's pray, and we'll look at "Cleave to Become One Flesh."

Heavenly Father, we don't want to leave Genesis until we know how you've created and designed marriage. Lord, you've designed us so miraculously, so supernaturally. We pray we would see how you designed marriage. And that we would understand, Lord, that it takes your supernatural power for us to become one flesh. We pray, as we dig into this word "cleave," that you would pierce our hearts where necessary and strengthen us where necessary. We want you to change us from the inside, transform us, and transform our marriages. We pray you would use your living Word and the power of your Holy Spirit to continue to do that. We thank you for it in advance. In Jesus' name, Amen.

PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

We've started each session so far with a little bit about personal transformation. This is so critical that I can't say it enough. We've got to continue to focus on our need for transformation. For God's Design to work in our marriage - we must be individually transformed; we must allow God to change us *individually*.

God's Design for Marriage is NOT just a bunch of ideas you can implement to improve your marriage. It is a supernatural, transformational, divine re-creating of two sinners miraculously - into ONE FLESH!

The only way marriage works as God designed it - is for each of you, *individually*, to be transformed; for you, *individually*, to put off the old self-will nature and to put on the new life in Christ. We can't only acknowledge our need to be transformed; we must begin to *tangibly* PUT OFF the old nature, and actively PUT ON Christ. In your homework this week - you'll look at putting off the "old self" and putting on the "new life traits" in Christ. So be sure to do your homework, you'll be blessed.

Begin to read and study **Eph 4:17-24** with your spouse. Here are the key verses:

Ephesians 4:21–24 (NLT)

- 21 Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, 22 throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.
- 23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.
- 24 <u>Put on</u> your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

Also begin reading and studying <u>Col 3:1-17</u>, which addresses the same "put-off" "put-on" theology of change.

I want to encourage you to pick up a couple of resources - the book I keep mentioning; "Be Ye Transformed" by Chuck and Nancy Missler. This is the most in-depth dealing of Rom 12:1-2 that I've ever read.

The book called "The Love Dare" is my number one choice for what we are about to talk about tonight - CLEAVING. This is from that great movie "Fireproof." If you haven't seen it, you should.

This book will give you 40 challenges to put on Christ in your marriage. You can read it, and do it, individually, or together. So, when I say "put on" the new life traits, you may say, "What does that mean?" Well, there are 40 of them right there in "The Love Dare." The authors are Stephen and Alex Kendrick. Stephen Kendrick is the pastor of the Baptist church that made the movie "Fireproof".

Recommended Resources:

"Be Ye Transformed," Chuck and Nancy Missler (amazon.com)

"The Love Dare," Stephen and Alex Kendrick (amazon.com)

This is our third week looking at Gen 2:24. So let's make sure we understand it before we leave it

Our Foundation Verse - Genesis 2:24



"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother, and hold fast (cleave) to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

There are three commands in this verse that we call "The Genesis Command" - Leave - Cleave - Become One Flesh

Every <u>serious problem</u> you have in your marriage can be <u>traced back</u> to some <u>conflict</u> with the three commands in this verse.

These three commands in Gen 2:24 address every single marriage problem I've ever seen. Last session we saw that you <u>cannot</u> become one flesh, as God designed, unless you understand what God means by the word "LEAVE." Today, we're going to see the same thing with the word "CLEAVE." And then, the greatest blessing of *becoming one flesh* will begin to be within your reach.

The greatest blessing of God in marriage is becoming one flesh. But you can't begin to become one flesh until you are <u>leaving</u>, and until you are <u>cleaving</u>.

In God's design, we must first **Leave** - then we must **Cleave**, then God says we shall *become* (a subsequent event) *one flesh*.

Maybe a more accurate way to say it is; when we are married we are made "positionally" one flesh by God. But it is only as we follow God's design of "leaving" and "cleaving" that we "practically" become one flesh, meaning we actually begin to live in the blessing of becoming one flesh.

Everything we study in this course - is to help you put into practice God's design of leaving - cleaving - so that you can become one flesh. This session's focus is "CLEAVING."

Some parts of this lesson are adapted from "A Biblical Portrait of Marriage" by Dr. Bruce H. Wilkinson, with our appreciation.



Go back . . . back . . . to the early days of your love relationship. In those days, "*cleaving*" came naturally.

We never had to be told we should:

- > Go see our Love
- > Hold their hand
- > Want to be with them
- > Want to make them happy

No one had to tell you, "You guys need to be together. You guys need to gaze longingly into each other's eyes. You need to have a nice long dinner and share your

heart with one another." No one told you that you had to do that. You just did it automatically.

I used to ride my ten-speed bike early in the morning, along this highway with no shoulder, just so I could ride the bus to school with the girl who would become my wife.

You did that, right? You were like, "I've got to go see them. I've got to figure out how to get there. I know it's not logical, but I've got to be there." That's all during the *initial* stages of cleaving. Although some people call this initial cleaving "infatuation," I'm good with calling it the initial stage of cleaving.

We did all these things because we were *head-over-heels* in love. We never had to be told in those early days to *cleave* – because we couldn't get enough of "*cleaving*" (*in that initial sense*) and that is a great time in every relationship - *and God uses it*. I believe God uses those feelings to attract you to each other, to initially bring you together. God uses those initial feelings to "*light the fire*" of the relationship.

We were certain we were doing all those things for <u>them</u> (because we loved <u>them</u> so much). However... as much as you might have thought that, in actuality, in the early stage of your relationship, you were actually doing those things (to a large extent) for ... *YOURSELF!!!*

It was actually because of how it made *YOU* feel that you were always with them - holding their hand - making them happy.

That first season of cleaving was based on how cleaving made *YOU* feel, and again, that's okay, because God uses those initial feelings to "*light the fire*." However, that first season of *cleaving* – is actually a very *shallow understanding* of what the word "cleave" really means.

That first season of cleaving is based on wonderful feelings. But it doesn't take anything to cleave to someone who is giving you all the right responses. You're feeling warm and fuzzy all over when you're cleaving to them. But you don't even have to know anything about God's design to feel that way.

The problem is, God would never actually design something as wonderful as marriage by telling us to rely on our emotions or feelings.

God would never take your fickle and fleeting emotions and base such a huge foundation of your life on them, because they can so easily start running every which way. God would not say to you, "You need to cleave to your spouse because of how it makes you

feel. You need to cleave to your spouse because you get the warm and fuzzy feelings from them when you do." God would never do that.

Cleaving in God's design is not conditional; *it is unconditional*. Our emotions are conditional. We feel good cleaving one day; we don't really feel good cleaving the next day. But God would never base His design of marriage on something as *conditional as our emotions*.

Marriage is permanent, our *emotions* or *feelings* are constantly changing. God would never base something as permanent as marriage on something as fleeting as our feelings. Don't get me wrong; God is a God of emotion, and he's given us wonderful emotions to share with each other. And becoming one flesh in your marriage involves the most wonderful emotions. *However*...

God has never said, and never will say, you are to cleave to your spouse <u>based on</u> your emotions or feelings. God's miraculous design for you to cleave is <u>not conditional</u>, meaning it is not based on how you feel. Cleaving in a marriage relationship (as God designed it) is not based on an emotion, it is based on a commitment.

This week's M.I.P. (Most Important Point) is:

M.I.P.

Session 4 – Most Important Point

AVING IS NOT BASED ON EMOTION

CLEAVING IS <u>NOT</u> BASED ON <u>EMOTION</u>.

IT IS BASED ON VOLITION.

 $\underline{\mathbf{Emotion}} = A \ State \ of \ Feeling$

<u>Volition</u> = Making a Choice or Commitment

Emotion is a state of feeling. "I'll cleave to you because of how you make me feel." That's the world's view of cleaving. Volition is making a choice. Volition is making a commitment. "I'll cleave because I've made a commitment to cleave. I'll cleave unconditionally because this is what I've made a commitment to do." Cleaving is a decision in God's design. It comes from your volition, not your emotion.

You do make the initial decision based on your emotion. You really do. I believe that's why God gives you the "fires of love." I believe that he starts those emotions to get the fire going. But the commitment isn't based on those emotions, because some days, the emotion is just not there. So the commitment is based on the choice, but it starts with the fires of emotion.

Most of our relationships started with those fires of emotion (or infatuation), but they must grow to cleaving by choice. *I'm going to make a choice – I'm going to make a commitment – and it's going to be permanent.*

One thing we must understand about God's design for marriage; God never, ever, says "only if you feel like it." Instead, God says if you will make the choice (the commitment), He will provide the grace and the power to accomplish his will in your marriage. Not only that - but he will bring into your life the blessings that come from trusting and following his design for your marriage.

You make the choice. He provides the grace, power, and the blessing. If you will make the choice, he will give you the power. If you will make the commitment, he will back it up supernaturally.

Both leaving and cleaving in God's Design – are acts of choice and commitment - NOT feelings and emotions.



HERE IS A DRASTIC PROBLEM IN OUR CULTURE ...

We've been told, "If it feels good DO it" and "If it doesn't feel good, DON'T do it." Unbelievably, that has filtered down to Christian marriages. The result is a divorce rate inside the church that is the same as outside the church.

The divorce rate inside the church is the same as outside the church because Christians have started saying, "I deserve to feel good, and if I don't feel good, then I deserve to make the changes necessary so that I do feel good."

That is the result of massive self-focus. But please hear me when I say the "I deserve to be happy" approach to life, and the decision to follow Jesus Christ are in two different universes, and it's created a real problem in the Church.

But God has not changed - and his words "*leaving*" and "*cleaving*" are still words of choice and decision – not feeling and emotion.

Both leaving and cleaving in God's design are acts of choice and commitment, **NOT** feelings and emotions.

In session 3, definitions for the Hebrew word "Leave" provided our outline. In this session the definitions for the word "Cleave" will do the same.

Let's look at the three definitions for the Hebrew word translated "CLEAVE."

Hebrew word for "Cleave" is "Dabaq" – it has 3 primary definitions:

- 1) To Pursue Closely
- 2) To Be Joined Together
- 3) To Hold Fast Together

Notice the graduating intensity of these definitions.



EVEL 1 – TO PURSUE CLOSELY, OR CHASE AFTER

It happens naturally in the beginning (as a result of emotion). But in order for you to truly cleave to your spouse, that pursuing of your spouse must become volitional!

You must <u>choose</u> to pursue closely, chase after your spouse, in every area of your marriage. And men, I'm not talking just physically. In <u>every</u> area of your marriage you must pursue closely your spouse - you've got to "chase after" them.

This is an act of your will, your volition.

It's not only when your emotions drive you (when you *feel* like it), but it is regularly and on purpose.

You must choose to "chase after" your spouse.



This definition is used to describe where two pieces of armor are *joined together* – right at the joint, that is the word "*Cleave*." This is the definition of "cleave" used most often, and it's a good one.

In the beginning of a love relationship, we often hear, "Man, it's like you two are joined together at the hip." Well, In God's design for marriage, that is a good thing.

But what does the world tell us??

Be your own person, have your own life. Do your own thing, don't smother each other.

But we never hear that kind of advice from God's word.

And when we try to adopt of the world's view to fit our self-will, that's when we begin living half-Godly and half-worldly marriages.

God's word says, <u>Cleave</u> - which means to be "joined together" like two pieces of armor joined at the critical point. There is absolutely no indication here – that it means only in a certain "compartment" or "area" of your life.

Marriage is not a "compartment" of your life. You cannot be an individual for eight hours a day – then be joined together again when you get home. You must be "joined together" with your spouse at all times, in all ways;

Physical – **Emotional** – **Relational** – **Spiritual** - in ALL ways.

```
So - Level 1 = "To Pursue Closely"

Level 2 = "To Be Joined Together"...
```



This is my favorite definition. The best picture we have today is in welding.

This definition "to hold fast together" describes the place where two pieces of steel are welded together. If you ask a welder where the strongest point is on two pieces of steel that have been welded together, he'll tell you; "right at the weld."

Right at the point of the weld is this definition of "cleave." It is by far the strongest point of any place on the two pieces of steel. And so, when we "cleave to" (become one with) our spouse, we become many times stronger than either of us could ever be individually.

And, by the way, that welding requires some very hot fire, and each piece must MELT in the process. But when it's over, there's nothing stronger than where the "refiners fire" has welded those two pieces together.

This final level of "cleaving" comes over time, as the inevitable "fires" of marriage cause you to be welded together as one flesh.

In review: 3 Definitions of the Hebrew word for "Cleave"

- 1) To Pursue Closely
- 2) To **Be Joined Together**
- 3) To Hold Fast Together

Now, let's go through the <u>7 Principles for Cleaving</u>. Here are 7 areas you can address today to begin to get your marriage in-line with God's design.

7 PRINCIPLES FOR CLEAVING:

> 1) LEAVE, TO SOME EXTENT, ALL OTHER RELATIONSHIPS

In some way – and at varying levels of intensity – you must **Loosen**, **Depart From**, or **Forsake**, ALL other relationships.

> 2) COMMIT TO GOD'S DESIGN IN EVERY AREA OF YOUR MARRIAGE

No matter what condition your marriage is in - *God is able* to provide the "cleaving glue" for you to "become one flesh." When there doesn't seem to be anything to hold onto in your marriage, God himself must become what you cling to - and commit to. Your marriage is patterned after the most sure and guaranteed love relationship in the world – that of Jesus Christ and His Church.

In Eph 5 Paul is talking about marriage and the Church.

Ephesians 5:31–32 (NLT)

31 As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined (cleaves) to his wife, and the two are united into one."

32 This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one.

God's design for your marriage is patterned after Jesus Christ's relationship with the

Church, and you can trust that pattern. No matter what your flesh thinks or sees or feels Jesus Christ can miraculously heal and restore the ugliest situation. It may take some time – some difficulty, and even some pain – but God designed you to cleave together, and he did that based on HIS ABILITY – *not yours*.

- A CONSCIOUS CHOICE -NOT A FEELING OR EMOTION

> 3) MAKE CLEAVING YOUR ONLY OPTION

True cleaving is volition - not emotion. Cleaving is a choice, a commitment – not a feeling or emotion. It can in fact, at times, be very contrary to feelings and emotions and sometimes it becomes a commitment to God alone, in submission to him – having faith in his grace and his power to strengthen, heal and restore your ability to "cleave."

His design is for cleaving to be your only option - and he will give you the grace, and the power, if you will make the choice.

The number three definition of "cleave" that we looked at means – "TO HOLD FAST" - a picture of two pieces of steel welded together.

And so, after quoting **Genesis 2:24** (our key verse) Jesus says:

Matthew 19:6 (ESV)

6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

God's design is for you to never be "un-cleaved." But for you to do that - you Will have to:

- 1) **Crucify** your self-will
- 2) **Leave**, to some extent, all other relationships
- 3) <u>Cleave</u>, no matter what, to one another

When times get tough – we have to fall back on God's absolutes.

All God needs from us is:

Complete surrender to his will and Complete crucifying of our self-will.

If we will do that – then God will provide *grace and the power* to bring about *his miraculous design* of two becoming one flesh – *even through the most difficult situations*.

> 4) MAKE CLEAVING YOUR TOP PRIORITY UNDER CHRIST

ANYTHING in your married life (EXCEPT your relationship with Christ) that you put at a higher priority than cleaving to your spouse will prevent you from becoming one flesh in that area.

The easiest example is that "brass ring" of success. I'm talking about getting caught up in chasing some temporal dream instead of chasing your desire to become one flesh. If it's more important to you to have all the "right stuff" than it is to cleave to your spouse—what you may end up with exactly half of the "right stuff" - and no spouse.

Don't get FOOLED by the lures of this world.

Put cleaving to your spouse, and becoming one flesh at the highest priority of your life (under Christ.)

> 5) WE MUST WORK AT CLEAVING IN EVERY AREA

Consider the instruction God gave to newlyweds in Deut 24:5:

Deut 24:5 (NKJV)

5 "When a man has taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war or be charged with any business; he shall be free at home one year, and bring happiness to his wife whom he has taken."

A year may not be possible, but God's point is clear . . . CLEAVING TAKES WORK!

When you're first married - concentrate on your marriage - learn how to cleave because there are times coming when we must "work" at cleaving and sometimes in the face of *very difficult* circumstances

So we've GOT to LEARN to WORK at "cleaving."



(A) Work at "Cleaving" Physically (non-sexual)

• We need to be "joined together" physically.

This means we spend time "first and foremost" with our spouse. And we need to develop a physical relationship – that is not sexual.

(B) Work at "Cleaving" Emotionally

• We must be "joined together" emotionally

This means sharing our *deepest emotions* with our spouse. We need to let our spouse "in" to our *emotional life*.

(C) Work at "Cleaving" Spiritually

• We must have a strong "spiritual relationship" with our spouse

Seldom do we see a couple in counseling that are *regularly* praying - reading God's word - and seeking God together. We must develop our *spiritual relationship* with our spouse.

> Now, #6) BE SEXUALLY PURE FOR YOUR SPOUSE IN EVERY WAY

We must **Pursue Closely - Be Joined Together -** and **Hold Fast** to our Spouse for **ALL** of our **Sexual** needs (critically important)

1 Cor 7:2-3 (NLT)

- 2 But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.
- 3 The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs.

God's design is for you to exclusively *cleave* to your spouse *sexually*. Sexual intimacy is the God-given *super-glue* in a marriage and broken sexual intimacy is one of the toughest trials to overcome.

Sexual intimacy is an incredible double-edged sword. If it's right; it is *unmatched* in its ability to produce *the miracle* of one flesh. If it becomes damaged; it is *unmatched* in its difficulty to recover from.

If you have been sexually pure – remain that way – at all costs. *Do not let the devil rip you off in this area*. The benefits are *far too big*, and the difficulties *far too great* – to trade for some *temporary pleasure*.

If you have not been sexually pure – get pure – today – and begin crying out to God (with your spouse) for you to begin the long road of *healing* and *reconciliation* that your marriage will have to go thru in order to be *restored*.

Please hear this: there is no damage -no pain -no difficulty - that is too big for God to heal...

When this area is damaged it is the *most difficult* to heal

With man, this is impossible, but with God, all things are possible

When I say you must be sexually pure for your spouse *in every way* – I'm referring to your eyes, AND your thoughts.

PORNOGRAPHY is a sin that breaks the Principle of Cleaving

NO DAMAGE
NO PAIN
NO DIFFICULTY
THAT IS TOO BIG FOR
GOD TO HEAL

THERE IS

- Pornography WILL prevent you from Cleaving to your Spouse
- Pornography WILL prevent you from Becoming One Flesh

James 1:14–16 (NLT)

14 Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. 15 These desires give birth to sinful actions. And when sin is allowed to grow, it gives birth to death.

16 So don't be misled . . .

Any type of pornography in a marriage must be totally forsaken – and completely crucified or **IT WILL** *destroy your marriage*.

Pornography is a sin that breaks the Principle of Cleaving

Pornography will prevent you from cleaving to your spouse. Pornography will prevent you from becoming one flesh.

Any type of pornography in a marriage must be totally forsaken and completely crucified if you ever desire to become one flesh.

Now the last principle for "cleaving to your spouse"... is such a huge principle, and such a huge requirement that it gets its own message devoted to it. I'm going to tell you the seventh principle for "cleaving" right now but then we're going to take all of next session to dig into it.

