

**Introduction: “What’s going on?”**

- One of God’s greatest joys is to see His children **LOVE EACH OTHER.**
- A prayer that only you can answer John 17
- Paul commands what Jesus prayed Philippians 2:1-2

*Now if your experience of Christ’s encouragement and love means anything to you, if you have known something of the fellowship of His Spirit, and all that it means in kindness and deep sympathy, do make my best hope for you come true! Live together in harmony, live together in love, as though you had only one mind and one spirit between you.*

Philippians 2:1-4 (J.B. Phillips Translation)

**Structure of passage:**

**The context** = Conflict without  
Conflict within  
Philippians 1:29-30  
Philippians 4:2

**The command** = Live in authentic, Christ-empowered unity  
Philippians 2:1-2

**The structure** = If you have any encouragement in Christ,  
If any comfort from His love.  
If any fellowship with the Spirit,  
If any tenderness and compassion...  
Philippians 2:1

**Then** make my joy complete by...

1. Being of the same mind
  2. Maintaining the same love
  3. United in spirit
  4. Intent on one purpose.
- Philippians 2:2

**The Platinum Rule:**

“Do unto others as God has already done unto you.”

## How to become a more loving person:

### 1. Choose to declare war on **SELFISHNESS**

*<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from **selfishness** or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;*

Philippians 2:3

## What delights our Father and what Christ modeled: The “I am second” mentality

- 3 characteristics of people who are genuinely humble:

1. They have a reasonably **ACCURATE VIEW** of themselves
2. They **CARE** more deeply and **NOTICE** others
3. They are **TEACHABLE**

### 2. Attack the root of the problem... **PRIDE**

*<sup>3</sup> Do nothing from selfishness or **empty conceit**, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;*

Philippians 2:3

### 3. Choose to **PRACTICE HUMILITY** daily by putting others' needs and interests ahead of your own

*<sup>4</sup> do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.*

Philippians 2:4

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why is our unity so important to God? Read *John 13:34-35* for added insight.
2. On what basis are we to be motivated toward authentic unity in relationships (Philippians 2:1)?
3. What does “declaring war” on selfishness look like in your life? Discuss the “paradox” of servant living and personal joy.
4. What is the impact of practicing humility in the lives of family? Neighbors? Coworkers? The world in general?
5. What specific relationship needs a “dose” of “**I am second**” mindset this week? Home? Work? Friends?
6. Share one specific step you will take this week to practice the “Platinum Rule”.

**Introduction:** The quest for greatness = **UNIVERSAL!**

**How do we measure greatness?**

- **Power** = Who and what we control
- **Possessions** = What and how much we own
- **Position** = Our rank in the pecking order
- **Prestige** = Who and how many “look up” to us
- **Productivity** = What and how much we accomplish

**How do we obtain greatness?**

- Two pathways to greatness:
  1. **ASCENDING**
  2. **DESCENDING**
- **True greatness** defined = Philippians 2:3-4

## How do you experience true greatness?

One word = **HUMILITY**

Humility is the channel through which the supernatural power of God's love flows to heal our deepest hurts and restore our most important relationships.

## Following Jesus into greatness

### How to be authentically humble:

1. Humility flows from a specific "mindset".

*<sup>5</sup> Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,*

Philippians 2:5

2. We achieve true greatness when we embrace Christ's "mindset" toward **power** and **possessions**.

*<sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,*

Philippians 2:6

3. We become truly great when we embrace Christ's "mindset" toward **position** and **prestige**.

*<sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.*

Philippians 2:7

4. We become truly great when we embrace Christ's "mindset" toward **productivity**.

*<sup>8</sup> Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

Philippians 2:8

5. We experience the **REWARD** of true greatness when we follow Christ's example of **servanthood**.

*<sup>9</sup> For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Philippians 2:9-11

**Conclusion: God wants you to be great!**

- The acid test of greatness = **LOVE**
- The road to greatness = **HUMILITY**
- The opportunity for greatness = **SERVING**

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Is there anything wrong with wanting to be great or successful?
2. How does God define greatness? Success?
3. Discuss Christ's descent into greatness. Walk through each point and share what "descending" would look like in your life and relationships.
4. Where, who, and how would God have you serve: At home? At church? At work? At school?



