

Syllabus

Theme: Ecclesiastes 4:9-12:
⁹Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. ¹⁰For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. ¹¹Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm [alone?] ¹²And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three [strands] is not quickly torn apart.

Purpose: To glorify God by nurturing a marriage relationship which will properly reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church.

Commitment: I dedicate myself to demonstrate my desire for God's involvement in my marriage by attending each meeting (unless impossible), completing all assignments, and conforming to God's ideal as he reveals it to me.

Signed: _____

Schedule: Meeting as agreed each Monday (except holidays) from 5:30 to 7:00 P.M.

Topics:

- 1 - Introduction. Review the syllabus; set expectations; get started.
- 2 - The Engagement. Purity; dealing with the past; wedding preparation; birth control.
- 3 - Biblical Foundation of Marriage. God's view of marriage; covenants; biblical passages relating to marriage.
- 4 - Gender Differences and Their Effect on Marriage Partners. Husbands' and wives' needs.
- 5 - Dealing with Conflict. Communication; conflict resolution; relationship priorities; in-laws; pet peeves.
- 6 - Finances. Paying the bills; credit; making financial decisions; parental purse-strings; trusting God in finances.
- 7 - Roles. Careers; responsibilities; spiritual leadership; being a spiritual challenge; supporting your spouse; children. (Split)
- 8 - Preventing Divorce. Marriage maintenance; dating; relationships with others; manners; growing; changing; true love; creative ways to express love.
- 9 - Sex. Three easy lessons; actual demonstrations; full-color illustrations; personal testimonies; the wedding night; faithfulness; communication; practical aspects. (Split)

Bibliography:

- Arthur, Kay. *Marriage without Regrets.*
- Burkett, Larry. *The Complete Financial Guide for Young Couples.*
- Crabb, Larry. *The Marriage Builder.*
- Dobson, James. *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women.*
- Gillham, Bill and Anabel. *Marriage Takes More Than Two.*
- Harley, Willard F., Jr. *His Needs, Her Needs.*
- McPherson, Greg and Candy, and Bobb and Cheryl Biehl. *Preventing Divorce.*
- Smalley, Gary. *The Joy of Committed Love.*
- Wells. *Spiritual Intimacy in Marriage.*
- Wheat, Ed. *Intended for Pleasure.*
- _____. *Love Life.*
- _____. *Secret Choices.*
- Wright, H. Norman. *So You're Getting Married.*
- _____. *Communication: Key to Your Marriage*

Stupid, Hard, and/or Sensitive Questions:

There are none. If you wish to discuss something with Trena and/or Jonathan, please ask. We are available.

Gradings: Preparing for marriage is more important than preparing for your career. While we generally will not be evaluating homework and flunking students, the final grade from your wedding preparation will be posted for all to see.

Introduction

Your efforts preparing for marriage show two things. You show how much you value marriage and the person you are marrying. By working on your marriage now, you also show that there is at least a chance that you may be willing to work on it after you are married. Unfortunately, few do. That's one more reason to do it now.

During the time we have, we will be discussing lots of topics. Some will be fun and may leave you feeling warm and fuzzy, starry-eyed, and really dreamy about marriage. This is good—there are many great things ahead; marriage is excellent. But, we will also be talking about some things which are not so much fun, could burst your bubble, and might even make you downright discour-

Isn't it ironic that a plumber's license requires four years of training, but a marriage license requires nothing but two willing bodies and sometimes a blood test? - Gary Smalley

While we intend for the time we spend to cover most important issues relating to marriage, please do not take these meetings to be a substitute for one-on-one premarital counselling with a trained, older professional. The minister who will be performing your wedding will probably wish to meet with you for counselling. If that is not possible, then there are other counselling resources available, both at church and at school. Yes, it takes time, effort, and some level of suffering, but it is necessary!

aged. Sorry, but that's real, too. You will find out sooner or later that marriage is not what you expect—no matter what you expect. We want you to have a more realistic understanding of what marriage is, so that when you are married, you won't be disappointed. We want your dreamy-eyed excitement to be well-founded. Don't get us wrong, though. We are certainly not of the vast majority of people who will try everything possible to make you as unhappy as they are. You'll not hear us saying, "You must be newlyweds. Just wait until you've been married for a

while." We are happy and want you to be, too.

Speaking of expectations, let's talk about what we expect during these meetings. We as leaders expect from you: commitment, honesty, seriousness, openness, discipline, purity, and prayer.

Now we'll take some notes. What do you expect? What do you need? What do you expect from us? What do you expect from your spouse? What do you expect from yourself? What do you expect from God? Let's spend some time together with the Lord in prayer for the time we will be spending together.

Questions of the week: Please answer these questions individually and then discuss the answers with your partner before we meet next week.

1. Describe God's part in your relationship from the beginning until now. _____

2. How do your parents feel about your relationship? _____

3. List the five characteristics which attract you most about your partner. _____

4. What would be the advantages to waiting an additional 12 months before getting married? _____

BOOK REVIEW: *So You're Getting Married: Commitment: Basis for a Successful Marriage*, H. Norman Wright (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1985).

GRADE: B+

Summary: Overall, this book is quite helpful. The author is very forthright and addresses specific and often difficult topics necessary for adequate marriage preparation. His presentation is a little weak in its emphasis of Scripture, focusing more on modern theories and opinions rather than thorough grounding in biblical principles (example: he does not address Eph. 5 and the submissive role of wife).

A. COMMITMENT TO MARRIAGE

While marriage can meet many of our needs (completion, consolation, coition, creation, correlation), it is a call to **servanthood** (Phil. 2:4-9). It means making sure the needs of your spouse are met; it is not something to be demanded (even though Scripture teaches we are to be servants). Marriage is a call to **suffering** (Rom. 8: 16-17: we are fellow-heirs with Christ if we suffer with Him). "Your marriage vow was a promise to suffer . . . [and] to hurt with your spouse. A marriage is a life of shared pain," (p. 28).

B. COMMITMENT TO BE FREE FROM THE PAST

Evaluate your past and seek to uncover any buried, painful memories that will resurrect to haunt you during future crises. They must be dredged up and faced for healing to occur. Unresolved relationships and issues still guide your life and hamper communication. Author includes questions to inventory your childhood and past parental relationships. He states, "Please do not marry without first becoming fully aware of any issues from the past that might interfere with your marriage," (p. 49).

C. COMMITMENT TO LOVE

Why are you marrying your fiancé? Why do you love your fiancée? Why marry now? Three types of love: *eros*, *philo*, *agape*. "Love means to commit yourself without guarantee . . . Love is an act of faith . . . The perfect love . . . gives all and expects nothing. . . . For if one expects nothing and asks nothing, he can never be deceived or disappointed. It is only when love demands that it brings on pain," (pp. 60-61). *Agape* reduces the potential for frustration and irritation, while striving for self-satisfaction breeds frustration. Because God has already "met our basic needs for love, assurance, security and self-worth, we are no longer chained to the bondage of self-satisfaction. This freedom gives us patience in our relationship with our spouses. Our frustration level drops significantly," (p. 62).

