**PREMARITAL COUNSELING**

**COUPLES WORKBOOK**

**DEVELOPED BY ALAN AND LISA BRANCH**

**Session 1**

**“To Have and To Hold”**

**Biblical Foundations for Marriage**

**I. God Ordained Gender Distinctions**

**Genesis 1:26 – 28**: Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, all the earth, and the creatures that crawl on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; He created him in the image of God; He created them male and female. God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it. Rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and every creature that crawls on the earth.”

A. Men and Women Share Equally in the Image of God.

B. Men and Women Have God-Designed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

1. Physiological Differences

\*Females have two X chromosomes; males have one X chromosome and one Y chromosome.

\*Different but corresponding genitalia.

\*Brain differences: Men and women process information differently because of differences in a portion of the brain called the splenium, which is much larger in women than in men, and has more brain-wave activity. Studies have shown that problem solving tasks in female brains are handled by both hemispheres, while the male brain only uses one hemisphere.

\*Women typically have 55- 58 percent of the upper body strength of men and on average are only 80 percent as strong as a man of identical weight. Sex differences also appear by the age of three in the ability of males and females to throw a ball far and accurately.

\*On average, heart disease starts ten years later in women than in men.

2. Emotional and Relational Differences

Willard Harley (Ph.D. University of California – Santa Barbara) suggests the following lists for the top five needs of women and men:

 Top Five Needs for Women Top Five Needs for Men

 1. Affection 1. Sexual Fulfillment

 2. Conversation 2. Recreational Companionship

 3. Honesty and Openness 3. Attractive Spouse

 4. Financial Commitment 4. Domestic Support

 5. Family Commitment 5. Admiration

My point in listing Harley’s findings is for you to realize that the needs for men and women are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_! Biblically, these can be summarized by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**II. The God-Designed Gender Differences Are Intended to Complement Each Other**.

**Genesis 2:18**: Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper as his complement. (HCS)

God created the gender differences to complement each other. We are designed to relate to each other.

**III. Putting the “In-Love” Experience Into Proper Context.**

**Genesis 2:23:** And the man said, “This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called “woman,” for she was taken out of man.”

A rough paraphrase of the Hebrew here might be, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!

A. The “In – Love” Experience

There is within each of us an inherent desire to love and to be loved.  But if we are ignorant as to what actually constitutes love, then how will we ever hope to know whether what is happening between us and another person is actually love?

The “In – Love” Experience is:

 \*Characterized by its intensity; a feeling of euphoria.

 \*May blind us to someone’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

 \*Is not bad, but must be understood.

 \*Has a limit: Usually, a maximum of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Gary Chapman describes the “In-Love” experience and says, “At its peak, the in-love experience is euphoric. We are emotionally obsessed with each other. We go to sleep thinking of one another. When we rise, that person is the first thought on our minds. We long to be together. Spending time together is like playing in the anteroom of heaven.”[[1]](#footnote-1)

B. Biblical Love

From a Biblical perspective, love is not just an emotion, but is an act of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**John 3:16**: For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosever believes in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

The Greek word for “love” is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: This type of love is defined by Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

**1 John 4:9-10**: God’s love was revealed among us in this way. God sent His One and Only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. Love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

**IV. Marriage is God’s Idea**

**Genesis 2:24 – 25**: This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds [cleaves] with his wife, and they become one flesh. Both the man and his wife were naked, but felt no shame.

Genesis 2:24 – 25 shows that God’s design for marriage is both \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**A. A strong marriage has a healthy separation from the families of origin while maintaining respect and courtesy towards our parents.**

Genesis 2:24 – 25 assumes a ­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to begin marriage.

**B. God views marriage as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_; our society views marriage as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**C. Sex is designed for marriage; our culture \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ God’s order**.

**D. Live-In relationships**

1. The statement “\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_” is Biblically incorrect.

2. In 2,000 years of Church History, ­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Christian group has ever said this is a good idea.

3. Secular research indicates Living Together is one of the most **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**choices you can make in relation to future marital satisfaction.

**V. “Soul Mate” vs. “Sole Mate”**

A common term used today is “soul mate”: an idea that we are supposed to find the one perfect person who \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ us. This idea does not derive from Christianity, but from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Instead, Christians are encouraged to look for a “sole” mate: one person with whom you will stay married until death.

**Session 2**

**“To Have and To Hold”**

**Biblical Foundations for Marriage Part II**

**I. The Essential Foundation: Faith in Christ**

A. The New Testament Assumes **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** will marry **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

2 Corinthians 6:14:  Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

The language here pictures two different kinds of animals plowing a field under a single yoke.