**Introduction: Our expectations powerfully shape...**

- Our relationships
- Our responses

**Key:** Our personal history is paramount in forming our expectations.

**Two critical questions**

1. What can we expect from God?
2. What does God expect from us?

**Remember:** Our **HISTORY** always shapes our expectations, and historically people have answered these two questions very differently.

## Church history: Two views concerning God's expectations

### J. CALVIN

Sovereignty

Predestination

"It's God who's at work"

"Whatever will be, will be"

Eternally secure

"Let go, and let God"

### J. ARMINUS

Responsibility

Free will

"Work out your salvation"

Choices have consequences

Eternally uncertain

"Let's go and let's get with it!"

**God's Word rejects both extremes and hold God's sovereignty and man's responsibility in "biblical tension" and balance**

### **Man's responsibility**

*<sup>12</sup> So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling;*

Philippians 2:12

### **God's sovereignty**

*<sup>13</sup> for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*

Philippians 2:13

**How do we “work out” what God has “worked in”?**

**The command:** Be a **GRATEFUL** servant!

*<sup>14</sup> Do everything without grumbling or arguing,*

Philippians 2:14

**The purpose:** Be a **GODLY** servant!

*<sup>15</sup> so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation,*

Philippians 2:15a

**The result:** Be a **BOLD** servant!

*in which you shine like stars in the universe <sup>16</sup> as you hold out the word of life*

Philippians 2:15b-16a

**The motive:** Be a **JOYFUL** servant!

*in order that I may boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor for nothing. <sup>17</sup> But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. <sup>18</sup> So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.*

Philippians 16b-18

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What conscious or unconscious expectations have you had of God and His role in your life?
2. What conscious or unconscious expectations have you believed God has of you?
3. What is God's part in our ongoing transformation to become like Jesus? What's our part?
4. Where do you see growth and progress in "working out" what God has "worked in" your life?
5. Where do you need to focus your effort and energy to allow Jesus' life to be manifested "in" and "through" you?  
  

☐ Attitude?

☐ Speech?

☐ Godliness?

☐ Authenticity?

☐ Boldness?
6. Check 1 or 2 above and share what next steps would help you grow and/or what help you might need from others.

**Introduction: God is always shopping...**

**What is He looking for?**

*<sup>30</sup> I searched for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand in the gap before Me for the land, so that I would not destroy it; but I found no one. <sup>31</sup> Thus I have poured out My indignation on them; I have consumed them with the fire of My wrath; their way I have brought upon their heads," declares the Lord GOD.*

Ezekiel 22:30-31

*<sup>9</sup> For the eyes of the Lord move to and fro throughout the earth that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His. You have acted foolishly in this. Indeed, from now on you will surely have wars."*

2 Chronicles 16:9

**Question: Why does God use some people and not others?**

## **The answer: Philippians 2:19-30**

### **The purpose for sending Timothy?**

**Paul CARES!**

*<sup>19</sup>But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.*

Philippians 2:19

### **The reason Timothy was chosen?**

**Timothy CARES!**

*<sup>20</sup>For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. <sup>21</sup>For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. <sup>22</sup>But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. <sup>23</sup>Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me; <sup>24</sup>and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.*

Philippians 2:20-24

### **The reason Epaphroditus is sent?**

**Epaphroditus CARES!**

*<sup>25</sup>But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; <sup>26</sup>because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. <sup>27</sup>For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. <sup>28</sup>Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. <sup>29</sup>Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; <sup>30</sup>because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.*

Philippians 2:25-30

## **Summary**

Timothy and Epaphroditus exemplify the kind of person God uses to fulfill His purposes on Earth.