D. COMMITMENT TO CHANGE

Assuming your future spouse and your marriage relationship will never change is guaranteed trouble! All marriages pass through stages. People and relationships change; this is the reality of life. Expect change in your marriage. It will continually grow for "it is the intricate and graceful cooperation of two dancers who through long practice have learned to match each other's movements and moods in response to the music of the spheres," (p. 68).

E. COMMITMENT TO UNDERSTAND YOURSELF

Men obtain identity through occupation and so devote their time and energy to work. Women's identity often comes through family relationships and is the reason why they stress intimacy. If intimacy with husband does not adequately develop, she may turn to children to meet this need! These two paths will eventually lead to a crisis in the marriage. Working outside the home heightens a woman's inner tensions considerably, for role expectations for the home and office are opposite (warm, expressive, submissive vs. self-assertive, competitive, dominant), hence a difficulty in shifting roles each day. Men do not encounter this dilemma because they are expected to exhibit the same qualities in both marriage and occupation. If both work, marriage will be a challenge and maintaining the relationship will take constant work.

Self-concept/identity does not come from work or relationships but must be based on who God is, how He sees you, and what He has already accomplished for you through Jesus! (Note pronouns and subject of verbs.)

Basing your sense of adequacy upon ideals you set too high for yourself (being a perfectionist) or upon the feedback or endorsement of others will lead to instability. God's love **alone** fulfills your need for identity and adequacy.

F. COMMITMENT TO EVALUATE EXPECTATIONS AND SET GOALS

Unspoken expectations usually go unfulfilled, leading to anger and self-pity. Do you have a superficial awareness of your fiancé's needs and expectations? What events are you assuming will transpire? (Husband home at night; husband is spiritual leader; wife cooks; wife will/will not work; spending holidays with whom; who initiates sex). **If expectations differ, conflict will result.**

Set very specific, measurable, obtainable goals, individually and mutually (by 3, 6, 12 months and 3-years). Evaluate them regularly.

G. COMMITMENT TO MAKE WISE DECISIONS.

Decision Making Guide: (who will make what decisions, pp. 126-27). What if one spouse fails to assume responsibility for making a decision, thus forcing the other to make the decision? Taking the abdicated responsibility reinforces apathy of

the other. Work out the decision-making process you will follow.

H. COMMITMENT TO COMMUNICATION.

Without it there is no relationship (true for your spouse and God). It is accomplished only if other person receives your message (verbal or nonverbal). You are marrying a "foreigner" because you each speak a different language with different meanings to the same words, ("I'll be home early;" what does "early" mean? Non-specific commitments: "I'll think about it," or "I'll try.") **Be specific.** "One of the most vicious and destructive communication techniques is silence," (p. 143). When a spouse retreats into silence the other's presence, existence and significance are ignored by the most significant person in their life. Silence may communicate happiness, well-being, but usually dissatisfaction, contempt, anger, sulking, apathy. It gives little opportunity to resolve issues. 3 components of communication: actual content (7%), tone of voice (38%), nonverbal (55%). Contradicting components=confusing messages ("How was your day?," in a flat tone while walking into another room: will respond to non-verbal, not verbal message). Vocal variables are important carriers of meaning: sincerity/insincerity; truth/falsity; conviction/lack of it. What is your "communication mode"? Visual, auditory, or feeling? To which do you and your spouse respond best? Note the phrases you use in everyday speech: "*Looks/Sounds/Feels* like the right thing to do."

I. COMMITMENT TO LISTEN.

Ps. 34:15-18. "Too often conversations today between married couples are dialogues of the deaf," (p. 151). Definition of listening: not thinking about what you will say when he/she stops talking; complete acceptance (not necessarily agreement) of what he/she is saying, without passing judgment (ex. tone of voice); being able to repeat what was just told to you and what you think he/she felt. It is a skill to be learned. "To hear" in the New Testament usually means "to pay heed" and not to an auditory experience (**Matt. 13:13-15**). Sensitive listening opens the way to intimacy. OBSTACLE: Defensiveness (thinking up a rebuttal); Being overwhelmed by own emotions; interrupting; mind-overload; timing; **selective listening** (hearing only what we want to hear; ignoring, distorting, or rejecting positive messages; leads to **selective retention**). HOW TO BE A BETTER LISTENER: concentrate on person (turn T.V. off, don't wash dishes); repeat/clarify what they say; observing ("I noticed your voice dropped when you talked about . . ."); inquiring (draws out more information). **Be patient, don't finish their sentences, jump in whenever you find an opening, or hurry them along.** Listening in love means waiting for them to speak their heart.

J. COMMUNICATION GUIDELINES.

Self-talk (inner conversation) determines most of your emotions (anger, depression, guilt, worry), your behavior toward spouse (not determined by their behavior!), what you say and how you say it. Your thoughts determine your emotion, behaviors and verbal responses, **not** outside events or other people. "You need not settle for either your automatic thoughts or those you consciously work up. You can choose precisely what you will think about," (p. 167). **1 Pet. 1:13** ("gird your minds for action"= cast out of your mind any thoughts that would hinder your growth in your Christian life), **Phil. 4:8.** Pleasant greetings, transition time ("decompression"); never discuss serious subjects that involve potential disagreement when tired, sick, emotionally upset; set aside "Decision Time" and non-controversial time; use encouraging phrases ("I see," "um-hm"); praise him/her; discuss topics you know interest them; never exaggerate to make your point.

K. COMMITMENT TO RESOLVE CONFLICTS.

Jas. 4:1-3. "Quarrel"= not dealing with the issue but attacking other person. Conflict is inevitable; usually a symptom of an unmet need; left unresolved, will lead to barriers. 5 Ways to Deal with Conflict: Withdrawal, Winning (shows low concern for relationship), Compromise (some concern), Yielding, and **Resolve** (high concern). Speak directly (don't assume they know what you are thinking or feeling), be honest, make "I" statements and not "You" statements, identify your own contribution to the problem, state what you could do to help and be willing to ask for their opinion and accept criticism (**Prov. 25:12; 28:13**).

L. COMMITMENT TO BUILD POSITIVE IN-LAW RELATIONSHIPS.

View them positively and optimistically, recognize their importance in your relationship, consider their needs (their "criticism" (like a mother with the way daughter cleans house) may really be an attempt to being needed still), treat them with same consideration and respect as you would friends, give them benefit of the doubt, keep visits reasonably short; don't discuss your marital disagreements or spouse's faults with your family (may bias them).

M. COMMITMENT TO FORGIVE AND PRAY TOGETHER.

"Forgiveness"= not forgetting, not pretending, not a feeling, not bringing up the past, not demanding change before you forgive; it is costly (costs love and pride), rare, self-giving (freedom where punishment is deserved). Majority of Christian couple do not pray (p. 246).

Engagement

Let marriage [be held] in honor among all, and let the [marriage] bed [be] undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Hebrews 13:4

The purpose of engagement is the first topic we will cover in this session.

What are some possible purposes which God can have for the time of engagement? _____

What spiritual picture do we have for the engagement period? _____
On what areas of your relationship should you be focusing? _____

During the engagement, one of the most difficult things will be to continue to control the physical aspect of your relationship. Nearly all couples (who have waited) will have the greatest level of temptation to fall during this time of life. Thankfully, this is a rela-

tively short period of time in the grand scheme of things. There is a light at the end of the tunnel—and it's not a train.

