



## **Participant & Leaders Guide**

*Marriage*  
Cultivating  
friendship & fun



**Marriage**  
*Cultivating Friendship and Fun*

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friendship & fun



# Contents

Introduction	1
1 • Love	5
2 • Joy & Delight	17
3 • Peace	33
4 • Kindness & Goodness	45
5 • Gentleness & Humility	57
6 • Patience	81
Appendix	
Information for Group & Discussion Leaders	93

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## Introduction

God designed marriage to be a loving and warm relationship that draws a man and a woman closer to each other (Matthew 19:5-6) and closer to God (Ephesians 5:22-33). It is meant to be a deep, fulfilling, and fun friendship.

Marriage is an institution created by God, designed for two people who trust in God as their only hope. When you put your faith in Jesus, He sends his Spirit, who bears bountiful fruit in your life, expressed through your actions and attitudes – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-25). Who doesn't want these things in their friends? In their spouse?

This Participants & Leaders Guide contains everything you need to participate in or lead the course, along with accompanying video series, built from interviews with North Wake Church members.

None of the couples in the interviews claim to have a perfect marriage, but we can follow their good examples just as they follow Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). Each chapter has one video and accompanying group discussion questions for both couples and singles.

*"This course covers six elements of the fruit of the Spirit, intended to be covered in six weeks. Character does not change that fast, commonly. Real heart change moves slower.*

*Character usually changes in one area at a time. So coming out of this class, I encourage you to have one of these six things you need to do next. And when you're done with that one, God will be kind, and you can ask him, "what's the next one?" And you go back to your notes."*

– Larry Trotter

God has used a large group of contributors to plan, pray for, and contribute to this course.

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## 1 • Love

### Teaching: Course Introduction & Fruit of the Spirit<sup>1</sup>

This class is called “Marriage: Cultivating Friendship and Fun.” In this class, we’re going to study God’s word to learn what God does in the life of those who belong to him. We’re going to look at applications of how that works for married couples.

- The Bible teaches that we inherit a sin nature; it’s part of us, in our very flesh. It is so strong, we are slaves of that nature.
- But God intervenes: he was rich in mercy, and by his decision to die for us on the cross, Jesus paid the penalty for our sin, and pleased the Father.
- Then he invited us to trust in Jesus, putting our only hope in the truth that His work on the cross is enough to save us from the punishment for our sins, to reconcile us to God.
- Part of that reconciliation is the place of the Holy Spirit.
  - John 7:39 says that the Holy Spirit would be sent to all those who believed in him.
  - Jesus later says that the Holy Spirit will dwell in them (John 14:17). The Father would send him, the Spirit, to those who trust in and rely on Jesus’s work on the cross. The Holy Spirit will help them to know and understand Jesus better (John 15:26)
- Now, before someone has the spirit of God, the Bible teaches they are controlled by the flesh. So Paul explains the result of the spirit living inside you, and he shows how that is different from your life controlled by your natural desires.
- Read Galatians 5:16-25 (ESV).
  - 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

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<sup>1</sup>Chapter written by Mark Lindsey

- First thing to notice: The *fruit* of the Spirit is singular.
  - In 1 Corinthians 12 and elsewhere, we learn about different gifts God gives to the church – hospitality, teaching, generosity.
  - But the *fruit* of the Spirit is singular. It's not that one person gets one fruit, and another gets another; the spirit bears all these fruit.
- Another point: The fruit are not our own doing.
  - The Spirit produces his fruit in our lives as we “keep in step with the spirit”.
  - Our role is to obey God. We set our minds on the things of the Spirit – which is to say, (in the words of John Piper) “the words of God, spoken by the apostles, taught by the Spirit, not human wisdom”.
  - We walk as children of the light and try to discern what is pleasing to Jesus. (Ephesians 5:8-10).

## Teaching: Looking at “Love” In Scripture

**Love.** In this, our first chapter, the first grace from the Holy spirit to look at, which he bears as fruit in our lives, is *love*.

- God's love for us is huge – and amazing.
- Speaking to God, David says, “Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you.” (Psalm 63:3).
  - Better than life!?
  - This isn't some distant, theoretical principle in a textbook.
  - Personally Experiencing God's steadfast love is essential to knowing God, and even understanding God!
  - And if you don't feel like God loves you, I would love to talk to you, and help you know and trust him more.
- Jesus said that the greatest commandments are for us to show love – to God, and to other people (Matthew 22:37-40).
- In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul teaches the church there, and us, about what love looks like in the life of a Christian.
  - 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (ESV)
  - 4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not

rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

- 8 Love never ends. . . .

We're going to walk through these items, and think about them applying in our marriages.

- 13:4 Love is Patient / 13:7 Love Endures All things
  - Patience is about waiting. Commentators say this is primarily about patience with people, not circumstances.
  - When you see a book, you see the front and back cover. And for his little teaching defining love, patience and endurance are the front and back cover.
  - You know, Satan knew a lot of scripture – and how to misuse it, and there's a way to misuse this text as well. For example,
    - **If I've caused my wife pain**, I am the one who has done damage to the relationship.
    - I've been the one who has injured the love.
    - It's only natural that she would respond to that to that pain I have caused! Suppose my wife doesn't "patiently endure" – So if my wife is not able to patiently endure what I've said or done, it would be exactly the opposite of loving I were to demand she endure something from me.
    - And this is true for all the Fruit of the Spirit: it would be EXACTLY the opposite of the meaning to demand these from someone.
- 13:7 Love bears or covers all things
  - When there's a weakness or a fault in someone else, we mean to cover or conceal those faults in silence.
  - Love is supporting, protective.
  - One writer said that "when sin is known to have been committed, it tries to correct it with the least possible harm to the sinner." <sup>2</sup>
  - Sometimes correcting the sin will take a lot of talking, a lot of care, a lot of patience.
    - Think about when a glass falls on the floor and breaks, a mess has to be cleaned up.

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<sup>2</sup> Trail, Ronald. Summer Institute of Linguistics Exegetical Summary: 1 Corinthians. quoting John MacArthur.

- Love bearing does not mean that everything is swept under the rug; it's really the opposite: it's working together to clean up the mess and trying to ensure nobody gets hurt.
- ***In marriage we might see this a couple of ways:***
  - He might see a weakness in his spouse - and work to make it invisible - or help to make her stronger.
  - She might know of a bad habit he has - and give him encouragement as she sees him fighting the sin. Christians will help one another to grow!
- 13:4 Love is Kind
  - Kindness is actively seeking the good of others.
  - It's about doing action that "alleviates pain, worries, and fears of others, and contributes positively to their happiness."<sup>3</sup>
  - ***In marriage:***
    - Kindness is you, a spouse, do something, or say something, only because it will help or encourage your spouse.
- 13:5 Love does not insist on its own way
  - This is about selfishness – seeking your own pleasure, or profit, or honor.<sup>4</sup>
  - ***In Marriage:***
    - Maybe there's work to be done in the home, and it's not what you would have picked. Love spurs us to do what needs to be done.
    - Maybe there's a chance for a vacation, or do something fun – love looks for what others want to do.
- 13:5 Love is not irritable
  - The loving person is not easily angered, touchy, quick to take offense.
  - ***In Marriage:***
    - There are always going to be conflicts. An irritable person blows up, or they demand to talk about it *right then*.
    - But Love is not irritable; the anger doesn't rise easily. There's no immediate need to argue.
    - Love takes time to cool down. Love doesn't avoid the caring conversations. Love can say, "When that happened, it made me feel hurt." Or, "it made me anxious."

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid. quoting Orr, Walther, The Anchor Bible, 1 Corinthians

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. quoting Lenski

- And on the receiving side of that, love hears when someone says they were hurt, and doesn't blow up.
- 13:5 Love is not resentful
  - Literally: does not keep a record of wrong, like a debt.
  - ***In Marriage:***
    - When conflicts emerge, refusing to be resentful can mean that you decide not to hold old grudges.
    - It can mean that when God changes your spouse for the better, God helps you to accept that change!
- 13:7 Love believes all things
  - This isn't about believing that 1=2, or right is wrong.
  - Instead, it's about giving the benefit of the doubt.
  - If love is going to make an error, the error will be to believe others rather than suspecting them of doing something wrong.
  - Many writers point out that this is about believing "God will work out his plans when everything indicates otherwise."
  - ***In Marriage:***
    - You marry someone and you realize they have some real problem. You know they trust God, and you are looking for God to work in them. You pray for them!
    - And you do all you can to support them in God's work for them.

These are all pretty amazing ways the Holy Spirit works in us.

- I know I want to be more in step with God's spirit, myself, to be more loving!
- Jesus said it's not just good to hear – blessed are those who hear God's word, and do it!  
But know that it is God in you, working for his good pleasure.

And as you look at your own marriage, and see the lives of friends, look for evidence of love that aligns with Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 13.

## Bible Study Listening Notes

*Answer the following questions while the teacher is teaching.*

1. The Spirit of God is \_\_\_\_\_ to

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2. The fruit of the spirit is \_\_\_\_\_ not plural, so we can expect

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3. Love is described in this passage \_\_\_\_\_

Something that stood out to me about the Bible's description of love is:

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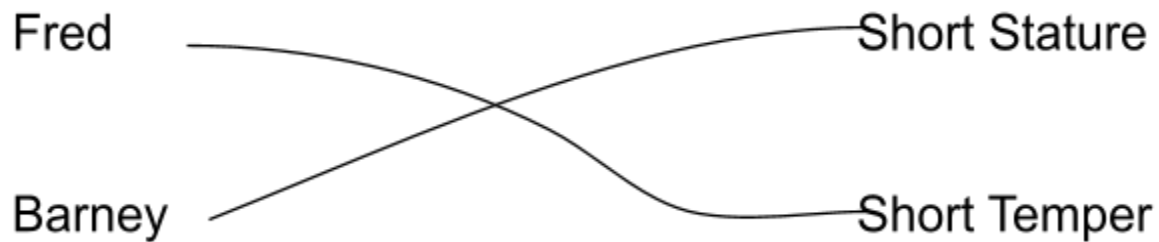
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## Video Testimonies Listening Activity

We'll play a video of North Wakers who contributed to answer some questions about their marriages. Listen for ways that their descriptions are examples that show that God is growing the fruit of love, and draw a line from the couple to each of the aspects of love that you hear.



**North Wake Couples  
(In Order Of Appearance)**

**Aspects of Love from 1 Corinthians 13**

Jake & Chelle	Love is Patient
	Love is Kind
Mike & Beury	Love does not envy or boast
	Love is not arrogant or rude
	Love does not insist on its own way
Gene & Marie	Love is not irritable
	Love is not resentful
Chris & Suzy	Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth
	Love bears all things
Billy & Becca	Love believes all things
	Love hopes all things
	Love endures all things
Matt & Julie	Love never ends

## Group Discussion

Take a few minutes with your group members to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.

**1 Before everyone shares in the large group, turn to one or two people next to you and finish this sentence: “After the teaching and testimonies video, one question I now have is . . .”**

2. What stands out to you from the video teaching: a story, a quote, a thought, an idea? Explain.

3. 1 Corinthians 13 has several examples of what love is not – “not rude” “does not rejoice in wrongdoing,” “not arrogant.” Have you ever felt “not-loved” by someone in your life? How did that affect your relationship with that person?

4. Now read Song of Songs 1 aloud, choosing three volunteer readers for the various “speakers” in the dialogue. According to this passage, what does it look and feel like to be cherished?