The next principle *continually required* in every marriage in order for you to be able to "cleave" to our spouse is

> 7) COVER YOUR MARRIAGE IN DIVINE FORGIVENESS

(And that's *the entire message* for next week)

Let's REVIEW THE 7 PRINCIPLES FOR CLEAVING

7 PRINCIPLES FOR CLEAVING;

- > LEAVE, to some extent, ALL other relationships
- > COMMIT to God's Design in EVERY area of your marriage
- > Make cleaving your ONLY OPTION
- > Make cleaving your TOP PRIORITY under Christ
- > WORK at cleaving in EVERY area
- > Be SEXUALLY PURE for your spouse in EVERY way
- Cover your marriage in DIVINE FORGIVENESS

No matter how *broken*, how *un-cleaved* you feel your marriage is today, are you willing to make the choice to cleave, so that God can *pour out* his grace and his power, to bring the miracle of *cleaving* back into your marriage?

Do you believe that God is powerful enough to heal – to restore - and to make you one flesh?

If so – then here are your RESPONSE Questions

Response Time . . .

Are you willing to CHOOSE to CLEAVE to your spouse in every way, no matter how you FEEL?

Are you willing to tangibly WORK toward CLEAVING to your spouse in every way, asking for God's grace and God's power to enable you?

No matter how un-cleaved you find your marriage today, do you believe God is powerful enough to heal, to restore, and to make you one flesh?

"Heavenly Father, teach us to cleave in every way. May you give us the faith to choose to cleave no matter what the circumstances, no matter the feeling or emotion. As we make the choice to cleave to one another, please empower us by your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen."

<u>Put-Off, Put-On</u> Session 4 - Homework # 1

SCRIPTURE :Eph_4:17-24, Col_3:1-17
PRAY Together - Ask God to give you the faith and the power to commit to change for the benefit of your marriage.
<u>LISTEN</u>
Read <u>Eph 4:17-24</u> . Read it a few times, in a couple translations, until you have a good grasp of what it says.
<u>THINK</u>
Do you both agree that putting off the old sin life and putting on the new life is absolutely necessary to follow Christ?
Do you think you can have a marriage as God designed it WITHOUT putting off the old sin life and putting on the new life in Christ?
<u>How</u> might you <u>LEARN</u> to do this? Not <u>what</u> should you put off and put on, but what resources or avenues are available to you to <u>LEARN</u> how to do this?
Will you commit to LEARN what this means and learn HOW to do it?
Just for starters; try going to www.blueletterbible.org and typing each of these phrases in the "FAQ search" box:

What Practical Steps Can We Take toward Christian Maturity?

Is Our Salvation Something That We Presently Experience?

LISTEN

Read <u>Col 3:1-17</u>. This is a long read, so slow down, mull over it together. Think about it, talk about it. You're meditating on God's Word together, be happy!

<u>THINK</u>
Find the "Put Off" verses and review them. List some of the Old Sin Life you need to put OFF, specifically for your marriage.
Find the "Put On" verses and review them.
List some of the New Life traits you need to put ON, specifically for your marriage.

<u>PRAY</u>

Each of you pray that God would guide you in how to do this, and give you the faith and the power to follow through with any commitments you've made.

SERIOUSLY CONSIDER

Seriously consider buying . . .

"Be Ye Transformed," Chuck and Nancy Missler, (kingshighway.org). This book and workbook will help you learn **HOW** to change Biblically.

"The Love Dare," Stephen and Alex Kendrick (amazon.com). This book will give you a great 40-day guide, and challenge, to actively **PUT ON** the new life traits specifically in your marriage.

Cleave to Become One Flesh Session 4 - Homework # 2

<u>SCRIPTURE</u> : <u>Eph 4:29-32, Gen 2:24</u> DATE
<u>PRAY</u> - Slow Down. Pray together to have an honest, loving conversation.
<u>LISTEN</u>
Read <u>Eph 4:29-32</u> (again). Each one of you read it out loud. Make a commitment to follow these guidelines in this conversation.
In <u>Gen 2:24</u> we are commanded to <u>CLEAVE</u> to one another in order to become one flesh (see workbook.)
The three definitions of the Hebrew word for CLEAVE are: 1) To Pursue Closely 2) To be Joined Together 3) To Hold Fast Together
DISCUSS
Discuss these three definitions until you understand them (review your workbook).
Review the "7 <i>Principles for Cleaving</i> " on page 7 of your workbook. Using this list as a conversation starter, share with your spouse <u>up to three areas</u> of <u>CLEAVING</u> where you would like to see improvement in your marriage.
Take turns talking about <u>why</u> you would like to see improvement in these areas. If this conversation gets "heated," STOP and re-read <u>Eph 4:29-32</u> . Really, do it.
What areas of CLEAVING are you at odds about improving?
What conflict has NOT CLEAVING in these areas caused in your marriage?

In what ways can you work at CLEAVING in the area(s) that your spouse shared with you?
LISTEN
Read Phil 2:2-4 together (again). And apologize to your spouse if necessary.
PRAY
Pray together about what you've discussed.
COMMIT
When will you return to the list you made above to check on your progress in these areas?

DIVINE FORGIVENESS IN MARRIAGE

SESSION 5

Welcome back to "God's Design for Marriage" - Session 5. Let's open up with prayer.

Father God. This message is huge, and it has huge potential to heal our marriages. So God, we just seek you now, asking for your Holy Spirit to reveal to us the power and the transformation that comes through divine forgiveness. Help us, Lord, to apply your divine forgiveness to our marriages for your healing to begin. Teach us how to forgive each other to the same degree that you have forgiven us. We can't do it on our own, Lord, so please give us your mighty power to accomplish this in our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

In the last two sessions we looked at "leaving" to become one flesh and "cleaving" to become one flesh. We ended session four with "7 Principles for Cleaving" and noted that number seven was actually so big it required its own message. That seventh and final principle was "Living in Divine Forgiveness." This subject has the ability to heal more marriages than possibly any other subject we will be discussing during this series.

Unforgiveness is a wall that will always separate you and your spouse, a wall often built one brick (or hurt) at a time, until those bricks all add up to a huge crisis. Unforgiveness leads to bitterness, resentment, anger and even revenge, and these sins will destroy your marriage.

Living in divine forgiveness becomes an absolute, constant, mandatory requirement for every God-designed marriage. I know some of you have some serious things that require serious divine forgiveness, but I want you to know; GOD IS ABLE!!



It's important that we recognize right up front that forgiveness and reconciliation do not always go together. Reconciliation requires repentance and transformation on the part of both parties. As a Christian, God calls you to divine forgiveness, however, reconciliation requires two parties in agreement. We can't fit the whole picture of reconciliation into this

session, but we can start with divine forgiveness, which is where you must start. Because the sin of unforgiveness not only separates you from your spouse, but it also separates you from God.

Let's look at Eph 4:30-32 again (you've already seen it in your homework).

Ephesians 4:30–32 (NLT)

- 30 And do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.
- 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior.
- 32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, <u>just as</u> God through Christ has forgiven you.

After two strong warnings in verses 29-30, verses 31-32 show a perfect contrast of unforgiveness (vs. 31) and divine forgiveness (vs.32). Read those two verses again, with this contrast in mind.

Now, in verse 32 we see the key to understanding what divine forgiveness is. The key is the two words "just as" or "even as." In Greek, the two words "even as" mean "in the same proportion or to the same degree." We could read the end of verse 32 as "forgiving one another in the same proportion as God in Christ forgave you."

And so, in Ephesians 4:32, we find today's M.I.P.

M.I.P.

Session 4 – Most Important Point

We must forgive one another in the same proportion as God in Christ has forgiven us.

In Matthew Chapter 18 we have a wonderful picture of this "just as" (in the same proportion as) command.





Matthew 18:21–22 (NLT)

21 Then Peter came to him and asked, "Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times?"

22 "No, not seven times," Jesus replied, "but seventy times seven!

Some translations say "seventy-seven times" but it doesn't matter, seventy-seven or seventy times seven. Jesus is not saying to keep good track. He is commanding unlimited, unconditional forgiveness.

In order to do that we must make the comparison and as we continue in Matt 18, Jesus does that for us. Beginning in Matt 18:23 is a picture of you, God and your spouse, and *the purpose is for you to make a comparison*.





MAKE THE COMPARISON...

Matthew 18:23–25 (NLT)

23 "Therefore, the Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him.

24 In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him millions of dollars. (an un-repayable debt)

25 He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt.

This servant owed a debt that could *never* be re-paid. So the "just" (or right) thing to do was for the king to sell the man and his family into slavery, to recover the debt owed by the man.

Matthew 18:26–27 (NLT)

26 "But the man fell down before his master and begged him, 'Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.'

27 Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and <u>forgave his</u> <u>debt</u>.

This is a picture of you standing before God, owing a debt that can't be paid, and receiving a full release and full forgiveness from God.

Now the picture changes to that of you and your spouse.

Matthew 18:28 (NLT)

28 "But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a <u>few</u> thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment.

That is a drastically different response than the one this servant got from his master who *forgave him his un-repayable debt*.

Consider carefully the vast difference between how the servant with the un-repayable debt was forgiven (that's you being forgiven by God), versus the way the servant treated his fellow servant who owed him, by comparison, a relatively small debt (that's you and your spouse.)



WE MUST MAKE THE COMPARISON between the phenomenal, un-repayable debt we owed God and the pocket change debt our spouse owes us.

- ➤ How has God responded when you've hurt him, compared to how you've responded when your spouse hurt you?
- And when you've been wronged by your spouse do you extract some type repayment, because you *deserve it*?

So, after the unforgiving servant had "laid hands" on the one who owed him a small debt (by comparison), the parable continues.

Matthew 18:28–30 (NLT)

28 "But when the man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment.

29 "His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. 'Be patient with me, and I will pay it,' he pleaded.

30 But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full.

This sounds like some of our marriage relationships, doesn't it? Perpetually putting each other in debtor's prison...

Now imagine the angels watching what Jesus Christ went through to forgive you an unrepayable debt to God, then watching you throw your spouse into debtor's prison for their relatively small (by comparison) offense. It's in the next verse.

Matthew 18:31 (NLT)

31 "When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened.

It's like the angels coming to God and saying, "We don't understand, after all you have forgiven them, look at how they're treating one another."

And so the Master has a response for the unforgiving servant.

Matthew 18:32–34 (NLT)

- 32 Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, 'You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me.
- 33 Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?' 34 Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be tortured until he had paid his entire debt.
- "Sent the man to prison to be tortured," that sounds pretty drastic. Certainly God wouldn't do that to us just because we refuse to forgive our spouse of some offense would he? Well . . . let's read the next verse very carefully.

Matthew 18:35 (NLT)

35 "That's what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart."

Have you ever felt <u>tortured</u> by unforgiveness? Have bitterness, resentment, and anger been TORTURING you from the inside?

Why would God allow us to feel tortured by our unforgiveness?

Think of why we have pain in our physical body. That pain is actually good. It plays a key role in your healing. Because if you didn't have physical pain when there was something wrong in your body, you would never go to the doctor, and you would die from never receiving care. And God's discipline is very similar.

Hebrews 12:5–6 (NLT)

5 And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said, "My child, don't make light of the Lord's discipline, and don't give up when he corrects you.

6 For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes each one he accepts as his child."

Hebrews 12:11 (NLT)

11 No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

God loves you enough to *allow* that bitterness, resentment and anger to torture you, until it breaks you, *so you can be healed*. If you will be trained by his chastisement, it will yield in you the peaceable fruit of righteousness (including divine forgiveness.)

If you are living with bitterness, resentment and anger toward your spouse, you are being tortured. God wants to *free you and heal you*, and he has given you the power (in the Holy Spirit) to forgive "*just as*" (in the same proportion) as God has forgiven you. He would not give you the command without providing you the power, because you and I don't have this forgiveness in our own nature. It can only come from the divine nature of God. It must be supernaturally imparted to you by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Let's turn over to the "Lord's Prayer." Here we see, right in the middle of the Lord's Prayer, a conditional statement:



Matthew 6:12 (NLT)

12 and forgive us our sins, <u>as</u> we have forgiven those who sin against us.

Do you really want God to forgive you the same way you forgive your spouse? Is that really how you want God to deal with you?

Then, following the Lord's Prayer, Jesus chooses just one subject of the prayer to add 'comment' to.

Matthew 6:14–15 (NLT)

14 "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you.
15 But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Now the hammer really falls! Some of us have never really read those verses before. Jesus isn't talking about salvation here. He has made it clear this is a prayer for disciples, who are already saved. The issue here is being in a right relationship with God. Your relationship with God will feel tortured, and your relationship with your spouse will feel tortured, until you learn to live in divine forgiveness in your marriage relationship.

There are two other key passages on why we must forgive, and they are included in your homework; Mark 11:25 and Luke 6:37-38. This is such a critical subject, please be sure to study this in your homework.

ow Can We Live in Divine Forgiveness?

The question is how? How can we experience God's divine forgiveness in our marriages? How can we forgive in the same proportion as God has forgiven us? How can we end the torture that unforgiveness brings into our lives? How can we make our relationship with our spouse and God right, through divine forgiveness?

Well, first we need to know; Divine forgiveness is <u>not</u> approving of, or excusing, sin in your spouse. It's not denying the offense. It's not pretending you're not hurt.

Divine forgiveness is being fully aware of the offense and making a choice (against your feelings) to:

- 1) **RELEASE** them from the debt
- 2) **REFUSE** to punish them
- 3) **KEEP NO RECORD** of the wrong

That is how God in Christ has forgiven you, and that is how you are called to forgive your spouse.

Divine forgiveness acknowledges the wrong done and then chooses to completely forgive it. The offense must be willfully, purposefully forgiven and all resentment totally crucified. You may think it's impossible for you to forgive at that level. And without God, it is impossible.

But, Romans 5:5 says (ESV)

5... God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

All the steps to divine forgiveness are <u>supernatural</u> and they all start with us *crucifying* our self-will and then seeking God's *transforming power*.

God's agape love is that unconditional, self-sacrificing love that we don't have in our own nature. It is the power of God alive in us. We can't apply it in our own strength, we can only choose by faith to yield to the agape love God has given to us by the Holy Spirit.

Living in divine forgiveness is a *process* of transforming our lives, from our old sin nature, to God's divine nature. And you can start this transformation process today. Today, you can begin to supernaturally live in divine forgiveness.

L STEPS TO LIVING IN DIVINE FORGIVENESS

- 1 Recognize Unforgiveness in your heart
- 2 Repent of your sin with godly sorrow
- 3 Receive God's command to forgive by faith
- 4 Replace your hard heart with God's unconditionally loving heart



Unforgiveness is damaging your marriage, and will continue to damage it as long as you are holding on to it. Begin the process by asking God to reveal any unforgiveness you are carrying. We must constantly pray with King David in;

Psalm 139:23-24 (ESV)

23 Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! 24 And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

DIVINE FORGIVENESS COMES ONLY FROM THE AGAPE LOVE OF GOD

God has given us signs to show us when we are harboring unforgiveness.

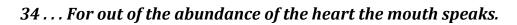
The first sign of unforgiveness is separation

If we feel

Unforgiveness is a sin that separates us from God and from our spouse. If we feel separated from our spouse, and/or from God, we need to search our hearts for unforgiveness. Because unforgiveness separates us and we end up feeling tortured.

The second sign of unforgiveness is our tongue

Mat 12:34





Listen to the words that are coming out of your mouth because unforgiveness is always revealed in your tongue.

Anger – Bitterness – Resentment – Jealousy . . . are all signs of unforgiveness. And these sins are all revealed by what comes out of your mouth toward your spouse.

We must recognize that unforgiveness is an open door for Satan to bring destruction into our lives.

In <u>2 Cor Ch 2</u>, Paul is speaking about the necessity of forgiveness, and in verse 11, he says "...lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices."

Satan will take advantage of unforgiveness in your heart to bring damage and destruction *into your life*.

TEP # 2 - REPENT OF YOUR SIN WITH GODLY SORROW

Unforgiveness is a sin that separates you from your spouse and God, giving the devil a wide open door. It's a sin that must be repented of, just like any other sin.

2 Cor 7:10 (NKJV)

10 For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted . . .

Repentance means literally "A change of mind, purpose and action."

Probably the greatest display of repentance in the Bible is in Psalm 51, where King David truly displays "godly sorrow" and we see true repentance. Study this passage, and ask the Holy Spirit to really impress upon you the true repentance that comes from "godly sorrow." If you desire to move toward divine forgiveness, Psalm 51 must be the prayer of your heart.

Psalm 51:10-12 (ESV)

10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

- 11 Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

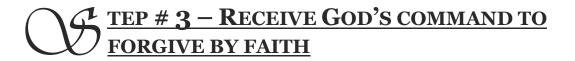
Until you see unforgiveness as a sin, you will continue to justify it and live in the torture.



Godly Sorrow = Sorrow or Grieving that is Due (<u>owed to</u>) God **Repentance** = A Change of Mind, Purpose, **and** Action

Have you experienced this level of "godly Sorrow" over your sin of unforgiveness? Until you do, you will continue to justify and rationalize your pride and self-will. And Satan will continue to bring destruction into your marriage, and your life.

When we experience sorrow and grieving which we rightfully owe to God, it produces a change of mind, purpose, and action. When we come with true godly sorrow and a broken and contrite heart, then God will begin to *heal us*.



There is nothing here about feelings. This is strictly about faith and obedience. "God said it, I'll do it."

<u>Hebrews 11:6 (ESV)</u>

6 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.

<u>Faith</u> is the *opposite* of <u>feeling</u>. God is waiting for you to say:

"I <u>receive</u> your command to forgive just as I have been forgiven."

"I <u>believe</u> your Word and I will crucify my own self-will (my flesh) in order to receive Your command." "I will <u>act on</u> your command, by faith and in obedience."

If you will receive God's command to forgive (believe without reservation) then you will begin to experience the supernatural transformation of divine forgiveness in your life (and marriage.) Your power is in yielding your actions to the Holy Spirit (see Rom 6:12-14.) As you yield to the Holy Spirit, HE is your power to do what you cannot do on your own, and that is how your life and your marriage are transformed.



TEP # 4 - REPLACE YOUR HARD HEART WITH GOD'S HEART

At the cross there was an exchange of hearts. Jesus Christ took upon Himself our heart of sin and he gave us *his own heart*. (We are <u>IN Christ</u> - Rom 6.)

Paul understood this when he said in Galatians:

Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

<u>When</u> we have crucified our self-will and self-interest with Christ (which is done through repentance and godly sorrow) <u>then</u> our hard heart can be replaced with God's divine heart. We need a supernatural transformation of our lives in order to forgive as God calls us to forgive. And when we do, we will begin to put off our own nature and put on Christ's nature.

Romans 12:1-2 is one of the best descriptions in the Bible of the supernatural transformation of your heart through the power of yielding your life to the Holy Spirit.

Rom 12:1-2

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice (sacrifice your self-will), holy, acceptable to God, which

is your reasonable service.

² And do not be conformed to this world (don't do what is natural), but be transformed (get a new nature) by the renewing of your mind (by the Holy Spirit), that you may prove (know) what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

God is ready, willing and able. You, however, must choose to crucify yourself and yield your actions to God so He can live through you. All that bitterness, resentment and anger will begin to heal as you crucify the "self" nature, be renewed by the Holy Spirit, and put on the new nature of Jesus Christ. (See Eph 4:17-32, and Col 3:1-17.)

The secret fifth step is actually the secret to living in divine forgiveness every day of your life.

The secret fifth step to living in divine forgiveness is...

