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DEVELOPING A MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT SEMINAR FOR  
COUPLES AT EASTHAVEN BAPTIST CHURCH,  
KALISPELL, MONTANA

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

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by  
Michael Wayne Marrs  
December 2015

**APPROVAL SHEET**

DEVELOPING A MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT SEMINAR  
FOR COUPLES AT EASTHAVEN BAPTIST  
CHURCH, KALISPELL, MONTANA

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Dedicated to  
My Heavenly Father  
Who has blessed my life abundantly and made all this possible.

*Soli Deo Gloria*



And to my wife

Anne

The love of my life and my better three-quarters.

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## PREFACE

The opportunity to develop and implement this project marks the culmination of the first phase of my plans for a career in Biblical Counseling. Through this project I was able to synthesize my thinking about the importance of specific components that couples need to address both before and after they are married.

I have long felt called to this type of ministry, and focusing on this project, “Developing a Marriage Enrichment Seminar For Couples at Easthaven Baptist Church, Kalispell, Montana,” has given me a greater appreciation for how Scripture and the Gospel of Jesus Christ provide the answers for individuals and couples seeking to have better quality lives and better quality marriages, while glorifying God.

I would like to thank my many professors at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminar who through their teaching, counseling, and support helped me gain direction for my life within ministry. Most specifically, I would like to thank Dr. Stuart Scott, who introduced me to the field of Biblical Counseling and whose influence and mentorship has helped shaped the very way I engage in pastoral counseling and ministry.

I would also like to thank my church family at Easthaven Baptist Church for their continued prayers of support and encouragement, which they have provided, me and my wife, Anne, as we started the *LOGOS* Christian Counseling ministry at Easthaven, and the Doctor of Ministry program at the same time. A special thanks to Easthaven’s Senior Pastor, Dr. Daniel Lambert, for his assistance and guidance, not only on this project, but in my spiritual growth and development as a pastor.

Recognition must also be given to my parents, Dr. Lawrence W. Marrs and Barbara Grove for their endless love, advice, and tireless editing of this project and other papers I have written while attending seminary.

To my incredible wife, Anne, who has stood by me through seminary, the start up of *LOGOS*, and now the Doctor of Ministry degree, with a warm smile on her face, love in her heart, frequent words of encouragement, and a focused determination to help me succeed in the program, our ministry, and in our amazing venture through life together.

In closing, there is no way to express the complete gratitude I have for my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, who made this all possible through his sacrificial death on the cross resulting in the forgiveness of my sins and the privilege to serve him and his Kingdom, while serving others in ministry. *Soli Deo Gloria.*

Michael W. Marrs

Whitefish, Montana

December 2015

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to develop a Marriage Enrichment Seminar for couples at Easthaven Baptist Church in Kalispell, Montana.

#### **Goals**

Four goals were established for the purpose of developing, implementing evaluating and ensuring the success of this project. The first goal was to identify eight essential topics to be addressed when counseling couples seeking to enrich or enhance the quality of their marriages by building them upon a strong biblical foundation. The eight topics were identified for the seminar by administering a pre-course inventory designed to measure the relative importance of seventeen different topics directly related to and impacting marriages today.<sup>1</sup> The survey was administered to 8 married couples at Easthaven. The goal was considered successfully met when 5 married couples completed the survey, ranking the level of priority for each of seventeen topics listed. The inventory was analyzed yielding a clear picture of the eight highest-ranking topics to be covered during the marriage enrichment seminar.

The Bible and pertinent biblical and sociological resources were utilized during the development phase of this project explaining the significance of each of the eight essential topics chosen and why they were considered relevant to the seminar.

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix 1.

The second goal involved presenting the eight essential topics identified in goal 1 to Easthaven's pastoral staff, for feedback utilizing a preliminary rubric to evaluate the relevance of each topic included in the curriculum, as well as the initial scope and sequence of each essential topic included in the course.<sup>2</sup> This information was utilized to determine the depth of each topic addressed and the sequence in which they were taught. The second goal was deemed successful when 90 percent of rubric evaluation indicators were marked as sufficient or above and the eight essential topics had been identified and placed in sequence. Rubric results were also used to determine topic relevance. When completing the rubric, the pastoral staff was given an opportunity to voice their opinions under the comments section should another topic have been deemed more relevant than one of the initial eight topics.

The third goal of this project was to develop the curriculum addressing the eight topics identified in goal 1.<sup>3</sup> The curriculum was created by referencing Scripture along with pertinent biblical and sociological resources. The curriculum was then incorporated into a plan for an eight-hour marriage enrichment seminar and presented to Easthaven's pastoral staff, for feedback utilizing a rubric to evaluate the seminar curriculum. The rubric, found in appendix 2, will be used to evaluate the efficacy of curriculum content. This goal was deemed successful when 90 percent of rubric evaluation indicators were marked as sufficient or above, indicating the curriculum met the sufficiency standards of the rubric by 90 percent.

The fourth goal of this project was to implement the marriage enrichment seminar during a weekend long marriage retreat at Howling Wolf Ranch in Whitefish, Montana. The marriage enrichment seminar was designed to increase participant knowledge and

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>3</sup>See appendix 3.

understanding of what constitutes a biblical marriage. This goal was measured utilizing a pre-seminar and post seminar survey.<sup>4</sup> The goal was deemed successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference between the pre-and post survey scores, indicating an increase in participant knowledge and understanding of what constitutes a biblical marriage and how each topic addressed contributes to a strong foundation for unity in marriage.

With all four goals having been successfully completed, Easthaven Baptist Church now has in place an eight-to twelve-hour marriage enrichment seminar that can be modified from a weekend event to an eight-week course or a home Bible study. The seminar material can be taught to married couples by any of Easthaven's pastoral staff, lay leaders, biblical counselors, or group leaders.

### **Context of Ministry**

From the context of the biblical counseling ministry at Easthaven Baptist Church in Kalispell, Montana, there had arisen a need to develop and implement a marriage enrichment seminar, the curriculum of which can be used by pastors and lay personnel alike. With approximately seven hundred members, comprised mostly of families, there is a healthy blend of younger and older married couples within the church. Each generation of adults brings with it unique desires and perspectives on what it believes constitutes a good marriage. These unique desires and perspectives can often result in poor communication, conflict, bitterness, and instability within the marriage and family. Furthermore, there tends to be a real disconnect between what couples perceive as the purpose of marriage and what God's ultimate purpose is for marriage.

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 4.

Currently four full-time and two part-time pastors conduct marriage counseling and marriage enrichment training for couples who approach them in need of help with their marriages. Each pastor has his own method of conducting marriage counseling, and each uses his own choice of reading and testing materials. Individual pastors also determine how many sessions or hours of marriage counseling will be conducted. The current practice creates a great deal of disparity in how couples are counseled and the type of marriage enrichment training they are provided.

From a biblical counseling perspective, most of the counseling I conduct each year is with couples whose marriages are struggling or in crisis. Most of the couples I have counseled had not attended any form of premarital counseling classes before marrying, and most couples I have seen were living together or sexually involved with each other before marriage. Most do not understand the Christian meaning or purpose of marriage, much less the unique roles of a Christian husband and wife. Consequently, most fail to understand what constitutes a biblical marriage and most lack the skills necessary for good communication, conflict avoidance, decision-making, budgeting, and sexual intimacy.

Even though most couples I counsel proclaim to have been raised in Christian homes, few have developed a sound biblical foundation for their marriages. As a result, Easthaven is faced with three tasks related to floundering marriages. The first task is to minister to individuals whose marriages are torn apart by separation or divorce; these individuals failed to understand or have a willingness to keep covenantal vows. The second task is to counsel with couples whose marriages are in crisis. These couples lack the knowledge or skills necessary to deal with each other's sinful behaviors, lustful desires, and hardness of heart. The third task is to become proactive by offering a marriage enrichment

seminar designed to address many of the tough issues married couples currently face or struggle within their marriages.

In an attempt to address the issues discussed above, while also communicating the importance of marriages and families within the church setting, the senior pastor and associate pastor of counseling at Easthaven have both recognized the need to conduct a marriage enrichment seminar, and to make seminar materials available to anyone at Easthaven who may be interested in utilizing the material for conducting future seminars. Given their desire to have an established marriage enrichment course designed to equip couples with the skills and knowledge necessary to start their marriages off well, or to enhance an existing marriage, there was a recognized need for a marriage enrichment seminar to be developed and provide to couples at Easthaven Baptist Church.

### **Project Rationale**

Therefore, a standardized marriage enrichment course available to all pastors, counselors, and laypersons, interested in conducting such training was developed and implemented at Easthaven Baptist Church. The rationale for such a program was derived directly from the impact a seminar could have on married couples when viewed in the context of ministry. Ministering to married couples is an important area of ministry that is too often overlooked. Marriage enrichment seminars can help communicate the importance of marriages and families within the church. A standardized course developed around eight key areas of concern facing married couples, or couples seeking to improve the quality of their marriage, better utilizes the amount of time available for Easthaven pastors, while helping to ensure the quality of information provided to couples through a seminar.

Given the reports from many counselees I have seen with marital issues, it is apparent that most men and women are not raised in homes that expose them to solid biblical teaching, much less teaching on how a Christian husband and wife are to love one another, respect one another, encourage one another, and communicate with one another. Being raised in a Christian home, much less a non-Christian home, does not guarantee a person will fully understand or embrace what his or her future role as a husband or wife might look like. For this reason, it is imperative that Easthaven make available marriage counseling and marriage enrichment training that clearly articulates the roles of husband and wife. As a husband and wife making choices and working together to glorify God in their marriage, they must understand and develop the valuable skills necessary for good communication, conflict avoidance, decision-making, financial stewardship, and sexual intimacy. Through this marriage enrichment seminar, couples acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to enhance the strength and quality of their marriages. As attested to by counselees in the ministry environment, these skills do not come naturally.

This course was designed to provide couples with the necessary information and skills needed to build a strong biblical foundation on which to base their marriage by referencing Scripture and pertinent biblical and sociological resources. Couples were provided valuable resource materials. The information provided to them will be useful references throughout the course of a couple's marriage. It could also be utilized, as a self-diagnostic tool for determining how a couple perceives their marriage is progressing in light of their desire to have a distinctly Christian marriage.

The previous practice at Easthaven of each pastor using his own marriage enrichment materials created disparity in the quantity and quality of information provided to



couples seeking marriage counseling. This disparity resulted in a genuine need and the opportunity to develop and implement a standardized marriage enrichment course. A standardized approach at Easthaven, incorporating the strengths of other programs while addressing new concerns or trends couples face in today's society, can better equip couples to exist in a state of holy matrimony with the knowledge and skills necessary to foster a distinctly Christian marriage. The seminar curriculum has eliminated the need for each pastor to design his own program, eliminating the disparity between differing counseling methodologies, materials used, and information disseminated. While pastors at Easthaven have recognized the need for a standardized approach to marriage counseling and training, each pastor will retain the right to choose whether to use the seminar curriculum or just parts of it, or to follow their own unique outlines.

Given the size of the church membership, and the number of couples seeking marriage counseling from pastors, as well as seeking help from secular sources, it was imperative a marriage enrichment course be developed in order to conduct training seminars with more than one couple at a time. The marriage enrichment seminar can be duplicated throughout the year, providing ongoing answers to questions that couples who are seeking counseling might ask, while also lessening the counseling load placed on pastors. Additionally, the seminar will help insure the quality of support and information couples receive.

Another advantage to developing and implementing the marriage enrichment seminar is that the curriculum has the ability to easily meet the needs of married couples who have never had an opportunity to participate in premarital counseling. The curriculum allows them to learn the valuable skills and knowledge necessary to have a thriving and vibrant

marriage. Implementing this program and making it available to married couples has helped meet the growing need of married couples seeking biblical counseling.

Another reason for developing and implementing a solid, biblically-based marriage enrichment seminar was to ensure that couples contemplating marriage, and newlyweds, understand and appreciate the significance of entering into marriage by knowing God created marriage for his glory. My counseling experience shows many, if not most, couples today believe the wedding ceremony is all about them, or more specifically, it is the bride's day. It is important couples understand the wedding ceremony is a celebration of a man and woman entering into a holy-covenant relationship with God. Unfortunately, the understanding that God created marriage for His glory, and to be a reflection of the gospel of Jesus Christ and Christ's love for his church tends to get lost in premarital counseling sessions, which are taught hurriedly because pastors are short on time and do not have sufficient content. The marriage enrichment seminar was implemented in such a manner that it richly expresses God's Word, his love, and his grace as couples are taught the significant biblical roles a man and a woman are designed to play. There is a sharp contrast between what couples learned about marriage through this eight-hour seminar and what the secular world would have them learn.

Finally, the marriage enrichment seminar utilized at Easthaven now has the opportunity to teach couples how marriage was created by God for God's glory. Couples learned how marriage is to be a picture of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, actively portrayed through their lives together as a married couple, which is joined in a holy and covenantal relationship. The marriage enrichment seminar has the opportunity to bring unbelievers

seeking marriage counseling to Christ, because the Gospel of Jesus Christ will be made front and center through this ministry opportunity.

In summary, it was imperative the proposed marriage enrichment course be developed and provided to pastors, counselors and laypersons interested in teaching, mentoring and counseling couples. The material used in the seminar is now valuable for teaching premarital counseling classes and equipping engaged couples with the tools necessary to have a distinctly Christian marriage that is thriving and vibrant.

### **Definition, Limitations, and Delimitations**

Three key definitions, three limitations, and two delimitations were pertinent to this project. The three definitions focus on the meaning of *marriage*, the importance of enhancing marriage through *enrichment*, and the intended use of the word *premarital* throughout the project. The limitations and delimitation found in this project were associated with time constraints and limited demographics.

*Marriage.* John Piper's definition of marriage best reflects the position taken in this project: "Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman in which they promise to be a faithful husband and a faithful wife in a new one-flesh union as long as they both shall live. This covenant, sealed with solemn vows, is designed to showcase the covenant-keeping grace of God."<sup>5</sup> This covenant is entered into before witnesses and in keeping with governmental laws and statutes.

*Enrichment.* Enrichment, in the context of marriage enrichment, means to make things better, to enhance or improve the desirable qualities or attributes necessary to fully

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<sup>5</sup>John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 43.

experience the joy, happiness, security, and sense of fulfillment couples seek to experience in their relationship with each other.

*Premarital.* For the purpose of this project, this term refers to individuals or couples preparing for marriage. This does not presuppose a man and woman attending the premarital counseling course are in fact engaged or that a date has been set for a wedding. The term reflects an individual's desire to learn more about marriage before entering into a marriage commitment. Adams illustrates how couples presenting for premarital counseling may "discover areas of conflict, unexplored areas of possible tension, how well they know one another, and whether they are ready for marriage."<sup>6</sup>

A limitation for this project was the anticipated start date for this project. It was anticipated the project would start in March 2015. Several other adult ministries, including a men's retreat and a women's retreat were scheduled for the beginning of March. The second limitation was conducting the seminar in a retreat setting over a weekend, starting Friday evening and ending Sunday at noon. A third limitation was the ten-week time frame in which to complete the ministry project in its entirety.

The marriage enrichment seminar was delimited to only seven married couples from Easthaven seeking to improve upon their marriages. A second delimitation was the location of the seminar, which was at Howling Wolf Ranch outside Whitefish, Montana. The course was not open to singles or other individuals passively interested in the course.

### **Research Methodology**

The purpose of the project was to develop a Marriage Enrichment Seminar for couples at Easthaven Baptist Church in Kalispell, Montana. The marriage enrichment

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<sup>6</sup>Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselors Manual: The Practice Of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 332.

seminar was developed and conducted in a retreat setting over the course of an extended weekend at Howling Wolf Ranch in Whitefish, Montana.

Four goals were established to accomplish the purpose of this project. In order to accomplish each goal, the following methodology was implemented over the course of ten weeks.

The first goal of the project was accomplished in week 1 as the eight essential topics to be covered in the marriage enrichment seminar were identified. The eight essential topics were identified for the seminar by administering a pre-course inventory designed to measure the relative importance of seventeen different topics directly related to and impacting marriages today. The survey was administered to 8 married couples at Easthaven. The goal was considered successfully met when 5 married couples completed the survey, ranking the level of priority for each of seventeen topics listed, and the inventory had been analyzed yielding a clear indicator of the eight highest-ranking topics to be covered during the marriage enrichment seminar.

Weeks 2 through 5 of this project were dedicated to researching the eight topics identified from the perspective of the thesis outlined in both chapters 2 and 3. The thesis of chapter 2 addresses the biblical and theological justification for a couple to have a marriage, which displays Christ's love for his church. The thesis of chapter 3 addresses the theoretical and practical support for couples to participate in a marriage enrichment course. Much of the research associated with these two chapters was completed prior to the start of this project. The results of this research were incorporated into the course curriculum.

During weeks 6 through 7, the course curriculum was presented to Easthaven's four pastors for evaluation and feedback. A rubric was provided to each pastor with the

expectation of its completion and return to my office by the end of week 6. Information and feedback from the pastors was processed along with the rubric, to determine strengths and weaknesses in the curriculum. Necessary changes to the curriculum were made during week 9.

Weeks 12 and 13 marked the beginning of the Marriage Enrichment Seminar, which was conducted in a retreat setting at Howling Wolf Ranch. Four married couples were recruited for two weekend seminars. The first four hours of the seminar began on a Friday night starting at six and ending at 10:00 o'clock.

Classes were held in an open lodge environment with couches, chairs, and a fireplace. The room was large enough to accommodate the eight participants and provide the necessary equipment to conduct power point presentations and provide access to the internet. Each topic was formally addressed in one of eight 50-minute sessions and informally discussed among participants during open discussions and times of fellowship at the retreat. A lesson plan was developed outlining the goals and objectives, activities, and resources for each topic. Information provided during each session was relevant to the research conducted leading up to the course. Additional supporting materials, books, charts, diagrams and handouts were provided to course participants.

At the beginning of the first session, the purpose and goals of the project were explained to participants. Couples also had an opportunity to ask questions before beginning. Once the introductions were completed, the pre-course survey was explained and administered to each of the seminar participants. They were asked to complete the surveys on their own and turn the results in to me before continuing on with the first session.

The seminar included the following topics:

1. Understanding God's purpose and design for marriage
2. Role of a husband and wife; leaving and cleaving to one another
3. Idols of the heart; eliminate them, pursuing righteousness, worshipping God
4. Building effective personal communication skills
5. Conflict, conflict avoidance, conflict resolution
6. Forgiveness, grace, and mercy
7. Sexual intimacy and fidelity in marriage
8. Technology and its impact on relationships

Session 1 addressed the definition of marriage and focus on God's purpose and plan for marriage. The discussion began with a discussion about the creation of both the man and woman and with God instituting the first marriage in the Garden of Eden. Biblical support for how marriage is to reflect Christ's love for his church and God's glory was clearly articulated. Couples learned that God's purpose and design for marriage is to reflect Christ's love for his church.

Session 2 focused on the biblical roles of husbands and wives. The purpose of this session was to debunk secular myths about what constitutes a good marriage. Couples also learned the meaning of "leaving and cleaving," as found in Genesis 2:24. Couples were encouraged to discuss how their perceived roles as a husband or wife line up with the biblical teaching.

In session 3, participants learned about the lustful desires of the heart and how devastating idols can be to a marriage. Participants learned how sinful choices originating in their deceitful hearts can negatively impact their lives, their marriages and their relationships with God.

Sessions 4 and 5 addressed communication skills and how to best deal with conflict. These two sessions were pivotal in teaching couples the importance of good communication throughout the lifetime of a marriage. Communication skills and techniques were taught and couples were encouraged to begin implementing these techniques into their daily lives. These techniques help build good communication habits before a couple encounters the changes and conflicts that commonly take place in marriage. Biblical methods of defining and addressing conflict were discussed. Tools for conflict resolution were also taught during these sessions.

In session 6, participants were taught what biblical forgiveness, grace and mercy look like and the importance of extending forgiveness, grace and mercy to others.

In session 7, the topic of intimacy and sexual relationships was discussed. At the end of session seven, couples were provided one-on-one time to discuss, privately, difficult questions they might not feel comfortable addressing anywhere else.

Session 8 focused on the issue of technology and the devastating effects technology can have on a couple and the family when used improperly. This session also included important material related to pornography and the negative impact it has on marriages and family relationships. At the end of this session a post-course survey was distributed to each participant (see appendix 4).<sup>7</sup> Surveys were completed and turned in to me before participants left the seminar.

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<sup>7</sup>All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Ethics Committee prior to the use in the ministry project.



Weeks 14 and 15 were dedicated to processing the pre- and post-survey results. Results were tabulated and compared using a t-test for dependent samples.<sup>8</sup> The purpose of this project, developing a Marriage Enrichment Seminar for couples at Easthaven Baptist Church in Kalispell, Montana, was considered successfully completed when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post- survey scores.

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<sup>8</sup>See appendix 5.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL JUSTIFICATION FOR COUPLES ENGAGING IN AN EIGHT-HOUR MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT SEMINAR

The Bible clearly presents marriage as a sacred covenant-keeping relationship in which God joins a husband and wife into a one-flesh union for the purpose of displaying Christ's love for His church. In support of this thesis, I desire to offer an effective marriage enrichment program. It is important to begin with a study of the biblical basis for marriage which shows that marriage is not the invention of man. As John Piper states, "The world cannot know what marriage is without learning it from God."<sup>1</sup> A biblical perspective on marriage is important because "the most profound thing that shapes anybody's worldview is their understanding of God. What a person believes about God determines what he or she thinks about how we got here, what our ultimate meaning is, and what happens after we die."<sup>2</sup> What we believe about God determines what we believe to be true about the purpose and meaning of marriage, the sanctity and permanence of marriage, and our relationship to one another. A strong biblical foundation built upon God's word and the creation accounts found in Genesis chapters one and two is vital for a marriage. Once a couple understands and establishes the biblical foundation for their marriage, they are better prepared to have a marriage honoring God while also loving and serving each other according to God's will for

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<sup>1</sup>John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 20.

<sup>2</sup>Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do: Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), 20.

their lives. By participating in a marriage enrichment program, couples will learn how God's glory can be reflected in their relationship with one another throughout their marriage as they grow through faith in Christ.

For the purpose of this marriage enrichment program, a biblical exegesis of Genesis 1:27-28 exploring how God created man and woman in his own image is the appropriate place to begin, followed by a study of Genesis 2:7, 18, and 21-22. Genesis chapter 2 provides a more detailed account of how God created man and why he created a woman. Only by understanding God's intended design and purpose of companionship for a man and woman can we begin to fully appreciate the importance of God's ordained covenant relationship called marriage.

A study regarding the meaning and purpose of marriage, the mystery of marriage, the importance of sacrifice in marriage, and the importance of "putting off" unrighteous virtue and "putting on" righteousness is paramount in building a strong foundation upon which to have a thriving marriage. In such a marriage, a husband and wife understand their individual roles and responsibilities to God and each other. This will require a biblical exegesis of Scripture into four primary areas.

First, the primary reference point for marriage is found in Genesis chapter 2, the first mention of marriage in the Bible. For this reason, the first primary area of exegesis of marriage is found in Genesis 1:27-28 and 2:18-25. Genesis articulates how marriage was instituted as part of God's original design for his creation from the very beginning of time.

Second, an exegesis of Ephesians 5:31-32 reveals how there is a "mystery" to marriage and the mystery is to reflect Christ's love for his church. For this reason, an understanding of Paul's meaning behind the "mystery of marriage" must be resolved in order

for couples to better appreciate the purpose of marriage, along with necessity of “leaving and cleaving” or holding fast to one another.

Third, an exegesis of Luke 22:14-20 will demonstrate how Christ knew it was only through the sacrificial shedding of his blood that a new covenant relationship could be established. He paid the ultimate price for his bride, “the church,” entering into a new covenant relationship, “marriage,” with her. Christ’s example of sacrificial love becomes the example of how couples are to love one another in marriage. Marriage should be a reflection of Christ’s love for the church.

Fourth, an exegesis of Colossians 3:12-19 will help define the virtues or traits every man and woman must “put off” and “put on” in order to glorify Christ in their marriage. This exploration of Scripture will help equip couples to begin bearing with one another. Each of these four areas will help couples build a solid biblical foundation for their marriage, help them understand God’s overall purpose and design for marriage and answer why the institution of holy matrimony is to be kept sacred and undefiled.

### **Creation Account of Man**

An exploration into the creation account of man begins with the study of Genesis 1:27-28; “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth’.” Using the words male and female, God is clearly defining humanity as heterosexual, “making each partner the complement of the other, anticipating the New Testament doctrine of the sexes’

spiritual equality ('all one', Gal 3:28; 'heirs together', 1 Pet 3:7b; see also Mark 12:25). This is reaffirmed in Genesis 2:18-25."<sup>3</sup>

In the beginning chapters of Genesis, one sees a picture of Adam clearly walking with, and communicating personally with God. Adam's interactions with God, implies man was created to be in relationship with God, who has given authority and responsibility to Adam. Genesis also makes clear the creation of man is uniquely different from the animals in that God says, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Gen 1:26). Man's being created in God's image is different from God's creating other creatures "according to its kind" (Gen 1:25). Sailhamer notes, "The creation of man is specifically noted as a creation of man as 'male and female' (v. 27)."<sup>4</sup> The creation of man is seen as special; he is not like other creatures. It is only man who has been uniquely created in the image and likeness of God. However, "Man did not begin as a 'heavenly creature'; he was made of the 'dust of the ground'."<sup>5</sup>

One aspect of being created in God's image (Gen 1:27) means man was created with communicable attributes of God, including the spiritual quality to reason, and the cognitive abilities to differentiate between right and wrong, good and evil, sin and righteousness. Man was created to know, love, worship, and obey God, while being in full relationship with him, and living in harmony with one another. A second aspect of being created in God's image is that man has been created with a soul and the animals have not. "Genesis 2:7 states that man became a 'living being.' The original says 'a living *nephesh*,'

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<sup>3</sup>Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 56.

<sup>4</sup>John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, in vol. 2 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 37.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 41.

the Hebrew word for soul. In Hebrew thought, man does not have a soul; he is a soul.”<sup>6</sup>

While the word *nephesh* was also used to describe the animals as they were being brought

before Adam to be named (2:19), a man’s soul is what uniquely allows him to be an image

bearer of God, allowing him to be in fellowship with God in a way unattainable by the

animals. To be created in his image means man was created to communicate with God,

worship God, fellowship with God, and be in a committed, trusting relationship with him.<sup>7</sup>

To be created in God’s image also means we are able to make covenants with him and we are

equipped to “‘subdue and rule’ the earth and its animal inhabitants, thereby fulfilling [our]

role as God’s image-bearer[s] on earth (cf. v 26).”<sup>8</sup>

To better comprehend what it means to be an image bearer of God, one has only to look at what the Bible teaches about Jesus. The image of God and his attributes are most accurately reflected in Jesus’s life and how he lived his sinless life in perfect fellowship and obedience with the Father (John 17:21-22; Luke 22:42; John 4:34, 5:30, 6:38). The more believers take on Christ’s likeness in the way they live their lives, the more they reflect the image of God to others. Reading and studying what Scripture teaches about Jesus is the only way to become more like him.

The creation narratives found in six key verses of Genesis 2 expand upon Genesis 1:27-28. Genesis 2:7 focuses on the first man (*ha ’adam*) created by God, “Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” While there is a relationship established between

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<sup>6</sup>Clyde T. Francisco, *Genesis*, in vol. 1 of *The Broadman Bible Commentary*, ed. Clifton J. Allen, et al. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1969), 125.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard, et al., vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1997), 33.

God and man, God recognizes Adam's loneliness and the need for Adam to be in relationship with another created being who could be his helpmate and counterpart. So in verse 19, God parades all the animals he has created before Adam and gives Adam the authority to name the animals. During this process, Adam realizes there is not a helper suitable for him, so the Lord God takes action in verse 21.

In Genesis 2:18, God declares for the first time in the creation narrative that something "is not good." "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him'." God created Adam to worship and to be in relationship with him. He also created Adam to be in relationship with another who could help and encourage him. In verse 18, Atkinson notes, "The Hebrew phrase includes two words *ezer* *knegdo*. The first of these, translated 'helper', implies someone who assists and encourages. 'Helper' provides support for what is lacking in the one who needs help. It is a word that is used several times in the Old Testament for the help which comes from God."<sup>9</sup> *Knegdo* means, "to make visible" or appear, as in a suitable helper appearing before the man.

While Genesis 2:7 describes God creating the first man, Genesis 2:21-22 focuses on God's methodology for creating the first woman to be a helper suitable for the man, "So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man."

Together, these six Scripture verses identify God as the very creator of man—the giver of life.<sup>10</sup> These six verses also illustrate an ordered process undertaken by God in

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<sup>9</sup>David Atkinson, *The Message of Genesis 1-11*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1990), 69.

<sup>10</sup>Six verses include, Gen 1:27, 28; Gen 2:18, 19, 21, 22.

creating the man and woman. God created Adam, the first man, and placed him in the garden to cultivate and attend to it. He then gives Adam the responsibility of naming all the animals (Gen 2:19) and, in the process, Adam is unable to find a helper suitable for him. However, after God creates the woman, he brings her to Adam so he can name her—as he has done with the animals. It is at this time, in extreme excitement, the man speaks out the first lines of Hebrew poetry found in Scripture—Genesis 2:23, “Then the man said, ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’” One can picture the sheer sense of excitement and joy Adam must have been experiencing at the first sight of his new bride—Eve. No other creature could match her beauty. No other creature could be more suitable for him.

Lastly it is important to note, Genesis 2:25 states, “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” Sin had not yet entered the world—corrupting the relationship between God and the man and woman. God’s creation was perfect and undefiled.

### **The First Wedding**

Genesis 2:23-24 presents a picture of the first wedding ceremony being conducted in the Garden of Eden, with God presenting the first bride to the first man, with Adam’s ecstatic burst of poetry, followed in verse 24 with the first principles of marriage; “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and [*hold fast*] to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”<sup>11</sup> A husband and wife’s commitment to each other overrides every other commitment and relationship. To hold fast to one another is to enter into a covenant relationship of

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<sup>11</sup>To “hold fast to his wife” (ESV) can also be translated “United to his wife” (NIV); “Cleave unto his wife” (KJ); “Bonds with his wife” (HCS); and “Cling to his wife” (NIV).



faithfulness to each other. In marriage there is a union of two people becoming one. As Grudem points out, “This unity is not only a physical unity; it is a spiritual and emotional unity of profound dimension. A husband and wife joined together in marriage are people that ‘God has joined together’ (Matt 19:6).”<sup>12</sup> To become one flesh does not simply mean to be joined in sexual intercourse, as many people believe. There is a deeper, more profound mystery to this union that goes beyond our comprehension and it has to do with Christ and his church. This relationship will be explored further in this program.

It is important to note how God uses an entirely different method of creation for the woman than he did the first man. He could have created her from the dust of the ground and breathed life into her nostrils as he did Adam, but instead he chose to make the woman out of the man. Paul addresses God’s intended purpose for creating the woman out of the man in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, “For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.” While these two verses speak to created order and hierarchy, they do not intend to picture women as inferior to men. 1 Corinthians 11:11-12 reflects that a man and woman are interdependent upon each other. “Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.” The man and the woman are interdependent upon each other not only for companionship but to fulfill God’s instructions to inhabit the earth and subdue it. True interdependence and companionship cannot be achieved one without the other, yet functionally, God established a hierarchy—woman created for man.

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<sup>12</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 455.

In the poetic verse of Genesis 2:23, the first man names God’s new creation “woman.” Having been given authority and instructed to name all the animals in verse 19, the man chooses in verse 23 to name her woman. In Genesis 3:20, Adam uses the same authority and “called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.” Acting out of his authority, in obedience to God, the man actively gives her a name. From the Hebrew perspective; since God gave Adam authority over all creation and created him before the woman, Scripture indicates the woman is subordinate to the man. Interestingly, this presupposition is key to understanding the dynamic at play in the garden after they eat of the forbidden fruit. After addressing Eve, God says to Adam, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life” (Gen 3:17). Because Adam “listened to the voice of” his wife instead of obeying God, he is punished more severely. Wenham claims, “obeying his wife rather than God was man’s fundamental mistake.”<sup>13</sup> This fundamental mistake was Adam’s original act of sin, disobeying and rebellion against God, which lead to the commission of the sin of eating from the tree God had commanded him not to eat from. From the Hebrew perspective, Adam relinquished his authority by submitting to his wife’s desire, and eating what she offered to him, while knowing full well he should have acted in obedience to God and not eaten the fruit she offered him. Because he sinned by disobeying what God commanded, Adam and the land were cursed, as were the serpent and Eve.

While chapter one depicts God creating man in his own divine image, chapter two emphasizes the very process by which he created man and woman, and why he created them

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<sup>13</sup>Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 82.

man and woman. Sailhamer argues, “Genesis 2 is unique among the creation myths of the whole of the Ancient Near East in its appreciation of the meaning of woman, i.e., that human existence is a partnership of man and woman.”<sup>14</sup> The Lord God used a different methodology for the creation of both the man and the woman. The man and the woman were created uniquely different and at different times. He created Adam to cultivate and attend to the Garden of Eden, he created woman to be a helper suitable for Adam. Having created them male and female, he then blesses them both at the same time. He creates male and female as separate and unique by design, yet equal in who they are as persons, with the same dignity, value, quality and character. They are both representatives, or bearers of God’s own image and are distinguished from all other creatures. Strauch notes, “God created men and women to be different and fulfill distinct gender roles. God designed the man to be husband, father, provider, and protector. He is to be head of the family and to lead the church family. God designed the woman to be wife, mother, and nurturer. She is to actively help and submit to the man’s leadership.”<sup>15</sup>

Two distinct gender roles of a husband and wife can also be inferred from Genesis 1:28, “And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth’.” The implicit understanding of this verse is that one of God’s intended purposes for the man and the woman is to bear children to inhabit the earth. God grants them a blessing of fruitfulness, which carries with it the promise of God’s provision enabling man to fulfill the command.

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<sup>14</sup>Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 47.

<sup>15</sup>Alexander Strauch, *Men and Women Equal Yet Different: A Brief Study of The Biblical Passages on Gender* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishers, 1999), 7.

By design, the procreation of children can only be achieved by joining a man's sperm and woman's egg together, as achieved through sexual intercourse between a husband and his wife. While God could have created man as a fully functioning hermaphrodite capable of giving birth to other hermaphrodites, he chose instead to populate the earth through the joining of a man and a woman together in sexual intercourse. Incest was initially accepted as a means to populate the earth, but was later forbidden by the laws of Leviticus 18:6-18 which also forbid having sexual relationships with anyone other than your spouse. In addition, Leviticus 18:22 specifically forbids same-sex relationships, stating, "You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female, it is an abomination." God intended sexual relationships to be exclusively between a husband and wife. "Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous" (Heb 13:4). Speaking on faith and sex in marriage, Piper states, "Marriage at its exquisite peak of pleasure speaks powerfully the truth of covenant-keeping love between Christ and his church. And that love is the most powerful force in the world. It is not surprising then that Satan's defeat, Christ's glory, and our pleasure should come together in this undefiled marriage bed."<sup>16</sup> Paul addresses the importance of covenant-keeping love in his letter to the church in Ephesus.

