

Before class: Read chapters 3 & 10 in “Things I Wish I’d Known Before We Got Married” by Gary Chapman and finish assignments from previous week.

FAMILY DYNAMICS

Speaker Notes

Small Group Discussion

- Read Genesis 2:24. Marriage involves “leaving and cleaving” and “becoming one.” Discuss at least one area in which you have an opportunity for growth in this area.
 - How might “leaving and cleaving” apply to where you and your spouse will live, how you will celebrate holidays, raise/discipline children, or resolve conflict?
 - Where are you holding on to the way “my family has always done things”?
- How do your similarities or differences in your family of origin impact your current relationship?
- Quickly complete the **Hidden Rules** exercise on the next page. Randomly select a few items and share where couples might be in disagreement and why. (Make sure couples discuss further as part of their couples exercise).
- What from your family of origin would you like to repeat in your couple relationship? What would you like to change? How can you start making those changes?
- Since the success or failure of your marriage will also include each other’s family, what do you perceive as things that need to be discussed regarding your... in-laws, grandparents, siblings and other relatives? Where might you need to set boundaries with your parents as you move towards balancing or maintaining a balance in your relationship?
- What things from your childhood could influence your upcoming marriage? (e.g., perfectionism, procrastination, impulsiveness, compulsive, overworking, withdrawing, tending toward depression, worry, overeating, low self-esteem, laziness, wanting your own way, bringing problems from work back home with you, verbal abuse, or taking risks)

Hidden Rules

Please mark YES or NO next to each question identifying what is normal for you. Please find a time to discuss each statement with your partner. When in disagreement, work towards understanding and resolution.

1. Married women only work until babies are born. Then they stay at home.
2. The fun of Christmas morning is sleeping late.
3. Sex is never to be discussed.
4. The fun of Christmas morning is waking up early and getting completely dressed for a big family breakfast.
5. Two people who really love each other should never argue.
6. No home is complete without a cat.
7. You're married for life, so you never need to talk about it.
8. Men always do the driving.
9. Two people who really love each other have plenty of arguments.
10. Husbands always plan the vacations.
11. Two children - max.
12. Gaining weight is a sure sign that you no longer care about your spouse.
13. Men do not need to engage in deep conversation. It's not natural.
14. Being on time is critical.
15. Men always initiate sex.
16. Women whose husbands don't engage in deep conversation are free to tell their friends about it.
17. Life is fun.
18. How many children a couple has is up to God.
19. Kitchen cabinet doors are a nuisance, which is why they should be left open.
20. Women hide their purchases from their husbands.
21. Men don't do housework.
22. Alcohol, in any form, is a bad idea.
23. Except for anger, men do not show their emotions.
24. The house should always be immaculate.
25. Cars are to be idolized and should never be dirty.
26. Dinner isn't dinner without a glass of wine. Football isn't football without a beer.
27. Cars are transportation. Period.
28. Saying a prayer before a meal is nonnegotiable. Even at McDonald's.
29. Husbands write the checks.
30. Men should volunteer to do housework without being asked.
31. A man should always hold the door for his wife.
32. Sandwiches are always made with white bread.
33. Wives do the books.
34. It's not necessary to say a blessing before every meal. God knows we're thankful.
35. Sitting quietly and reading a book is a complete waste of time.
36. A woman should never make more money than her husband.
37. No home is complete without a dog-a really big dog.
38. A hot breakfast will only be possible if you put a lighted match to your cornflakes.
39. A loving husband should be blind to his wife's weight gain. Anything else is conditional love.
40. Watching sports on television is a complete waste of time.
41. Wives are responsible for the warmth and tenderness in the relationship.
42. In-laws are never to be consulted.
43. Screaming is always a bad idea. We never raise our voices. We never yell.
44. Women should be willing to move to follow their husbands' careers.
45. Men do yard work.
46. Couples should never borrow money from their parents.

Couple Devotional

Families are interesting. We don't get to pick them and a lot of who we are is a result of the family we grew up in. Most of us would be able to recognize the good and perhaps the not so good in our extended families. The families represented in the Bible are no different. They experienced both great things as well as challenging circumstances. Take some time and read about the dynamic between two brothers in the Old Testament.

