

### 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
- The CARE list – “I feel most loved when you...”

Proverbs 21:1

### **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.?