In Ephesians 5:31-32, Paul quotes the words of Jesus as spoken in Matthew 19:5, Mark 10:7, and Genesis 2:24, regarding a man and wife becoming one flesh: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." Paul is referencing Jesus' words and Genesis 2:24 in order to affirm how God conducted the first wedding ceremony, by blessing and joining a man and woman together

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<sup>16</sup>John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 135.

into a one-flesh union. However, Paul goes on to point out there is a profound mystery behind being joined together into a one-flesh union. The mystery is directly tied to the relationship between Christ and his church. Paul claims in verse 32, “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.” Paul is stating the mystery is beyond man’s comprehension. Yet in his letter to the Colossians Paul states, “The mystery hidden for ages and generations but now revealed to his saints. To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col 1:26-27). Through special revelation to Paul, God states the union between a husband and wife is comparable to the union between Christ and members of his church.<sup>17</sup> Piper expands on the meaning of this mystery noting, “The covenant involved in leaving mother and father and holding fast to a spouse and becoming one flesh is a portrayal of the covenant between Christ and his church. Marriage exists ultimately to display the covenant-keeping love between Christ and his church.”<sup>18</sup> God’s primary purpose for marriage is for it to be a reflection of Christ’s love for his church to a world that does not know him, just as God’s chosen people, the nation of Israel, were to be a light unto the pagan nations. It is important for couples to recognize the importance of “leaving and cleaving” in order to fully appreciate how a man and woman are to hold fast to one another, just as members of Christ’s church, his bride, hold fast to him.

### **The Preeminence of Christ**

The preeminence of Christ and his love for the church are the foundation upon which we can build an understanding of “this mystery” implicit in the union of marriage. An

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<sup>17</sup>Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), 965.

<sup>18</sup>Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 42.

exegetical look at Ephesians 1:3-12, Colossians 1:18, and Matthew 6:33 will establish the importance of a husband and wife embracing Christ's preeminence in their personal lives and, in their union together.

The creation account of Genesis and the implications surrounding God's creation of the first man and woman demonstrate the high value God places on marriage. Exell notes, "Marriage is the most dignified, honorable, and helpful relationship into which we can enter. It is a relationship of mutual sympathy, sacredness, honor and responsibility."<sup>19</sup> Marriage, as God intended it to be, honors God and enables sanctification for the married couple, their family and to those they witness to by their words and actions. Marriage should reflect unity and conformity with Christ and his word.

It is important to recognize God is ultimately the head of every household. Without his holy spirit dwelling in us, we are unable to live up to the standard we are called to in obedience to God's will. A wife submitting in respect and a husband loving as Christ loved, are supernatural actions and are unobtainable without the Holy Spirit. This supernatural love and respect for one another should not be confused with Eggerichs' teaching in *Love & Respect*, whereby love and respect are seen as essential needs to be constantly sought after by a husband and wife, attempting to avoid what Eggerichs defines as "The Crazy Cycle."<sup>20</sup> From a biblical perspective, Eggerichs could be seen promoting idol worship, as the need for love and respect become the idols his readers are encouraged to seek after, usurping the need to seek after Christ first. Christ must be preeminent in a couple's

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<sup>19</sup>Joseph S. Exell, *Ephesians*, in vol. 19 of *The Biblical Illustrator* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1973), 589.

<sup>20</sup>Emerson Eggerichs, *Love & Respect: The Love She Most Desires, The Respect He Desperately Needs* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2004), 5.

relationship in order for a married couple to fully experience a lifetime of joy, spiritual fellowship and intimacy, to embrace a commitment to one another that withstands the storms of life. Dunnam notes, “The commitment of marriage, sustained by the decision to love and nourish by caring, moves a couple along the road of perfection in love. As the church reflects the Kingdom of Christ, so marriage may be a cameo of that kingdom.”<sup>21</sup>

As I counsel couples struggling with various issues in life, one constant sin that keeps surfacing is husbands or wives living for themselves, and seeking after their own desires, expectations, and rights within a marriage. As a result, an individual or couple fails to focus on the preeminence of Christ and the need to be in a daily relationship with him. The failure to turn to God’s word, and reflect daily on how to make sound biblical decisions daily opens individuals up to the influence of evil in the world around them. Furthermore, by not turning to him daily, an individual begins to follow after the desires of his own flesh and the influences of the devil. When couples recognize the importance of “seeking first the kingdom of God” (Matt 6:33) in their marriages, they begin to understand the importance of placing Christ first. Like Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians, they seek to please Christ above all else, “So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him” (2 Cor 5:9). In his letter to the Colossians, Paul also teaches that Jesus “is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent” (Col 1:18). Christ is head over the church, but he is also head over each of our lives whether single or married. A willingness to embrace God’s preeminence means individuals and couples open themselves up to God’s will and look to his word for truth and direction, since “the sum of your word is ‘truth, and every one of your righteous

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<sup>21</sup>Maxie D. Dunnam, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 8 of The Communicator’s Commentary, ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 234.

rules endures forever” (Ps 119:160). One goal in counseling is to help couples develop new habits which lead to a closer relationship with Christ while also drawing them closer to each other. A diagram of a triangle is often used to illustrate this point, with God at the top and the husband and wife at the two lower corners of the triangle. As a husband and wife grow in their faith, by trusting in God and seeking his will for their lives, they move closer to him, in essence shrinking the size of the triangle and growing closer to their spouse at the same time. To accomplish this, I encourage couples to devote personal time daily for reading and meditating on God’s word and to pray together daily.

### **The Divine Mystery of a One Flesh Union**

Understanding the preeminence of Christ and his love for the church is the backdrop upon which to build an understanding of “this mystery” implicit in the union of marriage. Genesis 2:24 instructs a man to hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. A husband and wife becoming one flesh points to a covenantal relationship. There is also a deeper meaning that Paul alludes to in Ephesians 5. Arnold states, “Paul sees a typology present in the divine institution of marriage that finds its antitype in the relationship between Christ and the church”<sup>22</sup> Many people speculate about the meaning of a “one-flesh” union, believing it to be what occurs at the time of sexual intercourse. While there is truth to this, clearly Paul is teaching there is an even deeper meaning to this union, a mystery that has not yet been fully revealed. Paul teaches about the mystery of marriage and the one-flesh union stating, “The mystery was made known to me by special revelation, as I have written briefly” (Eph 3:3). Paul is speaking of God’s grace reflected in the marriage when two

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<sup>22</sup>Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 396.



become one flesh or one body as shown through his example of God's grace with the "incorporation of the Gentiles into one body of the church (2:16) as equal partners with Israel (3:6). This was disclosed by means of direct "revelation" or spiritual enlightenment (1:18)."<sup>23</sup> In verse 4 he goes on to proclaim, "When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ." Paul wants his readers to understand the gravity and importance of marriage by describing what is a profound mystery surrounding the marriage union. He accomplishes this by quoting Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:31 and his explaining the mystery in Ephesians 5:32: "This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church." Paul is teaching that from the first marriage in the Garden of Eden, God's intended purpose for marriage was to reflect Christ's covenant relationship to his church. "'This mystery' thus refers to the union of husband and wife in marriage as a divinely instituted illustration of the close and intimate union between Christ and the church. It is 'great' because it is so profound and significant."<sup>24</sup> In addition, Piper notes, "The highest meaning and the most ultimate purpose of marriage is to put the covenant relationship of Christ and his church on display. That is why marriage exists."<sup>25</sup> Stott also supports this view, acknowledging there truly is a mystery in two becoming one flesh, and yet there is also a symbolic purpose: "There seems no reason to doubt that Paul is referring to the mysterious and sacred depths of sexual union itself. But there is a deeper symbolism of

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<sup>23</sup>Kenneth L. Barker and John Kohlenberger III, eds., *NIV Bible Commentary: New Testament*, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 763.

<sup>24</sup>Arnold, *Ephesians*, 397.

<sup>25</sup>Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 25.

Christ and the church.”<sup>26</sup> The divine mystery encompasses Christ and how he loves his church. Marriage should be a living reflection of Christ and his church. According to Dunnam, “To know the mystery is to know what is deepest and most characteristic of the nature and purpose of God.”<sup>27</sup>

The discussion of this mystery brings up an important question: Why would God reveal his mystery to Paul? The answer is found in the new covenant with Jesus Christ. His church has ushered in a new era in which Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled and the gospel is being shared throughout the world to both Jews and Gentiles. This new era has brought with it new revelation as given to Paul. The illustration of Jew and Gentile in one church family shows two unique groups joined in one fellowship. Likewise, a husband and a wife are mysteriously joined in faith by grace into one flesh, as incorporated members of Christ’s body—the church.<sup>28</sup> Paul paints a picture of unity. He shows first the unity of one man and one woman brought together in marriage and joined in a one-flesh union. Then, he shows the unity of Jews and Gentiles joined into one body—Christ’s church. Both are spiritual unions that show the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit.

Before individuals are joined together in marriage, each individual has ties or close bonds to parents and other family members. When joined in marriage, a new bond is formed as a couple is joined in the “mysterious” one-flesh union (Eph 5:31). They are united as one flesh and the new bond transcends any bonds experienced in other relationships; this bond

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<sup>26</sup>John R. W. Stott, “The Message of Ephesians,” *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979), 230.

<sup>27</sup>Maxie D. Dunnam, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 8 of *The Communicator’s Commentary*, ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 190.

<sup>28</sup>Armin J. Panning, *Galatians Ephesians*, *People Bible Commentary* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1997), 163.

forms a couple's new identity, a new family that is honoring God's will and design for marriage. Patzia and other scholars believe Ephesians 5:31, "Appropriately expresses the intimacy, unity, and, according to his thoughts, the identity of the husband and wife within marriage—a condition undoubtedly created by their sexual union."<sup>29</sup> The husband and wife are to become dependent on each other, as the husband is to provide for his wife's welfare and nourish her spiritual growth, while the wife is to be her husband's helpmate. A couple's dependence on each other allows them to become less dependent on their parents for financial support, approval, emotional stability, and physical care. Scott notes, "To build their marriage upon a biblical basis, a couple must be committed to giving their marriage priority over every other human relationship. God says children must leave their parents (Gen 2:24; Matt 19:5; Eph 5:31). God says the man must cleave to his wife (not 'wife and parents'). This results in the two becoming one flesh."<sup>30</sup>

A couple's interdependence does not mean they are to disrespect or disown their parents. First Timothy 5:8 teaches; "But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." There is still a duty to love and care for the needs of parents and family.<sup>31</sup>

The fact that sexual intercourse creates a one-flesh union can be seen in Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 6:16-17 where he warns, "Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is written, 'The two will become one flesh.' But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him." The implications

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<sup>29</sup>Arthur G. Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 273.

<sup>30</sup>Stuart Scott, "The Biblical Basis for Marriage" (classroom lecture, 80554—*Marriage & Family Counseling*, Winter 2013, photocopy), 3.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

of being joined together in sexual union with anyone other than your husband or wife are profound. Because sex outside of marriage results a spiritual desecration, and a distortion of God's intended purpose for sex in marriage. The two being joined physically in the flesh—through sexual intercourse—does not unite them spiritually to each other and the Lord in marriage, nor does it prevent termination of the relationship. It is an act of adultery that brings with it the consequences of sin associated with infidelity.

In today's permissive culture, many see no issue with having sexual relationships with multiple partners or joining together for one-night stands. According to the Bible, sex outside of marriage is immoral. Scripture highlights why it is immoral and why believers are to avoid promiscuous sexual relationships, one-night stands, and same sex relationships. Paul instructs his readers, "Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price, to glorify God in your body" (1 Cor 6:18-20). Christians, have the Holy Spirit living inside them; hence their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. Engaging in immoral sexual relationships results in a person sinning against his or her own body and the Holy Spirit. Piper notes, "The point here is simply that in Paul's mind the covenant union between a husband and wife is designed by God to reflect and display spiritual union between Christ and the church. So he says, 'He who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him'."<sup>32</sup> Christ's love for his church is unending. The new covenant he has established with his church is everlasting. Marriage is to be a reflection of Christ's love, fidelity, unity, and commitment; it should be uncompromisingly steadfast, and

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<sup>32</sup>Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 31.

obedient to God. Engaging in sexual relationships outside of marriage distorts God's purpose and design for the marriage relationship.

### **A New Covenant Relationship—Marriage**

An exegesis of Luke 22:20 demonstrates that Christ knew it was only through the sacrificial shedding of His blood that a new covenant relationship could be established. He paid the ultimate price for his bride “the church,” with his death on a cross—entering into a new covenant relationship, “marriage” with her (See also Matt 26:26-28). Christ's example of sacrificial love becomes the example of how couples are to love one another in marriage. Marriage should be a reflection of Christ's sacrificial love for the church.

Entering into a new covenant with God involves a blood sacrifice (See Lev 17:11; Ex 24:1-8). Ryken notes, “It is characteristic of the covenants that God has made with his people for salvation that they are made by sacrifice. A covenant is a bond in blood, a solemn commitment that God will keep his saving promise to the very death. This is always indicated by a blood sacrifice.”<sup>33</sup> Christ's atoning death on the cross ushered in the New Covenant relationship between God and man, between Christ and his church. Jesus died on the cross “for you” (Luke 22:19). This truth is made abundantly clear through participation in the Lord's Supper.

Luke 22:14-23 describes Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper during the Passover meal he shared with his disciples in the upper room. Beginning in verse 19, Luke explains, “And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new

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<sup>33</sup>Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, Reformed Expositors Commentary, vol. 2 (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009) 469.

covenant in my blood.” Participation in the Lord’s Supper is sacramental, bringing to mind the death of Christ on the cross and his atoning death for each of us. According to Ryken,

The atoning death of Jesus is even more obviously signified in the words “for you” (Luke 22:19). The New Testament uses this language to indicate that Jesus died on our behalf, that his sacrifice was substitutionary (e.g., Gal. 1:4; 3:13). When Jesus said to his disciples, ‘This is my body, which is given for you,’ he was already looking ahead to what he would do for them and for all his disciples on the cross. Jesus was speaking of himself as a saving sacrifice. He was giving himself for us, dying in our place to pay the penalty that we deserve for our sins.”<sup>34</sup>

Christ knew he was going to become a living sacrifice and pay the ultimate price “for you,” his bride, “the church.” Jesus knew it was only through his atoning blood sacrifice that he could enter into a New Covenant relationship with his church, thereby entering into an unbreakable marriage with her. This new covenant relationship, a picture of Christ and his church, is what a marriage between a man woman should be. Piper notes, “The ultimate thing we can say about marriage is that it exists for God’s glory. That is, it exists to display God. Marriage is patterned after Christ’s covenant relationship to his redeemed people, the church.”<sup>35</sup>

The emphasis of the Gospel of Luke is on salvation and need for the people of God to be made whole and right before a holy God. This reconciliation takes place supernaturally through the birth, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus as described in the Gospels. Addressing the supernatural, Wilcox notes, “Within the church we find many whose rejection of this or that in the Bible or in biblical theology is based on nothing more objective than an unwillingness to accept the supernatural; but we know that without the supernatural there is

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<sup>34</sup>Ryken, *Luke*, 467.

<sup>35</sup>Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 25.

no gospel.”<sup>36</sup> There is a supernatural aspect to every covenant entered into with God. The marriage covenant is no exception. The supernatural can be seen in the uniting of two into a one-flesh union, as God is the one doing the joining. What we believe about God and the supernatural will determine how we view Scripture and our willingness, or lack thereof, to build a marriage based on biblical foundations (Matt. 7:24-27).

Covenant relationships are lifelong relationships that are not to be entered into lightly. Christ’s covenant with his church is eternal. A man and woman enter into a three-way covenant relationship between God and themselves as they profess their vows to each other and God before witnesses during their wedding ceremony. No other human vows are as tender, no other vows more sacred than those assumed by a man and woman entering into the holy estate of matrimony. As a couple exchanges their vows, they become a part of God’s profound mystery of experience, as two are joined in a one-flesh union and become a living portrait of the very essence of divine love, Christ’s love for his church. In marriage the vows taken between a man and his bride are to reflect the life-long nature of covenant.

When performing wedding ceremonies, I ask the bride and groom to take the following vows to live together after God’s ordinances. To the groom I ask, “Do you vow to take (bride’s name) as your wedded wife, to live together after God’s ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Do you vow to reverence her, serve her, love, honor, and keep her, in sickness and in health, forsaking all others, so long as you both shall live?” The appropriate response would be “I do.” To the bride the following vow is made: “Do you vow to have (groom’s name) as your wedded husband, to live together after God’s ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Do you vow to reverence him, respect him, submit to him as head of

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<sup>36</sup>Michael Wilcox, “The Message of Luke,” *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 40.

your household, love and keep him, in sickness and in health, forsaking all others, so long as you both shall live?” Again the appropriate response would be “I do.” These vows should not be taken or entered into lightly as they become a sacred covenant promise between the couple and God.<sup>37</sup> The vow, “till death do us part” or “so long as you both shall live,” reflects Christ’s New Covenant promise to never leave us or forsake us, even when things become difficult and we distance ourselves from him by seeking after our own selfish desires of the flesh resulting in sin. It is because two are joined in a one-flesh union that divorce should not be considered an option for couples who simply feel they have grown out of love with each other. Marriage is not about falling in love and staying in love; it is about keeping one’s covenant with a spouse and with God. Marriage is a reflection of Christ’s covenant love for his people. To enter into divorce is to distort the image of Christ loving his church, for Christ will never leave his bride.<sup>38</sup>

Piper emphasizes the importance of marriage reflecting the message of the cross, stating, “Jesus died for sinners. He forged a covenant in the white-hot heat of his suffering in our place. He made an imperfect bride his own with the price of his blood and covered her with garments of his own righteousness. He said, ‘I am with you...to the end of the age...I will never leave you nor forsake you’ (Matt 28:20; Heb 13:5).”<sup>39</sup> Through their marriage, a couple’s lifetime together can reflect the reality of the gospel message to the world around them. Their marriage can truly reflect God’s glory and love for his church.

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<sup>37</sup>Couples should be discouraged from making up their own vows, lest they stray away from the standard commitments made between each other and God.

<sup>38</sup>See appendix 8, *Divorce, Remarriage and Church Leadership*, Research Paper.

<sup>39</sup>Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 26.



## **“Put Off” and “Put On”**

Lastly, an exegesis of Colossians 3:5-14 illustrates the traits every man and woman should “put off” and “put on” in order to glorify Christ in their marriage. In order to fully understand Paul’s teaching on which traits to “put on,” it is imperative to know which traits are to be “put off” first. Paul teaches his readers to “Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col 3:2). In Romans 12:2, readers are instructed to “not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” Ephesians 4:24 teaches that men and women are “to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.” Putting on the “new self” is not something men and women just choose to do. As Patzia points out, “It is God’s doing! To express this process the Greek uses a present passive participle (*anakainoumenon*) to indicate that renewal is continuous (the present) and that it has an outside source (the passive, the new self which is being renewed).”<sup>40</sup> God, through the work of the Holy Spirit, enables a person to take captive their thoughts and renew their mind with new thoughts. Thereby, “putting off” unrighteous thoughts or behaviors, replacing them with new thoughts or actions glorifying God.

Colossians 3:5 identifies five sinful traits or earthly desires, which are destructive to relationships and should be “put to death.” In putting to death these destructive traits, Wright believes Paul advocates, “Abandoning a way of life that is ‘earthly’ as opposed to ‘heavenly’ in the sense indicated by verses 1-4, i.e. that belongs to the old age and not to the

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<sup>40</sup>Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 76.

new.”<sup>41</sup> These traits include: Sexual immorality (*porneia*), also translated as fornication, referring to sexual intercourse outside of marriage or adultery, and homosexuality; Impurity (*akatharsia*), means to defile something or make unclean, including immoral intent or immoral behavior, as in sexual immorality; Lust (*pathos*), uncontrolled passions or very strong sexual desires, or cravings; Evil desire (*epithymian kakēn*), to wrongly seek after wrongly desired passions or something forbidden or prohibited for illicit gratification of the flesh; and Covetousness (*pleonexia*), or greed, inordinately seeking after something someone else has, or something you believe you deserve and have a right to, including another man’s wife, wealth or possessions.<sup>42</sup>

Covetousness or greed is considered idolatry because the things one seeks after take the place of God in the human heart. They become things or issues individuals are willing to sin to get or things that will cause them to sin if they do not get them.<sup>43</sup> Paul goes on in verse 6 to note, “On account of these the wrath of God is coming.” Engaging in these sins provokes the wrath of God. Throughout Scripture, God’s wrath and his judgment against those who choose to engage in sinful behavior is evident. Understanding Romans 1:18-32 is fundamental for comprehending God’s wrath against sin and unrighteousness; for understanding why men suppress the truth and choose to follow the “lust of their hearts,” and for determining why they choose to “exchange the truth about God for a lie.” In verse 32, Paul notes, “Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things

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<sup>41</sup>N. T. Wright, “Colossians, and Philemon: An Introduction and Commentary,” In *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, vol. 12, ed. Leon Morris (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1986), 13.

<sup>42</sup>Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 73.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, 72.

deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”<sup>44</sup> In the counseling setting, couples should be led to the Scriptures and taught how to identify these six sinful traits along with, “anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk” (Col 3:8) in their own lives, so they can repent and put off the old nature of unrighteousness and replace each sin with a righteous trait honoring God and honoring each other (Col 3:5-10).<sup>45</sup>

A key for every relationship, including marriage, is an understanding of the necessity to “put-on,” or clothe yourself, with the new self, “which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of it’s creator” (Col 3:10). Each person must put on the virtues which are reflective of the “fruit of the spirit” as found in Galatians 5:22-23: “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control; against such things there is no law.” According to Paul, as followers of Christ, believers are to put on: Compassionate hearts (*splanchna oiktirmos*) otherwise translated “bowels of mercy,” to have a selfless heart filled with tenderness, sympathy, sorrow, and mercy for others; Kindness (*chrēstotēs*), to be gracious and empathic towards others, loving kindness; Humility (*tapeinophrosynē*) a modest view of one’s own importance, to show courtesy and respect towards others; Meekness (*prautēs*) characterized by gentleness, submissiveness and willingness to consider other’s needs; and Patience (*makrothymia*), ability to endure difficult situations or circumstances without getting upset or angry.<sup>46</sup> In verse 13, Paul instructs his readers to be proactive, “bearing with one another,” which means showing tolerance for one another. Paul is indicating there are times when people will

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<sup>44</sup>See also 1 Cor 5:10, 11; 6:9, 10; 1 Thess 4:3-6.

<sup>45</sup>Maxie D. Dunnam, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 8 of The Communicator’s Commentary, ed. Lloyd J. Ogilvie (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1982), 382.

<sup>46</sup>Patzia, *Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon*, 78.

irritate or anger each other and it is during these times that believers are to selflessly tolerate one another.

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul clearly distinguishes between two different styles of living. These two styles are worlds apart, just as are the worlds of the believer and unbelievers. Referring to the “old self” which we put off, and the “new self” we put on, Wright notes, “In one we find attitudes and behavior that cause inevitable fragmentation in human society and even within individuals: in the other, a way of life which integrates both individual persons and groups of people. The former, in other words, steadily obliterates genuinely human existence: the latter enhances it.”<sup>47</sup> Couples who put on the virtues described in Galatians are then equipped to begin “bearing with one another” (3:13); they become better equipped to avoid conflict and learn to attack difficult situations and circumstances as a team working together towards resolution, instead of attacking each other out of selfish pride or anger. Couples learn the importance of forgiving each other and recognizing the joy that comes from being forgiven by Christ.

### **Conclusion**

This exegesis of relevant biblical and theological sources, clearly demonstrates that the Bible presents marriage as a sacred covenant-keeping relationship in which God joins a husband and wife into a one-flesh union for the purpose of displaying Christ’s love for his church. This study thus shows the importance of equipping couples to understand their particular roles and responsibilities to one another, as presented in the next chapter.

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<sup>47</sup>Wright, *Colossians and Philemon*, 134.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL SUPPORT FOR COUPLES ENGAGING IN AN EIGHT-HOUR MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT SEMINAR

In order to enhance a marriage and make it glorify God, husbands and wives must live according to the distinctly different roles and responsibilities God has established for each of them. Throughout this chapter, I will focus on discovering how couples can practically apply biblical principles to their distinct roles as husband and wife. Through application of the principles learned in the previous chapter, in conjunction with this chapter, couples will establish a solid biblical foundation from which they may enhance their marriage relationship with each other and with God which will enable them to experience the true joy and blessing God intends for their marriage and life together.

#### **Husband and Wife Relationships**

In order to have a marriage founded on biblical principles, couples must understand that God is the ultimate head of the household. Furthermore, in marriage God calls us to a higher standard of living, which would be impossible to achieve without the indwelling of his Holy Spirit. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit enables everyone to accomplish much more than they deem possible, “For nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 2:37). The Bible teaches three key imperatives regarding the husband wife relationship. First, “Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). Second, “Let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the

wife see that she respects her husband” (Eph 5:33). Lastly, Wives submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord” (Eph 5:22). All three imperatives are seen as impossible without the Holy Spirit. The husband who can love his wife as Christ loved the church and the wife who can willingly submit in respect to her husband, can only exist with supernatural power.

God designed men and women very different physically and emotionally. His design is not flawed, nor has he made a mistake. As part of his divine plan, God has hardwired men and women for the particular roles they are to play within the context of marriage. Learning what is expected from God within the marriage context and applying his precepts to the marriage relationship can lead to a healthy marriage that is truly reflective of Christ and his church. To this end, it is crucial a husband and wife understand the different roles and responsibilities placed upon them, beginning with the roles and responsibilities of the Christian husband, followed by that of the Christian wife. It is also important that a husband and wife have a working definition of what love is. According to Scott, “God’s kind love is: A selfless and enduring commitment of the will to care about and benefit another person by righteous, truthful, and compassionate thoughts, words and actions. True love has no ulterior motive to only benefit self. True love is always thinking of the other person. True love is like God’s love.”<sup>1</sup>

### **Husband Role**

Scott identifies four key roles or responsibilities of the Christian husband. He is to be a: Leader (Eph 5:21-33; 1 Cor 11:3,9,11); Longsufferer (Col 3:19); Learner (1 Pet 3:7)

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<sup>1</sup>Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband: A Biblical Perspective*, rev. ed. (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2002), 106.

and a Lover (Eph 5:1-2, 25-33).<sup>2</sup> When a husband lives up to these biblical roles and responsibilities, he not only glorifies God, but he demonstrates his Christ-like obedience and identity to his wife and to others around him.

Each of these four roles warrants further attention, beginning with the husband's role as a leader. In a marriage, it is imperative for a husband to know his role as a *humble servant leader*. A husband's humility is a distinguishing quality, which allows him to love his wife in a manner pleasing to the Lord. Without humility, a husband's pride blinds him to the truth of who he is, who God intends him to be as a husband, and ultimately distorts his ability to lead and love his wife as Christ does the church. The proud husband worships himself and arrogantly seeks self-recognition and self-exaltation by lording over his wife. Peter instructs us, "Clothe yourself, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble'" (1 Pet 5:5). Husbands should not adopt a prideful attitude of arrogance and superiority towards their wives; they should not be puffed up (1 Cor 8:1) by the authority given them by God. Instead, they should lead with meekness, humility, and wisdom (Jas 3:13, 17-18).<sup>3</sup> To be humble is to take the focus off of self and place it on the needs of others, encouraging them and loving them with a desire to glorify and please God first and foremost. Scott identifies twelve reasons why it is important to "put-off" pride and "put-on" a spirit of humility:

Humility is the one character quality that will enable us to be all Christ wants us to be. We cannot come to God without it. We cannot love God supremely without it. We cannot be an effective witness for Christ without it. We cannot love and serve our wives without it. We cannot lead in a Godly way without it. We cannot enjoy physical

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<sup>2</sup>Stuart Scott, "The Role and Responsibilities of Husbands" (classroom lecture notes, 80554—*Marriage & Family Counseling*, Winter 2013, photocopy), 1-5.

<sup>3</sup>Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 33-34.

intimacy the way God intended without it. We cannot communicate properly without it. We cannot resolve conflict without it. We cannot deal with the sin of others rightly without it. We especially cannot resist sin without it. In short, we must embrace and live out humility in order to truly live and be who God means for us to be.<sup>4</sup>

In 1 Corinthians 11:3, Paul explains, “The head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.” He goes on in verses eight and nine to say, “For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.” In these verses, Paul addresses *headship or leadership*. A husband must lead his family by recognizing his divine calling and God-given responsibility to love his wife as Christ loved his church. The emphasis in Ephesians 5:22-25 is headship, where the man is the head of his wife. Paul is instructing men to take the leadership role within the family, leading their wives and children with authority just as Christ has authority over his church. The key for every husband is to recognize that his style of leadership and authority is to be modeled after Christ’s own headship. Christ exemplifies humility and service to others. His leadership style is that of a servant meeting the needs of other people. Christ is the perfect example of a servant leader. He demonstrated the ability to take the time necessary to minister to the needs of those around him, even when he was in the middle of trying to accomplish a task. Husbands, likewise, should be prepared to be interrupted and to take the time to go on walks and spend quality time with their wives. A husband should lead by example, setting aside time to pray with his wife and disciple his children.<sup>5</sup>

In Ephesians 5:25, Paul writes the following imperative for husbands:

“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” Scott notes, “This biblical perspective is needed for Christ-likeness in marriage. It is through his

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<sup>4</sup>Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, 175.

<sup>5</sup>Scott, “The Role and Responsibilities of Husbands,” 4.



role that the husband exemplifies Christ to his wife, his family, and the world.”<sup>6</sup> When a husband abdicates his role and fails to fully love his wife, he goes against this imperative, which results in unbiblical behavior and ultimately affecting his relationship with his wife and God. His behavior sets the tone for love and respect in the home. According to Köstenberger, “The husband’s leadership, as well as the wife’s submission, is to be exercised within the orbit of grace rather than legalism or coercion.”<sup>7</sup> A husband who becomes a humble servant leader demonstrates grace and compassion toward his wife.

A husband’s second role is that of a *longsufferer*. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul instructs, “Wives, submit to your husbands” (Col 3:18) and then addresses husbands, commanding them, “Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.” Paul’s instruction to not be harsh with one’s wife is an imperative for husbands to be longsuffering. A husband who is longsuffering demonstrates: tolerance, patience, selflessness, grace, mercy and forgiveness. A husband should not allow his pride or anger to oppress his wife. Instead, he should take the time to talk to and listen to his wife, allowing her to express what is going on in her life. When conflict occurs within a marriage, a longsuffering husband is able to put aside his pride and create a safe environment in which he and his wife can work through differences as brother and sister in Christ.

The third role of a husband is that of a *learner*. All good leaders are learners and husbands are called to be learners as well. First Peter 3:7 teaches, “Likewise, husbands live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”

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<sup>6</sup>Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, 75.

<sup>7</sup>Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God Marriage and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 70.

Husbands should show honor to their wives, recognizing they have been created by God and are considered daughters of the King—God himself.<sup>8</sup>

It is impossible to understand and honor another person until one gets to know that individual person. In a marriage things are always dynamic and never static; physical, emotional, and spiritual changes are always taking place. For this reason, a husband should be continually and intentionally observing and studying his wife. A husband should strive to be a good listener and communicator, giving the necessary time to fully understand what is weighing heavy on his wife's life, and how her thoughts and ideas do, or do not, mesh with God's desire for her life. A husband's observations of his wife can and should help him determine how he is performing as a humble servant leader, who is longsuffering, loving, and bringing glory to God. It is also important for a husband to study and learn from his wife in order to avoid dissension and contempt in the relationship. Thomas notes, "Contempt is born when we fixate on our spouse's weaknesses. Every spouse has his or her weak points. If you want to find them, without a doubt you will. If you want to obsess about them, they'll grow—but you won't!"<sup>9</sup> In the counseling setting, more often than not, husbands and wives will take the initiative to point out everything they believe their spouse is doing wrong; they are keeping score, creating conflict within the marriage. When this occurs, both husband and wife need to learn the meaning behind Jesus' words as recorded in Matthew 7:3-5, "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is a log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you

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<sup>8</sup>Gary Thomas, *Sacred Marriage: What if God Designed Marriage to Make Us Holy More than to Make Us Happy?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2000), 63.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., 70.

will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." Husbands need to be learners. They need to learn to identify the logs in their own eyes before allowing contempt and bitterness to set in because of something their wives have said or done, which will lead to conflict and withdrawal.

A husband's last role is that of a *lover*. As an ambassador of Christ's love in the home, the husband has the greatest responsibility for fostering love within the marriage relationship. Three times husbands are commanded to "love your wives" (Eph 5:25, 28, 33), yet there is only one reference to wives learning to love their husbands and children. In Titus 2:3, the older women of the church are to "train young women to love their husbands and children." Other references to love include the command to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:31) and "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt 5:44). Christians are commanded to love their neighbor and their enemies. No one is closer as a neighbor than a husband and a wife are to each other. If love is lacking within the framework of a marriage, most often it can be related back to the husband's failure to responsibly love his wife.

### **Nine Attributes of Love**

A question men often asked in a counseling setting is "How, as a husband, am I to love like Christ?" Scott identifies nine attributes demonstrated by Christ through his love for the church. For the purpose of this project, each attribute has been expanded upon, including the scriptural support provided by Scott.<sup>10</sup> Although these attributes are included under the heading of a husband's role and responsibility to love his wife, these attributes of love are

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<sup>10</sup> Scott, "The Role and Responsibilities of Husbands," 1-2.

traits and characteristics everyone should strive to live by, loving one another just as Christ loves them.

First, Christ is the *initiator* of love. In order to love like Christ, one must be an initiator of nurturing love, just as Christ initiates and nurtures love for his church. John reminds readers, “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). As Christ initiates love, people respond to his love. Notice, no one solicits or initiates Christ’s love. God loves everyone regardless of a person’s love for him. There are no expectations, just pure agape love. This same dynamic is at play in a marriage; as a husband initiates and nurtures love for his wife, she in turn responds to his love with love and respect.<sup>11</sup>

Second, Christ’s love is *sacrificial*. Husbands are to love their wives sacrificially, as shown in Ephesians, “Husband love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her” (Eph 5:25). Husbands must be willing to sacrifice everything for the wellbeing of their wives, even to the point of laying down their lives for their wives' safety. A husband may demonstrate his sacrificial love by sacrificing time, personal desires, expectations, or perceived needs, for the sake of his wife. Husbands may also sacrifice their own comfort, plans, goals, likes, ideas, and energy for their wives. To do less for their wives is to do less than loving the church as Christ did on every believer’s behalf. Christ sacrificed in all these areas for his church. The question for husbands then becomes, “How much are you willing to sacrifice for your wife, so you will not be acting contrary to God’s will?”

Third, Christ’s love is a *humble, unselfish* love. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul instructs his readers, “Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also

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<sup>11</sup>Alistair Begg, *Lasting Love: How to Avoid Marital Failure* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1997), 144.

the interests of others” (Phil 2:3-4). Christ, the third member of the trinity, humbled himself by taking on the form of a man and, in obedience to the father, going to the cross on our behalf (Phil 2:5-8). Jesus did not go to the cross expecting anything from us. Jesus humbled himself before the father in obedience, recognizing that God the father did not send him because God needed us, but because God knew we needed Jesus as our savior. He sacrificed himself for our needs. Begg notes, “A good husband should not be stuck on himself, and his attitude should be genuine.”<sup>12</sup> A husband’s humility and selfless love is reflected by his character, as demonstrated by his compassion toward his wife.

