

MARRIAGE COURSE

AUG / SEP 2015



This course aims to present a biblical view of marriage. God designed the institution of marriage, and we would all do our marriages well by understanding His take on things by constantly reminding ourselves of the truth in His word.

1) The Promise for Marriage (19/08/15)

* The marriage relationship, like our relationship with God, is based on covenant

2) The Purpose for Marriage (26/08/15)

- * Enjoying God's blessing of intimate friendship
- * Growing through God's shaping and correcting

3) The Pattern for Marriage (02/09/15)

- * God instructs husbands to love their wives
- * God instructs wives to respect their husbands

4) The Players in Marriage (09/09/15)

- * God has ordained husbands to be servant leaders
- * God has ordained wives to be submissive helpers

5) The Power for Marriage (16/09/15)

- * God's grace is there for us not only to receive, but also to extend to others; most significantly, our marriage partner



Ephesians 5:21-33 (NIV)**Instructions for Christian Households**

²¹ Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

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

²³ For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.

²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵ Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her

²⁶ to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word,

²⁷ and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

²⁸ In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.

²⁹ After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— ³⁰ for we are members of his body.

³¹ “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

³² This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church.

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



**THE PROMISE
FOR MARRIAGE**



The Promise for Marriage

The essence of marriage is a sacrificial commitment to the good of the other. That means that love is more fundamentally action than emotion, and that the good of the relationship takes precedence over the immediate needs of the individual.

Key text(s):

Genesis 2:24

“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

Ephesians 5:31

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”



“Love needs a framework of binding obligation to make it fully what it should be. A covenant relationship is not just intimate despite being legal, it is a relationship that is more intimate because it is legal.”

“Wedding vows are not a declaration of present love but a mutually binding promise of future love.”



“Our culture says that feelings of love are the basis for actions of love. And of course that can be true. But it is truer to say that actions of love can lead consistently to feelings of love.”

“When over the years someone has seen you at your worst, and knows you with all your strengths and flaws, yet commits him- or herself to you wholly, it is a consummate experience. To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretence, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies us for any difficulty life can throw at us.”





Questions:

Why, do you think, we often hear the phrase, “I don’t need a piece of paper to love you. It just complicates things.” if marriage is such a deep Godly commitment that carries the weight that it does?

What, do you think, the difference between a contract and a covenant is?

How do you define love? Is it emotion, action, or both?

How am I expressing love within our relationship?

What adjustments do I need to make to ensure that our love is primarily action based, and not only feelings based?

Is ‘sacrificial commitment’ a good way to describe my contribution to our covenantal relationship?

Does our covenantal relationship make you feel boxed in, or do you experience greater freedom to be yourself, and to have greater levels of honesty and vulnerability?

How is ‘confrontation within a covenant’ different to ‘confrontation outside of a covenant’?



Wedding Vows

The pledges before God & witnesses

Do you, declare that as far as you know there is no legal impediment to your proposed marriage with and that you call all here present to witness that you take him/her as your husband/wife? (I do), do you take to be your husband/wife? Do you promise that you will love, cherish, honour and protect him/her, and, forsaking all others, be faithful to him/her as long as you both shall live? (I do)

Vows to one another

I take you,
to be my husband/wife,
loving you now and as you grow into all that God intends.
I will love you when we are together and when we are not;
when our lives are at peace and when they are in turmoil;
when I am proud of you and when I am disappointed in you;
in times of rest and in times of work.
I will honour your goals and dreams
and help you to fulfil them.
From the depth of my being,
I will seek to be open and honest with you.
I say these things believing
that God is in the midst of them all.



**THE PURPOSE
OF MARRIAGE**



The Purpose of Marriage

The purpose of marriage is friendship and holiness. The Bible is clear that our journey towards greater holiness cannot be achieved alone. It's achieved through Christian relationships... the most effective and significant of which is the deepest and most intimate friendship discovered in our marriage relationship.

Key text(s):

Genesis 2:18

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

Proverbs 27:5-6

Better is open rebuke than hidden love.

Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.

Proverbs 27:17

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

Ephesians 5:26-28

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.



“Christian friendship is meant to be a deep oneness that develops as two people journey together towards the same destination, helping one another through the dangers and challenges along the way.”

“What is the purpose of marriage? The Bible’s answer to this question starts with the principle that marriage is a friendship.”



