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ENRICHING THE MARRIAGES OF THE SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE VALLEY, ANGUILLA

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A Project  
Presented to  
the Faculty of  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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by  
Howard John Simon  
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**APPROVAL SHEET**

ENRICHING THE MARRIAGES OF THE SEVENTH-DAY  
ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE VALLEY, ANGUILLA

Howard John Simon

Read and Approved by:

Faculty Supervisor: Jay D. Owens

Second Reader: Robert L. Plummer

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Dedicated to Michelle, Yael, and Yazel

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## PREFACE

Gratitude to God my Father, Jesus my Savior, and the Holy Spirit my sanctifier for the wonderful works of creation, redemption, and sanctification in my life. I owe all that I am and all that I will be to God who through his grace and mercy has called and preserved me in the ministry.

Gratitude to my parents, now deceased, for their great and positive influence on my life. My mother dedicated me to God while in her womb and prayed to God to make me a pastor and named me after a radio evangelist whose sermons blessed her while she carried me in her womb. My father modeled industry and thought me by precept and example the dignity of hard work from an early age.

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Howard Simon

The Valley, Anguilla

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

“Unfortunately, for many people, marriage is a bad word.”<sup>1</sup> The fact that many unmarried individuals have negative perspectives about marriage is concerning. What is even more disheartening is that many married individuals, who because of their own undesirable experience and that of others, see marriage as a living nightmare. On the other end of the spectrum are individuals who experience some of life’s greatest blessings in their marriage. Both of these extremes and everyone in between can benefit from marriage enrichment. “Every marriage can develop blind spots, relational lethargy, or subtle unhealthy habits and so every marriage can benefit from time in the counseling room.”<sup>2</sup>

#### **Context**

The Seventh-day Adventist Church in Anguilla (SDACVA) consists of five local congregations with over one thousand members. There are two pastors and two districts. One pastor serves as the Island Coordinator and oversees two churches, and the other pastor serves as a district pastor of three churches. About four times per year all five churches congregate for conventions, training, revivals, and evangelistic meetings.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church on the Island of Anguilla has not escaped the universal attacks on marriage. There is evidence of couples who were once married and are now divorced. Couples who are married also experience grave trials that range

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<sup>1</sup> Robert D. Jones, “Marriage and Family Counseling Manual” (unpublished, 2019), 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Jonathan D. Holmes, *Counsel for Couples: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 68.

from communication challenges to infidelity. In between these two extremes, marital challenges may include issues such as unresolved financial battles, inability to resolve conflict, unforgiveness, and dissatisfaction in the quality or quantity of sexual and spiritual intimacy.

Many couples extend great energy in trying to save or improve their marriages through behavior change or utilizing relational techniques. These important though secondary approaches have been relatively helpful but usually lack the complete transformation that brings lasting change. However, some couples have been made aware of the direct correlation of the state of their marriages with the state of their hearts and the need for the gospel to do its work in their lives not just to enhance spirituality but also enhance marriages. There was also a great need for couples to understand and experience the power of the gospel in their lives and to see their challenges as God-given opportunities for marital growth and advancing in sanctification. The inability or reluctance to get to the root of challenges and uproot or be free from the tentacles of sin has caused untold pain, hardship, suffering, suffocation, and relational death.

Building on the biblical perspective of the acclaimed father of biblical counseling Jay Adams, who advocated that sin is the most common denominator of all families and family challenges,<sup>3</sup> biblical counseling professor Robert D. Jones distinguishes between causative and non-causative factors in marital challenges. The so-called major challenges faced by married couples, such as abuse, situational pressure, sinful influence, diseases or chemical imbalances, and the work of the devil, though they should be taken seriously and should break the hearts of counselors, are not causative factors. Sin is the root cause of all marriage challenges. Therefore, to address the heart and foundation of marriage problems, sin must be tackled.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Christian Living in the Home* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972), 10.

<sup>4</sup> Jones, "Marriage and Family Counseling Manual," 2-3.

The couples were not the only ones who needed to take responsibility for this rabid reality in many marriages within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Anguilla. It was also important for leaders to have shouldered some of the responsibility for this sad state of affairs. This was not because the ones in charge of the church had not sought to provide systematic marriage resources and training, but because many of the initiatives had sought to deal with merely symptomatic factors as opposed to the causative factors. Sound biblical family life education was greatly needed to rebuild the foundation of marriages in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Anguilla.

Though the marital climate looked bleak in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Anguilla, there were some reasons for optimism. Many of the members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church adhered to the high view of family and marriage as espoused by the Bible. This strength paid great dividends for married couples, especially as it relates to utilizing Scripture in challenging, repairing, and growing their marriages.

The biblical value of being equally yoked with believers was also a strength of many members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Many members believed and practiced this principle. This was helpful as it meant that there was common ground as it pertains to spiritual and theological orientation and practice.

Seventh-day Adventists also believe in fundamental biblical purposes of marriage, such as procreation, dominion over creation (Gen 1:26), companionship (Gen 2:18), and sexual fulfillment (Prov 5:19; 1 Cor 7:3-5).

Some members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were once married but are now divorced. Some were still legally married but were separated or lived separate lives, and others had been unfaithful to their spouses or were unfulfilled in their marriages. The morale in many marriages was at an all-time low, and spouses needed something more than tools, tips, and techniques that were able to improve marriages for a short season. These couples needed sound biblical marriage enrichment that addressed the heart of life by ministering to the life of the heart. Jeremiah 17:9 says, "The heart is

deceitful above all things and desperately sick; who can understand it?”<sup>5</sup> The answer to Jeremiah’s somewhat rhetorical question is—God understands the heart because he made the heart and he alone can fix the heart. God has left his church some clues as to how he can partner with it to repair not only the heart of individuals but the hearts and lives of married couples by the power of his Word.

### **Rationale**

There was a need for greater engagement with married couples within the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Anguilla to provide marriage enrichment through biblical education and training. Not only was the divorce rate relatively high, with almost half of married couples either divorced or separated, but many who were still married faced grave challenges in areas of communication, conflict resolution, finance, and sexual and spiritual intimacy.

If marriages were not enriched from the inside out, then it was likely that more marriages would end in divorce, more children would suffer the effects of living in dysfunctional or single parent homes, and the spiritual health of the church would decline and possibly cause the community to perish in darkness for lack of light (Matt 5:14-16).

There were great benefits to be derived from relevant biblical marriage enrichment for couples in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Anguilla. The first possible benefit was increased knowledge and understanding of the marriage experience. Marriages are destroyed because of lack of knowledge (Hos 4:6). Providing biblical education for married couples was critical so that they could have a clearer understanding of what the Bible teaches about the institution of marriage. In this respect, it was vital to equip couples with greater knowledge of both the role of husbands and wives (Eph 5:21-33; 1 Pet 3:7; Prov 31:10-31). Husbands and wives were encouraged to follow the pattern

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<sup>5</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the New International Version, unless otherwise stated.

after the relationship of Christ and the church in order to carry out the mandates given by God to the human family.

The second possible benefit was improved marital health. Healthy marriage is God's idea and ideal for healthy families and a healthy world (Gen 2:19-25). Though God gave to humanity this gift of unity, intimacy, and charity, sin has effaced and diminished it to such low degree that it was fair to say that all married couples, some more than others, needed marriage enrichment.

The third benefit was prevention or reduction in the frequency of separation and divorce. God hates divorce (Mal 2:16). Followers of God should hate what he hates and love what he loves. This godly congruence on the horizontal plain should not just be a mental exercise that is distant and invisible to human interaction but manifested in the zeal put forth in protecting and blessing the things that are valuable to God. This sanctified zeal was greatly needed to propel individuals to enrich their own marriage and the marriages of others.

The fourth possible benefit was elevated sanctification. God sometimes uses marriage relationships to help couples mature spiritually. However, he often uses methods that are strange and unpleasant to the human psyche. This reality cannot be learned from secular psychology and other related subjects but only from a biblical counseling and God-centered family life education approach. The discovery of this perspective commissions and mandates those who are exposed to its tenets to be light in the midst of darkness as it relates to marriage relationships and pleasing God. Sustaining a godly marriage requires that both husbands and wives are first married to Christ in an intimate relationship so that the horizontal experience is informed and guided by the vertical relationship. Deepening the spirituality of married couples as they grow in greater oneness with Christ caused married couples to reflect Christ in their marriages and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit.

The primacy of the marriage relationship necessitated that priority be given to equipping couples. This is not only important for couples themselves but also for children who are usually captives of the relationship and environment created by their parents. The fact that divorce rate is on the increase and marital health seems to be diminishing globally means that if children are not helped, future marriages would only continue to depreciate. One of the best ways to help children is to help their parents. Biblical marriage enrichment not only helps couples but also their children by extension.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to enrich the marriages in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in The Valley, Anguilla.

### **Goals**

Three goals provided guidance to the development, evaluation, and execution of this project.

1. The first goal was to develop a five-session retreat series to enrich the marriages of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in The Valley, Anguilla.
2. The second goal was to assess the current marriage experience among spouses of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in The Valley, Anguilla.
3. The third goal was to enrich the marriages of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in The Valley, Anguilla through a five-session marriage enrichment seminar.

The methodology presented in the section that follows was used to measure the successful completion of these three goals.

### **Research Methodology**

The three goals gave directionality to the research methodology of the project.<sup>6</sup> The first goal was to develop a five-session retreat series to enrich the marriages of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in The Valley, Anguilla. The seminar was comprised of

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<sup>6</sup> All the research instruments used in his project were performed in compliance with and approved by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use.



biblical education pertaining to marriage, and important areas of marriage enrichment such as communication, conflict resolution, financial management, sexual intimacy, and sanctification. This goal was measured by an expert panel, all married individuals, who were either pastors, counselors, or teachers. The panelists used a rubric to measure biblical faithfulness, clarity and relevance of the seminar.<sup>7</sup> This goal was regarded as complete when 90 percent of the areas assessed met or surpassed the sufficient level. The seminar was also enriched and made more relevant by the results of the pre-seminar survey before the final draft was completed.

The second goal was to assess the current marriage experience among spouses of the SDACVA. The evaluated areas were biblical literacy pertaining to marriage, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, sexual fulfillment, and sanctification. This goal was measured by administering a survey to married couples who are members of the SDACVA.<sup>8</sup> The survey requested biographic and church related information from married couples and assessed important areas of marriage enrichment, such as communication, conflict resolution, financial health, sexual intimacy, and spiritual intimacy. The goal was considered successfully met when ten surveys were completed, returned and analyzed.

The third goal was to enrich the marriages of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in The Valley, Anguilla. The method of accomplishing this goal was a five-session marriage enrichment seminar. This goal was measured by administering a post-seminar survey. The seminars were interactive and lasted for about four hours over a two-day period. The presentations were accompanied with relevant PowerPoint slides to ensure that multiple senses were engaged for maximum learning and impact. The seminars were recorded so that participants would be able to utilize the resources in the future. Recording

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<sup>7</sup> See appendix 2.

<sup>8</sup> See appendix 1.

the seminars was important because learning is not a one-time event but an experience that sometimes requires repetition for the best results. This goal was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

### **Definition and Limitations/Delimitations**

To ensure that the subject matter of this project was clear and easy to understand, definitions were provided for some key terms.

*Marriage.* *Marriage* is a sacred bond between a man and a woman instituted by and publicly entered into before God (whether or not this is acknowledged by the married couple) normally consummated by intercourse.<sup>9</sup>

*Covenant.* *Covenant* is a word frequently used for vows between God and human beings based on a solemn commitment that guarantees promises or obligations undertaken by one or both parties.<sup>10</sup>

In the context of delimitations, it was required that all participants were members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in The Valley, Anguilla and were married. The relative short time, five sessions, was also delimiting factor. This project required that all participants were baptized members of Seventh-day Adventist Church in The Valley, Anguilla. Further, the brevity of the time to discharge a series on marriage enrichment in a weekend retreat was a delimitation.

Limitations might have emerged in the area of confidentiality. The fact that Anguilla is a relatively small Island where most people are known by most people, individuals were a bit suspicious about confidentiality. Confidentiality was promised, and things were put in place to ensure privacy and anonymity. This was vital because if

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<sup>9</sup> Gordon P. Helgenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: Biblical Law and Ethics as Developed from Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 194.

<sup>10</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 74.

persons were not confident that information was kept confidential, then they might have withheld or distorted the truth about themselves. The brevity of this seminar, five sessions, dictated that only the most important areas were covered.

### **Conclusion**

Marriage enrichment education has improved the quality of marriage relationships in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Anguilla. Knowledge was not the only factor needed to improve marriages, but it was a good starting place that could have a positive and profound impact. Marriages are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos 4:6). Many marriages could have been saved from the wreckages of divorce if couples only had better and wider knowledge of how to work and grow their marriages. This is not to say that education is the only factor that can improve marital health, but education affirms the importance of knowledge in the process of relational development. Changes begins in the mind as the way people think determines who they really are (Prov 23:7). Tutoring married couples from a biblical counseling perspective has empowered them with relevant resources to make improvements in their marriages and most of all connect them with Christ who is able to transform spouses who avail themselves to him.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASES FOR MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

Humanity faces a sociological pandemic of monumental proportions. “Civilization is in crisis.”<sup>1</sup> Marriage is under siege.<sup>2</sup> This God ordained institution is being attacked and assaulted relentlessly (Matt 19:4-6). The battering of marriage has universal implication. If marriage fails, it will cause all other institutions, including churches, businesses, hospitals, and governments, to fail.<sup>3</sup> Lamentably, present day society is already experiencing relational suffocation, interpersonal decay, and moral death.<sup>4</sup> In this context, the marriage institution is in desperate need of redemption.

As foreboding and pathetic as the present cultural crisis is, it is merely symptomatic of an ingrained spiritual wretchedness that is both contagious and catastrophic. The problem is spiritual in nature, therefore the solution, if it is to get to the root of the issue, must also be spiritual.<sup>5</sup> Addressing the heart of what is wrong with humanity and marriage necessitates dealing with the heart of sin.<sup>6</sup> Marriages are in dire need of enrichment but not of the variety that merely deals with surface areas such a

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<sup>1</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 15.

<sup>2</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 15.

<sup>3</sup> James Montgomery Boyce, *Genesis: Creation and Fall (Genesis 1–11)* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 137.

<sup>4</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 15.

<sup>5</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do: Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), 16.

conflict resolution, communication, financial management, and sexual fulfillment. As important as these areas are, they do not get to the heart of the issue, which is the issue of the heart (Prov 4:23).

This chapter presents a biblical and theological framework for marriage enrichment. It shows that the Bible teaches that God has designed the institution of marriage to be the primary human relationship based on covenantal principles to provide intimacy between husbands and wives when functioning according to their God ordained roles. This thesis is built on the foundation of four biblical passages.

An exegesis of Genesis 2:18-25 will show that God designed the institution of marriage to be the primary human relationship. An exegesis of Matthew 19:3-12 will help to establish that God has designed the institution of marriage based on covenantal principles. An exegesis of 1 Corinthians 7:1-5 will validate that God has designed the institution of marriage to provide married couples with sexual intimacy. Finally, an exegesis of Ephesians 5:21-33 will establish that God has designed the institution of marriage between a man and a woman and for them to function according to their God ordained roles. These passages represent only a partial expression of the biblical data on the subject; however, they provide a broad perspective that gives support and enrichment to the marriage partnership.

### **Genesis 2:18-25**

Marriage was the first human to human relationship (Gen 2:21-25). A perfect man and a perfect woman experiencing life in a perfect garden. The quality of human relationship was at its highest. This was God's idea and his ideal. God could have begun the human family with the parent-child relationship but as important as that relationship is to the qualitative and quantitative survival of humans, God did not start the human family with that model but with the marriage relationship model. This fact speaks eloquently to the primacy of the marriage partnership.

## Partnership

After God created Adam, the first man found himself without a counterpart. In a sense, even the animals had a sociological advantage over Adam as they all had companionship, but Adam was incomplete, alone, and without anyone with whom to relate on an egalitarian level. This is the context in which Eve was planted by God into the garden of Adam's life. The Bible presents marriage as a God-ordained partnership between a man and a woman. "Eve's creation as a whole takes steps to show that the woman is not subject to the man in the same sense as the animals are subject to him. Rather, the text presents them as partners who together exercise rule, fulfilling the mandate of 1:28 by exercising their appropriate sexual functions and respective intrahuman roles."<sup>7</sup> The Genesis model presents marriage as an indispensable partnership.<sup>8</sup>

"The Lord God said, it is not good for man to be to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him" (Gen 2:18). The Hebrew phrase for "not good" essentially means that it is bad for Adam to be alone. Intimacy, community, and sexual relationship are all packaged in the gift of marriage which God models after himself. Just as God does not exist in isolation but in a trinity and in the company of a heavenly host, he gifted the first married couple with richness of community and fellowship with each other.<sup>9</sup>

"In this particular case we should note that it is God who makes the judgement about the unsuitability of man's aloneness. Man is not consulted for his thoughts on the matter. At no point does the man offer to God any grievance about his current

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<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: B & H, 1996), 221.

<sup>8</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 214.

<sup>9</sup> Bruce K. Waltke and Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 88.

circumstances.”<sup>10</sup> It is not surprising that marriage results from the omniscient God’s singular initiative. “God is not only evaluator; he is also rectifier.”<sup>11</sup>

The Bible establishes the value of the marriage partnership on its own merit and not merely as a function of procreation (Gen 2:2:18-25). “The woman is presented wholly as his partner and counterpart; nothing is yet said of her as child bearer. She is valued for herself alone.”<sup>12</sup> In fact, God constructed, or built, Eve for Adam.<sup>13</sup> She was made to be his helper: “A helper like him, suited to him, worthy of him, corresponding to him.”<sup>14</sup> “God intended that the man and the woman be a spiritual, functional unity, walking in integrity, serving him, and keeping his commandments.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, God made Adam and Eve to be united in partnership with him and with each other for his glory and for the qualitative and quantitative development of the human family. The primacy of this partnership is clearly seen in the biblical presentation of a man moving from family of origin to family of cohabitation (Gen 2:24). “Whilst a man is single, he forms part of his father’s family, but when he takes a wife, he founds a new family; so long as he is in his father’s house, all his love is dedicated to his father and mother, but when he marries, his love for his wife transcends that for his parents.”<sup>16</sup> In this context,

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<sup>10</sup> Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 175.

<sup>11</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, 175.

<sup>12</sup> Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 1 (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity, 1967), 65.

<sup>13</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 69.

<sup>14</sup> Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, pt. 1 (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989), 127.

<sup>15</sup> Allan P. Ross, *Creation and Blessings: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 125.

<sup>16</sup> Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 137.

living with one's parents can be seen as preparation for the more primary and permanent relationship of marriage.

### **Permanence**

The Genesis record presents marriage as a God-ordained, enduring, and lifelong experience. This sacred relationship may also be defined as a God-sealed bond that is permanent in nature.<sup>17</sup> In marriage, God has established a flesh line that in some ways is stronger and more intimate than a bloodline or those who are related through parental bond.<sup>18</sup> “As two persons become ‘one flesh’ in marriage, their sexual relationship builds a life of companionship, intense intimacy, and fidelity. With such a union no human love can compete and nothing short of death can part.”<sup>19</sup>

The Bible advocates the perpetuity of marriage. This most intimate relationship, as God ordained in Genesis 2:18-25, is about becoming one flesh based on self-giving and reciprocal commitment that also finds expression in sexual union. “One flesh” clearly indicates that the physical, emotional, and social unity of husband and wife is more profound than the relationship of children to parents. Permanence is one of the characteristics of this most sacred relationship.<sup>20</sup> Marriage is unbreakable in nature. The husband uniting or sticking to his wife indicates both the passion and the permanence of marriage.<sup>21</sup> The relational permanence of marriage might even be bigger and greater than marriage itself in that neither death nor divorce can destroy the kinships established by

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<sup>17</sup> Kidner, *Genesis*, 66.

<sup>18</sup> John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan 2001), 177.

<sup>19</sup> Joe E. Trull, *Walking in the Way: An Introduction to Christian Ethics* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 162.

<sup>20</sup> John Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christianity Today* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1990), 285-86, 288-89.

<sup>21</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 71.



marriage.<sup>22</sup> Even when one spouse dies or they divorce, the relational and kindred permanence created by marriage may continue to live. God created marriage to be a permanent union.<sup>23</sup> Also, marriage is the God-established institution for procreation (Gen 1:28).