Warning 1: **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** does not work!

Warning 2: If you are dedicated to Jesus Christ, your **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**will make you unique in a vulgar culture.

Warning 3: Just because you are both Christians DOES NOT MEAN you will **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** have **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**in your marriage!

Warning 4: Just because you are both Christians DOES NOT MEAN you can **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** the hard work of learning how to be a good husband or wife.

The Best Indicator of post-marital behavior is **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**behavior.

B**. The Filling of the Holy Spirit is essential to a successful Christian marriage.**

Ephesians 5:18: Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.

**II. A Covenant, Not a Contract**

**A. Marriage is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**B. Covenant Language in Genesis 2:24 – 25**

The two covenant terms in Genesis 2:24 – 25 are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**C. A Covenant, Not a Contract**

* A contract is a joining of two individuals; a covenant is the joining of two lives.
* A contract is a legal agreement; a covenant is a binding promise of the heart.
* A contract does not concern the witnessing community of believers; a covenant is given in the witnessing community (the church) that helps hold the couple accountable.
* Contracts a not so concerned about the virtue of the participants; in a covenant, virtue and fidelity to standards of morality are paramount.
* Contracts can be employed with relational detachment, but covenants cannot do so.
* Contracts focus on benefits to *me*; Covenants focus on the good of the relationship.
* Contracts are temporary and typically have a time limit; covenants are intended to be permanent, until “death do us part.”

**III. False Expectations, Reality, and Hard Work**

**A. False Expectations and the Reality**

In *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts,* Les and Leslie Parrott suggest four myths that are very dangerous to any marriage:

1. We expect exactly the **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**from marriage.
2. Everything **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**in our marriage will get better.

3. Everything **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** in my life will disappear.
4. My spouse will make me **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**.

**B. You are marrying a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!**

Romans 3:23: For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

**C. Successful Marriages Take \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!**

1. Forgiveness

Luke 17:3 – 4: [Jesus speaking] “Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** is a gift you give someone; **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**is earned.

2. Submitting to the Lord

Ephesians 5:21: Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

**IV. The Biblical Role for Wives**

Ephesians 5:22 – 24: 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

A. What these verses DO NOT mean!

1. These verses do not mean that menare **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** than women.

2. These verses do not mean that all **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**should submit to all **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** The application is specifically tied to **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**.

3. These verses do not mean a husband has permission to be **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** to his wife.

4. These verses do not have any application to a **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** relationship.

5. These verses do not mean that a wife is a **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**in marriage.

6. It does not mean a wife must passively endure self-destructive behavior by a husband: e.g., **gambling, alcoholism, infidelity.**

**B. What these verses do mean.**

1. The word submit was also used in **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**contexts: the word basically means to “line up under.”

2. The submission described here is based on prior submission to **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**by both the husband and the wife.

3. It is **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** and **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** It cannot be **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

4. It is based on a desire for good order and structure in the home.

**V. The Biblical Roles for Husbands**

**Ephesians 5:25 - 32**

**A. Husbands are commanded to love their wives.**

1. The Greek word for “love” in verse 25 is *agapē*.

2. The word “love” is a present imperative enforcing the idea that the husbands love for the wife is to be an **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

3. The Husband’s love is modeled on the love of **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

John 15:13: Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.

4. The Husband’s love is supposed to be a **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** love.

5. The Husband’s greatest desire should be for his wife to grow in **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

6. The Husband’s love is a **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**love: that means the **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**of his wife and children supersede his own **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

7. The Husband is never to be **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**.

1 Peter 3:7:  Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

The term “weaker” here denotes the fact that generally women are physically weaker than men and should not be taken to mean that wives are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_or **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**inferior to men.

**B. The Husband’s Implied Task: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**VI. Love and Respect**

Ephesians 5:33:  However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

A. Wives – **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**your husbands.

B. Husbands – **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**your wives.

C. What Husbands and Wives are Not

1. What A Husband Is Not

A **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

His wife’s Father - One who disciplines his wife; who treats her like one of his **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**.

The Exclusive Decision Maker – cf. Proverbs 31

Her **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** - He is to be her loving servant/leader.

2. What A Wife Is Not

She is not: A **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**- Someone to be walked on; someone to take a husband’s abuse.

She is not **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** Partner - Not a mindless dependent or a voiceless participant; She’s a contributor – offers advice, encouragement and at times, warning.

