

Growing in *Grace*



Cultivating a Fruitful Marriage Through the Book of Philippians

Sabrina Reedy

Growing in Grace

A Couples' Devotional Study

By Sabrina Reedy

www.thehopeofglory.org

"The mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed ... which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Colossians 1:26-27)

Foreword by Elisabeth Fury

Cover image photography by Matthew J. Barnes

April 2024

Foreword

In this devotional Sabrina leads us through the book of Philippians, opening the treasures of each passage in the context of marriage. This book will challenge you—whether you are a newlywed or have had many years of married life—to daily come to Christ, to learn of Him who is meek and lowly in heart. In doing so you will receive His grace to be a blessing to your spouse, children, and all those who surround you, and to reflect His character. I have been most blessed in reading it. Very often I had to pause and ponder, meditating upon our heavenly Father’s ideal for marriage. The Lord deeply touched me through Sabrina’s study and led me closer to Him to be transformed by His Word. The simplicity and profoundness of this book will give you the desire to often come back to reread and meditate upon the beautiful nuggets of truth imbedded in it. Thank you, Sabrina, for being willing to share what our Father has put in your heart.

Many blessings as you read!

Elisabeth Fury
Albi, France

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Paul's letter to the Philippian church contains a great deal of counsel for developing a Christlike character, especially in the context of our relationships with others. Through this devotional book, this counsel will be used to help us reflect specifically upon our marriages; seeking to learn how we can grow in grace towards our spouse and fulfill God's perfect will in our relationship.

If you are married, we encourage you to go through these studies with your husband or wife, and pray that you will be abundantly blessed in doing so. If you are not married, we pray that reflecting independently upon these principles will help you to build a strong foundation for a future relationship, if that is God's will for you!

Malcolm & Sabrina Reedy

Day 1 | Grace & Faith

Philippians 1:1-7

*"**Grace to you** and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God **upon every remembrance of you**, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, **being confident of this very thing**, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because **I have you in my heart**, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are **partakers with me of grace.**"*

I invite you to consider how Paul's love is expressed towards the members of the Philippian church in this greeting. Each of these features should be present in the way we express love towards our spouses as well.

"Grace to You"

Do you extend the same grace to your spouse as you do to others?

As you reflect on this question, if you feel you must answer "no," I commend you for being honest with yourself. Where there is humility, God can step in and do His thing. And if you think the answer is "yes," I pray that that is true! But one way that we can test ourselves on this point is to take note of how we pray for our spouse. Notice how Paul prayed for his brothers and sisters...

- He thanked God upon *every* remembrance of them.
- He made requests for them *with joy*.

- He had confidence that God would complete the good work He had begun in them.

Do you thank God every time your spouse comes to your mind? Is each request for them being made with joy in your heart? Do you confidently praise God for the finished work you yet cannot see?

It is often easier to pray in this way for someone who is a bit further removed from our day-to-day experience. It can certainly be much harder to have this calm, joyful, and faith-filled mindset while praying for the person whose behaviours affect our daily life more than anyone else's, but this is why trials with our spouse can be the greatest way to test and strengthen our faith.

When we notice a character flaw or weakness in our spouse, the enemy can tempt us to become frustrated because they are not "perfect" today. But God simply asks us to bring the issue to Him in prayer, and trust *Him* to finish the work He has started. Instead of nit-picking at every small irritation, we can focus our energy on praising God for how far He has brought them, and thanking and encouraging them in all the positive things they do.

The way that we react to our spouses' shortcomings actually has very little to do with them, and has everything to do with us—our faith and our trust in God. If we can "*walk by faith and not by sight*" (II Cor. 5:7) with our spouse (as Jesus does with us!), we will see them not for who they are today, but for who they can become under God's transforming hand.

The second very important question to reflect upon is: **Are we extending this same grace to ourselves?**

Do we get discouraged or despondent when we feel that we have let our spouse down, or are not meeting certain expectations of what it means to be a good husband or wife? Do we let ourselves be tempted with the thought that someone else would make a better partner for our spouse because of our shortcomings?

Conviction and true (often sorrowful) repentance are necessary for overcoming sinful traits or habits, but harbouring negative feelings about our own shortcomings and doubting our ability to be the spouse God has called us to be reveals that we are not taking hold of His grace in our life.

Preventing ourselves from receiving His grace, forgiveness, and healing feeds the growth of insecurities that are just as damaging to a relationship as not extending grace to our partner. We must not allow the weight of our faults to crush us with guilt, but focus on praising God also for how far He has brought *us* from who we used to be, and trust in His power to continue transforming us into His image.

No matter where you and your spouse are at in your spiritual journeys, it is vital that you trust in God's plan, power, and timing in all things.

Believe that you are the ones God has chosen for each other, for the purpose of testing, refining, encouraging, ennobling, and finishing the work He has begun in you! Begin each day by thanking God that you have the privilege of being partakers together of His grace.

"... Being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hindered." **1 Peter 3:7**



Day 2 | The Affection of Jesus

Philippians 1:8-11

*"For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with **the affection of Jesus Christ**. And this I pray, that your love may **abound still more and more** in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be **sincere and without offense** till the day of Christ, being **filled with the fruits of righteousness** which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God."*

Paul had "the affection of Jesus Christ" towards the Philippian believers. What is Jesus' affection like? Consider its attributes, and meditate upon whether you have this affection towards your spouse.

This Greek verb translated "affection" is used throughout the gospels to describe Christ's **compassion** for people. (For some examples, check out **Matt. 9:36, 14:14, 15:32, 20:34, Mark 1:41, 6:34, 8:2, Luke 7:13, and 10:33**)

Why did He feel this compassion towards them? For a variety of reasons: They were physically or mentally weary, harassed, sick, injured, hungry, needing spiritual direction and encouragement, mourning the death of loved ones, etc.

When our spouses experience the common trials of life, do we show them the **unconditional compassion** of Christ? Sadly, we may actually find it easier to extend this compassion towards *others* than towards our own spouse, because in many ways the world has taught us that love and compassion should be *earned* or *deserved* by those closest to us. Yet this mindset often does not apply to strangers.

For example, a homeless individual on the side of the street has done nothing to *earn* our compassionate care, but this does not cause us to

withhold it if God impresses us to extend love to them. Yet we can often be guilty of withholding tender, loving care from our own spouses because we feel they have not earned it! We may feel that because they have failed to show it to us, we should not show it to them. But this is not the way of Christ.

If Jesus only poured out His love upon those who had earned it, we would all be in big trouble.

It is impossible to earn or deserve God's love, because His love for us is not based on our performance, but simply on our identity as His children. This must become our mindset as well; not only in our marriages, but in all our relationships. Jesus has never withheld His affection from a single soul in need of it.

John 6:37 *"...The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out."*

We also see that Christ showed warm physical affection. In **John 13:23**, the disciple John leaned restfully upon Jesus' chest, and in **Matt. 19:14** we see Him receiving and blessing little children with open arms.

Physical affection comes more easily to some of us than to others, and heavily depends upon whether we experienced it growing up (and whether those experiences were positive or negative). But even if physical affection is not the way you have learned to display love, it can always be cultivated.

My husband was (and still is) a wonderful example to me of the power of physical affection in displaying the love of Christ to those we meet. It was one of the first things I noticed when we began spending time together; that whether someone was a close relative or a complete stranger, they were embraced by him in a hug that said, "You are my family." He genuinely expressed care in knowing how they were doing, and his freely bestowed affection usually made it easy for people to open up to him. He never met strangers, only new friends.

And not surprisingly, he was also great with children—easily making them smile and laugh, and gaining their friendship within minutes of

interaction. In the beginning, this was honestly quite uncomfortable for me to witness, only because it caused deep conviction of my own lack in this area. But by God's grace, both He and my husband have been helping me learn to let my walls down and become a more warm and affectionate witness for Christ, and I have certainly noticed the positive impact on my relationships.

Physical affection also has an important role within the divine pattern of headship—God as the head of Christ, Christ as the head of man, and man as the head of woman (**I Cor. 11:3**).

As we mentioned, John affectionately rested in the bosom of Christ, reflecting his complete trust and comfort within His Saviour's authority and care. This is paralleled spiritually by how Jesus rests in the bosom of His Father (**John 1:18**), and thus how God intends for woman to rest in the bosom of man.