### **Procreation**

It may be reasonable to conclude that “the man’s being alone was not good, because he could not do all that God had planned for humankind.”<sup>24</sup> Procreation was one of the things that Adam could not do alone. He needed Eve to carry out his God-ordained purpose of populating the earth and establishing humanity (Gen 1:28). The fact that God presented to the first pair the gift of procreation speaks eloquently to the primacy of the institution of marriage. Furthermore, as Mathews explains, “Isolation is not the divine norm for human beings; community is the creation and purpose of God. The commissioning of man and woman to reign over the good land (1:28) include procreation and only together can they achieve their destiny.”<sup>25</sup> The population of the earth was one of the vital reasons God brought Adam and Eve together in marriage.

Marriage is the God-ordained vehicle for procreation.<sup>26</sup> Husbands and wives are explicitly charged with the responsibility of procreation as a part of their stewardship responsibility before God.<sup>27</sup> Marriage represents the best place for children to be conceived and nurtured. As husband and wife work together, their children get their first

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<sup>22</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 71.

<sup>23</sup> Garry R. Collins, *Christian Counseling* (Dallas: Word, 1988), 408.

<sup>24</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessings*, 126.

<sup>25</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 213.

<sup>26</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *God Marriage and Family*, 71.

<sup>27</sup> R. Albert Mohler, Jr., *We Cannot Be Silent: Speaking Truth to a Culture Redefining Sex, Marriage and the Very Meaning of Right and Wrong* (Nashville: Nelson Books, 2015), 102.

impressions of what maleness and femaleness are about. Children's identity and philosophy of life are affected either for good or for evil based on the model they receive from their parents. "Everything that parents do in their role as married partners will profoundly influence their children's behaviors and attitudes as marriage partners."<sup>28</sup>

As important as procreation is in a marriage and for the continuation and survival of humanity, it is secondary to the marriage itself. "Because husband and wife are one flesh, the bond of marriage has priority over the bond of procreation. The husband's obligation to his wife take precedence over other priorities."<sup>29</sup> The narrator of Genesis, in saying "for this reason" (Gen 2:24), articulates the archetypal intent of the narrative. God is the architect of all family relations, but he has designed marriage to be the primary human relationship.<sup>30</sup> The primacy of marriage is validated by God's initiative to entrust children to the protective care of married couples. The primacy of marriage may also be seen in the fact that God blessed spouses with dimensions of expressions that would be inappropriate in any other relationships (Prov 5:19).

### **Propriety**

There is something glorious, sublime, and mystical about the picture of the first couple being naked and not ashamed (Gen 2:25). This posture of external body transparency is an expression of marital intimacy.<sup>31</sup> Nakedness without shame relates to the ideal Edenic state in which sexuality was furnished with wholeness, openness, and

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<sup>28</sup> Jack O. Balswick and Judith K. Balswick, *The Family: A Christian Perspective on the Contemporary Home* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 74.

<sup>29</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 90.

<sup>30</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 90.

<sup>31</sup> Trull, *Walking in the Way*, 162.

trust.<sup>32</sup> In this Edenic, exotic exposure is found the pinnacle of the creation narrative.<sup>33</sup> The first married couple were in a state of being intimately at ease and free from fear and evil exploitation.<sup>34</sup>

It is noteworthy and interesting that God, the great Creator, culminated his perfect creation with the blameless nakedness of the first pair. “The climax of the creation is, interestingly, the notion that the couple were naked and felt no shame before each other.”<sup>35</sup> This experience of guiltless nakedness may only be possible in an environment that has not been contaminated by sin. “Adam and Eve have nothing to hide from each other and no one to hide themselves from, they have no shame for they have no guilt and are secure in themselves and in one another.”<sup>36</sup> The nakedness of the first couple reveals the completeness, trust, fidelity and transparency present in their marriage.<sup>37</sup>

Marriage is a place of God-ordained nakedness. Not only during intercourse, but the closeness and intimacy that marriage affords, enables a couple to be naked before each other in ways that may not be possible in any other relationship. What is covered from outsiders, including family members, are visible, available, and touchable for spouses only. “In the complete freedom of Eden” God intended for husbands and wives to celebrate the bliss of “shameless nakedness.”<sup>38</sup> Though the fall of humanity aborted much of God’s original intention for married couples, marriage, when it is done God’s

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<sup>32</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 90.

<sup>33</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, 180.

<sup>34</sup> Ross, *Creation and Blessings*, 127.

<sup>35</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, 181. “Naked refers primarily to physical nudity, but one may also think that no barrier of any kind drove a wedge between Adam and Eve.”

<sup>36</sup> Walton, *Genesis*, 179.

<sup>37</sup> Waltke and Fredricks, *Genesis*, 90.

<sup>38</sup> Trull, *Walking in the Way*, 162.

way,<sup>39</sup> may be the only place where a man and a woman can be naked and truly and honorably not ashamed. This fruit of intimacy may flourish best on the tree of trust, transparency, and faithfulness.

Genesis 2:25 is the only place in the Old Testament where nakedness is not connected with some form of humiliation.<sup>40</sup> Could the reason why this is the only area where nakedness is not related to shame in the Old Testament be because it is the only place where nakedness is mentioned in the context of married couples? If that is so, then it may be fair to say that marriage is the place where couples can be naked in the presence of each other and in the presence of God and not be ashamed. Hebrews 13:4 says, “Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.”

The marriage bed is the only place where couples can be naked and still pure and honorable. If intimate nakedness is found anywhere else except the married bed, then it is shamefully declared to be fornication or adultery, incest, homosexuality and abomination, or other sinful descriptions (Prov 6:32; 1 Cor 6:9-10). Mathews writes, “Monogamous heterosexual marriage was always viewed as the divine norm from the onset of creation.”<sup>41</sup> God provided marriage for the human family to have a place where they can be naked before each other and in the very presence of God and not be ashamed in this immoral world (1 Cor 7:2).

## **Provision**

Throughout the first few chapters of Genesis, God presents himself as the great provider. He provides life for every living creature. He provides for the unique needs of

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<sup>39</sup> God is the creator and definer of marriage. Irrespective of humanity’s redefinition of marriage, only God can truly define marriage and he has done that by limiting marriage to one man and one woman (Gen 2:24).

<sup>40</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, 181.

<sup>41</sup> Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, 224.

the creatures he created: light for all creatures to see; the sky for the birds to fly; the sea for the fish to swim; and the field for the animals to roam. He also provided counterparts for the creatures to be able to relate and mate. All of God's creatures were taken care of except one (Gen 1–2). Loaded with beauty, value, and gratification was God's provision of Eve for Adam. "Just as a builder builds, with the raw materials of stones and dust, an edifice of grace and perfection, so from an ordinary piece of bone and flesh the Lord God fashioned the comeliest of God's creatures."<sup>42</sup>

For this reason, God declared that it was not good for man to be alone (Gen 2:18). "Despite God's identification of man's need, there is a delay in his provision."<sup>43</sup> After the delay and suspense that allowed those who read the narrative to feel man's loneliness, God provided a helper suitable for Adam.<sup>44</sup> This gift of God's provision of a wife for Adam moved him in such a profound way that Adam became the first human poet when he "rapturously acclaimed in poetic outburst."<sup>45</sup> "This is now bone of my bones and flesh; of my flesh she shall be called woman for she was taken out of man" (Gen 2:23).

When individuals become recipients of God's priceless provisions and good gifts as it relates to attaining a spouse, it can lead not only to poetic celebration but to glorifying God in thanksgiving and worship (Jas 1:17; Ps 106:1; Prov 5:15-18; 1 Cor 10:31).

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<sup>42</sup> Cassuto, *Commentary on the Book of Genesis*, 135.

<sup>43</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 68.

<sup>44</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 69.

<sup>45</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 68.

## Matthew 19:3-12

### Views of Marriage

In academic and theological conversations regarding relationships, there is a controversial issue pertaining to the nature of marriage. While some scholars hold to the sacramental view, others adhere to the contractual view, and some also advocate the covenantal view. This is not to say that all three views do not have a kernel of truth, but the covenantal view may be the most biblically affirmed view of the three.<sup>46</sup> “The covenantal view roots marriage in his standards of divine law (that is, the authoritative divine revelation found in scripture itself).”<sup>47</sup>

The sacramental view presents marriage as a measure of receiving grace and finds its origin in the theology of Christian theologian, Augustine of Hippo. The contractual view contends that marriage is based on a bilateral contract that is voluntary entered into and sustained or dissolved by two persons. The covenantal view advocates that marriage is a consecrated connection between a man and a woman, instated by and performed in the presence of God.<sup>48</sup> In other words this biblical perspective finds its origin in Genesis 2:18-25 where God himself performed the first wedding between the first man and the first woman as a covenant of intimacy and oneness.

Multiple perspectives about marriage are not a modern phenomenon, as during the times of Jesus there were two main views: the school of Hillel and the school of Shammai. Intrinsic to the question asked by the Pharisees to Jesus that occasioned his discussion with them in Matthew 19:3-12, was which of the two schools would he affirm.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *God Marriage and Family*, 69.

<sup>47</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *God Marriage and Family*, 74.

<sup>48</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *God Marriage and Family*, 75.

<sup>49</sup> Donald Hagner writes, “Would Jesus side with the school of Shammai, which allowed divorce only on the grounds of sexual immorality, or would he side with the school of Hillel, which

## The View of Jesus

A study of the Bible as it pertains to Jesus's position on the nature of marriage reveals that he does not hold to marriage being a measure of receiving grace or a contract that can be easily dissolved, but as a covenant that has both human and divine elements. The binding and permanent nature of Jesus' words evokes covenantal images. Matthew 19:6 say, "So, they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." Jesus presented marriage as a covenantal relationship that is anchored in creation and contains the unbreakable elements of God's covenantal promises.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, Jesus embraced marriage as a divinely instituted covenant, and that by upholding the divine covenant in marriage he stood against the laxity of divorce that was rampant in the Jewish world and acknowledged only the single exception to the principle.<sup>51</sup>

In responding to the question from the Pharisees, Jesus went beyond the popular opinions of his day and even beyond Deuteronomy and planted his perspective in the Genesis creation ordinance. He quoted Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 and proclaimed the permanence of marriage as God's original intention. This citation from Genesis was most authoritative as "In Jewish hermeneutics the further back one went in the Torah the more authority it possessed. So Jesus brings in the creation principle, which trumps the pharisees' quote from Deuteronomy."<sup>52</sup> Jesus' reference to Genesis was unique in the rabbinical debate of his day, as none of the other Rabbis reference the Genesis passages

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sanctioned divorce on the most trivial grounds?" Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 33B (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 547.

<sup>50</sup> D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, in vol. 8 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 412.

<sup>51</sup> Grant Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 706.

<sup>52</sup> Osborne, *Matthew*, 703.

to answer the question of divorce.<sup>53</sup> Jesus' position on the permanence of marriage was stronger than the Rabbis arguments of his own day. Jesus presented the marriage covenant as a two-dimensional perpetual experience that involves leaving, uniting, and becoming one flesh.<sup>54</sup>

### **Leave and Unite**

To leave and be united means that the husband-and-wife connection become priority and supersede the parent and child relationship. One's fundamental obligation, responsibility and allegiance are transported from the family of origin to the family of cohabitation.<sup>55</sup> "When two people are married, their identity as their parents' children is altered, and their new identity as husband and wife is permanent unless ruined by human sinfulness."<sup>56</sup> In marriage, God joins couples together according to his creation order with such unity that divorce becomes both unnatural and rebellious against the covenantal intentions of God.<sup>57</sup> Divorce is evidence of sin and the antithesis of God's matrimonial covenant.<sup>58</sup>

The word for unite or "cleave" is often utilized to symbolize covenant faithfulness and loyalty (Deut 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:5; 30:20; Josh 22:5; 23:8) and is regularly linked to covenant terms such as "to serve," "to fear," "to keep his commands,"

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<sup>53</sup> Jacob Neusner, *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 487.

<sup>54</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, vol. 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 290.

<sup>55</sup> Blomberg, *Matthew*, 290.

<sup>56</sup> David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 461.

<sup>57</sup> Carson, *Matthew*, 412.

<sup>58</sup> Osborne, *Matthew*, 704.



and “to love.”<sup>59</sup> Therefore, the covenant motif is intrinsically evident from the use of words such as “cleave” and “one flesh.”

### **One Flesh**

“One flesh” represents the most intimate of human relationships that finds expression in marriage and climaxes in interpersonal unity and sexual relationships.<sup>60</sup> “One flesh” encompasses the total connectivity of the marriage experience in every dimension of life.<sup>61</sup> The Creator God, who engineered humanity into two sexes, is the one who ordained that a man and woman should be cemented together in marriage, which is an unbreakable commitment of oneness that supersedes all other relationships except one’s relationship with God himself. This covenantal union is displayed with such an intense metaphor that it would be almost impossible to find a more permanent and powerful connection. Marriage is here depicted with the enduring quality of being glued or welded together in an indissoluble, unbreakable bond.<sup>62</sup> Jesus builds his one flesh union of the creation context in which the woman was made from the side of the man from his very bone and from his very flesh.<sup>63</sup>

Covenant relationship in marriage is not merely expressed in husbands and wives being one with each other but for spouses to become one with God. Diana Garland writes, “We retain our primary relationship with God, and that responsibility must come

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<sup>59</sup> Devin Paul Hudson, “Covenant as a Framework for Understanding the Primary Divorce and Remarriage Text in the New Testament” (PhD diss., The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2004), 45.

<sup>60</sup> Blomberg, *Matthew*, 290.

<sup>61</sup> Osborne, *Matthew*, 704.

<sup>62</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 716.

<sup>63</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 716.

before any human covenants.”<sup>64</sup> Systematically putting God first is key to covenant keeping both with God and with one’s spouse (Matthew 6:33).

### **First Corinthians 7:1-5**

#### **Matters of Context**

A long-standing controversy among students of the Bible pertains to the biblical passage found in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5. Some contend that the issue was whether individuals should get married or not. Others affirm that the issue was whether married couples could abstain from sexual intimacy while married. The former was the traditional view held by many scholars in the past, but the latter seems to be the preferred view of many modern scholars.

Another issue that is important to the matter of context as it pertains 1 Corinthians 7:1-5 is whether all of what is written are the direct words and perspective of Paul or if he was addressing and quoting issues of the Corinthians. It is possible that Paul commences the section (v. 1b) by quoting from the letter written by the Corinthians that he somewhat agrees but disapproves as to how they applied the teaching to real life situations.<sup>65</sup> Paul “cites the Corinthian position only to correct its dangerous misapplication.”<sup>66</sup> “The key to understanding this pericope is in the recognition that 1 Cor. 7:1 is Paul’s reluctant and qualified usage of a Corinthians slogan or position.”<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Diana R. Garland, *Family Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity, 1999), 339.

<sup>65</sup> Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 324.

<sup>66</sup> David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 223.

<sup>67</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 100.

## Sex in Marriage

The idiom used by Paul “to touch a woman” was a frequently used euphemism for sexual intercourse. The English equivalent for that rewording would be, it is not good for a man to have sexual intercourse with a woman.<sup>68</sup> Paul assumes a very high view of sexual intercourse in Christian marriages that supersedes what happens in most cultures. He contends that intimacy in the Christian marriage is both unitive and affirmative of total and mutual oneness between husbands and wives.<sup>69</sup>

In 1 Corinthians 7:2-5 Paul strongly asserts that healthy sexual intimacy in marriage is not an option but an indispensable necessity.<sup>70</sup> “Paul qualifies the previous statement in 7:1b. He does not reject it outright, since he values celibacy, but instead points out how the Corinthian maxim is untenable for those who are married. The change from *ἄνθρωπος* (anthropos, man) to *ἀνὴρ* (aner, husband) indicates that he is talking specifically about marriage relationships.”<sup>71</sup> The apostle is not making a case for individuals to marry but is contending for sexual relationship in marriage as unitive, practical, appropriate, and systematic.<sup>72</sup> One of Paul’s concerns is for married couples to ensure mutual sexual fulfillment in marriage. “A husband and wife should have sex often enough so that neither is frustrated or tempted to cheat on the other.”<sup>73</sup>

The intimate nature of marriage is of such that both spouses share the belonging of their very bodies with each other. Fee writes, “Married couples are indebted to one another sexually”<sup>74</sup> Blomberg explains, “Married persons no longer control their bodies

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<sup>68</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 325.

<sup>69</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 330.

<sup>70</sup> Garland, *I Corinthians*, 225.

<sup>71</sup> Garland, *I Corinthians*, 226.

<sup>72</sup> Garland, *I Corinthians*, 227.

<sup>73</sup> Blomberg, *I Corinthians*, 100.

<sup>74</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 279.

but must surrender authority over them to their spouses.”<sup>75</sup> This bodily yielding is intended to be an intimate mutual obligation between married couples. It is not intended to be used as a bribe or reward but a willing giving of oneself for the satisfaction of each other’s desire for sexual intimacy.<sup>76</sup> This is not a selfish notion of possessing the body of one’s spouse but a selfless posture of gladly giving one’s own body for the systematic fulfillment of one’s spouse.<sup>77</sup> In a sense, this is no giving at all since one cannot give to another what another already owns. This inability to give what one already owns also speaks to the reality that abstinence should be a rare exception rather than a prevailing posture in marriage (1 Cor 7:3-5).

### **Abstinence in Marriage**

Paul gives direct instructions pertaining to abstinence in marriage that are both clear and specific. “The exceptional situation in which Paul permits temporary abstinence highlights, in passing, the central role spiritual disciplines (prayer, meditation, Bible study, etc.) should play in believers’ life.”<sup>78</sup> In other words, because of the importance of marital intimacy, only for specific matters pertaining to God should couples cease their sexual fulfillment for each other for a specific agreed upon time.

### **Unifying Motif**

Counseling others to remain exactly the way they are may be among the worst counsel that can be given in areas that require change and growth. However, in some areas it may be the best possible advice that can be given. This posture of inflexibility is a prohibition against divorce. This counsel, given by Paul, was not just to married couples

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<sup>75</sup> Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 101.

<sup>76</sup> Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 105.

<sup>77</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 280.

<sup>78</sup> Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 105.

but also for singles not to change their status but to remain as they are. This counsel of not changing status might be the unifying motif of the whole chapter of 1 Corinthians 7.<sup>79</sup> Paul stood resolute against the extreme views within the church of Corinth in which some advocated that marriages should be dissolved, and others were encouraged to abstain from marriage.<sup>80</sup>

### **A Higher Purpose**

For the Christian, sex should not be the ultimate experience or even a function for mere pleasure and procreation but should have a higher purpose. Paul provides a summary principle that establishes this higher purpose that is germane not only for sexuality and marriage but for all areas of life. The principle states, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all for the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31). The Bible makes it clear that all that one does should be done for God’s glory, which includes the important area of sexual intimacy. “For the Christian there is indeed freedom within God’s designs, but a freedom to personally and creatively explore the meaning for God’s glory. After all, every dimension of life is to be lived for the glory of God including marital sex.”<sup>81</sup>

### **Ephesians 5:21-33**

#### **Role of All Believers**

In presenting his instructions about marriage (Eph 5:21-33), Paul continues his positive motivation about how believers should live with carefulness and wisdom in the present evil age (Eph 5:15-16), live according to God’s will (Eph 5:17), and experience spiritual development and Spirit-led living (Eph 5:18). He shows how this lifestyle looks

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<sup>79</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 319.

<sup>80</sup> Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 320.

<sup>81</sup> Dennis P. Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 145.

in the context of a traditional Greco-Roman household by giving somewhat culturally traditional counsel pertaining to the role of wives in submission to the headship of husbands but redefines the traditional expectation of the role and authority of husbands by declaring it should be used to benefit wives through sacrificial love.<sup>82</sup>

Some scholars believe that both wives and husbands “are to live in mutual submission to each other.”<sup>83</sup> What seems clear is that all believers submitting to each other<sup>84</sup> (Eph 5:21) provides the context for wives submitting to husbands (Eph 5:22), but is not a mandate of mutuality in marriage,<sup>85</sup> “but it does hint that there is a sense in which everyone is involved in serving others.”<sup>86</sup> Ephesians 5:21 not only provides the participle for Ephesians 5:22, which admonishes wives to submit to their husbands, but provides an inclusion by introducing the concept of fear that is completed in the final verse, Ephesians 5:33.<sup>87</sup> The former enables a suitable bridge that connects the author’s counsel to the whole community to his advice specifically to husbands and wives.<sup>88</sup>

Submission is to be carried out in the context of the fear of God and being aided by the Holy Spirit. The word *fear* is best described as reverential fear or reverential

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<sup>82</sup> Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 392.

