

REAL MARRIAGE

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Weddings are lovely. They are stressful and a lot of work, but they often seem magical. *Marriage*, however, is more like the set-up and teardown for the wedding ceremony. There are some good times, and a lot of fun and excitement, but there's also a great deal of raw effort needed to pull it off. Let's roll up our sleeves and commit to the work in our relationships, so we can get to the fun times as well.

Where Am I Today?

- 1) We're being challenged this week to have a "*new marriage, same spouse.*" If asked if you needed this, what would you say? If your spouse was asked, what answer do you suppose they would give?

Into the Bible

- 2) **Read Ephesians 5:22-33** and answer the questions below for *your gender only*. Think about what you are supposed to do in the relationship, not what your spouse is supposed to do. Write down the most obvious answer, as taught this weekend.
 - a. I am called to _____ my spouse.
 - b. What does this mean, practically?

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- c. When am I supposed to do this?

 - d. If God has asked us to have these unconditional reactions and feelings for our spouses, how are we able to do that?
- 3) Read the following verses for some practical advice on handling conflict and arguments in your marriage (and other relationships) well.
- a. **Proverbs 16:23**
 - b. **Proverbs 29:11**
 - c. **Proverbs 3:30**
 - d. **1 Corinthians 13:5**
 - e. **Ephesians 4:29, 32**

How Does This Apply?

- 4) I have friends who tell me they sometimes shake their heads at the things couples say to, and about, each other. My friends comment to each other, "Those people just do not understand the concept of 'team.'"
- a. Does your family understand the concept of "team"? Do you always have each other's backs?

 - b. Do you turn first to your spouse for support, guidance, and encouragement—or do you look elsewhere?

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5) How are you doing with “leaving and cleaving” in your marriage? If you are single, how are you preparing to leave and cleave?

6) Are you willing to ask the hard questions this week? Make up a list and ask your spouse some questions like:

How am I doing at loving you?

Where do I do it well?

Where do I need improvement?

Can you tell me your dreams and how we can work towards them?

What is one thing I do that undermines and hurts you?

Digging Deeper: Going Further on Your Own

7) **Compare Ephesians 5:22-33** and **1 Peter 3:1-7**. They are companion passages, written by two different apostles about a similar topic. Compare them as you think about the following questions:

a. Who does the author primarily address in each passage? Another way of asking this is, who is being “preached to” most strongly in each?

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b. There is often a break or a new subject header between 1 Peter 3:7 and 8. But what if the author meant for verse 8, and those that follow it, to pertain to marriages also? **Read 1 Peter 3:8-12.** Does this speak to you and your marriage? Does it even speak to marriages in general—or to other external relationships?

c. If you had to pick one verse or phrase—from any of these passages—that you feel God is telling you to work on and apply to your marriage, what would it be? You do not have to share, but you do need to commit to obey.