Notice from what part of the man God created the woman, as truly, He does nothing arbitrarily...

Genesis 2:21-22 *"And the LORD (Yahweh) God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took **one of his ribs**, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man."*

God reached within the bosom of man, beneath his arm and close to his heart, to take the material from which He would create the woman. And as the woman was taken from man's bosom, God intends that she should find comfort and rest there. This type of embrace is comforting and encouraging for the man as well, as he feels his wife's contentment and trust in his authority and protection.

Love Abounding in Knowledge & Discernment

Your wedding day is meant to be only the *beginning* of love, not the climax which only decreases from that point onward. God's will is that

your agape (unconditional) love for each other will grow deeper and stronger each day.

He desires that as our **knowledge** of our spouse grows day by day, so will our love for them.

Every fault and weakness will be revealed in the closeness of the marriage relationship, and many of these will be exposed within the first year.

The devil wants these negative qualities to cause us to harden our hearts against our spouses, but God wants these to compel us to more earnest **prayer, love, grace, and service** towards them; for the refinement of *both* partners' characters. No one is perfect!

Our knowledge also grows of the wonderful, Christlike traits that God has developed in our spouses, and these should be focused on, mentioned often, and encouraged!

As Paul said, *"approve the things that are excellent."* Allow these positive qualities of your spouse to be a constant, uplifting reminder of how far God has brought them, and His faithfulness to finish the work!

Making it Practical! — Let Love Abound

When you become irritated by a perceived fault in your spouse, **before saying anything**, take a deep breath, and thank God for 10 (specific!) positive and praiseworthy qualities in your spouse. Next, pray for God to convict them about this fault, and say nothing. If your spouse is open to the voice of God, you will often save yourself from even having to address the issue. (Trust me... The Holy Spirit is *much* better at convicting our spouses' hearts than we could ever be!)

If it continues to be a problem, and you feel **led by God** to discuss it, being in a mindset of thankfulness for their positive qualities will allow you to approach the subject with a heart saturated with love and grace, and displace any spirit of judgment or condemnation towards them as you make a gentle appeal.

It is also God's will that we grow in **discernment** in our relationships. It is important that we reflect often upon what things have proven to be **helpful** or **hurtful** to the closeness of our marriage.

We all make mistakes, and there *will* be times that you do or say things that hurt your spouse. But if we take these opportunities to learn together and grow in grace, we can come out of these trials even stronger, and with greater discernment to prevent such events in the future.

Sincere & Without Offense

Openness and honesty are critical for any healthy marriage, but it is important that we strive to be "without offense" towards our spouse. A critical, condemning spirit will **never** create the changes you wish to see in your home. A friend once shared that one of the keys to a healthy marriage is to leave about four things a day unsaid. This is not dishonest, this is **wise**.

Proverbs 10:19 *"In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise."*

Count your marriage as **more precious than gold**, and *deeply* consider whether the thing you want to say to your spouse will be helpful or hurtful.

Proverbs 18:21 *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue..."*

Proverbs 12:18 *"There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health."*

You can choose to **only** speak words of life, hope, love, and encouragement to your spouse. Make this your job, and let God take care of the rest!

Filled with the Fruits of Righteousness

Pray earnestly for the fruits of the Spirit, and consider whether your spouse experiences these fruits **in you**.

Galatians 5:22-23 *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...”*

Think of these fruits as the food which nourishes your spouse. Has your loved one been able to partake of these fruits each day, or have they been left to starve?

Take note also of the works of the flesh (**Gal. 5:19-21**) and consider these to be like poison to your spouse. (Make sure to especially notice those in the list that may be less commonly considered as “evil”—contention, jealousy, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, etc.)

If we make an earnest commitment to follow Christ’s example in loving our spouse, and pray daily for His Spirit to dwell within us and change our hearts, God is faithful to fill our marriage to overflowing with the fruits of His righteousness.



Day 3 | Christ Magnified Through Trials

Philippians 1:12-21

*"But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for **the furtherance of the gospel**, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are **in Christ**; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are **much more bold to speak the word without fear**. Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing that I am **appointed for the defense of the gospel**.*

*What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and **the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ**, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also **Christ will be magnified** in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*

Furthering the Gospel

A beloved preacher once expressed that most Christians neglect to make use of the **most powerful evangelistic tool** that God can put into our hands... *"The opportunity to shine in suffering."* Because after all, this is what proves the tangible power of the gospel in our lives.

So here is our question for consideration today: When we face trials in our marriage, do we allow the enemy to overcome us with sadness, frustration, doubt, and fear, or do we see them as powerful opportunities to let Christ be magnified through our response?

Paul was determined that the trials he faced would not be used by the devil for destruction, but by God for the upbuilding of His kingdom. Let us see what Peter says, in the direct context of marriage difficulties...

I Peter 3:1 *"Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear."*

Peter counsels women whose husbands are not walking in God's ways to continue submitting to them, that their Christlike character may work in winning their husbands' hearts to God. And for many, this is a very hard saying. But as wives who have devoted ourselves to our husbands "'til death do us part," we must remember not to look to the examples of the world, but to the example of Christ.

On the night of Jesus' final supper with His disciples, the plan to betray Him was already in the heart of Judas, and Christ knew this. Yet, Christ girded Himself with a towel, knelt down on the floor, and washed the feet of His friend, displaying nothing but pure, unconditional love. (**John 13:2-4**) He was a peaceful, dedicated, willing servant to the man who in that moment was His enemy.

The only way Christ was able to do this was because there was no hint of self-defence or self-service in His heart. He was filled with all the fullness of God—a perfect representation of His Father's character, which is pure selflessness. If we are willing to receive it, He is able to give us this selflessness towards our spouses too.

And though Peter's counsel in this particular verse is directed to wives, husbands should certainly embrace the same principle of continuing to operate in their God-appointed role of blessing, protecting, and providing for their wives, no matter how their wife is acting towards them. Because surely, Christ has done this much and more for His faulty

children, and husbands are called to love their wives just as Christ loves His church (**Eph. 5:25**). As Peter mentions a few verses later, having compassionate understanding for them and honoring them, unconditionally. (**I Pet. 3:7**) Whether husband or wife, the principle is the same—**Show them Christ, that they may be won to Christ.**

It was only by witnessing how Christ responded to rejection, misunderstanding, false-accusation, torment, and ultimately crucifixion, that we as a race were able to see the fullness of God's character revealed through Him. If He was able to endure all that abuse without ever hindering the outflow of love from Himself to those around Him, He is more than able and willing to help us reveal His likeness to our spouse amidst our marital struggles.

I Peter 2:21-23 *"For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, **that you should follow His steps**: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;"*

Strengthening Others in Their Walk

The way that Paul rejoiced in his trials was a powerful source of encouragement for his brethren, allowing them to be *"much more bold to speak the Word without fear."* He trusted that he would be blessed with the abundant *"supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,"* and God proved this to be so! Thus, those looking up to Paul as a leader in the faith could believe that God's Spirit would likewise be amply supplied to them in any moment of need.

When we allow God to work through us as we face difficulties in our marriage—to show unconditional, selfless love in any situation, and to stand firm in our God-appointed role by which we best bless our spouse—He can use us as a mighty witness to our friends, our children, our parents... To anyone! His will is that every marriage relationship be *"appointed for the defense of the gospel,"* and He is faithful to accomplish this work in us.

James 1:2-4 *“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.”*

Practice Makes Perfect!

Create four columns on a piece of paper, divided into three large rows. In the first column, describe three recent or memorable trials you have experienced (or are currently experiencing) in your marriage. In the second column, describe how you have responded thus far to each situation. In the third column, prayerfully contemplate and write out how you believe Christ Himself would have responded in each case. And in the fourth, write out prayers to God— thanking Him for each trial, for the specific things it has shown you of your deeper need of Him, and for the opportunity to practice being more like Jesus.



