**Introduction: The American Family**

1. Our heart’s desire – 97% want a close-knit family.

2. Our current situation: Families are disintegrating.

3. The **Christian** family is in demise.

4. The primary cause: Our failure to hold marriage and marriage commitments in high esteem.

**God’s instructions for a great marriage**

22Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. 25Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; 26that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. 28So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30because we are members of His body. 31For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. 32This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband.

Ephesians 5:22-33 (NIV)
1. It requires mutual **submission** to God and each other.

   …and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.

   Ephesians 5:21 (NIV)

2. You need to know how to **love** your mate.

3. Your marriage has an even bigger **purpose** than your happiness.

**God’s design for marriage: “The Blueprint”**

- **GOD**
- **Body**
- **LOVERS**
- **Soul** (mind, will, emotions)
- **BEST FRIENDS**
- **Spirit**
- **BROTHERS & SISTERS IN CHRIST**

- **MAN**
- **WOMAN**

Genesis 2:24
Marriage is a holy covenant

A covenant: An agreement and guarantee one person makes with another.

- The Hebrew word for covenant used in the Old Testament comes from the verb “to cut”.

- We see in the Bible that God made very serious agreements where He established a “covenant” which represents a serious occasion which the parties involved seal their promises in the midst of “cutting” which generally involved blood.

- Examples: Noah Genesis 9:1-17
  Abraham Genesis 17:3-8
  Moses Exodus 34
  Jesus Mark 14:24 & Hebrews 7:22

- The Bible itself is divided into two sections called the Old Testament and the New Testament. The word “testament” is interchangeable with the word “covenant”. So when Jesus died on the cross and shed His blood, a new covenant was established which was different then the Old Testament. This is why we see in the Bible where marriage is a “covenant” - it is a very serious thing in the sight of God (Malachi 2:14).

Definition: Marriage is an IRREVOCABLE commitment of unconditional love toward an IMPERFECT person.

A covenant marriage involves three distinct aspects:

1. Leaving

2. Cleaving

3. Becoming “one flesh”
Since marriage is a covenant and not merely a contract...

1. **DIVORCE** is not an option.  
   Malachi 2:14

2. **ADULTERY** is a serious covenant breaking offense.  
   Proverbs 2:16-19

3. **SEX** before **MARRIAGE** is a violation of this holy covenant.  
   Hebrews 13:4

4. **SAME SEX** relationships are forbidden as a violation of God’s design.

   1 Corinthians 6:9; Romans 1:26-27

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**Marriage that Works**  
**Personal Commitment – Week 1**

From this day forward...
- I will refuse to consider divorce as an option.
- I will take seriously my covenant relationship with my mate before God.

For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

Genesis 2:24 (NIV)

Beginning with me...
- I realize I need God’s forgiveness for violating His covenant plan for marriage.
- I receive God’s complete forgiveness for my sin based on Christ’s death for me.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:9 (NIV)

I commit to pray for...
- My marriage/future marriage
- My children’s marriage
- A marriage that is in crisis

__________________________  _____________
Signed  
Date

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Marriage – A Holy Covenant  
Ephesians 5:21-33
**Introduction: “Missing In Action”**

1. The evolution of the American male

2. The father-absent family

3. The impact of changing roles
   a. **PASSIVE** men
   b. **WILD** women
   c. Confused children

4. Two “PCs” we must avoid
   a. “**POLITICALLY** Correct”
   b. “**PSEUDO** Christian”
Redefining manhood in our marriages and homes:

1. It always begins with mutual **SUBMISSION**.

   … and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Ephesians 5:21 (NIV)

- The Metaphor of “The Dance”
  
  Dance floor is mutual submission the movement on the floor is the beauty, not who took the first step. Jesus woos his bride.

2. A great dance/marriage requires clarity of **ROLES**.

   22Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23For the **husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church**, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

   25**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her;** 26that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.

   28**So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies.** He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30because we are members of His body.

Ephesians 5:22-30 (NIV)
3. Husbands are to “STEP UP” and give their lives to lead their families in righteousness.

