

Marriage & Family



“Living and Leaving a Legacy”

*Ed & Janice Blankenship
Scott & Ali Blankenship
Bubba & Joy Lewis*

***“The LORD God made a woman from the rib...
and he brought her to the man...For this reason a man
will leave his father and mother and be united to his
wife, and they will become one flesh.”***

Genesis 2:22-24

If you work at it, marriage can be like heaven on earth!

And if you don’t, well it can get quite a bit hotter!

We decided early on that we didn’t like the second option, so we made a commitment to each other to work at it, and also decided that divorce would never be an option either. Of course it also makes all the difference if God is in the mix! With Him it is much easier for two to fully become one. For the closer each partner gets to God...the closer they get to each other!

In this study you will learn how to build a solid Christian home. You’ll discover God’s plan for marriage and how you fit into that plan as a husband or wife. Grasp practical tips on raising children and dealing with issues that occur in marriage. In addition to Bible study and personal stories it also contains help with your devotional life, tips on effective prayer, group accountability, a plan to encourage Bible reading, and journal blanks for the 7-weeks. Includes how to have meaningful family devotions and how to leave a Christian legacy for generations to come, both in your own family and those your family touches.

So go ahead, learn how two can truly become one in the full sense of the word. And then leave behind a legacy that will go on for generations!

The extended Blankenship Family shown here thanks you for going through their study on Marriage and Family. In 2011 they all attended Stafford Crossing Community Church near Fredericksburg, VA and lived in Stafford, VA. Ed & Janice have been married 42 years and have 3 children, Joy and Scott and also another daughter who lives in Canada with her husband. Joy and Bubba (William) have been married for 14 years and have 3 children. Scott and Ali have been married 5 years and have 2 daughters and 2 dogs.



Marriage & Family

Living and Leaving a Legacy...

A Spiritual Journey

Dedication

To Mary and Joseph, the mother and earthly father of our Lord, Jesus. They not only believed and trusted God in what must have been a most unusual courtship, but also protected, cared for, and raised God in human flesh. While not much is written about them specifically, they (along with Jesus and his half brothers and sisters) must have been a good example of what a “Christian” family should be like. We urge you to read the gospels to learn more about them and their entire family. We are all here today because of them and most importantly because of God’s Son. Thanks Mary and Joseph for raising Jesus!

Some Studies in The Transformation Series

- *Reflections* – Spending Time With God
- *Excavations* – Digging Deep Into God’s Word
- *Meditations* – Becoming a Person After God’s Own Heart
- *Directions* – Moving Others Towards Christ
- *Acts* – Reaching the World for Christ
- *2 Timothy* – Multiply Your Ministry

And a stand-alone 3-month *Life’s Log Book* – Your Time With God

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<i>Table of Contents</i>	Page
Intro to the Bible and Prayer	6
Purpose of this Study and Suggested Use	7
For the Small Group Leader	8
Week 1 – Why a Study on Marriage?	10
Personal Time With God	
Practice Having a Quiet Time	
Week 2 – God’s Plan	17
Week 3 – Roles in Marriage	21
Setting Goals	
Week 4 – Becoming One in Marriage	27
Week 5 – Raising Godly Children	33
Priorities	
Family Time, Teachable Moments, Dates, Teens	
Using a Prayer List	
Week 6 - Communication	42
Week 7 – A Legacy	48
Prayer – The One Thing I Needed to Do	
Summary of Key Principles and Continuing On	
Appendix: Issues and Other Information	57
Quiet Time Journal	64
Prayer Pages	78
New Testament Reading Chart	80
My Goals Page	81
Verses to Memorize	82

Intro to the Bible and Prayer

The Bible actually consists of numerous individual "books". The table of contents in your Bible should be used to help you locate the individual "books" of the Bible. Note that some book titles are very similar, such as the book of John, the book of 1 John, the book of 2 John, and finally the book of 3 John. If a particular verse you are looking up doesn't make sense in regards to the question, you may be in the wrong Bible book! The references to Bible passages in this study are in the traditional manner - by book, chapter, and verse. So John 3:16 refers to the book of John in the Bible, chapter 3, the 16th verse.

It is helpful to have a separate Bible for Bible study in addition to the paperback Bible or New Testament used for your Quiet Time. Bibles are available in any book, department, or discount store. There are major differences in the language used by different versions of the Bible sold today. Some versions (e.g. the King James Version) were translated in the 1600s and use old English. Others use modern English. Make sure you use a Bible you can fully understand for your study as well as your Quiet Time.

It is important for every Christian to read their Bible regularly. The New Testament is an excellent place to start reading. Use the chart near the back of this study to keep track of your reading in the New Testament. This chart lists every book of the New Testament and every chapter number. Put an "X" through the chapter numbers as you read them.

Many Christians use prayer lists to be more consistent in their prayer life. In the back you will find several prayer pages that have a column for specific prayer requests and another for God's answers. Remember that God can answer in 3 ways – Yes, No, or Wait. If he answers No or Wait, he is not trying to be mean, but knows that this isn't either the best thing or not the right time! Keep praying, be specific, and be consistent in your prayers and God will bless you with many wonderful answers to prayer! (Colossians 4:2)

Purpose of this Study and Suggested Use

The purpose of this study is to strengthen marriages and families. This study is designed for those who trust the Bible as the Word of God. If you are not a Christian, but do believe that the Bible has useful information you also will get something out of it. We ask that you please go into it with an open mind.

There are some exercises given in the study, particularly having a “Date” with your spouse. Please make these exercises a priority. You do not have to share anything you don’t want to in your small group. But we do ask you to think about everything and try to look up many of the verse references for each question. You may want to space them out during the week, or you can do them all at one setting.

Most Christians never study the Word of God. Yet the Bible is the most wonderful book there is! Jesus, when tempted by Satan said that it is to be what we live by. But how can we if we don’t know it. Jeremiah 15:16 says, “Thy words were found and I did eat them, and they words became to me the joy and delight of my heart.” Only as we get into the Word does it become real to us. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, “The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do them.” That is the purpose of Bible study, to help unlock those secrets.

The studies in this guide are question and answer. Some ask for Observation – What did the Scripture Say? Others ask for Interpretation – What does the Scripture mean? And finally others ask about Application – How will you put it into practice in your daily life?

In this study we also will have a daily Quiet Time with God and share thoughts from those times with God during our group time each week. We also have a Goals page which allows us to tailor the study to meet our own needs. The purpose of this is to include some accountability which we all need, to insure that the concepts we learn are also the concepts we practice.

The purpose behind all this is not to fill out blanks on a sheet, nor is it even to achieve certain goals, but to learn more about marriage and how to raise our family. Also, we hope that meeting with God on a regular basis becomes a life-long habit in your life. When we do that, He will change our lives. That is our prayer for you as you begin this journey into His Word!

For the Small Group Leader

Thanks for leading this study in your small group! Prayer is the number one thing you need to do for the group, praying for individuals as God leads you to pray. Also, spend time with them outside of the study so you get to know them better. But also set the pace, doing your study ahead of time. This is also important as far as the Quiet Time is concerned. In week 1 you will share what it has meant to you personally. Even if you have had a Quiet Time regularly, we encourage you to do the practice one in week 1 ahead of time and use the Journal Pages for 2 weeks to personally see the benefits before you teach it in your group.

When leading the studies go through it question by question, initially asking individuals to read the question and the verse. Then get several answers before going on to the next question and repeating the process. After a week or two, expect most everyone to have done their homework and so only read a question or the Scripture in rare instances to emphasize a point. Most of the time, just get several

answers. Don't forget that you are a member of the group too and should share occasionally.

Each week, there is material that is to be read. It is best if this is read aloud by group members (rather than by the leader), going around the room and letting each person read a paragraph aloud, in sequence. This allows even the quiet person to hear his or her voice in the group and participate.

Each week group members will be sharing something they have written down on their Journal. This is not to be rushed. In week 1, during the practice session have everyone share as time permits. In subsequent weeks, ask for volunteers, and encourage them in what they have written down. Try to allow for all to share, including yourself, even going first at times. Note that it is recommended that members choose their own book in the Bible to read rather than assigning specific devotional readings. This allows for better sharing.

Encourage members to get a paperback New Testament or Bible for their Quiet Times so they will feel free to mark in it. They will want a different Bible for their Bible study and should also be encouraged to get some Bible reference books.

The Goals Page is meant to be a measure of accountability to help encourage members to complete the assignments and have regular Quiet Times. Allow time for people to share their accomplished goals and get them initialed off weekly. As the leader you may want to add a note of encouragement!

Note that some lessons are longer than others. Don't feel like you have to cover every question in your discussion. Pick those questions you think are most pertinent to the group and discuss those. Then ask, "What have we not covered in the lesson that you would also like us to talk about?" Week 4 has verses on sex, and it is recommended that you break up into two groups, men in one group, women in the other, for part of that discussion on sex in marriage.

WEEK 1

Get acquainted & ask, “Why are you interested in this study?”

Open in prayer

Read the material on Why a Study on Marriage?

Read the material on Personal Time With God

Practice having a Quiet Time

Share practice Quiet Time writings

Discuss assignment for next week

Close in Prayer

Why a Study on Marriage?