<sup>83</sup> Klyne Snodgrass, *Ephesians*, The NIV Application Commentary, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 314.

<sup>84</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 42 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 353.

<sup>85</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 322-24.

<sup>86</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 324.

<sup>87</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 352.

<sup>88</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 365.

respect as it likely connotes more than respect but less than terror. This is the nature of fear that inspires mutual submission between believers.<sup>89</sup>

Mutual submission of believers is a direct result of being filled by the Spirit. This is one of the things that distinguishes believers from unbelievers. The latter are prone to thrive in individualism and independence which can lead to selfishness, while the former promotes interdependence, humility, and community.<sup>90</sup> Submission to the Spirit is critical not only for believers but also in the marriage relationship to enable both husbands and wives to fulfill their God-ordained roles. The force of Ephesians 5:21 is so strong that although it does not require mutual submission of husbands and wives it totally transforms what follows so that husbands should have a submissive attitude to wives by unselfish service or putting the interest of their wives before their own.<sup>91</sup>

### **Role of Wives**

Ephesians 5:22-24 is built on the call for mutual submission (Eph 5:21), but the submission enjoined in this section speaks specifically to the role of wives while the command to love speaks directly to husbands. This call for submission for wives and love from husbands is also validated by the parallel passage in Colossians 3:18-19.<sup>92</sup> The submission of wives to husbands is not presented as a separate experience from their relationship with Christ but as a very significant part of that vertical experience. “Christian wives submitting to their husbands is one aspect of their obedience to the Lord.”<sup>93</sup> Submission does not require obedience, it does not promote a husband to be a

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<sup>89</sup> Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 719.

<sup>90</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 717.

<sup>91</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 365-66.

<sup>92</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1984), 383.

<sup>93</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, 384.

boss and a wife to be a slave, it does not require a wife to give up her identity, voice, or decision-making ability, and it does not set up a wife for any form of abuse.<sup>94</sup>

“The word ‘head’ has the idea of authority attached to it after the analogy of Christ’s headship over the church.”<sup>95</sup> The headship of the husband is not to be based on his unique personality, his likes and dislikes, or his personal philosophy of what he thinks a wife should or should not do. “The husband’s headship or authority, which the wife is to recognize, is one that is patterned on the unique character of Christ’s headship over the Church.”<sup>96</sup> “The church benefits from the headship of Christ and so also should the wife’s submission enhance here well-being.”<sup>97</sup>

Great care should be exercised not to overstate the biblical doctrine of headship. This biblical teaching of headship does not mean that husbands have unlimited authority and are authorized to be tyrants or that wives are required to model unconditional obedience. The submission is in response to God’s authority expressed through a human being. The God-given authority of husbands does not include commanding anything that God forbids or forbidding anything that God commands, as to submit to such wrongdoing would be to disobey God.<sup>98</sup>

The submission of the wife is not akin to inferiority but is a posture of meekness that accepts the divine ordering of society.<sup>99</sup> The word submit, *hypotassomai*, implies

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<sup>94</sup> Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 10 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 380.

<sup>95</sup> Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon and to the Ephesians*, 384.

<sup>96</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 369.

<sup>97</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 746.

<sup>98</sup> John Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, *The Bible Speaks Today* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1979), 218-19.

<sup>99</sup> Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 217.



recognition of God-ordained and delegated authority based on our reverence for Christ.<sup>100</sup> Submission should be voluntary and joyful,<sup>101</sup> and some believe it should also contain “glad obedience.”<sup>102</sup> “Once again it much be remembered that Paul is not using ‘obey’ (ὕπακούω) as he does for other relationships in the household (see Eph. 6:1, 5). Thus, it is inappropriate to suggest that a wife should receive orders from her husband, be forced to engage in any kind of sinful activities or behaviors, or be victimized by abuse”<sup>103</sup> Just as the church’s submission to Christ is not forced but is willing and free, so the wife’s submission should be voluntary and celebrated.<sup>104</sup> As the church looks to its head for loving leadership in an environment that enables growth and maturity, and responds with joyful gratitude, so should the wife respond to her husband.<sup>105</sup> The basic idea of submission entails, “that women should not seek to assert themselves in the home in a way that could be viewed as ruling, controlling, or dominating. Rather, they must acknowledge the God-given role assigned to their husband and respect the leadership he endeavors to provide for the family.”<sup>106</sup> “Paul picture the wife’s submission as the recognition of the authority of a husband who imitates the self-sacrificial, nurturing and supporting roles that Christ fills with respect to the Church.”<sup>107</sup> This role is not merely a traditional societal stereotype but a service to God.<sup>108</sup> “A Christian wife empowers her husband as no one else on the

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<sup>100</sup> Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 218.

<sup>101</sup> Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 217.

<sup>102</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 367.

<sup>103</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383.

<sup>104</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 372.

<sup>105</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 372.

<sup>106</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 380.

<sup>107</sup> Thielman, *Ephesians*, 379.

<sup>108</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 367.

face of the earth can do. She is so secure in Christ that she is no longer jealous to establish her identity separate from her husband. She understands how profound it is to be one flesh with him, and she gives him here whole heart and her practical support.”<sup>109</sup>

“After the exhortation to wives to submit, with its depiction of husbands as head, what might well have been expected by contemporary readers would be an exhortation to husbands to rule their wives. Instead the exhortation is for husbands to love their wives.”<sup>110</sup> The marriage relationship is to be a symbiotic symphony that empowers both husbands and wives to experience progressive sanctification as they perform their roles in God-honoring ways.

### **Role of Husbands**

Paul uses about three times as many words in his counsels to husbands as he does in his admonitions to wives.<sup>111</sup> The quantity of words used in dealing with husbands may be an indication of the importance of the husbands’ responsibility to their wives.<sup>112</sup> Though both spouses are responsible for the upkeep of the marriage, the husband, head, or leader, has an indispensable responsibility to lead his family in experiencing success. “Fulfilling this responsibility will not only enrich their wives but will also bring harmony to the marriage and thus to the believing community.”<sup>113</sup>

In Ephesians 5:25-30, Paul calls husbands to love their wives unconditionally, regardless of behavior, appearance, or health conditions. Husbands are to love their wives even in their most negative, unlovely, and unbecoming state as Christ loved the

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<sup>109</sup> Ray Ortlund, *Marriage and the Mystery of the Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 93-94.

<sup>110</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 373.

<sup>111</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 355.

<sup>112</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 746.

<sup>113</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 746-47.

church.<sup>114</sup> “The present imperative of the verb ‘love’ (ἀγαπατε) indicates that this kind of love should be the regular and hallmark feature of the husband’s affections and behavior towards his wife.”<sup>115</sup> This God ordained love is the key word in the section which is used six times. It refers to unmerited favor given even to the undeserved. This form of undeserved love is very similar to the instruction given to wives in the passage—both the wives’ submission and the husbands’ love are not to be based on the response of the other.<sup>116</sup>

Ephesians 5:25-30 call husbands to provide selfless love motivated by what is in the best interest for wives without expecting rewards. This love finds its context in the love of Christ for the church, and as he made the ultimate sacrifice, husbands should love to the point of death or willingness of sacrificing life itself.<sup>117</sup> This love from husbands should be motivated by obedience to the Lord and because of the example of Christ’s love.<sup>118</sup> “It is not the duty of the wife to tell him to love her. It is his duty to the Lord to love her.”<sup>119</sup> “As he does not think about loving himself because it is natural, so also, should the husband’s love of his wife be something that is as natural as loving himself.”<sup>120</sup>

The call for husbands to love their wives is a greater challenge than the call for wives to submit to husbands. There is no higher pinnacle in the marriage relationship than the call of husbands to love their wives as Christ loved and sacrifice himself for the

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<sup>114</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383.

<sup>115</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 383.

<sup>116</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 747.

<sup>117</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 374.

<sup>118</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 764.

<sup>119</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 764.

<sup>120</sup> Hoehner, *Ephesians*, 765.

church.<sup>121</sup> “This is the totality of self- sacrifice. He is to love her with what is sometimes termed ‘Calvary love’; no higher standard is conceivable. A Christian husband who even partially fulfills this ideal preaches the gospel without even opening his lips, for people can see in him the quality of love which took Jesus Christ to his cross.”<sup>122</sup> “Thus the roles should reflect the actions and attitudes appropriate to that wonderful relationship between Christ and His Church.”<sup>123</sup> In other words, husbands are called to prioritize loving like Christ loved the church and wives are called to prioritize submitting as the church to Christ. “The headship of the husband over his wife must not be negative, oppressive, or reactionary. Instead, it must be a headship of love in which the husband gives of himself for his wife’s good, nourishing and cherishing the beloved one who, as his equal, voluntarily submits to his headship.”<sup>124</sup>

Believers are called to submit to each other, and wives are called upon to submit to husbands, but husbands are not called upon to submit to wives. Husbands and wives are called to be, “servant-leaders and servant submitters,”<sup>125</sup> respectively. Husbands are called to love their wives as Christ loves the church, which is theoretically and practically a deeper level of submission. “Paul clearly maintains a differentiation of roles between husbands and wives in the Christian marriage.”<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 234.

<sup>122</sup> Stott, *The Message of Ephesians*, 234.

<sup>123</sup> Wayne Grudem and John Piper, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006), 282.

<sup>124</sup> Grudem and Piper, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, 283.

<sup>125</sup> David Powlison, *Seeing with New Eyes, Counseling and the Human Condition Through the Lens of Scripture* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2003), 60.

<sup>126</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 402.

## Roles Rehearsal

In Ephesians 5:33, Paul concludes his admonition to husbands and wives: “However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” “Paul concludes this set of instructions to husbands and wives by summarizing two of the central admonitions, that each husband should love his wife in a vigilant and caring way and each wife should be responsive to the leadership her husband provides.”<sup>127</sup> Paul summarizes the pericope by presenting the same concepts with different words and also places emphasis on individual responsibility to ensure that no one can claim to be exempted from these universal roles and principles for all married couples.<sup>128</sup>

## Wider Implications

In Ephesians 5:21-33, Paul presents the marriage relationship as a microcosm of God’s greater purpose. No other relationship provides a better reflection of God’s objective for his universe.<sup>129</sup> Marriage is intended to reflect how God relates. Ephesians 5:31 is a direct quotation of Genesis 2:24, which presents the marriage of Adam and Eve and generalizes it as God’s ideal to all married couples. Undoubtedly, Genesis 2:24 provides the foundation of Hebrew understanding of the indispensability of marriage for the survival of the human family. “Monogamous heterosexual marriage was always viewed as the divine norm from the outset of creation.”<sup>130</sup> “The biblical definition of marriage established in Genesis 2:24—one moral life fully shared between one man and one woman—that Old Testament definition is clearly reaffirmed as normative in the New

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<sup>127</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 397.

<sup>128</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 397, 401.

<sup>129</sup> Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 402.

<sup>130</sup> Kenneth Matthew, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: B and H, 1996), 224.

Testament.”<sup>131</sup> In other words, the heterosexual intention of the passage is clear as it was from the beginning when God married the first man, Adam, to the first woman, Eve.

In Ephesians 5:21-33, Paul does not only express the most detailed, countercultural instructions for husbands and wives but presents the heart of the gospel by drawing from the relationship of Christ and the church.<sup>132</sup> “Christ loves us, sacrificed himself for us, saves us, sanctifies us, makes us his own, and will present us to himself to be his own at the end of time.”<sup>133</sup> This Christological presentation is the loftiest model to inform and motivate both husbands and wives to emulate Christ in the stewardship of their marital roles first with Christ then with their spouse.<sup>134</sup>

### **Conclusion**

From the very beginning of human history, God created, established, and ordained the honorable institution of marriage between the first man, Adam, and the first, woman, Eve. Above and beyond all other human kinships, marriage is intended to be both the primary and most permanent of all relationships. Systematic and satisfying intimacy should be benevolently bestowed on both husbands and wives while functioning according to their divinely directed roles.

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<sup>131</sup> Ortlund, *Marriage and the Mystery of the Gospel*, 79.

<sup>132</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 399.

<sup>133</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 400.

<sup>134</sup> Arnold, *Ephesians*, 400-403.



CHAPTER 3  
THEORETICAL, PRACTICAL AND  
HISTORICAL ISSUES RELATED  
TO MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

“God’s word is sufficient and powerful enough to address the deepest of marital issues and robust enough to assess the everyday issues you will encounter in marriage.”<sup>1</sup> The biblical underpinnings for marriage enrichment are indispensable and irreplaceable, yet theoretical, practical, and historical issues related to this subject matter are presented in extrabiblical resources that can further enrich married couples, especially when the principles and solutions are grounded in the Word of God. A global sweep of marriage from Old Testament times to modern times has revealed four major influences that have greatly affected the development and transformation of this institution. “The change from institution-centered to individual-centered marriage; the relationship of women’s status to marriage stability; changes in expectations regarding marriage; and the changing perception of sex.”<sup>2</sup> Though these historical findings are important for couples seeking marriage enrichment, God’s power alone can establish robust homes and families.<sup>3</sup>

Since marriages typically exhibit challenges in the areas of communication, conflict resolution, financial management, and sexuality, these subjects will be explored in this chapter. As important as these areas are, they are not an end in themselves as the

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<sup>1</sup> Jonathan D. Holmes, *Counsel for Couples: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Bernard I. Murstein, *Love, Sex and Marriage Through the Ages* (New York: Springer, 1974), 555.

<sup>3</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage and Family: Rebuilding the Biblical Foundation* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 19.



goals in marriage enrichment go beyond presenting problems to unfolding the relevance of the gospel and helping husbands and wives grow to become more like Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

### **Communication**

“Many marriage counselors say that the number one problem in marriage is poor communication.”<sup>5</sup> Marriages die without communication.<sup>6</sup> It is not surprising that breakdown in communication is considered the top marriage challenge as many things in marriage rise or fall on communication.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, indispensable instruments of a successful marriage, such as love, submission, understanding, intimacy, conflict resolution, and forgiveness, are usually enhanced by good communication. Communication has been a challenge in marriages since it broke down between Adam and Eve and God in the garden of Eden. Even in present society, with all its advances and innovation, communication challenges persist in marriages.

Part of the challenge in communication may be that possibly six messages can be derived when spouses speak to each other: what is meant to be said, what is actually said, what the other person heard, what the other person thought was heard, what the other person said about what was heard, and what one thought the other person said about what was said.<sup>8</sup> “Another source of frustration is that all too often husbands and wives concentrate on the talking aspect of communicating because they are overly concerned about sharing their ideas. In doing this they fail to listen to the other party. When this

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<sup>4</sup> Jeremy Pierre and Deepak Reju, *The Pastor and Counseling-The Basics of Shepherding Members in Need* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 77.

<sup>5</sup> H. Norman Wright, *Communication Key to Your Marriage* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1974), 62-63.

<sup>6</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Christian Living in the Home* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1972), 28-29.

<sup>7</sup> Nancy L. Van Pelt, *How to Talk so Your Mate Will Listen and Listen so Your Mate Will Talk* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1989), 19.

<sup>8</sup> Wright, *Communication Key*, 54.

happens husbands and wives have no real idea of what the other is really thinking or feeling.”<sup>9</sup> Additionally, lack of training and fear of rejection when sharing deep thoughts and feelings may be among the reasons good communication is absent in many marriages.<sup>10</sup>

Good communicate is one of the most important skills that affect the success or failure of marriage relationships. Quality communication for married couples includes godly speech, good listening skills, and the ability to understand each other. Thankfully, the Bible provides sound and timeless principles that, if utilized, can transform communication in marriage. Many of those principles are found in Proverbs 15–18: godly speech (15:1, 2, 4, 7; 16:21, 23, 24; 17:27, 28; 18:4, 20, 21), effective listening (18:13, 15, 17), and accurate understanding (16:22; 18:2, 15, 17).

### **Godly Speech**

Few things can stifle a marriage relationship more than ungodly speech. Ungodly speech has the ability to extract the very oxygen out of a marriage and cause a sudden or slow death (Prov 18:21). “Words cannot only hurt; they can destroy a relationship.”<sup>11</sup> Godly speech can breathe energy, transformation, and life into marriage relationships (Prov 18:21). Husbands and wives can improve their speech by learning to use wise words, tell the truth tactfully, speak with a tender tone, avoid accusation, practice shrewd silence, foster forgiveness, claim precious promises, and ask quality questions.

**Wise words.** Successful communication in marriage requires wise speech, which takes a lifetime of work for many couples.<sup>12</sup> Wise words are a powerful instrument

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<sup>9</sup> Wright, *Communication Key*, 62.

<sup>10</sup> Van Pelt, *How to Talk*, 19-21.

<sup>11</sup> Emerson Eggerichs, *Cracking the Communication Code* (Nashville: Integrity Publishers, 2007), 37.

<sup>12</sup> David A. Hubbard, *Proverbs*, The Preacher’s Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson,

of blessing for married couples.<sup>13</sup> Wise words can be the difference between success and failure in marriages (Prov 15:2). God is the source of wisdom—from him comes wise words (Jas 1:5; Jer 33:3; Dan 2:20-22). God is able and willing to work with married couples to furnish their speech with wisdom (Ps 37:30) but requires submission of the heart (Prov 23:26).

Proverbs 16:23 says, “A wise man’s heart guides his mouth, and his lips promote instruction.” When couples submit their hearts to God from their lips can flow wise words that would enhance their marriages, for out of the overflow of their hearts wise words are derived (Luke 6:45). The same source, the power of God, that enables married couples to utilize wise speech is also able to empower couples in telling the truth in a tactful manner.

**Tactful truth.** “Every word we speak is rooted either in the truth or a lie.”<sup>14</sup> “Truthfulness between husband and wife doesn’t always happen.”<sup>15</sup> Among the ways that spouses commit the sin of lying against each other and against God are outright lies, half-truths, distorted truths, and exaggerations.<sup>16</sup> Lies should be seen for what they are—sins against God and not merely alternative facts or fake news. Truth should also be valued as an attribute of God. Married couples should emulate and speak truth to each other lovingly and tactfully for the betterment of their relationship (Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18).

A lack of truthful communication in a marriage can destroy trust and eventually the marriage itself; however, truthful communication tactfully expressed can bring healing,

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1989), 4996.

<sup>13</sup> Ed Wheat and Gloria Okes Perkins, *Love Life for Every Married Couple* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 178.

<sup>14</sup> Paul David Tripp, *War on Words: Getting to the Heart of Your Communication Struggles* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R, 2000), 22.

<sup>15</sup> Holmes, *Counsel for Couples*, 193.

<sup>16</sup> Holmes, *Counsel for Couples*, 193-94.

trust, intimacy and many other blessings to the marriage.<sup>17</sup> “If couples want to make progress in their communication, they must resolve to speak the truth in love with one another.”<sup>18</sup> Husbands and wives who desire to utilize tactful truth in their relationship should think about the truth and also express or share the truth only when it is “excellent or praiseworthy” (Phil 4:8). “People don’t want to hear every bit of the truth about themselves every moment. It is too much for them. Sometimes it’s better to say nothing and pray for God to show you when a person is ready to hear the truth.”<sup>19</sup> When married couples submit themselves to Jesus, the truth, they can be set free from lying, speaking the truth harshly, and also speak with tender tone (John 16:12; 8:32; 14:6; Eph 4:15; 1 John 2:21; Gen 50:21).

**Tender tone.** Harsh words can have a negative impact on marriage relationships. For this reason, it is crucial that married couples season their words with tenderness, kindness, and love. “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Prov 15:1).<sup>20</sup> Gentle words can curtail conflicts, soothe sorrow, and increase intimacy. Words are the fruits of the heart; therefore, a continuous tender tone is best produced by hearts made tender by the transforming power of God’s grace.

Successful communication in marriage not only necessitates a tender tone but also quality content in both commission and omission. One of the most important areas of omission is in the area of accusation. Married couples would do well to avoid this popular but negative and destructive communication device.

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<sup>17</sup> Adams, *Christian Living in the Home*, 29.

<sup>18</sup> Holmes, *Counsel for Couples*, 194.

<sup>19</sup> Stormy Omartin, *The Power of a Praying Woman* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2002), 227.

<sup>20</sup> Bruce K. Waltke writes, “This antithetical proverb implies that the disciple has the emotional restraint to give a tender soft response, not a hard and painful one, in a dialogue charged with the potential for anger.” Bruce K. Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 611. This is the quality of self-control and restraint that married couples need to exhibit to foster excellent communication.

**Avoiding accusation.** Accusation or blaming was one of the first visible effects of sin—Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the serpent (Gen 3:12, 13). Satan is called the accuser of God’s people (Rev 12:10). Consequently, accusation in marriage may be a direct result of a sinful heart and the influence of the devil.

