



*PICTURE PERFECT*



CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH  
2021

## Introduction to the *Picture-Perfect* series

Scroll through any social media feed and you will see perfect pictures. The perfect meal, the perfect job, the perfect workout, the perfect vacation, even the perfect family. But let's be honest, life is never that picture-perfect. This can be especially true in our marriages and families. There are fights, struggles, failures, disappointments, and regrets. We may feel embarrassed that our family doesn't measure up to some picture-perfect standard, or we may even be guilty of trying to convince others we do.

Stop comparing or pretending. Join us as we spend the next four weeks seeking God's best for our marriages and families. Let's allow God to do something miraculous as we find ways to deepen our relationships – with Him and with one another.

### Introduction To The 4G Guide

#### *GATHER – GOD – GROUP – GIVE*

It's important that we *GATHER* each week as a church family. Still, God has so much more for us! He wants us to take what He's teaching and apply it to our lives. This is the heart of the 4G Guides. These guides are written to encourage you in your personal *GOD TIME* and in your small *GROUPS*. They are designed to help you understand what God is teaching and apply it to your daily life. Understanding and application allows you to then take what God is teaching and *GIVE* it to others.

Unless otherwise indicated, all scripture references are from the *English Standard Version* (ESV Text Edition: 2016) Bible.



## How To Use The 4G Guide

Each week is divided into four sections:



### Gear Up

Each week starts with the Gear Up section. This section introduces the weekly topic and expounds on Scripture. Also provided are some practical steps to putting the subject matter into practice.



### God Time

Personal time with God is vital to the Christian walk. Five daily devotionals are provided for each week's topic. This is your one-on-one time in a guided devotional format. At the conclusion, we encourage you to pray, seeking direction for the day and the rest of the week.



### Group Time

We learn from one another! In small groups we meet to dig deeper into the weekly material. This booklet contains lesson outlines for discipleship discussion. For more information on available groups and forming a group, go to our Groups webpage:

[cbcfamily.net/groups](http://cbcfamily.net/groups).



### Family Group Time

Family worship glorifies God. Each week we have simple devotionals just for Families. Plan ahead though, as many of these lessons include fun experiments or short videos to discuss.



## Gear Up: We Are All Broken

We all have an idea of what the perfect family looks like. Imagine the perfect photo— like something from Instagram, or what you get when you buy a photo frame. But we all know this never happens. We are all imperfect and we bring that imperfection into our families. It doesn't mean our family can't be great, though.

**Yes, our families can be great!** Families who seek the best for each other, who work through conflict, and honor God together are real possibilities. That doesn't mean it will be easy, but worthwhile things rarely are.

**We begin by acknowledging that we are broken, sinful creatures.** Once we do that, then we can take responsibility. Oftentimes, we focus first on our spouse and think that if they would just do whatever we want, then everything would be better.

### Matthew 7:3-5 says:

*Why do you look at the splinter in your brother's eye but don't notice the beam of wood in your own eye? <sup>4</sup>Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the splinter out of your eye,' and look, there's a beam of wood in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>Hypocrite! First take the beam of wood out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to take the splinter out of your brother's eye.*

### The Log in My Eye Keeps Me from Seeing Clearly and Hurts Me More Than the Speck in Yours

It's important to realize that when we have a log in our eye, we just can't see well. Instead of playing the victim and thinking the other person needs to do all the changing, we need to focus on pulling out the log from our own eye.

## How Do I Pull Out the Log?

**It's better to use a mirror and not a magnifying glass for this one.**

When we begin to think about or comment on the other person, we need to first ask this: God, will you show me what I need to change?

### Romans 12:3 says:

*For by the grace given to me, I tell everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he should think. Instead, think sensibly, as God has distributed a measure of faith to each one.*

### And Psalm 139:23-24 says:

*<sup>23</sup>Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my concerns. <sup>24</sup>See if there is any offensive way in me; lead me in the everlasting way.*

**When we look at ourselves through the lens of Jesus,** we see who we really are and who He wants us to be. He will show us how to get there.

James 1:19 says, "Be quick to hear" and emphasizes the importance of listening. James 5:16 says, "Confess your sins to one another."

Both verses are helpful in working toward building better relationships with others. Remember:

### Ask God What He Wants You to Work On

**Listen More than You Talk**

**Confess More than You Blame**

Talk to God and listen to Him. Then watch what He does in your life and in your relationships!

WEEK 1 – WE ARE ALL BROKEN

God Time: Day 1 – Nothing Is Perfect: But it Can Be Great!



We are all broken, imperfect people. Since that’s the case, how can we, broken people, have a great marriage, a great family, and a great life (Picture Perfect)? It starts with taking responsibility for our actions and being obedient to God.



Read Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:3-5.  
<sup>3</sup> *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?* <sup>4</sup> *Or how can you say to your brother, “Let me take the speck out of your eye,” when there is the log in your own eye?* <sup>5</sup> *You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.*



Circle what the brother has in his eye.  
What does Jesus say “you” don’t notice in “your own eye?”



Explain in your own words what is happening in verse 4:

Put a box around the first two words of verse 5. Then, rewrite what Jesus tells us to do.



According to the same verse, what is the purpose of doing that?

In this passage, the log and speck refer to sin. Not recognizing the sin in our own lives keeps us from seeing clearly; it hurts us more than a speck of it in another’s eye hurts them. In the context of marriage, this means we need to evaluate ourselves and deal with what we find. When was the last time you evaluated yourself?



Are you more likely to look at yourself or to look at the speck in someone else’s eye?

God Time: Day 2 – Pull Out the Log: Look In the Mirror



Read Romans 12:3.  
*For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.*



What are we not supposed to think?  
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What are we supposed to think with?  
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This verse begins a discussion on spiritual gifts. Paul reminds Believers that there are many gifts and that having a certain gift doesn’t make someone better than anyone else. Christians should always practice humility! This is especially important to remember in marriage.



