

4 WEEKS

LOVE &  
MARRIAGE





## Is a great marriage even possible?

Whether you're married, or just hoping to be one day, there are a lot of expectations when it comes to marriage. And when the marriage you're in doesn't meet your expectations, there are all sorts of letdowns, disappointments, hurt, pain, disappointment, anger, and even divorce.

This leads to a common question: "Is a great marriage even possible?"

Beyond a shadow of a doubt, the answer to that questions is an emphatic YES! But the harsh reality is that it's not likely to happen if you do what everyone else in our culture does. God is the author and perfecter of marriage. He created us and redeemed us to live in love. And when we follow His blueprint for marriage, that's when we can truly have a GREAT marriage.

In this series, we're taking a look at four commitments you must make in order to have the kind of marriage that God designed. That is, a marriage where each partner reflects the unconditional love of Jesus and one where physical, emotional and spiritual intimacy is deep. A marriage where you can find both satisfaction, contentment, joy and purpose.

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# Seek God



Week 1

## SMALL GROUP STUDY

### Kicking it off:

What first attracted you to your spouse when you met?

### Big Idea:

A healthy marriage starts with seeking God together, as God is your "one" and your spouse is your "two".

### Key Scriptures:

#### Matthew 6:33

*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*

#### Matthew 22:37-40

*"Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."*

#### 2 Chronicles 7:14

*"If my people, who are called*

*by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land."*

### Discussion:

1. Share what song most accurately describes the current state of your marriage and why you chose it:
  - Good Vibrations
  - Beautiful Crazy
  - Chicken Fried
  - Endless Love
  - Rehab
  - Cold as Ice
  - Rock and a Hard Place
  - Truly Madly Deeply
  - Grow Old with Me
2. Share one thing that is good and one thing that you would like to improve in your marriage.
3. Read Matthew 6:33 and Matthew 22: 37-40. While these passage are not specifically related to marriage, they are

foundational in that, until you're solid, you can't have a solid marriage. The number one thing that leads to a healthy marriage is when both partners are seeking God with all their hearts. God created marriage and it stands to reason that if you want to have success in it, you seek Him in it. So start together with a reality check: How much of a priority is seeking God together in your marriage? Or if you are single, how much of a priority is seeking God in your dating life?

4. What did you learn in this week's message about seeking God in your marriage?
5. What challenges do you face in keeping God number one and your spouse and kids after that?
6. *Read 2 Chronicles 7:14.* In this week's message the importance of praying together as a couple was discussed. What are some of the benefits you've experienced of praying together? If you are not praying together, what's preventing you from doing so?

7. What are some spiritual practices or traditions that you've created with your spouse or would like to create?
8. What's one thing you will do this week as a result of something you learned from this week's message?

### **Wrapping It Up:**

Spend some time praying for one another specifically in the area of the desired improvement that each of you shared. And if you're not already praying together, commit to praying together every day this week. Check back with one another next week for accountability.

### **Prayer Focus:**

Pray for the high school and middle school students who are learning more about the true love of Christ. Pray that God will ignite in them a passion to share His truth.

### **Memory Verse:**

*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."* **Matthew 6:33**



# Fight Fair



Week 2

## SMALL GROUP STUDY

### Kicking it off:

Share about the most ridiculous fight you and your spouse ever had.

### Big Idea:

All couples fight, but good couples learn to fight fair. When you fight you must "be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."

### Key Scriptures:

#### James 1:19-20

*"Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires."*

#### Proverbs 18:2

*"A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions."*

#### Proverbs 21:23 (NLT)

*"Watch your tongue and keep your mouth shut, and you will stay out of trouble."*

### Ephesians 4:26-27

*"In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold."*

### Ephesians 4:32

*"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."*

### Discussion:

1. Do a reality check: How would you evaluate the way you and your spouse fight or deal with conflict. Do you typically fight fair or unfair?
2. How did your parents handle conflict in their marriage? How has that shaped the way you handle conflict in your own marriage?
3. In what ways have you had success in dealing with conflict in your marriage?
4. With which of the following do you struggle when you face conflict with your spouse?
  - calling names
  - raising your voice
  - getting historical (bringing