## **4 things God is looking for:**

1. Do you have a **SERVANT'S** heart?
2. Are you **WILLING** and **AVAILABLE**?
3. Are you **FAITHFUL** in the assignments God gives you?
4. Are you **LOYAL** and **TEACHABLE**?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Share a time when God used your life to help someone in a significant way. How did it feel?
2. Which of the 4 questions, on page 3, did you answer “yes” to? Explain your answer.
3. Why do you think God sometimes passes over “talented and gifted” people to use people like Timothy?
4. How does a hurried, busy lifestyle “kill” love in relationships?
5. What specifically do you need to stop or start doing to become the kind of person God can really use?



## **Introduction: How do you keep love alive?**

*<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present to Himself the Church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; <sup>29</sup> for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the Church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of His body. <sup>31</sup> FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. <sup>32</sup> This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the Church. <sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.*

Ephesians 5:25-33

Very rarely, do we take how Jesus loves the Church and use that as our model for how we are to love one another in marriage.

Your marriage is not just about your  
**PERSONAL** fulfillment.

John 13:1-17, 33-35

Other than the Church of Jesus Christ, your relationship with your mate is the single most powerful testimony of the reality of God.

**Principles:**

**1. Love is not a FEELING.**

Love is giving another person what they need the most, when they deserve it the least, at great personal cost.

**2. Love is SERVING.**

Philippians 2:3-4

Eliminate these words from your marriage vocabulary:

- Should
- Never
- Always
- Divorce

**3. Love must be RECEIVED.**

There is no such thing as a winner or loser. It is either win-win or lose-lose.

**4. Love is UNCONDITIONAL.**

This takes the supernatural, Holy Spirit power living within you.

**Practical Implications:**

**1. Love is a CHOICE.**

**2. Love MEETS the NEEDS of the one loved.**

**3. Love requires extreme HUMILITY and SECURITY.**

**The tool for transformation:**

**Learn the five languages of love**

- Words of affirmation
- Quality time
- Receiving gifts
- Acts of service
- Physical touch

**Two clues as to what your love language is:**

- What bothers you the most?
- What do you ask for the most?

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why is it so important to clearly define “love” when it comes to building a great marriage? List 2 or 3 of the most common misconceptions about love in our culture.
2. How did Jesus model “loving” the most important people in His life?
3. Which of the principles most challenged your thinking and/or practice of loving your mate?
4. What are your top two “Love Languages”? What are your mate’s top two “Love Languages”?
5. Share with your mate how it makes you feel when he/she serves you with one of your top two “Love Languages”.

**Introduction:**

“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.  
O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”

-Saint Francis of Assisi

God gives grace through **DISCIPLINE**.

Discipline – is learning to do, over time, what you can’t currently do.

**Biblical practices great marriages have in common:**

1. Love
2. Hope

**Jesus gives hope to His bride, the Church:**

*<sup>1</sup>“Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. <sup>2</sup> In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. <sup>4</sup> And you know the way where I am going.” <sup>5</sup> Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?” <sup>6</sup> Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.*

*<sup>7</sup> If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; from now on you know Him, and have seen Him.”*

*<sup>8</sup> Philip said to Him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” <sup>9</sup> Jesus said to him, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup> Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works. <sup>11</sup> Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me; otherwise believe because of the works themselves. <sup>12</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father. <sup>13</sup> Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup> If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it.*

*<sup>15</sup> “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.*

*<sup>16</sup> I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; <sup>17</sup> that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.*

*<sup>18</sup> “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. <sup>20</sup> In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.”*

John 14:1-21

**Hope is a picture of the future that says, what we are doing today is going to produce a better tomorrow.**

**Principles:**

1. Long-term planning provides **HOPE** and **PERSPECTIVE** to overcome short-term pain and challenges.
2. Great plans provide a specific **PATH** and create **HOPE** for tomorrow and forever.
3. Hope rises and falls with how we keep our **PROMISES**.