**What does this mean?**

- Husbands must love their wives **SACRIFICIALLY**.

- Husbands must love their wives with **INTENTIONALITY**.

- Husbands must love their wives **SENSITIVELY**.

**What does this not mean?**

- It doesn’t mean you always do what your wife **WANTS**.

- It doesn’t mean you don’t have a life of your **OWN**.

- It doesn’t mean you make her **DEPENDENT** on you.

- It doesn’t mean you “call all the shots.”
Application/Discussion Questions:

1. What **new insight** did you gain concerning the roles of men in marriage?

2. How has **our culture** made it difficult to function according to God’s design?

3. How have **abuses** in the church made it difficult to function according to God’s design?

4. (Men) What specific steps do you need to take to become the man God wants in your home?

5. (Women) What specific steps do you need to take to help your husband be the man God wants him to be in your home?

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**Marriage that Works**

**Personal Commitment – Week 2**

From this day forward...

- I will “step-up” and give my life to lead my family in righteousness.

> Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

Ephesians 5:25 (NIV)

Signed ___________________________ Date ___________________________

I commit to pray for...

- Husbands to “step-up” and give their lives to lead their wives and families in righteousness.
- Husbands to love their wives **sacrificially**.
- Husbands to love their wives with **intentionality**.
- Husbands to love their wives **sensitively**.
**Introduction:** What’s a woman to do?

1. The evolution of the American female

2. The mother-absent family

3. The impact of changing roles
   - Men: 2 income family
   - Women: 2 jobs
   - Children: 2 little attention

4. The fundamental question:
   - Are women’s lives, marriages, and families **BETTER** or **WORSE**, since the “PC” experiment?
Womanhood in our marriages and homes

1. It always begins with mutual **SUBMISSION**.

   . . . and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.  

   Ephesians 5:21 (NIV)

   - The metaphor of “The Dance”

   - The meaning of “submission”

2. A great dance/marriage requires clarity of **ROLES**.

   *22* Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord.  

   *23* For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body.  

   *24* But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

   *25* Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her;  

   *26* that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word,  

   *27* that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.

   *28* So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself;  

   *29* for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church,  

   *30* because we are members of His body.

   *33* Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect her husband.

   Ephesians 5:22-33 (NIV)

**Related Passages**: 1 Peter 3:1-6; Colossians 3:18; 1 Corinthians 11:3
3. Wives are to “STEP-IN” and support, affirm, and encourage their husbands with strength and respect to lead their families in righteousness.

*What does this mean?*

- Wives must understand that marriage is not an **EQUALITARIAN** fifty/fifty proposition.

- Wives must **VOLUNTARILY** support their husbands from the heart as an act of obedience to Christ.

- Wives must believe that submission (“stepping in” vs. “stepping over”) is a woman’s **GREATEST ALLY**; the key to bringing about positive change.

*What this does not mean*

- It doesn’t mean you are to be **PASSIVE** or feel **INFERIOR**.

- It doesn’t mean that you **SUBMIT** only when you think he’s right.

- It doesn’t mean that you **VIOLATE** Scripture, reason, or morality to support your husband.

- It doesn’t mean you’re a **DOORMAT**.

- It doesn’t mean you use “submission” as a **TOOL** to get your way.
Application/Discussion Questions:

1. What new insight did you gain concerning the roles of women in marriage?

2. How has our culture made it difficult to function according to God’s design?

3. How have abuses in the church made it difficult to function according to God’s design?

4. (Women) What specific steps do you need to take to become the woman God wants in your home?

5. (Men) What specific steps do you need to take to help your wife be the woman God wants her to be in your home?

Marriage that Works
Personal Commitment – Week 3

From this day forward...

- I will “step-in” and support, affirm, and encourage my husband with strength and respect in order to lead our family in righteousness.

  Wives be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord... as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything.

  Ephesians 5:22a, 24b (NIV)

Signed

Date

I commit to pray for...

- Husbands and wives to be subject to one another in Christ.
- Wives to support, affirm, and encourage their husbands.
- Wives to be willing to trust God in areas they fear “letting go.”