Day 4 | One in Mind & Spirit

Philippians 1:27-2:2

*"Only let your conduct be **worthy of the gospel of Christ**, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you **stand fast in one spirit**, with **one mind striving together** for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.*

*Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being **like-minded**, having the **same love**, being of **one accord**, of **one mind**."*

Worthy of the Gospel

Christ's earnest prayer for His followers was "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me." (**John 17:21**) This oneness, for the purpose of preaching the gospel to the world, is especially critical in the marriage relationship, as the man and woman were created in the image of God and His Son—the divine pattern of **Source** and **Channel**.

I Corinthians 8:6 *"For us there is one God, the Father, **of whom** are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, **through whom** are all things, and through whom we live."*

Genesis 1:26-27 *"Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness... So God created man in His*

*image; in the image of God He created him; **male** and **female** He created them."*

Genesis 2:7, 18, 21-23 *"And Yahweh God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (...) And Yahweh God said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him **a helper comparable to him...**"*

*And Yahweh God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which Yahweh God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was **taken out of Man.**"*

John 8:42 *"Jesus said unto them, 'If God were your Father, you would love Me: for I **proceeded forth** and **came from God...**"*

John 16:27-28 *"... I **came out from** God. I **came forth from** the Father..."*

I Corinthians 11:3 *"... The head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God."*

The Son of God was brought forth from His Father to be His Helper, His Companion, His Right Arm; the Word through whom He would create, uphold, and redeem all things. And in God's infinite wisdom He designed the relationship of husband and wife to preach the beauty of this relationship to the entire universe.

Hebrews 1:1-3 *"God ... has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds, ... **the brightness of His glory** and the express image of His person..."*

I Corinthians 11:7-10 *"For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but **woman is the glory of man.** For man is not from woman, but **woman from***

man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels."

Just as Jesus is the glory of His Father, the woman is the glory of the man. God designed that all the love and blessing the husband pours into her, she would magnify to the children, church family, and community in their midst, just as the love of the Father was magnified to the universe through His Son.

This all goes back to the great controversy which began in heaven. Lucifer coveted to be invited into the counsels which the Father only shared with His begotten Son. (**Zech. 6:12-13**) Not wanting to submit to Christ, Lucifer began planting doubts in the minds of the angels about the identity and authority of God's Son.

This is why Paul describes the symbol of authority on the woman's head as being **because of the angels**. God desires to use the Source/Channel relationship between husband and wife to reaffirm to all the angels what His relationship with His Son is like, and why no other being can take the place of His Son in that relationship.

Of One Mind

For us as married couples to fulfill this great and holy calling, we must understand the oneness that exists between the Father and Son. (For a full study of this topic, please check out my other short book, *Blueprint of Blessing*, which can be downloaded for free at thehopeofglory.org.)

Jesus prayed for us, "... *That they may be one **just as We are one**... that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.*" (**John 17:22-23**)

So what does this oneness look like? Well, Jesus testified that His Father withheld no good thing from Him, and that all He had, He had joyfully received from His Father.

John 5:26 *"For as the Father has life in Himself, so has He given to the Son to have life in Himself"*

Colossians 1:19 *"For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell."*

John 17:7 *"Now they have known that **all things** which You have given Me **are from You.**"*

John 3:35 *"The Father loves the Son, and has **given all things** into His hand."*

Because of Jesus' faith in His Father as the Source of all blessing upon Him, He rests joyfully in submission to His Father, never doubting His love, protection, or provision. He has no desire to seek His own will, speak His own words, or do His own works. (**John 5:30, John 6:38, John 7:16-18, John 12:49-50, John 14:10**).

He has also never felt the need to prove His identity when Satan has tempted Him to do so (**Matt. 4:1-11**), because His Father's word of assurance is all He needs.

Mark 1:11 *"You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

His life's mission has only ever been to glorify His Father, and in turn, the Father has highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name (**Phil. 2:9**). This beautiful Source/Channel relationship is what God designed to be experienced in every marriage. If the Father and Son were not in one accord, with one Spirit, of one mind, the plan of salvation could never have succeeded. This is why **this** oneness in a marriage—

- the husband receiving his will from Christ (who has received it from His Father), and the wife submitting to this same will;
- the husband trusting all he has in the hands of his wife, pouring love and spiritual blessing into her continually, that it may be magnified to their children and community through her;
- and the wife doing all to the glory of her husband, upholding him as the head of their home, that he may do all to the glory of God,

—is the **number one evangelistic tool** that God has designed on this earth. But if a couple refuses to walk in the glorious light of their divine design, they can never attain to *true oneness*, and be the powerful witness God desires them to be.

As a couple continues to study the Father/Son, Source/Channel relationship, and each seek to walk in their God-ordained roles, their witness will certainly be found *“worthy of the gospel of Christ.”*

Making it Practical! — Headship Re-Examined

Husbands—Find as many verses as you can which show how the Father relates to His Son, and how Jesus relates to His church. These will help you understand what it means to be the head of your wife, and relate to her according to God’s design.

Wives—Find as many verses as you can which show how Jesus relates to His Father, and how we as believers are to relate to Christ. These will help you understand how to relate to your husband as your head.

Based on what you each learn through your personal study, write a renewed list of marriage vows to share with your spouse 🍷



Day 5 | Serving Your Spouse

Philippians 2:3-8

*“Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each **esteem others better than himself**. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. **Let this mind be in you** which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, **taking the form of a bondservant**, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He **humbled Himself** and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.”*

We often like to ask our older married friends, if they could share one golden nugget of wisdom with newer couples, what it would be. In response, one couple shared a principle which they have found helpful, which is that, *“If the husband is always looking out for the needs of the wife, and the wife is always looking out for the needs of the husband, then everyone’s needs are always met!”*

Now, while this seems like a great principle *in theory*, the actual outworking of this principle to produce a consistently joyful marriage would unfortunately be a highly unattainable experience. We are all faulty human beings, and in the majority of relationships the question would naturally arise, “Well, what if my spouse isn’t doing their part?” If spouses only commit to caring for the other’s needs with the expectation that *their* needs will be cared for in return, disappointment is inevitable.

And when this disappointment inevitably comes—whether your spouse drops the ball for a just one moment, many days, or several years—the real-life question that we need addressed is, **“How do I continue to serve my spouse when they are not serving me?”** And by God’s amazing grace, we have not been left without the answer.

Let This Mind Be in You

Selfless service is the foundation of God's kingdom. Though this earth has been marred by sin, we still see evidences all throughout creation of the fact that nothing was designed to live for itself. Where selflessness reigns, life and relationships flourish.

The bright beams of this agape love that we still see shining through God's creation are a reflection of His own character. His love and blessing and mercy ever flow out, unconditionally, to His creatures, and our experience is dependent wholly upon whether we choose to receive or reject them.

This principle was magnified for us to witness in the earthly life of Jesus. The Son of God was fully at rest in His reception of His Father's blessings; never fearing that anything good would be withheld from Him. Therefore, He took no thought for His own temporal needs—where He would sleep, what He would eat or drink, or how He would be clothed.

Matthew 6:32-33 *"For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."*

The focus of Jesus' earthly life was solely to do the will of His Father in manifesting His love to human beings—aka. meeting *our* needs. He was wholly focused on serving His Father, and thus serving us (*His bride*, **Rev. 19:7**), and trusted wholeheartedly that His Father would take care of all His needs.

Just as the marriage relationship is designed to reflect that between the Father and Son, it is also meant to reflect the relationship between Christ and His church. As Paul counselled the believers in Ephesus,

Ephesians 5:24-25 *"Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,"*

I want us to deeply consider the implications of Christ being in the role of **husband**, and ask ourselves, "Is His wife meeting His needs?"

If we are being honest, we would have to say, "No."

Of course, the degree to which the bride of Christ has offered true respect, trust, and devotion to Him has fluctuated throughout history, but as a whole, the bride of Christ has never fully met His needs in returning the love that He has shown her. In fact, the love He has shown her far outweighs any love that she could ever hope to show in return.

So the question then is, **how does Christ continue to serve her so selflessly?**

And the answer is that she is not the source of His love.

Please re-read that statement. Maybe twice. Let it sink in. Christ's bride, His wife, never has been and never will be His source of love.

So then, who is?

John 3:35 *"The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand."*

Matthew 3:17 *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

Jesus not only receives all the rest, provision, and protection He needs from His Father, but He also receives all the love, acceptance, and appreciation He needs. God is an ever-flowing, never-failing fountain of love, and Jesus, drinking freely from this fountain every day, never lacks the love He needs to give to His bride.

