

Before class: Read chapter 11 in “Things I Wish I’d Known Before We Got Married” by Gary Chapman and finish assignments from previous week.

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Speaker Notes

Small Group Discussion

- What reactions do you personally have to what has been presented today?
- Share any insight or new perspectives you gained from this week's reading in *Things I Wish I'd Known Before We Got Married*
- What do you hope your marriage will look like? How important is it to you that you have a Christ-centered marriage? Are you working on having a Christ-centered/God-honoring relationship presently?
- As a group, read COVENANT MARRIAGE by Gary Chapman in the Digging Deeper Section and spend some time discussing.

Assignments

Couple Devotional

The passage from 1 Corinthians 13 is often heard at wedding ceremonies. It makes you wonder as the years progress in marriage if couples take time to reflect back to the passage shared on their wedding day. It is one we should keep in our minds and hearts, as we love our partner daily.

Read Together 1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Answer questions separately and then discuss together.

In the following list, how do you rate yourself? (Using 1 thru 5, 5 being highest)

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Is Patient | <input type="checkbox"/> Is Kind | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Envious | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Boastful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not Proud | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Rude | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Self—Seeking | <input type="checkbox"/> Not Easily Angered |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeps no record of wrongs | <input type="checkbox"/> Does not delight in evil | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rejoices in the Truth | <input type="checkbox"/> Always Protects | <input type="checkbox"/> Always Trusts | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Always Helps | <input type="checkbox"/> Always Perseveres | | |

- Compare your answers as a couple. Is your partner in agreement with your rating?
- Share one of the attributes you greatly appreciate about your partner.
- Are there any that need some work? Can you share which ones?

We read that love is not self-seeking. The Webster's Dictionary defines a self-seeker as "one seeking only or mainly to further his/her own interests."

- List a few of your future spouse's interests that should be put before your own.
- Describe the difficulty you might have with focusing on your spouse's interests above your own. (Hint: God's power is needed!)
- How are you doing with not keeping a list of "wrongs"? Please list a circumstance when you brought one of your partner's "wrong doings" up again (and perhaps again and again).
- What do you need to do to "let go of it"?

Pray Together

Let's take some time and look at "love is not proud" from vs 4. It is not uncommon to find pride as a problem for couples, and this pride can result in them refusing to acknowledge any weaknesses, or needs, to one another. Steve Wickstrom in *Praying Together as a Couple* identifies that praying together as a couple is a great way to solve this problem. When we pray, God wants us to be honest and humble ourselves before Him. Allow your spouse to hear you confess your needs openly and let your spouse pray for those needs. You will find you draw closer to God and closer to each other as a result.

Share your three needs below with your partner and then pray for **each other's needs**.

I need help with _____.

I need your help with _____.

I need God to help me change in the area of _____.

Next, identify what your partner needs from you and then pray for your desire to help them.

What can I do to help you?

How can I make your life easier?

How can I love you better?

Couple Exercise

Answer questions separately and then discuss together.

- I would classify my point on a spiritual journey as:
 - ☐ Fully devoted follower of Jesus Christ
 - ☐ Newer believer in Jesus Christ
 - ☐ Seeker, looking for spiritual truth
 - ☐ Mildly interested in spiritual things
 - ☐ Believe in God, but not in Jesus Christ
 - ☐ No spiritual belief
- How would you like to grow spiritually as an individual?
- Read Joshua 24:15. What specifically might Joshua's statement "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve . . . as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord," mean for your marriage?

- Read Matthew 7:24-27. This passage is talking about building your house upon a firm foundation. List what you believe are ten firm foundations which will go into making a solid marriage relationship.

- | | |
|----|-----|
| 1. | 6. |
| 2. | 7. |
| 3. | 8. |
| 4. | 9. |
| 5. | 10. |

For Previously Marrieds

- In your first marriage, what were the reasons you chose to marry that specific person? What did you learn from this?
- If you have forgiven your former spouse, how has that forgiveness brought healing? Has it changed the way you relate to your former spouse? Are there any outstanding areas yet to be forgiven?
- What marriage expectations were not fulfilled in the former marriage?
- What was missing in your relationship with your former spouse?

Reminder: Read assigned chapter for next lesson.

Digging Deeper

Additional information on Covenant Marriage is offered on the next few pages.

Digging Deeper

Covenant Marriage

The word covenant is not something we hear in our everyday conversations. As a Christian, it is important for us to understand the word and its importance. Take some time as a couple and dig deeper into understanding a covenant marriage and God's covenant relationship with His people.

Covenant Relationship between God and His People

Listen to this podcast by Timothy Keller, a pastor, theologian and author, as he gives deep but yet clear insight into God's plan for covenant relationships. Enter this into your web browser: <http://player.subsplash.com/756f0bd> (it is the number Zero, not the letter o)

Covenant Marriage

Christian author and speaker, Gary Chapman, gives a clear perspective on covenant vs. contract in an article he wrote for *Lifeway* on Jan. 3, 2014.