  …hear my voice when I call to You. May my prayer be set before You like incense…

  Psalm 141:1-2 (NIV)
Introduction: Would someone show me the “box top?”

- **The What** = “Step Up” in love

- **The How** = A man’s top 3 priorities
  1. Provision
  2. Protection
  3. Nurture

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 Timothy 5:8 (NAS)

You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 Peter 3:7 (NAS)

. . . (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)

1 Timothy 3:5 (NAS)
How to “step up” in love to lead your wife and family:

1. Husbands hold primary responsibility for the **FINANCIAL PROVISION** of their families.  
   - **The Role** = The family “CFO/Bank President”

   - **The Responsibility** = Shelter, food, clothes, financial training

   - **The Practical Outworking** = 5 Objectives
     1. Do honest work
     2. Honor God first
     3. Live within your means
     4. Prepare for the future
     5. Train your children

   - **The Core Values** = To **MODEL and TEACH**
     1. Work ethic
     2. Stewardship of money and time
     3. Responsibility and discipline
     4. Enjoyment and generosity

For more resources, go to www.livingontheedge.org
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2. Husbands hold primary responsibility for the SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT and protection of their families.

1 Peter 3:7; Ephesians 6:4; Deuteronomy 6:4-9

- **The Role** = The family “PRIEST”

- **The Responsibility** = Come before God on behalf of your family and come before your family on behalf of God.

- **The Practical Outworking** = 5 Objectives
  1. Set the pace personally.
  2. **KNOW** the spiritual condition of your wife and children.
  3. **PRAY** for them and with them regularly.
  4. Insure Biblical instruction occurs at home and at church.
  5. Make **EXPERIENCING** God and loving each other (not morality) your aim.

- **The Core Values** = To Model and Teach
  1. **DEPENDENCY** evidenced by prayer/fasting
  2. Faith in God and His Word
  3. A service and outreach orientation
  4. Progressive growth in personal **HOLINESS**
3. Husbands hold primary responsibility for the RELATIONAL HEALTH and welfare of their families.

1 Timothy 5:5; Ephesians 6:4; 1 Peter 3:7

- **The Role** = The family “GM/Coach”

- **The Responsibility** = To manage the household in a manner that produces love, obedience, and respect toward God and one another.

- **The Practical Outworking** = 5 Objectives
  1. The MARRIAGE COVENANT is verbalized and celebrated.
  2. **Time** is scheduled to develop marriage and family relationships.
  3. **STRUCTURE** and boundaries are provided to insure family relationships take priority over outside demands.
  4. **Communication** is built into the fabric and rhythm of the family schedule.
  5. **CONSEQUENCES** are exercised fairly, firmly, and lovingly among all family members.

- **The Core Values** = To Model and Teach
  1. Acceptance – Unconditionally
  2. **Affirmation** – Specifically and consistently
  3. Accountability – Filled with truth and grace
  4. Conflict Resolution – “Speaking the truth in love”
Marriage that Works
Personal Commitment – Week 4

Providing, Protecting, Nurturing

I understand that every journey begins with first steps and my first steps will be in the area of:

☐ Financial Provision/Responsibility
☐ Spiritual Development and Protection
☐ Relational Health and Welfare

I know that to follow through on my commitments, I will need help. I will use a “tool” to help me take an accountability step.

❖ FINANCIAL
Managing Our Finances God’s Way  DaveRamsey.com
(Venture Resource Center or Crown.org)

❖ SPIRITUAL
Download: Passing On What Matters Most  by Chip Ingram
Focusonthefamily.com  (Search: Family Mealtime Devotionals)

❖ RELATIONAL
Effective Parenting in a Defective World  by Chip Ingram
Seven Seasons of the Man in the Mirror  by Pat Morley

☐ ASK A FRIEND TO “HOLD ME TO IT”

☐ SEEK OUT A MENTOR

☐ JOIN A MEN’S GROUP

☐ JOIN A “GROWTH GROUP”

☐ JOIN A BIBLE STUDY

Signed

______________________________

Date
Introduction: Please show me which box top?

