

Enhancing
YOUR
MARRIAGE

A WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

Leader's Guide

JUDY ROSSI

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A Note to the Leaders

Dear Sisters in Christ:

My deepest thanks for leading *Enhancing Your Marriage: A Women's Bible Study*. It is my highest hope that by doing so, you will build up and equip wives to be their best for the Lord and for their husbands. May you and your marriages come away enriched and rewarded as well.

This study is intended to address marriages in all stages of growth, circumstance, and maturity. Women who thought their marriages couldn't get any better discovered that there is always room for improvement. As well, women who thought there was no hope, not only found God's hand in their marriage relationship, but the hope and strength to persevere through some very tough times.

May you cling to God's truth in all of the circumstances you'll find among your students. Believe God, and encourage your students to believe God and let Him work. That work first takes place in our own hearts. Then the goodness of God is able to touch the heart of another through us. As we apply God's principles to our role as wives and release our husbands to Him, His beautiful dynamic begins to unfold.

Should you have any questions, comments, or suggestions regarding *Enhancing Your Marriage: A Women's Bible Study* or the Leader's Guide, please send them my way. The Leader's Guide is a work in progress. Therefore, I welcome your feedback and any questions you'd like to add to the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) at the end of each lesson in the Guide. Contact me through my email at judy@eyministries.org, and please visit my website anytime at www.eyministries.org.

May God richly bless you as you do this good work that He prepared in advance for you to do (Ephesians 2:10).

Loving you in Christ,

Judy Rossi

Enhancing Your Marriage: A Women's Bible Study **Leader's Guide**

Introduction

Resources: *Enhancing Your Marriage: A Women's Bible Study* (EYM) and a Bible are all that each student should need for this course. **Leaders:** For Lesson 8 on sexual intimacy, it is my recommendation that you buy a copy of Dr. Doug Rosenau's, *A Celebration of Sex*, Dr. Shay Roop's, *For Women Only: God's Design for Female Sexuality & Intimacy*, and Kevin Leman's, *Sheet Music*. These books are biblical, thorough, and fun to read. And they'll have all the answers to the questions that will come up! I would also recommend these books to your students along with others mentioned in Lesson 8 and in this Guide. Again, recommendations, not prerequisites.

Who Should Take *Enhancing Your Marriage: A Women's Bible Study*? *Enhancing Your Marriage* (EYM) is for every wife no matter what state her marriage is in, for women who are engaged, women who are divorced or widowed with hopes to remarry one day, and women who want to help others in their marriages also benefit from this study.

Since divorce and remarriage are common in our culture, there is a question that regularly surfaces early on in my classes. Please familiarize yourself with the question and the answer so that you can make this point in the introduction phase of your class. The question is, ***“Can God possibly be interested in or even bless our marriage if one or both of us have been divorced? How much of this study can apply to us?”*** I believe God's answer to these two questions would be, “Absolutely!” and, “All of it.” Why? Because God knows where we've been and desires to meet us right where we are *now*. And the marriage we're in right now is where God intends to meet us and make a life-long difference. We serve a forgiving, forward-moving God. He doesn't want us "stuck" in past mistakes (ours or our husband's), but desires to bless us as we follow Him in our current marriages. So my encouragement to every wife who is in a divorced and remarried status, or whose husband is in a divorced and remarried status, is this: Do not permit yourself to be distracted by that statistic, but keep your eyes fixed on the Author and Finisher of your faith, and let Him move in *this* marriage. You can glorify Him there, for as long as you and your husband both shall live.

Teaching Sessions: *Enhancing Your Marriage* may be taught in one of the following three ways: 1) over **one semester (Introduction plus 12 weeks)**; 2) from **January to May/June (Introduction plus 20 weeks)**; or 3) over **two-semesters (Introduction plus 24 weeks, typically September to May)**. The syllabi at the end of this section divide the lessons in accordance with the 20 and 24-week sessions.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's): At the end of each lesson in this Guide, I am building a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's) section. Feel free to send me the burning questions that come up in your classes if you think the answers would benefit students in other classes. If necessary, I will gladly help you answer them; and if applicable, I will add them to the Leader's Guide as well as to the FAQ's on my website.

Leadership Responsibilities: When we lead a Bible study, we are beginning a wonderful adventure with God and with the women in our classes. It is also an amazing privilege. With that come a handful of responsibilities:

- Have a heart for women's growth in the Lord and in their marriages
- Be aware of and have compassion for where these women are in their faith, and, if necessary, be prepared to lead a student to Christ.
- Commit to finishing each week's "heartwork" (I don't call it homework), and seek God's wisdom on how to facilitate that week's lesson.
- Be a *servant-leader*. Matthew 20:25-28, Jesus said, *“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to*

become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve...” We’re given the Ultimate Example. Our number one responsibility is not to “lord” our authority, knowledge, or opinions over our students, but to come along side them and point them to the truth of Jesus, who is the Final Authority in all things. We do this when we...

- Don’t dominate the class by being the only talker, but rather, we ask questions relevant to that week’s lesson (this Guide helps with the questions). Ensure their responses reflect the scriptural truths taught in the study.
- Respect everyone’s answers and listen without interruption. However, *tactfully correct any error or misrepresentation* of scripture as it applies to them or their marriages.
- Don’t permit personal experiences to be more relevant to a marital issue than the application of God’s Truth. Although personal experiences can be helpful examples, they should not trump the value of applying God’s Word to all marital circumstances. Therefore...
- Encourage *testimony* throughout the study on how applying *what they’re learning* is impacting their relationship with their husbands. Personal experience doesn’t get better than this!
- Handle the Word of God correctly: The apostle Paul lovingly admonishes Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15 to present himself to God “*as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.*”
- Handle confidential information wisely: We will become privy to sensitive information, as will our group facilitators if our classes have or break up into small groups. Paul warns Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:16 to “*avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly.*” It’s a warning to heed.
- Apply what *we* learn from this study of God’s word to our own marriage. We allow ourselves to be appropriately transparent with our students about our successes and our failures. Both can be personal *testimony* to God’s faithfulness and glory.
- Are willing to mentor/coach/encourage our students *from the perspective of God’s Truth and its application to their lives and marriages* rather than from our personal knowledge or opinion.
- Keep track of our ladies. If a student misses two classes in a row, we reach out and make sure she’s OK, and encourage her to return. (Note: If you have small groups, give that this responsibility to your small group facilitators.)

Using Visuals or Practical Applications: “Visuals” and practical applications are provided at the beginning of most lessons in the Guide *for optional use*. You may want to use them in order to drive that lesson’s main point home. And I could use some help with the visuals or practical applications. So if God gives you a visual that is successfully used in your class, please send it to me (judy@eyministries.org). I will incorporate it into the chapter to which it applies and attribute it to your study. Thank you in advance!

Before You Begin: Here are some helpful hints before your first session.

- You may want to use the **handouts** (syllabi and/or rosters and attendance sheets) available at the end of this section. They include a Syllabus for the 12-Week, 20-week, and 24-week studies, a Class Roster and an Attendance Sheet. These will help your ladies keep track of their lessons, and help you keep track of your ladies. If someone is absent, you will have the information you need to connect with her. You can also establish a group email so that you can send your students changes, reminders, and encouragements throughout the semester or year.
- Decide whether or not you’d like to incorporate small group discussion into your weekly sessions. Doing so will give your students 15 minutes for a “Bottom Line Question” that pulls together the week’s lesson with practical application. (See EYM Small Group Guidelines.)
- Make sure everyone has the day, time, place, and directions for where you’ll meet.
- Arrive early to your meeting place to make sure it’s set up the way you want it. Be prepared and organized. This gives your students a positive first impression.

- Be sure you have a copy of the study before your Introductory session so that you can be familiar with its contents. It's also helpful to have completed Lesson 1 so that you can begin to create a sense of anticipation and excitement about what you will all learn. It's beneficial to stay one lesson ahead of your students.
- Determine how long your study will last each week. Sixty to ninety minutes of Bible study class time is ideal. (This doesn't include fellowship time, praise and worship, or prayer time.) Small group time can easily be incorporated into the 60-90 minute time frame.

Laying the Foundation for *Enhancing Your Marriage: A Women's Bible Study*

Depending on how your study sessions are configured and the flexibility of your women's group, *Enhancing Your Marriage* lessons can be done over 12 weeks (one semester), 20 weeks, or 24 weeks (or two semesters). A sample syllabus for each follows this section.) Each construct should include an extra week for the study's Introduction.

In Lessons One through Twelve, the Leader's Guide will provide a Main Point and questions that apply to each Day's sub-lesson. Some questions will draw answers from the book for review, while others will elicit personal responses from your students. At times, I will contribute the answer (A). *Since there are more questions in the Guide than you may have time for*, it's important that you tap in to the Holy Spirit's leading for your class. It's not necessary to ask each question. God may even give you other questions that are more fitting for your wives. Enjoy where the Lord leads you. A "Bottom Line Question" (BLQ) is provided at the end of each lesson in the Guide, and is configured for either a 12-week or a 24-week study. If you're doing the 20-week study, you can adapt the BLQ's accordingly. BLQ's will tie the entire week's study together and can be addressed as a class or after breaking into small groups. (See Small Group Guidelines, page 9.)

The First Day: Getting Started Introducing *Enhancing Your Marriage*

- Open with prayer
- Introduce yourself and anyone who is helping you with the class, such as a co-teacher, or one who collects the money for the books, one who is taping the class, group leaders (should you break into small groups after class discussion for Bottom Line Questions), etc.
- Have your students fill out the Attendance Sheet and the Class Roster (both documents follow)
- Distribute copies of *Enhancing Your Marriage: A Women's Bible Study*
- Distribute copies of the syllabus (page 11, 12, or 13)
- When introducing EYM, **encourage your students to:**
 - Arrive to class on time
 - Place children in age-appropriate child care if available on sight. Otherwise, both facilitator and students can be easily distracted by child activity in the class environment.
 - Commit to the heartwork and arrive prepared, reminding them that each lesson builds toward the next
 - Enjoy their *heartwork*. *Enhancing Your Marriage* is "user friendly", even if women are new to Bible study. As they prepare their lessons daily with the Lord, they can experience *joy*, *revelation*, and *delight* in what God teaches them.
 - Be deliberate about *creating* the time to complete their heartwork. Each day's heartwork within a lesson will require an average of 30-60 minutes (based on a 12, 20, or 24-week semester). Some settings for doing heartwork might include: before kids awake in the morning, right after kids go to school, in lieu of a TV program, in the car while waiting at soccer, swim, baseball practices (not during games!), in the doctor or dentist's waiting room, and so on. Even several 10-15 minute

snippets of time in a day are valuable. (I keep my study and Bible in a tote by my chair. It's by my side at home to do, or it's ready to go where I go. I've completed a whole lesson while waiting to be seen at a clinic appointment!) Get them excited about what they'll learn at the Lord's feet!

- Schedule dental/doctor/school appointments any other day but Bible study day, if at all possible.
- Use the writing space in the study's margins for their insights and questions. Encourage them to make notes as they're learning. (For example: they can answer text questions in pencil, write questions for verification in blue ink, and highlight Scriptures or statements that really speak to them.)
- Scroll through the study's Table of Contents, noting how each lesson builds the foundation for the next. Please make this point to your class.
- Pay attention to the Sidebars on each page and go the extra mile.
- Use a Bible they're comfortable with. If you have students new to the Bible, take the time to mention the different Bible translations available. You may even bring several examples for them to look over after class, such as *The New International Version* (NIV), *New American Standard Bible* (NASB), *New Living Translation* (NLT), *The English Standard Version* (ESV), *King James* (KJV) or *New King James Version* (NKJV). Encourage them not to be embarrassed or intimidated by their newness to the Bible, and to depend on their Table of Contents or Bible tabs (available at any Christian bookstore) for easy access to the books in the Bible. We all start out in the same place. By the time they finish this study, they'll be very familiar with their Bibles. 😊
- Participate in class discussion without dominating it. Encourage your women to contribute the wonderful insights that *God reveals in their heartwork and application*, so that many may benefit. (Often women want to "talk" or ask questions without the benefit of completing their week's study. I have found that their questions would have been answered had they done their heartwork. My classroom policy encourages women to contribute comments for those days of heartwork that *they completed*. If there are days of a lesson that they didn't complete, I invite them to kick back and listen to the insights of others.)
- Stay on topic. It is easy for a student to get off topic or bring up a specific marriage issue. If you have small group time, that will allow an opportunity to *apply scripture* to specific marital issues. Remember that you facilitate the learning and discussion among all class members; therefore, tactfully but firmly bring the class back on topic should the discussion get temporarily derailed. A statement such as, "Why don't you and I discuss that particular issue more specifically after class?" can work very well. Then, don't be afraid to move on. (If an after-class connection isn't convenient for a student, be sure to follow up with a phone call or email.)
- Listen respectfully to others without interruption
- Commit to confidentiality in and out of the classroom
- Not to berate their husbands in classroom or group discussion—or at any time. Conveying a problem can be done without tearing down a husband. This will be the beginning of a great new habit for many wives!

Introducing Lesson 1: For your next meeting, students should read the "Preface" of *Enhancing Your Marriage* and follow the 12, 20, or 24-week syllabus for Lesson 1, "Knowing God Better: The Key". Give them a motivating preview based on what you learned in the first lesson. Remind them that God can help them create study time throughout the week and give them opportunities to apply what they learn from the daily study of His Word.

- Student Introduction: It's good to get to know your women and establish a comfort zone. After the administrative duties are completed, you can ask each student the questions below, being sure to allot a specific amount of time to each so that you get to all the students. (One to two minutes each is plenty of time.) Depending on class size, this can be done as a whole class or in small groups.
 - Name:
 - Husband's name:
 - Number of years married:

- Warm-Up Question: How did you and your husband meet, and what drew you to him?
- ***If you have unmarried women in your group***, ask...
 - About her marital status (“Are you waiting for Mr. Righteous, engaged, divorced, or widowed”)? Then...
 - “The other women are telling about how they met their husbands in order to “remember” what drew their hearts. What are your dreams for a marriage?”
- Finishing Point: *Remembering* how we met our husbands and what drew us to them is important. It reminds us of where we started, illuminates where we are, and gives us a sense of where we’d like to be. Ask your class if they focus daily on the positive attributes of their men. When was the last time they:
 - Went through their wedding albums
 - Reread their love notes
 - Recounted their dating experiences
 - Considered and appreciated their husband’s good qualities
 - *Looked for more* good qualities
- Suggest that they do one of the above this week.
- End with this consideration: Oftentimes we have a tendency to focus on the negative characteristics, or what we perceive as being hopeless circumstances. *We do not serve a God of hopelessness*, but the God of hope. Create a sense of anticipation that God will be moving in their lives and in their marriages throughout this study. Leave them with **Isaiah 43:18 and 19** to ponder. Then watch Him work!

Close with Prayer and dismiss the class.

EYM Small Group Guidelines For Class Leaders and Group Facilitators

As the Class Leader, you may choose to discuss the questions from each Day with the class as a whole, then break into small groups to discuss the Bottom Line Question that ties the lesson together with personal application.

Each small group should have the same students and facilitator weekly.

Purpose of Small Groups:

- To discuss specific “Bottom Line” question as it relates to each marriage in the small group. The Bottom Line questions (BLQ’s) are provided in the Leader’s Guide at the end of each lesson and conform to the 12-week or the 24-week course. BLQ’s for the 20-week study may be adapted accordingly. The Class Leader will give each Group Facilitator the Bottom Line Question before class begins.
- To build rapport and establish a place of intimacy, support, safety (confidentiality) and prayer support
- As with the whole-class concept, to lovingly and continually **point these women to Christ and His Word as the plumb line for their marriages and the challenges they face.**

Small Group Facilitators should

- Be biblically grounded
- Handle the Word of God correctly
- Be committed to finishing each week’s “heartwork”. Then they can legitimately encourage their group to apply to their marriage what they learn from the Word of God.
- Have the heart of a servant-leader
- Have a heart for women’s growth in the Lord
- Have compassion for where each woman is in her marriage without judgment or condemnation
- Be able to control the discussion of the BLQ’s so that all members of her group may answer. Be able to keep the group focused on the BLQ’s without straying. Small group time is short.
- Pray during the week for those in her small group
- Be able to impart biblical truth (not personal opinion) to tough places in her women’s lives and marriages with love and grace
- Apply what she learns to her own life and marriage
- Handle confidential information wisely
- Be willing to mentor/coach/encourage her group participants from the perspective of God’s Truth and its application to their lives and marriages rather than from personal knowledge or opinion.
- Stay connected with her small group on a regular basis, particularly if a student misses two classes in a row.

The following are guidelines for EYM small groups:

- Up to eight women per group are easy to manage. If the length of your meeting time is a factor, make your groups smaller so that sharing can be done within the time allotted.
- Confidentiality is necessary. Every woman needs that safety net.
- Establish how long your small groups will meet. Be sure to start and end on time. If small groups convene after class discussion, 15-20 minutes should give ample time to discuss the Bottom Line Question.
- If there are multiple BLQ’s, instruct group facilitators to ask one BLQ at a time before moving on to the next.

- Group Facilitators should keep a gentle but firm reign on each woman's "talk" time so that each has an opportunity to address the "Bottom Line" question(s).
- The Bottom Line question(s) may raise more questions. If a Group Facilitator doesn't know the answer to a question asked by a student, *she is to confidently say so*, then follow up with the answer the next week or by personal contact (telephone or email). The Class Leader should be available to help with answers to questions that come up. The whole class may benefit from the question and answer, which the Class Leader may address in the next class. Feel free to contact me should you need assistance with a question: judy@eyministries.org

Group Session Prayer Time

Important tip: Don't take down prayer requests with the purpose of sending them out on the email for your group to pray for. You don't know who on the other end of the email will end up reading it besides your students. Below are two options. My recommendation is the first:

Option 1: Give each student in your small group a Post It note or small piece of paper at the *beginning* of each class and ask them to write their prayer request before small group time. (*This prayer request should be concisely written. It should also be marriage-specific and related to that week's lesson, as opposed to praying for a sick relative, a job opportunity, etc. The purpose of this is to get them focused on praying for themselves as wives, for their husbands, and for marriage-related issues.*) The written prayer request saves precious time during small group time. At the beginning of group time, have each gal take another's note to pray for during the week. The Small Group Facilitator can pray at the end of the group time as led by God and based on what the group discussion revealed that day. Many students will be new to the concept, purpose, and power of prayer. This is a good venue where students can be taught about prayer and also observe the results of prayers within their groups.

Option 2: For the first few weeks, Group Facilitators can close their group in prayer. As the weeks unfold, they should invite their group members to participate in the prayer process, making their contributions short and to the point for the sake of time. It will be the Group Facilitator's call as to when she initiates that participation. The participation is necessary over time to encourage students toward a level of comfort with prayer. Many students will be new to the concept, purpose, and power of prayer, so this is another good venue where they can be taught about prayer and also observe the results of prayers within their groups. (*As explained in Option 1, keep the prayer requests short, specific, and related to that week's lesson.*)

Post-Processing with SGLs (necessary at least monthly): The Class Leader should call her Group Facilitators together after class in order to process group time, such as facilitators' questions or concerns. Please be sensitive to the potential for the meeting to become a chatty discussion of personal information about the women in the groups. Personal information should be discussed only when genuine counsel is being sought. The Class Leader should be accessible to help her Group Facilitators as the need arises.

Remember, the purpose of the small groups is not to FIX the student and her problems, but to continually point her to the One Who can through His Holy Spirit.