Much communication is about accusing or blaming others.<sup>21</sup> Married couples are usually tempted to play the blame game of unloading their burdens and responsibilities on each other.<sup>22</sup> Blamers tend to be poor listeners, assume a posture of superiority, and try to avoid responsibility.<sup>23</sup> Conversely, meaningful communication in marriage necessitates avoiding blaming one’s spouse and instead taking responsibility. Heart transformation is necessary if couples are to rid their marriages of accusation (Ezek 36:26). When the hearts of married couples have been changed by the Holy Spirit, they will be able to encourage and affirm or remain quiet instead of accusing.

**Shrewd silence.** “A time to be silent and a time to speak” (Eccl 3:7). The old adage “if you don’t have something to say, don’t say anything at all”<sup>24</sup> is good counsel for married couples. Silence should not be used to frustrate one’s spouse.<sup>25</sup> In other words, silence should be used to create a positive, thoughtful environment in communication that would assist in helping couples not to say hurtful things.

Silence is a strong instrument of good listening. It allows one spouse to talk while the other listens. “It is when you listen for silence that you are liable to hear the most

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<sup>21</sup> Tripp, *War on Words*, 22.

<sup>22</sup> Tripp, *War on Words*, 22.

<sup>23</sup> Brian Strong et al., *The Marriage and Family Experience: Intimate Relationships in a Changing Society*, 8th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomas Learning, 2001), 189.

<sup>24</sup> Holmes, *Counsel for Couples*, 195.

<sup>25</sup> Wright, *Communication Key*, 189.

important messages.”<sup>26</sup> When couples fail at being silent and at listening in order to exercise self-control in communication, then hurtful things may be said that require couples to request or grant forgiveness.

**Fostering forgiveness.** To be hurt with words and to be hurt by words are two of the inescapable experiences of living.<sup>27</sup> This is especially true in marriage, where opportunity to hurt one’s spouse and be hurt by one’s spouse with words may exceed all other relationships. For this reason and other reasons, forgiveness is necessary for the health and survival of marriage. “There is no greater impediment to change than the unwillingness to seek and grant forgiveness.”<sup>28</sup>

“When you exhibit the grace of forgiving love towards your spouse, you change the entire tone of your marriage. No longer are you like referees counting each other’s fouls, ready to toss each other out of the game. Marriage becomes a safe place where you don’t have to hide your foibles and your failings.”<sup>29</sup> Forgiveness in marriage can provide many benefits including—freedom of the offender and offended, freedom of grudges and guilt, cleansing from wrongs, bringing the relationship into the light, and possible reconciliation.<sup>30</sup>

“When we start with our own confession, we are in much better place to lead another to confess.”<sup>31</sup> When husbands or wives begin the process of forgiveness by confessing their own wrongs, they foster forgiveness by encouraging their spouse to do

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<sup>26</sup> Gordon MacDonald and Gail MacDonald, *Heart Connections: Growing Intimacy in Your Marriage and Family* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1997), 107.

<sup>27</sup> Tripp, *War on Words*, 9.

<sup>28</sup> Tripp, *War on Words*, 84.

<sup>29</sup> Garry Rosberg and Barbra Rosberg, *Divorce Proof Your Marriage* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2002), 76.

<sup>30</sup> Rosberg and Rosberg, *Divorce Proof Your Marriage*, 76.

<sup>31</sup> Tripp, *War on Words*, 99.

the same and thus grant and request forgiveness (Matt 7:1-5). Married couples not only can receive forgiveness from each other but also from God (1 John 1:9). Forgiveness is also one of the precious promises of God.

**Precious promises.** When God's Word expands in importance and relevance to a married couple, his promises provide nourishment that grow the quality of the relationship.<sup>32</sup> God has given spouses great and precious promises (2 Pet 1:4). Married couples should not be selfish in claiming God's promises for themselves but should also pray and claim promises for their spouses. Claiming God's promises can empower spouses to cultivate a biblical worldview that can improve the quality of communication in a marriage. When in doubt, husbands may ask wives and wives may ask husbands what areas of their lives would they like God's promises to be claimed?

**Quality questions.** Asking questions is a valuable instrument of intimate communication. Among the best questions married couples can ask are those that get to the hearts of both husbands and wives (Luke 5:22) and help spouses understand how best to serve each other (Matt 20:32). Asking questions to help in understanding what is best for each other can express great care and deepen the level of communication between spouses. Not many things can help spouses understand the deep cries and longings of the heart like quality questions. Quality questions are not merely tools of good speech, but also of effective listening.

### **Effective Listening**

Listening is among the least understood and most neglected of all communication skills. It is usually easier to become an eloquent speaker than a perceptive

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<sup>32</sup> David Powlison, *Speaking Truth in Love: Counsel in Community* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth, 2005), 44.

listener.<sup>33</sup> “Listening is foundational to what it means to be human.”<sup>34</sup> Notwithstanding, “We speak volumes, but we listen in snippets.”<sup>35</sup> Many spouses seek counseling in search of someone who would listen to them because their husbands or wives do a poor job of listening.<sup>36</sup>

“Listening is serious business because it involves more than hearing words. It involves discernment, observing nonverbals, caring, eye contact, watching for underlying motives, asking the right questions, giving appropriate responses and sometimes being silent.<sup>37</sup> “In listening we open the door and receive a guest. When we listen, we welcome others into our space. We open ourselves. When we listen, we invite others into places of vulnerability and potential intimacy.”<sup>38</sup> “Pay attention and listen to the words of the wise and apply your heart to what I teach” (Prov 22:17). “My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry” (Jas 1:19).

A grave but often overlooked reason for negative communication in marriage is grieving or ignoring the Holy Spirit.<sup>39</sup> The listening experience of married couples can be greatly improved or even transformed when it has a vertical focus of listening to the Holy Spirit speaking through God’s Word. Effective listening is a prerequisite to good understanding (Isa 30:21).

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<sup>33</sup> Van Pelt, *How to Talk*, 58, 63.

<sup>34</sup> Adam S. McHugh, *The Listening Life: Embracing Attentiveness in a World of Distractions* (Westmont, IL: IVP, 2015), 5.

<sup>35</sup> McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 6.

<sup>36</sup> McHugh, *The Listening Life*, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Van Pelt, *How to Talk*, 63.

<sup>38</sup> McHugh. *The Listening Life*, 18.

<sup>39</sup> Holmes, *Counsel for Couples*, 195.



## Good Understanding

Lack of understanding is one of the leading causes of marital distress. Many of the mistakes made by husbands and wives in their communication are not because of bad intentions.<sup>40</sup> “It is just that we really don’t understand. We don’t see clearly into one another’s heart”<sup>41</sup> “There’s no way to have rich, rewarding family relationships without real understanding. Relationships can be superficial. They can be functional. They can be transactional. But they can’t be transformational—and deeply satisfying—unless they’re build on a foundation of genuine understanding.”<sup>42</sup>

To understand each other, husbands and wives need to move beyond words and carefully observe body language, gesture or posture, facial expressions, voice tone, speed of speaking and making eye contact.<sup>43</sup> “By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established” (Prov 24:3). “If you want to build a solid, divorce-proof home, you must understand each other. And to understand each other, you must share your hearts with each other.”<sup>44</sup>

As good as these communication challenges and issues are, they may be symptomatic and may not get to the root of communication problems. “Communication problems are heart problems.”<sup>45</sup> Couples with communication problems need the transforming power of Christ to change their hearts through the power of his gospel and his Word. Only when the gospel of Christ has done its work in the heart can couples practice godly speech, effective listening, and good understanding. What marriages need,

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<sup>40</sup> Steven R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families* (New York: Golden Books, 1997), 206.

<sup>41</sup> Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families*, 206.

<sup>42</sup> Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families*, 206.

<sup>43</sup> MacDonald and MacDonald, *Heart Connections*, 106-8.

<sup>44</sup> Rosberg and Rosberg, *Divorce Proof Your Marriage*, 135.

<sup>45</sup> Holmes, *Counsel for Couples*, 190.

then, is not merely better horizontal communication but better vertical communication—better praying, better listening to God’s Word, and better understanding and application of the gospel to the lives of both husbands and wives. It is critical for married couples to communicate well with God because nothing can transform them better than the power of God. When vertical communication is at its best, horizontal communication will be at its best. This transformation can be seen in the life of the Old Testament character Jacob—when his communication and experience with God were transformed, his communication with his family was also transformed (Gen 32:24-32). This growth in intimate interaction with God that can transform communication in marriage can also affect the way couples deal with conflicts as faulty communication with God is the cause of faulty communication in marriage, which is one of the major causes of conflicts.

### **Conflict Resolution**

There is widespread agreement that conflicts are inevitable. “Conflicts happen in every relationship.”<sup>46</sup> “No matter how deeply a man and woman love each other, they will eventually have conflict.”<sup>47</sup> Evidently, every marriage contains conflicts. The difference in parental models, upbringing, personality, likes and dislikes, and strengths and weakness all provide grounds for conflicts. The major difference between successful and failed marriages is often their attitude toward resolving conflicts.<sup>48</sup> Conflict resolution is critical for the quality and quantity of the marriage experience, yet many married couples do not have a clear understanding of the real cause of conflict and may mistake the symptoms of conflicts for the cause of conflicts.

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<sup>46</sup> Robert D. Jones, *Pursuing Peace: A Christian Guide to Handling Conflicts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 11.

<sup>47</sup> Les Parrott and Leslie Parrott III, *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts: Seven Questions to Ask Before and After You Marry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 112.

<sup>48</sup> H. Norman Wright. *Marriage Counseling: A Practical Guide for Pastors and Counselors* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), 16.

## **The Birthplace of Conflicts**

The heart is the birthplace of conflicts. The heart is indispensable when both the cause and cure for conflicts are sought. James 4:1 says, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you?” “Our hearts are the wellsprings of all our thoughts desires, words and actions. Therefore, it is also the source of our conflicts” (Luke 12:13-15).<sup>49</sup> “For out of our heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander” (Matt 15:19).

## **The Solution for Conflicts**

“Few Maladies plague our lives more than relational conflict.”<sup>50</sup> Experiencing relational peace is crucial because marriages die without it.<sup>51</sup> Dealing with conflicts requires that couples do not merely tackle symptoms but get to the heart of the matter. Husbands and wives must first make peace with God, and then live as peacemakers by the power of the Holy Spirit, to experience peace in their marriage.

**Making peace with God.** In the beginning, God created and married the first man and the first woman and placed them in a perfect paradise of peace (Gen 1–2). When sin entered the human family, it forever stripped the first husband and wife naked of their intimate peace with God and each other. From the time of the fall, humans have been at war with God and with each other (Gen 3:1-19; 4:1-15; Isa 59:2). “You cannot read your Bible well and miss its militant plot; it is the ultimate ‘war and peace’ novel.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ken Sande, *The Peace Maker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflicts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 102.

<sup>50</sup> Jones, *Pursuing Peace*, 11.

<sup>51</sup> Jones, *Pursuing Peace*, 11.

<sup>52</sup> Jones, *Pursuing Peace*, 18.

The fundamental reason why there is conflict in every marriage is that all sons and daughters born to Adam and Eve inherited their fore parents' sinful nature and are at war with God. This is both serious and sad news because long term real peace in marriage can only be experienced when peace with God has been established. For husbands and wives to experience peace in their marriage they must first make peace with God individually.

This peace with God is redemptive in nature and begins when one accepts Christ as Savior and Lord. It is a peace based solely on God's grace through which couples are justified by faith through Christ in whom both husbands and wives hope and celebrate the glory of God (Rom 5:1-2). "Justification by grace through faith is at the very heart of what makes marriage work the way God designed it. Justification creates peace with God vertically, in spite of our sin."<sup>53</sup> "This peace is more than the absence of war and strife. It is the positive presence of harmony, salvation, joy, blessing, and reconciliation."<sup>54</sup>

God not only grants redemptive peace to his saints but also internal peace in contrast to anxiety.<sup>55</sup> This peace enables assurance and confidence in God, in the midst of trouble (John 14:27; Ps 4:8; Phil 4:6-7). "In salvation God has done something not only for us, but also in us. Our Christian growth—sanctification in its past, present, and future aspects—began with a decisive act by God of severing the spinal cord of sin and making us new people who are now inclined to love and obey him."<sup>56</sup> Living as a peacemaker is one the vital ways to obey God (Rom 12:18; Heb 12:14).

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<sup>53</sup> John Piper, *The Momentary Marriage: A Marriage of Permanence* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 34.

<sup>54</sup> Jones, *Pursuing Peace*, 21.

<sup>55</sup> Jones, *Pursuing Peace*, 25.

<sup>56</sup> Jones, *Pursuing Peace*, 22.

**Living as peacemakers.** A peacemaker is one who has made peace with God and receives power from God to live at peace with others. A peacemaker is one who submits to God and has given total life control over to the Holy Spirit; this person is not perfect but experiences progressive sanctification through the working of the Holy Spirit and the purifying power of the Word of God (Gal 6:22-23; John 16:13, 17:17). Living as a peacemaker is not the absence of trials in marriage but the God given ability to experience peace in the midst of perplexities (John 16:33).

When husbands and wives become peacemakers, they are able to protect their marriage from debilitating conflicts that can destroy relationships and can instead grow in love and intimacy in their marriage.<sup>57</sup> Conflicts can then be used to deepen intimacy in marriage relationships.<sup>58</sup> God’s transformation of husbands and wives into peacemakers can also mature couples so profoundly that, instead of damaging married relationships, conflicts can become instruments of sanctification (Phil 1:12-14; Rom 8:28).

God is the royal and sovereign peacemaker. When God plants his peace in the hearts of husbands and wives, they are able to share it with each other. Vertical peace precedes horizontal peace in that when husbands and wives have made peace with God, they are best able to live at peace with each other. “Marriages are fixed vertically before they are ever fixed horizontally.”<sup>59</sup> This principle is expressed in the life of Jacob—when his life was transformed by the God of peace, the way he handled conflicts on the human level was also changed in a positive way (Gen 33:1-4). The same God who was able to transform Jacob and countless married couples into peacemakers, also brings financial

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<sup>57</sup> Ken Sande, *Peacemaking for Families: A Biblical Guide to Managing Conflicts in Your Home* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2002), x.

<sup>58</sup> Garry Smalley, *Making Love Last Forever* (Dallas: Word, 1996), 213.

<sup>59</sup> Paul David Tripp, *What Did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 33.

transformation to husbands and wives who are willing to submit to him and be directed by his word (Isa 9:6; Jam 1:17).

### **Financial Management**

“Lack of money is the leading stressor among families.”<sup>60</sup> Financial management is a major challenge in many marriages. Marriage counselors and many couples who have been divorced agree that financial battles are the leading cause of divorce.<sup>61</sup> “Seeking counsel for marriage or financial problems should be as normal as seeking medical counsel.”<sup>62</sup> Financial management is important as it usually affects the quality and longevity of marriage relationships.

### **The Importance of Money**

“There is no topic more talked about by Jesus than the topic of money.”<sup>63</sup> “Money is such an important subject that nearly two-thirds of Christ parables deal with the use and handling of it. That alone should tell us the importance of understanding God’s plan for finances.”<sup>64</sup> The importance of money can also be highlighted by the fact that many basic desires, such as food, clothing, and shelter, require money.

Money is not only important because of its frequent mention in the Bible or its ability to help cater to basic aspirations, but also because it has the capacity of exposing the true nature of hearts. “Your financial life is always determined more by the desires of

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<sup>60</sup> Richard A. Swenson, *Margin: Restoring Emotional, Physical, Financial, and Time Reserves to Overloaded Lives* (Colorado Springs: Navpress, 1992), 168.

<sup>61</sup> Dave Ramsey, *Financial Peace Revisited* (New York: Penguin, 2003), 195.

<sup>62</sup> Larry Burkett, *The Complete Guide to Managing your Money* (New York: Inspirational Press, 1996), 328.

<sup>63</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Redeeming Money: How God Reveals and Reorients Our Hearts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 44.

<sup>64</sup> Burkett, *The Complete Guide to Managing Your Money*, 10.

your heart than by the size of your income.”<sup>65</sup> Getting to the heart of money problems in marriage requires that both husbands and wives assess their own hearts. “You can be poor and have deeply spiritual money issues. Money problem are heart problems.”<sup>66</sup> “Our handling of money is a litmus test of our true character. It’s an index of our spiritual life. Our stewardship of our money and possessions become the story of our lives.”<sup>67</sup> “There is no better indicator of the identity you have assigned to yourself than the way you use money.”<sup>68</sup> “Since money problems and fights are statistically the biggest problem in marriage, any one of us who is wise will be on guard against these problems and looking for ways to win.”<sup>69</sup>

### **Winning the Money Battle**

Principles of financial management are important, but they do not always get to the heart of money challenges. Getting to the heart of money issues in marriage requires a transformation of the heart. Financial education and practical principles like budgeting are important but they cannot shield the heart from the grave dangers of sin.<sup>70</sup>

Acknowledging one’s sinful heart and how it relates to money is the starting place for winning the money battle. “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Ps 51:5). “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Rom 3:23). “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander (Matt 15:19). When the Holy Spirit convicts of sinfulness and transforms hearts by God’s redeeming grace (John 16:8, Eph 2;8-9), then couples are

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<sup>65</sup> Tripp, *Redeeming Money*, 150.

<sup>66</sup> Tripp, *Redeeming Money*, 31.

<sup>67</sup> Randy Alcorn, *Money Possessions and Eternity* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2003), 8.

<sup>68</sup> Tripp, *Redeeming Money*, 26.

<sup>69</sup> Ramsey, *Financial Peace Revisited*, 206.

<sup>70</sup> Tripp, *Redeeming Money*, 82.

able to allow both God and money to take their rightful places in their hearts and lives (Matt 6:24). When Christ rules in the heart, husbands and wives are able to overcome the temptation that many married couples succumb to by not asking money to do for them what only God can do for them<sup>71</sup> “The work of grace is heart change, and since heart change is the only way our behavior changes in a lasting way, God’s grace offer us the only hope of real change when it comes to our personal finances. There is no mountain of debt so big that God’s grace isn’t bigger.”<sup>72</sup> Principles of financial management are best executed by a heart that has been transformed by the gospel of Christ. There are money management principles that, if followed by married couples, can greatly assist in their financial management. These principles include accepting that God owns everything, practicing generosity, cultivating a grateful heart, living by a budget, using credit wisely, planning for retirement, and programing the heart with eternity.

**Accept God’s ownership.** Married couples who acknowledge God’s ownership are better able to avoid making money their idol. “There are few idols more powerful than money.”<sup>73</sup> As they work diligently to earn money, married couples should ensure that they do not worship money or any other idol but God only (Matt 6:24; 1 Tim 6:10). “Our lives don’t belong to us to use as we please. Because we were created by God, we belong to God, and because our money belongs to God, we don’t have the right to use and invest it however we please.”<sup>74</sup> “Just as Christians cannot experience fullness of the Holy Spirit until they surrender ownership of their lives to Christ, so too they cannot

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<sup>71</sup> Tripp, *Redeeming Money*, 150.

<sup>72</sup> Tripp, *Redeeming Money*, 17.

<sup>73</sup> Tripp, *Redeeming Money*, 15.

<sup>74</sup> Tripp, *Redeeming Money*, 13.



experience peace in the area of finances until they have surrendered total control of this area to God and accepted their position as stewards.”<sup>75</sup>

God is the sovereign owner of everything (Ps 24:1; Exod 19:5; 1 Chron 29:14; Ps 50:10). The principle of God’s sovereign ownership or creatorship is a strong motivation to put money in its rightful place and worship God only (Ps 50:10-15; Rev 14:6,7; Exod 20:8-11). Giving of resources is also a vital part of worship to God in acknowledgement of his ownership. Acknowledgement of God’s sovereign ownership motives generosity. Similarly, couples accepting that all their possessions come from God liberates them to be generous to God, each other and others (Ja 1:17, 1 Chron 29:14; Luke 6:38).

**Practice generosity.** Some individuals get married mainly for what they can receive—security, companionship, love, sex, assets, and other blessings—but the Bible affirms that those who give are more blessed than those who receive (Acts 20:35). When married couples become generous by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, they become more like God who is the great giver (John 3:16; Jas 1:17; Eph 1:3). “By taking our focus off the human receiver and putting it on the divine giver, Christians can become a symbol of God’s giving heart rather than people’s grabbing hands.”<sup>76</sup> “As we are continually receiving the blessings of God, so are we to be continually giving.”<sup>77</sup>

Waiting to receive from others can create fertile grounds for disappointment and frustration, as even in marriage (the most intimate of human relationship) there is no guarantee that spouses would receive their desires. Giving from a heart of generosity, on

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<sup>75</sup> Burkett, *The Complete Guide to Managing Your Money*, 29.