(Scott) I've been involved in the automotive industry for seven years now and one thing I've seen is the need for Preventive Maintenance. If you change the oil in your car every 3 months or 3,000 miles (or whatever your manual says), it will basically last forever. Yes, the things listed in your Owner's Manual are key to the life of your car.

Marriage is the same way. There are certain things we need to do to make it last forever. My Dad told me when Ali and I got married that we should look at marriage as a life-long commitment. Divorce was not an option! With this in mind, we realized that if we were going to live together for as long as we both should live, then we needed to work at it to be happy. A miserable marriage didn't sound like fun.

But how do you have a happy marriage? By following the Owner's Manual. But our Owner's Manual in this case is the Bible. It says we should be true to our spouse and not cheat. It says we should be loving and submit to one another. It says we should raise our children and teach them how to be good people. It says we as Christians should shine like lights in the world. We should do that in our home too!

You may even be single. If so, you'll see in this study that this is God's plan for you right now. And, if God would so lead, this study should help you in choosing a mate sometime in the future. Or you may be a single parent. If so, this study will give you guidance on raising your children.

It will cover God's plan for marriage, the different roles of husband and wife, how to raise your children, communication, and finally how to look at your walk with God and your marriage and family as a legacy, something that will have a lasting impact. Our prayer is that this will enrich both you and your marriage and your family!

Personal Time With God

Bible study is key to long-term knowledge and application of the Word of God. But another discipline which is also foundational is personal time with God. God wants us to grow in our knowledge and love for Him each day. But how does a believer do this? The answer is simple - "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." James 4:8a. "Drawing near to God" involves daily meeting Him, talking with Him, and He with you. As we do this, we begin to build a deeper and deeper relationship with Him, the most important relationship of all.

One key habit that can help build this deeper relationship with God is having a daily "quiet time", or a daily "devotional" as it is sometimes called. This is a time of Bible reading and prayer where you quiet your heart before God and listen to Him through His Word and then also commune (or talk) with Him in prayer. It doesn't have to be long, maybe just 5 to 10 minutes at first, but it is a time you will soon find grows and means more and more to you each day!

WHY HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME?

First, God desires to meet with you daily! He died on the cross to make that a possibility. Each and every day, He is interested in your life, and having a daily quiet time is a wonderful way to commune with Christ. (Zephaniah 3:17 and Revelation 3:20)

Secondly, you need a daily quiet time. By doing so, you will get to know Jesus better. It will enrich your day. God will use it for cleansing and to guide you in everyday decisions. It will help in all areas of your life. (Luke 10:38-42)

Third, it will give you something to share with others. A passage you read today may be just what someone else needs to hear. Keeping a journal is an excellent way to have those thoughts from God available to you for others' needs. (Hebrews 10:24-25 and Colossians 3:15)

HOW TO HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME.

While there are many ways to have a quiet time with God, here is one that can often work best to get you started.

1. Find a quiet place, apart from distractions, where you can be alone. Many find the morning to be the best time.
2. Pray, telling God you love Him, and ask for wisdom and for Him to speak to your heart. Thank Him, and confess any sin you know of.
3. Read a passage in the Bible. Start with a chapter, perhaps in the New Testament, particularly if the quiet time is a new concept. As you read, underline verses that stand out to you. Many people prefer a paperback Bible for their quiet time so they feel "more free" to underline.
4. When completed reading, go back and review the verses you underlined. Pick one underlined verse that impresses you. Fill out a journal entry on it. For the appropriate day, write down in a journal what you read in the Bible, what verse stood out to you the most, what that verse said (paraphrase it or put down what it said verbatim), how it impressed you, and your response. Here's an example:
◊ **Monday:** Date: 12/4/09 What I read: Philippians 1 Best Verse: 25
What it said: Paul lived so he can help others grow and experience the joy of salvation.
How it impressed me: He was focused on helping people grow more mature in their faith.
My response: Lord, help me (and use me) to help others grow and experience You daily!
5. After completing your journal entry, talk to God in prayer about this verse, how it impacts you, and how you want to respond as a result of it. Then go on to pray about other items from your daily prayer list(s).

Practice Having a Quiet Time

Read and mark the passage that corresponds with your birthday, then fill out the practice journal entry that follows:

Birthday is January 1 – March 31

Psalms 1 - 1. Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2. But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. 4. Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. 5. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish. (NIV)

Birthday is April 1 – June 30

Psalms 23 - 1. The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want. 2. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, 3. he restores my soul. He guides me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake. 4. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. 5. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows. 6. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever. (NIV)

Practice Journal Entry

◊ **Today:** Date: _____ What I read: _____ Best Verse: _____

What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

Read and mark the passage that corresponds with your birthday, then fill out the sample journal entry that follows:

Birthday is July 1 – September 30

1 Thessalonians 1

1. Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you. 2. We always thank God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers. 3. We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. 4. For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, 5. because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6. You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia--your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, 9. for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10. and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead--Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. (NIV)

Practice Journal Entry

◊ **Today:** Date: _____ What I read: _____ Best Verse: _____

What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

Read and mark the passage that corresponds with your birthday, then fill out the sample journal entry that follows:

Birthday is October 1 – December 31

1 John 1

1. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched--this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4. We write this to make our joy complete. 5. This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 8. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. (NIV)

Practice Journal Entry

◊ **Today:** Date: _____ What I read: _____ Best Verse: _____

What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

One Final, Yet Most Important Word Before We Begin...

This is a guide on marriage with verses from the Bible. Jesus says in John 5:39-40, "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life". So we don't want to just study the written Word without first knowing the Living Word! So have you realized that God has a wonderful plan for your life, but that we are all separated from God and His plan because of our sin? Have you been convicted of that sin and are you willing with God's help to turn from it? Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty from those things and to give you the gift of eternal life? Have you asked Him to come into your life, take away your sins, and give you the gift of eternal life? Turning your life over to Christ is the only way to really understand His Word, because only then do you know the author. That is the key to the best marriage possible!

Assignment for next week

1. Get a paperback Bible or New Testament in a version you prefer and begin reading in it daily wherever you like. You have just read an entire chapter of one of the books of the Bible during our practice time. You may want to continue in the same book by reading the next chapter in that book. The book of John is also a good place to start if the Bible is new to you. (Note that the Bible actually consists of numerous individual "books". Use the table of contents in your Bible or New Testament to find a particular "book".) Each day, underline what stands out to you, pick one underlined verse and complete a journal record. Be ready to share at least one journal entry next week.
2. Fill out as much of the Bible study lesson as you can for next week. You may fill out some together in your small group. You will want to have a good leather or hard-back Bible available for your Bible Study. If you want, complete all of the lesson ahead of time on your own. This will allow you to share more during the discussion next week. You will also gain more from the lesson.

WEEK 2

**Get further acquainted & ask, “Why do you like marriage?”
(or “Why do you like being single?” if you are single)**

Open in prayer

Time for Group Members to share from their Quiet Time

Discuss God’s Plan

Discuss assignment for next week

Close in Prayer

GOD’S PLAN

This lesson helps us see why God designed marriage and why there are both husband and wife. It also gets into the wonderful reason for children. It finally shows us how to get closer to your husband or wife in your marriage.

God and Us

1. When God created everything, how did He describe the outcome? Genesis 1:31
2. Focusing in on people in creation, however, what did God say about the man he had made? Genesis 2:18
3. Since we are not meant to be alone, what is the primary relationship we should all (married and single) have? 2 Corinthians 11:3

In fact, if one is called to be single, how can that be beneficial in this? 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

The most important relationship in our life is God. He died for us, made us and wants us to truly put Him first in our life whether we are married or single.

Us and Our Spouse

4. Getting back to Genesis, what did God try first to satisfy man?
Genesis 2:19-20

5. Then what did God do and what was the result? Genesis 2:21-23

6. Then in Genesis 2:24 we see the first marriage. What was said about it?

God made wives to be helpers for their husbands. Because of marriage we are to leave our parents and become “one” with our spouse.

Us and Children

7. What did God say was one of the ultimate purposes in marriage?
Genesis 1:28

8. It's not just more people that God wants, however, it's about followers of Him. How does God say it in Malachi 2:15?

9. In fact, what does God want for us as Christian families? Joshua 24:15

God gives children to some marriages. He wants godly offspring. He wants our whole family to serve Him.

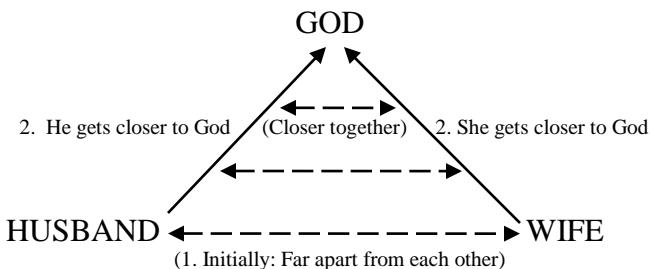
Summary

10. While not talking about marriages specifically, what lessons related to marriage can be drawn from Ecclesiastes 4:9-12?