She is not **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** - She relates to her husband as God the Son does to God the Father, as the church does to Christ. She is essentially equal to her husband. Her submission is functional and relational.

**VII. A Christian Family**

A. A Christian Couple will read the **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** together.

B. A Christian Couple will **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**together.

C. A Christian Couple will **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** together.

D. A Christian Couple will **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** together.

E. A Christian Couple will uphold high **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** together. (Philippians 4:8)

F. A Christian Couple will **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** children together in a unified and loving manner.

**Session 3**

**To Love and To Cherish:**

**God’s Gift of Sexual Intimacy**

**I. Wrong Starting Points for Sexual Ethics**

**1 Corinthians 6:12 – 13: 12**"Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything. **13**"Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. (NIV)

**A. Moral Autonomy as a Wrong Starting Point**

“Everything is permissible for me!” -- A statement advocating moral autonomy: I make my **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_about sex.

**B. Hedonism as a Wrong Starting Point**

“Food for the stomach and the stomach for food.” -- A statement advocating Hedonism: I determine what is right or wrong about sex based on my own **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** This can be called a **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Morality.**

**C. Why are these views wrong?**

1. Both autonomy and hedonism are **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

“But not all things are beneficial for me.”

The Greek word translated “beneficial” means we take into account how our actions affect not only **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** but **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** as well.

2. Both autonomy and hedonism lead to **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

1 Corinthians 6:12b: "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything.

3. Sexual Immorality Distorts \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ purpose for Sex.

1 Corinthians 6:13: "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food"—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.

**II. The Counter-Cultural Christian Ethic**

1 Corinthians 6:15 – 17: 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” 17 But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.

**A. Our Bodies Belong to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

**B. God’s Design for Sex.**

Paul references Genesis 2:24 – 25 as a reason against sexual immorality. Sex is designed by an all-wise God. It is not the result of a Darwinian urge to reproduce. Therefore, it should not be viewed as an “animal instinct” to be satiated in any way we desire.

**C. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Sexual Immorality**

1 Corinthians 6:18 (NKJV): Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

**D. We Do Not Belong to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

1 Corinthians 6:19 - 20: 19 Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? 20 For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

Since we now belong to God, there is no room for sexual autonomy that demands freedom from God’s commands. Instead, we are bound to follow the commands of our owner.

Family of Origin Questionnaire

Answer the following questions before session 3:

1. Describe your family of origin. Are your parents still married? Did your parents ever marry? If your parents divorced, how many divorces did you observe? Were there ever live-in boyfriends or girlfriends in your home? This question is the most important one on this questionnaire, so take your time and answer carefully.

2. Did you or anyone in your family ever experience abuse or domestic violence?

3. Was anyone in your family of origin addicted to drugs or alcohol?

4. Was profanity common in your family of origin? Did individuals curse each other when things became difficult?

5. With whom in your family were you the closest? Why? With whom in your family are you the closest to (emotionally) now?

6. Who in your family of origin do you still see on a regular basis?

7. Who in your family experienced the most conflict when you were growing up? Which member of your family of origin experiences the most conflict now?

8. Have there been any deaths in your immediate family? If so, how did they affect you/your family?

9. Has there been any significant illness (physical or emotional) in your family of origin (including yourself)? If so, how has this illness affected you/your family?

10. What is your favorite memory with your family when you were growing up?

11. When your parents experienced conflict between each other, how did they handle the disagreements?

12. When your parents experienced conflict with you and your siblings, how did everyone deal with it?

13. What are any current expectations your family of origin has for you or your spouse?

14. Did your family attend church or other house of worship? If so, how often? Did your family ever read the Bible together and pray together?

15. Did you have close friends when you were growing up? If so, what were those friendships like?

16. What were your family vacations like? What would you change about them?

17. What important traditions did your family celebrate during holidays such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, or the Fourth of July?

**III. God’s Purposes for Sex**

In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul describes the way a healthy and mature Christian couple should approach sex. First, let’s provide some clarification concerning a Confusing Verse:

I Corinthians 7:1: About the things you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have relations with a woman." (HCS)

Paul is not advocating \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**A. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ against Sexual Immorality.**

I Corinthians 7:2: But because of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

1. One reason for sexual intercourse in marriage is to **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**. A healthy sexual life within the safety of the marriage covenant is a protection against the temptation to participate in various forms of sexual immorality.

2. Sexual intercourse is an **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** part of any marriage.

3. The emphasis on “his *own* wife” and “her *own* husband” means that husbands and wives are to guard their gift of sexual intimacy. Modern ideas of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are clearly inconsistent with I Corinthians 7:2.

