

[LEADER'S GUIDE: THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE]

This is a study based on Timothy & Kathy Keller's book, "The Meaning of Marriage"
Study materials written by Justin & Megan Wright: <http://donotdisturbblog.wordpress.com/>
Additional Editing by our friends, Rick & Theresa Hill, and Laura Tuel
donotdisturbblog@gmail.com

The Meaning of Marriage
Leader's Guide
Introduction

Thank you for participating in this study on Timothy Keller's "The Meaning of Marriage." Throughout this study you will not only have opportunities to study out the subject of marriage in great detail, but you and your spouse will have opportunities to discuss how well you're living out God's meaning and purpose within your marriage. Our hope is that by discussing this material together you will fall more in love with one another and with the Creator of marriage.

In order for this group to be successful, there are a few requirements for each participant. These include:

1. Read the material AND listen to one audio message each week.

Each week we will be reading one chapter of Timothy Keller's "The Meaning of Marriage" and listening to a message with a similar theme to the chapter. The questions you will be discussing in your small group will come from both the book and the message. While it may seem like a lot, you should be able to cover all of the material throughout the week in 20-30 minutes a day or less. Our recommendation is to listen to the audio message in its entirety in one sitting, and break up the book and the questions into 20-30 minute sections. Overall, this is minimal amount of time for the impact this study can have on your marriage.

Note: If you are doing this study yourself and not as part of a small group, it is still important that both you and your spouse discuss the material each week.

2. Answer the study questions BEFORE coming to your small group.

The study questions are designed to encourage discussion within your marriage and within your small group. You and your spouse should answer the questions ahead of time, taking the opportunity to discuss your answers with one another before coming to your small group. This will help encourage even greater discussion in a group setting.

3. Read key biblical texts on the subject of marriage.

While a great deal of the questions will come directly from “The Meaning of Marriage” and audio messages, some questions will be specific to what scripture has to say about the subject of marriage. This is a vital part of the study. You may want to read, reread, and reread again some of these passages. Additionally, you may want to take the opportunity to read study bible notes or commentaries on these passages as well.

4. Ask questions.

During your small group, you and/or your spouse may have questions about the material that you would like to discuss in greater detail within your group. Perhaps you have differing opinions. Perhaps you have a question about marriage or sex that you’ve never been willing to ask before. This group is the perfect opportunity to ask all of your questions.

Below is a list of the assigned reading each week, as well as web-links to all of the audio messages incorporated with this study. Six of these messages are online for free download or web streaming, however, two of the messages by Timothy Keller are available online to be purchased.

Date:	“The Meaning of Marriage” Book Reading:	Audio Message:
Week #1	Chapter 1: The Secret of Marriage	Mark Driscoll – Taking Out the Trash
Week #2	Chapter 2: The Power of Marriage	Timothy Keller – Marriage as Ministry Power
Week #3	Chapter 3: The Essence of Marriage	Timothy Keller – Marriage as Commitment
Week #4	Chapter 4: The Mission of Marriage	Mark Driscoll – Friend With Benefits
Week #5	Chapter 5: Loving the Stranger	Feelin’ It – Andy Stanley (Part 3 in series)
Week #6	Chapter 6: Embracing the Other	Timothy Keller – Cultivating a Healthy Marriage and Part 2 (2 separate files)
Week #7	Chapter 7: Singleness and Marriage	Andy Stanley – Designer Sex (part 3 in series)
Week #8	Chapter 8: Sex and Marriage	Mark Driscoll – God, Gross or Gift

Leader's Note:

This study is intended for couples to enhance their own marriage. Throughout this process, some couples (or individuals) may choose to be more open than others. Additionally, some may want to put time and attention on other marriages rather than their own. To discourage these desires, please read through the following "Guidelines for Group Discussion" when you first meet. Once you read through these, feel free to have each couple in your group introduce themselves.

Guidelines for Group Discussion:

- 1) All conversations during our group meetings are to be kept confidential. We want all couples to feel open to discuss in a trusted environment.
- 2) Don't talk about anything that makes you feel uncomfortable, but please be open and honest.
- 3) Throughout the study you may share stories about negative situations that have happened within your marriage. This is OK. But negative or embarrassing comments about your spouse are not permitted.
- 4) Throughout this study, be sure to focus on what God is encouraging you to change rather than on what you think your spouse needs to change.
- 5) Commit to the reading and audio message assignments, and arrive prepared to discuss the information.

3. On a scale of 1-10, how would you currently rate your marriage? What are two or three things that are currently preventing your marriage from going up to the next number on the scale?

Digging Deeper:

Read “The Meaning of Marriage” Introduction & Chapter 1: The Secret of Marriage (40 pages)

Listen to Audio Message 1: [Taking Out the Trash by Mark Driscoll](#) (55 minutes)

4. Timothy Keller writes that, “...marriage, next to our relationship to God is the most profound relationship there is.” (p.14, 22) Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
5. What are some of your thoughts on the marriage statistics provided on pages 14-18 (kindle), 22-27 (hard copy)?
6. How did the Enlightenment change the view of marriage? (p.19, 27-28) Do you believe this view of marriage has impacted our culture today in any way?