**Practical implications:**

1. If you fail to **PLAN**, you plan to **FAIL**.
2. If you don't have a plan, you don't have **HOPE**.

**Tools for transformation:**

1. Clarity
  - You are a trophy of God's grace – you share hope when you share your brokenness.
  - Assignment: Add 10 years – see the goal, plan to get there.
2. Structure – work together on:
  - Finances
  - Calendars
3. If necessary, get outside help

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why did Jesus talk about and make such specific promises about the future with those He loved?
2. How did Jesus model “planning” that provided hope and set realistic expectations about future challenges?
3. Which of the principles challenged your thinking and/or practice in planning with your mate?
4. What practical steps do you need to take as a couple to “plan in” daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly activities to renew your hearts and provide hope for your future?
5. Identify “streams” that are polluting your heart and relationship and “streams” that renew them. (Proverbs 4:23)



**Introduction:**

**Biblical practice #1:** Serve your mate John 13

**Biblical practice #2:** Plan together John 14

**Biblical practice #3:** Connect with each other John 15

*"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. <sup>2</sup> Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. <sup>8</sup> My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples. <sup>9</sup> Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. <sup>11</sup> These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.*

<sup>12</sup> *"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.*

<sup>13</sup> *Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. <sup>14</sup> You are My friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. <sup>17</sup> This I command you, that you love one another.*

John 15:1-17

### How do we stay connected?

1. Jesus is the true vine and we are the branches. He is the source of life.
2. Fruitfulness – an extraordinary life with extraordinary impact.
3. Love results in heartfelt obedience.
4. The result of abiding is intimacy and it results in supernatural joy.

### Principles:

1. You can't impart what you do not possess. You must **ABIDE** in Him to have His love to give to your mate.
2. Connection is built on **COMMUNICATION** – quality and quantity of time spent with one another.
3. **JOY** is the fruit or the overflow of connection with Christ and with one another. It will **SUSTAIN** you.

**Practical implications:**

1. Your personal walk with God is critical to a great marriage.
2. The key to a joyful marriage is communication skill and practice.
3. The connection is of the mind, the body, the emotions, and the spirit.

**Tools for transformation:**

- “The conference”
- Pray and ask God to speak to him/her Proverbs 21:1
- The CARE list – “I feel most loved when you...”

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why was Jesus so concerned about those He loved staying connected to Him?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Which of the principles most challenged your thinking and/or practice of connecting with your mate?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What practical activities, actions, and words make you feel most connected to your mate?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Take 10 minutes and have “a conference” to connect your mind and hearts.
  - What are you concerned about?
  - What do you wish?
  - What are you willing to do?

**Introduction:** What is something in your past or in your present that you're ashamed of?

**Three major reasons we have shame:**

1. A theological reason – we ALL have shame.
2. Shame from things DONE to us.
3. Shame of things that we DO.

**Three natural responses:**

1. To HIDE.
2. To NUMB the pain.
3. To COMPENSATE.

<sup>1</sup>Afterward Jesus appeared again to His disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: <sup>2</sup>Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. <sup>3</sup>“I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup>Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

<sup>5</sup>He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”  
“No,” they answered.

<sup>6</sup>He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

<sup>7</sup>Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. <sup>8</sup>The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. <sup>9</sup>When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

<sup>10</sup>Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” <sup>11</sup>So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup>Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask Him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. <sup>14</sup>This was now the third time Jesus appeared to His disciples after He was raised from the dead.

<sup>15</sup>When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love Me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “You know that I love You.”

Jesus said, “Feed My lambs.”

<sup>16</sup>Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love Me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, You know that I love You.”

Jesus said, “Take care of My sheep.”

<sup>17</sup>The third time He said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love Me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love Me?” He said, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.”

Jesus said, “Feed My sheep. <sup>18</sup>Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” <sup>19</sup>Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then He said to him, “Follow Me!”