Fourth, Christ’s love is *volitional*. The Gospel of John quotes Jesus regarding his choice to love us, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another” (John 15:16-17). Biblical love is demonstrated by God’s choice to love us (Deut. 7:7). Christ chose us. Likewise, husbands *choose* to love their wives. In the counseling setting, it is not uncommon to hear a husband or wife say, “I do not feel love for him anymore” or “I have fallen out of love with her.” You never fall in or out of biblical love. You choose to love one another; your love is volitional. In John 13:34-35, Jesus teaches, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I love you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” Husbands are to be active and intentional in how they love their wives.

Fifth, Christ’s love is *contraconditional* or *gracious*. Romans 5:8 illustrates Christ’s contraconditional love, “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” God loved us enough to send his only son to die on a cross on

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<sup>12</sup>Begg, *Lasting Love*, 59.

our behalf. It is because of what Christ has already done for us on the cross that we can be recipients of his gracious love. Christ's love for us is a picture of grace, without hidden conditions or expectations from us. He does not love us because we are loveable, worthy, or righteous. He loves us in spite of who we are. He loves us even though we fall short of his glory, "for all have fallen short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23). He loves us because he is gracious. In the same way, husbands are to love their wives with grace, mercy and forbearance. Husbands must put aside unrealistic expectations of their wives and not restrain their love until their wives give them the respect they desire or believe they deserve.

Sixth, Christ's love is *eternal* and *committed*. Paul teaches, "Nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:39). Christ's love continues on regardless of our circumstances (John 13:1). Even under the most tenuous of circumstances, Christ continues to love his church. His love cannot be quenched or taken away. Song of Solomon 8:7 teaches, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can floods drown it." Eternal and committed love is analogous to an unquenchable fire that cannot be put out regardless of the circumstances. Husbands likewise are to be fully committed to loving their wives. Husbands and wives both need to rest in the security of knowing their spouses are fully committed to them regardless of how difficult life may become. A committed love is not fickle, vacillating, or mutable. During wedding ceremonies, couples vow to "love and cherish, in sickness and health till death do us part." These vows become the basis for a covenantal commitment to never leave or forsake each other, but to persevere in love for one another. Christ will never abandon us, and husbands and wives should never abandon each other.

Seventh, Christ's love is *forgiving*. According to Paul, believers must be willing to forgive one another: "Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive" (Col 3:12-13). Husbands and wives must be willing to forgive and not be led into bitterness by their feelings. Ephesians 32 commands everyone, "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you." Husbands and wives must be willing to lay down the temptation to make their spouses pay for their actions. They must be willing to absorb the cost of the offending spouse's sin against them. In counseling, couples are often holding onto emotional pain over what their spouses have done to them. Their trust may have been broken and there is the feeling of a debt needing to be paid (Matt 18:28). The Gospel message of the cross and the working of the Holy Spirit gives husbands and wives the ability to truly practice biblical forgiveness and not engage in a form of therapeutic forgiveness.<sup>13</sup> Harvey notes, "Forgiveness and repentance is the powerful tool that repairs the damage done to sin-torn marriage relationships. And where forgiveness is employed, and repentance is lived out, it transforms. Forgiveness humbly sought and humbly given, profoundly expresses the glory of God. Why? Because forgiveness is at the heart of the gospel."<sup>14</sup>

Eighth, Christ's love is *purifying* and *constructive*. Ephesians 5:26-27 explains why Christ gave himself up for his church, "That he might sanctify her, having cleansed her

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<sup>13</sup>Chris Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness: Biblical Answers for Complex Questions and Deep Wounds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 65.

<sup>14</sup>Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do: Discovering the Power of The Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), 113.

by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy without blemish.” Christ’s love cleanses us, holds us blameless, renews us, makes us whole, sanctifies us and makes us holy so we might be presented unto himself. Likewise, a husband’s love should be a constructive, ministering kind of love; it should help his wife grow and develop spiritually, socially, and mentally. A husband’s love should encourage and build up his wife, recognizing that where there is weakness in her life, there is opportunity for growth. A husband should want to know what he can do for her, not what can she do for him.

Ninth, Christ’s love is *practical*. Love is also applicable in real-life: “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth” (1 John 3:18). Love within the marriage relationship is not something to just be talked about. Love needs to be constantly applied in a marriage. First Peter 3:7 gives the practical advice, “Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.” For a husband to show honor to his wife as the weaker vessel can be illustrated by the care taken when handling a piece of fine china versus a piece of Tupperware. Fine china is lovingly cherished, taken care of, protected, and provided a special place in a china cabinet; while Tupperware is expendable, carelessly tossed about and used indiscriminately, it may be handled by anyone and left in a drawer or on a shelf out of sight. Husbands are to cherish and nurture their wives, bringing glory to God, so their prayers may be heard.

In the counseling setting, counselees often express many ideas about how they define love, yet they tend to fall short of examples of how they are intentionally applying the previous eight attributes of Christ’s love into their marriage. Speaking of love to the



Colossians, Paul emphasizes the importance of putting on love, “And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony” (Col 3:14). Love is practical and must be applied for a healthy marriage relationship.

### **The Wife’s Role in Marriage**

Submission is never easy in any marriage. There is often the sense of competition between the strengths of a man and the strengths of a woman both vying for control. In some ways, marriage is like a dance. When a couple understands their respective roles and how to be in sync with each other in a manner glorifying the Lord, their marriage has the potential to become a masterpiece comprised of love, caring, companionship, commitment, security, and shared faith. The marriage masterpiece breaks free of the mundane as a couple shows determination to grow daily in their marriage and walk with the Lord.

A wife has four primary roles and responsibilities in her relationship with her husband. She is called to *respect* her husband in her attitude, through her words, and by her actions (Eph 5:33). A wife is called to be her husband’s *helper* by coming alongside him as his partner. A wife should be an *encourager*.<sup>15</sup> She should help build her husband’s confidence and encourage his success, while also helping him avoid failures. Lastly, she is to *submit* to her husband’s headship. “The negative tendency in many marriages is for a man to retreat from leadership, and a wife to step in. And while she may be competent to make good decisions, she is still replacing the role that God outlined in Scriptures.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> *The Art of Marriage: Getting to the Heart of God’s Design* (Little Rock, AR: FamilyLife Publishing, 2011), 67.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid.

## The Wife's Role and Submission

When discussing the wife's role and submission, one must recognize there is a great difference between how the world defines submission and what biblical submission looks like. "The Greek word for submission is *hupotassō*, a word that means 'to arrange under, to subordinate, to subject oneself, to obey, to submit to one's control, to yield to one's admonition or advice. The term is used forty times in the New Testament in reference to familial, civic, and ecclesiastical and spiritual government."<sup>17</sup> A Christian wife who understands the biblical meaning recognizes there is real freedom in being able to submit to her husband's authority. Submission involves obeying from the heart and choosing to follow leadership even when one believes she or he knows a better way or believes they can do a better job.

Few things in today's culture are as contentious as the biblical teaching on submission. The topic is often much maligned and misunderstood. For this reason, Peace notes, "Pastors often avoid the issues of submission because the subject is so volatile."<sup>18</sup> Yet the teaching of biblical submission as it relates to both men and women needs to be taught from the pulpit. "Submission in the home is not only God's idea but is—as are all the Lord's commands—for our good, our blessing, and our life (Deut 32:47; 1 Pet 3:10-12)."<sup>19</sup>

Fitzpatrick describes how the biblical concept of submission is often used in the context of mutual submission for both men and women: "All Christians, male and female, are called to humbly and voluntarily subject themselves to each other. In every life context, all

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<sup>17</sup>Elyse Fitzpatrick, *Helper by Design: God's Perfect Plan for Women in Marriage* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishing, 2003), 152.

<sup>18</sup>Martha Peace, *The Excellent Wife: A Biblical Perspective*, 10th ed. (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2005), 137.

<sup>19</sup>Fitzpatrick, *Helper by Design*, 145.

Christians are admonished to submit themselves to the authorities God has placed over them.”<sup>20</sup> Hence in Ephesians 5:15-21, we are taught, “Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise . . . submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.” The imperative for wives to submit to their husband is mentioned four times in the New Testament (Eph 5:22, 24; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:1). First Peter 3:1 describes how a wife subject to her husband has the potential of testifying to the truth of the gospel and leading him to Christ.

At no point does submission suggest inequality between a man and woman, as both are created in God’s image (Gen 1:27). Furthermore, 1 Peter 3:7 describes wives as being “heirs with you of the grace of life.” In other words, wives are equal in standing or worth before God. In 1 Timothy 2:9-15, Paul bases headship on the fact Adam was first born and then Eve was born. In Hebrew culture, the first-born was one who had authority and leadership. This is why Jesus is called the first born in Colossians 1. Both verses are intended to show authority and headship.

There are two main reasons for this contention regarding the concept of submission. The first has to do with *pride* and sinful *rebelliousness of the human heart* to authority, “For the fool speaks folly, and his heart is busy with iniquity, to practice ungodliness, to utter error concerning the Lord” (Isa 32:6). People naturally want to be in charge of their own lives. In our western culture, women are taught to be more assertive and independent—in charge of their own destinies (Jas 4).

Second, there tends to be a misunderstanding of how headship for a husband and submission for a wife are defined in Scripture. Many see Matthew 5:22-24 as giving men unlimited advantages and privileges while relegating wives to lives of slavery. For those seeing submission as providing an advantage to men, a wife’s submission means a life

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<sup>20</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Helper by Design*, 146.

doomed to misery and un-fulfillment. They believe true fulfillment and happiness is only found in the freedom to do whatever they desire. In reality, they lack the knowledge to understand that true fulfillment and happiness comes from glorifying God and defining ourselves as children of God. For a wife to experience true fulfillment and happiness in accordance with God's will for her, she ought to strive to be the Christian wife God intends her to be. Only in obedience to God and in submission to her husband, as found in Scripture, can she find true fulfillment and happiness.

### **Biblical Submission: Six Misconceptions**

Given the divisive nature concerning the topic of submission, it is important to recognize six misconceptions regarding biblical submission.

First, submission is not husband worship. To yield to one's husband does not mean a wife should worship her husband or place him on a pedestal, as an idol, in the place of Christ, for it is Christ that is the "head of the body, the church" (Col 1:18). To place a husband or wife above Christ is to make an idol out of them. When a wife sins against God in an effort to please her husband or make her husband happy at the expense of being obedient to God's Word, she has allowed her husband to become an idol in her life. First John 5:21 warns, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols." No one is to allow other people or things to become the object of their worship; as the Lord commands: "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exod 20:3).<sup>21</sup> A wife submitting to a husband's authority indicates she respects her husband. Adams addresses this form of respect, explaining,

Christian wives are to submit to their husbands, not because of any supposed authority residing in those men, but because of the authoritative capacity in which God places husbands as the heads of their homes. That is not an internal, inherent authority

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<sup>21</sup>Fitzpatrick, *Helper by Design*, 150.

(*dunamis*) but an externally conferred authority (*exousia*). And since a husband's authority is conferred on him by God, it is God whom wives respect when they respect their husbands, and it is God whom they disrespect when they don't.<sup>22</sup>

Second, to be submissive is not the sum total of what a wife is. A wife's willingness to submit to her husband in no way means she is to become a door mat or a bellhop waiting to be called and given tasks to complete, nor is she to give up her individual personality and become stagnant, unable to thrive or grow.<sup>23</sup> God intends each wife to use the gifts and talents he has given her to serve her husband and others. Romans 12:6 tells us that we each have "gifts that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them." She is to use the gifts and talents God has given her to serve others. Likewise, in Peter 4:10, Scripture teaches, "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace." God gives everyone gifts and talents to serve his or her specific role as part of the body of Christ. In Proverbs 31, God's ideal woman is portrayed as a person with many unique qualities and gifts. She is described as a woman of "excellence." She is devoted to the well-being of her husband and she uses her education, wisdom, talents and abilities to help him become a successful provider and spiritual leader. She is a woman of strength, virtue and personality. "The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life. . . . Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: 'Many have done excellently but you surpass them all'" (Prov 31:11-12, 28-29). The submissive wife is loved and praised for her commitment to her husband and family. She is in no way stripped of personality or purpose.

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<sup>22</sup>Jay Adams, *Solving Marriage Problems: Biblical Solutions for Christian Counselors* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 109.

<sup>23</sup>Begg, *Lasting Love*, 110.

Scott identifies four attributes of a submissive wife: “First she heeds her husband’s leadership (Eph 5:1-2; Titus 2:4-5); Second, she honors her husband (Eph 5:22-24, 33; 1 Cor 11:3); Third, she is her husband’s helpmate (Gen 2:18-24; Prov 31:10-31; 1 Cor 11:9); Lastly, she is attentive to the home (Prov 31:10-31; Eph 5:1-2; Titus 2:4-5).”<sup>24</sup> True submission is serving without a begrudging or complaining spirit—serving out of a sense of desire and not obligation.

Third, submission is not based on a husband being superior to his wife or a wife being inferior to her husband. Submission is about obedience to God. Philippians 2:3-8 presents a clear picture of humility as Christ “emptied himself, by taking on the form of a servant . . . he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Jesus submitted himself and became obedient to the Father, and yet Jesus is considered equal to the Father, as Jesus states, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30). He is the second member of the trinity and yet he took orders from the Father; even though he and the Father share the same attributes, they have differing roles. Jesus submitted to the Father’s authority and his submission did not make him less important than the father. He had a different purpose to fulfill in God’s redemptive plan for man. “The submission to which a wife is called does not negate the spiritual equality she enjoys with her husband. Every team must have a captain, and every home a leader, and God has established things in such a way that this responsibility falls to the man. His authority is limited by the broader parameter of God’s Word.”<sup>25</sup> Jesus is equal with the Father but submitted to God’s authority to fulfill an objective, which was to accomplish a plan for our salvation. This same

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<sup>24</sup> Stuart Scott, “Role and Responsibilities of Wives” (classroom lecture notes, 80554—*Marriage & Family Counseling*, Winter 2013, photocopy), 1-3.

<sup>25</sup>Begg, *Lasting Love*, 110.

commitment to headship and authority should be demonstrated in the relationship between a wife and her husband as they strive to accomplish God's purpose for them and their marriage.

Fourth, submission is part of God's plan in which husbands and wives have differing roles. In Romans 13:1-2, Paul instructs, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and God has instituted those that exist. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment." To be in submission to government authorities, does not mean government authorities are more important than individuals are and it does not mean they have more important roles to play. The imperative to submit to governmental authority is simply a part of God's redemptive purpose and plan for our lives. Likewise, Luke 2:51 describes Jesus submitting to the authority of Mary and Joseph as his parents. His submission was not a sign of his being lesser in importance. Rather, he recognized an established order and chose to respect and submit himself to his parent's authority, honoring and glorifying God in the process.

Another example of how submitting to authority does not mean a person is of lesser importance or value, can be seen in church leadership. Hebrews 13:17 commands followers of Christ to "obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account." Scripture is not saying leaders are more important; it is describing a role or function they are anointed to perform in service to God. All leaders will have to give a special accounting for how they performed in their respective roles. Similarly in marriage, a husband will have to give an accounting to God for

how he performs his duties as a humble servant leader, which includes loving and cherishing his wife.

Some might defend the world's view that certain people are more important than others due to their wealth, power, status, notoriety, stardom, or contributions to society. However, Scripture teaches, that in the body of Christ, the church, all parts of the body (each and every person) are important and indispensable, even those that seem obscure or unapproachable: "On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor" (1 Cor 12:22-23). As a member of the body of Christ, a wife must recognize her importance and the incredible role God has designed her for within the marriage relationship. Like differing parts of the body, husbands and wives have unique but equally important roles to play. For example, while the husband may be the "head" of his wife, his wife's supporting role could be envisioned as the "neck," which is the foundation supporting the head, allowing the body to move upright and function properly. Hence, each part may have a different function, yet each part is equal in its value or importance to the function of the body as a whole.

Fifth, submission does not mean a wife must forgo her participation in the decision-making process. As her husband's help mate, a wife should be prepared to influence the decisions of her husband based on her own education, experiences, wisdom, discernment, and intuition. Colossians 3:16 teaches, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom." A wife should be prepared to teach and counsel jointly with her husband, as his wife and as a sister in Christ, with the responsibility to both exhort and to rebuke her husband. A wife should be willing to help her



husband gather facts in order to make well-informed decisions. Two perspectives are always better than one. It is the foolish man who fails to counsel with his wife before making decisions, especially those affecting his family and others. Proverbs 1:7 teaches how, “Fools despise wisdom and instruction.”

Sixth, submission does not mean being fearful, enabling, or tolerating abuse. A wife must recognize her first allegiance is to the Lord and then her husband. Therefore, everything she does should be done to the glory of the Lord. This means, a wife must be willing to say no if her husband asks her to engage in sinful behavior. For example, if an unbelieving husband forbids his wife to go to church, read her Bible, or pray, his wife can refuse and participate in the activities she knows are glorifying to God, since she knows doing otherwise in obedience to her husband would result in the sin of dishonoring God. Anytime a husband asks his wife to do something contrary to biblical principle, the wife should respectfully decline. Acts 5:29 quotes the Apostle Paul as saying, “We must obey God rather than men.” An example can be seen in Exodus chapter one, where Pharaoh ordered his midwives to put to death every son born of the Hebrews. Exodus 1:17 says, “But the midwives feared God and did not do as the King of Egypt commanded them, but let the male children live.” A husband who commands his wife to engage in any harmful acts or sinful behavior forfeits any right to expect obedience. The wife should not enable or tolerate any form of abusive behavior.

A wife’s fear of her husband is generally attributed to abusive behavior on his part. As discussed in the previous section dealing with husbands, husbands are to love and cherish their wives as Christ loves and cherishes the church. There should be no fear within a marriage when love abounds. Scripture teaches, “There is no fear in love, but perfect love

casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love” (1 John 4:18). A wife’s unwillingness to submit to her husband should not be the result of her being fearful in spirit or worrying about outcomes or things beyond her control. Regarding fear, Paul wrote, “For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control” (2 Tim 1:7). It is easy for a wife to worry that submission on her part might lead to her husband making poor choices. In these instances, she fails to recognize it is often through failure and mistakes that spiritual growth can occur for both her and her husband.

Submission must be motivated by hope and trust in God. Fear of one’s husband should never be the reason for submission as God intended. Likewise, fear of possible outcomes should never be the reason for not submitting. A wife should have confidence in God and recognize God is sovereign and capable of preventing her husband from making mistakes. Furthermore, God is big enough to fix any mistakes her husband might make. In Romans 8:28, Paul addresses God’s ability to work things for our good and Christ’s glory: “And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good.” A husband’s mistakes can be used by God to sanctify and draw him closer to Jesus. A wife’s fear leading to submission, or a lack there of, indicates a greater sin problem a husband and wife must address together.

According to Piper, “The deepest root of Christian womanhood mentioned in 1 Peter 3:5 is hope in God. ‘Holy women who hoped in God . . . .’ A Christian woman does not put her hope in her husband, or in getting a husband. She does not put her hope in her looks or her intelligence or her creativity. She puts her hope in the promises of God.”<sup>26</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>26</sup>John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 97.

a wife's submission to her husband ultimately reflects her hope and trust in God's sovereignty.

Lastly, Peace identifies five ways a submissive wife honors the Word of God:

First, obeying God is more important to her than having her own way (Rom 12:1-2). Second, she has an appropriate reverential fear of the Lord (Psalm 2:11; Prov 3:7; Matt 10:28). Third, she lets the Word of Christ direct her life (Col 3:16; Titus 2:5). Fourth, her life is not an affront to the pattern for marriage given in Ephesians chapter five, of the church and its submissive relationship to Christ (Eph 5:24). Lastly, she is submissive whether she *feels* like it or not (Heb 12:1-2; Eph 4:31, 32).<sup>27</sup>

### **Communication**

Good communication skills are prerequisite for experiencing true intimacy—being fully known and truly loved without fear of rejection in a marriage. If a couple lacks good communication skills, there is a lack of intimacy and the success or failure of a marriage may hang in the balance. Matthews correctly notes, “If love is the heartbeat of a marriage, communication is its lifeblood.”<sup>28</sup> Communication is the transmittal of messages, feelings, attitudes, desires, and ideas from one person to another resulting in some receptivity and understanding between both the sender and the receiver. Scott provides a sound biblical model for communication:

Good communication from God's perspective is sending a message that is true, holy, purposeful, clear, and timely. The recipient in love, humility and with care should listen to what is being said, trying to understand where the communicator is coming from without reacting—clarifying with questions if needed. Upon receiving the message, the recipient should then ponder before answering and continue using these biblical principles.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Peace, *The Excellent Wife*, 148-149.

<sup>28</sup>D. Wayne Matthews, “Marriage Enrichment: Communication in Marriage,” *Family & Consumer Sciences*, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/.../FCS466-2.pdf>.

<sup>29</sup>Stuart Scott, “Biblical Principles of Loving Communication & Loving Resolution” (classroom lecture notes, 80554—*Marriage & Family Counseling*, Winter 2013, photocopy), 1.

Scott's model echoes David's words as found in Psalm 19:14, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer." In Ephesians, Paul teaches, "Rather, speak the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ" (Eph 4:15). When speaking the truth in love, it is important to always be cognizant of whom you are talking to, what you say, how you say it, why you are saying it, and how much you should say. It is easy to forget that how you say something, also includes non-verbal cues including posture, hand and body movements, facial expressions, vocal tones, intensity of speech, and eye contact. Given current technology, non-verbal communication also includes texting, emails, and social media. Any one of these non-verbal methods of communicating has the potential to be misinterpreted by the receiver or receivers of a transmitted message.

Two key aspects of good communication are expressing oneself clearly, concisely and listening to what is being communicated. The receiver of a message must do the hard work of listening well, actively participating in the conversation, showing respect, asking probing questions as necessary for clarity sake, and cautiously correcting incorrect messages. Feelings of anger, frustration, despair, fear, neglect, and loneliness, can easily affect interpretations and responses. Matthews explains, "The art of good listening also involves the ability to respond reflectively. Another word for reflectively is paraphrasing. When you listen carefully enough so that you can tell your partner what was just said in your own words, you are paraphrasing."<sup>30</sup> Good conversations involve both giving and receiving, with a genuine willingness to change or a readiness to yield to your spouse. Only by expressing

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<sup>30</sup>Matthews, "Marriage Enrichment," 3.

thoughts clearly, and listening intently, can a couple experience the intimacy and joy that comes from communicating well (1 Tim 1:5; 1 Cor 10:31).

Most conflicts within a marriage can be directly attributed to two key factors: selfish desires and poor communications skills. In the counseling setting, the number one complaint I hear from couples regarding their marriages is their inability to communicate or talk with each other. However, most communication problems can be traced back to deeper issues such as selfishness, pride, shame, and an unwillingness to forgive. The presence of deeper issues or sin in a person's life emphasizes the importance of understanding what is going on in the heart of the individual (Matt 12:34-35; Jas 4:1-3).

### **Forgiveness**

What we believe about forgiveness is ultimately driven by what we believe about God, including who He is in relationship to who we are. Therefore, our understanding of God, how He offers us forgiveness, and His requirements for us to forgive one another all help shape our heartfelt attitude toward offering forgiveness in accordance with Matthew 18:23-25 and Colossians 3:12-14. Harvey addresses the importance of forgiveness stating, "Extending true forgiveness is clear and persuasive evidence that we are forgiven by God. The bottom line is that *forgiven sinners forgive sin.*"<sup>31</sup> Extending forgiveness, grace and mercy to a spouse who has sinned against his or her mate is evidence of one spouse treating the other better than he or she deserves (Luke 6:27-29, 35-36). It reflects a healthy covenant-keeping relationship bolstered by forgiveness and forbearance.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do*, 100.

<sup>32</sup>Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 64.

Brauns defines God’s forgiveness as “A commitment by the one true God to pardon graciously those who repent and believe so that they are reconciled to him, although this commitment does not eliminate all consequences.”<sup>33</sup> He further defines human forgiveness as “A commitment by the offended to pardon graciously, forgive the repentant from moral liability and to be reconciled to that person, although not all consequences are necessarily eliminated.”<sup>34</sup> This definition contains within it three key attributes of forgiveness: repentance, reconciliation, and consequences. Of the three, reconciliation is often the most difficult attribute to deal with in the marriage counseling setting. The difficulty lies in how couples define forgiveness in their own lives, which is often influenced by their culture, and ultimately reflected in their heart. Issues of non-reconciliation are usually reflective of a prideful spirit and rebellion against God. Brauns delineates between “I won’t” and “I can’t” forgive. As the offended party, he notes, “If you won’t forgive, that is a matter of the will. If you can’t forgive, that is a matter of ability.”<sup>35</sup> It is important to understand many spouses who say “I can’t” really mean “I don’t want to.” Out of bitterness, they may simply refuse to forgive, choosing instead to hold their mates’ sins over their heads like a wrecking ball waiting to be dropped at any moment or dropped repeatedly. “True forgiveness sees another’s sin for the evil that it is, addresses it, then absorbs the cost of that sin by the power of God’s abundant grace. Such forgiveness sets the sinner free; the account of the sin is closed, cancelled, blotted out, just as one sees in Matthew 18.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Chris Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness: Biblical Answers For Complex Questions and Deep Wounds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 51.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>36</sup>Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do*, 108.

Couples should learn to live by five biblical truths regarding forgiveness: First, they should forgive others as God forgives them (Matt 6:12; Eph 4:32). Second, they should dispense grace and forgiveness toward all people (John 1:12, 3:16; Eph 2:8-9). Third, they must be willing to forgive all who ask for forgiveness (Luke 17:3-4). Fourth, they can overcome bitterness by focusing on God's justice and providence (Rom 12:19, 8:28; Gen 45:5-7). Lastly, their unwillingness to forgive or holding on to bitterness should cause them to question their salvation (Matt 6:14-15, 18:21-35).<sup>37</sup>

Christians are to forgive their spouses whenever the offenders turn their actions around and demonstrate a change in attitude leading to repentance. A spouse should not be quick to dismiss their mate who is willing to repent and demonstrates a willingness to accept the consequences of their actions. Their willingness to accept the consequences for the sake of justice is a good indicator of how genuine their act of repentance truly is.<sup>38</sup> Our forgiveness cannot be perceived as unconditional; it requires genuine repentance, reconciliation, and sometimes consequences or restitution. Harvey notes how forgiveness is at the heart of the gospel and for this reason, "Forgiveness and repentance is the powerful tool that repairs the damage done to sin-torn marriage relationships. And where forgiveness is employed, and repentance is lived out, it transforms. Forgiveness humbly sought, and humbly given, profoundly expresses the glory of God."<sup>39</sup> God demonstrated his unyielding love for us in that while we deserved his wrath, he offered us forgiveness through Christ's death on the cross.

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<sup>37</sup>See also Rom 12:17-19, 21.

<sup>38</sup>Braun, *Unpacking Forgiveness*, 58.

<sup>39</sup>Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do*, 113.

Couples need to be aware of the difference between “Therapeutic Forgiveness” and “Biblical Forgiveness.” Most couples practice a form of Therapeutic Forgiveness without realizing a difference between the two forms of forgiveness exists. Brauns describes therapeutic forgiveness as a form of “cheap grace” that “misleads many into believing they are Christians when they are not, and believers fail to think discerningly about what is right or wrong. When evil is not identified and named, it soon flourishes.”<sup>40</sup>

Referencing the founder of Therapeutic Forgiveness, Lewis Smedes, Brauns explains, “Smedes essentially defined forgiveness as ceasing to feel resentment or anger over an offense or perceived offense. The way he views it, forgiveness is a private strategy for defeating bitterness and hate.”<sup>41</sup> Smedes’ view “internalizes or privatizes” forgiveness. It can be seen as a way to avoid conflict by simply choosing not to feel any resentment or bitterness towards another person. This becomes a heart issue, as the offended person chooses not to respond in a biblical manner, but is “motivated instead by self-interest,” possibly acting out of fear and anxiety or driven by a personal sense of pride. In Therapeutic Forgiveness, “You can legitimately choose to forgive someone who has not done anything wrong.”<sup>42</sup> This would include choosing whether or not you are willing and able to forgive God for something He did or did not do.

While counseling a married couple together, a husband recently asked, “What if I need to forgive God and I don’t feel like I can?” The wife is a Christian, while her husband professes to be an unbeliever. He does recognize that God exists, but he is extremely angry

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<sup>40</sup>Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness*, 69.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 65.



with God and chooses not to forgive God for allowing him to accidentally shoot and kill his fifteen-year-old brother, some twenty-two years ago. He is practicing a form of Therapeutic Forgiveness by blaming God for his actions and then internalizing his anger as a means of forgetting the consequences of his own actions and sin. He is acting on emotions and feelings rooted in his own bitterness, shame, and self-loathing that run deep into his heart. “Feelings rather than truth have become the standard. If a person feels bitterness or resentment, the legitimate response is to forgive. This approach fails to recognize that on many occasions people are wrong in how they feel. Proverbs 16:2 says, ‘All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the spirit’.”<sup>43</sup> This husband’s lack of repentance and self-loathing has resulted in multiple affairs and a self-righteous attitude that claims no need for God. Smedes would probably encourage the husband to just forgive God so he might finally be at peace with himself for what occurred in the past. The Therapeutic approach really allows an individual to relinquish ownership for one’s role in an incident and covers up one’s sin. Brauns correctly states, “God is perfect and holy. He does not need to be pardoned of any wrongdoing. And when people say they forgive God, there is a clear implication of blame, regardless of whether we claim to do it without blame.”<sup>44</sup> Proverbs 19:3 describes this circumstance: “When a man’s folly brings his way to ruin, his heart rages against the Lord.”

Brauns notes, “It is one thing to know what the Bible teaches about how we should respond to those who have hurt us. It is quite another to stop thinking about what happened.

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<sup>43</sup>Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness*, 71.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid., 67.

Silencing the memories can be nigh unto impossible.”<sup>45</sup> In time, the Holy Spirit can work in this husband’s life and bring him to a point of sorrow and repentance before God and his wife. He may not be able to completely silence the memories of his brother’s death or his acts of infidelity against his wife, but he can move forward with a renewed sense of peace in Christ.

Lastly, in the counseling setting, there is value in using the imagery of forgiveness being wrapped up and offered like a present to an offending party. The offender may choose to seek forgiveness, repenting for their actions, seeking reconciliation and accepting the gift of forgiveness offered by the offended party. According to Brauns, “One of Satan’s favorite tactics is to use unresolved relational issues. When Paul exhorted the Corinthians that it was time to forgive, he followed up with the reminder that they should be aware that unresolved differences are one of Satan’s favorite strategies to divide and destroy God’s people (2 Cor 2:5-11; Eph 4:25-27).”<sup>46</sup> One of the tools he uses is the sin of bitterness, which couples invite into their lives on their own. Couples can overcome bitterness by listening to and learning from a wise pastor or a counselor who can open a couple’s eyes to the truth of God’s Word, his justice, and his providence, exemplifying why Jesus sent us His Holy Spirit of Truth and Mighty Counselor.

### **Idols of the Heart**

Since the beginning of creation—Genesis—God created men and women with two primary attributes written into their nature or DNA. First, God created us and all creation to worship him. Secondly, God created us to be in relationship with him. Worshiping God

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<sup>45</sup> Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness*, 167.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 169.

means showing reverence, devotion and adoration for God, placing him first in your life, seeking him out, engaging him through prayer, serving him while serving others, and trusting in his Word. Worshiping God means finding your purpose, peace, and refuge in him and trusting in his wisdom, love, and sovereignty (2 Tim 1:12). Believers are worshiping him when they are prayerfully seeking his will, spending time reading his Word, engaging in prayer, and living our lives to glorify him.

The Bible teaches worship flows from the heart of man. Scott describes the heart as a temple and a vehicle of worship, representing the real you as reflected in personal behaviors.<sup>47</sup> The heart governs the words an individual chooses to use (Matt 12:34), their thoughts (Matt 9:4; 15:19), and all of their actions (Matt 15:19). The heart is representative of the temple from which they worship (Ezk 14:1-11; Rom 1:18-25; 1 Cor 6:19-20). Frame describes the heart as, “The center of human existence, the whole person as God sees him, the true self when all its masks are removed. To the heart is the motive of motives, the fundamental disposition of every person. The heart is the source of a persons most fundamental commitment, either to serve God or to serve an idol.”<sup>48</sup> Ultimately, everyone either chooses to worship God—as God intended—or they choose to worship various idols in their own lives, usurping God’s rightful position on the throne of their heart.

Who and what a person chooses to worship is at the core of man’s problems in life. Most couples seeking help through counseling will say, their problem is poor communication skills. In reality, their problems stem from idolatrous hearts selfishly bent on worshiping and seeking after idols of their own making. Jeremiah 17:9 teaches, “The heart is deceitful above

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<sup>47</sup>Stuart Scott, “Addressing Heart Issues” (classroom lecture notes, 80554—*Marriage & Family Counseling*, Winter 2013, photocopy), 1.

<sup>48</sup>John M. Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life: a Theology of Lordship* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2008), 325.

all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?” They do not understand how their pride and idolatrous lusts or desires are driving their beliefs, thoughts, feelings, emotions, and actions, which is creating division in their relationships with God and each other. Mark 7:20-23 quotes Jesus’ teaching, “Out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.” Because of man’s propensity to follow the desires of his heart, Scripture warns us, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life” (Prov 4:23).

Since man was created with the primary attribute to worship, there are no true atheists; everyone engages in worship, whether it is self-worship, worship of other deities, or idols. Frame explains:

When people turn away from worship of the one true God, they don’t reject absolutes in general. Rather, instead of the true God, they worship idols, as Paul teaches in Romans 1:18-32. The great division in mankind is not between those who worship a god and others who do not. Rather, it is between those who worship the true God and those who worship false gods, or idols. False worship may not involve rites or ceremonies, but it always involves the attribution of aseity to something.<sup>49</sup>

A question often asked in marriage counseling is: “What are the idols affecting our marriage?” The best answer to this question can be found referencing James 4:1-3, and identifying what James refers to as *passions*:

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions.

Core passions become idols locked away in the stronghold of the heart. They become the sources of conflict, fear, anxiety, and depression when they take the place of God on the

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<sup>49</sup>Frame, *The Doctrine of the Christian Life*, 57.

throne of our hearts. An idol is, “Anything or anyone that captures our hearts, minds, and affections more than God.”<sup>50</sup> Scott defines an idol as, “Anything that we consistently make equal to or more important than God in our attention, desire, devotion, and choices.”<sup>51</sup> An idol can be anything, including a blessing God has provided that becomes distorted and placed above God in a person’s heart.

Examples of idols may include: marriage, spouse, children, friends, other people, work, success, home, religion, money, security, food, appearance, health, cars, boats, control, pets, sex, homosexuality, adultery, drugs, alcohol, pornography, sports, technology, games, music, books, movies, fear, anger, jealousy, drunkenness, pride, and self (Gal 5:19-21; 1 Cor 6:9-11). While this list is not exhaustive, it represents many of the idols most people identify and struggle with. “We can make anything an idol or refuge, even something good. Our desires must remain unessential and our trust must be in God alone. When He is all we really must have and He alone satisfies, then we know that we are worshipping and trusting God alone (Ps 62:5-8).”<sup>52</sup> Each of the idols listed above has the potential to shape a person’s identity, and distort his or her true identity, which is found in Christ.