- up the past)
  - saying “you never” or “you always”
  - stonewalling or silent treatment
  - threatening divorce
5. *Read James 1:19.* The keys to fighting fair are found here. In which of these three ways do you and your spouse do well when you face conflict, and which do you not?
  6. *Read Proverbs 18:2 and Proverbs 21:23.* What’s one way you can prompt yourself to talk less and listen more?
  7. Recall your first fight or one of your early fights as a couple. How has the way you face conflict changed throughout your marriage?
  8. *Read Ephesians 4:26-27.* As a couple, have you ever gone to bed angry with one another? If so, share how that went down.
  9. What commitment are you willing to make to not let the sun go down on your anger?
  10. *Read Ephesians 4:32.* This passage contains the key to being able to resolve conflict in your marriage. The four most important words in marriage are “will you forgive me?” Bringing kindness, compassion and

forgiveness into the situation will help you to be more equipped to resolve your issues. What commitment are you willing to make to practice this with your spouse?

### **Wrapping It Up:**

Pray together for the commitments you are each willing to make to “fight fair” in your marriage.

### **Prayer Focus:**

Pray for our Marriage Mentoring ministry – specifically for the mentor couples who are walking with couples who are facing challenges in their marriages.

### **Memory Verse:**

*“Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, for man’s anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.”*

**James 1:19-20**



# Never Give Up

Week 3

## SMALL GROUP STUDY

*Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."*

### Kicking it off:

What's the most grueling physical activity you've ever endured your way through? Share how you felt afterward.

### Big Idea:

Marriage is a covenant, not a contract. It is a permanent relationship with no end date. No matter how tough things might become, divorce should not be an option.

### Key Scriptures:

**Matthew 19:3-6**

*"Some Pharisees came to [Jesus] to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one.*

**Galatians 6:7-9**

*"Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."*

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8**

*"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails."*

### Discussion:

1. Read Matthew 19:3-6. How have you seen divorce affect



your family or the families of those you know?

2. Describe a time when you encountered a tough time in your marriage? How did you get through it and how did that experience impact your marriage?
3. *Read Galatians 6:7-9.* Consider your marriage and share what and where you are sowing currently? Are you pleased with your harvest or do you need to make some changes?
4. Discuss the differences between a contract, based on mutual distrust and a covenant, based on mutual trust. How does that play out in marriage?
5. It's been said that marriage is not designed to make you happy, but to make you holy and that happiness is a by-product of right living. Discuss how the challenges of marriage can help you grow more in reflecting God's character as you learn to yield to Him in the midst of your challenges.
6. *Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.* Many people divorce because they are no longer "in love" with their spouse. What does this

passage teach you about the permanence of marriage and of love?

7. What are some specific things you've learned from this series that you are going to do to ensure that you and your spouse never give up in your marriage?

### **Wrapping It Up:**

If changes need to be made in what you are sowing in your marriage, share with your group and hold one another accountable both in prayer and in checking back with one another as to how it's going.

### **Prayer Focus:**

Pray for couples at Sunnybrook to be covenant keeping in their marriages.

### **Memory Verse:**

*"Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."*

**Matthew 19:6**



# Stay Pure



Week 4

## SMALL GROUP STUDY

### Kicking it off:

When it comes to purity, which of the following areas tend to expose you most to impurity:

- What you watch/listen to
- What you read
- What you eat
- Who you hang out with
- What activities you engage in
- Your job

### Big Idea:

To have a healthy marriage, couples must strive for both inward and outward purity.

### Key Scriptures:

#### Hebrews 13:4

*"Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral."*

#### Ephesians 5:3

*"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity..."*

#### 1 Corinthians 6:18-20

*"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price."*

#### Matthew 5:28

*"But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

#### Psalms 119:9-11

*"How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to your word. I seek you with all my heart; do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you."*

### Discussion:

1. Read Hebrews 13:4, Ephesians 5:3, 1 Corinthians 6:18-20 and Matthew 5:28. What do these passages

- teach about sexual purity?
2. What other kinds of impurity can creep into one's life or marriage?
  3. Do a reality check: Is seeking purity a priority in your marriage? Why or why not?
  4. *Read Ephesians 5:3.* What kinds of things might constitute a "hint of immorality or impurity"?
  5. If there is one area of vulnerability that could compromise your purity, what would it be? What commitment might you make to guard yourself in this area?
  6. *Read Psalm 119:9-11.* There are two types of purity we must strive for: outward purity, which is our behavior, and inward purity, which involves our heart. What outward or inward changes do you need to make to ensure you live a life of purity?

