IMPROVING OUR MARRIAGES

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Introduction

Marriage is an arrangement that God has designed, for a people that he designed.

It should not surprise us that God should bring this into human history

It was designed to be a good and perfect gift.

* Permanent and lifelong

But in fact, only God knows how to make it what it’s intended to be. If our marriage is to be what God wants it to be, we are going to have to accept His direction.

He created the creature and arrangement of marriage - Not in man - Jer 10:23,24

* Tragedy comes when we think we have a better way.

It is God’s Intention that all who marry would find joy and peace in this relationship. That it should touch the partners spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically.

Broken marriages and broken lives is our story in this culture.

* Partners
* Children
* Families
* Subsequent generations
* The Lord’s church

**Class Objectives**

* Understand the Biblical roles God gives in marriage
* Improve our ability to communicate effectively with our spouses
* Discuss practical ideas to address real challenges
* Enjoy a more loving marriage

**Discussion points**

* Marriage, the most intimate of human relationships
* The problem of married Christians who would not divorce one another but who nevertheless have grown apart emotionally. What suffers?
* A joint, wholehearted commitment to Christ is necessary.
	+ It goes without saying that there is no longer a firm conviction in our society at large that marriage is for life.
	+ But even among Christians, unreserved commitment in marriage -- the kind that can stand up under stress and overcome difficulties -- is more and more rare

Lesson 1

**Improving your commitment (faithfulness) to God**

Introduction

It should not surprise us that God would bring this into human history - Radical

* Permanent
* Lifelong
* *Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice in the wife of your youth* - Pr 5:18
* *An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels. The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life.* Pr 31:10

Broken marriages and broken lives are the story in this culture

We see others and their challenges with marriage - We need to think and ask “what about us?” What is the distinguishing characteristic in marriage?

Key Points

* Being fully and absolutely committed to God is the key to our marriages being what we really need them to be.
* Our lives and our marital challenges are complicated.
* Years of unresolved issues and unmet expectations will damage our relationships.

We can boil this down into some basic principles:

Honor

* Honor our commitment to God - God is to be first in our lives
* By honoring our commitment to our spouse, we honor our commitment to God
	+ Class discussion...
		- When does commitment to God really have meaning? When there is a conflict between what I want and what God wants.
* Mt 6:33 - Putting God truly first in our lives
* Mt 22:37 - Deut 6:5

I have never seen a marriage fall apart between two committed Christians.

Choosing

What kind of effort are we putting into our marriage?

* Some say “I don’t feel like loving you”
	+ Feelings come after the choice
	+ I have chosen to love you
	+ I have made a commitment to God

Review Ephesians 5 and note how interwoven our commitment to our spouse is with our commitment to the Lord. Note the connection -

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Wife** | **Husband** |
| Submit | Love |
| Respect | Cherish |
|  | Honor |

This is not a complicated text. What is expressed here is the basis of marital contentment.

We can’t really separate marital problems from our relationship with God - the two things are intertwined.

Difficulties? Focus on our relationship toward God.

Gen. 29:32, 33, 35 - Dialog with Leah - So desirous to please her husband - Finally, praising God. “Now I will praise the Lord”

Text

“*All this has come upon us; but we have not forgotten You, nor have we dealt falsely with Your covenant. Our heart has not turned back, nor have our steps departed from Your way*” (Psalm 44:17,18)

*“Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator” I Peter 4:19*

*“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.Dt.6:4-5*

Biblical Characters that characterize faithfulness

* *Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him. Genesis 6:22*
* Then I replied to them, “The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.” Nehemiah 2:20
* “In *all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrong.” Job 1:22*
* *“As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today.” Genesis 50:20*
* *“For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father’s house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” Esther 4:14*
* *“He went to his house where he had windows in his upper chamber open toward Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as he had done.” Daniel 6:10*

The opposite of faithfulness is betrayal

For it is not an enemy who taunts me—
 then I could bear it;
 it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—
 then I could hide from him.
 But it is you, a man, my equal,
 my companion, my familiar friend. Ps 55:11-13

Class discussion

* Discuss areas in our lives where we might experience commitment.
* What is the product of this commitment?
* Is there any doubt that God desires our full and complete commitment?
* What are the results when we are less than fully committed to anything

Additional Texts

*But you say, “Why does he not?” Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.* *Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.*  Mal. 2:14, 15

Lesson 2 Humility

1. Passages about Humility

a. Definition of Humility

 i. : not proud : not thinking of yourself as better than other people

 ii. Given or said in a way that shows you do not think you are better than other people

 Iii.: showing that you do not think of yourself as better than other people

 iv. :not proud or haughty : not arrogant or assertive

 v. : reflecting, expressing, or offered in a spirit of deference or submission <a humble apology>

 vi. a : ranking low in a hierarchy or scale : insignificant, unpretentious

 vii. b : not costly or luxurious <a humble contraption>

b. Pro\_15:33 The fear of the LORD is instruction in wisdom, and humility comes before honor.

c. Pro\_18:12 before destruction a man's heart is haughty, but humility comes before honor.

d. Pro\_22:4 the reward for humility and fear of the LORD is riches and honor and life.

e. Zep\_2:3 Seek the LORD, all you humble of the land, who do his just commands; seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps you may be hidden on the day of the anger of the LORD.

f. Act\_20:19 serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews;

g. Eph\_4:2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,

h. Php\_2:3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

i. Col\_3:12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,

j. 1Pe\_5:5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

k. Jas\_4:6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

l. Jas\_4:10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.

m. 1Pe\_3:8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

n. 1Pe\_5:5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

o. 1Pe\_5:6 Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,

p. Job\_40:11 Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud and abase him.

q. Job\_40:12 Look on everyone who is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked where they stand.

r. Psa\_40:4 Blessed is the man who makes the LORD his trust, who does not turn to the proud, to those who go astray after a lie!

s. Psa\_94:2 Rise up, O judge of the earth; repay to the proud what they deserve!

t. Psa\_123:4 Our soul has had more than enough of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.

u. Pro\_15:25 The LORD tears down the house of the proud but maintains the widow's boundaries.

v. Pro\_16:19 It is better to be of a lowly spirit with the poor than to divide the spoil with the proud.

w. Pro\_21:4 Haughty eyes and a proud heart, the lamp of the wicked, are sin.

x. Ecc\_7:8 Better is the end of a thing than its beginning, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.

y.