This, I believe, is the key to being able to serve our spouses selflessly (or anyone else for that matter).

First, we must acknowledge that **love is a real need of God's created beings**—just as real for us humans as oxygen, food, or water. God

designed us to live and flourish in the stream of receiving and giving love.

Second, we must realize that our spouse, our parent, our sibling, our child, our friend, or ourselves, **can never and will never** be an adequate source of love for us. Every human is a faulty vessel, and trying to drink from broken vessels will only leave us disappointed and thirsty.

Jeremiah 2:13 *“For My people have committed two evils: they have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—**broken cisterns that can hold no water.**”*

If we genuinely desire to give selfless love to our spouse, love that **expects nothing in return**, we must accept the fact that we cannot create this love ourselves. We must get it from somewhere, and the only unfailing Source, Who is ever ready to fill our cup to overflowing, is our Father in heaven.

We also must recognize that just as it is **our own responsibility** to inhale the oxygen that surrounds us, or to chew and swallow the food that is set before us, it is our responsibility to **take in the evidences of God’s love for us** that are available to us every day.

We can read His Word, but are we *believing* what He has said? We can spend time in prayer, but are we *receiving* the comfort and wisdom He extends to us? We can hurry through our day trying to accomplish many “good” things, but are we taking time to recognize and appreciate *His* goodness and *His* beauty in people, experiences, and nature?

The fountain is always flowing; it is up to us to choose to quench our thirst.

Revelation 22:17 *“And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, **let him take** the water of life **freely.**”*

It is only with this water of life, flowing freely from the throne of God, that we can humbly wash the feet of our spouse, no matter what they have done or have not done for us. It is because He was filled with this

water of life that Jesus could wash the feet of Judas, just hours before he would betray Him into the hands of murderers.

It is because He receives *all* He needs from His Father, that Jesus can continually pour His love upon us, bearing the pain of our burden and sin, even if we will never acknowledge Him or choose to love Him back.

The only way, as a spouse, to become truly forgetful of our own needs, is not to rely upon our spouse to meet them, but to allow our heavenly Father to meet them. Then we will not be looking to our spouse to be our source, but we will see them as the one who we were designed to *give to*, not to *take from*.

Now, a quick note for **wives**...

As we have discussed, the Source/Channel relationship is the divine blueprint for marriage. So, you may be wondering, "Isn't it *right* for me to view my husband as a 'source'?" And the answer is that ideally, yes, your husband is meant to be a source of blessing to you, and it is important that you are open and receptive to the love, counsel, instruction, etc. that he provides. You do not want to do anything to hinder his ability to operate in his God-ordained role of 'source' to his family, as he receives divine help to do so.

However, every husband is at a different place in his journey of learning to rest in *his* Source, and though he may stumble, the way that you respond will greatly impact his confidence as a leader (positively or negatively). Therefore, it is critical that you follow Christ's example in looking to your heavenly Father as the perfect, constant, unailing Source of everything you need, so that you are fulfilled *in Him*, and thus enabled to grant your husband the grace and freedom to grow in his role without pressure or condemnation.

Isaiah 54:5 *"For your Maker is your husband..."*

Hosea 2:19 *"I will betroth you to Me forever; yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and justice, in **steadfast love** and mercy."*

If we are receiving all we need from God, then the blessings that *do* come to us through our spouses (God-willing) will be the cherries on top of our experience, but not the bread that sustains us.

This approach takes great humility, great meekness, but this is what Christ came to show us. He took the form of a bondservant to lead by example, and show us the way to true rest of soul and abundant life.

Matthew 11:29-30 *"Take My yoke upon you and **learn from Me**, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and **you will find rest** for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."*

There is great rest in being able to love and serve our spouses unconditionally, not relying upon them to fulfill our needs in return, because we are already fulfilled in God through Christ. And we can take great courage in the principle and promise that **like begets like**.

I John 4:19 *"We love Him because He first loved us."*

Galatians 6:7 *"For whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."*

Proverbs 15:1 *"A soft answer turns away wrath."*

I Peter 3:1 *"Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives,"*

Love begets love. Gentleness begets gentleness. Selfishness can only beget more selfishness, but service will beget service. Our willingness to selflessly serve our spouse will, by God's grace, convict and give birth to the desire in their hearts to serve us in return.

This same principle applies to the church body, as Paul is addressing. As more believers are willing to esteem others as better than themselves, freely receiving all they need from God so that they can look out for other's interests above their own, this love will spread throughout the body and draw more members into selfless service for their brethren.

The beautiful thing about this principle is that it only takes one person to start, and there will be a snowball effect. As the familiar song says, *“It only takes one spark, to get a fire going...”* May God help us learn how to serve our spouses as selflessly as Christ serves us each and every day, that His unconditional love may bring its warmth and light into our homes.

Making it Practical! — Check Your Source

Consider whenever you feel frustrated with your spouse: Are you focused on your own needs, and feeling that they are not being met? First, take some time to draw close to God. The foundation of peace in the Christian walk is knowing that God supplies all our needs, not our spouse. Second, allow God’s love to fill you so that you can continue serving your spouse unconditionally, and watch miracles begin to happen in your marriage.



Day 6 | Highly Exalted

Philippians 2:9-16

*"Therefore God also has **highly exalted** Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation** with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you **shine as lights in the world**, holding fast the Word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain."*

Christ's self-sacrificing service for mankind resulted in God highly exalting Him in the hearts and minds of His created beings. Every spouse desires to be exalted in their partner's mind...

Song of Solomon 5:9-16 *"(Daughters of Jerusalem) What is your beloved more than another beloved, O fairest among women? ... (The Shulamite) My beloved is ... chief among ten thousand... He is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, and this is my friend..."*

6:4-10 *"(The Beloved) O my love, you are as beautiful as Tirzah, lovely as Jerusalem, awesome as an army with banners! ... My dove, my perfect one, is the only one..."*

This high exaltation in the mind of your spouse can never be attained by trying to put yourself there, no matter how tempting it may seem to guilt

them for their lack of love or explain all the reasons why they should think more highly of you.

Matthew 23:12 *"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

Remember, *"We love Him because He first loved us."* (**1 John 4:19**) Christ has been lifted up in our minds because of the amazing, self-sacrificing love He has shown us. He has lifted *us* to such a high place of love and infinite worth in *His* mind, and proved it by His actions, that He is now reaping the precious fruit of being likewise exalted in *our* minds and hearts.

So the question to ask yourself is, what position does your spouse hold in *your* mind? Do you think of them the way you want them to think of you? Have you exalted them to the place you wish to be exalted, and treated them accordingly?

When we determine not to worry about what our spouse currently thinks of us, or what position we hold, or do not hold, in their mind, and focus on pouring God's unconditional love upon them, the exaltation will take care of itself.

When we surrender to doing God's will towards those in our lives, we enable His Spirit to work upon their hearts and minds to lift us up. When we read how faithfully the woman in Proverbs 31 loves and serves her husband and family, it is no wonder that, *"Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all."* (**Prov. 31:28-29**)

Working Out Your Salvation

We know that salvation is not of works, lest any man should boast. (**Eph. 2:9**) It is **the gift of God**, and thus our "work" is to *treasure* this gift—being willing to let go of everything that comes between us and God, and prioritizing quality time with Him, to strengthen our relationship and allow Him to do His transforming work within us.

Do we see our marriage as a gift of God? Something to be greatly cherished and prioritized? Do we recognize that God wants to use our marriage as a means of refining our character, for the sake of our, and our spouse's, salvation?

Marriage presents an astounding new level of trials, as for many of us it is a shocking wake-up call to how selfish we really are. It daily reveals our need of a deeper walk with God in order to be able to manifest the selfless love of Christ to our spouse.

When we stop thinking of our marriage as a thing meant to fulfill our own selfish desires, and embrace it as a means of sanctification, we will learn how to truly rejoice in every trial and love our spouse unconditionally.

Shining As Lights in the World

When others look at your marriage, do they see the love of Christ being manifested? Often, we make the mistake of wanting others to see a perfectly peaceful, harmonious, trouble-free, fairytale relationship. But guess what? That is ***not*** the gospel!