4. Heterosexual and monogamous marriage is affirmed and **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** is clearly forbidden in this verse.

**B. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to Each Other**.

I Corinthians 7:3 - 4: A husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband. A wife does not have authority over her own body, but her husband does. Equally, a husband does not have authority over his own body, but his wife does. (HCS)

**C. Prolonged, Intentional Sexual Abstinence in Marriage is discouraged**

1 Corinthians 7:5: Do not deprive one another sexually – except when you agree for a time, to devote yourselves to prayer. Then, come together again; otherwise, Satan may tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

Alan and Lisa’s paraphrase: Don’t use sex as a tool of **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**, granting it and withholding it in order to get your way.

**D. Procreation and Dominion Over the Earth**

Genesis 1:26 – 28

Alan and Lisa’s view of contraception:

1. Couples should thoroughly educate themselves about contraception.

2. Methods that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ are forbidden.

3. Intentionally Choosing to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ may be inconsistent with Scripture.

4. As a matter of Christian \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, couples may \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_to use contraception.

**E. Relaxation and Play**

Proverbs 5:19: [Referring to a husband and a wife] A loving doe and a graceful deer – may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be captivated by her love.

The Hebrew word translated “captivated” means **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!**

**F. Comfort**

Genesis 24:67

Alan and Lisa’s final word of advice: Keep your sex life \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Matthew 7:6

A Prayer to Commit our Sexuality and Sexual Ethics to the Lordship of Jesus Christ:

Lord Jesus Christ, I confess here and now that you are my Creator (John 1:3) and therefore the Creator of my sexuality. I confess that you are also my Savior, that you have ransomed me with your blood (1 Cor. 15:3; Matt. 20:28). I have been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ; my life and my body belong to [you] God (1 Cor. 6:19 – 20). Jesus, I present myself to you now to be made whole and holy in every way, including my sexuality. You ask us to present our bodies to you as living sacrifices (Rom. 12:1). I do this now. I present my body, my sexuality (“as a man” or “as a woman”), and my sexual nature to you.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Session 4**

**“Forsaking All Others”**

**How to Affair Proof Your Marriage**

**I. Proverbs 5 and the Danger of Adultery**

**A. Adultery is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Temptation Proverbs 5:1-6**

Proverbs 5: 3 – 6: For the lips of an adulteress drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil;

but in the end she is bitter as gall, sharp as a double-edged sword. Her feet go down to death;
her steps lead straight to the grave. She gives no thought to the way of life; her paths are crooked, but she knows it not.

Notice that adultery often begins with **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** from someone other than your spouse.

**B. Adultery has Unavoidable Consequences. Proverbs 5:7 – 14.**

1. You will suffer **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**. Proverbs 5:9, 11

2. You will suffer **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** Proverbs 5:10

3. You will suffer **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**. Proverbs 5:12

4. You will ruin your **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**. Proverbs 5:13 – 14

**C. Adultery can be Avoided When Celebrate the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Satisfaction of Sex within Marriage. Proverbs 5:15 – 19**

Proverbs 5:19: A loving doe, a graceful deer— may her breasts satisfy you always,
 may you ever be captivated by her love.

The Hebrew word translated “captivated” means \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**D. Adultery: We are Given A Final \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Proverbs 5:20 – 23**

Proverbs 5:20 – 23: Why be captivated, my son, by an adulteress? Why embrace the bosom of another man’s wife? For a man’s ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths. The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast. He will die for lack of discipline, led astray by his own great folly.

**II. How to Avoid Adultery**

**A. Warning Signs of Infidelity**

Here are some warning signs that may suggest we are placing ourselves in a situation more conducive to infidelity.

1. A feeling of “going through the marriage motions.”

2. Inventing excuses to visit someone.

3. Intentionally increasing male/female contacts in normal environments. Eg: work, choir, recreation.

4. Being preoccupied with thoughts about another person.

5. Exchanging of gifts with a “friend” of the opposite sex.

6. Making daily/weekly contact with someone by phone, email, or Facebook.

7. Putting yourself in situations where a “friend or employee” might become more.

8. Having to touch, embrace or glance at a person of the opposite sex.

9. Do you find yourself making excuses *not* to spend time alone with your spouse?

**B. How to Avoid Adultery**

1. Expect Temptation! 1 Corinthians 10:12 says, “Therefore, whoever thinks he stands must be careful not to fall!”

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_! Place physical distance between you and the problem. See Genesis 39.