2. Some examples of humility

a. John 13:3-5 - Jesus washing the disciples feet

b. Luke 7:36-39, Woman anointing Jesus with perfume and washing His feet with her hair

c. Jesus coming to earth in the form of a man

 i. Phil 2:5-8 (NASB) - 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. 8 Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

d. Deut 8:2-7 (NASB) - 2 You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3 He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord. 4 Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. 5 Thus you are to know in your heart that the Lord your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. 6 Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. 7 For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills;

3. Practical applications of this characteristic

**a.** **Do something out of the ordinary and special for your spouse**

 i. Serving your wife dinner on occasion given she has served you many times

 ii. Bringing her coffee in the morning while she is getting ready

 iii. It does not matter what it is, but you have to pay attention enough to know what your spouse would like or appreciate

b. You have just **tracked mud into the thru the kitchen** and down the hall. Your wife has just cleaned the floors. You are not aware of that. She is furious with you. She raises her voice at you.

 i. You can humbly apologize and clean up the mess

 ii. You can apologize and let her clean up the mess

 iii. You can get on to her for raising her voice to you and tell her to clean up the mess

c. You are left with the kids, one of which is a baby in diapers. Your wife will only be gone for 30 minutes but the **baby's diaper needs to be changed**

 i. You can change the diaper even though you really hate to do it

 ii. You can leave it till she returns

 iii. Which one shows humility?

d. Your **wife has completely failed to accomplish what you nicely asked her to do** this morning and it was important it got done today. She knew that. She is very irritable when you get home from work. She is short with you and snappy. You ask about the items that needed to be done today. She replies with a disrespectful answer.

 i. You can get angry and rebuke her.

 ii. You can ask how her day went and if she needs some help with something

e. Never pay back evil with evil

 i. Your husband walks in the door. You are excited to see him as are the kids. You greet him, and kiss him. **He snaps at you and storms off**

1. You can get mad at his complete lack of consideration and rudeness

2. You could give him some space, keep the kids away and then offer some dinner in a little while all while not being mad or offended.

 ii. One of you have **broken your promise to the kids**. You have completely forgotten about it. Your spouse has called it to your attention.

1. You can deny it, make excuses or try to blame others

2. You can humbly accept responsibility and work to correct the situation

 iii. Rom 12:14-19 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. (15) Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. (16) Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. (17) Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. (18) If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (19) Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."

Selflessness

**Lesson 3**

1. Definition

a. Selfish

i. concerned excessively or exclusively with oneself **:** seeking or concentrating on one's own advantage, pleasure, or well-being without regard for others

 ii. arising from concern with one's own welfare or advantage in disregard of others <a *selfish* act>

 iii. being an actively replicating repetitive sequence of nucleic acid that serves no known function <*selfish* DNA>; *also* **:** being genetic material solely concerned with its own replication <*selfish* genes>

 iv. From <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/selfish>>

b. Selfless

 i. Having no concern for self

 ii. Concern more for the needs and wishes of others than for one's self

2. Passages on Selfish

a. Php 2:3-8 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. (4) Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. (5) Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, (6) who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

b. Psa\_119:36 Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain!

c. Php\_1:17 The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.

d. Jas\_3:14 But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth.

e. Jas\_3:16 For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice.

f. Mat 6:31-33 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' (32) For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. (33) But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

3. Passages on Sacrifice

a. Rom 12:1-5 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. (2) Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (3) For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. (4) For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, (5) so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

b. Gal 2:20 I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

c. Considering another's conscience

 i. Rom 14

 ii. 1 cor 8-10

 iii. From these passages we learn that my "rights" stop at another's conscience

d. 2Sa 24:24 But the king said to Araunah, "No, but I will buy it from you for a price. I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing." So David bought the threshing floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

e. Eph 5:22-33 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. (23) For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. (24) Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. (25) Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, (26) that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, (27) so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. (28) In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. (29) For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, (30) because we are members of his body. (31) "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." (32) This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. (33) However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

4. Practical applications

a. Ladies, you have been working side jobs and saving money to but this new outfit, purse, and shoes - all matching of course.

 i. You have the money. You are going tomorrow to buy

 ii. Wed night at service you learn that sister \_\_\_\_\_\_ needs money to cover electric bill that will be turned off if not paid tomorrow

 iii. What do you do?

b. Football Game vs going to church

 i. You have not missed church on Sunday for years. You got free tickets to a play-off game of your favorite team. It is going to cause you to miss Sunday worship. Do you go?

1. What if you will only miss Sunday evening?

2. What if you are only going to miss Wed night?

3. Who are you putting first with each decision?

c. Job vs God

 i. Have a good Job. Was offered a new job but it requires me to work 2 Sundays a month. Do I take it?