11. Mark Driscoll mentioned 4 things that can ruin a marriage. These include:
 - a. Criticism – when you attack the person and not the problem.
 - b. Contempt – You are disgusted with your spouse and are condescending toward them. You try to shame your spouse, or control them.
 - c. Defensiveness – You defend yourself and keep the conversation on your spouse and their “problems”.
 - d. Stonewalling – When you ignore the other person, and refuse to engage in dialog or resolve the situation.

In what ways can these hurt a marriage relationship?

Are any of them currently impacting your marriage in a negative way? Please explain.

12. Mark Driscoll also stated that, “Couples don’t fall out of love, they fall out of repentance.” How important do you believe repentance is in the marriage relationship?

Leader’s Note: If necessary, give your group a definition of repentance.

Repent - to feel such sorrow for sin or fault as to be disposed to change one's life for the better.

13. What was your favorite section from chapter 1 or from the audio message? Did you have a least favorite?

Leader's Note: Each week, the participants guide will include a quote from “The Meaning of Marriage” or from the Bible for each participant to memorize. Additionally, an “On Your Own” and “Prayer” section is included in the material for each couple to go over together each week. End your meeting in prayer, but take the opportunity to encourage all couples to go through these sections every week prior to your group meeting.

Note: The lesson for next week includes:
Read “The Meaning of Marriage” Chapter 2: The Power for Marriage (26 pages)
Listen to Audio Message 2: [Marriage as Ministry Power by Timothy Keller](#) (34 minutes)

Memorize:

*Write down the following passage and put it in a place you'll see it and read it on a daily basis.
Do your best to memorize it throughout the week.*

“The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.” ~Timothy Keller

On your own:

'Repentance' means coming clean, being sorry, admitting your wrongdoing, and taking direct steps to change how you're living your life. It involves bringing to the light that which you've chosen to keep hidden. Confessing any wrongdoing you've committed against God (Psalm 51:4) and your spouse is a vital part of maintaining trust in the marriage relationship.

Take the opportunity to think about any sins you've committed against your spouse. What have you not told him or her? What may you need to confess and repent? Take the opportunity to do so before your first group meeting. After doing so, read the prayer (written below) together as a couple. Make this a moment when you both reaffirm your love to one another.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we acknowledge at this time that our marriage is a gift from You. We confess that there have been times when we have taken opportunities to put our own individual desires ahead of Your desires for our relationship. We acknowledge that marriage isn't easy, but we also acknowledge that the marriage relationship is a picture of the relationship that Jesus has with His church (Ephesians 5:21-32). We come to You at this time with the desire to keep You at the center of our marriage. We ask that You would lead, guide and protect every aspect of our marriage, from our friendship, to our parenting, to our finances and even our intimate lives. And we come to You with a desire to take opportunities over the next 8 weeks to reflect on how our marriage can be a better representation of the relationship you desire with each of us. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Meaning of Marriage
Leader's Guide
Week 2

Note: Page numbers are listed as kindle edition first, hard copy second.

Introduction:

1. Outside of your home, has the subject of marriage come up in any of your day-to-day conversations this week? What was the conversation about?
2. What are one or two things you have applied to your marriage this past week as a result of the readings so far?

Digging Deeper:

Read "The Meaning of Marriage" Chapter 2: The Power for Marriage (26 pages)

Listen to Audio Message 2: [Marriage as Ministry Power by Timothy Keller](#) (34 minutes)

3. Marriage is not a political institution, but is an institution created by God Himself. Does this change the way you view marriage in any way? Please explain.

Leader's Note: In Timothy Keller's message, he mentioned there are 3 institutions created by God Himself. These include the family (marriage), the church, and the state. Many in our culture today view marriage as a political institution, or merely a part of our culture. But scripture clearly shows that marriage was God's idea (Genesis 2).

4. What are 2 ways (or past experiences) where you have discovered that serving others' interests ahead of your own does not come naturally?

5. What is the difference between serving others on your own and serving others by the power of the Holy Spirit? Is there a difference? (See Galatians 5:19-26)

Leader's Note: The difference here is that if one is serving others on their own, they're likely doing it for their own glory, or in order to feel good about themselves. Serving through the power of the Holy Spirit shows that our emphasis in serving is for the glory of God.

6. What are three ways you currently serve your spouse? Do you believe you do this on your own, or with the help of the Holy Spirit?

Leader's Note: As mentioned above, we may sometimes serve our spouse (the right thing to do) with the wrong motives. For a marriage to be rooted in the gospel, our service to our spouse must be with the intent of serving for God's glory.

7. What are 3 ways your spouse currently “fills your tank?” (p.44, 52) Do you believe God can fill it any better? Please explain.

8. Timothy Keller writes, “Whether we are husband or wife, we are not to live for ourselves but for the other. And that is the hardest yet single most important function of being a husband or a wife in marriage.” (p.45, 53)

Do you agree that this is the hardest and most important part of the marriage relationship?

How do you believe this is *best* lived out within a marriage?

Leader’s note: How this is *best* lived out within a marriage should be answered differently by each couple. While not all couples will answer all questions in your group setting, try to get each couple to verbally express how living for the other can be best expressed in marriage.