### **Identifying Idols**

Identifying idols is not always an easy task given our propensity towards sin and our ability to justify our actions. It is for this reason Scripture repeatedly warns believers not to deceive themselves (Deut 11:16; Rom 7:11; 1 Cor 3:18; 6:9-11; 15:33; 2 Cor 11:3; Gal 6:3, 7; Jas 1:16). People easily deceive themselves into embracing idols offering the

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<sup>50</sup>Brad Bigney, *Gospel Treason: Betraying The Gospel with Hidden Idols* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2012), 24.

<sup>51</sup>Scott, “Addressing Heart Issues,” 1.

<sup>52</sup>Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, 95.

pleasures of sin. Bigney explains, “Sin is what you do when you’re chasing after something other than God, namely one of your idols.”<sup>53</sup> If a person is unwilling to turn away from sinful choices and activities he or she should doubt whether he or she is truly born of God (1 John 3:9-10). Fortunately, believers know God provides a way out of temptation: “No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it” (1 Cor 10:13-14).

When I work with couples to identify existing idols or passions in their lives, I utilize a list of six questions developed by Scott and other Biblical counselors. The list is provided to couples who are then asked to fill in the blanks with a potential idol from the example list of idols provided earlier. I also ask them to expand the list, incorporating things they believe are their basic *needs* or *rights*.

1. Am I willing to sin to get \_\_\_\_\_?
2. Am I willing to sin if I don’t get \_\_\_\_\_?
3. Am I willing to compromise my beliefs for \_\_\_\_\_?
4. Am I willing to sin if I think I might lose \_\_\_\_\_?
5. Am I willing to turn to \_\_\_\_\_ for refuge and comfort instead of God?
6. Am I willing to worry about, or feel fearful, or anxious about \_\_\_\_\_?<sup>54</sup>

Once a person applies a potential idol to each of the six questions, it should become apparent which items meet the definition of an idol by replacing God at the center of the heart.

Worshiping idols is a core reason men and women struggle trying to find happiness in material things including other relationships, or they find themselves in bondage to drugs, alcohol, pornography, adultery, sexual immorality, homosexuality or shame. In the counseling setting, counselees will often describe there being a hole in their heart—

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<sup>53</sup>Bigney, *Gospel Treason*, 26.

<sup>54</sup>Scott, “Addressing Heart Issues,” 5.

something missing, a sense of unhappiness, or loneliness they have unsuccessfully struggled to fill. For this reason they allow personal idols to manifest themselves as passions, which are at war within them, collaterally damaging their relationships with God, their spouses, family members, and others (Jas 4:1-3).

### **Getting Rid of Idols**

Ephesians 4:17-24 describes how Christians are not to live their lives like the rest of the world which embraces idols, seeking pleasure by following after lustful desires of the flesh. Instead, beginning in verse 22, a believer in Christ is expected to, “Put off [his] old self, which belongs to [his] former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness” (Eph 4:22-24). Once an idol is identified, it is imperative to begin “putting off” all sinful desires and behaviors, and begin “putting on” righteous motives, thoughts, and behaviors. Scripture teaches that this process begins by taking captive your thoughts (2 Cor 10:5), repenting (Ezekiel 14:6) and seeking God’s help: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; And see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way of everlasting” (Ps 139:23-24). When putting off a behavior or thought, it is imperative to prayerfully search the Scriptures and replace it with a Christlike substitute. Otherwise a vacuum is created which allows for other sinful behaviors to move in and take hold of the heart. Proverbs 4:23 says, “Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”

### **Sexual Intimacy**

Couples who understand covenant love and the importance of sexual intimacy in expressing that love to their mate are better equipped to glorify God through their respective

roles in marriage. Sexual intimacy in marriage should be a cause for celebration, as a husband and wife unite into oneness in the sight of God. Primarily for his glory and our good, God has created men and women with the ability to fully enjoy the pleasure and the passion experienced, as two become one through intercourse within marriage. However, according to Burk, “Sex is not to be enjoyed for its own sake but for God’s sake. Enjoying sex for God’s sake means shunning every sexual union outside of the covenantal union of one man and one woman. Since the body exists ‘for the Lord,’ its proper use must be under the lordship of Christ.”<sup>55</sup> Mahaney, Scott, Cutrer, and Burk all agree that, from a biblical context, sex is a gift from God to be enjoyed between a man and a woman exclusively in the bounds of covenant love in marriage. The Bible teaches, “Each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights and, likewise, the wife to her husband. For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does” (1 Cor 7:2-4). In this context, God’s design for sex is a picture of oneness before God. Through their oneness, a couple is able to fully bond in intimacy and love. “Sexual intercourse, and those wonderfully intense passions it brings about, are designed to help husband and wife form a relational bond of unique, unparalleled richness. When these divine purposes are experienced and fulfilled, they bring much glory to God.”<sup>56</sup> The beauty found in sexual intimacy between a husband and wife is captured in Proverbs 5:18-19: “Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice in the wife of your youth, a lovely deer, a

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<sup>55</sup>Denny Burk, *What Is the Meaning of Sex?* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2013), 51.

<sup>56</sup>C. J. Mahaney, *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God: What Every Christian Husband Needs to Know* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 74.



graceful doe. Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight; be intoxicated always in her love.”

Biblically, sex was intended for marriage and is the gift a man and woman share exclusively with their mates. Hebrews 13:4 addresses this precept teaching, “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.” Sex outside of marriage devalues that gift; it is no longer something unique and special between two people, but becomes a shared experience with others. Like a box of chocolates passed around the office—when wrapped, unopened, and presented as a gift to someone it is truly special and untouched. Once shared, it loses some of its content and is no longer fresh, untouched, or unique—it becomes known by many. The consequences can be devastating as the shame associated with sexual sin impacts a couple’s sense of trust, security, and ability to openly and honestly communicate with each other regarding all aspects of their lives. Cutrer exposes the negative impact of sexual sin by emphasizing how, “It stunts spiritual growth, alienates the sexual partners from God, and erects a barrier to true intimacy in the future.”<sup>57</sup> Hence, there is a need for the Gospel message, which provides Christ’s forgiveness, grace and mercy to a couple in marriage. For couples struggling with a past history of sexual sin, there needs to be repentance and forgiveness, “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Rom 8:1).<sup>58</sup>

A husband and wife demonstrate Christlikeness by lovingly giving themselves to each other, completely and without selfish intent or motives. God has blessed sex between a

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<sup>57</sup>William Cutrer and Sandra Glahn, *Sexual Intimacy in Marriage*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2007), 190.

<sup>58</sup> See also: 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 4:22-24, 42; Col 3:13.

husband and wife and there is nothing about which to be ashamed. Genesis 2:25 provides a description of Adam and Eve in the garden before sin entered the world: “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” In the garden, before the fall, Adam and Eve would have experienced sex as God fully intended—without shame or self-gratification. Since the fall, through sin that opposes God and his people, human sexuality has become distorted and perverted. It is no longer glorifying God but glorifying the lusts of the flesh and a worldview that says, “If it feels good, do it.” Pornography, homosexuality, adultery, fornication, incest, and bestiality all exist because of a turning away from God’s designed purpose for sexual intimacy in marriage (Gal 5:19-21; 1 Thess 4:3-6; Eph 5:3, 28).

As presented in the Bible, the Song of Solomon through the use of imagery unashamedly encourages couples to explore their sexuality in marriage by communicating, touching, and learning from each other. As they do, intimacy and trust begin to develop and grow as a couple learns to talk openly and candidly with each other about sexual preferences—likes and dislikes. For this reason, Cutrer believes, “True intimacy is the state of being fully known, fully and truly loved, without fear of rejection or abuse.”<sup>59</sup> As a couple develops intimacy, they also develop a sense of security and are better able to experience a sense of enhanced sexual pleasure that is a profound and fulfilling experience. This is accomplished when both are operating with right motives by unselfishly seeking the other’s pleasure first, before self.<sup>60</sup>

While marriage is about much more than sex, sex within a marriage can be an excellent indicator of how well a marriage is functioning. Because sexual intimacy involves

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<sup>59</sup>Cutrer and Glahn, *Sexual Intimacy in Marriage*, 252.

<sup>60</sup>Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, 106.

four key components—commitment, passion, companionship and spiritual intimacy—attention should be paid to each area, with couples talking about and evaluating how each component is either thriving or dying in their marriage. This allows a couple to reflect on the quality of their relationship and their level of relational intimacy at any given moment in time.<sup>61</sup>

In the counseling setting, couples are taught to recognize sinful behaviors within their marriage. They are shown how their sin corrupts relational intimacy, distorts communication, hinders their prayers, and negatively impacts their levels of physical contact and intimacy. Due to sin, most sexual dysfunction stems from other problems outside the bedroom. When relational intimacy breaks down, problems like unresolved anger, selfishness, resentment, bitterness, and involvement in pornography or affairs often cause sexual dysfunction in a marriage. Couples are then taught how to engage in the process of putting off sinful behaviors and begin putting on what is righteous and healthy in their marriage. They are taught the importance of regularly engaging in sexual relations: “Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of our lack of self control” (1 Cor 7:5). Couples are also taught not to withhold sexual relationships from each other, based on a biblical sense of marital duty for a man and wife to constantly provide for the sexual needs of their mate, as they would provide for the needs of their own bodies (1 Cor 7:3-4; Phil 2:3-4).<sup>62</sup> Withholding sexual relations from one’s mate

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<sup>61</sup>Thomas, *The Art of Marriage*, 114.

<sup>62</sup>Stuart Scott, “Biblical Principles of Physical Intimacy” (classroom lecture notes, 80554—*Marriage & Family Counseling*, Winter 2013, photocopy), 3.

opens the door for Satan to tempt a spouse to engage in acts of sexual immorality or to engage in lustful thinking, emotional affairs, adultery, and pornography (Prov 5:3-5).<sup>63</sup>

Lastly, it is important to keep in mind God's glory and what is pleasing to Christ, when determining what sexual activities are appropriate or acceptable. Couples should seek to honor Biblical principles for sexual intimacy in a covenantal marriage (1 Cor 7:2-3). However, limitations should be placed on activities that impose hardship or discomfort on a mate or cause them to violate their conscience regarding perceived sinful acts or behaviors (Rom 14:23). Limitations should also be placed on activities in which one spouse imposes his or her will on the other, ultimately using their mate for his or her own gain or personal gratification, while causing discomfort or distress for their mate. Love expressed through sexual intimacy should be unselfish and focused on the needs of the other. It should promote a sense of fulfillment and unity (1 Cor 13:3-7).<sup>64</sup>

Sexual intimacy cultivates emotional intimacy, which is a sense of being known and accepted. Couples who regularly engage in sexual intercourse find greater peace within the marriage resulting from an enhanced appreciation for each other. They replace loneliness and rejection with a sense of belonging. Sexual intimacy helps fight off temptation, emphasizing a husband and wife's covenantal commitment to God and to each other in love.

It is important to recognize intimacy is not just about sexual intercourse. Intimacy is also formed through time spent talking and listening to each other. Intimacy involves touching, kissing, flirting, laughing and having fun with one another. Couples desiring to build intimacy in a marriage are encouraged to pray together, spend quality time with each

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<sup>63</sup>Cutrer and Glahn, *Sexual Intimacy in Marriage*, 196.

<sup>64</sup>Scott, "Biblical Principles of Physical Intimacy," 4.

other, date each other, and engage in recreational activities that are fun for each other. Intimacy also develops when couples undergo hardships and crises together, approaching God as the source of their comfort and peace and seeing him work through the Holy Spirit in their lives. Intimacy is about sacrificially loving one another. Intimacy is a reflection of a couple's covenantal commitment to one another; a commitment which is the glue that binds a couple in covenantal love, reflecting the very purpose of marriage which is to reflect Christ's covenantal love for his church. Mahaney states, "The covenant love that characterizes marriage under God is marked with a seal. It is 'strong to death.' It is an unquenchable flame. And it is not something that can be purchased, for there is nothing you could exchange for it that is of equal or greater value. Covenant love is gift."<sup>65</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Throughout this chapter, the roles of a husband and wife have been clearly delineated. I have demonstrated that husbands and wives must live according to the biblical precepts which distinctly define the differing roles and responsibilities God has established for them, in order for a couple to have a marriage that fully glorifies God. Couples are able to learn these precepts along with other couples through participation in a marriage enrichment seminar designed to enhance their relationship, fostering a stronger marriage centered on the gospel.

Through the research cited in chapter two and here in chapter three, I have demonstrated that couples who have learned to embrace God's Word and apply it to their marriages are better equipped to experience all the joy and excitement that comes from being united in a covenantal relationship with their creator. I agree with Harvey's assessment,

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<sup>65</sup>Mahaney, *Sex, Romance, and the Glory of God*, 93.

“When we begin to orient our marriages around biblical truth, we see something amazing. Marriage was not just *invented* by God, it *belongs* to God. He has a unique claim over its design, purpose and goals. It actually exists for him more than it exists for you and me and our spouses.”<sup>66</sup>

This marriage enrichment seminar has been designed to better equip each couple to live together in a covenantal marriage that is reflective of Christ’s love for his church, as intended for God’s glory and their good.

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<sup>66</sup>Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do*, 25.

CHAPTER 4  
DEVELOPING AND LEADING A MARRIAGE  
ENRICHMENT RETREAT

**Purpose**

The increased number of couples seeking marriage counseling with pastors from Easthaven Baptist Church and with pastors associated with the Kalispell Ministerial Association shows there is a great need for biblical marital counseling and seminars in the Flathead Valley. This project, “Developing a Marriage Enrichment Seminar,” was designed and implemented to help address the growing need to provide sound biblical solutions for today’s marital issues.

This marriage enrichment seminar was specifically developed for the purpose of meeting the needs of couples seeking to improve or enhance their marriages, while shouldering part of the burden normally carried by the four pastors at Easthaven and pastors associated with local area churches. The curriculum is based on eight key topics which were developed to provide couples the necessary skills to build a strong biblical foundation on which to base their marriage (Matt 7:24-27).

**Identifying Eight Key Topics**  
(Week 1)

The first week of the project was focused on gathering information through informal discussions with pastors and small group leaders regarding a list of potential topics they would like to see included in the marriage enrichment program. Seventeen potential

topics were identified and a pre-course inventory was developed for the purpose of narrowing down eight essential topics to be incorporated into the curriculum.<sup>1</sup>

The inventory was distributed to 8 random couples attending Wednesday night activities at the church. Of the 8 couples, only 5 couples returned the inventory to me by the following Sunday. Data from the 10 returned inventories was tallied with the top eight topics identified:

1. Communication skills
2. God's purpose and plan for marriage
3. Sexual intimacy in marriage
4. Conflict and conflict resolution
5. Importance of forgiveness, grace, and mercy
6. Roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives
7. Technology's influence on marriage and the home
8. Understanding idols of the heart<sup>2</sup>

Number 8, "Understanding Idols of the Heart," scored five points less than the category of "Decision-Making," and two points less than the categories of "Budgets and Spiritual Disciplines."<sup>3</sup> However, in discussing the inventory results with Easthaven's pastors, it was agreed that teaching about the heart issues needed to be considered a priority, as it is foundational to understanding the root cause of so many issues in marriage, including sin in one's personal life. Therefore, the subject was included among the eight topics incorporated

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<sup>1</sup>See appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.,

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.,



into the marriage enrichment curriculum.

During the first week, the decision was also made to conduct the marriage enrichment seminar as a weekend-long retreat as opposed to conducting the seminar over the course of eight consecutive weeks. The decision was also made to hold two retreats on consecutive weekends. Each weekend retreat would begin on a Friday at 6:00 PM and conclude on Sunday afternoon at 3:00 PM.<sup>4</sup> The advantage of conducting the seminar over a long weekend was the ability to find four couples willing to commit and participate. For most couples, the idea of getting away with their spouses for the weekend was more appealing than trying to commit to an eight-week seminar requiring several participants to arrange for childcare on a weekly basis. Five of the 7 couples participating in one of the two retreats were already committed to Bible study groups each week. Four of the 7 couples had to make childcare arrangements for the weekend in which they participated.

The venue for the retreat was Howling Wolf Ranch, located twenty-five miles west of Whitefish, Montana. Travel time to the ranch for most couples averaged forty-five minutes to an hour. Each couple had their own room, sharing two separate bathrooms. The ranch accommodated ten people: four participating couples and my wife, Anne, and me. Each session was conducted in the great room, utilizing a sixty-five inch flat-screen for video and Power Point presentations, or outdoors sitting on lawn chairs placed in a circle. Three couples' projects, outlined in *The Art of Marriage* workbook, were conducted outside over the course of the weekend, allowing each couple time to roam and enjoy the two hundred acres together while focusing on the topics at hand. Meals were served in the dining room with one table accommodating all ten people. The dining room proved to be a great place to

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<sup>4</sup>See appendix 6.

socialize and develop friendships. Each morning, people gathered in the dining room around the entrance to the kitchen, drinking coffee and getting to know each other better.

### **Curriculum Development** (Weeks 2-5)

Lesson plans and curriculum for the marriage enrichment seminar/retreat were developed for each of the eight topics during weeks 2 through 5. Two Easthaven pastors suggested reviewing FamilyLife's video series *The Art of Marriage: Getting to the Heart of God's Design*, as a possible source of material for each topic.<sup>5</sup> After reviewing the workbook and watching all six videos, the decision was made to incorporate material from the videos and workbook into the seminar, along with Scott's lecture notes, a copy of chapters 2 and 3 of this project, and some power point slides from Cutrer's lecture notes.<sup>6</sup> Individual lesson plans were created for each of eight sessions.

In developing the marriage enrichment seminar, one concern was keeping everyone's attention while being attentive to differing learning styles over the course of the weekend. For this reason, I decided to dedicate forty-five minutes for lectures or discussions with occasional power points, break for ten to fifteen minutes and resume the session with a video followed by a brief summary and another short break. In discussions with retreat participants during and after each retreat, I received overwhelming support for keeping each element of the training.

Each lesson plan, or outline, begins with a specific objective followed by key ideas and the relevant biblical text considered. Session outlines were derived primarily from

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<sup>5</sup>*The Art of Marriage: Getting to the Heart of God's Design* (Little Rock, AR: FamilyLife Publishing, 2011).

<sup>6</sup>William Cutrer, "Developing Intimacy in Marriage" (classroom lecture notes and PowerPoint, 35160—*Marriage and Family Enrichment*, Fall 2011, electronic copy, used by permission).

Scott's "Marriage and Family" class lecture notes, while incorporating some power point slides from Cutrer's "Marriage Enrichment class."<sup>7</sup> All but two sessions were designed to end with a corresponding video and follow-up discussion related to *The Art of Marriage* workbook along with follow-up homework ideas found in the workbook. The workbook included three projects which couples engaged in over the course of the weekend. At the end of each session, there was a review of material including the key ideas and special vocabulary addressed during the course of each session. Some key ideas and vocabulary were included in the Pre- and Post-Seminar Survey completed by each participant.<sup>8</sup>

### **Pastoral Review of Curriculum** (Weeks 6 and 7)

At the beginning of week 6, I held a meeting with four pastors from Easthaven in the senior pastor's office. Each pastor was provided the following materials:

1. Lesson plans for all eight topics
2. Copies of chapters two and three of this project
3. A schedule of events for each retreat, each beginning on a Friday and ending on the following Sunday
4. Curriculum Evaluation Rubric including an Agreement to Participate<sup>9</sup>

An explanation of the project and the project goals were presented to the pastors. I then walked through all the materials, explaining how they were to be used in support of accomplishing each of the project goals. The pastors were then given time to ask questions and present their concerns and ideas.

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<sup>7</sup>Cutrer, "Developing Intimacy in Marriage."

<sup>8</sup>See appendix 4.

<sup>9</sup>See appendix 2.

The meeting went very well, with each pastor agreeing to review the materials, participate in the Curriculum Evaluation Rubric, and return the material within one week. It actually took two weeks to receive all four completed rubrics back for evaluation. During this time period, I continued working on curriculum development and began promoting the retreat by discussing it with church staff, members of Easthaven, and couples I had previously counseled.

### **Curriculum Evaluation Rubrics Reviewed** (Week 8)

During week 8, I reviewed and processed the data from the completed Curriculum Evaluation Rubrics that were returned to me by the pastors. The results were tabulated and are included in appendix 1. Written comments from each pastor have also been included in the completed rubric. The completed rubrics showed a high degree of support for the curriculum and the marriage enrichment seminar. After reviewing the rubrics, I met individually with each pastor to discuss his thoughts and ideas more closely. Each pastor expressed his support for the weekend format and the idea of holding the retreats at Howling Wolf Ranch. Each has been at the ranch for strategic planning retreats and is familiar with the facilities and the setting.

### **Curriculum Changes** (Week 9)

During week 9, I made changes to the curriculum changes to reflect suggestions from each of the pastors. During this same week, I obtained permission from Scott to use and distribute lecture notes to couples attending the retreat. Copies of the lecture notes were bound, and I also had copies of the lesson plans bound separately from the lecture notes. Eighteen copies of *The Art of Marriage* workbooks were also ordered online during week 9.

## **Final Arrangements**

(Weeks 10-12)

Weeks 10 and 11 were spent finalizing arrangements for each of the retreats with the owner of Howling Wolf. During week 10, the menu for Friday evening supper through Sunday lunch was created. Six couples who had registered to attend either of the two retreats were contacted regarding any dietary restrictions or requirements they might have. Special accommodations were made to meet their individual needs.

*The Art of Marriage* workbooks arrived and were delivered to Howling Wolf Ranch, where I spent most of weeks 10 and 11 writing and preparing for the first retreat to begin. While at the ranch, I reviewed the videos, PowerPoint presentations, and lesson plans. During the last two weeks, there was quite a bit of flux among couples committing to attend. Two couples who had registered early dropped out, one for a major crisis in their marriage and the second due to childcare issues. Two new couples quickly signed on and both weekends were booked with four couples each.

During week 12, food was purchased for the first weekend retreat according to the menu. My wife, Anne, began prepping and cooking some menu items to lessen the burden on the weekend. There were last minute schedule changes among participants during this week as well. However, four couples participated in the first weekend.

## **Facilitated Marriage Enrichment Retreats**

(Weeks 12-13)

The retreats were conducted during the weekends of both the twelfth and thirteenth weeks. During week 13, we again experienced some changes in participants. One of the original couples who had dropped out two weeks earlier because of personal conflicts in their marriage contacted me and special arrangements were made for them to attend. Another

couple cancelled the night before the second retreat, leaving us with only three couples. I had a total of seven couples participate in the two retreats.

Towards the middle of the week 13, we again purchased necessary food for the weekend and prepared for couples to arrive Friday evening. Both retreats went according to schedule and couples expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to attend. The wife of the couple who had originally cancelled and then signed back on expressed how she believed she had experienced an incredible spiritual breakthrough over the weekend. Her husband expressed his belief the retreat helped save their marriage; he considered the retreat priceless. The following sessions were taught during both weekend retreats.

**Session 1:  
God's Ultimate Purpose and Plan  
for Marriage**

Evaluating the eight topics chosen for the seminar, the logical place to start with session 1 was from the beginning, as found in the book of Genesis. The objective of session 1 was to lay the biblical foundation for marriage. It is important men and women understand how marriage, as God defines it in Scripture, is the union of one man and one woman in a sacred covenant-keeping relationship. God joins a husband and wife in a one-flesh union for the purpose of displaying his glory and Christ's love for his church.

At the beginning of this session, emphasis was placed on the creation account of man and woman as found in Genesis 1:27-28; 2:7, 2:19, 2:21-22, with the primary reference for marriage found in Genesis 2:18-25. Referencing Piper's *This Momentary Marriage*, the discussion on Genesis helped couples recognize the ultimate purpose in marriage is not about

them and their individual happiness; it is about “placing the covenant relationship of Christ and his church on display.”<sup>10</sup>

Along with God’s purpose for marriage, the divine mystery as presented by Paul in Ephesians 5:31-32 was presented for couples to have a clear understanding of what constitutes a one-flesh union and how the mystery of this union reflects Christ’s love for, and relationship with, his church. This dove-tailed easily with emphasis on Christ’s sacrificial death on the cross, where he demonstrated his obedience to the father and his willingness to sacrifice his life for us as he entered into a new covenant relationship with us (Luke 22:20).

Couples were also taught about the preeminence of Christ in marriage (Eph 1:1-11, Col 1:18, Matt 6:33). A discussion about the importance of couples placing Christ first in their lives and their marriages, along with personal examples, helped to solidify the need for many to return and refocus their attention on Christ and not on themselves. With this concept in mind, couples were taught about the importance of “putting off” unrighteous behaviors and begin “putting on” righteous thoughts and actions (Col 3:12-19).

At the end of the lecture for session 1, the group took a ten-minute break and returned to watch the FamilyLife video session 1, “Love Happens: God’s Purpose and Plan.” Before beginning the video, I introduced them to the *Art of Marriage* workbook and showed them how to reference the book during each of the six videos shown during the retreat. Couples were also shown where to find important homework assignments included for each session in the workbook. The homework assignments were designed to encourage each

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<sup>10</sup>John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 25.

couple to continue working on their marriage well after the retreat was over. The video strongly supported the material covered in the lecture, reemphasizing key points.

**Session 2:  
Addressing Heart Issues—  
Idols of the Heart**

The primary focus of session 2 is on the core of most marital issues, both a prideful spirit and a deceitful heart (Jer 17:9). For this reason, session 2 was developed to teach each couple how the Bible depicts every heart as a worshipping heart, showing how God created men and women to worship him and to be in relationship with him. Yet pride combined with desire and unfulfilled passion easily leads people to seek after personal idols, which are any things that capture our hearts, minds, and affections more than God. The objective of this session was for each person to learn how to identify idols of his or her own heart by asking a series of diagnostic questions focused on making personal choices to either engage in sinful behavior or to glorify God by not engaging in sinful actions. Another key objective for session 1 was for husbands or wives to learn the five diagnostic questions used to identify an idol.<sup>11</sup>

At the end of the session 2, there was a brief review of key terms and ideas expressed during the lecture and the video. Couples then had an hour to complete the first of three projects included in *The Art of Marriage* workbook. This project focused on “Receiving your spouse,” “The natural drift toward isolation,” and “Every marriage needs Christ.”<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Five questions to ask when trying to identify personal idols of the heart: (1) What will I sin to get? (2) What will cause me to sin if I don’t get it? (3) What will cause me to sin if I think I might lose it? (4) What do I then (tend?) to worry about or fear most? (5) Where do I turn for hope, comfort, or peace?

<sup>12</sup>*The Art of Marriage*, 44-47.



### **Session 3: Role and Responsibilities of Husbands and Wives**

Session 3 was developed to teach each couple the biblical role and responsibilities of husbands and wives. The objective was for couples to be able to explain their personal roles with respect to biblical leadership and submission within marriage. Emphasis was also placed on their learning the nine attributes of Christ's love. The nine attributes of Christ-like love identify how a man should endeavor to love his wife. The traits also reflect characteristics of love everyone should strive to live by as we strive to love one another just as Christ loves us. Emphasis was placed on the unique and differing roles of a husband and wife, teaching the husband's role is that of a humble servant leader, while the wife's role in marriage is glorifying and submitting to God. This session also afforded the opportunity to explain the meaning of biblical submission while addressing six common misconceptions regarding biblical submission.

After the lecture and a fifteen minute break, we watched and discussed the video *Love Dances: Fulfilling Our Responsibilities*, followed by a one hour break for couples to spend time outside completing project two together. The emphasis of project two was on "affirming and encouraging each other."<sup>13</sup> Couples appreciated the opportunity to write a letter of love in each other's workbooks during this project.

### **Session 4: Communication Skills**

Session 4 addressed the number one concern of the married couples who participated in the Pre-Course Inventory: Communication Skills. The objective of the session was for couples to learn how good communication skills are prerequisite for experiencing true

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<sup>13</sup>*The Art of Marriage*, 74-77.

intimacy—being fully known and truly loved without fear of rejection or fear of being objectified—in a marriage. The discussion was focused on the differences in how men and women process data and how easy it is to miscommunicate when not speaking or listening well. Emphasis was placed on recognizing that good communication always involves at least two people: one good speaker and one good listener. Couples were taught that presentation is everything when speaking, meaning attention must be paid to what you say, how you say it, how much you say, when you say it and why you say it. Furthermore, good communication must be honest and truthful (Eph 4:15) and involve speaking the truth lovingly.

Couples also learned the receiver of the message must do the hard work of listening well while actively participating in the conversation by showing respect, asking probing questions as necessary for clarity sake, and cautiously correcting incorrect messages. I explained how feelings of anger, frustration, despair, fear, neglect and loneliness can easily affect interpretations and responses.

Couples learned how good conversation involves both giving and receiving, and both participants must have a genuine willingness to change and/or a readiness to yield to their spouse. Selfish desires and poor communication skills are directly attributed to conflict within a marriage.

This session was not followed by a video. Instead, the group took a fifteen-minute break and returned to begin the next session on Conflict Resolution, which ties in well with the application of good communication skills.

## **Session 5: Conflict Resolution**

The objective of session 5 was to teach couples about conflict and conflict resolution. Focus was placed on what causes quarrels, fights, or conflict, and how their own passions fuel arguments and fights with each other (James 4:1-4). Couples learned how many disagreements are the results of their own sinful motives and lustful desires or passions which often lead to poor communication and hurtful, destructive behaviors. Couples were then taught how to examine their own motives and begin applying the “putting off” and “putting on” strategy taught them in session two by identifying and taking captive their thoughts that lead to conflict and choosing to replace them with righteous thoughts intent on avoiding conflict and seeking peace (2 Cor 10:5). Husbands and wives were also taught to be mindful of not engaging in four common *sinful* actions or behaviors to avoid conflict. Instead they were taught to replace destructive thoughts and behaviors with any of ten God-honoring methods for avoiding conflict in order to demonstrate love for their spouses or other people with whom they may be entering into conflict. Couples also learned that not all conflict is bad and some conflict can be good for spiritual growth.

After the lecture for session 5, dinner was served. After dinner, video four, *Love Interrupted: Communication and Conflict* was shown. Dessert and coffee were served during the video. Through actor portrayals, the video illustrated how couples can easily fall into the trap of conflict. The video also provided good tips on communication, how to deal with anger, and how to confront each other in love. Emphasis was placed on the importance of seeking and granting forgiveness to those repenting for their actions and seeking to be forgiven by their spouses.

## **Session 6:**

### **Biblical Principles of Physical Intimacy**

The objective of session 6 was for couples to learn how the Bible clearly presents intimacy and sexual union as a blessing from God. By the end of the session, couples were able to define intimacy and describe three elements required to experience true intimacy in their marriages.

Couples were taught the meaning of covenant love and the importance of sexual intimacy in expressing that love to their mate, which better equipped them to glorify God through their respective roles in marriage. Sexual intimacy was shown to be a cause for celebration as a husband and wife unite into oneness in the sight of God.

The emphasis of this session was to show that sex in marriage should be seen as pure and holy because it demonstrates Christ-like giving as one spouse seeks to unselfishly provide sexual satisfaction to his or her partner for the glory of God. It was shown that sexual relations are to be regular and continuous (1 Cor 7:3-4).

The meaning of intimacy was also addressed and I demonstrated how couples are united through intimacy by joining pink and blue balls of clay together to create a purple ball which represents the union of each couple. Once purple, the pink and blue balls can never be separated out.

A short break was taken after this session, followed by video five entitled, *Love Sizzles: Experiencing Real Intimacy*. The video emphasized, “The ultimate purpose of sex is to bring glory to God and how a satisfying sex life is the result of a satisfying marriage relationship.”<sup>14</sup> There are two versions of this video, one much more descriptive than the

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<sup>14</sup>*The Art of Marriage*, 99.

first. After reviewing both, my wife and I chose to show the less descriptive version believing the original descriptive version might be embarrassing to some of the wives in mixed company. There was only one person out of seven couples attending the weekend retreats who expressed her opinion that we should have watched the “adult” version.

**Session 7:  
Forgiveness, Grace, and Mercy**

Session 7 was taught on Sunday mornings after breakfast and after an hour-long worship service. The format was changed from a lecture style to that of an open discussion taking place outside, sitting in lawn chairs placed in a circle while having a guided conversation on forgiveness, grace, and mercy. The focus of this session was the difference between therapeutic and biblical forgiveness as explained by Brauns in his book, *Unpacking Forgiveness: Biblical Answers for Complex Questions and Deep Wounds*.

Couples learned forgiveness is conditional, just as God’s forgiveness is conditional in that he does not forgive all.<sup>15</sup> For most of the couples attending the retreat, this topic was very controversial, as most participants easily related to the concept of what they learned to be “Therapeutic Forgiveness.”<sup>16</sup> Initially, most did not understand that biblical forgiveness is always based on repentance (Luke 17:3-4). Christians are to always be ready and willing to forgive the repentant.<sup>17</sup>

Couples were also taught Sande’s four promises that Christians make when they

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<sup>15</sup> Chris Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness: Biblical Answers For Complex Questions and Deep Wounds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 21.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 64.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., 57.

genuinely forgive another.<sup>18</sup> In discussing these promises, each couple was able to share how forgiveness had been addressed in their own lives and how their willingness to forgive a repentant spouse had led to reconciliation and, in many instances, a greater sense of trust and intimacy in their marriage.

Following the session, couples participated in the third and last outdoor project, which emphasized the importance of both seeking and granting forgiveness with each other (Jas 5:16).<sup>19</sup>

### **Session 8: Technology's Impact on Marriage**

After seeing how much everyone enjoyed the opportunity to sit outside for the previous session, the format for session 8 was changed from a lecture style indoors to that of an open discussion outside, again sitting in lawn chairs placed in a circle. The objective of this session was for couples to better understand how new technologies are impacting their marriages in positive and negative ways. Couples learned the importance of controlling technology in their lives instead of allow the technology to control them. Issues of pornography and its influence on the marriage, family, and children were discussed as was the importance of installing filtering software on all computers, cellphones, tablets, and other devices having access to the Internet. Lambert's book *Finally Free* was recommended as a resource for learning about how to help those struggling with bondage to pornography.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness*, 57. Brauns quotes Sande's four promises when forgiving another: (1) "I will not dwell on this incident." (2) "I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you." (3) "I will not talk to others about this incident." (4) "I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship."

<sup>19</sup>*The Art of Marriage*, 96-97.

<sup>20</sup>Heath Lambert, *Finally Free: Fighting For Purity with the Power of Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013).

Following session 8, lunch was served while participants watched the closing video entitled *Love Always: Leaving a Lasting Legacy*. After the video, there was an open discussion about the weekend retreat and how it impacted each couple's marriage. Couples then met in the dining room and completed the Post-Seminar Survey and The Marriage Enrichment Seminar Critique. Once completed, a group photo was taken and each participant signed a thank-you card for the owner of Howling Wolf Ranch. Couples then exchanged contact information with each other and left.

