

The Key To A Christ-Centered Marriage

Remodeled or Transformed?

***Grace Point Church
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Biographical Sketch

Bill was born and raised in College Station, Texas and moved to Dallas, Texas in 1986. He was a commercial general contractor there for 25 years. Bill and his wife, Paige, were married in October 1988.

Although he was saved at age 18, Bill didn't understand Christ as his source for life until he was 48 years old. As a Christian for thirty years Bill wandered in a wilderness of spiritual performance for God trying to earn His love, acceptance, and worth. He had severe internal struggles with fear, anxiety, and worry that overcame him for most of those thirty years. He would ask, "Where is this abundant life that the Lord promised in John 10:10? Why, after living the Christian life so long, am I still being defeated by the same sin patterns? Why am I not experiencing God's peace and rest in the midst of adverse circumstances?"

Bill's defeat in the Christian life got to a point that in 1998, while an elder at a former church, he told Paige that he wanted out of the Christian life. He was spiritually exhausted. In late 1998 Ian Thomas, founder of Torchbearers, was invited to Bill's church to speak. The first words that he shared were, "**God never intended for you to live the life that only Christ can live in and through you.**"

The Lord showed Bill through Ian Thomas's words that he had been living much of his Christian life out of self-effort and self-sufficiency. The Lord also revealed to Bill that God has designed us to be His vessels through which His life and His power would flow. He realized for the first time that God didn't want to help us live the Christian life, but He actually wants to be our **Source** for living the Christian life. This was such a transforming time for Bill that five months later God called Bill out of his business and eventually led him into full-time ministry with Exchanged Life Ministries Texas (ELMT) in Dallas. During his 2 and ½ years with ELMT, Bill shared the Christ-life message in conferences and in follow-up discipleship curriculum. He was the conference coordinator for all the ELMT church conferences. While ministering in the churches, he recognized a growing need to partner with them on a continuing basis. He and Paige prayed for God's will concerning his growing passion to be more involved with churches.

Then in September 2003 the Lord called him and Paige to form a ministry with the primary focus being to teach, develop curriculum, and disciple "multipliers" in the local church. In November 2003 he and Paige formed Christ Is Life Ministries. They moved to San Antonio in April 2004, and they are now working with several churches in the area and throughout Texas.

Conference Schedule

Session One

***What Do You Believe About Marriage
God's Design For A Christ-Centered Marriage***

Session Two

The Obstacles To A Christ-Centered Marriage

Session Three

***How God Transforms You and Your Spouse To
Experience A Christ-Centered Marriage***

SESSION ONE

What Do You Believe About Marriage?

What Is God's Design For A Christ-Centered Marriage?

How Would You Evaluate Your Marriage?

1. God has given you intellect, IQ, ability, and willpower. Do you believe that you and your spouse working together with God's help, using your intellect, IQ, abilities, willpower, and the right marriage principles can produce a Christ-centered marriage?

2. What are some of the expectations you have about marriage? How does it make you feel when your expectations are not met?

3. Which of the following needs do you believe it is up to your spouse to meet?

- Unconditional Love
- Unconditional Acceptance
- Respect
- Security
- Worth/Value

4. Think about the areas of conflict in your marriage. Write down some of the consistent negative or fleshly attitudes or behaviors that are exhibited by your spouse? (i.e., being critical, angry, controlling, unforgiving, moody, condemning, etc.)

5. How are these fleshly behaviors negatively impacting your oneness, your communication, your emotional and sexual intimacy, etc.?

6. What are you doing to change these fleshly behaviors? Is what you are doing working?

7. If I were to ask you to describe your spouse in a negative way, what would you say?

8. What are one or more things you would like to change about your spouse?

9. What are one or more things you would like to change about your marriage?

Improved or TRANSFORMED?

Question: Can a non-Christian improve his marriage by following certain tips and techniques written about in Christian books on marriage?

***God promises MORE than just improvement in your marriage.
He promises to TRANSFORM your marriage.***

Three Kinds Of Marriages

Category 1 - A CHRISTIAN Marriage is one where both spouses are Christians. Their marriage appears to be doing well, but it is a marriage where there is no real ongoing spiritual transformation. In this category of marriage the couples have learned to cope with each other's fleshly behavior and attitudes and have learned how to cope with unresolvable conflicts and differences instead of resolving them.

What Is COPING?: It is behaviors that couples use to protect or to insulate themselves from the negative effects of their fleshly behavior, unmet needs, and unresolved conflicts.

Category 2 - A TROUBLED Marriage is one with ongoing conflicts that are causing a growing emotional separation.

Category 3 - A CHRIST-CENTERED Marriage is one where you are living from Christ as the Source, are experiencing ongoing spiritual transformation, and are continually moving into a deeper experience of unconditional love, oneness, intimacy, and harmony with each other and with God. It is a marriage where both spouses are being transformed into Christ-likeness.

What does it mean to be transformed into Christ-likeness? This is part of our spiritual destiny according to Romans 8:29 and 2 Corinthians 3:18:

*“For whom He foreknew, **He also predestined** to become **conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.” Romans 8:29*

*“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, **are being transformed into His likeness** with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”
2 Corinthians 3:18*

Your SPIRITUAL DESTINY

*To be transformed into the LIKENESS of Christ,
means that you will think, believe, choose, and behave like Christ.*

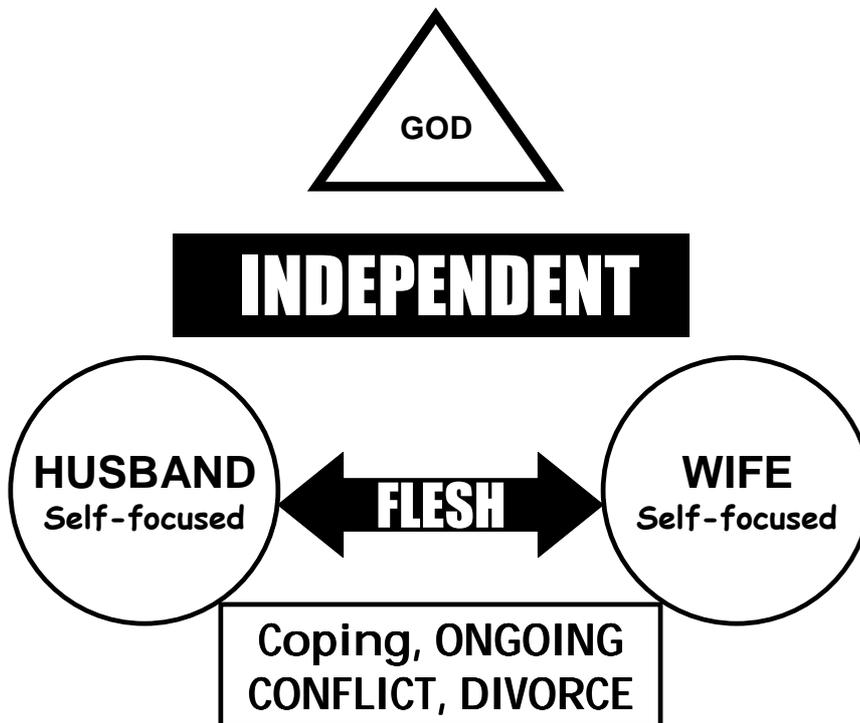
QUESTION: How would it transform your marriage if you were thinking, believing, choosing and behaving like Christ?