9. Be honest, how often do you immerse yourself in the teachings of Jesus on a regular basis? What are 2 or 3 ways your marriage would be different if you did this? (p.66, 74)

Leader's Note: Some couples may do this regularly, and others may not. The intent of the question is not for anybody to feel guilty about their current study habits, it's to encourage each couple to think about a way their marriage may improve.

10. Re-read the section with the heading "The Problem of Self-Centeredness". (p.48, 56)
What are 3 ways or areas where you may be more likely to think of yourself before your spouse?

How may this impact your marriage?

11. Timothy Keller said, "It is impossible to live a non-self-centered life apart from God's help." Write out your own prayer to God, asking Him to reveal areas of your own self-centeredness.

12. What was your favorite section from chapter 2 or from the audio message? Did you have a least favorite?

Leader's Note: Remember to include a time of prayer at the end of your group meeting. While family illnesses are common prayer requests, be sure to include specific prayer for how each couple may continue to grow in their marriage friendship.

Note: The lesson for next week includes:
Read "The Meaning of Marriage" Chapter 3: The Essence of Marriage (32 pages)
Listen to Audio Message 3: [Marriage as Commitment by Timothy Keller](#) (46 minutes)

Memorize:

Write down the following passage and put it in a place you'll see it and read it on a daily basis.

Do your best to memorize it throughout the week.

"Fear' in the Bible means to be overwhelmed, to be controlled by something. To fear the Lord is to be overwhelmed with wonder before the greatness of God and his love." ~Timothy Keller

On Your Own:

On the subject of self-centeredness, Timothy Keller said, "After the first year or two of marriage, you begin to see how selfish your spouse is. And at the same time, they begin to tell you how selfish you are. And you don't think that your selfishness is nearly as bad as your spouses... you make excuses for your own selfishness."

Take the opportunity to think about ways you may be selfish toward your spouse. Are there moments where you put your needs ahead of theirs? Have there been times when you have identified their selfishness and seen it as worse than yours? Take the opportunity to confess some of your own selfish ways to your spouse before the next group meeting. After doing so, read the prayer (written below) together as a couple.

Prayer:

Father in Heaven, thank you for revealing to us our selfishness. Please continue to show us areas where we can lovingly serve one another and fill us with a willingness to sacrifice for each other. Help us Lord Jesus to see each other through Your loving, merciful and forgiving eyes. Please continue to convict and reveal to us our spouse's needs. Provide your enlightenment, Lord, to help us see our own flaws first. Thank you for your redemptive, restorative power Lord. We ask all this in Jesus name. Amen.

The Meaning of Marriage
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Week 3

Note: Page numbers are listed as kindle edition first, hard copy second.

Introduction:

1. Marriage is often referred to as a covenant. What do you think the difference is between a contract and a covenant?

Leader's Note: A contract is a legal document that can be changed depending on various circumstances. A covenant is promise made publicly, includes God, and cannot be changed.

2. Without looking at additional resources, how would you define "love"?
3. Look up a few definitions of the word "love". How was your definition similar? How was it different?

Leader's Note: The word “love” today is often viewed as a feeling, and not as an act of service. It's seen as a noun (person, place, or thing) and not a verb (something that requires action). For example, below is a modern day definition of love, as well as an 1828 definition. Take just a few moments to discuss with your group how much culture has changed in this regard.

Love (modern day) – *noun* - *a* (1) : strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties <maternal love for a child> (2) : attraction based on sexual desire : affection and tenderness felt by lovers (3) : affection based on admiration, benevolence, or common interests <love for his old schoolmates>

Love (1828) – *verb* - 1. In a general sense to be pleased with; to regard with affection, on account of some qualities which excite pleasing sensations or desire of gratification. We love a friend, on account of some qualities which give us pleasure in his society. We love a man who has done us a favor; in which case, gratitude enters into the composition of our affection. We love our parents and our children, on account of their connection with us, and on account of many qualities which please us. We love to retire to a cool shade in summer. We love a warm room in winter. We love to hear an eloquent advocate. The Christian loves his Bible. In short, we love whatever gives us pleasure and delight, whether animal or intellectual; and if our hearts are right, we love God above all things, as the sum of all excellence and all the attributes which can communicate happiness to intelligent beings. In other words, the Christian loves God with the love of complacency in his attributes, the love of benevolence towards the interest of his kingdom, and the love of gratitude for favors received. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind - Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Matt. 22. 2. To have benevolence or good will for. John 3.

Note: both definitions are provided from Webster's dictionary.

Digging Deeper:

Read “The Meaning of Marriage” Chapter 3: The Essence of Marriage (32 pages)

Listen to Audio Message 3: [Marriage as Commitment by Timothy Keller](#) (46 minutes)

4. Timothy Keller writes, “In so many cases, when one person says to another, “I love you, but let's not ruin it by getting married...I don't need a piece of paper to love you.” (p.69)
If you heard somebody say this today, how would you respond to them?

5. This chapter focuses primarily on marriage as commitment. Why do you think Timothy Keller writes so much about sex during this chapter?

Leader's Note: The Jewish faith heavily emphasizes the sexual consummation of the marriage relationship. Throughout Old Testament culture, a couple was not viewed as fully married (or committed) to one another until after their sexual consummation.