God's guidelines for your relationship do not change one bit during your engagement.

His standard is still absolute purity. If you haven't maintained that standard up to now, you must start.

If you have kept yourself, then stay strong! The wait is almost over! What are the benefits of entering your marriage pure? _____

What are the temptations which you face now in regard to purity? _____

Is it more difficult to obey God now than before? _____
Why? _____

What times are the hardest to say, "No." _____

What places offer the greatest opportunity for failure? _____

What are some action plans to help avoid times, places, and situations which are tempting? _____

*It was the best of times;
it was the worst of times.-
Charles Dickens*

Since you are going to be having sex soon, you need to make some decisions now. These decisions will have an impact on areas such as the frequency, spontaneity, pleasure, and freedom with which you have sex.

What is your conviction concerning birth control? _____

Are you prepared to have children in your first year of marriage? _____

Whenever you have sex, you must accept the possibility of children. You might say I am pro-choice. I think you have a choice whether or not to have sex. Once you make that choice, you've made your only choice.

If you are going to use birth control, what type are you going to use? _____

Once you decide on the if and which questions, you must begin preparing to implement your decisions. You may need to go to a doctor; you may need to read some books; you may need to begin monitoring your monthly cycle; or you may need to begin preparing a nursery.

Homework for the week: Please answer these questions individually and then discuss the answers with your partner before we meet next week.

1. Describe an action plan which will be sufficient to prevent you and your partner from going past God's standard for unmarried Christians. _____

Will you hold each other accountable to follow it absolutely? _____

2. Have you discussed with your partner past issues which might affect your future relationship? _____

3. Should you and your partner discuss such issues? _____

4. List 5 of your partner's characteristics, qualities, and/or habits which you would like to see changed. _____

5. Determine a relatively low budget (say \$10.00) and list 10 things you could do for a romantic date within that budget. _____

Choose together the funnest, most romantic of the possibilities and do it for Valentine's Day.

Engagement Session 2

A secret traumatic event, series of events, or sin pattern can have tremendous repercussions on a relationship. Thankfully, most of the problems can be avoided by dealing

with the past. These issues include physical and sexual abuse, rape, emotional trauma, sexual promiscuity, physical incapacities, and poor role models.

Many of these issues will cause difficulties in or out of a relationship. When one is married and these issues surface, both will be affected, sometimes seriously. Some counselors do not recommend that these issues be brought out into the open unless absolutely necessary. As "one flesh", we feel like it is appropriate for spouses to know at least generally what traumatic, emotional, physical, and sexual issues are present. In some cases, it is appropriate to know specifics.

Be aware that, especially when repressed, discussing and dealing with these types of issues can be emotionally volatile. Often, people who have such issues are emotionally bound. When one experiences freedom from bondage the whole personality may change. The stages of denial, anger, depression, and recovery are very difficult, both for the person and their close relations. Certainly, one should seek professional counsel if dealing with serious past issues.

Do you think it is appropriate to discuss these types of issues with your future spouse? _____

What would you want your spouse to do? _____

How would these types of issues affect your relationship in the future? _____

In addition to these engagement issues, we wish to

provide some wedding preparation hints from our experience.

Homework for the week:

Please answer these questions individually and then discuss the answers with your partner before we meet next week.

1. Why do you believe it is God's will for you to marry this particular person? A. Spiritual compatibility: _____

B. Life goals: _____

C. Ministry goals: _____

D. Family background: _____

E. Confirmation through parents and Scripture: _____

2. What do you personally expect to receive out of this marriage? _____

3. What place should Jesus Christ have in the daily routine of your married life? _____

4. List your top four priorities in life. _____

Biblical Foundation

FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.

Ephesians 5:31-32

We will do a brief survey of the Bible passages relating to marriage after considering the idea of covenant in the Scripture. Is marriage a contract? _____ What is the difference between a contract and a covenant? _____

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:7; 2:18-25
What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage?

What benefits of marriage are shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

Ephesians 5:21-33
What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage?

What benefits of marriage are shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

Proverbs 31:10-31
What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage?

What benefits of marriage are shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

First Corinthians 7:1-5
What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage?

What benefits of marriage are shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

First Timothy 3:1-13
What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage?

What benefits of marriage are shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

Malachi 2:11-16
What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage?

What benefits of marriage are shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

Proverbs 5:15-23
What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage?

What benefits of marriage are shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

Proverbs 12:4; 21:9; 21:19; 25:24
What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage?

What benefits of marriage are shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

Deuteronomy 24:5
What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage?

What benefits of marriage are shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

First Peter 3:1-12
What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage?

What benefits of marriage are shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

Matthew 5:31-32; Mark 10:1-12;

What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage? _____

What benefits of marriage are shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

Titus 2:2-5

What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage? _____

What benefits of marriage are

shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

First Timothy 2:11-15

What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage? _____

What benefits of marriage are shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

First Corinthians 11:3, 7-12

What lessons about marriage can you gain from this passage? _____

What benefits of marriage are shown? _____

What roles or responsibilities? _____

What instructions are given to the man? _____

What instructions are given to the woman? _____

Notes: _____

Also consider our theme passage, Ecclesiastes 4:9-12.

Homework for the week: Please answer

these questions individually and then discuss the answers with your partner before we meet next week.

1. Finish the Bible study passages which were not covered during the session.
2. List 10 ways in which you and your partner are different. _____

3. Date assignment: Dress up formally and go to a fast-food restaurant.

BOOK REVIEW: *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women*, James Dobson (Wheaton, Ill.: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1987).

GRADE: A+

A. MOM: THE DOMESTIC ENGINEER

There are unique **skills** required of wives and mothers. "Their job is of utmost importance to the health and vitality of our society, and I regret **the lack of respect and status** given to today's 'housewives.' Even that word '**housewife**' has come to **symbolize unfulfillment, inferiority, and insignificance**. How unfortunate! We can make **no greater mistake as a nation than to devalue the importance of the home** and the sustenance which children should be given there," (pp. 11-12). Women have needs which men do not comprehend: either they are unable to put themselves in their wives' places, they are too preoccupied with work, or simply are not listening (p. 13).

B. SOURCES OF DEPRESSION IN WOMEN

Depression occurs more frequently in women than in men. In men it is *crisis* oriented (specific problems such as business setback or illness). Many women regularly experience "the vague, generalized, almost indefinable feeling of discouragement," (p. 15).