What ***is*** the gospel?

Romans 5:8 *"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that ***while we were still sinners***, Christ died for us."*

Do others see you continuing to love and serve and be willing to give your life for your spouse, even when they are acting ungodly towards you? That is the gospel.

That is what Christ has done, and continues to do for *us*, and that is how we preach His love not only to our spouse, but to the world.

That kind of selfless love is what will work sanctification in both of your hearts, allowing others to witness God using your marriage to transform you *both* into His image, and believe that He can do the same for them.

If we want to shine as lights in the world, Paul includes that we must be, "*holding fast the Word of life.*" (**Phil. 2:16**)

We cannot give what we do not have. Therefore, to be able to pour God's love into our spouse each day, we must be filled up with it each morning. It is quite simple, really.

But it is important to remember that, as we have discussed previously, it is not God's duty to keep us full. His love is abundant and freely available to all, but He does not force-feed it to us.

He allows us to choose each day whether we want to rely on His strength, or our own. Thus, it is our individual responsibility to drink from the fountain of living waters, and eat the living bread from heaven, that our souls may be satisfied, and the love that we take in may shine out through us.

If we truly desire to prioritize our marriage, we must prioritize spending time with God in prayer and in His Word each morning. I have certainly learned the hard way that it is not safe to start my day without doing so.

Our spiritual food must be *as* important as our physical food (if not more so!).

But we need not be discouraged if we find that we have a hard time prioritizing this. While God is not in the business of force-feeding, He *is* in the business of coming to the aid of every sincere child asking for help.

Every desire we have ever had to read His Word and receive His Spirit has come from Him in the first place. So, if we humbly reach out and ask Him to *increase* this desire in our hearts, for the sake of our marriage, He will joyfully grant us this blessing!

Remember that your Father in heaven *wants* both you and your spouse to have high and honored places in each other's minds. He wants you to experience victories through your marital trials, to both be fitted to live with Him in heaven, and He wants your marriage to shine brightly in preaching the love of Christ to this dark world.

When we remember that these are *His* desires even more so than ours, and humble ourselves to recognize that we can do nothing without Him, we are able to take hold of His strength and His promises in these areas, for our highest good and His ultimate glory.

As Paul's, our running and laboring will not be in vain. For, "*He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it!*" (**I Thess. 5:24**)



Day 7 | Circumcision of the Heart

Philippians 3:1-7

*“Finally, my brethren, **rejoice in the Lord.** For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and **have no confidence in the flesh,** though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, **these I have counted loss for Christ.**”*

Rejoice in the Lord

If the things that our spouse does or does not do have the power to steal our joy, have we really learned what it means to rejoice in the Lord?

Most believers would say that they desire to know God’s will for their life and their marriage, but it can be hard to be faced with the reality of what this will actually is. As Paul counselled the Thessalonian believers,

I Thessalonians 5:16-18 *“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for **this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.**”*

God’s will for us as believers is to rejoice and give thanks in every situation. This is absolutely impossible for any human being to do in their own strength, but that is why this is specifically described as God’s will

for us **in Christ Jesus**, and why the second exhortation in his list is so vital—to *pray without ceasing*.

Only Christ can fulfill God's will in us as we are humble and willing to ask Him for help, moment by moment. Paul expands upon this counsel in his letter to the Philippians as well,

Philippians 4:4-7 *"Rejoice in the Lord **always**. Again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."*

We see that he again emphasizes the importance of being prayerful *in everything*. And if these earnest prayers and supplications are brought to God **with thanksgiving**—choosing to trust God's faithfulness and thank Him for answering *before* we see it come to pass—we will experience supernatural peace, and be able to rejoice in even the most trying circumstances.

Philippians 4:11-13 *"... For I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."*

No Confidence in the Flesh

"The flesh" is a term Paul uses to represent our own works, and he counsels us to have *no confidence* therein. Here in Paul's letter, he references circumcision.

Circumcision was a sign that God gave to Abraham and his descendants because, unfortunately, God knows how quickly we forget and repeat our past mistakes.

Abraham had made a terrible mistake in doubting God's promise to give him a son through his wife, Sarah. He chose to put his confidence in his own flesh (literally) by trying to fulfill God's word by conceiving a child with a different woman.

This massive breach in the marriage covenant caused tremendous pain and trouble in his own family, and the consequences of this sin would lead to untold suffering throughout human history.

Thus, the removal of this particular piece of flesh was instituted as a means of reminding all his descendants that **the flesh profits nothing in the fulfillment of God's promises.**

But unfortunately, over time, it seems this meaning was completely forgotten by Abraham's bloodline. In an amazingly ironic way, the Jewish people turned the very symbol of the utter insufficiency of our own works into a "work" itself, which they taught that men must do to be saved!

Yet God never stopped trying to remind them that what was needed was **the circumcision of their hearts**—the complete loss of confidence in their own strength, and their return to confidence in *His* power alone to fulfill His good pleasure in them.

Deuteronomy 30:6 *"And the LORD (Yahweh) your God will **circumcise your heart** and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD (Yahweh) your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."*

Paul especially, describing himself as "a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (**Acts 23:6**) had a special burden to bring home this truth to believers, teaching often that true circumcision is of the heart.

Romans 2:28-29 *"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew **who is one inwardly**; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God."*

And so in our marriages, just as in our relationship with God, we cannot trust in outward religious forms to make our home a holy and joyful place.

Many well-meaning couples institute habits such as church attendance, family prayers, modest dressing, healthy eating, and even reading the Bible together. And while none of these things are bad, in fact they are wonderful habits to cultivate, not a single one of them has the power to sanctify our marriage if our **hearts** are not surrendered to God!

If we have confidence in our own flesh, believing that these “good works” will save our marriage, we will be sorely disappointed. Many believers are shocked to learn that the divorce rate within the professedly Christian population is not much different than that of unbelievers.

If we are not humbling ourselves before God daily, asking Him to renew our hearts and fill us with His Spirit, we will not be able to manifest the fruits of the Spirit towards our spouse, and allow the love of Christ to be felt in our home.

Matthew 7:14 *“Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”*

John 14:6 *“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”*

We must choose to give up our confidence in the traditions, schedules, and habits that we have trusted in to bring happiness to our families. Not to necessarily discard them, if they prove to be good and helpful practices, but to dethrone them from Christ’s rightful seat in our hearts, that they may be held in their proper place as the fruit, and not the root.

We must do as Paul did, casting down all trust in our own works—no matter how “good” our track record may appear—and counting all things as loss for Christ, that we may be humbled to acknowledge our desperate need of a new heart. In this mindset we will be empowered to rejoice and find peace in **His power alone** to fulfill His promise in our marriages, that what God has joined together, no man may separate (**Matt. 19:6**).

Day 8 | The Upward Call

Philippians 3:8-14

*“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and **the fellowship of His sufferings**, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

*Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but **I press on**, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, **forgetting those things which are behind** and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of **the upward call** of God in Christ Jesus.”*

Pressing On

The path of marriage inevitably brings challenges that we may often feel unequipped to meet. Amid these difficulties, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus is the only sure way to receive the strength we need to continue pressing forward in faith. His life’s example **proved** that the joy of revealing God’s love to mankind and seeing souls saved for eternity has the power to override *any* amount of discouragement and weariness. This is why we are to look to and learn from Him, and all that He has endured for our sakes.

Hebrews 12:1-4 *“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the*

race that is set before us, **looking unto Jesus**, the author and finisher of our faith, who **for the joy that was set before Him** endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin."

This is strong language, yet we must recognize that we, as believers, are the ones being addressed here.

Christ has endured all the horrors of *the cross* for the joyous hope of saving His bride. And His cross was not just a several-hour event. The earthly experience of being rejected, betrayed, falsely accused, mocked, beaten, pierced through with nails, and hung up in agony and humiliation was simply **the visible manifestation** of what Christ has been enduring in His Spirit since His creation rebelled against His love, and what He will endure until sin is finally vanquished from the universe. He is, "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,*" (**Rev. 13:8**). Furthermore, His suffering is the revelation and magnification of the pain which His Father has been enduring for these thousands of years on our behalf...