11. The triple braided cord (or a cord of three strands) referred to in Ecclesiastes can represent husband, wife, and God in a marriage. This can also be shown as a pyramid on the next page. Our own relationship with God is key in this pyramid. When we start out in marriage we find ourselves often very far apart (at the bottom of the pyramid)! One reason many marriages in the world don't make it, is they try to get closer to each other, but since both parties often have their own guiding principles that is impossible, and they find that they can't truly get that much closer to each other. But if both partners are Believers and each gets closer to God individually, their goals and purpose in life get more in tune

with God and they find that they also are then getting closer to each other as the illustration below shows:

To Get Closer to Each Other...
Each Spouse Should Focus on Getting Closer to God



Use X's to show where you and your mate are on this illustration. What would it take to get you personally closer to the Lord?

12. In light of all this, what has God spoken to your heart about in regards to your marriage or where you are at in your life?

A Christian marriage is like a cord of three strands, it isn't easy to break. It also is like a pyramid with Christ as the Head. As we get closer to Him, we also get closer to our spouse!

Assignment for next week

1. Continue your Bible reading and marking in your daily Quiet Time. Continue to record your daily journal entries and come prepared to share at least one entry from your journal next week.
2. Complete the lesson for next week. Next week will be the last time we will look up any verses during the study. Completing the lesson ahead of time will give you more to share next week.

WEEK 3

Open in prayer & ask, “How can a wife help her husband? and How can a husband help his wife?”

Time for Members to share from their Quiet Time Journal

Discuss the Lesson

Read the material on Setting Goals

Discuss assignment for next week and Close in Prayer

ROLES IN MARRIAGE

God designed each partner in a marriage differently. He also gave us specific roles we are to follow. Let’s start with what happened as a result of the first sin and then we’ll go into the New Testament teaching on the roles of both husband and wife.

Result of the “Fall”

1. Going back to Adam and Eve, initially they were with God in the Garden of Eden. But after eating the apple God had forbidden, God said what would happen to them as a result of this sin.

What did it cause in their relationship with God? (Genesis 3:10)

What about having children? (Genesis 3:16a)

What does it say about work? (Genesis 3:17-19)

In the husband-wife relationship, what does Genesis 3:16b say:
Regarding the wife?

Regarding the husband?

2. What was the ultimate outcome (result) of this sin? Genesis 3:23-24

3. We all still sin. It's not just Adam and Eve's fault! What results are there from sin today? Look at Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, and Proverbs 17:1.

Sin causes a separation between us and God. It also strained the relationship between husband and wife. It started with Adam and Eve, but we all sin today.

Both Love and Submit

4. God showed His love for us by sending Jesus to die for our sins. If we accept Him, He makes us a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17). Jesus not only saves us, but He gives us a plan to follow in marriage and in life. What did Jesus command that His followers should do in John 13:34-35?

How would this be evident in a marriage do you think?

5. Another key passage about the roles in marriage is Ephesians 5. What does Ephesians 5:21 say for both husband and wife (as well as for all believers)?

Think of some examples of the husband or wife submitting to his or her spouse and list them below:

The Husband could

The Wife could

As a result of sin we are all separated from God and can have strife in our marriage. Each partner should accept Christ and love and submit to the other as to the Lord.

Specific Roles (Husband Lead & Love, Wives Submit/Respect/ Honor and Help)

6. Ephesians 5 goes on to talk about more specific roles of husband and wife. What does Ephesians 5:22-24 say...

To Wives?

About Husbands?

Why should a wife do this?

1 Peter 3:1-4 gives additional insight to a woman submitting to her husband's leadership. What does this passage say as to why a wife should submit?

7. Ephesians 5:25-30 talks more about the husband's responsibility. What does it say the husband should do?

Why should a husband love his wife?

What is the husband's example in all this?

8. In summary, what does Ephesians 5:31-33 say a marriage should be like?

9. 1 Peter 3:7 gives another charge to husbands. What is it?

What is the outcome of husbands doing this?

10. Out of all this, what do you feel you need to work on in your marriage?

The Christian marriage should be one where the husband loves his wife just as much as Jesus loves all of us. He must be willing to give of himself for his wife. The wife must submit to her husband out of respect for him as the leader of the family. God is the ultimate head of the family, however, and He brings everything into submission under Him.

Setting Goals

We set goals in many areas of life. It may be to get a new job, to save for a down payment on a house, to start a family, to lose 10 pounds, to start college, etc. It is often helpful to set goals in the Christian life as well. During this study we have made it a priority to have daily Quiet Times, to read the Bible, to do Bible study, and regularly attend small group. Hebrews 10:24 says, “And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works.” And Proverbs 27:17 says, “Iron sharpens iron and one person sharpens another.” We want to be an encouragement and help to each other. Part of that is to set some goals and help each other achieve them.

In the back of this study there is a page you can use to set spiritual goals for this quarter, semester, or some other period. A Quiet Time goal is already given of 7 consecutive days. Note that it may take several attempts to get 7 days in a row, but that is OK, for as you continue to try and eventually succeed your walk with God will be greatly strengthened. In future journals you may want to increase the number of consecutive days as experience has shown it takes 21 days to form a new habit. So moving up to 14 and eventually 21 consecutive days can help build this habit into your walk with God for a lifetime. Just remember that the ultimate goal is spending time with God, not some legalistic number of days. Another goal that is given is to have a “Date” with your spouse. There will be more on this later, but this is a time to keep the romance alive by having regular dates. Plan at least one of these during this 7 weeks. Another goal you should attempt is to have a family night. These are also explained later in this study, but are basically a time when you turn off the TV, play some games, maybe sing some, and read a Bible story or lesson.

Another goal you might have would be to read certain books of the New Testament, or even the entire New Testament. It could be to complete all the questions in the Bible study lessons or to memorize a verse from each of the studies. It could also be to pray for a specific person or for something specific to happen. It is

sometimes good to set long-term goals, but to begin we recommend setting goals you can achieve in one to three months. This helps make your goals more achievable and help build on success. As Proverbs 13:19 says, “A desire accomplished is sweet to the soul.” During the rest of this study we will be weekly checking each other on our progress towards meeting our goals. And your group leader may also want to see your progress and write a specific note of encouragement about the growth evidenced in your walk with God during this study. Prayerfully consider what goals you should set and work towards achieving them. Remember, goals are not an end in themselves, but are an aid to help each of us grow to spiritual maturity.

Assignment for next week

1. Continue your Bible reading and marking in your daily Quiet Time. Continue to record your daily journal entries and come prepared to share at least one entry from your journal next week.
2. Complete the lesson for next week. Note that next week some material is from the Song of Solomon on the sexual aspect of marriage. Men and women will discuss that separately.
3. Look over the Goals page in the back of this study and prayerfully consider what goals God would have you set for your Christian life for this quarter or semester. Write down some goals for the next month or so. Come prepared to share next week what you’ve written down.

WEEK 4

Open in prayer & ask, “Who’s got it easiest, husband or wife?”

Time for Members to share from their Quiet Time Journal

Share Goals you have set for yourself with your group

Discuss the Lesson / Break up for the Song of Songs discussion

Discuss assignment for next week and Close in Prayer

BECOMING ONE IN MARRIAGE

God brings two separate people together in a marriage from different homes, sometimes from different cultures even, and says that the two will become one. This lesson gets into what is involved in becoming one both spiritually and physically.

Becoming One Spiritually

1. When a man and woman become married what are they to do regarding their former lives? Genesis 2:24
2. What do you think is involved in leaving your parents?
3. What else do you think God would want us to leave behind when we get married? Think of things that might prevent a person from getting closer to their spouse. (Do you think this could include time with former friends?)
4. What is involved in clinging to (or “cleaving” to) your new mate?

5. God says in Mark 10:9 that He himself brings us together. What kind of joining do you think that entails, spiritual, or physical, or both?

Why is that important?

6. Finally, we can gain insight from what is called the Greatest Commandment, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” Our love for Him should involve ALL of our being, not just part of it! This is the love Christ also has for us as well. In the same way, husband and wife are to have this same intensity and expansiveness in their relationship and love toward one another. Soul is spiritual. Mind is mental or intellectual. Heart is emotional. Strength is physical. All are important in showing love. Think about each of these four ways we are to love, and come up with some ways you can love first God, and then your spouse that way. (If you have trouble coming up with answers for some of these, don’t worry. Enter what you can, and then draw from what others say in your group.)

Soul (Spiritual)

- How might you show God that you love Him spiritually?
- How might you show your spouse that you love them spiritually?

Mind (Mental or Intellectual)

- How might you show God that you love Him mentally?

- How might you show your spouse that you love them mentally?

Heart (Emotional)

- How might you show God that you love Him emotionally?
- How might you show your spouse that you love them emotionally?

Strength (Physical)

- How might you show God that you love Him physically?
- How might you show your spouse that you love them physically?

We'll learn more about the physical aspect of showing love next.

God wants us to leave behind our former lives when we get married. We are no longer to be dependent on our parents, nor are we to "run around with the old crowd". We now have a new partner, joined together with them to share all life's experiences together.

Becoming One Physically (Sex in Marriage) (Note: You will want to discuss this next section in two separate groups, men in one group, women in the other.)