### **Sessions End:**

At the beginning and end of each retreat, couples were asked to complete the Pre- and Post-Seminar Survey. It took roughly forty-five minutes for the Post-Seminar Survey and a Marriage Enrichment Seminar Critique to be completed.. Additionally, each participant wrote a note in a thank-you card addressed to Ron Carpenter, the owner of Howling Wolf Ranch, expressing gratitude for his opening the ranch up to them in order to attend the retreats. Pictures were then taken of each group before they left the ranch.

### **Processing Data** (Weeks 14-15)

Week 14 was spent processing data obtained from the Pre- and Post-Seminar Surveys and the Marriage Enrichment Seminar Critiques. A t-test for dependent samples was run on participant answers provided in both the Pre- and Post-Seminar Survey sections dealing with terms and definitions and the fill-in-the blank portion of the survey.

The t-test was selected for this analysis as it compares the means of the scores from the pre-test and post-test, which measured each person's knowledge of marriage among the select group of median adults. Participation in the marriage enrichment seminar which

included teachings on eight marital topics made a statistically significant difference, resulting in an increase in their knowledge of what is required to have a marriage glorifying God, while enriching their marriages in the process ( $t=17.2$ ,  $p< .0000$ ).<sup>21</sup>

Week 15 was spent reflecting on the process involved in developing the curriculum and conducting each of the marriage retreats. An outline was produced and subsequently used for the writing of chapters 4 and 5 of the project.

### **Conclusion**

Counseling married couples at Easthaven is an important area of the ministry at the church. Married couples make up about 95 percent of the counseling I conduct each year at The *LOGOS* Christian Counseling Center at Easthaven Baptist Church. This project and the success of both weekend marriage retreats have the acceptance and support of the pastors and deacons at Easthaven. Additional retreats are tentatively being scheduled for the fall of 2015.

The weekend retreat format appears to be more appealing to couples than an eight-week seminar. However, the weekend format limits the number of couples able to participate and there is a higher cost for attendance. The cost of material for this retreat averaged \$40 per couple, covering the cost of *The Art of Marriage* workbooks and the printing and binding of lesson plans and Scott's lecture notes. The cost of food averaged \$60 per couple, for a total of \$100 per couple. There was no cost associated with the lodging, thanks to the generosity of Ron Carpenter, owner of Howling Wolf Ranch.

The course materials provided to each couple can be referenced throughout the couple's marriage. Materials utilized as diagnostic tools can help determine how a couple's marriage is progressing in light of their desire to have a distinctly Christian marriage.

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<sup>21</sup>See appendix 4.



## CHAPTER 5

### FINAL EVALUATION AND REFLECTION ON THE MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT WEEKEND RETREATS

#### **Introduction**

In today's fast-paced, high-tech culture, where the very definition of marriage has been changed by the Supreme Court of the United States, the divorce rate is on the rise and more people are choosing to live together outside of marriage, married couples are struggling to have God-honoring marriages. Part of the struggle married couples face is centered on their lack of biblical knowledge when it comes to God's intended purpose for their marriages. Furthermore, many couples do not understand what their respective biblical roles are nor do they understand how to perform their respective roles as a husband and wife.

The marriage enrichment curriculum for this project was developed to teach couples God's purpose and design for marriage and to instruct them on biblical principles they should be applying to their lives. The curriculum can be taught in either an eight-week seminar format or as a weekend retreat. For the purpose of this project, the weekend retreat format was chosen.

The following is an evaluation of the project including insight gained from the experience of hosting two marriage retreats.

#### **Evaluation of the Project's Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to develop a Marriage Enrichment Seminar for couples at Easthaven Baptist Church in Kalispell, Montana. Having developed the marriage

enrichment seminar and having taught the material twice during two weekend retreats, the easy answer is yes: mission accomplished—the marriage enrichment seminar was developed and implemented.

However, the easy answer ignores five objectives that became apparent in the initial development of this project. The first objective was sharing the gospel, recognizing as Harvey does that “The gospel is the fountain of a thriving marriage.”<sup>1</sup> Only through the gospel of Jesus Christ could this project begin meeting the spiritual needs of couples endeavoring to hold onto their marriages with little or no understanding of God’s ultimate purpose for their marriages. Only through the gospel of Jesus Christ could these couples learn the meaning of being joined together in a covenant union with God, which is not a contract to be broken at will. Second, this project was developed to share the truth about what the Bible teaches couples regarding the importance of living out their particular biblical roles and fulfilling their responsibilities as husband and wife. The third objective was to teach couples who lack the communication skills necessary to develop true intimacy within their marriages how to become better communicators and listeners in order to build greater trust and intimacy with each other. The fourth objective was to teach what Scripture says about forgiveness, grace and mercy. Lastly, the ultimate objective of this project was for couples to gain a greater understanding about the preeminence of Christ and the importance of placing him first in all things and in all ways, which allows couples to grow closer to God and to each other. In essence, accomplishing the purpose and meeting each of these five objectives was shown to have a positive impact, enriching the marriages of couples who attended, as they drew closer to Christ.

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<sup>1</sup>Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do: Discovering the Power of The Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), 25.

Reflecting back on the intended purpose of the project and meeting the defined goals and the five objectives, I can now say without hesitation, mission accomplished.

### **Evaluation of the Project's Goals**

The first goal of this project was to identify eight essential topics to be included in the marriage enrichment seminar. I accomplished this goal by creating a seventeen-item Pre-Course Inventory and distributing it to 8 random couples attending Wednesday night activities at the church. The original goal had a planned distribution to 25 married couples. After discussing the seventeen topics with the senior pastor and explaining how I intended to derive the top eight for inclusion in the program, the pastor suggested I distribute it to couples attending our Wednesday Bible study. His suggestion was intended to expedite the data gathering process. In following through with his recommendation, I encountered only 8 married couples willing to make the commitment to complete the inventory and return it to me by the following Sunday. Of the 8, only 5 couples returned their data on time. The compiled results of the ten inventories became the basis for defining the eight topics that make up the core curriculum.<sup>2</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, after discussing the results of the Pre-Course Inventory with the pastors, I decided to include Addressing Heart Issues—Idols of the Heart as one of the eight essential topics, even though it scored lower than Decision Making, Budgets, and Spiritual Disciplines in the inventories. The decision was also made at that time to change from an eight-week seminar format to a Friday evening through Sunday afternoon retreat format.

The second goal of the project was to present the eight essential topics to Easthaven's pastoral staff. The third goal was to develop the curriculum for each of the eight

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<sup>2</sup>See appendix 1.

topics, incorporating Scripture along with pertinent biblical and sociological resources. In order to complete these goals simultaneously, I conducted a meeting in the Senior Pastor's office with Easthaven's four full-time pastors. Meeting with the four pastors allowed me the opportunity to explain the purpose and goals behind *Developing a Marriage Enrichment Seminar for Couples at Easthaven Baptist Church*. The meeting also gave me a chance to clearly explain how their participation and input was crucial for the successful completion of the project. I provided each pastor a copy of the results obtained from the Pre-Course Inventory, a rough draft of the lesson plans for each of the eight essential topics chosen, and a tentative schedule of events for each retreat. I also provided copies of chapters two and three of this project along with an explanation of the relevant nature of the material contained within the two chapters. During our meeting, we discussed incorporating *The Art of Marriage* video and workbook into the retreats. Each pastor was very familiar with the material and supportive of its inclusion. At the end of our meeting, copies of the Marriage Enrichment Seminar Curriculum Evaluation Rubric were distributed to each person along with an explanation of how to complete the rubric.<sup>3</sup>

Each pastor was given one and a half weeks to evaluate the materials, complete the rubric, and offer his comments and suggestions for making improvements to the marriage enrichment program. All four completed rubrics were returned to me within two weeks of our meeting. After completing the curriculum evaluation rubric, pastors were also given opportunities to offer opinions and suggestions during one-on-one follow-up discussions. I evaluated the Marriage Enrichment Seminar Curriculum Evaluation Rubrics and learned that the second and third goals were successful as more than 90 percent of rubric evaluation

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<sup>3</sup>See appendix 2.

indicators were marked sufficient or above and the eight essential topics were identified and placed in sequence.<sup>4</sup>

After evaluating the data and corresponding feedback from each pastor, the curriculum was put into final presentation for teaching married couples and incorporated into a format designed for a weekend retreat as opposed to an eight-hour seminar.

In order to fulfill the requirements of the fourth and last goal, two marriage enrichment retreats were held, one May 22<sup>nd</sup> through May 24<sup>th</sup> and the second May 29<sup>th</sup> through May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015. Each weekend retreat began at 6:00 PM on Friday evening and lasted until 3:00 PM on the following Sunday. Pre-Seminar Surveys were completed by participants before the start of session one and Post-Seminar Surveys were completed at the end of session eight on both consecutive weekends.<sup>5</sup>

Goal four was successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference between the pre- and post- survey scores. The t-test indicated an increase in participant knowledge and understanding of what constitutes a biblical marriage and how each topic addressed contributes to a strong foundation for unity in marriage. The results of the paired two sample t-Test demonstrates:  $t = -17.2$ ,  $t\text{-critical value} = 2.144$ ,  $p\text{ value} < .0000$ .<sup>6</sup>

### **Strengths of the Project**

The first strength of this project was found in the people encouraging and supporting me throughout the process of “Developing a Marriage Enrichment Seminar for Couples at Easthaven Baptist Church.” The four full-time pastors and their staff were

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<sup>4</sup>See appendix 2.

<sup>5</sup>See appendix 3.

<sup>6</sup>See appendix 4.

incredibly supportive; they spent time meeting with me and offered advice and assistance when needed. Throughout the process of developing and implementing this project, several members of Easthaven continually offered prayer support and words of encouragement to me.

The second strength of this project is found in my own passion for working with married couples. Ninety-eight percent of my counseling ministry at The *LOGOS* Christian Counseling Center at Easthaven is focused on ministering to couples whose marriages are in crisis, on the edge of separation or divorce, and those who are seeking help to improve in some particular area of their marriage. For example, spouses seeking counseling may want to learn how to overcome communication barriers with their spouses, how to deal with interpersonal conflict, the importance of forgiveness, or how to develop spiritually. For many couples not wanting to engage in formal marriage counseling, the opportunity to attend a marriage retreat like the one developed for this project may be the first chance they have to learn what a biblical marriage looks like and how important it is to live out their particular roles as husband or wife in a manner that is obedient and pleasing to God.

A third strength of the weekend retreats was the emphasis placed on biblical doctrine, laying the foundation for marriage and the unique roles and responsibilities of both husbands and wives. The curriculum begins with the creation account of the first man and first woman and the institution of marriage as a covenantal union taking place between God, a man and a woman. This covenantal union is reflected as the bride and groom exchange their vows with each other. The curriculum was developed with an emphasis on sound biblical doctrine, referring to Scripture throughout each of the eight sessions in both lecture

and video formats. Likewise, all supporting materials exemplified a commitment to Scripture. Some of the resources I used include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Stuart Scott's *Marriage & Family*, lecture notes.
2. William Cutrer's *Marriage Enrichment*, lecture notes.
3. *The Art of Marriage* video and workbook.
4. John Piper's *This Momentary Marriage*.
5. Chris Brauns's *Unpacking Forgiveness*.
6. Dave Harvey's *When Sinners Say "I Do"*.

For several couples, the curriculum taught them that marriage is more about God's glory and reflecting Christ's love for the church, and less about themselves or their own happiness. Some couples found this teaching difficult, particularly one newlywed couple and one couple who had been married fourteen years and had not yet accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior. In the case of the unbelieving couple, I feel the husband is ready to commit his life to Christ. His wife, who has a new age perspective and does not believe in Christ, took a huge step forward, possibly seeing the Holy Spirit at work in her life and her marriage. After the retreat, she commented that the weekend resulted in a "very real spiritual awakening" for her, causing her to acknowledge Jesus's existence and begin contemplating who Jesus really was and is today. She expressed an interest in seeing Scott's power point presentation, *Presenting the Gospel in its Context*.<sup>7</sup>

At the end of both retreats, participants all agreed the weekends had allowed them time to grow closer to God and to each other. Each person was able to identify unrighteous behaviors he/she needed to put-off and explain the types of choices he/she needed to make in

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<sup>7</sup>Stuart Scott, *Presenting the Gospel in its Context* (Lifeandgodliness.org 2006), Power Point presentation on CD-ROM.

an effort to put-on behaviors pleasing to God and to better serve his/her spouse and family members, while reflecting Christ's love for one another.

Relationship building was another strength of the marriage retreats. Each participating couple was given an opportunity to share their personal stories and begin learning about the other couples present at the retreat. Building relationships opened the door for some very constructive, healthy conversations, which enhanced the learning experience for each session. Over the course of the retreat, couples were able to hear the shared testimonies of other couples that had overcome difficulties and experienced suffering through their battles with cancer and the loss of loved ones. Each testimony gave credit to God, glorifying him and praising him for getting them through their trials, and acknowledging how he had blessed them with hope, encouragement, comfort, peace, and joy. The testimonies shared over the course of both weekends were invaluable for everyone participating. These moments of sharing also helped husbands and wives realize that many of the problems they are dealing with in their own marriages are not unique to themselves, but shared by others and can almost always be tied back to sinful choices involving pride, selfishness, worry, fear, or an unwillingness to forgive.

The fifth strength of the retreats was the location. Howling Wolf Ranch provided a comfortable ranch setting in which to hold the retreats and was within forty-five minutes to an hour from most couples' homes. The two hundred acres of space created the perfect outdoor environment for couples to engage in three marriage-building projects with each other. There were also plenty of places for couples to hike and explore on their own. Howling Wolf provided comfortable lodging, excellent meals, plenty of snacks, coffee, tea, and lemonade. It was the perfect environment for couples to relax and enjoy time away from



the constant noise of the city, enjoy the smell of fresh pine in the air, and look at night skies filled with stars and constellations. The fact that there is no cellular phone service at the ranch helped reduce the number of distractions, which allowed couples to spend more time focused on each other and less time connecting electronically with others.

Lastly, the weekend retreat venue was more popular for couples thinking about participating in a marriage enrichment seminar than a weekly class. The Post-Seminar Surveys supported the choice of holding weekend retreats instead of an eight-week seminar, which would have required a greater time commitment from couples, increased difficulties with weekly childcare, and competition with other weekly activities and programs.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

Twenty written comments were turned in with the Seminar Critiques.<sup>8</sup> The comments were useful in identifying several weaknesses or areas that can be improved upon for future retreats. More than one person expressed a desire to have additional time to spend with his/her spouse in order to talk and identify strengths and weaknesses within their marriage. Some would like to have had more assignments or projects relating to each session that they could have worked on together during the retreat.

A major weakness of the project was trying to cover too much material over the course of a weekend retreat. Having eight topics to cover was not a problem. The problem was trying to teach the material on each topic in conjunction with the *Art of Marriage* video series and workbook. The choice was made to incorporate the *Art of Marriage* materials as a supplement for my own material, since the video and workbook coincided with my own lesson plans. I originally thought the video and workbook would help enhance and reinforce

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<sup>8</sup>See appendix 7.

what was being taught and keep things interesting, while also appealing to differing learning styles. Some individuals found the repetitive nature of the material helpful, while others found it distracting. Given the feedback, couples enjoyed both the lectures and the video series but acknowledged there was no down time and very little opportunity for couples to spend time alone. The intensity of following the tight schedule also left couples feeling exhausted by the end of each day. There was no time afforded for couples to really enjoy the ranch setting and activities available to them.

A second weakness of the retreats was the lack of emphasis given to life application questions. After the sessions were over, couples expressed a desire to hear more true-life examples of how the topics addressed have impacted other people's lives and marriages. There was a desire to better understand how the material being taught could be actively applied to a person's life in such a way as to transform their lives and their marriages. Couples wanted to know how to implement change, how to better love one another, and how to have a marriage glorifying God. Ultimately, couples can have the head knowledge; it's the ability to apply the knowledge to their marriages that is important.

A third weakness was my own teaching style. My lesson outlines contained too much material. Furthermore, following the outlines resulted in me teaching each group of married couples in the same manner I might have taught a class of seminary students. I recognized this early in each retreat and modified the lesson outlines, engaging in more open discussions and using the outlines more as talking points. I originally developed the lesson plans with an emphasis on trying to include as much helpful material on each topic as I could. In hindsight, I needed to invest more time in developing lesson plans that focus on two or three key ideas that are applicable to the needs of the intended audience and recognize

it is impossible to teach everything in a limited amount of time. The lesson plans should have been simplified and more interactive.

### **What I Would Do Differently**

Given the success of the project, the positive testimonies of those who attended, and new couples expressing their desires to attend a future retreat, I will likely be hosting more marriage enrichment retreats in the fall, there are a few changes that will be necessary.

In the future, I would continue to use the *Art of Marriage* video and workbook as the core materials for the retreat. However, I would change my lesson outlines to support the video lessons and allow more opportunity for interactive discussion with a greater emphasis on how to apply what is being taught in each video session. The lesson plans would become less technical and more applicable.

Helping couples understand how to apply what they learn would be a major priority in the future. I do not want to just change how much a couple knows as measured in the Pre- and Post-Seminar Surveys. I want to help couples apply the gospel and learned biblical principles to their lives and to their marriages. This goal can be achieved by providing more real life examples of couples overcoming struggles and conflict through their faith in God's sovereignty and the preeminence of Christ in their lives. Incorporating a case study into each session would help generate discussion on the topic and potentially help couples apply the material learned in each session to their own lives.

In the future, I would build in more one-on-one time for couples to spend with each other. This time together could be used to complete a project or discuss a case study and how it applies to them. I would also encourage couples to spend time in prayer together by providing dedicated prayer time and materials to start journaling their prayer requests and

documenting answers to prayers. The journals would help them understand how God is actively at work in their lives.

An advantage to holding a retreat at a ranch is the opportunity for couples to enjoy the outdoor activities and an environment conducive to thoughtful meditation, conversations and togetherness in God's marvelous setting. Future retreats will include recreational activities designed to build closer friendships between individual participants and outdoor activities will also be designed to help each couple foster a closer relationship and intimacy in their own marriage.

The pre- and post-seminar surveys required approximately forty-five minutes to complete, which took up valuable time. In the future, couples will be issued the surveys when they sign up to attend a retreat. I will ask participants to complete them at home and bring them to the retreat.

### **Theological Reflections**

Throughout the development and implementation of this project, I have placed a strong emphasis on Scripture and what it teaches about marriage. Couples were taught that marriage is a sacred, covenant-keeping relationship in which God joins a husband and wife into a one-flesh union for the purpose of displaying his glory and Christ's love for his church.<sup>9</sup> I have learned a great deal about God's ultimate purpose and plan for marriage, starting with Genesis and the primary reference point for marriage in Genesis 2:18-25.

One thing that really stood out for me was recognizing that God is not teaching Adam and Eve about leaving and cleaving in Genesis 2:24; he is instructing future couples on the principle of leaving family and holding fast to one another. Verse 24 was not

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<sup>9</sup>John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage: A Parable of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 25.

addressing Adam and Eve; they had no parents to leave. The verse has application for us today, as we do have parents and family we leave, as we are joined in a covenantal union with our husband or wife.

I also found the curse as described in Genesis 3:16 fascinating. In verse 16, God tells the woman, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; and in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” Cutrer taught three things relating to the curse that really stood out to me. He pointed out that women are the only creatures that experience intense pain in childbearing. No other animals experience the same levels of pain, as does a woman. In addition, the *desire* a wife has for her husband is not for his love and affection; it is a sinful desire seeking his headship or authority to lead. Also, the statement “He shall rule over you” addresses why it is so easy for a man to become a less than humble servant leader in his home and become a dictator ruling with pride and selfish expectations. Husbands and wives must be aware of how the curse influences their natural tendency toward sinning against one another. The presence of the curse does not mean, however, that men and women are slaves to sin. Through faith in Christ, men and women can put-off their sinful desires and seek instead to put-on righteousness in order to fulfill the roles and responsibilities God has intended for husbands and wives. With an understanding of the curse and the implications described by Cutrer, a person cannot read the account in the garden without a greater sense of appreciation for its genuineness and relevance to every husband and wife today.

This project has given me a greater appreciation for how marriage is meant to reflect Christ’s love for his church. With this in mind, I believe the condition of any marriage at any given moment in time can be an indicator of how a husband and wife are

doing spiritually in their personal relationships with Christ. Couples can attend church, bible studies, small group fellowships, know and say all the right things, yet if there is tension, conflict, and sin within the marriage, all is not well in their relationships with Christ. Harvey says it best: “What we believe about God determines the quality of our marriage.”<sup>10</sup>

This project brought to the forefront, for me, the importance of teaching the Gospel with an emphasis on God’s mercy, grace, and forgiveness. I developed a greater understanding of how to teach couples the differences between Therapeutic and Biblical forgiveness and discovered how important it is to emphasize the conditional aspect of forgiveness. Brauns states simply, “God’s forgiveness is conditional. Only those who repent and believe are saved.”<sup>11</sup> Forgiveness is not just about feeling good about ourselves and it should not be motivated by our own selfish interest. Forgiveness is manifested out of a desire to please God first by demonstrating love for our neighbor or spouse by offering to pardon them for any offense they have made against us, should they seek to repent and ask forgiveness. Forgiveness is about reconciling and restoring relationships. Fully understanding what God’s forgiveness means for us and what forgiveness looks like when applied to our lives, will ultimately determine how willing we are to practice forgiveness with others. I like the analogy of forgiveness being a gift we are ready and willing to offer someone who is willing to repent and ask for it.

Lastly, the recognition that God has a plan for marriage has become a reoccurring theme throughout this project. God has a plan for every husband and every wife and as long as we are willing to trust in his Word and follow his biblical principles for living, our

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<sup>10</sup>Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do: Discovering the Power of The Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), 20.

<sup>11</sup>Chris Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness: Biblical Answers for Complex Questions and Deep Wounds* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 47.

marriages are going to have an opportunity to reflect Christ's love for his church to a world that so desperately needs him.

### **Personal Reflections**

Developing the marriage enrichment curriculum has caused me to reflect introspectively on my role as a Christian husband. Many times throughout the project, I have questioned how I am applying the biblical principles I have learned within my own marriage. On some occasions, I have found myself asking my wife, Anne, what she perceives are my strengths and weaknesses in any given area. For example, when writing about the nine attributes of Christ's love, Anne and I were able to have a discussion regarding how I was personally embodying those attributes and what I could do to better incorporate them in my attitudes and actions within our marriage. Headship and taking responsibility for making right decisions stood out to me as areas in which I need to continue to improve. I find it is easy to abdicate the decision-making process to my wife which, in essence, encourages her innate desire to lead. In our marriage, we are both in agreement that our first priority is to wisely make decisions together and prayerfully engage in activities that are pleasing to the Lord.

Throughout the project, I have tried to learn as much as I can to become a more effective pastoral counselor and positive agent of change in order to lead people to Christ and help them apply sound biblical principles to their lives. The importance placed on the gospel message throughout the curriculum has helped me to foster a greater appreciation for how the gospel, working through the Holy Spirit, can and does change lives. An example of the impact the gospel can have on someone's life is seen in the couple mentioned previously, where the wife who did not believe in Jesus now wants to learn more about Jesus, while her

husband is close to accepting Christ as his savior. I am convinced the more I share the truth of God's Word with couples and show them how the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life (2 Pet 1:3; Rom 15:4), the more I will be used by God to help couples build stronger marriages reflective of Christ's love for his church.

Working on this project helped me grow in my appreciation for and practice of the spiritual disciplines. Before the project, I would define my prayer life as on-again off-again, with very little consistency. My time spent reading the Bible was also very limited and often only when counseling others. About midway through the project, after I had completed the required seminars, I found myself really struggling to keep up with the research and writing. My wife suggested I spend more time praying about the project and those I hope to minister to through the retreats. As I began spending more time practicing the spiritual disciplines, I found it easier to focus and accomplish the tasks of working on the project while maintaining a fulltime-counseling ministry. The Lord has answered so many of my prayers over the course of this project, which include giving me a greater passion to be in his Word, the desire to pray with my wife more consistently, and the ability encourage couples I counsel to do the same.

Overall, the project has helped me grow closer to the Lord and closer to my wife. I have a greater appreciation for the blessing she is and recognize God placed Anne into my arms to love, cherish, and protect. I know one day I will place her back in his arms; my hope is to hear him say, "Well done my good and faithful servant."

### **Conclusion**

Developing and implementing these two marriage enrichment retreats has been the fulfillment of a vision I have had for close to ten years. When Anne and I moved to Montana



the first time in 2005, we both shared the vision of ministering to couples whose marriages were in crisis. In 2007, we purchased property and obtained the permits necessary to construct and operate a marriage retreat center. Then in 2008, I felt led to quit everything and return to Louisville, Kentucky, to attend The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary to become a pastor. At the seminary, I had a chance to study biblical counseling under Stuart Scott. Scott's passion for counseling from a biblical perspective changed the direction I was heading in ministry; I turned down an opportunity for a pastorate with a local church to pursue instead pastoral counseling as a calling. My passion has always been working with couples.

In February 2012, Easthaven Baptist Church provided the space for me to open the *LOGOS* Christian Counseling Center. The focus of this counseling ministry has been on marriage and family issues. I appreciate the support and encouragement I have received in this ministry. This project has given me the opportunity to develop something that can be given back to the church in the form of curriculum necessary to conduct marriage enrichment seminars or retreats. In the future, I hope to keep cultivating the material and would like to develop a program or format I could teach at other churches around the country.

## APPENDIX 1

### PRE-COURSE INVENTORY: IDENTIFYING EIGHT ESSENTIAL TOPICS

In order to fulfill goal one of this project, eight essential topics will be identified for the seminar by administering the following pre-course inventory designed to measure the relative importance of seventeen different topics directly related to, and impacting marriages today. The survey will be administered to five married couples at Easthaven. The goal will be considered successfully met when five married couples complete the survey, ranking levels of priority for each of the seventeen topics listed, and the inventory has been analyzed yielding total scores for each of the topics. The top eight scores will identify the eight topics to be covered during the marriage enrichment seminar.

Listed below are seventeen topics. Out of the seventeen choices, eight will be incorporated into a marriage enrichment seminar. Please read each of the topics carefully and *circle the answer* from the scale provided that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement with the topic being *ESSENTIAL* for inclusion in a seminar.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA	
1.	Communication skills, understanding differences in how men and women communicate both verbally and non-verbally.					SD D DS AS A SA
2.	Understanding God’s purpose and plan for marriage.					SD D DS AS A SA
3.	Sexual intimacy and its important role in marriage.					SD D DS AS A SA
4.	Importance of forgiveness grace and mercy in marriage.					SD D DS AS A SA
5.	Clearly defined roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives.					SD D DS AS A SA
6.	Conflict and conflict resolution for couples.					SD D DS AS A SA
7.	Decision making skills.					SD D DS AS A SA
8.	Physical hygiene, why appearances are important in marriage.					SD D DS AS A SA
9.	Technology, its influence on relationships in the home, at work, and in the bedroom.					SD D DS AS A SA
10.	Birth control, various forms and methods.					SD D DS AS A SA
11.	Idols of the heart. Learning to understand, what causes quarrels and fights between husbands and wives.					SD D DS AS A SA
12.	Nutrition, eating well to please your spouse.					SD D DS AS A SA
13.	Budgets and financial planning for the future.					SD D DS AS A SA
14.	Personal spiritual disciplines in the marriage.					SD D DS AS A SA
15.	Hobbies, engaging in shared interests and activities.					SD D DS AS A SA
16.	Divorce and remarriage, a biblical perspective.					SD D DS AS A SA
17.	Family and friends, their influences on a marriage.					SD D DS AS A SA

PRE-COURSE INVENTORY  
SCORES

Question	Participant #										Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
1	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	SA	SA	A	SA	A	57
2	A	SA	SA	SA	A	SA	SA	AS	SA	A	55
3	SA	SA	A	A	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	AS	55
4	AS	SA	SA	SA	A	SA	AS	SA	SA	A	53
5	A	SA	A	SA	A	SA	SA	DS	SA	AS	52
6	A	SA	SA	A	A	SA	SA	A	SA	AS	54
7	A	A	SA	AS	A	A	A	SA	SA	AS	51
8	A	AS	A	DS	AS	AS	A	SA	SA	DS	45
9	A	SA	SA	A	A	SA	SA	AS	SA	DS	52
10	AS	A	D	AS	D	AS	D	DS	SA	DS	32
11	A	A	A	SA	A	SA	AS	A	SA	AS	46
12	AS	AS	SD	AS	DS	AS	A	SA	A	DS	39
13	AS	A	AS	AS	A	AS	A	SA	SA	A	48
14	A	A	AS	A	AS	AS	A	A	SA	A	48
15	A	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	AS	SA	SA	DS	41
16	AS	DS	SD	DS	DS	AS	D	A	A	DS	33
17	AS	A	AS	DS	AS	AS	SA	A	SA	AS	45

Topics in order of priority:	Rating
1. Communication skills	57
3. God's Purpose and Plan for marriage	55
2. Sexual intimacy in marriage	55
4. Conflict and conflict resolution	54
5. Importance of forgiveness, grace, and mercy	53
6. Roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives	52
7. Technologies influence on marriage and the home	52
8. Understanding idols of the heart	46

**NOTE:** While #8, Understanding idols of the heart scored a (46), five points less than the category of decision-making (51), and two points less than the categories of budgets and spiritual disciplines, both scoring (48); in discussions with Easthaven's pastors it was agreed, teaching about the heart issues needed to be a priority, hence it was included among the top eight topics to be incorporated into the marriage enrichment curriculum.

## APPENDIX 2

### MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT SEMINAR: CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following rubric was utilized to evaluate the strengths and weakness of the eight topics identified and the supporting curriculum developed for the eight-hour marriage enrichment seminar. The rubric and chapters 2 and 3 of this project were given to Easthaven's four full-time pastors. The pastors were instructed to complete the rubric in order to evaluate topic relevance as found in goal one and subsequently repeated in goal two. The purpose of the rubric is to verify if the curriculum meets the sufficiency standards of the rubric by at least 90 percent.

The results obtained from each of the four pastors are tabulated in the included rubric. Pastors' written comments can be found in the comments section of the rubric.

## CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to help develop an eight-hour Marriage Enrichment Seminar for couples at Easthaven Baptist Church in Kalispell, Montana. This research is being conducted by Michael W. Marrs for the purpose of completing the requirements for his Doctor of Ministry degree. In this research, you will be asked to evaluate and critique seminar curriculum to help me determine its strengths and weaknesses for use in the eight-hour seminar using the Curriculum Rating Rubric. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*. At no time will your name be reported nor will your name be identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By completing this Curriculum Evaluation Rubric and signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

<b>Marriage Enrichment Seminar, Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
To the right of each criteria listed, indicate your answer by placing a check in the box that most accurately reflects your answer to each statement. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns should be written under the comments section.					
<b>1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The topics included in the eight-hour seminar warrant inclusion in an eight-hour marriage enrichment seminar.					
The goals and objectives of this course are well defined.					
The curriculum for each of the eight sessions is well defined.					
The lesson plan for each session is clearly defined.					
Biblical support is provided for each topic addressed.					
The role of a husband is clearly explained and supported biblically.					
The role of a wife is clearly explained and supported biblically.					
The curriculum accurately reflects God's purpose and design for marriage.					

CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

<b>Marriage Enrichment Seminar, Curriculum Evaluation Tool—Continued</b>					
To the right of each criteria listed, indicate your answer by placing a check in the box that most accurately reflects your answer to each statement. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns should be written under the comments section.					
<b>1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum accurately reflects the importance of intimacy and sexual relations in marriage.					
The curriculum accurately reflects the importance of developing good communication skills.					
The curriculum accurately reflects the impact of technology on marriage.					
Biblical methods of addressing conflict are clearly defined and made applicable.					
Traits couples should “put-on” in order to glorify Christ are made apparent throughout the course.					
The curriculum clearly addresses idols of the heart and the impact of sin on relationships.					
The curriculum clearly reflects the importance of forgiveness and grace in marriage.					



CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

<b>Marriage Enrichment Seminar, Curriculum Evaluation Tool—Continued</b>					
To the right of each criteria listed, indicate your answer by placing a check in the box that most accurately reflects your answer to each statement. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns should be written under the comments section.					
<b>1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum reflects the ideas of strong biblical and theological writers.					
The gospel is clearly articulated throughout the course.					
Justification for couples growing in their faith in order to enhance their marriage is made clear in the curriculum.					
Each session contains information applicable to participants' lives.					
The curriculum is easy to follow and comprehend.					
The curriculum emphasizes the importance of placing God first in a marriage.					
The pre- and post-survey accurately reflect the subject matter contained in each session.					
The seminar curriculum accurately reflects the stated purpose and goals.					

**COMPLETED CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC**

<b>Marriage Enrichment Seminar, Curriculum Evaluation Tool</b>					
To the right of each criteria listed, the number of reviewers responding with 1/2/3 or 4 for the specific criteria are listed. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns are included in the comments section for the respective criterion.					
<b>1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The topics included in the eight-hour seminar warrant inclusion in an eight-hour marriage enrichment seminar.				4	1. Very Good.
The goals and objectives of this course are well defined.			1	3	
The curriculum for each of the eight sessions is well defined.		1	2	1	1. It would be helpful to go through the sessions as you go through the paper.
The lesson plan for each session is clearly defined.			3	1	1. Not sure about each lesson.
Biblical support is provided for each topic addressed.				4	1. Great! 2. Great volume of Scripture.
The role of a husband is clearly explained and supported biblically.				4	1. Really strong.
The role of a wife is clearly explained and supported biblically.		1		3	1. Clearly covers submission but needs more of other areas. 2. Really strong.
The curriculum accurately reflects God's purpose and design for marriage.				4	1. Very well!

COMPLETED CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

<b>Marriage Enrichment Seminar, Curriculum Evaluation Tool—Continued</b>					
To the right of each criteria listed, the number of reviewers responding with 1/2/3 or 4 for the specific criteria are listed. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns are included in the comments section for the respective criterion.					
<b>1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum accurately reflects the importance of intimacy and sexual relations in marriage.			1	3	
The curriculum accurately reflects the importance of developing good communication skills.			1	3	1. Very practical.
The curriculum accurately reflects the impact of technology on marriage.			4		1. If this is a goal, could use more.
Biblical methods of addressing conflict are clearly defined and made applicable.			2	2	
Traits couples should “put-on” in order to glorify Christ are made apparent throughout the course.				4	
The curriculum clearly addresses idols of the heart and the impact of sin on relationships.			1	3	1. Addressed clearly. 2. Very good information. 3. Strong.
The curriculum clearly reflects the importance of forgiveness and grace in marriage.				4	1. Essential! Can you forgive someone w/o them repenting? 1 Pet 4:8; 1 Cor 13.