**5 What is one action step you could take with your spouse as a result of this session? *Write down your step below and pray for God’s help to do it.***

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## Pray Together For God's Help

**Take a few moments to pray together as a group. You can't do this in your own strength but he promises to help those who call on him!**

- Ask God to show you how he's loved and cherished you as individuals and as couples.
- Ask God to allow this message of how to cherish to sink deep into your hearts and minds as you seek to deepen your love for your spouse.
- Ask God to show you what it really looks like to love your spouse.
- Ask God to open yourselves up to authenticity, honesty, and vulnerability as you spend time together as a group.
- Thank God for his presence in your lives, the people in your group, and the opportunity to cherish your spouse in new ways.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Discussion material adapted from Thomas, Gary. *Cherish: Bible Study Guide*. Zondervan, 2017.

## Later This Week: Couples Homework Activity

We plan to do this activity at this date and time: \_\_\_\_\_

Part of understanding and exploring what it means to cherish and love one another is verbalizing what it means to be loved. This may seem simple for some, but for others, it will require thought and maybe a few examples. So, take a few minutes as a couple to talk about what makes you feel loved. Couples, discuss this with one another.

- From the examples given in the video, what are some ways of showing love that stand out to you?
- Is love best shown by the words you use? Partnering together in tasks? Patience with feelings?
- What is one thing from 1 Corinthians 13 that you would like to grow in personally?

## Marriage Enrichment & Restoration

This course is built to be an enrichment course and we believe will help nearly every marriage represented in this room. Sam and Mindy Williams do extensive counseling for couples at North Wake. Sam is an elder at North Wake, and Mindy is a deaconess leading our Women's Ministry.

If the things Sam and Mindy said make you want to talk more, please reach out to one of us, the table hosts, or any of the North Wake leaders on our web site on the page

[northwake.com/leadership](http://northwake.com/leadership)



## 2 • Joy & Delight

### Joy & Delight In Scripture<sup>6</sup>

In this class we are talking about how the Spirit controls our lives, and particular what that means for our marriages. Paul has made the case that all believers receive the Spirit, who helps us understand God as our Father, but causes us to be persecuted by those “in the flesh.” But those “in the Spirit” hope in God’s kingdom on earth, can be victorious over the “works of the flesh” and so they live a life full of the manifestations of the Spirit as they submit to the Spirit:<sup>7</sup>

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control... (Galatians 5:22-23a)

In Chapter 1, we focused on the love that the Holy Spirit produces in Christians and much of what that implies – happiness at the good of others, freedom from arrogance and self-will, and genuinely looking out for the interests of others. It seems to be a primary expression of the Spirit, for Paul. In this chapter, we’ll look at the element of joy, listed as the second facet of the fruit of the spirit.

Paul writes in Colossians 1:13 that God the Father “has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” and this monumental rescue is the basis for our joy.<sup>8</sup>

The word translated “joy” (χαρά) could be rendered as “gladness”<sup>9</sup> grounded in our conscious, aware relationship with God.<sup>10</sup> We want to look at a couple of ways of talking about Joy: Delight, which includes the very surface of our emotions, and also Joy, which includes deep, good feelings from seeing God at Work.

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<sup>6</sup> Chapter written by Mark Lindsey

<sup>7</sup> See Scot McKnight, NIV Application Commentary, Galatians

<sup>8</sup> (Exegetical Summary Series) Morris, Leon. Galatians: Paul’s Charter of Christian Freedom. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996.

<sup>9</sup> (Exegetical Summary Series) Lenski, R. C. H. The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians. 1937. Reprint. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961.

<sup>10</sup> (Exegetical Summary Series) Burton, Ernest De Witt. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T & T Clark; distr. in USA by Books International, Inc., Herndon, VA, 1920.

## *Delight*

Throughout the Bible, God's creatures delight in his creation!

We read in Psalms 104:24 "O LORD, how manifold are your works! In wisdom have you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures." It is Biblical to rejoice in the goodness and power of God.

The very first marriage began with rejoicing like this. We read in Genesis 2:20-23 (ESV):

20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
she shall be called Woman,  
because she was taken out of Man."

Noah Joyner preached this passage and explained:

Here we see the man rejoicing at the completeness... the wholeness that her arrival brings. Humanity is delivered from the lack of her presence and delivered into a place of flourishing and living as God fully intended....Ready to fill the earth and subdue it together....

[Adam] sings out in joy for the helper God has made. "Finally", he says, "there is one like me, who came from me" Like the animals all had fitting ones for them, now he has one that fits.

The man awakes from his God given slumber to discover his God given helper, fitted perfectly to him. God has kept his promise to man and he has brought about what he



called very good from [Genesis] chapter 1. His work is complete. The creation of woman serves as the crescendo of the creation account.

The Bible's great poem of marriage, Song of Solomon, chronicles the courtship, struggles, and excitement of marriage. We see the delight in what God has given them all throughout.

HE

2:2 As a lily among brambles, so is my love among the young women.

*Before they're married, he is so smitten with his bride, he cannot even consider comparing her to other women. Compared to her, all the other women seem like thorns.*

SHE

2:3 As an apple tree among the trees of the forest,

so is my beloved among the young men.

With great delight I sat in his shadow,

and his fruit was sweet to my taste.

*For her, he stands out as something really special. She's thrilled just to sit with him and spend time together.*

HE

4:9 You have captivated my heart, my sister, my bride;

you have captivated my heart with one glance of your eyes,

with one jewel of your necklace.

*After they're married, she owns his heart. She has so many attributes that attract him, and it only takes just one to delight him.*

SHE

7:10 I am my beloved's,  
and his desire is for me.

## *Joy*

Delight sees something good God has done and responds emotionally, often openly. We should delight in what God has made and done. But the concept of Christian joy describes a feeling that may be deep and not currently on our lips. Pastor John Piper provides this helpful definition.

Christian joy is a good feeling in the soul, produced by the Holy Spirit, as he causes us to see the beauty of Christ in the word and in the world.

And we can add: "And the beauty of Christ in your spouse."

This definition points at a key distinction between Christian joy and lighthearted mirth. "Laughter does good like a medicine," but sometimes you need actual medicine when there is a deep problem. And the opposite is also true: sometimes we see and recognize God's goodness even when we don't have laughter.

The joy Paul describes is not dimmed by tribulation.<sup>11</sup> As Paul wrote the book of Philippians, he was in a prison cell. In writing and praying for them, he was doing work that should bring benefit for them. He had great confidence for the work God was doing in their hearts and lives. His joy was that deep, good feeling knowing that God was working and bringing about good. (E.g., Philippians 1:3-6)

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<sup>11</sup> (Exegetical Summary Series) Lenski, R. C. H. The Interpretation of St. Paul's Epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians. 1937. Reprint. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961.

Thankfully, in our marriages, we're not usually separated by hundreds of miles and a jail cell from our beloved. Our model for joy is usually much easier to see. In Ephesians 5, Paul writes:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (Ephesians 5:25-27 (ESV))

What was Jesus's goal in his work? "To present the church to himself in splendor." Jesus endured the cross why? We can see why in Hebrews 12:2 – "For the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross." Jesus suffered the torture of the cross for his own joy! What an amazing irony that the self sacrifice was for his own pleasure.

In Ephesians, husbands are told to love their wives the same way. John Piper explodes the implications:<sup>12</sup>

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.

Jesus does not intend to have a dirty and unholy wife. Therefore, he was willing to die to sanctify and cleanse his betrothed so he could present to himself a wife "in splendor." He gained the desire of his heart by giving himself up in suffering for the good of his bride.

When you love the person with whom God has made you one flesh, you are loving yourself. That is, your greatest joy in marriage is found in seeking the greatest joy of your spouse out of love and obedience to God.

Piper says that Jesus "gained the desire of his heart." Does that sound a bit selfish? Surprisingly, no! Because we know Jesus's method of gaining his heart's desire was bringing salvation to the whole world! This becomes our model: when the Holy Spirit is controlling in a marriage, your spouse's greatest joy becomes your greatest joy; and your greatest happiness is found in seeking your spouse's most sincere gladness.

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<sup>12</sup> Jesus's Joy In Marriage, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/jesus-joy-in-marriage> accessed 2023-04-07

Watch the marriages around you. Look to see how the husband and the wife are consciously seeking the good, the happiness, the delight of their spouse. And in your own heart and marriage, watch how that genuine pursuit of happiness for another bears the fruit for your own joy.

## Bible Study Listening Notes

1. In whose lives does God bear the fruit of the Spirit?

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2. When \_\_\_\_\_ was created, Adam felt \_\_\_\_\_

3. The delight of the husband and wife depicted in Song of Solomon is (underline one

(A) How God intended marriage to be

(B) Completely exceptional

4. Jesus gave himself on the cross for his own \_\_\_\_\_

5. Following the example of Jesus in Ephesians 5:25-27, husbands and wives seek their own joy

in... \_\_\_\_\_ because of their own love of God

## Video Testimonies Listening Activity

In this video of North Wake couples, listen for glad examples of glad enjoyment of one another in marriage, and also their deep good feelings recognizing how God is working in their marriages.

### Fill in the blanks with the quotes.

- "It was really just a sweet time together. It's just really fun to do stuff like that. We have a good time and we \_\_\_\_\_ and it's just \_\_\_\_\_."
- "Cultivating that relationship is very important for us as a couple, you as a couple, but also for your \_\_\_\_\_ to see that your husband or your wife is priority over them and your marriage is a \_\_\_\_\_ for them when they get older and they look for a spouse."
- "When you come and share something with me that you feel like God has spoken to you about, or something that he's leading us to do or speaking to you, about our ministry especially, I \_\_\_\_\_ because they're like golden words to me."
- "She delights in the Lord. He is her \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ just flow out of her."

## Group Discussion

Take a few minutes with your group members to discuss what you just watched and explore these concepts in Scripture.<sup>13</sup>

1\* Have a volunteer read Song of Solomon 6:9 aloud to the group:

"But my dove, my perfect one, is unique..."

Discuss: According to the passage, what does enjoying your unique spouse look like from a Biblical perspective?

3. Discuss: What are some ways that people fall into a pattern of *tolerating* their spouse's unique strengths rather than *celebrating* those strengths? What part does comparing your spouse to their men or women play in this?

4\* *Do this as a couple, then share your results with the group if you have time.* Part of understanding and exploring what it means to cherish one another is verbalizing what it means to appreciate and affirm your spouse as you celebrate their uniqueness in the world. So, as you close today's session, take a few minutes to write down a few things you appreciate about your spouse. In addition, write down a few ways that he or she has made sacrifices for you in the past (see Ephesians 5:25-27). Share these items with your spouse. Then, when everyone is finished, share one or two answers as a couple with the group.

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*Continue this section as a group discussion.*

5. Have another volunteer read 1 Samuel 16:7 aloud to the group:

"The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart."

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<sup>13</sup> This section adapted from Gary Thomas Cherish Bible Study Guide session 3

What does this passage mean to you in regard to identifying the good in your in your spouse?  
What truly matters in a relationship?

6. God commands spouses to understand one another (1 Peter 3:7) – which means he promises to help us do it! So how do you study your spouse? How will getting to know what your spouse likes or how he or she reacts in certain situations affect your contentment in marriage?

7. Ask a third volunteer to read Romans 12:2 aloud to the group:

"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you be able to test and approve what God's will is -- His good, pleasing, and perfect will."

What is the world's pattern for spouses relating?

8. How does this passage relate to the idea of enjoying your spouse? How can renewing your mind in Christ affect the way you receive your spouse as a gift from God?

9\* What is one action step you could take with your spouse as a result of this session? *Write down your step below and pray for God's help to do it.*

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## Pray Together For God's Help

**Take a few moments to pray together as a group. You can't do this in your own strength but he promises to help those who call on him!**

- Share with each other any special burdens or requests that come out of this teaching.
- Thank God for giving you an awareness of Him and his creation - and especially for creating your marriage. *I praise you, for my spouse is fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. – Adapted from Psalms 139:14*
- Ask God to help you grow in joy and delight of all he has put in marriage, to accept your spouse as a Gift from God
- Ask God to allow you to follow Jesus's example in Ephesians 5, of seeking your own joy in serving your spouse, even when your own sacrifice is necessary to achieve that end goal of delight.



