



Week Three: Rekindle – Study Guide

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Have you ever attempted to build a campfire? You know, out in the wilderness equipped only with a match and the moral support of your closest cold and hungry troopers! Your pride did not allow you to show it outwardly as you frantically tried to recall all those tips from Boy/Girl Scouts: “What type of tinder is best? What size should the kindling be? How is the best way to position it, and by the grace of God if this thing happens to spark, how much do I blow on it to get a flame started?” Building a fire, without good instruction, some real life trial and error, and even regular practice, can turn out to be very frustrating and can often lead to a miserable camping trip. This week, in part 3 of our series *Family Dynamics*, we will be seeking to avoid that miserable experience and attempt to rekindle our flame, but not one using wood and a match. We are rekindling the spark between a husband and wife.

Where Am I Today?

- 1) What is meant by the phrase, “honeymoon period” or “honeymoon years” in reference to a married couple? Please keep in mind that there are distinct differences and boundaries between marriage and dating relationships, and this study will primarily focus on marriages. However, did this euphoric excitement begin for you while dating or actually during marriage?

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- 2) Looking over the span of your relationship, can you say that you seek to please your spouse with the same passion and enthusiasm as you did in the beginning? Why or why not? (If you are single, you can most likely relate to some aspects of this if you have experienced long dating relationships.) If your spouse were asked privately and confidentially about your answer, do you feel they would agree?

- 3) Is the honeymoon period realistic in marriage long term? Why or why not? Many folks feel that the spark just goes away, or we grow out of it. Definitely we do hope to mature as the years go by, but how can you tell if you are progressing in maturity, or falling backward with selfishness?

- 4) Before we move into the Bible, let's do a quick check. Up to this point in the study, have you thought more about your needs, or your spouse's needs? Was it mostly positive or negative?

Into the Bible

- 5) One of the most wonderful acts I can imagine is a husband and wife deciding to rekindle the flame of their marriage, and asking God to meet them there. On the other hand, one of the cruelest things I can imagine is taking someone as a spouse, and consuming years of your spouse's life for your own selfish reasons. **Read Genesis 16:1-6, Genesis 21:1-14 and 1 Peter 3:5-6.** Abraham lived in a time and place in history where having multiple wives was common; although not exactly God's design, we can see a clear contrast in relationships between this husband and his wives. Which wife do you feel Abraham loved? What actions from him give you that indication? Which wife most likely felt loved by Abraham? How much do your daily actions and responses affect your spouse, and how can these impact their feelings toward you?

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- 6) **Read Genesis 29:16-20.** Ah, the romance. Remember the days when we would conquer heaven and earth for the one we loved? Do you recall going above and beyond for your spouse in the early days, or at least more so than now? Do you see Jacob as selflessly showing his love for Rachel? Read on to verse 21. Does this change your perspective any? Even in our most "selfless" time, could we still find that we are somewhat looking out for ourselves?
- 7) When my son was young we would play a certain game, mostly while riding in the car. One of us would start by saying, "I love you," and the other would say, "I love you more." Then, we would try and trump the other one by progressing with "I love you bigger than that truck" followed by "Well, I love you bigger than that mountain." This would go back and forth until my son would finally say, "Dad, I love you big as Jesus" at which I would always intentionally resign in defeat. My purpose was to instill in him that this was the largest thing imaginable. **Read Ephesians 5:22-33.** Even if you have read these verses a hundred times, read them once more as if for the first time. Are verses 22 and 25 unclear? Notice the reference to "the Lord" and "Christ." Why do you think the writer went ahead and stated the largest thing imaginable in regard to how we treat our spouses? Do these verses say anything about our spouses being our God? In what ways do we place expectation on our spouses to be God?

How Does This Apply?

- 8) In week one of *Family Dynamics* we discussed several challenges to living a single life. Things like sex, loneliness, security, and lack of contentment were among those listed. Do you find it intriguing that when working through marital issues, we once again start voicing the same complaints and worries that we had in singleness? Could the common theme be you? Are we bringing our own sin along on the journey without realizing it?

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- 9) Withholding your body, your service, and a kind, encouraging attitude from your spouse is completely unacceptable if you are attempting to live out God's desire for your marriage. The spark that you are looking for, this rekindling of your marriage, could it be that the lost spark is found in Christ alone? **Read Colossians 1:15-17, Matthew 23:11-12 and 1 Corinthians 7:3-5.** Who holds all things together? What is greatest in the eyes of Christ? Would you want your life to play out in any way other than what is greatest? Is it ok to just deny our spouses?
- 10) Looking back at those years that the fires were burning brightly, we can list many things that we did for each other that were extremely caring, funny, and passionate. Did anyone have to teach you how to do those things back then, or were you naturally trying everything you knew out of your desire to please him/her?

Current Prayer Focus

What we're praying for together as a church:

- Pray for families and marriages in our church family and your community.

Increase Your Learning on Your Own

- 11) It's difficult when we realize that our own selfishness has played a major role in the state of our marriages. Looking at the truth behind our motives when we were dating and wanting to get married, it wasn't ALL about making their life better. It wasn't ALL about what we could help them achieve in life, and definitely not about committing the remainder of our lives on earth for them to experience true companionship, pleasure, loyalty, and many days of laughter. Instead, much like Jacob with Rachel, we have our own benefits in mind. Beautiful, handsome, rich, successful, funny, compassionate, nurturing, strong, etc. The list of pros for us can go on and on.

There may even be a tougher question that should be asked. In the honeymoon phase, were you completely honest and true in representing who you were and what

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marriage would be like? Was there any false advertisement on your part? In some cases the honeymoon phase didn't go away; it was just a lie. Naturally, Christ never calls us to live in the past; we press on toward the mark, the prize. We ask for forgiveness and we forgive likewise. So, let's look at a serious matter that ties in directly to these personal marriage reflections. **Read John 14:1-21.** If you have received Christ, you have become His bride, His precious possession, and the one He so dearly gave His life for. Meditate on the following as you read through John 14.

- a. How much of your salvation was for selfish reasons?
- b. Did you come to Christ because of how it may have benefited you, or was it to pour out your life in gratitude because of Who He is, and what He has done?
- c. Could you imagine telling Him face to face, "It wasn't all about you, I was just afraid there was a hell"?
- d. How does this change your perspective on how to live life truly dedicated to your spouse?