COMPLETED CURRICULUM EVALUATION RUBRIC

<b>Marriage Enrichment Seminar, Curriculum Evaluation Tool—Continued</b>					
To the right of each criteria listed, the number of reviewers responding with 1/2/3 or 4 for the specific criteria are listed. Additional ideas for improvement and any concerns are included in the comments section for the respective criterion.					
<b>1=insufficient 2=requires attention 3=sufficient 4=exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The curriculum reflects the ideas of strong biblical and theological writers.				4	
The gospel is clearly articulated throughout the course.			1	3	1. Obviously important, seemed a little forced into the content, but good for the retreat.
Justification for couples growing in their faith in order to enhance their marriage is made clear in the curriculum.			1	3	1. Very well done, this is exciting. 2. Triangle diagram.
Each session contains information applicable to participants' lives.			1	3	1. Absolutely.
The curriculum is easy to follow and comprehend.			2	2	
The curriculum emphasizes the importance of placing God first in a marriage.				4	
The pre- and post-survey accurately reflect the subject matter contained in each session.			1	3	
The seminar curriculum accurately reflects the stated purpose and goals.			1	3	

## APPENDIX 3

### LESSON PLANS FOR SESSIONS 1 THROUGH 8

Lesson plans were developed using material from one or more of the following resources:

1. Stuart Scott's *Marriage & Family*, lecture notes.
2. William Cutrer's *Marriage Enrichment*, lecture notes.
3. The *Art of Marriage* video and workbook.
4. John Piper's *This Momentary Marriage*.
5. Dave Harvey's *When Sinners Say "I Do"*.
6. Chapters 2 and 3 of this project.

## Session 1

### GOD'S ULTIMATE PURPOSE AND PLAN FOR MARRIAGE

(Primary source: Chapters two and three, Scott's lecture notes)

#### OBJECTIVE:

Couples will learn how the Bible clearly presents marriage as a sacred covenant-keeping relationship in which God joins a husband and wife into a one-flesh union for the purpose of displaying his glory and Christ's love for his church. They will understand and be able to explain each of the key ideas and terms used in session one.

#### Key Ideas and Relevant Text:

- A. Creation account of man and woman (Gen 1:27-28; 2:7, 2:19, 2:21-22).
  - 1. First man (*ha 'adam*) created from dust of the ground by God, who breathed into his nostrils the breath of life (Gen 2:7).
  - 2. First woman (*Ishah*) created from rib of the man (Gen 2:21-22).
    - a. *Ezer Knegdo* – she was created to be a *helper suitable* for the man (Gen 2:18).
  - 3. Created in the image of God (Gen 1-27).
    - a. Communicable attributes of God.
    - b. Created with a soul (Gen 2:27), man became a living being *nephesh*.
    - c. To take on Christ's likeness is to reflect the image of God to others.
  - 4. God's Blessing (Gen 1:28).
    - a. Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.
  
- B. Primary reference point for marriage (Gen 2:18-25).
  - 1. Picture of the first wedding held in the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:23-24).
    - a. God brought the woman to Adam (Gen 2:18).
    - b. First Hebrew poetry in the Old Testament (Gen 2:23).
    - c. Man and woman are seen leaving and cleaving as they are joined into a one-flesh union and hold fast to one another (Gen 2:24).
  
- C. Preeminence of Christ in marriage (Eph 1:1-11, Col 1:18, Matt 6:33).
  - 1. Importance of a husband and wife embracing Christ's preeminence in their personal lives and in their union together.
    - a. God ultimately the head of all things including every household (Col 1:18).
    - b. Without the Holy Spirit, we cannot live up to the standard we are called to in obedience to God's will.
    - c. A wife submitting in respect and a husband loving as Christ loved are supernatural actions and are unobtainable without the Holy Spirit.

- d. Husbands and wives must seek to please Christ above all else (2 Cor 5:9).
- e. What we believe about God and the supernatural determines the quality of our marriage and our life (Matt 7:24-27).

D. Purposes of marriage.

1. God's primary purpose for marriage is to display the covenant-keeping love between Christ and his church.
2. Marriage should be a living reflection of Christ and his church.
3. Marriage can be an indicator of how a husband and wife are doing in their spiritual walk with the Lord.

E. The divine mystery of a one-flesh union in marriage (Eph 5:31-32).

1. Built upon an understanding of the preeminence of Christ and his love for the church.
2. Not just about sexual intercourse. There is a deeper symbolism of Christ and the church.
3. The one-flesh union points to a covenantal relationship (Gen 2:24).
4. Directly tied to the relationship between Christ and his church (Eph 5:32).
5. A new bond is formed that transcends any bonds experienced in other relationships. This new bond forms a couple's new identity and a new family that is honoring God's will and design for marriage (Eph 5:31).

F. Christ's example of sacrificial love reflecting his love for the church (Luke 22:14-20).

1. Sacrificial shedding of blood established a new covenant relationship (Luke 22:20).
2. Christ sets the example of how couples are to love one another in marriage.

G. Traits every man and woman must "put off" and "put on" in marriage (Col 3:12-19).

1. Put off unrighteous thought or behaviors and replace them with new thoughts and actions glorifying God (Eph 4:22-24).
2. Five Traits to "put off" include: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and covetousness or greed. Covetousness and greed are considered idolatry because the things one seeks after take the place of God in the human heart (Col 3:5).
3. Each person must "put on" the virtues reflective of the "fruit of the spirit" which are: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal 5:22-23).

4. Couples who put on the virtues described in Galatians are better equipped to begin “bearing with one another” and “forgiving each other” (Col 3:12-13).

**Key Terms:**

- A. *Ezer Knegdo* – Ezer is translated “helper”; Knegdo is translated “to make visible”
- B. Covenant – Permanent, lifelong promise; not a contract, not entered into lightly
- C. Image of God – Created with communicable attributes of God.
- D. *Nephesh* – Hebrew word for soul; man does not have a soul - he is a soul.
- E. *Ish* – man
- F. *Ishah* – woman
- G. *ha 'adam* – first man created by God
- H. Hold fast – to enter into a covenant relationship of faithfulness to each other.
- I. Leaving, cleaving, becoming one – Shifting loyalties to your spouse
- J. Preeminence of Christ – Christ is head over our lives and our marriages



## Session 2

### **ADDRESSING HEART ISSUES—IDOLS OF THE HEART**

(Primary source: Chapters two and three, Scott's lecture notes)

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

Couples will learn how the Bible depicts every heart as a worshipping heart which was created to worship God. Couples will also learn how to identify idols of the heart that they choose to seek after and worship instead of God. They will understand and be able to explain each of the key ideas and terms used in session one.

#### **Key Ideas and Relevant Text:**

A. Every heart is a worshipping heart.

1. Since man was created with the primary attribute to worship, there are no true atheists; everyone engages in worship, whether it is self-worship or worship of other deities or idols. People either worship the true God or they worship false gods and idols (Rom 1:18-32).
2. Worship flows from the heart of man. It governs the words we use (Matt 12:34), our thoughts (Matt 9:4; 15:19), and all of our actions (Matt 15:19).

B. Jeremiah 17:9 teaches, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?"

1. The heart is the "real" you (1 Sam 16:7; Prov 4:23).
2. All behaviors and actions flow from the heart (Prov 4:23;)
3. "Out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these things come from within, and they defile a person"

C. Idolatrous lusts are best described as the passions one seeks after (James 4:1-3).

1. Idols may include: marriage, spouse, children, friends, other people, work, success, home, religion, money, security, food, appearance, health, cars, boats, control, pets, sex, homosexuality, adultery, drugs, alcohol, pornography, sports, technology games, music, books, movies, fear, anger, jealousy, drunkenness, pride and self (Gal 5:19-21; 1 Cor 6:9-11).
2. Identifying idolatrous lusts is difficult, given our natural impulse to rationalize our sinful behaviors, justify our actions, and deceive ourselves. Scripture warns against this (Deut 11:16; Rom 7:11; 1 Cor 3:18; 6:9-11; 15:33; 2 Cor 11:3; Gal 6:3, 7; James 1:16).
3. Seven questions to ask when attempting to identify idolatrous lusts in your life are:

- a. What do I want so badly I would sin to get it?
  - b. What do I want so badly I would sin if I did not get it?
  - c. What is so important to me I willing to compromise by beliefs for it?
  - d. What is so important to me that I am willing to sin to prevent losing it?
  - e. What do I turn to for refuge and comfort instead of turning to God?
  - f. What do I tend to worry about, feel fearful about, or feel anxious about?
  - g. What do I believe to be my basic *needs* or *rights*?
- D. If a person is unwilling to turn away from sinful choices and activities (idolatry), he or she should doubt whether he or she is truly born of God (1 John 3:9-10).
- 1. Scripture describes the unsaved life locked in idol worship (Rom 1:18-25; 3:10-18; 8:1; Eph 2:1-3; Titus 3:3).
  - 2. God provides a way of escape from temptation (1 Cor 10:13-14).
- E. Once idols are identified, it is imperative to begin “putting off” all sinful desires and behaviors and begin “putting on” righteous motives, thoughts, and behaviors (Eph 4:22-24).
- 1. Take your thoughts captive (2 Cor 10:5).
  - 2. Repent and turn away from idols (Ezekiel 14:6).
  - 3. Seek God’s help (Ps 139:23-24).

**Key Terms:**

- A. Idol – Anything or anyone that captures our hearts, minds, and affections more than God. An idol is best described as a passion replacing God at the center of the heart (James 4).
- B. Idolatry – Not worshipping God alone but worshiping other gods, idols, passions, or lusts.
- C. Passion – A desire that consumes us; another term for idol.
- D. Worship – Any act of seeking after, serving, sacrificing, spending time or money, speaking or praying, meditating and trusting after God or something else.

## Session 3

### **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF HUSBANDS AND WIVES**

(Primary source: Chapters two and three, Scott's lecture notes)

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

Couples will learn the biblical roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives and be able to explain the differences in their respective roles. Couples will also learn the importance of biblical leadership and submission within marriage.

#### **Key Ideas and Relevant Text:**

A. The husband's role in marriage is best described as "a humble servant leader" of his home. A husband's humility is a distinguishing quality which allows him to love his wife in a manner pleasing to the Lord. Four primary roles of a husband are:

1. Godly Leader: (Eph 5:21-33; 1 Cor 11:3,9,11).
  - a. A husband must lead his family, recognizing his divine calling. "The head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor 11:3).
  - b. The emphasis in Ephesians 5:22-25 is headship, where the man is the head of his wife. Paul is instructing men to take the leadership role within the family, leading their wives and children with authority just as Christ has authority over the church.
  - c. The style of leadership should be modeled after Christ's own headship. The husband should humbly lead by example, spend quality time with his wife and taking time to pray, and spend time with his children (Eph 5:25).
  - d. The husband should not be a dictator (Matt 20:25).
  - e. The husband should not be following his wife (1 Cor 11:3, 7-9; Eph 5:23).
2. Patient Longsufferer: Colossians 3:18 teaches, "Wives submit to your husbands" and then commands, "Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them" (Col 3:19). Paul's imperative for husbands to not be harsh with their wives is an admonition for husbands to demonstrate tolerance, patience, grace, mercy and forgiveness.
3. Humble Learner: All good leaders are learners and husbands are called to be learners as well.
4. Sacrificial Lover: Three times husbands are commanded to "love your wives" (Eph 5:25, 28, 33), yet there is only one reference to wives learning to love their husbands and children.

- a. If love is lacking within the framework of a marriage, most often it can be related back to the husband's failure to responsibly love his wife.

B. Nine attributes of love. Although these attributes are included under the heading of a husband's role and responsibility to love his wife, these attributes of love are traits and characteristics everyone should strive to live by so we might love one another just as Christ loved us.

1. Christ is the *initiator* of love (1 John 4:19). As Christ initiates love, we respond to love. God loves us regardless of our love for him.
2. Christ's love is *sacrificial* (Eph 5:25). A husband must be willing to sacrifice everything for the wellbeing of his wife, even to the point of laying down his life for his wife's safety.
3. Christ's love is a *humble, unselfish* love (Phil 2:3-4). Jesus did not go to the cross expecting anything from us. Jesus humbled himself before the father in obedience, recognizing that God the father did not send him because God needed us, but because God knew we needed Jesus as our savior. He sacrificed himself for our needs.
4. Christ's love is *volitional* (John 15:16-17). Biblical love is demonstrated by God's choice to love us (Deut. 7:7). Christ chose us. Likewise, husbands *choose* to love their wives. You never fall in or out of biblical love. You choose to love one another; your love is volitional.
5. Christ's love is *contraconditional* or *gracious* (Rom 5:8). Christ's love for us is a picture of grace, without hidden conditions or expectations from us. He does not love us because we are loveable, worthy, or righteous. He loves us in spite of who we are. Husbands must put aside unrealistic expectations for their wives and not restrain their love until their wives give them the respect they desire or believe they deserve.
6. Christ's love is *eternal* and *committed* (Rom 8:39; John 13:1). Christ's love continues on regardless of our circumstances. Husbands and wives both need to rest in the security of knowing their spouses are fully committed to them regardless of how difficult life may become. A committed love is not fickle, vacillating, or mutable.
7. Christ's love is *forgiving* (Col 3:12-13; Eph 32). Harvey notes, "Forgiveness and repentance is the powerful tool that repairs the damage done to sin-torn marriage relationships. And where forgiveness is employed, and repentance is lived out, it transforms. Forgiveness humbly sought and humbly given, profoundly expresses the glory of God. Why? Because forgiveness is at the heart of the gospel."

8. Christ's love is *purifying* and *constructive* (Eph 5:26-27). Christ's love cleanses us, holds us blameless, renews us, makes us whole, sanctifies us and makes us holy so we might be presented unto himself. Likewise, a husband's love should be a constructive, ministering kind of love; it should help his wife grow and develop spiritually, socially, and mentally.
9. Christ's love is *practical* (1 John 3:18). Love within the marriage relationship is not something to just be talked about. Love needs to be constantly applied in a marriage. First Peter 3:7 gives the practical advice, "Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered." A husband showing honor to his wife can be illustrated by the care taken when handling a piece of fine china versus a piece of Tupperware.

C. A wife's role in marriage is glorifying and submissive to God and in many ways like the church when applying four primary roles and responsibilities of the wife in her relationship with her husband.

1. She is called to *respect* her husband in her attitude, through her words, and by her actions (Eph 5:33).
2. A wife is called to be her husband's *helper* or *helpmate* by coming alongside him as his partner (Gen 2:18-24; Prov 31:10-31; 1 Cor 11:9).
3. A wife should be an *encourager*. She should help build her husband's confidence and encourage his success, while also helping him avoid failures.
4. Lastly, she is to *submit* to her husband's headship (Eph 5:22, 24; Col 3:18; 1 Pet 3:10-12). The negative tendency in many marriages is for a man to retreat from leadership and a wife to step in as leader. And while she may be competent to make good decisions, she is still usurping the role that God outlined in Scripture.

D. Given the divisive nature of the topic of submission, it is important to recognize six misconceptions regarding biblical submission.

1. Submission is not husband worship. Yielding to one's husband does not mean a wife should worship her husband or place him on a pedestal. This would be making him an idol in the place of Christ, for it is Christ that is the "head of the body, the church" (Col 1:18).
2. Submissive is not the sum total of what a wife is. A wife's willingness to submit to her husband in no way means she is to become a doormat or a bellhop waiting to be called and given tasks to complete. She should not give up her individual personality and become stagnant, unable to thrive or grow.

God intends each wife to use the gifts and talents he has given her to serve her husband and others. (Rom 12:6; Pet 4:10; Prov 31).

3. Submission is not based on a husband being superior to his wife or a wife being inferior to her husband. Submission is about obedience to God. Philippians 2:3-8 presents a clear picture of humility as Christ “emptied himself, by taking on the form of a servant . . . he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Jesus submitted himself and became obedient to the Father, and yet Jesus is considered equal to the Father, as Jesus states, “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).
4. Submission is part of God’s plan in which husbands and wives have differing roles.
5. Submission does not mean a wife must forgo her participation in the decision-making process. As her husband’s help mate, a wife should be prepared to influence the decisions of her husband based on her own education, experiences, wisdom, discernment, and intuition. Colossians 3:16 teaches, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.”
6. Submission does not mean being fearful, enabling, or tolerating abuse. A wife must recognize her first allegiance is to the Lord and then to her husband. Therefore, everything she does should be done to the glory of the Lord. This means a wife must be willing to say no if her husband asks her to engage in sinful behavior. Anytime a husband asks his wife to do something contrary to biblical principle, the wife should respectfully decline. Acts 5:29 quotes the Apostle Paul as saying, “We must obey God rather than men.”

### **Key Terms:**

Longsuffering – A husband who is long suffering demonstrates tolerance, patience, grace, mercy and forgiveness.

Sacrificial love – “Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave himself up for her.” This is not a self-serving love.

Humble – “Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own personal interest, but also for the interests of others” (Phil 2:3-4).

Submission – Submission involves obeying from the heart and choosing to follow leadership even when one believes she or he knows a better way or believes he or she can do a better job.

## Session 4

### COMMUNICATION SKILLS

(Primary source: Chapters two and three, Scott's lecture notes)

**OBJECTIVE:** Couples will learn good communication skills are prerequisite for experiencing true intimacy—being fully known and truly loved without fear of rejection—in a marriage. Couples will be able to explain why the success or failure of a marriage may hang in the balance when there is a lack of good communication skills which has caused a lack of genuine intimacy.

#### Key Ideas and Relevant Texts:

A. Communication is the transmittal of messages, feelings, attitudes, desires, and ideas from one person to another resulting in some receptivity and understanding between both the sender and the receiver.

1. Good communication from God's perspective is sending a message that is true, holy, purposeful, clear, and timely. With love, humility, and care, the recipient should listen to what is being said while trying to understand where the communicator is coming from without reacting and clarifying with questions if needed. Upon receiving the message, the recipient should then ponder before answering and continue using these biblical principles (Psalm 19:14).
  - a. Communication is always 2 way = good speaker + good effective listener. Must be able to listen well and not just talk.
  - b. Communication must be honest and truthful (Eph 4:15).
2. When communicating, it is imperative to think through your communication and be concerned with:
  - a. What you say. What did I just say?
  - b. How you say it (presentation). How did I just say that?
  - c. How much you say. How much did I say?
  - d. When you say it. When should I say this?
  - e. Why you say it. Why am I saying this?
3. When communicating, it is equally imperative to be a good listener or receiver of the message.
  - a. The receiver of a message must do the hard work of listening well, actively participating in the conversation, showing respect, asking probing questions as necessary for clarity sake, and cautiously correcting incorrect messages. Feelings of anger, frustration, despair, fear, neglect, and loneliness can easily affect interpretations and responses.

- b. The art of good listening also involves the ability to respond reflectively. A good listener will practice paraphrasing.
- 4. Good conversations involve both giving and receiving, with a genuine willingness to change or a readiness to yield to your spouse. Only by expressing thoughts clearly and listening intently can a couple experience the intimacy and joy that comes from communicating well (1 Tim 1:5; 1 Cor 10:31).

B. Most conflicts within a marriage can be directly attributed to two key factors: selfish desires and poor communications skills. Most communication problems can be traced back to deeper issues such as selfishness, pride, shame, and an unwillingness to forgive. The presence of deeper issues or sin in a person's life emphasizes the importance of understanding what is going on in the heart of the individual (Matt 12:34-35; Jas 4:1-3).

**Key Terms:**

Communication – The transmittal of messages, feelings, attitudes, desires, and ideas from one person to another resulting in some receptivity and understanding between both the sender and the receiver.

Paraphrasing – When you listen carefully enough that you can tell your partner what was just said in your own words.



## Session 5

### CONFLICT RESOLUTION

(Primary source: *The Art of Marriage*, Scott's lecture notes)

**OBJECTIVE:** Couples will learn the biblical principles for avoiding conflict and how to deal with conflict when it occurs.

#### Key Ideas and Relevant Texts:

“Not all conflict is bad; instead, it teaches that some differences are natural and beneficial...not all conflict is natural or beneficial, however, the Bible teaches that many disagreements are the result of sinful motives and behavior...the Bible teaches that we should see conflict neither as an inconvenience nor as an occasion for selfish gain, but rather an opportunity to glorify God, to serve others, and to grow to be like Christ (K. Sande, *The Peacemakers*, 19, 20).

A. Thoughts that lead to conflict should be replaced with thoughts that avoid conflict:

#### Thoughts that lead to conflict:

That's ridiculous!  
I will have my way!  
How dare he/she!  
I will not be treated this way!

#### Thoughts that avoid conflict:

She/he may have a point.  
I don't have to have my way.  
I need to pray for him/her.  
How can I return good to him or her?

B. Sinful ways to avoid conflict:

1. *Just keep quiet.* When there is little or no communication, bitterness will eventually find a way to express itself (Ecclesiastes 3:7b; Ephesians 4:29-31; Colossians 3:19).
2. *Stay away from one another.* Obviously this is not an option for Christians. Consider God's commands for wives to respect their husbands and husbands to love their wives. We are commanded to be “fervent [stretched out with all intensity] in our love” (John 15:12; 1 Peter 4:8).
3. *Change the subject.* This tactic is much like the keep quiet method, but it also involves *deception* and *manipulation* (Proverbs 12:22, 24:28).
4. *Hide information, sins or bitterness.* This method involves deception, which we know to be sin. There is also no way that a couple can be one when this is going on (Genesis 20:2).

C. God-honoring ways to avoid conflict:

1. *Seek to know your spouse well.* Appreciate and understand your spouse's perspective (1Peter 3:7).
2. *Gather plenty of data before speaking.* Clarify often what you think you heard or understood. Ask lots of questions (Proverbs 18:13, 17).
3. *Listen more than you speak, but do speak* (Proverbs 10:19; 25:11).
4. *Refuse to sin in your communication* (Proverbs 8:6-8).
5. *Pray, study and think* about the issue before speaking, if possible (Proverbs 15:28).
6. *Demonstrate and/or communicate your love* and care at the time of a disagreement (Romans 12:9-10).
7. In matters of sin, *approach your spouse in love* (Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 3:19).
8. In matters of preference, *prefer one another* (Romans 12:10).
9. In matters of wisdom and conscience, suggest *searching the Scriptures and getting godly counsel* (Proverbs 11:14; 2 Timothy 2:15).
10. *Be more interested in God's glory and the other's good, rather than having your own way or being right* (Joshua 22:5; Romans 15:2).

One of the best ways to avoid conflict with another person who is angry at you is to *give a gently and caring answer to their angry words*. Proverbs 15:1 tell us,

**“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.”**

### RESOLVING CONFLICTS

D. How are we to handle conflicts that have already begun or conflicts that have been fully carried out (but not resolved)?

If you know that your spouse is bitter against you for any reason, you must make every effort to resolve the situation. By not dealing with their bitterness, you risk becoming angry, and then bitterness takes root in your own heart. There are right and wrong ways to resolve conflicts. Our ultimate method of resolving conflicts needs to be in agreement with God's Word.

E. Sinful Ways To Resolve Conflicts:

1. *Let time heal it.* Healing alone is not what is needed or what honors God when conflict has taken place. What is needed is confession, forgiveness, and repentance. Note: Time passes for us but not for God. He wants His children to deal with sin quickly (Matthew 5:23-24; Ephesians 4:26). Usually another's sin and our own hurts become bigger (not smaller) with the passage of time. Our memories can become very selective and make the resolution process even more difficult.
2. *Try to bury it.* Trying to forget about what happened or stay so busy that you don't have time to think only works for so long. A person who lives this way will most likely accumulate many unresolved issues, which can very easily result in more sin, bitterness, depression, and even physical sickness. Many

- misuse Philippians 3:13 in an attempt to biblically justify this position.
3. *Pretend it never happened.* This sinful way to resolve conflict is one way to really irritate your spouse! All the pretending in the world does not erase a conflict. A person who does this is not living in reality and will only carry on superficial relationships with other people (Philippians 4:8a).
  4. *Wait for the other person to initiate the resolution process.* This approach is in direct violation of God's command to go and seek to resolve any problem that someone has with you (Matthew 5:23-24).
  5. *Punish the other person until they change and take all the blame.* People often do various things to punish their spouse until they change and assume the blame. They may give them the silent treatment, be harsh with them, or even leave. This method of dealing with conflict is only heaping sin upon sin (Galatians 6:1; Romans 12:9-20).

#### F. Biblical Way To Resolve Conflict:

1. Confess any sin that you are aware of to God. Ask Him to open your eyes to any other sin on your part as you consider His Word. You can start by thinking about your motives, your thoughts, your attitude, your words, and your actions (Psalm 139:23-24; 1 John 1:9-10).
2. Go to your spouse, ask forgiveness for each thing you did specifically and discuss your plan not to do those things again (Ephesians 4:32; James 5:16).
3. Express a desire to resolve the conflict fully and decide together when the best time to do that would be. Ask if they would (in the meantime) consider if there is any other way that you have sinned, any sin that they may have committed, and what the issues of the conflict are (Proverbs 15:28).
4. Come together at the appointed time. Express your desire to honor God and love one another by doing everything you can to resolve this issue with both of you on the same team against the problem, not against each other (Psalm 34:14). Think of the problem as not between you but as a challenge for both of you together.
5. Pray together for God's wisdom, self-control, and speech (Proverbs 16:32; James 1:5).
6. Review God's rules of communication. Decide on a reminder phrase or sign you can use if there is a violation during your discussion (Ephesians 4:15, 26-32; James 1:19).
  - a. Be a good listener.
  - b. Speak the truth.
  - c. Speak in a righteous way—in love.
  - d. Speak with the right purposes: God's glory and the other's good.
  - e. Speak as clearly as possible.
7. Each one should take a turn to confess any sin that has not been confessed (to God and spouse) and ask forgiveness. Each should ask for the other's input (Ephesians 4:32; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9).
8. Begin discussing the issues that precipitated the conflict. Let me suggest maybe spending 30-40 minutes trying to reach the point of unity concerning the

issue (at least come up with a plan). After that decide on another time to come together again. Seek to love one another in the meantime.

**Key Terms:**

Conflict – Literally, to strike at or fight against. Conflict is when both parties sin against one another in their communication and or their actions and are then in opposition to one another.

Manipulation – To control somebody or something, generally without their realizing it.

P.A.U.S.E – Prepare, Affirm relationship, Understand interests, Search for creative solutions, Evaluate options objectively and reasonably.

## Session 6

### **BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES OF PHYSICAL INTIMACY**

(Source: Cutrer and Scott's lecture notes)

**OBJECTIVE:** Couples will learn how the Bible clearly presents intimacy and sexual union as a blessing from God. Couples will be able to define intimacy and describe the three elements required to experience true intimacy in their marriage.

#### **Key Ideas and Relevant Texts:**

A. Couples who understand covenant love and the importance of sexual intimacy in expressing that love to their mate are better equipped to glorify God through their respective roles in marriage. Sexual intimacy in marriage should be a cause for celebration, as a husband and wife unite into oneness in the sight of God for his glory and our passion.

B. Sex in marriage is pure and holy.

1. Created by God before sin entered the world (Gen 1-2).
2. Still called honorable after the fall (Prov 5; Heb 13:4).
3. Sexual relation in marriage is as holy as:
  - a. Praying
  - b. Reading the Bible
  - c. Preaching
  - d. Giving

C. The primary goal of sexual relationship is Christlike giving—providing sexual satisfaction for one's spouse for the glory of God.

D. Sexual relations are to be regular and continuous: "Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Cor 7:3-4).

E. Three requirements for true intimacy to develop.

1. Spiritual
2. Relational
3. Physical

F. Understanding intimacy:  $1+1=1$ . Clay: when pink and blue are joined, they become purple and cannot be separated.

#### G. Purposes for Sexuality:

1. Procreation
2. Celebration
3. Communication
4. Transformation

#### G. Physiology of Sexuality

1. Differences between men and women.
  - a. Endorphins—Very Good. They reduce the sensation of pain and affect emotions.
  - b. Enkephalins—Very Good. Either of two pentapeptides with opiate and analgesic activity that occurs naturally, especially in the brain, and has a marked affinity for opiate receptors
  - c. Dopamine—Good. Makes us feel good and happy.
  - d. Serotonin—Bad. Too much leads to depression
  - e. Prostaglandin—“Ouch” or Oh! One of a number of hormone-like substances that participate in a wide range of body functions such as the contraction and relaxation of smooth muscle, the dilation and constriction of blood vessels, control of blood pressure, and modulation of inflammation.
  - f. Oxytocin—Aaah! Or not! A hormone made in the brain that plays a role in childbirth and lactation by causing muscles to contract in the uterus (womb) and the mammary glands in the breast. Animal studies have shown that oxytocin also has a role in pair bonding, mate-guarding, and social memory.

H. Limitation on sexual activity, keeping in mind God’s glory and pleasing Christ, don't call something sin that is not sin. You should not engage in sexual activities that cause you to use your spouse or are only for your own satisfaction at the expense of your spouse. Watch out for behavior that is manipulative or self-seeking.

1. Unselfish love must always be the motive (1 Cor 13:4-7).
2. Must be based on mutual agreement—preferring one another and prayer-related if not engaging in intimacy (Phil 2:1-4).
3. Apply the principle of mutual authority (1 Cor 7:2-3).
4. Do not cause your spouse to violate his/her conscience—nothing sinful (Rom 14:23).
5. Self-control in between.

**Key Terms:**

1. Intimacy – to be fully loved and fully known, without fear of rejection or fear of being objectified.
2. Dopamine – Hormone that makes us feel good and happy.
3. Serotonin – Bad hormone. Too much leads to depression.
4. Apex – Ecstasy. Reaching the point of orgasm through intercourse.
5. Afterglow – Calm after reaching apex. Often, a sense of exhaustion after intercourse.
6. Arousal – Period of excitement when senses become heightened, often during foreplay.

## Session 7

### **FORGIVENESS, GRACE, and MERCY**

(Source: Chris Brauns, *Unpacking Forgiveness*)

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

Couples will learn the differences between Therapeutic Forgiveness and Biblical Forgiveness. Couples will also learn how Biblical Forgiveness is conditional while Therapeutic Forgiveness is unconditional.

#### **Key Ideas and Relevant Text:**

Many people do not know what it means to forgive or the different types of forgiveness.

A. God expects Christians to forgive in the same way that he forgives them. From there, a definition of God's forgiveness is developed. God's forgiveness is a commitment by the one true God to pardon graciously those who repent and believe so that they are reconciled to him, although not all consequences are eliminated.

B. Christian forgiveness defined: Christians should forgive graciously. Biblical forgiveness is a freely offered gift motivated by love. In biblical forgiveness, the forgiving person pays the price of forgiveness.

C. The gracious offer of forgiveness is unconditional. Christians should always have a disposition of grace toward those who offend them. This is what Jesus modeled on the cross when he prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

D. Four Promises that Christians make when they forgive another:

1. I will not dwell on this incident.
2. I will not bring up this incident again and use it against you.
3. I will not talk to others about this incident.
4. I will not let this incident stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

E. Biblical forgiveness is conditional:

1. Forgiveness is a commitment to pardon the offender.
2. Forgiveness is something that happens between two parties.
3. Biblical forgiveness is conditioned upon repentance.
4. Biblical forgiveness is motivated by love for neighbor and love for God. It is for God's glory and our good.
5. Justice is the basis for forgiveness. You cannot legitimately forgive someone if



- he or she has not done anything wrong according to God's standards.
6. Biblical forgiveness is inextricably connected to reconciliation.

F. Therapeutic forgiveness is unconditional:

1. Forgiveness is a feeling. It is ceasing to feel resentment or bitterness.
2. Forgiveness is private or individual. It is "primarily an activity that goes on within an individual person's heart and mind."
3. Forgiveness is unconditional. Forgiveness should be granted regardless of whether or not the offender is repentant.
4. Forgiveness is motivated primarily by self-interest. You should forgive another for your own sake.
5. A standard of justice is not critical—it is about how the person "feels." According to this definition, you can legitimately choose to forgive someone who has not done anything wrong.

**Key Terms:**

1. Repent – To change behavior as a result of a complete change of thinking and attitude. It means to turn around in actions and attitude.
2. Biblical forgiveness – Biblical forgiveness is a freely offered gift motivated by love. In biblical forgiveness, the forgiving person pays the price of forgiveness.

## Session 8

### **TECHNOLOGY'S IMPACT ON MARRIAGE**

(Source: Covenant Eyes Website)

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

Couples will learn how to recognize when technology is negatively affecting their marriages or families. Discussion will center around the importance of establishing boundaries and limitations on how technology is used. Couples will also learn about the advantages of installing filtering or blocking software onto cellphones, tablets, computers and other personal devices capable of accessing the Internet.

#### **Key Ideas and Relevant Text:**

1. Importance of maintaining purity in the marriage.
2. Negative impact of social media on relationships and marriages.
3. Controlling access to technology within the home.
  - A. Placement of computer in family room or open space in the home.
  - B. Placing boundaries or limitations on usage of technology.
  - C. Keeping cellphones and distractions out of the bedroom.
4. The American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers reports that 56% of divorce cases involve one party having “an obsessive interest in pornographic websites.”
  - A. According to numerous studies, prolonged exposure to pornography leads to:
    1. A diminished trust between intimate couples.
    2. The belief that promiscuity is the natural state.
    3. Cynicism about love or the need for affection between sexual partners.
    4. The belief that marriage is sexually confining.
    5. A lack of attraction to family and child-raising.
5. More than half of boys and nearly a third of girls see their first pornographic images before they turn 13. In a survey of hundreds of college students, 93% of boys and 62% of girls said they were exposed to pornography before they turned 18. In the same survey, 83% of boys and 57% of girls said they had seen images of group sex online.
6. Porn presents a higher level of sexual excitement than married sex; it also allows a man to have sex on his terms. Porn is always available, never too busy, and always inviting. It doesn't criticize, doesn't require foreplay or patience, isn't dependent on "feeling close," and

never has a headache. When a guy is engaged in this type of sexual outlet, his sexuality becomes centered on his immediate needs and demands. The prospect of working through the messy issues of marital intimacy is pretty unattractive.

7. Differences in Internet filtering or blocking software.

## APPENDIX 4

### PRE- AND POST-SEMINAR SURVEY

The following survey questions were presented to individuals participating in the weekend marriage enrichment retreat offered at Howling Wolf Ranch. Each participant was asked to complete the survey before the beginning of the first session and was then asked to retake the survey at the end of the last session. Survey answers were evaluated to determine how much knowledge participants acquired over the retreat. The marriage enrichment retreat was determined successful as the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

## **PRE- AND POST-SEMINAR SURVEY**

### **Agreement to Participate**

The research study in which you are about to participate is designed to help develop and conduct a weekend Marriage Enrichment Seminar for couples at Easthaven Baptist Church in Kalispell, Montana. This research is being conducted by Michael W. Marrs for the purpose of completing the requirements for his Doctor of Ministry degree. In this research, you will be asked to participate in a weekend retreat where you will complete both pre- and post-seminar surveys. You will also be encouraged to actively participate in all sessions of the retreat by asking questions and volunteering answers to questions raised during the seminar. Any information you provide will be held *strictly confidential*. At no time will your name be reported or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time.