Sample Syllabus for teaching EYM over one semester (approximately 12 weeks):

Enhancing Your Marriage: A Women's Bible Study
12-week Syllabus
Fall or Spring 20__

<u>Lesson Due</u>	<u>“Heartwork” Assignment to be completed for:</u>
Month/Day	Opening Day and Introduction of the Study
Month/Day	EYM Lesson One: Knowing God Better: The Key
Month/Day	EYM Lesson Two: The Savior and the Helper
Month/Day	EYM Lesson Three: Pleasing God ~ A Study on Obedience
Month/Day	EYM Lesson Four: Obedience in Action ~ The Process of Change
Month/Day	EYM Lesson Five: Marriage ~ God's Will, God's Way
Month/Day	EYM Lesson Six: Right Attitude ~ Right Love
Month/Day	EYM Lesson Seven: The Freedom to Love
Month/Day	EYM Lesson Eight: Our Sexuality ~ God's Ultimate Wedding Gift
Month/Day	EYM Lesson Nine: Let the Romance Begin
Month/Day	EYM Lesson Ten: Words Are Not Enough: The Art of Communicating
Month/Day	EYM Lesson Eleven: My Husband, My Friend
Month/Day	EYM Lesson Twelve: Praying for Your Husband

Sample Syllabus for teaching EYM from January to May/June (approximately 20 weeks):

Enhancing Your Marriage: A Women's Bible Study
20-week Syllabus
Winter/Spring 20__

Lesson Due "Heartwork" Assignment to be completed for:

Month/Day	Opening Day and Introduction
Month/Day	Preface and Lesson 1: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 1: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 2: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 2: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 3: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 3: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 4: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 4: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 5: Days One, Two, Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 6: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 6: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 7: Days One, Two, Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 8: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 8: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 9: Days One, Two, Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 10: Days One, Two, Three
Month/Day	Lesson 10: Days Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 11: Days One, Two, Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 12: Days One, Two, Three, Four, Five

Sample Syllabus for teaching EYM over two semesters (approximately 24 weeks):

Enhancing Your Marriage: A Women's Bible Study
24-week Syllabus
Fall 20__

Lesson Due "Heartwork" Assignment to be completed for:

Month/Day	Opening Day and Introduction of the Study
Month/Day	Lesson 1: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 1: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 2: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 2: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 3: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 3: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 4: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 4: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 5: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 5: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 6: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 6: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 7: Days One, Two, Three, Four
Month/Day	Lesson 7: Day Five
Month/Day	Lesson 8: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 8: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 9: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 9: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 10: Days One, Two, Three
Month/Day	Lesson 10: Days Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 11: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 11: Days Three, Four, Five
Month/Day	Lesson 12: Days One, Two
Month/Day	Lesson 12: Days Three, Four, Five

Enhancing Your Marriage
Leader's Guide
Lesson 1 ~ Knowing God Better: The Key

Getting Started

- Open with prayer.
- Assess how the first week's heartwork went. Some may have met resistance while doing their heartwork, or had feelings of being overwhelmed, or perhaps felt unworthy, or were filled with a sense of, "It's too hard!" If so, assure them that they're in the right study. The last thing the Enemy wants is depth to their faith and commitment to their marriages. The effort and perseverance they put into this study will last a lifetime.
- If on the 12-week program, introduce Lesson 2: This lesson will answer the question, "Why is marriage so tough?" It further clarifies why life in general and relationships in particular are difficult. Again, create an excitement for what they will learn.
 - Have them write the following question at the top of page 23 and consider it throughout the week while they're doing their lesson: *Am I in a religion about Jesus Christ, or am I in a relationship with Him? How do I know the difference?*

Lesson 1 ~ Main Point: Our God, the only One who is able to create something out of nothing, *and* hold all things together, is infinitely able to accomplish His good purpose in our marriages, not because of what He does, but because of who He is.

OPTIONAL

Visual/Practical Application

#1: Before class, buy red and white yarn. Give each student two pieces of white yarn and one piece of red yarn, each 18" in length. The two strands of white represent each student and her husband. The red strand represents Christ. Have them tie the set of three strands with a knot at the top. (You may want to show them how easily one strand of yarn breaks when tugged on; then two strands together.) Explain that our marriages are a cord of three strands that cannot be quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:12). Explain that each week, the class will begin by braiding an inch of the strand until, by week twelve, there is a complete braided cord of three strands. Today, braid the three strands only one inch. This is to remind them that as Christ is woven into their marriage (even if the spouse is not a Christian), the cord will be stronger, tougher, more resistant to tugs and attempts to tear the marriage apart. Each week, have your women braid another inch of cord in the classroom as a reminder of how God is strengthening their marriages through the teaching *they* are receiving and applying. He's that faithful!

Contributed by Shannon George and Dana Marm, Stuttgart, Germany

#2: We opened Lesson One with the red and white yarn and Ecclesiastes 4:12 (Visual #1). When starting Day 2, we all squeezed Playdoh until we got to Isaiah 64:8 (page 8), where we talked about how much more malleable clay is when it spends some time in the warmth of the molder's hands. What a great continuing visual. Debbie Durant, Burke, VA

#3: I have used a quilt theme to represent our marriages. Each week, I place a quilt on the table to remind us of the pieces we bring into our marriages and how God will place them together for a thing of beauty if we allow Him to do His marvelous works in our lives. A scented candle is always in the center—the aroma of Christ and the Light that leads us through this study!

Contributed by Deb Easterling, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas

DAY ONE ~ God as Author

Q: What struck you most about how God created the earth and everything in it?

P 3: Who was involved in all this creating?

P 3: According to **Genesis 1:26 and 27**, what was unique about God's creation of mankind? Read paragraph 1. ("The entire Godhead...") on page 3.

P 3, 4: Why did God create humanity? How does this impact you as His creation?

P 5: What do you think was significant about *the way* God created Adam (**Genesis 2:7**) and Eve (**Genesis 2:22**)?

Leaders: God's fashioning Eve out of Adam made them a *part of* each other, not *separate from* each other. He took one, made two, and called them into oneness. To further establish God's hierarchy of order, the man's responsibility was for his wife, because she came from him. God ordained the man as the leader, protector and provider in his home and environment (**Genesis 2:15, 18, 21-24**). Equally important was God's call to the woman as the responder to and completer of her husband (**Genesis 2:20, 22-24**). She completes him by her response to him, supporting him in all that God intended him to become. This, in turn, profoundly blesses the wife. She was created equal in status, though different in function.

P 5: What responsibilities did God give Adam and how do they define Adam's role (verses 15-16)?

P 5: Why do you think God created Adam first and Eve second?

P 5: What part does Eve's role as the "helpmate" or "responder" play in Adam's life?

Q: What is the *value* of God's ordained roles for the man and woman, especially as they relate to today's American culture?

P 6. Read para 1: "Adam's declaration..."

Q: In what ways are you for your husband what God *knows* he needs?

P 6: What is the foundational scripture of marriage that God intends *usto* apply, even today?

Leaders: Be sure to address the **Author's Note** on page 22 in the book (before going on to Day Two) regarding those who are divorced and remarried. It's good to get that distraction out of the way.

Author's Challenge to Students: Even if you're in a rough place in your marriage right now, will you accept by faith that you were fashioned for your husband? His desire is that you remain one. Will you permit God to teach you how to be essential to all that your husband is to become? Will you release your husband to God and trust God with *the outcome of His work in you*?

DAY TWO ~ God as Abba

P 7: How would you characterize the ideal earthly father?

P 8, 9: How is God characterized in the verses on these pages?

P 10: Read the sidebar on "believe". How does this definition of **believe** match your own when it comes to who God is and what He's capable of in your life?

Read Oswald Chambers, July 9: We say, "Oh, if only I really could believe!" The question is, "Will I believe?" No wonder Jesus Christ placed such emphasis on the sin of unbelief. "He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief" ([Matthew 13:58](#)). If we really believed that God meant what He said, just imagine what we would be like! Do I really dare to let God be to me all that He says He will be?"

P 10: Read Philippians 4:19. What do you think this means for you? (NLT: "And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.")

DAY THREE ~ God as Awesome

Omniscient—all knowing

P 10 and 11: Read **Psalm 139:1-6** (p 11) and paragraph 1, p 11.

P 12: Apply questions

Note: God knows how to best fit a husband and wife together. I must trust Him to grow *me* to be what my husband needs, which enhances and encourages all that he is to become in Christ. This applies even if a husband is an unbeliever. (See **1 Corinthians 7:12-14**.) This is where our hope lies: That Christ exhibited in us and through us wives can woo our unsaved husbands to Himself.

Omnipresent—everywhere all at once

P 12: Read **Psalm 139:7-12**. **Matthew 6:4:** God sees everything done in secret.

Q: What does God's omnipresence mean for you personally? For your husband?

Omnipotent—all powerful

P 13: Read **Jeremiah 32:17, 26-27**.

P 14, Apply #2: How can embracing (*believing!*) the all-powerful nature of God change your approach to your marriage?

Bottom Line, P 14: Read last paragraph to sum up our responsibility regarding God's three O's.

DAY FOUR ~ God as Our All

I AM

P 15: There are over 6,000 references to God as the I AM. What does this attribute mean to you? What does it mean for your marriage?

Insight #1: We, like Moses, think "I can't do this. It's too hard...too scary...to threatening..." But God *knows* that we can, so He'll engineer our circumstances (providing an Aaron, if necessary) to build our "God-confidence" while still accomplishing His plan and purpose in our lives. That's the bottom line of life in Christ: *God's* plan and purpose in our circumstances, not our own. And as we follow Him (respond) through a tough time, we will bring Him pleasure and glorify Him—the very reasons He created us. And we will be at peace.

Insight #2: God wouldn't let Moses wiggle out of the circumstance he was in even though the thought of what could happen caused Moses anxiety. What could this mean for us in our marriages?

P 16, Apply: *Do* you doubt that the I AM could work the impossible in your life and/or marriage?

Bottom Line, P 16: "The I AM is *bigger* than..."

Holy

P 17, Apply: What is your response to God's holiness?

P 18: How does the concept of holiness apply to your marriage? How does it apply to your growth as a wife?

Truth

P 18: What does Numbers 23:19 and Titus 1:1-2 affirm about God?

Q: What of God's truths about marriage are being redefined or even obliterated today by our culture?

P 19, Apply: How does God's truth about marriage alter your attitude toward marriage in general? Toward your own marriage in particular?

DAY FIVE ~ God as Loving Authority

Immutable

Q: What does "immutable" mean?

Q: Why do we find change so uncomfortable or intimidating?

Q: How many of us have prayed for change in our marriages? What did it sound like?

P 19: Read **Psalm 102:25-27**. Why does only God have the authority to change another person?

Consider: Only He in His unchanging perfection knows how to get to the depths of that person's soul where change must take place.

P 20, Apply: In what areas can you perceive God moving in you toward change?

Sovereign

Q: How would you define “sovereign”?

P 20: Read **Psalm 33: 6-22**. In verses 6-9, the psalmist declares God’s sovereignty over all creation. In verses 10-19, he declares God’s sovereignty over the affairs of mankind. According to verses 20-22, how should we respond to God’s sovereignty?

Consider: In His sovereignty, God will either use our circumstances to weave His plan and purpose in them or He will create the circumstances in your life that are necessary to carry out His plan and purpose.

P 21, Apply: How can God’s sovereignty encourage you in your marriage, regardless of its condition?

Love

P 21: Read **Jeremiah 31:3**. *Think* about how you were drawn to God. What effect can God’s love for you have on your love for your husband?

Leaders: Emphasize *how* God drew us to Himself: **READ:** The word “lovingkindness” (or “mercy”), is one of the most important words in scripture. It’s the kindness, love, and mercy God shows to His own and is associated with His sacred, eternal, unbreakable covenant. He drew us to Himself with this relentless love of His. We can only feebly imagine what impact His relentless love through us could have on our husbands. God’s love in us and through us rebuilds us and others.

Please point out the **Author’s Note on P 22** should anyone have a question about her marital status and God’s (or anyone else’s) perspective.

Optional: At this point, you can break into groups to discuss the Bottom Line Question. Please follow the EYM Small Group Guidelines should you decide to form groups.

Lesson One: Bottom Line Question for 12-week course:

FIRST SMALL GROUP MEETING (first small group session only): SGLs can ask the following “getting to know you” questions (feel free to take notes on this info in order to commit each group member to memory). Tell your students they have about **one minute total** for these answers.

Name:

Husband's name:

Number of years married:

Ice Breaker Question: How did you and your husband meet, and what drew you to him? (*Remembering is important.*)

BLQ: 1) If you were to ask God to do *one thing* in your marriage, what would it be (from Application question on p 7)? After the entire group answers this question, go on to the next.

2) What did you learn about God in this week’s lesson that addresses your “one thing”?

Close in Prayer

Lesson One: Bottom Line Questions for 24-week course:

FIRST SMALL GROUP MEETING (first small group session only, if applicable): SGLs can ask the following “getting to know you” questions (feel free to take notes on this info in order to commit each group member to memory). Tell your students they have about **one minute total** for these answers.

Name:

Husband's name:

Number of years married:

Ice Breaker Question: How did you and your husband meet, and what drew you to him? (*Remembering is important.*)

LESSON 1, Days One and Two

Bottom Line Questions (BLQ's) from Lesson 1, Days One and Two (about 20 minutes; then close in prayer.)

1) If you were to ask God to do *one thing* in your marriage, what would it be (from Application question on p 7)? After the entire group answers this question, go on to the next.

2) What did you learn about God in this week's lesson that addresses your "one thing"?

End in prayer (last 3-5 minutes of small group time): My suggestion is that in this first session, you pray for each woman (briefly) in your group based on the bullet notes you take from her answers to the two BLQ's. If you have women who are ill at ease about praying out loud, you will set the tone and the example for future group sessions.

Close in prayer

LESSON 1, Days Three, Four, and Five

1) Of all the attributes of God studied in this week's lesson, which speaks most deeply to you and why?

2) How do you see this attribute influencing you in your marriage?

Close in prayer

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's):

Question: Can God possibly be interested in or even bless our marriage if one or both of us have been divorced? How much of this study can apply to us?

Answer: I believe God's answer to these two questions would be, "Absolutely!" and, "All of it." Why? Because God knows where we've been and desires to meet us right where we are *now*. And the marriage we're in right now is where God intends to meet us. We serve a forgiving, forward-moving God. He doesn't want us "stuck" in past mistakes (ours or our husband's), but desires to bless us as we follow Him in our current marriages. So my encouragement to every wife who is in a divorced and remarried status, or whose husband is in a divorced and remarried status, is this: Do not permit yourself to be distracted by that statistic, but keep your eyes fixed on the Author and Finisher of your faith, and let Him move in *this* marriage. You can glorify Him there, for as long as you and your husband both shall live.

Enhancing Your Marriage
Leader's Guide
Lesson 2 ~ The Savior and the Helper

Getting Started

- Open with prayer
- Introduce Lesson Three
- Introduction Questions for Lesson Two
 - Does anyone see her relationship with the Lord a little differently after this week's lesson? How so?
 - Does anyone see her relationship with her husband a little differently after this week's lesson? How so?

Lesson 2 ~ Main Point: Are we in a religion *about* Jesus Christ, or are we in a relationship *with* Him? What's the difference? Why should it matter? The answer to these questions *is* the main point.

Visual /Practical Application (OPTIONAL): To illustrate how the Holy Spirit keeps us focused, tie a few pieces of red paper to the rungs of a table top fan. Turn the fan on and see how those papers fly in a deliberate stream and direction. That is us while we are governed by the Holy Spirit. Now, take a hand full a paper torn into pieces and toss it into the fan's air flow. The papers scatter everywhere, while those tied to the fan remain on course. That illustrates us when we aren't being governed by the Holy Spirit.

Contributed by Shannon George and Dana Marm, Stuttgart, Germany

DAY ONE ~ The Downfall

P 24: God's ordained roles for the man were established in **Genesis 2:15-18, 22**. What were they? (Refer to para 5 for the man.) And what was Eve's role? (Refer to the EYM text, Lesson 1, page 5.)

P 24: Ask the Apply question at the bottom of the page.

PP 25-27: Read **Genesis 3:1-6**. What were the "5 D's" that led up to Adam and Eve's downfall and in what ways do they work in your own life?

Leaders: Distraction, Doubt (self-talk), Debate (more self-talk), Deception, and Desire = Downfall.

Reinforce with your students:

- what we tell ourselves about our husbands and our marriages (our self-talk) aids the 5 D's; if we permit the quiet meandering of negativism (our negative self-talk) in our hearts and minds about our husbands and marriages, we play into the hands of the enemy.
- our daily battle is believing God: "*Did God really say...?*" versus "*Thus says the Lord...*"

P 28: Read **Genesis 3:7-13**. How did the Downfall impact Adam and Eve's relationship with each other?

P 28, para 1: How would you define loneliness?

Leaders: Loneliness is the feeling of *isolation* often resulting from the closing of spirits in a marriage relationship. It indicates that separation has taken place.

P 28: How can shame, fear, denial, self-deception, defensiveness, and blame foster loneliness?

Q: If you are lonely in your marriage, to what do you attribute that?

Q: What do you think the remedy for loneliness is?

Leaders: God's Truth helps us face our shame, fear, denial, self-deception, defensiveness, and blame. Often these are lies that feed our loneliness and keep us from addressing our marital issues.

P 27, para 2: This is the bottom line re our marriages: "*Did God really say...?*" versus "*Thus says the Lord...*"

DAY TWO ~ The Consequences

PP 28-31: Refer to **Genesis 3:7-24** and pp 28-31. What were the effects of the Downfall?

PP 29-31: From the application questions on these pages, what did you learn about the effects of the Downfall on your own marriage?

Q: How does **Genesis 3:16b personally apply to a woman in her marriage?** (“*And you will desire to control your husband, but he will rule over you*”, NLT).

Q: (v. 16b: What does **competition** look like in your homes?

Q: (v. 17): Can you think of a time when your words caused your husband to **forego his convictions** in order to please you (or perhaps to silence you)?

Q, P 31, read para 1: Since a wife has such a powerful place of influence with her husband, how can (should) she protect him spiritually? By implication, what is her responsibility?

Leaders: As completer/responder, the wife’s responsibility is to let her husband assume responsibility for his God-given roles and support him there, even if he’s not a Christian. It’s in his nature to lead, protect, and provide for his wife and family. If wives relinquish control and let their men be those things, God will take over. Scary thought for most wives, which is why we need to finish this study! ☺

Q, P 31: How did the Downfall impact Adam and Eve’s relationship with God? (**Romans 5:12** and **3:23**)

Q, P 33: Read **Genesis 3:15** and **Ezekiel 36:25-27**. What glorious hope did God have in place to counter mankind’s separation from Him?

DAY THREE – The Redemption (to buy back)

Quote: “Sin is a fundamental relationship—it is not wrong doing, but wrong being—it is deliberate and determined independence from God.” (Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest*, October 7).

PP 34-35: Who is Jesus Christ? What else did you learn about Him from the scriptures on P 35?

P 35, “Apply” from Colossians 1:17. What impact can this truth have on your personal life? (**Author’s Challenge:** *Do you trust Jesus Christ as your life’s glue?*)

P 36, Romans 5:18-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22: Why was it necessary for Jesus to die for us? (See the “Substitution” Sidebar” on page 32.)

Q: How can Christ’s life *in you* affect your relationship with your husband?

Give an invitation to know Jesus as Savior and Lord.

DAY FOUR ~ The Assurance

Q: How do we know that our salvation is secure? Is it because we’re Protestant, or Catholic, or baptized, or speaking in tongues? How do we *know*?

Leaders: It’s *belief* in Jesus Christ—total dependence and reliance on Him and His finished work on the Cross—that secures our salvation. (**John 3:16** and **36; Romans 10:9-10**)

Q: What makes this gift (a gift is always free, or it’s not a gift) so difficult to receive?

Point: Review the scriptures of assurance on page 39. Receiving Christ doesn’t mean we’re suddenly perfect. It means He removes sin’s *power* over us and primes us for the changing power of the Holy Spirit who now dwells in us (**Ezekiel 36:25-27**). We now have a new Master who begins the transforming process in our lives.

Leaders: Please ask if there is anyone here who’s having a hard time receiving this gift. If so, offer to meet with her after class. If you’re not comfortable in this area, please bring alongside you another sister who can help you gently yet forthrightly convey the saving *grace* of Christ. You can also have those in your class who are comfortable sharing this knowledge raise their hands so that women who have questions can go to them. It’s wonderful to share this opportunity.