Read Psalm 139:23-24.  
<sup>23</sup> *Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!* <sup>24</sup> *And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!*

It is easy to see our spouse’s problems. (It is easy to see *anyone* else’s problems.) **But, instead of looking at our loved one’s issues with a magnifying glass, we need to look at ourselves in the mirror.**



Spend some time asking yourself the following. Then journal your answers.

- 1. Do I look for the speck in others’ eyes so that I don’t have to confront what I find in myself?

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What sins/struggles do I need to deal with? (Addiction, pride, impatience, bitterness, anger, disrespect, etc.?)

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What will I do today to work on myself?  
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WEEK 1 – WE ARE ALL BROKEN

God Time: Day 3 – Pull Out the Log: Listen More Than You Talk



Read James 1:19-20.  
<sup>19</sup> *Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger;* <sup>20</sup> *for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.*



Circle what this verse says to be quick to do. Put a box around the two things we are to be slow to do.



What does anger not produce according to verse 20?  
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Listening to your spouse and his or her intent is hugely important. Remember: *listening* is different from hearing! Listen so that you can know, understand, and help your spouse.

Ask the Lord to help you be a better listener and to show you any areas where you haven't done this well. Then, listen to your spouse today— really *listen*.

God Time: Day 4 – Pull Out the Log: Confess More Than You Blame



Read James 5:16.  
*Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*



What does this verse tell us to do? Why?  
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Confess more than you blame! If we want healing in our marriages and relationships, confessing our sins and struggles to one another and then praying for one another are excellent places to start.

Do you have things to confess? What are they? (We will do an application step with this tomorrow.)



Pray for your spouse— for their physical and mental health, spiritual growth, purity, and for God's blessings.

God Time: Day 5 – Start With Yourself!



On Day 2, we discussed that it is easier to see our spouse's problems than our own. But we need to look at ourselves in the mirror and start our problem solving right there!

**Work on Yourself:** Yesterday, some prompts were given to pray for your spouse. Those same prompts can serve as evaluation tools in order to answer the first self-evaluation question, "What do I need to work on?"

Spend time in prayer and reflection and give yourself a check-up. On a scale of 1 – 10, rate each:

Physical Health:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Mental Health:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Spiritual Growth:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Spiritual Purity:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10



Find your lowest score. What two things can you start doing today to improve it? (If you don't know, ask someone you trust.)  
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**Learn to Listen:** Being a good listener requires effort and practice.



Read Proverbs 18:2 & 13.  
<sup>2</sup> *A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion...* <sup>13</sup> *If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.*

What is one thing you will do to be a better listener today?  
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**Confess and Plan:** What did you determine yesterday that you need to confess? Using this model, talk to your spouse about it:

Here is what I did wrong \_\_\_\_\_,  
 and this is how I will do better \_\_\_\_\_.



Spend time each day talking and listening to your spouse. Make specific plans together to do better. If you are unmarried, use this material with the goal of improving yourself. Having a great life starts with taking responsibility for our actions and being obedient to God.



**Group Time**

◀◀◀ **LOOK BACK:**

1. Each participant shares one praise and one prayer request. (Commit these to prayer for the week.)

2. **ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1 (See last page for directions)**

Y / N	Y / N	_____
_____	_____	

3. Starting a new series.



What do you hope to gain from this series?

**Question:** Is there a couple you know, whether in person or a celebrity, that had everyone thinking they had the picture-perfect relationship – until the truth came out?

**Recap:** While we all have the idea of what a picture-perfect relationship, marriage, and family look like, the fact is that this doesn't exist because we are all imperfect people – we are all broken. Knowing and admitting this fact is the first step.

To develop loving and growing relationships, we must see ourselves through the lens of Jesus. To do this we must listen more than we talk and confess more than we blame. It starts by fixing "me."

**LOOK IN: Discussion Questions**

Read James 1:19-20.

- Reread verse 19. How difficult is this to do, especially in conflict?
- When have you seen it work well?

Read James 5:16

- How difficult is it to confess a sin to a loved one?
- How difficult is it to listen to such a confession?

**LOOK FORWARD: Application**

**Point:** *We must see ourselves through the lens of Jesus. This takes honesty, trust, and transparency. We must listen and be truthful.*

**Look in the Mirror (Matthew 7:3-5):**

- This week, when you find yourself ready to complain about someone else's actions at home, on social media, or in the news, pause for a moment and look at yourself in a mirror.

What do you see? \_\_\_\_\_

What does Jesus see? \_\_\_\_\_

**Listen More Than You Talk (James 1:19-20):**

- Circle where you would rate yourself on the "Listening Scale."  
(Poor) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 (Great)

○ Put a square where your spouse would rate you.

○ Put a diamond where your kids would rate you.

What can you do this week to move up at least 2 numbers?

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- Implement the Daily 20-Minute Listening Plan:
  - Take turns listening to each other for 5 minutes (5 minutes each. No responding, just listening.)
  - Then discuss what you heard each other say and together, for 10 minutes, discuss your plan moving forward.
  - Keep a journal of your discussion plans.

**Confess More Than You Blame (James 5:16):**

- What do you need to confess? How will you deal with it?

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- How will you react to your loved one's confession?

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## Family Group Time

### Main Idea:

**We Are All Broken.**



### Key Verse: Matthew 7:3-5

<sup>3</sup> 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? <sup>4</sup> Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.



**Ask:** If you were to create the perfect family, what would it look like?

- How many kids?
- How many animals?
- Where would they live?
- What kind of house?
- What might be some of the rules?
- Etc....

Do you ever feel the pressure of comparing your family with others and realizing that you do not measure up to what you see? We all have dreams of what our ideal family life would be. Sometimes these are prompted by “model” families that we have seen, or perhaps they are the dreams we have had of what our own family should be like.