- **The What** = “Step In” and support

- **The How** = A woman’s top 3 priorities
  1. Nurture
  2. Protection
  3. Provision

10An excellent wife, who can find? For her worth is far above jewels. 11The heart of her husband trusts in her, And he will have no lack of gain. 12She does him good and not evil All the days of her life.

Proverbs 31:10-12 (NIV)

So I would prefer that the younger widows get married, have children, and take care of their homes, so as to give our enemies no chance of speaking evil of us.

1 Timothy 5:14 (NIV)

3Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips, nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, 4that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, 5to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored.

Titus 2:3-5 (NIV)
How to “step in” and support to lead your family in righteousness:

1. A wife’s 1st priority is to support, affirm, and EMPOWER her husband to fulfill his God-given calling both within and outside the home. Genesis 2:18

- **The Role** = “The **CHAMPION**” – A teammate and best friend

- **The Practical Outworking**

  1. **Make time with GOD** your #1 priority.

  2. **Pray** for him regularly.

  3. **Plan** for him daily.

  4. **Prepare** for him daily.

  5. **Protect** your time with him.
2. A wife’s 2nd priority is to create an environment in the home that **NURTURES** and **DEVELOPS** her children to fulfill God’s will for their lives.

1 Timothy 5:14

- **The Role** = “The **MOTHER**” – A teacher, counselor, consoler, and refuge for her children

- **The Practical Outworking**

  1. **Model** dependency on Christ.

  2. **Pray** for your children **FERVENTLY**.

  3. **Create** structures and **SCHEDULED** times that make family life a priority.

  4. **TEACH** them how to live.

  5. **Make time** for them – be **AVAILABLE**.
3. A woman’s 3rd priority is to train **YOUNGER WOMEN** in the art of becoming a godly wife and mother.

   Titus 2:3-5

- **The Role** = “The MENTOR” – A spiritual guide to provide practical insight and coaching

- **The Practical Outworking** = A women’s mentoring program

4. **Important questions to ponder:**

   1. Should a woman work outside the home? When? Why? Why not?

   2. What about single moms who have to work?

   3. What if you can’t live on one income?
Marriage that Works
Personal Commitment – Week 5

Nurturing, Providing, Protecting

- As a wife, I will assume primary responsibility for the establishment of a nurturing home environment for my husband and children.

- **Starting this week**, I will prayerfully consider what steps I should take toward fulfilling my responsibilities in the following areas:
  
  - Support, affirm and empower my husband.
  
  - Create an environment to nurture and develop my children.
  
  - Mentor other women (or be mentored) to become a godly wife and mother.

- **My action step will be** ____________________________
  
  ____________________________ ____________________________

  ____________________________ ____________________________

Signed ____________________________ Date _________________
Marriage that Works

Resource List

➢ For Couples:

- Covenant Marriage by Gary Chapman
- Creating an Intimate Marriage by Jim Burns
- The 5 Love Languages by Gary Chapman
- Passive Men, Wild Women by Pierre Mornell M.D.
- Broken Hearts, Broken Dreams by Chip Ingram – LivingontheEdge.org
- Experiencing God’s Dream for Your Marriage by Chip Ingram – LivingontheEdge.org
- Twenty Principles Regarding Marriage & Divorce by Dr. Ray Zuck (handout)

➢ For Singles:

- Love, Sex and Lasting Relationships by Chip Ingram – LivingontheEdge.org
- Singleness: Blessing or Curse by Chip Ingram – LivingontheEdge.org

➢ For Women:

- Have a New Husband by Friday by Dr. Kevin Leman
- Let Me Be a Woman by Elizabeth Elliot
- Passion and Purity by Elizabeth Elliot

➢ For Men:

- What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew About Women by Dr. James Dobson
- Man in the Mirror by Pat Morley
- Portrait of a Father by Chip Ingram – LivingontheEdge.org

➢ Other Resources:

- The Case Against Divorce by Diane Medved, Ph.D.
- Divorce & Remarriage in the Church by Chip Ingram – LivingontheEdge.org

(from the teaching series Singleness: Blessing or Curse)