Isaiah 63:9 "*In all their affliction **He was afflicted**, and the Angel of His Presence saved them; in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them **all the days of old.***"

This is why Jesus came to this earth and submitted to all that He experienced—that our eyes could be opened to the true enmity that exists in man's natural heart towards Him, and to reveal the fullness of His Father's love for mankind in spite of this. It is this revelation of God's goodness and longsuffering that leads men to genuine repentance (**Rom. 2:4**).

Are we willing to take up our cross and endure with our spouse, that they may see the beauty of God's character in us, and be led to repentance?

Are we willing to truly embrace the "*fellowship of His sufferings*" as we co-labor with Christ in the work of saving souls, especially those in our own homes?

I now understand why a wise woman of God once said that it would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day meditating upon the life of Christ, especially its closing scenes. How often we forget about those terrible hours of rejection and betrayal, and His overwhelming love in spite of it all, as we go about our daily routines.

And if these scenes are but a visible revelation of what our heavenly Father and His Son have been enduring **on our behalf** for *millennia*, would this daily meditation not impart tremendous gratitude, along with the strength and grace to face whatever difficulties may come our way?

Forgetting What's Behind

God's agape love is described as keeping "*no record of wrongs*" (**I Cor. 13:5**), and when asked how many times a day we should forgive our brother, Jesus said, "*I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*" (**Matt. 18:22**)

How much more, then, should we forgive our spouse—the one whom we have vowed to love and serve for the rest of our life?

One clear sign that we are not truly forgiving our spouse's past shortcomings, is if when a certain issue arises, a list of previous offenses comes flooding into our mind. Satan loves to tempt us to use this "*record of wrongs*" as ammunition against our spouse in the current situation, but in truth, it should reveal to *us* our *own* need of repentance and deeper healing.

The fact that this list comes to our mind with negative emotions attached to each event is proof that we have **not truly forgiven them** for these things. And this is worse news for us than it is for them, because the fact that we are unable to freely and fully forgive others is evidence that we have not yet received God's free and full forgiveness for *ourselves*.

We cannot give what we have not yet received. But the abundantly good news is that His forgiveness *is* full and free! All we must do is come humbly with a willing heart to receive it and believe it.

Psalm 103:12 *"As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us."*

When we are able to truly believe this, and experience this healing in our relationship with God, we will find that we are also able to cast our spouse's sins as far from our minds as the east is from the west.

Ephesians 4:31-32 *"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."*

Notice that He **forgave us**, past tense, before we ever confessed our sins or asked for His forgiveness. In other words, the ball is in our court to either receive or reject what is available to us, but God is not holding onto any negative thoughts towards us.

Jeremiah 29:11 *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, **thoughts of peace and not of evil**, to give you a future and a hope."*

To extend to our spouse the same forgiveness that God has extended to us, is also to forgive them before they ask for it. They do not need to ever confess or repent before you can fully and completely forgive them. In fact, your free forgiveness towards them is one of the most powerful ways to show them God's love, that their heart may be broken in true repentance, and opened up to receive the cleansing and healing that we all need.

An amazing result of choosing to walk in this forgiveness, is that those memories of past issues *will* eventually fade until they no longer come to mind. Those who have experienced this can attest that it is true!

True forgiveness *completely* changes our emotional response towards a memory, which allows us to stop ruminating on it. And the less that we think about something, the weaker those neural pathways in our brain become until they are eventually replaced by the thoughts and memories that we choose to focus on. As Paul counsels later on in this letter,

Philippians 4:8-9 *“Whatever things are true... noble... just... pure... lovely... of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on **these things**. ... And the God of peace will be with you.”*

The Upward Call

Believing that we are called to share the untiring, unfailing love of God with every person in our lives (including our spouse!) seems to the natural human heart like a burdensome task. But when we have Christ as our Burden-Bearer, it is a wonderfully freeing experience.

Matthew 11:28-30 *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For **My yoke is easy** and **My burden is light**.”*

With Christ bearing more upon His shoulders than we could ever comprehend, how is it possible for Him to describe His burden as *easy* and *light*?

When the carnal mind tries to imagine all the pain and suffering of humanity, seen, felt, and carried by Jesus moment by moment, these words simply cannot fit. The mind cannot wrap itself around Christ’s reality.

But it *is* His reality, and it can be ours too! So what is His secret?

John 3:35 *“The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand.”*

John 5:30 *"I can of Myself do nothing..."*

Matthew 11:29 *"For I am meek and lowly in heart..."*

The key to the light and easy yoke of Christ, is His rest in His identity as God's beloved Son. He knows that His worth is not measured by His ability to bear the sin of the world, because He knows that He could never do it on His own.

In this meekness and lowliness, He is able to receive a continual stream of love, strength, and grace from His Father, moment by moment, to supply His every need. He is able to bear up humanity, because He knows His Father is bearing Him up.

When we are likewise at rest in our identity as God's beloved sons and daughters, we can allow His love to flow freely through us without any fear of feeling unloved or uncared for in return. We are not giving in order to receive; we are receiving that we may give.

And as we receive all that we need from our Father, nothing that happens on this earth has the power to take away our value, peace, or joy. Thus, we feel no need to defend ourselves, because God is our Defender. We can bear what we are called to bear, and love who we are called to love, because we are wholly at rest in our Father's care.

1 Peter 2:21-23 *"For **to this you were called**, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously;"*

Matthew 16:24 *"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and **take up his cross**, and follow Me."*

Let us learn of Him, by studying what He has endured for our sakes, and how He is able to endure it, that we may declare as Paul did,

II Timothy 4:7-8 *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing."*



Day 9 | Those Who So Walk

Philippians 3:15-21

*“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, **have this mind**; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. Brethren, join in following my example, and **note those who so walk**, as you have us for **a pattern**. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind **on earthly things**. For our citizenship is **in heaven**, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.”*

Have This Mind

Let us recall which *mind* Paul is exhorting us to have...

Philippians 2:5 *“Let this mind be in you **which was also in Christ Jesus**.”*

We are to have the same mind that Christ has; a mind of perfect trust and submission to His heavenly Father. And as we have just discussed, one with this mind will have such security in their identity as a beloved child of God, that they will be able to endure and press on through trials for the hope of the joy of revealing God’s love to those around them.

“And if in anything you think otherwise,” Paul says, *“God will reveal even this to you.” (Phil. 3:15).* As we grow in our walk with Christ, studying His life and praying for His Spirit, we will come to understand His mind, and

His faith, more fully. Thus, God will be able to convict us of areas in our marriage where we are not thinking, speaking, or acting as He would. And we need not be discouraged when He reveals these things, but trust in Him who is faithful to finish His work in us!

The fact that we have eyes to see and admit to our shortcomings is evidence of His Spirit's work, and the very assurance of our victory in Him, as we continue beholding Him and allowing Him to change us into His image.

Note Those Who So Walk

In addition to directly beholding the life of Christ, if you ask God to do so, He will send beautiful examples of thriving, Christ-centered marriages into your life, to be a source of blessing and counsel to you.

I can testify that all along the way, when I have prayed for godly counsel on how to thrive in singleness, how to navigate a new relationship, how to prepare for marriage, how to be a godly wife, and now how to prepare for children, God has been abundantly faithful to place individuals in my path whom I could look to for a pattern, and receive Biblically sound wisdom from.

I therefore encourage you to pray this prayer also. The body of Christ is meant to edify and uplift one another. Any couple who truly have the mind of Christ will find it an absolute joy and blessing to help a younger (or newer) couple to navigate the journey of marriage.

But with our desire for heavenly wisdom, we must exercise discernment when considering a couple as a source of counsel. Paul describes those "*whose end is destruction,*" (**Phil. 3:18-19**) giving some helpful indicators to take into consideration:

- **"Whose God is their belly..."** Do they idolize fleshly pleasures? This Greek word translated "belly" can refer to the physical palate and stomach, *or* to the lower passions and desires of the carnal man. Hence this warning certainly includes those who indulge in

overly stimulating and unhealthy foods, but could also include those who indulge in sexual excess, addictive substances, or unprofitable entertainment and amusements.

- **“Whose glory is their shame...”** Do they glory (find their value, or boast) in features of their lives which the world may applaud, but which are shameful to God?
- **“Who set their mind on earthly things...”** Are their minds—their goals, ambitions, daily desires—focused on the temporary things of this earth, which shall ultimately come to nothing?

