

Sacred Marriage (Introduction)

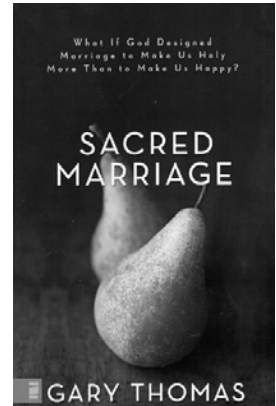
“What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?””

A. Class Regrouping

- What is the best thing you did over the summer?
- What is one milestone each of your kids reached this summer?

B. Class Dynamics

- Authority of Scripture
 1. Everything written in the Scriptures is true and is exactly what God wants us to know.
- Relational God
 2. God is loving and desires a living, ongoing relationship with each of us.
 3. The only way to have a relationship with God is through Jesus Christ.
- Circle of Trust
 4. What is shared in the group stays in the group.
 5. We will not demean others with our words or actions.
- Points of Courtesy
 6. While we encourage the sharing of personal prayer requests, please do not use it as a vehicle to gossip about other people. Please focus on immediate family.
 7. We want this to be an open group where people feel welcome. Therefore, since we will naturally gravitate to a group of friends, please continue to include others.
 8. We will end at 12:15, for those who need to get kids home for naps. Everyone is welcome to mingle afterwards as nursery will be provided until church ends at 12:30. Start at 11:00.
- Weekly or Bi-weekly



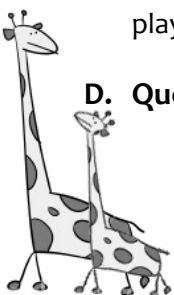
C. Book Review

The ultimate purpose of this book is not to make you love your spouse more. It's to equip you to love your God more. As we look at the underlying themes of this book we will not only grow closer to God but also to our spouse and our kids. Our kids will feel most secure when their parents are in love with each other. Our kids want to know that the world is not dependent on them.

This is a book that looks at how we can use the challenges, joys, struggles, and celebrations of marriage to draw closer to God and to grow in Christian character. What this means and how this plays out in our lives and parenting will be the focus of our discussions.

D. Questions

- Suggested HW: Chapter 1 & 2



Sacred Marriage (Chap 1 & 2)

“Marriage cannot help being a risking of identity... For if the marriage last, the two must become more and more like one another.” – Mike Mason

A. Getting to Know You Better

- What is the name of the restaurant where you went on your first date?
- What color is your spouse’s toothbrush?

B. Book Review – Finding God in Marriage

After creation itself, marriage was God’s first miracle. He took two completely different creatures and bound them together as one. For many this is a source of conflict, but as long as a couple stays together, they continue to display the ongoing commitment between Christ and his church. If we are consumed with highlighting where our spouse falls short, we will miss the divine mysteries of marriage and the lessons it has to teach us.

If you want to serve Jesus – stay single. If you want to become like Jesus – get married

1. What aspect of marriage has taught you the most about how God loves you?
2. How does marriage reveal God and his love to the world?



C. Bible Study

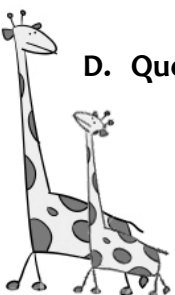
EPHESIANS 5: 22 – 31

3. What analogies does Paul make between marriage and Christ?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
4. Are these analogies encouraging to you? How/why not?
5. How do you view God: master, friend, spouse, other?

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” – Genesis 2:24

D. Questions

6. What is the purpose of marriage?
 - Suggested HW: Chapter 3 & 4



Sacred Marriage (Chap 3 & 4)

“By ignoring unconditional respect for husbands, I had not been ‘accurately handling the word of truth’ (2 Tim. 2:15).” – Emerson Eggerich

A. Getting to Know You Better

- How did you spouse ask you on the first date / how did your spouse respond?
- How does your spouse like their eggs?

B. Book Review – Love and Respect

Each of us made vows on our wedding day to love and cherish our spouse as long as we both shall live. Similar to asking Jesus into our hearts, we took a step of faith. We said that I am so convinced that this is the one for me that I will commit myself to them for the rest of my life. While we took on the life of another, we failed to remove the life of pride. Pride is the enemy of love and respect because one is self-centered and the other is other centered. Love and respect from our spouse attacks and destroys pride simply eliminating the need for it. What use is there in asserting the self if the self is already loved, and not because of but in spite of anything our spouse might know? Love and respect is a healing balm in our marriage and a wonderful reminder that we are loved by God.