## Later This Week: Couples Homework Activity

We plan to do this activity at this date and time: \_\_\_\_\_

*At some point during the week, sit down together to complete this homework.*

1. Read Song of Solomon 7:11-12. Solomon gives us an example of lovers intentionally making time for each other and finding ways to connect. List some ways you and your spouse do/could employ the following "connectors" (rituals that draw us closer to our spouse) on a regular basis...<sup>14</sup>

How could you spend time alone with each other regularly (i.e. no kids or other friends)?

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How could you do projects together? (Chores don't have to be drudgery if you approach them as an opportunity to spend time together.)

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Where could you share some interests?

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Touch each other often (Physical intimacy is an important part of connecting as a couple.)

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<sup>14</sup> Adapted from Kim Bowen, *The Love, Joy, Peace Workbook: A Couples Bible Study* p. 44

2. Think back to a time when you and your spouse were dating. What did you do together for fun? What rituals did you regularly engage in that kept you connected? Spend some time thinking and remembering. List as many things as you can.

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Is there anything on that list you've stopped doing now that you're married?

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Each of you make a list of your favorite hobbies and the activities you do for fun.

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Is there anything that made both of your lists? If nothing matches, keep brainstorming together until you find at least one activity you both enjoy, then make a date to do it.

*Marriage*  
Cultivating  
friendship & fun









## 3 • Peace

### Peace in Scripture<sup>15</sup>

This chapter focuses on Peace within relationships, and specifically peace within our marriages. If we're going to pursue friendship within our marriage, peace is at the very heart of that. Friends live in harmony together. And so we will be looking at a couple of passages and then a couple of suggestions about how to pursue peace within one of, if not the most important earthly relationship the Lord has given you with your spouse.

Let's look at the book of James. As we get there, we should frame what "peace" is.

Negatively, it is the lack of war or the lack of quarreling, the lack of strife between two people. Positively, we can explain it as a unity or a concord between two people or a group of people or nations.

In the Old Testament, there's a particular understanding of the idea of "shalom" -- things being the way they're supposed to be flourishing, growth, goodness, and rightness -- is the sense of peace. And that idea carries over to the New Testament. As we pursue all this, we want to ask, "Why don't we have peace?"

#### *What's your desire?*

Where does the lack of peace come from? And as a person working on 19 years of marriage, Steph and I have more seasons and more examples of not having peace together, quarreling & disunity than we would like to mention. Where does that come from?

And the fantastic thing is that the Bible tells us straightforwardly the answers to these questions -- where is it that quarreling, that lack of peace that is disunity, that un-peace? Where does it come from?

James 4:1 –

What causes quarrels, and what causes fights among you?

Wow. What a great question.

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<sup>15</sup> Chapter written by Noah Joyner

James continues,

Is it not this that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder, you covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel.

And so those are two kinds of heavy examples -- murder and coveting.

But within our marriage, what causes fights?

"You desire and do not have."

Think through your most recent quarrel or fight with your spouse. What was your desire? What did you want from your spouse that they were unwilling to give you?

And what did that cause within you? Did it bring out some anger or frustration towards your spouse? James is explaining precisely a situation like that quarrel. We want something to be heard, respected, have something, or to be made to feel a certain way.

We don't receive that from our spouse, and then we respond when we are not getting what we desire. Sadly, we often react with anger, frustration, or disappointment, right? Sometimes that means we draw back. Depending on your personality type, that may mean that you lash out. Those things happen all too consistently in relationships.

And James here is prescribing how we identify the source of those fights and quarrels.

Now we know the source: My desires are not met as I think they ought to be. My hopes and dreams and all those things are not being fulfilled. And then I lash out. What is the solution to that source of the problem?

In Galatians 5:16-17, the Apostle Paul discusses this topic similarly.

But I say, walk by the spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Things like quarreling and fighting for the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit. The desires of the Spirit are "against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other to keep you from doing the things you want to do."

So there's a fight within us. And the Spirit of God is warring against our flesh to produce good things in us – He produces His fruit. Galatians 5:22:



But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control against such things there is no law.

Good fruit is borne by the good Spirit of Christ that lives in us, the Holy Spirit. We should expect fruit-bearing. As we look at these pieces of the fruit of the Spirit, remember that it's one fruit in multiple pieces. Much like the whole is an orange: it has components and segments, but it's all one fruit.

As we think about both the unity and individuality of these aspects of the fruit of the Spirit in this passage, it is a helpful way of thinking. We would expect this fruit to become ripe in our lives.

All the parts are growing together to create and bear a whole fruit in us. We don't get to pick out one segment that we want to see in our lives. We want to see the entire fruit grow us.

Peace comes from the Spirit. We receive that peace in our relationship with God. Love, Joy, Peace, Patience -- you'll notice all of these are relational terms in relationship with others because of the Spirit's work in us. His work is the solution to unmet desires within myself, within my flesh, because "the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit" (5:17).

I have to have my desires replaced by the wishes of the Spirit. The Spirit is happy to do that as I participate with him in this work of sanctification that he's doing in me. So we see the source of disruption to peace and the solution, the bringer of peace.

## *Forgive*

Some suggestions for you on how to pursue a relationship of peace with your spouse -- or with anyone, honestly. These can apply to any relationship, but we practice them often and thoroughly in our homes.

First, be quick to forgive. Ask for forgiveness and give forgiveness that we're consistently asking people, our spouse to forgive us, our children, and those that we work with. Because of the proximity to our spouses, we have more opportunities with them to ask for forgiveness.

Likewise, in our homes, we have more opportunities to extend forgiveness. I want to give as much grace and forgiveness as I hope to receive. And as a person who needs a lot of grace and forgiveness, it's only rational that I need to give it a lot out. The measure to which I'm willing to

give forgiveness -- in many circumstances -- equal to the standard with which people are eager to forgive me.

In my home, with God's help, I often try and lead by asking for forgiveness. Recently, Steph and I couldn't agree on a decision. I wanted one thing; she wanted another, but we had to decide. At the moment, we had responsibilities that required us to go our different ways. She was driving one car, I was driving another, and as I pulled away, I felt pretty grumpy about my desires being unmet in our decision. And so I had a decision: I could stew on that or pick up the phone and call her.

And by God's grace, because of the Spirit's work in it, I was able to call her and say, "Hey, I'm sorry I was being quite difficult to get along with. Will you forgive me?" And she was gracious in giving me that forgiveness. I didn't need to reference what she had done or what I had said; it was just, "Hey, I was being difficult."

That allowed her to say likewise, "I was being difficult. I wanted a certain thing. Will you forgive me?" And so, by God's grace, she could follow my example. And I pray that's always the case within our marriage. And be quick to forgive.

### *Forget*

Second, be quick to forget. So don't keep track of past wars and past quarrels. I know that's hard to do. Many times our memory is wrapped up in our emotions, but it's imperative that when things have been resolved, we have to work to let them stay resolved. So forgetting what it is that we have been fighting or have fought about in the past. We see this decision to "not hold a record of wrong" in the description of love (see Chapter 1).

These are tools for enriching our marriages. Suppose there is a pattern of unforgiveness, quarreling, and fighting at the very center of your relationship. In that case, some restoration and rebuilding must happen before a purposeful forgetfulness towards those quarrels can come about.

When God brings our relationships to the point where we can extend and receive forgiveness, deciding to forget about those things, he brings true help to our marriages.

My mom is struggling with Alzheimer's and dementia. And one thing she mentioned is that one of the benefits of it is that my dad can say something to her that she doesn't like, and she

forgets it. She actually mentioned, "It kind of helps our relationship because I just forget that he says some things."

That's not how it's supposed to be in our world; people aren't supposed to lose their memories. And as sad as that is, it was a good reminder to me to be a person with a bit of intentional forgetfulness when it comes to past quarrels.

I pursue forgiving people as I have been forgiven in Christ (Colossians 3:13), and I move on from those things. I want to have a deep forgetfulness towards those disputes to move forward and quickly foster peace.

### *Keep the Big things Big, and Keep the Small things small*

As a husband, I can highlight things about her that I appreciate that fosters peace. It's hard to be mad at someone doting on you, constantly pointing out the good things about you. Another way of doing this is to joke about the things we have petty quarrels about, not in a way to make light of something truly serious, but refusing to let small matters be a big deal.

I've watched this in my father-in-law: someone can be critical of him, and instead of responding as offended, he can make light of that and be like, yeah, you're right. Or he will make himself the butt of that joke in a self-deprecating way. And it's a way of pursuing peace, not making a big deal of other people's criticism. I'm thankful for his example.

Of course, if joking is the only way someone communicates with you, that's not OK. Pursuing and sometimes clearly speaking about how things have grieved you is the best way to foster peace. It can be healthy to talk about how things make you feel but also know that not everything has to be addressed immediately, at every moment.

### *Fostering Peace*

We must protect, foster, and pursue peace. We can see the need for active peace-making in places where Civil War has broken out in countries in the past. For example, South Africa is famous for an extensive "Truth and Reconciliation" process of peace-making that followed the end of the policy of apartheid that brutally divided that country for so long.

What happens at the national scale is a pointer to what occurs inside us. We have a choice: will we love the people in our lives, obeying the second greatest commandment to love others? Or, instead, will we focus on our own desires?

To call it a "choice" might make it seem like something we do once and consider it done. In reality, making peace requires sustained effort. If, in your marriage relationship, peace is not being fostered, cared for, developed, attended to, and pursued through our words, you will show that you prioritize your desires above your spouse. We can use gestures and make a big deal about things that show we aren't pursuing peace. But when we grasp that God has called us to care for people, we use our words, gestures, or emphasis to develop peace, and we do so in the power of his Holy Spirit.

Those things are central to fostering peace. What can you do today to foster peace? It may be that you can ask God to help you in forgetting ways that you have been wronged. You can make a gesture of peace towards the person you love.

So we can foster peace by being quick to forgive and forget as best we can by God's grace. God will do specific things to develop peace in our marriages as we pursue peace.

### *The Champion of Peace*

Christ has done everything to foster peace with us, and we imitate him in our relationships. He has chosen to forgive us. He has chosen to forget our sins -- even though he bears the marks of the forgiveness he bought for us. He paid the penalty for those things. His kindness and forgiveness overflow towards us so that we can overflow in forgiveness to others. We can endeavor to forget as he has fully forgotten our sins. And we can foster care and kindness towards others as he fosters peace with us daily. So my challenge and encouragement for you today is this, will you pursue peace with your nearest neighbor, your spouse, in the way Christ has sought peace with you, even towards his death, even giving his own life?

Would you be willing to imitate that in some small way today?

## Listening Questions

*Answer the following questions while the teacher is teaching.*

1. A good scripture that talks about dissension: \_\_\_\_\_
2. We get angry when we do not get what we \_\_\_\_\_
3. Because of the proximity to our spouses, we have more opportunities with them to ask for  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. It can be healthy to talk about how things make you feel but also know that not everything  
has to be addressed \_\_\_\_\_, at every moment.
5. Christ is our \_\_\_\_\_ of peace

## Video Testimonies Listening Activity

*Fill in the words you hear from the testimonies video.*

1. "Marriage is a journey and, and couples develop over the years. And if they don't work at it, they \_\_\_\_\_ in the first year of marriage and increasingly the bad parts of the first year of marriage instead of really growing and developing throughout a lifetime so that they're not just doing 52 consecutive one year experiences."

2. "'What can I take off your plate?' That's a thousand times better than just \_\_\_\_\_ – and getting it \_\_\_\_\_."

3. "I think a lot of our \_\_\_\_\_ of communication is also sometimes knowing that there needs to just be \_\_\_\_\_. There just needs to be \_\_\_\_\_. And not everything has to be \_\_\_\_\_."