1. LOW SELF-ESTEEM

(50% of 5,000 women polled ranked this as #1 cause of depression; 80% placed it in the top five reasons). "Even in seemingly healthy and happily married young women, personal inferiority and self-doubt cut the deepest and leave the most wicked scars," (p. 22). **Definition** of low self-esteem (see pp. 22-23). "It can engulf anyone who feels **disrespected** in the eyes of other people. **At least 90 percent** of our self-concept is built from what **we think others think about us**." Old proverb: "No one can stand the awful knowledge that he is not needed," (p. 24). **THREE CAUSES:** "The '**disease**' of **inferiority** has reached **epidemic** proportions among females" in our society and "their **traditional responsibilities** [raising children and maintaining a home] have become matters of **disrespect and ridicule** . . . [and] hold very little social status" in our country, (p. 25). The **role of beauty** is highly magnified in our society and has a profound impact on self-esteem. It is **very difficult to separate basic human worth from the quality of one's own body**," (p. 26). Many women doubt their **basic intelligence** and feel **dumb and stupid**, (p. 27). "Before you are entitled to tinker with another person's self-esteem, you are obligated *first* to demonstrate your own respect for him as a person," (40).

2. FATIGUE AND TIME PRESSURE

When we are tired we are attacked by ideas we thought we had conquered long ago (p.-44). Husbands could significantly reduce depression in their wives caused by fatigue if they comprehended and accepted the following: (1) Humans (esp. women) tolerate stresses much better if at least one other person knows they are enduring it; the "**unforgivable question**": "What did you do all day, Dear?" Husbands get their emotional need for **respect** and **sense of worth** from their jobs (promotions, raises, evaluations, praise); wives from their husbands, who are their **primary** source for it and a **shield** against inferiority (pp. 51-52; 64); (2) "Constantly guard against the scourge of **overcommitment**," (p. 54).

"Every disenchanted housewife is being offered the same solution to her low self-esteem: get a job, have a career, do your own thing. . . . *I believe that this abandonment of the home is our gravest and most dangerous mistake as a nation!*" (p. 55). **2 Big Lies:** most women can "have it all" (work and meet family obligations: not enough energy after working to meet emotional needs of child, nurture, train, guide, build self-esteem, teach true values, **and** to maintain a healthy marital relationship); children under five don't really need their mothers' extensive nurturing and involvement (To whom are you willing to entrust your responsibility of raising your children? "Who will care enough to make the necessary investment if [you and your wife] are too busy for the job? What babysitter will take [your] place? Who will represent [your] values and beliefs to [your children]? To whom will [you] surrender the prime-time experiences of their day? . . . As for me and my house, we welcome the opportunity to shape the . . . lives which have been loaned to us. And I worry about a nation which calls that task "unrewarding and unfulfilling and boring," (pp. 55-58).

3. LONELINESS, ISOLATION, AND BOREDOM AND ABSENCE OF ROMANTIC LOVE IN MARRIAGE

Causes of Isolation (pp. 60-63): small children; women tend to be vicious, competitive, and suspicious of one another (the very people they need for mutual respect and acceptance); feelings of inferiority; unsuccessful in finding outside interests and activities; financial limitations. The more isolated a wife becomes, the more vital is her husband "to her sense of fulfillment, confidence, and well-being. . . . **Men derive self-esteem by being respected; women feel worthy when they are loved**," (p. 64; see p. 65 and **Unique Views of Marriage**). "Emotional well-being of a wife is the specific responsibility of her husband" (Deut. 24:5); if his work and play suffocate his family where he has no time for them, "he deserves the conflict that is certainly coming," (p. 68). Wives, to correct your husbands' lack of understanding, **do no resort to "nagging, pleading, scolding, complaining and accusing . . . shuts down communication with amazing efficiency."** **Use Timing, Setting, and Manner** (pp. 76-78). (Universal characteristic of human nature: see p. 78; "trapped syndrome;" maintaining personal dignity: see p. 82-84). **Romantic love is important to "every aspect of feminine**

existence. It provides the foundation for a woman's self-esteem, her joy in living, and her sexual responsiveness." This is the one message Dr. Dobson would send to every American family if he could only send one! (p. 117).

4. FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

5. SEXUAL PROBLEMS IN MARRIAGE

Another Lie: "Except for ability to bear children, men and women are identical." We differ biochemically, anatomically (every cell is unique (differing chromosomal patterns)), and emotionally. Men are stimulated by the *visual*; women by the *sense of touch*. "The sheer biological power of sexual desire in a male is largely focused on the physical body of an attractive female," (p. 115). However, women are less excited by a good-looking man, preferring one whom they respect and admire. "A woman is stimulated by the romantic aura which surrounds her man, and by his character and personality," (p. 116) **Thus, sex for men is more physical; sex for women is more emotional.**

Men become sexually excited more quickly than women, and "it is a wise man who recognizes this feminine inertia, and brings his wife along at her own pace," (p. 117).

WHAT HUSBANDS WISH THEIR WIVES KNEW ABOUT MEN: Men hunger for sexual release more consistently than do women. Man's accumulating sexual appetite: Blocked sexual response—accumulating physiological pressure which demands release—seminal vesicles fill to capacity—hormonal influences sensitize the man to all sexual stimuli. A wise wife recognizes these strong biochemical influences "and if she loves him, she will seek to satisfy those needs as meaningfully and as regularly as possible," (p. 118). *Touché!*

Society's Sexual Deception leads to feeling sexually inferior or inadequate (pp. 120-21).

6. MENSTRUAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Detailed discussion of menopause and its physical and emotional symptoms.

7. PROBLEMS WITH THE CHILDREN

See his two other books dealing specifically with this issue more thoroughly, Dare to Discipline and Hide and Seek.

C. THE LAST WORD

"We human beings can survive the most difficult of circumstances if we are not forced to stand alone. We are social creatures and can no better tolerate emotional solitude than Adam did before Eve was offered as his companion. Women need men, and men need women . . . We have been examining . . . a single problem with ten separate manifestations. Simply stated, the family was designed by God Almighty to have a specific purpose and function: when it operates as intended, the emotional and physical needs of husbands, wives, and children [self-esteem, romantic aspirations, sexual fulfillment, security, the abolition of loneliness, isolation, and boredom] are met in a beautiful relationship of symbiotic love. But when that function is inhibited or destroyed, then every member of the family experiences the discomfort of unmet needs. That is my message. That is what I came to say in this book," (p. 185).

Notes:

Male/Female Differences

You husbands likewise, live with [your wives] in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 Peter 3:7

Now we move on to the differences between men and women and how those differences are manifested in the marriage relationship. List

*There is a difference.
 - Jonathan Bingham*

differences of which you are already aware in the following areas.:

Sexual:

Conversation:

Vacation/Entertainment:

Physical Strength:

Emotions:

Sensitivity:

Thinking:

Homework for the week: Please answer

these questions individually and then discuss the answers with your partner before we meet next week.

1. Discuss the ways you and your partner reflect the stereotypical male/female differences, as well as how you differ from them. _____

2. What steps do you plan to take to resolve conflict in your marriage? _____

3. Date assignment: Separately design a date which you think will meet the desires of your partner. Then just do it!

BOOK REVIEW: *His Needs, Her Needs: Building An Affair-proof Marriage*, Willard F. Harley, Jr. (Old Tappan, N. J.: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1986).

GRADE: A (Very practical and logical)

HIS TOP FIVE NEEDS

1. Sexual Fulfillment
2. Recreational Companionship
3. An Attractive Spouse
4. Domestic Support
5. Admiration

HER TOP FIVE NEEDS

1. Affection
2. Conversation
3. Honesty and Openness
4. Financial Support
5. Family Commitment

(*Note: These needs are **within the context of marriage**, and **must be met only by one's spouse**. Also, both men and women **share all ten needs**, but these are the "higher priority" needs for each, (p. 25).)

