



## NG Study Guide: Genesis 1:27-28 :: “Growing Fruitful Marriages” [3.17.24]

### Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above, and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. Regularly review the notes at the bottom.

### The Study

**Thesis:** Marriage is the most complex, but also most potentially rewarding of human relationships, because if marriage is done God’s way it thrives and reflects Jesus’ relationship with His Church (Ephesians 5:21-33). Today we learn how...

**Subject:** Christ-honoring Marriage

**Object:** Experience Fruitful Marriage

**Context:** 4-week series on God-honoring family life (prior to verse by verse study through Ephesians). We are considering: a flourishing personal relationship with God, raising children of faith, thriving families for generations, and today growing fruitful marriages.

Some years ago, I wrote a book entitled “Fruitful Marriage” which is presently called, “Marriage” and is available for free on our site, <https://calvarynexus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Marriage-Bruce-Zachary.pdf>.

“Fruitful” was used as an acronym: foundation, reconciliation, unity, intimacy, time + trust, finances, union threats, and leadership.

I encourage you, if you are married or interested in marriage, to download the book later today.

Today, our **outline** will focus on the acronym FRUIT: foundation, reconciliation, unity, intimacy, time and trust.

**“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” (Genesis 1:27-28)**

#### 1. Foundation:

##### a. The right foundation: Hear God’s word and do it (Matthew 7:24-27).

Building on the rock of Christ is the building design that survives the storms of life. As individuals, and as a couple, choose to learn God’s word, love God’s word, and live God’s word regardless of the challenges you face.

I knew a couple that dated for ten days, got engaged and were married 2.5 months later. Their pastor agreed to marry them, because he was convinced they would do life God’s way (not endorsing this as a model).

**b. Be equally yoked (2Corinthians 6:14-16, Genesis 24:3-4):** Followers of Jesus are called to marry followers of Jesus. Having Christ as the foundation of the marriage is the most significant area of commonality, security, and contentment. Imagine a triangle with Jesus at the top, and husband and wife at the bottom corners. As husband and wife both draw closer to Jesus, they draw closer to one another, but if only one is drawing closer there is distance between husband and wife.

**c. God’s purpose:** God’s desire is to display Christ, His gospel, and His Bride the Church through a fruitful marriage (Ephesians 5:21-33).

**d. The key to contentment (Genesis 24:67):** after the death of Isaac's mother Sarah, he took Rebekah as his wife; and *Isaac loved Rebekah* so he was comforted after the passing of his mother. What we might expect to see is, *Rebekah loved Isaac* so he was comforted. Yet, it is because Isaac loved Rebekah that he was comforted. The key is in your hand.

## **2. Reconciliation:**

**a. The problem of bitterness (Hebrews 12:15):** bitterness is like a deep-rooted weed, that springs up and defiles many. To remove the root requires a biblical understanding of forgiveness, and likely requires us to "get on our knees."

**b. Initiating reconciliation (Matthew 5:23, 44):** Ideally the spouse who has done wrong should initiate, but hurting one another is often multi-faceted, complicated, and characterized by shared fault. When your spouse has hurt you deeply, they don't feel like your spouse, but rather like a neighbor. So, how should you treat a neighbor? Perhaps they've hurt you so much they feel more like an enemy. So, how are we to treat an enemy? If thinking about the person you are bitter or angry towards, or what happened is interfering with your worship of God seek to be reconciled.

**c. Biblical forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32, Matthew 5:44):** Ephesians 4:32 instructs us, "To be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you." Thus, we are to choose not to avenge wrongs, and work towards restoring relationships. Matthew 5:44 encourages us to love our enemies by blessing (not cursing), doing good, and praying for them. These practical steps move towards reconciliation, but don't require intimacy, or vulnerability where your well-being feels compromised. Imagine a walled-city in ancient times. Generally, gates are opened at sunrise and closed at sundown. However, when threatened the gates are opened temporarily to let people in or out, and closed when there appears to be danger. This can serve as a helpful metaphor regarding vulnerability while seeking reconciliation.

**d. Fruit of repentance (Matthew 3:8):** John the Baptist famously told religious leaders queuing to be baptized to bear fruit worthy of repentance. It takes time to see transformed attitudes and actions that reveal true repentance necessary for biblical restoration and reconciliation.

## **3. Unity + Intimacy:**

### **a. Unity and becoming one (Genesis 2:24)**

Genesis 2:24 reveals God's design for marriage, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." The marriage relationship is the only human relationship where the stated ideal is oneness or unity. For example, business partners, friends and even parent-child relationships don't exalt oneness nor aim for oneness per se. This relationship of oneness is a picture of the relationship between Jesus and His Church (Ephesians 5:30-32). To become one, a husband and wife need to die to themselves (in a certain sense) to forge a new identity.