## Group Discussion

1. Read James 4:1-3 together. Where do you see connections between desires and anger? What are some common sources of conflict within our own lives?

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2. In the interview, Marie says that they were guessing what each other needed rather than actually talking about it. How is discussing what we need an example of building peace?

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3. Later in the chapter, James 4:7 describes the need to repent of sin. How can a personal and regular practice of repentance of specific sin contribute to peace?

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4. What has it been like when someone asks you for forgiveness? How did it help, and what was left unresolved afterward?

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## Pray Together For God's Help

**Take a few moments to pray together as a group. You can't do this in your own strength but he promises to help those who call on him!**

- Share any specific special burdens.
- Thank God for showing us that Jesus is the "Prince of Peace," and praise God for the benefits of peace he gives:
  - Jesus leaves us with peace that goes beyond worldly peace
  - Jesus brings us peace with God through his cross
  - Jesus shows us there are special blessings for those who work to make peace
- Ask God to help us all to help us see our desires that lead to frustration and anger, and fight those sins.
- And ask for his help to actively participate as peacemakers.



## Later This Week: Couples Homework Activity

**We plan to do this activity at this date and time:** \_\_\_\_\_

As a couple, read these passages and discuss these questions.

- Read Matthew 5:9 together. What does it mean to be a peacemaker in a marriage?
- Read James 4:1-3 together. What desires or needs are most likely to create strain in your relationship?
- Without getting into the discussion now, is there an old source of tension that just seems to stay with you year after year in marriage? The most common ones relate to family, money, and sex. Identify one key area and commit to pray for God's help to seek peace and continued wisdom for that area.

***God, please help us to grow in peace and unity about*** \_\_\_\_\_



## 4 • Kindness & Goodness

### Kindness & Goodness In Scripture<sup>16</sup>

The year is 197 AD, Christianity has been growing by leaps and bounds but in spite of that, or perhaps because of it, Christians are being disparaged and persecuted. One particular Christian writer living in the Latin-speaking part of the empire, Tertullian, is getting fed up with the hatred leveled against his brothers and sisters in Christ, so he writes an apologetic work helpfully titled *Apology*. He starts his third chapter by complaining about how people would say things like, “Such-and-such is a good man, except that he is a Christian,” or, “I’m surprised that so-and-so, an otherwise sensible person, became a Christian.”<sup>17</sup>

Tertullian reasons that the term *Christian* shouldn’t be a problem, since the word is just related to anointing. Seems pretty innocuous. He mentioned that the word is sometimes mispronounced as *Chrestian*, and in that case in Greek it, surprisingly, is related to *sweetness* or *kindness*. How much better can you get than that?

I really like that phonological mistake. Christians being mistakenly called Chrestians, or “the kind ones,” which segues nicely to our topic in this section of the class: *kindness* and *goodness*, the fifth and sixth aspects of the fruit of the spirit.

Let’s review Galatians 5:22-23:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, *kindness*, *goodness*, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control; against such things there is no law.

It’s a word that we use all the time, but what exactly is *kindness*? If you were to look-up kindness in a standard English dictionary, you would see that being kind has to do with being sympathetic, helpful, polite.

Those are all good things, but is Christian kindness just *politeness*? Is it merely, like Pastor Stephen Witmer asks, a matter of “smiling, getting along, and not ruffling feathers”? Christian kindness certainly includes pleasant words, and caring smiles, but it is so much more. Going further than politeness, some behaviors that come to mind include being thoughtful, putting

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<sup>16</sup> Chapter written by Brian Gomez

<sup>17</sup> Tertullian, and Minucius Felix. 2008. *Apologetical Works*; Octavius. *The Fathers of the Church: A New Translation*. Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press.

the needs of others before your own, and being generous. Christian kindness definitely includes all of the above and those behaviors need to be part of our marriages.

When we take a look in Scripture, we'll see that there is also a deeper kindness, the kind which is long-suffering and always ready to forgive, especially when the other person doesn't deserve it.

To learn what Paul means by kindness let's take a look at the language used in Galatians. The Greek word that Paul uses, χρηστότης (khrēstótēs), is fairly common in Paul's virtue lists and is often used to connote the kindness that God displays toward us in providing us salvation through Christ.<sup>18</sup> The next aspect of the fruit of the spirit is *goodness* ἁγαθωσύνη (agathōsúnē) and interestingly, there is a lot of overlap between how this word and χρηστότης (khrēstótēs) are translated. ἁγαθωσύνη (Agathōsúnē) is only used about four times in the New Testament and can be also be translated as kindness.

Since there's so much in common here and both words are sometimes translated as "generosity"<sup>19</sup>, and because of the significant semantic similitude (Phew; glad I got that alliterative Baptist thing out of the way.) we're going to be looking at them together.

## *Kindness*

We're going to start by diving into Ephesians. This is a particularly great book when studying this topic because, like many of these epistles, Paul spends roughly the first half of his discourse teaching beautiful truths about God and the Gospel and finishes the second half exhorting Christians to live out those truths for God, explaining how their lives should conform to the union they have with Christ.

Paul writes in Ephesians 2:7

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<sup>18</sup> For more see Thomas R. Schreiner. 2010. Galatians. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series: New Testament. Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan Academic.

<sup>19</sup> Bauer gives the following entries for χρηστότης and ἁγαθωσύνη respectively: "Kindness: χρηστότης (LN 88.10, 88.67) (BAGD 2.a. p. 886): 'kindness' [BAGD, BNTC, Herm, LN (88.67), Mor, WBC; all versions except CEV, KJV], 'benevolence' [LN (88.10)], 'generosity, goodness' [BAGD], 'gentleness' [KJV]. This noun is also translated as a verb phrase or clause: 'makes us kind' [CEV], 'people treat others kindly' [SSA]. Goodness: ἁγαθωσύνη (LN 57.109, 57.109 fn28, 88.1) (BAGD p. 3): 'goodness' [BNTC, Herm, LN (57.109 fn 28, 88.1), Mor, WBC; all versions except CEV, NRSV], 'generosity' [BAGD, LN (57.109); NRSV], This noun is also translated as a verb phrase or clause: 'makes us good' [CEV], 'people are good' [SSA]." For more see (Exegetical Summary Series) Bauer, Walter. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature. Translated and adapted from the 5th ed., 1958.

... so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in *kindness* (χρηστότητι, *chrēstótēti*) toward us in Christ Jesus.

Here Paul is linking God's kindness to the amazing unfathomable grace that he has blessed us with through union with Christ. The context here is Paul explaining how God initiated a relationship with us, providing us the gift of salvation through his Son. Moreover, He did not provide that gift in response to our living virtuously. No, he was infinitely *kind* and *generous* toward us in that he saved us when we were dead in our trespasses and sins.

Let's now shift to Ephesians 4:32

Be kind (χρηστοί, *chrēstoí*) to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Do you see what Paul is doing here? He's using the example of the kindness that God displayed toward us as the model for how we are to act with one another. If people like me, people like all of us, can be forgiven by God despite the myriad ways in which we fall short every day, then how much more should we forgive each other? It may not be easy at first, but we need to cultivate a habit of quickly and kindly forgiving.

God first loved us and forgave us, we too, whenever something negative is said or done, should be the first to apologize, regardless of who would be more to blame in a court hearing.

Be kind to each other without expecting anything in return and always seek to forgive.

## *Goodness*

Goodness is so closely tied to kindness, it's nearly impossible to separate them. Let's take a look at what Ephesians 5:8-9 says about goodness.

... for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good (ἀγαθωσύνη) and right and true).

Any goodness that we partake of is ultimately from God since all good gifts come down to us from Him (James 1:17). Ephesians affirms that God has saved us and we are united with Christ, so we get to reflect God's goodness in our daily lives to those around us and, maybe especially, to our spouses.

Marriage itself is one of the good gifts that the Lord has blessed us with, so it is fitting that our marriages should be shining with the light of God's goodness.

Let's take a look at Matthew 20 where we will see this same word for goodness translated as *generosity*. This is the parable of the vineyard owner who employed different people at different hours, but paid them all the same. Skipping down to verse 15 we see the following:

Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity (ἀγαθός, *agathós*)?'

The word generosity here is the same word in Greek for good. So to be *good* according to Jesus is to be *generous*. In the context of marriage, that means not being strictly *fair*, but lovingly giving more to your spouse. It means their wants and needs should always be thought of and met before your own.

I hope you're noticing that all the things we've been talking about, not just in this lesson but in all the previous ones, are linked together. Like Noah reminded us (Chapter 3), the fruit of the Spirit may have components and segments, but it's all one fruit. Being generous like the vineyard owner, showing kindness like God has toward us, these things are only possible if we're also showing love, having joy, and building peace.

To further cement what *kindness* and *goodness* are, we can do no better than looking to the example that Jesus set. As the author of Hebrews says, Jesus, "is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature," so when we look at Jesus, we see all the goodness and kindness of God lived out in the flesh. As Christopher Wright puts it, "Jesus was kindness incarnate – kindness on two legs."<sup>20</sup>

One way in which Jesus shows us what kindness and generosity look like is in His response to being interrupted. For many of us, the thought, let alone the reality of being interrupted causes all sorts of unbiblical reactions to come out. Think for a minute about how important Jesus's mission was and how valuable his limited time must have been. And yet, in Gospel after Gospel, encounter after encounter, Jesus is constantly interrupted and He always responds in love and kindness. He responds this way even toward people whom his society and culture would typically have shunned and rejected. Three quick examples would be the woman with the

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<sup>20</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright. 2017. *Cultivating the Fruit of the Spirit : Growing in Christlikeness*. Downers Grove: IVP.

bleeding condition, blind Bartimaeus who kept shouting for him, and the Syro-Phoenician woman who wouldn't take no for an answer (Luke 8:43-48; Mark 10:46-52; Mark 7:24-30).<sup>21</sup>

### *Some Final Thoughts*

We have learned what Scripture teaches about biblical *kindness* and *goodness*. But we didn't stop there, we also looked at biblical examples of it in action, and that is really important because at the end of the day, practical application, actually being like Christ in the world, "is the chief end of theology and its highest apex."<sup>22</sup>

I would really like to encourage you to take the time this week, it could be on a commute, in the shower, whenever you have some moments, take some time and start thinking about how you can show a little more kindness and generosity in your relationship with your spouse. Please consider the ways in which you are thankful for your spouse. Dwell deeply on all their best aspects and let them know that you appreciate them. Extend forgiveness quickly and without having your spouse jump through hoops. Seek out their needs and desires before your own. Think about how you can tangibly show kindness to your spouse:

- Take the trash out without being asked (and replace the bag!)
- Bring home flowers or dinner unexpectedly
- If you divide chores up around the house, do some of their chores for them
- Send them a random text with some kind words
- Give up some of your time to do something they like to do, show interest in their hobbies

No matter what, don't stop at just being polite.

Remember that the fruit of the spirit is holistic, so our responses need to be *joyful*, *loving*, *peaceful*, as well as *kind* and *good*.

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Mastricht, Peter van. *Theoretical-Practical Theology*. Vol 1. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Reformation Heritage Books, 2018.

## Bible Study Listening Notes

1. Ephesians 2:7: ... so that in the coming ages he might show the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
2. Ephesians 4:32: Be kind to one another, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_  
one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
3. Be kind to each other without \_\_\_\_\_ in return  
and always seek to \_\_\_\_\_ .
4. In encounter after encounter, Jesus is constantly \_\_\_\_\_ and He always  
responds in \_\_\_\_\_ and kindness.



## Video Testimonies Listening Activity

Fill in the blanks with the quotes you hear from the video.