<sup>76</sup> Alcorn, *Money Possessions and Eternity*, 387.

<sup>77</sup> Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1940), 17.

the other hand, empowers its practitioners with the choice and freedom to being an almost undeniable blessing. “Giving produces freedom 100 percent of the time.”<sup>78</sup>

“Giving involves money but much more.”<sup>79</sup> Spouses are called upon to give all they have and all they are to each other in love and submission (Eph 51:21-33).

Generosity may be evidence of the transformational power of God who is also able to bestow on husbands and wives a grateful heart.

**Cultivate a grateful heart.** A thankful heart can inoculate married couples from succumbing to the temptation to misuse and abuse the resources of God. This posture of gratitude assists in overcoming the temptation to minimize the provision of God.<sup>80</sup> The Bible, especially the Psalms, encourages God’s people to give God thanks for his goodness and mercy (Pss 136; 107:1-2; 92:1-5). When married couples obey God’s instructions and allow him to create an atmosphere of gratitude in their hearts and marriage, they are able to focus on God the giver and worship him with praise and thanksgiving.

Few things lure us to exchange the glory of God more readily than money does. Money wakens desire for what it can buy; this desire becomes covetousness, competing with God; this covetousness destroys our contentment in the glory of God; and contrary to the first and second commandments, we thus become idolaters—people who prefer anything over God.<sup>81</sup>

Gratitude is an antidote for covetousness and can also prevent idolatry by helping its practitioners focus more on the giver, God, and less on his provision. Contentment, which is a similar posture to thankfulness, is part of the Bible’s solution for overcoming the love of money (1 Tim 5:6-10). Gratitude motivates individuals to focus on their blessings instead of on what they are lacking or on what they have and not on what they desire.

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<sup>78</sup> Alcorn, *Money Possessions and Eternity*, 19.

<sup>79</sup> Alcorn, *Money Possessions and Eternity*, 196.

<sup>80</sup> Tripp, *Redeeming Money*, 47.

<sup>81</sup> John Piper, *Living in the Light: Money Sex and Power* (Norhaven, Denmark: Good Book, 2016), 47.

When married couples are truly grateful to God for his bountiful blessings, they are more likely to see themselves as stewards to properly manage God’s resources. Living by a budget is one of the best ways that married couples can manage their God-given resources.

**Live by a budget.** “A budget can expose what your heart truly values, but a budget has no power to make you worship the right king. A budget can give you useful spending guidelines, but it has no power to restrain your fickle wondering heart. A budget can make you more money aware, but it will not deliver you from temptation.”<sup>82</sup> A budget is a mere instrument, but it can be a blessing to married couples whose hearts are touched by divine grace.

Living by a budget is one of the most fundamental steps for married couples to give serious thought and establish order to their finances. Living by a budget helps couples plan their finances and allocate wisely for the important areas of living. Establishing a budget makes it possible to view one’s income, expenditures, and savings amount at one glance. “In order to establish the right relationship about finances in the home, husband and wife together must establish specific goals.”<sup>83</sup> A budget allows married couples to set and accomplish goals as it pertains to spending, giving, saving and investing.

Composing a simple and user-friendly budget is important to ensure that it is used and followed by couples.<sup>84</sup> While preparing the budget it is important to ask questions that would refine the process and ensure that more is saved and less is spent. Questions such as, it this really needed? Can we be more efficient and use less of some items? Can we purchase cheaper items when quality is not a priority?<sup>85</sup> Living by a

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<sup>82</sup> Tripp, *Redeeming Money*, 99.

<sup>83</sup> Burkett, *The Complete Guide to Managing Your Money*, 329.

<sup>84</sup> Ramsey, *Financial Peace Revisited*, 251.

<sup>85</sup> Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor’s Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 445.

budget can help to prevent married couples from depending too much on credit in order to survive or succeed.

**Use credit wisely.** Debt can produce stress that can overwhelm married couples. “Most families today live on the brink of disaster. The excessive use of personal and business credit has weakened the already shaky family structure.”<sup>86</sup> Lamentably, many married couples have become slaves to indebtedness and “financial pressures caused by indebtedness are major factor in more than half of divorces.”<sup>87</sup>

Not with standing, “Credit can be a tremendous asset to individuals and families who respect it for what it is: a tool to help them to acquire appreciating assets such as a home, investment, real estate, or a promising business.”<sup>88</sup> Therefore, couples should seek to be masters and not slaves of their debts (Prov 22:7). “The most serious money problem anyone could have is not debt; but worship.”<sup>89</sup> Even married couples who are deeply indebted can have hope if their priority or worship is placed on God (Matt 6:33). Possibly few things can affect the quality of one’s retirement like indebtedness.

**Plan for retirement.** The stewardship of financial management is a lifelong commitment that should factor in retirement long before it arrives. Proverbs 6:6-8 says, “Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise. It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest.” “Even ants know there will be no food in winter unless it’s stored during the summer.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> Burkett, *The Complete Guide to Managing Your Money*, 17.

<sup>87</sup> Alcorn, *Money Possessions and Eternity*, 303.

<sup>88</sup> Dan Benson, *Twelve Stupid Mistakes People Make with Their Money* (Nashville: W Publishing, 2002), 53.

<sup>89</sup> Tripp, *Redeeming Money*, 14.

<sup>90</sup> Alcorn, *Money Possessions and Eternity*, 303.

Spouses can learn lessons of diligence, industry, and wisdom from ants to ensure that they are well prepared for retirement.

**Program the heart with eternity.** Husbands and wives may handle money best when God and his eternal plan for their lives inform how they use money. “God wants to direct how we make, spend, save, invest and share the money He supplies.”<sup>91</sup> Mark 8:36 reads, “What good is it for a man to gain the world, yet forfeit his soul?” “When we look at money only as money, and not in light of its impact on eternity, we walk away with a cloudy and shortsighted vision.”<sup>92</sup> “Once we allow money to have lordship over our lives, it becomes Money with a capital M, a god that jealously dethrones all else.”<sup>93</sup>

“What you do with your resources in this life is your autobiography.”<sup>94</sup> “Every misuse of money begins with elevating human wisdom over the wisdom of God.”<sup>95</sup> Married couples can overcome their financial woes by programing their hearts with eternity by submitting to the lordship of Christ. “Human hearts can be redeemed by Christ, and in the hand of the redeemed, money can serve redemptive purposes.”<sup>96</sup> Matthew 13:44 says, “The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought the field.”

When the hearts of married couples have been transformed by God or programed with eternity, they are able to put money in its rightful place and let go of that which once held their hearts captives. Money will be dethroned from ruling the heart and

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<sup>91</sup> Burkett, *The Complete Guide to Managing Your Money*, 10.

<sup>92</sup> Alcorn, *Money Possessions and Eternity*, 13.

<sup>93</sup> Alcorn, *Money Possessions and Eternity*, 19.

<sup>94</sup> Alcorn, *Money Possessions and Eternity*, 19.

<sup>95</sup> Tripp, *Redeeming Money*, 46.

<sup>96</sup> Alcorn, *Money Possessions and Eternity*, 18.

financial matters become secondary as God takes his rightful place. This was the case with Jacob who was a swindler, whose life was dominated by greed and embezzlement. However, after God transformed him, he was changed from a taker to a giver; from one who exploited his brother's weakness in gaining his birthright and stole his blessing to one who compelled his brother to receive from him a huge gift (Gen 25:29-34; 27:1-46; 33:1-11). God is willing and able to transform the lives of married couples not only in the areas of communication, conflict resolution, and financial management, but also in the area of sexuality.

### **Sexual Intimacy**

“Few areas of the human struggle reveal more powerfully the sad sinfulness of sin than the sex evils that are done to people and through people hundreds of thousands of times every day.”<sup>97</sup> As it relates to sex, the masses of the world seem to have gone morally bankrupt and culturally insane as functional delusion, self-deception, and self-destruction have become the norm.<sup>98</sup> Sex-related challenges have become so ubiquitous that everyone seems to be affected either directly or indirectly. “Either you have sex problems yourself, or you are near someone who does. You’ve bought into the insanity or someone near to you is mad.”<sup>99</sup> One of the reasons why sex is misused and abused may be that individuals are not aware or guided by the true purpose of sex.

### **The Purpose of Sex**

Sex is one of God's good gifts, but it is also a fallen gift in need of God's

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<sup>97</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Sex in a Broken World: How Christ Redeems What Sin Distorts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 11.

<sup>98</sup> Tripp, *Sex in a Broken World*, 32.

<sup>99</sup> Tripp, *Sex in a Broken World*, 38.

redemption.<sup>100</sup> The main functions of sex implicitly expressed in the Bible and also seen in human relationships and natural revelation are consummation, procreation, love, pleasure, and God's glory. God's purpose for sex might be best realized when these functions are held together. When they are individualized or overemphasized then distortions usually happen.<sup>101</sup>

**Consummation.** Biblical consummation is akin to intimate knowledge and communication of spouses—it expresses marriage at its best with deep intimacy, transparency, and trust.<sup>102</sup> Marital consummation is a powerful, total body experience that transforms the relationship of two individuals in a unique, enduring way.<sup>103</sup> “This is not the mere meeting of two bodies or the simple expression of emotional love. This is the meeting of two human beings in their totality in such a way that their relationship is now different, set apart, made distinct. After the act they are never the same again toward each other.”<sup>104</sup>

When God presented consummation and procreation to the first pair, these gifts were given in context of marriage (Gen 1:28). Even in today's sex crazy world, consummation is usually used relatively exclusively in the context of marriage,<sup>105</sup> but the same cannot be said for procreation.

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<sup>100</sup> Dennis P. Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex: Christian Ethics and the Moral Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 95.

<sup>101</sup> Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex*, 93.

<sup>102</sup> Carolyn S. Self and William L. Self, *Survival Kit for Marriage* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing, 1998), 40-41.

<sup>103</sup> Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex*, 95.

<sup>104</sup> Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex*, 95.

<sup>105</sup> Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex*, 95.

**Procreation.** One of the sad realities of human relationship is that most times it does not follow the divine order. Shamefully, God’s intentions and directives pertaining to procreation have been trivialized, disobeyed, and aborted. The God-ordained union between procreation and sex has been so divorced that sex in many environments is more associated with advertisement, entertainment, pornography, and prostitution rather than procreation. “God’s design is that humans enter the world through the most intimate loving relationship on earth—the one- flesh covenant relationship of marriage.”<sup>106</sup> “Not only is God’s intention that Children are born through the sexual intimacy of a covenant relationship, but that sex itself always remain an inherently procreative act. Until modern times the link between sex and procreation was virtually unchallenged.”<sup>107</sup>

The procreational dimension of sex affords married couples the solemn privilege to partner with God in producing children.<sup>108</sup> Undoubtedly, covenantal love provides the best atmosphere for human life to begin.

**Love.** “Real love can melt an iceberg.”<sup>109</sup> Thirst may be quenched or satisfied by water, but nothing can quench love. Love is unstoppable and unquenchable; it burns like fire and not even death can kill it. Love finds its origin in God, as such, humans are only able to truly love when connected to God (Song 8:6-8; Phil 2:8; 1 John 4:7-12). “Intimacy in the deepest, most rewarding relationship is not only a horizontal relationship, but also must have a vertical dimension. The spiritual depth of each person nurtures the relationship.”<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex*, 102.

<sup>107</sup> Hollinger, *The Meaning of Sex*, 102.

<sup>108</sup> Köstenberger and Jones, *God, Marriage, and Family*, 81.

<sup>109</sup> James Dobson, *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew about Women* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1975), 117.

<sup>110</sup> Self and Self, *Survival Kit for Marriage*, 58.



As husbands and wives grow in love with God, they are able to grow in love with each other. In this love experience, the horizontal is informed by the vertical; godly traits of love can be shared and reciprocated between spouses. These attributes include patience, kindness, humility, politeness, unselfishness, forgiveness, truth, protection, trust, hope, and perseverance (1 Cor 13: 4-7). “Nurturing one’s partner can be an exciting experience in participating in the creative process of giving, as well as receiving, love.”<sup>111</sup> Couples sharing love with each other is what God-ordained intercourse is intended to be and provides the best environment for sexual pleasure to be experienced by spouses.

**Pleasure.** Marital sexuality is beyond amazing and transcends full understanding (Prov 30:19). Sex is a sublime gift from God to married couples (Gen 2:18-25). “God Himself invented sex for our delight. It was His gift to us—intended for pleasure.”<sup>112</sup> “God’s intention that we enjoy sex is evident in reading the descriptive passion, delight, and celebration expressed in that great book of the Bible, Song of Solomon.”<sup>113</sup> “The sexual part of us is a simple yet complex aspect of our being. It is predictable yet changeable, diverse, unknowable, mysterious, and forever beyond full understanding.”<sup>114</sup> God created the nervous systems with the capacity to experience pleasure from the act of sex. Sexual pleasure in marriage is a God-ordained holy and honorable act of intimacy. Yet this God-ordained good gift has been distorted because of the brokenness and sinfulness

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<sup>111</sup> Self and Self, *Survival Kit for Marriage*, 59.

<sup>112</sup> Ed Wheat and Gaye Wheat, *Intended for Pleasure: Sex Technique and Sexual Fulfillment in Christian Marriage* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1981), 16.

<sup>113</sup> Archibald Hart, Catherine Hart Webster, and Debra Taylor, *Secrets of Eve: Understanding the Mystery of Female Sexuality* (Nashville: Word, 1998), 37.

<sup>114</sup> Clifford Penner and Joyce Penner, *The Gift of Sex: A Guide to Sexual Fulfillment* (Waco, TX: Word, 1981), 25.

of humanity.<sup>115</sup> God designed sex to be pleasurable for married couples to enjoy without guilt.<sup>116</sup> Yet, the greatest pleasure is to be found in God, and not sex. “Only when the greatest pleasure of your life is the knowledge that God is pleased by the way you are living can you handle pleasure properly.”<sup>117</sup>

“If a couple gets along great in the bedroom, it is more likely that they will get along well in the rest of the house. However, good sex is no guarantee of a good marriage.”<sup>118</sup> Marriage is a God-ordained instrument for living a sexually pure life in an impure and abominable world (Heb 13:4).

**For the glory of God.** “The best sex and the deepest human intimacy are only possible when, first, couple is living in the context for marriage, and second, that the couple is living in the light of God’s purpose for marriage.”<sup>119</sup> “The ultimate thing to see in the Bible about marriage is that it exists for God’s glory. Most foundationally, marriage is the doing of God. Most ultimately, marriage is the display of God. It is designed by God to display his glory in a way that no other event or institution does.”<sup>120</sup> Married couples can display God’s glory by modeling positive biblical sexuality and living by godly principles of sex (John 15:8; Matt 5:14-16; 1 Cor 7:2).

## The Principles of Sex

Several principles, if rightly utilized, can be a blessing to married couples in

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<sup>115</sup> Pat Robinson, *Answers to Two Hundred of Life’s Most Probing Questions* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984), 173.

<sup>116</sup> Tripp, *Sex in a Broken World*, 73.

<sup>117</sup> Tripp, *Sex in a Broken World*, 76.

<sup>118</sup> Len D. McMillan, *Why Can’t My Mate Be More Like Me* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 1986), 95.

<sup>119</sup> C. J. Mahaney and Carolyn Mahaney, *Sex, Romance, and Glory of God: What Every Christian Husband Needs to Know* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 20.

<sup>120</sup> Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 24.

the area of sexual intimacy and fidelity. These principles include, but are not limited to, knowledge, priority, unselfishness, forgiveness, fulfillment, and fidelity.

**Knowledge.** It is somewhat ironic that in an age of information explosion that marriages are being destroyed because of lack of knowledge (Hos 4:6). Much of the information readily available in the area of sex education is far removed from the guiding principles of God’s Word. In fact, many Christians enter marriage with warped views in the area of sexuality. Sadly, “our culture is saturated with sex distorted into lust, and desire has been twisted and deformed, until it appears as a beast running loose in the streets destroying God-given boundaries.”<sup>121</sup>

**Priority.** No activity should ever interrupt the regular sexual relations of married couples except prayer when it has been agreed upon by both husband and wife for a limited period (1 Cor 7:3-5). The priority of sex in marriage is not a human invention but is God’s viewpoint that is presented vigorously in the Bible.<sup>122</sup> If sex is to be given its rightful place in marriage, then it should include planned frequency, scheduling, and limited flexibility. Sexual stewardship should not be trivialized or relegated to the bottom of the list for married couples, but husbands and wives should grow in unselfish service to each other in this important area.

**Unselfishness.** Selfishness is one of the characteristics of fallen humans, husbands and wives (Phil 2:1-4). Unselfish serving and giving should characterize the sexual experience of married couples. “Ironically, negative feelings are easily vented through the very act that God designed to bring two people together as one flesh.”<sup>123</sup> Sex

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<sup>121</sup> Wheat and Wheat, *Intended for Pleasure*, 23.

<sup>122</sup> Wheat and Wheat, *Intended for Pleasure*, 23.

<sup>123</sup> Wheat and Perkins, *Love Life*, 69.

should not be used to “frustrate, disappoint, reject, or pay back one’s mate.”<sup>124</sup> Sexual sins may be among the hardest for many spouses to forgive.

**Forgiveness.** Forgiveness is a necessity in marriage. Without forgiveness, intimacy withers and marriages die. “Forgiveness is love’s toughest work, and love’s biggest risk.”<sup>125</sup> “A Christ-centered marriage consists of two partners who are willing to suspect themselves, inspect themselves, and humble themselves to confess their marital sins—sins of commission and omission—to God and each other.”<sup>126</sup> “When we forgive our spouse, we decide, we declare, and we promise to not hold our spouse’s sins against him. . . . Unless and until each spouse grasps God’s matchless forgiveness they will find it difficult to forgive each other in the face of serious or repeated offenses. . . . No one has ever sinned against you as you have sinned against God.”<sup>127</sup> “When you forgive someone for hurting you, you perform spiritual surgery inside your soul.”<sup>128</sup> “Forgiveness is the means of rebuilding a relationship which has been broken or strained.”<sup>129</sup>

**Fulfillment.** It is important to “make every effort to provide your mate with a good sexual release as a habitual part of your life together.”<sup>130</sup> Sexual fulfillment can be critical to the quality and longevity of marriages. “A major factor in many marital breakups is a failure to work out a mutually satisfying sexual relationship.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Wheat and Perkins, *Love Life*, 69.

<sup>125</sup> Lewis B. Smedes. *Forgive and Forget: Healing the Hurts We Do Not Deserve* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), xii.

<sup>126</sup> Robert D. Jones, “Marriage and Family Counseling Manual” (unpublished, 2019), 5.

<sup>127</sup> Jones, “Marriage and Counseling Manual,” 5.

<sup>128</sup> Smedes, *Forgive and Forget*, 27.

<sup>129</sup> Self and Self, *Survival Kit for Marriage*, 59.

<sup>130</sup> Wheat and Perkins, *Love Life*, 73.

<sup>131</sup> Archibald Hart, *The Sexual Man* (Dallas: Word, 1994), xiii.

Preparation is important for satisfaction. “May her breast satisfy you always” (Prov 5:19). This text exudes images of stimulating and satisfying touch. “A mutually fulfilling sex life can enrich the entire marriage experience.”<sup>132</sup> “Touch has the greatest potential for eliciting sexual stimulation when the person doing the touching is relaxed and enjoying the other person’s body.”<sup>133</sup> “God is the creator of sex. He set human drives in motion, not to torture men and women, but to bring them enjoyment and fulfilment.”<sup>134</sup>

**Fidelity.** Fidelity is critical to the survival of marriage. “Since the fourth century, the church has generally recognized Augustine’s triad of primary purpose for marriage: procreation, fidelity, and unity.”<sup>135</sup> The love of Christ compels us to faithful and unselfish living (2 Cor 5:14-15). Fidelity may be best protected and maintained when spouses love each other with the same excitement that is usually exhibited by newly married couples.<sup>136</sup>

Few things have the potential to destroy marriages like infidelity. “Sexual sins are the termites in the walls and foundations of today’s marriages.”<sup>137</sup> A great sex life is usually not only the result of a passionate marriage but also an important factor in creating it.<sup>138</sup> Exclusiveness is a necessary instrument of marital fidelity. “It’s easy to

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<sup>132</sup> Wheat and Perkins, *Love Life*, 67.