John 21:1-19

### Principles:

1. Jesus **MEETS** us where we are.
2. Jesus gently **DEMANDS** that we face the truth about ourselves.
3. Jesus **AFFIRMS** our value and our worthiness by commissioning us to service.

### Practical implications:

1. You can't forgive your mate until you have **RECEIVED** both forgiveness and restoration. Ephesians 4:32
2. **EXPERIENCE** God's forgiveness and restoration.
3. Freely **GIVE** what you have received.

### Tools for transformation:

D – **DEFINE** the issue clearly.

E – **ENTER** the pain and hurt.

F – Ask for **FORGIVENESS**.

U – **UNDERSTAND** the process.

- Phase 1: Forgive
- Phase 2: Forgiving
- Phase 3: Forgiven

S – **SET** things right between you.

- Own your responsibility
- Confess: "I was wrong."
- Ask: "Will you forgive me?"
- Answer: "Yes, I forgive you."

E – **ESTABLISH** a specific game plan to move forward.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why did Jesus “bring up the past” with Peter? What was His motive and goal for Peter? For their relationship?
2. How did Jesus “model forgiving” Peter and restoring their relationship? Why is it critical to resolve real and/or perceived wounds in our relationships?
3. Which of the principles most challenged your thinking and/or practice in forgiving your mate?
4. What practical steps do you need to take to fully forgive your mate and put the past behind you?
5. Is there an issue you need to D.E.F.U.S.E.?



**Introduction:** Some “times” it’s harder to keep love alive than others.  
Oftentimes you cope in a crisis.

**God’s Promise:**

*Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.*

James 4:8a

**My journey, my practice:**

<sup>12</sup> So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;**

<sup>13</sup> *bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.*

<sup>14</sup> *Beyond all these things **put on love**, which is the perfect bond of unity.*

<sup>15</sup> **Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts**, to which indeed you were called in one body; and **be thankful**.

<sup>16</sup> **Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you**, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

<sup>17</sup> *Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.*

Colossians 3:12-17

**How do you develop spiritual intimacy?**

**I. Spiritual intimacy with Christ is cultivated by actively believing two things:**

1. Whose you are – Chosen Colossians 1:13-22
2. Who you've become – Holy and loved Colossians 2:9-15

**II. Spiritual intimacy with your mate is cultivated by recognizing the supremacy Christ's role and relationship in your marriage.**

Colossians 1:15-18

**III. The benefits of spiritual intimacy\***

- Allows you to **CONNECT** at the deepest level.
- Links you with God's **PURPOSES** and **PLANS** for you.
- Allows you to **BLESS** each other with God's love.
- Brings your deepest values and desires into agreement.
- Opens the door to the deepest levels of **COMMUNICATION**.
- Empowers your marriage to **SURVIVE**.
- Connects you to a **SUPPORTIVE** body of fellow believers.

\* *Divorce Proof Your Marriage* by Gary and Barbara Rosberg, pgs. 254-256.

**IV. How to develop your personal spiritual intimacy\*\***

- **ASK** God for it. Colossians 1:1-9
- **BEWARE** of counterfeits. Colossians 2:8-10
- **GUARD** your thought life. Colossians 3:1-4
- **KILL** spiritual competitors. Colossians 3:5-7
- **SATURATE** your life in God's Word. Colossians 3:16

**V. Removing barriers and building bridges for spiritual intimacy**

- There is no one right way to develop spiritual intimacy.
- Pray together.
- Worship together.
- Share what you're learning.

**\*\*Marriage that Works** by Chip Ingram, specific help and practical steps for men and women; chapter 9 for men and chapter 11 for women.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How do our different family and spiritual backgrounds impact our perspective and practice of spiritual intimacy?
2. What are your biggest challenges as a man or woman in cultivating spiritual intimacy? For you as a couple?
3. What “baby steps” could you take this week to connect more deeply spiritually?