7. God designed us with sexual differences. He created both male and female. Sex in marriage is God's plan (Genesis 1:24 and 1:28). What does 1 Corinthians 7:3-6 say about what a husband and wife should do to satisfy each other sexually?

8. While either spouse can have a "wandering eye", men seem to have the greatest problem with this. What do the following passages bring out about this?

Hebrews 13:4

Proverbs 5:18-21

Matthew 5:27-28

9. It is perfectly alright for each married partner to look at (and want) their spouse in this way, however. The Song of Solomon (or Song of Songs as it is also called) is a sensual book on the subject of desiring each other. Read the passages indicated below and write down some of what the husband or wife is thinking about the other. (We've abbreviated Song of Solomon as "SS".)

The wife (What she is thinking about her husband)

SS 1:2, 4, 7, 13, and 16

SS 2:3-10

SS 5:10-16

The husband (What he is thinking about his wife)

SS 4:1-11

SS 7:1-9

9. You may have noticed some differences in the 2 lists above. The man is more interested in what he can visually see in the woman while the woman seems also interested in the strength and ability of the man. (But there certainly are aspects of both for each sex, so both are important.) One key aspect of this difference is a woman likes to be romanced. Discuss what you think is really involved in “romance”?

10. Finally, here's a list of some "**Differences in Men and Women**" in general. These don't hold for every member of that sex, but this list does tend to show that we are made different sexually. Discuss how you might work with your spouses' differences to enhance your relationship rather than just "grudgingly accept them". And, don't fret that you are different from your mate. Be glad that they are different. That's why you came together in the first place. "Viva La Difference!"

Man (Husband)

- More visually stimulated.
- Stronger physically
- Compartmentalizes things
- Decides based more on logic
- Stricter disciplinarian
- Resistant to talking
- Likes speed
- Big-picture oriented

Woman (Wife)

- Stimulated more by touch
- Relationally stronger
- Interrelates everything
- Decides based more on emotion
- More lenient
- Likes to talk
- Likes to take it slow
- Detail-oriented

Sex in marriage is a wonderful thing. It involves caressing, romancing, looking, kissing, talking, as well as intercourse itself. Pray that God will make this part of your relationship all it can be.

Assignment for next week

1. Continue your daily Quiet Time (Bible reading, marking, recording). Come prepared to share at least one entry next week.
2. Complete the lesson for next week.
3. Work towards achieving one of your goals in the next few weeks. Maybe it's having a Quiet Time for 7 consecutive days, or completing more of the Bible studies. Maybe it's talking to a specific person. This would also be the perfect week to have a date together. Do something you both enjoy. Whatever it is, seeing God work to help you accomplish it will be an encouragement. Come prepared to share next week what you've seen God do!

WEEK 5

Open in prayer & ask, “What is challenging, raising kids?”

Time for Members to share from their Quiet Time Journal

Share progress on your Goals

Discuss the Lesson

Discuss some other items given this week such as Prayer Lists

Discuss assignment for next week

Close in Prayer

Raising Godly Children

Children are a gift from God. This lesson shows us how we should raise our children, how we should love and care for them, how we should teach them, and how we should discipline them. (Note: Some answers are given in this lesson.)

The Blessing of Children

1. When God first made people he told them to “be fruitful and multiply”. In other words, to have children! What does Psalm 127:3-5 say about children?
2. Children aren’t made by just husband and wife. What does Genesis 4:1 and Psalm 139:13-16 say about how children are made?
3. Children are very important to God. What did Jesus say (or do) regarding children?

Matthew 18:2-5

Matthew 19:13-15

Children are a blessing from God. They are special to Him and were made by Him (and by us).

Nurturing

4. Another thing we need to do as parents is nurture (or care for) our children. What do the following say about this?

1 Samuel 1:22-24

Isaiah 49:15 She nursed him and had compassion on her son.

Isaiah 66:13

1 Timothy 5:8 Provide for them.

Hebrews 11:23

Caring for our children physically and emotionally is the first thing we do for them. While we eventually want them to provide for themselves, we never stop loving them.

Teaching and Training

5. We must teach our kids what they should do in life. What do the following verses say about this?

Deuteronomy 4:5-6 and verse 9 Teach them the Word of God.
The Word will give them wisdom and understanding. It will teach them obedience.

Deuteronomy 6:5-7

Joshua 24:15 Teach them to serve God.

Psalm 78:2-7

Psalm 122:1

Proverbs 6:20 Obey your father and mother.

Ephesians 6:4

Colossians 3:21 Don't exasperate them or make them discouraged.

6. Another aspect of teaching is training. Training is helping them make right decisions. What does Proverbs 22:6 say will happen when we do this with our kids?

7. There are a number of areas we should teach and train our children in including relationships, spiritual growth, morals, responsibility, citizenship, caring for others, sharing, serving,

money management, etc. What other areas do you think are also important?

8. Why is the Word of God especially important for our children to know? 2 Timothy 3:16-17

We can't expect our kids to know the whole Bible, but we can teach them what is in the different books of the Bible. We should also show them how to find what the Bible says on a particular subject using a concordance or topical index. Some of these are online (see www.biblegateway.com). We also need to make sure they have accepted Christ and know how to spend daily time with Him in the Word and prayer. There are tools in this series available to help you instruct your children in these areas.

God expects us to teach our children His Word. Most importantly we need to model it. And we also need to make it a part of our everyday life. We should also worship God with our children. This should include going to church regularly with them. Getting them into Sunday school and youth group when they are old enough. We should also teach them at home. Make it appropriate for them. And make it fun and worthwhile.

Example is Key

9. One of the reasons for parents is to raise their children. The apostle Paul wasn't married and so he didn't have physical children. But he did lead people to Christ and they became his "spiritual children". What did Paul know about how children (spiritual and physical) learn best? See Philippians 4:9.

10. Kids pick up everything their parents do. If a parent cusses, the kids will cuss. If a parent praises God, the kids will praise God. What kind of example are you setting for your children? What are they picking up from you?

We need to remember that actions speak louder than words. The example we set for our kids speaks volumes to them, and to others as well. Philippians 4:8 is also a good verse to keep in mind. If we have positive thoughts, our actions will be more helpful to our children. Negative thoughts are harmful.

Discipline

11. One of the hardest things we have to do as parents is discipline our children. Yet the Bible makes it clear that God disciplines us as His children. What do the following say about why God discipline us?

Proverbs 3:12 Because God loves us.

Hebrews 12:10

12. If God disciplines us for our good and because He loves us, we as parents should do the same. What do the following verses say about our children and disciplining them?

Proverbs 3:11-12 Kids shouldn't reject discipline. Don't be Upset when disciplined. God corrects those He love, just as a father does us.

Proverbs 23:13-14

Ecclesiastes 8:11

1 Timothy 3:4 Keep kids respectful and obedient.

Hebrews 12:11

Discipline is important. God disciplines us for our good. We should do the same. But we must be careful when we discipline our children, however. Never do it out of anger. Cool off first if needed. Also, do it in private. But don't let it wait. Kids need to associate the discipline with what they did. Proper discipline will help them to live a godly life.

Priorities in Life and in Marriage

(Ed) When I was a kid, my parents used to tell me that they loved me more than they loved each other. I guess they thought that would make me feel good, but inside I felt like that wasn't right, that they should love each other more than me. After getting married, Janice and I started talking about having kids, and I told her I wanted to wait. I didn't want kids to come between us. Eventually we worked this out, and I realized that you love your kids differently than you love each other as husband and wife. But it does bring up the whole subject of priorities in our life. God should be #1 in our lives (Matthew 6:33 and Matthew 22:37-38). We will be spending eternity with Him. He came and died for us.

He is to be our first love. We are His love (John 3:16). Next to Him all else should pale in comparison. Yet God also gives many of us a spouse. We are to love our spouse above all others on this earth. Our spouse is to be our one true love for life. No one can (or should) take their place. (Matthew 19:6) So your spouse becomes #2 in your life. Not your #1, as that is for God alone. Each of you keeping (or putting) God as #1 in your life, gives your life real meaning and purpose, and helps you to love your spouse even more than you could do on your own. It's a win-win for all! Then as God gives some couples children, they should become #3 in our life, behind God and our spouse. As we've seen children are a blessing from God. We would certainly die for them as Christ died for us, but our kids should never take the place of our spouse (or God) in our lives. That isn't healthy for them, nor is it right for our spouse or to God. We have them for a few short years and then they will go off and most of them will start families of their own. We still love them, but as they build their own lives, we need to go on with our own lives. An "empty nest" is easier if our spouse has always been #2 in our life before our children.