<sup>133</sup> Penner and Penner, *The Gift of Sex*, 160.

<sup>134</sup> Tim and Beverly LaHaye, *The Act of Marriage: The Beauty of Sexual Love* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 14.

<sup>135</sup> Matthew D. Haste and Shane W. Parker, *The Pastor’s Life, Practical Wisdom from the Puritans* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2019), 83.

<sup>136</sup> Bill Perkins, *When Good Men Are Tempted* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 176.

<sup>137</sup> Steven Arteburn, Fred Stoker, and Mike Yorker, *Every Man’s Battle: Winning the War on Sexual Temptation One Victory at a Time* (Colorado Springs: Water Brook, 2000), 3.

<sup>138</sup> John Gray, *Mars and Venus in the Bedroom* (London: Vermilion, 1996), 12.

step into the trap of sexual lust. Getting out is another matter. The draws of the trap are strong, its teeth sharp and long.”<sup>139</sup> God offers victory over the power of sin through the cross of Jesus Christ who empowers couples to live pure lives.<sup>140</sup> God intended for husbands and wives to be exclusive in satisfying each other’s sexual desires.<sup>141</sup> “Only when the son of God’s all-satisfying glory is the center of the solar system of our lives will sex find its beautiful, holy, happy orbit.”<sup>142</sup>

“The danger of sex is that because our hearts are naturally disordered vertically and God is not our supreme desire, therefore our sexual desires are disordered horizontally, and we prefer illicit pleasures to godly ones. We even prefer them over God himself.”<sup>143</sup> Consequently, in sexuality courses in some institutions, topics such a sexual technique have sometimes been given more emphasis than the purpose and principles of sex. Though sexual procedures are important for married couples, they may be best offered after the purpose and principles of sex are presented. Among the important sexual techniques, preparation, pace, and creativity may be considered.

### **The Procedures of Sex**

**Preparation.** Generally speaking, wives may require more time and preparation than husbands. This is important for husbands as a part of their loving expression to ensure that their wives are well prepared for intercourse. When husbands are aware of the need for special preparation of their wives, they are able to make preparation for sex not simply as an act but a way of life that causes them to express perpetual care based on the motive of love. “Preparation for satisfactory sexual intercourse at 10 p.m. begins with tender

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<sup>139</sup> Perkins, *When Good Men Are Tempted*, 38.

<sup>140</sup> Arteburn, Stoker, and Yorker, *Every Man’s Battle*, 4.

<sup>141</sup> LaHaye, *The Act of Marriage*, 19.

<sup>142</sup> Piper, *Living in the Light*, 34.

<sup>143</sup> Piper, *Living in the Light*, 33.

words at 7 a.m. and continues through the day as kindness and respect.”<sup>144</sup>

In most cases, it seems that husbands desire sex more often than wives; therefore, it is important for most wives to be prepared to increase their frequency to fulfill their husbands, and husbands to show understanding to their wives who might desire sex less frequently than they do. In other words, couple should seek to make the satisfaction, joy, and happiness of their spouse priority.<sup>145</sup>

For maximum enjoyment, it is important for married couples to ensure their bodies are clean and well prepared. That the most attractive clothing according to the taste of their spouse is utilized and that the room is prepared to assist in making the experience special and memorable.

**Pace.** Human beings were fearfully and wonderfully created by God (Ps 139:14). Each individual is unique and has a personal pace. When married couples learn each other’s pace they are able to pace their intercourse to suit their spouse. Usually, one partner may be faster than the other. In this respect it is important of the faster person to slow down and the slower person to speed up so that they both can travel the intimacy course together. It is important for spouses to coordinate well and maintain a suitable tempo in transporting each other skillfully to the threshold of mutual fulfillment.<sup>146</sup>

**Creativity.** “When one makes love in the same bedroom, from the same position and surrounded by the same four walls, it has become rather routine after so many years. And routine sex is usually bored sex.”<sup>147</sup> Husbands and wives can fight the mundane reality of marital sexuality with creative energy that keeps their sexual

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<sup>144</sup> Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 134.

<sup>145</sup> Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 134.

<sup>146</sup> Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 134.

<sup>147</sup> Dobson, *What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew*, 127.

relationship inspired and renewed.

Husbands and wives should assert more creativity in the bedroom than they do at work or on the playground or in the kitchen as the stakes are higher and more important to the quality and quantity of their sexual experience. Creativity must be expressed in the confines of exclusivity, as the marriage experience has been ordained by God to be expressed between husbands and wives only with one exception.

### **Third Party**

There is one exception to the exclusive privilege of husbands and wives—inviting God to be present in every area of marriage, including the area of sexual intimacy. “This part of the drama has an audience of three: husband, wife, and God, who sees all.”<sup>148</sup> When God is invited to be a permanent part of the marriage relationship, then God not only provides the free gift of salvation but is able to transform the sexual relationship of husbands and wives. Like Jacob after his transformation, married couples who have been transformed by God’s justifying and sanctifying power submit to God so that their spirituality and not their sexuality or family becomes priority (Gen 46:1-7). Jacob was not a paragon of virtue in the area of sexuality; conversely, he succumbed to the popular flaw of his day by having two wives and two concubines. Yet the positive thing that can be said about Jacob is that his failings in the area of sexuality, like the other areas of his life, came before God transformed him. This fact provides hope for married couples by intrinsically expressing that when God transforms hearts and empowers toward progressive satisfaction, marriage enrichment can be experienced in all areas of marriage.

### **Conclusion**

Among major marriage challenges faced by spouses, reported by both married couples and counselors, are communication, conflict resolution, financial management, and

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<sup>148</sup> Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*, 128.



sexuality. These important though secondary issues are usually manifested in marriage are symptoms that reveal the core issue of the sinful heart. Married couples are sinners in need of a Savior and even when spouses have received the free gift of salvation from Christ, the work of progressive sanctification continues for the whole life of the marriage. When married couples submit to God and are justified and sanctified progressively, God continues to transform spouses' hearts; and when their hearts are transformed then communication, conflict resolution, financial management, sexuality, and all other areas of marriage can be redeemed by God for the glory of God and the betterment of couples.

## CHAPTER 4

### PREPARATION IMPLEMENTATION AND CONTENT OVRVIEW

The purpose of this project was to enrich the marriages in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in The Valley, Anguilla. This chapter provides details of the preparation, implementation, and content overview of the project. The three goals of this project were to (1) develop a five-session retreat series to enrich marriages in the SDACVA; (2) assess the current marriage experience among spouses of the SDACVA; and (3) enrich the marriages of the SDACVA. The first goal will be discussed in the preparation section of this chapter, while the second and third goals will be discussed in the implementation section.

#### **Project Preparation**

In a sense, preparation of this project began almost three decades ago when I was formally introduced to family life education. From that time, my desire to impact families positively for God's kingdom has steadily progressed in multiple dimensions. Among the areas I have provided most services are parenting education and counseling, grief counseling, crisis counseling, marriage enrichment, and marriage counseling. This project represents a culmination of much of what I have learned from the Word of God, reading life-changing books, learning from my teachers and peers who have positively affected my life and ministry, learning from life and ministry experiences, and the rich and rewarding relationship I have enjoyed with my dear wife for over two decades.

Formal preparation of the project began on July 1, 2021, when I began to refine the content of chapters 2 and 3 of my research with the aim of summarizing and modifying the chapters into a presentation format to be used for the marriage enrichment seminar. During this same period I took the course “Foundations of Teaching,” which was helpful in enabling me to convert my project into a curriculum for teaching, and was a step closer to transforming the project content into a seminar to enrich married couples.

The first draft of the seminar was completed on September 22, 2021, and sent to a four-member expert panel. Initially, five panelists, comprised of pastors and educators, were chosen, but one panelist was unable to participate because of medical reasons. A rubric that rated the relevance, biblical faithfulness, clarity, practical application and thesis of the seminar was provided for the panelists.<sup>1</sup> The panelists were helpful as they provided objective and corrective appraisal of the seminar that brought to my attention elements I had overlooked. Though the seminar exceeded the basic requirements, the recommendations from the panel were taken into consideration in writing the second draft, especially as it related to including more practical applications. At that point, the first goal, which was to develop a five-session retreat series to enrich the marriages of the SDACVA, was considered complete. Table 1 shows the panelists’ rubric responses. The four panelists rated the five seminars on the eight items in the rubric. The total score for each item added up to 20. The seminar is clearly relevant to the subject of marriage enrichment, as there were 19 exemplary scores and 1 sufficient.

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<sup>1</sup> See appendix 2.

Table 1. Seminar evaluation rubric results

Marriage Enrichment Seminar Evaluation Instrument					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The seminar is clearly relevant to the subject of marriage enrichment.			1	19	
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on marriage enrichment.			4	16	
The material is theologically sound.				20	
The thesis of the seminar is clearly stated.			2	18	
The points and principles of the seminar clearly support the thesis.			4	16	
The seminar contains points of practical application and family life education.		1	11	8	More practical applications needed.
The seminar is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			4	16	
Overall, the seminar is clearly crafted.			4	16	

The development of the survey was another important part of the preparation of the project. This phase began when I took the research methodology class and submitted a survey as a part of my project proposal. The aim at that point was just to submit a pre-designed survey that I would seek permission to utilize in my final research project. However, as I studied and learned from surveys that past students had developed and utilized in their projects, I began to desire to develop a survey specifically for my project. From that point, I slowly developed a survey based on the major subject areas covered in my project.

The development of the project survey was greatly assisted by the course "Applied Emphatical Research." From the knowledge of the professor, assigned textbooks, practical and theoretical assignments, and peer review received in the class, I improved the quality and readiness of the survey instrument. The initial survey I had first intended to use contained almost fifty items, but the final survey document contained twenty-five items. The reduction of the size of the survey not only made its preparation and administration more efficient, but also affected positively the participants who had to complete it twice. The time for recording and analyzing the survey was also reduced

because of scaling down the survey, which assisted in meeting deadlines for completing the project.

### **Project Implementation**

The second goal was to assess the current marriage experience among spouses of the SDACVA. The goal was considered successfully met when ten surveys were completed, returned, and analyzed. Implementation of the project began in September when leaders of the SDACVA were informed of the project and couples were selected who met the requirements. Twenty persons were selected; two persons declined, two responded after the deadline, and sixteen signed up for the seminar. On September 29, 2021, permission was granted by The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Ethics Committee to carry out my survey.

Early in October, the pre-seminar surveys were sent out via Google forms to sixteen individuals. All surveys were returned in less than a week after they were sent. The surveys were assessed and improvements were made to the seminar to address perceived areas of concerns based on the results. Table 2 details the pre-seminar mean from all the participants' responses.

The information collected from the pre-seminar survey was helpful in presenting a picture of the perceived areas of strength and areas of concern among participants. Two major areas of concern, items 4 and 10, dealt with the sinful heart as it relates to marriage problems and the spiritual nature of money problems. Table 3 displays the two questions that yielded the lowest scores in the pre-seminar survey.

Table 2. Pre-seminar survey mean

Survey Items	Pre-seminar Mean (N=16)
1. I am committed to following biblical guidelines in my marriage.	5.8125
2. The Bible teaches that husbands should lovingly lead their wives.	5.875
3. The Bible teaches that wives should respectfully submit to their husbands.	5.9375
4. My sinful heart is a major cause of my marriage problems.	4.5
5. I know how to improve communication in my marriage.	4.9375
6. I express love in my marriage by listening to my spouse with undivided attention.	4.75
7. I know how to be a peace maker in my marriage.	5.3125
8. God can use conflicts to grow my relationship with my spouse.	5.125
9. I know how to improve the use of finance in my marriage.	4.9375
10. Money problems are usually spiritual problems.	3.8125
11. As my relationship with God grows so does my relationship with my spouse.	5.375
12. Spiritual intimacy with God enhances sexual intimacy in marriage.	5.25
13. I believe that viewing pornography is destructive to my marriage.	5.375
14. Fulfilling my spouse is a top priority in my marriage.	5.5
15. I believe that marriage is the most important human relationship.	5.3125
16. Improving myself is a key element in improving my marriage.	5.5625
17. My marriage has what is necessary to last a lifetime.	4.9375
18. Progressive sanctification is one of the primary goals in my marriage.	5.1875
19. The quality of my marriage relationship reflects my spiritual maturity.	5.25
20. Glorifying God is a top priority in marriage.	5.625

Table 3. Major areas of concern in pre-seminar survey

Survey Items	Pre-seminar Mean (N=16)
4. My sinful heart is a major cause of my marriage problems.	4.5
10. Money problems are usually spiritual problems.	3.8125

It was not surprising that items 4 and 10 yielded the lowest results of all the items in the survey. Conversely, it might have validated an important presupposition and recurring theme of this project—the core of what is wrong with marriage is spiritual in nature and correcting it requires heart transformation. Moreover, the sad and serious reality of the sin problem is not only that it is the main problem with humanity but, like Eve when dealing with the serpent, many individuals are not aware that the sin problem is the cause of all other problems, including marital problems (Gen 3:1-24).

The matter of the negative effects of sinful hearts on marriage revealed in the pre-test was taken into consideration to improve and make the seminar more relevant to the married couples in the project and to ensure that the areas of greatest concern were dealt with.

The second goal was to assess the current marriage experience among spouses of the SDACVA. The goal was considered successfully met when ten surveys were completed, returned, and analyzed. This goal was successful met as sixteen individuals, eight couples, completed and returned the pre-seminar surveys which were then evaluated and improvement made to the seminar.

The third goal was to enrich the marriages of the SDACVA. Later in October, the five-part seminar was conducted via Zoom over a two-day period. This format was initially planned as an in-person event, but the Zoom platform was utilized because of uncertainties, limitations, and restrictions caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic.

The Zoom platform, though it had limitations, provided the necessary safety, flexibility, and accessibility necessary for the success of the seminar. Three individuals who were not in the territory during the time of the seminar were able to participate in the meetings. Another individual who had to work during the time of the seminar, after acquiring permission, was also able to participate in the meetings. These four individuals would have likely missed the seminar if it were conducted in person. Among the limitations of doing the seminar virtually were the inability to read non-verbal cues, inability to keep attention by moving around the classroom, lack of awareness of distractions and challenges participants may have experienced, and reduced group cohesiveness.

Despite the challenges of utilizing the virtual platform, many positives were reported from the seminar. There were reports of improved understanding of what the Bible teaches about marriage and a deeper desire to ensure that biblical models were followed. There were also testimonies of individuals who claimed to have gained a better

understanding of the subjects of communication, conflict resolution, and financial management in marriage. One participant requested that the presentation be delivered again to all married couples in the church. Plans are on the way to ensure that the information will be shared with all couples in the church and that invitations be extended to the wider community.

In early November, about a week after the seminar was presented, the post-seminar surveys were sent to the participants via Google forms. Both the pre- and post-surveys were sent via WhatsApp, which proved to be an efficient platform, especially as it relates to regularly reminding participants to complete and return the surveys. Less than a week after the surveys were sent, they were all returned and evaluated, and the results documented. The raw scores of both the pre-survey and post-survey results were analyzed, the means for both the pre-and post- survey were calculated, and a *t*-test for dependent samples was completed and recorded. Items 4 and 10 were given special attention both in the preparation and delivery of the seminar. Table 4 shows the increase in mean from pre-seminar survey to post-seminar survey.

Table 4. Increased scores in major areas of concern in post-seminar survey

Survey Item	Pre-survey mean	Post-survey mean	Difference
4. My sinful heart is a major cause of my marriage problems.	4.5	5.375	+0.875
10. Money problems are usually spiritual problems.	3.8125	4.9375	+1.250

In the seminar, the sinful heart of married couples was emphasized in the context of the transformation that is possible through the power of the gospel. The results of teaching about the importance of the heart change are shown in table 4 as the greatest positive increase of the seminar, (+1.250 and + 0.875). The items that received the lowest



scores in the pre-test had the greatest increase in the post-test, which is an indication that the seminar made a positive impact on the participants.

What was true for items 4 and 10 were also true for 90 percent of the post-seminar survey, which showed a positive increase.

Recording and measuring the mean of the items in the survey shows clearly that 18 out of 20 survey items, or 90 percent, increased after the seminar was presented as indicated by the post-survey. It was also revealed that 5 percent of the responses, 1 out of 20, showed no change and 5 percent, 1 out of 20, decreased after the seminar was presented. See figure 1 and table 5 for the pre- and post-seminar changes.

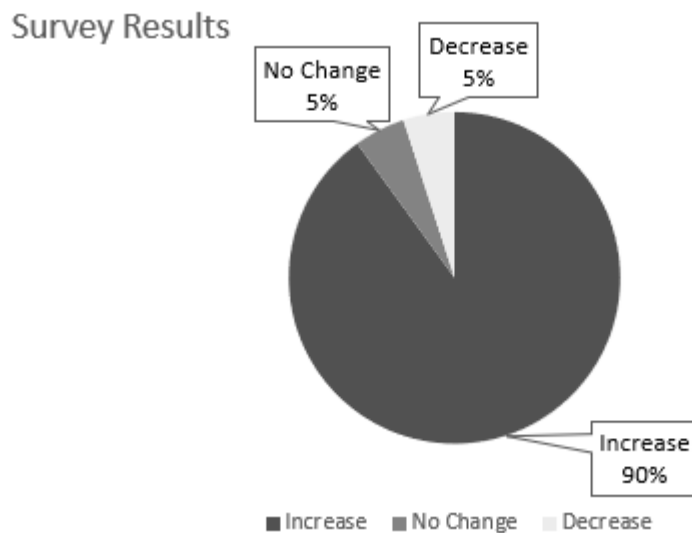


Figure 1. Post-seminar difference

Table 5. Pre-seminar and post seminar difference

Survey Items	Pre-seminar Mean (N=16)	Post-seminar Mean (N=16)	Difference
1. I am committed to following biblical guidelines in my marriage.	5.8125	5.875	+0.0625
2. The Bible teaches that husbands should lovingly lead their wives.	5.875	5.875	0
3. The Bible teaches that wives should respectfully submit to their husbands.	5.9375	5.875	-0.0625
4. My sinful heart is a major cause of my marriage problems.	4.5	5.375	+0.875
5. I know how to improve communication in my marriage.	4.9375	5.5	+0.5625
6. I express love in my marriage by listening to my spouse with undivided attention.	4.75	5.5625	+0.8125
7. I know how to be a peace maker in my marriage.	5.3125	5.375	+0.0625
8. God can use conflicts to grow my relationship with my spouse.	5.125	5.375	+0.25
9. I know how to improve the use of finance in my marriage.	4.9375	5.625	+0.6875
10. Money problems are usually spiritual problems.	3.8125	4.9375	+1.250
11. As my relationship with God grows so does my relationship with my spouse.	5.375	5.9375	+0.5625
12. Spiritual intimacy with God enhances sexual intimacy in marriage.	5.25	5.625	+0.375
13. I believe that viewing pornography is destructive to my marriage.	5.375	5.9375	+0.5625
14. Fulfilling my spouse is a top priority in my marriage.	5.5	5.8125	+0.3125
15. I believe that marriage is the most important human relationship.	5.3125	5.625	+0.3125
16. Improving myself is a key element in improving my marriage.	5.5625	5.875	+0.3125
17. My marriage has what is necessary to last a lifetime.	4.9375	5.5	+0.5625
18. Progressive sanctification is one of the primary goals in my marriage.	5.1875	5.5	+0.3125
19. The quality of my marriage relationship reflects my spiritual maturity.	5.25	5.5625	+0.3125
20. Glorifying God is a top priority in marriage.	5.625	5.875	+0.25

The 90 percent increase shows clearly that the marriage seminar had a positive impact on the participants. The seminar was an instrument that caused married couples not only to listen, understand, and learn, but to change and improve their thinking about

marriage. This transformation of thinking could be the genesis of marriage enrichment for the married couples who participated in the project.

The 10 percent of the survey that did not increase, items 2 and 3, were given individualized attention and evaluation to ascertain possible reasons. Table 6 displays the 2 items that did not show an increase. Item 2 remained the same and item 3 showed a slight decrease.

