

# BUILDING A SACRED MARRIAGE

## FINDING THE PROPER PURPOSE FOR MARRIAGE?

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### DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

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1. Why did you choose to get married (or if you are not married why do you want to get married—or why should you want to get married if you currently don't want to)?
2. What is the primary biblical purpose of marriage?

#### *For Married Couples*

*Read through Ephesians 5:21-33 together. What are the expectations of a wife in this passage? What are the expectations of a husband? For what purpose does the author compare the marriage relationship of a husband and wife to the relationship of Christ and the church? What does this tell us about the purpose of a marriage?*

*Once you have discussed the above questions, work together to create a mission statement for your marriage based firmly on a biblical purpose for the marriage relationship.*

3. What is the role of romantic love in a marriage relationship? How can this help work towards a biblical purpose for marriage? In what ways can concepts of romantic love work against the biblical purpose for marriage?

***For Married Couples***

*Work separately and each write out what an ideal “romantic” evening (make sure that it is “ideal” but still realistic) would like look for you. After you have both completed your assignment, share your work with one another. Make plans to carry out each of your evenings as soon as possible.*

4. God is the one who should ultimately fulfill us rather than our mate. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Explain and discuss?
  
5. How does it change your perspective on marriage to think that God designed marriage to make us holy even more than to make us happy? Discuss your answers with your spouse.
  
6. In your own experience are you more motivated by what makes you happy or what pleases God?

***For Married Couples***

*Look at each of the following situations and discuss how each of you might normally respond to that situation if your goal was to be happy. Then discuss how your response might be different in each situation if your goal was to please God.*

*You walk into the kitchen and discover that your spouse has left a huge mess*

*You come home exhausted looking forward to a quiet night only to discover that your spouse made a dinner appointment with another couple for that evening and forgot to tell you*

*You did something that would displease your spouse but that they wouldn't find out about unless you told them*

7. What aspect of God's character would you most like your marriage to reveal to the world? How can you accomplish this?

# BUILDING A SACRED MARRIAGE – PART 2

FINDING LOVE AND RESPECT IN RELATIONSHIPS

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## DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

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*“Marriage requires a radical commitment to love our spouses as they are, while longing for them to become what they are not yet. Every marriage moves either toward enhancing one another’s glory or toward degrading each other.”*

Dan Allender and Tremper Longman III

1. Dissect and discuss the above quote.
2. Compare and contrast what our culture usually means by the word love with how the Bible defines it? In what ways do you find yourself loving your spouse in worldly ways? In what ways do you find that your spouse loves you in God ways?
3. If somebody tried to describe your love for God solely by how you love your spouse, what would he or she conclude? What are one or two things you can do that would serve your spouse, strengthen your marriage, and please God?

### *For Married Couples*

*Discuss some of the ways that marriage seems uniquely designed to train us in how to love. In what ways have you grown in your love towards your spouse? Does your spouse agree?*

*Find one scripture on love and memorize it as a couple.*

4. The beauty of Christianity is in learning to love, and few life situations test that so radically as does a marriage. Read 1 John 4:20-21. Discuss the implications of the principle that how we love one another in a marriage demonstrates our love for God.
5. We can grow to love someone when we spend time together and care for one another, meet each other’s needs and seek to serve them. Do you agree or disagree? Take a few minutes to talk about ways we can show our love for one another when you are apart.

***For Married Couples***

*Take time to list the ways in which you feel the most honored and ways in which you think your spouse feels most honored. Share your answers with each other and make a commitment to put them into practice over the next couple of weeks.*

6. How is any lack of respect or active contempt for your spouse negatively affecting your own life and the lives of your children?
7. Are you more apt to look for “evidences of God’s grace” in your spouse, or is it your pattern to be consumed with your mate’s flaws? What practical steps can you take to choose respect over contempt?
8. The author writes “we’re not married in a carefree Garden of Eden. We’re married in the midst of many responsibilities that compete for your energy.” In light of this, do you believe you give your spouse sufficient leeway and understanding?

***For Married Couples***

*Make a vow to promise to show respect for your spouse when you are speaking of them to others, when you are in front of family and friends, and when you believe that they don’t “deserve it.” Spend a night praying together for God to continue to strengthen your marriage and to praise God for the specific admirable qualities of your spouse.*

9. How does respect and honor for your spouse ultimately show honor and respect for God? Are you honoring God in this way?

# BUILDING A SACRED MARRIAGE, PART 3

## WORKING AS A TEAM

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### DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

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1. What are your five greatest strengths when it comes to your marriage relationship (If you are single answer these questions based on your strengths and weaknesses within relationships in general)?
2. What are your three most prevalent weaknesses when it comes to your marriage relationship?
3. What are your spouse's five greatest strengths when it comes to your marriage relationship?
4. What are your spouse's three most prevalent weaknesses when it comes to your marriage relationship?

***For Married Couples***

*Read through 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 together. How do your strengths and weaknesses balance out your relationship rather than weakening it? How can each of you use your strengths to help smooth out your spouse's weaknesses? How can you grow as a couple in seeing the weaknesses of one another as an opportunity for growth in your teamwork rather than simply a negative item?*

5. Think of the various roles within your marriage (who cleans, who does the finances, etc.). Are there any roles in your marriage that are still not clearly defined? Spend some time discussing this together and making sure that you have discussed through the roles of your marriage?

6. What are the strengths of your communication in your marriage (or what are your strengths as an individual communicator)?
  
7. What are the areas of needed growth in your communication in your marriage (or what are your areas of needed growth as an individual communicator)?

***For Married Couples***

*Memorize Philippians 4:8 together. Take some time to discuss how applying this passage to your marriage and to your own thought lives as it relates to your marriage could alter your relationship for the better.*

# BUILDING A SACRED MARRIAGE, PART 4

## A CHRIST CENTERED MARRIAGE

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### DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

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1. Why is patience such an integral component in a marriage where the ultimate goal is holiness rather than happiness?
2. What is the most difficult thing in your marriage to be patient about? What do you think is the most difficult aspect of your character for your spouse to be patient about?

***For Married Couples***

*Read through 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 together. How can your marriage demonstrate God's ministry of reconciliation to others? Discuss specific ways that you can be intentional in displaying the reconciliation that God wants to bring to the whole world through your family, your marriage, and your life at your job, in your home, in your neighborhood, and through your hospitality.*

3. In chapter 7 of Sacred Marriage, author Gary Thomas talks of developing a sacred history of your marriage. Make sure that you both you and your spouse read that chapter together. Which stories should be part of your sacred marriage to be told to your children, family, and friends?

***For Married Couples***

*Plan an evening where you invite other couples to share the sacred stories of yours and their marriages. Give them time to prepare for the evening so that everyone can fully participate. Plan an incredible evening where you make invitations that briefly explain the concept of a sacred marriage story and explain what the evening will look like as each married couple shares their sacred story.*

4. Is Christ truly the center of your marriage? In what ways do you keep Christ at the center of your family and marriage life? In what areas do you not always keep Christ at the center?
  
5. Whom do you most admire for the way that they have built their marriage and handled difficulties? What can you learn from those individuals?
  
6. Do you regularly seek the input of someone else in your marriage? Are you constantly learning from others about how to improve your marriage skills?