• **Affairs** start by "Just Being Friends." Very often not based on physical attraction, but because an **unfulfilled need is met**, (p. 12). Affairs are based on **fantasy**, not reality (ignore faults). Affairs **start by looking for support beyond your exclusive marital bond** ("Isn't it great how we can just talk and share together?"), (p. 13).

• Marriages break up because "one or both partners **lack the skills or awareness to meet each other's needs**. . . . "being right or wrong for someone depends not on some mysterious compatibility quotient, but on **how willing and able you are to meet that someone's needs**," (p. 15).

• **Everyone has a "LOVEBANK."** Each time you interact with your spouse you either make **deposits** or **withdrawals**, (p. 16). "**If any of a spouse's five basic needs goes unmet, that spouse becomes vulnerable to the temptation of an affair**," (p. 25).

Conflict

Therefore, laying aside falsehood, SPEAK TRUTH, EACH ONE [of you,] WITH HIS NEIGHBOR, for we are members of one another. ²⁶BE ANGRY, AND [yet] DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on your anger, ²⁷and do not give the devil an opportunity.

Ephesians 4:25-27

This week, we will talk about conflict. In Trena's book review of *Communication, Key to Your Marriage*, she will be discussing general aspects of conflict resolution and communication. In our study, we will be talking about 101 specific things, dos and don'ts, which may help round out the picture.

AVOIDING CONFLICT

1. **Don't** allow being tired, emotional, or hormonal be the cause of conflict. If one of you is cranky, then the other needs to love, not react.
2. If there is a topic or situation which frequently leads to conflict, **avoid** it.
3. **Do** learn and appreciate your spouse's pet peeves and idiosyncrasies. **Don't** knowingly violate a spouse's pet peeve. If you both feel strongly in opposite ways, then **do** compromise and live with it!
4. **Do always** greet one another with a hug and a kind word.
5. **Do** remember that you are both on the same side. **Don't** allow Satan to use a conflict to

drive a wedge between you. When problems come, **do** first establish your unity, then move together to attack the problem. Conflict can grow your marriage.

A lesson about conflict? We discussed it, and we decided to go ahead and do it. At first, I didn't want to. I just think that everybody can figure it out for themselves. She said that I'm just a typical male and don't know how to communicate and that I don't care about her - then she started crying. I quit talking to her because I didn't want to get blamed for anything else. Then she threatened to withhold sex. So, here we are, talking about conflict.

- The Bingham

6. **Don't** personalize your spouse's anger.
7. **Don't** say hurtful words, even in jest, to your spouse.
8. Husbands, **don't ever** joke about your wife's appearance.
9. Wives, **don't ever** complain about your husband's ability to provide for you or to do other manly things.
10. **Don't ever** say anything to anybody about your spouse (without permission) which is not positive.
11. **Do** immediately obey the promptings of God's Spirit to serve your spouse, to speak a word of encouragement to them, or to love them in some practical way.
12. As often and in as many ways as possible, **do** show your spouse how important they are to you and how much you love them.
13. **Do always** involve your spouse in decisions which affect them, financial decisions above

\$_____, and event schedules.

14. **Don't** have unspoken expectations. **Do** communicate your expectations of your spouse, events, and your life.
15. Discuss and agree upon general and specific financial issues and decisions.
16. **Don't** be a fool: Learn to take constructive criticism.

FIGHTING FAIR

1. **Don't ever** say anything in anger that you will regret later.. Your spouse *will* be damaged by your hurtful words. **Do** think before you speak.
2. **Don't** clam up. If one is too angry then it may be appropriate to delay the discussion.
3. **Do** resolve the conflict. **Don't** let too much time pass. **Don't** just let it ride. Your spouse will be keeping track and the next time, it will be a festering sore.
4. **Don't** attack the other person. **Do** address behavior or situations. **Avoid** "When you do this..." Instead **try**, "When this happens, I feel ..."
5. **Don't** be a martyr. **Don't** take all of the blame just to get a quick "resolution."
6. **Don't ever** bring up past failures. **Do** practice real forgiveness.
7. **Don't** allow inappropriate emotions to add to or distract

from the conflict.

8. **Don't** exaggerate. **Do** discuss facts and feelings.
9. **Don't ever** have serious disagreements with anyone else around.
10. **Don't** share your conflicts with others, especially family members.
11. **Do** admit your mistakes.
12. **Do** ask for forgiveness.

AFTER THE RESOLUTION

1. **Do** allow your spouse time to settle their emotions.
2. **Do** practice your agreement without complaining.
3. **Do** practice complete forgiveness.
4. After both are emotionally settled, **do always** have wild passionate sex to "make up." It nearly makes conflict something to look forward to!

SPECIAL CONCERNS:

RELATIONSHIP PRIORITIES

1. **Do always** put your spouse above all others on the earth.
2. **Don't** expect your spouse to be able to fulfill all of your emotional or social needs.
3. **Do** always put your relationship with God (not your service to him) before your spouse. Doing this will not cause conflict and will, in fact, help avoid it.
4. **Don't** put your relationship with your children above your spouse.

PARENTS AND IN-LAWS

1. **Don't** say negative things about your spouse's parents.
2. **Do** strive to get along with your spouse's parents.
3. **Don't** be dependent upon either set of parents for any level of financial support.
4. **Don't** allow either set of parents to force expectations on you or to make important decisions for you.
5. Whenever a conflict arises between you and your parents,

do stick with your spouse.

Homework for the week:

Please answer these questions individually and then discuss the answers with your partner before we meet next week.

1. How did your parents deal with conflict? _____
2. What steps have you taken to avoid their mistakes and weaknesses or to implement their strengths? _____
3. How do you deal with conflict? _____
4. Discuss successes and failures in your relationship thus far in dealing with conflict. _____
5. Discuss specific steps you plan to take to deal with conflict in your marriage. _____

Date assignment: Ladies, cook your guy's favorite meal and serve it to them by candlelight.

BOOK REVIEW: *Communication: Key to Your Marriage*, H. Norman Wright (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1974).

GRADE: A (See comments about his other book we have covered, *So You're Getting Married*.)

Much of what we've already covered in our discussions is included in this book. To avoid redundancy, we will only include that which is new and pertinent to our discussion on "Conflict."

HOW TO COPE WITH CONFLICT

Conflict is a part of marriage and should be handled, not hidden or ignored. Webster defines conflict as "Disagreement, emotional tension resulting from incompatible inner needs or drives." This is the type of conflict with which we deal in our marriages (nor warfare).

TEN WAYS TO COPE WITH CONFLICT

1. Don't avoid conflict with the silent treatment, "silence is yellow."
2. Don't save "emotional trading stamps," (to redeem them).
3. If possible, prepare the setting for disagreement.
4. Attack the problem, not each other . . .
 - back up accusations with facts
 - remember to forget (Phil. 3:13)
 - no cracks about in-laws or relatives
 - no cracks about your mate's appearance
 - no dramatics (high emotions/tears)
5. Don't throw your feelings like stones; learn to inform your spouse about them.
 - be direct, not devious; specific, not generalized; "say it straight."
6. Stay on the subject.
7. Offer solutions with your criticisms, but remember Rom. 14:13.
8. Never say, "You never . . ." or "You always . . ."
 - turn down the volume
 - don't exaggerate
9. Don't manipulate your mate with, "It's all my fault."
10. Be humble — you could be wrong.