6. Do you think that sex before marriage helps or hinders the overall commitment to a relationship? Please explain.

Leader's Note: This is an area in which some couples may be experiencing deep struggles and regrets. We do not wish for couples to openly discuss their own sexual past at this time. However, if any couples willingly open up, feel free to let them discuss it. The Week #7 "On Your Own" section will give each couple the opportunity to discuss their past with one another, outside of a group setting.

7. In what ways does the commitment of marriage make it the deepest relationship possible you can have with another person? Write down the first 4 that come to mind.

13. What kind of impact do you think bargaining has on the marriage relationship? Be specific.

14. What was your favorite section from chapter 3 or the audio message? Did you have a least favorite?

Leader's Note: Remember to include a time of prayer at the end of your group meeting. While family illnesses are common prayer requests, be sure to include specific prayer for how each couple may continue to grow in their marriage friendship.

Note: The lesson for next week includes:
Read "The Meaning of Marriage" Chapter 4: The Mission of Marriage (23 pages)
Listen to Audio Message 4: [Friend with Benefits by Mark Driscoll](#) (67 minutes)

Memorize:

Write down the following passage and put it in a place you'll see it and read it on a daily basis.

Do your best to memorize it throughout the week.

"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." Ephesians 5:31 (NIV)

On Your Own:

Do you still have your wedding vows written down somewhere? Take the opportunity to read through them together. What, specifically, did you commit or promise to do for one another in those vows? Talk openly, not judgmentally to your spouse about whether or not you believe you're each accomplishing your promises to one another. Then write down specific steps you plan to take over the next week, month, and year to better fulfill your marriage vows.

Sample Vows:

I, MAN, before God and these witnesses, take you, WOMAN, to be my lawfully wedded wife. I promise to love you unconditionally and sacrificially as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, to live with you in an understanding way and to grant you honor as a fellow heir for the grace of life. As your head I promise to lead, guide, and protect you in sickness and in health, in sorrow and in happiness, in adversity and in prosperity, until death should separate us or until the Lord Jesus Christ returns for us. Realizing my inadequacy, I gratefully accept God's promise of grace to perform these vows. I promise to do these things because God commands me, because you are my best friend and because I love you.

I, WOMAN, before God and these witnesses, take you, MAN, to be my lawfully wedded husband. I promise to be your loving and faithful wife. I acknowledge the position that God has given you as my head, and I promise to joyfully submit to you as to the Lord. I promise to respect and admire you and to be subject to your leadership. I promise to stand by you and loyally support you in sickness and in health, in sorrow and in happiness, in adversity and in prosperity, until death should separate us or until the Lord Jesus Christ returns for us. Realizing my inadequacy, I gratefully accept God's promise of grace to perform these vows. I promise to do these things because God commands me, because you are my best friend and because I love you.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, at this time we come to you seeking wisdom in how we can be more loving toward one another. We recognize that we sometimes see "love" as an emotional feeling and not as something we do for one another. But it is our desire to "be loving" toward one another. As your Word says, we wish to "submit to one another out of reverence for Christ," and that by doing so we're able to see one another for the person You have made us to be. We know that the relationship You desire to have with each of us is strong, and we pray that throughout this week our relationship with one another is reflective of Your relationship with us. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

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Week 4

Note: Page numbers are listed as kindle edition first, hard copy second.

Introduction:

1. Do you believe that most couples today marry their best friend? Why or why not?
2. What are some of the dangers of couples marrying a romantic or sexual partner and not their best friend?
3. What characteristics or qualities were you looking for in a spouse before you got married?

Leader's Note: This is an opportunity for each person to offer encouraging words (and only encouraging words) about their spouse. Most likely, people were looking for an attractive person and someone with characteristics to provide deep friendship. By using encouraging words here, couples will be more prepared to answer question #4 below in a group setting.

8. “Your spouse and your marriage must be the number one priority in your life.” (p.118, 127) If you have children, how do you balance the necessary commitment to both your children and your spouse? Which do you believe is more important, your role as a parent or your role as a spouse? Please explain.

Leader’s Note: While parenthood is extremely important, the marriage relationship must come first. One of the best things a couple can do for their children is to demonstrate how a healthy marriage operates. Children will often take a considerable amount of time, but a married couple must make time to grow their marriage. Doing so will ensure that marriage continues to thrive from one generation to the next.

9. What did you think of Mark Driscoll’s story about how Martin Luther married his wife? What similarities do you see between their friendship and the friendship you have with your spouse?

10. Mark Driscoll mentioned 3 types of marriages today. These include:

- a. Back to back – The couple is not working on their friendship, and one or both parties are becoming bitter and angry.
- b. Shoulder to shoulder – The couple is working as a team, focusing on parenting, paying the bills, but ignoring their friendship.
- c. Face to face – The couple takes opportunities often, perhaps daily, to enjoy sacred moments with one another and build their friendship.

How can you and your spouse work together to ensure your marriage is a “face to face” marriage? Be specific.

Leader's Note: During his message, Mark Driscoll mentioned that many marriages today are “shoulder to shoulder”. This is likely true with some of the couples in your small group as well. That said, the purpose of the question isn't to condemn a couple, but to encourage them to be a “face to face” marriage and to take the appropriate steps to do so.