But more often we see problems in families.

- What are some problems you've noticed in your classmates or friend's families?



### Talk:

- Why do you think families are not perfect?
- Go back and read the key verse. What does the verse say that we have in our own eye that at times we cannot see?
- Why is it important for us to realize that our family is not perfect (no one's is)?
- What ways can we stop comparing our family to other families? Why is this important to do?



**Encourage:** There is no such thing as the ideal, “perfect family.” Every family will experience challenges, trials, character deficiencies, and more. The ideal of the perfect family does not consider the following realities:

- Our sin nature. (See Romans 7:18.)
- The influence of the world, the flesh, and the devil. (See Romans 7.)
- Spiritual growth through trials. (See James 1:2–4 and Romans 5:3–5.)
- The uniqueness of family members.

Let's refrain from trying to become that perfect family, but instead become the family that God intended us to become. Our desire is to please the Lord. Follow the principles and commitments that He has revealed to your family, according to His Word. Observe the direction your family is going and encourage them in it. **Look for the best** in family members and praise those qualities.

*“Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things”* (Philippians 4:8).



## Gear Up: Your Foundation Matters

A bad foundation is... well, bad! We all know that a house built on a bad foundation is doomed. The same could be said of marriage. For a marriage to thrive and be healthy, it must be built on a solid foundation.

**So, what is a solid foundation for marriage?** Many people think that love is the foundation for a great marriage. But that is only true if we properly define “love.”

### 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 says:

*<sup>4</sup>Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, is not boastful, is not arrogant, <sup>5</sup>is not rude, is not self-seeking, is not irritable, and does not keep a record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup>Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup>It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

The passage above teaches that love is a commitment to doing the best for the other person. A marriage built on this kind of love will last. But how do we develop or nurture this kind of love?

### Find True Love

**We can look to the Book of Genesis to teach us** about three pillars of true love.

*<sup>18</sup> Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” <sup>19</sup> Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. <sup>20</sup> The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. <sup>21</sup> 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.*

*<sup>22</sup> And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. <sup>23</sup> 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.” <sup>24</sup> Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. <sup>25</sup> And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. – Genesis 2:18-25*



### Pillar One: Intimacy

**Intimacy in marriage is more than just something physical.** God made Eve out of Adam’s own rib. She would become Adam’s partner, companion, and helper in life, there for a deep relationship and to do God’s work alongside her husband. This is intimacy.



### Pillar Two: Commitment

**Everything of value requires work!** Marriage isn’t easy and we shouldn’t expect it to be. But when we are committed to our spouse, our foundation is stronger.



### Pillar Three: God

**Grow close to God.** After all, He designed and created marriage. We need to make sure we are listening to what God says about marriage. We also need to grow in our relationship with God. If we and our spouses are doing that, then we are also growing closer together.

Level your foundation by spending time with your spouse each day. Make marriage your highest priority, and let God guide you. Stay close to Him and close to one another.

WEEK 2 – YOUR FOUNDATION MATTERS

God Time: Day 1 – What is True Love?



Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. <sup>4</sup>Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant<sup>5</sup>or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup>it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup>Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.



Circle anything that stands out to you. This is God’s definition of true love. Notice two things:

1. There is nothing in this definition about feelings. Instead, we have a description to help us recognize true love.
2. This definition sounds a lot like a description of Christ.



Thank God for showing us what true love looks like. Ask Him to help you love others the way Christ loves you.

God Time: Day 2 – Find True Love: Intimacy



Read Genesis 2:18 and 21-22. <sup>18</sup>Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him” <sup>21</sup>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. <sup>22</sup>And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.

In verse 18, underline what God said is “not good.”



What did He do in response?

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God created the animals and Adam but only man was *alone* — there was no other like him! He needed someone to connect with mentally, spiritually, and physically. This is intimacy.



Talking to your spouse, serving together, and prioritizing your marriage fosters intimacy. What will you do this week to develop intimacy with your spouse?

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God Time: Day 3 – Find True Love: Commitment



Read Paul’s words in Ephesians 4:1-3. <sup>1</sup>I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.



In verse 1, what does Paul urge all Christians to do?

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In verses 2 and 3, circle the words that show what we are to do this “with.”

These verses don’t specifically talk about marriage, but they demonstrate how Christians are supposed to be toward one another. By obeying, we commit to treat one another in the way Christ wants us to and reflect how He treats us.



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

Underline the words “hold fast.” In the Hebrew, this word indicates a holy promise or commitment. God desires marriage to be a covenantal union of one husband and one wife joined together through the promise of commitment, all for His glory. Two separate people become one.

What is your commitment to your spouse? Declare it to them. (Examples: “I promise to always be here,” “...to love you no matter what,” etc.)



What will you do to “hold fast” to your spouse today?

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Remember: Marriage is not easy; it requires work but has a great return on investment! Have you seen this in your life?

Share it with someone today.

God Time: Day 4 – Find True Love: God



Reread Genesis 2:24 from Day 3.

Now read Philippians 2:3-5.

<sup>3</sup>Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. <sup>4</sup>Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. <sup>5</sup>Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus...

In verse 3, circle what two things we are to “Do nothing from.”



What are we supposed to do instead (verses 3 and 4)?

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Why can we do this? (Verse 5) We have the mind of \_\_\_\_\_

Consider memorizing Philippians 2:3-5.

The first passage above defines marriage: man will leave his parents and “hold fast” to his wife. The second tells how to treat one another and can be applied to any relationship.

Our culture will try to define (or redefine) marriage and tell us what accepted behavior is. Do you sometimes tend to listen to culture over God? If so, what will you do to change that?

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If you are not married, how can you demonstrate that you agree with and support God’s definition of marriage?