1. It only requires me to work one Sunday a month?

2. It requires me to work 2 Wed's a month?

 ii. I do not have a job. I have been looking for weeks. I am running up my charge card. I get an offer for a good job but it requires me to work 2 Sundays a month. What do I do?

 iii. Husbands working late

 iv. Spouse traveling and/or traveling often

d. Husband or wife is verbally abusive

 i. Wives fight back or

e. Girl time or guy time

 i. There is a regular opportunity to spend time with your friends. You spouse stays at home and is not included.

f. Spending time with spouse each night

 i. Talk

 ii. Do something together - read, study bible, TV, workout,etc

g. Giving children all your attention and ignoring spouse

h. Go to bed together/at the same time and bed.

5. some tests

a. What have you given for your spouse this week?

b. Were you asked to or did you just do it?

c. Did it cost you anything?

**Forgiveness**

**Lesson 4**

Introduction

There are many things that each of us might do in our marriages. Lying or deception, addictions, destructive financial decisions, chronic indifference to our spouse’s needs, and even unfaithfulness.

God and forgiveness

* For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. Matthew 6:14-15
* Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. Matthew 6:11-12

So what is real forgiveness?

Biblically - APHIEMI - v. Forgive, to send forth, send away (apo, from, hiemi, to send) - To remit or forgive.

Mt 6:12, 18:27, 32 - These are completely cancelled.

Firstly, signifies the remission of the punishment due to sinful conduct - Christ

Secondly, it involves the complete removal of the cause of offence.

 “Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times” Matthew 18:21-22

Understanding what forgiveness really is and is not

We often equate forgiveness with something warm and fuzzy. Truthfully, forgiveness is quite the opposite. Forgiveness can be quite painful when it involves someone you love. In marriage, forgiveness is not "Don't worry about what you did, I'm fine with it and we all make mistakes." Unresolved, things can turn into pain, anger, bitterness, and resentment.

* Forgiveness is not lip service.
* Forgiveness is not being so numb to pain that we are oblivious to reality.
* Forgiveness is not choosing to inflict the price for the offense.
* Forgiveness is not letting the offender off the hook. We can and should still hold others accountable for their actions or lack of actions.
* Forgiveness is not letting the offense recur again and again. Forgiveness is not based on others' actions but on our attitude.
* Forgiveness is returning to God the right to take care of justice. By refusing to transfer the right to exact punishment or revenge, we are telling God we don't trust him to take care of matters.

Thoughts for Discussion

* The reason we battle unforgiveness is because we can only see the problems (Speck) in others, but we often times ignore the beams in our own eyes
* After all I have done against God, how can I turn to another human being and say - “i refuse to forgive you!”
* Often times our ability to genuinely forgive is possible when we see and fully understand God’s forgiveness extended toward us
	+ We should take care not to confuse victims of the enemy with the enemy himself. Even when controversy is necessary, it helps to remember that our human opponent is, at worst, a victim of the enemy (2 Timothy 2:24-26). The real enemy is the devil, and that’s where our fury needs to be focused.

 “Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times” Matthew 18:21-22

* Forgiveness means excusing the penalty for an offense, offering pardon.
	+ ... then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.” Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin. Hebrews 10:17-18
	+ “I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins. Isaiah 43:25
	+ Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, [*forgiving*](http://www.esvbible.org/2Co2.7%3B2Co2.10%3BMt6.14/) one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Eph 4:32

Patient

Lesson 5

1. Definition of "patient"

a. able to accept or tolerate delays, problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious:

 i. From <<https://www.bing.com/search?q=patient+definition&form=WNSGPH&qs=AS&cvid=73666efd231a42798425e930ab205ab5&pq=patient%20defi&nclid=1E5972217D33957D9C30DE5839F327B1&ts=1446336322703&elv=ACzV!ebBcP1hQxd4ksnfJS3dMLifTrY2m6vSaoHIxuDo>>

b. bearing pains or trials calmly or without complaint

c. manifesting [forbearance](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/forbearance) under provocation or strain

d. not hasty or [impetuous](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/impetuous)

e. steadfast despite opposition, difficulty, or adversity

f. able or willing to bear —used with *of*

 i. From <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/patient>>

2. Closely Related terms

a. perseverance

 i. the quality that allows someone to continue trying to do something even though it is difficult

 ii. continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, failure, or opposition : the action or condition or an instance of persevering :

b. Steadfastness

 i. firmly fixed in place : immovable

 ii. not subject to change <the steadfast doctrine of original sin — Ellen Glasgow>

 iii. firm in belief, determination, or adherence : loyal <her followers have remained steadfast>

3. Passages about patience

a. Ecc 7:7-9 Surely oppression drives the wise into madness, and a bribe corrupts the heart. (8) Better is the end of a thing than its beginning, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. (9) Be not quick in your spirit to become angry, for anger lodges in the heart of fools.

b. Pro\_25:15 With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone.

c. Luk\_8:15 As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience.

d. Rom\_2:4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

e. Rom 2:6-8 He will render to each one according to his works: (7) to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; (8) but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

f. Rom 8:24-25 For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? (25) But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

g. Rom 12:9-15 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. (10) Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. (11) Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. (12) Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. (13) Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. (14) Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. (15) Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

h. 1Co 13:4-7 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant (5) or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; (6) it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. (7) Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

i. Gal\_5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

j. Eph 4:1-3 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, (2) with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, (3) eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

k. 1Ti 1:15-16 The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. (16) But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

l. 2Ti\_4:2 preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching.

m. Jas 5:7-8 Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. (8) You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.

n. Jas 5:9-11 Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. (10) As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. (11) Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

o. 1Pe 3:18-20 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, (19) in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, (20) because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

p. 2Pe 3:8-10 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. (9) The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. (10) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

q. 2Pe 3:13-15 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (14) Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. (15) And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him,