Table 6. Items from post-seminar survey that remained the same or decreased

Survey Items	Pre-seminar Mean (N=16)	Post-seminar Mean (N=16)	Difference
2. The Bible teaches that husbands should lovingly lead their wives.	5.875	5.875	0
3. The Bible teaches that wives should respectfully submit to their husbands.	5.9375	5.875	-0.0625

Item 2, “The Bible teaches that husbands should lovingly lead their wives,” showed no change after the seminar was taught. It may be that because the pre-survey score was relatively high (5.875), emphasis was not placed on this area in the seminar, so the thinking of the couples remained the same after the seminar as it was before

It may also be true that not enough emphasis was placed on item 3 as that score was even higher (5.9375) than item 2. That the post-test for item 3, “The Bible teaches that wives should respectfully submit to their husbands,” showed a decrease may be that one individual was possibly vacillating between a complementarian and an egalitarian worldview. The actual decline in item 3 was relatively minimal, from 5.9375 to 5.875, which may suggest that if this area were emphasized more in the seminar, it may not have declined but may have remained the same or increased. It is possibly that if the same emphasis given to items 4 and 10, were given to items 2 and 3, that 100 percent of the areas in the survey would have shown increase.

The third goal, which was to enrich the marriages of the SDACVA, was considered successfully met when a *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores. See table 7 for a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-seminar scores.

Table 7. Results for *t*-test for dependent samples

	Pre-seminar survey	Post-seminar survey
Mean	5.1875	5.618421
Variance	0.240017361	0.066361
Observations	20	20
Person Correlation	0.847731049	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Df	15	
T Stat	-6.17921473	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000003912	
T Critical one-tail	1.734063607	
T Critical two-tail	0.00000782	
P(T<=t) two tail	2.10092204	

### **Project Content Overview**

The seminar consisted of five sections, the first four areas—biblical foundation of marriage, communication and conflict resolution in marriage, financial management in marriage and sexual intimacy in marriage—were presented in chapters 2 and 3 of this project. The fifth area, sanctification in marriage, though not dealt with as a separate section in this research, was a recurring theme that ran through the project as the sinfulness of the human heart was exposed and the power of the gospel to provide transformation was presented. Therefore, in that context, the content of the seminar was derived from chapters 2 and 3 of this project.

### **Biblical Foundation**

The biblical foundation, which was established in chapter 2 of this project, was built on four pivotal texts: Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:3-12; 1 Corinthians 7:1-5, and Ephesians 5:21-33. These four texts were summarized and unpacked in the first part of

the seminar: God designed the institution of marriage to be the primary human relationship based on covenantal principles to provide intimacy between husbands and wives when functioning according to their God ordained roles

From the Genesis passage, five principles established the primacy of marriage: partnership, permanence, procreation, propriety, and provision. Seminar participants learned that God, in creating the first pair, Adam and Eve, established the first human partnership that was intended to be an institution of permanence, procreation and propriety based on the provision of God. God designed the marriage between Adam and Eve as the first human partnership. Eve was created to be Adam's suitable helper (Gen 2:20). God's original intent for the permanence of marriage can be seen in the Genesis narrative.<sup>2</sup>

"The commissioning of man and woman to reign over the land (1:28) included procreation, and only together could Adam and Eve achieve their destiny."<sup>3</sup> Populating the earth was one of the primary reasons God brought Adam and Eve together in marriage. Marriage is the God-ordained institution for procreation.<sup>4</sup> The nakedness of the first pair was the pinnacle of the creation narrative.<sup>5</sup> Marriage is a place of God-ordained nakedness. Nakedness in marriage is both proper and without shame (Gen 2:25). Practical application questions are, is your relationship with your spouse your most important human relationship? And what biblical principles can best enrich the present state of your marriage?

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<sup>2</sup> John Stott, *Decisive Issues Facing Christianity Today* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1990), 289.

<sup>3</sup> Kenneth Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, The New American Commentary, vol. 1A (Nashville: B & H, 1996), 213.

<sup>4</sup> Andreas J. Köstenberger and David W. Jones, *God, Marriage and Family* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 71.

<sup>5</sup> Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis 1-17*, New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 180.

From the Matthew passage, the covenantal nature of marriage was established by giving attention to the teaching of Jesus who went back to the creation narrative to show the permanent nature of God's original intention for marriage. "Have you not read,' he replied, 'that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh?'" (Matt 19: 4,5). "Jesus is upholding the divine covenant in marriage and opposing the freedom to divorce in the Jewish world while recognizing the one exception to the rule."<sup>6</sup> One of Jesus' major points in this passage is that "God created men and women to be together and not to be divorced."<sup>7</sup>

From the 1 Corinthians passage the importance of sexual intimacy in marriage was established. Husbands and wives are joint owners of each other's bodies and as such should gladly give to each other what is already there to ensure sexual fulfillment. "Here the implication is that in the mutuality of sexual relations the body of the one is the 'free' possession of the other."<sup>8</sup> That husbands and wives bodies belong to each other should provide motivation for making any demands on each other but instead cause spouses to treat each other as they would treat themselves or better (Eph 5:29; 1 Cor 13:4-7). A practical application question is, what specific actions will you take to ensure that your marriage is greater enriched in the area of sexual intimacy?

From the Ephesians passage it was established that the Bible teaches that husbands and wives should function according to their God ordained roles. Husbands are to lovingly lead their wives and wives are to respectfully submit to their husbands. Submission for wives and loving leadership of husbands should be performed in the

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<sup>6</sup> Grant Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 706.

<sup>7</sup> Osborne, *Matthew*, 704.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary of the New Testament, rev. ed (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 280.

context of Christ and his relationship with his church. Just as Christ lovingly leads his church and his church ought to willingly submit to him for its own good, so should the relationship be between husbands and wives. Husbands and wives are able to perform their roles best when their relationship with Christ is at its best. A practical application question is, can you explain how God can use biblical roles to enrich your marriage?

### **Communication and Conflict Resolution**

Since marriages typically exhibit challenges in the areas of communication and conflict resolution, it is important that these areas be taught and applied to marriages in an intentional, Christ-centered way. The ability to communicate well and resolve conflicts are important to the stability and functionality of marriage. In the seminar, couples learned that when communication has been transformed by Christ, they are motivated to express godly speech, good listening skills, and good understanding.

**Godly speech.** Godly speech that flows from a heart transformed by Christ includes wise words (Prov 16:23), tactful truth (Eph 4:15), tender tone (Prov 15:1), avoids accusation (Gen 3:12,13), shrewd silence (Eccl 3:7), forgiveness (Eph 4:32), precious promises (2 Pet 1:4), and quality questions (Matt 20:32).

**Good listening.** One of the best ways married couples can express love to each other is to listen with undivided attention. “Listening is serious business because it involves more than hearing words. It involves discernment, observing nonverbals, caring, eye contact, watching for underlying motives, asking the right questions, giving appropriate responses and sometimes being silent.<sup>9</sup> The listening experience of married couples can be greatly improved or even transformed when it has a vertical focus of listening to the

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<sup>9</sup> Nancy L. Van Pelt, *How to Talk so Your Mate Will Listen and Listen so Your Mate Will Talk* (Grand Rapids: Revell, 1989), 63.

Holy Spirit speaking through God’s Word. Effective listening is a prerequisite to good understanding (Isa 30:21).

**Good understanding.** Lack of understanding is one of the leading causes of marital distress. Many of the mistakes that husbands and wives make in communication is not because of bad intentions.<sup>10</sup> “It is just that we really don’t understand. We don’t see clearly into one another’s heart.”<sup>11</sup> “There’s no way to have rich, rewarding family relationships without real understanding. Relationships can be superficial. They can be functional. They can be transactional. But they can’t be transformational—and deeply satisfying—unless they’re build on a foundation of genuine understanding.”<sup>12</sup> For husbands and wives to understand each other they need to move beyond words and carefully observe body language, gesture or posture, facial expressions, voice tone, speed of speaking and making eye contact.<sup>13</sup> Proverbs 24:3 says, “By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established.” “If you want to build a solid, divorce-proof home, you must understand each other. And to understand each other, you must share your hearts with each other.”<sup>14</sup>

As good as these communication challenges and issues are, they may be symptomatic and do not get to the root of communication problems in marriage. “Communication problems are heart problems.”<sup>15</sup> Couples with communication problems

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<sup>10</sup> Steven R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families* (New York: Golden Books, 1997), 206.

<sup>11</sup> Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families*, 206.

<sup>12</sup> Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families*, 206.

<sup>13</sup> Gordon MacDonald and Gail MacDonald, *Heart Connections: Growing Intimacy in Your Marriage and Family* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1997), 106-8.

<sup>14</sup> Garry Rosberg and Barbra Rosberg, *Divorce Proof Your Marriage* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 2002), 135.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan D. Holmes, *Counsel for Couples: A Biblical and Practical Guide for Marriage Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2019), 190.



need the transforming power of Christ to change their hearts through the power is his gospel and his Word. Only when the gospel of Christ has done its work in the heart can couples practice godly speech, effective listening, and good understanding. What marriage needs then is not merely better horizontal communication but better vertical communication—better praying, better listening to God’s Word, better understanding, and application of the gospel to the lives of both husbands and wives. It is critical for married couples to communicate well with God because nothing can transform them better than the power of God. When vertical communication is at its best, horizontal communication will be at its best.

**Peace makers.** I made it clear that conflict resolution is not merely about techniques, but it is about making peace with God and becoming peace makers in their marriage and other relationships. From the time of the fall, humans have been at war with God and with each other (Gen3:1-19, 4:1-15 Isa 59:2). For husbands and wives to experience peace in their marriage they must first make peace with God then live as peace makers by the power of the Holy Spirit. Practical application questions are, have you and your spouse made peace with God? And how does making peace with God affect your marriage?

### **Financial Management**

Since marriage typically exhibits challenges in the area of financial management, it is an important area to be taught and applied to marriages in an intentional way. Tenets of fiscal administration are crucial, but they do not always get to the heart of money challenges. To get to the heart of money issues in marriage requires the transformation of the heart. Financial education and practical principles like budgeting are important but they cannot defend the heart from the perils of sin.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Paul David Tripp, *Redeeming Money: How God Reveals and Reorients Our Hearts* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 82.

Accepting the sinful nature of the heart and how it relates to money is the starting place for winning the money battle. Psalm 51:5 says, “Surely, I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” Romans 3:23 says, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Matthew 15:19 reads, “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.” When the Holy Spirit convicts of sinfulness and transforms hearts by God’s redeeming grace (John 16:8; Eph 2:8-9), one is able to allow both God and money to take their rightful places in hearts and lives (Matt 6:24).

When the hearts of married couples have been transformed by the gospel and money has been given its rightful place, then biblical principles pertaining to financial management can be best utilized. These principles include accepting God’s ownership (Ps 24), practicing liberality (Prov 11:25), cultivating a grateful heart (Luke 14:28), being directed by a budget (Luke 14:28), living within one’s means, using credit wisely (Prov 22:7), cultivating multiple streams of income (Job 1:2-4), preparing for retirement (Prov 6:6-8) using money and loving people (1 Tim 6:10), and money problems are heart problems therefore, programing one’s heart with eternity (Mark 8:36). Practical application questions are, what is your personal philosophy and your spouse’s personal philosophy about money? And what is the relationship with money challenges and the sinful heart?

### **Sexual Intimacy**

Since marriage typically exhibit challenges in the area of sexual intimacy, it is an important area to be taught and applied to marriages in an intentional way. In the area of sexual intimacy couples were taught that spiritual intimacy with God enriches sexual intimacy in marriage, and the destructive nature of pornography. In addition, the purpose, principles, and procedures of sex were summarized and highlighted.

The sexual intimacy of married couples may be best experienced in the context of being informed by its true purpose. Five principles are significant to the true purpose of sexual intimacy: consummation, procreation, love, pleasure, and God’s glory. Six

principles are vital to sexual intimacy of married couples: knowledge, priority, unselfishness, forgiveness, fulfillment, and fidelity. Three procedures are essential to sexual intimacy of married couples: preparation, pace, and inviting the presence of God. Practical application questions are, what area of sexual intimacy can you and your spouse improve in order to give God greater glory in your marriage experience? And can you explain the statement—as my relationship with Christ grows so does my relationship with my spouse.

### **Sanctification**

Since marriage typically exhibits challenges in the area of spirituality, couples should prioritize sanctification so that they may anchor their marriages on a spiritual foundation and grow to become more like Christ. In the area of progressive sanctification couples were challenged to elevate progressive sanctification and glorifying God as priorities in their marriages. Emphasis was placed on the heart as couples were encouraged to allow the Holy Spirit to work through God’s Word in directing their lives in godly living in their marriages.

Sanctification can be defined as “That act of God whereby the holy disposition of the soul is strengthened, holy exercises are increased, and thus a new course of life engendered and promoted. The old structure of sin is gradually torn down and a new structure of God is reared in its stead.”<sup>17</sup>

**Biblical framework of sanctification.** Sanctification is a divine work of God (1 Thess 5:23; Heb 13:20-21), sanctification involves the mortification of flesh (Rom 6:6; Gal 5:24), sanctification is the quickening of the new man (Rom 6:4-5; Col 2:12; 3:1-2), sanctification involves the whole person (1 Thess 5:23; 2 Cor 5:17; Rom 6:12; Col 3:1-

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<sup>17</sup> Louis Berkof, *Systematic Theology*, 4th ed. (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1988), 533.

2), sanctification is the work of God in partnership with believers (Rom 12:9, 16-17; 1 Cor 6:9-10; Gal 5:16-23).<sup>18</sup>

**How sanctification works in marriage.** Marriage is the union of two sinners who say I do.<sup>19</sup> In addition to the sinful nature of all husbands and wives, marriage is a place where the nakedness and flaws of relationship are most intimately revealed (Gen 2:25). Sanctification is a personal matter that each spouse must experience with God (Ezek 14:14; John 15:4-5). Sanctification is progressive (Col 1:10; 2 Cor 10:5).

**Principles that foster sanctification in Marriage.** Acknowledgement of sin (1 John 1:9). Receiving, living, and sharing God's grace: grace is a gift from God (Ps 84:11). Grace is God's instrument of justification (Rom 3:24; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:7). Grace comes by Jesus Christ (Rom 5:15). Grace is stronger than sin (Rom 5:20). Grace motivates righteous living (Rom 6:15). Grace is sufficient (2 Cor 12:9). Sanctification in a sense is growing in grace (2 Pet 3:18). Put God first. When God is the husband and wife's priority, then God is able to provide all things including sanctification (Matt 6:33). The Bible is indispensable for married couples to experience sanctification (John 17:17).

The principle of putting off and putting on can be used by married couples in their progressive sanctification. Couples should seek to develop the opposite virtue to the sin that may be dominating their lives. For example, if one has a disposition toward lustful thoughts, then the couple needs to cultivate self-control in their thought life. If couples have a tendency to become anxious and worried, then the virtue of peace should be developed. If individuals are easily angered, then the virtue of patience should be nurtured. With the Spirit's help, couples should search out their unique inclinations toward sin and

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<sup>18</sup> Berkof, *Systematic Theology*, 533-34.

<sup>19</sup> Dave Harvey, *When Sinners Say I Do: Discovering the Power of the Gospel for Marriage* (Wapwallopen, PA: Shepherd Press, 2007), 15.

ask God to help them develop the opposite virtues in their place.<sup>20</sup> Marriage can be an instrument of sanctification as God sometimes uses the natural to bring about supernatural results (Gen 50:20). Some practical application questions are, do you understand the doctrine of sanctification? And can you explain the process of progressive sanctification and state how it at work is in your personal life and your marriage?

In addition to the two-day educational experience in which the content was taught, couples were equipped through electronic handouts posted before and after the seminar to increase learning through preparation and reinforcement of the material covered. Personal prayer sessions were also conducted with each couple, asking God to grow spouses in the areas covered in the seminar.

### **Conclusion**

The preparation of the project was a rewarding, focused, and joyful event for me. The important stakeholders, including my helpful, understanding, and wise supervisor, my resourceful expert panel, committed participants, and efficient staff of the PDS office at SBTS, assisted in the success of the project. The implementation of the project also proceeded relatively smoothly despite limitations and adjustments because of COVID-19. The experience was rewarding to both the presenter and the participants. The project was successful and exceeded its goals.

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<sup>20</sup> Brian G. Hedges, *Licensed the Kill: A Field Manual for Mortifying Sin* (Adelphi, MD: Cruciform Press, 2011), 90.

## CHAPTER 5

### EVALUATION OF THE PROJECT

This chapter provides evaluation of the purpose and goals which gave direction and scope to the project. Additionally, it assesses the strengths and weaknesses of the project and presents correctives and my personal and theological reflections.

#### **Evaluation of the Purpose**

The purpose of this project was to enrich the marriages in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in The Valley, Anguilla. This purpose was forged and developed from over two decades of family life education and marriage counseling done in my pastoral ministry, family life and personal experience.

The accomplishment of the purpose was assisted by the relevance of the areas chosen. Pertinent areas of marriage enrichment such as communication and conflict resolution, financial management, sexual intimacy, and sanctification were taught in the context of a biblical worldview that emphasized transformation of the heart through the power of the gospel. The results from chapter 4 show clearly that this focus on the heart was critical for the success of the project in fulfilling the purpose of enriching married couples in the SDACVA in a life-changing way. “The whole heart must be yielded to God, or the change can never be wrought in us by which we are to be restored to His likeness.”<sup>1</sup>

The realization of the purpose was also aided by its close alignment with the Bible. God created marriage and placed guidelines for its intent and function in his Word (Gen 2:18-25; Matt 19:3-12; 1 Cor 7:1-5; Eph 5:21-33). Undoubtedly, marriage enrichment

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<sup>1</sup> Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1977), 27.

built on God's Word is constructed on firm foundation. Transformation and success are possible in marriage enrichment when the Bible is presented by human instruments aided by the Holy Spirit. "God wants others to know that human wisdom administering human ideas does not change lives. Rather, it is the truth, ministered in the power of the Spirit that change lives."<sup>2</sup>

The success of the purpose and the accomplishment of the goals were also affirmed by the participants who confirmed that their marriages were enriched by the project.

### **Evaluation of the Goals**

Three goals provided guidance to the development, evaluation, and execution of this project. The first goal was to develop a five-session retreat series to enrich the marriages of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in The Valley, Anguilla. This goal was regarded as complete when 90 percent of the evaluation rubric areas met or surpassed the sufficient level.<sup>3</sup> The five-session retreat series was approved by a four-member expert panel who provided ratings that indicated that above 90 percent of the areas met or surpassed the sufficient level. Members of the panel pointed out that the seminar needed more practical application. This recommendation was adhered to and implemented to improve the final draft of the seminar.

The second goal was to assess the current marriage experience among spouses of the SDACVA. This goal was considered successfully met when ten surveys were completed, returned, and analyzed. This goal was successful met, as sixteen individuals

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<sup>2</sup> Jay E. Adams, *Committed to Craftmanship in Biblical Counseling* (Cardova, TN: Institute for Nouthetic Studies, 2019), 14

<sup>3</sup> See appendix 2.

(eight couples) completed and returned the pre-seminar surveys which were then evaluated and improvements were made to the seminar.<sup>4</sup>

The third goal was to enrich the marriages of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in The Valley, Anguilla through a five-session marriage enrichment seminar. This goal was successful met partly because the project contained relevant areas of marriage enrichment such as communication, conflict resolution, financial management, sexual intimacy, and sanctification from a biblical worldview in the context of the life-enriching power of the gospel. These important areas of marriage enrichment allowed for legitimate concerns and real-life challenges that married couples experience to be addressed. Participants also affirmed the success of the seminar as they all answered “yes” when asked if the seminar enriched their marriages. A *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores as indicated in table 7.

### **Strengths of the Project**

The first strength of this project was its biblical foundation. The Bible records that God is the creator of marriage. In addition, the Bible provides clear instructions for how husbands and wives should function in the context of marriage. Genesis 2:18-25, Matthew 19:3-12, 1 Corinthians 7:1-5, and Ephesians 5:21-33 were the four pivotal passages used in chapter 2 to provide the foundation for the project. Chapter 3 of the project dealt with the theoretical, practical, and historical foundation as presented in the context of a biblical worldview.

The second strength of this project was that it addressed the matter of heart. Many Christians approach marriage enrichment by dealing only with teaching, tools, and techniques. As important as these instruments are, they often do not get to the root of what affects marriage. Addressing the sinful heart of married couples is indispensable in

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<sup>4</sup> See appendix 3.



creating real and lasting change through the transformational efficacy of the gospel. The pre-seminar survey uncovered that this most important aspect, the heart, was the area of greatest concern. It was both rewarding and satisfying when the post-seminar survey revealed that this area of paramount concern registered the greatest positive change from pre-survey to post survey. This change was not merely a goal accomplished but also a prayer answered, and teaching understood and applied by the participants.