11. Mark Driscoll's message highlighted an acronym for F.R.I.E.N.D.S. and how it applies to the marriage relationship. The acronym includes:
 - a. Fruitful – “Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion.”
 - b. Reciprocal – you both need to work on your friendship
 - c. Intimacy – Intimacy was defined as “into me see”
 - d. Enjoyable – Have fun and make memories together
 - e. Needed – Before sin entered the world, it was “not good” for Adam to be alone. Marriage was needed.
 - f. Devoted – Romans 12:15 – “Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.” Be devoted in all circumstances.
 - g. Sanctifying – Sanctifying means that marriage shows us our sin, and we want to help one another become more like Jesus, and we want to do this together.

Can you think of any other characteristics for the marriage friendship that may not be listed here?

What do you think of Mark Driscoll's definition of “intimacy”? How can you best help your spouse see into you?

Leader's Note: Many of the characteristics of marriage were probably answered during discussion of #3 above. However, based on this list, participants may have additional characteristics they've thought of. As for the 2nd part of this question, the definition Mark Driscoll gave for intimacy was “into me see”.

12. What was your favorite section from chapter 4 or the audio message? Did you have a least favorite?

13. What questions, if any do you have from the first ½ of the book?

Leader's Note: Remember to include a time of prayer at the end of your group meeting. If time allows, after the meeting ask each couple how they've applied what they've learned the first ½ of the study within their marriage.

Note: The lesson for next week includes:
Read "The Meaning of Marriage" Chapter 5: Loving the Stranger (35 pages)
Listen to Audio Message 5: [Feelin' It by Andy Stanley](#) (38 minutes)

Memorize:

*Write down the following passage and put it in a place you'll see it and read it on a daily basis.
Do your best to memorize it throughout the week.*

"Husbands love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word." Ephesians 5:26-27 (HCSB)

On Your Own:

Take the opportunity to ask your spouse a simple, yet very difficult question: “How good of a friend have I been to you?” Give them full permission to speak openly and honestly. Then, follow-up with, “How can I be a better friend?”

As your spouse asks you this question, remember to focus on the importance of holiness within your marriage. As a friend, your desire is for your spouse to help you become a more godly person, and your desire is to see this in them as well. Talk with your spouse about friendship and holiness, and how you can work together to improve in both.

Prayer:

This week, each of you should take the opportunity write out your own prayer to God. Pray in such a way that your desire is for the holiness of your spouse, and how you can help them become a more godly person than they already are. Read your prayer to your spouse on your own sometime this week. If you have children, you may want to consider reading it in front of them as well. Give them the opportunity to see that marriage involves helping one another fall more deeply in love with God.

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Week 5

Note: Page numbers are listed as kindle edition first, hard copy second.

Introduction:

1. Did you do anything this past week that strengthened your friendship? What was it?
2. In what ways has your personality changed since you first got married? In what ways has your spouse's personality changed?
3. If somebody asked you today, "What is the best way to stay 'in love' with your spouse," how would you respond?
4. Based on everything you've read so far, do you believe it is possible for a couple to "fall out of love"? Please explain.

Leader's Note: Throughout this study participants have heard on a few occasions that it is not possible for two people to fall out of love. This statement usually sees love as an emotion, and not as an act of service (see week #3). Additionally, week #1 discussed that couples don't fall out of love, they fall out of repentance. If anybody in your group states that they do believe it is possible to fall out of love, review some of the questions from weeks #1 & 3 to remind them of these statements.

8. Read Genesis 2:24. What does it mean to leave your father and mother?

How easy or difficult do you think this is for most couples today?

How easy or difficult has it been for your marriage?

Leader's Note: To leave your father and mother doesn't mean to have no contact with them; it means to leave that family culture and begin a new culture of your own. As the Keller's discussed in the diaper story, each of them was bringing their own family culture into their marriage. Today, this often happens with special events (how birthdays and holidays are celebrated), parenting styles, and many other areas of marriage. Each person within the marriage must re-think how they view all aspects of marriage and family and must begin their own new family culture.

9. Timothy Keller briefly mentioned Love Languages. Dr. Gary Chapman has outlined 5 Love Languages, and they include:

- a. Words of Affirmation – This person enjoys unsolicited compliments and encouragement. Insults are not easily forgotten and leave them feeling shattered.
- b. Quality Time – This person desires full, undivided attention. Cell phones, ipads, Facebook and Pinterest are enemies of a quality time personality.
- c. Receiving Gifts – Any gift, large or small makes this person feel cared for and prized above all other things.
- d. Acts of Service – This person deeply appreciates you vacuuming, doing the dishes, changing the oil, or anything else you can do to ease the burden of responsibilities.
- e. Physical Touch – This isn't just about sex. They enjoy hugs, pats on the back, holding hands, and other forms of touch all throughout the day.

If you had to guess, which one is your primary love language? Which one is your spouse's primary love language? (Note: If you wish, take a free online assessment at <http://www.5lovelanguages.com/assessments/love/>)

Does this give you better insight as to how you can better **be** loving toward your spouse? Please explain.