4. If we expect God to be patient with us we MUST be patient with others

a. Mat 18:23-35 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. (24) When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. (25) And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. (26) So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' (27) And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. (28) But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' (29) So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' (30) He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. (31) When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. (32) Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. (33) And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' (34) And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. (35) So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

b. The one who owed money needed more time.

c. This is often the case, we promise to do something, in this case, pay something, and we are not able to meet our obligations

d. We need others to be patient with us.

e. When we receive patience, as the servant did, we have got return that patience to others.

f. In this parable, the master is clearly God. God forgave the debt having pity, compassion on the servant

g. But the servant did not return that pity and compassion

5. Practical applications of patience

a. Wives, your husband is the sloppiest person you know. He leaves his clothes out, his work stuff out, his tools, etc. Basically, his ability to put stuff up when done with it is non-existent. You are constantly picking up after him. What do you do?

 i. Nag him, and holler at him every time you find something out

 ii. Ask him nicely to pick up his stuff

 iii. Pick up his stuff for him and love him anyway

 iv. Refuse to pick his stuff every again.

 v. Threaten to kill him, if he does it again

b. Husbands, your wife is loving and wonderful, but she cannot get ready to go on time to save her life. You are constantly late to church and other events that impact others. You and her have discussed this lots of times. She knows there is a change needed. She is struggling to get there. What do you do?

c. Drinking/Drugs - is a spouse uses these items, there is always a level of distrust that develops over time because the drinker/drug user becomes more interested in the drinking/drugs than in the spouse

d. Little "white lies" - your spouse has a tendency to tell little white lies about things that are often just not important/significant. You are starting to distrust your spouse because of this problem.

e. Your spouse has hurt you in some way - harsh words, repeatedly, disloyal, unfaithful, etc. He/She has repented and has promised to change/fix your trust. But, it has been days now, weeks now, or months now. What do you do?

6. What are the challenges to being patient? What tries your patience?

a. Having to explain the same thing over and over again. Your spouse, child, co-worker cannot seem to grasp the solution.

b. Having to work with/live with someone who is lazy or not willing to pull their own weight.

 i. Are relationships/marriages 50/50?

c. Having to work with/live with someone who only cares about themselves

d. Having to deal with someone who is not willing to give/change their mind.

7. How can I manage my patience or improve my patience?

a. Focus on God first. Getting to heaven.

b. Be humble, loving, selfless

c. Put others first - what do they need to succeed.

d. Change your mind about what makes you happy.

 i. Doing what God wants makes you happy.

 ii. Yes, enduring for God's sake makes you happy.

1. Paul and Silas singing in prison after being beaten

e. Have an opinion but be willing to change

f. Who is control of your attitude?

 i. You are. Hence you can control your patience

g. Limit stress by limiting the amount of work in progress

 i. Take one day at a time - bible tells us this

 ii. Produce a list of ToDo's,

 iii. Break the items up into small things that can be done in less than 1 day

 iv. prioritize them and pick the top 1-5 items to complete today.

 v. Completely ignore the rest of the list until tonight

 vi. Finish the top 2-5 items in order

 vii. Repeat the same process tomorrow

**Lesson 6**

**Becoming More Submissive**

Introduction

Submission is a choice that we all make everyday.

Defining Submission

Oxford Dictionary - Accept or [yield](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/yield#yield__11) to a [superior](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/superior#superior__2) force or to the authority or [will](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/will#will-2__3) of another:

(**submit oneself**) [Consent](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/consent#consent__6) to undergo a certain treatment:

*she submitted under duress*

**give in/way**, [yield](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/yield#yield__11), back down, [cave in](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/cave#cave__15), [capitulate](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/capitulate#capitulate__2); [surrender](http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/surrender#surrender__2), knuckle under

Vines <1,,5226, hupeiko>

"to retire, withdraw" (hupo, under, eiko, "to yield"), hence, "to yield, submit," is used metaphorically in Heb. 13:17, of "submitting" to spiritual guides in the churches.

Adj. - inclined or ready to [submit](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/submit) or yield to the authority of another; unresistingly or humbly obedient:

Why in the world would you ever submit to anything? Many refuse to submit, or be subject to anything

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! . . .” (Matthew 23:37,38)

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Romans 8:7

The idea of submission is at the heart of the gospel.

* “I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls” (2 Corinthians 12:15)
* In humility consider other better than yourselves. Each should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others. [Philippians 2:3b-4](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Philippians%202.3b-4)
* Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honour one another above yourselves. [Romans 12:10](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Romans%2012.10)
* Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. [1 Corinthians 10:24](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/1%20Corinthians%2010.24)
* Be kind and tender-hearted to one another, forgiving each other just as in Christ, God forgave you. [Ephesians 4:32](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Ephesians%204.32)
* As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. [Colossians 3:12](http://biblia.com/bible/nasb95/Colossians%203.12)

Not just for our wives - It’s a strong and frequent admonition from God in the NT.

* To one another - Eph 5:20,21, I Pet 5:5
* Civil Authorities - Rom 7:1-7; I Pet 2:13-17
* Domestic Authorities - Eph 6:5-9
* Those God places over them in the church II Thes 3:14, Shepherds - I Thes 5:12,13;

There is also another sense in which we should submit our will

* Christ
* Our children

Talking Points

* “... heirs together of the grace of life” - I Pet 3:7
* The wife’s submission to God should become her ultimate motive to be in submission to her husband - Eph 5:22 ... as unto the Lord
* Submission is Abraham in Gen 12 saying Yes to God and going.