TEP # 5 – REPEAT AS OFTEN AS NECESSARY

When unforgiveness rises up again to damage your life, you must repeat the process. We must watch closely for any root of bitterness springing back up and we must immediately crucify it by *repeating* this process. You don't have to be a slave to your unforgiveness. Anger and bitterness don't have to destroy your life. You can begin to get victory over the sin of unforgiveness right now. God is waiting for you, and ready to empower you to start walking in divine forgiveness by faith.



Response Time . . .

Are you holding onto unforgiveness in <u>ANY</u> area of your marriage?
Are you willing to crucify your Self-Will and have your heart supernaturally transformed by yielding to God's agape love?
Are you willing to <i>KEEP ASKING</i> God for the power to forgive in the same proportion as God has forgiven you?
Please look into your spouse's eyes, and make a commitment by faith to forgive as God has forgiven you, and to allow God to make Divine Forgiveness a reality in your marriage.

"Heavenly Father, we acknowledge that our unforgiveness is destroying our marriages. We receive your command to divine unconditional forgiveness. We repent of our sin of unforgiveness. Please give us a clean heart and renew a right spirit in us. May we yield to your agape love in our lives by the power of your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen."





<u>Mat 6:9-15</u> (The Lord's Prayer) – verse 12 says, "And forgive us our debts, as [in the same way as] we forgive our debtors."

Do you really want God to forgive you in the same way you forgive your spouse?

And in verses 14-15 (just after the Lord's Prayer), we read:

Mat 6:14-15

"14 For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

¹⁵ But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Jesus is not referring to our salvation, but to our on-going fellowship with God. There is a direct comparison between our forgiving others and our "right relationship" with God.

Mark 11:25-26

⁴²⁵ And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

²⁶ But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses. "

Our unforgiveness prevents us from walking in right relationship with God, and with our spouse.

Read Mat 7:1-5 (the Plank and Speck) and replace the word "brother" with the word "spouse."

If you will deal with the plank of unforgiveness in your own eye, most likely you won't be able to see the speck in your spouse's eye.

Read Luke 6:36-38 (Give and it will be given to you). Notice the Primary Context is Mercy and Forgiveness

Make The Comparison Session 5 - Homework # 1

SCRIPTURE:	Matt 18:21-35	<u>Date</u>
<u>PRAY TOGETHE</u>	R	
<u>LISTEN</u>		
	slowly, take your time, get the sider carefully who each of t	e picture clearly in your mind. As the he characters represent.
<u>THINK</u>		
		on Jesus is teaching in this parable. ocess you see, and why is it such a
How must you apply	this teaching to your mar	riage?

Read Matt 18:34-35 again. Have you ever felt "tortured" by your unforgiveness?
Write some of the damaging effects unforgiveness has had on you personally, your marriage, and your family.
LISTEN
Read Heb 12:5-11, focusing on verses 5 and 11.
<u>THINK</u>
Do you think God has been trying to get your attention through the pain that unforgiveness has been causing in your life?
Will you commit to focus your spiritual growth on THIS subject, to whatever extent it's needed in your life and marriage?
In what ways might you be able to focus your spiritual growth on THIS subject? (You may need a mentor/discipler to help answer this question)

PRAY TOGETHER

Forgive To Be Forgiven Session 5 - Homework # 2

SCRIPTURE : Matt 6:9-15, Mark 11:25, Luke 6:37-38 Date
<u>PRAY TOGETHER</u>
LISTEN
Read <u>Matt 6:9-15</u> .
THINK
What single line of "The Lord's Prayer" is actually 'conditional'?
Why, in your opinion, does Jesus go back in verses 14 and 15 and comment on
verse 12?
<u>LISTEN</u>
Read all of <u>Mark 11:22-25</u> (NKJV readers: Don't be thrown off by the title break between verses 24 and 25, verses 22-25 are all one statement by Jesus).
<u>THINK</u>
Why would Jesus add verse 25 to the statements in verses 22-24?

LISTEN

Read <u>Luke 6:37-38</u> very carefully. Don't automatically start thinking about this verse in regards to money.

<u>THINK</u>

Using ONLY the subjects listed in verse 37, what does the word "Give" seem to be referring to? (The primary subject of the word "give" is dictated by the context of verse of 37. Think hard. It's not primarily about money.)
Thinking about ALL THREE of these texts (Matt 6, Mk 11, Luke 6), what is the one overriding truth being very clearly taught?
How does this life-changing truth apply to our marriages?

PRAY TOGETHER

This is such a HUGE subject. Really take the time to pray together about what you've learned and discussed.

THE "S" WORD IS FOR EVERYONE



SESSION 6

Let me just clear up one thing... the "S" word is not "SEX."

The failure rate among Christian marriages is astounding; it's practically the same as non-believers. That shouldn't shock us when we realize that surveys show Christians operate their marriages pretty much the same way non-Christians do, so we really shouldn't wonder why our divorce statistics are the same.

God intends marriage to be the greatest blessing on earth (next to our relationship with him) and he has a design to make that happen. All we have to do is get into alignment with his design, and we won't become a "divorce statistic" in the church.

One critical way for us to get in alignment with God's design, is to embrace the truth about the "S" word. There are two things we need to know about the "S" word;

- 1) The "S" word is for *EVERYONE*
- 2) The "S" word is the **KEY** to the *correct FUNCTIONING* of your marriage

<u>Jon Courson</u> says the "S" word is the key for harmony in all relationships - Spouses - Houses - and "Mouses." It's the key to making every relationship function smoothly, especially marriage.

M.I.P.

Session 6 – Most Important Point

RELATIONSHIPS FUNCTION CORRECTLY WHEN THEY ARE ALIGNED WITH GOD'S DESIGN. RELATIONSHIPS DYSFUNCTION WHEN THEY ARE ALIGNED WITH OUR SELF-WILL.

The reason I haven't said the "S" word yet, is because I need to first give you an opportunity to crucify your self-will so you can hear and receive what God has to say to you. - - So let's pray;

Heavenly Father, please reveal to us the importance of this word, please show us how you've designed all relationships to function on the foundation of this word. Show us something that we haven't seen before, Lord. Re-align us Lord, because we have been misaligned by our self-nature and our culture. Lord, I pray that you would soften our hearts that we would hear your Word, and that we would see that it is the absolute key, the secret, to every well-functioning godly relationship. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Are you ready for me to say the "S" word without you feeling rebellion rising up in your heart? If you're ready, here it is...

The "S" word is **SUBMISSION.** There! I've said it! It's out!!!

Immediately, some of you have a battle going on inside of you. Please recognize that battle you feel is not from God, it is your flesh battling *with* God on this critical subject. And we must crucify our flesh in order to win that battle and hear from God.

The reason this word causes such a battle between our flesh and God's spirit is because we are consumed with the all-encompassing question:

"What about ME?" "What about ME?"

And our flesh is always crying out, "HEY, if I actually accept God's design in this area, how am I going to get what I want?"

But, that is us losing our battle with the flesh. What we need to hear and receive is; the "s" word is for everyone. Ephesians 5:21 says we are to be . . .

Eph 5:21 (NKJV)

21 submitting to one another in the fear of God.

And 1Pet 5:5 says (NKJV)

5... Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, ...

Submitting **to** one another... (Eph 5:21) Be submissive **to** one another... (1Pet 5:5)

Some of us have never heard God say submit to one another in your marriage.

The word is "hupotasso" and it comes from two Greek words:

hupo = by, under, with **tasso** = to arrange, assign, appoint

The most common definition is: to arrange under.

The word, submission, is most frequently used to denote order and functionality in relationships. It means, to arrange under, assign by, or appoint with. Again, most often we hear the word used in regard to bringing order and functionality to a relationship, however that is only one use of this powerful word. Sometimes we get so "bent" about how it's used in that sense that we never get to see how it's used in its greater sense.

In the LESSER Sense - this word applies to order and functionality in a relationship.

In the GREATER Sense - this word applies to coming underneath to support, carry, or "bear the burden."

And in this greater sense, this word applies to EVERY single one of us, in ALL of our relationships. (Male, female, husband and wife - all other relationships.)

Eph 5:21 (NKJV)

21 <u>submitting</u> to <u>one another</u> in the fear (reverence) of God.

"Submitting to one another" means all relationships involve submission and "in the fear of God" means that we are to do it out of reverence and respect for God.

This implies it is regardless of whether a person deserves it. We are called to submit to one another out of our love, and reverence for God! We arrange ourselves under one another, we assign ourselves by, we appoint ourselves with... out of our love and reverence for God!

This is the greater sense (purpose) for the word <u>hupotassō</u>. I am not saying God has given men and women the same roles. I am saying both of our roles include submission.

UPOTASSŌ IS USED 47 TIMES IN 32 VERSES IN THE

NEW TESTAMENT

Jesus to His parents - <u>Luke 2:51</u> Demons to the name of Jesus - <u>Luke 2:51</u> Creation to God - <u>Rom 8:20</u> Christians to government - <u>Rom 13:1</u> Church members to leaders - <u>1 Cor 16:16</u> Christ to the Father - 1 Cor 15:28



Submitting to one another in the fear of God makes every relationship right. But our flesh rebels so much, that instead of just believing God by faith, we are always looking for loopholes.

The word submission is about how God designed relationships to work.

In its lesser sense, submission is about order and functionality. In its greater sense, it about setting your "self" aside and coming underneath another. And in your marriage, its purpose (for <u>both</u> of you) is to enable you to experience the blessing of becoming *one flesh*.

The word SUBMISSION <u>does not mean</u>: SUBSERVIENT, INFERIOR or NOT HAVING ANY RIGHTS. "Submitting to one another" means you set your self-will aside and serve the good of your spouse.

You sacrificially put yourself underneath them, to help bear their burden at the expense of your self-will. The problem is we've *distorted God's design*, in <u>all</u> our relationships to serve our "<u>self</u>," instead of the other person.

For example, if we apply our logic regarding this word to Jesus, here's what we get:

1 Corinthians 11:3 (ESV)

3 But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.

<u>The head of Christ is God??</u> Now, wait just a minute. Jesus must be living in the dark ages. Jesus, don't You know you have equal rights with God? Poor Jesus, having to live under that archaic system.

That is us distorting the idea of submission. But wait, it gets "worse."

John 6:38 (ESV)

38 For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me.

John 5:30 (ESV)

30 "I can do nothing on my own . . . because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me.

John 4:34 (ESV)

34 Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.

Here's a question for you: if Jesus Christ had the same feeling toward submission that many of us in the church do... where do you think we all would be heading right now for eternity? Without Jesus Christ choosing a life of total submission you and I would be headed straight to hell right now.

THE GREATEST ACT OF SUBMISSION IN THE UNIVERSE IS THE ACT THAT GETS YOU INTO HEAVEN.

Do you really want to say to Jesus, "Well, I appreciate that submission thing for my salvation... but don't try to force that on me, 'cause I got my own ideas on all that."

The "S" word is for everyone and Jesus is our *supreme example*.

There is submission in the GREATER SENSE, which is setting aside our self-will and coming underneath someone else. And there is submission in the LESSER SENSE,

which is regarding order and functionality in a relationship. Let's look closely at submission in the lesser sense.

John 14:28(b)

28... If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I.

Here, Jesus is NOT talking about "coming underneath" the Father in the greater sense of the word. He is talking about roles. He is talking about "order and functionality in the Godhead."

For example, I could say Chuck Smith was "greater" than me because his "role" in Calvary chapel was above mine, even though he was a man just like me and we have the same value to God. So the Father is "greater than" Jesus, not in essence, nature or value, but in order and function in their roles in the Godhead. The Son willingly submits to the Father, not because of superiority, but because of functionality and role in the relationship. In all relationships there must be a function of roles - Church, Work, Family and Marriage - and the "S" word is the key to making any relationship function correctly (including marriage.)

Let's go back to submission in the *greater sense* (to which we all are called.) Submission (in the greater sense) is putting us under one another, it's sacrificing our self for the other's good. Submitting to one another in the greater sense is both husband and wife saying... I am willing to set my self aside (to crucify my self-will) in order to come under you, to help bear your burden.

There is no greater demonstration of this "greater sense" of submission, than Jesus.

Philippians 2:3–8 (NLT)

- 3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble thinking of others as better than yourselves.
- 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.
- 5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had. 6 Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.
- 7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,

8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.



Jesus Christ willingly set aside all of his *divine rights*. He *emptied* Himself completely (literally means to be "poured out.") He submitted himself to death - for your good.

Then, in Phil 2:5, *You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had*. That is the level of submission we are called to in our marriages. If your marriage is functioning smoothly today, I promise you this key ingredient is at work. Each spouse is sacrificially seeking the other spouse's good at their own expense, just like Jesus did for us.

Let's look at how this truth gets twisted up so often. It gets twisted up by us just "dropping in" to that infamous verse most often used to teach the "S" word in marriage. Let's do that. Let's "drop in" to that one single verse.

Ephesians 5:22 (ESV)

22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

Too often women do all they can to avoid hearing this verse and too often men do all they can to capitalize on this verse. But very often, what neither of them sees is this verse actually taught in context. Look at how well the NLT handles this verse in context.

Ephesians 5:21–22 (NLT)

21 And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 For wives, this means submit to your husband's as to the Lord.

...and then verse 25 says for husbands, and then for children and then employees. This subject of submission does not start in Eph 5:22. The Holy Spirit <u>builds up</u> to this verse. Eph 5:22 is so often taught on its own and it's actually in the <u>middle</u> of an incredible teaching on relationships.

The full context begins way back in Eph 4:1, but we will pick it up in Eph 5:1

Ephesians 5:1–2 (NLT)

1 <u>Imitate God</u>, therefore, in everything you do, because you are his dear children.
2 Live a life filled with love, <u>following the example of Christ</u>. He loved us and offered himself as a sacrifice for us, a pleasing aroma to God.

Then for the next fifteen verses we are exhorted to walk in love, light and wisdom and finally... to be filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18(b) (ESV)

18... be filled with the Holy Spirit,

This is a "continual command." Then verses 19-21 are the result (the fruit) of being constantly filled with the Spirit. There are four "results" (fruits) of being continually filled with the Holy Spirit. Mark them in your bible.

Ephesians 5:19–21 (ESV)

- 19 (1) addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs,
- (2) singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart,
- 20 (3) giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 21 (4) submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

These are "fruits" of being filled with the Spirit and they are all <u>commands</u> in the <u>CONTINUAL</u> tense - meaning *always be*. Then, verse 21 is a transistional statement. It's actually a "kick off verse" for the next twenty verses, The roles of the husband and wife starting in verse 22 are actually a continuation of thought from verse 18, being filled with the Holy Spirit. The next twenty verses tell us *how* we are to do this.



- 5:22 Wives to Husbands
- 5:25 Husbands to Wives
- **6:1** Children to Parents
- **6:4** Parents to Children
- **<u>6:5</u>** Employees to Employers
- **6:9** Employers to Employees

Six different relationships, all relating to the transitional verse 21, "submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ." which is one of the results of being filled with the Spirit in verse 18.

Eph 5:22 causes such negative reaction because we so often make the mistake of just "dive bombing" into the text right there. Biblical submission is not a one sided rule. It's not for an authoritative husband to be abusive to his wife or children and it's not for authoritative pastors to control their sheep - it's for everyone.

Submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ makes you:

- **▶ Humble** not controlling
- > Gentle not abusive
- > Other-centered not self-centered

Submitting to one another is about:

- **Esteeming** the other **higher** than ourselves
- > Sacrificing our self-will for our spouse

Regarding *roles* in the marriage, submission is about "order and functionality." It's about "aligning ourselves" with God's design. Relationships are complex and they require God's design to function properly. The secret ingredient in God's design to make every relationship work - is us *submitting to one another in the fear of the Lord*. **Eph 5:21**.

It's actually the secret ingredient to all godly relationships but we never want to hear about it. Why not? Because the "S" word grates against our sin nature, so we either reject it completely or we water it down enough so we can give it "lip service."

Submitting to one another in the greater sense of <u>sacrificing our self-will</u> for the other person's good is the secret to all godly relationships - especially the marriage relationship

Submitting to one another in the fear of God means to:

- **EMPTY OURSELVES FOR** one another
- > **CRUCIFY** our self-will **FOR** one another
- **ESTEEM** the other person **HIGHER** than ourselves

This does not mean the LESSER SENSE is negated, such as in the roles of husband and wife. These roles are still critical for God's design to work. But, in the GREATER SENSE, when we are both functioning in our "God designed roles" we are actually BOTH placing ourselves underneath one another to strengthen and bear up one another to become "one flesh."

It is our
REBELLION to
God's design
that brings
damage and
destruction.

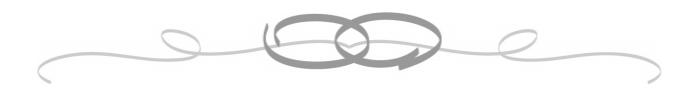


It is our OBEDIENCE to God's design that brings God's promises. In the GREATER SENSE submission means <u>not</u> demanding our own way (either one of us.) It's not fighting for our own opinions, desires or needs, but instead it's submitting (placing underneath) our own needs for the good of our spouse and for the GOOD of our marriage.

We must be willing to have our self-will crucified with Christ to be able to submit to one another in the fear of God.

As soon as we begin to really obey God in this area, then we'll understand the supernatural nature of His design. And then we'll begin to experience the blessings that come from choosing GOD'S will over our self-will.

If we will **OBEY** God, by **FAITH**, He will **faithfully bring blessings** into our marriage.



Response Time . . .

•	Are you willing to sacrifice your <u>self-will</u> for your spouse?
3	Are you willing to put on <u>the mind of Christ</u> in your marriage (who emptied Himself of His privileges for our good, even to death)?
•	Are you willing to <u>esteem</u> (think of) your spouse higher than yourself?
•	In what <u>specific areas</u> can you begin doing this right away?

"Heavenly Father thank you for the power of your Holy Spirit living in me. I surrender my self-will to your design for my marriage. Please give me the power to esteem my spouse higher than myself, to empty my "self" for the good of my spouse, and to come underneath my spouse for their good. In Jesus' name, amen."



Understanding the "S" word Session 6 - Homework # 1

SCRIPTURE:	Phil 2:3-8	<u>Date</u>	
<u>PRAY TOGETHE</u>	R		
<u>REVIEW</u>			
	ok, write out the <u>LESS</u> sion" (the "S" word).	SER and GREATER sense of the	word
In the LESSER Se	ense		
In the GREATER	sense		
In the GREATER strelationships?	sense, <u>WHO</u> does thi	s word apply to, and in <u>WHAT</u>	_
			_
<u>LISTEN</u>			
Read Phil 2:3-8 sloworkbook.	owly, in more than one	translation. You can read the NL	₋ T in your
Write out just ver	se 5.		
THINK			
	-	n of Jesus Christ's submissior ses does <u>NOT</u> apply to you?	າ (in the

your own words, write what Phil 2:3-8 is saying regarding how you are to come nder, support, and sacrifice for your spouse. No simple, few word answers llowed. Chew on each verse and write out what you are called to do in order to ave the same attitude as Christ in your marriage.
ow can you tangibly begin to do this in your marriage, today?

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray together specifically about applying these verses in your marriage.

The Ephesians 5 Context Session 6 - Homework # 2

SCRIPTURE : Eph 5:1-2 & 15-21 Date
<u>PRAY TOGETHER</u>
<u>LISTEN</u>
Read Eph 5:1-2 , out of two different translations if possible.
<u>THINK</u>
What similar command is here that was in Phil 2:3-5 regarding coming under and sacrificing for one another?
Eph 5:3-14 addresses the negative side of this text (what NOT to do). Read them for context, but we are focusing on the positive side (what TO do).
Thoughts or questions on verses 3-14

LISTEN

Read <u>Eph 5:15-21</u>, from two translations (one literal, one dynamic) if possible. The generally accepted interpretation of these verses is that v.18 is the COMMAND (be being constantly filled with the Spirit), followed by 4 RESULTS of being constantly filled with the Spirit.