“Your spouse has got to be your best friend, or be on the way to becoming your best friend, or you won’t have a strong, rich marriage that endures and that makes you both vastly better persons for having been in it.”

“Romance, sex, laughter, and plain fun are the by-products of this process of sanctification and refinement. Those things are important, but they can’t keep a marriage going through years and years of ordinary life. What keeps the marriage going is your commitment to your spouse’s holiness. You’re committed to his or her beauty. You’re committed to his or her greatness and perfection. You’re committed to his or her honesty and passion for the things of God. That’s your job as a spouse. Any lesser goal than that, any smaller purpose, and you’re just playing at being married.”



“When Jesus’ love, wisdom, and greatness are formed in us, each with our own unique gifts and callings, we become our “true selves,” the persons we were created to be. Every page in the Bible cries that the journey to this horizon cannot be accomplished alone. We must face it and share it with brothers and sisters, friends of our heart. And the very best human friendship possible for that adventure is with the lover-friend who is your spouse.”

“If your spouse does not feel that you are putting him or her first then, by definition, you aren’t. And when that happens, your marriage starts to decline.”



Questions:

According to Scripture, what is the underlying purpose of marriage?

“Agape is a love that can only be known by the actions it inspires.”

- How have I shown you agape love over the past few weeks?
- What is your favourite way that I love you?

“Biblical love is always expressed as how much you are willing to curb your choices as a way of meeting the needs of another.”

- What choices do I make that make you feel like I am not always willing to meet your needs?
- Do I make you feel like you are my best friend?
- How can I make you feel like you are my best friend?

“I would never have seen the depths of my sin if I wasn't married. I would never have been in a position to see it.” - Tim Keller

- What have you seen in yourself, since being married, that you long for me to help you through?
- What do you see in me, that you wish I could see for myself?
[Encouragement]
- In what way have I partnered with God to make you more like Jesus?



**THE PATTERN
FOR MARRIAGE**



The Pattern for Marriage

A wife has one driving need – to feel loved. A husband has one driving need – to feel respected. When these needs are met, the marriage relationship ‘sings’. When either or both aren’t met, the marriage relationship ‘groans’. By abiding by this biblical pattern, couples can bring greater levels of peace and fulfilment into their relationships.

Key text(s):

Ephesians 5:25

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

Ephesians 5:33

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

1 Peter 3:1-6

“Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewelry or fine clothes. Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.”

Colossians 3:18-19

“Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.”



“God has put in the heart of every little girl the desire to be a princess. She dresses up, talks about it, even dreams about it. As a woman, she wants to be first in the heart of her prince. She wants to be loved and treasured like a princess. A little boy wants to be the hero, defending the fort and saving others from danger. As a man, he wants to be the prince, the hero that his princess admires and respects. He is designed by God to be a man of honour, one who is responsible to provide and care for his princess.”

“In your marriage, be the first to ‘seek peace and pursue it’”
(1 Peter 3:11)



“One key to making your relationship safe and secure is to demonstrate benevolent goodwill toward your mate – to believe he or she has good intentions, to expect the best of the other person. Even when your mate messes up, you can choose to believe in the goodwill of your spouse.”

“Ultimately, you practice love or respect because beyond your spouse you see Jesus Christ and you envision a moment when you will be standing before Him at the final judgment, realizing that your marriage was really a tool and a test to deepen and demonstrate your love and your reverence for your Lord.”



C-O-U-P-L-E

To the men, here's an acronym to remind you of what your wife needs. This is how you spell love to your wife:

- Closeness—She wants you to be close.
- Openness—She wants you to open up to her.
- Understanding—She wants you to listen; don't try to fix her.
- Peacemaking—She wants you to say, "I'm sorry".
- Loyalty—She wants to know that you're committed.
- Esteem—She wants you to honour and cherish her.

C-H-A-I-R-S

To the women, here's an acronym to remind you of what your husband needs. This is how you spell respect to your husband:

- Conquest—He wants to work and achieve.
- Hierarchy—He wants to protect and provide.
- Authority—He wants to serve and to lead.
- Insight—He wants to analyse and counsel.
- Relationship—He wants shoulder-to-shoulder friendship.
- Sexuality—He wants sexual intimacy.