P 40: Based on **Revelation 22:13-14**, what is restored to every believer?

DAY FIVE ~ The Provision

P 41: Who is the Holy Spirit, and how important is He to your walk and to your marriage relationship (**Galatians 4:6**)?

P 41: Read quote: “Forgetting, misunderstanding, or ignoring the Holy Spirit in our lives is like having all the conveniences in our homes—heat, telephone, water, electricity—and not using them, then wondering why we’re cold, lonely, thirsty, dirty, and sitting in the dark.” How does this quote apply to you?

P 42: Focus on the scriptures about the Holy Spirit. How can and does He affect lives and marriages? Canvass your students to see which scriptures most influenced their perspective on He can impact their relationship with their husband.

Q, P 43: How does **2 Corinthians 3:17-18** apply to each of us? **A: PROCESS!**

Bottom Line Question for 12-week course:

- 1) Based on this week’s lesson, what lies have been exposed that you believed about your marriage?
- 2) On page 31, Judy writes: “A wife’s competition for her husband’s role as head of the family will yield one of two reactions from him: either he’ll withdraw and let her take over, or he’ll fight back.” Were you surprised that this dynamic is a direct result of The Fall? How does this dynamic play out in your marriage?
- 3) Based on what you’ve learned about the Holy Spirit, what part will He play in your ability to follow God as your husband’s wife? What part do you play?

Close in prayer

Bottom Line Questions for 24-week course:

LESSON 2, Days One and Two

- 4) Based on this week’s lesson, what lies have been exposed that you believed about your marriage?
- 5) On page 31, Judy writes: “A wife’s competition for her husband’s role as head of the family will yield one of two reactions from him: either he’ll withdraw and let her take over, or he’ll fight back.” Were you surprised that this dynamic is a direct result of The Fall? How does this dynamic play out in your marriage?
- 6) How did you answer the questions in “Apply” on page 31?

Close in prayer

LESSON 2, Days Three, Four and Five

- 1) What impact is the redemption of Christ having on your life and on your marriage? **Leaders:** Please ensure that they understand the personal nature of this question: not what impact redemption *should* have on their lives and marriages, but what impact it *is* having (or not!)
- 2) What will you do to prevent your becoming the woman on page 41: “Forgetting, misunderstanding, or ignoring the Holy Spirit in our lives is like having all the conveniences in our homes—heat, telephone, water, electricity—and not using them, then wondering why we’re cold, lonely, thirsty, dirty, and sitting in the dark.”

Close in prayer

Enhancing Your Marriage
Leader's Guide
Lesson 3 ~ Pleasing God: A Study on Obedience

Getting Started

- Open with prayer
- Introduce Lesson Four

Lesson 3 ~ Main Point: You'll know you are maturing *not* when everything's all right, but when everything's all wrong and you respond correctly. Our response to life should not be about following rules and regulations, or about pleasing or seeking the approval of others, but about pleasing God. This is what *believing God* is all about. Doing so is an ongoing *learning process* guided by the Holy Spirit in the Christian's life.

Visual/Practical Application: Have you got a good illustration for this week's lesson? Please send it to me: judy@eyministries.org. Thanks!

DAY ONE ~ Defining the Problem

P 46-47: Think about the Corinthians. What's the problem (see **1 Corinthians 3:2-3**)?

P 47: What's the difference between a carnal and a spiritual believer? **Leaders:** tie it back to what they learned about the Holy Spirit in Lesson Two, Day Five.

P 48: What was Paul's challenge to them? (See **2 Corinthians 5:15**).

P 48: Review **Hebrews 5:11-14**. According to this verse, how do we mature as Christians?

Q: How do we know we're maturing in our Christian walk? What's our challenge? **Leaders:** Make the POINT from para 2: "The byproduct of applying God's truth to daily circumstances is *maturity*."

P 48, para 3, "Spiritual growth is a choice..." What's this got to do with marriage?

P 49: Time permitting, ask Application questions.

DAY TWO ~ The Disobedience of Unbelief

Q: What is it about believing God that's so difficult? (If necessary, define "belief" again from Sidebar, p 9.)

P 55, top: Is unbelief a choice or something we can't help? But what if your circumstance is really, *really* difficult? See **Mark 9:14-24**.

P 50-55: Give a brief summary of **Numbers 13 and 14**.

P 52: According to **Numbers 14:10-11**, how does God see unbelief? Have you ever considered your unbelief as contempt toward God? What does this mean to you?

Q: Obedience to God is about *believing God* (depending and relying on, cleaving to and trusting Him totally). **Numbers 13 and 14** are about God's people who didn't believe God, and *He was with them!* What's different about God and His people today?

A: He is *in* us!

Q: How can His dwelling in us help us in our unbelief?

P 50: According to **Numbers 13:26-33**, how did unbelief govern *the leaders* of Israel?

A: Their unbelief led to poor leadership decisions which caused all of Israel to doubt God.

Personal application: How does our unbelief affect (or infect) those who are under our leadership?

A: Unbelief destroys our witness and God’s credibility in our lives, and discourages others by weakening their faith and causing them to stumble.

P 51, Apply #1: How did unbelief affect *the Israelites*? (See **Numbers 14:1-4**.)

A: Their unbelief resulted in grieving, grumbling against authority, accusing God, and ultimate rebellion against God’s appointed authority and God Himself.

Personal application: How *will* our unbelief affect us?

A: It can cause us to grieve our circumstances; grumble against the authority figures in our lives; accuse God and question His motives; and ultimately rebel against Him and His authorities in our lives.

P 52: Make the point in Apply statement, “The facts of our personal circumstances...”

P 53, Apply: How did unbelief affect *the Israelite children* in **14:31-33**?

A: Their parents’ unbelief caused the innocents to suffer the *consequences* of their parents’ unfaithfulness.

Personal application: How does our unbelief affect our families?

A: Our children will suffer the consequences of our choices that are rooted in unbelief. But it can go even devastatingly further...our children will likely follow our footsteps toward unbelief. They will become what we model.

P 54: Read **Hebrews 3:7-13** and the paragraph that defines the word “unbelief”. How did you answer the question at the end of the paragraph: “What can we do to avoid the sin of unbelief?” (**vss. 12-14**) How can we help others not go down the slippery slope of unbelief, especially with regard to our marriages?

P 55: How does **1 Corinthians 10:13 (AMP)** address the temptation to succumb to unbelief?

P 55: Application: “How can the encouragements in **1 Corinthians 10:13** apply specifically to your marriage?”

Note: I believe God turned the Israelites away from the Promised Land and back into the desert because He knew their unbelief would inflict more damage on them at the hands of the Canaanites than His judgments—perhaps even destroy them as a nation. The 40 years of desert experience were merciful, disciplining, and purging. They never knew what He saved them from.

DAY THREE ~ Love the Lord Your God

P56-58: Based on **Deuteronomy 6**, what’s the essence of this lesson?

A: Put love for God above all else. Establish God in our own hearts and in the hearts of our children so that all will go well with us.

Read paragraph 1 on page 57: “If we forget to acknowledge...”

P 57: What can we do to remember the goodness of God so as not to get complacent or casual about living for Him in our marriages?

P 58: According to Deuteronomy 6:25, what was the people’s reward for obeying God?

P 58: How did Jesus validate that reward in Mark 12:28-30 and John 14:21?

DAY FOUR ~ The Disobedience of Compromise

PP 59-60: According to **Deuteronomy 7**, from God’s perspective, what did it take to drive the enemy from the land God promised to the Israelites? (**Leaders:** You may want whiteboard and marker for this exercise.)

A: To drive their enemies out, God commanded...

- Believe God!
- Don’t compromise His standard (vs. 2, 3, 11, 16)
- Follow Him only (vs. 5, 16)
- Don’t be afraid (vs. 18)
- *Remember* what He did *for them* in Egypt (vs. 18)
- Don’t be afraid of the enemies in hiding. What they didn’t see, God will expose and the *hornet* will rout them out for destruction (vs. 20).

- Don't try to eliminate the enemies all at once; the Lord will drive them out *little by little* (**Exodus 23:29-30**).
- Don't compromise with those that remain, but abhor and detest them! (vs. 24)
- Don't covet their possessions (vs. 25, 26); they will ensnare.

P 60: Read **Psalm 81:13-16**: What's the bottom line when it comes to getting rid of an enemy in our territory?

A. *Listen* to God and *follow* His ways. Don't compromise! (But you gotta wanna.)

DAY FIVE ~ Embracing the Solution

Q: Based on what you've learned, what is the epitome of carnal living?

A: Self-centeredness

P 62: Were you able to circle a few Canaanites? (**Leaders:** Take this opportunity to remind them not to be overwhelmed if they circled *many* Canaanites. God knows they're there, and only He knows how to drive them from our land "little by little". We're to trust Him with ourselves.)

P 61: Read **Galatians 5:16**. Do you feel that tension? That's how you know you're alive in Christ! What's the solution to overcoming our Canaanites?

Q: What is the parallel between the Israelites' overcoming the enemies in their Promised Land (as God commanded in Deuteronomy 6 and 7) and our overcoming the inner enemies of our hearts?

- *Believe God!*
- *Don't compromise* God's standard when it comes to enemies (Canaanites) occupying your land
- *Follow Him* only
- *Don't be afraid* of your Canaanites
- *Remember* God's faithfulness in the past
- *Don't be afraid* of the Canaanites in hiding (**Psalm 139:23, 24; 19:12, 13**). God will expose them in His timing and the Holy Spirit will rout them out in due time (the hornet being the metaphorical representation of the Holy Spirit for this purpose. (See p 62, last para.)
- *Don't try to eliminate them all at once*. Why? We'll stir up the wild beasts. (See page 63, para 1.)
- *God will set them up for removal little by little*. What does this mean to you?
- *Don't compromise* with those that remain, but abhor and detest them, *desiring* to be rid of them

Read paragraph 1, p 62: "Sometimes the antagonists in our 'land'..."

P 63: Read **Ephesians 4:30**: What does it mean to "grieve the Holy Spirit"?

P 63: Read **2 Corinthians 3:17, 18**. What is the assurance that change will happen in the life of a believer?

Q: What does walking/living/being led by the Holy Spirit look like?

Oswald Chambers said: "Our battles are first won or lost in the secret places of our will in God's presence, never in full view of the world. The Spirit of God seizes me and I am compelled to get alone with God and fight the battle before Him. Until I do this, I will lose every time. The Battle may take one minute or one year, but that will depend on me, not God." (*My Utmost for His Highest*, James Reiman, ed., December 27)

Bottom Line Questions for 12-week course:

- 1) What is the #1 Canaanite in your life that God revealed to you on page 64?
- 2) How does it affect your relationship with your husband? (Also consider how it affects your children, other family members, co-workers, and so on.)
- 3) What excuses, rationalizations, or denials are you making to justify the Canaanite inhabiting your land?
- 4) Based on what you learned in Lesson 3, what part will belief or unbelief play in ridding this Canaanite from your land?

Close in prayer

Bottom Line Questions for 24-week course LESSON 3, Days One and Two

- 1) How did you respond to the application question at the bottom of page 54: "What are some areas of unbelief in your life right now, areas that you don't believe God can or will affect?"
- 2) How do you think this area of unbelief is affecting your faith walk?
- 3) From page 55 (bottom), how can the encouragements in 1 Corinthians 10:13 apply specifically to your marriage?

Close in prayer

LESSON 3, Days Three, Four and Five

- 1) On page 64 we identified our #1 Canaanite. Consider how you've been excusing, denying or rationalizing its presence in your life. How has it been affecting your relationship with God?
- 2) How has it been affecting your relationship with your husband?
- 3) As you yield to God's will, He'll weaken this inner enemy little by little, all the while strengthening you for its destruction. What part will belief or unbelief play in ridding this Canaanite from your land?

Close in prayer

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's):

Question: I am a fairly new Christian who was not raised in a Christian family. As I work my way through the Bible, I do have many questions. In Deuteronomy 5:9 I read, "*The Lord your God is a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me*". I don't know how to understand this. Am I going to be punished for the sins of my forefathers? And likewise my children's children for the sins my husband or I did?

Answer: With regard to Deuteronomy 5:9 (also Exodus 20:5,6), John MacArthur writes: "Moses had made it clear that children were not punished for the sins of their parents (Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:19-32), but children would feel the impact of their parents' breaches of God's law by their parents' generation as a natural consequence of its disobedience, its hatred of God. Children reared in such an environment would imbibe and then practice similar idolatry, thus themselves expressing hateful disobedience. The difference in consequence served as both a warning and a motivation. The effect of a disobedient generation was to plant wickedness so deeply that it took several generations to reverse." (*MacArthur Study Bible*, Exodus 20:5,6, p. 124)

As Christians, we may have to suffer consequences of another's sin (example: a father's alcoholism, the consequences of a daughter's out of wedlock pregnancy, a spouse's infidelity, behavioral traits in us that we learned from our parents, and so on). But Jesus in us can turn consequences into glorifying testimonies and impetus for change. God won't waste anything when it comes to growing up His children and showing Himself powerful and effective in their lives and in their circumstances as we follow Him closely *all the time*, and especially during a tough season.

Question: I have been overwhelmed with the guilt I feel for not being the way God wants me to be. On the list of personal Canaanites I found "guilt". Is the guilt I'm feeling really bad? I think it is good to feel bad and guilty for falling short. I remember being told that acknowledgment of a problem is half way solving it. And unless I recognize it and feel remorse and guilt I am not admitting that I have a problem. Maybe I need the meaning of guilt as it is stated on that list.

Answer: Excellent question, one that will be further clarified in Lesson 4. There's good (constructive) guilt and bad (destructive) guilt. Good guilt is placed on us by the Holy Spirit in the form of conviction for a sin committed. Its intent is to lead us to confession, repentance, forgiveness and then the *freedom* to keep moving forward in our walk with God. Bad guilt is a tool of the Enemy in the form of accusation and condemnation. Its

intent is to keep us "stuck" so that we can't move forward. We'll stay stuck in guilt and shame; we'll turn away from God rather than run to Him because we believe that our guilt is unforgivable, which is a lie. God wants us to run to Him, clear the air and be free. Satan doesn't. Hence, we need to know our Enemy and his schemes so that we don't unwittingly cooperate with him.

Enhancing Your Marriage
Leader's Guide
Lesson 4 ~ Obedience in Action: The Process of Change

Getting Started

- Open with Prayer
- Introduce Lesson 5

Lesson 4 ~ Main Point: “God doesn’t give us overcoming life—He gives us *life* as we overcome.”
Oswald Chambers

Visual/Practical Application: Make copies of the half page hand-out on page 26 in this Guide. Break into small groups. Have the ladies discuss their prayer need, and then pray for each other as a small group.

DAY ONE ~ A Matter of the Heart

P 67-68: What is “the heart” and what did you learn about it from the Scriptures?

P 67: Recall **Proverbs 23:7**: “*As [a man] thinks in his heart, so is he.*” What’s that got to do with the Canaanites in our lives?

Q: How does **Proverbs 23:7** apply to marriage?

P 68: Is there any cure? If so, what is it? Read para 2. (Remind them of **Ezekiel 36:25-27**.)

P 68: Read **Hebrews 4:12-13** (AMP). How does the truth of God work in a heart?

P 69: According to **Colossians 2:6-7, 13-14; 3:1-17**, what’s our personal responsibility in answer to what God did for us?

A: This is the difference between “inwardness” (which is about me) and “upwardness” (which is about God and others.)

P 69: Answer Apply.

Oswald Chambers says: “Jesus Christ can put into anyone the heredity nature that was in Himself, and all the standards He gives us are based on that nature—His teaching is meant to be applied to the life which He puts within us. The proper action on my part is simply to agree with God’s verdict on sin as judged on the Cross of Christ.” (*My Utmost for His Highest*, October 60)

DAY TWO ~ Everyone Has a History

P 70: Read Zephaniah 3:14-20; Jeremiah 29:11-13. What role does God play with regard to our history?

A: It’s worth the reminder of what Jesus came to do and is doing in each life, whether we realize it or not.

That He drew each woman to this class indicates that God is doing a very personal work in her life, even if it doesn’t “feel” like it to her. He saved her out of her past for a *reason*, and He will finish what He started, especially in the face of much pain. He knows the testimony that He wants us to have for Him.

P 70: Read **Colossians 1:21-22**. How do these verses address our past?

P 70 (paragraph 2) says, “If we **choose** to cling to our past, we’ll remain victimized by it and allow ourselves to victimize others and ourselves because of it, and we’ll continue to impede God’s process of change in our life.” Did this quote strike a cord with anyone this week? What did you discover about you, your past and your future?

A: Leaders, please note that the operative word in this quote is “choose”. It is necessary to stress the personal responsibility associated with clinging to the past (remaining in the darkness) and using it as an excuse

for current behavior or not moving forward. We do not serve the I WAS, but the I AM. He's about *now*. He wants us to believe that He covers our past and is with us in our present—shaping and recalibrating us for the future that He holds securely in His hand. Believing this is living in the Light (**John 8:8-17**).

P 71: Read **John 8:31-32**. What does Jesus say frees us from our past and how do you think this happens?

PP 71, 72: What did you learn from the “Apply” questions?

DAY THREE ~ Getting on Track

P 73: Leaders: If you are doing the Bottom Line Questions in a small group, skip this question: Recall your #1 Canaanite identified on page 64 and re-written on page 73. How did the seven steps in Days Three and Four address your inner enemy?

Recognize

P 73: What is difficult about recognizing our own Canaanite?

P 73: Read **1 John 1:5-8** and **10**, then read the para that follows.

Q: Do you recognize your inner enemies (page 62) for what they really are? Are you willing to call sin, sin – even when the world excuses it as no big deal, “normal”, or justified—something you have the right to feel and express, such as resentment, hostility, and bitterness? (“I have the right to be angry...” or “I’m depressed because...”) What do we need to overcome in order to recognize them?

Did you know that the number one cause of depression is anger? Think about that! And what about those of us who hold tightly to the reins of control in our lives, our husband’s lives, our children’s lives? What if we “can’t help” being worried, fearful, or apprehensive about life not happening the way we think it ought? (Did you know that fear of not being in control is the number one cause of anxiety?) What is the value of recognizing as sin those inner enemies that master us, often paralyze us, determine our behavior, and foster independence from God?

P 73: Read **Romans 7:14-25**. Then ask “Apply” question, bottom.

Deny Yourself

PP 74-75. What did God show you about yourself in this section?

P 74: Read **Mark 8:34**, AMP. What do you think it means to “*pick up your cross, deny yourself, and follow Me*”?

P 74, bottom: Address the application question, “How would denying yourself, taking up your cross, and following Jesus change how you’re living for Him in your marriage?”

Confess, Repent, and Receive God’s Forgiveness:

P 75: What does “confession” mean? What does “repentance” mean?

Q: What gets in the way of our willingness to confess and repent?

Q, P 75: What’s the difference between godly and worldly sorrow? (See **2 Corinthians 7:9-10**.) Discuss the difference between Holy Spirit’s constructive guilt (conviction) and Satan’s destructive guilt (condemnation).

Q, P 75: Read **Psalms 51** and answer the last question on this page.

Q, P 76: How does God respond to our pride? (**Leaders:** the word “oppose” means “to set an army in array against.” That’s pretty powerful opposition from God!) How can pride thwart the freedom that confession, repentance, and being forgiven bring? **Note:** *God doesn’t want to wound our pride; He wants to kill it.*

Q, P 77, first Bible icon: Based on these verses, what is God’s response to heartfelt confession?

Q, P 77: Address the last paragraph. “If we know that God has forgiven...” which addresses forgiving ourselves. For some, countless years and dollars are spent on therapists over the issues of guilt, shame, remorse, self-deprecation, anger, depression, and so on, oftentimes with little, slow, or no progress. It’s been asked that if something isn’t working, should we continue to do it louder, harder, faster, longer, or should our approach change? What would God say? “*Come unto me...*” (**Matthew 11:28-30**) and “*You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (**John 8:32**). If we will believe God, our freedom begins, because He will show us not only what needs to change, but how to change it! (**Romans 12:1-2**)

DAY FOUR ~ Full Steam Ahead

Trust God

P 79: Read **Jeremiah 17:5-8** and note what happens should we choose to trust man or trust God. **Leaders:** It takes total dependence on God in order to trust Him. Cleveland preacher Alistair Begg said: “If dependence is the objective, then weakness is the advantage.”