**Introduction: Communication is the highway upon which love travels.**

- It's more than just "words".
- It's more than better listening and understanding your life partner.
- Biblical communication is the transfer of God's love in meaningful, understandable, super-natural ways through you to your mate.

<sup>12</sup> So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, **put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;**

<sup>13</sup> bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

<sup>14</sup> Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.

<sup>15</sup> Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.

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Colossians 3:12-17

**How to effectively communicate:**

- I. **The command – Put on the proper attire** Colossians 3:12
  1. **COMPASSION** – Empathy to action vs. cynical Matthew 9:36
  2. **KINDNESS** – Whatever is helpful, beneficial vs. critical Jeremiah 9:23-24  
John 4
  3. **HUMILITY** – Their needs first, posture of a servant Philippians 2:5-11
  4. **GENTLENESS** – Strength under control, your emotions Matthew 11:28-30
  5. **PATIENCE** – Endure with a good attitude 2 Peter 3:8-9
- II. **Why the “clothing” metaphor is crucial to biblical communication**
  1. “Old clothes” must be taken off. Colossians 3:8-9
    - Anger – continuous state of smoldering, seething hate
    - Rage – outbreaks into angry speech, cations
    - Malice – desire to cause hurt, evil intent
    - Slander – to tear down another with half-truths and lies
    - Abusive speech – words that contaminate, demean
    - Do not lie... since you put off old self (that lived independent of God and for yourself)
  2. The new self requires “new clothes”. Colossians 3:10-11

**The Principle:** Who we are determines how we “dress” (communicate from the heart)

### III. The problem:

We have settled for techniques and self-help tools to change how we speak, and to modify our emotions and behaviors to improve compatibility; rather than focusing on the deep-rooted transformation of our hearts which empowers us to give the life-giving love of Christ to our mates.

### IV. The solution is three-fold:

1. Don't buy the old lies\*
  - I am what I have – Possessions
  - I am what I accomplish – Performance
  - I am what others think of me – Popularity
2. Dress appropriately for your mate
  - Practice A.W.E
    1. A – **AFFIRMATION**
    2. W – **WARMTH**
    3. E – **ENCOURAGEMENT**
3. Have at least 2 “couples conferences” per week\*\*
  - 3 questions for couples conferences:
    1. What are you concerned about?
    2. What do you wish?
    3. What are you willing to do?

*\*Discover Your True Self* book and *Affirmation Cards* by Chip Ingram and Theresa Ingram.

*\*\*Marriage that Works* by Chip Ingram.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How would you describe your current communication skills towards your loved ones?
2. What are some “old clothes” that need to be taken off in your life? How will you specifically put on “new clothes” (compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience) this week?
3. Which of the three “old lies” (I am what I have, I am what I accomplish, or I am what others think of me) do you tend to fall into more often? Take some time to ask God for help in this area.



**Introduction: A biblical perspective on conflict**

- It's inevitable. John 16:33
- It flows from our differences in perspective. Acts 15:36-41
- It flows from our selfish desires. James 4:1-3
- It can be rooted in personality or style differences. Philippians 4:2-3

**Summary:** Conflict is normal, healthy conflict provides an opportunity for growth, but can be destructive unless addressed wisely, lovingly, and with rules to govern the process.