3. Stay away from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. Stay away from \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ material in film, TV, computers, books or online.

5. Invest in your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

6. Do not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in an even casual manner. If you don’t have any **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**in the water**,** you won’t get any **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

7. Always compliment **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**, and not appearance.

8. Never ride alone in a car with a member of the opposite sex who is not your wife or immediate family member.

9. Never go into a **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** with a member of the opposite sex who is not your wife or immediate family member.

10. Listen to your **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!**

11. Learn what the “tingles” are and how to handle them.

12. Husbands do not have female friends that they “hang out” with and wives do not have male friends they “hang out” with.

13. Be aware of the dangers of **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** sites.

14. The most common place for affairs to begin is at **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**.

**C. Affair Proof Your Marriage Through Romance With Each Other!**

1. Plan a regular date-night and keep it!

2. Learn your spouse’s love language and speak it!

3. Don’t focus on sex: A wonderful love life is the overflow of a marriage that is healthy in many other areas. Be kind to each other. Forgive each other.

4. Be creative, innovative, and thoughtful in your love life with each other. Ed Young, Sr. says, “Be your mate’s best option. When you give your spouse affection, attention, praise, support, and encouragement, you build a compelling case for faithfulness.”

**Session 5**

**“For Richer, For Poorer”**

**Christian Couples and Money**

**I. Introduction**

The biggest adjustment you will have to make in your first year of marriage is managing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

In our opinion, separate checking accounts demonstrates lack of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in marriage.

The most common mistake: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ bills vs. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ bills attitude. In our experience, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ before marriage often leads to this attitude.

**II. Foundational Biblical Principles**

**Principle 1:** God owns \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Haggai 2:8: “The silver is mine and the gold is mine,” declares the LORD Almighty.

**Principle 2:** Contentment leads to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

1 Timothy 6:7 – 9

**Principle 3:** Money is Morally \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

1 Timothy 6:10: For the **love** of money is a root of all kinds of evil. (Proverbs 23:4)

**Principle 4:** The Biblical \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and the ethics of money are closely related. See Proverbs 10:4; 13:11

**Principle 5:** Give God His **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

Malachi 3:7 - 12

**Principle 6: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

Proverbs 30:25.

A Best Case Scenario: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to God; \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to savings; live on the rest.

**Principle 7:** The \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ of money.

If you spend money on one item, you cannot spend it on something else.

**Principle 8:** Don’t Be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

1. Debt is a form of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Proverbs 22:7

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for someone else is discouraged.

Proverbs 6:1 - 5

**Principle 9**: Keep precise and clear \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Proverbs 22:23 – 24

**Principle 10**: Don’t be fooled by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Proverbs 12:11

The most popular and the most common form of financial fantasy today is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**III. The Basics**

**A. Key Questions**

1. Has there been full disclosure?

2. Exactly how much debt do each of you have?

3. How will you make financial decisions?

4. Typically, one of you is a spendthrift and the other is a “free spirit.”

5. Where will we live?

**B. Dave Ramsey’s Seven Baby Steps**

1. Save $1,000 to start an emergency fund.

2. Pay off all debt using the debt snowball.

3. Put 3 – 6 months expenses in savings.

4. Invest 15% of household income in IRAs and Pre-Tax Retirement.

5. Save for college for children.

6. Pay off your home.

7. Build wealth and give.

**C. The Very, Very Basics**

1. Develop a budget

2. Use the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ system.

3. Spend \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ than you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. Don’t \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

5. Don’t use \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

6. If you cannot pay off the monthly balance on your credit card, perform \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

7. In our experience, the single most important thing to do is to **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**. Having a three – six month emergency fund lessens anxiety in marriage. Also, a healthy savings account keeps \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_emergencies from becoming a **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** crisis.

8. Remember, your purpose in life is to **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**. How we use our money is an indicator of our spiritual life.

**Session 6**

**Until Death Do Us Part:**

**How To Have a Fair Fight**

You are both imperfect people, therefore you will not have a “perfect” marriage, but you can have a Godly and wonderful marriage.

**I. Common Subject of Arguments in Marriage**

**A. Money / Finances**

\*Debt, especially **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** debt from your spouse. Consistently spending more than you earn will lead to an argument!

 \*Discretionary Spending

 \*Making Large purchases without **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** your spouse.

 \***\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** bills versus **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** bills arguments.

 \*Debates about how much to **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** versus how much to **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**.