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As a couple grows closer to God and obeys Him, they are drawn closer together. A God-focused life leads to a God-focused marriage. What steps will you take this month to live a more God-focused life? (Read the Bible together, pray together, serve in ministry together, etc.)

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God Time: Day 5 – Level Your Foundation



Reread 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

<sup>4</sup>Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant<sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup>it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup>Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

When we are trying to “find true love” we should remember the three pillars we covered over the past three days: intimacy, commitment, and God.

God was mentioned last, but He is absolutely not least! (The other two don’t even matter without God.) But notice that the three pillars are like legs on a stool. When one is too short, the stool will tip.



How do we invest in these pillars? Here are three practical tips:

- 1.) **Spend 20 minutes a day talking.** Talk about your plans, your goals, what’s important to you, and so on. Listen to one another. What did you discover?

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**Look at your priorities.** Set your marriage in a position above your work, your family, your friendships, and so on. Do you need to make a change? If so, what?

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**Let God guide you.** Set Him as your ultimate focus. As you and your spouse both seek Him, you will be drawn together. Do you need to lengthen this pillar, or “leg of the stool?” What will you do differently?

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Whether married or single, there is work to do and room to grow. Invest in your foundation. A solid foundation matters!



**Group Time**

◀◀◀ **LOOK BACK:**

1. Each participant shares one praise and one prayer request. (Commit these to prayer for the week.)

2.

**ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1** (See last page for directions)

Y / N   
 Y / N   
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\_\_\_\_\_   
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3. *We must see ourselves through the lens of Jesus. This takes honesty, trust, and transparency. We must listen and be truthful.*
  - Review last week’s lesson.
  - How well did you listen this past week? Did you improve?

**Question:** What could go wrong with a marriage based on love?

**Recap:** Great marriages are not based on love that is a feeling but love that is based on a commitment to do the best for the other person. This kind of love is intentional and needs to be developed.

True love is based on three pillars (or legs). Pull one and it all falls.



- Intimacy: Knowing and serving one another.
- Commitment: It requires work and planning.
- God: The creator and designer of marriage.

**LOOK IN: Discussion Questions**

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

- Compare and contrast these three statements:
  - If you loved me, you would...
  - I love you, what can I...
  - I love you, what can we...
- Reread verse 6. What is the “truth” of true love?

**LOOK FORWARD: Application**

**Point:** *A marriage based on true love is one of intimacy and commitment (knowing one another and working as one) with God at the center of all things.*

**Level Your Foundation**

- What are your top three marriage priorities?
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
- If children, work, or family were in the top two, try again:
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. \_\_\_\_\_
- What can you be doing together to stay close to God and let Him guide your marriage?
 

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- Continue the Daily 20-Minute Listening Plan. This week focus on your commitment to each other. Look at your priorities. Together, how will you stay close to God?
  - Take turns listening to each other for 5 minutes (5 minutes each. No responding, just listening.)
  - Then discuss what you heard each other say and together, for 10 minutes, discuss your plans moving forward.
  - Keep journaling your discussion plans.

Pray for your marriage, and those in your group.

Pray for the discussions and plans for moving forward.

Family Group Time



Main Idea:

Your Foundation Matters



Key Verse: Joshua 24:14-15

14 "Now therefore fear the LORD and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. Put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Set it Up:

When building a house, what is the most important place to start? Pull out some toy blocks and spend time together as a family constructing buildings with different kinds of foundations.



Ask:

- Which one of the buildings has a better foundation?
- Why is it important for buildings to have a great foundation?



Encourage:

- As a family, we need to have a great foundation too. Write down three or four things in the space below, that need to be our foundation as a family (e.g., God, commitment, etc.).

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- God designed and created the first family. His goal was that the family would always be centered on God. Because of sin, it can be easy to make our family about ourselves and not God. What can we do as a family this week to make our foundation stronger?



Challenge:

Our challenge for this week is to do these three things as a family:

1. Spend 15 minutes a day talking as a family. Make sure that each person gets uninterrupted time to share what they did and how that made them feel.
2. Make sure your family time takes priority over TV, sports, or other extracurricular activities.
3. Spend time each day praying together as a family. This should be a time when each family member prays for another family member.



## Gear Up: Move Together

When God's people arrived in the Promised Land, they probably felt like they had finally gotten everything they'd hoped and dreamed. But the reality was that the challenge was only beginning, because now they must conquer the land.

### We Have Arrived

The honeymoon phase of marriage doesn't last, and at some point, reality sets in. If we aren't careful, we can allow the challenges to get in our way and we lose sight of what really matters.

Joshua tells God's people in Joshua 24:14-15 this:

*"Therefore, fear the Lord and worship him in sincerity and truth. Get rid of the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and worship the Lord. But if it doesn't please you to worship the Lord, choose for yourselves today: Which will you worship — the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living? As for me and my family, we will worship the Lord."*

As their time conquering comes to an end, Joshua tells the people to fear (honor and respect) God, serve Him, and put away false gods (anything that stands between them and God). He urged them to make a decision that very day! And he told them what his decision was: he and his family would worship the Lord!

### Have You Decided Whom You Will Serve?

Many of us are just living life just doing what needs to be done and not thinking much about what is guiding us. But something guides us, and it's helpful for us to evaluate what that is. Is it feelings? Tradition? Or simply, "the flow?"

If we are honest, we have to admit that many times we are guided by something (or someone) other than God. This means we are serving that thing or person. Think about it: in our culture today, many people even allow things like sports, money, success, or even entertainment to take the place of God. We will either serve the Lord, or we will serve some other god. That's the reality.

### Create a Family Declaration

Like Joshua and his family, we can make a decision and declaration to serve the Lord. Plan a time to meet (when will you do it?) and then begin with prayer. Answer these questions:

1. How will we honor God?
2. How will we serve Him?
3. What idols do we need to remove?

**Make the declaration personal.** Men, take the lead. Let the declaration guide your major decisions and allow it to grow with your family. Write your declaration down and put it up on the wall in a place where you'll see it regularly.