Those 4 RESULTS (fruits) of being constantly filled with the Spirit are;

- 1) Addressing one another (speaking).
- 2) Singing and making melody.
- 3) Giving thanks.
- 4) Submitting to one another.

Do you see the 4 "Results" (fruitsome count 5)?	its) of being filled with the Spirit in these verses
<u>THINK</u>	

THINK

Don't leave this text too quickly. Read over verses 1-2 and verses 15-21 again.

If your Bible breaks the text between verses 20 and 21, remember those breaks are not inspired. The original manuscript flows without breaks.

Most scholars see vs. 21 as the "Transition" verse from the results of being filled with the Spirit, to what it looks like when we are submitting to one another.

•	9	on to the teaching on marriage, etc in the following ve			

Questions?		

PRAY TOGETHER

For more study on being filled with the Holy Spirit go to **wordbymail.com** and download the audio or notes on messages 15, 16, 17, "Under His Influence"

Or buy **Lloyd Pulley's** book by the same name - "**Under His Influence**" at Amazon.

THE ROLE OF THE WIFE

SESSION 7

I think the most important thing we can do before we start talking about roles is to decide "from what source" we take our direction. Where you get your information impacts how you feel, and we have basically three choices for our role definitions; the <u>World</u> - the <u>Church</u> - and the <u>Bible</u>. If we put it on a scale, it would look something like this:





WORLD ----- C --- H --- U --- R --- C --- H ----- BIBLE

The <u>world</u> puts our role way on one end of the scale, the <u>Bible</u> puts our role way on the other end of the scale, and the <u>Church</u> has become "spread out" somewhere between the world and the Bible, hasn't it?

When Christians discuss this subject, why is it so often we find ourselves on some kind of a sliding scale, trying to fit in somewhere between what the world says and what the Bible says? Even good solid Christians, who accept the Bible as the inerrant, holy Word of God - when this subject comes along, they often get their feathers ruffled and start explaining why they don't agree with God's Word in this area. Often, Christians don't want to really dig too deep into God's Word on this subject, because we really want to stay on that sliding scale somewhere between the world and the Bible - and this is true for the roles of both husband and wife.

But guys, we've got to trust and accept God's Word including what it says about our roles. And I promise you, it is the flesh nature in both husband and wife that begins to "rebel" when we consider accepting God's design about our roles in Marriage.

If we want to experience God's blessings in our marriage, we've got to accept our <u>God-given</u> roles *by faith*, relying on the Holy Spirit to conform us to God's design.

Let's pray.

Father God, make us ready to hear your will. Lord, prepare our hearts. Wipe away that self-opinion. God we are full enough of our own ideas and our own philosophies. We pray God that you would make us ready to hear, that you would just give us an open heart. And Lord, all the things that would keep us from hearing your Word, we pray that you would allow us to set those aside. Help us, Lord. That you would minister to us. That you would calm our hearts if necessary, to set those preconceived notions and those dysfunctional ideas or experiences Lord, that we could set all those things aside and just hear from you, by you, Holy Spirit and through your living Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

Wives where you go to get your information and for your answer to the question: What is your God designed role in your marriage (do you go to the world, the Bible or the Church - somewhere in the middle -?) determines whether you join God in his design... or whether you superficially acknowledge God's design and then do whatever you want in your marriage anyway.

I used three sources to prepare for this message, Sandy Macintosh, Nancy Missler and Kay Arthur; "For Women Only" by Word for Today.

Now it would be easier to start with God's design for the husband, because then we could IMPLY that big IF... *IF my husband does his role - THEN I'll do mine*. There is no condition in God's Word. And God addressed the order of our roles three times in the Bible and every time God addresses the wife first, so we'll do the same.

Let's go back to Genesis 2:18 where for the first time in the creation account God said, "*It is not good*."

Gen 2:18 (NLT)

18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a <u>helper</u> who is <u>just right</u> for him."

We looked at this verse in our second message, "Creating a Husband and a Wife." But in that message we were focused on the words, "just right." Now, we are going back to look at the word "HELPER."

Remember, God said "It is not good for the man to be alone" because God was not finished creating mankind. And so to finish God's complete design of mankind He said, "I will make him a helper comparable to him." And God designed woman as a "helper just right for Adam" to complete his design of mankind.

But wait a minute. Before we look too closely at this verse let's back up to Gen Ch 1.

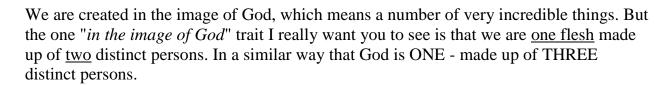
Genesis 1:26–27 (NLT)

26 Then God said, "Let us make human beings (mankind) in our image, to be like us. They will reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground."

27 So God created human beings (mankind) in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

In order for us to understand our *roles* we first have to understand our complete *equality*, and we begin to understand our complete *equality*

here in verse 27. First verse 27 says that mankind was <u>made in the IMAGE</u> of God, and then do you see in verse 27, God created mankind "One" made out of "Two?"



In the one person of God, is there one whose role is to be the Helper? Don't we even call one member of the Trinity "The Helper?" So, are we demeaning that Person of the Godhead? Are we insinuating that role of the Godhead has less worth? Do you think the Holy Spirit feels insulted or slighted by his title?

Then why do some of us "bristle up" at this term "Helper"? ANSWER: The sin nature. In fact, it's actually part of the curse of the "Fall." In Gen 3:16 when God was laying down the consequences of the "Fall" he said to the woman:

Genesis 3:16 (NLT)

16... And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you."

We need to understand, it's the sin nature (self-will) - not God - that causes us to "bristle" at this word.



Gen 2:18 (NLT)

18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a <u>helper</u> who is <u>just right</u> for him."

The <u>Hebrew word</u> for "helper" is **`ezer** (ay-zer) - <u>Literally:</u> "to help" It is used <u>21 times</u> in the O.T.

<u>5 TIMES</u> it's used referring to PEOPLE (including here in Gen 2:18) **<u>16 TIMES</u>** it's used referring to the person of God, most often referring to the Holy Spirit.

This word is used to define God's role *three times more often* than it's used to define mankind's role to one another. Yet because of our sin nature and because of the world's influence - we think somehow it's a demeaning term! (What an insult to God!)



Look at John 14:16 where Jesus is promising to send the Holy Spirit.

John 14:16 (ESV)

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you <u>another Helper</u>, to be with you forever,

"Allos Parakletos" - "One of the same Kind and Quality Who is <u>CALLED</u> alongside to help"

The Helper is not LESS than totally EQUAL in the Godhead. He is GOD - Who is "*One of the same Kind and Quality - Whose role - is to HELP*." That's how God Himself is designed, and that's how God DESIGNED a husband and wife, perfectly equal - with different roles - just like the Godhead.

Remember, back in <u>Gen 2:18</u>, the words "*Just right*" (NLT) or "*Fit for him*" (ESV) mean *According to the opposite*. In our second session we talked about how God made a



husband and wife to *fit* together. And part of *how* God made a husband and wife *fit* together is by designing the husband to <u>SACRIFICIALLY lead</u> (which we will look at next session) and by designing the wife to <u>SACRIFICIALLY support</u> (help.) God made two opposites that make *one* when put together correctly. It is actually impossible for God's design for marriage to be fulfilled without the wife taking on her role

as "helper." It would be like the church trying to accomplish God's purposes without the **power**, the **strength** and the **help** of the Holy Spirit.

We've got to bring God's design of the wife's role from Gen 2 as we head over to the infamous verse, Eph 5:22, and if we'll approach Eph 5:22 with God's Gen 2 design fresh in our minds, then we'll see this scripture is really a matter of organization.

Ephesians 5:21–22 (NLT)

21 And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord.

Verse 21 is the **GREATER SENSE** of "<u>Submit</u>" as in EMPTYING ourselves to ESTEEM the other HIGHER.

Verse 22 is the **LESSER SENSE** of "*Submit*" as in dealing with ORDER and FUNCTIONALITY.

This statement of order in a marriage relationship comes directly from the roles that God designed. There are some women who really rebel against this - why? It's because, our sin nature wants us to be in charge. Because our sin nature says WHAT ABOOUT ME? WHAT ABOUT ME? And that's been true since the fall of mankind in the garden. But in this sense, the most common definition of submit is: "to align or arrange under" - it refers to order and functionality.

(The message from Session 6, "The 'S' Word is for Everyone" deals with the GREATER SENSE of submission. But for this session we are talking about submission as it relates to *order and functionality* in relationships.)

That's what God is dealing with here in Eph 5 and 6 - He's talking about how *all* Godly relationships function correctly.

God's design for the good of the marriage relationship is:

- ➤ for the husband to be the leader, and
- > for the wife to help and support.

It has <u>nothing</u> to do with *superiority*. It has <u>everything</u> to do with *function*:

- It is in role and function that Jesus Christ submits to the Father; and
- It is in role and function that the wife submits to the husband.

"Submission" does not mean caveman and possession, dictator and slave or even Tarzan and Jane. Submission is the design for multiple roles to operate as *one flesh*, in the same image as the **Father**, **Son** and **Holy Spirit**. Wives, the leadership role in your marriage is your husband's - your role is to be his "counter-part" to *help and support him*.

These verses in Eph 5 and 6 kick off the role of submission in *all* relationships. You'll remember from Session 6 there are six different relationships dealt with in these passages, and all of them flow from Eph 5:21 - *submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ*. Submission is an integral part of every correctly functioning relationship, and in Eph 5:22 - *it is about leadership functioning in marriage*.

Now, let's talk about the "as to the Lord" part of this verse.

Ephesians 5:22 (NLT)

22 For wives, this means submit to your husband's as to the Lord.

Colossians 3:18 (NLT)

18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord.

Colossians 3:23 (NLT)

23 Work willingly at whatever you do, <u>as though you were</u> working for the Lord rather than for people.

A WIFE'S HELP AND SUPPORT OF HER HUSBAND IS HER SERVICE RENDERED AS UNTO THE LORD.

A wife's submission - coming <u>under</u> (<u>along-side</u>) her husband to help and support him - *is* her services rendered "*as to the Lord*." When a wife recognizes her husband's role of leadership, she does that "*as unto the Lord*."

Now, let's read the entire instruction to wives here in Eph 5.

Ephesians 5:22–24 (NLT)

- 22 For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord.
- 23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church.
- 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything.

This is an <u>acknowledgement</u> of <u>LEADERSHIP</u>. Paul is moving into kind of a double metaphor, comparing MARRIAGE to the CHURCH. But here, the reference is to LEADERSHIP. The "head" is referring to the role of leadership. Remember what 1 COR 11:3 says:

1 Corinthians 11:3 (NLT)

3 But there is one thing I want you to know: The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.

The issue here is LEADERSHIP in your marriage. Now, invariably, right here comes the quick-draw response, "*yeah*, *but*..." I have never heard so many "yeah, buts" from Christians as when these verses are read, or even *referred* to!

- > "Yeah, but" what if my husband _____?
- > "Yeah, but" what if my husband isn't saved?
- ➤ "Yeah, but" what if my husband's an idiot?
- ➤ "Yeah, but" what about ME? And what about what I WANT?

Now, some of the "yeah, but" questions do require additional counsel. <u>HOWEVER</u>, you must *first* trust God's design for marriage, and then you can seek additional counsel *from* that position of trusting God's design.

We will talk more about the "yeah, buts" in the session called "Living in our Roles."

1 Peter 3:1–2 (NLT)

1 In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over

2 by observing your pure and reverent lives.

We will talk more about this later. But for this session please understand <u>God's Design</u> for the Role of the Wife is:

- 1) To sacrificially HELP (like the Holy Spirit in the Godhead)
- 2) To sacrificially SUPPORT your Husband as The Leader (Eph 5)

Now, the real beauty of God's design for marriage is when BOTH really submit to their *God given roles*. However, the real MIRACLE is - either one of you CAN fill your role whether your spouse *is or not*. Because neither one of our roles is *conditional*, they are *unconditional*.

Remember, most often when EITHER a husband or a wife is not functioning in their God given role, it's usually because the *sin nature* is in control somewhere, instead of the *new nature*.

Remember (First M.I.P.) - It is the refusal to crucify self-will that is at the root of EVERY marriage problem!!!



You *can* (in the power of the Holy Spirit) sacrificially *help* and sacrificially *support* your husband, YOU CAN!! Not in your own strength (there's not enough TRY in you) but by putting off the OLD nature and putting on the NEW.

So, if you're ready to *take on* your God Designed role, let me give you five "A" words from Sandy Macintosh (*Word for Today* – "For Women Only" series) that will truly say to your husband: "*I want to be your helper*" - and - "*I support you*."

5 practical ways to fulfill the role of the wife (written by a woman):

- **1** <u>Adaptation</u> adapt yourself to your husband.
- **2** Acceptance let him know you accept him, just as he is.
- **3** Agreement this takes constant self-sacrifice from both spouses.
- **4** <u>Attitude</u> that draws him to you, not pushes him away.
- **5 Appreciation** show him how much you appreciate him.

There were actually 6 'A' words, but the 6th was a little mushy for me . . .

Adoration – let him know you adore him.

God's Design for the Wife's Role

- > SACRIFICIALLY HELP and
- > SACRIFICIALLY SUPPORT your Husband

YES - there are some "What if's" and "What about's" and some specifics, but **THIS** is **GOD'S design** for your role.



Response Time . . Who determines if the wife is fulfilling her role as Helper?

WIVES, this is so important - it is today's M.I.P....

M.I.P.

Session 7 – Most Important Point

IT IS THE HUSBAND THAT DETERMINES IF THE WIFE IS SACRIFICIALLY HELPING AND SACRIFICIALLY SUPPORTING.

I've seen Christian marriages where the wife says, I know I'm called to be the helper - so *THIS* is what *I'M* going to do. *THIS* is how *I'M* going to do it. And these are *MY* limits.

But if the wife is determining all of the <u>what</u>, <u>when</u> and <u>how much</u> of her helping, is that <u>really helping</u>? Or rather is it the wife saying basically, "*I'm just going to design my own role so I can still do what I want*."

So, wives, I need to say something *very important*. (Next session I will get to the husbands.)

You're only <u>helping</u> if your husband "<u>FEELS</u>" helped.

You're only <u>strengthening</u> and <u>supporting</u> if your husband "<u>FEELS</u>" strengthened and supported.

And there is only one way to know... ASK HIM! Ask your husband, "What can I do to actually help you?" "How can I come alongside you to strengthen and support you?"

It is possible for a wife to be knocking herself out in the marriage... and the whole time your husband is not feeling helped, or strengthened or supported at all. Wives, you need to honestly ask, "What can I do to help you." While you are sacrificing your own desires, and coming alongside your husband to strengthen and support him in your marriage.

So, let me help you do that...

Wives, please hand your workbook to your <u>husband</u>...

(O BE COMPLETED BY THE HUSBAND IN THE WIFE'S WORKBOOK
	3 areas my wife DOES make me feel <u>helped</u> and/or <u>supported</u> :
	1)
	2)
	3)
	3 areas my wife <u>COULD</u> make me feel helped and/or <u>supported</u> : 1) 2) 3)

"Heavenly Father, this can be such a difficult subject. Please help us choose your design over our own or the world's. May you live in us to fulfill the roles you've designed us for. We trust your design. Please give us the power of the Holy Spirit to be all that you've created us to be. In Jesus' name, amen."





The Role of The WIFE Session 7 - Homework # 1

#USBANDS - Your homework this week is to pray with your wife every day. Not just pray for her, pray with her. And find something in the Bible to read with her at least 3 days this week

<u>WIVES</u> - The following homework is for you.		
Before starting today, take a minute to think about where (from what source) you have developed your ideas and opinions about your role in marriage. Write something about how you've come to your current views regarding your role.		
SCRIPTURE: Gen & Psalms Date		
PRAY		
LISTEN		
Read <u>Gen 1:26-27</u> from the NLT (see this workbook chapter, page 2) Do you see that part of being made "in the image of God" is two made into one?		
God is "Three in One." Three distinct persons, each with different roles, all perfectly, equally One. Can you see that God could make a husband and wife in <u>that</u> same image?		

<u>LISTEN</u>

Read these five Psalms, marking the word "<u>help</u>" In each verse. Psa 33:20, Psa 63:7, Psa 70:5, Psa 94:17, Psa 121:1-2

T_{i}	\mathcal{H}	I	N	K

Each of these words " <u>help</u> " are the same Hebrew word used for " <u>helper</u> " in <u>Gen 2:18</u> .
How do these verses, referring to God, relate to <u>Gen 2:18</u> , referring to your role in marriage?
What are your concerns (if any), with God calling you a "helper" like himself?
How does it make you feel that God calls both you, and himself, a helper?
Respond
If you have some "Yeah, but's" write them here for later discussion.

If necessary, commit to getting wise counsel on this matter. Work out your questions and concerns with a spiritually mature Christian woman.





The Role of The WIFE - Part 2 Session 7 - Homework # 2

SCRIPTURE: Eph 5	<u>Date</u>
<u>PRAY</u>	
LISTEN Read the following 3 key verse	es out of the NLT:
Ephesians 5:21, 22, 25 (NLT) 21 And further, submit to one and 22 For wives, this means submit	other out of reverence for Christ. to your husbands as to the Lord.
25 <u>For husbands</u> , this means lov up his life for her	ve your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave
•	nd last week's chapter that both the husband's and ibmitting to one another" of V.21?
LISTEN Eph 5:22-24 begins the teaching	g on how Godly relationships function correctly.
Write down the verses that dea	al with the other relationships discussed here;
Husband's to Wives	
Children to Parents	
Fathers (and mothers) to Child	lren
Employees to Employers	
Employers to Employees	
s the teaching in these verses re- regarding how Godly relationship	garding different levels of equality and value, or is it os function correctly?

LISTEN

this study

Read also <u>Col 3:18-4:1</u>. This is the parallel teaching of <u>Eph 5:22-6:9</u>. Just read over these two sections focusing on the big picture of how Godly relationships are designed by God to function correctly

<u>LISTEN</u>
Read Eph 5:22 again, focusing on the words "as to the Lord." (see also Col 3:18)
<u>T光INK</u> How can you fulfill your role "as to the Lord"
Respond Is your primary role in your marriage to "sacrificially help and sacrificially support?
Why or why not?
PRAY Talk to your husband about anything God has really impressed on you during
rain to your nusband about anything bod has really impressed on you during



THE ROLE OF THE HUSBAND



SESSION 8

Welcome to back to "God's Design for Marriage" - Session 8.

Last session we looked at the role of the wife to *sacrificially help* and to *sacrificially support*. And wives, without the sacrificing of "self" there's no way you can be either a "help" or a "support" to your husband.

Now, this session, we look at God's design for "The Role of the Husband." Men, I want you to know I am not a shining example. I am needing to be a more "Christ-like" husband and father just like each of you. Husbands, I know you better, because I am one. So what I would like to do is go over the "keyword" that is the ultimate necessity for the husband to fulfill his role. I know I let the wives kinda figure out their "keyword", but for the men I'm just going to put it out there, right up front. But first, let's pray

Father God, we just lift up this session to you, and the important truths we will be studying here. We ask for your mercy and grace and your Holy Spirit to reveal to us the importance of sacrifice in our roles as husband and as wife. That your Holy Spirit will impart to us husbands, the power to love and to sacrifice, and to lead by example. In Jesus' name, amen.