By completing this pre- and post-Retreat Survey and signing your name below, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Personal Identification

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Referred By: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital Status (circle): Single Engaged Married Separated Divorced Remarried

How many years have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_

Have you and your spouse ever attended a marriage enrichment seminar before? \_\_\_\_\_

What are you hoping to achieve at this seminar? \_\_\_\_\_

Education (last year completed): \_\_\_\_\_ Are you currently enrolled in school? \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies: \_\_\_\_\_

Other significant time/financial commitments:

\_\_\_\_\_

Information about Children: If you have children, please provide the following information:

Child's Name	Age	Gender	Living	Years of Ed.	Stepchild (Yes or No)
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\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Please read each of the following statements carefully and *circle the answer* from the scale provided that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
1. What we believe about each other determines the quality of our marriage.						SD D DS AS A SA
2. Fundamentally, marriage is all about our love for each other.						SD D DS AS A SA
3. The ultimate purpose of marriage is to put the covenant relationship a couple has with each other on display.						SD D DS AS A SA
4. The biblical picture of marriage is between one man and one woman.						SD D DS AS A SA
5. The idea of a wife's total submission to her husband reflects Old Testament teachings and does not apply as much under the New Covenant.						SD D DS AS A SA
6. Headship is the divine calling of a husband to rule over his home.						SD D DS AS A SA
7. A marriage is only as good as a couple's ability to communicate with each other.						SD D DS AS A SA
8. The most crucial element in communication is our body language.						SD D DS AS A SA
9. Conflict occurs when one person feels upset with another.						SD D DS AS A SA
10. Conflict always results from personal pride, self-serving lusts or both.						SD D DS AS A SA
11. Quarrels and fights are the result of our own passions and desires.						SD D DS AS A SA
12. Differences and disagreements are destructive and not beneficial.						SD D DS AS A SA
13. Genesis 3:16 states, "Yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." This verse reflects a wife's growing love for her husband.						SD D DS AS A SA

**Please read each of the following statements carefully and *circle the answer* from the scale provided that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.**

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
14.	Problems in marriage stem from a war within a husband or wife's heart.				SD D DS AS A SA
15.	I believe I am the biggest problem in my marriage.				SD D DS AS A SA
16.	The cause of couples having marital difficulties is sin in their hearts.				SD D DS AS A SA
17.	The source of angry words, unforgiving looks, and cold-shoulders is unmet emotional needs and hurt feelings.				SD D DS AS A SA
18.	Most men think about sex, on average, three to five times per day.				SD D DS AS A SA
19.	Most healthy women think of sexual intercourse an average of one or two times per month.				SD D DS AS A SA
20.	Scripture demonstrates there is such a thing as "Christian Sex."				SD D DS AS A SA
21.	Marriage is a union in which we no longer have final say about our bodies. We voluntarily relinquish our rights to our husband or wife.				SD D DS AS A SA
22.	Outside marriage, sexual intercourse between two people who love each other and have committed themselves to each other is not a sin.				SD D DS AS A SA
23.	Couples who are truly following Christ from the heart will not ask "How far can I go?" but "What is God's standard for sexuality and how can I most glorify God in this relationship?"				SD D DS AS A SA
24.	Social media sites like Facebook are beneficial to my marriage.				SD D DS AS A SA
25.	Listing pros and cons are the two keys to good decision-making.				SD D DS AS A SA
26.	As it relates to our relationship with God, no spiritual discipline is more important than prayer.				SD D DS AS A SA



Please read each of the following statements carefully and *circle the answer* from the scale provided that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
27. Having technology available in the bedroom is a good thing.					
					SD D DS AS A SA
28. It is better a wife know her husband is looking at pornography than not know who else he is might be looking at.					
					SD D DS AS A SA
29. It is easier to talk about your sin than it is to believe you are forgiven.					
					SD D DS AS A SA
30. Pornography is extremely damaging to marriage relationships.					
					SD D DS AS A SA
31. I can tolerate my spouse looking at pornography.					
					SD D DS AS A SA
32. Most people can choose to quit looking at pornography entirely on their own.					
					SD D DS AS A SA
33. My children would never get involved in looking at pornography.					
					SD D DS AS A SA
34. I struggle with idolatrous lusts.					
					SD D DS AS A SA
35. God created us to live in happiness and joy with one another.					
					SD D DS AS A SA
36. I can trust my emotions and feelings to guide me in decision-making.					
					SD D DS AS A SA
37. My emotions and feelings generally control my thoughts.					
					SD D DS AS A SA
38. Sin is defined differently based upon an individual's beliefs.					
					SD D DS AS A SA
39. Scripture reveals how the mystery of marriage is seen in the way a husband and wife seek to fulfill each other's needs.					
					SD D DS AS A SA
40. A New Covenant relationship exists in marriage because of the vows a husband and wife willing enter into.					
					SD D DS AS A SA

**Please read each of the following statements carefully and *circle the answer* from the scale provided that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.**

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>				
<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>				
41.	Biblical forgiveness is a feeling. It is ceasing to feel resentment or bitterness towards another person.			SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
42.	Biblical forgiveness is motivated by my desire to forgive others so I am free from hate and the pain associated with betrayal.			SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
43.	There are times in life when I find myself forgiving God for things that have happened to me or someone I love.			SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
44.	How I forgive others is based on what I believe theologically.			SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
45.	The pleasures of sin are the rewards it offers—it lives in me.			SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
46.	No one who is born of God can live at peace with sin in his or her life.			SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
47.	A treaty between the desires of my flesh and God is possible because of my spiritual growth and sanctification.			SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
48.	My spouse should be willing to change to meet my emotional needs.			SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
49.	I recognize certain changes I must make for our future happiness.			SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
50.	Marital happiness is dependent upon a couple’s ability to meet each other’s emotional needs.			SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
51.	Knowing each other’s “love language” will result in a lasting marriage.			SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
52.	God calls each husband to be the supreme leader in his home.			SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
53.	A wife’s total submission to her husband’s authority is biblical.			SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA

**(Survey Continued)**

**Terms and definitions:**

1. *Ezer Knegdo*
2. *Ishah*
3. Cleave
4. Nephesh
5. *Ha 'adam*
6. Hold Fast
7. Submission
8. Preeminence of Christ
9. Idol
10. *Ish*
11. Idolatrous lusts
12. Passion
13. Longsuffering
14. Humble
15. Conflict
16. Manipulation
17. Headship
18. P.A.U.S.E. (Ken Sande Acronym) \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ relationship, \_\_\_\_\_ interest, \_\_\_\_\_ for creative solutions, \_\_\_\_\_ options objectively and reasonably.
19. Paraphrasing
20. True Intimacy

**Fill In The Blank:**

1. Intimacy means: To be fully \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ without \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Women can listen to and process \_\_\_\_\_ separate audio inputs; men process \_\_\_\_\_.
3. A woman's skin is \_\_\_\_\_ times more sensitive to touch and pressure than a man's skin.
4. On average, women speak \_\_\_\_\_ words per day, while a man typically speaks \_\_\_\_\_ words per day.
5. The primary purpose of marriage is to \_\_\_\_\_.
6. It is just as important to \_\_\_\_\_ the right person as it is to \_\_\_\_\_ the right person.
7. One of the root causes of isolation is \_\_\_\_\_.
8. God calls men to \_\_\_\_\_ love and lead their wives.
9. God calls women to \_\_\_\_\_ and support their husbands.
10. A husband's privileged role is to \_\_\_\_\_ his wife.
11. God calls a wife to be a \_\_\_\_\_ in the marriage relationship.
12. The source of our anger is \_\_\_\_\_.
13. Conflict occurs when our \_\_\_\_\_ aren't fulfilled.
14. Sex is like a \_\_\_\_\_ in marriage, not a \_\_\_\_\_.
15. God created men and women with two key attributes: First, to \_\_\_\_\_ him and, second, to be in \_\_\_\_\_ with him and each other.
16. Three questions to ask when attempting to identify an idol include:
  - A. \_\_\_\_\_?

B. \_\_\_\_\_?

C. \_\_\_\_\_?

17. Once idols are identified, it is imperative to begin “\_\_\_\_\_” all sinful desires and behaviors and begin “\_\_\_\_\_” righteous motives, thoughts, and behaviors.

18. Women derive the fastest neurological reward you can get outside of an orgasm through \_\_\_\_\_.

19. Men see \_\_\_\_\_ colors in the rainbow, while women see eight to ten colors.

20. Most men talk \_\_\_\_\_; most women talk \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

21. Talking can intimidate men while it nurtures \_\_\_\_\_ for women.

22. Men feel compelled to offer \_\_\_\_\_ while women want affirmation and assurance.

### **Rate Your Marriage**

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest possible rating and 10 being the highest possible rating, how would you rate your marriage today? \_\_\_\_\_.

## Answer Sheet

### Terms and definitions:

1. *Ezer Knegdo*: Helper Suitable
2. *Ishah*: First Woman
3. Cleave: To hold fast or to adhere to
4. Nephesh: Hebrew word for soul
5. *Ha 'adam*: First Man
6. Hold Fast: To enter into a covenant relationship of faithfulness with each other
7. Submission: Obedying from the heart and choosing to follow leadership even when one believes he or she knows a better way or believes he or she can do a better job
8. Preeminence of Christ: Christ first in everything
9. Idol: Anything that captures our hearts, minds, and affections more than God
10. *Ish*: Husband/Man
11. Idolatrous lusts: Desire for something we are willing to sin to get
12. Passion: A desire that consumes us; another term for idol
13. Longsuffering: To demonstrate patience regardless of difficult circumstances
14. Humble: Doing nothing out of selfish or empty conceit; acting with humility of mind
15. Conflict: To strike at or fight against. Conflict occurs when both parties sin against one another in their communication and/or their actions and they are then in opposition to one another.
16. Manipulation: To control somebody or something, generally without their knowing it
17. Headship: The position of being the leader. Biblically, the husband is the leader of his wife.
18. P.A.U.S.E. (Ken Sande Acronym) **PREPARE**, **AFFIRM** the relationship, **UNDERSTAND** interest, **SEARCH** for creative solutions, **EVALUATE** options objectively and reasonably.

19. Paraphrasing: When you listen carefully enough so that you can tell your partner what was just said using your own words.
20. True Intimacy: To be fully loved and fully known, without fear of rejection.

**Fill In The Blank:**

1. Intimacy means: To be fully **loved** and **fully known**, without **fear of rejection** or **fear of being objectified**
2. Women can listen to and process **7** separate audio inputs; men process **1**.
3. A woman's skin is **10** times more sensitive to touch and pressure than a man's skin.
4. On average, women speak **20,000** words per day, while a man typically speaks **7,000** words per day.
5. The primary purpose of marriage is to **glorify God. Marriage is a picture of Christ's love for the church.**
6. It is just as important to **become** the right person as it is to **find** the right person.
7. One of the root causes of isolation is **selfishness**.
8. God calls men to **humbly** love and lead their wives.
9. God calls women to **respect, encourage** and support their husbands.
10. A husband's privileged role is to **lead** his wife.
11. God calls a wife to be a **help mate** in the marriage relationship.
12. The source of our anger is **pride**.
13. Conflict occurs when our **desires or passions** aren't fulfilled.
14. Sex is like a **thermometer** in marriage, not a **thermostat**.
15. God created men and women with two key attributes: First, to **worship** him and, second, to be in **relationship** with him and each other.

16. **Three questions** to ask when attempting to identify an idol include:
- A. **What am I willing to sin to get?**
  - B. **What will cause me to sin if I don't get it?**
  - C. **What will I turn to for refuge, comfort, peace, joy, hope or happiness?**
  - D. **What do I tend to worry about or fear?**
  - E. **What will I compromise my beliefs for?**
17. Once idols are identified, it is imperative to begin **“Putting-Off”** all sinful desires and behaviors and begin **“Putting-On”** righteous motives, thoughts, and behaviors.
18. Women derive the fastest neurological reward you can get outside of an orgasm through **Talking**.
19. Men see **7** colors in the rainbow, while women see eight to ten colors.
20. Most men talk **facts**; most women talk **facts** and **feelings**.
21. Talking can intimidate men while it nurtures **intimacy** for women.
22. Men feel compelled to offer **solutions** while women want affirmation and assurance.



## **RATE YOUR MARRIAGE**

(Results)

Each seminar participant was asked to rate his or her marriage before and after the retreat for comparative analysis. Participants rated their marriages based on a scale of 1-10, with 1 being the lowest possible rating and 10 being the highest possible rating. The results were as follows:

Participant	Before	After	Change
1.	7	8	1 pt. increase
2.	8	9	1 pt. increase
3.	8	8	0 pt. no change
4.	8	9	1 pt. increase
5.	7	8	1 pt. increase
6.	5	7	2 pt. increase
7.	8	9	1 pt. increase
8.	9	9	0 pt. no change
9.	7	9	2 pt. increase
10.	6	9	3 pt. increase
11.	3	8	5 pt. increase
12.	-	5	Unknown
13.	7	5	2 pt. decrease
14.	8	7	1 pt. decrease
15.	4	9	5 pt. increase

## APPENDIX 5

### PAIRED TWO SAMPLE T-TEST

The *null hypothesis* states that there is no difference between the means of the pre-test and post-test scores; the *research hypothesis* states there will be a significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores.

The results of the paired two sample t-Test demonstrates that participation by a group of adults in the marriage enrichment seminar made a statistically significant difference, resulting in the increase of their knowledge of what it means to be a couple united in a marriage that is glorifying God ( $t = -17.2$ ,  $t$ -critical value = 2.144,  $p < .0000$ ,). The change in scores is not due to chance but demonstrates the marriage enrichment retreat made a statistically significant difference, disproving the null hypothesis.

### Paired Student's *t*-Test: Results

The results of a paired *t*-test performed at 12:25 on 4-JUN-2015

$t = 17.2$

degrees of freedom = 14

$t$  Critical Value (5%) = 2.14479

The probability of this result, assuming the null hypothesis, is 0.000

Group A: Number of items= 15

7.00 10.0 12.0 12.0 15.0 15.0 16.0 22.0 23.0 23.0 28.0 30.0 30.0 30.0 30.0

Mean = 20.2

95% confidence interval for Mean: 15.64 thru 24.76

Standard Deviation = 8.23

Hi = 30.0 Low = 7.00

Median = 22.0

Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 7.13

Group B: Number of items= 15

50.0 60.0 70.0 75.0 77.0 78.0 80.0 80.0 82.0 83.0 87.0 87.0 90.0 90.0 96.0

Mean = 79.0

95% confidence interval for Mean: 72.40 thru 85.60

Standard Deviation = 11.9

Hi = 96.0 Low = 50.0

Median = 80.0

Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 8.33

Group A-B: Number of items= 15

-72.0 -72.0 -71.0 -71.0 -71.0 -66.0 -62.0 -60.0 -58.0 -58.0 -57.0 -52.0 -47.0 -35.0 -30.0

Mean = -58.8

95% confidence interval for Mean: -66.12 thru -51.48

Standard Deviation = 13.2

Hi = -30.0 Low = -72.0

Median = -60.0

Average Absolute Deviation from Median = 9.87

## APPENDIX 6

### MARRIAGE RETREAT SCHEDULE AND MENU

The following schedule was adhered to closely during the retreat. However, slight changes were made to accommodate open discussions on particular topics.

**Marriage Enrichment Seminar Schedule**  
**May 22-24 & 29-31, 2015**

**Friday 5/22 & 5/29**

6:00 – 6:30	Guests Arriving (Paperwork already completed)
6:30 – 8:00	Dinner & Introductions
8:00 – 8:45	Key Topic #1 God's Ultimate Purpose & Plan For Marriage (Dessert)
9:00 – 10:00	Video #1 – Love Happens: Gods Purpose & Plan For Marriage

**Saturday 5/23 & 5/30**

7:00 – 7:45	Prep For Breakfast: Coffee and Social In The Dining Room
7:45 – 9:00	Breakfast
9:00 – 9:45	Key Topic #2 Addressing Heart Issues—Idols of the Heart
10:00 – 11:00	Video #2 – Love Fades: Overcoming Isolation
11:00 – 11:45	Project One (Outdoors)
11:45 – 1:00	Lunch – Key Topic #3 – Roles & Responsibilities of Husbands & Wives
1:00 – 2:00	Video #3 Love Dances: Fulfilling Our Responsibilities
2:00 – 3:00	Project Two – (Outdoors)
3:00 – 3:45	Key Topic #4 Communication Skills
4:00 – 4:45	Key Topic #5 Conflict Resolution
5:00 – 7:00	Dinner
7:00 – 8:00	Video #4 – Love Interrupted (Dessert)
8:00 – 9:00	Key Topic #6 Biblical Principles of Physical Intimacy
9:00 – 10:00	Open Discussion

**Sunday 5/24 & 5/30**

7:00 – 7:45	Prep For Breakfast: Coffee and Social In The Dining Room
7:45 – 9:00	Breakfast
9:00 – 10:00	Worship
10:00 – 10:45	Key Topic #7 Forgiveness Grace & Mercy
11:00 – 12:00	Project Three – (Outdoors)
12:00 – 12:45	Key Topic #8 Technologies Impact on Marriage
1:00 – 2:00	Lunch – Video #6 – Love Always: Leaving a Lasting Legacy
2:00 – 3:00	Post-Course Survey; Seminar Critique; Group Picture

**Note:** The format for this marriage enrichment seminar is based on eight key topics with lesson plans. Key topics are also supplemented by, *The Art of Marriage: Getting to the Heart of God's Design*, video series and workbook produced by Familylife Publishing of Little Rock Arkansas.

**Note:** Lecture notes covering all eight topics and several additional topics have been provided as an additional resource to you. Dr. Stuart Scott has graciously given permission to use his class lecture notes as part of the content of this marriage enrichment seminar. All rights to this material are reserved. No part of this material may be reproduced, photocopied, electronically transmitted or otherwise distributed, without the prior permission of Dr. Scott.

## RETREAT MENU

The following menu was followed for both weekend marriage retreats

### **Friday Evening Dinner: 6:30-8:00 PM.**

- Beef Brisket
- Potato Salad
- Baked Beans
- Cole Slaw
- Strawberry Shortcake

### **Saturday Morning Breakfast: 7:00-9:00 AM.**

- Egg, Sausage, and hash brown casserole
- Yogurt (varied choices)
- Fruit
- Muffins
- Coffee, Orange Juice, or Milk

### **Saturday Lunch: 11:45 AM-1:00 PM.**

- Broiled—Sandwiches on hoagie buns (variety of meats & cheeses to choose from).
- Potato Chips
- Potato Salad
- Baked Beans
- Cookies

### **Saturday Night Dinner: 5:00-7:00 PM**

- Barbeque Chicken
- Baked Potatoes
- Tossed Green Salad
- Bean Salad
- Garlic Rolls
- Peach Cobbler

### **Sunday Morning Breakfast: 7:00-9:00 AM**

- Pancakes
- Sausage
- Fruit
- Muffins
- Yogurt (varied choices)
- Coffee, Orange Juice, or Milk

### **Sunday Lunch: 1:00-2:00 PM**

- Open kitchen (broiled sandwiches and leftovers from previous meals)

## APPENDIX 7

### SEMINAR CRITIQUE, RESULTS, AND COMMENTS

The following seminar critique was presented to individuals participating in the weekend long marriage enrichment seminars. Each participant was asked to complete the critique at the end of the last session. Information provided by participants in the critiques and their personal comments will be utilized to implement changes that will enhance the marriage enrichment seminar in the future.

Critique results are included, along with participants' personal comments.

## SEMINAR CRITIQUE

Please read each of the following statements carefully and *circle the answer* from the scale provided that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Somewhat	Agree Somewhat	Agree	Strongly Agree	
SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA	
1.						SD D DS AS A SA
						of marriage enrichment seminar.
2.						SD D DS AS A SA
						The accommodations were clean and comfortable.
3.						SD D DS AS A SA
						The food was well prepared, good, plentiful, and nutritious.
4.						SD D DS AS A SA
						The amount of material covered exceeded my expectations.
5.						SD D DS AS A SA
						The material covered was well presented and understandable.
6.						SD D DS AS A SA
						The instructor had a clear understanding of the material presented.
7.						SD D DS AS A SA
						Each topic presented was relevant for achieving a better marriage.
8.						SD D DS AS A SA
						Incorporating <i>The Art of Marriage</i> material was beneficial.
9.						SD D DS AS A SA
						The retreat has increased my appreciation for God's work in my life and the life of my spouse.
10.						SD D DS AS A SA
						The retreat has given me a greater appreciation for my spouse.
11.						SD D DS AS A SA
						The retreat has given me a greater appreciation for my role in my marriage.
12.						SD D DS AS A SA
						Having attended this retreat, I believe my spouse and I can communicate better and deal with conflict more positively.



Please read each of the following statements carefully and *circle the answer* from the scale provided that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	
<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	
13.	Session one, <i>God's Ultimate Purpose &amp; Plan For Marriage</i> , exceeded my expectations.					SD D DS AS A SA
14.	Session two, <i>Addressing Heart Issues—Idols of the Heart</i> , exceeded my expectations.					SD D DS AS A SA
15.	Session three, <i>Role and Responsibilities of Husband and Wives</i> , exceeded my expectations.					SD D DS AS A SA
16.	Session four, <i>Communication Skills</i> , exceeded my expectations.					SD D DS AS A SA
17.	Session five, <i>Conflict Resolution</i> , exceeded my expectations.					SD D DS AS A SA
18.	Session six, <i>Biblical Principles of Physical Intimacy</i> , exceeded my expectations.					SD D DS AS A SA
19.	Session seven, <i>Forgiveness Grace and Mercy</i> , exceeded my expectations.					SD D DS AS A SA
20.	Session eight, <i>Technology's Impact on Marriage</i> , exceeded my expectations.					SD D DS AS A SA
21.	Combining both power point and video was beneficial for learning.					SD D DS AS A SA
22.	Handout materials were beneficial and useful for future reference.					SD D DS AS A SA
23.	The <i>Art of Marriage</i> material complemented each session.					SD D DS AS A SA
24.	The seminar was conducted in a timely manner.					SD D DS AS A SA
25.	My spouse and I were able to spend quality time together.					SD D DS AS A SA
26.	The weekend format worked well for my spouse and me.					SD D DS AS A SA

**Please read each of the following statements carefully and *circle the answer* from the scale provided that best represents your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.**

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree Somewhat</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>DS</b>	<b>AS</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>

27. An eight-week format would work better for this seminar. SD D DS AS A SA

28. I would recommend this marriage enrichment seminar to others. SD D DS AS A SA

**Please provide any additional comments or concerns you would like to share:**

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Thank you for your participation in this weekend retreat. “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Rom 15:13).

## SEMINAR CRITIQUE RESULTS

Question	Participant #									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	SA	SA	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	N/C	N/C	SA
2	SA	SA	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	N/C	N/C	SA
3	SA	SA	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	N/C	N/C	SA
4	SA	SA	DS	A	SA	SA	A	N/C	N/C	SA
5	SA	SA	AS	A	SA	SA	A	N/C	N/C	SA
6	SA	A	A	SA	SA	SA	A	N/C	N/C	SA
7	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	N/C	N/C	SA
8	SA	AS	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	N/C	N/C	SA
9	SA	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	N/C	N/C	SA
10	A	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	N/C	N/C	SA
11	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	N/C	N/C	SA
12	A	AS	SA	AS	A	SA	SA	N/C	N/C	SA
13	A	SA	AS	A	A	A	A	N/C	N/C	SA
14	A	DS	DS	A	A	A	A	N/C	N/C	SA
15	A	DS	A	SA	SA	A	A	N/C	N/C	A
16	A	AS	A	A	A	A	A	N/C	N/C	SA
17	A	DS	A	A	A	A	A	N/C	N/C	SA
18	A	SD	AS	A	A	AS	AS	N/C	N/C	SA
19	A	AS	A	SA	A	A	AS	N/C	N/C	A
20	A	AS	AS	A	A	AS	AS	N/C	N/C	A
21	SA	AS	A	SA	A	A	SA	N/C	N/C	SA
22	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	A	A	N/C	N/C	SA
23	SA	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	N/C	N/C	SA
24	SA	DS	SA	SA	AS	A	A	N/C	N/C	SA
25	AS	SA	AS	SA	AS	A	AS	N/C	N/C	A
26	A	SA	SA	SA	A	SA	SA	N/C	N/C	SA
27	D	SD	DS	D	D	AS	DS	N/C	N/C	SD
28	SA	SA	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	N/C	N/C	SA

**SEMINAR CRITIQUE RESULTS**  
(Continued)

Question	Participant #				
	11	12	13	14	15
1	SA	SA	A	SA	SA
2	SA	SA	A	SA	SA
3	SA	SA	A	SA	SA
4	SA	A	AS	A	SA
5	SA	A	A	SA	SA
6	SA	A	A	SA	SA
7	SA	SA	A	SA	SA
8	SA	A	A	SA	SA
9	SA	SA	A	SA	SA
10	SA	AS	A	SA	SA
11	SA	A	A	SA	SA
12	SA	A	A	SA	A
13	A	A	DS	A	SA
14	A	A	DS	A	A
15	A	A	DS	A	SA
16	A	A	DS	A	SA
17	A	A	DS	A	SA
18	A	A	DS	A	SA
19	A	A	DS	A	A
20	A	AS	DS	A	A
21	SA	A	A	SA	SA
22	SA	A	AS	SA	SA
23	SA	A	AS	SA	SA
24	SA	AS	A	SA	SA
25	SA	AS	AS	SA	AS
26	SA	AS	AS	SA	SA
27	AS	AS	D	AS	AS
28	SA	SA	A	SA	SA

**Note:** After reviewing the results, it became apparent that the emphasis on “exceeding” expectations in questions 13-20, rather than rating the value or impact of the session, skews the interpretation of these responses. For example, one could have very high expectations and learn a lot, but still mark this as disagreeing that it exceeded expectations. In this case you wouldn’t get the information that the participant learned a lot from the data.

## **SEMINAR CRITIQUE – COMMENTS**

(As written by participants in the comment section)

Participant Number:

1. A. It would be helpful to have a little more time with spouse to talk (more periods, not lengthening existing program).  
B. Assignments with presented material would make it more impactful for our relationship.
2. A. Include more time for introductions: “Why we are all here?” “Where is your marriage today?”  
B. Intimacy was disappointing. It wasn't as honest or as in depth as it could have been. I didn't care for the video, I would have preferred the adult version. I would include your power point.  
C. Good variation of conversation and lecture and video. Perhaps less video.  
D. Projects and intentional alone time were great!  
E. You could one day charge up to \$500 a weekend for something like this!  
F. Neat to have Anne here! She should be at every one. Thank you!!!
4. A. Thank you for the opportunity to draw closer to God and my wife. It was a great weekend. We really appreciate it.
5. A. I had no idea what to expect for this weekend, and I came away with a deeper appreciation for my husband, and insight on how to have a Godly marriage.  
B. I am excited to implement all I have learned and I'm way blessed to be a wife of an incredible, humble servant leader of a husband!
6. A. Use more specific examples. Watch for repetition.
7. A. I think eliminating a few of the videos and using your own power point would be beneficial, not only because you could offer more information but also it could open up more time for fellowship or open discussion.
10. A. I would not be able to attend an eight-week seminar and it would lose continuity, intensity and impact.  
B. Perhaps start earlier on Friday afternoon around 4-ish, to allow more free time as a couple and maybe a nap.
11. A. The benefits of this retreat are priceless. Thank you.
13. A. Could have used some bigger breaks.
14. A. Some group split up would be good—just men together and just women together.  
B. I think the entire package for the retreat was good, from the leader, to the food, to the material and the setting. Well done.
15. A. The schedule was very packed. I think I would have enjoyed more time that my spouse and I could talk more about issues, or about issues that came up during the session would be great.

## APPENDIX 8

The following research paper focuses on the issue of, “Divorce, Remarriage and Church Leadership.” The paper addresses the Biblical grounds for divorce, and when a divorced person is free to remarry. The paper also addresses the issue of a divorced individual’s eligibility to serve in a church leadership role as a deacon or elder.

*DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE AND CHURCH LEADERSHIP*

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A Research Paper

Presented to

Dr. Stuart W. Scott

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for 80554

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by

Michael W. Marrs

1/15/13

## **DIVORCE, REMARRIAGE AND CHURCH LEADERSHIP**

In America today, four out of five adults will enter into marriage at least once during their lifetime. According to a Barna Group study, 84% of born-again Christians will choose to enter into marriage. This number is 10% higher than those claiming to be non-Christians or of other faith groups (74%)—and is 19% higher than among those claiming to be agnostics or atheists (65%).<sup>1</sup> Of those adults entering into marriage, “one out of three (33%) will have previously been divorced at least once,”<sup>2</sup> and entering into a second or third marriage.

Historically it can be argued that the divorce rate has fallen from a “high of 22.6 divorces per 1,000 married women in 1980 to 17.5 in 2007. In real terms this means that slightly more than 40% of contemporary first marriages are likely to end in divorce, down from approximately 50% in 1980.”<sup>3</sup> While the statistics are debatable, the evidence is clear that divorce has been and continues to be a major issue for society and the church today. The high percentage of adults divorcing and remarrying begs the question: “What does Scripture tell us about divorce, remarriage, and the ability to serve the church in leadership?”

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<sup>1</sup>George Barna, *New Marriage and Divorce Statistics Released* (Summary report on research conducted between January 2007 through January 2008 involving 5017 adults across the United States), accessed November 21, 2012, <http://www.barna.org/barna-update/article/15-familykids/42-new-marriage-and-divorce.html>.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Bradford W. Wilcox, “The Evolution of Divorce,” *National Affairs*, accessed November 21, 2012, <http://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/print/the-evolution-of-divorce.html>; Internet. also see: [http://w.wyofams.org/index\\_htm\\_files/Study\\_Wilcox\\_Fall09.pdf](http://w.wyofams.org/index_htm_files/Study_Wilcox_Fall09.pdf).



I will argue that Scripture teaches men and women experiencing biblical divorce and remarriage can be considered viable candidates for church leadership roles.

### **God Ordained Marriage**

In Scripture the concept of marriage is initially introduced in the first two chapters of Genesis, beginning with Genesis 1:27-28, “And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it.’” In Chapter 2, Genesis 2:24 describes the essence of marriage as an event taking place between a man and a woman as they are united into one flesh, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Emphasis is placed on three key elements, “leaving, cleaving (holding fast), and becoming one flesh.”<sup>4</sup> From these initial references in Scripture, marriage can be defined as a sacred occasion when a mutual vow between two parties takes place constituting the entering into of a covenantal union between one male and one female before God who is witness to the event (Mal 2:14; Prov. 2:17). “Marriage is the only social institution that God ordained before the fall of mankind. The Book of Hebrews declares that marriage ‘should be honored by all [people]’ (Heb. 13:4). Thus God ordained marriage for non-Christians as well as Christians. And he is the witness of all weddings, whether invited or not.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), 777.

<sup>5</sup>Norman L. Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1989), 279.

The purpose of marriage is bringing glory to God through a covenantal relationship that fulfills the need for companionship (Mal. 2:14).<sup>6</sup> It also establishes the foundation for social and spiritual wellbeing. While marriage culminates in sexual union, it does so for purposes of propagation (Gen 1:28), unification (Gen 2:24), and for recreation (Prov. 5:18-19).<sup>7</sup> “In short, marriage involves the right to sexual union between a male and female. Sexual intercourse before marriage is called *fornication* (Acts 15:20; 1 Cor. 6:18), and sexual intercourse outside of marriage is called *adultery* (Exod. 20:14; Matt. 19:9). Under the Old Testament law, those who engage in premarital intercourse were obligated to marry (Deut 22:28-29).”<sup>8</sup> In contrast, under the Old Testament law, those who engaged in adultery were to be put to death, this penalty for adultery is clearly stated in Leviticus 10:20, “If *there is* a man who commits adultery with another man's wife, one who commits adultery with his friend's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death.” The Jews in Jesus’ day were aware of the differences between adultery and fornication and the penalties for each.

Paul recognized the spiritual significance of a man and woman becoming joined or united together in one flesh and he warned his readers that for this reason they should not engage in acts of adultery that would defile the sanctity of the marriage vows. Paul explicitly states this in 1 Corinthians 6:15-16, “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take away the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot?

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<sup>6</sup>Stuart Scott, *The Exemplary Husband: A Biblical Perspective* (Bemidji, MN: Focus Publishing, 2002), 68.

<sup>7</sup>Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 279.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 278.

May it never be! Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body *with her*? For He says, ‘The two will become one flesh.’”

### **Jesus Versus the Pharisees on Divorce**

The marriage covenant is to be a lifelong commitment. Unfortunately, our sinful nature, selfish interests, and lustful desires have created a schism between God’s ultimate purpose and plan for marriage and our own human frailty. Allowances for divorce in the “Mosaic statutes were interposed, not to replace the Creator’s original intent, but merely in recognition of the reality of human hardness of heart (Matt. 19:7-8; Mark 10:5; cf. Matt. 5:31-32). In fact, marriage was intended as a lifelong, faithful union of a man and a woman.”<sup>9</sup> The fact that God merely permitted divorce but did not condone it is made clear in Malachi 2:16, where God states, “‘For I hate divorce,’ says the LORD, the God of Israel, ‘and him who covers his garment with wrong,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.’”

Jesus is confronted by Pharisees representing the Schools of Shammai and Hillel, regarding divorce in Matt: 19:3, “And *some* Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, ‘Is it lawful *for a man* to divorce his wife for any cause at all?’” Köstenberger comments on why they asked this particular question:

The Pharisees’ question brings into play the views held by the different rabbinic schools in Jesus’ day. Though not compiled until around A.D. 200, the Mishnah provides pertinent information about the respective positions on divorce in first-century Judaism: The School of Shammai says: A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her, for it is written, “Because he has found in her indecency in anything” (Deut. 24:1). And the School of Hillel says: [He may divorce her] even if

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<sup>9</sup>Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God Marriage and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2004), 229.

she spoiled a dish for him, for it is written, “Because he has found in her indecency in anything” (*m. Gittin* 9:10).<sup>10</sup>

Jesus, aware of their pretentious natures and desire for recognition, power, and authority, answers them simply and concisely denying them the opportunity to boast about their particular school’s philosophical point of view. With full knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures he answers them: “Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way” (Matt. 19:8). Jesus’ answer to the Pharisees underscores the point that God never intended for divorce to be a standard or the norm. According to Scott, “Jesus’ primary point in the discourse is to correct the Jew’s idea that they could divorce one another ‘for any cause at all’ (Matt 19:3) and to show the gravity of pursuing a sinful divorce.”<sup>11</sup> His answer did not settle well with the Pharisees, who had hoped to trap Jesus in his answer.

While God hates divorce, the Scriptures demonstrate how the loving God of “The Bible recognizes human frailty. Even though God did not design divorce, he did foresee it and accommodate his plan to it. The very fact that God led Moses to permit divorce (Deut 24: 1-4, cf. Matt 19:8) shows that God understands that in a fallen world the ideal cannot always be realized.”<sup>12</sup> Paul in his letter to the Corinthians says of divorce: “Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife (1 Cor. 7:27).”

Deut 24:2-4 serves as a warning to husbands not to give their wives a certificate of divorce prematurely, or with the idea of reinstating the marriage at a later date; hence,

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<sup>10</sup>Köstenberger, *God Marriage and Family*, 232.