Even if a couple whose lives reveal these qualities profess to be Christian, according to Paul they do not have the mind of Christ, and are actually *enemies* of the cross of Christ. This may be a hard saying, but it is very important for us to know who is safe to allow as a “pattern” in our lives.

Exodus 20:7 *“You shall not take the name of the LORD (Yahweh) your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.”*

To “take” in this context means **to take up and carry with you**. In other words, this commandment is not simply referring to using God’s name as a curse word, as many suppose (though that certainly is not a wise habit either). But it is speaking about taking up the name of Yahweh and carrying it with you—referring to yourself as a follower of God, or nowadays a Christian—but doing so *“in vain,”* because you are not truly dying to self and allowing Christ to live through you.

Though any couple may profess Christianity, we are called to have spiritual discernment, and to be “fruit” inspectors (**Gal. 5:22-23**). It is the only way to determine whether the roots of the tree are healthy.

If a couple truly have *“the mind of Christ,”* we will see **the fruits of His Spirit**—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—in their lives and their relationship, and by God’s grace their counsel would be of such as to help us produce the same fruits in our own marriage.

But if a couple *does* seem, to our discernment, to be carrying the name of Christ in vain, we do not judge them. We still love them and bless them, but we should not look to them as an example.

Heavenly Citizens

One of the most powerful ways to safeguard ourselves and our marriages from carrying Christ's name in vain is to always bear in mind that this world is only our temporary home, and that we are pilgrims and ambassadors for the kingdom of heaven.

This is therefore one of the key qualifications we want to look for in another couple as well, to help us discern whether they are a pure, Christlike pattern for us to take notice of, and to ultimately help us heavenward.

Colossians 3:1-3 *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."*



Day 10 | Rejoicing in the Lord

Philippians 4:1-9

*“Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so **stand fast in the Lord**, beloved. I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life. **Rejoice** in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice! Let **your gentleness** be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, **with thanksgiving**, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

*Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—**meditate on these things**. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.”*

Stand Fast

God promises that when we build our life, our marriage, our home upon His Word, we will be strengthened to stand whatever trials may come.

Matthew 7:24-25 *“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and **it did not fall**, for it was founded on the rock.”*

Psalm 16:8 *"I have set the LORD always before me; because He is at my right hand **I shall not be moved**. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope."*

Paul also encourages us to, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free..." (**Gal. 5:1**). If we truly embrace the freedom that we receive in Christ—learning to rest in His care as He rests in His Father's care—no power of darkness will be able to steal the joy we have in Him.

Colossians 1:12-13 *"...Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has **delivered us from the power of darkness** and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love,"*

And Paul is certainly qualified to speak from experience on this principle. Remember what he and Silas went through...

Acts 16:22-26 *"Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks. But at midnight Paul and Silas were **praying and singing hymns to God**, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed."*

From an earthly perspective, no one would have blamed Paul or Silas for being discouraged and even depressed in the midst of this experience, but what do we see instead? Even being beaten and thrown in prison could not take away their freedom in Christ!

In fact, the freedom that they held onto was so powerful, expressed through their songs of rejoicing as they laid bare-backed and bloodied on the prison floor, that its heavenly vibrations affected their physical

situation. It shook the very foundations of the earth, and impacted everyone around them.

The physical prison was proven to have no power to restrain the freedom that exists in Christ. And their faithfulness to stand fast in the Lord resulted not only in bringing physical freedom to the other prisoners, but bringing spiritual freedom to the jailer and his entire household (**Acts 16:27-34**).

When we take hold of the Lord's strength to stand fast in Him, we will see prison doors fall open in our own lives and marriages as well, and this atmosphere of freedom will be felt by all within our sphere of influence.

Gentleness Known by All

Do others see gentleness in the way we respond to our spouse, especially when they have done something wrong? Does our demeanor reveal the unconditional love of Christ?

When we keep in the forefront of our minds the fact that all sin hurts Jesus personally (**Isaiah 63:9**), we gain a whole new appreciation for the way that He treated those living in sin. Recall how He spoke to the woman who was caught in adultery,

John 8:10-11 *"When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."*

The gentleness of Christ was seen and known by all, which is why multitudes flocked to hear His teaching. As the officers who were sent to arrest Him (and came back empty-handed) said, *"No man ever spoke like this Man!"* (**John 7:46**)

The world expects us (and even encourages us) to lash out and defend ourselves against those who cause us pain. But Jesus has never done this, though every one of us has caused Him *great* pain.

Thus, manifesting gentleness when others expect harshness is a mighty revelation of the power of God to transform the human heart into His likeness.

Others will notice this difference and be drawn to you, to learn of the One who has done this for you! When we manifest His gentleness in our marriages and our homes, we will certainly stand out as a "*peculiar people*" (**1 Pet. 2:9**), and bear witness that truly "*the Lord is at hand.*"

Praying with Thanksgiving

The peace of God which passes *all* understanding, keeping us calm, gentle, and joyful in the midst of any difficulty, will only be ours as we learn to pray "*with thanksgiving.*" (**Phil. 4:6**)

Simply supplicating God with our requests will not have the same effect. In fact, talking to God about all of our problems, and stopping there, is more likely to *increase* anxiety, because our mind is left focused on the problem, and not the solution.

But when we choose to *thank* God for the problem and *thank* Him for the answer that we yet cannot see, we are exercising faith in choosing to trust that God has the solution, and leave our focus there. Cultivating this thankfulness will allow His promise of peace to be realized in your heart and home.

Meditating on the Positive

When we allow ourselves to dwell on negative thoughts about our spouse or marriage, we are not only letting Satan rob us of God's peace, but we are glorifying the devil. He is the accuser of the brethren (**Rev. 12:10**). He is the one accusing your spouse to you, and to God.

But what is **true**? What does **God say** about your spouse?

- They are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. (**I Pet. 1:18-19**)
- They are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, and predestined to adoption in Him. (**Eph. 2:10, 1:5**)
- God has a beautiful plan and purpose for their life (**Jer. 29:11**), and **you** are a part of that plan for their salvation! (**I Pet. 3:1-7**)
- God is faithful to finish the good work He has begun in them. (**Phil. 1:6**)

Any feelings of despair, hopelessness, doubt, or fear for the future do not come from a place of faith in God, and therefore are sin. "...For whatever is not from faith is sin." (**Rom. 14:23**)

Hebrews 11:1 *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."*

Hebrews 11:6 *"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."*

When we are not operating by faith, sin separates our hearts from God, so that we cannot see Him or feel His presence, which is why God cannot bless us with His peace while we are embracing these thoughts.

When we come to Him, we must believe in His love and His promises, in order for our hearts, and our lives, to be open to receive His blessings.

"Of Good Report"

Focusing on thankfulness and praise in every area of life is the example Paul is encouraging us to follow, and the reason why he could receive God's abiding, supernatural peace even amidst the most terrible trials.

When we praise God daily with good reports about our spouse, an atmosphere of faith will fill our home and bless our loved ones abundantly as God continues to help them become like Jesus.

Practice Makes Perfect!

Challenge yourself for one month to keep a daily gratitude journal, beginning with "Thank You Father for..." and listing 10 things you are grateful for each day about your spouse.



Day 11 | Care & Contentment

Philippians 4:10-14

*"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last **your care for me has flourished again**; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, **to be content**: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things **through Christ who strengthens me**. Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress."*

Embracing Opportunity

The Philippian believers had not ceased caring for Paul, but had lacked the opportunity to show their care. The beautiful thing about marriage is that each new day provides a hundred new opportunities to allow your care for your spouse to flourish, and be received by them with joy!

And even if their *rejoicing* is not as apparent as Paul's, you can be sure that your acts of loving care will cause notes of thankfulness to ascend to God from their hearts, slowly softening them and increasing their desire to care for you as well.

Content in Every State

Even when Paul was not receiving outward manifestations of love from the believers he was ministering to, he had peace in Christ. He trusted their love for him, and he trusted God. He did not need to see consistent evidence.

If you go through a season where your spouse is not manifesting as much outward care and affection towards you, consider that God wants to use

that time to help you find the true and lasting contentment that can only be found in Him.