Finances

Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' In tithes and offerings. ⁹You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation [of you]! ¹⁰Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven, and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. ¹¹Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it may not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast [its grapes]," says the LORD of hosts. ¹²"And all the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land," says the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 3:8-12

Better is a little with the fear of the LORD, Than great treasure and turmoil with it.

Proverbs 15:16

Quotations from Larry Burkett's *The Complete Financial Guide for Young Couples* and *Answers to Your Family's Financial Questions*:

"Finances are an important part of marriage. Unfortunately, mismanagement of money accounts for the majority of divorces in America today."

"If a wife is working because a family "needs" the money, it's the wrong motive. Until a couple learns to get along on what

the husband makes, there will never be enough."

"The average couple tries to accumulate in about 3 years what should take them 30 years to accumulate. Consequently, what they do accumulate is an enormous amount of debt."

We now move to the topic of finances. It is certain that the vast majority of marriage failures (and problems) are directly or indirectly the result of financial difficulties. If that is true, then if we can keep our finances from being a problem,

Jesus Dedicated about two thirds of all parables in the New Testament telling us the principles of how to handle money properly. - Larry Burkett

we will have dealt with the greatest single threat to our marriages.

Once again we face our lack of preparation for marriage. Our society advertises immediate gratification without consequences. Bankruptcy is a common "easy out" for those who subscribe to that philosophy. We don't often hear anything about financial responsibility, patience, or trusting God. When most get married, neither the husband nor wife have had practical experience or even

training handling family financial issues. Many have never used a budget. Few have seen their parents follow one. Since a realistic budget is the cornerstone of managing finances, we begin with the budget. On page 16, you will find a worksheet which contains most of the categories of spending which are typical of young couples. It's true that the reality of a budget may seem discouraging. But it is reality. If you spend more than you receive, then you will go into debt. If you don't have enough money then one of three things is true: you are spending too much, you aren't doing what God intended for income, or you are not right with God. If you are maintain-

ing the standard of living which God has specified for you, then you will have enough money! If you are given an employment opportunity which will not meet your cost of living at the standard God has specified, then the opportunity is not from God (unless He gives you a clear word to take the position in spite of the funding problem - then it is His problem to provide for you and He will).

One more point about creating a budget: Don't use best case optimism when determining income and expenses.

Budget Worksheet

Category	%	Monthly	Annual
Income:			
Salary - Husband	_____	_____	_____
Salary - Wife	_____	_____	_____
Extra Income	_____	_____	_____
Gifts	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____
Total Income:	_____	_____	_____
Nondiscretionary Expenses	_____	_____	_____
Taxes (Federal, FICA, etc.)	_____	_____	_____
Giving (Tithe/Offering, etc.)	_____	_____	_____
Total Nondiscretionary	_____	_____	_____
Available Income:	_____	_____	_____
Expenses:			
Housing:			
Rent	_____	_____	_____
Rental Insurance	_____	_____	_____
Utilities:			
Electricity	_____	_____	_____
Gas	_____	_____	_____
Water/Sewer	_____	_____	_____
Phone	_____	_____	_____
Total Utilities	_____	_____	_____
Furniture	_____	_____	_____
Outdoor Supplies	_____	_____	_____
Tools	_____	_____	_____
Indoor Supplies	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____
Total Housing:	_____	_____	_____
Living			
Groceries	_____	_____	_____
Cleaning Supplies	_____	_____	_____
Laundry/Cleaners	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____
Total Living	_____	_____	_____
Debt Retirement	_____	_____	_____
Bank Charges/Interest	_____	_____	_____
Transportation			
_____ Payment	_____	_____	_____
_____ Payment	_____	_____	_____
_____ License/Insp.	_____	_____	_____
_____ License/Insp.	_____	_____	_____
_____ Insurance	_____	_____	_____
_____ Insurance	_____	_____	_____
_____ Fuel	_____	_____	_____
_____ Fuel	_____	_____	_____
_____ Maintenance	_____	_____	_____
_____ Maintenance	_____	_____	_____
Car repairs	_____	_____	_____
Total Transportation	_____	_____	_____

Category	%	Monthly	Annual
Expenses (continued):			
Medical Expenses	_____	_____	_____
His Insurance	_____	_____	_____
Her Insurance	_____	_____	_____
Doctor Visits	_____	_____	_____
Medicine	_____	_____	_____
Total Medical	_____	_____	_____
Clothing			
His Clothing	_____	_____	_____
His Haircut	_____	_____	_____
Her Clothing	_____	_____	_____
Her Hair Care	_____	_____	_____
Her Accessories	_____	_____	_____
Her Makeup	_____	_____	_____
Total Clothing	_____	_____	_____
Pet	_____	_____	_____
Gifts			
Him for Her	_____	_____	_____
Her for Him	_____	_____	_____
Us for Them	_____	_____	_____
Total Gifts	_____	_____	_____
Entertainment			
Dates	_____	_____	_____
Hobbies	_____	_____	_____
Books/Mags/News	_____	_____	_____
Music/Video	_____	_____	_____
Activities	_____	_____	_____
Family Trips	_____	_____	_____
Vacations	_____	_____	_____
Cable TV	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____
Total Entertainment	_____	_____	_____
Allowance			
His Allowance	_____	_____	_____
Her Allowance	_____	_____	_____
Total Allowance	_____	_____	_____
Other	_____	_____	_____
Total Expenses	_____	_____	_____
Other expenses to consider:			
Money to give to needy	_____	_____	_____
Savings	_____	_____	_____
Ministry Expenses	_____	_____	_____
Emergency Fund	_____	_____	_____
Child-bearing	_____	_____	_____
Life Insurance	_____	_____	_____
Special Expenses	_____	_____	_____
Notes:			

Actual income and expenses fall between best and worst case. Planning for difficulties will make them less difficult.

Learn to use the most basic and effective method of living within a budget—the envelope/cash method. Preparing a budget is a good exercise, but if you don't live by it, it is only that, an exercise. Take notes here about how the envelope budgeting method works: _____

Who is going to make the financial decisions for the family? How are important financial decisions going to be handled? What is the amount of money above which the other spouse must be involved before you buy something? Who is the tightwad? Who is the impulsive purchaser? Who is financially minded? Who has training in financial matters? These are all questions which must be answered together for the finances to not become a problem. Other important financial issues include: How much of our income should be saved? What is the standard of living which God has specified for us? Under what parameters will the wife work? How soon are you going to have children?