- Kindness is shown through \_\_\_\_\_
- Kindness is shown in \_\_\_\_\_
- "The thing that we've had to figure out is \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ what we need"
- "If you can pursue friendship first, the other aspects of marriage will be  
\_\_\_\_\_ and you'll actually be the thing that \_\_\_\_\_ is with his people."

## Group Discussion<sup>23</sup>

1. Have a volunteer read Philippians 4:8-9 aloud to the group...

"Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you." (ESV)

According to this passage, what does kindness toward your spouse look like from a biblical perspective?

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2. How have you recently expressed appreciation for your spouse? How has your spouse recently sacrificed for you?

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3. Have another volunteer read Proverbs 18:20-21 aloud to the group...

"From the fruit of a man's mouth his stomach is satisfied; he is satisfied by the yield of his lips. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruits." (ESV)

What does this passage say about the way we use our words with each other?

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<sup>23</sup> Discussion material adapted from Thomas, Gary. *Cherish: Bible Study Guide*. Zondervan, 2017.

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4. Is any area of life making you so busy or preoccupied that you are failing to cherish your spouse? What is it? Remember, it might be something that sounds "good" (i.e. parenting, volunteering, your job) but that is also distracting you from your first pledge to "love and to cherish." Ask your spouse if he or she thinks anything seems to be taking you away from him or her.

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5. Have a final volunteer read Proverbs 4:20-23 aloud to the group...

"My son, be attentive to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Let them not escape from your sight; keep them within your heart. For they are life to those who find them, and healing to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life." (ESV)

Why do you think the Bible says to "guard your heart"? Remember that God made every husband and wife to be "one flesh" – a single person! How do you guard your heart and, in doing so, also guard the heart of your spouse?

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## Pray Together For God's Help

**Take a few moments to pray together as a group. You can't do this in your own strength but he promises to help those who call on him!**

- Ask God to allow you to forgive the hurts of the past and even give you the desire to sacrifice for your spouse.
- Ask God to show you what it really looks like to guard your heart and use words as tools to build each other up instead of bring each other down.
- Ask God to help you delight in your spouse in new ways and to cherish your spouse above all else.
- Thank God for His presence in your lives, for the people in your group, and for the opportunity to be on this journey together.

## Later This Week: Couples Homework Activity

**We plan to do this activity at this date and time:** \_\_\_\_\_

Part of understanding and exploring what it means to show kindness to one another is to verbalize what it means to appreciate and protect your spouse. You may think, “my spouse already knows I appreciate him or her!” But we all need to hear it from time to time. So take a few minutes to write down a few things you appreciate about your spouse and ways you have felt protected by your spouse, and then share these items with your spouse.

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## Later This Week: Individual Challenge

A study by psychologists of the behavior of couples who stayed together throughout life, and those who later separated, showed that the happy couples had two people “constantly scanning the environment, and their spouse” for ways to show gratitude or to respond with affection. *When can you dedicate some energy this week to look for ways to show gratitude to your spouse?*



## 5 • Gentleness & Humility

### Humility in Scripture<sup>24</sup>

When I was first asked about teaching about humility for this course, I was honored. I was flattered. I thought someone noticed my excellent grasp of this subject, and I said, “Mark, I would be proud to teach humility.” And that’s how it goes!

Pride is this great, covert, ever-present thing that whacks away at us. Winston Churchill once said of a political opponent, “He is a humble man, but then he has much to be humble about.” I must confess that I am not an expert in humility, and many areas in my life where I feel ashamed, particularly in my marriage, are centered around pride. Therefore, my experience is a cautionary tale, much like a relative with lung cancer warning against smoking.

Because I have watched Pride, I’ve watched what it’s done. You don’t want anything to do with pride. And the scriptures are replete with that warning. According to God’s very words, it is a damnable sin. Proverb 16:5:

The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.

I’ll give four reasons why humility matters to Jesus’s followers. There are many more reasons the Bible is replete with encouragement and exhortation towards humility.

### *Humility Brings Joy*

First, there is great joy in humility. Pride is the great joy robber. Humility is the joy bringer. There’s a wonderful little book, “Humility, the Joy of Self Forgetfulness” by Gavin Ortlund. It’s the most helpful book I’ve read on humility. In the book, he says:

Many of us think humility is important, but strictly as a duty. It’s like paying our taxes or going to the dentist. Interestingly, CS Lewis. He says, argues the opposite. To get even near humility, Lewis says, even for a moment is like a drink of cold water to a man in a desert.

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<sup>24</sup> Chapter written by Larry Trotter

Joy is a good acid test of humility, and our entire spirituality, true humility, always produces joy. If we lack joy, we know we've got a counterfeit; something is misfiring... We can think of humility like this: *self-forgetfulness leading to joy*.

I hope you find the beauty of this enticing. There is true joy here that the world may not be able to offer.

### *Humility is the way of Jesus.*

Additionally, I'd like to share a second reason for consideration. In the words of the Mandalorian, "This is the way." Jesus famously embodied this idea in Philippians 2: "Being found in human form, Jesus humbled himself. He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." To follow Jesus, one cannot be proud. Pride is a hindrance to following Jesus. As Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

It is not possible to deny yourself and be proud at the same time. Humility is the way of a Jesus follower.

### *Humility enables Love*

Another reason why you cannot love and be proud is found in 1 Corinthians 13. "Love is patient, kind, does not envy or boast, and is not arrogant."

Love and pride are mutually exclusive. As blogger Tim Challies writes:

Love is impossible without humility. If I want to excel at love, I first need to learn to be humble, to learn to count my own joy and pleasure as less important than the joy and pleasure of someone else. Perhaps the key to love is learning to derive pleasure from someone else's pleasure. Selfless love is to find pleasure in another person's pleasure.

Our Far-Flung Family submits health reports to North Wake every quarter, a simple assessment that allows them to raise flags and receive assistance. One of the questions in these reports pertains to their marriage. Recently, a family who had only been living in their new location for a year provided a heartwarming comment. The husband wrote about his wife thriving as a teacher at an international school with their children by her side. He expressed his joy in seeing his wife flourish. This is a beautiful example of finding happiness in another person's success.



## *Humility Beats the Alternative*

The fourth reason is that humility beats the alternative. God delights in humility. Psalm 149:4:

For the LORD takes pleasure in his people; he adorns the humble with salvation.

Proverbs 6:16:

There are six things that the LORD hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes...

The first one, top of the list of the six -- Haughty eyes, is evidence of pride. And the list of six things God hates. Pride is the first one out of the blocks.

That's why humility matters to a Jesus follower. There are many more, but those are four power reasons. Here's a quote from Gavin Ortlund's little book. He says,

Therefore, just as pride permeates our lives and affects all that we do, social humility is more than simply one virtue to aim at. It is to be the atmosphere and quality in which we experience all of life.

Humility is not just another thing to do. It is the way we should do everything. Isn't that beautiful?

So in light of those four things, let's turn our thoughts briefly to how we can grow humility in our souls and become more humble.

And the first kind of underlying perspective on this is that humility is God's work, right? It is, after all, as we're seeing it linked to gentleness. It's a fruit of the spirit. So it is not a fruit solely of our effort. So simply trying harder is not the answer. Instead, we must grasp the tools God loves to wield to shape our souls.

### *Tool 1: Scripture*

His word is first -- and so study and reflect, journal, and memorize on this subject of humility, mainly so that God can use his word to shape our soul. Scripture is an essential tool. It has so been so pivotal in my personal pursuit of this virtue.

In this course book, you'll find a summary of findings from a study I did on humility about 15 years ago, called "Biblical Examples of Humility." It involves things that fuel humility, the fruit of humility, and some key verses to help you start your study. So if humility is what God has before you coming out of this class, use that material to get you started. The verses collected there would be a great place to begin your personal study in journaling.

(Let me make an aside about this study: This course covers six elements of the fruit of the Spirit, intended to be covered in six weeks. Character does not change that fast, commonly. Real heart change moves slower than in seminary, where you study philosophy, theology, education, hermeneutics, and all kinds of stuff simultaneously. Character usually changes one area at a time. So coming out of this class, I encourage you to have one of these six things you need to do next. And when you're done with that one, God will be kind, and you can ask him, "what's the next one?" And you go back to your notes.)

But if humility is that one thing for you, then an extended meditation on the scriptures is a good, powerful thing in God's hands. And those verses smattered all over that page from me are good ones to start with.

Especially helpful in humility is to welcome and receive what God is saying to us about a couple of things -- how we see ourselves before God. We are undeserving recipients of mercy and love. So, we are all undeserving of all the kindness that God gets to us. And Gavin Ortlund tells a helpful story. He says:

Suppose you are approaching an extremely powerful king. You walk into the royal court. Your footsteps echo on the marble. The ceiling is far above. Gold glitters around the room. You look up to his high throne. You wait for him to speak. How does this feel? Humbling, to be sure.

But now suppose the king gets off his throne and rushes to you. He has been greatly worried about you. He has, in fact, put his life in great danger in order to help you. He embraces you and cries with relief that you are safe. Then he leads you to a huge table and personally serves you breakfast.

How do you feel now? Does not the king's kindness humble you as well—in a different (deeper) way?

This is the humility the gospel should produce in us.

And so, in keeping with the gospel, we can enhance that story and say that we don't approach this king simply as a peasant but as a rebel peasant. We approach him as an adversary who would dethrone and do him wrong. And his response is the same: He lavishes kindness and mercy on us as though we were his own with that kind of love.

That is a large slice of humble pie, right? Grace is why we call the gospel *good news*!

Corrie Ten Boom was a wonderful Christian lady who ministered in really difficult POW camp situations in World War II. She had a remarkable writing and speaking ministry after that.

But someone asked her if it was difficult for her to be humble as a result of all that kind of fame that came her way. She responded,

*When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday on the back of a donkey, and everyone was waving palm branches and throwing garments onto the road, and singing praises, do you think that for one moment it ever entered the head of that donkey that any of that was for him?*

She says if I can be the donkey on which Jesus rides in his glory, I give him all the praise and all the honor. So, you and me -- we're Jesus's donkeys, right? That's an excellent way to think about God and us.

But the scriptures will also help us think about how we see others. Famously the cornerstone of humility in the New Testament. Philippians 2:3-4:

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others

It's important to approach every room we enter with humility and the mindset that we are the least significant person present. And a helpful little prayer to pray, perhaps daily, would be something like this: "Oh, Jesus, meek and love help me to consider myself the least important person in the room, in every room and all the rooms I enter this day." Pray that just to sow that seed as the way that you're going to go about your day.

## *Tool 2: Prayer*

And that leads us to the second tool. God loves to really loves to wield his word, to shape us and make us more humble. And he does love to use prayer.

The act of prayer itself is humbling. The traditional posture for prayer is to be bowed. The posture of prayer is a pretty humbling thing. And it is humbling that we are crying out to God for help and mercy.

Prayer is humbling. 2 Chronicles 7:14 includes the famous statement,

If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Prayer and humility are inextricably linked right in this passage and in others.

Just to increase your prayer life is compatible with a posture of humility.

One of the couples recorded for this course talks about praying Philippians 2 as a daily part of their praying. This is another powerful weapon in God's hands.

Later in this guide, you'll find a potent prayer called the Litany of Humility -- adapted into a "Litany of Humility for Marriage." That one's really "dangerous." Pray it at your own risk. It's a powerful little prayer.

Here's the thing: If you want to be humble but don't pray to be humble, you probably won't be humble.

## *Tool 3: Training*

Embrace the word, embrace prayer. And the last one is one I'm calling "training" -- because humility is certainly a Fruit of the Spirit. It's God's work -- and yet scripture says we play a part in that work. That's why it uses this kind of language, such as in 1 Peter 5:5-6:

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you.

So we are commanded to humble ourselves.