When we take hold of this contentment, we will be able to continue showing unconditional love to our spouse during these times. We will be strengthened to put their needs above our own, and consider what **they** are going through and how we can help them to reconnect to the Source of love.

The Strength of Christ

What is Christ's strength?

John 5:30 *"I can of Myself do **nothing**. ..."*

Jesus did not try to find the strength to continue loving unconditionally *within Himself*. Neither should we!

John 5:30 *"... I do not seek My own will but **the will of the Father** who sent Me."*

Christ's strength was found in not seeking His own will. He had completely become one with fallen humanity, and the will of His flesh would have certainly recoiled from the life of utter selflessness that He was called to manifest.

But His flesh **never** had the power to sway Him, even in thought, because His heart and mind were wholly devoted to doing His Father's will. This devotion was simply the fruit of the security He had in His identity, and His faith in His Father's love for Him.

We see the climax of this devotion begin in the garden of Gethsemane, as the weight of the world's rejection of His Father began to crush down upon Him, causing His sweat to become like great drops of blood in the intensity of His anguish. In this moment He renewed His covenant with God,

Luke 22:42 "... Not My will, but Yours, be done."

As He embraced His Father's will above His own, He was able to receive strength from the angel sent to minister to Him, to fortify that unwavering devotion which would carry Him through the time of intense trial that lay before Him—a trial more intense than any of us will ever be called to bear.

Recalling the final scenes of Christ's life is enough to make anyone cry out in repentance for how we react in the trials we face with our spouses.

The covenant that Christ made with His Father for the redemption of humanity is meant to be illustrated to the world through our marriage covenants—that wives would submit to and trust their husbands even as Christ submits to and trusts His Father, and that husbands would love their wives even as Christ loves the church and lays down His life for her.

Each of these commitments require studying the life of Christ, and taking hold of His strength by following His example of complete surrender and submission to His Father's will, even unto death.

The Source of His Strength

John 14:10 "... The Father who dwells in Me does the works."

Christ was able to stay true to His covenant because He never neglected His quiet time alone with His Father, praying to be filled with His Spirit, that every word He would speak, every action He would perform, would be wrought by the Spirit of His Father, and not by His human flesh.

God has promised and is faithful to do the same for us, that Christ's victory may be ours!

Ezekiel 36:26-27 *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."*

Day 12 | He Will Supply

Philippians 4:15-23

"Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.

*Not that I seek the gift, but **I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.** Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. And **my God shall supply all your need** according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.*

Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

Seeking the Fruit

God wants to produce in us the fruits of His Spirit, and many of us pray for this to be done. But are we willing to endure what is necessary to cultivate those fruits?

Paul was thankful to see the generosity of this church, not because he was in desperate need, but because it was evidence of the Spirit's work in their hearts. When we give of ourselves selflessly to our spouses, God's heart rejoices because He knows these acts are working to transform our characters into His likeness.

Galatians 5:22-23 *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."*

Memorize these fruits, and desire to bless your spouse with good gifts, not because they have earned anything, or that you want something in return, but that these fruits may be cultivated in your own heart.

God Will Supply All Your Need

Have you ever heard the saying, *"It is impossible to out-give God"*? Well, it's true!

And how do we give anything to God? Remember what Jesus said,

Matthew 25:40 *"... Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me."*

Every kind and loving act that we do for our spouse is as if we are doing it to Christ Himself. Why? Because *"in Him all things consist,"* or *"hold together"* (**Col. 1:17**).

Our heavenly Father, through His Son, is sustaining the life of our spouse every day. Therefore, every pain they experience, God feels, and every gift they receive blesses Him as well.

Having this mindset will help us to continue loving and serving even if we do not feel loved in return, because we ultimately know that **God** loves us, and has done all He could ever do to prove it by giving His Son!

Colossians 3:17-19, 23-24 *"And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them. (...)*

*And whatever you do, do it heartily, **as to the Lord and not to men**, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."*

Ephesians 6:6-8 "... Not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, **as to the Lord, and not to men**, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord, whether he is a slave or free."

And what is "the reward of the inheritance" which we will receive?

I Peter 1:4-7 "... An inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, **reserved in heaven for you**, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ,"

God has made us "joint-heirs" with Christ (**Rom. 8:17**), and has given "all things" into His hands (**John 3:35**). Therefore, if we are abiding in Christ, we have everything we need!

II Peter 1:3-4 "... As His divine power has given to us **all things that pertain to life and godliness**, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."

As we allow Christ to live His life through us in our marriages, we take hold of this inheritance, and will discover that it is *truly* impossible to out-give God. He has already provided all we need for daily life, and for godliness—the perfection of our characters.

As we unconditionally serve and love our spouses as unto God, and not unto men (or women), believing in His promises, and partaking of His divine nature, we will experience this abundance of blessing transforming ourselves, our spouses, our marriages, and our homes.

And by His grace, we will become beacons of light in our communities, that the true image of God may be seen, and others may be drawn into the blessed fellowship of our Father and His beloved Son.

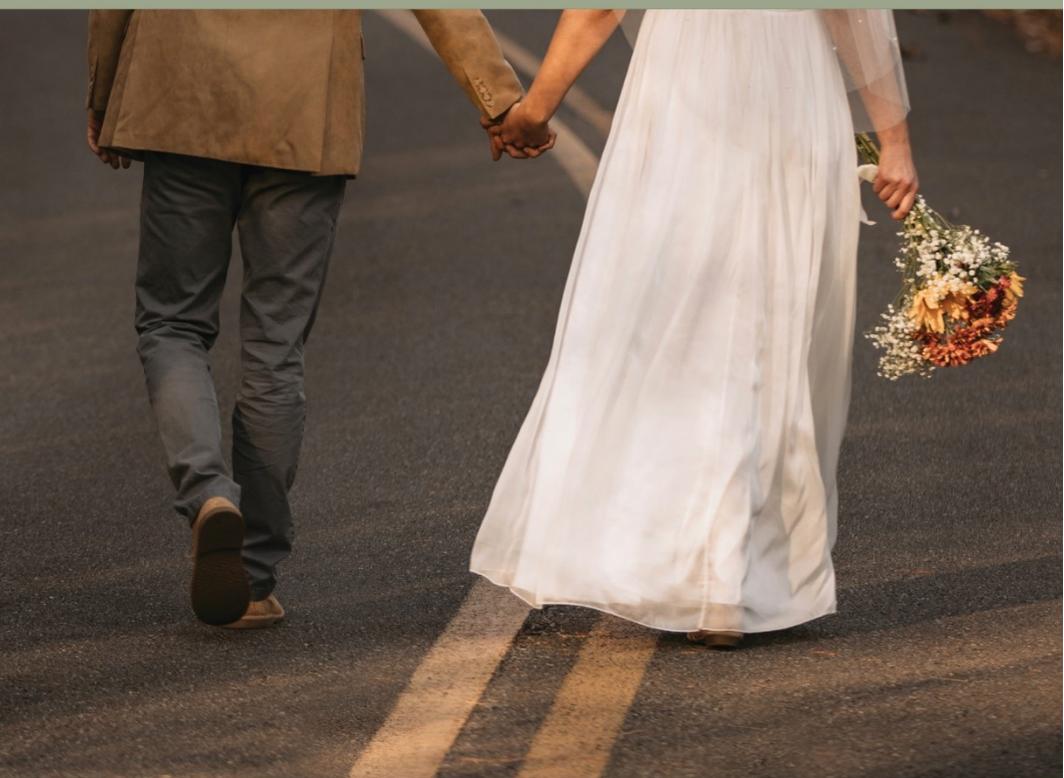
I John 1:3-4 *"... That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you **that your joy may be full.**"*

Matthew 5:14-16 *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. **Let your light so shine** before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*



Several months into our new life together, encountering the daily struggles of married life along with its joys, I came to the book of Philippians in my personal devotional time. God then led me to begin a deep study of Paul's letter, applying his relationship-focused counsel to our marriage, that our union would serve to preach the everlasting gospel and glorify our Father in heaven.

If you share this desire, we invite you to partake of the fruits of this study with us, that you may likewise receive the transforming power of God's Word into your hearts and your homes.



"Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."
Mark 10:9