1. How much time do you spend thinking about how to make your spouse happy compared to how much you think about how well your spouse is pleasing you?
2. How does trying to understand our spouses – rather than judge them – help us to fulfill the biblical command to respect them?

C. Bible Study

EPHESIANS 5: 31 – 33

3. What are wives commanded to do? What are husbands...?
4. Would you rather be loved or respected?
5. How are these two commands different?
6. Which is harder?
7. Why do we give love and respect?
8. Which of these does God give us? How?



“Show proper respect to everyone” – 1 Peter 2:17a

D. Questions

9. What are two things you love/respect about your spouse??
- Suggested HW: Chapter 5



Sacred Marriage (Chap 5)

“Prayer is a work to which we must commit ourselves if we are to make sense of our lives in light of eternity.” – Terry Glaspey

A. Getting to Know You Better

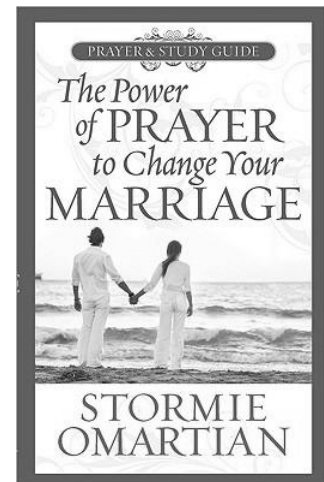
- What is something you wear that your spouse does not like?
- What was your first address together?

B. Book Review – Prayer and Marriage

The Christian community tells us that if we want a stronger marriage, we should improve our prayer lives. But Peter tells us that we should improve our marriages so that we can improve our prayer lives. 1 Peter 3:7 hits husbands with the amazing statement about prayer that if we do not treat our wives right, our prayers may be hindered. If prayer is the essence of spirituality and if a wrong attitude in marriage destroys that activity, it behooves men in particular to pay careful attention here.

Marriage is a choosing of the closeness of God, in the form of a close relationship with another person. It is a deliberate choosing of closeness over distance. Therefore if we choose distance from our spouse through unforgiveness, God will also seem distant.

1. How can you imagine your prayer life improving if your marriage can be closer to the way God intended?
2. What happens to your praying when you are upset with your spouse?



C. Bible Study

JOHN 17: 20 – 23

3. What does Jesus mean that we be one?
4. What is the purpose of oneness that Jesus gives here?
5. How does oneness lead people to this conclusion?
6. How do we come into complete unity?

“Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.” – 1 Peter 3:7

D. Questions

7. When have been effective times for you to pray with your spouse?
- Suggested HW: Chapter 6 & 7



Sacred Marriage (Chap 6 & 7)

“It might be said that love is the total willingness to be owned... In allowing another person rights of proprietorship over us, we learn something of what it means to be possessed by the Lord, to have no hesitation in giving ourselves to Him because He already owns us.” – Mike Mason

A. Getting to Know You Better

- What is something you wear because your spouse likes it but you don't?
- What days of the week were your kids born?

B. Book Review – Love and Exposure

Some people go into marriage thinking that they will not have to change much, or perhaps only a little bit along lines that are perfectly foreseeable and within their control. Such people are in for a rough ride. Marriage exposes sin. Loving something and purifying something go hand and hand. Spouses who love each other will put growth in godliness and purity above affluence, personal ease, and even children.

Do you hide from your spouse? Christian marriage presumes a certain degree of self-disclosure. Possessing the knowledge of someone's sin is a powerful and dangerous thing which is why we are hesitant to give it. Only love can drive out the constant threat of condemnation and rejection that otherwise haunts and spoils all experiences of intimacy.

1. Why is self-disclosure important in marriage?
2. If we know our spouse loves and accepts us, why do we tend to hide from our spouse?

C. Bible Study

HOSEA 2: 5 – 13; 14 – 23

3. What is God's response to Israel's sin?
4. Is the response based out of anger or love?
How do you know?
5. What is God's attitude once He exposes her?
6. How does the relationship change?



“God's kindness leads you toward repentance.” – Romans 2:4b

D. Questions

7. What about this lesson has been encouraging to you?
- Suggested HW: Chapter 9



Sacred Marriage (Chap 9)

“Forgiveness is love practiced among people who love poorly.” – Henri Nouwen

A. Getting to Know You Better

- What is your spouse’s favorite food at the fair?
- What is one thing you don’t do now that you did before you were married?