P 79: Read middle paragraph to drive home the trust vs. try point.

Wait for God

PP 79-80: According to **Psalm 37:34** and **Psalm 40:1-3**, what are the benefits of waiting for the Lord to act on your Canaanite?

P 80: What should our waiting for God look like: Read para 1 and Chambers’ quote.

Rejoice and Pray with Thanksgiving

P 80: Read **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** and last question: “Why is this step necessary in the process of overcoming our inner antagonists, especially when they want to rear their ugly heads in tough circumstances?”

P 81, question: “What’s the opposite of thanksgiving? How would that attitude affect our response to difficult circumstances [and perhaps the circumstances themselves!]?”

Obey (the evidence of a faithful walk)

P 81: According to the scriptures in John, what awaits us on the other side of our obedience, and how will these impact our Canaanites?

DAY FIVE ~ Staying on Track

P 82: Read **Hebrews 12:1-13**. Re “weight” (v. 1): The weight may not be sin but can lead to sin (example: expectations when not met lead to a sinful reaction). God has marked out a race for each of us. He knows where we are, He knows where He wants us, and He knows how to get us there. He also knows to whom we’re to be holy witnesses in their race. All that said, what is the purpose of our race?

P 83: Reread verse 5-7. What form has God’s discipline (guidance and instruction) taken in your life?

P 83: Reread verse 11. What does this verse imply is our part in producing the harvest? Would you say that you are being trained by it?

P 83: What’s the exhortation in verses 12, 13? Read the last paragraph: “I love these last two...” How do these two verses address those who are still “stuck” in their one identified Canaanite?

Point: God will use His loving, purposeful discipline as His means of building us up and preparing us for His greater purpose. Our job is to let Him.

Bottom Line Questions for 12-week course: (**Leaders:** You have the option to use the half-page hand-out that follows to guide your prayer in the class as a whole, or after it breaks into small groups.)

Question: Recall your #1 Canaanite identified on page 64 and re-written on page 73. How did the seven steps in Days Three and Four address your inner enemy?

Small Group Leader or Class Leader: It’s time to turn your #1 inner enemy over to God for His weakening, all the while strengthening you for its defeat. And it will happen in His timing and in a way that is perfectly tailored to you. We’re going to take it to Him in prayer right now. Be sure that each student has a copy of the half sheet that follows. Pray together.

Bottom Line Questions for 24-week course:

LESSON 4, Days One and Two (You'll need more small group time for this session.)

- 1) Based on your answers to the application questions on pages 71 and 72, how has your "history" affected your relationship with God?
- 2) How has your "history" affected your relationship with your husband?
- 3) What part should Jesus play in your freedom from your history? **Leaders:** While no one is to judge/condemn another's road to freedom, the leader's goal is to help students understand that Jesus is totally sufficient to free us from whatever masters us. He does this by renewing our minds. **Leaders**, do you believe this? The steps in Days Three, Four, and Five are intended to begin a student's journey to freedom.

Read Philippians 1:6 (AMP) and make the point that follows: "*He Who began a good work in you will continue until the day of Jesus Christ—right up to the time of His return—developing [that good work] and perfecting and bringing it to full completion in you*" (underlines mine, denoting ongoing effort). (**Leaders:** The message here is *process*. In Christ, the goal is not the end-state of perfection; His goal is in the life-long *process of transformation* toward Christ-likeness.)

LESSON 4: Days Three, Four, and Five

- 1) Revisit your #1 Canaanite on page 64. Describe how the 7 steps from Days Three and Four can work to help you overcome and destroy your Canaanite, or any Canaanite.
- 2) Do you see any *evidence* that God is disciplining the Canaanite from your life? If so, what does this discipline look like? If not, why do you think that is?
- 3) With regard to any Canaanite in your life, what more can you *expect* from God?

Walk them through the prayer on page 31.

FAQ's:

Question: If we have a new heart, why does God need to work His nature into it little by little as it says on page 46? Isn't our nature new too? I know we still walk in the old flesh patterns that we relied upon before Christ, but does that have anything to do with our hearts, especially our new ones?

Answer: Great questions. We have been given a new heart (nature) that is now *responsive* to God's nature. Ezekiel 36:27 says, "*I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them*". The new heart now desires and is now *ready* and *able* to be conformed to the image of Christ—changed—which is not possible in an unregenerate heart. So, little by little, God replaces our negative thoughts, behaviors, conditioned responses, bad habits and behavior (I like your term "flesh patterns"), with His godly traits. And that *process* will continue until we cross over into glory. What an adventure!

Hand out prayer to each student. Instruction: From now on, deal with your Canaanites as God raises them up. Walk each Canaanite through the prayer below:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I recognize before You the Canaanite of _____. I choose to deny myself the luxury of tolerating it in my life any longer. I confess my struggle with this enemy. (Ladies: Take a moment and speak to the Lord in your own personal words how this enemy rears its head in your life and in your marriage.) I repent of it and seek Your forgiveness, God, desiring to turn from it and toward You.

I entrust this enemy to You, God, to lovingly discipline it out of my life Your way and in Your time.

Give me Your grace to wait on You and Your timing and not to lose faith. Help me to recognize every opportunity You put before me to rid this Canaanite from my land. I will trust that Your will is being done in my life.

I choose now to rejoice in You because You are God and You are able to do immeasurably more than I can ask or imagine according to Your power that is at work in me. Thank You, God! I give You all the praise and honor and glory for what You are doing and how You're doing it, and for what You are going to do in and through me.

Dear Lord, help me to choose obedience as You discipline this Canaanite out of my life, little by little.

In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

Watch and see how faithful your Father is in ridding the enemy from your land, little by little.

MEMORY VERSE: "Commit your ways to the Lord; Trust in Him, and He will act." Psalm 37:5 (RSV)

From now on, deal with your Canaanites as God raises them up. Walk each through the prayer below:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I recognize before You the Canaanite of _____. I choose to deny myself the luxury of tolerating it in my life any longer. I confess my struggle with this enemy. (Ladies: Take a moment and speak to the Lord in your own personal words how this enemy rears its head in your life and in your marriage.) I repent of it and seek Your forgiveness, God, desiring to turn from it and toward You.

I entrust this enemy to You, God, to lovingly discipline it out of my life Your way and in Your time.

Give me Your grace to wait on You and Your timing and not to lose faith. Help me to recognize every opportunity You put before me to rid this Canaanite from my land. I will trust that Your will is being done in my life.

I choose now to rejoice in You because You are God and You are able to do immeasurably more than I can ask or imagine according to Your power that is at work in me. Thank You, God! I give You all the praise and honor and glory for what You are doing and how You're doing it, and for what You are going to do in and through me.

Dear Lord, help me to choose obedience as You discipline this Canaanite out of my life, little by little.

In Jesus' Name I pray, Amen.

Watch and see how faithful your Father is in ridding the enemy from your land, little by little.

MEMORY VERSE: "Commit your ways to the Lord; Trust in Him, and He will act." Psalm 37:5 (RSV)

Enhancing Your Marriage
Leader's Guide
Lesson 5 ~ Marriage: God's Will and God's Way

Getting Started

- Open with Prayer
- Introduce Lesson 6
 - **Leaders:** Please give the ladies a “heads-up” that the exercise found on page 112, is very important for next week: “Third, ask your husband to write down what his three greatest needs are *from you* ...”

Lesson 5 ~ Main Point: Our changeless God has set changeless standards. “In the beginning” doesn’t change with the times. That which God intended for marriage in the beginning, He intends for today.

Visual/Practical Application #1: Before class, take time to write out a “Covenantal Love Chart” on a flip chart, chalk board, power point, etc. The covenantal love chart comes from the bottom of page 94. Write what God’s covenant love promises and then parallel it with what our love as wives should be. Example: God’s covenantal love is everlasting...Dana’s covenantal love for her husband is everlasting.

Contributed by Shannon George and Dana Marm, Stuttgart, Germany

#2: Bring a lock and key to the classroom. Hold up the key (hiding the lock) and ask the class what its function is. (It unlocks doors, cars, etc.) Then hold up the lock (without the key) and ask the class what its function is. Answers might include: it protects, secures containers, lockers, doors, etc. Now give a student the lock and ask her to use it. (She won’t be able to without the key.) Give another student the key and ask her to use it. (She won’t be able to without the lock.) Have them bring the two together “as one” to perform the functions for which they were designed. Make these points: 1) Neither functions fully without the other. 2) The key was specifically designed to fit the lock. 3) No other key will open in this lock...nor was it intended to. Such is the case with the two becoming one flesh as God ordains. You might ask your class how this illustration relates to the marriage relationship and see what insights you get.

Contributed by Machaela Curry, Brunswick, Maine

#3: To illustrate two being torn apart by divorce, pass out a 2” square of pink and a 2” square of blue paper to each student. With glue sticks, have them glue the pieces of paper together at the beginning of class and set aside. Just before closing, have them pull the pieces of paper apart. What happens to each piece of paper? This illustrates the tragedy of divorce as expressed in Dr. Ed Wheat’s quote in paragraph 2, page 98.

Contributed by Shannon George and Dana Marm, Stuttgart, Germany

#4: bring a balancing scale to class to make this point: When we respond incorrectly to our husbands, we can be off balance. I find this to be so true in my own life.

Contributed by Marcia Bednar, St. Joseph, MI

DAY ONE: Bone of My Bones

P 85: How do you respond to the statement made in the sidebar?

P 86: Let’s do a short review. **Read** Genesis 2:7, 18-20, 21-23. What’s the significance of Adam’s declaration in **Genesis 2:23**?

A: Genesis 2:23 was God’s remedy to **Genesis 2:18**. When God joins two together in the marriage covenant, they literally become a part of each other. God’s forming Adam’s helpmeet from his rib is symbolic of this spiritual dynamic. Marriage is a relationship within which we are a part *of* the other, not apart *from* the other—it’s spiritual DNA. And no one is to change that (**Matthew 19:6**).

Q: How would you define “alone”? If marriage was created by God to ease humanity’s aloneness, why are we sometimes so alone in our marriages?

PP 87-88: At this point in our study, can you see how *you* are designed to complete *your husband* physically (non-sexually and sexually), emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually? Think about it...in what ways *are* you necessary to your husband’s life?

P 88, Bottom Line, read paragraph: “Marriage is about companionship...” In what ways is God revealing this same dynamic in your marriage? (If it’s not yet recognizable, it will be.)

DAY TWO: And the Two Shall Become One

P 89: Read paragraph 1 and **Genesis 2:24**. How does breaking one of these commands bring strife to a marriage?

P 89-90: Read last para and first para: How do these paras speak to a Christian marriage today?

P 90: What is the spiritual parallel to leaving and cleaving based on these scriptures?

P 91: What is the significance of becoming one flesh? What’s the spiritual parallel (**1 Corinthians 6:17**)?

P 90-92: What did you discover from the application questions about *your* leaving? *Your* cleaving? *Your* becoming one with your husband?

P 92, Bottom Line: Read last paragraph: “Leaving, cleaving, and becoming one...”

DAY THREE: The Covenant Love of God

P 93-95: Describe God’s covenant love in single words or phrases.

Q: What does His covenant-keeping character mean for our marriages?

A: It’s an anchor, an example, and His standard for us.

Q, P 95: What if some in the class are divorced and remarried, or are married to one who has been divorced and remarried? Read para 2: “God obviously has high standards...” (Also refresh their memories from the Author’s Note on page 22 or from the explanation on page 4 of this Leader’s Guide under “Who Should Take *Enhancing Your Marriage: A Women’s Bible Study*?”)

P 95: Last Apply question.

DAY FOUR: The Marriage Covenant ~ A Biblical Perspective

Leaders: Please read these next three paragraphs from me to your students:

Today’s lesson is a tough teaching. We want to come and go as we please in life and marriage, believing that God will bob and weave with our times, our choices, our culture, our whims, etc. But the God of covenant is the same yesterday, today, and forever. What He’s established from the beginning will *never* change. This truth shouldn’t create angst and dissatisfaction, especially as it relates to marriage; it should create in us peace and security. The hardest part about *knowing* God’s intent for permanence in marriage is accepting it for ourselves or for others whose marriages are difficult.

In Malachi 2:16, God said, “I hate divorce.” The word “hate” literally means “foe or enemy of”. Whenever we hear of a marriage that is so untenable that divorce seems like the only reasonable (and merciful!) answer, we fail to consider whether *one or both of the spouses involved has tried marriage God’s way*. We might even counsel a friend toward divorce because it’s what her husband deserves, but only God knows all the facts, and only He knows how to work with each individual involved based on those facts. Our number one thrust should be to encourage another to seek God in the midst of a tough marriage or marital circumstance, which is what we’re supposed to be doing even in the best of circumstances. And if the tough marriage is our own, the testimony to others is our perseverance in preserving what God witnessed and declared inseparable.

A good friend told me, “If we concentrated on the beauty of God’s perfect design and miracle of marriage, I believe we would fight to the death to save it.”

P 99: read para 1 to reinforce not giving up.

Q: What was your response to this day’s lesson?

DAY FIVE: Loving God's Way

P 101: What is your definition of "love," where did you get it, and how has it shaped your marriage?

P 102: Read **1 John 3:16-18**. According to para one, "God's covenant love...", what do you think *agape* love should look like in a marriage?

Q: What if a husband is an unbeliever? How should his wife love him?

A: In the same way. Nothing changes! If anything, she loves him harder with the love of Christ and woos him to Christ as He wooed her to Himself – not by criticism and condemnation, but by *unconditional acceptance* for who he is; *sacrificial service* that personifies Christ in her; *merciful understanding* for her husband's ways that are without Christ for now; and *honest and sometimes hard truths* that, because of and out of Christ's love in her (and him), are genuinely and gently administered. As we reflect on how Jesus Christ addressed the lost, it was always with profound love, compassion, tenderness, and kindness. The Samaritan woman at the well (**John 4:1-26**) and the rich young lawyer (**Mark 10:17-22**) come to mind. When we truly grasp Christ's love for us, we should be so humbled by it that we can only love our husbands in the same way and leave the results to Jesus. An excellent book on this topic is Jo Berry's *Beloved Unbeliever*. It's an easy read, but not a book that you leave on your nightstand for your husband to see!

Qualifier: Believer or unbeliever, a husband is involved in illegal or immoral activity requires a helpmate who is willing to confront the problem and respectfully engage him with the truth. She is not to enable by ignoring the issue or participating in it with him. However, before doing so, profession, biblically-grounded counsel (pastor, counselor) is recommended along with adequate prayer/personal support from a discerning, biblically-grounded sister(s) who can maintain confidentiality.

P 103: Read **1 John 4:20-21**. How would you apply these verses to loving our husbands?

Q: What makes loving a husband God's way possible? See **Romans 5:5** and discuss what that means.

Q, P 104: Gary Thomas said, "...that's what marriage is for—to teach us how to love." Do you agree?

Oswald Chambers wrote, "God loved me not because I was lovable, but because it was His nature to do so. Now He commands me to show the same love to others..." He continues with, "[God] is saying, 'I will bring a number of people around you whom you cannot respect, but you must exhibit My love to them, just as I have exhibited it to you.' This kind of love is not a patronizing love for the unlovable—it is His love, and it will not be evidenced in us overnight. I should look within and remember how wonderfully He has dealt with me. The knowledge that God has loved me beyond all limits will compel me to go into the world to love others in the same way. I may get irritated because I have to live with an unusually difficult person. But I must think how disagreeable I have been with God!" (*My Utmost for His Highest*, May 11)

Until we truly understand and embrace God's covenant love for us, we will be unable or unwilling to love His way.

In a marriage relationship, our first "other" is our spouse. Therein lies the true believability of Christ in our lives. God's love in us can turn the tide in just about any marriage. And unless a husband is suffering from a deep psychological anomaly, or his heart is a stone, I believe he will respond over time. God promised, "Love [God's love in me] never fails" (**1 Corinthians 13:8**, NIV). Are we willing to prove Him right? If so, the place where this test will be the most credible is in our marriages.

Bottom Line Questions for 12-week course:

- 1) Being in covenant with your husband was meant by God to be an unbreakable bond until death. Therefore, what are you learning about how you love your husband?
- 2) What are you discovering that you need to do differently in order to love your husband God's way?

Close in prayer

Bottom Line Questions for 24-week course:

LESSON 5, Days One and Two

- 1) Consider the areas of strife in your marriage. These are evidence of *aloneness* (lack of oneness). Which of the three commands (leaving, cleaving, becoming one flesh) are being violated?
- 2) How does this violation contribute to these areas of strife?
- 3) How can your *covenant* relationship with Jesus Christ help to heal these areas of strife?

Close in prayer

LESSON 5: Days Three, Four, and Five

- 1) Being in covenant with your husband was meant by God to be an unbreakable bond until death. Therefore, what are you learning about how you love your husband?
- 2) Is there anything you need to change in order to love your husband God's *agape* way?

Close in prayer

FAQ's: None

Enhancing Your Marriage
Leader's Guide
Lesson 6 ~Right Attitude ~ Right Love

Getting Started

- Open with Prayer
- Introduce Lesson 7

Lesson 6 ~ Main Point: God deliberately created men and women to be *different*, not with the intention of being opposites, but each other's *balance*—in order to complement rather than compete.

Visual/Practical Application:

My husband, Marc, will be painting the walls of our new sunroom, so while looking at color samples on a color wheel I brought home from the paint store, I noticed that two colors can lay opposite each other on the colorwheel, yet still complement each other when used together in a room. In the same way, God created men & women to be "different" from each other, yet, in marriage, when working together in their God-given roles, they bring balance by complementing each other, rather than competing with each other.

Contributed by Paula Howard, Carlisle Barracks, PA

DAY ONE: Enhancing My Marriage Begins with Me

P 106: In **Philippians 4:4-6**, what does Paul say are the remedies for the anxieties about our marriage? How does this counsel apply to every issue in a marriage? Why or why not?

Q: Read **Philippians 4:7**. What's the benefit putting marriage difficulties to prayer instead of being anxious?

A: It eliminates fretting which leads to sin/evil (**Psalm 37:8**). (Discuss what that sin/evil can look like in a marriage.) Being "fret-free" frees the mind to receive the Holy Spirit's direction.

P 107: para 1 and **Philippians 4:8**. What does it mean to think on things from a "spiritual perspective"?

A: God and His purposes are fully at work all the time and in every circumstance, bar none! (**Jesus Calling 1/28**)

Q: Anyone assess her thought life about her husband? What did you discover? How can viewing our marriages from spiritual perspective change how we respond to our husbands? In other words, how do we get to right thinking and right doing when it comes to our husbands?

P 108: Read the Ricucci quote. Does this statement ring true in your marriage? What are you learning about yourself??

Q: Do you remember Gary Thomas' quote at the beginning of this lesson on page 105, that God designed marriage to make us holy rather than happy? How does **Romans 8:28-29** cooperate with this plan?

DAY TWO ~ Loving My Husband, No Strings Attached (1 Corinthians 13: 1-8)

P 108 (bottom), and 109 paras 1-4: Define *agape* love in your own words (p 109, Question #1)?

Q: What's difficult about loving our husbands the *agape* way? What's easy about it?

A: Leaders: Along with the descriptions on pages 108 and 109, it's important to stress that *agape* love is not out of our emotions, but rather, an act of our will. Loving the *agape* way (God's way) is our **choice and decision**. Regardless of our feelings, we can choose to love God's way. How does this happen? Submitting first to God, who commands it.

Q: Where do we get the ability to love our husbands "as is" (**Romans 5:5**)?

A: It's a 90-Degree Dynamic: We ask God to pour into us what He wants us to pour into our husbands

P 110: Ask Apply at top: “Do some of the personality traits you admired...” Then ask, In what ways are these traits necessary to your relationship?