### You Choose

**Revelation 3:15-16 says:**

*<sup>15</sup>I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were cold or hot. <sup>16</sup>So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I am going to vomit you out of my mouth.*

**This is a reminder that our choice matters.** The Lord wants His children to serve Him with wholehearted devotion. Choose today whom you will serve, and let it be the Lord!

God Time: Day 1 – Arrived! We Made It



Read: Exodus 32:13.

Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Israel, to whom you swore by your own self: 'I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and I will give your descendants all this land I promised them, and it will be their inheritance forever.

Too often we imagine that if God fulfills His promise, we are excused from putting in our own effort – we think we've arrived; we've made it! It may be easy to see the foolishness of this idea when we think of Abraham after the birth of Isaac. God promised to make Abraham a father of many nations. Just because Isaac was finally born did not mean that Abraham need not make an effort to raise Isaac to be the kind of man who could lead a family into the future. There are no "happily-ever-after's" that don't require effort. In reality, the work has just begun.



What situation(s) in your relationship with your spouse or others have you believed that "because God put you together," you could easily cruise along without continued effort?

God Time: Day 2 – The Power of Example



Read: Joshua 24:15.

And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Underline the words Joshua used to declare his choice.

How often have you been in a situation where it seemed everyone was waiting on someone else to make a choice?

God calls each of us to be His example to others. When we choose to follow God's ways, our feet may be set on an uphill path, but it's the right path.



Your family and others are watching to see the kind of choices you make. How are your daily choices serving God?

God Time: Day 3 – Whom Will You Serve



Read: Matthew 6:24a.

No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other.

This verse gives us a clear choice of what we choose to serve. Choosing to serve anything above or in equality to God is idolatry.

When we try to serve God and any other thing equally as masters, what does this verse say will be the outcome?

We will \_\_\_\_\_ the one and \_\_\_\_\_ the other.

Or we will be \_\_\_\_\_ to one and \_\_\_\_\_ the other.



Consider an important relationship, like that with your spouse or very close friend. What will happen if we try to serve (live out) that relationship equally with God?

\_\_\_\_\_

God has given us direction in how to administer our relationships, and when we follow His guidelines, we serve Him as master.



Read: Ephesians 5:22 & 25, and 6:1 & 4.

<sup>22</sup>Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

<sup>1</sup>Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right.

<sup>4</sup>Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.



When we follow the guidelines God has provided, it allows us to serve Him and be a witness to others. List practical ways you can better serve God in your relationships, especially with your family.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

God Time: Day 4 – Create Your Declaration



A constitution provides a foundation for the laws and governmental structure of a country. Declaration documents are required for the legal establishment of different types of organizations. Similarly, a family declaration serves as a guiding force, shaping the path of the family.



Read: Ruth 1:16-17  
<sup>16</sup>But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God.  
<sup>17</sup>Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.”

Ruth’s words to Naomi provide a pattern we can use to develop our own family declarations:



Circle the phrases which describe a commitment to **unity**.

Underline the statement of **spiritual dedication**.

Draw a box around the words which describe **how long** this commitment is meant to last.

Note the very last sentence, which describes what kind of **consequence** is expected if Ruth fails to hold this commitment. The phrase doesn’t easily translate into English but is an open invitation for punishment if she lets anything keep her from this commitment.



As we are challenged to create our family declarations, feel free to use the outlines provided in the Group Time and Family Time sections this week, but also consider Ruth’s pattern. For making your declaration, use this pattern for each choice you discuss:

We choose to: \_\_\_\_\_

Because: \_\_\_\_\_

Regardless of: \_\_\_\_\_

Until: \_\_\_\_\_

God Time: Day 5 – Enjoy the Process



Read: Philippians 2:1-2.  
<sup>1</sup> So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,  
<sup>2</sup>complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Underline these words in verse 1: *comfort, love, affection, sympathy, joy.*

Paul tells us that these are the results of working together for the benefit of Christ and by the leading of the Holy Spirit “*in full accord and of one mind.*”

As your family formulates its declaration, there is a danger of turning the exercise into just an activity to get done. That prevents us from taking joy in the shared commitment.

Just as we started this week with learning that there was more work to do after reaching the Promised Land, so remember that your Family Declaration is not the end, but the beginning of a new and Godly focus for your family.



Read: 1 John 1: 7-9.  
<sup>7</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Underline the two results of walking in the light in verse 7.



In verse 8, circle what is not in us when we pretend that we have it all together (“*have no sin*”). We cannot remain connected to God without the Truth.

Draw a box around the action in verse 9 that allows us to receive the cleansing power of Jesus?



What do you need to *confess* in order to move forward with your family as you seek to serve God together?

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**Group Time**

◀◀ LOOK BACK:

1. Each participant shares one praise and one prayer request. (Commit these to prayer for the week.)

2. ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1 (See last page for directions)

Y / N	Y / N	_____
_____	_____	

3. A marriage based on true love is one of intimacy and commitment (knowing one another and working as one) with God at the center of all things.

- Review last week’s lesson.
- How well did you listen this past week? What have you learned?

**Question:** Companies have them, churches have them, sports teams have them – What is a Mission Statement?

**Recap:** After the Israelites ended their 40 years of wandering, they were given the mission to conquer the Promised Land. After that was finished, they needed a new mission. Joshua told them that they need to decide, “whom will you serve?” He challenged them to choose the god(s) they will serve.

In society today, we have many gods to choose from. They are determined by how we spend our time and money. This becomes our mission. What would it look like if serving the Lord was our mission?