### **b. Intimacy: emotional, spiritual, physical**

When a husband or a wife says, "I want to be intimate" chances are they have different expectations associated with those words. One may associate intimacy as sexual and another may be focused on the emotional. Also, one may be willing to try to be emotionally intimate to experience physical intimacy, while the other may be willing to be physically intimate to try to experience emotional intimacy. So, here are some thoughts to cultivate intimacy in your marriage:

#### **i. Emotional (1Peter 3:7, James 1:19, Romans 12:15)**

Husbands are to dwell with their wives with understanding, and honor their wives (1Peter 3:7). In essence, a husband is to continually discover his wife's thoughts, feelings, desires, and boundaries; and then affirm and respect her. James provides some practical advice on how to do this, "Let every man (person) be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath." Learning to actively listen, without interrupting or waiting for a pause to interject a solution promotes intimacy. By slowing down, you can ask someone what they would like from you (e.g. "Do you want me to simply listen, or are you looking for feedback, or something else?"). Also, by slowing down we can seek to respond in the spirit rather than reacting in the flesh. Being slow to wrath implies that the listener is not defensive, or angry with the revealed communication or communicator. Finally, in Romans 12:15 we learn, "Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep." The essence is empathy and compassion. Intimacy is cultivated when you feel your spouse's emotion.

In effect, you are playing dominoes in the sense that if your spouse plays a three then you need to put down a three.

#### **ii. Spiritual (Ephesians 5:23-25):**

Wives should encourage their husbands to be spiritual leaders in their home, and husbands are to lead. Spiritual disciplines that promote unity and intimacy include: prayer, the Word, church attendance, a biblical worldview.

#### **iii. Physical (Song of Solomon, Hebrews 13:4):**

Emotional and spiritual intimacy support physical intimacy. Marriage is honorable and the bed is undefiled (Hebrews 13:4). Thus, a consenting married man and woman should be intimate in whatever way they are both comfortable. Love should seek to please a spouse, and be willing to place a spouse's needs before one's own. Respect, love, honor and a desire to foster intimacy are desired outcomes.

### **4. Time and Trust:**

#### **a. Time (Ephesians 5:15-16)**

We are to recognize that time is a limited resource, and we are to be careful and wise in regard to how we allocate this most precious and fleeting resource. Through our allocation of time, especially discretionary time, we communicate priorities, and can also communicate what we truly care about (1Corinthians 7:33-34).

Also, we need to be aware of our maintenance needs and those of our spouse. For example, imagine a sports car that needs frequent tuning (e.g. Ferrari); and imagine a vehicle that needs little to no maintenance (e.g. Hummer). If you treat a Ferrari like a Hummer, or vice versa, there are going to be issues. It is challenging enough to ensure proper maintenance when you have an owner's manual, but your spouse doesn't come with an owner's manual. So, in every season of life you need to be aware of the importance of time, and allocating time to cultivate fruitfulness in your marriage.

#### **b. Trust (Ephesians 4:15, 1Corinthians 13:4-8)**

Jesus' followers are to approach life such that we are trustworthy, and generally trusting of others (1Corinthians 13:4-8). Similarly, we are not called to be naive nor are we to be generally suspicious or cynical. We are to speak the truth in love, to facilitate growth and development in Christ (Ephesians 4:15). God's people are to engage in "truthing" not lying.

Trust is like credit in the sense that it can be very easy to damage, and generally takes time to restore. Lies and betrayal (of trust) are the enemies of a foundation of trust, respect, unity, intimacy and fruitfulness. Remember, the meta-narrative of the Bible is God's redemptive and restorative plan for His glory and our contentment. So, review the section on reconciliation.

**How to be fruitful (John 15:1-10):** Humble yourself and yield to God and He will 1. lift you up, 2. prune you, and 3. wash you with the Word of God. We need to *abide*. Ten times in this section. It means to dwell with, remain connected to, and refers to proximity. By the way the couple that dated for ten days, got engaged and were married 2.5 months later and their pastor agreed to marry them, because he was convinced they would do life God's way: it is Karen and I.

### **Study Guide Qs:**

**Q1. Review the section, "Foundation." What is interesting to you and why?**

**Q2. Review the section, "Reconciliation." What is interesting to you and why?**

**Q3. Review the section, "Unity + Intimacy." What is interesting to you and why?**

**Q4. Review the section, "Time and Trust." What is interesting to you and why?**

### **"Disciples Who Dig Deeper" (optional or alternative study)**

**1. "Marriage" by Pastor Bruce is available for free on our site, <https://calvarynexus.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Marriage-Bruce-Zachary.pdf>. If you are married or interested in marriage, download + read the book.**

**2. Here are two family devotionals by Pastor Bruce available for free on our site:**

**Love your neighbors (inside + outside the group) better:**

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors inside or outside the group?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbors inside or outside the group?

**Disciples who make disciples:**

1. Who would like to share how they recently sought to make disciples?
2. Here is a disciple making idea to consider for the weeks ahead:

**Invite neighbors where you live, work, study, play and worship to join you for Holy Week services (Good Friday and Easter/Resurrection Sunday).**

**Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:**

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

**Notes:**

1. **Preparation and participation:** Group participants should read the teacher's notes contained in this study guide prior to your meeting and be prepared to discuss the content. Remember the purpose of preparation and participation is to accelerate growth as disciples who loves God supremely, loves neighbors like self, and make other disciples who do likewise. **Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
2. **Consider what about the passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?**  
If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.
3. **The "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Disciples Who Dig Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
4. **The "Love your neighbors" section encourages participants to love neighbors inside and outside the group better.** As a leader, discuss this section frequently.
5. **The "Disciples who make disciples" section provides a helpful idea, and encourages participants to be disciples who make disciples.** Leaders should regularly encourage the group to review and discuss this section.

**Next week's passage: Ephesians 3:14-21**