Just as a very important aside, we are to humble *ourselves*. Scripture does not say we are to humble our spouses! That is not our job. Humble *ourselves* is where the emphasis on this goes. And one way for this to happen is through the daily practice of glad sacrifice for the good of others, particularly in our marriage for the good of our spouse.

### *Training in Speech*

And you can think about this in terms of speech, and you can think of it in terms of actions. For speech: To be humble means that you would listen well. And you would confess well and quickly -- wrongs done, harms afflicted, inflicted. So speaking and listening to our spouses as though they are more important than we are.

This is an area of struggle for me. We are so quick to speak and confident in our speech. Sometimes we feel we're important when we say things -- and this is a dangerous idea to carry into marriage! It has followed me into my marriage.

For me, learning to listen to my wife, Steph, as though she is more important -- what she has to say is more important -- than what I want to say. It is crucial for our marriage -- as is confessing well and quickly. In relationships, there's a concept of "Keeping short accounts." It means that you address issues, understandings, and grievances promptly instead of letting them accumulate over time. For us, that is super important. And it's part of sacrificing for the good of others is that we would do that quickly.

### *Training in Actions*

So there is a kind of sacrificial, loving communication that's helpful. And there is also sacrificial action. Jesus told us about this in the passage on Foot Washing, John 13:13-16. Jesus says,

You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. 14 If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. 15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. 1

So the idea behind this is this simple: taking on low chores in your home, which no one else, especially your spouse, wants to do. That could be diapers, could be laundry, could be toilets, could be dishes, could be weeds, could be vacuuming.

If you pause for a moment, you probably already know something your spouse dislikes doing in your home. And part of training is simply to do that for them. It's regular training of your soul to be the less-important person in your marriage. So is there a "foot washer" kind of chore in your home that you could pick up that might serve to put you in your place of the place of humility -- like your savior?

I ran across a beautiful prayer by a 19th-century French Christian nun, Thérèse of Lisieux, on this matter of humility. You can make it yours.

I beg You, my Divine Jesus, to send me a humiliation whenever I try to set myself above others.

I know, O my God, that You humble the proud soul but to the one who humbles one's self You give an eternity of glory.

So I want to put myself in the last rank and to share Your humiliations so as "to have a share with You" in the kingdom of Heaven.

But, You know my weakness, Lord. Every morning I make a resolution to practice humility and in the evening I recognize that I have committed again many faults of pride.

At this I am tempted to become discouraged but I know that discouragement is also pride. Therefore, O my God, I want to base my hope in You alone.

Since You can do everything, deign to bring to birth in my soul the virtue I desire.

To obtain this grace of Your infinite mercy I will very often repeat: "O Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, make my heart like Yours!"

Amen.

## Bible Study Listening Notes

1. What are four reasons that humility matters to Jesus's followers?

- \_\_\_\_\_ in humility
- \_\_\_\_\_ is a hindrance to following Jesus
- Love and pride are \_\_\_\_\_
- God \_\_\_\_\_ in humility

2. A helpful daily would be: "Oh, Jesus, meek and love help me to consider myself the least \_\_\_\_\_ person in the room, in every room and all the rooms I enter this day."

3. The first tool to use for growing in humility is \_\_\_\_\_.

4. We are to practice humbling \_\_\_\_\_ – not our \_\_\_\_\_.

## Video Testimonies Listening Activity

Fill in the blanks with the quotes.

- Humility allows you to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ and welcome God to change you for the better.
- Stephanie: Saying “I’m just so sorry” ... sounds simple, but is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to be done with the power of the gospel because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ a good work in me is faithful.
- Humility allows you to \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ when you need it.
- Chip: Seek out \_\_\_\_\_. We all need \_\_\_\_\_ at one time or another. We’ve all \_\_\_\_\_ or others recognized we needed help. And this is the importance of being in a church where you’ve got small groups that are helping one another.
- Chris: I pray the Philippians 2 verse: \_\_\_\_\_ out of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_. Put the \_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_ above your own. That naturally combats  
the selfishness or the irritability when you are looking to how to serve somebody else.

## Group Discussion<sup>25</sup>

1. Thinking about the examples given in the video, what is one example of humility that stood out to you? Why?

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2. Read Philippians 2:1-8 in at least two translations. What are some ways we are to follow the example of Jesus?

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3. Summarize the attitude of Christ by circling one word in verse 7 that expresses that attitude: "[He] emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men."

4. Read verses 7 and 8 again. How did Christ demonstrate His servanthood?

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5. The attitude of servanthood is explained in verses 3-4. Underline what we are told to do:

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<sup>25</sup> Adapted from A Couple's Guide to a Growing Marriage, Gary Chapman, Ch. 4 "Developing My Serve"

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

6. Thinking of others as better than ourselves is the opposite of what we normally do. When you apply this principle to the way you think and act toward your spouse, what are some actions you would demonstrate?

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7. Read John 13:1-17. In our day, what would compare to foot washing in Jesus's day? Add your answers to the following list.

*Taking out the trash*

*Making dinner*

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## Pray Together For God's Help<sup>26</sup>

***This is written to be used as a personal prayer, and can be prayed for yourself to ask God for his mercy as a group.***

O Jesus! meek and humble of heart, hear me.

From the desire of being esteemed in my marriage, deliver me, O Jesus.

From the demand to be loved, deliver me, O Jesus.

From the desire of being extolled by my spouse, deliver me, O Jesus.

From the desire of being honored, deliver me, O Jesus.

From the desire of being praised for what I do, deliver me, O Jesus.

From the expectation to be consulted about everything in my home, deliver me, O Jesus.

From the desire of having my spouse say they approve of me, deliver me, O Jesus.

From the fear of being humiliated before my spouse or children, deliver me, O Jesus.

From the fear of being despised in my home, deliver me, O Jesus.

From the fear of being corrected or asked to repent, deliver me, O Jesus.

From the fear of having my spouse not understand me, deliver me, O Jesus.

From the fear of being wronged by my spouse, deliver me, O Jesus.

That my spouse may be loved more than I, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That my spouse would receive more recognition than I, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That, in the opinion of the world, my spouse seems more important, and I seem less important, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That my spouse would have opportunities that I do not have, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That others may be praised and I unnoticed, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That my spouse may be preferred to me in everything, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

That my spouse may become more Christlike than I, provided that I may become as Christlike as I should, Jesus, grant me the grace to desire it.

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<sup>26</sup> Adapted from the Litany of Humility, credited to Rafael Cardinal Merry de Val, 1863

## Later This Week: Couples Homework Activity

**We plan to do this activity at this date and time:** \_\_\_\_\_

Happiness is something all couples want, but few achieve. Those who do achieve happiness have discovered the secret. You can too. Happiness is the result of serving, not of demanding. This exercise will help you develop your serve.

1. List the ways you served your spouse yesterday. Include the entire day from the time you awakened until you went to sleep. Be as specific as you can and include every act of service, large or small (for example: prepared her breakfast, picked up his dry cleaning).

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2. Make a list of several things you know your spouse would like you to do for him or her. These may include regular activities like taking out the garbage or occasional projects such as painting the bedroom. At this stage in the exercise, don't ask your partner what should be on the list. That will come later.

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3. The items you just listed provide a good source of ideas for how you can serve your spouse. Choose one you will do or begin to do today.

Act of service for my spouse and date completed: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Complete at least two other acts of service for your spouse this week. These need not be large or time-consuming, but they need to be acts you consciously do in a spirit of service to your spouse fueled by Jesus's love and service of you. Record them and the date you complete each one.

Act of service for my spouse and date completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Act of service for my spouse and date completed: \_\_\_\_\_

5. When you and your spouse have completed steps 1-4, share your answers with each other. If you feel comfortable doing so, ask your mate to help you build your list of things he would like you to do for him. This will help you identify practical ways to express your growing attitude of service.

6. Beginning today, seek to do at least one specific act of service for your spouse each day. It is fine to do more than one. Remember your objective is to build a lifestyle of serving your spouse. Jesus said the result of your service will be a blessing (see John 13:12-17).

## Study Resource: Biblical Examples of Humility - Summary (Larry Trotter)

### *Humility defined and displayed*

- **Confession** of sin marks the humble (Lev. 26.40-42)
- **Fasting and petitioning God** expresses humility (Ezra 8.21; Ps. 35.13)
- **Trusting in the Name of the LORD** marks the humble (Zep. 3.11)
- **Patience and loving forbearance** are humility's companions (Eph. 4.2)
- **Submission** is the way humility is revealed in young men (1 Pet. 5.5)

### *Exemplary Humility*

- **Moses** (Num. 12.3) was the most humble man on earth – he was marked by suffering personally and amongst the people he led. He saw God. He was dependent upon God and others. These things seemed to fuel his humility.
- **Ahab** (1 Kings 21.29) was renowned for his wickedness, yet when he humbled himself, God showed him mercy. How God esteems humility! How gracious and merciful God is! Ahab would not stay in this humble state (as evidenced by his rejection of Elijah as a prophet of the LORD in 1 Kings 22). Knowing this full well, God honored his evident humility and showed him mercy. Ahab's humility was triggered by the threat of God's judgment. Once again, it is (imminent) suffering that brings about humility. Ahab is a stunning portrait of how much God values humility. If humility can bring Ahab to a place of receiving God's mercy, how eager should we all be to humble ourselves and find mercy instead of judgment.
- **Josiah**, the good king, (2 Kings 22, 23) was the polar opposite of Ahab, a king of extraordinary goodness and obedience. Yet he, too, humbled himself before the LORD with many of the same signs as Ahab – weeping and rending of garments. And it was because of this humility that he was heard by God and his prayers granted. His immediate response to an awareness of his sins and the sins of his people was to humble himself. In this God delighted.
- **The leaders of Israel** (2 Chron. 12.6). They had abandoned the law of the LORD and came under severe judgment as a result (overrun by the Egyptians). The LORD pronounced them abandoned and they acknowledged it with these words, "the LORD is just." Their humility was expressed in acknowledging their sin and submitting to the

LORD's justice. In response, God showed them mercy and withheld his wrath, though he did discipline them.

- **The men of Asher, Manasseh and Zebulon** (2 Chron. 30.11). Their humility led them to embrace King Hezekiah's call to repent and return to the LORD. In a vivid contrast, the pride of many led them to scorn the invitation and mock the messengers.
- **Manasseh**, much like Ahab, was amongst the most wicked of kings. His legacy was one of blatant evil, even murderous idolatry (2 Chron. 33.6). And so, in an inexplicable kindness, God brought the greatest of sufferings upon him and he repented (33.12), humbling himself greatly. His humility manifested itself in prayer and led to his restoration and transformation of both him and the nation.
- **Josiah** (2 Chron. 34.27), though only 26 years old, Josiah already had a history of purging idols from the land. At the discovery of the scroll containing the law of the Lord, he humbled himself and tore his robes and wept before the Lord. He models a tender, repentant heart before the Word as he leads the people in restoring obedience to the Word of God.
- **Nebuchadnezzar** – (Dan. 4.37) deeply and involuntarily humbled by a kind of insanity, he now becomes a worshiper of God.
- **Daniel** – (Dan. 10.12) Daniel's great humility before God was evidenced by prayer, fasting and more outward symbols. His evident humility led to his prayers being eagerly and quickly heard and granted by God
- **Jesus** – Matt. 11.29 contains his own self-declaration of meekness. Phil. 2 paints his whole life as one of humility, supremely evidenced in his love poured out on the cross.
- **Paul** – Acts 20.19 – Paul describes his service as being marked by great humility and suffering (tears). Again there is a connection between humility and suffering.

### *Negative Examples*

- **Zedekiah** (2 Chron. 36.12) who did evil and would not humble himself before the LORD.
- **Jer. 44.10** - a tragic example of pride that leads to stubborn, unrepentant idolatry no matter what the cost
- **Belshazzar** – (Dan. 5.22) – he failed to humble himself and honor God and his reign and life came to an end in judgment.