**LOOK IN: Discussion Questions**

Read Joshua 24:14-15

- What are examples of modern-day gods we choose to serve?
- Reread verse 14 but replace the phrase “the gods your fathers served beyond the river and in Egypt” with an example god from the above question. Do this for each example you came up with.

**LOOK FORWARD: Application**

**Point:** Put away the false gods of men and choose this day to serve the Lord in sincerity and faithfulness – you and your house.

**Create a Family Declaration**

- Assemble the family! Start with prayer.
- Answer these three questions:
  - How will we HONOR God?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- How will we SERVE God?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- What man-made gods (idols) do we need to remove?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- Come up with a Family Declaration / Mission Statement:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Notes: Don’t make it perfect, make it PERSONAL! Let it GUIDE your major decisions. Allow it to GROW with your family.

- Finalize your declaration using the template at the end of this booklet.



Family Group Time

Main Idea:

Move Together



Key Verse: Colossians 3:23-24

23 Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward. You are serving the Lord Christ.

Set it Up:

Serving God as a family can be one of the most rewarding things to do. Our verse for the week gives us some insight into how important it is to serve God and not men. That does not mean we do not help each other.

What it does mean is that everything we do, we make sure to do it to the best of our ability because we should always give God our best. It is important that we do this as individuals and as a family.

To give our best means we need to know where we are going. This makes sense in sports and business, but what about our family. Do we know where we are going? What is our purpose? What is our commitment to God and one another?



Challenge: As a family fill out the information to create your family declaration.

Create a Family Declaration

- Start with prayer.
- Answer the following three questions:

o How will we HONOR God?

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o How will we SERVE God?

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o What man-made gods (idols) do we need to remove?

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• Come up with a Family Declaration / Mission Statement:

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Notes: Don't make it perfect, make it PERSONAL! Let it GUIDE your major decisions. Allow it to GROW with your family.



## Gear Up: It's Never Too Late

For the past three weeks, we have talked about strengthening your marriage. But what do we do when we feel our marriage is beyond help? What do we do when it feels like everything is falling apart or when the other person is walking away? Those questions aren't easy to answer, but there is hope. Why? Because...

### God is a God of Restoration

#### Job 42:10 says:

*After Job had prayed for his friends, the LORD restored his fortunes and doubled his previous possessions.*

#### In Amos 9:14, the LORD says:

*I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and drink their wine, and they shall make gardens and eat their fruit.*

#### And in 1 Peter 5:10, God's Word says:

*The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while.*

**God is a God who restores!** We also see examples of this in the Bible stories of Abraham and Sarah, as well as in David and Bathsheba.

#### Yes, sometimes marriages end, but God never rejoices in that

because that was never part of His original plan. (God does allow for divorce in the cases of sexual immorality. See Mathew 5:32) If we feel our marriage is in danger, both marriage partners must do everything we can to make things work.

### A Path to Restoration

#### In Ephesians 4:31-32, Paul says:

*<sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness, anger and wrath, shouting and slander be removed from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup>And be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving one another, just as God also forgave you in Christ.*

**Paul tells us two things that we *can* control**, even if we can't control everything. We must put away some attitudes and put on others. Yes, some attitudes need to be removed, and others need to be adopted.

#### Put Away

#### **We must put away wrath, anger, clamor, slander, and malice.**

These result from wanting our own way, demanding our just due, and being otherwise self-centered. In other words, we need to put away a life that is focused on ourselves! This builds and restores relationships. We don't do this by accident. This requires intentionality! We should make sacrifices for our spouses and never ignore or tear them down.

#### Put On

**We also need to put on kindness, tenderheartedness, and forgiveness.** These are attitudes and actions that reflect Jesus. We should be giving toward our spouses and build them up.

#### Position Your Marriage for Healing and Don't Give Up

This is often the mission ingredient when we look for restoration. It takes effort to stop being selfish and to love like Jesus does. But we must not give up! We must remember: the Lord is a God who restores.

God Time: Day 1 – God of Restoration



Read: Hebrews 12:1.

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.

The great cloud of witnesses described in this verse includes the various people mentioned in Hebrews 11 – often called the heroes of faith. But who were they really?

- Noah got so drunk his son had to cover up his nakedness.
- Abraham let his wife be taken into the harem of a local ruler.
- Moses murdered a man that he saw mistreating someone.



If we learn nothing else from those who’s stories are found in the Bible, we see that God is in the business of healing the broken and redeeming the fallen.



One of the devil’s tactics is to make people believe that they are too far gone for God to save them. Have you ever believed this lie about yourself? What was happening?



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Have you ever been tempted to believe this lie about others, even those close to you? Short of naming names, what types of people are they?

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Write a prayer asking God to help you see them the same way He does, as someone who is never too far gone.

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God Time: Day 2 – Put Away: Attitudes to Drop

Read: Ephesians 4:29-32.

<sup>29</sup> Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

In verse 31, underline the six attitudes/behaviors we need to get rid of – “put away” – from our lives.

In verse 30, circle God’s reaction when we choose those hateful attitudes or behaviors.

Put a box around the attitudes/behaviors found in verse 32 that exhibit Christlikeness.

We live in this fallen world, and we will continue to struggle with temptations and behave in ways contrary to God’s Spirit. Like other habits, it takes time to bring about change.

Identify a close relationship where you need to drop one of these negative attitudes/behaviors found in verse 31. What will you do to change and exhibit the attitudes/behaviors found in verse 32?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Write a prayer asking God for forgiveness and for His help to put away the attitudes and behaviors that “grieve” Him and (instead) to adopt the attitudes and behaviors of Christ.

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## WEEK 4 – IT’S NEVER TOO LATE

### God Time: Day 3 – Put On: Attitudes to Adopt



Read: Ephesians 4:22-24.

<sup>22</sup> to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup> and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Underline the description of the “old self,” or unredeemed life.



Circle the description of the “new self.”