The word that is the ultimate necessity for husbands to fulfill their God designed role in marriage... is three small syllables, that when put together make up the key word for the husband;



I wanted to break it down, to make it easier for us men to understand.

THE ULTIMATE NECESSITY FOR BOTH THE HUSBAND AND THE WIFE TO FULFILL THEIR GOD DESIGNED ROLES IN MARRIAGE IS THE WORD SACRIFICE.

The truth is, the ultimate necessity for both the husband and the wife to fulfill their God designed roles in marriage is the word SACRIFICE. Again, unlike the way I built up to the role of the wife, I want to give you the role of the husband right up front.

The God-Designed Role of the Husband:

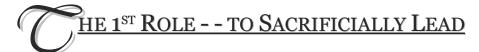
- To sacrificially <u>LEAD</u>
- To sacrificially <u>LOVE</u>

If we put the role of the wife and husband together, it would look like this:

WIFE HUSBAND

To <u>sacrificially</u> HELP To <u>sacrificially</u> LEAD To <u>sacrificially</u> SUPPORT To <u>sacrificially</u> LOVE

The leader part of the husband's role was established last session when we talked about the "order and functionality" of submission.



We saw it in Eph 5.

Eph 5:23 (ESV)

23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.

For the first part of the husband's role "to sacrificially lead" we are going to look at two Greek words. "Head" here in these verses and "Manage" (rule) used primarily in 1 Tim 3:4.

Actually, here in Eph 5:23, this is a title "For the husband is 'the head' of the wife." It's a leadership title, like we have said so many times, having to do with order and functionality, NOT value and worth. In Strong's Lexicon to define this Greek title "The Head" it says: "of a husband in relation to his wife" and "of Christ: the Lord of the husband and of the Church." This role of the husband being the leader is so accepted in scripture, it's used in the Greek Lexicon to define what the Greek word means.

The role of the husband as "head" (leader) is confirmed throughout the New Testament. 1 Cor 11:3, Col 3:18 and 1Pet 3:1 all say the same thing. In the sense this word is used here it means "to lead" "to take responsibility for." God made men to instinctively lead, much the same way he made women to instinctively love.

Sandy Macintosh's notes, "In God's instructions to the wife, he never specifically commands the woman to *love* because he designed that into her nature. In God's instructions to the husband he never specifically commands the man to *lead* because he designed that into a man's nature." But what does that really mean, "*To lead*"?

Webster's definition of "leading" is:

- > To guide by going in advance
- > To direct on a course or in a direction

Men, you've been designed by God as a "leader." Are you leading? Do we even know what it really means?

- Are you guiding your wife and family by going in advance?
- Are you directing the course for your wife and family?

The word "lead" is a *proactive* word. It means to "lead by example," by going in advance, out in front and saying "follow me" "watch what I do and the way I go and do that." Are you doing that? Or have you become passive? Do you want the role of king, but have you ducked out of being the godly leader? Maybe because you feel like a failure in this area. Maybe because you feel like you have an unsupportive wife. Maybe because of selfishness (it's just too much work). If you have given up your out-front leadership position... I wonder... what's your excuse?



Husband, God has sovereignly appointed you as the leader. You must go out in front, you must "set the course" for the good of your marriage and family. The time when we are most likely to bail-out of our role, is just when we are needed most, when things get difficult. *That* is when your sacrificial leading and loving is most needed. If you bail out of this role, then your wife has no choice but to take over your leadership, because you gave it to her... and that is the beginning of a dangerous downward spiral. It creates bitterness and resentment in both spouses and it is often very destructive to the marriage and family, all because the man failed to operate in his role as leader.

If you bail out of this role, then your wife has no choice but to take it over. And that is the beginning of a dangerous downward spiral that is often very destructive to the marriage and family, all because the man has failed to take his role as a proactive leader.

Years ago, Lucille Ball was on the Merv Griffith show and she was asked why so many marriages were falling apart. She simply said, "Things are falling apart because Papa's gone. If Papa were here, he would fix it."

Men, that is our role, our responsibility is to be there, to fix it when it's wrong. That is the role God has ordained you to. We need to stand up and take our role and stop serving our own self centered needs. When your wife is hurting and when life is crashing in around her, you must *mend her heart*. You must *minister to that need* with no concern for yourself. You must "come under" her (submit yourself) to carry the burdens of your wife and children. They are not there to make your life better, they are there for you to sacrificially lead and love, just as Christ does the Church.

In 1 Tim 3, Paul writes about the qualifications of spiritual overseers. (No, you are not off the hook if you are not church leadership.)

1 Timothy 3:4 (ESV)

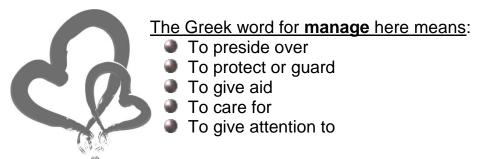
4 He must manage his own household well . . .

And then in verse 5

5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

The teaching is: we are *all* called to *manage our own households*, and if we can't do that certainly we shouldn't be leading the church. But our point here, for this session, is we are *called to manage* our household.

The Greek word for "manage" here is *proistemi*. Definition: *to so influence others as to cause them to follow a recommended course of action*. This is a really great word to study throughout the New Testament – it means:

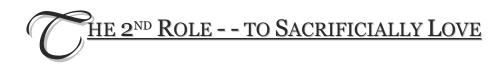


Men, are you doing this? God help us be the men he designed us to be!! And God help us repent and ask for forgiveness if we are not. The first God designed role of the husband is to *sacrificially lead*.

Proistemi = Manage

- To preside over
- > To protect or guard
- > To give aid
- > To care for
- > To give attention to





Back in Eph 5 we really have the "all-encompassing design" for the husband's role in marriage, including your role as leader.

Ephesians 5:25 (ESV)

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

Let's start with the word "love." "Husbands love your wives." This is that supernatural Greek word for love, most commonly, "agape." However, here, the actual word is

"agapao" – which is important – because "agapao" is the verb form of "agape." The reason the verb form is used here is because a verb expresses an action, and this use of "agape" is all about taking action. It's the same form of "agape" found in John 3:16 (also a verb) "For God so loved . . . that He gave



His only son." "Agape" in its verb form is best defined as "an action of unconditional, sacrificial love, by choice."

Maybe you have heard there are always at least three "**Aspects**" to every Greek verb, we call them **Tense** – **Voice** – **Mood**.

<u>The "Tense" here is "Present"</u> — meaning; you love, you continue to love, you never stop loving, no matter the sacrifice — no matter the response.

<u>The "Voice" here is "Active"</u> - meaning; you take the initiative – You pro-actively love. God pro-actively loved you, no matter what, and now he calls you to pro-actively love your wife.

<u>The "Mood" here is in the "Imperative"</u> — meaning; it's a command. This is not love in response to a feeling. It's a command requiring action without regard to feeling (or response.) Love is definitely an emotion. It's the greatest emotion. But this "agape" love is love by choice, not in response to a feeling, not because you expect anything from it, it is love by choice.

Now, let's admit something right here, we can't do this. In our own nature, we don't possess this type of love. God knows that and he would never command us to do something that he hasn't enabled us to do. That's why Rom 5:5 says...

Romans 5:5 (ESV)

5... God's (agape) love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.



Men, we must seek God *daily*, and depend on God *daily* for him to pour into our hearts this supernatural love. And we cannot receive God's supernatural love for our wives unless we first *crucify our self-will*. The only way you can fulfill your God designed role as husband is to have your self-will crucified with Christ (Gal 2:20.) Christ must be alive and in charge in you. *It's the only way you can fulfill your role as a godly husband*.

Let's go back to Eph 5:25. The rest of this verse makes our role crystal clear.

Eph 5:25 (NKJV)

25 Husbands, love your wives, <u>just as</u> (ESV - as) Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

Back in session 5 we looked very closely at these words "just as" which means "in the same proportion." So, we can read verse 25: "Husbands, love your wives, in the same proportion as Christ also loved the church."

How does Christ love the church all day?

- **†** Christ loves the church in every way and at all times
- **†** Christ always does what is best for the church
- **†** Christ always provides all that the church needs
- **†** Christ loves with an all giving, all sacrificial love that never changes
- **†** There is nothing that can separate the church from the love of God

That would be "in the same proportion" as Christ loved the church. And the church very often didn't love in return. But Christ's love never changes and neither should yours.

To try to summarize this command: - that we are called to love our wives - JUST AS Christ loved the church . . . I'd like to borrow Skip Heitzig's outline on this same subject. He says a husband's love must be: SACRIFICIAL - SANCTIFYING - and SECURE.



SACRIFICIAL · SANCTIFYING · SECURE

Eph 5:25 (NKJV)

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,



Christ's love for the church is sacrificial: "He gave Himself for her" and that is exactly how we are to love our wives. Christ sacrifices all along the way, in order to love us from the throne to the cross. Each step was a sacrifice.

The sad thing is there are husbands who'd say, "I'd die for my wife," but they can't get up off the couch and help with the dishes.

And so, it is not just to *die sacrificially*, it is to *live sacrificially* which is much, much harder. You put yourself under your wife's needs, help her carry her burdens. You sacrifice yourself for your wife's good. Your love must be sacrificial just as Christ's was for the church.



Eph 5 - Verses 25-27 (ESV)

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

26 that he might <u>sanctify</u> her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,

27 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.



This is one of the most beautiful pictures there is of us loving our wives as Christ loved the church and this one really hurts, because few of us do this enough. "Sanctify" means literally "to be set apart" and that is a beautiful picture of loving our wives that we might "set them apart," that we might pour the Word over them, that the Word would heal them and make them whole, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. This is the role of being priest of the home, to sanctify your wife, to minister the Word of God to her and also to your children.





Eph 5:28-30

28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but <u>nourishes</u> and <u>cherishes</u> it, just as (in the same proportion as) Christ does the church,

30 because we are members of his body.

If your wife feels that she is truly an extension of your own body, I promise you she will feel "secure." This is the level of love our wives need to feel. If we will treat our wife as an extension of our own body, then we will convey to her the most secure love possible. We are called to nourish and cherish our wife as an extension of our own body. Jesus Christ nourishes and cherishes his body, the church (Verse 29.) And we are called to nourish and cherish our wife just as (in the same proportion) Christ does the church. If you will, then your wife will feel secure in your love. If you won't then she will feel insecure in your love.

There is NOTHING in the Bible that paints God's role for the husband as a domineering, self-centered dictator with his wife running around to make him happy. **That is nowhere in the Bible!!**

God's design for the role of the husband is to:

- Sacrificially lead
- Sacrificially love

When a husband's role gets distorted by self-will then he can become a blasphemous example of Christ. God's design is for the husband to be an example of Christ's love for the church. That is what Eph 5 is saying. How can a Christian husband ever use their role to serve their self-will? Because that is not how Jesus Christ leads and loves the church.

Response Time . . .

Who determines if the husband is fulfilling his role to lead and love?

☐ Wife ☐ Husband

M.I.P.

Session 8 – Most Important Point

IT IS THE WIFE WHO DETERMINES IF THE HUSBAND IS SACRIFICIALLY LEADING AND SACRIFICIALLY LOVING HER.

There is only one way to know... ASK HER! Husbands, you are only leading if your wife feels led. You are only loving if your wife feels loved. You must ask her!



How often do we see a husband working himself crazy, while his wife feels alone and unloved at home.



So husbands, please hand your workbook to your wife...



3 areas my husband DOES sacrificially LEAD and/or LOVE me:
1)
2)
3)
3 areas my husband COULD make me feel more LED and/or LOVED :
1)
2)
3)

"Lord Jesus, I surrender my "self." I lay my "self" on the altar. May I be consumed. May there be nothing of my "self" left in my marriage. Jesus, may you live in me by the power of the Holy Spirit to sacrificially lead and sacrificially love my wife. I make this commitment to you and to my wife today. In Jesus' name, amen."

The Role of The HUSBAND - Pt 1 Week 8 - homework # 1

WIVES - Your homework this week is to pray with your husband every day. It's okay to ask your husband to pray with you, you don't have to wait for him to ask you. And find something in the Bible to read to your husband that will encourage him, at least 3 days this week

HUSBANDS - The following homework is for you.

Before starting today, take a minute to think about where (from what source) you have developed your ideas and opinions about your role in marriage. Write something about how you've come to your current views regarding your role.		
SCRIPTURE: Eph Ch 5 Date		
<u>PRAY</u>		
LISTEN & THINK		
Read Eph 5:15-21 carefully, looking for how these verses "Lead up to" verse 21.		
In week 6 we said the "submitting" in Verse 21 is in the "Greater" sense. Meaning, we are to come under to support, and help bear the burden of, one another. This submit is in the sense of "esteeming the other person higher than ourselves" (Phil 2:3)		
How do you <u>currently</u> submit in this greater sense to your wife?		

How <u>CAN</u> you submit in this greater sense to your wife? Take your time. Try to fill in all the lines with your answer.		
<u>LISTEN</u>		
Read Eph 5:23 and 1Cor 11:3 Consider the title given - "The Head."		
This title "The Head" describes a <u>leadership</u> position. From the notes in this chapter, write out Webster's definition of <u>LEADING</u> :		
To lead is to		
<u>THINK</u>		
In regard to Spiritual Matters only. Are you leading your wife and family according to the above definition?		
What will you <u>COMMIT to do</u> to better lead your wife and family in Spiritual Matters?		
Reflect		
From this chapter, write out the quote from Lucille Ball on the Merv Griffin show.		

The Role of The HUSBAND - Pt 2 Week 8 - homework # 2

<u>SCRIPTURE</u> : _	Eph 5:25-27	<u>Date</u> _
<u>PRAY</u>		
LISTEN & THIN	<u> </u>	
In Eph 5:25 the wor	d "Love" is the <u>VERB fc</u>	orm of the Greek word Agape.
What does it mean	that the love we are to	o have for our wives is a VERB? (page 5)
From our study on "just as" in Eph 5:2		or from this Ch), what do the words
From page 6 in this	s Ch, write down 4 way	ys that Christ loves the church
Christ loves		
Christ always		
Christ always		
Christ loves		
LISTEN & THIN	<u>!K</u>	
Read Eph 5:25-27		
these verses mean	_	ou've learned in the class, write out what n, verse by verse, and write out what you what extent.
		continue →

<u>LISTEN</u>			
Read Eph 5:28-3	<u>80</u>		
<u>THINK</u>			
	t thought to grasp. Try t as our own bodies. (The	to grasp (& write) what it mear key is vs's 29-30)	ns for us to
	·		
<u>REFLECT</u>			
From page 5 in the	nis chapter, Skip Heitzig s	ays a husband's love must be;	
1)	2)	3)	
	o to make your wife feel	that your love is providing me	
PRAY			

Talk to your wife about anything God has really impressed on you during this study.

LIVING IN OUR ROLES

LESSON 9

Welcome back to our ninth session, "Living in our Roles." We've been talking about our roles in marriage for three sessions: "The 'S' Word is for Everyone," "The Role of the Wife," and "The Role of the Husband." Now, we try to turn all of that into practical application with the question "How do we live in our roles?" How do we walk in (and grow in) our roles as God designed them? How do we allow the Word of God to actually change our marriages? Let's remember, we're talking about God's design for marriage. We're not talking about another good idea from the wisdom of the world. We're talking about God's supernatural, divine design for marriage.

Let's pray.

Father God, you are the one who has the divine design for marriage. We want to reinforce how to live in our roles, submitting to one another, loving, leading, doing what we are called to do in our respective roles. We can't live in our roles without the divine, supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Give us that power, we pray, daily as we seek you to transform us. Give us open hearts to hear and apply your word to our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.

M.I.P.

Session 9 – Most Important Point

PRESENT YOUR 'SELF' TO BE CONSUMED BY GOD AND BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND

Let's start with our M.I.P. Present your "self" to be consumed by God and be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Let's first look at examples of both of our roles (what it looks like) and then we'll do an outline on how we get there.

How do we take the Word of God and actually transform our marriages? How do we begin to live (moment by moment) in our roles?

Cow do we Live in Our Roles?

Before we answer that question, let's see some examples of what living in our roles looks like.



EIVING IN THE HUSBAND'S ROLE

God's Design for the Role of the Husband

- Sacrificially Lead Eph 5:23
- ➤ Sacrificially Love Eph 5:25-29

We could study the New Testament the rest of our lives to see how Christ sacrificially led and sacrificially loved the church (and we should.) But we can only look at one example of him both leading and loving his bride.

In John 13, Jesus was facing his greatest hour of trial and testing. He was carrying the tremendous burden of knowing he was about to be betrayed, arrested, beaten, crucified. He was facing a burden greater than any husband will ever face, and yet he set aside his own burden and stress and he became a servant leader, to lead and love his disciples. He did it to show those he loved the way to say to them, "*Now you follow my example, do as I do.*"

John 13:1–5 (NLT)

1 Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end (or 'completely', 'to the uttermost').

He's going to demonstrate that to them right now, but ultimately his loving them "to the uttermost" would cost Him his life

John 13:2 It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus (which Jesus knew).

John 13:3 Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God.

4 So (knowing everything completely) he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist,

5 and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

That is what sacrificial love looks like. Setting aside our own feelings, your own stresses and trials and doing something sacrificial for your wife, to wash away the effects of the day. Jesus was washing the dirt and grime of the day off of his Bride. Men, listen closely, although Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, he never asked the church to do one thing for his personal benefit. The only time Jesus ever asked his disciples to do anything for him personally, was when he asked them to pray in the Garden. Though he is the head of the church, his actions and focus were always for the benefit of the church, never for his own benefit. Jesus both led the church and loved the church by his sacrifice.

John 13:12–15 (NLT)

12 After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing?

13 You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. 14 And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet.

15 I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.

Men, can you say that to your wife and family, can you say, "Do as I have done to you?" And do you see how Christ's leading and loving of the church was always wrapped up in total humility? In Phil 2:7 it says Christ "emptied himself," "He made himself nothing" and he sacrificially loved the church to his own death. We see that sacrificial love all through the Gospels. In total humility Jesus Christ put his love into action to serve, to heal and to give life to his bride.

Then he says the following, in John 13:15.

<u>Jn 13:15 (NLT)</u>

15 I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.

Maybe you would say, "Yeah but what if my wife isn't treating me like she should?" or "What if she isn't even a believer?"

Look carefully for the answer to those questions...

Judas Iscariot was in the room, for sure, when Jesus washed the disciples' feet. Jesus knew what Judas was about to do and still, he served him and loved him, just the same.

Jesus loved and led someone else even while they were his enemy...you. So, you do just what Jesus did. You sacrificially lead her and sacrificially love her. I know the example of Christ sounds almost impossible to reach, but take hope. He has also given us the power to be transformed (to this level.) Not perfectly, but increasingly.



IVING IN THE WIFE'S ROLE

God's Design for the Role of the Wife

- ➤ Sacrificially Help Gen 2:18
- Sacrificially Support Eph 5:22-

Sacrificially Help

Wives, more than anything else your husband needs your help and support. Let's start with sacrificially help, and one of the most critical ways to do that is at home. I understand in our culture this is more complicated when both husband and wife work outside the home, but look with me...

In Titus, Paul is giving instruction for the older women in disciplining the younger women.