Family Time, Teachable Moments, and Dates

It is helpful if you have regular "Family Times" with your children. These are times when you turn off the TV, have some fun together through a game or two, tell a story or give a Bible lesson, and just share with each other. Make it appropriate to the ages of your children. (If your kids are a lot different in ages you might want to gear one family night for the younger kids and then the next time make it appropriate for the older ones.) Resources are available from your church or from a Christian bookstore. Also, use "teachable moments" during the week. In other words, as situations come up, look to use those moments to teach a lesson. This is particularly important as they grow older. Also, important is to have "Dates". First of all, you should have regular dates with your spouse, whether weekly, bi-weekly, or at least monthly. Get a sitter (or a grandparent) and go out and have fun together. Also, Mommy or Daddy can each have dates with each of the kids

individually. These have to be age-appropriate, but allow time for the child to know he or she is special and has Mommy's (or Daddy's) full attention. Maybe you could have one a month with a different child, whatever feels right to you. Teens may be difficult to do this with.

Teens

Some kids when they turn 13 become different people. Where before they wanted to do everything with you, now they will ask you to drop them off two blocks away from school so their friends won't see them riding with you! Not all teens are like this, but virtually all will exhibit some desire to be independent which is natural. What we have to do is make them realize that while they will be doing some things on their own or with friends, they are never alone, for God is always with them. We need to move them from being dependent on us, to being dependent on Him. Encourage youth group, doing chores around the house, budgeting their money, and making some goals. Get to know their friends particularly, and make your home accessible for them. And of course, pray. Prayer is the most important thing we need to do for our children as they grow older.

Using a Prayer List

Many Christians use prayer lists to help them be more consistent in their prayer life. In the back you will find several prayer pages that have a column for specific prayer request and another for God's answer. (There is also some space for prayer items on each weekly Journal Page.) It helps to be specific in your prayers as much as possible. For example if some friends you know are going through a difficult time, in addition to just asking for "Prayer for Bill and Sue", also ask that "God would provide a job and finances for Bill and Sue." This will help you see specific answers.

Remember that God can answer in 3 ways – Yes, No, or Wait. If he answers No or Wait, he is not trying to be mean, but knows that this isn’t either the best thing or not the right time. Keep praying and be consistent in your prayers and God will bless you with many wonderful answers to prayer. (Colossians 4:2)

Assignment for next week

1. Continue your Bible reading and marking in your daily Quiet Time. Continue to record your daily journal entries and come prepared to share at least one entry from your journal next week. Continue marking the New Testament chapters that you’ve read on the New Testament Reading Chart if you like.
2. Complete the lesson for next week.
3. There are some prayer pages in the back of this guide. You can add some prayer requests to the prayer pages. Use these to help you be more specific and consistent in your prayers. Pray these requests AFTER you have responded back to God about what he has impressed on your heart during your Quiet Time.
4. Work towards achieving one of your goals in the next few weeks. Come prepared to share next week what you’ve seen God do in your life. If you haven’t planned your “Date” or your Family Night, put it on your calendar now.

WEEK 6

Have prayer & ask “Why is communication hard for some?”

Time for Members to share from their Quiet Time Journal

Share progress on your Goals

Discuss the Lesson

Discuss assignment for next week and then Close in Prayer

Communication and Relationships

Communication is one of the keys to a successful marriage. Expressing your love for one another sexually is a key part of that communication as we saw several weeks back, but this week we will look into how we should listen to and speak with our mate. (Note: Some answers are given.)

General Principles

1. We want to look at some basic principles of human relationships. Much of these should be observed in marriage. Randomly pick six (6) of the following verses, circle them below, then read them, and while doing so, what do you see that should be observed in marriage? Write down what you find below.

Proverbs 17:22	Proverbs 29:11	Romans 12:9-10
Romans 12:12	Romans 14:13	Romans 14:19
Romans 15:1-2	Romans 15:7	Philippians 4:4-6
Philippians 4:8	Colossians 3:8-9	James 3:16-18

From the 6 verses that I circled I see that in marriage I should:

Which one of these would you like to do this week to pleasantly surprise your mate?

2. Love is paramount in a relationship like marriage. How would you describe love based on 1 Corinthians 13:4-7?

3. Where do these types of qualities come from? Galatians 5:22-23

Have you asked God for this type of fruit in your life?

4. Titus 2:2-8 gives specific instruction for men and women in relationships. What does it say:

To Older Men?

To Older Women?

To Younger Women?

To Younger Men?

What do you need to work on in your life?

Exhortations we find in the Bible on personal relationships also are pertinent for marriages. Things like kindness, goodness, and faithfulness work with everybody. Love is the paramount quality we need to exhibit, and it should be most obvious in our relationship with our spouse.

Listening and Talking

5. Listening is key in communication. What do the following bring out about listening?

Proverbs 18:13 Don't talk before you have the facts.

Matthew 13:15

James 1:19

6. The tongue (or talking) and the words we say are so important. What do the following teach about what we say?

Proverbs 12:18

Proverbs 15:28 Think carefully before you talk.

Proverbs 18:21

Ephesians 4:15

Do you speak the truth in love?

7. Since it is so easy to say words that hurt, what is a good idea to do both together as a couple, and also individually? James 5:16

The act of communication involves listening and talking. But the art of communication involves so much more. We should seek to understand and empathize with our spouse when they are communicating with us, and then share our response in love.

Disagreements and Forgiveness

8. It is inevitable that you will have disagreements in your marriage. That is normal. But sometimes they turn into fights or quarrels. What does James 4:1-3 says is the reason for this?

9. What is one principle that can keep arguments from starting or growing into more than they should? Ephesians 4:26

Look at the appendix for help on Resolving Conflicts.

10. If one party offends the other what does the Bible say we should do...

If we wronged someone? (Matthew 5:23-24)

If we were the one wronged? (Matthew 18:15)

Note that in either case it is our responsibility to go to the other party. God wants the relationship restored.

11. When someone wrongs us, what does Colossians 3:13 say?

Several areas that commonly cause disagreements in marriages are finances, discipline of children, and a lack of communication. In this lesson we've discussed communication. Good communication starts with following God and His Word. Things you read in Scripture can be applied to your marriage. Communication includes both listening with understanding and speaking in love. It is definitely something that continually needs to be worked on. The sexual relationship is a part of this and definitely needs to be discussed. Find out what both of you like. Plan times to just sit and talk, and if disagreements come up, come to an agreement. And don't go to sleep until you've made up.

Last lesson we discussed discipline of children. This causes problems if husband and wife don't agree either on the method of discipline or on consistency. Make it a point to determine what should be punished, how you are going to discipline, and then be consistent with your children. That will minimize friction between husband and wife. Plus, kids do best when they have boundaries.

As for money, it too can cause conflicts in marriage. Both parties need some spending money of their own and the freedom to do so, but it is important to have a budget and stick to it. The study "Finances – More Than Making Ends Meet" has help in this. And Financial Peace University offered by Dave Ramsey is solid financial training. You can also use on-line budget tools. Some key money principles and passages follow:

1. God owns everything	Psalm 24:1
2. God entrusts it to us	Job 1:21
3. We should use it wisely	1 Corinthians 4:2
4. Trust God to provide	Philippians 4:19
5. Be content with what you have	Hebrews 13:5
6. Give away some of it	2 Corinthians 9:6-7
7. Save some of what you make	Proverbs 21:20

Another key aspect of finances is to have proper insurance. This too is important for families. This includes term life insurance on the main breadwinner and health insurance on family members. 1

Timothy 5:8 says we should provide for our own family. Insurance is a way we provide for them if someone is ill or if we die. Many financial planners recommend getting enough term life insurance to cover at least ten (10) times your annual salary.

A will is another important document to have prepared. It is particularly important to designate guardians for your children. Of the items just mentioned, check below what you have done:

- Decided on an approach to Discipline of children
- Developed a Budget. Following our Budget
- Obtained sufficient Term Life Insurance
- Obtained Health Insurance
- Have a Will designating children guardian (if applicable)

Important: If you don't have some of these, plan now to do so.

Assignment for next week

1. Continue your daily Quiet Time. Come prepared to share at least one entry from your journal next week.
2. Complete the lesson and read the article on Prayer. Also complete the questions on "How Has Your Life Changed?"
3. Work towards achieving some goals in the next week. Come prepared to share next week what you've seen God do in your life.

WEEK 7

Open in prayer & ask “What do you want most in the future?”

Time for Members to share from their Quiet Time Journal

Share progress on your Goals

Discuss the Lesson

Discuss Prayer, the One Thing I Needed to Do

Discuss How Has Your Life Changed?

Discuss Continuing On and then Close in Prayer

A Legacy

Whether you’re single or married, a “Legacy” is what you leave behind. If single, it’s your walk with God and ministry to others. And if married, it also includes your children and grand-children if so blessed. Hopefully there will be generations following you that bring glory to God! But we also like to think of it as your “Impact” today in people’s lives in the world around you as a result of your faith, your Christian marriage, and your family. In this last lesson we’ll see how you can have a positive and lasting impact on your family, community, your church, and the world.

Christian Families Should Be Like a Beacon

1. Your entire household may not yet be believers. What hope do you see in these verses that you can claim?

Matthew 19:13-15

1 Corinthians 7:12-14

A Christian spouse brings holiness to the house.

1 Peter 3:1

Acts 16:31-34

The entire household came to Christ.

2. Christian singles and families should be a godly example in the world. Look at these verses and see what Christian singles and Christian family members should be like.