Text Ephesians 5:21>

Note vs. 21 reminds us that being filled with the Spirit is not only singing and giving thanks, but is submitting to one another.

* Submission can be voluntary or involuntary
	+ Slavery is not something we voluntarily enter into
	+ With Christianity, we choose to do this
		- Workplace
		- Local congregation
		- Wife says yes to marriage she recognizes that God’s arrangement assigns leadership to the husband
* All these things are done as noted at the end of the out of “reverence for Christ”

“Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands.” I Pet 3:1

this as a call to something strong and noble and beautiful and dignified and worthy of a woman’s highest spiritual and moral efforts.

Does submission mean that

* What about if you’re a better money manager than your husband?

Submission is the divine calling of a wife to honor and

* affirm her husband’s leadership and help carry it through
* follow a husband’s authority and an inclination to yield to his leadership
	+ “I delight for you to take the initiative in our family. I am glad when you take responsibility for things and lead with love. I don’t flourish in the relationship when you are passive and I have to make sure the family works.”



**Listening**

Lesson 7

1. What is communication?

a. General

 i. the imparting or exchanging of information or news:

1. "direct communication between the two countries will produce greater understanding"

2. synonyms: transmission · conveyance · divulgence · disclosure ·

 ii. means of connection between people or places, in particular.

b. Webster says

 i. the act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviors to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc., to someone else

 ii. a message that is given to someone : a letter, telephone call, etc.

 iii. communications : the ways of sending information to people by using technology

3. <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships/effective-communication.htm>

a. It sounds so simple: say what you mean. But all too often, what we try to communicate gets lost in translation despite our best intentions. We say one thing, the other person hears something else, and misunderstandings, frustration, and conflicts ensue.

b. Fortunately, you can learn how to communicate more clearly and effectively. Whether you’re trying to improve communication with your spouse, kids, boss, or coworkers, you can improve the communication skills that enable you to effectively connect with others, build trust and respect, and feel heard and understood.

c. Communication is about more than just exchanging information. It's about understanding the emotion and intentions behind the information. Effective communication is also a two-way street. It’s not only how you convey a message so that it is received and understood by someone in exactly the way you intended, it’s also how you listen to gain the full meaning of what’s being said and to make the other person feel heard and understood.

d. More than just the words you use, effective communication combines a set of skills including nonverbal communication, engaged listening, managing stress in the moment, the ability to communicate assertively, and the capacity to recognize and understand your own emotions and those of the person you’re communicating with.

4. We will focus on 1 of the 4 communication skills: Listening

a. Listen

 i. to pay attention to someone or something in order to hear what is being said, sung, played, etc.

 ii. used to tell a person to listen to what you are saying

 iii. to hear what someone has said and understand that it is serious, important, or true

b. Hear

 i. to perceive or apprehend by the ear

 ii. to gain knowledge of by hearing

 iii. to listen to with attention : heed

 iv. attend <hear mass>

 v. to give a legal hearing to

 vi. to take testimony from <hear witnesses>

c. Bible definition

 i. Jas 1:19-20 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; (20) for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

1. **Quick to hear** - listen, pay attention, understand what is being said

2. **Slow to speak** - Now that you understand it, think about it. Apply wisdom.

3. **Slow to anger** - React deliberately. Do not be out of control. Control your anger, be sure it is justified.

2. Bible passages

a. There are 195 verses that use the word "listen"

b. There are 469 verses that use the word "hear"

c. Exo\_7:13 Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

d. Exo\_7:22 But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

e. Exo\_8:19 Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said.

f. Exo 15:22-26 Then Moses made Israel set out from the Red Sea, and they went into the wilderness of Shur. They went three days in the wilderness and found no water. (23) When they came to Marah, they could not drink the water of Marah because it was bitter; therefore it was named Marah. (24) And the people grumbled against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" (25) And he cried to the LORD, and the LORD showed him a log, and he threw it into the water, and the water became sweet. There the LORD made for them a statute and a rule, and there he tested them, (26) saying, "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer."

g. Deu\_4:1 "And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

h. Deu\_7:12 "And because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the LORD your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers.

i. Deu 13:6-10 "If your brother, the son of your mother, or your son or your daughter or the wife you embrace or your friend who is as your own soul entices you secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which neither you nor your fathers have known, (7) some of the gods of the peoples who are around you, whether near you or far off from you, from the one end of the earth to the other, (8) you shall not yield to him or listen to him, nor shall your eye pity him, nor shall you spare him, nor shall you conceal him. (9) But you shall kill him. Your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. (10) You shall stone him to death with stones, because he sought to draw you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

j. Psa\_81:8 Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me!

k. Psa\_81:11 "But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel would not submit to me.

l. Psa\_81:13 Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways!

m. Psa\_86:6 Give ear, O LORD, to my prayer; listen to my plea for grace.

n. Pro\_5:7 And now, O sons, listen to me, and do not depart from the words of my mouth.

o. Pro\_5:13 I did not listen to the voice of my teachers or incline my ear to my instructors.

p. Pro\_7:24 And now, O sons, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth.

q. Pro\_8:32 "And now, O sons, listen to me: blessed are those who keep my ways.

r. Pro\_13:1 A wise son hears his father's instruction, but a scoffer does not listen to rebuke.

s. Pro\_19:20 Listen to advice and accept instruction, that you may gain wisdom in the future.

t. Pro\_23:22 Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old.

u. Ecc\_5:1 Guard your steps when you go to the house of God. To draw near to listen is better than to offer the sacrifice of fools, for they do not know that they are doing evil.

v. Num\_9:8 And Moses said to them, "Wait, that I may hear what the LORD will command concerning you."

w. Num\_12:6 And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream.