- **False humility** – (Col. 2.18, 23) – there is a humility rooted in self abasement and self inflicted afflictions. This humility has no power against sexual indulgence. By implication, true humility does have such a power. Is. 58.3 also cites an unacceptable humility that fails to respect and care for others, though it bears the outward markings of true humility.

### *The Fuel for Humility*

- God uses **suffering and oppression** to humble the proud (Lev. 26.40-42; Ps. 44.9; 107.39). The Hebrew term for humble is often rendered afflicted (wne anav). In Deut. 8 God's use of great and prolonged suffering to produce humility is documented in their 40 years in the desert. Poverty is a comparable tool (1 Sam. 2.7). Financial need is a tool God uses to humble us and to slay our pride, provided we seek Him.
- In Deut. 8.3, 16 God is using not only suffering and deprivation as a tool to humble us, but **also his gracious and mighty provision**. The miraculous provision of manna was intended to humble them as well as was their need of it.
- An **awareness of the consequences of pride**, of a lack of humility, is presented as a major incentive to humble ourselves (2 Sam. 2.28). God watches over the proud to bring them low. He opposes them (1 Pet. 5.5). It is a crazy thing to choose to oppose God.
- Humility is a **regular companion of the fear of the LORD** (Prov. 15.33; 22.4). To see God rightly and hold Him in awe would surely humble us.
- **Fasting** is another regular companion, both evidencing and reinforcing humility in our lives (Is. 58-3-5)
- There is a kind of **involuntary humility** that the proud will face. It may not refer to heart as much as to place and position (Is. 2. 11, 12; 13.11). It is a kind of humbling to be avoided at all costs. It comes at the day of God's judgment. You can humble yourself (in response to what God is doing) or you can be humbled at that day. You definitely don't want to choose the latter. Nebuchadnezzar would surely testify to this! (Dan. 4.37)
- Humility can be **chosen** (Matt. 23.12). It must be **pursued** (Zeph. 2.3). We can **humble ourselves** (Prov. 6.3). - references to "the humble" are often referring to humility of place as well as heart (cf. Lk. 1.52). Poverty and **humble station** seem conducive, but not automatic or necessary to humility of heart.
- Reflecting on the **loving choice of God** of the likes of me fuels humility (Col. 3.12)
- **Wisdom** fuels humility (James 3.13)



## *The Fruit of Humility*

Humility is the trigger that releases the favor of God upon a life. He **saves** the humble (2 Sam. 2. 28; Ps. 18.27), he gives **grace** to them (1 Pet. 5.5; Prov. 3.34; James 4.6). Humility fuels **prayer and seeking God** and makes the way for God to **forgive and heal** (2 Chron. 7.14). God **guides** the humble in His ways and **teaches** them what is right (Ps. 25.9). God **sustains** the humble (Ps. 147.6) and **delights** in them (Ps. 149.4). Humility **yields wisdom** (Prov. 11.2), **honor** (Prov. 15.33), **wealth** and **life** (Prov. 22.4). He esteems/hears the humble (Is. 66.2). It protects us from God's anger (Zep. 2.3). It is the mark of the **greatest** in the kingdom (Matt. 18.4). If we humble ourselves, **God will exalt us** in turn (Matt. 23.12). Humility is a prerequisite to **justification** (Lk. 18.14). It **restrains sexual indulgence** (Col. 2.23). The humble will be **exalted** by God (James 4.10). It results in **humble deeds** that are the fruit of a good life (James 3.13). Humility enables us to **respond to evil with blessing** (1 Pet. 3.8). By their parents' humility **children are blessed** with the provision of God through their parent's intercession.

## *The Expectation of Humility*

None are exempt from humility. (Phil. 2.10) It is expected of the greatest of kings (Ex. 10.3) and it is the descriptor of the righteous poor (James 1.9). True humility is to be shown towards all men, no exceptions (Tit. 3.2).

The following are commands to humble ourselves:

- Eph. 4.2 – be completely humble
- Phil. 2.3 – allows for no exceptions to humble deference to others
- 1 Pet. 3.8 – fuelling the ability not to repay evil for evil
- 1 Pet. 5.5 – uniquely required of young men, but of all before the Lord as well.

## *On a lack of Humility*

If we do not humble ourselves, God will humble us (Matt. 23.12). Self humility is a kind of blessing. To be humbled by God is a kind of judgment/discipline (1 Kings 11.39)

## *Meditation Verses*

- Numbers 12:3            Now the man Moses was very meek, more than all people who were on the face of the earth.
- Deuteronomy 8:16        who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.
- 1 Kings 21:29            “Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days; but in his son's days I will bring the disaster upon his house.”
- 2 Chronicles 7:14        If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.
- Psalms 25:9              He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way.
- Proverbs 3:34            Toward the scornful he is scornful, but to the humble he gives favor.
- Proverbs 11:2            When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.
- Proverbs 18:12          Before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.
- Isaiah 2:11                The haughty looks of man shall be brought low, and the lofty pride of men shall be humbled, and the Lord alone will be exalted in that day.
- Isaiah 2:12                For the Lord of hosts has a day against all that is proud and lofty, against all that is lifted up—and it shall be brought low;
- Isaiah 66:2                All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be,

declares the Lord.

But this is the one to whom I will look:  
he who is humble and contrite in spirit  
and trembles at my word.

- Daniel 4:37      Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven,  
for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in  
pride he is able to humble.
- Daniel 10:12      Then he said to me, "Fear not, Daniel, for from the first day that you set  
your heart to understand and humbled yourself before your God, your  
words have been heard, and I have come because of your words.
- Zephaniah 2:3      Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land,  
who do his just commands;  
seek righteousness; seek humility;  
perhaps you may be hidden  
on the day of the anger of the Lord.
- Zephaniah 3:12      But I will leave in your midst  
a people humble and lowly.  
They shall seek refuge in the name of the Lord,
- Matthew 11:29      Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in  
heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
- Matthew 11:30      For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."
- Matthew 18:4      Whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom  
of heaven.
- Ephesians 4:1      I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner  
worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility  
and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,
- Colossians 3:12      Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate  
hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,

- James 3:13                      Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom.
- 1 Peter 3:8                      Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.
- 1 Peter 5:5-6                    Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,

*All verses are from the English Standard Version (ESV).*





## 6 • Patience

### Patience In Scripture<sup>27</sup>

*Patience - An attribute of God He grows in us*

Some ways we could translate the term Patience include:

- Long-suffering
- Perseverance
- Endurance
- Fortitude

Patience is an attribute of God. His patience is described in terms of *mercy*, of *compassion*, of being *gracious*, of having limits on his anger, of protecting us from the full wrath of our guilt, and of caring for us as fragile.

Ps 103:8-14

8 The Lord is compassionate and gracious,

*Slow to anger* and abounding in mercy.

9 He will not always contend with us,

Nor will He keep His anger forever.

10 He has not dealt with us according to our sins,

Nor rewarded us according to our guilty deeds.

11 For as high as the heavens are above the earth,

So great is His mercy toward those who fear Him.

12 As far as the east is from the west,

So far has He removed our wrongdoings from us.

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<sup>27</sup> Outline developed by Jerry Lassetter

13 Just as a father has compassion on his children,  
So the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him.

14 For He Himself knows our form;  
He is mindful that we are nothing but dust.

Num 14:18a

The Lord is *slow to anger* and abundant in mercy, forgiving wrongdoing and violation of His Law;

Exodus 34:6

6 Then the Lord passed by in front of him and proclaimed, “The Lord, the Lord God, compassionate and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in faithfulness and truth...

The Apostle Peter describes God’s patience toward those who do not yet trust him; he restrains the punishment we are all due, so that we will turn to him.

2 Peter 3:9

9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance.

Patience is an attribute that he clearly shares with his own through the Holy Spirit. His Spirit in us bears the fruit of patience in our lives.

Gal 5:22-23

The fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, ... .

Because God shares his patience with us, he requires it of us:

1 Thess 5:14



14 We urge you, brothers and sisters, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be *patient* with everyone.

1 Peter 2:20

20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you *patiently endure it*, this finds favor with God.

1 Cor 13:4

4 *Love is patient* and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant

### *Applying Patience in Life & Marriage*

1. When Impatience is a pattern - it's not immediate, it's not momentary, it's habitual.
  - a. This is an issue. Habitual impatience is not showing the fruit of the Spirit, and it is cause for concern.
  - b. A couple experiencing habitual patience needs to
    - i. Pray for wisdom and healing from impatience,
    - ii. Have a discussion at the appropriate time and place, and
    - iii. Seek help from a trusted counselor.
2. When Impatience is Immediate, short-lived
  - a. Suppose someone else slams the door, how do you respond? This is where patience can be deployed.
  - b. If it's momentary, and not a pattern, you need to recognize that it happens, and let it blow over. This is patience toward one another.

3. There are circumstances outside of your control
  - a. In the course videos, Mark Savage's testimony discussed this.
  - b. When the problem is outside of your control, e.g., the car breaks down, or an appliance dies.
  - c. These situations call for a longer enduring patience
  - d. This is patience together.
4. Patience with different seasons of life
  - a. In the course videos, Mike and Beury Derstine discussed this.
  - b. Patience with toddlers looks very different than patience with teens.
  - c. This can also be patience together that's necessary because God is bringing you through different seasons of life.

### *Practical Guidance for Fighting Impatience*

When you see impatience, especially in yourself, take some time to troubleshoot. This may be a good topic to take a half day of prayer and go to God to hear from him.

Ask "Why?" What's bothering you, to make you impatient? Ask God to help show you: What is the root cause?

Ask yourself, "Am I selfish and I want what I want? Did I not get my way?" Impatience often springs from a lack of humility. Impatience can say, "I'm right and you should come to my side (and on my schedule!)" This is a manifestation of pride.

Impatience can come when you are worn down by circumstances, expecting to do more, or expecting life to be easier, but perhaps not relying on God to give you strength and endurance. His yoke is easy and his burden is light – but it requires us to stop trying to do everything ourselves. We have to depend on him.

Inability to recognize the seasons of life, or the season you are in, can lead to impatience. For example, If you're expecting things today to be the way they were 10 years ago, you may be frustrated.

An example of this can be the loss of control as kids become more independent. You may feel impatience if you fail to understand what is legitimately in your control, and what is not.

## Bible Study Listening Notes


1. God's patience is often described as his being slow to \_\_\_\_\_.
2. We share in the attributes of God because of the work of the \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ in our lives.
3. When outbursts of impatience are a habitual pattern, it is wise to \_\_\_\_\_ to God  
to ask for help, \_\_\_\_\_ with each other, and seek \_\_\_\_\_ from  
someone else.

## Video Testimonies Listening Activity

Fill in the blanks with the quotes.

- Wayne: "With the newlywed couple, there \_\_\_\_\_ an area where everything is going to go smoothly. They're going to be \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ all of those kinds of issues... They're growing together, as the Lord intends. But the patience part is a huge piece. They love each other, um, but they really have to learn how to \_\_\_\_\_."
- Ruthie: "When he is especially \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ to me and listens to me and \_\_\_\_\_, when we have a decision to make – since we've had these years of trust and him treating me with love and respect ... I fully *trust* him to make the right decision. Because I know that he has taken what I have said in full consideration with everything else that is going on at issue."
- Mike: "As a parent, you move from where you're kind of telling them what to do and what \_\_\_\_\_ to take, to now \_\_\_\_\_ them in a way that is -- trying to give them insight where they want to be the ones making decisions."

- Gene: “We have to work at being \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ in a way. You have to keep navigating, keep  
talking about those things.”

We love you and we're thrilled that you're at North Wake – and we hope that you learn to love one another and this church. 