The third strength of this project was that it dealt with relevant areas relating to marriage. The areas of biblical foundation, communication and conflict resolution, financial management, sexual intimacy, and sanctification are considered by many to be vital areas of marriage enrichment. The couples who participated in the project affirmed the relevance of the areas of the seminar and were able to make immediate application of the information shared.

The fourth strength of this project was the efficiency and commitment of the couples who participated. The couples completed and returned both the pre- and post-seminar survey relatively swiftly and were on time for the seminars. In addition, the couples showed strong commitment to learning and participating in the seminars.

The fifth strength of this seminar was the use of technology. Google Forms, WhatsApp, Canva, Zoom, and PowerPoint were utilized in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic to make the seminar possible. There was no need to practice social distancing and the use of technology provided flexibility and efficiency as three persons were able to participate while out of the country and one person was able to access and participate in the seminar while at work. The individual who was able to attend the seminar while at her job participated because of the nature of her work, a care provider, and because she received permission from her supervisor.

The sixth strength of the project was that it had a positive impact on the participants. There was visible growth in the lives of the participants after the seminar was presented to the married couples of the SDACVA. From the commencement of the

seminar, there was an atmosphere of expectancy and eagerness to learn on the part of the participants.

The seventh strength of the project was that it had a positive impact on the presenter. My relationship with God and my spouse have grown and I have become a better servant of God and husband to my wife. As the seminar was presented, I not only talked to the participants but also to myself. This approach allowed me the privilege of being enriched by the information shared in the seminar.

### **Weaknesses of the Project**

The first weakness of the project was the lack of in person connection. Though the use of technology was very helpful in the present ministerial context of the global pandemic, it had limitations. In person meetings afford undisturbed focus that is not easily replicated using Zoom or other online platforms. Though participants were committed and motivated, ensuring that they were not distracted or multitasking on Zoom can be much more challenging than when meeting in person.

The second weakness of the project was that a relatively small number of couples were invited to participate. The initial intention was to invite all married couples of the SDACVA to participate in the project with the aim of having at least thirty couples participating. However, the uncertainty brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic and the need to select individuals who would exercise a high level of commitment to the project and be willing and ready to utilize technology became critical to the project's success. The final result was that only eight couples participated in the project. Though I would have preferred as many couples as possible to have benefited from the project, the smaller number might have afforded greater efficiency and quality.

The third weakness was that some of the items in the pre- and post-seminar survey need improvement. The course "Applied Empirical Research" assisted me greatly in improving the survey but as I assessed the responses after the project was complete, I noticed some areas that could have been improved.

The fourth weakness was that not enough emphasis was given in the marriage enrichment seminar to the importance of the biblical roles of husbands and wives. Possibly because the pre-seminar results were very commendable, I failed to give sufficient emphasis to this important area and the results for items 2 and 3 did not show a positive difference from pre-seminar survey to the post-seminar survey.

The fifth weakness was that there were not any homework assignments given to the participants. Homework assignments would have created another dimension to the seminar that would have added continuity and extended the enrichment beyond the actual event. Jay Adams writes, “The counselee needs help; not only hope. Help, however, must be real help. He needs help to deal with his current problems. . . . One principal means of offering such help is through the judicious use of homework.”<sup>5</sup> Homework also helps to ensure that participants work harder than the presenter in seeking to enrich their marriage, which is a vital posture for personal ownership and growth.

### **Correctives**

If I were to do this project over, I would seek to increase the number of individuals who participated in the seminar and to have at least a part of the seminar done in person. I would also spend more time designing the survey to ensure that the items are of a higher quality. I would also ensure that I complete “Applied Empirical Research” earlier in my project planning so that I would be better prepared to construct my survey and implement the project.

To add continuity and extend the enrichment of marriages in the SDACVA beyond the seminar, homework assignments should be given to participants. For some participants, it might have been the first time that they have made a clear and direct connection with their sinful hearts and the state of their marriages. The novelty of this

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<sup>5</sup> Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counseling Manual: The Practice of Nouthetic Counseling* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973), 294.

concept and its importance to meaningful and sustained transformation and growth somewhat necessitate homework assignments that provide additional teaching on the subject and also reinforce what was learned. The fact that this area was the part of the project of greatest concern also strengthens the case for the importance of homework assignments.

### **Theological Reflections**

Marriage is one of God's good gifts for the strength, stability, and survival of the human family (Jas 1:17; Gen 2:18-25). Many couples are more proactive, strategic, and deliberate about maintaining and repairing their vehicles and houses than they are about enriching the God-given gift of marriage.

The success of the family, church, and society necessitate that couples invest more time and energy in enriching their marriages. Reading books on the subject of marriage, attending marriage seminars, and receiving and giving mentorship are some things that can be done to enrich marriages. Most importantly, married couples need to daily embrace the gospel and grow in their relationship with God—theology must inform practice for true marriage enrichment to be sustained.

God's great love for his church and his willingness to sacrifice himself for his people is the perfect pattern for married couples to follow (John 3:16; Eph 5:21-33; Phil 2:5-8). The more this pattern is followed by husbands and wives the more enriched marriages will be.

### **Personal Reflections**

My parents were married for fifty-six years until the death of my mother. Their marriage was not perfect, but they were both strongly committed to God and each other. My parents' commitment to God and each other left indelible imprints in my heart pertaining to the solemnity and permanence of marriage. This commitment that I witnessed

in the lives of my mother and father informed my personal philosophy of marriage and my desire to help others to be committed to their spouses for a whole lifetime.

God's original intention for marriage was for it to be a life-long covenant between a man and woman and himself (Gen 2:18-25). My heart pains when a marriage fails, especially among those I shepherd. Marriage enrichment that not only deals with behavioral issues but also addresses the sinful heart with the power of gospel is greatly needed to bring lasting transformation in marriage. This project was an attempt to equip couples of the SDACVA so that their marriages would thrive for the whole of their lives.

This project has been an enriching experience for me. I experienced theological growth as it pertains to marriage enrichment and have grown as a Christian and husband. My knowledge has increased and I am better equipped to be a blessing to my wife and family and to those that I am called to shepherd.

This project had a profoundly positive impact on my life, marriage, and ministry. It provided me the opportunity to hear again, in a clear and powerful way, the biblical instructions about marriage. The project also provided the opportunity, which I embraced whole heartedly, to renew my commitment to being a loving servant leader of my marriage, family, and church. I also grew in the major areas covered in the project—communication, conflict resolution, financial management, sexual intimacy, and sanctification—which also deepened my resolution to continue to grow (Prov 4:18). The greater joy came from seeing the enthusiasm and growth of the participants and how they embraced the knowledge gained from the seminar

### **Conclusion**

Marriage enrichment should address not only important areas such as communication, conflict resolution, financial management, and sexual intimacy, but also the heart. When priority is given to addressing the sinful heart with the gospel, then married couples, though sinners, can experience transformation, husbands can lovingly lead their wives, wives can respectfully submit to their husbands, and marriage can be

what God intended it to be—a unified experience that reflects the image of God (Gen 2:18-25; 1:27-28).

## APPENDIX 1

### PRE- AND POST-SEMINAR SURVEY

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine your current understanding and application of the biblical teachings and your personal views on marriage. This research is being conducted by Howard John Simon for purposes of gathering data needed for completing a doctoral project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In this research, you will be asked to: (1) provide biographical information related to you and your marriage; (2) complete a survey in which you will express your feelings in response to numerous items related to marriage. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

#### **Part 1: Personal Information**

Your unique code \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your age?  
Less than 20 \_\_\_ 20-29 \_\_\_ 30-39 \_\_\_ 40-49 \_\_\_ 50-59 \_\_\_ 60+ \_\_\_
2. What is your gender? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How many years have you been married? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Are you a Christian/Member of the SDA Church? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No
5. How many years have you been a Christian/Member of SDA Church? \_\_\_\_\_

## Part 2: Marriage Enrichment Survey

Using the following scale, please circle the number that corresponds to your feelings in response to, or in your understanding of, the following statements.

SD = Strongly Disagree      D = Disagree      DS = Disagree Slightly  
AS = Agree Slightly      A = Agree      SA = Strongly Agree

1. I am committed to following biblical guidelines in my marriage.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
2. The Bible teaches that husbands should lovingly lead their wives.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
3. The Bible teaches that wives should respectfully submit to their husbands.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
4. My sinful heart is a major cause of my marriage problems.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
5. I know how to improve communication in my marriage.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
6. I express love in my marriage by listening to my spouse with undivided attention.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
7. I know how to be a peace maker in my marriage.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
8. God can use conflicts to grow my relationship with my spouse.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
9. I know how to improve the use of finances in my marriage.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
10. Money problems are usually spiritual problems.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
11. As my relationship with God grows so does my relationship with my spouse.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
12. Spiritual intimacy with God enriches sexual intimacy in marriage.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
13. I believe that viewing pornography is destructive to my marriage.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
14. Fulfilling my spouse is a top priority in sexual intimacy in my marriage.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
15. I believe that marriage is the most important human relationship.  
SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA



16. Improving myself is a key element in improving my marriage.  
 SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
17. My marriage has what it necessary to least for my whole lifetime.  
 SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
18. Progressive sanctification is one of the primary goals of my marriage.  
 SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
19. The quality of my marriage relationship reflects my spiritual maturity.  
 SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA
20. Glorifying God is the top priority in my marriage.  
 SD      D      DS      AS      A      SA

APPENDIX 2

SEMINAR EVALUATION RUBRIC

<b>Marriage Enrichment Seminar Evaluation Instrument</b>					
<b>1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary</b>					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The seminar is clearly relevant to the subject of marriage enrichment.			1	19	
The material is faithful to the Bible's teaching on marriage enrichment.			4	16	
The material is theologically sound.				20	
The thesis of the seminar is clearly stated.			2	18	
The points and principles of the seminar clearly support the thesis.			4	16	
The seminar contains points of practical application and family life education.		1	11	8	More practical applications needed.
The seminar is sufficiently thorough in its coverage of the material.			4	16	
Overall, the seminar is clearly crafted.			4	16	

## APPENDIX 3

### COMPLETED PRE- AND POST-SEMINAR SURVEY

#### **Agreement to Participate**

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to determine your current understanding and application of the biblical teachings and your personal views on marriage. This research is being conducted by Howard John Simon for purposes of gathering data needed for completing a doctoral project at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. In this research, you will be asked to: (1) provide biographical information related to you and your marriage; (2) complete a survey in which you will express your feelings in response to numerous items related to marriage. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported, or your name identified with your responses. Participation in this study is totally voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. By your completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this research.

Your unique code \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Part 1: Personal Information**

Table A1. Results of question 1: What is your age?

	Pre	Post
A. 0-19	0	0
B. 20-29	1	1
C. 30-39	5	5
D. 40-49	5	5
E. 50-59	5	5
F. 60+	0	0

Table A2. Results of question 2: What is your gender?

	Pre	Post
A. Male	8	8
B. Female	8	8

Table A3. Results of question 3: How many years have you been married?

	Pre	Post
A. 1-9	6	6
B. 10-19	2	2
C. 20-29	8	8
D. 30-39		
E. 40-49		
F. 50+		

Table A4. Results of question 4: Are you a Christian/member of the SDA Church

	Pre	Post
A. Yes	16	16
B. No		

Table A5. Results of question 5: How many years have you been a Christian/member of the SDA Church

	Pre	Post
A.1-9	1	1
B.10-19	5	5
C.20-29	3	3
D.30-39	4	4
E.40-49	3	3
F.50		

**Part 2: Marriage Enrichment Survey**

Using the following scale, please circle the number that corresponds to your feelings in response to, or in your understanding of, the following statements.

SD = Strongly Disagree    D = Disagree    DS = Disagree Slightly  
 AS = Agree Slightly    A=Agree    SA=Strongly Agree

Table A6. Results of statement 1: I am committed to following biblical guidelines in my marriage

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre				1	1	14
Post					2	14

Table A7. Results of statement 2: The Bible teaches that husbands should lovingly lead their wives

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre					2	14
Post					2	14

Table A8. Results of statement 3: The Bible teaches that wives should respectfully submit to their husbands

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre					2	14
Post				1	1	14

Table A9. Results of statement 4: My sinful heart is a major cause of my marriage problems

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre		1	2	5	4	4
Post		1		1	4	10

Table A10. Results of statement 5: I know how to improve communication in my marriage

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre			2	2	7	5
Post					8	8

Table A11. Results of statement 6: I express love in my marriage by listening to my spouse with undivided attention

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre		2	0	3	6	5
Post				1	5	10

Table A12. Results of statement 7: I know how to be a peace maker in my marriage

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre				2	7	7
Post				1	8	7

Table A13. Results of statement 8: God can use conflicts to grow my relationship with my spouse

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre		1		1	8	6
Post			1		7	8

Table A14. Results of statement 9: I know how to improve the use of finances in my marriage

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre	0	1	1	2	6	6
Post	0			2	2	12

Table A15. Results of statement 10: Money problem are usually spiritual problems

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre		3	2	6	5	
Post		1		4	5	6

Table A16. Results of statement 11: As my relationship with God grows so does my relationship with my spouse

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre	1				5	10
Post	0				1	15

Table A17. Results of statement 12: Spiritual intimacy with God enriches sexual intimacy in marriage

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre	0			2	8	6
Post	0				6	10

Table A18. Results of statement 13: I believe that viewing pornography is destructive to my marriage

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre	1		1		2	12
Post					1	15

Table A19. Results of statement 14: Fulfilling my spouse is a top priority in my marriage

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre				1	6	9
Post				1	1	14

Table A20. Results of statement 15: I believe that marriage is the most important human relationship

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre		1		2	3	10
Post			1	1	1	13

Table A21. Results of statement 16: Improving myself is a key element in improving my marriage

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre			1		4	11
Post					2	14

Table A22. Results of statement 17: My marriage has what is necessary to last for a lifetime

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre				4	9	3
Post				2	4	10

Table A23. Results of statement 18: Progressive sanctification is one of the primary goals in my marriage

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre		1		1	7	7
Post				1	6	9

Table A24. Results of statement 19: The quality of my marriage relationship reflects my spiritual maturity

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre				3	6	7
Post				1	5	10



Table A25. Results of statement 20: Glorify God is the top priority in my marriage

	SD	D	DS	AS	A	SA
Pre				1	4	11
Post					2	14

APPENDIX 4

PRE- SEMINAR INFORMATION

Table A26. Pre-seminar mean, median, and standard deviation

Survey Items	Pre-seminar Mean (N=16)	Pre-seminar Median (N=16)	Pre-seminar Standard Deviation (N=16)
1. I am committed to following biblical guidelines in my marriage.	5.8125	6	0.543905629
2. The Bible teaches that husbands should lovingly lead their wives.	5.8750	6	0.341565026
3. The Bible teaches that wives should respectfully submit to their husbands.	5.9375	6	0.341565026
4. My sinful heart is a major cause of my marriage problems.	4.5000	4.5	1.211060142
5. I know how to improve communication in my marriage.	4.9375	5	0.997914492
6. I express love in my marriage by listening to my spouse with undivided attention.	4.7500	5	1.290994449
7. I know how to be a peace maker in my marriage.	5.3125	5	0.704154339
8. God can use conflicts to grow my relationship with my spouse.	5.1250	5	1.024695077
9. I know how to improve the use of finance in my marriage.	4.9375	5	1.181453907
10. Money problems are usually spiritual problems.	3.8125	4	1.108677891
11. As my relationship with God grows so does my relationship with my spouse.	5.3750	6	1.258305739
12. Spiritual intimacy with God enhances sexual intimacy in marriage.	5.2500	5	0.683130051
13. I believe that viewing pornography is destructive to my marriage.	5.3750	6	1.408308678
14. Fulfilling my spouse is a top priority in my marriage.	5.5000	6	0.632455532
15. I believe that marriage is the most important human relationship.	5.3125	6	1.138346754
16. Improving myself is a key element in improving my marriage.	5.5625	6	0.81394103
17. My marriage has what is necessary to last a lifetime.	4.9375	5	0.680073525

*Table A26 continued*

Survey Items	Pre-seminar Mean (N=16)	Pre-seminar Median (N=16)	Pre-seminar Standard Deviation (N=16)
18. Progressive sanctification is one of the primary goals in my marriage.	5.1875	5	1.046820583
19. The quality of my marriage relationship reflects my spiritual maturity.	5.2500	5	0.774596669
20. Glorifying God is a top priority in marriage.	5.6250	6	0.619139187

APPENDIX 5

POST- SEMINAR INFORMATION

Table A27. Post-seminar mean, median, and standard deviation

Survey Items	Post-seminar Mean (N=16)	Post-seminar Median (N=16)	Post-seminar Standard Deviation (N=16)
1. I am committed to following biblical guidelines in my marriage.	5.8750	6	0.341565026
2. The Bible teaches that husbands should lovingly lead their wives.	5.8750	6	0.341565026
3. The Bible teaches that wives should respectfully submit to their husbands.	5.8750	6	0.25
4. My sinful heart is a major cause of my marriage problems.	5.3750	6	1.087811258
5. I know how to improve communication in my marriage.	5.5000	5.5	0.516397779
6. I express love in my marriage by listening to my spouse with undivided attention.	5.5625	6	0.62915287
7. I know how to be a peace maker in my marriage.	5.3750	5	0.619139187
8. God can use conflicts to grow my relationship with my spouse.	5.3750	5.5	0.806225775
9. I know how to improve the use of finance in my marriage.	5.6250	6	0.718795288
10. Money problems are usually spiritual problems.	4.9375	5	1.123610253
11. As my relationship with God grows so does my relationship with my spouse.	5.9375	6	0.25
12. Spiritual intimacy with God enhances sexual intimacy in marriage.	5.6250	6	0.5
13. I believe that viewing pornography is destructive to my marriage.	5.9375	6	0.25
14. Fulfilling my spouse is a top priority in my marriage.	5.8125	6	0.543905629
15. I believe that marriage is the most important human relationship.	5.6250	6	0.885061203
16. Improving myself is a key element in improving my marriage.	5.8750	6	0.341565026
17. My marriage has what is necessary to last a lifetime.	5.5000	6	0.730296743

*Table A27 continued*

Survey Items	Post-seminar Mean (N=16)	Post-seminar Median (N=16)	Post-seminar Standard Deviation (N=16)
18. Progressive sanctification is one of the primary goals in my marriage.	5.5000	6	0.632455532
19. The quality of my marriage relationship reflects my spiritual maturity.	5.5625	6	0.62915287
20. Glorifying God is a top priority in marriage.	5.8750	6	0.341565026

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## ABSTRACT

### ENRICHING THE MARRIAGES OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH IN THE VALLEY, ANGUILLA

Howard John Simon, DEdMin  
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2022  
Faculty Supervisor: Jay Owens

The purpose of this project was to enrich the marriages in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in The Valley, Anguilla.

Chapter 1 explains the purpose, goals, context, rationale, definitions, limitations, delimitations, and research methodology of the project.

Chapter 2 presents the biblical and theological basis for marriage enrichment. This chapter presents firstly that the Bible teaches that God has designed the institution of marriage to be the primary human relationship. Second, this chapter presents marriage as an institution based on covenantal principles. Third, this chapter contends that God designed marriage to provide intimacy between husbands and wives. Fourth, this chapter argues that God established marriage to function according to the roles he established in his Word.

Chapter 3 focuses on the theoretical, practical, historical, and developmental factors pertaining to marriage enrichment. This chapter contends that marriages usually experience challenges in the areas of communication, conflict resolution, financial management, and sexual fulfillment. These important areas are best addressed when the hearts of couples are changed and challenged by the gospel.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the specific details pertaining to the preparation, implementation, and evaluation of the project.

## VITA

Howard John Simon

### EDUCATION

BA, University of the Southern Caribbean, 1993

MA, Andrews University, 1998

### PUBLICATIONS

*Achieving Excellence-101 Life-Changing Principles of Greatness*. Grand Rapids: Wingspan Press, 2007

*Motivating Excellence—Growing from Good to Great*. Grand Rapids: Wingspan Press, 2011

### ORGANIZATIONS

Ministerial Association of General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist Church

### MINISTERIAL EMPLOYMENT

Pastoral Intern, Antigua North Caribbean Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 1993-1996

District Pastor, Antigua Seventh-day Adventist Churches, North Caribbean Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 1996-2005

District Pastor, Tortola Seventh-day Adventist Churches, North Caribbean Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 2005-2019

District Pastor, Anguilla North Caribbean Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, 2019-