Matthew 5:16

John 13:34-35

Romans 1:8 Have strong faith.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

1 Corinthians 16:15 Spend your life in service to others.

Titus 1:6-9

Once one member of a family comes to Christ, there is a much greater chance that others will also. (Claim Acts 2:39 for your family!) Once that happens we first all love one another with Christ's love. Then Christian families (like all believers) should set an example that will draw others to Christ. Christian singles and families should be like lighthouses. They warn people away from danger and guide them to Christ.

Being an Example

3. Your job is one area you should “shine”. What do the following say that most people think about their work?

Genesis 3:17-19 That work is “hard”. “Cursed” almost!

Ecclesiastes 2:11 and 17

But what does God say our attitude should be about our jobs?

1 Corinthians 10:31

1 Corinthians 15:58

Philippians 2:14-15 Don't complain or argue.

Colossians 3:17 Do it as a representative of Christ, giving Him thanks.

It's a good idea to share around the dinner table each night how your day went. This can include how you demonstrated Christ at home, school, or work. Also remember to pray together at meals.

4. One thing we should do as a Christian single or Christian family is to be part of a local church. What should we do there?

Psalm 96:9 Worship God.

Hebrews 10:24-25

Why is church so important? Ephesians 1:22-23

5. What do you see was done in the early Church?

Acts 2:42-47

Acts 4:32-35

6. Think about what needs you could meet as a family. Do you have extra toys or other things that could be given to others? What could you do to help others in some way?

7. The early churches were “house churches”. Many of these things could be done today in small groups that meet in people’s homes today. There are many benefits to having a small group. This could be with neighbors or people from church. People are often more comfortable in a small group, particularly if they meet in a home. It is also a good forum to cover topics or issues that pertain specifically to that particular group of individuals. It is not a substitute for the organized worship, but an ideal way to introduce care and outreach. And being a small group leader really helps you too! You get to study the lesson more in-depth and get to know the people in the group better. Leading a small group is a blessing all-around. Prayerfully consider if God would have you lead a small group. What do you see would be the benefits of a small group Bible study that would meet in your home in your neighborhood?

Having a proper attitude on your job and in your neighborhood, being an example, and being part of a church, and leading (or hosting) a small group are ways for your family to leave a legacy.

Ministry

8. One thing we should want to do is serve others. Look at these verses and see how you can do this.

Proverbs 14:31 Help the poor.

Luke 10:26-37 (particularly verses 33-35)

2 Corinthians 8:1-5 Give generously.

Hebrews 13:1-3

As a family, talk about those you know of that are in need. Perhaps someone comes to mind. One idea is to sponsor a child through World Vision or Compassion International. This is a tangible thing your children can identify with.

9. We should also sense an urging to tell others about Christ. How can we do this?

Matthew 28:19-20

Mark 16:15

Romans 10:1 Pray for people to come to Christ.

Romans 10:13-15

1 Peter 3:15

Serving others and telling others about Christ is one way to leave a legacy. This can happen as a result of prayer, one-on-one encounters, via a small group, or just taking cookies to a neighbor with a card. Think of your family as a network. Each member knows others, whether at school, at work, or in the neighborhood. Plan how you can best minister to them and then tell them about God when it comes up. Be prepared to share a testimony of what God has done in your life (See the Appendix, item 4 for help.)

PRAYER – THE ONE THING I NEEDED TO DO!

(Ed) My Dad was 49 when I was born. As a teenager I thought it was odd that my friend's parents were so young. Mine were in their 60s by

that time, and not in the best of health. So after I went away to college and became a Christian at age 18, I was excited and came home one weekend and told them what I had done. My Mom was pleased that I had become a Christian, and I found out she was one too. My Dad, however, seemed bothered by what I said and asked if I thought he had raised me wrong, and then told me “not to go off the deep end on this”. Well as I grew in my faith I learned several ways to share the gospel, and whenever I came home I would talk with my Dad, but he would always change the subject. As the years went by his health issues increased and despite having had cancer twice, he reached age 79, yet still wasn’t interested in the gospel. I began to think to myself, “You know, my Dad’s not going to make it spiritually.” I had shared with him every way I knew how to become a Christian. I didn’t know what else to do. So I resigned myself to the fact that the only thing left for me to do was pray.

I started praying for my Dad regularly. Don’t get me wrong, I had prayed some for my Dad before, but I now made a commitment to God that I would pray daily for my Dad to come to Christ. I also prayed that if God had anything else He wanted me to do regarding my Dad that He would let me know. Well I believe He did tell me one thing. The Good News Bible had just come out, and so I got the idea to get two copies, one for my Dad and one for my Mom (so my Dad wouldn’t feel singled out) and I wrote something in the front of each one. To my Dad I said, “Thanks Pop for all the things you’ve taught me”, and then I listed 12 things and then signed it. I wrote a similar thing for my Mom. I gave them to my Mom and my Dad. Then I began praying daily that my Dad would somehow read that Bible.

I bet I prayed that daily for almost a whole year. Well we lived about 1,000 miles away and so didn’t see them for about a year and when we did come home to visit as soon as we came in the house my Dad said, “Son, sit down here.” Well my Dad started asking me questions about the Bible. Questions about Moses, questions about Abraham, questions about David, questions about Jesus, questions about Peter and Paul. I had answers to some of them, but he had answers to all of them. I said, “Pop, how do you know so much about the Bible?” He said, “Son, you know that Bible you gave me a year ago? I bet I haven’t missed a day reading that thing!”

Well I about fell off my chair! I had prayed that he would read it, and had wanted to believe that he would, but hadn’t really thought it possible. But God took my tiny scrap of faith and blessed it. So I talked some

more with my Dad that day. I had just learned a new way of sharing the gospel and asked him if I could tell him what I was learning. He now said, “Yes!” which was definitely different from past conversations. I shared what I had just learned. That God has a wonderful plan for our life, but that we are all separated from God and His plan because of our sin. That we need to be convicted of that sin and be willing with God’s help to turn from it. That Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty from those things and to give us the gift of eternal life. That we need to ask Him to come into our life, take away our sins, and give us the gift of eternal life. I then asked him if he would like to receive Jesus Christ personally. He said he would think about it. The next day Janice and I visited my wife’s parents for a few days and I kept praying for my Dad. When we came back a few days later and walked in the door he grabbed me by the shoulder and said, “You know that thing you talked with me about the other night? Well I prayed and asked Jesus into my life just after you left!”

So my Dad became a Christian at age 80, and he lived to 83. I got him memorizing a few key verses and having a Quiet Time. (He was already reading the Bible daily.) I saw changes in my Dad’s life those last 3 years that you sometimes don’t see in someone much younger who comes to Christ. He had been very prejudiced towards certain people, but God softened his heart towards others. And he and Mom started going to church, something they had never done before. Mom was thrilled!

Yes, I had discouragingly thought that the only thing left for me to do was pray for my Dad as I had exhausted all possibilities. I was relying on myself, not God. Now I know that committed prayer was the one thing I needed to do! And I also now firmly believe that we should pray not only for someone to come to Christ, but also pray for ourselves that God would show us what He wants us to do in regards to that person. I believe God laid that Bible and the inscription on my mind and heart. I found out later that my Dad was so proud of that Bible after I gave it to him that he showed it to everyone he knew. He’d say, “See what my Son thinks of me!” I bet after saying that numerous times he thought, “Gee, if my Son thinks so much of me, then maybe I should read the book that he gave me.” He probably started reading it just to please me, but it helped change his life. And God used it to change me too!

How Has Your Life Changed?

1. Overall, what have you thought of these studies?
2. Since going through these studies how has your life changed?
3. What new habits have you picked up?
4. What new attitudes are beginning to develop in your life?
5. How has this helped your marriage? Family? Being single?
6. Where would you like to see your life in 1 year? 2 years?

SUMMARY OF KEY PRINCIPLES

Foundational

- The Bible is God's "Owner's Manual" for marriage and raising a family. (2 Peter 1:3-4)
- God wants each of us to grow in our knowledge and love for Him every day. (John 3:16 and Luke 10:27)
- Having a daily Quiet Time is an excellent way to spend time with God. (Mark 1:35 and Psalm 5:3)

God's Plan for Marriage

- The most important relationship in our life is God. He is to be #1 in our life! Your spouse is to be #2 in your life. Your kids should be #3 in priority. But they need protection. (Matthew 6:33, Luke 14:26)
- The best way for a husband and wife to grow closer to each other is for each to grow closer to God. (1 John 1:3)
- God wants to use our marriage to reach others. (Matthew 5:16)

Roles in Marriage

- Husbands are to be the leader of the marriage. But it is to be a leadership of love. (Ephesians 5:22-24 and 25-30)

- Wives are to help their husbands, but that doesn't mean they are inferior in any way. (1 Peter 3:1-4)
- Both husband and wife are to love and help each other. (John 13:34-35 and Ephesians 5:21)

Becoming One in Marriage

- Sexual purity is the most important thing you can do for your spouse. Be faithful! (Genesis 2:24 and Mark 10:7-9)
- Realize that husbands and wives look at sex differently. She wants romance. Talking, caressing, and showing love throughout the day is vital to her. He on the other hand is vision-based. What is worn, appearance, and interest is important to him. (Matthew 5:27-28, Song of Songs, 2 Samuel 11:2, Genesis 26:8)

Raising Godly Children

- Remember that your children are a gift from God. (Psalm 127:3-5 and Psalm 139:13-16)
- We are to teach our children about life, relationships, life skills, and of course about God. (Proverbs 22:6)
- We are to discipline our children, but ALWAYS do so in love, NEVER in anger. (Proverbs 23:12-14)

Continuing On

We have reached the end of this study, but this really isn't the end, it's only the beginning. The beginning of hopefully a new and strengthened marriage, and a new and strengthened walk with the Lord. We encourage you to keep having a daily Quiet Time in the Word and prayer and praying together as a family as well. Have regular dates together and Family Nights too! And if you're single we hope you've seen that being single can be an advantage in your Christian walk and ministry to others. Think how you can impact your neighbors and others for Christ. And if you continue in a small group, keep sharing what God shows you from your Quiet Times with each other as part of your small group time as well. Also keep setting some goals for yourself and your marriage and asking others (and your spouse) to help hold you accountable on completion of those goals. Confess your sins, pray, and keep reading and applying the Word to your life. He wants you to live out your faith. May God bless as you continue these disciplines and strengthen your marriage and continue to walk with Him!