P 110: Read **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**. How can *agape* love (God’s love in you) described in this passage help you treat (love) your husband differently?

A: It’s important to realize that ***we are not humanly capable of loving God’s way***. It’s not naturally in us. But if the Spirit is in us, then we are truly free to reject our human reactions and choose to love as God does and can through us.

P 111: Ask Apply: “**1 Corinthians 13:8** says that *agape* love (God’s love in us) never fails. What does this promise mean for you in your marriage” (whether it’s ideal or tough)?

P 111, Apply question: How could loving your husband “as is” be a gift to him?

P 112, Apply question reads: “Third, ask your husband to write down what his three greatest needs are *from you* that help him feel secure in your love.... Write down what *you* think his three top needs from you are.” What did you learn about your husband’s needs? Were they different from what you thought they were?

(**Leaders:** This is a very important and revealing exercise. If you have small groups, save it for then.)

P, 112-113, last paragraph plus Prayer paragraph: This is the bottom line of learning to love our husbands “as is”.

A husband’s lament: “If you can’t accentuate the positive, at least acknowledge it. The world is full of messages to men that there are standards we don’t meet. There is always another man who is more handsome, more virile, more athletic than we are. None of that matters if the most important person in our life looks up to us, accepts us as we are, and loves us even though we aren’t perfect. Maybe there is a part of the small boy that never leaves the grown man, I don’t know. All I know is that the husband who has a wife who supports him and praises him for the positive things he does is the envy of all the other men who have to live with criticism, sarcasm, and constant reminders of their failures.” (From Dr. Laura Schlessinger’s *The Proper Care and Feeding of Husbands*)

DAY THREE ~ Submission—God’s Powerful Conduit

Q: What was your concept of “the submissive wife” before this lesson and what is it now?

P 113. Read quote from Nancy Leigh DeMoss.

Point: Trying to acquire control or fight for it is not only destructive to the marriage relationship, but to observant children as well. And, it’s not only *exhausting*, it’s offensive to God. It’s a form of bondage rather than liberty!

P 113, 114: Discuss the difference between biblical submission in marriage and submission as the world defines it.

A: Godly submission is yielding our wills to the will of God out of reverence for Christ *first*, then adapting to our husband’s leadership out of *faith* and trust in God (trusting God with our husbands and entrusting our husbands, ourselves, and the outcome to God. In short, ***Biblical submission means adapting to our husband’s leadership, provision, and protection.***

“Doormat” submission yields our will to that of another, whether right or wrong, out of *fear* of that person.

P 115, 116: Read **Ephesians 5:22-24; 25 and 33**. Why are these commands necessary?

A: P 115, the middle para: “Although the decree of headship stands...”

A: P 116, para 1: “God knows that yielding to our husbands...”

Here’s the spiritual dynamic: the more a wife accepts and adapts to her husband’s leadership (submits), the more likely and able he is to love her as Christ loves the Church, which motivates her to accept his leadership.

Q: What do you think a wife’s respectful submission demonstrates to her husband? To her children? To everyone else?

Q: What if your husband isn’t saved? Are you still required to adapt to his leadership?

A: Whether husbands are saved or unsaved, God’s requirement is that wives adapt to their leadership. Most husbands, whether or not they’re Christian, are *good* men. When their wives respect (a word synonymous with submission, I believe) them as leader, protector and provider, husbands will step up to the plate. They

will also be more likely to “hear” the godly voice of their wives. (Our submission to our husbands must be in accordance with our submission to God. Review “What Submission is Not”, p 113. If she submits for the wrong reasons, she enables sinful behavior.)

P 116: Read the Handford quote. What’s your response to this quote? How does it relate to **Genesis 3:17**? (You may want to revisit “What Submission is Not” on page 113.)

P 117: According to the Forster quote, why is submission so difficult for a woman?

P 118, para 1, Bottom Line: “If we fear where godly submission will lead...”

Q: VERY IMPORTANT QUESTIONS: What are some areas of marriage that wives find it difficult to adapt to their husband’s leadership?

Q: What would godly, biblical submission look like in these areas? Solicit examples and their outcomes.

Q: In what ways are the commands to husbands and wives in Ephesians 5:22-33 the ultimate expressions of *agape* loving?

DAY FOUR ~ Respect—The Evidence of Honor

Q: Read **Ephesians 5:33** and **1 Peter 3:1-6** and make the following points (from page 119):

- **Respect and submission go hand in hand.** We cannot say that we respect our husbands and then refuse to adapt to their leadership. Conversely, submitting to their leadership disrespectfully is prideful and offends God.
- **Ephesians 5:33** gives no qualifiers or exceptions when it comes to respecting our husbands

- **OPTIONAL information:** Insights into **1 Peter 3:1-6** (NASB) ~ “*In the same way, you wives be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are **disobedient to the word**, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and **respectful behavior**. And let not your adornment be merely external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but let it be the **hidden person of the heart**, with the imperishable quality of a **gentle and quiet spirit**, which is precious in the sight of God. For this is the way in former times **the holy women also, who hoped in God**, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you **do what is right without being frightened by any fear**.*” (NASB)
 - “**submissive to your own husbands**” and no one else’s husband, puts a his cover of protection over his wife. She is to adapt to his leadership in the home.
 - “**disobedient to the word**” (or, “do not believe the word” - NIV) refers to unbelievers, but can also apply if a husband is a believer who isn’t following God
 - “**won**” means wooed to *Christ’s side* by respectful, loving conduct. The dictionary defines “woo” as “to bend or incline another toward one’s self; to court; to solicit in love...” In short, it’s not about what we say, but about what we *do*. And it’s how Christ won us over to Himself, not by condemnation or criticism, but by unconditional love and acceptance “as is”.
 - “**without a word**” refers to talk about spiritual things. It means, “Don’t preach! Don’t make spiritual things an issue.”
 - “**respectful behavior**” (verse 2) or “conduct”. This is the most powerful evangelistic tool a wife has. The Amplified Version says it this way: “[...That is, you are to feel for him all that reverence includes]—to respect, defer to, revere him; [revere means] to honor, esteem (appreciate, prize), and [in the human sense] adore him; [and adore means] to admire, praise, be devoted to, deeply love and enjoy [your husband].” Can you imagine any man on the receiving end of these gifts? A number of years ago I looked up each underlined word in my dictionary. The discovery was painfully revealing. I asked God to show me how to clean up my areas of disrespect. God and I have made great headway, and my husband is a grateful (and responsive!) receiver of this multifaceted respect. (**Leaders:** You will benefit from looking up the underlined words. Encourage your students to look them up as well.) “A wife’s respectful

- behavior will make a difference in her husband’s response to spiritual things, because it lends credibility to her walk.” (*EYM*, p 119)
- “**the hidden person of the heart**” refers to the inward gentle and peaceful (not anxious or fearful) spirit that is more beautiful to a man than her outward adornment.
 - “**gentle and quiet spirit**”: “Jo Berry writes, ‘The word *quiet*, as it is used in this passage, doesn’t mean lack of noise or activity, but lack of agitation or harshness. It doesn’t mean a godly woman is to be passive, complacent, or speak in a whisper. It doesn’t mean she can’t differ with her husband or that she has to be withdrawn or uncommunicative. It means she is to cultivate the peace of God in her life.’ Because her hope is in God, she is able to respectfully submit to her husband without being fearful of the outcome. Her peace-filled attitude makes her beautiful to him. This inner beauty—her strength and dignity—builds a husband’s trust and confidence in her, causing him to seek, welcome, and honor her positive influence.” (*EYM*, p 119)
 - “**the holy women also, who hoped in God**”: Their faith in God, not their faith in their husbands or in themselves, was their source of strength and encouragement.
 - “**do what is right**”: Adapting to a husband’s leadership is *God’s* righteous way; therefore, a wife can respond to her husband’s leadership without...
 - “**being frightened by any fear**” of where godly submission will lead. Verse 6, Amplified: “*It was thus that Sarah obeyed Abraham (following his guidance and acknowledging his headship over her by) calling him lord—master, leader, authority. And you are now her true daughters if you do right and let nothing terrify you—not giving way to hysterical fears or letting anxieties unnerve you*”. God’s protection covers her.
 - Read and discuss quote by Pam Forster, p 117.

Q: Can a husband be threatened by his wife’s Christianity? If so, why do you think that is?

P 119: What do you think Peter is suggesting with the phrase “*without a word*”?

P 119: From the middle paragraph: Have you found yourself

- beating your husband over the head with your Bible knowledge?
- self righteously applying your Bible knowledge to all he does that you disapprove of?
- **refusing to forgive him for not being a believer?** It is so common for us to piously hold our husbands hostage for their unbelief or slow growth, rather than obey God and let Him do what only He is able to do. No one comes to God except drawn by the Holy Spirit. Our job is not to let disrespectful behavior get in God’s way.
- using spiritual superiority to justify certain bad behaviors toward your husband?

P 119, last Q: How is a wife’s beauty defined in **1 Peter 3:3-6** and what do you think this means? Also see **Proverbs 31:30**.

Leaders: Please reinforce that disrespectful behavior is offensive to God because it discredits *Him* in *her* (p 119)

Q: Answer the “APPLY” questions on page 120. A good question to ask oneself when thinking we are good at respecting our husbands is, “Is what’s important to him important to me?” The answer to this question will answer the question, do I *truly* respect my husband?

DAY FIVE ~ My Friend or My Enemy?

Q: What difference does reacting or responding make in your relationship with your husband?

Q: How does **Romans 12:1-2** apply to the issue of reacting and responding?

P 123: Read para 1. Then: When we permit God to be in control of our emotions (responding), we can then trust Him with the outcome. Do you agree?

Here's an acrostic that applies to reactive behavior:

S—be **SELF-CONTROLLED** and

T—**TEMPERED** by the

O—**OVER-RIDING**

P—**POWER** of the Holy Spirit

Go back to the checklist in **Philippians 4:8**. If your thinking doesn't pass the test, adjust it in accordance with **Romans 12:2**.

Bottom Line Questions, Lesson 6 for 12-week course: (*Leaders:* Your students may want to focus on the negative. Make sure they give positives in each category, too):

What are you learning *about yourself* with regard to...

- How you love (*agape*) your husband unconditionally?
- How you submit to him (adapt to his leadership in your marriage and in your home)?
- How you respect him?
- How you respond (rather than react) to him?

Close in prayer

Leaders: If some of the wives try to blame their husbands for their (the wives') disrespectful or reactionary behavior, *please* bring them back to what they are learning about *themselves*, not what they think about their husbands. Gently remind them that in God's economy, no matter how our husbands behave, God will hold us accountable for our conduct.

Bottom Line Questions for 24-week course:

Lesson 6, Days One and Two

- 1) From page 112, what three top needs did your husband write down? What did you think his top three needs were? How did your lists compare?
- 2) Would you say that what's important to your husband is important to you? How does your answer address his top three needs?
- 3) How is God calling you to love your husband differently than you have been?

Pray for change in how they love (agape) their husbands

Lesson 6: Days Three, Four, and Five

(*Leaders:* Your students may want to focus on the negative. Make sure they give positives in each category, too):

- 1) What are you learning *about yourself* with regard to how you submit to your husband (adapt to his leadership in your marriage and in your home)?
- 2) What are you learning *about yourself* with regard to how you respect your husband? How you respond (rather than react) to your husband?

Leaders: If some of the wives try to blame their husbands for their (the wives') disrespectful or reactionary behavior, *please* bring them back to what they are learning about *themselves*, not what they think about their husbands. Gently remind them that in God's economy, no matter how our husbands behave, God will hold us accountable for our disobedience to His command to submit and respect.

Pray for the changes necessary in each of these areas of submission, respect, and reacting?

FAQ:

Question: In Ephesians 5:21, Paul calls us to submit to *one another* out of reverence to Christ. Aren't there times when my husband is supposed to submit to me, especially if I'm right?

Answer: Let's look closely at what follows Ephesians 5:21: Instructions to the wives about submitting to their husbands (5:22-24); instructions to children about submitting to (obeying) their parents (6:1-4); instructions to slaves about submitting to their masters (6:5-9). As many theologians agree, Ephesians 5:21 does not call everyone to be mutually submissive depending on the circumstance. Verse 5:21 is the introduction to the *relationships* in which submission is necessary and appropriate for order, whether in the home, the workplace, or in government (Romans 13:1-7).

Even when a wife is right, her submission to her husband can accomplish more for God when her husband realizes his mistake than all the browbeating or nagging in a lifetime. A good example of godly submission is a wife's deference to her husband's decision on a financial issue when he shows strong resistance to her correct, and even biblical, counsel. If she nags (which means she lets him know how she feels more than once—OK *twice*), his resistance will only harden. Or she can become fearful and whine a lot, which drives home her distrust of him. Neither will honor God. If God calls her to submit to her husband's decision and trust *Him* with the outcome—even if it hurts—then she can rest in knowing that God's got a powerful growth opportunity in store for both of them. Her challenge will be not to fear, but to exhibit the grace that assists God in His teaching (usually without a word from her) once her husband discovers his mistake. "I told you so"—whether spoken, written all over her face, or exhibited in her body language—will kill whatever depth God intended to bring to the teaching and to their relationship through His lesson.

Enhancing Your Marriage
Leader's Guide
Lesson 7 ~ The Freedom to Love

Getting Started:

- Open with Prayer
- Introduce **Lesson 8**.
 - **Leaders:** There are two options to conducting **Lesson 8**. Please choose whichever you're more comfortable with.
 - Option One will be the typical format of discussing questions from each sub-lesson.
 - Option Two: Today, hand out pieces of paper and ask your students to anonymously write their most "burning" question about sex, fold it, and turn it in at the end of today's lesson. (I use the larger, 3"x5" Post It Notes. The gals write their question on the sticky side and fold it in half, sticking it shut.) Some of their questions will be answered in Lesson 8 and you won't have to address them beyond that, but others haven't been addressed in Lesson 8 (a space issue for the most part). You can spend the better portion of next week's class time discussing the questions in lieu of the typical Q/A format. You will have a week to prepare the answers (mostly from Dr. Rosenau's book, *A Celebration of Sex*. You are likely to find the answers to every question in this book.) All of their questions should be acknowledged and addressed. In Lesson 8's FAQ's section, I've addressed some of the most burning questions that came my way over the years. If you're shy about discussing sex, ask God for holy boldness! After all, it was His idea. ☺
 - No matter which option you choose, you'll get questions. Be prepared! The FAQ's at the end of **Lesson 8** in this guide will help you.

Lesson 7 ~ Main Point: Forgiveness frees *you*—to grow in Christ!

Visual/Practical Application: To illustrate the burden of unforgiveness, open class by asking the ladies to stand and find a partner. Have each pair stand back-to-back with their arms intertwined and locked together. Now, have one lady lean forward such that she is bearing the whole weight of her partner on her back and try to take a few steps. Then, have the other partner do the same. It's nearly impossible to have each lady walk with such a burden on her back. This demonstrates the huge burden of unforgiveness—roping the one unforgiven to your back. The only difference is that the load is continually carried around until forgiveness releases it and frees you both.

Contributed by Shannon George and Dana Marm, Stuttgart, Germany

DAY ONE ~ The Burden

Q: What was your response to Day One's exercise?

DAY TWO~ The Unburdening

P 129: Read **Matthew 6:14-15**. How does this passage address a marriage?

P 130-132: According to the **Matthew 6 and 18** passages, how does forgiveness work? What are the consequences of unforgiveness?

Q: How did walking through **Matthew 18:21-35** as a role play impact your perspective on forgiving your husband?

Q: What did the servant's debt to the master really represent, and why should that be important to us?

A: Our sin debt that was cancelled by Christ.

P 132: In **Matthew 18:35**, why do you think forgiving "*from the heart*" is so important to God?

Bottom Line: third paragraph on page 132.

DAY THREE ~ Understanding Forgiveness

P 133: Ask what truths in Day Three's lesson spoke to them personally and why? Be sure to read the scriptures that accompany the point.

P 134: Read **1 Peter 2:23** and **Romans 12:17-21**. How do the principles in these verses play out in a marriage relationship? Any recent examples?

Note: *Telling Each Other the Truth*, by William Backus is a helpful book on how to be genuine and say what is real so that the need to forgive doesn't keep cropping up.

DAY FOUR ~ Time to Forgive

Q: What was your response to this exercise?

Q: Did anyone discover that some of what you forgave wasn't even sin? What does this reveal about human nature and its impact on a marriage relationship? What is the remedy to this problem?

Q: Are there any bitter roots still out there? What's the danger of this? Read **Psalm 73:21-28**; **Hebrews 12:15**.

P 137, bottom para: What about the legitimate feelings that are associated with an offense against us?

A: The feelings that result from an offense against us are real and in many cases, valid. But we can't permit our feelings to determine whether or not we forgive. God has already determined that we must. Therefore, forgiving is an *act of our will*, one that He knows we are capable of or He wouldn't require it of us.

Acknowledging our feelings to God—telling Him how our offender made us feel—is vital to moving on. He may even have us confront our offender, which would have to be a true leading of the Holy Spirit. When we *choose* to forgive out of obedience to God's will and remain steadfast to our decision to forgive, the feelings of forgiveness will follow in time.

Q: Since forgiveness does change us, did something change in *you* this week?

DAY FIVE ~ Through Your Eyes, Lord

P 139: Read **Romans 12:1-2**; then para 1: "When you praise God for the good qualities in your husband, you'll begin to be '*transformed by the renewing of your mind.*'" What impact did listing and speaking your husband's good qualities have on you?

P 139, second finger: Make this point: "...be sincere about his good qualities, and they'll begin to grow". How is this so?

P 139, fourth finger: Did you discover something that's important to your husband that you've been ignoring or neglecting to act on?

Q, P 140: What did you discover about the ways your husband has blessed you?

Q, P 140-142, "Apply": Remembering is very important to the process of strengthening and solidifying a relationship. What did you learn from this last application exercise?

Bottom Line Question for 12-week course:

The person you forgave will likely disappoint you again. How will you choose to respond to that disappointment?

Leaders: My encouragement, Leaders, is to keep a handle on those who want to make excuses (blame their husbands) for why they can't (won't) forgive. Stand lovingly firm on God's requirement (Matthew 18:35), encouraging them that if it were impossible to forgive, God wouldn't require it of us. I think the exercise is really more about our being conformed into Christ's image than about our letting someone off our hook.

“Not my will but Thine be done” is always the goal. That’s where the freedom lies. Keep moving them forward.

Close in prayer

Bottom Line Questions for 24-week course

Lesson 7, Days One through Four:

Your husband (or the person other than your husband whom you forgave) will likely disappoint you again. How will you choose to respond to that disappointment?

Leaders: My encouragement, Leaders, is to keep a handle on those who want to make excuses (blame their husbands) for why they can't (won't) forgive. Stand lovingly firm on God's requirement (Matthew 18:35), encouraging them that if it were impossible to forgive, God wouldn't require it of us. I think the exercise is really more about our being conformed into Christ's image than about our letting someone off our hook. *“Not my will but Thine be done”* is always the goal. That’s where the freedom lies. Keep moving them forward.

Close in prayer

Lesson 7, Day Five:

Today we’re going to put Romans 12:2 into practice. Devote a generous amount of class time to this small group exercise.

- 1) From P 138: What are your husband’s good qualities, special attributes and strengths
- 2) From P 139: What did you say or do this week that reflected Romans 12:2 at work in your mind?
- 3) From P 140: In what ways *has* your husband blessed you?
- 4) From PP 140-142, Apply: What did you discover from this exercise?

