

Before class: Read chapters 7 & 12 in “Things I Wish I’d Known Before We Got Married” by Gary Chapman and finish assignments from previous week.

IMPORTANT FIRST YEARS OF MARRIAGE

Speaker Notes

Small Group Discussion

- The principle *"God created marriage for our holiness not our happiness"* was referenced in today's message. Share your perspective on this principle. Is this a new concept? Are you challenged by this concept? Are you in acceptance of it?
- In what areas would you like to know your spouse better? What conversations or experiences could you bring about to learn more about him/her?
- What classes, retreats, books or other "skill building" resources have you seen couples benefit from?
- What things might you want to intentionally plan with your spouse to set your marriage up for success?
- How willing are you to personally address self-change in regards to behavior, expectations, forgiveness, or deeper spiritual relationship?

Couple Devotional

In Chapter 3 of Colossians, the apostle Paul explains true Christian behavior. We should reflect Christian behavior at all times in our lives but we should focus greatly on responding as Christ would to the one closest to us – our spouse. Your first year together as husband and wife will offer great moments of joy but also times of adjustment. The challenge in the latter is to reflect on how Christ would respond. This passage gives you clear direction on delivering a Christ-like response.

Read Together Colossians 3:8-17

Answer questions separately and then discuss together.

Referring to verses 8 & 9, please identify the opposite of “the things we should rid ourselves of”:

Column A	Column B (opposite)
Anger	_____
Rage	_____
Malice	_____
Slander	_____
Filthy Language	_____
Lying	_____

- From Column A please list the things you are still working on “ridding yourself of”:
- How might you be able to accomplish this? (Accountability, praying, Bible study, self-control, counseling etc.)
- What does the word **admonish** mean in this passage? (it is NOT to reprove or scold)
- During your first year of marriage what approach might you use to admonish your spouse?
- From verse 12, personally identify which of the characteristics are your strengths:
- From verse 12, personally identify which of the characteristics are growth areas for you:
- Does your partner agree that these are your strengths and growth areas?
- How can you commit to improving one of these growth areas for the sake of your future spouse?

Pray Together

Each of you pray to God:

Dear God,

You have called me to this awesome role as a husband/wife. Please guide me in the areas where I need to take more responsibility. Help me rid myself of any _____, _____, _____ (practices from vs. 8) which still finds its way into my behavior. Develop me deeper with the ability to show _____, _____, _____ (from vs. 13) to (partner's name). As Christ loved the church, help me to love (partner's name) and to serve him/her sacrificially. As I am subject to the Lord, help me to serve (partner's name) in the same manner as I would serve the Lord. Help us to praise and esteem each other as we grow to know you, God, and each other in these first important years of marriage. In Jesus name, Amen.

Couple Exercise

Answer questions separately and then discuss together.

- What one outside commitment could you give up in the first year of marriage in order to give your spouse the gift of your time and attention?
- What one thing would you like to learn about, together, in your first year of marriage?
- Husbands and wives will be at different places spiritually. Discuss what a spiritual foundation may look like in your relationship.
- From the list below, discuss what you might continue to learn about one another.

Personality	Expectations
Emotional needs	Viewpoints
Romantic needs	Fears
Values	Emotional triggers
- Philippians 2:3-4 states: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others." What areas do you feel challenged with selflessness in your relationship? Get feedback from your future spouse on areas they think you could improve.
- What are a few of the "simple things" you would appreciate your future spouse saying or doing? Create a list of things you commit to doing for one another after you are married.
- Marriage Expectations - Each person has many expectations of what marriage will be like. List your 10 greatest expectations for marriage.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

The Unforeseen “Expectations”

And Possible Fears of Incompatibility

Finding the Passions of your spouse: Observe any sensitivities/irritations/things you would like to see changed/added in the following questions:

1. Where do you spend most of your time? Are there any irritations/sensitive areas?
2. What do you spend your time on?
3. Whom do you spend most of your time with?
4. What amount of time do you spend working/pleasure? Is it balanced?
5. Do you know what your future mate is passionate about? (I.e. shopping, television, sports, people, computers, texting, tweeting, face book, church activities, service, missions, faith).
6. What will be your boundaries regarding friends after marriage, spending time together with siblings, meeting friends after work, single friends, separate friends? What about friends of the opposite sex? What precautions should there be established before marriage?
7. How important are other couples in your life (role modeling)? Whom do you not want to be like? Will you join a couples' Bible Study?
8. Will you attend church together? Is that important? Do you know what you believe? Do you know what your future mate believes?
9. How often will you spend time with In-laws? What about surprise visits from them or others? Do you see any possible problems w/family/friends? How will you care for your aging parents?
10. What about your work? Will you continue to travel/commute? Is this becoming a problem?
11. What type of house do you expect/hope to live in (neat/tidy or clean when needed)? Who will do the cleaning? What about the laundry? Who makes the bed? Who will plan the meals/shop/do dishes? Who will cook meals? Will you eat on time and together? What is a good mealtime to agree upon? What if someone is late? How often will you go out to eat?
12. How important are eating habits? (Healthy food, vitamins, snacking vs. a full meal each day, eating together, eating while watching television, eating fast food after work).
13. What kind of physical exercise do you enjoy (together, separate, maintaining good weight).
14. What about alcohol, smoking, mind-altering drugs? What limitations would you prefer?
15. Sleeping habits: Morning/cheerful person? Night person/sleep late/awake grumpy?
16. How strong are political views? Are there any differences?
17. How will you like to make your anniversary special?

Reminder: Read assigned chapter for next lesson.

Digging Deeper

Additional assignments are offered on the next few pages.

Digging Deeper

Your Partner's Acceptance

Circle the number that corresponds to your response on how accepted you feel.

	No	Mid	Yes
1. I feel guilty when I ask for things or sometimes want my way.	3	2	1
2. I am afraid of making mistakes around him/her.	3	2	1
3. I feel it necessary to defend my actions when I am with him/her.	3	2	1
4. I am bothered by fears of feeling stupid or inadequate with him/her.	3	2	1
5. Criticism from him/her hurts my feelings of worth.	3	2	1
6. I feel free to show my weaknesses in front of him/her	1	2	3
7. I can care for myself in spite of his/her feelings for me.	1	2	3
8. I am afraid to be myself with him/her.	3	2	1
9. I feel free to express my needs to him/her.	1	2	3
10. I find that I must give him/her reasons for my feelings.	3	2	1
11. I can be negative or positive with him/her.	1	2	3
12. My wants, likes, dislikes, and values are respected by him/her.	1	2	3
13. I sometimes ask for my needs to be met.	1	2	3
14. I can be inconsistent or illogical with him/her.	3	2	1
15. I am afraid to show my fears to him/her.	3	2	1
16. I am afraid to show tears in front of him/her.	3	2	1
TOTALS			

SCORING: After you have responded to each statement, add up your score. The highest possible score is 48; the lowest score is 16.

40-48 Strong feelings of acceptance

32-39 Lack some feelings of acceptance

24-31 Serious feelings of lack of acceptance

16-23 Your communication needs lots of work

Digging Deeper

Perceptions

Below you are given the opportunity to evaluate your partner. Be honest in your evaluation and remember these are just your perceptions.

	Needs to Improve	Improving	Good	Very Good
1. Decision making				
2. Conflict resolution				
3. Finances				
4. Jealousy				
5. Hobbies (time balanced)				
6. Moodiness				
7. Temper				
8. Dependability				
9. Job (responsibility)				
10.Recreation (time balanced)				
11.Television (time balanced)				
12.Telephone				
13.Affection				
14.Friendships				
15.Praying together				
16.Spending time with you				
17.Relatives (relationships)				
18.Sense of humor				
19.Time with God				
20.Communication				