

Marriage Booster



A Brief Bible Study to Strengthen Your Marriage

Compiled by Dr. R. Craig Etheredge

Couple's Bible Study: Understanding Your Role as a Mate

As a couple, read Genesis 1:26-31 and 2:18-25 in more than one version of scripture. For a helpful Bible website that offers many translations, go to www.biblegateway.com.

- 1) In whose image did God create man? _____

 - 2) In reading Genesis 1:27, consider how mankind bears the image of God. Is the image of God born only by the male? _____
_____. Who else carries the image of God? _____.
 - 3) In 1:28, God gives His first commands to His new creatures. Was this command given only to the man? What are the four parts of this command?
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____
 - d) _____
 - 4) In light of what you have read here, what should your attitude be toward your mate and his or her place before God? _____

 - 5) Who first said it was not good for man to be alone? _____
 - 6) How did God enable Adam to see his need for a mate? (2:20) _____

 - 7) Notice that God uses a different word to describe how the female came into existence (2:21). What word or words has He used in other verses to describe His creative activities? 1:21 - _____
_____ 1:25 - _____
_____ 2:19 - _____

 - a) What word does He use in 2:22 for the formation of the woman? _____
 - b) The Hebrew word translated here has the idea of something built with extra special care. God fashioned the woman with extra attention to the details so she would be a helper suitable for the man.
 - 8) In Genesis 2:18, God says He will make for man a _____. The idea from the original Hebrew is "one who corresponds to in every way." The picture is of someone who will meet all of Adam's needs in every way. It is like two pieces of a puzzle fitting perfectly together. She will be capable of meeting all of Adam's needs and he will be capable of meeting all of her needs.
 - 9) In 2:24, three things take place. What are these three actions?
 - a) _____
 - b) _____
 - c) _____
 - 10) The verbs *leave* and *cleave* are very strong verbs in Hebrew. *Leave* has the idea of totally severing all emotional ties and dependency. *Cleave* has the idea of welding together, so that they cannot be separated. The leaving must be completed before the cleaving can be completed! As you evaluate your relationship with your mate, do you see some areas where your mate has not left which may be affecting your relationship? _____

- _____ In all fairness, are there some areas in your relationship with your parents where you are still too dependent? _____
- _____ What are these, and how do you think they might be affecting your relationship with your mate? _____

The Necessity of Honor

Honor is the single most important principle known for healthy relationships

Honor means literally “heavy” or “weighty” or very “valuable”

When we say we honor someone, we are saying that who they are and what they say carries great weight with us. We are saying that they are extremely valuable in our eyes.

When we dishonor someone by our verbal or nonverbal statements, we are saying that their words or actions make them of little weight in our eyes.

Listen to what the Bible says about honor in your relationships

“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.” (1 Peter 3:7)

“Let the wife see to it that she respects her husband.” (Ephesians 5:33)

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.” Exodus 20:12

“...but now the LORD declares: 'Far be it from me, for those who honor me I will honor, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed.” (1 Samuel 2:30)

“Because you are precious in my eyes, and honored, and I love you, I give men in return for you, peoples in exchange for your life.” (Isaiah 43:4)

“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor.” (Romans 12:10)

“Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.” (1 Timothy 5:17)

“Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.” (Hebrews 13:4)

Four Principles of Honor

- 1) Honor is a continual and intentional attitude
 - a) It requires humility and commitment
- 2) Honor is not a natural feeling but a decision
- 3) Honor is not something earned or deserved
 - a) There are times we don't deserve to be shown honor, but real love will continue to show honor.
 - b) Our ultimate example is Jesus (Philippians 2)
 - c) Don't forget, when you get married, you vowed to honor your spouse.
- 4) Honor is not blind stupidity
 - a) It is not ignorantly sweeping wrongs under the rug
 - b) It is not a lack of conflict

"Living Out" Honor

There are many ways to demonstrate the attitude of honor. Here are a few suggestions. We show honor by:

- 1) Helping our partner maintain his or her own autonomy
 - a) Encourage their interests
- 2) By listening
- 3) By helping our partner reach his or her goals
- 4) By not telling others his or her negatives
- 5) By focusing your thoughts on positives

Healthy relationships make honor a household word!

For Him: Honoring Your Wife

"You husbands likewise, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel...grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life."

(1 Peter 3:7)

The Value of a Woman

- 1) Women speak the language of the heart
 - a) Women often speak a language of the heart. In most cases, they love to share thoughts, feelings, dreams and goals. A woman's natural skills at communicating often will make her wonderfully sensitive to small things others are thinking, saying or feeling. And her desire for deep relationships usually exceeds what the average man desires.
- 2) Women tend to relate on multiple levels
 - a) In general, most women are able to concentrate on more than one thing at a time. However, most men tend to concentrate on one thing at a time.
- 3) Women personalize their environment
 - a) Another strength a woman has is to become personally involved with everything around her. If a man isn't aware of his partner's tendency to "personalize" almost everything around her, it can lead to friction in a relationship.
- 4) Women are more concerned with people rather than projects
 - a) Women, primarily derive their feelings of worth from those to whom they're related. If a woman is married, she looks to her husband more than any other earthly individual for her personal value and worth.
 - b) Women generally have a desire to know and to be known deeply.