B. Book Review – Forgiveness

Marriages start with a tidal wave of love and affection. Newlyweds cannot imagine anything but daisies and buttercups for one another, but eventually this person who promised to love and cherish you will hurt you—sometimes intentionally so. Disagreements and pain are inevitable. We can’t control that, but we can control the direction in which these issues take us. To stop moving toward our spouse is to stop loving him/her. It’s holding back from the very purpose of marriage.

Forgiveness is a process, not an event. We must relinquish our bitterness a dozen times or more, continually choosing to release the offender from our judgment. Forgiveness is the perpetual exercise of dying to yourself and allowing God to defend you.

1. Thomas said, “I believe one of marriage’s primary purposes is to teach us how to forgive.” What are your thoughts on that statement?
2. What does Thomas mean when he says to “fall forward?”

C. Bible Study

GENESIS 50: 15 – 20

3. What did Joseph’s brothers deserve?
4. Would Joseph have been justified in that action? (from man and/or God?)
5. How was Joseph able to forgive?



LUKE 23: 34

6. How was Jesus able to forgive?
7. What would have happened if Jesus did not forgive?

“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.” – Mark 11:25

D. Questions

8. How does this apply for your marriage?
- Suggested HW: Chapters 10 – 11



Sacred Marriage (Chap 10 - 11)

“To be naked with another person is a sort of symbolic demonstration of perfect honesty, perfect trust, perfect giving and commitment, and if the heart is not naked along with the body, then the whole action becomes a lie and a mockery.” – Mike Mason

A. Getting to Know You Better

- What is your spouse’s worst Thanksgiving memory?
- What traditions do you want to create for Thanksgiving?

B. Book Review – Sexual Saints

If sex is going to turn us toward God and each other, it is vital that we examine it with Christian understanding. Sex gives us an avenue to give ourselves completely to another in a uniquely human way, and yet sex is often used to take, to coerce, to shame, and to harm. Most of us are introduced to sex in shameful ways. It is just like Satan to turn us against God’s good gift.

Sex is one of those mysteries, like prayer, that is not dependent on technique. It is to be mutually enjoyed by both participants as it united them in one flesh. The two that were once separate are now forever joined as one. All that went into one is now applied to the other and vice versa. This is what God intends for marriage and what He wants us to experience with Him.

C. Bible Study

I CORINTHIANS 6: 15 – 7: 5

1. What is the rationale against sexual immorality?
2. Why is it good not to marry?
3. What does it mean that our bodies are not our own but also our spouse’s?
4. Since we come with different expectations than our spouse about sex, how can we not deprive one another?
5. If sex produces one flesh, what is the one spirit equivalent?
6. How do we determine where our expectations are different from God’s?



“Awake, north wind, and come, south wind! Blow on my garden, that its fragrance may spread abroad. Let my lover come into his garden and taste its choice fruits.” – Song of Solomon 4: 16



D. Questions

- Suggested HW: Chapter 12 – 13

Sacred Marriage (Chap 12 - 13)

“What is given in marriage is fairly obvious; the love of another being. What is taken away is perhaps not quite so apparent; the entire freedom to think and to act as an independent person” – Mike Mason

A. Getting to Know You Better

- What did you want your spouse learn from the topic last week?
- What do you hope you take away from the class?

B. Book Review – Ever Present

To know the Lord is to be brought into a personal relationship so dramatic that marriage is the best analogy and yet only a pale image of it. Marriage addresses the issue of God not being seen by giving us a spouse where love can be touched, held, questioned, and probed. More than that, marriage constantly reminds us that we are not alone.

Marriage comes to use as an invasion of privacy. No one has ever been married without being surprised at the sheer intensity of this invasion. Even the simplest decision must take your spouse into account. Marriage can be a favorable funnel to direct God’s presence into our daily lives.

A spiritually alive marriage will remain a marriage of two individuals in pursuit of a common vision outside themselves. The vow of love to one special person is intended to free us up to the brim with love, to train us in the very depths of love and so free us to have much more love for others than ever before.



C. Bible Study

I CORINTHIANS 7: 32 – 35

1. What kind of things occupied your mind when you were single?
2. Now that you are married...?
3. How does pleasing your spouse hinder you from following God?
4. How does this help you to follow God?

*“Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?” – Psalm 139: 7*

D. Questions

5. How can you more consciously invite the presence of God into your marriage?