Close in prayer

FAQ’s: None

Enhancing Your Marriage
Leader's Guide
Lesson 8 ~ Our Sexuality: God's Ultimate Wedding Gift

Getting Started

- Open with Prayer
- Introduce Lesson 9
- Teaching strategies for Lesson 8: Whether you choose to follow the weekly format for conducting your class (Option 1), or to address your students' questions gathered last week (Option 2), you have a wonderful opportunity to boldly and biblically address the topic of sexual intimacy. Do so with compassion, gentleness, and reliance on God's input. It's important to cite your resources (as well as the resources I used with the FAQ section), and encourage them to continue to get educated on their own. I can't stress enough how important it is for Christian women to get smart about their bodies, their husband's bodies, sex, and sexuality as God designed it. It's freeing (John 8:32).
 - Option One ~ Follow the weekly format of discussing the questions for each sub-lesson. Encourage the women to be honest and forthright with their answers to these questions and to put down the temptation to be fearful about discussing sex.
 - Option Two ~ The class may remain together as a group today rather than break into smaller groups since answers to questions will benefit the class as a whole.
 - Be sure to re-establish the security of confidentiality in your class with either Option, since it's likely you'll get some personal questions. Discussion can get lively!

Lesson 8 ~ Main Point: Sexual intimacy brings strength, protection, healing, and comfort to a marriage. God intended it to bless a husband and wife—often.

Visual/Practical Application: Depending on how many ladies submitted questions last week, make copies of the FAQ's at the end of this section, and pass them out to each student. Take time at the end of class to review each question and ensure that there are not any "floating" questions out there.

DAY ONE ~ The Purpose and Pleasure of Sexual Intimacy

P 144, para 3: What is the spiritual connect of sexual intimacy in marriage?

P 145: Pastor and author John Piper says this of marriage in general: "The reason there is so much misery in marriage is not that husbands and wives seek their own pleasure, but that they do not seek it in the pleasure of their spouses. The biblical mandate to husbands and wives is to seek your own joy in the joy of your spouse." (*Desiring God*, Multnomah Books, Sisters, OR, 1996, p175). Marital sexual intimacy is a beautiful place of joy as we bring joy to our spouses. How does Song of **Solomon 4:1-16 and 5:1** affirm Piper's statement?

P 145, Apply: What is your response to our omnipresent God being in your most intimate places with your husband?

A: A woman in class emphatically and very seriously exclaimed that if God is in her bedroom then she's not going in there anymore! If any of us is fearful of God's stamp of approval, we should want Him in there all the more to respond and teach to our need; to comfort us in our discomfort, inhibitions, and uncertainties; to rejoice with us in our exhilarations; to share in the joy and deep satisfaction of knowing we've brought pleasure to our mate, and received it! Sexual intimacy solidifies our oneness—over and over again. Is it any wonder that sex is part of God's "very good"! (**Genesis 1:31**)

P 146, read paragraph 2: “The adulteress has corrupted...” and stress that the adulteress is still a real and bold threat against today’s marriages. Proverbs stresses this in Chapters 1-7. And not just the adulteress today. Erotica and pornography take a toll on the person and the marriage relationship by isolating a spouse.

Q: Read **Proverbs 5:15-19**. What is the message for both husband and wife in this passage?

A: Not only is our husband supposed to find pleasure in us throughout the years in our sexual intimacy, but we are to provide that pleasure. And it’s not just pleasure. There will be those times when our sexual intimacy will provide comfort, and *always* protection, not only against the adulteress and her schemes, but against those things that want to assault our husband’s manhood: health issues, work issues, insecurities. We have no idea how deeply our loving our husband’s sexually goes.

P 147: Ask questions at top of page.

DAY TWO ~ Principles of Selfless Sexual Intimacy

P 147: Read **Ephesians 5:22-25 and 33**, then read the last paragraph: “These verses reveal...” Have you seen God’s Law of Reciprocity at work in your relationship as it’s described in this paragraph?

Point: Sex is a primary area for every wife to practice respect for her husband’s sexual nature, and loving, *voluntary* submission to his sexual need. It is perhaps her greatest test of selfless serving. She is not a “sex object”, and he is not merely a “pay check”.

P 147-152: Read **1 Corinthians 7:3-5**. What are God’s Principles of Need, Authority and Habit and how does each impact your perspective on sex?

Q: Principle of Need: What gets in the way of following this principle? (Answers may vary.)

P 149: Read first line of para 3: “Having authority over...” and ask what they think of this statement. What gets in the way of follow this principle? (Authority)

P 150, para 3: “God calls...” Why is habit important to our sexual intimacy? What spiritual dynamic do you see in maintaining consistent sexual intimacy? What gets in the way of following this principle (Habit)?

Q: What’s the “bottom line” laid out by God’s three principles?

P 151: Read **Proverbs 11:24-25** and **Luke 6:38**. How do these passages apply to selfless sexual response?

Q: Read **Colossians 3:17, 23-24**. How can this exhortation help you respond to your husband sexually even if you’re not interested or “in the mood.”

P 151, last paragraph: “God’s protection and blessing...” How should this point affect your perspective on your sex life?

DAY THREE ~ Major Roadblocks to Our Sexual Fulfillment

P 153-158: Address each Roadblock and one accompanying scripture. Solicit comments on what your students learned, or any testimonies they may have as a result of what they learned.

P 154: Read the Minirth/Meier quote at the top of the page: “If an individual changes all his *can’t*s to *won’t*s, he stops avoiding the truth, quits deceiving himself, and starts living in reality.” How can this truth change our sex lives?

P 155: Dr. Shay Roop, author of *For Women Only: God’s Design for Female Sexuality and Intimacy*, said, “The worst enemy of good sex is silence.” How can we as wives (helpmeets!) start to break down the barrier of inhibited communication that may exist between our husbands and us?

A: One of the best ways is to read an excellent Christian sex manual (my recommendation is **Dr. Doug Rosenau’s, *A Celebration of Sex***). Since many husbands have little time to read books, read short excerpts to yours. I don’t know too many husbands that don’t appreciate hearing little tidbits about sex that can enhance the relationship. My other favorite books are **Kevin Leman’s *Making Sense of the Men in Your Life***, and his other, *Sheet Music*. My husband loves to hear from Kevin! For those of us who are in an older season of life, **Rosenau’s, *A Celebration of Sex After 50***, and **Dr. Tim and Beverly LaHaye’s, *The Act of Marriage After 40***, are highly recommended. Also visit my website: www.eymministries.org and the Frequently Asked Questions.

Leaders: Be certain to convey to your students that the excerpts they read to their husbands shouldn't be with the intent of pointing out all the things their guys do wrong, but to build them up and contribute to their sexual growth as a couple.

DAY FOUR ~ Common Obstacles Along the Way

P 158-161: As with Day Three, address each obstacle and one accompanying scripture. Solicit their comments on what they learned, or any testimonies they may have as a result of what they learned.

DAY FIVE ~ On the Road to Sexual Fulfillment

P 162: What impact, if any, did Facts #1 and #2 have on you and your perspective with regard to your sexual response?

P 163: Read the first paragraph and discuss students' response to it.

Q: Read **Song of Solomon 5:10-16 and 6:2-3**. How do we fix our minds on our husbands as our lovers?

Bottom Line Question for 12-week course: After this week's lesson, what is the "next thing" you'll be doing to build sexual intimacy with your husband?

Close in prayer

Bottom Line Question for 24-week course:

Lesson 8, Days One and Two

Principle of Need: What did God teach you about relating to your husband in this area of sexual need? How will this change the way you relate to him in this area?

Principle of Authority: What is your response to your husband's God-given authority over your body? What is your response to your God-given authority over your husband's body? How will your answers to these questions change the way you relate to him in this area of mutual authority?

Principle of Habit: What did God teach you about how you relate to your husband in this area of sexual habit? How will it change the way you relate to him in this area?

Leaders: If you have difficulty getting a response to the previous questions, ask the questions specific to each principle that follows:

Principle of Need:

How does your husband communicate to you his need for sex?

Generally, what is your response?

What effect do you think your response has on your husband? Your relationship in general?

What will you do to elevate this principle in your marriage bed?

Principle of Authority:

What new doors—new freedoms—can this truth open for you?

What will you do to elevate this principle in your marriage bed?

Principle of Habit:

How does the principle of habit speak to your current level of sexual activity?

Has your habit been one of avoidance and deprivation or of responsiveness? What impact has your habit had on your relationship?

What avoidance practices do you use?

Do you use the habit of withholding sex as a form of punishment?

How does withholding sex violate God's principles of need, authority, and habit?

What will you do to elevate this principle in your marriage bed?

Close in prayer

Bottom Line Question for Lesson 8, Days Three, Four and Five:

- 1) What would you like your husband to know about your sexual relationship that you've been afraid to communicate?
- 2) After this week's lesson, what is the "next thing" you'll be doing to build sexual intimacy and compatibility with your husband?

Close in prayer

A Little Humor

Housework was a woman's job, but one evening, Janice arrived home from work to find the children bathed, one load of laundry in the washer and another in the dryer. Dinner was on the stove and the table set. She was astonished!

It turns out that Chuck had read an article that said, 'Wives who worked full-time and had to do their own housework were too tired to have sex.'

The night went very well. The next day, Janice told her Red Hat friends all about it. 'We had a great dinner. Chuck even cleaned up the kitchen. He helped the kids do their homework, folded all the laundry and put it away. I really enjoyed the evening.'

'But what about afterward?' asked her friends.

'Oh, that..... Chuck was too tired.'

God is good. ☺

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's):

Question: Having been taught that sex was to be saved for marriage, I was a virgin when I married. However, I'm still having trouble feeling free about enjoying my husband sexually. It's still naughty in my mind even though I did everything right! How do I get over this hump?

Answer: What a great question! The answer was lovingly crafted by Claudia Duff: The wedding night can be a scary thing for a virgin. Most of us were taught to "avoid sex" until marriage rather than to "reverence" the gift and the "Giver" of sex by honoring it with our pure marriage beds. There is a huge difference between the two, although they both produce virgins.

My first thought is, change your mind. Romans 12:2 (AMP) says, "*Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].*" You must reject the lie that sex is dirty, and believe the truth that

it is beautiful and designed by a loving Creator for His creation to enjoy. The Enemy has robbed the Church of the gift of sex, and we must take it back. Do not allow the Enemy to reign in the place that God has ordained for you and your husband—your marital bed.

My second thought is, believe The Word of God. *"When they observe the pure and modest way in which you conduct yourselves, together with your reverence [for your husband; you are to feel for him all that reverence includes; to respect, defer to, revere him-to honor, esteem, appreciate, prize, and, in the human sense, to adore him, that is, to admire, praise, be devoted to, deeply love, and enjoy your husband]!"* (1Peter 3:2, AMP) Sexual enjoyment in marriage is a part of your submission and reverence to your husband; it is not optional. God expects you to ENJOY your husband. What a great God we serve to command such freedom to us! Now, that is what I call "free love"!

My third thought is, make no excuses for disobedience. *"It was thus that Sarah obeyed Abraham [following his guidance and acknowledging his headship over her by] calling him lord (master, leader, authority). And you are now her true daughters if you do right and let nothing terrify you [not giving way to hysterical fears or letting anxieties unnerve you]!"* (1Peter 3:6, AMP) Fear about sexual intimacy diminishes when you choose to walk in obedience to the Word of God. Honor His commands and the fear will begin to lose its grip on your heart each time you choose rightly. God has already made provision for your fear, and He wants you to overcome it by your faith, by walking out *His* plan—oneness through sexual intimacy.

Question: How do I "switch gears" when my husband conveys sexual interest? Sometimes (often!) it's hard for me to leave what I'm doing to refocus on having sex. I think I'm nice about it, but I'm sure it affects my husband when I put him off.

Answer: "Switching gears" is a gracious act of your will and it takes practice. This is where the Principles of Need, Authority and Habit (1 Corinthians 7:3-5) kick in and link up with a servant's heart. A wife's *choice* to respond to her husband's sexual desire speaks volumes to him. It conveys that she cares, that what's important to him is important to her, and that he's necessary to her life. These validate and solidify in his heart and mind his oneness with his wife, and she remains the object of his love. I have discovered that when I do the right thing and respond to my husband's desire (and need) for sex, the right feelings follow. Both of us are blessed!

If there is a time when you truly can't accommodate your husband (because you *do* have that dental appointment, or you truly do have a migraine), make a plan for later in the day or the next day and stick to it.

Question: My husband wants me to initiate sex more, but I'm uncomfortable with that. What can I do?

Answer: Actually, the question is what *will* you do? From a biblical perspective, a wife has every right to initiate and is encouraged to do so. See 1 Corinthians 7:4. Initiation speaks volumes to a husband. It says, "You've got what it takes and I desire it." A wife's initiation completes her husband in a very deep place: The pleasure most men derive from sexually pleasing their wives affirms them. This is not macho, self-centered chest-beating, but a natural manifestation of God's creative design to build oneness. When we as wives flip that switch in our heads from berating our men for their maleness (an increasingly more popular cultural pastime), to praising God for how He created our husbands (which includes thanking God that our men still desire us), we'll begin to find pleasure in the pleasure they derive from us. Bottom line: *Choose* to initiate!

Question: I've never experienced orgasm, except for clitoral stimulation. Will I ever be able to do so?

Answer: *First*, get a physical checkup to ensure that all your parts are healthy.

Second, if all is well, start getting "smart" about your body and how God created it to respond sexually. I maintain that one of the biggest deterrents to orgasm is *lack of knowledge* about our sexual bodies. Another deterrent is *not communicating* what you learn to your husband. And yet another is taking the *time* to put what you learn to good use. Christian books recommended for your sex ed:

- *A Celebration of Sex* by Dr. Doug Rosenau
- *A Celebration of Sex After 50* by Dr. Doug Rosenau
- *For Women Only: God's Design for Female Sexuality & Intimacy* by Dr. Shay Roop

- *How the Make Sense Out of the Men in Your Live* by Kevin Leman
- *Sheet Music* by Kevin Leman
- *Intimate Issues* by Linda Dillow and Lorraine Pintus
- *The Act of Marriage After 40* by Dr. Tim and Beverly LaHaye

Learn about your body. *Learn* about your husband's body. *Learn* to enjoy what God intended for pleasure, and *unlearn* the lies that distract you from being all He intended you to be for your husband. This applies to anything that may inhibit you sexually: sin, guilt, fear, anger, complacency, shyness, frustration, disgust, whatever has you bound. Return to Lesson 8, Days Two and Three in *Enhancing Your Marriage* and really do business with God over the Roadblocks and Obstacles that apply to you. If necessary, find a biblically grounded sister who can pray with you and hold you accountable to right thinking and doing.

Third, do not be distracted any longer about not having an orgasm. Begin to praise God for the deep connections you make with your husband every time you're sexually intimate. Approach your intimacy with no expectations (of orgasm), but enter your encounters with joy at the opportunity of sharing and building your oneness so intimately. *Desire* to build depth into your love-making.

Fourth, permit yourself to relax. Consciously, before and during intercourse, *cause all* your muscles to loosen and let down. Stop trying to have an orgasm and start trusting God with the way He created your body to respond to sexual stimuli. Allow yourself to *feel* how your body responds to your husband's touch, praising God for each and every sensation. Enjoy getting in tune with your body without the expectation that it will lead to orgasm. This isn't giving up; this is giving over (surrendering) to God. Have this approach every time you make love.

Fifth, take more time in foreplay with your husband so that your body can respond more fully to sexual arousal. And don't be afraid to ask him to take the time with you. You both need the practice no matter how long you've been married! This is all a part of your growing together as God's couple. Why is it that when couples marry we can accept that it will take a lifetime together to grow into ever-increasing oneness and compatibility, but we expect our wedding nights to be perfect when it comes to our sexual oneness and compatibility? Growing together sexually is also a lifetime process. The wedding night was the *beginning* of growth toward sexual maturity, not the goal itself. The goal is in the process.

Last, how fit is your PC muscle? You'll read in your Christian manuals that God programmed our bodies to work at their optimum sexually. In the woman, the pubococcygeus (PC) muscle extends from the bony part at the front of the pelvis (pubis) to the coccyx at the end of the spine. It not only assists in stopping a stream of urine, but is also capable of heightening sexual arousal. The more we use it, the better it works. After childbirth, many of us have been given **Kegel exercises** to strengthen the PC muscle for better bladder control. Such was the case for Mrs. Wilson, a patient of Dr. Kegel's, who suffered with stress incontinence (lack of bladder control). Dr. Kegel gave her experimental exercises. Not only was her incontinence alleviated, but she reported to Dr. Kegel that she had reached orgasm for the first time in 15 years of marriage. The strengthened PC muscle made her vagina more able to automatically exert the pressure and tension required to stimulate the nerves in response to the sexual stimulation by the penis. The strengthened PC also tugs on the clitoris when contracted. You can consciously contract the PC muscle during intercourse, which further stimulates toward orgasm.

Kegel exercises are not limited to women who've given childbirth. Women (young or older) with no children can have weak PC muscles which can result in their not "feeling anything" during intercourse. The success of Kegel exercises for improving sexual response (as well as bladder control) has prompted its adoption by doctors worldwide. The exercises are *simple* and can be done even while sitting at a red light (and no one will even know you're doing it!). Here's how to begin:

While sitting on the commode, stop and start your steady stream of urine. If you can stop a steady stream and hold it for 5-10 seconds, your PC muscle is in pretty good shape. If you cannot hold a steady stream, you need to start exercising the PC muscle several times daily for about 6 weeks until you can stop a stream for a good 10 seconds. Contract the PC muscle, hold your urine as long as possible, and release while on the commode. This will give you a sense of what the contraction and release (that's the exercise) of the muscle feels like. Do so every time you urinate. Once you have the feel for it, you can exercise your PC muscle any time or

anywhere—at a red light, watching TV, talking on the telephone, etc. Contract the muscle, hold the muscle taught, and release; contract, hold, and release. The goal is to build the muscle strength that will allow you to hold the muscle taught for about 10 seconds. It really happens rather quickly. You will then find that your PC muscle is easy to control during lovemaking—enhancing your husband’s sexual experience (causing a tighter grip of his penis) and your experience (increasing vaginal and clitoral sensations). Please note the potential here, Ladies! Know your own bodies and how God designed them to work. Then enjoy!!

Question: What about sex during my period? It was a sin in the Old Testament.

Answer: There is no prohibition these days to having sex during your period, because we are not under the Law. I’m reminded of 1 Corinthians 6:1 in which Paul says, “*All things are permissible for me—but not everything is beneficial.*” It is permissible to have sex during one’s period, but it may not be beneficial during her heaviest flow because of the “mess” associated with it. Naturally it’s less messy nearing the end of menstruation. Therefore, if both husband and wife are amenable to sex during her period, it is not an issue. A towel on the bed works wonders.

Question: What about masturbation, especially during long separations?

Answer: The major taboo about masturbation, also called self-pleasuring, is where the mind goes. No one other than our spouse is to take up intimate space in our minds. I would have to copy Rosenau’s chapter in *A Celebration of Sex* to tell you all of his guidance on this subject, but it is good, healthy, balanced guidance. We as couples are free to pleasure each other. We can even discover our own bodies and hotspots by exploring them ourselves or with our husbands (no matter how old we are!) We sometimes need to *rediscover* hotspots as we get older or after a season of complacency, illness, pregnancy, or menopause. Even medications can affect our areas of arousal.

Dr. Tim and Beverly LaHaye, in their book, *The Act of Marriage After 40*, write: “All forms of masturbation have to be evaluated, not in the light of the physical experience, but in the mental attitude at the time. Usually, male masturbation is associated with pornography or fantasies that are pornographic, and that’s when it’s detrimental. Masturbation can also become self-addicting...At the end of the day,” LaHaye says, “masturbation is a matter between the individual and God. If you can do it without feeling the need to confess it as sin, the physical function of bringing oneself to orgasm is not in itself a sinful act—it’s the mental thought process that makes it right or wrong.” (*The Act of Marriage After 40*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000, p 189)

A consideration: One of the drawbacks to masturbation is the issue of oneness. We are not one with ourselves but with our spouse. Masturbation can counter the goal of oneness that sexual intimacy fosters.

A warning: Is a husband’s masturbation a wife’s problem? It is if he is compensating regularly for what she should be providing. If spouses are remiss in fulfilling their sexual responsibilities (as outlined in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5) their neglect may force their mates to masturbate out of sheer sexual frustration. God will call a neglectful spouse to account. Masturbation is not to be a *primary* source of sexual release or pleasure.