Your Wife's Four "Emotional Tanks"

What are the four emotional tanks?

Note:

*Tanks are opaque and their levels are never easily discerned

*Tanks are constantly draining throughout the day

*Tanks are received in different conditions. You may receive tanks that are damaged and in need of repair

*Your job is to fill these tanks regularly

- 1) Meaningful communication
- 2) Unconditional security

- 3) Meaningful touch
- 4) Genuine romance

How do you fill these emotional tanks?

- 1) Check the levels on a regular basis and fill as needed.
 - a) Three key questions (on a scale of 1-10):
 - i) What kind of relationship would you like?
 - ii) Where are we in our relationship right now?
 - iii) What would it take to get to a ten?
- 2) Recognize the warning signs
- 3) Anticipate “high usage” times
- 4) Utilize your power of blessings
 - a) Meaningful touch
 - b) Spoken messages
 - c) Attaching high value
 - d) Picture a special future
 - e) Make a commitment
 - f) Pray together
 - g) Read devotional books together
 - h) Serve in meaningful ways
- 5) Follow God’s service plan for filling tanks

God’s Service Plan for Filling Tanks

Ephesians 5:25-33 – “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”

1. Love her with a sacrificing kind of love (vs. 25)
2. Love her with a purifying kind of love (vs. 26-27)
3. Love her with an attentive kind of love (vs. 28-30)
4. Love her with a permanent kind of love (vs. 31a)
5. Love her with an intimate kind of love (vs. 31b)

The Top Ten Dishonoring Acts

(from *Love is a Decision* by Smalley and Trent)

Look through the following list and share with your partner if you feel as though you have been a “victim” of any of these:

- 1) Ignoring or degrading another person’s opinions, advice, or beliefs (especially criticizing another person’s faith).
- 2) Burying oneself in the television or laptop when another person is trying to communicate with us.
- 3) Creating jokes about another person’s weak areas or shortcomings.
- 4) Making regular verbal attacks on loved ones – criticizing harshly, being judgmental, or delivering uncaring lectures.
- 5) Treating in-laws or other relatives as unimportant in one’s planning and communication.
- 6) Ignoring or simply not expressing appreciation for kind deeds done for us.

- 7) Distasteful habits that are practiced in front of family – even after we are asked to stop.
- 8) Over-committing ourselves to other projects or people so that everything outside the relationship seems more important than those inside the relationship.
- 9) Power struggles that leave one person feeling as if he or she is a child or is being harshly dominated.
- 10) An unwillingness to admit that we are wrong or ask forgiveness.

Bible Study – Ephesians 5:15-6:20: Understanding Your Responsibility as a Husband

Read Ephesians 5:15-6:20 (concentrate particularly on Ephesians 5:23-33). Also read 1 Peter 3:7-9. Read the passages in more than one version, if you can. For multiple translations, go to www.biblegateway.org.

- 1) Notice the context of Paul’s instructions to the wife and husband. What immediately precedes these instructions? (5:15-21) _____
 _____ What immediately follows the section dealing with interpersonal relationships? (6:10-20) _____
 _____ Why do you believe Paul placed these instructions about our relationships in this context? _____

- 2) In Ephesians 5:18, Paul instructs everyone to be filled with the Spirit. In verses 19-21, he then lists four evidences of being filled with the Spirit. What are they?
 a) Vs. 19: _____
 b) Vs. 19: _____
 c) Vs. 20: _____
 d) Vs. 21: _____
- 3) In light of this, “_____ to one another” is to be the lifestyle of all believers, not just wives. (vs. 21)
- 4) In verse 23, Paul says the husband *is* the head of the wife. He does not *become* the head of the wife, he is the head like Jesus is the Head of the Church.
- 5) Make a list of five responsibilities you think headship should include.
 a) _____
 b) _____
 c) _____
 d) _____
 e) _____
- 6) Does *headship* mean the husband is a dictator? _____ Does it mean the wife has no say in decisions? _____
- 7) Read John 13. From this passage, how does Jesus say a person should lead others? _____

- 8) List five ways you can lead your wife the way Christ led the disciples:
 a) _____
 b) _____
 c) _____
 d) _____
 e) _____
- 9) In Ephesians 5:25, Paul instructs the husband to love his wife as _____ loved the Church, and _____ Himself for her.
- 10) In your own words, describe how Christ loved the Church. What did His love for the Church cause Him to do? (Romans 5:8, see also Philippians 2:3-11) _____

If you are to love your wife as Christ loved the Church, what must you do then? _____

- 11) What was the condition of the Church when Christ died for her? Was the Church deserving of His love? (see also Ephesians 2:1-10)_____ Does your wife's attitudes or actions remove your responsibility to fulfill the command that God has given you in Ephesians 5:25? _____
- 12) Verses 26 and 27 tell what Christ's great love is going to accomplish for the Church. These verses tell why Christ gave Himself up for her, and your love as a husband is to accomplish similar purposes in your wife. In light of this, whom do you think God is going to hold responsible to some degree for your wife's growth? _____
- 13) As you evaluate your love for your wife in light of Christ's example, do you see some areas where you have been selfish and have not been fulfilling your responsibility? List these areas, and with each one list one specific activity you can engage in to begin to more adequately fulfill your responsibility.
- | | |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
- 14) Ask the Lord to forgive you for your failure to fulfill His commandment (1 John 1:9) given to you in Ephesians 5:25-33. Also ask your wife to forgive you. Re-commit yourself before the Lord to love your wife as Christ loved the Church (1 Thessalonians 5:24). Verbalize this commitment to your wife. It helps to write your confession to your wife and your commitment to her on a separate sheet of paper. This will enable you to say exactly what you want to say.