Appendix: Issues & Other Information

1. Handling Conflict
2. ABCs of Knowing God's Will
3. Have you received the Salvation G-I-F-T ?
4. Personal Testimonies
5. Purity/Porn
6. Mom Working vs. Stay at Home Mom
7. Abuse
8. Married to a Non-Christian (Unequally Yoked)
9. Singleness
10. Divorce and Children
11. In-Laws
12. Learning from your Kids and Grand-Kids
13. Prayer
14. Leaving a Legacy
15. Priorities
16. Marriage is not a 50/50 Proposition

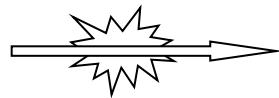
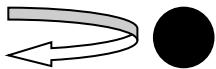
1. HANDLING CONFLICT

There are 3 ways to handle conflict (represented by the circles):

AVOID IT

SIDE ISSUES

GO THROUGH IT



One way is Avoid It. The problem is it comes up again. A second way is Talk All Around It (or Handling Side Issues). You discuss things related to the problem, but not the actual issue itself. The problem again is the issue resurfaces. The third way to handle conflict is to go right to the Big Issue and Work Right Through It. This is eventually best and resolves the issue. Note that in some instances there still may be differing opinions in some areas, but you should come to a decision and it's OK to agree to disagree in those. After all, your relationship is most important!

2. The ABCs of KNOWING GOD'S WILL

The book of James says we must ask for guidance to know His will, yet there is no magic formula to knowing the will of God. His will is often revealed step-by-step as we walk with Him. There are, however, certain things we can do that allows us to better grasp God's will and then act upon them. You can easily remember them with the letters of the alphabet, A to G.

Ask God. Pray and ask Him for wisdom and guidance in whatever situation you are facing. (James 1:5)

Bible. Look in the Word for wisdom, particularly during your daily devotions. (Psalm 119:105)

Counsel. Get advice from Godly Christians who know you well. (Exodus 18)

Desire. Delight in Him. God will give you the desire to do His will. Ask, what has He given you the desire to do? (Psalm 37:4)

Evaluate. Prayerfully review what the above have shown you. If all of them point to a single course of action, it makes sense to proceed. (1 Thessalonians 5:6)

Forge Ahead. Act on what He has shown you to do. Trust Him for the outcome. (Exodus 14:15)

God has the final say. He will either open or close the door to reveal His perfect will. (Acts 16:6-10)

As you follow the above steps, don't forget to praise God for His perfect will, whatever the outcome!

3. Have You Received the G-I-F-T of Salvation?

The Christian life is the most rewarding experience possible, because it is a relationship with the person of Jesus Christ. Biblical Christianity is God reaching down to us, caring for us, and accepting us just the way we are. It's a **gift**, not something earned by being good.

G - God Loves Us and Has a Wonderful Plan

Some people say God couldn't possibly be concerned about them. But look at 1 Peter 5:7 and John 3:16. They say God does love us and has a wonderful plan for us – eternal life.

I – I Sin (Do Things Wrong)

But there is a problem. The Bible says all people have something in common. Instead of the life God intended, we mess it up, and there is an awful result. Look at Romans 3:23 and Romans 5:12. Our sin separates us from God. Some people think the way to win favor with God is to be

a good person and do good works. But look at what the Bible says in Ephesians 2:8, 9. We simply can't earn our way to heaven!

F – Forgiveness is Through Christ

With people in such a helpless situation, God didn't just leave us hanging. He sent Jesus for us. See Romans 6:23 and Romans 5:8. To those who say there are many ways to heaven, the Bible differs. John 14:6 says there is only one way. Jesus paid the penalty for us.

T – Trust in Jesus

In John 6:29 Jesus says we must believe in Him to have the abundant life God intends. In Revelation 3:20 Jesus gives the promise he will come into our life if we ask. He wants to be part of everyone's life. You can invite Him in by praying, **"Lord Jesus, I know I have done things wrong and I am sorry. I ask that you help me to turn from those things. I ask Jesus to come into my heart and life and save me. Amen."** If this is the prayer of your heart, Jesus is in your life!

2 Corinthians 5:17 says that He then makes you a new person. Now continue to grow in Him by reading the Bible and praying daily. Also attend a church where Christ is preached and get into a small group.

4. Personal Testimonies (also called Our Own Spiritual Stories)

One way to leave a legacy is to think through your own personal testimonies and then share them with non-Believers and your children as opportunities arise. As you share what Christ has done in your life, God will use what you say to help encourage and lead others to Christ. **Each Christian has several testimonies as to how God has changed their life.** It may be victory over some sin or bad habit, such as gossip, smoking, liquor, pornography, or infidelity. It may be changes in attitudes or goals, such as going to a specific school, a change in vocation, trusting God, faithfulness, desire to help others, or inner peace. It may be a hunger for (or understanding of) the Bible or the knowledge that now you have eternal life and know where you will spend eternity. Each of these can be a testimony you can share with someone else. In sharing your testimonies, arrange each one into three sections (remembered by "**P-P-S**") and then discuss a bit on each one:

1-The **Past** – The issue you used to have and how you dealt with it.

2-The **Present** - Specifically what your life is like now in this area.

3-The **Secret** – How you received Christ personally and how He helps you daily. Mention that you aren't perfect, but He has made all the difference in your life!

You can have several testimonies as items 1 and 2 will be different for each issue, but item 3 remains essentially the same.

You may want to use a special verse of Scripture to support what you did. God will use these verses in their life. Do not preach to them, however, and try to keep it short - minute testimonies are best. You may also want to practice an example testimony. Begin praying for opportunities to share them, and pray by name for those you know that need to receive Christ. In sharing a testimony, look for common ground and leverage off that. If they are having trouble in their marriage and God has helped you in your marriage then share a "Marriage" Testimony. If they are having trouble with a specific habit and God has helped you with some habit, then share a "Habit" Testimony with them. (It doesn't have to be the same habit.) Use a simple approach such as, "I used to struggle with that, and tried several things but with limited success, but I had something happen to me that has really helped me in that area of my life. Could I tell you what was the secret that really helped (or "Can I tell you about it?") Once they agree, share it with them.

After sharing your testimony, ask if they have ever personally asked Christ into their life. Tell them you'd be glad to share with them how they can do that. Use a gospel tract for that or share G-I-F-T (included in this study). If they would like to turn their life over to God now, then tell them they can pray and tell God they have sinned, be willing to turn from that sin, and in prayer personally ask Christ to come into their heart and life. Pray with them if they are willing. If they receive Christ, go over 1 John 5:11 and 12 with them for assurance.

5. Purity/Porn

Intercourse outside of marriage is sin (Hebrews 13:4, Matthew 5:32), whether with a fiancé or someone else. And lusting, whether online or otherwise, is also a sin against God and your future or current spouse (Matthew 5:28-30). Get help if you're addicted to it.

6. Mother Working vs. Stay at Home Mom

(Janice) Staying at home or working outside the home is an issue many couples face. When looking into the Bible, we see women did hold many roles. Deborah was a judge and poet (Judges 4:4), Miriam was a prophet (Exodus 14:21, and Priscilla was a tentmaker along with her husband (Acts 18:3). But most importantly we see mothers in their special roles as mothers. Mary was the mother of Jesus, Elizabeth of John the Baptist, and Hannah was caring for her son Samuel. The

Proverbs 31 woman is hard-working, takes care of her family, and also conducts business affairs. Some Moms can do all this, others probably shouldn't. But above all, God expects the children to be properly raised and cared for, and for the parents to possess godly character. In Proverbs 31, this particular wife did all this and is described as wise, gracious, her children bless her, and she is called the crown of her husband. Words we'd all love to hear. Pray about what God would have you do.