10. Timothy Keller mentioned some Greek words to distinguish love. They included (storge) affection, (phileo) friendship, and (agape) service. How can your spouse best communicate your love language in the areas of affection, friendship, and service?

Leader's Note: This question should give each person a good opportunity to better understand how they can love their spouse. If you're not able to discuss this question in your group setting due to time constraints, be sure to encourage each couple to discuss this question on their own.

11. Do you regularly take opportunities to read the Bible or other Christian literature together? If so, what are some benefits to your marriage from doing so? If not, what would be some benefits to your marriage if you did so?

12. What are 3 or 4 ways you can guard your heart? Which of these do you believe is the most effective? Why? (Proverbs 4:23)

Leader's Note: In the Old Testament, the “heart” was the core of who a person was. The heart can be deceptive (Psalm 12:2), in denial (Psalm 14:1), or can long to obey God (Psalm 119:2). In short, one’s heart should be focused on growing in holiness. Therefore, this question gives each person the opportunity to think through anything in life that may hinder their spiritual growth. When each person in a marriage does this, the marriage relationship is much more likely to thrive.

13. What was your favorite section from chapter 5 or from the audio message? Did you have a least favorite?

Leader's Note: Remember to include a time of prayer at the end of your group meeting.

Note: The lesson for next week includes:
Read “The Meaning of Marriage” Chapter 6: Embracing the Other (21 pages)
Listen to Audio Message 6: [Cultivating a Healthy Marriage \(2 CD\)](#) by Timothy & Kathy Keller
This audio message is lengthy, but includes a good review of material covered to date, including material on biblical roles of men and women covered in Chapter 6.

Memorize:

*Write down the following passage and put it in a place you'll see it and read it on a daily basis.
Do your best to memorize it throughout the week.*

“Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” Proverbs 4:23 (NIV)

On Your Own:

Andy Stanley talked a lot about the importance of sharing your feelings with one another. While it is sometimes difficult to identify your exact feelings, knowing your love language will help you effectively communicate to your spouse how they can be more loving toward you. This week, take the opportunity to discover your personal love language. (The free online assessment is available at www.5lovelanguages.com/assessments/love/.) Afterwards, discuss with your spouse how well you're speaking their personal love language, and how well they're speaking yours. Work together to find the root of any discouragement you may be feeling about your marriage relationship. Is it due to love language communication? Is it due to your own insecurities? Is it due to you not guarding your heart (Proverbs 4:23)?

If you feel no discouragement about your marriage relationship, you can still talk with your spouse about how you can continue working together to strengthen your friendship.

Some suggestions include:

1. Regularly discuss what you're each reading in the Scriptures.
2. After this study, read and discuss another marriage book together. Suggestions include:
 - a. The Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman
 - b. Sacred Marriage by Gary Thomas
 - c. Intimacy Ignited by Dillow/Pintus
 - d. Sheet Music by Kevin Leman
3. Pray together on a regular basis.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we acknowledge at this time that we do change as time goes on. We understand that we are not the same person we were when we married, and that years from now we will not be the same people we are today. We know that we will change. Throughout these changes, we commit that we will continually keep our marriage relationship and our friendship as a tremendous priority in our lives. We pray that You will give us wisdom in how to do so, and we give each other permission to keep us accountable in this.

(For those married with children) We also acknowledge that it is sometimes easier to focus on being a parent than it is to focus on being a spouse. And we pray today that our relationship will be a reflection of the marriage we want our children to have and experience. That our marriage relationship will be of greater importance to us than our relationship with our children, or any other person.

Father, we don't wish to simply maintain our marriage relationship, instead our desire is for our marriage to grow and mature to a level we never thought possible. And we ask that You will continue to guide and lead us with this in mind. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Meaning of Marriage
Leader's Guide
Week 6

Note: Page numbers are listed as kindle edition first, hard copy second.

Introduction:

1. What are 3 ways you think men and women are different? What are 3 ways you and your spouse are different? (Yes, keep it to only 3.)

Leader's Note: This week's lesson focuses on the differences between men and women, outlined as "roles" in this chapter. While some may struggle deeply with this lesson, each person should be able to realize obvious differences between men and women.

2. Despite these differences, how has your marriage helped you to grow and mature like no other relationship you've experienced?

Digging Deeper:

Read "The Meaning of Marriage" Chapter 6: Embracing the Other (21 pages)

Listen to Audio Message 6: [Cultivating a Healthy Marriage \(2 CD\)](#) by Timothy & Kathy Keller (2+ hours)

3. Read Genesis 2:15-25. What differences do you see here between men and women that may not be part of your list above? Can you think of other scripture passages that may point out other differences as well?

Leader's Note: Some differences may include: **1)** Adam was created first, and then Eve (Gen. 2:21-22; 1 Timothy 2:13); **2)** Adam was created from the dust, and Eve was made from Adam, **3)** Adam and Eve each received a different curse from God for their actions (Gen. 3:8-19).

4. What dangers may there be in talking about the different roles of men and women in today's culture? What pros may there be?

Leader's Note: Some participants may believe there are more cons than there are pros. If so, take the opportunity to read Ephesians 5:21-33 in your group. Also, take the opportunity to point out all of the pros highlighted throughout Chapter 6.