## Group Discussion<sup>28</sup>

1. What stands out to you from the video teaching: a story, a quote, a thought, an idea? Explain.

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2. Ask a volunteer to read Ephesians 4:1-3 aloud to the group:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

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<sup>28</sup>Adapted from Thomas, Gary. Cherish Bible Study Guide, Section 4 "This is How Your Spouse Stumbles"

What does it mean to be "holy"? What does it mean to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called"?

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4. What are a few practical and encouraging ways we can respond to our spouse when they show they're *very different* from you?

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5. What are a few practical and encouraging ways we can respond to our spouse when he or she stumbles?

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6. Have another volunteer read Colossians 3:12-14 aloud to the group:

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

So despite all your goof ups, you have been chosen, made holy, and you are loved by God. What does this passage mean to you in regard to cherishing your spouse even when he or she stumbles or messes up?

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7. What are the outstanding character qualities you know to be true about your spouse? How can you keep these character qualities in mind when you're tempted to doubt or judge your spouse?

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## Pray Together For God's Help

**Take a few moments to pray together as a group. You can't do this in your own strength but he promises to help those who call on him!**

- Thank God for His presence in your lives, for the people in your group, and for the opportunity to be on this journey together as you work toward building a cherishing marriage -- even when you or your spouse stumbles.
- Ask God to forgive each of you for the ways you've questioned your spouse or added to their hurt instead of helping them heal by responding with compassion and empathy.
- Ask God to show you what it really looks like for you and your spouse to heal from past hurts or bad habits and become whole.



## Later This Week: Couples Homework Activity

**We plan to do this activity at this date and time:** \_\_\_\_\_

Part of building a cherishing marriage is understanding what it means to respond to your spouse as a physician, not a prosecuting attorney. So take a few minutes to think about times when you've treated your spouse as though you were a prosecuting attorney. Do you need to ask your spouse's forgiveness for those moments? In what areas of life does your spouse need you to respond more like a physician -- as someone who wants to help them heal and become a whole person?

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Name those areas and tell your spouse you will commit to walking alongside him or her with empathy and compassion in those areas of hurt and healing.

What are one or two steps you will take as a couple to express more empathy and compassion toward one another.

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# Appendix

## Information for Group & Discussion Leaders

## Background Information for Leaders

This study material was developed primarily to be used in a classroom setting with discussion groups. It can also be used in a retreat format with a single group. The ideal case has discussion groups remaining consistent so that the discussion leader and participants get to know one another.

The “room leader” is the person in the room who helps organize and keeps the class moving along. They will need to watch the clock very carefully to ensure that each item starts at the right time.

The “discussion leaders” are responsible for discussion, sometimes in a sub-group like those around a table. Discussion leaders should study the questions in advance so they can guide the discussion toward the best questions for their group. Discussion Leaders may continue to meet and have contact with their participants for encouragement or even ongoing marriage mentoring.

The “Testimonies Videos” were recorded at North Wake Church in 2023. A big part of the goal was to hear from both men and women about how God is forming them. Another goal is for these to be people that North Wakers can easily go and meet in person.

Each week, ask everyone to wear a nametag. If there are door-prizes, you can have them use the non-adhesive backing paper to write their name and put it into the basket for winning the prize.

Door Prizes are a fun way to encourage participation. We recommend giving a door prize each week to those who attend.

## Typical Class Meeting Schedule

1. Welcome to the class, and prayer [5 minutes]
2. Teaching: Looking at Scripture (e.g., Looking at “Love” In Scripture)
  - If you’re doing this in a small setting, you can play the teaching videos. These are numbered Video 1.1, Video 2.1, Video 3.1, etc., and cover the scripture texting. These are intended to be used when there’s no Bible teacher available.
3. Explain: How to Use the “Testimonies” Video
  - Listen to the video just as examples from imperfect couples of how God has worked in their lives.
4. Play a Testimonies video (e.g., “Testimonies of Love” (Video 1.2))
  - If you’re short on time, you can pause after about 10 minutes in
5. Group Table Discussion
  - If you’re short on time, you can select certain questions or adapt them. Questions marked with an asterisk (\*) may be great ones to highlight.
6. Closing Prayer [5 minutes]
  - Try to make this a time for prayer for one another at the tables, and not merely a closing benediction. This course can stir up difficulties, so we should ask God to help one another.
  - Ideally, Discussion Leaders will pray for each person at their table by name.

## Leader Notes for Chapter 1 - Course Introduction & Love

- Room Leader: This is a busy class day! Your discussion time will likely be a little shorter.

### *Note: Extra Video in this Lesson*

This lesson has both a testimonies video 1.2, and also an extra Video 1.3. This is a message from North Wake leaders, Sam and Mindy Williams. You'll play this near the end of the class.

### *Bible Study Listening Notes*

1. The Spirit of God is given to everyone who trusts Christ for Salvation
2. The fruit of the spirit is singular not plural, so we can expect the Spirit can bear all of his fruit it in everybody
3. Love is described in this passage 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

### *Video Testimonies Listening Activity*

No answer key is given for this activity, but many of the speakers gave examples of many of the concepts in 1 Corinthians 13.

### *Group Discussion*

You *should* have 20 minutes for this section.

If you're short on time, focus on the questions in bold.

Recommended: Do introductions with everyone at the table, asking each couple to say how long they've been married.

### *Couples Activity - For This Week*

This is intended to be done at home in the week by the couple individually.

### *Marriage Enrichment & Restoration*

ROOM LEADER can say: “This course is built to be an enrichment course and we believe will help nearly every marriage represented in this room. Sam and Mindy Williams do extensive counseling for couples at North Wake. Sam is an elder at North Wake, and Mindy is a deaconess leading our Women’s Ministry. Please watch this video.”

Play the video: “Marriage: Enrichment & Restoration”, Video 1.3

ROOM LEADER can say: “If the things Sam and Mindy said make you want to talk more, please reach out to one of us, the table hosts, or any of the North Wake leaders on our web site on the page [northwake.com/leadership](http://northwake.com/leadership)”

### *Closing Prayer*

It’s important to end your time with prayer. This is intended to be more than a closing benediction; it’s to be a true plea to God for help personally and for each other.

## Leader Notes for Chapter 2: Joy & Delight

### *Bible Study Listening Notes*

*Students answer these questions while listening to the teacher covering Joy & Delight.*

1. In whose lives does God bear the fruit of the Spirit?

The Spirit bears fruit in the lives of every Christian who walks in obedience to Him.

2. When Eve was created, Adam felt great delight

3. The delight of the husband and wife depicted in Song of Solomon is (underline one)

(C) How God intended marriage to be

(D) Completely exceptional

4. Jesus gave himself on the cross for his own joy

5. Following the example of Jesus in Ephesians 5:25-27, husbands and wives seek their own joy in... The joy of their spouse because of their own love of God

### *Video Testimonies Listening Notes*

Play the video: Video 2.2 (Testimonies of Joy & Gladness)

[16 minutes - but pause after 10 minutes to reserve 25-35 minutes for discussion and prayer together at tables.]

- "It was really just a sweet time together. It's just really fun to do stuff like that. We have a good time and we laugh and it's just refreshing."
- "Cultivating that relationship is very important for us as a couple, you as a couple, but also for your children to see that your husband or your wife is priority over them and your marriage is a foundation for them when they get older and they look for a spouse."



- "When you come and share something with me that you feel like God has spoken to you about, or something that he's leading us to do or speaking to you, about our ministry especially, I pay close attention because they're like golden words to me."
- "She delights in the Lord. He is her portion and the promises of God just flow out of her."

## Leader Notes for Chapter 3: Peace

### *Teaching Bible Study Listening Notes Questions*

1. A good scripture that talks about dissension: James 4
2. We get angry when we do not get what we desire
3. Because of the proximity to our spouses, we have more opportunities with them to ask for forgiveness
4. It can be healthy to talk about how things make you feel but also know that not everything has to be addressed immediately, at every moment.
5. Christ is our Champion of peace

### *Video: Testimonies of Peace*

“Marriage is a journey and, and couples develop over the years. And if they don't work at it, they stay stuck in the first year of marriage and increasingly the bad parts of the first year of marriage instead of really growing and developing throughout a lifetime so that they're not just doing 52 consecutive one year experiences.”

“‘What can I take off your plate?’ That's a thousand times better than just guessing – and getting it wrong.”

“I think a lot of our restoration of communication is also sometimes knowing that there needs to just be space. There just needs to be space. And not everything has to be verbally processed.”

## Leader Notes for Chapter 4: Kindness & Goodness

### *Bible Study Listening Notes*

1. Ephesians 2:7: ... so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.
2. Ephesians 4:32: Be kind to one another, tenderhearted forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.
3. Be kind to each other without expecting anything in return and always seek to forgive.
4. In encounter after encounter, Jesus is constantly interrupted and He always responds in love and kindness.

### *Video Testimonies Listening Notes*

- Kindness is shown through encouragement
- Kindness is shown in helping
- "The thing that we've had to figure out is how to communicate what we need"
- "If you can pursue friendship first, the other aspects of marriage will be more enjoyable and you'll actually be the thing that Jesus is with his people."

## Leader Notes for Chapter 5: Gentleness & Humility

### *Bible Study Listening Notes Questions*

1. What are four reasons that humility matters to Jesus's followers?

- Great joy in humility
- Pride is a hindrance to following Jesus
- Love and pride are mutually exclusive
- God delights in humility

2. A helpful daily would be: "Oh, Jesus, meek and love help me to consider myself the least important person in the room, in every room and all the rooms I enter this day."

3. The first tool to use for growing in humility is scripture.

4. We are to practice humbling ourselves – not our spouses.

### *Video Testimonies Listening Notes*

- Humility allows you to admit when you're wrong and welcome God to change you for the better.
- *Stephanie:* Saying "I'm just so sorry" ... sounds simple, but is remarkable and truly only able to be done with the power of the gospel because he who began a good work in me is faithful.
- Humility allows you to ask for help when you need it.
- *Chip:* Seek out help. We all need help at one time or another. We've all asked for help or others recognized we needed help. And this is the importance of being in a church where you've got small groups that are helping one another.
- *Chris:* I pray the *Philippians 2* verse: Do nothing out of selfish ambition. Put the needs of others above your own. That naturally combats the selfishness or the irritability when you are looking to how to serve somebody else.

## Leader Notes for Chapter 6: Patience

### *Bible Study Listening Notes*

1. God's patience is often described as his being slow to anger.
2. We share in the attributes of God because of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.
3. When outbursts of impatience are a habitual pattern, it is wise to pray to God to ask for help, talk with each other, and seek input from someone else.

### *Video Testimonies Listening Notes*

- Wayne: "With the newlywed couple, there isn't an area where everything is going to go smoothly. They're going to be struggling and working through all of those kinds of issues... They're growing together, as the Lord intends. But the patience part is a huge piece. They love each other, um, but they really have to learn how to work together."
- Ruthie: "When he is especially nice and thoughtful to me and listens to me and hears me out completely, when we have a decision to make – since we've had these years of trust and him treating me with love and respect ... I fully trust him to make the right decision. Because I know that he has taken what I have said in full consideration with everything else that is going on at issue."
- Mike: "As a parent, you move from where you're kind of telling them what to do and what boundaries to take, to now shepherding them in a way that is -- trying to give them insight where they want to be the ones making decisions."
- Gene: "We have to work at being made for each other in a way. You have to keep navigating, keep talking about those things."

## What's Next After This Course?

Some couples will want to continue the conversation. Discussion Leaders may be able to continue to meet informally to talk about the items that were raised in the study. Some couples may want to pursue individual or couples' counseling to continue to dialog about their marriage, to grow closer to God and to one another. These are all great outcomes. Many healthy North Wake couples stay healthy because they set aside time and energy every few years to get counseling and "tune up" their marriage.

May God bless you as you seek to honor his design in your marriage!