3. What does listening do for you?

a. Provides information

b. Enables Understanding

c. Sparks new ideas or approaches or solutions

d. Proves you are respectful or considerate of the one you are listening to.

4. What does listening do for the other party (the other party seeing that you are listening)?

a. Builds trust

b. Builds a desire to work together

c. Encourages or obligates them to listen to you

5. What is required of you to really listen?

a. Work.

b. Thinking

c. Consideration

d. Compassion

e. Patience

f. Humility

6. What hinders you from listening?

a. Your own stress

b. Your own workload and sense of urgency to solve a different problem

c. Selfishness

d. The speaker when

 i. Rambling

 ii. Disoriented words/sentences

 iii. Foul language

 iv. Disrespect or rudeness

7. Applying listening skills in your marriage.

a. Your wife is a complex creature

i. 1 Pet 3:7 (NASB) - You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

b. Your wife enters the room, calls your name to get your attention. You respond, then you proceed to not listen (turn your attention to something else) while your wife speaks to you.

c. Sitting at dinner table and everyone is texting or looking at the phone

d. What happens when you disobey God? What does it mean to disobey God?

 i. You are not listening

 ii. You are sinning

 iii. You are telling God that you are more important. His sacrifice is not important

 iv. So, what does it mean if you half pay attention to your wife, or completley ignore your wife while she is communicating with you

e. Your wife is very upset. She gets your attention and begins talking. Telling all that is going on describing this problem and that problem. What do you do?

 i. Listen. Ask questions. Find out what her need is.

 ii. You may not need to do anything but listen. On the other hand, she may be asking you to do help

 iii. We have to understand the message being given. Listen means to understand and act according. Acting accordingly, may mean you just listen, or be supportive, or provide encouragement, etc.

 iv. Your spouse has accused you of doing something, you have even been guilty, from time to time, but now it seems your spouse is accusing you. What do you do?

8. Things to remember to listen better

a. Focus actively on the one speaking. Do not be doing something else (texting, writing, watching TV, playing video game, etc)

b. Be patient.

c. Listen more and talk less. If you want to talk. Instead stop and listen more.

 i. Eccl 5:6-7 (NET) - 6 Do not let your mouth cause you to sin, and do not tell the priest, "It was a mistake!" Why make God angry at you so that he would destroy the work of your hands?" 7 Just as there is futility in many dreams, so also in many words. Therefore, fear God!

 ii. Prov 10:19 (NASB) - When there are many words, transgression is unavoidable, But he who restrains his lips is wise.

d. Provide feedback to the speaker: nod, ask questions, restate what has been said to get confirmation

e. Maintain eye contact.

f. Do not be thinking about what you are going to say next.

g. Remember the habits or needs of the one speaking to you. Learn their body language, gestures, etc

h. Do not be judgmental. Give benefit of the doubt.

i. Avoid interrupting

j. Be genuinely interested

k. Remember the message: Details and/or just key points

l. Understand the context of the message

m. Doing these things may take

 i. Work on your part

 ii. Patience

 iii. Sacrifice

 iv. Humility

 v. Long suffering

Disagreement or Conflict

Lesson 9

1. Conflict

a. A state of open, often prolonged fighting; a battle or war.

b. A state of disharmony between incompatible or antithetical person’s, ideas, or interests; a clash.

c. Psychology A psychic struggle, often unconscious, resulting from the opposition or simultaneous functioning of mutually exclusive impulses, desires, or tendencies.

d. Opposition between characters or forces in a work of drama or fiction, especially opposition that motivates or shapes the action of the plot

2. Disagreement

a. failure to agree

b. a difference of opinion : an argument caused by people having different opinions about something

c. the state of being different or unalike

3. One person defined it this way…

a. “Conflict is neither good nor bad—it just is. And what it is is a word derived from the Latin word "conflictus" (the act of striking together) and is defined as:

 i. competitive or opposing action of incompatibles: antagonistic state or action (as of divergent ideas, interests, or persons)

 ii. mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes, or external or internal demands “

4. Another person defined it…

a. “Conflict occurs when individuals or groups are not obtaining what they need or want and are seeking their own self-interest.”

b. Clearly conflict or disagreement comes from selfishness on the side of one or both partiers but not always. Consider Paul or Jesus and their conflict with the Jews

5. Conflict is typically a bad thing

a. The bible speaks in numerous places how strife, envy, anger, hatred, etc will destroy yourself and others.

b. Prov 6:12-15, 6:19, 10:12, 18, 15:18, 16:28, 17:1, 17:14, 18:17, etc

c. 1 Cor 3:1-3, Gal 5:19-20, 1 Tim 6:3-5, Tit 3:9, James 3:13-18

6. It can be a good thing

a. Proverbs is full of passages that teach how one is to accept correction

 i. Prov 10:17,12:1, 13:18, 15:5,10,31-32, 29:15, etc

b. I know from my personal experience, that I learn a lot more when there is disagreement and I have to prove my position or accept theirs

7. “You can either let conflict or the potential for conflict drag you down or you can use it to lift you to new levels of performance”

8. Christians have the responsibility to address and endure conflict

a. Rom 12:9-19 (NASB) - 9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; 11 not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, 13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. 17 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

b. 1Co 13:4-7 NASB Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, (5) does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, (6) does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; (7) bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things

c. Phil 2:3-7 (NASB) - 3 Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. 5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

9. What is true about disagreement/conflict?

a. Conflict is inevitable;

b. Conflict develops because we are dealing with people's lives, jobs, children, pride, self-concept, ego and sense of mission or purpose;

c. Early indicators of conflict can be recognized;

d. There are strategies for resolution that are available and DO work;

e. Although inevitable, conflict can be minimized, diverted and/or resolved.