Category 1 and 2 Marriages = Self-Centered Marriages

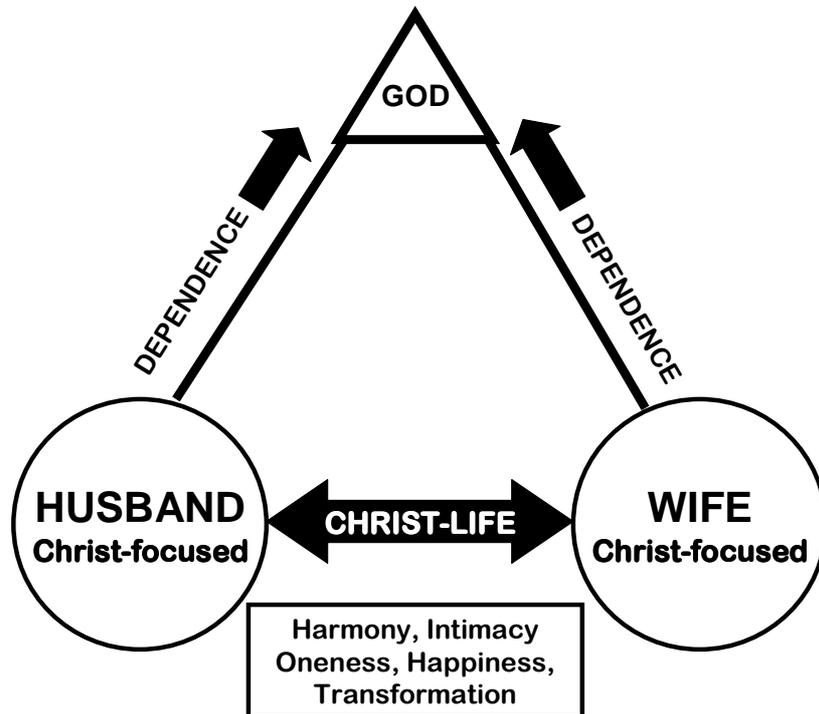
Characteristics of A Self-Centered Marriage

1. Husband and wife primarily focused on **themselves**. (i.e. living from the flesh.)
2. **Trying** to be the source to produce a Christ-centered marriage.
3. **Unmet** needs and expectations which produce fleshly behavior.
4. **Unchanged** fleshly behaviors and attitudes
5. **Unresolved** conflict in one or more areas of the marriage.
6. **Coping** and **emotional distancing**.
7. **No** ongoing internal spiritual transformation.

A SELF (Flesh)-Centered Marriage



Category 3 Marriage – A Christ-Centered Marriage



Some of the Characteristics of A Christ-Centered Marriage

- **All** of your and your spouse's God-given needs are being met **in Christ**.
Philippians 4:19
- Each spouse is living with an attitude of **dependence** upon God as their Source.
John 15:5
- Your marriage is being **transformed** because each spouse is experiencing ongoing personal spiritual transformation. Romans 12:2
- You and your spouse understand your **true identity** in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17
- You and your spouse draw on God's **supernatural power** to overcome your fleshly behaviors and to **resolve** your marital conflicts. Ephesians 1:19, 20
- You will have a marriage that is **increasing** in harmony, intimacy, and oneness.
1 Peter 3:8, 9

A Christ-Centered Marriage is

a marriage where both spouses are being supernaturally being transformed into Christ-likeness and are DRAWING from, RELYING upon and LIVING from Christ as their Life and Source.

How Do We Know What God's Design For Marriage Looks Like?

In order to understand what God intended for you and your spouse in marriage, then we need to go back and look at the first marriage between Adam and Eve. Let's look at some truths about the condition of Adam and Eve before the Fall:

1. Adam and Eve Were Indwelt By The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

“Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” Genesis 2:7

Truth #1

Adam and Eve contained within them the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2. Adam and Eve Lived In Total Dependence Upon God As Their SOURCE To Meet All Of Their Needs.

“Then God said, ‘I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food...’” Genesis 1:29

“He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption” 1 Corinthians 1:30

Truth #2

Adam and Eve were living totally DEPENDENT upon God as their Source to meet their physical, spiritual, and emotional needs.

3. Adam and Eve Were Living FROM God’s Life and Power Within Them.

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.”

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.” John 14:6

Truth #3

Adam and Eve were living from Christ’s LIFE and POWER within them.

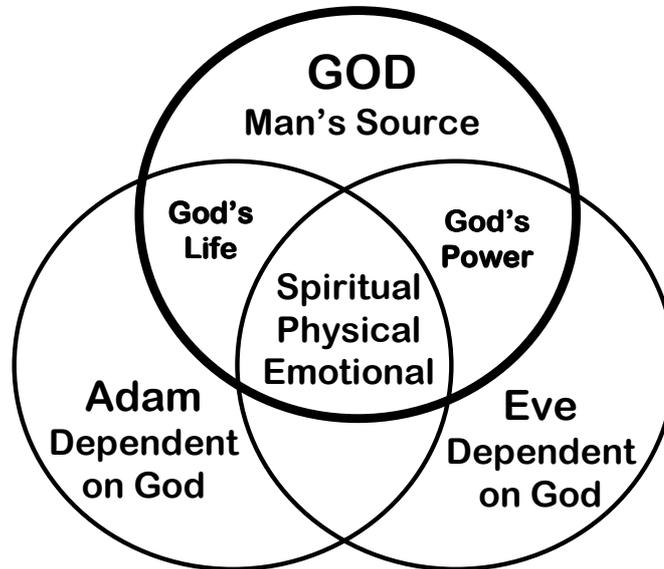
4. Adam and Eve Fully Experienced God’s Unconditional Love Relationship With Them and PERFECT Love, Harmony, Intimacy, and Oneness With Each Other.

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

Truth #4

Adam and Eve experienced God’s design for marriage which produced perfect love, harmony, intimacy, and oneness between themselves and God.

**God Was The SOURCE To Meet
Adam and Eve's Needs Before The Fall**



For Adam and Eve To Continue To Enjoy Marital Bliss, They Had To Make A Choice!



Tree of LIFE = DEPENDENCE = Perfect intimacy with God and each other, God's design for marriage, abundant and eternal Life.

"And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, 'From any tree of the garden you may eat freely...' " Genesis 2:16



Tree of the KNOWLEDGE of GOOD and EVIL = INDEPENDENCE = Spiritual death, loss of intimacy with God and loss of experiencing God's design for marriage.

"but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die." " Genesis 2:17

For Adam and Eve To Continue Experiencing Intimate Relationship with God, God's Perfect Design For Marriage, and Abundant and Eternal Life, They Had To Make A Moment-By-Moment CHOICE To DEPEND Upon God As Their Source.

However, Adam and Eve Bought Into "The LIE."

"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Genesis 3:5

"THE LIE"

**Man can become his OWN god.
Man can live INDEPENDENTLY of God.
Man can produce a godly marriage apart from God.**

As A Result of Eating From The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve Died SPIRITUALLY

What is spiritual death?