**B. Division of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**C. Annoying \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**D. Family of Origin Arguments: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!**

**E. The Kids**

**F. Sex**

**II. Biblical Principles**

**A. We will be held accountable for our \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

Matthew 12:36 – 37: But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”

**B. Don’t use \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

Matthew 12:34b: For the mouth speaks from the overflow of the heart.

Ephesians 5:4: Coarse and foolish talking or crude joking are not suitable, but rather giving thanks.

Colossians 3:8: But now you must also put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth.

**C. Do not call each other \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

Proverbs 12:18: Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

**D. Do not use threats or physical violence.**

1 Corinthians 13:4a: Love is patient, love is kind.

**E. Do not get \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!**

1 Corinthians 13:5b: Love does not keep a record of wrongs.

**F. Maintain a healthy appreciation of your own \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

Romans 3:23: For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

**G. Kindness**

Ephesians 4:32: Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

I Corinthians 13:5 (NKJV): Love does not . . . behave rudely.

“Good manners express to your wife or husband, “I value you enough to exercise some self-control around you. I want to be a person who’s a pleasure to be with.” When you allow love to change your behavior – even in the smallest of ways – you restore an atmosphere of honor to your relationship.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

**H. The Fruit of the Spirit in Marriage**

Galatians 5:22:23: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

**III. Fair Fighting Rules**

**From Gary Smalley:** Words have awesome power to build us up or tear us down emotionally. Many people can clearly remember words of praise their parents spoke years ago. Others can remember negative, cutting words—in extraordinary detail. Communication within the family is like the body’s circulatory system. When we stop listening to each other, it’s as though the family suffers a stroke. We become disabled. Certain members no longer respond to other members.

1. We will never touch each other in a harmful way.

2. Turn off your cell phone, your home phone and the TV! The implication here also is that you are discussing the problem in person and not on your cell phone!

3. Watch your non-verbals: Part of communication is listening, so make sure your body language reflects that! Don’t doodle, look at your watch, roll your eyes, etc.

4. Avoid \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ words: “You always . . . !” “You never . . . !” “You’ll never change!” “I told you so!” “You’ll never understand!” Along these lines, agree to the following: “We will never mention divorce.”

5. Practice drive-through listening: Repeat back to your partner what you heard them say.

6. Use “When I hear you say, I feel” sentences.

**From Gary Smalley:** Explain how you feel in- stead of demanding that your partner improve. Use “I feel” statements, but wait for the right time, and abandon the “you” statements and the “I told you so” statements.

7. Set a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_!

Proverbs 10:19: When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise.

8. Do not attempt to solve a problem via electronic media. Don’t play text “ping pong.” In fact, texting or email are both absolutely horrid ways to communicate when you are angry at each other and usually result in more anger! Never, never, never, never, never attempt to solve a problem via texting.

9. Be especially aware of the dangers of bringing disputes into public:

Don't criticize your spouse in public.

Don't tease your spouse in public.

Don't embarrass or act disrespectfully to your spouse in public.

Don’t tell everyone on Facebook that the two of you had an argument.

Don’t fight in public or in front of the children.

10. Call a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ if conflict escalates to a damaging level.

11. Pray together! (And don’t preach to your spouse while praying!)

12. Don’t interrupt each other. Try the “three and three” experiment: Couples flip a coin to determine who will talk first. The winner of the coin toss then has three minutes to talk without being interrupted by the other person. At the end of those three minutes, the other person has three minutes of uninterrupted time to respond.

**IV. Forgiveness**

**A. Forgiveness in the Teaching of Jesus**

Matthew 6:12: Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

Matthew 18:21 – 22: Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times [or seventy times seven].”

**B. What Forgiveness does not mean.**

1. Forgiveness does not imply forgetting, but in fact requires that we remember.

2. Forgiveness is not the same as trust: Forgiveness is a **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** we give someone; trust is **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

3. Forgiveness does not mean that we pretend that a **ugly word or action** is not wrong.

**C. What does forgiveness mean?**

1. Forgiveness means releasing someone from a **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.** It is defined by the cross of Jesus Christ.

2. It is a choice you and you alone can make.

3. Sometimes, we want to rush the forgiveness process. To receive or give forgiveness often takes time. If you have offended your spouse, try not be insistent about forgiveness, but give them time to forgive you.

4. Forgiveness is essential to a lasting and successful marriage.

1. Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages: The Secret to Love That Lasts* (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2010), 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. This prayer is from John Eldredge, *Wild At Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man’s Soul,* 2nd ed. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010), 231. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick, *The Love Dare* (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 2008), 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)