10. Indicators of disagreement & conflict

a. Body language

b. Disagreement, regardless of issue

c. Withholding of bad news

d. Value system differences

e. Selfishness, desire for something for self

f. Lack of respect

g. Lack of or poor communication - no management of expectations

h. Strong statements

i. Stubbornness

j. Revealing of private matters or differences or opinion in public

11. How do we handle disagreements/conflicts? Here are some situations to consider

a. Husband and wife are recently married. Both have been on their own for a few years having their own bank accounts and method for dealing with bills. Who is going to pay the bills or do you split the bills? Do you combine the bank accounts or maintain two separate accounts? How do you decide?

 i. Neither option is right or wrong.

 ii. Are there some principles from the bible to guide you?

 iii. Does care how you manage it?

 iv. Are there pitfalls or potential problems with one approach or the other?

 v. Some things to consider

1. Is one person more responsible than the other?

2. If one person controls the money, what can that do to the relationship?

3. What are each other weaknesses as it relates to money, spending, or book keeping?

b. You want to buy a new car. Your is old and needing frequent repairs. You have two small children but you do not want a minivan. There is a nice SUV that you prefer. Your spouse is set on a minivan. How do you decide?

 i. Price is certainly important. Only purchase what you can afford - do not let what you want/like to be more important that living within your means

1. Recall that a loan is a vow. You are promising to pay regardless of what happens to you.

2. If you lose your job you still have to pay.

3. This is an important spiritual principle

 ii. Think beyond today - Children grow quickly. Plan for it.

iii. Can you give up your wants to prefer your spouse?

 iv. Can you discuss it reasonably, logically, without getting mad if the facts are against you?

c. You have been married for 3-4 years, Your firstborn is now two. She is getting into lots of stuff and is clearly being rebellious to instruction sometimes but very sweet most of the time. You think it is time to start spanking the child for misbehavior. Your spouse is adamant that the child should not be spanked - actually prefers that the child never be spanked. What do you do?

 i. What is the real problem?

 ii. The bible speaks to discipline of children

iii. Often, this kind of disagreement between two faithful Christians indicates there is a bigger problem?

 iv. Do you have a temper? Can you control your anger? Are going to be too rough?

 v. Can the child go without discipline?

 vi. What does God say about who is responsible for discipline?

 vii. Proper discipline requires effort and sacrifice. Parents are often not willing to make the effort or give up what they want.

 viii. Does the bible say how to raise a child?

d. Your daughter has just turned 13. She is beautiful, outgoing, does well in school, is well liked and is interested in the bible but has not become a Christian yet. There is a boy she is very interested in. He comes from a good family. You know the family. He makes good grades. He and his family attend the Catholic church regularly. Your spouse, has no real evidence but completely does not trust the boy. Your spouse also thinks the daughter is not ready to date. What do you do:

 i. When the daughter approaches you to see if she can attend services with the boy on Saturday mass? Wednesday night? On Sunday?

 ii. When the boy asks her to go to the movie?

 iii. You have not let them date. She has been seeing the boy at your house or his house for 6 months. He just got his license and he has stopped by to show her his new car. He wants to take her for a drive and to get some ice cream? Your spouse is not at home. What do you do?

 iv. If you want your child to be a faithful Christian you have to be on.

 v. You have to let God drive your every decision. You have to understand why you do what you do.

 vi. Teenagers do not yet understand that. You have to teach them that. If you have not lived consistent with the bible, you teenage knows it and will practice that pattern.

1. It is easier to sin than to be faithful

2. Recall how God dealt with man during the exodus and how He dealt with man as the NT was established.

3. God demonstrated love and gave man multiples reasons to trust and depend on Him

4. God set limits on what man could do and not do

5. God informed man of those limits

6. God was patient and longsuffering until He had given man sufficient time to understand His expectations

7. God used multiple forms of punishment with stern discipline high on His list

8. After punishment and repentance, God would give man another chance to do what was right.

9. Look at How God deals with Man in the NT

10. Man, in a sense, has grown up. He is ready for God’s NT.

11. God paid the ultimate sacrifice for man thru the death of Jesus on the cross. God has provided everything man needs.

12. Early in Acts, we see the severe punishment of God (Acts 5)

13. God now expects us to hear and obey.

14. God is no longer going to overlook ignorance (Acts 17:30-31)

15. He is not going to strike you down immediately today but He will discipline us. (Heb 12:4-11)

16. Do not ignore the lessons we have from God.

17. Deal with our children in the same way God deals with us.

18. Doing so will help them to understand God

e. Your mother-in-law is a Christian but she is not attending services and her lifestyle is not godly. Your spouse continues to visit his/her mother on a regular basis. The two of you have studied the topic of fellowship. You have discussed withdrawal. The mother-in-law, when approached , has refused to discuss religion. You think you and your wife should withdraw from her but your spouse does not. What do you do?

i. It has been 10 months of discussion back and forth. No conclusion has been reached. You have invited a number of people from church over. Your spouse has invited your mother-in-law. What should be done?

ii. Now it has been 15 months and you are starting to believe your spouse is not willing to put God before his/her mother. What should you do?

f. You have been working to get a promotion for some time. Money has been tight. This promotion would provide a good raise. It does require you to move. The area is very nice. The schools are excellent. Your child could use a better place because his/her friends are a bad influence. Your spouse does not think you should move. What do you do?

 i. There is a church nearby but its practices are questionable (use of money, fellowship hall, bible classes seem weak)? Does this change what you should do?

 ii. There is a faithful church but it is 50 miles away? Does this change things?