Question: How about using other devices, or “bedroom games” or role playing? My husband and I like to role play, but we don’t lose our identities as husband and wife in the process. We like both the fun and sensation. We thought it was OK as long as we mutually agree. Is it?

Answer: Being creative in your sexual encounters is half the fun, as long as that creativity doesn’t introduce another’s identity into the mix. In other words, *your husband* is the firemen rescuing *his wife*, the damsel in distress, not Mel Gibson or the neighbor next door. The use of “props” or “toys” or the use of fantasy are not taboo as long as they are intended to enhance your intimacy with your husband and your lovemaking. They are to be mutually agreed upon and are not to violate or dishonor the spouse. Another thought: if you are aroused only when your husband is pretending to be someone else, or when you are pretending to be *with* someone else, fantasizing is no longer a healthy enhancer. The line has just crossed over into adulterous territory.

We are free to “love” our spouses in any way that doesn’t violate them physically or mentally, or compromise them spiritually. Only you and your husband can decide how you fit alongside God’s standard. If

you ask God's guidance, you'll get it. Since God created sex as the ultimate wedding gift, He is quite capable of spicing up our sex lives. Pick His brain.

Question: How about oral sex and anal intercourse? Does the Bible permit them?

Answer: This question is one of the most frequently asked by my students. Let's take these two delicate topics one at a time:

Oral Sex: The Bible is "silent" on oral sex to some degree. *The Song of Solomon* talks about the "garden of spices", which in the Hebrew, according to **Cliff Penner**, alludes to the genitalia (*The Gift of Sex*, Word Publishing, 1981, p 228). Eating "choice fruits" from this garden does not have to be an unpleasant consideration, especially if the fruit has been freshly washed. For the mutually consenting couple, oral sex can be stimulating, fun foreplay or full-play (especially for a husband whose wife is incapacitated due to heavy menstruation or childbirth). It's also a loving alternative for couples who may have health issues such as arthritis.

If you have closed the door on oral sex without having experienced it—either as the giver or the receiver—perhaps you can make it a matter of prayer. And learn more about it. Penner's book and all of the books recommended in my FAQ's deal forthrightly with the topic.

Anal intercourse: Although the Bible is also silent on this activity between a husband and wife, the medical evidence is not. God designed the vaginal tissue for the rigors of intercourse, not the anus. Its delicate tissues tear, bleed, and produce painful hemorrhoids and fissures—not to mention that the act itself can be very painful. Further, the bacteria harbored in the anus and intestines can also be transmitted to the vagina, causing an infection called gardinerella, which is considered a sexually transmitted disease (STD). It's treatable with an anti-infective. Information like this can be lovingly explained to an uninformed husband. He may be pressuring his wife for anal sex without the knowledge of its consequences.

Question: What if a husband isn't interested in sex or even attracted to his wife? What is she to do?

Answer: This is a tough, and painful, question. There are a number of reasons why a husband doesn't pursue his wife. Unfortunately, perhaps only he knows why. Here are some questions to consider:

- Has it always been this way? If they were virgins when married, was there any indication in their dating that there was strong, mutual sexual attraction? If she was a virgin, and perhaps naive, she may have thought he was being the perfect gentleman who kept himself in constant control instead of being unattracted to her sexually.
- If it hasn't always been this way, *when* did it change? Try to pin point a time or season when his disinterest began. Is there an identifier that coincides with the onset of his disinterest? Could it be the result of unresolved marital strife that is still lurking in the background of their relationship; is he repeatedly met with disrespect, criticism, or condemnation from his wife (not very arousing!); did he experience a significant trauma that impacted him: a death of a loved one, a job loss, a blight on his reputation? If there is something that triggered his disinterest, a wife must earnestly ask God to reveal it. He will.
- If they were sexually active before marriage, did the frequency of sex take on the same pattern in the marriage as before, or could guilt be blocking their sexual freedom as a married couple?
- Has she ever lovingly, yet frankly asked him why he is rejecting her (and she must use the word "rejecting" because that is what is happening here)? Does he understand that's what he's doing when he doesn't fulfill her sexual need? Does he *know* she has sexual needs, or does she hide it beneath her disappointment, afraid to let him know? If so, what was his answer? If not, she should pray about approaching him—and be prepared to lovingly receive his answer without retaliation or defense.
- Is he a Christian? If so, is he aware of what God says about meeting his spouse's sexual need? If he's not, again, she should pray about lovingly sharing what she's learned in scripture about the mutuality of married sexual responsibility. (See 1 Corinthians 7:3-5.)
- During lovemaking, is there any problem with his performance? Can he get and maintain an erection? Is there any indication of sexual dysfunction? If so, his fear of failure (performance anxiety) may keep him

from pursuing her. A doctor's visit is critical here. Medications like Viagra, Cialis, and Levitra increase blood flow to the penis and enhance erection.

- Is he on any other medications that counter erection (blood pressure, cholesterol, antidepressant, heart meds, for example)? A wife should be knowledgeable of his meds to see if and how they impact libido.
- What's his background like? Was his mom domineering and abusive, emasculating? What is his opinion of women in general?
- Has she ever sought professional counsel on this topic of low sexual interest? She should even if he isn't likely to. What she learns may help them both.
- Has he ever been sexually abused? Sexual abuse has a powerful impact on a man's self-assessment as a sexual male. Anger management may also be an issue.
- Is he addicted to pornography? Like any addiction, it takes more to satisfy over time. That combined with guilt can significantly impact a man's approach to his wife. If he is addicted, this is an area in which a wife must exercise grace and truth, not condemnation. It's an area God wants to purify and heal. A husband can't do that without a wife who supports him. But it can't happen in the darkness or if both are ignoring the elephant in the livingroom. God knew he would have this difficulty. And He's still bigger than it is. Recommended reading: *Confronting Your Spouse's Pornography Problem* by Rory C. Reid and Don Gray. Also recommend the following websites their associated reading material: www.feedomeveryday.org; www.faithfulandtrueministries.com; www.hopequestgroup.org; www.purelifeministries.org
- Unfortunately, in some cases, it's "just the way he is". A man's libido is a very sensitive issue, even if it's low. And some men have a naturally low libido.

Here's a nurse's perspective on the unpursuing husband: "Some of the causes are medical in nature. For example, a man can be low on testosterone leaving him without any zing. This can be checked with a simple blood test and is treated with monthly shot (which I might add are the scariest shots I have ever given since they are as thick as oil). Men can also have injuries to their genitals, perhaps while biking or horse back riding, which they may not even know they have received. Over time these activities can have as deleterious an effect as any crushing injury to what counts most. Finally, and on a social crisis level, there is the issue of homosexuality and the whole plethora of new gender confusion we have in this time. I know a woman going through a divorce that only had intercourse around 6 times in 7 years of marriage! In the end, her Christian husband struggled with homosexuality, but could not confess it. I am no expert on this issue, but medically and socially speaking, we could all delve into this problem more so that we can guard our homes against some of these preventable or treatable attacks against what God has called good."

I know these explanations may not be very encouraging. The most important thing a wife can do who suffers in this way is to get smart on the topic of male sexual avoidance. You'll find it covered in Rosenau's book (*A Celebration of Sex*). Remember that the enemy of good sex is silence. If this remains an unspoken dilemma in any marriage, it will never change. However, *how* the topic is approached is crucial. Wives in this circumstance should pray in earnest that God would shed light on this darkness and seek solid, biblical counsel. In the meantime, she should continue to pursue growth in her faith, to pursue God (but not reject her husband), to love her husband without condemnation, but with hope for God's turning point in this issue.

Question: Does the Bible specifically prohibit anything between husband and wife?

Answer: The only thing that I can find in scripture of a prohibitive nature is bringing another person into your marital bed—physically (the real thing or video) or mentally. We are to remain focused on our spouse as our lover. Even in the bedroom, husband and wife are to be a cord of three strands, the third strand being God, Himself.

Question: Our love life seems like an act, and afterward, he always wants to know how he did, which makes me feel like I'm grading him. How do I deal with this? Even though I've told him how I feel he continues to ask me anyway?

Answer: If your love life feels like an act, it probably is and he knows it. And if he didn't love you, he wouldn't bother asking the question. He's not secure in how he pleases you sexually, which is a measure of his manhood. This goes far beyond the bedroom, and it will require some self-examination on your part. Your husband needs affirmation as a man, a husband, a provider, a lover. As you begin to *genuinely* affirm him in these areas, your own level of love and appreciation for him will grow. You both will become more secure with each other, and your love making will begin to reflect it.

Question: Through years of marriage, my husband has said that he doesn't want me to submit to him sexually when I don't want to. How do I balance the knowledge that I need to be available and meet his needs even when I don't feel like it—that he doesn't want me to have sex out of a feeling of obligation?

Answer: The toughest part about loving our husbands sexually is replacing the “feelings” with the “facts”. If wives always waited to be “in the mood”, sex would be rare in most marriages. Unfortunately, many women allow their behavior to be guided by their feelings instead of by the Word of God, which can change our feelings, rearrange our attitudes, and course-correct our sex lives. First Corinthians 7:3-5 gives us the principles of married sexuality: The Principle of Need, the Principle of Authority, and the Principle of Habit. These principles are to be mutually bestowed on the other as an act of loving, selfless service. It truly is an act of selflessness. Colossians 3:17 and 24 can also speak to this issue: “*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him... Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.*” I pray prayers of thanksgiving when I'm responding to my husband's desire for me—thanksgiving that he still desires *me* after nearly 35 years! I don't worry any more about “feeling” in the mood. I move with expectancy, praise, and thanksgiving, and the feeling catches up.

Question: How do you deal with the times when a husband wants sex rather than love making without feeling used?

Answer: Actually, I kind of look at it like having a snack instead of a full meal. Both are legitimate, can be tasty, and satisfy a need. Remember, typically a man's sex drive is more intense than a woman's, governed by the level of testosterone in his body. Our challenge is to recognize our husband's need and be willing to meet him there *because we love him*. The Enemy wants us to think we're being used, but in most marital relationships that couldn't be farther from the truth. You will experience a change of attitude (“I'm just a sex object” vs. “I'm the object of his love”) when you start thanking God that your husband comes to you to get his sexual needs met. Believe me, there are many women out there who would gladly trade places with you! One of the best books on the topic is Kevin Leman's, *Making Sense of the Men in Your Life*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2000. Great book!

Question: What's a good way to get started with spicing up our sex life?

Answer: This one's simple. The most important thing is to want to. Next, start praying about how to do it. Next, ask your husband what would be fun (yes, they're in on this, too); next, buy Kevin Leman's book, *Sheet Music*, read it together in bed, or share “tidbits” with him as you read it. Consider your sex life a sacred adventure; then make it happen.

Question: I know fantasizing is wrong. I don't think about other men, but my mind wanders and I have battled this for years. I'm left feeling guilty after sex (I only do this when my husband is pleasing my body.) I have tried giving it to God, but then “slip back” again. What can I do?

Answer: First, fantasizing is wrong only when it's about one other than your spouse. We really can unlearn the habit of fantasizing “elsewhere” and learn to fantasize about our husbands, especially if their pleasing our bodies at the time. This is a “discipline of the mind”. You *can* do this, because we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Choose to focus in your mind on your husband as he's making love to you. Open your eyes and look at him, watch him, smile at him. Allow yourself to let him alone please your body and not another in your mind. Easier said than done? Yes, at first. But as any habit, this one can be replaced with a godly one as we practice it.

Resources addressing...

Sexual Intimacy

For you:

Sacred Sex by Tim Alan Gardner
A Celebration of Sex, by Dr. Douglas E. Rosenau
A Celebration of Sex After 50, by Douglas E. Rosenau
Making Sense of the Men in Your Life by Kevin Leman
Sheet Music by Kevin Leman
Intimate Issues, by Linda Dillow and Lorraine Pintus
Intimacy Ignited by Linda Dillow and Lorraine Pintus
Holy Sex! A Catholic Guide to Toe-Curing, Mind-Blowing, Infallible Loving by Gregory Popcak
The Act of Marriage After 40, by Dr. Tim and Beverly LaHaye

For your teens:

Technical Virgin: How Far is Too Far? by Hayley DiMarco
Almost Sex: 9 Signs You're About to Go Too Far (or already have) by Michael DiMarco
Why Wait? 24 Reasons to Wait Until Marriage to Have Sex, (Pamphlet, Rose Pub., comes in

To teach your kids about sex:

How and When to Tell Your Kids about Sex by Stan and Brenna Jones (Parent's Guide)
The Jones also have a four-part age-oriented series on teaching your kids about sex. They are:
Book 1: The Story of Me (ages 3-5)
Book 2: Before I Was Born (ages 5-8)
Book 3: What's the Big Deal? Why God Cares about Sex (ages 8-11)
Book 4: Facing the Facts: The Truth about Sex and You (ages 12-14)
A Chicken's Guide to Talking Turkey with Your Kids About Sex by Dr. Kevin Leman and Kathy Flores Bell
Raising Sexually Pure Kids: How to Prepare Your Kids for the Act of Marriage by Tim and Beverly LaHaye

Sexual Sin/Addiction

False Intimacy: Understanding the Struggle of Sexual Addiction by Harry Schaumburg
Hope after Betrayal: Healing When Sexual Addiction Invades Your Marriage by Meg Wilson
Healing the Wounds of Sexual Addiction by Dr. Mark R. Laasar
Every Heart Restored: A Wife's Guide to Healing in the Wake of a Husband's Sexual Sin by Stephen Arterburn, Fred & Brenda Stoeker
Breaking Free: Understanding Sexual Addiction & the Healing Power of Jesus by Russell Willingham

Website resources:

www.settingcaptivesfree.com
www.freedomeveryday.org
www.faithfulandtrueministries.com
www.hopequestgroup.org
www.purelifeministries.org
www.hopeafterbetrayal.com

Enhancing Your Marriage
Leader's Guide
Lesson 9 ~ Let the Romance Begin

Getting Started:

- Open with Prayer
- Introduce Lesson 10

Lesson 9 ~ Main Point: Romance keeps a marriage alive! If we don't breathe new life into our romantic love every so often, it will fade away or disintegrate altogether.

Visual/Practical Application: At the end of class take some time to have the ladies share some practical ideas of how they romance their husbands. Share event ideas and plans, website ideas for purchasing lingerie, etc.

DAY ONE ~ Returning to "First Love"

P 166-168: Read **Revelation 2:1-5**. In what ways does your relationship with Jesus Christ compare to your relationship with your husband (p 168)?

P 168: How can following the equation "Remember + Repent + Return = Rekindled Romance" enhance your relationship with your husband? How will doing so enhance your marital testimony?

P 168: Read paragraph mid-page, "If we pour ourselves..." and remind them to use their relationship with Jesus Christ as their barometer for their relationship with their husbands.

DAY TWO ~ The Object of My Love

P 170: What is your response to paragraph one?

P 170, second Bible icon: Read **Song of Solomon 4:1-7; 5:10-16; 7:1-10**. What do you conclude about the progression of their married relationship?

P 170: Read **Song of Solomon 7:10-13** and answer Apply at the top of the page.

P 171: Read **Proverbs 5:18-19** and **Song of Solomon 8:10**. What is the message to a husband and wife?

A: Solomon and Shulamith have been married for a while in Chapters 7 and 8. He desires her, and she *still* satisfies him with her body. Long after we're married, we're to find and create mutual joy and satisfaction in each other. Romance in marriage keeps our love alive.

P 172-173: What did the application exercise reveal to you?

DAY THREE ~ Building Romance: How Do I Love Thee?

P 174-176: Briefly walk through the eight points on romantic thinking. Solicit comments re which ones spoke to them.

P 174, first Bible icon: Make this point: See him and treat him as the best and he will step up to the plate!

P 174-175, last Bible icon and question: How do you convey to your husband that his love and protection are important to you?

P 175-176: Last Bible icon may need to be addressed with some forward-moving discussion.

P 176, top: Leaders: Stress the combination of inner and outer beauty and **Song of Solomon 7:1-6** where he praises her from toe to head. Emphasize 7:2.

DAY FOUR ~ Building Romance: Let Me Count the Ways

P 176, middle of the last paragraph, read: “But after the wedding day, men don’t often differentiate romance and sex. We women see romance as a means through which to establish emotional intimacy, thereby preparing our hearts for the sexual experience. Men, on the other hand, find that sex prepares them for emotional intimacy.” Have you any personal insights regarding this statement?

A: Stress that our way and our husband’s way aren’t wrong, but *different*. And that’s OK! God meant our differences to be mutually beneficial, which happens only when our differences are valued by the other

P 177-179: which of the seven ways of romantic loving hit home?

Q: What hesitations might you have about creating romance in your marriage?

P 178, second Bible icon: What about non-sexual touch? Is it easy for you? For your husband? Are you afraid of where it will lead, thus avoiding it? What will you do about that?

A: It’s fair to help our husbands understand that we enjoy and often need non-sexual touch without it always leading to sex. Help him understand that his touch brings safety, comfort, and security to your relationship. He may want you to understand that that’s what sexual intimacy does for him. This is a necessary place of mutual understanding and giving. It will free you both to freely express yourselves with both sexual and non-sexual touch.

P 178, middle para: “Describe a past romantic scenario...” Solicit responses.

P 179, first Bible icon: What about your feminine appeal? Have you ever asked your husband what appeals to him when it comes to your feminine sensuality? Do you want to know? If not, why? Asking him would be a bold admission that you care about what he thinks in this most intimate area of your lives. If it’s important to him, will you decide to make it important to you?

DAY FIVE ~ Building Romance: Putting it All Together

Q, P 179-180: Read Debra White Smith’s quote and emphasize that this is a spiritual, reciprocal dynamic of God, which is what makes romance possible and effective in a marriage.

Q, P 180-184: Discuss the Simply Romantic Evening Plan, the Extended Romance Plan, and the Elaborate Overnight or Weekend for Lovers Plan. Solicit ideas from your class for romantic encounters.

Bottom Line Question for Lesson 9 for 12-week course:

- 1) What did you learn about romancing your husband that you can implement today and every day?
- 2) Which plan (from Day Five) did you choose? When and how will you implement it? Make a commitment to God and to your marriage (Romans 12:2 and Colossians 3:17, 23, 24) and move forward with your plan.

Close in prayer

Bottom Line Question for Lesson 9, 24-week course:

Days One and Two: What did you learn in Days One and Two about romancing your husband that you can implement today and every day? What *will* you do starting today?

Close in prayer

Days Three, Four and Five:

- 1) What did you learn in Days Three through Five about romancing your husband that you can implement today and every day, starting today?
- 2) Which plan (from Day Five) did you choose and when will you implement it? Make a commitment to God and to your marriage (Romans 12:2 and Colossians 3:17, 23, 24) and move forward with your plan.

Close in prayer

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's):

Question: What is a good way to get started with spicing up our sex life?

Answer: Several things are important: 1) *Pray* about how God can spice up your imagination. The same God of *all* creation can guide your creativity in your sex life. 2) Give Lesson 9 of *Enhancing Your Marriage: A Women's Bible Study* your utmost attention, since romance doesn't happen once a week or once a month. It starts the moment your feet hit the floor in the morning. It's built on a foundation of mutual kindness, respect, and honor. 3) Read other Christian "how-to" books, such as Debra White Smith's *Romancing Your Husband: Enjoying a Passionate Life Together*. She and her husband, Daniel, wrote, *Romancing Your Wife*. 4) Ask your husband what he thinks would spice up your sex life. (If you're afraid to ask, tackle Lesson 10 on communication so that you'll have the tools and greater confidence in communicating without fear or inhibition.) 5) Then do it! The most important ingredient to spicing up your sex life is to *want* to.

Enhancing Your Marriage
Leader's Guide
Lesson 10 ~ Words Are Not Enough: The Art of Communicating

Getting Started

- Open with Prayer
- You may want to begin with the “communications” scenario at the end of this lesson (p 61).
- Introduce Lesson 11

Lesson 10 ~ Main Point: The care and skill with which you communicate with your mate can determine the direction of your relationship.