- SEPARATION from God as the SOURCE

"But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He does not hear." Isaiah 59:2

- SEPARATION from the LIFE of God

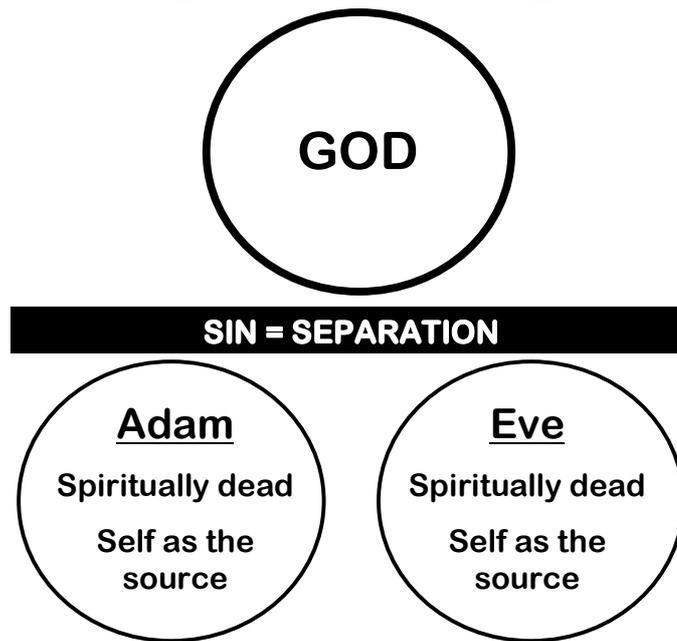
"Being darkened in their understanding, separated from the life of God..." Ephesians 4:18

As A Result Of Their Spiritual Death, Adam and Eve:

- NO longer had the indwelling life and power of God as their Source for living life.
- Had to meet their own needs because God was no longer their SOURCE to meet those needs.
- Lost the PERFECT harmony, intimacy, and oneness that they were experiencing.
- Had to be the source to resolve the conflicts that they would now be experiencing.
- Had to in their OWN efforts produce a successful marriage.

The following diagram reveals Adam's and Eve's condition after the Fall:

Adam and Eve's Condition AFTER The Fall



You and Your Spouse Inherited Adam and Eve's Spiritual Condition At Birth.

“Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man (Adam), and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, because all sinned.” Romans 5:12 (Parenthesis mine)

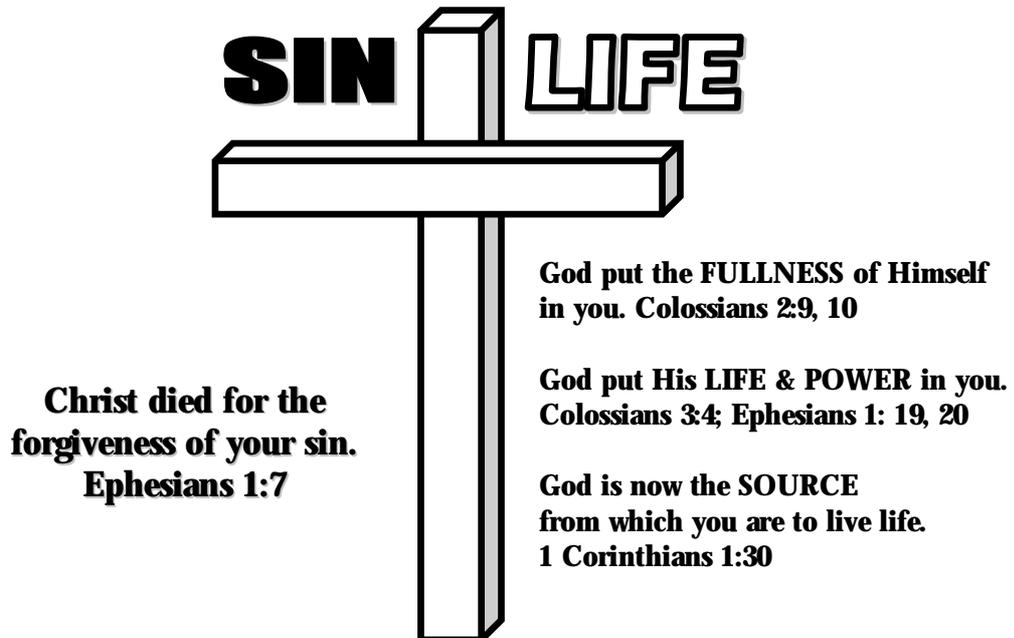
As a result of being from Adam and Eve's gene pool, you inherited their separation from God as their Life and Source when you were born.

At Physical Birth Man Was Separated From God's Life and From God Being The Source



What God Did To Restore What Was Lost In The Garden

The Two Sides of The Cross



THE LIFE SIDE OF THE CROSS

1. God Put The FULLNESS of Himself Back Into Man.

“For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.” Colossians 2:9, 10

2. You Now Contain The Fullness Of God’s LIFE and POWER IN You.

Christ’s LIFE

“...I AM the way, the truth, and the life...” John 14:6

“I AM the resurrection and the life.” John 11:25

“Christ, who is YOUR life.” Colossians 3:4

“To live to me IS Christ..” Philippians 1:21

*“God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life....”
1 John 5:12a*

Key Truth:

The Christian life is a PERSON. It is Christ HIMSELF!

God's POWER

*"I pray that you will begin to understand the **incredible greatness of His power** for us who believe him. This is the **same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead** and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms."*

Think of it!

The SAME power that resurrected Jesus from the dead is IN YOU!

God's power in you is the same power that:

- Created the heavens and the earth.
- Opened the Red Sea.
- Is holding the universe together.

3. As With Adam and Eve, God Can Now Be The SOURCE From Which To Live Life and Have A Christ-Centered Marriage

*"**He is the SOURCE of your life in Christ Jesus...**"*

*"**In Him** we live, and move, and have our being..." Acts 17:28*

THE RESULT:

By God putting the FULLNESS of HIMSELF and His LIFE and POWER in you means that you and your spouse no longer have to depend on yourself as the Source. God HIMSELF becomes your SOURCE from which to live life and to PRODUCE a Christ-centered marriage.

Since God Is Your Source For Your Life, He Wants To Live His Life IN You and THROUGH You.

*"I am crucified with Christ, and I no longer live, but **Christ lives IN me...**"*
Galatians 5:20

As Your Source, God Will Produce The Following In You and Your Spouse

- **VICTORY** – over the power of sin, the flesh, the world, and Satan - 1 Corinthians 15:57
- **FREEDOM** – from sinful attitudes and fleshly behaviors - Galatians 5:1
- **HEALING** – of your past woundedness - Psalm 147:3
- **TRANSFORMATION** – of your life so that you will think, feel, choose and behave like Christ - 2 Corinthians 3:18
- **INTIMACY** – with God - Ephesians 1:5

God As Your Source In Marriage Will:

- **Meet** your and your spouse's need for unconditional love, value/worth, acceptance, respect, security, **Philippians 4:19**
- Produce in you and your spouse the desire to live with an attitude of **dependence** on God as your Source. John 15:5
- Will **transform** your marriage so that you and your spouse will be thinking, feeling, believing and behaving like Christ. 2 Corinthians 3:18
- You and your spouse understand your **true identity** in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17
- In His **supernatural power** to transform your fleshly behaviors into godly behaviors and to **resolve** your marital conflicts. Ephesians 1:19, 20
- Produce a marriage that is **increasing** in harmony, intimacy, and oneness. 1 Peter 3: 8,9

KEY TRUTH:

You CANNOT produce the kind of marriage you want.