Despite the concept of covenant seen throughout the Bible, we don't often use the word covenant in conversation. Most of us have little understanding of the word. When we think of marriage, we usually do so in terms of a contract rather than a covenant. In reality, the two words are quite different.

Basically, a contract is an agreement between two or more persons signifying that all signing parties will do something. Legally, marriage is a contract with certain rights and responsibilities, but we must distinguish between legal marriage and covenant marriage. In a legal marriage, if one party doesn't live up to the contracts, then legal actions force him or her to do so or to end the marriage with an equitable settlement. A society couldn't exist without laws regulating marriage relationships. So in this sense, marriage is a contract. However, for a Christian, marriage is more than this. It's also a covenant.

The problem arises when you view your marriage only as a contract or as a series of contracts. When this happens, you will have become secular in your thinking and have abandoned the biblical view of marriage. The Bible views marriage ultimately as a covenant, although contracts may be an important part of carrying out your covenant.

Contracts characteristics

1. Contracts are often made for a limited period of time. Although most marriage ceremonies involve the phrase, "till death do us part," many couples interpret that as, "We're committed to each other if this relationship is mutually beneficial."
2. Contracts often deal with specific actions. Most informal contracts made within the marriage also deal with specific actions. Such informal agreements can be a positive way of living out a covenant marriage.
3. Contracts are based on an "If..., then..., " mentality. Couples with this mentality in which one spouse relies on the other spouse for happiness may struggle deeply in the first several years of their marriage.
4. Contracts are motivated by the desire to get something. People sign a lease contract because they want to have a car. The salesman signs the contract because he wants the commission. Many conversations in marriage are motivated to get something.

Covenant characteristics

A covenant, like a contract, is an agreement between two or more persons, but the nature of the agreement is different. The biblical pattern reveals five characteristics of covenants.

1. Covenants are initiated for the benefit of the other person. Many of us can honestly say that we entered marriage motivated by the deep desire to benefit the person we were about to marry. Our intention was to make them happy. However, when needs aren't met, spouses can revert to a contract mentality.
2. In covenant relationships people make unconditional promises. Covenant marriages are characterized by unconditional promises, such as those spoken in traditional wedding vows.
3. Covenant relationships are based on steadfast love. In a marriage, steadfast love refuses to focus on the negative aspects of one's spouse. Steadfast love is a choice.
4. Covenant relationships view commitments as permanent. Unquestionably the biblical ideal is one man and one woman married to each other for life. As Christians, we must not lower the ideal. This standard can only be attained if we practice the fifth characteristic of covenants.
5. Covenant relationships require confrontation and forgiveness. These two responses are essential in a covenant marriage. Confrontation means holding the other person responsible for his or her actions. Forgiving means a willingness to lift the penalty and continue a loving, growing relationship. Ignoring the failures of your spouse isn't the road to marital growth.

Covenant marriage is God's plan. There may be contracts within the framework of covenant marriage, but for the Christian, marriage is a covenant. God's best in marriage will never be accomplished without His power.

Spend time as a couple discussing this concept and how it will apply to your marriage.

Do you want a Covenant Marriage?

God does have a plan for your marriage. He desires to see your love grow and bear fruit. The goal of a covenant marriage is not to merely enjoy each other's company, nor is it to simply endure to the end. The goal of a covenant marriage is to glorify God in your relationship and to exemplify Christ to the world.

The next two pages include two covenant agreements for you to consider and commit to.

Digging Deeper

Purity Covenant

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you. ”

1 Thessalonians 4:3-8 NASB

**In obedience to God’s command,
I promise to protect your sexual purity
from this day until our honeymoon.**

“Flee immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body.”

1 Corinthians 6:18-20 NASB

**Because I respect and honor you,
I commit to building up the inner person of your heart
rather than violating you.**

“In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men”

Acts 24:16 NASB

**I pledge to show my love for you in ways
that allow both of us to maintain a clear
conscience before God and each other.**

This is my promise of purity.

Signed _____ Date _____
Signed _____ Date _____

Digging Deeper

Receiving Christ

Today, more than ever it is vital to have a Christian Marriage. It is said in **Psalm 127:1**, “**Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.**” God wants us to have an abundant life. In order to fulfill this God sent his only son to earth. Christ said in **John 10:10**, “**I came that you might have life, and might have it abundantly.**”

In order to follow our Lord, we have to receive Christ as our personal savior. What exactly does it take to do this? Christ said in the Bible, “**Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him**” **Revelations 3:20**. God is standing at the door waiting for you. The voice you hear is Christ asking you to believe (faith) that he died on the cross for you to forgive your sins. You have to turn from your old life (repent) and open the door allowing God to come in.

Lord Jesus, I hear your knock at my door. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I hear your voice and choose this day to turn from my old life. I open the door that will let you into my new life with you. Thank you for giving me eternal life. Please help me fulfill the wonderful plan you have for my life and become the person you want me to be. Amen

This is my covenant with You, Jesus.

Signed_____

Date_____