Visual/Practical Application: You and another can read or roleplay the Dave Barry story at the end of this lesson (pages 49-51). It brings back many memories!

DAY ONE ~ Men and Women: Vive La Difference!

P 186-187: What did you learn in today's lesson that gave you insight into the differences between *how* you and your husband communicate?

P 187, last para: “The bottom line is...” How can understanding this Bottom Line enhance your ability to communicate with your husband?

DAY TWO ~ Charting the Course

P 189: What points are being made in **James 3:1-12 and 1:26**?

P 189: And the point made in **Matthew 12:34-37** is...?

P 190: What does **Proverbs 18:21** mean for the marriage relationship (or *any* relationship)?

P 190-191, Apply: What did you discover about your familial speaking habits?

DAY THREE ~ God's Guidelines for Good Communication

P 191, para 1: what's the point?

P 192: What are the three things that good communication requires?

P 192: How does **Luke 6:31** apply to speaking correctly, listening carefully, understanding clearly?

P 192-193: Read **Ephesians 4:15, 25, 29**. According to the proverbs (P 192) and the Ephesians passages, what are the keys to *speaking correctly*? (Emphasize para 1, P 193.)

P 194: According to the proverbs on this page, what does *listening carefully* reap?

P 194, paragraph 2: What's the point?

Leaders: Good to remember: Speak with purpose; listen with intent.

P 194, last paragraph; P 195, middle paragraph: If a husband is a poor listener, what can a wife do to affect his listening habit?

P 195-196: Read **Matthew 13:10-17**, then Read third para, “Before understanding can take place...” Also consider the proverbs on these pages. In what ways does *understanding clearly* solidify oneness between husband and wife?

DAY FOUR ~ Beware the Saboteurs!

Q: What are the saboteurs that you studied in this day's lesson?

P 197, 198-Anger: Read **Ephesians 4:26, 27** and following para, "If we won't wrestle..." How will understanding the Enemy's influence change your approach to conflict resolution?

P 198, para 2: How do we resolve our own anger issue before addressing an issue with our husbands?

P 198, para 3: "The good news..." How can we take responsibility for our own anger? See **Ephesians 4:30-32**.

P 199, Fear: How does fear of conflict impede the growth and maturity of both marriage partners?

Q: What are some reasons why we're afraid of conflict with our guys?

A: P 199, read para 2, "Fear of conflict adds nothing..." then ask application question that follows.

Q: See **Proverbs 27:5-6**. This works both ways in any conflict resolution! Be willing to speak; be willing to listen; be willing to understand.

Q, P 199, Pride and selfishness: How do these saboteurs derail communication?

Q, P 200: How do these verses factor in to our communication and conflict resolution?

DAY FIVE ~ Handle with "Fair"

Q, P 201: According to para 1, there is a blessing to conflict. What is it?

Q, P 201-203: Paragraph one (P 201) admonishes us to persevere until the goal of understanding is met (which doesn't mean until my husband sees things *my way*). Which of today's techniques would be most helpful in improving your communication with your husband?

Q, P 203-204: Do the "APPLY".

Bottom Line: Seek to understand rather than to be understood.

Bottom Line Question for Lesson 10, 12-week course: At the top of page 204, look at what you identified as your "Areas of Communication Difficulty and Frustration" and difficult "Topics and Issues"? Based on this week's lesson, what can you do to improve your communication with your husband in these areas?

Leaders: When a student reveals an area of difficulty/frustration or the topic/issue that creates conflict, be sure to keep her focused on its correction or the most beneficial approach to resolution. This eliminates the temptation for her (or you) to get hung up on the problem, but rather recalibrates the focus on the solution.

Close in prayer

Bottom Line Question for Lesson 10, 24-week course:

Days One, Two

- 1) Based on today's lesson, how would you assess your husband's general communication skills? How would you assess your own?
- 2) Page 195, "The loop of good communication closes when clear understanding takes place, even if the understanding is to agree to disagree." What will *you* do to improve your ability to close the loop of *good* communication with your husband?

Close in prayer

Days Four and Five: At the top of page 204, look at what you identified as your “Areas of Communication Difficulty and Frustration” and difficult “Topics and Issues”? Based on this week's lesson, what will you do to improve your communication with your husband in these areas?

Leaders: When a student reveals an area of difficulty/frustration or the topic/issue that creates conflict, be sure to keep her focused on its correction or the most beneficial approach to resolution. This eliminates the temptation for her (or you) to get hung up on the problem, but rather recalibrates the focus on the solution.

Close in prayer

Fred and Martha

by Dave Barry

Let's say a guy named Fred is attracted to a woman named Martha. He asks her out to a movie; she accepts; they have a pretty good time. A few nights later he asks her out to dinner, and again they enjoy themselves. They continue to see each other regularly, and after a while neither one of them is seeing anybody else.

And then, one evening when they're driving home, a thought occurs to Martha, and, without really thinking, she says it aloud: "Do you realize that, as of tonight, we've been seeing each other for exactly six months?"

And then, there is silence in the car.

To Martha, it seems like a very loud silence. She thinks to herself: I wonder if it bothers him that I said that. Maybe he's been feeling confined by our relationship; maybe he thinks I'm trying to push him into some kind of obligation that he doesn't want, or isn't sure of.

And Fred is thinking: Gosh. Six months.

And Martha is thinking: But, hey, I'm not so sure I want this kind of relationship either. Sometimes I wish I had a little more space, so I'd have time to think about whether I really want us to keep going the way we are, moving steadily towards, I mean, where are we going? Are we just going to keep seeing each other at this level of intimacy? Are we heading toward marriage? Toward children? Toward a lifetime together? Am I ready for that level of commitment? Do I really even know this person?

And Fred is thinking: ...so that means it was...let's see...February when we started going out, which was right after I had the car at the dealer's, which means...lemme check the odometer...Whoa! I am way overdue for an oil change here.

And Martha is thinking: He's upset. I can see it on his face. Maybe I'm reading this completely wrong. Maybe he wants more from our relationship, more intimacy, more commitment; maybe he has sensed - even before I sensed it - that I was feeling some reservations. Yes, I bet that's it. That's why he's so reluctant to say anything about his own feelings. He's afraid of being rejected.

And Fred is thinking: And I'm gonna have them look at the transmission again. I don't care what those morons say, it's still not shifting right. And they better not try to blame it on the cold weather this time. What cold weather? It's 87 degrees out, and this thing

is shifting like a garbage truck, and I paid those incompetent thieves \$600.

And Martha is thinking: He's angry. And I don't blame him. I'd be angry, too. I feel so guilty, putting him through this, but I can't help the way I feel. I'm just not sure.

And Fred is thinking: They'll probably say it's only a 90-day warranty...scumballs.

And Martha is thinking: Maybe I'm just too idealistic, waiting for a knight to come riding up on his white horse, when I'm sitting right next to a perfectly good person, a person I enjoy being with, a person I truly do care about, a person who seems to truly care about me. A person who is in pain because of my self-centered, schoolgirl romantic fantasy.

And Fred is thinking: Warranty? They want a warranty? I'll give them a warranty. I'll take their warranty and stick it right up their...

"Fred," Martha says aloud.

"What?" says Fred, startled.

"Please don't torture yourself like this," she says, her eyes beginning to brim with tears. "Maybe I should never have...oh dear, I feel so..."(She breaks down, sobbing.)

"What?" says Fred.

"I'm such a fool," Martha sobs. "I mean, I know there's no knight. I really know that. It's silly. There's no knight, and there's no horse."

"There's no horse?" says Fred.

"You think I'm a fool, don't you?" Martha says.

"No!" says Fred, glad to finally know the correct answer.

"It's just that...it's that I...I need some time," Martha says.

(There is a 15-second pause while Fred, thinking as fast as he can, tries to come up with a safe response. Finally he comes up with one that he thinks might work.)

"Yes," he says. (Martha, deeply moved, touches his hand.)

"Oh, Fred, do you really feel that way?" she says.

"What way?" says Fred.

"That way about time," says Martha.

"Oh," says Fred. "Yes." (Martha turns to face him and gazes deeply into his eyes, causing him to become very nervous about what she might say next, especially if it involves a horse. At last she speaks.)

"Thank you, Fred," she says.

"Thank you," says Fred.

Then he takes her home, and she lies on her bed, a conflicted, tortured soul, and weeps until dawn, whereas when Fred gets back to his place, he opens a bag of Doritos, turns on the TV, and immediately becomes deeply involved in a rerun of a college basketball game between two South Dakota junior colleges that he has never heard of. A tiny voice in the far recesses of his mind tells him that something major was going on back there in the car, but he is pretty sure there is no way he would ever understand what, and so he figures it's better if he doesn't think about it.

The next day Martha will call her closest friend, or perhaps two of them, and they will talk about this situation for six straight hours. In painstaking detail, they will analyze everything she said and everything he said, going over it time and time again, exploring every word, expression, and gesture for nuances of meaning, considering every possible ramification.

They will continue to discuss this subject, off and on, for weeks, maybe months, never reaching any definite conclusions, but never getting bored with it either.

Meanwhile, Fred, while playing racquetball one day with a mutual friend of his and Martha's, will pause just before serving, frown, and say: "Norm, did Martha ever own a horse?"

And that's the difference between men and women.

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**This article is an original writing by Dave Barry.
It has been circulating the web and is
archived at [Pastor Tim's CleanLaugh Site](#) (CleanLaugh #707)**

Enhancing Your Marriage
Leader's Guide
Lesson 11 ~ My Husband, My Friend

Getting Started

- Open with Prayer
- Introduce Lesson 12

Lesson 11 ~ Main Point: Constructing a friendship with your husband can be tough at times, but out of the “tough” comes the resolute assurance that you belong together, no matter what.

Visual/Practical Application: Have you got a good illustration for this week's lesson? Please send it to me: judy@eyministries.org. Thanks!

DAY ONE ~ Building Trust

Loyalty

P 206: Read **Romans 8:31**. How does loyalty build trust?

A: Loyalty builds *security* in a marriage. That sense of safety translates into trust.

P 207: What are the four characteristics of God's love in **1 Corinthians 13:7**?

P 207: What does it mean to be emotionally loyal and why is it necessary? Read first paragraph.

Q: With whom is it most tempting to be disloyal about your husband?

P 208: How do we fix the problem of emotional loyalty? Read second paragraph and prayer icon.

Affirmation

P 209: Read **Proverbs 18:22** (a wife is *supposed* to be a good thing!) and **Proverbs 31:10-12, 23, 25-29**. How does affirmation build trust? Note the contrast in **Proverbs 21:9, 19; 27:15-16**.

P 209-210: What did you learn about affirming your husband from your “affirmation quotient”?

Q: What can make it difficult to affirm our husbands?

A: Answers may vary, but here are a few: Our pride; a husband who is rude and disrespectful; we can't (won't) find anything to affirm, want to stay in control, etc.

P 211: What do you *do* about these reasons? Read para 1.

A: There is *something* about our men we can admire and affirm. We *must* acknowledge it, swallow our pride and express our appreciation.

Q: Do you think a husband is affected by a lack of affirmation? How can a wife tell?

Q: How has your husband responded to your affirmation?

Bottom Line: ***The more we find to admire, the more admirable our husband's will become.***

Strength

P 211: How does emotional strength build trust?

P 211: Read **Psalms 73:21-26**. Where do we get the strength to give, especially in a tough circumstance?

P 211: Think of a time when your husband has been a strong place for you. How did this build your trust in him?

DAY TWO: Building Knowledge

P 212: Read **Jeremiah 9:23-24** and add **John 17:3**. How important is it to know God?

P 212-213: What did you discover from the application? How well *do* you know your husband?

P 213: Which bullet spoke most to you?

P 214, bullet #3 (“Trust him”): What are some areas in which we tend not to trust our husbands?

- A. Areas in which wives don’t trust their husbands include finances, parenting, handling their (or their wives’) emotions correctly, contributing to problem solving, remaining faithful. In any area where trust has been breached, if a husband is repentant, trust must be rebuilt. This will take time, a constant state of forgiveness (back to Lesson Seven), and dependence on the Holy Spirit’s leading all along the way. Discuss how wives can practice and convey trust in these areas. Solicit your wives’ insights and experiences.

DAY THREE: Building Friendship

P 215: Why is true friendship in a marriage hard to come by today?

P 215-216: Which scripture spoke to you?

P 216: Based on **John 15:13**, one will lay down her life for a friend. This is the stuff of sacrifice. What would this look like in a marriage? What is your sacrifice as your husband’s wife?

P 216: Read **Titus 2:3-5**. What’s the point of this verse and why is it important to a marriage?

P 216-217, Apply: What did the boxes you checked reveal about your friendship with your husband?

P 218: Have you any comments on the pointers? (I chose the last “finger”: Speak his language. How would each wife fill in the blank for “lawn mowed”?)

DAY FOUR: Building Unity

Q: What are some issues in a home/marriage that can destroy unity? What did you learn to help guard against disunity?

P 219: According to the four passages at the top of the page, what is the purpose of our tests/trials?

P 219, Apply: In what ways has your marriage matured you?

P 219: How does our enemy, Satan, factor into our marriages and how do we prevent his intrusion? (Refer to **Luke 11:17** and **Proverbs 14:1**) **Remember:** our husbands are not the enemy; the Enemy is the enemy, and we can’t cooperate with him.

P 220: Read Allender and Longman’s statement. What’s the point?

P 221: Note the areas of tension you identified. What are some of them and how can you ease the tension?

P 221: Read **Philippians 3:10-16**. How can these verses put your mind at ease regarding your differences and strengthen your unity? (Refer to the paragraph that follows Bible icon.)

DAY FIVE: Building Memories

Q: What’s the point of building memories even very early in marriage?

A: It’s never too early to invest in your future “empty nest”. *We will end as we began—the two of us alone together*. It should still be “very good”. Building memories also leaves a legacy for our children and grandchildren.

P 223: Read para 2 referring to investing in one’s marriage, focusing on the sentence that reads, “...invest now in your husband and in your life together, and include your children, not the other way around.” Ask students about the status of their “investment portfolio”.

P 223-224: How are you creating memories together right now?

Bottom Line Question for Lesson 11, 12-week course:

Based on what you've learned in this week's lesson, what area needs the most work: building trust, knowledge, friendship, unity, or memories? What *will* you do to improve your friendship with your husband in this area?

Close in prayer

Bottom Line Question for Lesson 11, 24-week course:

Days One and Two:

- 1) In what ways are your loyalty, your affirmation, and/or your strength building trust in your marriage? Where must there be improvement?
- 2) From pages 213-214, how will you get to know your husband more deeply?

Close in prayer

Days Three, Four and Five:

Based on what you've learned in this week's lesson, what *will* you do to improve your friendship with your husband?

Close in prayer

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's): None

Enhancing Your Marriage
Leader's Guide
Lesson 12 ~ Praying for Your Husband

Getting Started

- Open with Prayer
- Recognize those who helped you this semester
- Thank and praise the women in your class for persevering with the study and finishing the semester!

Lesson 12 ~ Main Point: Going to God about our marriages should never to be our last resort, but our first resort. His way works, and He reveals it in our quiet moments of humility and yieldedness.

Visual/Practical Application: Machaela choose a Scripture for her class (Psalm 23:1, “*The Lord is my shepherd*”) and the women examined God’s role as Shepherd, then the husband’s role as God’s appointed shepherd in the marriage and in the home. They then prayed for their husbands based on the prayer formula, ACTS, from page 237. Example prayer and follow-up questions:

Adoration for my husband: Lord, I acknowledge that you appointed my husband as my provider, my leader, my overseer, who cares for me and our family by his hard work and protects us by _____ (illuminate who he is and what he does). He is who we need to shepherd this family because _____.

Question: In what ways do I show adoration (admiration) for and to my husband for *who he is* and *what he does*? How can I do it better?

Confession: Lord, I confess that I don’t pray for my husband as our family’s shepherd—prayers that protect and sustain him. There are also times when I fail to adapt to his leadership role, to submit to his guidance or suggestions.

Question: In what ways do I fail to acknowledge my husband as the shepherd of our home (even if he’s not a Christian)—his leadership, guidance, and counsel?

Thanksgiving: Father, I am grateful for the man you brought me to. (What are the things of his character that you’re thankful for. What does he do that you are grateful for?)

Question: In what ways do I convey thanksgiving to my husband for all that he does for me and our family? Am I teaching our children to do the same?

Supplication: Lord, on behalf of my husband, I ask that you _____
Contributed by Machaela Curry, Brunswick, Maine

DAY ONE ~ God’s Purpose for Our Prayer

P 227, third finger pointer: “Prayer releases the power of God to carry out the plans of God.” What did Christ’s fervent prayer accomplish in **Luke 22:39-44**? How can this example apply to marriages?

A: Point: It prepared Him for the tougher road, a necessary message for Christians to embrace.

Q: How does this example apply to marriage?

P 228, third finger pointer: “Prayer protects us from the Enemy’s plan.” Does this mean bad things won’t happen to us?

A: No. It means that what Satan would *try* to use to destroy us, God will use to mature and perfect us (**Romans 8:28-29**).

DAY TWO ~ A Plan for our Prayer

P 229: Can you identify with “Change him”, “Fix Him”, “Get him” prayers? How has asking God to “Draw him”, “Mature him”, and “Bless and protect him” changed your perspective on praying for your husband? See **John 6:44** for insight.

P 231: What are the common threads in Paul’s prayers for the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians? How do these translate to your prayers for your husband?

Leaders: Should questions arise about the use of **Job 1:9-10** on page 231 please clarify with: Job had been protected by God’s hedge. God, in His sovereignty and with His higher purpose in mind (see chapter 42), chose to lift the hedge, though not completely. Although it seems as though Satan had the upper hand with Job, God’s hand of restraint was on Satan. God was still in control (verses 1:12 and 2:6), and Job knew it (verses 2:9-10).

DAY THREE ~ Our Part in Our Prayer

Q: Which principles of prayer in this sub-lesson have affected your prayer life?

Q: Have you any questions about what your part is in praying for your husband?

DAY FOUR ~ God’s Power in Our Prayer

Q: What do you think about praying scripture as a method of prayer?

Q: What scriptures were you given to pray that are specific to your husband or marriage?

DAY FIVE ~ Praying, Waiting, Standing

P 241, paragraph four: “In every marriage...” Ask your students what their response is to this paragraph. **Luke 22:42-44** is an excellent example of standing firm in anticipation of God’s higher purpose, even in an agonizing circumstance. Also **Isaiah 7:9b**.

Bottom Line Question for 12-week course: The following was posed to you in Lesson 1 on page 7: "If you were to ask God to do one thing in your marriage, what would it be?" After studying and applying God's approach to your marriage this last 12 weeks, how is the one thing you wanted Him to change different now?

Close in prayer

Bottom Line Question for Lesson 12, 24-week course:

Days One and Two:

Refer to the prayer icon on p 232: “When we know where our husbands need prayer, I believe God holds us accountable to pray. Their needs, their temptations, their weaknesses, their failings, their sin can be covered when praying “Draw Him” (where and why?), “Mature him” (how?), “Bless him” (in what ways?), and “Protect him” (from what or whom?). In your group, pray each category (Draw him; Mature him; Bless him; Protect him), one category at a time. Explain that you’ll begin each category and go around the table back to you, at which time you’ll begin the next category. Recall and follow how Paul prayed for the Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians—he first thanked God for them, then prayed for their needs.

Close in prayer

Bottom Line Question, Lesson 12, Days Three, Four and Five:

The following was posed to you in Lesson 1 on page 7: "If you were to ask God to do one thing in your marriage, what would it be?" After studying and applying God's approach to marriage this last 24 weeks, how is the one thing you wanted Him to change different now?

Pray for your marriage and for your application of what you have learned

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's): None

Final thoughts: Thank you, Leaders, for taking the time to guide your women through what I hope has been a life and marriage-changing study. I would welcome any comments and constructive criticism you might have. Please feel free to write me at judy@eyministries.org.

And thank your ladies for me as well!