5. Read Ephesians 5:21-33.

Men: What do you find most challenging about how you are to lead your family?

Women: What do you find most challenging about submitting to your husband's leadership?

Leader's Note: Once again, some couples may struggle greatly with these questions on biblical roles. One challenge for women is that they have a desire to lead. In Genesis 3:16 God says to Eve, "Your desire will be for your husband," which literally means, "your desire will be to rule your husband." Men, on the other hand, may notice that there are 7 verses here written to them and 3 to women. Remind everyone in your group as a part of this discussion that the role of both men and women is the Jesus role (see Philippians 2 – Jesus submits to the Father's will and has all authority to given to Him.) The passage is not about men being superior in any way, but is a picture of the gospel message, and a picture of how each member the Trinity operates with one another.

6. Which role do you believe is the most challenging: Is it the husband's, the wife's, or are both equally challenging? Please explain.

Leader's Note: Each role is the Jesus role. While each one has different challenges, to say one is more challenging than the other would be incorrect.

7. Re-read the section titled, "The Dance of the Trinity" (p.166, 174). Does this make you think differently about the subject of submission within marriage? (Also see Eph. 5:21)
8. Read Ephesians 6:12. Why do you think this passage comes so shortly after passages on marriage and parenting?

What, specifically, must you and your spouse do to protect yourselves from attack?

Leader's Note: If some members of your group still struggle on the biblical roles between men and women, feel free to ask a follow-up question: "Is it possible your struggles in this area are actually struggles against evil spirits in the heavenly places? Is it possible your struggles aren't with the role of you or your spouse but with the role of God in your own life?" This is a very difficult question to wrestle through, but it is interesting to see Ephesians 6:12 come so shortly after the subject of submission and headship in Eph. 5:21-33.

9. Men: How do other men you know and work with talk about their wives? Be specific.

Women: How do other women you know and work with talk about their husbands? Be specific.

How important do you think it is that you say only encouraging words about your spouse when you're around others?

Leader's Note: Many men and women talk disparagingly about their spouse while out in public. This gives others a bad impression of their spouse as well as a bad impression of marriage itself. It's extremely important for husbands and wives to go out of their way to always say positive words about their spouse while out in public.

10. How does your marriage relationship complete you? (See Genesis 2:23-25)

11. Read Philippians 2:3-4. Think about this passage in the context of your marriage. What are 3 ways you will serve your spouse this week that may not be part of your normal service to him/her?

12. What was your favorite section from chapter 6? Did you have a least favorite?

Leader's Note: Remember to include a time of prayer at the end of your group meeting.

Note: The lesson for next week includes:

Read "The Meaning of Marriage" Chapter 7: Singleness and Marriage (26 pages)

Listen to Audio Message 7: [Designer Sex by Andy Stanley](#) (45 minutes)

Memorize:

Write down the following passage and put it in a place you'll see it and read it on a daily basis.

Do your best to memorize it throughout the week.

"And further, submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Ephesians 5:21 (NLT)

On Your Own:

You've been discussing marriage at a very deep level for six weeks in a row. Now, it's time for a date night! Take the opportunity this week to go on a date with your spouse. This may include a night out on the town, or it may include a candlelit dinner at home. Whatever it may be for you, simply take the opportunity to enjoy one another's company. While enjoying your date, feel free to ask one another the following questions.

1. From what we've read so far, what has been most meaningful to you?
2. From what we've read so far, what has been most challenging for you?
3. How can I better submit to your desires and ensure we keep our marriage strong?
(Eph. 5:21)

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we acknowledge at this time that the different roles between men and women is not only a biblical reality for our marriage, but it's also a reality of the relationship that You, the Son, and the Spirit all demonstrate within Your own relationship. This week we ask for wisdom in how we may serve one another in ways we have never done so before. We recognize that we never need our spouse's permission to serve them, and we ought to consider their needs greater than our own. We know that this is certainly not an easy task, but we believe that You can lead and guide us in how it is to be done. We pray for protection for our marriage, and we pray that our marriage may be an inspiration to others, that our friendship will continue to develop and mature to a deeper level than we could ever imagine. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

The Meaning of Marriage
Leader's Guide
Week 7

Note: Page numbers are listed as kindle edition first, hard copy second.

Introduction:

1. Do you have any single friends or family members? What struggles, if any, do they have with being single instead of married?
2. In what ways do you think marriage can become an idol in someone's life?
3. What one thing led you to become married instead of remaining in a dating relationship?

Digging Deeper:

Read "The Meaning of Marriage" Chapter 7: Singleness and Marriage
Audio Message is only for "On Your Own" section this week (see below)

4. Read 1 Corinthians 7:29-40. How would you respond to a friend who has an extremely strong desire to be married?
5. Which Disney love story was your favorite when you were a child? Do you have any concerns for the message these movies convey? Please explain. (p.189, 197)

6. Timothy Keller listed 4 common ways Christian churches try to “explain” singleness. (p.188, 196) Which of these reasons have you heard the most?