Only God living His life IN you can produce the marriage you truly desire.

The First Step In Experiencing A Christ-Centered Marriage Is Coming To the Place of "I CAN'T."

"...apart from Me you can do NOTHING." John 15:5b

*“I am crucified with Christ, and **I no longer live**,” Galatians 2:20*

If you don't first come to the place of “I CAN'T” then you will NEVER be able to experience God's design for marriage.

What Does “I Can't” Look Like In Your Marriage

1. **I can't** obtain victory over my fleshly attitudes and behaviors that are creating conflicts in my marriage.
2. **I can't** change me or my spouse.
3. **I can't** be in control of my spouse.
4. **I can't** produce in me or my spouse Christ-like attitudes.
5. **I can't** produce the happiness, intimacy, and harmony in my marriage that God promises.

SESSION TWO

The Obstacles To A Christ-Centered Marriage

***You will not live beyond what you believe.
If what you believe is a lie, that is how you will live.
Believing lies ADVERSELY affects your marriage and
results in marital CONFLICT.***

A LYING BELIEF:

***Any belief, understanding, expectation, or perception that
contradicts or does not line up with God's truth.***

John 8:32 says:

“You will KNOW the truth, and the truth will set you FREE.”

What is it that you want to be set free from in your marriage?

***As a result of being on the other side of the Fall, there were adverse effects of the
Fall that negatively impact our marriages.***

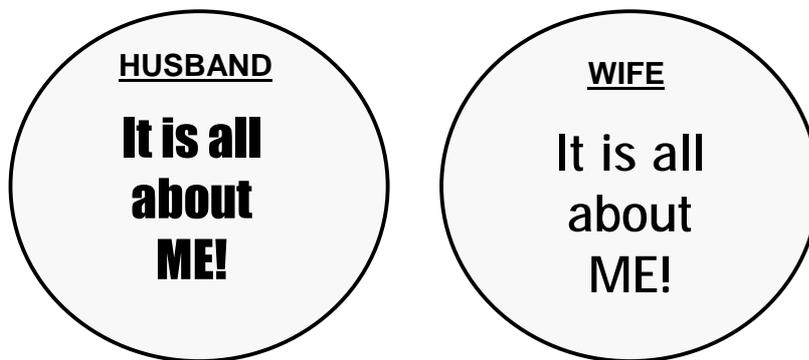
OBSTACLE #1 - The FLESH! (A Self-Centered Marriage)

***“For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the wishing is present in me,
but the doing of the good is not.” Romans 7:18***

#1 Lie About Marriage:

***Marriage is about me getting MY needs met, my spouse fulfilling MY
expectations, and he/she conforming to MY beliefs about marriage.***

How We Came Into The Marriage Relationship



The Lord Of MY Ring

***SELF-FOCUS in marriage is called
THE FLESH!***

Characteristics of The Flesh

The “flesh” as it pertains to me and my marriage is an **independent attitude** that says **apart from God**:

- I can be in control of my marriage.
- I can get my God-given needs met from my spouse.
- I can change me and my spouse.
- I can handle or overcome all my marital problems, conflicts, etc. in my own ability.
- I can make my marriage a successful and happy one.
- I can be my own god. (I don’t need God to have a happy marriage.)

The Flesh Will Always Be A Hindrance To A Christ-Centered Marriage.

“For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.” Galatians 5:17

“For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.” Romans 7:15

The battle between the flesh and Spirit will last a lifetime.

The flesh sets its desire against the Spirit by CONTINUALLY trying to draw the husband and wife into living for THEMSELVES.

Living From The Flesh Produces Fleshly Behaviors.

“Now the works of the flesh are obvious: *fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these.....*” Galatians 5:19-21a

It is important to know that there are two types of flesh. Some are negative, and some are positive.

Examples of **negative flesh**: anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, envy, jealousy

Examples of **positive flesh**: self-confidence, self-reliance, self-sufficiency, self-righteousness

Exercise: Look at pages 25 and 26 and pick out the fleshly behaviors that you exhibit when you experience stress, differences, or conflicts in these areas of your marriage.

Communication	Intimacy – Emotional and sexual
Finances	Trust/Respect
Children – discipline, values, training	In-laws or extended family members
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

What Is The Outcome of Living From Your Lying Beliefs and Fleshly Behaviors In Your Marriage?

#1 - Internal Misery

“For the *mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.*”
Romans 8:6

DEATH is defined as INTERNAL MISERY of the soul.

Here are some examples of internal misery caused by living from the flesh:

Condemnation	Stress	Anxiety	Shame	Unforgiveness
Self-sufficiency	Anger	Guilt	Arrogance	Bitterness
Self-pity	Inadequacy	Fear	Worry	Frustration
Unworthiness	Blame	Rejection	Insecurity	Dissatisfaction

From the list above, write down what internal misery that you experience when you are living from your flesh. (Feel free to add other things not on the list.)

Result #1

The outcome in your marriage (and your life) as you live out of your lying beliefs and fleshly behaviors will be INTERNAL MISERY.

#2 - You Believe That The REAL Problem In Your Marriage Is Your Spouse.

“The man said, ‘The woman You put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.’” Genesis 3:12

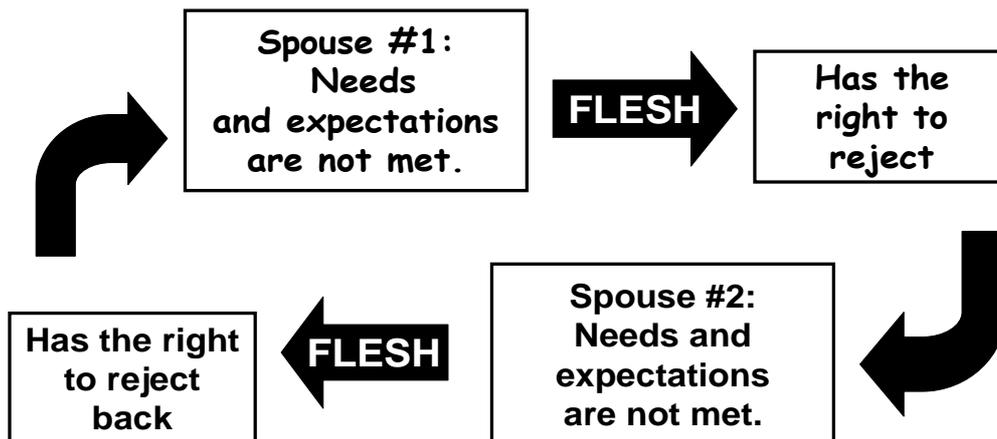
Result #2

You conclude that the real problem in your marriage is YOUR spouse. If he/she can be FIXED, then you will have a happy marriage.

Your spouse is NOT the ENEMY!