Questions:

When reading Ephesians 5:33, do you see the biblical truth being conveyed as a 'suggestion' or as an 'instruction'?

Husband ask your wife:

- Do you feel loved by me?
- What are the things that I can change and do that would make you feel more loved by me?

Wife ask your husband:

- Do you feel respected by me?
- What are the things that I can change and do that would make you feel more respected by me?

In light of Ephesians 5:33, and what we have heard tonight, do I need to apologise for wrong behaviour? What are the things that we want to commit to in the future?



The Gift of Respect By Erin Smalley

Recently, my husband, Greg, and I were attending our weekly marriage group. The food was great, the company even better . . . but I have to confess that the teaching was difficult for me. Not because the teaching wasn't great, but because of the conviction it brought to my heart.

The primary verse presented that evening was familiar — Ephesians 5:33 where Paul teaches: “Let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” There it was, straight from the Word of God, teaching that men are called to love their wives and wives are called to respect their husbands. Now, don't get me wrong, I thought I respected my husband most of the time. However, as I sat quietly with Greg's hand in mine, I knew that this issue was something I wanted to really focus on during the summer months. I wanted to be intentional about respecting my husband, especially in front of our children.

Intentional honour

In all honesty, I don't intentionally dishonour or disrespect my husband. However, in the rush of life as I try to balance a million things at once, I often respond to him in harsh tones or with body language that screams disrespect. As the teacher discussed how our children are watching our every move, the conviction that night in our small-group gathering drove deeper in my heart. I had to ask myself if I was leading our kids ultimately to think that my behaviour toward their dad in those moments was acceptable.

As I reflected even more on the verse that night, I realised that there were times that I had even justified my actions or words. I'd defend myself by saying, “I just needed his help with the kids — now — not in 30 minutes! So I increased my tone to intensify my immediate need.” Or I'd clarify, “I was in a hurry to hang up because I had to pick up one of our kids from school.” However, it says in Ephesians that wives are to respect their husbands. I noticed that it didn't say if we have time or when we can think about it or even when it's convenient. I realised that it wasn't like I was premeditating disrespect or planning to be rude. I just let it happen in the craziness of my daily life.

As our small group closed for the evening, the facilitator asked us to contemplate what we could focus on over the summer months to strengthen our marriage relationship. Before he could even finish his sentence, my hand was in the air. I wanted to share what my focus would be for the summer. At the top of my list was to be intentional about respecting my husband. And my dear husband jokingly offered me a list of ways I could honour him — just to get me started on the right foot.



Practical honour

The Oxford dictionary defines respect as: “A feeling of deep admiration for someone or something elicited by their abilities, qualities or achievements.” After pondering this definition, it became clear to me that I would need to regularly recognise what I most admired about Greg. Maybe I'd even need to keep a list of character qualities, abilities and achievements that I loved about him so I could refer to it regularly. It made me think of Luke 12:34, “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” I understood that my heart would be with whatever I treasured about Greg (whether it was his sense of humour, his amazing ability to connect with our girls or his great work ethic). I love the thought of that: I can respect my husband by making a choice, especially when I'm frustrated with him, and I can respect my husband as an overflow of the habit of my heart.

Maybe you, too, have become acutely aware of your desire to be more intentional in offering encouragement and respect to your husband. Maybe you would ultimately like to teach your kids to do the same. This Father's Day, I cannot help but think there's no greater gift for Dad than respect — both for the day and in the months that follow.

Here are a few things that might help with your endeavour:

- Every day be on the lookout for one thing in your husband's behaviour for which you can praise him. It can be as simple as taking out the trash. Or maybe it's his faithfulness to go to work each day and be a great provider. Or maybe it's simply emptying the dishwasher. If you look for praiseworthy behaviour, you will find it! Consider writing it down on a list of what you most admire about your husband. Encourage your kids to do the same.
- Offer your husband words of encouragement and affirmation — maybe even at the dinner table in front of your children. Consider inviting your children to share as well.
- When you are alone with your kids, always talk positively about your husband. Tell them how much you appreciate their dad.
- When you blow it by speaking to your husband in dishonouring ways, simply "clean it up". Acknowledge that you were wrong and ask your husband to forgive you.
- Commit to honouring and respecting your husband regardless of what he does, or does not do, in response to your respect. He is worthy of honour because his value does not change based on his behaviour. Scripture makes it clear that a person's value does not change because of his or her actions (Genesis 1:27; Exodus 19:5; Isaiah 43:4).
- Ask the Lord for strength and self-control and for His love to flow abundantly through you towards your husband.