7. Abuse

Domestic abuse can unfortunately happen in marriage today. Colossians 3:8 talks about putting aside anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech. "Let no unwholesome word come out of your mouth" (Ephesians 4:29), and verse 32 says we are to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, and forgiving, just as Christ was. These verses tell us as Christians to avoid verbal abuse in relationships. God hates wickedness and those who love violence. We need to avoid works of the flesh (strife, fits of anger, drunkenness) as Galatians 5:19-22 says. God desires husbands and wives to live together in harmony. Abuse has no place in Christian marriages. Get help if there are signs of abuse in your relationship.

8. Married to a Non-Christian (Unequally Yoked)

We know several families where one spouse was a Christian and the other was not. In one case, the husband was Jewish and he eventually came around and accepted Christ. In the other the husband is still on the way. In both cases the wife prayed regularly and also introduced their husbands to Christians. It may take a while, but God answers prayer. But don't use this as a license to go ahead and marry a non-Christian if you are single. Christian singles should only marry Christian singles.

9. Singleness

There is nothing wrong in being single. The greatest evangelist in all of Christianity was the Apostle Paul and he was single. The entire chapter of 1 Corinthians 7 is good for you to read and note the many advantages of being single.

10. Divorce and Children

(Ed) Divorce is hard on husband and wife. But it is especially hard on the children. I found out when I was a teenager that my Dad had been married several times before. I felt betrayed, and wondered if my Dad would leave me and Mom. God later helped me forgive my Dad, but don't let divorce be an option.

(Joy) I liked how Mom and Dad always told us that divorce was not an option. When you have an absolute, there's really no question. I think it is important to know that we are all human, and we are going to disappoint our spouse. Maybe God is trying to teach us to learn how to forgive as He does.

11. In-Laws

(Janice) Getting along with in-laws can sometimes be a struggle for married couples. Maybe that is why there are a lot of mother-in-law jokes. But God desires more for us as Believers. The story of Ruth and Naomi in the Old Testament tells a daughter-in-law's devotion and love for her mother-in-law. Refusing to leave Naomi, Ruth says she will go with her anywhere, even to a strange land (Ruth 1:4). It may not always be possible to have a Ruth/Naomi relationship, but God desires honor and respect for our in-laws (Leviticus 19:23 and 1 Timothy 5:1).

12. Learning from your Kids and Grand-Kids

(Ed) We pick up many things from our children, their sensitivity, their exuberance, their love for life, and their trust in Mom and Dad. Take time with each of them, learning their strengths, and seeing how you can model some of their wonder. Jesus said that we must have faith like a child to enter the kingdom of heaven. That certainly is something worth picking up from them, isn't it?

(Janice) Children and grand-children are indeed a gift from the Lord. Psalm 127:3 says children are a heritage and a reward from Him. I have learned patience, joy, and humility from our children, and that being a parent is hard work! But the joy certainly outweighs the work as I have seen them mature into adults. And then there are the grand-children! They are each so unique and loving, it is like icing on the cake! They are so much fun! Having children and grand-children in my life helps me see things more through Jesus' eyes. And it seems a little bit like heaven to be able to share Jesus with them, and then see them put their trust in Him!

(Joy) Children have a way of making you evaluate yourself and what kind of steward you are being and their genuine and sincere hearts make it so fun to be with them. They truly are a blast and a blessing and so much fun! I am so glad I can stay at home with them. I still have to be careful at times not to get distracted with unnecessary things though and miss out on opportunities. It is so much fun!

13. Prayer

(Janice) The importance of prayer is seen throughout Scripture. From Jesus' example (Luke 11:1-5 and Matthew 6:1-15) to Hannah's prayer for her son Samuel (1 Samuel 1:27) and Jonah praying in the belly of a fish, we see prayer's importance. So, praying together as a couple makes for a stronger and more unified marriage. Ecclesiastes 4:9-11 says "two are better than one, for they have a good return for their labor. If either falls, the other will be lifted up." We can be closer to God and each other as we pray together.

14. Leaving a Legacy

(Janice) A legacy is also something we are remembered for, or that we pass on to others. Everyone has memories or things they did with their families growing up. God want us to use our family for His purpose. We need to be handing down His teaching and promises to the next generation (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). These verses talk about loving God with all your being and teaching these commands to your children. What a privilege to be able to influence your kids and grand-kids to live Godly lives.

15. Priorities

(Joy) I really like the analogy of the pyramid-where when each person grows closer to God, their relationship to each other grows closer as well. It is good to be reminded of that, so that one can evaluate themselves and make sure as time goes by, that there are not things that are distracting one towards climbing that pyramid (such as commitments to other functions, children, and all the blessings that go along with them, etc.)

16. Marriage is not a Fifty/Fifty Proposition

It's got to be a 100/100 proposition IF you really want it to work. You give your all (100%) and your spouse gives their all (100%). Remember, God gives His all for us. If you do that you'll have a happy marriage.

QUIET TIME JOURNAL (Week 1)

GET STARTED: Pray for guidance. Pick a chapter in a **paperback Bible or New Testament**. (You may want to continue in the Bible book you read for practice in week one.) **Read and underline** what stands out to you. Pick what you consider to be the best verse and fill out the appropriate journal entry. Then talk to God about it. Do this daily. Then as God leads, share what God shows you with others.

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What it said: _____

How it impressed me: _____

My response: _____

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PRAYER PAGES

“Very early in the morning, Jesus got up, went to a solitary place, where He prayed.” Mark 1:35

Date/Request

Date/God's Answer

PRAYER PAGES

"Very early in the morning, Jesus got up, went to a solitary place, where He prayed." Mark 1:35

Date/Request

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NEW TESTAMENT READING CHART

It is important for every Christian to read their Bible regularly both for encouragement and for guidance. Psalm 119:9 says that a person should guard his (or her) life according to God's Word. But to do so you must be in The Book, not just have it in your house! The New Testament is an excellent place to start. Some people like to keep track of where they read to record their progress. Use the chart below to keep track of your reading in the New Testament. Put an "X" through the chapter numbers as you read them. Our prayer is that this will encourage you to read through the entire New Testament. You should be able to do so in about 9 months if you read 1 chapter daily. 3 chapters a day will get you through the entire Bible in about a year. (A sheet like this listing all the chapters in the Old and New Testaments is found in the back of *Growing Strong in God's Family* by NavPress.)

Matthew	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28										
Mark	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16			
Luke	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24														
John	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21																	
Acts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28										
Romans	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16			
1 Corinthians	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16			
2 Corinthians	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13						
Galatians	1	2	3	4	5	6													
Ephesians	1	2	3	4	5	6													
Philippians	1	2	3	4															
Colossians	1	2	3	4															
1 Thess.	1	2	3	4	5														
2 Thess.	1	2	3																
1 Timothy	1	2	3	4	5	6													
2 Timothy	1	2	3	4															
Titus	1	2	3																
Philemon	1																		
Hebrews	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13						
James	1	2	3	4	5														
1 Peter	1	2	3	4	5														
2 Peter	1	2	3																
1 John	1	2	3	4	5														
2 John	1																		
3 John	1																		
Jude	1																		
Revelation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	20	21	22																

My Goals

Set up specific goals for your marriage and family and for your spiritual life for this study. Three goals are given for those who are married and have kids, one to have a Quiet Time for 7 consecutive days, another to have a date with your spouse, and a third to have a family night with your kids. Set up any others that you like. Then **have someone else in your group initial on the line before each goal as you complete them.** You may also want to show them to your leader and ask for him or her to write about the growth they have seen in your walk with God during this time.

 Had Quiet Times daily alone with God for 7 consecutive days

 Had a date together as husband and wife doing something you both like.

 Had a family night together with the kids.

 Pray for _____

 Tell _____ about Christ

 Invite/Bring _____ to church

 Read _____

Other Goals

Leader Comments (Optional)

Verses to Memorize

There are particular verses that you will find that mean so much to you or impact your life in such a significant way that it makes sense to commit them to memory so you can carry them with you everywhere! This page is for you to write down these verses as you find them so you can begin to memorize and put them in your heart and mind. (Some on Marriage and Family are given below.) Learn the verse a phrase at a time, adding phrases until you can say it all from memory. And also learn the address (reference) of the verse as well (e.g., John 3:16) so you can show someone else where it is. I find it helpful to also write the verses out on small cards and carry them with me for review. Research has shown that once you can initially say a verse from memory you will be unable to do so in about an hour. But you will find that it will then take much less time to re-learn it. The same thing then occurs about a day later, a week later, etc., but each time taking less and less time to re-learn. Eventually it will be "in there" for good. I know verses I learned 42 years ago, and it's made such an impact on my life that I'm still learning new ones today. So the key to remembering a verse is not only to memorize it, but also to review. Reviewing with another person is also helpful, and will be an encouragement to them. Think about this, if the Bible is ever banned, the verses we've memorized will be the only ones we'll have. But even now, with Bibles in every book store and home, there are times during the day when we don't have one with us, or it is impractical to pull out our Bibles. So at those times, the verses we've memorized are all that we have at that particular moment. The Holy Spirit will then use the verses you've memorized in your life and help you to be a ministry to others at any time! So memorize key verses. God bless you as you memorize.

Genesis 2:21-24; Matthew 19:14; 1 Corinthians 7:32-35; Ephesians 5:22, Ephesians 5:25