Tit 2:4-5 (NKJV)

4 [see] that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children,

5 to be discreet, chaste, <u>homemakers</u>, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.

I want to focus on just that word: Homemakers. For the word homemakers the ESV and the NLT translate both as "working at home." This word means **to keep watch over** (care for) the affairs of the house.

Then, in 1Tim Paul is giving instructions on how to care for widows.

1Tim 5:14 (NKJV)

14 Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, <u>manage the house</u>, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

The phrase "manage the house" means to guide or direct the affairs of a household.

This is a different word than we looked at for the role of the husband.

- For the husband = to influence to follow, to lead
- For the wife = to guide / direct affairs of the household

So the first critical way for a wife to live in her role is to keep watch over, to guide, the affairs of the household. Again, I understand this requires some further discussion when both husband and wife work full-time outside the house.

All I can tell you, is one of the vital reasons I can stand here, fulfilling my role in the church, is because I have the absolute best manager and guide of household affairs that I could ever ask God for. And if I didn't, I absolutely could not do what I do in the ministry.

Often, when a wife thinks that managing and guiding the household affairs isn't a big enough or high enough calling, it's usually because they have been ripped off in their thinking, whether by the world around them or by the enemy. Let me say again, in a culture where often the husband and wife both work outside the home, this requires some extra delicate discussion. But God knew our culture when he wrote the Bible. And I want



you to know, one of the best ways a wife can live in her role is to be an excellent manager and guide of the household affairs.

Wives, I am going to let you in on a little secret. Men are only tough on the outside. You may think supporting your husband on the outside is most important, like guiding and managing the home, but I need you to hear me. There's actually a greater need for your support on the inside. Your husband really needs your encouragement and support emotionally on the inside. And one of the vital ingredients for your husband to feel helped and supported is simply this:

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Respect is the "magic ingredient" for your husband to feel supported. Remember we talked about tense, voice and mood when we looked at the word love (Agapao) last session? The Greek mood aspect of "love" for the husband was the imperative — meaning it was a command by God. Not so for the word "respect." Here, the Greek mood is "subjunctive" and the subjunctive mood is best defined as "making a choice." In other words, in the Greek we could say, "Wives, choose to respect your husbands." And often, if a wife will choose to respect her husband as the leader, he will become the leader of your home.

Prov 14:1 (NKJV)

1 The wise woman builds her house, But the foolish pulls it down with her hands.

Wives, I promise you, if you want to build your house instead of pulling it down, choose to respect your husband. And what if your husband is an unbeliever – or is just acting like one?

1 Peter 3:1–2 (ESV)

1 Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, 2 when they see your respectful and pure conduct.

Wives, if you desire to build your house instead of tear it down, choose to respect your husband. It will go a long way.



PERFECT WRAP-UP VERSE

Finally, in Eph 5:33 we see the perfect wrap up verse. In it we see what both the wife and the husband need.

Ephesians 5:33 (NLT)

33 So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.



She needs to be loved as her husband's own body.



He needs to be respected by his wife.

These are the <u>supernatural ingredients</u> for both husbands and wives to give their spouses what they need most.

We all may be feeling some pain by now. But, take hope, help is on the way. There is so much more to say about living in our roles that it fills many, many good Christian books on the subject. But what I've found (more often than not) is it's not that we don't know what our roles are, it's that we don't know how to live in them.



So I want to start the hope and healing part of the message over in 2 Pet Ch 1.

2 Peter 1:2–3 (NLT)

- 2 May God give you more and more grace and peace as you grow in your knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.
- 3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a Godly life. How? By coming to know him, the one who called us to himself. This is not that "experiential knowledge" (Ginosko) we find in Phil 3:10 "that I may know him." The word here is for "complete" or "divine knowledge" (Epignosis). It is God's divine knowledge given to us by God's divine power.

God's divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by glory and virtue.



2 Peter 1:4 (NLT)

4 And because of his glory and excellence, he has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.

We've got to see all that's in these two verses (3 and 4).

God's divine knowledge (vs 3) has been given to us by God's divine power (vs 3) that through God's divine promises (vs 4) we may be partakers of God's divine nature.



This is exactly what we need to have a God designed marriage!!

But... is there a "magic wand – repeat after me" prayer and "poof" your marriage is going to be just as God designed it? No! It takes effort on our part to grow in God's divine nature.

That's what these next verses are all about. Verses 5 through 8 are all about our part of our divine growth.

Look at 2 Peter 1:5-8

2 Peter 1:5–8 (NLT)

5 In view of all this, make every effort <u>to respond</u> to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge (gnosis),

6 and knowledge (gnosis) with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness,

7 and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone. 8 The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge (epignosis) of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is the "your part" part. This is focusing on our spiritual growth. You can be a partaker of the divine nature in your marriage, but it does take focused effort on your spiritual growth. It's going to take some spiritual growth on your part, and that means some focused effort and probably some discomfort.

So, I want to give you a three step process to actually begin to live in your role, as God designed it.

A 3-STEP PROCESS FOR TRANSFORMATION ...



TEP #1 - LEARN TO DEPEND ON THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

Realize there's not enough 'try' in you.

You must depend on the divine power of the Holy Spirit.

Here in 2 Peter 1:3 (NLT)

3 By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life . . .

This power doesn't come from within you. It's not "Awaken the giant within you" instead, it is "Crucify the giant within you." You can't awaken the right power, because you don't own it. This power comes from God. It is divine power. It comes in the person of the Holy Spirit.

John 14:16–17 (ESV)

16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever,

17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you.

Acts 1:8 Jesus says

8 But you shall <u>receive power</u> when the Holy Spirit has come upon you . . .

Rom 5:5 says

5... the love of God has been <u>poured out</u> in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

It's by the divine power of the Holy Spirit that we are given all things that pertain to life and goodness. For more on this, study Gal 5:16-25.



TEP #2 - PRESENT YOUR 'SELF' TO BE CONSUMED BY GOD

Christ must live in you to love and sacrifice for your spouse.

Romans 12:1 (ESV)

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your <u>bodies</u> as a <u>living sacrifice</u>, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

The word "body" here means: the totality of your "self." The word "sacrifice" is something "consumed" by God.

You must present the totality of your "self" to be consumed by God.

WHY?

So we can say with Paul in Galatians 2:20 (ESV)

20 I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...

"Self" must be crucified so Christ can live in you to love and sacrifice for your spouse.



You do this by focusing your spiritual growth on your marriage.

Romans 12:2 (ESV)

2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...

Don't conform to the way the world does it. Be transformed, get a new mind. The word for "renewal" means "a renovation, a complete change." Get a renovation of your mind. God's divine power can transform you, by renewing your mind.

HOW DOES THIS TRANSFORMATION TAKE PLACE?



The foundation is:

- ➤ <u>Daily intake</u> of: the Word Prayer Fellowship
- Acknowledging areas not fully consumed by God
- Focusing your spiritual growth on the specific areas of need

This almost always involves repentance from sin. This almost always involves forgiveness in your marriage. And it <u>always involves</u> walking in the Spirit.

Again:

Step #1 – Learn to depend on the power of the Holy Spirit

Realize there's not enough "try" in you

Step #2 – Present your "self" to be consumed by God

> This is so Christ can live in you

Step #3 – Be transformed by the renewing of your mind

➤ By focusing your Spiritual Growth on your marriage

We recommend – "Be Ye Transformed" By Chuck and Nancy Missler at amazon.com

Response Time . . .

Most workbook end up being "just more information" because we don't push through to see <u>actual change</u> in how we live. If we don't actively apply these truths, our marriages will go back to being the same as they were before reading this workbook.

rea	ading this workbook.
@	Do you understand that <u>information gathering</u> alone will NOT change your marriage?
@	Are you willing to actively apply the truths God is revealing to you in this study?
a	Will you commit to DAILY prayer and devotion reading with your spouse for the Holy Spirit to transform your marriage?
3	Will you acknowledge the specific needs in your marriage and commit to a long-term plan for divine transformation in those specific areas?

Let's Pray: "Dear Heavenly Father, please don't allow us to be hearers of your word only. Please convict us and give us the power to be doers of your Word. Please hold us accountable by your Holy Spirit to pray and read your Word together, and please reveal to us ways we can actively apply your principles in our marriage. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Living in our Roles - Pt 1 Session 9 - Homework # 1

<u>SCRIPTURE</u> : <u>Date</u>
<u>PRAY</u>
<u>LISTEN</u>
Read <u>Jn 13:1-15</u> (both of you). Read it carefully. Husband, you are in the place of Christ. Wife, you are in the place of the disciples (the church).
COMMUNICATE
Talk about what this text means in your marriage. Talk about how this picture can be applied to your marriage. In love, be honest. Spend some time talking about this.
RESPOND
Wife - How can your husband best do this for you? Husband - What will you do to accomplish this for your bride?

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray about this subject. Make sure you've taken enough time to really think through this, communicate about it in love, and respond to one another. Then pray for one another regarding what has been discussed.

<u>SCRIPTURE</u> :	Titus 2:4-5, 1Tim 5:14	Date
<u>PRAY</u>		
<u>LISTEN</u>		
	& 1Tim 5:14. Don't get 'off-topionits and "manage the house" in	c' here. Try to focus on the words 1Tim.
<u>COMMUNICA</u>	<u>re</u>	
in your marriage?		r the household. What does that mean be careful). Spend some time talking on.
<u>RESPOND</u>		
	can your wife do to help you i ou better help and support yo	

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray about this subject. Make sure you've taken enough time to really think through this, communicate about it in love, and respond to one another. Then pray for one another regarding what has been discussed.

Living in Our Roles - Pt 2 Session 9 - Homework # 2

SCRIPTURE: _	2 Pet 1:2-8	<u>Date</u>
<u>PRAY</u>		
<u>LISTEN</u>		
Read <u>2 Pet 1:2-8</u> . Rworkbook).	lead it over a few times, in	the NLT if you have it (or read it in the
<u>THINK</u>		
Has God given us (vs 3)	everything we need to liv	e in our roles as he designed them?
Is there an "Our Pa	art" part? Do we have a ro	ole? (vs 5)
Read over verses to grow in your sp		to write down what steps you've taken
What steps can yo	u take to continue growir	ng in your spiritual maturity?

COMMUNICATE

The 3 steps to changing your life (and marriage) can be summarized as follows;

- 1) Learn to Depend on the Power of the Holy Spirit
- 2) Present your 'Self' to be consumed by God (Crucify self)
- 3) Renew your Mind (by focusing your Spiritual Growth)

These steps are simple, but they are NOT easy. Talk together about how you can, together, grow in each of these three areas. Talk about them one at a time.

You may need to consider praying for, and asking for, marriage disciplers (mentors), who can point you in the right direction, and help you grow in each of these areas.

plan.			hlights of that	

PRAY

Pray that you would hold each other up, submitting to one another, in order to grow in your spiritual maturity, and in your marriage

COMMUNICATION – PART 1

SESSION 10

Let's begin with prayer. Father God, Thank you for the commitment each person has made to study your design for marriage. We thank you for the difficult truths and the life changing opportunities you've given us to be transformed in our marriages, Lord. And now Lord, as we focus on communication, we pray that you would focus our minds. Give us ears to hear. Lord we pray that you would inspire us. Not only that you would transform us, but that we would have our eyes opened, Lord, to what other marriages you would have us impact. We pray that you would speak to us, and make us ready to hear. It is in Jesus' name we pray, amen.

M.I.P.

Session 10 – Most Important Point

FOR GODLY COMMUNICATION; CLEANSE YOUR OWN HEART OF SIN, THEN BE QUICK TO HEAR, SLOW TO SPEAK, SLOW TO ANGER.

Communication is the critical "life flow" of our marriages and it's an area that can easily become so difficult. Communication often tops the list of marriage problems and can be the "final straw" that can topple a marriage. Many spouses point to a breakdown in communication as the "final nail" in the death of a marriage, because communication is the flow of life in a marriage.

Consider what God has gone through to communicate with us: the Bible is God's love letter to us; Jesus is the "expression" (communication) of God to us; the Holy Spirit resides in us to enable our communication with God. Our relationship with God resides within our communication with God. Our relationship with our spouse resides within our communication with our spouse. All we have studied in the last nine sessions on marriage; it all resides within the process of communication. "Leaving and Cleaving," "Divine Forgiveness," "Supporting One Another" and especially "Our Roles." All of these topics work out or reside within communication, that's how important communication is!

Kay Arthur describes communication as "The art of listening, watching and sharing." Would that really define communication in your marriage? Or would the idea of two "trains of thoughts" better define your communication style in your marriage?



TRAINS OF THOUGHT



Imagine two trains of thought. One train is sent out of your station with all the engines under full power and you're sure when that train of thought reaches your spouse, certainly they will receive it.

The only problem is, your spouse is sending out their own train of thought at the same time, on the same track, with just as much engine power.



So just about half way between your two "train stations", there's a head on collision of two trains of thought under full power.

The accident is often ugly, the trains derail, the track is now blocked and there are often innocent victims of a train wreck.

Sometimes it's not just two trains colliding, but one of the receiving train stations is shut down altogether. Hurt, unforgiveness, anger can all put a receiving station into such disrepair that it can't even receive a train of thought at all. It must be fully renovated (healed) before it can accept any trains.

Is your communication the art of listening, watching and sharing? Or is your communication the picture of two trains of thought on a collision course. The problem is often very easy to spot. The question is how can we prevent it or repair it? How can we communicate as God designed us to?



MATTER OF THE HEART

First we must understand communication is a matter of your *own heart*. If you are having communication conflicts in your marriage, the first place you must look for transformation is your own heart.

In Luke 6:43, at the conclusion of the "plank and speck" parable (you know, remove the telephone pole out of your own eye and then you can begin to deal with the speck in your spouse's eye,) on the heels of that Jesus is going to say, "your words reveal your heart."

<u>Luke 6:43-45 (NLT);</u>

43 "A good tree can't produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can't produce good fruit. 44 A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs are never gathered from thornbushes, and grapes are not picked from bramble bushes.

45 A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.

Angry heart = Bitter words Loving heart = Loving words

Right now, God's word needs to begin to pierce our hearts and we need to begin repenting for what's coming out of our heart.

<u>1Pet 3:8-12 (NLT)</u>

8 Finally, all of you should be of one mind. Sympathize with each other. Love each other as brothers and sisters. Be tenderhearted, and keep a humble attitude.
9 Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate with insults when people insult you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God has called you to do, and he will bless you for it.

When you receive an "insult" train of thought from your spouse, what kind of train do you send back?

10 For the Scriptures say, "If you want to enjoy life and see many happy days, <u>keep</u> your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies.

11 Turn away from evil and do good. <u>Search for peace</u>, and <u>work to maintain it</u>.

12 The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. <u>But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil</u>."

We need a renewing of our heart toward our spouse. We must repent of the sin that has caused "train wrecks" of our words. Keep your tongue from speaking evil, search for peace, work to maintain it because "The eyes of the Lord watch over those who do right, and his ears are open to their prayers. But the Lord turns his face against those who do evil."



What causes the fire, the poison, the knife of our tongue is sin in our heart, usually anger, bitterness and unforgiveness. And so the first step toward godly communication is not

becoming a better talker, it's dealing with the sin in our own heart. It's that sin that's causing you to spew toxic waste into your marriage. It's the sin in your own heart that's causing the train wrecks of communication in your marriage. Those feelings of anger, bitterness, and resentment... are sin. If you don't confess and repent of them, if you don't crucify that sin and allow God to transform you, you will continue to create head-on train wrecks in your marriage. But... if you will allow God to cleanse your heart of the sin that corrupts your communication, then you'll be on the right track.

Jay Adams – Unconfessed and unforgiven sin always leads to a break down in one's relationship . . . when there is unresolved sin husbands hide from their wives, and wives cover up parts of their lives. In order to reestablish communication in intimacy, it is first necessary to eliminate the sin that is blocking the communication

So, the first step is to deal with the sin in your own heart, which is really the root of your communication problems. And as we've been saying over and over, we deal with that sin by following Rom 21:1-2.



First - we present that part of our SELF to be consumed by God as a sacrifice (crucify your "self-interest" and "self-focus".)

Second - we allow the power of God to transform us by the renewing of our mind, by focusing our spiritual growth on this area.

We talked about this last session, and throughout the course I have been giving you ways to focus your spiritual growth on these individual areas. Let me just encourage you to DO IT!!

We are going to look primarily at one verse for renewing your mind in this area of communication. (Quick to hear.) We are going to look at James 1:19, but before we do, let's look at this session's Most Important Point.



M.I.P.

Session 10 – **Most Important Point**

FOR GODLY COMMUNICATION; CLEANSE YOUR OWN HEART OF SIN, THEN BE QUICK TO HEAR, SLOW TO SPEAK, SLOW TO ANGER.



James 1:19 (ESV)

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;

This is exactly opposite of our nature and this is exactly why we experience so many communication train wrecks. Let's look at the first requirement, "quick to hear." Let me repeat – this is the *first requirement*. Let me ask you, how many words has your spouse spoken before you begin formulating your "response." Isn't our nature exactly opposite? We are "slow" to hear and "quick" to speak. Actually, we already know what they're going to say... so we have to get our train ready to send out of the station... to prepare for that head on collision, right?



Instead, can I suggest something very simple to you? **Park it!** We have got to park our train of thought. Another way of saying this a bit clearer is, we must SHUT... DOWN our thought creating process.

We must SHUT DOWN our thought creating process and we must open up our thought receiving process. We've got to put all our effort, all our focus into really receiving what our spouse is saying. THAT is being quick to hear.

So after dealing with the sin of your own heart... the first requirement of godly communication is real focused (on purpose) listening.

One of the greatest discoveries of true communication is the awesome power of truly listening. *Listen proactively, with real effort*. This means you cannot be reloading your guns (I mean your thoughts) while your spouse is talking. Put yourself in your spouse's place and honestly ask yourself, "*Do I really understand how they are feeling... really*?" The way we do this is by using Phil 2:3-4.

Phil 2:3-4 (NLT)

- 3 Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.
- 4 Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

What if we really did that? What if we really thought of our spouse higher than we thought of our self? What if we really put their opinions higher than our own? We've got to really put ourselves in their position... doing our best to understand their position instead of always pushing our own agenda.

Phil 2:3-4 is really describing our word "empathy."

Webster's definition of "**empathy**:" the action of understanding, being aware of, being sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experience of another

What if we really did that when communicating with our spouse?

One last thing about this being "quick to hear" – if you interrupt your spouse that means you're not listening. It means, instead, that you're looking for an opportunity to push your "self train" back into the conversation.

If you interrupt your spouse - that means you aren't listening!!



<u>James 1:19 (ESV)</u> 19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be <u>quick to</u> hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;

I love the definition of "slow." It means: "inactive in mind." Before you release that nuclear cannon hiding in your mouth, be inactive in your mind. Just stop – be inactive. That does not mean you never speak, that's bad too. I actually have this bad habit of responding only in my mind and never actually speaking – this causes my family some stress. It is important that you do respond (in love) but before you do... slow to speak means stop loading the cannon for a minute. First, put yourself in your spouse's position – feel what they are feeling – hold their opinion higher than your own. And when you do speak, speak the truth in love.



Ephesians 4:15 (NLT)

15 Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ . . .

It is vital that we communicate, but first – be slow (inactive in mind) before speaking. Then, speak the truth.

Speaking the truth in love (more on this next session) is a vital key to communication.