#3 - Living In The “Rejection Cycle”

The Rejection Cycle

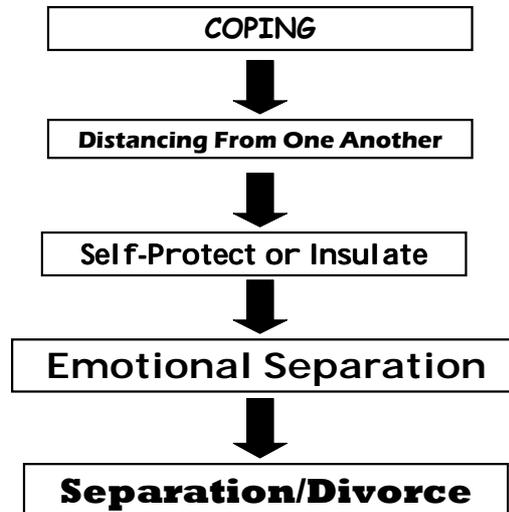


Result #3

Unmet needs and expectations will lead to one spouse REJECTING the other spouse with the result that the other spouse will reject him/her IN RETURN.

#4 – UNRESOLVED CONFLICT

The results of unresolved conflict:



Result #4

If you continue to live from your fleshly attitudes and behaviors, you will learn to COPE with the fleshly effects on your marriage. When you can no longer cope with your spouse, the result will be SEPARATION or DIVORCE.

Question: Examine your marriage, especially in the areas where your marriage seems stuck. Is it possible that in those areas you are just coping rather than experiencing transformation?

Obstacle #2 – Trying To Get Your Needs Met From Your Spouse

The LIE:

You can meet your spouse's God-given needs, and he/she can meet yours.

The TRUTH:

Only God can be the Source to meet both of your needs.

“My God shall supply ALL your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 4:19

As The Source For Your Life, ONLY God Can Meet Your Needs For:

1. Unconditional love – 1 John 4:8
2. Unconditional Acceptance – Romans 15:7
3. Value/Worth – 2 Corinthians 3:5
4. Respect – 1 Peter 3:2
5. Security – Proverbs 1:33

These GOD-GIVEN needs must be met. If you don't get them met IN Christ then you will look to OTHER people or things to get those needs met.

Question: How might it change your marriage if you quit trying to get these needs met from your spouse?

Obstacle #3 – The Belief That You Have FLESHLY RIGHTS In Marriage

1. I have the right to be respected.
2. I have the right not to forgive.
3. I have the right to be unconditionally loved.
4. I have the right to be in control.
5. I have the right to be right.
6. I have the right to have it my way.
7. I have the right to be unconditionally accepted.
8. I have the right to fix or to change you.
9. I have the right to be happy

The LIE:

You have fleshly rights in your marriage.

The TRUTH:

**By living only from your flesh, you will demand certain rights in your marriage. The truth is that you have no fleshly rights.
God expects you to DIE to your fleshly rights.**

What Is The Truth Concerning Your Fleshly Rights?

THE LIE: I have the right not to forgive.

THE TRUTH: You are a forgiving person in Christ and therefore do not have the right not to forgive. Colossians 3:13

THE LIE: I have the right to be in control.

THE TRUTH: Man attempts to be in control, but it is only an illusion. Only a sovereign God is truly in control. Psalm 103:19

THE LIE: I have the right to reject.

THE TRUTH: Since you are accepted unconditionally by Christ and are acceptable to Him, you no longer have the right to reject anyone. In Christ you are to accept unconditionally as you have been accepted by Christ. 2 Corinthians 3:5

What Does It Look Like To Die To Your Fleshly Rights?

Look at 2 Corinthians 4:11 to better understand this truth:

“For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh.”

God will reveal to you the DEATH OF your fleshly rights by His truth and will move your will to be willing to DIE TO them.

OBSTACLE #4 – Rights Concerning Expectations In Marriage

The LIE:

You have the right to have your realistic and unrealistic expectations met in your marriage.

The TRUTH:

The only right that you have is to DIE to your realistic and unrealistic expectations in your marriage.

“For we who live are constantly being delivered over to DEATH so that the life of Jesus may be manifested...” 2 Corinthians 4:11

Death To Your Expectations

God wants you to DIE to your expectations ever being met.

Death in this case means GIVING UP the right to have your expectations met.

The reason that you must die to or give up on your expectations being met is that if they are not met by your spouse, then you will tend to react with your fleshly behavior. (i.e. rejection, anger, resentment, etc.)

The First Step In Dying To Your Expectations Is To Know The Truth.

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATION: My spouse should make me happy.

THE TRUTH: Neither your spouse nor anyone nor anything else can make you happy. True joy is a Christ-like attitude that only the Holy Spirit can produce within you. Galatians 5:22, 23

REALISTIC EXPECTATION: My spouse should unconditionally love me.

THE TRUTH: Even though the word of God commands that you and your spouse unconditionally love one another, neither one of you can produce unconditional love. Only as you and your spouse draw upon Christ's unconditional love will you be able to unconditionally love one another.

The only REAL expectations we can have in marriage is what God promises to accomplish in the marriage as both spouses walk in DEPENDENCE on God.

Obstacle #5 – Fleshly Behavior Versus Your TRUE IDENTITY

The LIE:

You and your spouse's identities are based upon your ATTITUDES and BEHAVIORS.

The TRUTH:

Your TRUE identity is based upon who you are IN Christ.

“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a NEW CREATION; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

What God Did To Give You and Your Spouse A New Identity?

Truth #1 – Your Lying Beliefs Before Salvation = OLD IDENTITY

*“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a **new creation**, the **OLD THINGS** passed away; behold, **new things** have come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17 (Emphasis mine)*

The “old things” were your LYING beliefs that you believed about yourself prior to salvation. These lying beliefs made up your OLD IDENTITY.

Truth #2 – God CRUCIFIED Your Old Identity.

*“knowing this, that **our old self (old identity) was CRUCIFIED with Him**, that our body of sin (**old identity**) might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin,” Romans 6:6 (Parentheses mine)*

*“...the **OLD THINGS** passed away....” 2 Corinthians 5:17*

The “old things” (or your old identity) passed away because they were CRUCIFIED with Christ on the cross.

Truth #3 – God EXCHANGED Your Old Identity For A New Identity.

*“Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a **NEW CREATION** the **old things** passed away; behold, **new things** have come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17*

God made you a NEW creation by EXCHANGING your old identity (“old things”) for a new identity (“new things”).

Truth #4 – The Result Is That You Are A PARTAKER of the Divine Nature.

*“For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become **PARTAKERS** of the divine nature.....” 2 Peter 1:4*

Being a PARTAKER of the divine nature means that your NEW IDENTITY is made up of characteristics of God’s divine nature that He SHARES with you.

You and Your Spouse's TRUE Identity IN CHRIST:

1 John 4:12	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>unconditionally loved</u> . (lovers)
Colossians 3:12	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>compassionate, humble, kind, patient</u> .
Colossians 2:10	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>complete</u> .
Colossians 3:13	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>forgiving</u> persons.
Psalm 139:14	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>worthy</u> .
2 Corinthians 3:5	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>totally adequate</u> .
John 15:13	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>sacrificial</u> .
Romans 15:7	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>accepted and acceptable</u> .
Philippians 2:6	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>confident</u> .
Philippians 2:3	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>one-another focused</u> .
John 15:13	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>sacrificial</u> .
Psalm 139:5	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>secure</u> .
Psalm 56:4	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>fearless</u> .
Ephesians 4:24	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>righteous and holy</u> .
Ephesians 1:1	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>saints</u> .
Galatians 5:1	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>free</u> .
Psalm 28:7	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>strong</u> .
1 Corinthians 2:16	In Christ, you and your spouse have <u>the mind of Christ</u> .
Romans 8:37	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>more than conquerors</u> .
1 Corinthians 6:17	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>one in Christ</u> .
1 Corinthians 15:57	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>victorious</u> .
Colossians 3:4	In Christ, you and your spouse are <u>expressions of the life of Christ</u> .