Read together Genesis 27

Answer separately and then discuss together:

- What was one interesting thing you took away from reading Genesis 27?
- List two things you see that might have been morally wrong in this scripture?
- What was the difference between the father's plan and the mother's plan?

Differences in parental perspectives exist even in today's culture.

Do you remember a time when your parents had a different perspective in regards to parenting you? Describe their differences.

The family we grew up in impacts who we are today. Rebekah's choice was "her plan/her will" not "God's plan/God's will". We can take that same path by choosing "our will" over God's will.

- Are you able to identify a time in your life when you might have chosen "your plan/ your will" over "God's plan/God's will"?
- If so, did it have a negative or positive impact on your life?
- What about a negative or positive impact on someone else's life?
- From Genesis 27, identify the consequences from Jacob taking Esau's blessing.

Pray Together:

The **Serenity Prayer** is the common name for a prayer authored by the American theologian Reinhold Neibuhr. The best-known form is:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.

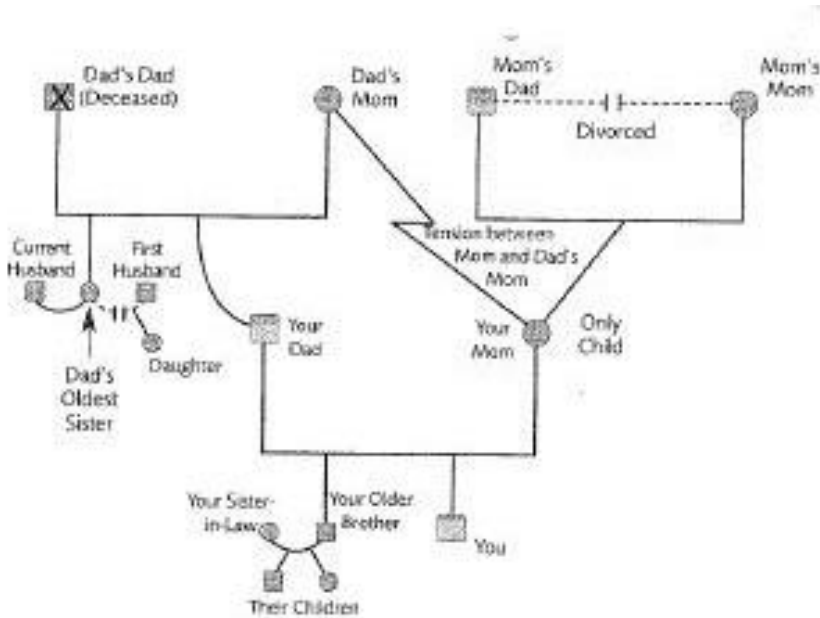
Here it is in complete form:

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
Forever in the next.
Amen.

- Pray the Serenity Prayer together as a couple.
- Underline at least one area in the Serenity Prayer you would like to work on. Then individually pray about it (them) and ask God for the courage to change with His help.

Couple Exercise

Answer separately and then discuss together



On a separate sheet of paper, construct a Genogram of your individual family.

- Together, give a brief description of each person's genogram.
- After the initial description, go deeper on information on your parents and grandparents by discussing:
 - What was their marriage like?
 - How did they deal with conflict?
 - What do you know about their spiritual life?
 - Where there any models of great marriages in your family system? If so, what were the great characteristics of their marriage?
- In what ways has your childhood experience been good or bad modeling for your marriage?
- What changes would you like to make in your marriage from those you've experienced in your family?
- Who made most of the decisions in your family? How would your partner answer this question?

- What things do you hope your spouse will emulate from their parents: behavior/attitudes, and what things do you hope they will not?
- How important is it that your future spouse participates in family events? What do you expect from them when you are invited to picnics, gatherings, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.?

For Previously Marrieds

- Since your previous marriage, how long have you lived alone? As a result of your independence, what areas may you have difficulty giving up?
- Since we all have baggage that we bring into relationships, list some mistakes that might be brought in from a previous marriage.
- What are potential problems with former/future in-laws?
- Are you confident you have settled the issues of your previous marriage and are ready to marry again? Explain.

Reminder: Read assigned chapter for next lesson.