

- Cultivating Closeness for a Lifetime
- A Marriage Series
- Personal Theology – Personal Responsibility

My personal **Theology** becomes my personal **Belief** when a personal **Problem** brings awareness of a personal **Need**.

Awareness of a personal Need drives me to change others to meet that need or take personal responsibility and surrender to Jesus.

Jesus never accuses me with past failures – do I accuse my spouse with their past failures?

- Debunking old Myths - Wrong expectations produce division

God did not create marriage for my happiness – He created marriage for my holiness.

God did not create marriage for my satisfaction – He created marriage for my sanctification.

Healthy marriages promote unity and interdependence, not independence.

- God’s Created Intent

We were created for relationship – God said, “it is not good for man to be alone.”

We were created in the image of God.

Marriage was the first “Institution” God created.

Marriage is to represent Christ and His relationship with the Church.

- Personal Responsibility is necessary for Marital Health

Marriage represents Christ and His relationship with the Church

Consider:

- I am the primary vessel through which God is to express His love to my spouse.
  - I am responsible for issues, sin, or anything in me that “blocks or hinders” my ability to receive and express that love.
  - I can’t give what I don’t have.
- Unresolved pain affects our filter

Many of us lack adequate self-awareness. We don’t realize that unresolved issues or “needs” from the past almost always create “false interpretations” of our spouse’s motives.

Our personalities are similar to an island in the sea. An island is the top of a large mountain – our personalities are similar because what we let others see is only the top of what lies below the surface. Our personalities are largely unexplored until we merge with another person in marriage.

- Cultivating Closeness or Conflict

God is interested in my personal holiness, not in my ability to point out faults in my spouse.

If I am broken and fallible, why do I try to fix my spouse before taking an honest look at myself?

As long as I focus on what is wrong with you, I don't have to correct what's wrong with me.

For closeness, I have to focus on becoming the right person instead of pointing out what is wrong with you.

- Genesis 1:26, 27

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

- Understanding God's Created Intent

Image of God.

Essential Unity.

The Fall – from confluence to conflict...The Blame Game begins.

- Thoughts Heal or Destroy

"I think I married the wrong person."

- Biblical Counter Argument: "I am not allowing God to transform me into the right person."

"I deserve more than I'm getting."

- Biblical Counter Argument: "God has given me more than I deserve, I should follow His example with my spouse."

"A divorce would make things better and change my life."

- Biblical Counter Argument: "A divorce would only change my address."

- Harvest Marriage Series  
*Cultivating Closeness for a Lifetime*
- Week 2
- Personal Responsibility  
Brief Review of Week 1

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- Unforgiveness  
*The Greatest Barrier to Intimacy*

“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.”

Rom. 11:36

My heart is a vessel through which God's love, grace, and mercy are received and extended or it is a barrier which keeps me from receiving or giving.

- His purpose – display the Glory of God in human life. Our marriage is the primary setting in which the life of God should be exhibited.
- God speaks to His own nature in me. Will I obey?
- Unforgiveness is like a Disease

Unforgiveness is like drinking a poison and waiting for the other person to get sick.

“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you”

Unforgiveness is like drinking a poison and waiting for the other person to get sick.

- Symptoms of Unforgiveness

A high level of defensiveness

An overreaction to minor slights – real or perceived

I look for the “negatives” in others, not the positives

I am angry and bitter and cannot seem to understand why

I find fault with others in order to justify my actions

- Unforgiveness cripples marriage
- It destroys the abundant life Christ promised
- My focus is on self-protection not self-denial
- It transforms me from the temple of the Holy Spirit into a prisoner of anger, hate, and bitterness
- Defining Forgiveness

Forgiveness is an act of my will, making use of God's grace, in order to cancel a debt owed me.

Forgiveness is a choice.

- Forgiveness is the purposeful removal of my desire to avenge or revenge or exhibit personal ill will toward someone who has hurt or injured me. God says vengeance is His (Romans 12:19).
- Forgiveness is freedom from the bondage of feelings that produce distress in my life and the lives of the ones who love me. It threatens my spiritual, emotional, and physical health. It is like an acid that destroys the container that holds it.
- Forgiveness is the settling of accounts (Matthew 18:23).
- What Forgiveness is Not!

Forgiveness is not approval of sin or the wrongs committed against you.

Forgiveness does not mean I trust you. Trust is a commodity that must be earned when there is consistency over time between what I say and what I do.

Forgiveness is not necessarily reconciliation

Sometimes we have to forgive someone with whom we will not be reconciled (e.g. deceased family members or those to remain in a “sin state” and threaten our spiritual, emotional, or physical well being). Forgiveness opens the door but reconciliation is a process that takes two people, the offended and the offender.

Forgiveness is not free.

- Removing Barriers

Prayerfully ask God to reveal to you persons whom you have not forgiven. This week, spend time listing the names of your offenders and the offenses committed against you. When you feel the list is complete, copy the form below for each offender and carry it with you for a few weeks.

- Make it Real!

Lord, you have forgiven me for so much. You have extended Your forgiveness to me daily. Therefore, as an act of my will, and with Your help, I choose to forgive \_\_\_\_\_ (name) and cancel the debt of \_\_\_\_\_ (general description, betrayal, rejection, etc.). From this day forward with Your help, I renounce my desire to avenge the wrong(s) committed against me and will show no more ill will toward the person(s) named above.

I realize this offense will come to mind even after I have forgiven.

Since I am keeping this paper with me, I will take it out and reaffirm that forgiveness has been extended and cannot be taken back when memories or negative emotions flood over me. I will then pray wherever I am and thank You for extending Your forgiveness to me through Your Son Jesus Christ.

Sign and Date: \_\_\_\_\_

- Harvest Marriage Series  
*Cultivating Closeness for a Lifetime*
- Week 3
- Brief Review

If you and your spouse were just alike, one of you would be unnecessary.

Primary Vessel of Him – From Him, Through Him, To Him.

Personal responsibility, how can you give what you don't have?

- Men and Women are Different

Men are Problem Solvers

Women are Process Seekers

- Marital Closeness Requires

Time and focused investment

Taking an active interest in your spouse

Investing in the wellbeing of your spouse

Resolving Conflicts – the right way

- Two Types of Conflict Resolution

Selfish Resolution: Accomplishing my PRIORITIES for my PURPOSE through my POWER .

Christian Resolution : Accomplishing God's PRIORITIES for His PURPOSE through His POWER.

Priorities determine Purpose.

Purpose defines Power.

We must all determine our priorities before we attempt to resolve conflict

- The Tyranny of Self

S – Sinning, self is enthroned – Christ denied

E – Evading responsibility, blaming others

L – Lusting to make my point known, intense desire to vindicate self

F – Forsaking God's right to control my life, forsaking my ability to  
influence His Kingdom

*Is your relationship more important than being right?*

- Reviewing what we already know

Overview

Ephesians 5

1 Peter 3

- Loving and Respecting

Acts of Worship

**Loving** – doting, cherishing, and affection – even toward an unloving object

**Respecting** – notice with special regard, hold in high esteem (awe), appreciate

- Preventing Marital Invasion

Ounces of Prevention avoid Pounds of cure

Sanctified Common Sense – Apply God's design

- Doing it God's Way

Breaks down barriers

Provides a positive feedback loop instead of a negative one

Is always about Influence, not Control