



Marriage for the Long Haul

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Session 2: Finding God's Grace in Changing Seasons

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I. Introduction

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh." (Mark 10:7–8)

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." (Genesis 2:24)

"Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous." (Hebrews 13:4)

Marriage is not so much about staying in love as it is about keeping a covenant.

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her 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 and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (Ephesians 5:22–32)

II. The Early Years (1-7) - Trust and Humility

A. Trust

The first trust is vertical: trusting God:

“Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.” (Psalm 62:8)

Trust is cultivated and nurtured through spending time in God’s word, meditating on his goodness, sovereignty, wisdom, power, authority, mercy, compassion, and kindness.

“**I know** that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.” (Job 42:2)

“And **I am sure** of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 1:6)

“For **I am sure** that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, 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.” (Romans 8:38–39)

The second trust is horizontal: learning to trust each other.

That kind of trust comes through shared experiences and open communication.

“We are told one another’s duties for the purpose of making their work a joy to them - just as Scripture puts it, in another context, for ministers and church members (Heb. 13:17). (Chad and Emily Van Dixhoorn, Gospel Shaped Marriage: Grace for Sinners to Love Like Saints, 43)

B. Humility

“Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (1 Peter 5:5)

What does humility actually look like?

Self-disclosure.

“Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire; he breaks out against all sound judgment.” (Proverbs 18:1)

“If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:6–7)

Seeking input.

“The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom, and whatever you get, get insight.”
(Proverbs 4:7)

“Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered.” (Proverbs 28:26)

Receiving input.

“A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.”
(Proverbs 18:2)

“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates reproof is stupid.”
(Proverbs 12:1)

Humility simply means thinking more highly of your spouse than yourself.
“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3)

III. The Middle Years (8-25) - Pursuit and Perseverance

“We all know that the familiarity and daily routine of marriage can gradually transform passionate devotion into something more like comfortable toleration.” (Betsy Ricucci)

Our hearts are being shaped during these years, either towards the Lord and his purposes, or to ourselves and our purposes.

“Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life.”

A. Pursuit.

Some things are always important.

Our relationship with Christ.

Our relationship with our spouse.

Our relationship with our kids.

Our relationship with the church.

For husbands:

Pursue growing understanding.

“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.” (1 Peter 3:7)

“It’s just not possible to grow in your love for anything that you take for granted, especially your wife. To increase marital romance, you must study and cherish the object of your affection through the regular investment of time and energy.”
(C.J. Mahaney)

Pursue growing affection.

“For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church,” (Ephesians 5:29)

“By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.” (1 John 3:16)

Date nights.
Touching.
Kissing.
Pictures.
Conversations.

B. Perseverance

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,” (Hebrews 12:1)

“Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.” (Hebrews 10:35–36)

“For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Romans 15:4)

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.” (Hebrews 10:23)

IV. The Later Years (26+) - Gratefulness and Servanthood

A. Gratefulness

“Growing old is not for the faint of heart. Bodies hurt, things stop working. A point comes in every person’s life when we top out and begin to decline. We are more tired after doing less, we recognize more people in the obituary column, and often our memories begin to fade. Long before all that happens, there comes a day when most of us realize that some of our dreams will never be fulfilled.” (Chad and Emily Van Dixhoorn, *The Gospel Shaped Marriage*, p. 128)

“The righteous flourish like the palm tree and grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They are planted in the house of the Lord; they flourish in the courts of our God. They still bear fruit in old age; they are ever full of sap and green, to declare that the Lord is upright; he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.” (Psalm 92:12–15)

“O God, from my youth you have taught me, and I still proclaim your wondrous deeds. So even to old age and gray hairs, O God, do not forsake me, until I proclaim your might to another generation, your power to all those to come.” (Psalm 71:17–18)

“The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.” (Psalm 16:5–6)

B. Servanthood

More time to serve.

More wisdom to draw from.

More resources.

“For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.” (Luke 22:27, ESV)

“Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.” (Hebrews 13:20–21)