Read: Galatians 3:27 (NIV).

*For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.*

The word “clothed” in the NIV is sometimes translated as “put on,” like in the Ephesian 4 passage above. This change in behavior – from the old self to the new self – is like changing clothes.

Corrie tenBoom was a Dutch Christian who was sent to a German concentration camp during World War 2 for helping Jews. She tells us firsthand about this change. Many years later, she was speaking about God’s redeeming power. Afterwards, a man approached her after the assembly to comment about how wonderful God’s grace was. She immediately recognized him as one of the guards from the camp she was imprisoned in, though he did not recognize her. When he offered to shake her hand in thanks, her feelings of resentment flared up and her own will was set to refuse him forgiveness. But, putting off her own desires and putting on the obedience of Jesus, she prayed silently that God would forgive him, and was able to extend her hand. As she did, her heart was transformed and all her bitterness against him disappeared.

Sometimes it’s not a stranger, but those closest to us (a spouse, a child, or a sibling) can hurt us the most deeply. Is there a situation where you need to “put off” your attitude and “put on” Christ’s attitude beyond your own ability to treat someone else the way God has treated you? Make a plan to address it today!



### God Time: Day 4 – A Healing Environment



Read: 1 Corinthians 5:7.

*Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*

Every year before Passover, the Jewish people ensure that their houses are completely emptied of any leaven. It’s very symbolic of our need to clean out our environment.

The “leaven” in our relationship environment is selfishness. Like leaven being added to bread dough, selfishness causes us to be puffed up. It needs to be cleaned out – “unleavened” – “sacrificed” – so that we can love others like Jesus loves us.



Review the last four weeks of this series and set a time to continue the 20-minute talking plan from Week Two (for a detailed outline, look on page 21). But today, “be a new lump,” talk to each other without using the words... “me,” “myself,” or “I.” Sacrifice your selfishness and love like Jesus loves.

Continue journaling your discussions.

### God Time: Day 5 – Pushing Forward to Healing



Read: Hebrews 12:12-14.

<sup>12</sup> Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, <sup>13</sup> and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. <sup>14</sup> Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Underline the effects of establishing good habits (*straight paths*).



In your own words, what two things must we strive for?

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While it is never too late for God to redeem someone who repents, it sometimes takes a long, sustained effort, and a lot of pain, to get back to where we again enjoy being in relationship with them. DON’T GIVE UP!



**Group Time**

◀◀ LOOK BACK:

1. Each participant shares one praise and one prayer request. (Commit these to prayer for the week.)

2. ENCOURAGEMENT 1-on-1 (See last page for directions)

Y / N	Y / N	_____
_____	_____	

3. Put away the false gods of men and choose this day to serve the Lord in sincerity and faithfulness – you and your house.
  - Review last week’s lesson.
  - Share your family’s mission statement with your group.

**Question:** Have you ever broken something, fixed it, and even though it wasn’t the same as before, it worked?

**Recap:** Like any other relationship, marriages can be broken. It is especially hard and difficult for them to be restored and there is no promise they will ever be the same. But there is a path, it is possible.

Both partners must put away all selfishness and put on a life that reflects Jesus, a life focused on the other, a life of love and forgiveness.

**LOOK IN: Discussion Questions**

- Do you have a personal (close family member or friend) story of a Godly restored marriage? What was the key?
- Women and men get in separate groups.
  - Women, list top five ways for a husband to show he loves his wife.
  - Men, list top five ways for a wife to show she loves her husband.
  - When finished, compare your lists, and discuss this question: How are each of these top five putting away selfishness and putting on love?

**LOOK FORWARD: Application**

**Point:** *The path to restoration requires putting away all selfishness and putting on love and forgiveness – the same way Jesus loves and forgives us.*

**Position Your Marriage For Healing**

- Be honest, how have you been selfish in your relationship lately? (You may want to write this on a separate piece of paper. Not to keep it private, but because you probably need more space.)  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- List five things you can do to build up your spouse. (Need help? Start with the top five list you heard earlier):

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- To-Do list: Choose the two you will do this week:
  1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
- Add two more to the “to-do” list each week and continue adding to the five-things list.



## Family Group Time

### Main Idea:

It is never too late to restore a relationship.



### Key Verse: Ephesians 4:31-32

<sup>31</sup> *Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice.*

<sup>32</sup> *Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

**Set it Up:** Relationships are always worth restoring (fixing). God has given us the ministry of restoring relationships. For this reason, a significant amount of the New Testament is devoted to teaching us how to get along with one another in fellowship.



### Watch this short video:



### Ask:

- What was your favorite part of the video?
- Can anyone in your family relate?
- Besides taking fake medicine, what can we do to actually listen, and not only be in a relationship with one another, but build our relationships with one another?



### Encourage:

Here are seven biblical steps to restoring family relationships:

- 1) **Talk to God before talking to the person.**
  - a) Read James 4:1-2
  - b) Why should we talk to God first?
- 2) **Always take the initiative.**
  - a) Read Matthew 5:23-24
  - b) Why is it important that we take the first step to talk to the person we have a problem with?
- 3) **Sympathize with their feelings.**
  - a) What does “sympathize” mean?
  - b) Read Ephesians 4:29
  - c) What did the scripture say about the words we use?
- 4) **Confess your part of the conflict.**
  - a) Read Matthew 7:5
  - b) Why is confessing our part so important?
- 5) **Attack the problem, not the person.**
  - a) Read Proverbs 15:1
  - b) Why do we want to attack the problem and not the person we are upset with?
- 6) **Cooperate as much as possible.**
  - a) Read Romans 12:18
  - b) Read Matthew 5:9
- 7) **Emphasize reconciliation, not resolution.**
  - a) Read 1 Peter 3:11
  - b) Look up the definitions of reconciliation and resolution.
  - c) Why is it important to focus on reconciliation over resolution?