For Her: Honoring Your Husband

"Let the wife see to it that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:33)

The Value of a Man

- 1) God has equipped him to be your loving leader
- 2) God has equipped him as a task conqueror
- 3) God has equipped him as a provider

"For most women, emotion precedes action but for many men, action precedes emotion."

Seeing Behind the Mask – His Needs

- 1) He needs to be loved and accepted
 - a) Genuine love is far more than a feeling; it's the kind of love that lasts a lifetime. It means commitment to care for the loved one unconditionally.
- 2) He needs to be admired
 - a) Let him know you are proud of him and that you accept him, even if you don't completely agree with the decisions he makes or the direction he is going.
- 3) He needs to be understood

- a) Accept the fact that your husband needs to be taught in creative, loving ways how to meet your needs.
- 4) He needs to know that his advice is valuable.
- 5) He needs to feel appreciated.
 - a) Appreciate the things he does – work, helping around the house, helping with kids, keeping up with cars, maintenance, bills, retirement, etc.
- 6) He needs to be replenished.
 - a) As he gives at work and at home, he needs to find ways to replenish his emotional, physical, and spiritual tanks.
- 7) He needs vital relationships with other men.
 - a) There needs to be a level of accountability with other men to spur him toward excellence in his walk with God, in his leadership at home and in his example before others.
 - b) This is healthy and is not always a reflection of what is happening at home.

2 Responses to Your Husband's Needs

The Flesh-Controlled Response

Many women tend to react opposite to the needs of their husbands when they are depleted and wounded. When you are in this condition the following responses to your husband's needs are common:

- 1) Does not show love – cold and distant
- 2) Does not admire – cutting, disrespectful, makes fun of him, complaining
- 3) Does not understand – close minded, will not see his point of view
- 4) Will not take his advice – laughs, acts like he is stupid, blows him off, rolls eyes, etc.
- 5) Refuses to appreciate – nothing is ever good enough, no gratitude
- 6) Takes, but does not give to replenish – demanding, manipulative
- 7) Feels threatened by others – jealous, angry, dominating, resents others' relationship with him

The Spirit-Controlled Response

The woman controlled by the Holy Spirit – who is seeking to respond in a Christ-like way – responds differently. Not because she has strength, but because she depends on Jesus to give her strength to respond in a godly way:

- 1) Recognize his needs
 - a) Men are typically more responsive to their wives when their emotional needs are fulfilled. Ask yourself, "Are there ways that I can meet the emotional needs of my husband?"
- 2) Clarify your needs
 - a) Find creative ways to express your needs clearly to your husband without assuming that he understands your need or resorting to negative communication.
- 3) Acknowledge your source of supply
 - a) Understand that your deepest needs are first met through your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. You should treat your husband not the way he deserves, but in the way that pleases God (Eph. 5:22).
- 4) Pray for him
 - a) Ask the Father to make him a godly man, sensitive, understanding and faithful.
- 5) Praise the successes
 - a) Men respond to praise and often quit when confronted harshly or negatively.
- 6) Forget the past failures
 - a) Be willing to forgive and give him another chance, just as Christ has forgiven you.

Five Characteristics of a Godly Wife

From 1 Peter 3:1-6

- 1) She honors her husband by coming under his leadership. (Vs. 1)
- 2) She influences her husband by her godly behavior. (Vs. 1)
- 3) She upholds God's standard of purity. (Vs. 2)

- 4) She pursues a spirit of gentleness. (Vs. 3-5)
- 5) She trusts God in her relationships. (Vs. 6)

Bible Study Guide to 1 Peter 3:1-6

Read this passage from two or three different translations and a paraphrase and then answer the following questions. Recommended versions are the *New American Standard Bible*, the *English Standard Version*, the *New International Version*, and *The Living Bible*. For multiple translations and other Bible helps, go to www.biblegateway.com.

1) What does "in the same way" mean? (Vs. 1) _____

Read 1 Peter 2:11-25 and paraphrase what this passage is saying: _____

What did Jesus do to enable Him to stand in an adverse situation? _____

Is this to be your example? _____

2) What does it mean to be submissive to your husband? (Vs. 1) _____

3) Why are you to be submissive to your own husband? (Vs. 1) _____

How will your husband be won over? _____

Not by _____, but by your _____

What else will he see if you are living a godly life? (Vs. 2) _____

What do you think the word *purity* means? _____