THE PLAYERS IN MARRIAGE



The Players in Marriage

Only in submitting to our divinely assigned gender roles do we discover that marriage is like a beautiful dance. When hot-button words like “headship” and “submission” are understood and applied correctly, with Jesus as the model for both, marriages flourish.

Key text(s):

Ephesians 5:22-28

“Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself.”

Genesis 1:26-28

“Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.”

So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.

God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.”

Genesis 2:18

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



Philippians 2:5-11

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;
rather, he made himself nothing
by taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
by becoming obedient to death—
even death on a cross!

Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.”



“The Son takes a subordinate role, and in that movement he shows not his weakness but his greatness.”

“Christian teaching does not offer a choice between fulfilment and sacrifice but rather mutual fulfilment through mutual sacrifice.”



“A discussion of how gender roles work in marriage must begin with a look at the good that God originally intended, how men and women have corrupted that good, and what Jesus has done to redeem gender roles. Only then can we move on to the hazardous concepts of authority, submission, and headship and the idea of a helpmate.”

“Jesus clearly states his position on the meaning of authority and headship. In the world, rulers and high officials exercise their authority by “lording it” over others. Not so with you. Those tasked with leadership must be slaves of all, following their master, who “did not come to be served but to serve...”



“The relationship of Jesus to church is the model for that of husband and wife. We the church, submit to Christ in everything, and the parallel of a wife submitting “everything” to her husband is no longer daunting, since we know what kind of behaviour the husband has been called on to imitate. To what role must he submit? To that of saviour, a servant-leader, who uses his authority and power to express a love that doesn’t even stop at dying for his beloved.”

“The only person over whom you have control is yourself.”



Questions:

Which role do you believe is the most challenging: Is it the husband's, the wife's, or are both equally challenging?

Husband ask your wife:

- What do you find most challenging about submitting to my leadership?
- Do you feel that my leading is done in such a way that you are the main beneficiary?
- What are the things that I can change and do that would make that more of a reality?

Wife ask your husband:

- What do you find most challenging about how you are to lead our family?
- Do you feel that I help you in a submissive way?
- What are the things that I can change and do that would make that more of a reality?

“In the dance of the Trinity, the greatest is the one who is most self-effacing, most sacrificial, most devoted to the good of the other. Jesus redefined - or, more truly, defined properly - headship and authority, thus taking the toxicity of it away, at least for those who live by his definition rather than by the world's understanding.”
How does this make you think differently about the subject of submission/headship in marriage?

How does our marriage relationship complete you?
(See Genesis 2:23-25)



**THE POWER
FOR MARRIAGE**



The Power for Marriage

Self-centredness is the greatest enemy of marriages. Spirit-generated selflessness is the greatest ally. Only in God, and through his ongoing work in our lives, can we truly live like Jesus (putting the needs of our spouses above our own).

Key text(s):

1 John 4:19

“We love – because he first loved us”

Ephesians 5:21

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Romans 5:1-2;5

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand.

And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”



“The gospel, brought home to your heart by the Spirit, can make you happy enough to be humble, giving you an internal fullness that frees you to be generous with your spouse even when you are not getting the satisfaction you want out of the relationship. Without the help of the Spirit, without a continual refilling of your soul’s tank with the glory and love of the Lord, such submission to the interests of the other is virtually impossible to accomplish for any length of time without becoming resentful.”



Praying for your spouse:

Wife pray:

- That God will give you the grace and guidance to submit as he intended. Pray for clarity where there is confusion and that God would soften your heart where there is resistance.
- That your husband would lead with heavenly wisdom and knowledge; gently and humbly
- That your husband would be led to protect, comfort and prefer you and your family

Husband pray:

- For the wisdom to know how to love and lead your wife
- For the ability to bring clarity to the Word
- For unity

Questions:

Ask your spouse:

How am I faring in the following areas?

- Spiritual disciplines
- Biblical knowledge
- Bible reading
- Spiritual gifts
- Involvement at church
- Relationship with your parents and my parents
- Fears, hopes and dreams
- Major disappointments
- Struggles

Take these points and pray over them together.





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