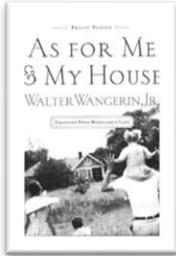
### Your Turn

It shouldn't be a surprise to us that Scripture is so devoted to teaching us to be patient with one another, forgiving, and kind. It is not in our nature to do any of these. Instead, it is in our nature to be selfish, think we are always right, and impatient. We must learn get along with everyone in our family and with our friends. This will take lots of practice and work. And when we do so, we honor God and display His love to the world around us!

## RESOURCES

If you are facing difficulty in your marriage or family, we encourage you to speak with one of our pastors or ministry leaders.

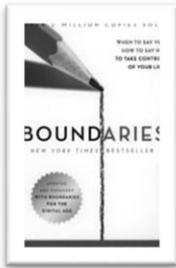
Here are some additional resources (at time of publishing):



*As For Me and My House: Crafting Your Marriage to Last*

By: Walter Wangerin Jr.

[Christianbook.com](http://Christianbook.com)



*Boundaries: When to Say Yes, How to Say No to Take Control of Your Life*

By: Dr. Henry Cloud, Dr. John Townsend

[Christianbook.com](http://Christianbook.com)



TEXAS BAPTISTS COUNSELING SERVICES

"We exist to offer hope and encouragement to Texas Baptists struggling with difficult life issues."

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HEART, MIND, AND SPIRIT MINISTRIES

Equipping God's People to Respond to the Mental Health Struggles of the World.

[revhelsley.wixsite.com/hmsministries](http://revhelsley.wixsite.com/hmsministries)

## Writing a Family Declaration

Let's start with the definition of a Declaration:

- A formal announcement.
- A statement about a new law.
- A statement made in connection with a case or legal matter or intended to have a formal status or effect.

As with any "formal" process, your family's declaration should have serious thought put into it. You are making an announcement that intends, from the definition, to have a binding effect between your immediate family members, your CBC Family members, and God.

Begin creating your Family Declaration:

- Assemble the family! Start with prayer.
- On a sheet of paper, answer these three questions. Each family member has a voice:
  - How will we HONOR God?
  - How will we SERVE God?
  - What man-made gods (idols) do we need to remove?
- Write a family Mission Statement. (Here is a v ) helpful guide from Focus on the Family.)
- Based upon your questions responses and you  family Mission Statement, write several "We will" statements. (We will \_\_\_\_\_)
- Put your "We will" statements into a Family Declaration.
  - Don't make it perfect, make it PERSONAL!
  - Think about how this declaration will GUIDE your major decisions.
  - Consider how it will GROW with your family?
- Have each family member sign the declaration.
- Post the declaration where it is visible. Visit the declaration at least once a month (preferably once a week) to check progress and make necessary adjustments.

**CBC Family Declaration Examples:**

- 1) As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.  
 We realize that we have become so busy doing “good things” that we do not have time for the most important things. Therefore, each member of our family will have only one extra activity at a time. This will allow us to eat at least four meals a week together, spend time reading the Bible together, and serving in church together. We will serve as greeters, making sure everyone who attends church knows they are welcome and wanted. Additionally, we will serve in our student ministry, investing our lives in the next generation.
- 2) There are two things I love to do; teach the Bible and start successful businesses.
  - I will serve the Lord by leading groups in my church and being available to teach when they need me. I will teach at least two groups a week.
  - Additionally, I will start and grow God-honoring businesses and will give at least 20% of everything I make to the church and other mission organizations.
  - It would be easy for success and money to become my idol, so I will meet monthly with other businessmen who encourage me to serve the Lord, not money.
- 3) When we consider everything God has done for our family, there is no other response than, “We will serve the Lord.”
  - God has called us to serve him through education and we are committed to being the best teachers we can be, and we will treat each child the way Jesus treats us.
  - We will show unconditional love and help each child reach their potential through Christ.
  - While we will give our best to our students, we must never neglect our own children.
  - We will build a strong marriage, have a deep faith, and make our church a priority. We will serve the Lord.

- 4) Like Joshua, we declare, that regardless of what others do, “We will serve the Lord.” We are not exactly sure what that means or what it will look like so, we will begin by committing to:
  - 1) Attend church every Sunday. Only sickness or a couple of family vacations will keep us from church.
  - 2) Pray together every day. We will gather for 5 minutes and pray for each other.
  - 3) Attend our Group every week. Just like Sunday morning, only sickness or vacation will keep us away.
  - 4) We will gather as a family 3 times a week to read the Bible and discuss scripture.

We believe these four activities will help us know how to serve the Lord as a family.



## 4G Group 3-Step Encouragement Process

*Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

Hebrews 10:23-25

1. Participants partner-up to ask five short and simple questions. Partners should be of the same gender. If there is an odd number, triplets are OK but need to work swiftly.
2. Partners ask each other these five questions:

	“Did you spend specific personal time in the <b>BIBLE</b> <u>each day</u> this past week?”	These are “Yes” or “No” questions. Any hesitations or “Well...” responses are recorded as “No.”
	“Did you spend specific time in <b>PRAYER</b> <u>each day</u> this past week? – not just for meals”	
	“Did you do something specific to show Godly <b>LOVE</b> to someone this past week?”	If so, the partner briefly shares the encounter(s) with their partner and writes the name of the person(s) they showed love to, shared the Gospel with, or disciplined on the line provided. If not, leave the line blank.
	“Did you intentionally share the <b>GOSPEL</b> with anyone this past week?”	
	“Did you <b>DISCIPLE</b> anyone this past week?” (E.g.: Sharing any of the God, Group, or Family Times)	

3. To finish, each partner prays for the other. No matter how or what the partner has done over the past week, this is an intentional prayer of **encouragement!**