12. Conclusion

a. God has provided the answer

 i. 2 Pet 1:2-3 (NASB) - 2 Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3 seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.

ii. 2 Tim 3:16-17 (NASB) - 16 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; 17 so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

iii. You can know God's will on any matter if you ARE willing to obey it. John 7:17 (NASB) - If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself.

b. It will take effort and sacrifice on your part.

c. Even when hard, you will always feel better knowing you did your best to serve God in the situation rather than you served yourself.

**Contentment**

Lesson 10

Some thinking about contentment in our lives.

Contentment” is defined as “satisfied with what one is or has.”(dictionary.com)

Synonyms - Satisfaction, gratification, fulfillment, happiness

Antonyms - Anxious, disappointment, worry

We live in a world that wants to breed discontent. So many thinkgs in our society is geared to make you unhappy with your current circumstances: your job, your wardrobe, your car, your house, your wife, your husband, the place you live, whatever it might be. Everything in the advertising world is designed to breed discontent. To make you unhappy with what you have. Make you miserable with what you have with the current circumstance.

Satan feeds this because it essentially winds up in the violation and break down of every relationship.

Not all contentment is good. Some are content with evil and sin in their lives - See Judges 17:10-11. Micah and the Levite set up idolatrous worship - and he “was content.”

Obstacles to contentment

* Lack of faith in God - Putting ourselves in God’s place - Whens and hows - The Children of Israel were to take the land and they lacked the confidence in God to do it. This cost the generation the opportunity to ever enter into the promised land - Note Num. 14:33
* Dwelling on the past - Unless we force ourselves to put the events of the past in the past and quit dwelling on them, we will never master the attitudes and skills for dealing with emotional pain.
* Anxiety - Worry steals our ability to be content
	+ A state of mind of uneasiness about the future
	+ Restlessness
	+ Anxiety is a thief
	+ Anxiety can become a stronghold in our lives - Something that keeps cropping up in our lives
* Not realising that I am not in control
* Self-centeredness

Some passages about contentment as a Christian

* “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
“Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. Matthew 6:25-34
	+ Satan cares little if we are consumed by greed or obsessed by worry as long as our minds are set on *things* and not on God.
	+ Men cannot acceptably serve God with a divided heart
	+ Jesus is challenging us as to what will hold the high-ground in our heart
* But godliness with contentment is great gain, for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. 1 Timothy 6:6-7
	+ Sufficient - needing no external aid
*
* For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. II Cor 12:10
* The Lord is my Shephard I shall not want. Ps 23:1
* And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Phil 4:

How does this translate into our marriages?

All marriages have their struggles - rough spots that we will navigate through - some better than others.

1. Paul reminds us about a key principle that sustains him;
* I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. Philippians 4:12
	+ It’s hard to imagine someone being in a more difficult circumstance
		- Imprisoned because of his preaching
		- Ridiculed by his opponents
		- Despised by the world and criticized by many of the churches
		- This was the backdrop that Paul chose to discuss his own sense of contentment.
* application to marriage - There are always going to be things that may bother us about our spouse. Some things we simply learn are not that important in light of heaven
1. We need to be more consciously grateful to God realizing that genuine peace can only be found within the boundaries of the gospel
* Gratitude in our lives takes away our ability to appreciate the goodness in our lives
	+ bitterness (No contentment) - Col 3:19
	+ comparing our spouses to others
		- There will always be others that are better off than you in certain areas - This kills contentment
1. Contentment really begins with a right relationship with God. First, we should realize that true contentment is really found only in God. No marriage is perfect because no human can fill the craving we have in our heart for perfect love.
	1. He has promised that we will find in Him all our hearts truly desire

Two things are needed:

1. We must see that our deepest need is for God
	1. This is the hardest of the two
		1. It’s hard to not be drawn by the most visible and more immediate and this keep us from seeing our deep need for God - But a longing for God is most urgent need
		2. Only God can perfectly satisfy our hunger and our thirst
		3. He is teaching us that if we have the hearts to learn, that He is the only thing we can’t do without

Supporting notes

We keep in our minds the idea that true fulfillment and joy is not really possible here since we live in a broken world - but we can have a sustaining hope about God fulfilling His promises. In truth, it is possible to be content and unfulfilled at the same time. Look at what Peter says...

 ... Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:8-9

It’s important to note here the end has not yet been achieved - “the salvation of your souls - Our joy is a joy of hope!

Not Content with True Contentment

“But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage?” (Galatians 4:9)

IT’S A FOOLISH THING TO DO, BUT WE SOMETIMES TURN AWAY FROM GOD TO SATISFY OURSELVES WITH THINGS THAT ARE FAR LESS SATISFYING. To the amazement of all who love us, we trade the better for the worse, going down the scale of values rather than up.

Rejecting what we’ve come to know of God’s will is so foolish, none of us would ever do it if we weren’t deceived. But therein lies the power of sin. The devil is shrewd enough to make slavery seem, for the moment, like it’s better than what we have.

It would help us if we paid more attention to the grace God has shown us. We need to be more CONSCIOUSLY GRATEFUL to Him, meditating on the deep, genuine peace that can be found only within the boundaries of the gospel. Do these boundaries limit us? Yes, they do, but let’s not lose touch with reality: WHAT GOD IS “HOLDING BACK” FROM US IS DEATH! If we forget that fact, we’re apt to find ourselves dissatisfied with what He has graciously provided.