*<sup>12</sup> So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;*

*<sup>13</sup> **bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.***

*<sup>14</sup> **Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.***

*<sup>15</sup> **Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.***

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Colossians 3:12-17

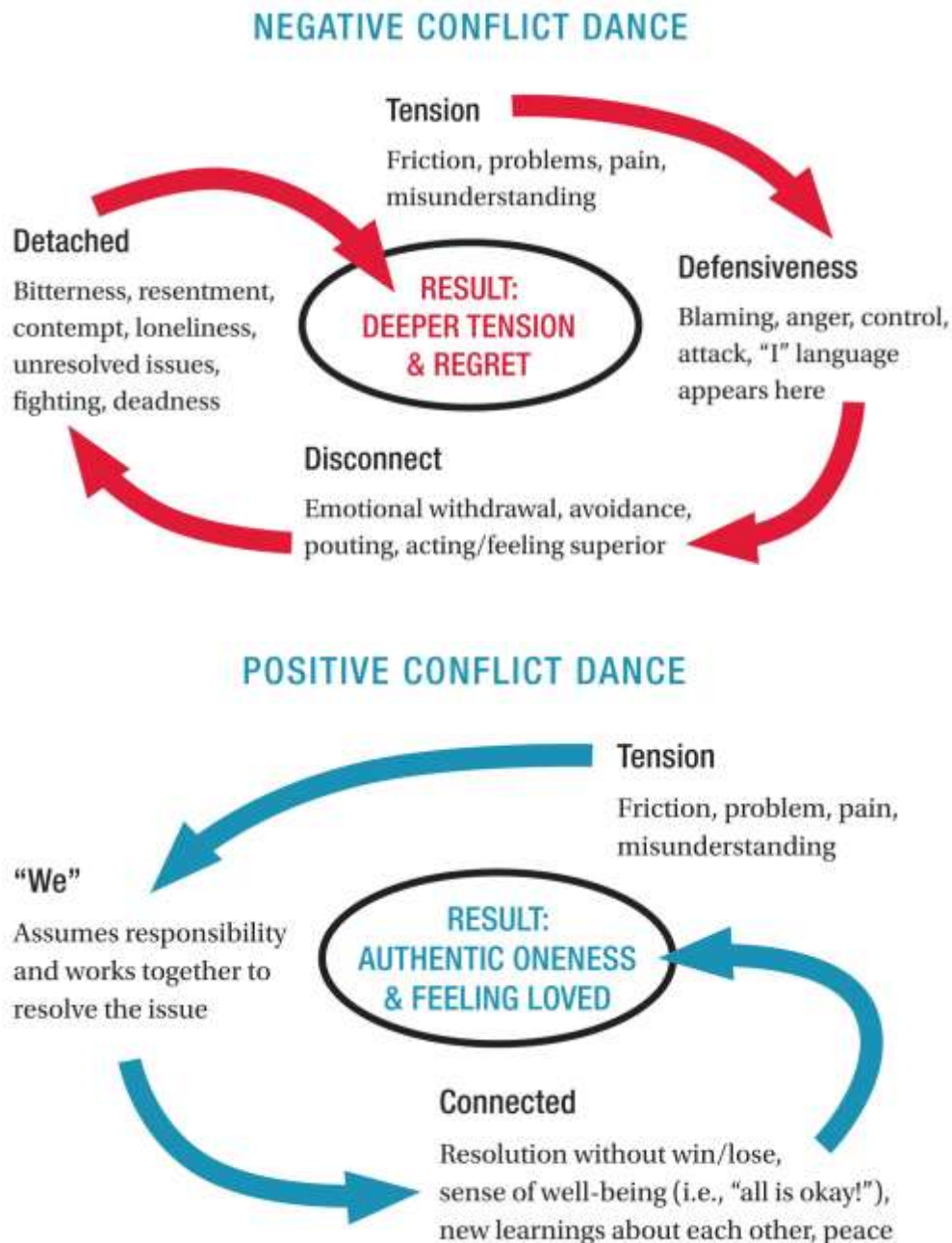
**How to resolve conflict peaceably:**

**I. The command – we are to deal with our mates as Christ deals with us.**

Colossians 3:13-15

1. “Bear with one another” – cause of tension
2. “Forgiving one another” – hurt and/or offense
3. “Whoever has a complaint” – personalized, ongoing
4. “Just as the Lord forgave you” – required response
5. “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts” – let God be the umpire
6. “Called into one body” – priority of unity
7. “Be thankful” – focus on what we have, not what’s lacking