<sup>11</sup>Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, 325

<sup>12</sup>Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 285.

divorcing her out of ignorance or anger as a form of punishment. While there is an opportunity to reconcile (Hos 3), the option only remains viable as long as his ex-wife remains unmarried. If she remarries any chance of reconciliation or remarriage is lost, even after her new husband passes away.<sup>13</sup>

When is divorce considered an option for the Christian today? This question remains at the center of a long-standing debate that separates people, and churches today. Köstenberger does an excellent job of defining the four major positions on divorce and remarriage:

1. *Divorce and remarriage for adultery and desertion*: Major Representatives of this view include: Erasmus, Westminster Confessions, Craig Bloomberg, Don Carson, John Feinberg and Paul Feinberg, Gordon Hugenberger, David Clyde Jones, John MacArthur, John Murray, Robert Stein, John Stott, and William Heth.
2. *Divorce, no remarriage for adultery and desertion*: Proponents of this view include: Gordon Wenham, William Heth (prior to 2002), Robert Gundry, Andrew Cornes, and Jacque Dupont.
3. *No divorce, no remarriage for adultery, Divorce but no remarriage for desertion*: Proponents include: Abel Isakson, James M. Boice, Dwight Pentecost and John Piper.
4. *No divorce, no remarriage for adultery; Divorce, remarriage for desertion*: Represented by Daniel Heimbach.<sup>14</sup>

The focus of the remainder of this paper will be on the more widely held first position—allowing for an individual to divorce and remarry when the covenant bond has been broken either through an act of adultery or the result of desertion. Having carefully reviewed a plethora of arguments in each of the four camps under the scrutiny of Scripture, I have found this first position to be the one exhibiting a more accurate hermeneutic.

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<sup>13</sup>Köstenberger, *God Marriage and Family*, 228.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 256.

## **Is Divorce and Remarriage a Christian Option?**

Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 have both become key texts for many in the divorce remarriage debate. Matthew 5:32 states: “But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, *except for the* cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Matthew 19:9 states, “And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, *except for* immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” Both passages contain what is known as the “exception clause”, and for “Matthew the ‘exception clause’ was a repeated aspect of Jesus’ teaching on divorce and thus ought not be dismissed lightly.”<sup>15</sup> Matthew mentions it twice for his readers—once in the *Sermon on the Mount* chapter 5:32, and in 19:9 respectively. The exception clause is exclusively found in Matthew’s Gospel and reinforced the indissoluble nature of marriage, unless sexual sin occurs.

The words *unchastity* and *immorality* as used in the exception clause are both translations from the Greek, *porneia*, meaning fornication or sexual immorality.<sup>16</sup> Fornication (*porneia*) can be further defined as the voluntary act of engaging in illicit sexual relations, or consensual sexual intercourse between a man and woman who are not married to each other. Other sexual acts that might be included in *porneia* would be premarital sex, incest, adultery, homosexuality and bestiality. All are forbidden in the Old Testament and addressed under the Mosaic Laws found in Leviticus 20:10-21.<sup>17</sup> In Matthew chapters 5 and

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<sup>15</sup> Köstenberger, *God Marriage and Family*, 238.

<sup>16</sup> Mark Wilson with Jason Oden, *Mastering New Testament Greek Vocabulary through Semantic Domains* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2003), 165.

<sup>17</sup> Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 284.

19, Jesus makes it clear that believers may divorce based on sexual *porneia*, which includes acts of adultery.

The Greek word for adultery is *moikeia* or *moichao*. “Matthew used the word *moikeia* when describing adultery (Matt. 15:19) and the verb form *moikeuo* (‘to commit adultery’) several times (Matt. 5:27-28; 19:18). Other New Testament writers regularly use the words *moikeia* and *moikeuo* to describe adultery (e.g., Mark 7:21; Luke 16:18; John 8:4; Rom. 2:22; James 2:11; Rev. 2:22).”<sup>18</sup> Based on Jesus’ testimony in both Matthew 5:32 and 19:9—A person divorced in accordance with the acceptance clause is free to remarry because of the *porneia* committed by the offending spouse. The *porneia* has broken their covenant vows and there is no obligation for reconciliation, hence “one could remarry without committing adultery.”<sup>19</sup>

In these two passages Jesus is emphasizing the point—for a man or woman simply to divorce and remarry is considered an act of adultery, *except* when he or she has obtained a divorce because the previous spouse had engaged in *porneia*. Adams notes that

in both Matthew 5 and 19, Jesus’ permission to divorce a spouse is based on the violating act (sexual sin, *porneia*) not on its effect (adultery). Jesus focuses on the act because He wants to cover all the possibilities. He declares fornication (sexual sin) to be the ground upon which one may serve a bill of divorce because fornication covers incest, bestiality, homosexuality and lesbianism as well as adultery.<sup>20</sup>

Mark’s Gospel preserved Jesus’ ultimate goal for marriage: “if a divorce does takes place (is permitted) then there is to be no re-marriage (so as to avoid committing adultery, sf. Mk 10:11-12; Mt 5:31; 19:9; Lk 16:18). The divorced person is to remain un-

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<sup>18</sup>Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 288.

<sup>19</sup>Jay E. Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible: A Fresh Look at What Scripture Teaches* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 86.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, 54.

married. If this state of affairs cannot be endured, then the apostolic authoritative command is for the parties to be reconciled, she to her husband and he to his wife (1 Cor. 7:11).”<sup>21</sup>

“According to this view, Jesus essentially answers the divorce question put to him in Hillelite terms, in a Shammaite fashion. One would expect Jesus to post a higher standard than either school rather than merely siding with the more conservative viewpoint of his day. A ‘no divorce once the marriage has been consummated’ position would seem to be more consistent.”<sup>22</sup> This view was held by the early church fathers of the first century and is held by a minority of individuals today. Schreiner believes “the view fails to persuade, for it is not clear syntactically that the divorce clause relates to divorce but excludes remarriage. The exception clause reads more naturally if both divorce and remarriage are included.”<sup>23</sup>

While the previous position might seem in itself to be the definitive answer regarding re-marriage after divorce, it must be understood in the context in which it was recorded and the authors’ intent or purpose. This becomes very apparent when observing that, “The Markan, Lukan, and Pauline intentions were different from those of Matthew, which in their view accounts adequately for their omission of the exception clause; and even though the exception clause is only found in Matthew, it is still there and must be dealt with—we are not at liberty to set aside biblical teaching just because it is given only once or twice.”<sup>24</sup> Interestingly enough one sees in Scripture how Mark tends to relay general principles, while Matthew concurs with Mark yet adds more detail or becomes more specific.

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<sup>21</sup>Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, eds., *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 598.

<sup>22</sup>Köstenberger, *God Marriage and Family*, 237.

<sup>23</sup>Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 779.

<sup>24</sup>Köstenberger, *God Marriage and Family*, 238.



For example when the Pharisees and Sadducees ask Jesus for a sign from heaven to test Him, Mark 8:12 quotes Jesus' general statement, "Truly, I say to you, no sign will be given to this generation." In contrast, Matthew 16:4, quotes Jesus more specifically adding "but no sign will be given to it *except the sign of Jonah*." There is no discrepancy between the meanings of the two Gospels. There is however more detail and clarity to be found in the book of Matthew. "We see precisely the same pattern in the saying on divorce. Mark communicates Jesus' general teaching: marriage and divorce constitute adultery. Matthew concurs with this view but adds the exception relating to sexual infidelity."<sup>25</sup>

At this point, it would be shortsighted to disregard Jesus' granting of an exception clause in Matthew's Gospel without first identifying specific scriptural reference contradicting his teaching, or by calling into question the books' inerrancy. Köstenberger goes on to explain how important it is to interpret properly each passage in light of its context, audience, and in parallel to other passages. A proper hermeneutic must be used allowing each passage to render the nuggets of truth and understanding contained within them. A proper hermeneutic must give consideration to Paul's letters and his allowances for divorce and remarriage.

In 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, Paul addresses how two believers are to respond in the event of separation: "But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not send his wife away. While Paul allows for a time of separation, verses 10 and 11 should not be construed as Paul advocating divorce between two believers. Hill explains: "A believer should never withdraw a

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<sup>25</sup>Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 779.

commitment to love his or her spouse. In a moment of sin or weakness a believer might fail to be committed to the good of his or her marriage partner in a particular situation or for a period of time. In these situations the believer is called upon to repent. The relationship is to be restored by re-commitment and forgiveness.”<sup>26</sup>

Adams exegesis of 1 Corinthians 7:12-13 expands on the notion that a Christian man or woman is to remain committed to their unsaved spouse that desires to remain in the marriage. Should the believer divorce or abandon their spouse, they would be committing a sinful act. “Upon repentance, he must seek not only God’s forgiveness for his sin (and all other sins committed in the course of obtaining the divorce), but *her* forgiveness as well. Because he ought to be married to her (he divorced her against the clear biblical prohibitions in I Cor. 7:12-14) he must seek to return to her and reestablish the marriage.”<sup>27</sup>

Scott believes divorce is permitted “in cases where an unbelieving mate does not desire to live with his or her believing spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12-15). Because ‘God has called us to peace’ (v. 15), divorce is allowed and may be preferable in such situations.”<sup>28</sup> Hill agrees with Scott, referring to the “Paulian Privilege;”<sup>29</sup> Paul approves of divorce based on desertion as explained in 1 Corinthians 7:15: “Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such *cases*, but God has called us to peace.” Paul is not speaking about adultery. He is focusing on the desertion of an unbelieving spouse and how the faithful and remaining partner is not bound by the marriage

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<sup>26</sup>Michael Hill, *The How and Why of Love: An Introduction to Evangelical Ethics* (Kingsford, Australia: Matthias Media, 2002), 169.

<sup>27</sup>Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, And Remarriage in the Bible*, 87.

<sup>28</sup>Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, 326.

<sup>29</sup>Hill, *The How and Why of Love*, 165.

covenant. The bond of marriage in essence has been severed by the deserting party and as such the remaining partner is freed to remarry. Regarding 1 Corinthians Hill notes,

What is significant is that in both verses 27 and 39 there is an antithesis between the notions of ‘being bound’ and ‘being free’. If one is free, then one is not bound, and if one is bound then one is not free. Given the covenantal nature of marriage, we must conclude that verse 15 meant that the believing partner is not bound to keep his or her marriage commitment because the unbelieving partner has broken the marriage and left. It is the commitment that binds one spouse to another, and when a spouse is freed from the partner they are freed from the commitment.<sup>30</sup>

The position that divorce and remarriage is permissible only for the innocent party as the result of a spouse’s adulterous relationship (*porneia*) or because of an unbeliever’s desertion is sometimes called “‘The Erasmian view,’ since the well know reformer Erasmus of Rotterdam held this position, though other descriptions are used as well. The position, which is also found in the *Westminster Confession of Faith*, represents the majority view among evangelicals today.”<sup>31</sup> Chapter 24: Sections V, and VI, of the *Westminster Confession*, state,

Section V—Adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, giveth just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve the contract (Matt. 1:18-20). In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce (Matt. 5:32), and after the divorce to marry another, as if the offending party were dead (Matt. 19:9; Rom. 7:2-3).

Section VI—Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments, unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage; yet nothing but adultery, or such willful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage (Matt. 19:8-9; 1 Cor. 7:15; Matt. 19:6): wherein a public and orderly course of proceedings is to be observed, and the person concerned in it not left to their own wills and discretion in their own case (Deut. 24:1-4).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup>Hill, *The How and Why of Love*, 166.

<sup>31</sup>Köstenberger, *God Marriage and Family*, 254.

<sup>32</sup>Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 285.

Jewish tradition and the view of the general populace in Paul's day was that divorce opened the door for a new marriage to occur. This view would have been well understood by the Corinthians Paul was addressing. For Paul to depart from the traditional Jewish view, denouncing the possibility of remarriage, would have required much further clarification on Paul's part in order for his readers to fully understand, there was now in place a new prohibition on remarriage.<sup>33</sup>

Regarding remarriage, Adams emphasizes that "Remarriage after divorce is not disallowed, but in cases where one has been properly 'released' from his spouse it is plainly declared to be no sin."<sup>34</sup> Adams then refers to Murray's exegesis of Scripture and how he clearly articulates the right of a divorced individual to remarry as long as the divorce was in accordance to the exception clause. Murray explains the divorced person is "free to remarry because the exception ('except because of sexual sin') applies not only to the phrase 'whoever divorces his wife,' but also the phrase 'and marries another'...Assuming, therefore, that Murray is correct, it is altogether proper to say that in such cases—there being no obligation for the parties to be reconciled—one could remarry without committing adultery."<sup>35</sup>

First Corinthians 7:39 is an excellent example of how a wife is bound (*deō*) to her husband and then released or freed to remarry after his death. Verse 15 addresses how a believer is not under bondage (*douloō*) to an unbeliever that abandons the marriage.

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<sup>33</sup>Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 783.

<sup>34</sup>Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*, 86.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

Köstenberger exegesis of the passages, specifically the usage of the *deō* and *douloō*, becomes very helpful in understanding the relationship between both verses. Köstenberger notes,

While not identical the terms *douloō* and *deō* do seem to inhabit the same semantic domain (“be under bondage,” “be bound”), so that 1 Corinthians 7:39 seems to be admissible as a relevant parallel to 1 Corinthians 7:15; in addition, it should be noted that the verb tense of the phrase “not bound” (*oudedoulotai*, perfect tense) in 7:15 implies that the unbeliever abandoned the marriage in the past and that, as a result, the remaining believing spouse is ‘no longer bound’ at the present time (with the effect of the abandonment continuing into the present), the burden of explaining how the Greek perfect tense here is compatible with a ‘no remarriage’ position would seem to rest on those who advocate such a view.<sup>36</sup>

It is clear that Scripture does allow some persons to remarry after the death of a spouse (I Cor 7:39), and after a divorce, provided the circumstances described in detail above have occurred. It is important to note that, should a believer remarry, they are to only marry another believer.<sup>37</sup> This can be found in 2 Corinthians 6:14, “Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?”

Having determined that there is sufficient warrant for divorce and remarriage if based on adultery (*porneia*) or abandonment. The issue remaining is—whether or not a divorced individual may enter into church leadership?

### **Can a Divorced Person Serve in Church Leadership?**

At first glance 1 Timothy 3:2, 3:12; and Titus 1:6; would appear to indicate that being party to a divorce would in and of itself constitute a disqualification for the office of overseer or elder and deacon. Our treatment of verse 3:2 will be applicable to the marriage

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<sup>36</sup>Köstenberger, *God Marriage and Family*, 252.

<sup>37</sup>Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*, 87.

stipulations found both in 1 Timothy and Titus.<sup>38</sup> First Timothy 3:2 states, “An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach.” This literalistic reading of the text, “husband of one wife” (*mias gunaikos andra*), fails to take several circumstances into consideration, for example—Paul extolled the virtues of celibacy and remaining single like himself (1 Cor 7:8). The emphasis of his narration in 1 Corinthians 7:32-35, is focused on how a man can better serve the Lord when unfettered by the responsibilities and distractions of marriage.<sup>39</sup> “But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, how he may please the Lord; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and *his interests* are divided” (1 Cor 7:32-35).

The literalistic reading of 1 Timothy 3:2 would appear to exclude three groups of married men. Those who are divorced, men engaged in polygamous relationships, and men who are widowers.<sup>40</sup> It would also appear to exclude a fourth group—the very single men whom Paul speaks so highly of in the verse quoted above (1 Cor 7:32-35). Following this same line of logic, Paul would have in essence disqualified himself from the office based on his post conversion life of celibacy. A hermeneutic taking into consideration all of Paul’s writings would clearly indicate Paul did not intend to disqualify single Christian men from holding the office of overseer or elder, having met the other biblical requirements he set forth. Furthermore, given Paul’s consideration and sanction of divorce and remarriage under the biblical circumstances discussed in 1 Corinthians, one cannot simply presuppose that he

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<sup>38</sup>Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 283.

<sup>39</sup>Köstenberger, *God Marriage and Family*, 260.

<sup>40</sup>Doug Beaumont, “Polygamy,” *Welcome to Doug Beaumont. Org*, accessed August 18, 2011, [http://www.dougbeaumont.org/SoulDevice/ethics\\_polygamy.html](http://www.dougbeaumont.org/SoulDevice/ethics_polygamy.html).

would intend to disqualify Godly—remarried men that are above reproach. Nowhere do the Scriptures portray divorced and remarried Christian men as being unequal to other men, including married Christian men that have never been divorced or widowed.

In order to address this paradox, we must begin by looking at the first century social environment in which Paul lived. Paul lived at a time when polygamy—while not widespread did exist along with homosexuality and other sexual sins. Köstenberger addresses this paradox by looking at Paul’s stipulation of “the husband of one wife” (*mias gunaikos andra*), he notes that the wording is “geared toward barring men from holding church office who had one or several concubines, a widespread practice at the time. Apparently, neither the Greeks nor the Romans regarded these practices as adulterous or polygamous. For Paul, however, concubinage was essentially equivalent to polygamy, since sexual sin results in a ‘one flesh’ relationship (cf. 1 Cor. 6:16).”<sup>41</sup> On the issue of polygamy Adams notes,

Many of the early converts of every church that Paul began were Jews of the dispersion. Josephus twice mentions polygamy in his day. In A.D. 212, the *lex Antoniana de civitate* made monogamy the law for Romans, *but specifically excepted Jews!* Later, in A.D. 285, Diocletian found it necessary to rescind the exception, but in 393 Theodosius found it necessary to enact a special law against polygamy among the Jews since they persisted in the practice. Even that did not put an end to it; polygamy among the Jews continued into the eleventh century.<sup>42</sup>

Clearly polygamy was a societal issue for first century Jews that actually dates back to the early days of the Old Testament. The Scriptures record a number of Old Testament Saints that were polygamists.<sup>43</sup> According to Geisler those counted among their

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<sup>41</sup>Köstenberger, *God Marriage and Family*, 261.

<sup>42</sup>Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*, 81.

<sup>43</sup>Beaumont, “Polygamy.”

ranks, included: “Abraham, Moses, and David. Indeed Solomon had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines (1 Kgs 11:3)! In response it should be noted that the Bible does not approve of everything that it records, at least not explicitly. For example, the Bible records Satan’s lie (Gen 3:4) but certainly does not approve of it.”<sup>44</sup> Wellum in his lecture on church leadership stated, “While polygamy was allowed in some circumstances in the Old Testament, the practice was not widespread in the first century. Herod Antipas one of the most prominent figures in Jesus’ day practiced polygamy.”<sup>45</sup> Interestingly, his father Herod the Great (37-4 B.C.) had ten wives. Herod Antipas (4 B.C.—A.D. 39) was known to have been married to the daughter of Arêtes, a Nabatean king, and yet ran away or eloped with his half-brother Philip I’s wife Herodias.<sup>46</sup> “The scandalous affair was condemned severely by John the Baptist (Matt. 14:4; Mark 6:17-18; Luke 3:19).”<sup>47</sup> In Luke 23:6-12 Jesus demonstrated his disapproval of Herod’s cunning and deceitful ways, referring to him as a fox. Jesus may have answered the Pharisees’ question in Matthew 19:3 with Herod and other leaders very much in mind.

Paul had to be extremely concerned about the issue of polygamy and how it tainted and defiled the sanctity of marriage. In this respect, he agrees with Hebrews 13:4 “*Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.*” Likewise, Paul clearly demonstrates his concerns regarding

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<sup>44</sup>Geisler, *Christian Ethics*, 280.

<sup>45</sup>Stephen J. Wellum, “Qualifications of Church Leaders: Elders and Deacons” (classroom lecture notes, 27080 B—*Systematic Theology III*, 09 November 2009), electronic copy.

<sup>46</sup>Ronald R. Youngblood, F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, eds., *Nelson’s New Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, rev. ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 1995), 560.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 561.



the necessary character and integrity of men desiring to become an overseer or elder. Titus 1:6 says, “he must be blameless,” while 1 Timothy 3:2, says, “they must be above reproach,” and in 1 Timothy 3:7, they “must have a good reputation with outsiders.” He would not have condoned a polygamist serving within church leadership and safeguarded against it by his choice of words.

Again, following this line of logic it becomes apparent why Paul would stipulate “the husband of one wife” (*mias gunaikos andra*). His purposeful choice of words emphatically addresses, and intentionally disqualifies, polygamists as candidates for leaderships and does so without prejudice and without disqualifying a “man married to one wife” *at a particular time*. Had Paul’s intention been to stipulate that an overseer or elder could only be married once—while disqualifying polygamists at the same time, he could have stated the obvious “married only once,” thereby clearly addressing both polygamy and remarriage simultaneously.<sup>48</sup> Adams expands on this position noting,

There was a perfectly good Greek word that Paul might have used (*gameo*) to indicate that one could *never* remarry (even after the death of his spouse) and hold office in the church if that is what he had wanted to say. Then the phrase would have read: “married (*gameo*) only once.” That would have been clear. But he did not use *gameo*; indeed, he was not talking about how often one was *married*. Rather, Paul consistently used the unusual construction ‘the husband of only one wife.’ He was concerned *not* about how many times a man had been married, but about how many wives he had!”<sup>49</sup>

Given the fact that the Pharisees used the question of divorce as a means to challenge and attempt to trick Jesus (Matt 19:3); the question itself highlights the importance of divorce and its relevance as a common practice in Jesus’ day and in the life of the Jewish people dating back to Moses in the Old Testament. Had Paul considered divorce and

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<sup>48</sup>Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*, 81.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 80-81.

remarriage as important an issue as polygamy, he would have intentionally used the construct “married (*gameo*) only once” instead of using (*mias gunaikos andra*) “husband of one wife”. Furthermore, Paul who was very calculated and explicit in many of his writings (Gal 5:19-23, 19-26; Rom 3:4-7); recognizing the importance of listing the qualifications required for the position of overseer or elder would have clearly stipulated or inserted “not divorced” (*me apolelumenon*), into at least one of his three relevant verses (1 Tim 3:2, 3:12; Titus 1:6).<sup>50</sup> But he did not use either of these two constructs, choosing instead to essentially remain silent on the issue of divorce and remarriage in these passages. Davis notes, “The language the apostle actually chose can well be rendered by such expressions as ‘a man of one woman’ or ‘a one-woman man’ it emphasizes the faithfulness and stability of the present marriage, rather than any sins or failure of the past.”<sup>51</sup> This rendering would reflect the requirement for an elder or deacon to be a “faithful husband.”

Regarding 1 Timothy 3:2, 12. Scott writes, “the leader must be ‘the husband of one wife’ (lit. ‘one woman man’). That phrase does not mean that an elder or deacon is only to have had one wife, but that he is solely and consistently faithful to his wife in an exemplary manner.”<sup>52</sup> Paul is describing a man who has demonstrated his faithfulness to one wife over a significant number of years. In doing so he has fulfilled one of the main requirements or attributes of eligibility to become an Overseer that is contentiously debated about today.

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<sup>50</sup>John Jefferson Davis, *Evangelical Ethics: Issues Facing The Church Today*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2004), 112.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, 333.

1 Timothy 3:1-7, lists a variety of attributes that cannot be ignored, nor can they be taken at face value at any given point in time. A man's being trustworthy, above reproach, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach; not a drunkard, violent or quarrelsome; not a lover of money, who can manage his household well, and is well thought of by others, implies he has proven himself over time to be a man of character and integrity—exhibiting and living according to the biblical attributes listed, including being an exemplary husband of one wife. This is one reason in 1 Timothy 3:6, Paul says the candidate for Overseer “Must *not* be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.” A man's qualifications for office are vetted with significant emphasis on his past history, along with his current state of affairs. A man with a proven history of loving his second wife sacrificially, in accordance with Ephesians 5:22-29, demonstrating “the relationship of Christ to His church, in cases where a potential pastor, elder, or even deacon has been divorced, the church must be confident that he has given evidence of ‘ruling his family well’ and proven his ability to lead those close to him to salvation and sanctification. His family is to be a model of faithful and righteous living (1 Timothy 3:4-5, Titus 1:6).”<sup>53</sup> In such an instances, why would our search committees or elder/deacon boards disqualify the candidate?

Paul's failure to address specifically divorce and remarriage in his list of qualifications should not lead to conjecture and presuppositions that create unbiblical barriers, eliminating from church leadership roles individuals whose lives extol the essential virtues of faith and Godly character that typify the very characteristics sought in elders and deacons. “All of these traits are the outworking of God's grace—not natural to us.

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<sup>53</sup>Scott, *The Exemplary Husband*, 334.

Ultimately we are looking for Godliness. Recognizing, to be above reproach does not mean to be perfect.”<sup>54</sup>

### **Concluding Summary and Thoughts**

Based on the review of literature regarding marriage and divorce, as well as an exegesis of the Scriptures in both Greek and English, it has become apparent that Köstenberger’s first of the four positions mentioned on page 5, is “in keeping with first-century Jewish belief, that *in the cases of legitimate divorce, a legitimately divorced person is free to remarry*. This conclusion is borne out also by the standard Jewish formula in the bill of divorce cited in the Mishnah, ‘See, you are free to marry any man’ (m. *Gittin* 9:3).<sup>55</sup> In view of the exception clause in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9: “Unless one is very certain, therefore, that Scripture absolutely prohibits divorce and remarriage under any and all circumstances it would seem wise to err on the side of grace and allow for divorce and remarriage in the cases of adultery and abandonment, lest people are held to a standard that may be higher than the biblical one.”<sup>56</sup>

With regard to eligibility to serve in a church leadership role as a deacon or elder; having addressed the requirements in 1 Timothy 3:2, 3:12; and Titus 1:6 and reflected on Paul’s consideration and sanction of divorce and remarriage under biblical circumstances as discussed in 1 Corinthians, there are sufficient grounds to support and encourage Christian men and women to enter into appropriate leadership roles within the Church, provided they meet the additional requirements stipulated in 1 Timothy 3:1-12; and Titus 1:6-9. Because

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<sup>54</sup>Wellum, “Qualifications of Church Leaders,” lecture notes

<sup>55</sup>Köstenberger, *God Marriage and Family*, 253.

<sup>56</sup>*Ibid.*, 257.

each case of divorce and or remarriage differs with regards to the circumstances involved, the clear biblical criteria ought to be *the* governing factor for determining eligibility. Regarding eligibility requirements, Adams believes “it is wrong to add church by-laws, especially when they are less flexible than the Scriptures themselves. The church has no right to forbid what God allows. It is the job of the existing officers in each instance to determine whether or not a given individual fits those qualifications.”<sup>57</sup> I would add to Adams’ words: God’s immutable grace, providence and sovereignty should trump any human attempt to discourage or write off an individual seeking a leadership role specifically because they have experienced the tragedy of divorce during their lifetime and subsequently remarried. The circumstances surrounding a divorce should always be taken into consideration, as should the individual’s spiritual status, exposed sin, repentance, forgiveness, and grace. “Overall, people should not be held to a stricter standard just to be ‘safe’ and ‘conservative.’ If (and not all agree) both Jesus and Paul were willing to make an exception, we should be willing to follow their lead without fearing that a high view of marriage will therefore be compromised.”<sup>58</sup>

The following questions should provide assistance when considering whether or not a divorced or remarried candidate for deacon or elder meets the biblical criteria set forth in the Scriptures:

1. What was the root cause of the divorce? Was *porneia* involved?
2. Who was the petitioner in the divorce and were they a Christian at the time?
3. What attempts if any were made at forgiveness and reconciliation?
4. Were there any children involved? If so, what are the custodial arrangements?
5. What is the candidate’s current view of—or relationship with—the ex-spouse now?
6. When did the candidate become a Christian and where did the conversion take place?

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<sup>57</sup>Adams, *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*, 83.

<sup>58</sup>Köstenberger, *God Marriage and Family*, 265

7. Is the candidate remarried? If so, is the new spouse a believer?  
(Note: If remarried, question 1-6 should be asked of the spouse.)
8. Is the candidate now part of a blended family with children?
9. What is the relationship with the stepchildren?
10. What is the relationship with the children's other parent?
11. Where will the children live?
12. How will discipline be handled in the home?

It is important to determine the candidate's role in the divorce process and whether or not his sin led to the demise of the marriage. Or if his spouse instigated the divorce, was it subsequently granted on biblical grounds. "The circumstances of his divorce and/or remarriage may be such that a person for years afterward would fail to qualify because of the bad reputation that he bears as a result. On the other hand, his lifestyle subsequently may be such that God has changed his reputation."<sup>59</sup> Geisler states, "Forgiveness by confession cancels the state of sin status for the divorcee (Jer. 3:1, 14). The only reason they are living in sin after divorce is that the divorce was sin. And as long as they do not confess the sin of divorce, they are still living in sin. But if they confess their sin God will forgive it like any other sin (1 John 1:9)."<sup>60</sup>

Ephesians 4:32 instructs, "And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you (Eph. 4:32)." Today there are many people going through the divorce process who will experience a lack of support, alienation, and pain from their home church. They will be set aside or asked to move their memberships. Many will be removed from church leadership roles only to become "imprisoned in the pews as a permanent penance for their misdeeds."<sup>61</sup> For many their

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., 83.

<sup>60</sup>Geisler, *Christian Ethics: Options and Issues*, 290.

<sup>61</sup>Jim Smoke, *Growing through Divorce*, rev. ed. (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishing, 1995), 25.

misconduct was simply being on the wrong end of an abusive spouse's wrath, or the respondent in an adulterous spouse's Petition for Divorce. Many will represent collateral damage—the offshoot of a lack of Church discipline and loving follow-up that might have intervened and provided much needed biblical counseling, guidance, encouragement and support. The circumstances surrounding Charles Stanley's divorce from his wife Anna after 44 years of marriage makes for an excellent case study for all church leaders.<sup>62</sup>

“In 1969 Governor Ronald Reagan of California signed into law the nations' first no-fault divorce bill...In the decade and a half that followed, virtually every state in the Union followed California's lead and enacted a no-fault divorce law of its own.”<sup>63</sup> The new law eliminated the need for couples to fabricate spousal wrongdoing in pursuit of a divorce. As “No Fault” divorces have become the norm, church leaders must be more alert to the danger signs of a marriage in crisis within their own ranks and within their congregations. They must also recognize the stigma of divorce, has lost its sting for unbelievers.

Unbelievers do not know the true God they are self-centered rather than oriented toward God and others, they do not possess the Holy Spirit, and so cannot love God or man in ways that are acceptable to God (Rom. 8:5; 1 Cor. 2). They cannot understand the Bible (1 Cor. 2:6-16), and if they did, they wouldn't want to follow it, or couldn't. In short, as Paul put it, ‘Those who are in the flesh [unbelievers] cannot please God’ (Rom. 8:8).”<sup>64</sup>

The issue of divorce, remarriage and qualifications for church leadership will continue to be hotly debated over cups of coffee in fellowship halls and Starbucks across the

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<sup>62</sup>Bill Fields, “Reconciliation, Pastor, Elder, Deacon, Church and Charles Stanley Divorce,” *PeaceMakers.net, Ministry of Biblical counseling*, accessed November 18, 2012, <http://www.peacemakers.net/peace/estanley.htm>; Internet.

<sup>63</sup>Wilcox, “The Evolution of Divorce.”

<sup>64</sup>Jay Adams, *From Forgiven to Forgiving: Learning to Forgive One Another God's Way* (Amityville, NY: Calvary Press, 1994), 74.

country. It is my hope and prayer that dedicated search committees will operate with a commitment to glorifying God while seeking the “one” He bestows the “the express purpose of ‘equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for edifying of the body of Christ’ (Eph. 4:11-12). There is something supernatural about the God-called pastor. He has the specific spiritual gift of pastoring the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>65</sup> I agree with Hawkins when he states, “God does not simply “call” the pastor into ministry; He gifts him for the task of pastorate. He does not call the equipped and gifted; He equips and gifts those whom He calls.”<sup>66</sup> One of the ways He gifts us is through our trials and tribulations, and in the various relationships in which we are engaged. Proverbs 27:17 instructs us that, “Iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another.”

Biblical divorce and remarriage can be a proving ground that God uses to strengthen, refine and equip men and women for leadership roles in our society today when—of those adults entering into marriage, “one out of three (33%) will have previously been divorced at least once,”<sup>67</sup> and entering into a second or third marriage. Many pastors and counselors are very well equipped to deal with marital and family issues. Who better to minister to couples and families in crisis, or recognize a storm brewing within a marriage than a pastor or counselor who has experienced the waves of deception and deceit only to be brought through the suffering of a failed marriage by God’s blessing, mercy and grace?

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<sup>65</sup>O. S. Hawkins, *The Pastor’s Primer* (Dallas, TX: Guidestone, 2006), 15.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., 14.

<sup>67</sup>Barna, “New Marriage and Divorce Statistics Released.”



Paul emphasizes the importance of recognizing God's mercy and his righteousness that leads to a new, transformed life. In Romans, Paul emphasizing the importance of living the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith" (Rom 12:1-3).

In conclusion, what we ultimately believe about God and ourselves will determine how we view others and the decisions we will make regarding candidates seeking leadership roles and positions of authority within our churches. This research has shown, Scripture does allow for some individuals who have divorced and remarried to enter into church leadership roles as Overseers and Deacons. Church leaders charged with the task of vetting a candidate for leadership must start by searching their own hearts and intentions (Luke 6:41-42), and must take into account a full biblical hermeneutic that encompasses all of Scripture—not simply relying on a wooden translation of 1 Timothy 3:2, 3:12; and Titus 1:6, as a basis for their decision.

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## ABSTRACT

### DEVELOPING A MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT SEMINAR FOR COUPLES AT EASTHAVEN BAPTIST CHURCH, KALISPELL, MONTANA

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This project focuses on the development and implementation of a marriage enrichment program pastors' and lay personnel can utilize for the purpose of helping couples strengthen and enhance their marriages. Chapter 1 explains the purpose and goals of the project, including the methodology used to identify the eight key topics incorporated into the program.

Chapter 2 begins with an exposé of the biblical basis for marriage, demonstrating how the Bible presents marriage as a sacred covenant-keeping relationship in which God joins a husband and wife into a one-flesh union for the purpose of displaying Christ's love for his church. The chapter explores how the preeminence of Christ positively impacts marriage. Emphasis is placed on what a person believes about God, and how their theological perception determines what they believe to be true about the purpose and meaning of marriage. Ultimately, what couples believe to be true about God will determine the quality of their marriages.

Chapter 3 examines the distinct roles and responsibilities of husbands and wives. Four key roles of the Christian husband as a leader, longsufferer, learner, and lover are

examined. Nine attributes of Christ's love for his church are discussed, including how husbands should exemplify each attribute in how they love their wives. Chapter 3 also examines the wife's role and submission. Clarification is made regarding what biblical submission looks like, including, six misconceptions regarding what submission is not. Other topics addressed include, communication, forgiveness, identifying idols of the heart, and sexual intimacy in marriage.

Chapter 4 details the steps involved in conducting the marriage enrichment retreat associated with this project. Details are provided on how eight key topics were chosen and developed for the retreat. Included is a weekly breakdown of events, and a description of each of the eight sessions taught during the retreat.

Chapter 5 presents an evaluation of the project in meeting the stated purpose and established goals. Strengths and weakness of the project are discussed, along with suggested improvements intended to enhance future retreats. The importance of teaching the Gospel with an emphasis on God's mercy, grace, and forgiveness, is emphasized in the theological and personal evaluations of this project.

The appendices include all supporting forms, surveys, lessons plans, and supporting data. Appendix 8 includes a copy of a research paper addressing "Divorce, Remarriage and Church Leadership." The paper is referenced in the project and copies of the paper are often requested by those having to make difficult decisions regarding divorce, remarriage and church leadership.

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