### **Wrapping It Up:**

Share one commitment to purity that you are willing to make as a result of this week's message. Then pray for one another in these areas.

## **Prayer Focus:**

Pray for the sexual purity support groups at Sunnybrook and for those who are seeking outward and inward purity in their lives.

### **Memory Verse:**

*"But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity..."* **Ephesians 5:3**



# Additional Scripture on Good Communication

## **Philippians 2:2 (Phillips)**

*"... Live together in harmony and love, as though you only had one mind and spirit between you."*

## **Ephesians 4:3**

*"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit..."*

## **Ephesians 4:2**

*"Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love."*

## **Ephesians 4:32**

*"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."*

## **1 Corinthians 13:5 (LB)**

*"... Love does not demand its own way."*

## **James 1:19-20**

*"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."*

## **Philippians 2:5**

*"Your attitude (toward each other) should be the same as that of Jesus Christ."*



## NOTES:

# Top 10 Tips for Leading a Small Group

1. Establish a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment.
  - Take time to prepare.
  - Make sure to give a warm enthusiastic greeting to each person.
  - Verbally communicate the environment that you hope to create.
2. On the opening night of your group you need to have some intentional discussions centered around these questions:
  - What is the purpose of our group?
  - What is the vision for our group?
  - What are your expectations?
  - What do you hope to gain from this group experience?
  - What are some things we value as a group?
  - What are some healthy guidelines we need to have in place?Review and sign a group agreement.
3. Be authentic. Spend time sharing your life stories in order to get to know each other on a deeper level.
4. Find a good balance between:
  - Truth and grace/Bible study and life
  - Encouraging and challenging one another
  - Giving and receiving feedback from each other
5. Ask good questions to stimulate good discussion. Use open ended questions and follow up questions.
6. Hang out together, do things socially, eat together and have fun together!
7. Develop a missional lifestyle, find a service project to do together in the community.
8. Raise up new leadership by rotating facilitation of the group.
9. Share the responsibilities in order to increase individual commitment and ownership of the group.
10. Pray for your group and for each other!

Find ways to celebrate what God is doing in your group! Who else could you invite to join you in order that their life may be impacted by what God is doing in your group?

# Group Agreement

## OUR PURPOSE

To transform our spiritual lives by cultivating our spiritual health in a healthy small group community. In addition, we: \_\_\_\_\_

## OUR VALUES

Group Attendance: To give priority to the group meeting. We will call or email if we will be late or absent.

Safe Environment: To help create a safe place where people can be heard and feel loved. (Please, no quick answers, snap judgments, or simple fixes.)

Respect Differences: To be gentle and gracious to people with different spiritual maturity, personal opinions, temperaments, or imperfections. We are all works in progress.

Confidentiality: To keep anything that is shared strictly confidential and within the group, and to avoid sharing improper information about those outside the group.

Encouragement for Growth: To be not just takers but givers of life. We want to spiritually multiply our life by serving others with our God-given gifts.

Welcome for Newcomers: To keep an open chair and share Jesus' dream of finding a shepherd for every sheep.

Shared Ownership: To remember that every member is a minister and to ensure that each attender will share a small team role or responsibility over time.

Rotating Hosts/Leaders and Homes: To encourage different people to host the group in their homes, and to rotate the responsibility of facilitating each meeting.

## OUR EXPECTATIONS

- Refreshments/mealtimes \_\_\_\_\_
- Childcare \_\_\_\_\_
- When we will meet (day of week) \_\_\_\_\_
- Where we will meet (place) \_\_\_\_\_
- We will begin at (time) \_\_\_\_\_ and end at \_\_\_\_\_
- We will do our best to have some or all of us attend a worship service together.
- Our primary worship service time will be \_\_\_\_\_
- Date of this agreement \_\_\_\_\_
- Date we will review this agreement again \_\_\_\_\_
- Who (other than the leader) will review this agreement at the end of this study \_\_\_\_\_



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