In Christ, you and your spouse are God's MASTERPIECES. Ephesians 2:10

Even Though Your (and Your Spouse's) ATTITUDES or BEHAVIORS Do Not Always Line Up With Your New Identity, That Does NOT Change The TRUTH Of Who You Really Are In Your New Identity IN Christ.

Question: How might it change how you treat your spouse if you saw him/her in their true identity in Christ?

If you are attempting to live from your lying beliefs and fleshly behavior in order to have the kind of marriage that you desire, I have a question:

“How is it working for you?”

Fleshly Behavior and Coping Mechanisms

Be self-absorbed (self-consumed)

become overly introspective
feel sorry for myself (self-pity)
get depressed
beat up on myself
play the role of victim/martyr
focus on my suffering to get
attention and sympathy
be jealous of another's success
and happiness

Withdraw (isolate myself)

be aloof (pull away)
distance myself from others
avoid others (be a loner)
go into a shell
become unapproachable
give them the silent treatment
refuse to communicate

Escape (pain/pressure) by using:

promiscuity carousing
drugs and alcohol talking
staying busy school
hobbies/games reading
computers fantasy
television movies
pornography sleep
overeating religion
work/career sex

Be anxious (worry and fret)

be fearful (apprehensive)
lack peace and rest
become paralyzed (numb)
be paranoid (overly suspicious)
refuse to see the positive
(gloom and doom thinking)
assume the worst

Seek guidance from:

astrology/horoscopes,
fortune telling and/or
the occult

Be self-disciplined (self-reliant)

base acceptance of self and
others on performance
become a perfectionist
try hard so as not to fail
fear making mistakes
be legalistic:
live "by the book"
feel obligated (have to's,
should's, ought to's)
be too hard on myself/others
set unrealistic standards for
myself/others

Become obsessed with:

accomplishments
recognition/status
acquiring material things
what others think of me
how I look physically
my physical health
the past (especially past hurts
and failures)
a devotion to a cause
structure, order and regulations

Become dominant

be dictatorial (bossy)
be demanding (pushy)
be overbearing (controlling)
intimidate others
refuse to give in

Stay in control through:

blackmail (making threats)
manipulation (use of guilt, pity,
silence, flattery, etc.)
coercion (physical threats)
profanity (swearing)
passivity (playing helpless)
not eating (anorexia/bulimia)

Lack compassion, gentleness

understanding, kindness, love
become defensive

Be self-righteous (self-justifying)

make excuses (rationalize)
cover up and hide mistakes
have to prove my point
assume I am never the problem
blame someone or something
else as the problem
avoid taking responsibility for
failure or problems
have difficulty: apologizing,
admitting I was wrong,
asking for forgiveness,
asking for help, and/or
expressing gratitude
have a superior attitude
(saying in effect):
"I know what is best"
"My way is the right way"

Be critical (judgmental)

find fault with others, myself
and everything around me
nitpick things to death
be prejudiced (intolerant)
complain a lot (nothing is
ever good enough)

Be self-assured (self-confident)

depend on myself instead of
God or others
become proud (haughty)
be egocentric (act pompous)
brag (be boastful)
become arrogant (cocky)
become conceited (smug)

Come across as insensitive,

uncaring, unsympathetic,
indifferent or unconcerned

Be complacent (nonchalant)

say things like, "it's okay" or
"it doesn't matter"

Fleshly Behavior and Fleshly Coping Mechanisms (Cont.)

Be pessimistic (negative)

lack confidence and optimism
be skeptical (suspicious)
distrust others, myself, God,
church and/or government
expect the worst
never be pleased with self
or others
never be satisfied or content

Become hostile

be unfriendly
be sarcastic (caustic)
be cynical (contemptuous)
be hateful (mean-spirited)
be cruel (malicious)
have a quick temper
rant and rave to vent my anger
be physically abusive
be verbally abusive
break things

Hold a grudge (be resentful)

become moody (sulk)
harbor bitterness
be unforgiving
keep a scorecard of offenses
try to get even (seek revenge)
want others to fail or get hurt
punish myself or others

Fight unfair (take cheap shots)

be slanderous
misrepresent the situation
gossip (talk behind their back)
engage in passive-aggressive
behavior: use humor to hide
real feelings, forget things,
refuse to communicate, be
late, procrastinate, etc.)

Be self-deprecating

assume I am always the problem
become overly apologetic
be too hard on myself
be uncomfortable with success
or happiness
have difficulty receiving: love,
compliments, forgiveness
be unable to forgive myself

Challenge others

resist authority
be uncooperative (inflexible)
be unteachable (close-minded)
cause dissention (strife)
be irritating (aggravate others)
be argumentative
be stubborn (unyielding)
be unreasonable

Deny reality

ignore problems and hope they
will go away
deny anything is bad or wrong
be subjective instead of objective
deceive others and myself
lie to self and others
exaggerate (overstate matters)
play games to hide real intent

Put up a front

hide what I really think and feel
pretend to be something I'm not
put on a show to impress others
and/or get attention
fake it (act like I know something
even when I don't)
be pretentious (phony, unreal)
be superficial (never let anyone
get to close)

Be passive (lack initiative)

quit too easily (give up)
don't take chances (play it safe)
wait for someone to tell me how
to think and what to do
vacillate (be too changeable)
be indecisive (let others make
decisions for me)
avoid failure at all costs
procrastinate (put things off)
be irresponsible (unreliable)
be lazy (apathetic, lethargic)

Be tense ("on guard")

find it hard to relax
be restless (feel like I have to be
doing something)
become impatient
be easily agitated

Become emotionally insulated

avoid intimacy
have difficulty expressing
feelings and opinions
suppress (stuff) emotions
be inhibited (restrained)

Live by my feelings

believe that truth is what I feel
be too sensitive to criticism
take things too personally
(be hypersensitive)
be touchy (irritable)
be controlled by fear, anger,
doubts and insecurities
automatically read in rejection
(think "it's about me")

Be a pleaser (be nice)

try to keep everyone happy
avoid conflict/keep the peace
say what I think others want
be overly compliant
submissive
have difficulty saying "no" and
setting boundaries
can't stand up for myself
afraid to disappoint others
give in to others too easily

Be a caretaker (rescuer)

be overprotective
be overly responsible
become too involved with
other's affairs/concerns
be possessive (too invested)
talk too much and listen poorly
make decisions for others
give unsolicited advice

Be too serious (intense)

be overly analytical
become stoical (unemotional)
not be able to have fun
be formal and businesslike
lack joy or life

SESSION THREE

How God Transforms You and Your Spouse To Experience A Christ-Centered Marriage

GOD'S PART – He Is The INITIATOR And The CAUSE and EFFECT of Transforming Your Marriage.

*“For I am confident of this very thing, that **He who began** a good work **in you will carry it on to completion** until the day of Christ Jesus.” *Philippians 1:6**

Your Part – Walk In Dependence Upon God In Order To Experience His Transforming Power.

*“**I am** the **vine**, **you** are the **branches**; he who **abides** in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit...”
*John 15:5a**

Man was created for DEPENDENCE upon God. DEPENDENCE is an attitude that recognizes your need for God every moment in every area of your marriage (and your life).