- After you've crucified your 'self-will'
- After you've really listened to what your spouse has said . . .
- Next you've got to dig way down into your heart, and honestly share what you are actually feeling - IN LOVE.

Speaking the truth does not mean you get to bluntly beat your spouse up with harsh judgment and criticism, all in the name of "truth." Here's what I want to talk about in regards to speaking the truth in love.

```
Some of us, when we feel 'hurt' – we say, "You're a Jerk."
When we feel 'rejected' – we say, "I don't need you."
When we feel 'unloved' – we say, "Why don't you ever help me?"
```

But speaking the truth in love would be...

```
When you feel 'Hurt' – you need to say, "I feel really hurt."
When you feel 'Rejected' – you need to say, "I feel really rejected."
When you feel 'Unloved' – you need to say, "I feel really unloved."
```



SPEAK THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Your spouse cannot read your mind (cannot even read between the lines). It's critical you share how you really feel and it's critical that you put what you're really feeling into accurately descriptive words.

There's another guide to speaking the truth in love. In fact, it's a guide for ALL things done in love.

<u>1 Corinthians 13:4–8 (NLT)</u>

4 Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud



5 or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.

6 It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.

7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

8.,.. . love will last forever!

That is the definition of God's agape love. And so, when you get to speaking the truth, speak it within those guidelines.

Speak in AGAPE LOVE

Finally, we must be...



One more time James 1:19 (ESV)

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;

If you are "quick to hear" and if you are "slow to speak" you will be "slow to anger."

Anger is the death knell to communication and the death of communication can mean death of a marriage. Once you get angry all real communication ends and instead you begin building a coffin for your marriage. When you begin to feel angry, do not sin! Stop talking, walk away, fall on your knees, and take a break. Get an anger accountability partner and go call them. Do something besides feeding your anger, then unleashing it.



Ephesians 4:26–27 (NLT)

26 And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry,

27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

"don't sin by letting anger control you."

Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry...



You must recognize your anger as sin and deal with it immediately (in your own heart.) If it can't be resolved, at least ask for forgiveness for your anger.

WHY? Why not just let your anger stew and boil? Because Eph 4:27 says "for anger gives a foothold to the devil." If you nurse your anger you will give a place for the devil to work.

I know you're right. You deserve to be angry... your spouse deserves to get anger stew for dinner tonight. It's their fault and they deserve it. Listen carefully; you are setting a place at the dinner table for the devil. Trust me, he will take advantage of the place you have set for him and he will go to work quick, fast and in a hurry. His one and only goal is to steal, kill and destroy. And that is exactly what he'll do in your marriage, if you swing the door wide open and give him free reign in your anger.

In 2 Cor Ch 2 Paul is talking about the importance of forgiveness.

2 Corinthians 2:10–11 (ESV)

10 Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive . . .

11 so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs (schemes).

Fueling your unforgiveness and anger is a classic scheme of the devil, and if you set the devil that place in your marriage he will gladly take it. Don't be ignorant of his devices. Protect your heart (and your marriage) through divine forgiveness and by being transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Let's review. The first two steps to God's design for communication:

- Cleanse your own heart of sin. Crucify "self." Be transformed.
- ➤ Be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath. Speak the truth in love.



You can practice this "protection process" during your transformation . . .

2-Step action required while working on the above steps:

- 1 Extend tongue between upper and lower teeth
- **2** When necessary . . . clamp teeth firmly together.

Hold this position until you've dealt with your own sin and can speak the truth in love.

Response Time . . .

•	How often can your communication be described as "Two trains of thought on a collision course?"
	Seldom Frequently Always
3	Do you <u>justify</u> your anger at your spouse, or do you <u>acknowledge</u> it as sin? Justify it Acknowledge it as sin
3	Are you willing to repent of your sin of anger and be swift to hear and slow to speak?

[&]quot;Heavenly Father, I am so sorry for my sin of anger toward my spouse, please forgive me. I repent of this sin. Please give me the power by your Holy Spirit to not sin when I feel angry. I thank you for my spouse, please help me crucify my anger, and be swift to hear and slow to speak. In Jesus' name, amen."

Communication - Pt 1 Session 10 - Homework # 1

SCRIPTURE:	Luke 6:43-45, Rom 12:1-2	<u>Date</u>
<u>PRAY</u>		
COMMUNICATE		
	two "trains of thought." Honestly ta your communication looks like two ack.	
(Wait. L	Did you really talk about the above ந	paragraph?)
LISTEN & RESPO	DND	
Read <u>Luke 6:43-45</u>	carefully and thoughtfully.	
According to the wo	ords coming out of your mouth, a eal and transform?	are there things in your heart
LISTEN & RESPO	DND	
Read Rom 12:1-2 ag	ain, thinking specifically about the	above question.
	ays that you can present this are how you may be able to go abou	•

SCRIPTURE:	Jas 1:19, Rom 12:1-2	<u>Date</u>
<u>PRAY</u>		
LISTEN & RES	<u>POND</u>	
Read James 1:19	·	
Of the 3 comman	ds here, which one are yοι	the BEST at? And give an example.
Which one are yo	ou the WORST at? And give	e an example.
COMMUNICAT	<u> </u>	
Discuss your answ	vers with your spouse. Reper	nt and ask forgiveness as necessary.

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray about this subject. Ask God's forgiveness, and commit to God and your spouse to focus your spiritual growth on the area of communication you need most to be transformed in.

Communication - Pt 1 Session 10 - Homework # 2

<u>SCRIPTURE</u> :	James 1:19-27, Eph 4:26-27	Date
<u>PRAY</u>		
<u>LISTEN</u>		
Read James 1:19	-27. Read it over at least twice.	
RESPOND		
	role our tongue (communication) p r. And write about what role our ton on."	

<u>PRAY</u>

Pray with your spouse that God would save you from the hypocrisy of worthless religion, and pray that one of the key signs of your true "new life" would be how you communicate to your spouse.

LISTEN

Read **Eph 4:26-27**. Don't think the words "Be angry" somehow permit anger.

The NLT translates these verses this way: 26 And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

Similarly, the NIV translates the beginning of v.26: "In your anger do not sin"

REST	PO	ND
1000	\sim	\sim

How often does anger control the way you communicate with your spouse?		
	Again, repentance may be in order.	
How does your communication, whe devil? Write at least one real life exa	en controlled by your anger, give place to the mple.	

PRAY TOGETHER

Make a commitment in prayer to seek God's transformation in the area of communication in your marriage.

COMMUNICATION – PART 2

SESSION 11

Welcome back to "God's Design for Marriage" – Session 11. Last message we talked about communication as two trains of thought. Have you thought of or used that concept? And how about the shutdown concept of holding our own train back?

We said:

- ➤ Communication is a matter of the heart *yours*
- We must be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath

Today, we are going to continue "Communication" in marriage by;

- 1) Looking at the power of the tongue
- 2) Looking at how to transform our communication

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we just pray, as we come to you that we would lay our lives on the altar, Lord. God, we especially surrender our tongues. We surrender our communication. We just lay it at your feet, and say Lord, "We can't change it. We are powerless over the sin nature." Lord, we need to be saved from this small member of our body, and we need to be transformed. That we need to learn to use our communication for good. For edification. To strengthen and to build up, Lord. So show us, right from your word, the danger of the tongue. Give us hope for transformation, so that we can commit to enter into transformation in our marriage. We pray in the power of your living Word and in Jesus' name, Amen.

There is no part of your body that has power - equal to your tongue. Your tongue can bring life to your marriage, restore your marriage and it can bring death to your marriage, destroy your marriage.

M.I.P.

Session 11 - Most Important Point

DEATH AND LIFE ARE IN THE POWER OF THE TONGUEProv 18:21

Each of us has been on the receiving end of the power of the tongue. Each of us has felt the pain, sometimes the long term pain, of the power of someone's tongue used against us. And hopefully we've felt the life and strength and restoration of the power of someone's tongue used for good.



It is the way a person speaks to us that either draws us to them or repels us from them. If you anticipate words of blessing, you are drawn to that person. If you anticipate words of bitterness, you will often find ways to avoid that person.

Again, let me make this perfectly clear, the power of your tongue can heal, strengthen and restore your marriage OR it can slowly, methodically destroy your marriage.

James 3:2-4 (NLT)

2 Indeed, we all make many mistakes. For if we could control our tongues, we would be perfect and could also control ourselves in every other way.

If you can control your tongue, you can control your whole body (and life.) That's the way it is in horses, and even in large ships.

- 3 We can make a large horse go wherever we want by means of a small bit in its mouth.
- 4 And a small rudder makes a huge ship turn wherever the pilot chooses to go, even though the winds are strong.



In 1989, the Exxon Valdez ran aground in Prince William Sound, Alaska. The pilot of the ship was careless with its tongue, and 11 million gallons of destruction and devastation was spilled over 1,300 miles of some of the most beautiful coastline in the world.

There was unbelievable pollution and damage, all caused by the uncontrolled tongue of one ship. This might well describe some of our marriages.

The Captain of the Exxon Valdez tried to excuse himself from that devastation saying, "I was just careless," but that Captain went to prison for the damage his ship's tongue caused. And how he wishes he could take back his carelessness.

James says we have the exact same risk in our marriages if we do not crucify the deadly power of our tongue. Continuing in James 3:

<u>James 3:5–6 (NLT)</u>

5 In the same way, the tongue is a small thing that makes grand speeches. But a tiny spark can set a great forest on fire. 6 And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is a whole world of wickedness, corrupting your entire body. It can set your whole life on fire, for it is set on fire by hell itself.



A small flame of fire that can destroy all life in its path. And verse six says the tongue IS a fire, a fire that can set your whole life on fire... and it, itself, is set on fire by hell. Those are some pretty serious warnings about our tongue. We should be *terrified at the potential damage* our tongues can do.

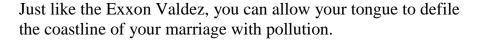
James 3:7–8 (NLT)

7 People can tame all kinds of animals, birds, reptiles, and fish, 8 but no one can tame the tongue. It is restless and evil, full of deadly poison.

Verse eight says "<u>no one can tame the tongue</u>" because its root is in your sin nature. And you, (in your own nature) don't have the ability to tame the tongue.

So you have one of two choices:

- 1) You CRUCIFY the sin nature of your tongue OR –
- 2) You ALLOW IT to destroy all life in your marriage.





So what are we to do with this dangerous enemy between our teeth? We said this in our last message, and it bears repeating. The problem with our tongue doesn't start in our mouth, it starts in our heart. So first, we must make our heart right before God, because if we are harboring poison in our heart, pollution will spill out into our marriage and bring devastation to what God made to be beautiful.

We see this dilemma of the tongue as we continue in James. Our tongue has both the power to bless and bring life *and* the power to curse and bring death.

Is Your tongue Blessing or Cursing?

James 3:9–12 (NLT)

9 Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it curses those who have been made in the image of God.

The biggest example:

- > Coming to church = you're cursing spouse and family
- ➤ In church, people are watching = you're praising the Lord
- ➤ Going home from church = you're cursing spouse and family

10 And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right!

It's not right! Something is not right here...

11 Does a spring of water bubble out with both fresh water and bitter water?

12 Does a fig tree produce olives, or a grapevine produce figs? No, and you can't draw fresh water from a salty spring.

Translation = **HYPOCRISY!!** The underlying issue here is your heart, not your "performance" at church.



Bitter words = Bitter heart Loving words = Loving heart

It is the condition of your heart causing bitter water and cursing to spring forth from the well that is between your teeth. How big of a deal is this? Look back up in James 1.

Jas 1:26 (NLT)

26 If you claim to be religious but don't control your tongue, you are fooling yourself, and your religion is worthless.

An Uncontrolled tongue = Useless Religion

This is a matter of your heart. And again, how do you know if your heart is right? By the words that are coming out of your mouth.

Pro 25.11 - A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold In settings of silver.

<u>Pro 16:24</u> - Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, Sweetness to the soul and health to the bones

<u>Pro 12.18</u> - . . . the tongue of the wise promotes health.

If the words coming out of your mouth are bringing life and health, you can know your heart is right with God. However, if the words coming out of your mouth are bringing death and destruction you can know your heart is not right with God.



It is vital we accept the fact that our tongue reveals sin in our heart, because that's how we know we need to be transformed. So, let's look at what transformed communication looks like.

Ephesians 4:17–18 (NLT)

17 With the Lord's authority I say this: Live (walk) no longer as the Gentiles (unbelievers) do, for they are hopelessly confused.

18 Their minds are <u>full of darkness</u>; they wander <u>far from the life God gives</u> because they have closed their minds and hardened their hearts against him.

Don't live (direct your life) like an unbeliever having your mind darkened and being far from God. Most Christians who are polluting their marriages with their tongues are blind to the sinful condition of their heart, just like an unbeliever. First, we've got to recognize we're acting like an unbeliever...

Now, Eph 4 turns to putting on the new life in Christ.

Ephesians 4:20–22 (NLT)

- 20 But that isn't what you learned about Christ.
- 21 Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him,
- 22 throw off (crucify) your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception.
- > Throw off your old sinful nature.
- ➤ Let the Holy Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.
- > Put on your new nature.

To "throw off" (put off) is to "crucify your old sin nature." HOW? By presenting your old sin nature to be consumed by God. (Rom 12:1) So verse 22 says "throw off (crucify) your old sinful nature and your former way of life..." and then Eph 4 says:

Ephesians 4:23 (NLT)

23 Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes.

Get a renovation of your mind – be transformed. (Rom 12:1) And then Eph 4 continues:

Ephesians 4:24 (NLT)

24 Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.

There is the "PUT-OFF" "PUT-ON" theology of *HOW* to be transformed. You'll then be able to say with Paul (Gal 2:20) "it is no longer I who live – but Christ lives in me."

HOW??

There are very practical and very biblical steps to throwing off your old life, letting the Holy Spirit renew your mind and putting on the new life. But first you must understand this one key word . . . **DATLY!!**

It's about *immersing yourself* in the Spirit (walking in the Spirit) *daily*, so that you don't fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16 (NLT)

16 So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves.

The simple answer to the "how?" is; we've got to learn how to let the Holy Spirit guide our lives (walk in the Spirit.) But we have to accept the word <u>learn</u>, - *implies learning*.

Learn to walk in the Spirit . . . learn to let the Holy Spirit guide your life.

As we throw off the old life (repent /turn) and as we learn to let the Holy Spirit guide us, we will begin to put on the new life of Christ.

Let me give you some real, practical guides to actually bringing transformation into your life.

Resources

These three resources are all by Wayne Mack.

- "A Christian Growth and Discipleship Manual"
- "A Homework Manual for Biblical Living"
- "God's Solutions to Life's Problems"

These are all very practical, daily guides to the "Put-Off, Put-On Transformation Theology" and we highly recommend anything by Wayne Mack.

Okay, now let's look in Eph 4 right after Paul finishes the transformation process, in the *very next verse* he goes into the evidence of this new life, and the first thing he addresses is our communication.

Ephesians 4:25–27 (NLT)

25 So stop telling lies. Let us tell our neighbors the truth, for we are all parts of the same body.

26 And "don't sin by letting anger control you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry,

27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil.

We dealt with both last session.

- 1) Speak the truth (what you're really feeling) in love
- 2) Your wrath is setting a welcoming place for the devil.

Then, in verse 28, Paul deals with stealing and honesty. And then he goes right back into issues of the tongue.

Ephesians 4:29 (NLT)

29 Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

Have you ever known a Christian with foul or abusive language coming out of their mouth? And the worst is the Christian who has pleasant and loving words for everyone else in the church, and then foul or abusive words for their spouse. That is a Christian who has not been transformed. We must esteem our spouse higher than all other person and we must be most careful with our words to them.

Again, Verse 29 - Don't use <u>foul or abusive</u> language. Let everything you say be <u>good</u> and helpful,

We've got to PUT OFF – foul and abusive and We've got to PUT ON – Good and helpful

We can be transformed to do exactly that. We can bring damage to our spouse like no one else with our foul and abusive words. We can build up and strengthen our spouse like no one else with words that are good and helpful.

Abusive language – is literally: <u>foul or putrid words</u> Encouragement – is literally: <u>to build up or strengthen</u>

But HOW can we do that? What if they don't deserve to be built up? How can we speak only what is good and helpful? The answer is...

BY IMPARTING GRACE...

Let's look at Eph 4:29 in the ESV.

Eph 4:29 (ESV)

29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace (NLT - encouragement) to those who hear.

Grace is giving your spouse what they do not deserve. It means literally, "unmerited favor" and it's exactly what God has given you. In the same way you have received undeserved favor from God, you can impart "undeserved favor" to your spouse. Jesus Christ died to give you God's grace (undeserved favor) and you must die to your "self" to give your spouse grace.

This is a foreign concept to our "self" nature and it's exactly what we are called to do.

When you have a right to be **angry** – instead be **forgiving** When you have a right to be **offended** – instead give **mercy** When you have a right to be **unloving** – instead give **love**

That is imparting grace. It's giving your spouse what they do not deserve. Our words must always impart grace to our spouse.

What are the consequences if we do not speak this way?

Ephesians 4:30 (NLT)

30 And do not bring sorrow to (grieve) God's Holy Spirit by the way you live . . .

We need to be very clear on this: If corrupt words are proceeding out of our mouth, we are grieving the Holy Spirit. The word "**grieve**" means "to make sorrowful, or to offend." When we are offending the Holy Spirit, we are separated from him, and there are consequences in our spiritual life. If you feel separated from God, you may want to check the words that are coming out of your mouth, because that might explain why you feel distant.

Ephesians 4:31 (NLT)

31 Get rid of all <u>bitterness</u>, <u>rage</u>, <u>anger</u>, <u>harsh words</u>, and <u>slander</u>, as well as all types of <u>evil behavior</u>.

These are all sins of communication. Six sins that will destroy your marriage

Bitterness – A bitter root, which produces a bitter fruit

Rage – Outbursts of anger

Anger – Exhibited in punishment

Harsh words – A verbal brawl

Slander –To injure by speech

Evil behavior – A desire to injure



Do you have a bitter root in your heart that leads to outbursts of anger, which are exhibited in punishment leading to verbal brawls where you end up causing injury by your speech? These are the sins of your heart that come out of your mouth.

But God is able to forgive you and to heal you of them . . .

If you will come to him in repentance:

- Presenting the totality of your 'self' to be consumed by him,
- To be transformed by the renewing of your mind,
- In order to put on the new nature of Christ.

And how will you know when that has happened?

When you are living out the next verse in Eph 4:

Ephesians 4:32 (NLT)

32 Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.

- ➤ When you are kind to your spouse when they don't deserve it
- ➤ When you are tender-hearted when they are hard hearted
- ➤ When you forgive them just as God in Christ has forgiven you

Then you have been truly transformed by the Spirit of the Living God! And it really can happen in each of our marriages.

Psalm 34:12–14 (NLT)

12 Does anyone want to live a life that is long and prosperous?

13 Then keep your tongue from speaking evil and your lips from telling lies!

14 Turn away from evil and do good. Search for peace, and work to maintain it.



Response Time . . .

From 0% to 100% – what percentage of the time do you feel YOU are blessing and edifying your spouse in your communication?%
From 0% to 100% – what percentage of the time do you feel YOUR SPOUSE is blessing and edifying you in their communication? %
Please compare your answers with your spouse
Do you need to be transformed in your communication with your spouse?