Notes:

Credit is probably the most difficult temptation available for young couples today. What does the Bible say about credit? Ps. 37:21 - _____

Prov. 22:7 - _____

Consider the theology you are practicing when you borrow money for items. _____

What items are so important that you need them now, you cannot wait for them, and God is not willing to provide them for you? _____

Notes:

Finally, here are a few last notes concerning financial stuff:

1. Practice full financial disclosure with your partner now. Lay everything on the table including all debts (car, school, other), all assets (car, bank account, savings, trusts), and all future liabilities and assets.
2. Remember what we talked about in the section regarding conflict. Don't depend upon any income from either parents. You must be free from any obli-

- gations except to God.
3. Get out of debt and stay out of debt.
4. Allow God to show His power in your lives by waiting for His provision.

Homework for the week: Please answer these questions individually and then discuss the answers with your partner before we meet next week.

1. Go back over the budget you prepared last week. Use the worksheet from this week and fill in the rest of the information.
2. Compare the income with the expenses. Discuss how to balance them.
3. Discuss how to implement a budget. Talk about how to implement the envelope/cash method of budgeting. Decide who should cash the paycheck(s) and divvy up the cash into the envelope to execute the plan.
4. **Date assignment:** Go to a travel agency and pick out brochures on your favorite vacations. Plan a dream vacation together.

Notes:

Roles

And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. ²²Wives, [be subject] to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself [being] the Savior of the body. ²⁴But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives [ought to be] to their husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; ²⁶that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, ²⁷that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.

Ephesians 5:21-27

In this section, we will talk about roles in marriage. First we will discuss the roles together, then we will split up and talk about practical ways to fulfill those roles for guys and girls. You will note as we go through this topic that some of the roles are clearly assigned to the husband or wife by God and others are not. Who will God hold responsible for the family? _____ For what will God hold the wife responsible? _____

Part of the result of this lesson will be that you will have had opportunity to decide between the two of you who will do what. In

the list below, mark who will be responsible for each role.

Subjection _____

What does subjection mean? _____

Headship _____

What does headship mean? _____

What does the command to love the wife in verse 25 mean? _____

Spiritual Leadership _____

Spiritual Protection _____

What does the command to respect the husband in verse 33 mean? _____

What is the role in 1 Timothy 5:8? _____

Who is to perform it? _____

List the roles in Proverbs 31:10-31. _____

Who is to perform them? _____

List the roles in Titus 2:2-5. _____

Who is to perform them? _____

See also 1 Peter 3:1-9.

Cooking _____

Cleaning the house _____

Keeping the yard _____

Decorating the house _____

Keeping car running _____

Bills/family business _____

Laundry _____

Teaching children _____

Disciplining children _____

Final decisions _____

Changing/feeding kids _____

Birth control _____

Driving _____

Gifts/letters/cards _____

Notes:

Homework for the week: Please answer these questions individually and then discuss the answers with your partner before we meet next week.

1. Ladies, list two ways that would be meaningful to you in which your partner could express his love for you (manners, actions, habits, etc.). _____

2. Men, commit to your partner that from now on, without complaining or expecting praise, you will try **very hard** to express your love to her in those two additional ways.

3. Men, list two ways that would be meaningful to you in which your partner could express her respect for you (actions, attitudes, words, etc.). _____

4. Ladies, commit to your partner that from now on, without complaining or expecting praise, you will try **very hard** to express your respect to him in those two additional ways.

5. Go through the roles we discussed and decide who will be responsible for them.

Preventing Divorce

Drink water from your own cistern, And fresh water from your own well. ¹⁶Should your springs be dispersed abroad, Streams of water in the streets? ¹⁷Let them be yours alone, And not for strangers with you. ¹⁸Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth. ¹⁹[As] a loving hind and a graceful doe, Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; Be exhilarated always with her love. ²⁰For why should you, my son, be exhilarated with an adulteress, And embrace the bosom of a foreigner? ²¹For the ways of a man are before the eyes of the LORD, And He watches all his paths.

Proverbs 5:15-21

As we approach the end of our studies, there is one more issue we need to discuss before we get to the final topic. Remember what our purpose has been: "To glorify God by nurturing a marriage relationship which will properly reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church." An important aspect of the Christ's relationship with the Church is its permanence. So, too, that of the husband and wife. In this topic, we will discuss ways to nurture and grow our marriages from the immature joy of early marriage to an even more meaningful and fulfilling long-term relationship. Marriage is something which requires constant maintenance. Even the nicest automobile requires fuel, oil changes, etc. to continue its

function. In the same way, marriage requires time and attention to avoid its eventual failure. One major threat to marriage is independence. An obvious source of this is when both spouses work. Other less obvious threats arise between the partners when different desires, preferences, commitments, hobbies, etc. tempt the couple to spend more and more time doing separate things. A great danger to a marriage is allowing opposite sex relationships to become more than acquaintances. While each partner may have had close friendships with the other gender before marriage, it quickly becomes dangerous to the marriage relationship after marriage. It is true before and after marriage that men and women cannot be close friends without some level of sexual attraction on the part of at least one. Before marriage that is OK, but not afterward. An important commitment that you need to make with your spouse is that neither of you will ever be alone with a person of the opposite sex. This will affect lunches with old friends, business relationships, and ministry situations. We have talked frequently about the importance of setting aside special time for each other (like you did before you got married). Even if money is tight and you are very busy, a dedicated "date night" is essential to keep up marriage priori-

ties, communication, and romance. There are many simple ways we can keep a level of mutual consideration and respect. It is very important to the wife for her husband to have proper manners, both publicly and privately. Some wives may not have had eight brothers to teach them just how gross it can be to live with a male. You don't need to give her a crash course. Wives, too, can protect their husbands from some of the less attractive realities of femalehood. The two of you can agree upon what level of propriety should be maintained in such situations. Also important in marriage maintenance is to express love to one another in creative ways. Yes, it is important to daily tell the other, "I love you." It is also important, though, to meaningfully express love to the other through actions. Men, consider the book from today's book review as a resource for creative ways to love your spouse. Remember that true love is not conditional. Frequently you will have the opportunity to love your spouse when they are neither deserving nor lovable. Those times are the "proof in the pudding" of your love. Day-to-day love isn't romantic or self-serving; it is sacrificial and sometimes painful. Time *will* change both of you. In seven years you will not be married to the same person—and neither will they. True love (and a successful marriage) will weather change.

BOOK REVIEW: *If Only He Knew.* Gary Smalley. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan. 1979).

GRADE: A+

This is a "must read" for any guy wishing to learn how to nurture any relationship with any female. Mr. Smalley includes many illustrations of marital difficulties (frequently his own), the root causes, and the ways the problems were corrected. One of the two most important truths to be gained from this book is the recurring theme of how a man can alienate his wife by harshness and insensitivity. Possibly the most unique (and important) thing I have *ever* read about marriage is the author's statement in chapter 5 about the man's responsibility for all marital problems after the fifth year of marriage.