What does DEPENDENCE on God look like in relationship to your marriage?

- Dependence on God to change you or your spouse.
- Dependence on God to meet your needs and the needs of your spouse.
- Dependence on God to die to your fleshly rights and unrealistic expectations.
- Dependence on God to resolve the areas of ongoing conflict.
- Dependence on God to move you away from living from your flesh as the source.
- Dependence on God to transform your fleshly and sinful attitudes to Christ-like attitudes.
- Dependence on God to produce harmony, intimacy, and oneness in your marriage.

Question: “Do you believe that you can truly accomplish any of the above things INDEPENDENTLY of God?”

Your Part In Living The Christian Life and Experiencing

A Christ-Centered Marriage Is To

Live with an ATTITUDE of DEPENDENCE upon God as the Source for living life.

Dependence = Faith

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” Galatians 2:20

Walking with an attitude of DEPENDENCE upon God is called FAITH.

Faith is the “HOW TO” for the Christian.

The Walk Of Faith Begins With One Step.

“The mind of a man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps.” Proverbs 16:9

A STEP OF FAITH

is a MOMENT in time where you ACTIVELY or INTENTIONALLY engage God by faith.

What Happens In The Moment When You Take A Step Of Faith?

1. Christ’s LIFE Is Released In You.

“He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” John 7:39

“I am ...the life...” John 14:6

Faith IGNITES Christ’s life to flow in you the moment when you take a step of faith.

Examples of what Christ’s life looks like:

Unconditional love	Victory	Worth	Acceptance	Faith
Freedom	Patience	Strength	Peace	Power
Forgiveness	Understanding	Security	Fearlessness	Wisdom
Discernment	Adequacy	Humility	Christ-confidence	Kindness
Righteousness	Selflessness	Rest	Compassion	Boldness
Kindness	Gentleness	Christ-control	Faithfulness	Courage

ALL of Christ’s LIFE is available to you when you take a step of faith.

2. God's POWER Is Released In You.

*“so that your **faith** would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on **the power of God.**”
1 Corinthians 2:5*

3. God Begins To SUPERNATURALLY Transform You and Your Spouse

*“be not conformed to this world but **be transformed**.....” Romans 12:2*

4. God Begins to RENEW Your Mind To The Truth.

*“be transformed by the **renewing of your mind**....” Romans 12:2*

5. God Begins To Set You FREE From Your Lying Beliefs.

*“you will know the truth and the **truth will set you free.**” Romans 8:32*

6. You Begin to EXPERIENCE Changes In The Way You Think, Feel, Believe, Choose and Behave.

*“And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, **are being transformed into His likeness** with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”
2 Corinthians 3:18*

Examples of Steps Of Faith To Deal With Your Flesh

Steps of Faith For God To Deal With Your Fleshly Behaviors

Example: Let's assume that you have a flesh pattern of wanting to control your spouse. God has exposed this flesh pattern in you, and you are willing to engage God to deal with it. Some steps of faith to accomplish that might be:

Steps of Faith:

“Lord, thank You for exposing my flesh pattern of controlling. **I can't** overcome it apart from You. I am **entrusting** this flesh pattern to control my spouse to You, and I am **asking** You to remove this desire to control from me.”

“Lord, without intervening with Your power, I will be defeated by my controlling flesh. I am **trusting** that your power will subdue, defeat, and overcome my fleshly desire to control.”

Remember: Some of your flesh patterns are very strong. It may take God more time to set you free from your stronger flesh patterns.

Steps of Faith To DIE To Your Fleshly “Rights”

Example: You have the fleshly “right” not to forgive because your spouse consistently offends you. The truth is that you have Christ's life in you, and you can forgive your spouse in Him.

Step of faith: “Lord, You have exposed my fleshly ‘right’ not to forgive my spouse. The truth is that I have no right not to forgive because I was forgiven by You unconditionally. Therefore I am asking You to move my will to die to that fleshly ‘right’ and to give me a willingness to forgive.”

Example: You realize that you have to die to your fleshly “right” to be right.

Step of faith: “Lord, the truth is that I do not have the fleshly ‘right’ to be right. I confess my pride associated with this ‘right,’ and I am asking You in Your power to give me a willingness to die to this ‘right.’

Steps of Faith and Getting Your Needs Met In Christ

Example: You have been trying to get your need for unconditional acceptance met from your spouse. However, your spouse has rejected you in many ways.

Step of faith: “The truth is, Lord, that my spouse is incapable of unconditionally accepting me. Remind me and renew my mind to the truth that You and You alone accept me unconditionally.”

Note: When you truly are finding your unconditional acceptance in Christ, you no longer have to take ownership of your spouse’s rejection. That will be true freedom.

Example: Your spouse is not loving you unconditionally.

Step of faith: “Lord, persuade me that only You can meet my need for unconditional love. Move me away from trying to find that unconditional love from my spouse.”

Note: As you no longer try to find your need of unconditional love from your spouse, you can ask God to unconditionally love your spouse through you.

Steps of Faith Concerning Your Expectations

Example: You have an unrealistic expectation that your spouse must make you happy.

Step of faith: “The truth is, Lord, that I can only find true happiness in You. Renew my mind to that truth and move me away from believing the lie that my spouse should make me happy.”

Example: You have a realistic expectation that you will be your spouse’s best friend. The problem is that not only is that not taking place, but you are also experiencing rejection from your spouse.

Step of faith: “Lord, I don’t feel like I am my spouse’s best friend. In fact, all I seem to feel is rejection. I am trusting You to be my acceptance and to give me a willingness to not take ownership of my spouse’s rejection.”

Steps of Faith Concerning Your True Identity

Example: You believe the lie that you are self-sufficient, which results in always knowing what is best for you and your spouse.

Step of faith: “Lord, I am believing the lie that I am self-sufficient because of my IQ or ability. Persuade me that my sufficiency can only be in You and not in myself as I walk in my true identity. Show me the death that my fleshly behavior is causing in my marriage.”

Example: You believe that you are inadequate and that inadequacy is causing you to be a people-pleaser in your marriage.

Step of faith: “Lord, I know that my lying belief of inadequacy is causing me to be a people-pleaser. I am trusting You to renew my mind to the truth that I am totally adequate in my true identity. I am asking You to move me away from my fleshly behavior of people-pleasing.”

Key Truths In The Walk of Faith

- **The strength of your flesh early on is greater than your walk of faith. Therefore, you may have to take several steps of faith before you experience a willingness to give up living from the flesh.**
- **Your flesh, early on, is unwilling to give up rights and expectations. Therefore, it may take several steps of faith to give up or die to your rights, expectations, and internal laws.**
- **If you have been trying to get your needs met from your spouse it will take time before you will realize that only God can meet those needs.**
- **If you have not known the truth of your true identity, then it will take time for God to move these truths from being revelation to becoming transformation.**

Key Truths To Remember During The Transformation Process

1. **Remember that God’s process of transformation is a SUPERNATURAL one.**

Supernatural means that you, for the most part, will NOT feel or experience God’s power in you transforming you. However, we know by faith that He is working if we are walking by faith in Him.