<u>Let's Pray</u>: "Dear Lord Jesus, I know that my tongue is a fire. I surrender it to you to be crucified. Please forgive me of sins of the tongue. Please heal me, please transform me, please give me your new nature, that I would be transformed into your image by the power of your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Be Transformed in your communication:

- 1 Begin by crucifying your 'self' and dealing with sin in your own heart,
- 2 Then renew your mind by the power of the Holy Spirit,
- **3** Then put on the new nature of Christ in your communication.

COMMUNICATION VERSES

2Tim 2:23

". . . avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife."

Prov 18.6-7

"6 A fool's lips enter into contention, And his mouth calls for blows.

 7 A fool's mouth is his destruction, And his lips are the snare of his soul."

Prov 17.14

"The beginning of strife is like releasing water; therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts."

Prov 15:1

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." [repeat]

Psa 34:12-14

- "12 Who is the man who desires life, and loves many days, that he may see good?
- ¹³ Keep your tongue from evil, And your lips from speaking deceit.
- ¹⁴ Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it."

DAVE'S FAVORITES

- Communication is a matter of <u>YOUR</u> heart make it right before God.
- Bitterness, anger and unforgiveness are <u>sins</u> deal with them as such.
- When you're wrong, admit it confess, repent, and ask forgiveness.
- Institute daily <u>couch time</u> 15 minutes a day of real communicating.
- **Pray** for one another sometime during every difficult conversation. The closer it gets to an argument; the more critical immediate prayer is.

Communication - Pt 2 Session 11 - Homework # 1

SCRIPTURE:	James 3:2-12	<u>Date</u>
<u>PRAY</u>		
<u>LISTEN</u>		
	2 slowly and carefully. Note the area of communication	Mark words and phrases that apply to you on in your marriage.
COMMUNICAT	<u>E</u>	
		ext that apply both to you personally and to of your homework time this discussion.
What do you need	ts does this text bring up to ask your spouse for fo that you need to "speak	
<u>RESPOND</u>		
	nd an in-depth convers ing the above questio	sation with your spouse regarding James ns?
	s will you make to tra ese commitments with	nsform your communication with your named your spouse.

LISTEN & RESPOND

Read the following verses and respond to them (write something).	
Prov 15:1	
Col 4:6	
Phil 4:8	

PRAY TOGETHER

Pray together about your communication. Repent as needed and make a covenant with God about your tongue.

Communication - Pt 2 Session 11 - Homework # 2

SCRIPTURE: _	Eph 4:17-32	<u>Dat</u>	<u>e</u>
PRAY			
<u>LISTEN</u>			
	slowly and carefully. Ma ne area of communication		hrases that apply to you iage.
COMMUNICAT	⊏ =		
	ersonally and to your ma		e the parts of this text that our time. Make most of your
<u>RESPOND</u>			
Have you really ha Eph 4:17-32?	d an in-depth convers	ation with you	ır spouse regarding
a plan (and the full		irit). What hav	re requires commitment and e you <u>STARTED</u> doing to

your spouse, what <u>WILL</u> you start doing? If you don't know what to do, <u>WHO</u> will you ask to disciple you in this process?				

PRAY TOGETHER

Make a commitment in prayer to be transformed by the renewing of your mind in this area of your marriage. And, if needed, make a commitment to seek out discipleship to bring this transformation to pass.

RECOMMENDED READING

"Strengthening Your Marriage" - Wayne Mack

"A Marriage Without Regrets" - Kay Arthur

"The Five Love Languages" - Gary Smalley

"The Love Dare" - Stephen & Alex Kendrick

ROMANCE AND LOYALTY

SESSION 12



Welcome to our final session in "God's Design for Marriage" – Session 12.

In this session we are going to talk about two subjects that are closely connected; Romance and Loyalty.



Romance is the reason you got married, and loyalty is the key to staying married. God's design for your marriage is that the fire of romance remains alive, and it is to be constantly "rekindled" by your loyalty.

Romance and loyalty have the same key ingredient; **Undying commitment**. And that is our M.I.P. (Most Important Point) for this final session.

Session 12 - Most Important Point

ROMANCE AND LOYALTY HAVE THE SAME KEY INGREDIENT; UNDYING COMMITMENT.

Undying commitment to romance keeps the marriage fire burning.
Undying commitment to loyalty continually rekindles the spark of romance.

The book I would recommend for this area of your marriage is; "The Book of Romance," by Tommy Nelson

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for what you have for us in this session. Thank you for the purpose you have for each of us taking part in this course. Lord, we thank you for this subject matter and your design in this area. Now we turn to your Word. Show us your plan and purpose for our marriages, Lord. Give us a yearning and a desire to allow you to continue to transform us. In Jesus' name, Amen

Let's start with the number one romance killer;



So often we hear these "warning signs" of a hard heart;

- I just don't feel in love anymore.
- I think I have fallen out of love with my spouse.
- Maybe it just isn't meant to be.

These are "smoke screen" statements. And they are almost always covering up the sin of unforgiveness and a hard heart. Every refusal to forgive your spouse causes your heart to become harder and harder. Unforgiveness turns into bitterness, and bitterness turns into vengeance. You might not think it's vengeance, but it's the vengeance of "closing your heart" to your spouse.

That's why we have quoted Eph 4:32 so many times: We must continually be <u>forgiving</u> one another, (in the SAME way) <u>as</u> God in Christ has forgiven us.

Offenses like unforgiveness and bitterness, if not fully healed, will bring callousness to your marriage and will result in the loss of romantic love.



Proverbs 18:19 (NLT)

19 An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars.

I am talking about <u>you</u> being offended by your spouse and then <u>you</u> refusing to forgive <u>them</u>. Then what happens is, they're on the other side of that locked gate, and they're trying to repent and they're attempting to make things right. But your heart is harder to win back than a fortified city because unforgiveness has calloused your heart.

And so, we must continually unlock the gate of our heart, and we must continually allow God to "soften" the hardness of our heart that comes from unforgiveness.

We've got to commit those hurts to God and allow him to pour AGAPE love (Rom 5:5) into our heart to soften and restore it, because healing our callused heart is the first step toward restoring romance in our marriage.

Next, the number two romance killer;

HE #2 ROMANCE KILLER – REFUSAL TO LIVE IN OUR GOD-DESIGNED ROLES

God designed our spouse; he knows exactly what they need. And he designed us to *provide exactly what they need*. The secret to providing our spouse just what they need is to live purposefully in our roles.



Wives (seriously) the most romantic thing you can do for your husband is to sacrificially support him, respect him, and even admire him. That's a man who can't wait to get home after work because he needs the emotional support that only his wife can give him.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T . . . That's actually what God designed a man to need.

<u>Wives</u> - you may think your body is the only thing that says romance to your husband. And husbands you may also mistakenly believe that same thing. But I promise you, a wife who is purposefully and actively living in her role is the real key to long-term romance. Husbands, contrary to your assumption, romance is not spelled S-E-X. Yes, it involves sex, but true romance starts way before that. True romance starts (and lasts) in the heart.

And the best way for you both to develop that heart of romance is to;

- 1) Keep God's agape love flowing for your spouse.
- 2) Purposefully and actively give your spouse what they need.

Wives, the world says romance is about looking like a model. The Bible says it is the *hidden beauty of the heart*.

1 Peter 3:1-4 (NLT)

1 In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands (live in your role). Then, even if some refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over

- 2 by observing your pure and reverent lives.
- 3 Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes.
- 4 You should <u>clothe yourselves</u> instead with the beauty that comes from within, the <u>unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit</u>, which is so precious to God.

The secret to romance (from the wive's side) is not primarily on the outside, but it is primarily on the inside. And if you are consistently critical and judgmental, you will never be able to show true romantic love to your husband.

Proverbs 27:15-16 (NLT)

15 A quarrelsome wife is as annoying as constant dripping on a rainy day. 16 Stopping her complaints is like trying to stop the wind . . .

For wives, honestly, romance starts with the "unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit." It starts with the heart. Now, of course, there are outward things you can do, and should do, to keep the romance alive in your marriage. But a critical, judgmental spirit, dressed up in a red nighty, only lasts for a very short time. The unfading beauty God has given you lasts forever, and it all starts with the condition of your heart.

<u>Husbands</u> - the most romantic thing you can do for your wife is to sacrificially love her. To love her with genuine tenderness and understanding, which is exactly what God made her to need.

A wife whose husband is constantly showing her kindness, tenderness, genuine affection, and understanding, THAT is a happy wife, and one who feels the life of romance in her marriage.

When a husband is genuinely treating his wife this way; not only will she be happy, <u>and</u> feel the life of romance in her marriage, but this is also most often what leads to the S-E-X part that all men think I'm actually talking about when I say romance.

Guys, our culture has damaged marriage (and sex) so much by playing to a man's fantasy of, "one wink and ten seconds later we're having wild sex." You know that doesn't actually work, right? And the rest of what you see on TV isn't true either!

Here's what is true, though, and here is how to really prepare for lasting romance, including the S-E-X part.

1 Peter 3:7 (NLT)

7 In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. <u>Treat your wife with understanding</u> as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. <u>Treat her as you should</u> so your prayers will not be hindered.

This verse is about giving great care to your wife, which is exactly what God created her to need. True romance is all about showing her honor and treating her with understanding, as you should. Not only will that make your marriage great, but also, when you pray, God will not say, "*I can't hear you*."

Husbands, you must give honor to your wife at all times, she is your queen, the most important thing in your world. That is what God designed your wife to need! If you do whatever is necessary for her to feel that way, your marriage will continually grow in the area of romance. But if you are a demanding, self-absorbed husband, it will be impossible for your wife to feel romantic towards you.

The key verse for your role is from Eph 5.

Ephesians 5:25 (NKJV)

25 Husbands, love your wives, <u>just as</u> Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

Do you want the sex part of romance? Then first love your wife just as Christ loved the Church. Romance is destroyed when either a husband or a wife refuses to give what the other person is designed by God to need.



When you truly begin to give your spouse what they need most, I promise, that romantic spark will come back.

<u>A wife</u> needs most to be loved, honored, and cherished by her husband. A husband needs most to be supported and respected by his wife.

Now let's talk about how loyalty fits together with romance.



Since the 1960's the divorce rate in this country has skyrocketed 700%. Almost half of all school-age children now come from broken homes. Why? Because we have set aside God's design and we have set aside our loyalty. Many here have been divorced. If you

have been divorced and asked God's forgiveness, he has forgiven you. And God wants you to press on for what he has for you. However, please understand God's design for marriage does not include the option for divorce.

In Matthew 19 Jesus says divorce exists because of the hardness of your hearts, but it was never God's design. Although the New Testament does allow divorce on the grounds of adultery, it means God permits it because of the intense damage adultery does.

However, even in that grave situation, God can heal and restore, because God has made two individuals one flesh.

Jesus says in Matthew 19:6 (NLT)

6 Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together."



The vow you took on your wedding day, God took seriously. It's taken from Exodus 20, the third commandment.

Exodus 20:7

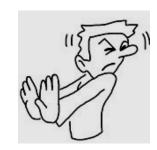
7 "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

This commandment is not about cursing. It's about the eternal seriousness of the vows we make before God. If you stood before God and made a vow before him to be one flesh with your spouse, God took that vow seriously, and he meant for you to take it seriously as well.

For us to maintain that vow, we need to be committed to two types of loyalty: **emotional** loyalty and **mental** loyalty.



Emotional loyalty means there is no one of the opposite sex involved in your emotional life – no one! Emotional oneness is a very powerful thing, and I promise you it is too powerful for you to share with someone of the opposite sex that is not your spouse. That emotional connection leads to romance. And so you should have no relationship with the opposite sex, other than your spouse, that involves the sharing of your emotions, unless it's your mother or father.



WARNING!!

AT THE PRECISE MOMENT YOUR MARRIAGE STRUGGLES, THE ENEMY WILL PUT SOMEONE OF THE OPPOSITE SEX IN YOUR PATH. IF YOU BEGIN TO SHARE YOUR EMOTIONS WITH THEM, YOU WILL BE PLAYING INTO THE DEVIL'S HAND AND GIVING HIM FREE REIGN TO STEAL, KILL, AND DESTROY YOUR MARRIAGE.

The sharing of your heart must be saved for your spouse because it is part of the magic of romance in a marriage. Outside of your marriage, friendships that involve the sharing of emotions must be of the same sex. Here's why; the devil's not stupid. Stop and read again the warning box above! Really, read it carefully.

Emotional disloyalty is very often the beginning of a marriage downfall. We must protect our heart, for our spouse, at all costs.



Next, you must keep your mind loyal to your spouse at all times. You must deny all other mental (or visual) temptations. Disloyalty (in any way) always undermines the one flesh bond, and it always begins with a small undermining. Then it just tears away at the foundation until your marriage collapses on itself.

And always remember this; The most important time for you to be fiercely loyal to your spouse . . . is when they are *not with you*.

YOU MUST BE LOYAL (MENTALLY AND VISUALLY) TO YOUR SPOUSE AT ALL TIMES.

MEN...

If you are looking at pornography, you are undermining the foundation of your marriage with every click of the mouse. Jesus said you are committing adultery in your heart, and you WILL destroy your marriage for the sake of some stupid picture. Don't be an idiot. You must count the cost of what you're looking at. It's very high.



But mental disloyalty is not *JUST* a man thing...

WOMEN...

In their minds, women often think some other man would be better for them - because they don't *know* that other man. That mental disloyalty also begins to subtly undermine the foundation of your marriage. Statistics also show that married women are in inappropriate internet communication twice as much as married men.

An affair always begins with a desire to escape current conditions in your marriage. And it ends with you trying to fulfill, outside your marriage, some need you don't think is being fulfilled inside your marriage.

An affair never fulfills the need that you think drove you to the affair. It never does. Those feelings are just the bait the enemy uses to get you to destroy your marriage. And he is always "in the wings," just waiting to provide the bait.

The devil's primary tactic to destroy your marriage is this:

- ➤ Mental (visual) disloyalty followed by
- **Emotional** disloyalty followed by
- ➤ **Physical** disloyalty followed by the
- **Destruction** of ALL loyalty and possibly the marriage.

Some of you are in relationships right now where you are being disloyal to your spouse, emotionally or mentally. You must end it right now! Today! YOU MUST make a commitment to God right now to crucify that relationship – cut it off, end it! If you have to quit your job, move, leave the ministry, it doesn't matter. Take drastic measures, and do it now!

When you do work, or minister, with persons of the opposite sex, you must set up a wall of emotional and mental loyalty to your spouse. Because your emotional and mental loyalty is not tested when you are with your spouse, it is always tested when you're away from your spouse. And so those lines must be drawn, and those walls must be built, and they must not be crossed, for any reason.

We must be loyal to our spouse, at all costs, in all ways, at all times.

EMOTIONALLY ~ **MENTALLY** ~ **VISUALLY** ~ **PHYSICALLY**

Let's wrap up now with a principle guaranteed to keep romantic love alive in your marriage. And I believe this principle will even divorce-proof your marriage. We call this principle, "<u>3-Dimensional Oneness</u>." It's oneness in every area of your marriage.

<u> Zdimensional Oneness</u>



<u>DIMENSION #1 – PHYSICAL ONENESS</u>

Physical touch and closeness, and yes . . . sex. But again, men, it's not *just* sex. It does include sex, but a physical oneness is much more than just sex. Sitting together, being together, doing things together. These are all in the physical oneness category. Being physically together, doing things together, is the first level of 3-Dimensional Oneness.

Being physically together, both intimately and non-intimately, is the foundational layer of 3-Dimensional Oneness. You can't be one if you're not *together*. Physical oneness is the starting point, and then you build on that foundation.



DIMENSION #2 - EMOTIONAL ONENESS

Emotional Oneness is where most marriage relationships, initially, really got rolling. When you began developing an emotional oneness, that's when you were on your way to getting married. Unfortunately, this is also where most marriages start to break down.

Emotional oneness is sharing all the emotions, together. It's experiencing life together. It's the emotional connection of two hearts beating as one. Romance at its best is heart-to-heart communication. It's feeling what your spouse feels.

Emotional oneness goes beyond just the physical; it's the beginning of a real romance that lasts. Emotional Oneness requires ongoing effort to grow and to maintain, but it is so worth it!

DIMENSION #3 - SPIRITUAL ONENESS

Spiritual Oneness is the supernatural unity that supersedes all else. The absolute pinnacle of oneness in your marriage is spiritual oneness.



God's love for us could be described as a romantic love:

- > He gently woos us to himself
- ➤ He assures us we are of great value to him
- ➤ He continually shows us how much he loves us and cares for us
- ➤ He desires to have a constantly growing relationship with us

God loves you in that way, and he's poured that love (his love) into your heart (Rom 5:5 says). The most supernatural oneness is spiritual oneness, and it is at the peak of the 3-Dimensional Oneness that will divorce-proof your marriage.

From Tommy Nelson's book, "The Book of Romance"

"A recent survey concluded 80 % of couples who live together not being married end up separating. 60% of couples married outside the church end up divorcing. 40% of couples married inside the church end up divorcing. But couples who read their Bible together daily, divorce at the rate of .1% (1/10 of 1%)."

Those numbers speak for themselves.

- "3-Dimensional Oneness" is the secret weapon to keep love alive and divorce-proof your marriage.
 - ➤ **Physical Oneness** Being together physically.
 - **Emotional Oneness** Two hearts beating as one.
 - ➤ **Spiritual Oneness** The supernatural unity.



3-Dimensional Oneness is your guarantee of romantic love, and your greatest defense against the enemy's attacks on your marriage.

We must hold our marriage in higher regard than anything else in this life (except Christ himself). We must honor it, protect it, and nurture it. We must always breathe life into it, and we must always sacrifice 'self' for it.

THIS IS GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE!

Let's Pray. "Heavenly Father, please make us one flesh, and please make us loyal. Please give us the power of your Holy Spirit to crucify our self, to live in the roles you've designed us to live in, and to experience your 3-dimensional oneness. May we experience the greatest blessings of your design for our marriage. In Jesus name, Amen."



Response Time . . .

Will you con Spouse?	mmit to do just ONE MORE night of homework with your
YES	NO
•	not done ANY other homework, will you absolutely commit to ast homework assignment?

Final Homework Session 12

Date _____

<u>SCRIPTURE</u>: <u>Eph 4:15-16</u>

<u>PRAY & LISTEN</u>
Read <u>Eph 4:15-16</u> . "Instead, <u>we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ</u> , who is the head of his body, the church. He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love." (NLT)
COMMUNICATE
Would you, right now, speak the truth in love to your spouse? Talk at a new level about your marriage, especially your concerns and your fears.
This is our last request for this series. Share with your spouse what you feel needs to change in your marriage. What area of your marriage do you need to surrender and commit to God for transformation?
RESPOND
Will you actually DO something, proactively and consistently, to allow God to transform your marriage in this area?
What commitment will you make to begin to apply God's transformation to your marriage? Discuss this with your spouse and write your commit here;
PRAY TOGETHER

You've started on a new journey of transformation in your marriage. Thank God for it. Commit to follow through. And pray for your spouse.

GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE

Leave all else
Cleave to your spouse
Become one flesh
Forgive... again and again
Submit to one another – esteeming the other higher
Live in your roles
Communicate in love
Keep the Romance alive
AND ABOVE ALL - BE LOYAL

If you would like additional CD's, MP3's, and Workbooks on "God's Design for Marriage," please contact;

Calvary Chapel Nuevo www.calvarynuevo.org

www.wordbymail.com

(951) 928-8582

P.O. Box 1347 Nuevo, CA 92567

Thank you for studying God's Design for Marriage with us.