1. How to Drive Your Wife Away Without Even Trying

This introductory chapter relates the purpose of the book, "...to help you learn how to love your wife more effectively and consistently."(22) In it, he discusses two reasons marriages fail: "Men and women enter marriage with 'storybook' expectations and limited training,"(16) and, "Men and women lack understanding about the general differences between men and women."(17) Supporting the first reason, he makes the statement I highlighted in an earlier section, "Isn't it ironic that a plumber's license requires four years of training, but a marriage license requires nothing but two willing bodies and sometimes a blood test."(16) He discusses the gender differences for most of the remainder of the chapter, but ends with a very useful test "to rate how stable your marriage is."(23)

2. Where Have All the Feelings Gone?

Mr. Smalley then discusses men's natural inability to feel and express genuine love. He points out that many husbands who consider themselves sensitive and loving actually fail "to meet a woman's needs from *her viewpoint*."(33) After listing nine needs of every wife, he then lists (from the wife's perspective) 100 ways to love your lover.

3. If Your Wife Doesn't Win First Place, You Lose!

In his opening paragraphs, Smalley writes, "A woman's sparkling affection toward her husband is diminished when he begins to prefer other activities or people over her. ... For a marriage to flourish, a wife desperately needs to know she has a very special place in her husband's heart."(43) In order for a wife to sense that she is first, the husband must listen attentively to her, quickly admit his mistakes, and ask forgiveness. "When a wife feels she is the most important, she gets excited about her husband being able to do the things he wants to do."(51)

4. Your Wife Needs Your Shoulder, Not Your Mouth

"Many men don't realize that tender love is all a woman needs at times..."(60) An important contribution is a section about depression. He gives thirteen symptoms of depression and seven ways a husband can help his wife overcome it.

5. Climbing Out of Marriages Deepest Pit

This important chapter deals with marriage problems and how to recover. A first rule is, "End every day with a clean slate—no offenses between the two of you."(70) "Harmony can be defined as the absence of unsettled offenses between the two of you. When a real harmony and oneness exist between you and your wife, the two of you will want to relax and spend time talking. Your wife will be more agreeable. She will feel emotionally and physically attracted to you."(72) There are listed five ways to build a loving relationship with your wife when the relationship has been damaged by past offenses. On page 74, Smalley makes the one most important statement in the book, "**If a couple has been married for more than five years, any persistent disharmony in their marriage relationship is usually attributable to the husband's lack of genuine love.**" He then goes on to state that he has never found a situation (after five years or more) where the man wasn't at fault. He closes the chapter with 120+ ways that a husband can offend his wife.

6. What No Woman Can Resist

This chapter covers how to praise your wife daily and a discussion on what not to draw attention to about your wife.

7. What Women Admire Most About Men

Here the author discusses how to honor your wife by listening to and following her advice.

8. If Your Wife's Not Protected, You Get Neglected

Mr. Smalley suggests ways to reduce the stress and pressure felt by your wife.

9. Arguments ... There's a Better Way

In this chapter, Smalley presents an alternative to arguments: decisions by agreement. He encourages families not to make any decision which affects the family until all affected are in agreement.

10. A Successful Marriage ... It's Easier Than You Think

Here the author suggests ways to build family closeness. He also discusses communication techniques.

11. So You Want the Perfect Wife

"How can a man expect his wife to gain self-control in areas of her life when he does not have it in his own?"(148)

12. Watch Out! It Can Happen to You

No one is such a good husband that he won't offend his wife from time to time.

BOOK REVIEW: *The Joy of Committed Love.* Gary Smalley. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan. 1984).

GRADE: A+

(This book is actually a combination of the above book for husbands, plus a second book for wives.) Ladies, if you want your husband to love you, listen to you, and treat you as you desire, then you must read this book. Mr. Smalley teaches you through various "real-marriage" scenarios how you can overcome your husband's natural callousness, insensitivity to your needs, and overall lack of understanding of women, and help him learn how to love you as you have always dreamed.

Smalley has keen insight into the ways husbands hurt their wives. He then systematically teaches you how to overcome each problem by addressing each one.

1. Helping Your Husband Become More Sensitive:

Use indirect methods; SEW, ladies! (sincerity, empathy, warmth); abandon "I told you so" statements.

2. Motivating Your Husband to Listen to You:

Always use the Salt Principle, and take advantage of his areas of high interest.

3. Motivating Your Husband to Change:

Six Inner-Beauty Qualities That Prepare a Husband to Listen: Courage, Persistence, Gratefulness, Calmness, Gentleness, Unselfish Love. I love the section on "Using Your Greatest Strength [Sensitivity] to Detect Praiseworthy Qualities in Your Husband," (p. 224): many positive qualities have negative expressions. Learn to detect them, for this is what attracted you to your husband initially!

4. How to Increase Your Husband's Desire to Spend Quality Time with You:

Admire him! Smalley defines "respect" as "admire, honor, to attach high value to another." Admiration looks beyond what he does (irritate offend, belittle, ignore, nauseate) to who he is. It's unconditional. See the "Quiz" on pp. 238-39. It is amazingly challenging and painfully accurate! Smalley then lists ten practical ways to express admiration for the husband: Seek his advice; remember and fulfill his past requests and preferences; Draw attention to his positive qualities in front of others; Gain an appreciation for his occupation and how important he feels his job is; carefully consider what he says without hasty negative reactions; Don't let two days pass without admiring him for one thing; Detect his personal goals and support him in pursuing them; Admire him in nonverbal ways (communication: 7% words, 38% tone, 55% facial expressions and body movement), How? Look attractive when he comes home, cook attractive meals, show interest in his job and activities and ask questions, listen by focusing eyes on him, don't make him compete with TV, dishes, or children when he's trying to talk to you; Express a positive attitude consistently; Show more interest in his life than anyone else does.

5. How to Gain Your Husband's Undivided Attention on a Consistent Basis:

"Light Up" with enthusiasm when you see him (shows he's valuable to you and it will draw him to you); Learn more about his interests and vocation; Use Salt Principle.

6. How to Increase Your Husband's Sensitivity to Your Emotional Needs

7. How to Gain Your Husband's Comfort and Understanding Instead of Lectures and Criticism:

Get excited over his efforts to comfort you; Teach him how to comfort by being his example; Tell him gently how you desire to be comforted.

8. How to Motivate Your Husband to Receive Your Correction Without Defensiveness:

Use the "Sandwich Approach;" Try the "Puzzle Approach;" Replace "You" statements with "I Feel;" Use Salt Principle; Set an Example by Enthusiastically Receiving His Correction [*ouch!*].

9. How to Gain Your Husband's Appreciation and Praise:

Show approval for him, then gently teach him about your need for his approval; "Light Up" when he praises you.

10. How to Increase and Deepen Your Husband's Affection for You:

Keep a spark burning; Increase your responsiveness to your husband; Keep imagination in relationship alive; Clear up past offenses toward him; Remain a challenge to him; Use your natural attractive qualities; Gently teach him by sharing your feelings.

11. How to Become His Best Friend.

12. How to Help Him Share Household Responsibilities; Meet Your Material Needs.

Notes:

Sex

Let the husband fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. ⁴The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband [does]; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife [does.]. ⁵Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again lest Satan tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5

Notes:

Homework: Please answer these questions individually and then discuss the answers with your partner.

1. Beginning as soon as possible after your marriage ceremony, apply every single truth from today's topic.
2. Do it again.
3. Keep trying.
4. Practice, practice, practice...
5. When at first you don't succeed...
6. Enjoy your lives together.
7. Obey God always!
8. Go forth and multiply.