2. **Early on in your walk of faith, you will choose MANY times to go back to your flesh.**

Because of the STRENGTH of your flesh early on in your faith walk, you will be tempted and will give in to the temptation to go back to your flesh. That does not make you a failure. Simply confess your sin, turn back to God, and keep walking.

3. **There will be RESISTANCE to your walk of faith.**

In addition to the resistance of the flesh, you will have NON-STOP resistance from the POWER OF SIN and SATAN/DEMONS. You will also be experiencing resistance from your SPOUSE'S flesh.

4. It may take TIME before you experience any real changes.

It may take several steps of faith before you ACTUALLY experience any changes in what you are thinking, feeling, and believing.

5. You WILL begin to truly experience real changes in your marriage.

Below are some examples of changes that you need to be aware of that will occur:

1. You will be willing to allow God to love your spouse through you.
2. You begin to experience a diminishing desire to have fleshly rights.
3. You will begin to seek your needs in Christ rather than trying to find them from your spouse or others.
4. You will recognize the “death” of your unrealistic expectations and will move away from them.
5. You will begin to see yourself and your spouse in your true identities. You will be able to look past your spouse’s fleshly behaviors and see who they truly are in Christ.
6. Your marital conflicts will lessen.
7. You will find yourself becoming more selfless and sacrificial.
8. You will have a greater willingness to forgive your spouse.
9. You will experience a growing harmony, intimacy, and oneness in your marriage.

6. As you begin to experience changes in your marriage, your CONFIDENCE IN GOD will grow concerning His ability and willingness to transform your marriage.

Greater and greater GOD-CONFIDENCE will result as you and your spouse experience changes in your marriage. This will INCREASE your willingness to take another step of faith.

You Will Be Tempted To Give Up On God, Your Spouse, and Yourself BUT.....

The reality of the walk of faith is that you will experience some of the following:

- You will doubt God’s ability and willingness to transform your life.
- You will get frustrated and even angry with God because He is not meeting your timetable and expectations for change.
- You will condemn yourself when you turn back to your flesh.

- You will condemn your spouse if he/she is not consistent in their faith walk or are not truly seeking spiritual transformation.

The question is, "Will you KEEP walking by faith in spite of these roadblocks, or will you GIVE UP and turn back to living from your fleshly ability?"

Therefore, You Have A Choice To Make.

Choice #1 – Your Self (Flesh) As The Source

The result of living from your flesh (your intellect, IQ, and ability functioning independently of God as the source in your marriage) is that you can expect the following:

- Unresolved conflicts
- Sinful behaviors will remain unchanged.
- Continued fleshly behavior as a result of unmet needs and expectations
- Coping with your spouse versus spiritual transformation.
- Emotional separation, physical separation or divorce.

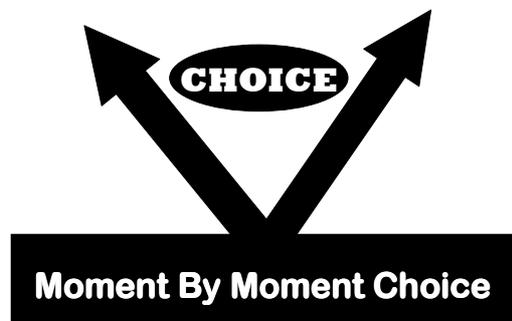
Choice #2 – God As Your SOURCE

If you choose to live from God as your Source in your marriage, you can expect:

- Transformation in the way that you think, feel, choose, and behave.
- Increasing harmony, intimacy, and oneness in your marriage.
- A decrease in number and intensity of marital conflicts.
- To increasingly become selfless and sacrificial.
- To experience freedom from your sinful behaviors.
- To unconditionally love, accept, and respect one another.

**Flesh As The Source =
Ongoing conflict, no change,
coping, separation, divorce.**

**God As The Source =
Transformation, harmony,
intimacy, oneness.**



What Choice Will You Make?

God Is Moving You and Your Spouse From A Self-Focused Marriage To A Christ-Focused Marriage.

“He must increase but I must decrease.” John 3:30

**Self-Focused Marriage
(Living From The Flesh)**

Self As The Source

Taking God's truth along with your own ability, intellect, and willpower to try and produce a Christ-centered marriage.

Dependence On Man-Made Solutions

Dependence on formulas to follow, checklists to complete and steps to take to produce a Christ-centered marriage through your own ability.

Self-Transformation w/God's Help

Using God's truth plus God's help for you to be the cause and effect for transformation in you and your spouse.

Conflict Resolution In Self

Using human solutions, methods, formulas, and self-effort to resolve marital conflict.

Unmet Needs Met In Self

Trying to get your needs of unconditional love, worth, and approval met from your spouse or from others.

Self Justifies Rights and Expectations

Justifying your fleshly rights and unrealistic expectations in your marriage.

**Christ-Focused Marriage
(Living From Christ)**

God As Source

Living from God's truth, ability and power as the one true Source to produce a Christ-centered marriage. John 14:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30

Dependence on God

Trusting God by faith/dependence for Him to produce a Christ-centered marriage. John 15:5

God As The Cause & Effect of Transformation

God is the cause and effect of His transforming work in you and your spouse. Philippians 1:6

Conflict Resolution In Christ

Engaging God's truth and power as the solution to marital conflict. John 8:32; Ephesians 1:19, 20

Unmet Needs Met In Christ

Truly getting your needs of unconditional love, acceptance, and approval met in Christ. Philippians 4:19

Rights/Expectations In Christ

Dying to your fleshly rights and unrealistic expectations. 2 Corinthians 4:11

Self-Management of The Flesh and Sin

You in your own strength(flesh) trying to subdue, defeat, overcome, manage or fix the fleshly attitudes and sinful behaviors in your marriage.

God's Power Over The Flesh and Sin

Drawing on God's power to experience victory and freedom over the flesh and sin.
1 Corinthians 15:57; Ephesians 3:20

Producing Christ-Likeness In Self

You, by imitation or through your own ability, try to change your fleshly behavior and produce Christ-like attitudes.

God Produced Christ-Likeness

Faith/Dependence in God to replace your fleshly behavior with Christ-like behavior.
2 Corinthians 3:18

False Identity

Continuing to live from the lying beliefs about yourself and judge your spouse by their fleshly behavior versus their true identity in Christ.

True Identity In Christ

Live from your true identity in Christ and see your spouse in his/her true identity. 2 Corinthians 5:17

"How To's" In Self

Self-focused application of tips, techniques, from books, articles, etc. to try and produce a Christ-centered marriage.

"How To's" In Christ

Allowing Christ to use whatever resources He so chooses to produce a Christ-centered marriage.
Philippians 2:13; Philippians 1:6

A Self-Focused Marriage Results In:

More flesh, sin, bondage, defeat

No transformation

Ongoing marital conflict

Coping, Separation, or Divorce

A Christ-Centered Marriage Results In:

Renewal, freedom, victory Romans 12:2;

Galatians 5:1; 1 Corinthians 15:57

Radical transformation in you and your spouse.

2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 12:2

Harmony, intimacy, oneness Galatians 5:22, 23

Christ-centered marriage Acts 17:28; Philippians 1:21

Action Plan:

1. Review this syllabus or go through *The Key To A Christ-Centered Marriage* booklet together.
2. As you do, pray together and seek the Holy Spirit to give you personal revelation of these truths.
3. Begin taking steps of faith and ask the Lord to make you aware of the changes He begins to make in your life.

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