**II. We all respond to “tension” positively or negatively.**



*Note: Negative and Positive Conflict Dance images by Dr. Jim Burns, HomeWord ministry.*

### III. How to “**DIFFUSE**” conflict in your marriage

- D - **DEFINE** the problem on your own. Proverbs 15:14 & 21:2
- I - **INITIATE** a time to talk. Matthew 5:23-24
- F - **FOCUS** on the “perceived” problem, not the person. Proverbs 18:19
- F - **FEEL** their pain as though it were your own. Proverbs 17:17
- U - **UNCOVER** the root problem. Proverbs 20:5

<u>Symptom</u>	<u>Root</u>
Money	Values, Priorities, Power / Control Issues
Sex	Communication, Unmet Emotional Needs, Past History / Baggage
In-Laws	Loyalty, Expectations
Children / Work	Roles and/or Goals

- S - **SET** things right between you. James 5:16
1. Own your responsibility.
  2. Confess - “I was wrong. . .”
  3. Ask for forgiveness - “Will you forgive me?”
- E - **ESTABLISH** a **specific action plan** that addresses the issue discussed;  
write it down. James 1:22-25
- Husband – I commit to . . . by . . . (when?)
  - Wife – I commit to . . . by . . . (when?)

**Discussion Questions:**

1. How did your family handle conflict when you were growing up?
2. When conflict arises, do you tend to become more a “turtle” or a “shark”?
3. What specifically did you learn about resolving conflict that was most helpful?
4. Is there a specific issue in your marriage that needs to be diffused? Are you willing to put into practice the “diffuse conflict” game plan you learned today? When and how will you go about it?

**Introduction: Addressing the #1 source of marital conflict & divorces in America**

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Colossians 3:12-17

**How to biblically manage your finances together:**

**I. The command – All our words and our actions are to be in Jesus' name.**

Colossians 3:17

- “In Jesus’ name” – means as His personal representative; empowered by His authority

## II. The second most accurate mirrors of our hearts and lives

### 1. Our words

*The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; **for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart.***

Luke 6:45

### 2. Our money

*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; **for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.***

Matthew 6:19-21

## III. A brief overview of biblical finances\*

- God owns it all. Psalm 50:12  
James 1:17
- We are stewards, managers, trustees. Luke 16:1-15
- We will give an account of our stewardship. Matthew 25:14-30
- Money is powerful and deceptive. Mark 4:18-19
- Money is the “other god.” Matthew 6:24
- Giving is God’s antidote to greed and the dangers of idol worship. 1 Timothy 6:17-19
- Debt is dangerous and to be avoided. Romans 13:8  
Proverbs 22:7
- We are to be accurately aware of our financial condition. Proverbs 27:23

\**The Truth About Money* by Russ Crosson, CEO of Ron Blue, Inc.

**IV. There are only 5 uses of money**

1. Giving
2. Taxes
3. Savings
4. Debt
5. Living

**V. Financial freedom requires spending less than one's income**

- The lie – We need more income.
- The truth – We need to adjust our spending to our income.
- The reality – Money is *not* the problem; it's just the symptom.

**VI. How to solve “money problems” in your marriage**

1. It must begin with... “It’s **our** problem, **we** will solve it with God’s help.”  
Colossians 3:12-14
2. Assessment instead of blaming.
  - Where are **we** financially?
  - Where do **we** want to be?
3. Alignment of values and execution
  - What do **we** both agree on?
  - Where do **we** (calmly) disagree?
  - What outside help do **we** need?
4. Action
  - What’s **our** “next step” to begin the process?
  - How will we **both** do our finances together moving forward?



**Discussion Questions:**

1. What do your words and actions reveal about your life?
2. In Matthew 6:19, Jesus says, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on Earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.” Are there any treasures on Earth that you’re holding on to? What’s keeping you from letting go?
3. What specifically did you learn about biblically managing your finances that was most helpful?
4. What steps will you take this week to solve the “money problems” in your marriage?