7. Have you given up some friendships for the sake of your marriage? How easy or difficult was this for you to do?

8. At what age do you think it’s appropriate for somebody to begin dating? Do you think it’s OK for somebody to date without any intention of their relationship progressing to marriage? Please explain.

9. Before you were married, how important was it for you to become married to someone of the Christian faith?

10. Can you think of any situations where marrying somebody outside the Christian faith would be OK? (p.202, 209-210)

11. What are some dangers of a dating relationship becoming passionate early on? (p. 204, 213)

12. Where do you think the line should be drawn in the area of physical intimacy for a dating couple? (See footnote #23 from p.207, 275)

13. What are some ways a dating couple can best get to know one another without living together? Write down the first 5 that come to mind.

14. What was your favorite section from chapter 7? Did you have a least favorite?

Note: The lesson for next week includes:

Read “The Meaning of Marriage” Chapter 8: Sex and Marriage, Epilogue & Appendix (25 pages)

Listen to Audio Message 8: [Sex: God, Gross, or Gift by Mark Driscoll](#) (62 minutes)

Memorize:

Write down the following passage and put it in a place you'll see it and read it on a daily basis.

Do your best to memorize it throughout the week.

“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-5 (NIV)

On your own:

Take the opportunity this week to listen to Audio Message 7: [Designer Sex](#) (45 minutes) by Andy Stanley. If possible, listen to this message with your spouse, and then discuss the following questions. (Note: Listening to the message and discussing these questions should take 60-90 minutes, so please plan ahead.)

1. Do you or your spouse have any sexual regrets from relationships prior to your marriage? If so, in what ways has this impacted your marriage? If not, in what ways do you think sex prior to marriage can impact the marriage relationship?
2. How has your sexual past changed your life story? What would you tell others today (unmarried) about the dangers of an unmarried sexual lifestyle?
3. If you could write a story about the ideal marriage/sex life, what would you say? What changes do you and your spouse need to make so that this story may be a reality for you?

We understand that discussing your sexual past may be a challenge. Next week's group discussion will focus on the beauty of sex in the marriage relationship, and we believe that openly discussing your past regrets will help you see the beauty that sex is and will continue to be within your marriage. If your sexual past is an area of contention in your marriage, it should be discussed openly, and if necessary with a trusted pastor or counselor. When full forgiveness of self/others is offered in this area, only then can your marriage fully develop to the level of beauty in which it's described within the bible. (See Song of Songs 4:16-5:1; Proverbs 5:19).

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, at this time we simply acknowledge how blessed we are to know one another. Some of the experiences we had together prior to dating were very memorable, but the experiences we now have on a regular basis continually help us to grow in our love for one another. We pray at this time that our relationship will be a shining example of marriage. That we continue to keep You at the center of our lives and our relationship, and that You bless our marriage in ways greater than we could ever ask or imagine. We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Leader's Note: Part 1 – Sex should be satisfying to both partners. However, if the goal of sex is for one to please their spouse, they will find sex becomes much more pleasurable for them as well. Part 2 – 1 Cor. 7:3-5 clearly shows that if one has a desire for sex and the other does not, they should have sex regardless. The marriage is a “one flesh” relationship, which means that what may be best for one spouse may be best for the marriage as a whole. Therefore, if one spouse would like sex more frequently than the other, then the one who prefers less sex can serve their spouse in this way, growing their marriage in the process. Note: It must be stated here that sometimes it is the wife who wants more sex than the husband. In this case, the husband, too, must not refuse sex and may use it as a way to serve his spouse.

8. What are 2 or 3 ways sex with your spouse can be seen as an act of obedience toward God?

9. In what ways does sex make one feel vulnerable (other than physically)?

How important is it for these same vulnerabilities to be expressed elsewhere in marriage?
In what ways can/should they be expressed?

Leader's Note: During sex, both partners are physically vulnerable in every way. However, this is only a picture of vulnerabilities elsewhere in marriage. Sex is a way for each spouse to show full acceptance of the other and the vulnerabilities they have seen elsewhere in marriage. It's a picture of pure friendship, commitment, and love. If necessary, discuss some of the highlights from weeks #4 and 5 on friendship.

10. Timothy Keller wrote, “Sex between a man and a woman points to the love between the Father and the Son.” (p.227, 235) Have you ever thought about sex in this way? Does this in any way change how you understand the Gospel?

11. Read Song of Songs 4:16-5:1. In your own words, what does God communicate here about sex in marriage?

12. What was your favorite section from chapter 8 and the audio message? Did you have a least favorite?

Leader’s Note: Remember to include a time of prayer at the end of your group meeting. Additionally, encourage each couple to complete the evaluation at the end of their study guide. All feedback may be used to improve how this study is used in the future. Thank you.

Memorize:

Write down the following passage and put it in a place you’ll see it and read it on a daily basis.

Do your best to memorize it throughout the week.

***“Let her breasts satisfy you always.
May you always be captivated by her love.” Proverbs 5:19 (HCSB)***

On Your Own:

Men and women are naturally inclined to use the 5 senses (sight, taste, touch, sound, and hearing) differently in the bedroom. Which senses do you think men prefer more? Which senses do you think women prefer more?

Take the opportunity to read the Song of Songs (also known as the Song of Solomon) this week. Pay specific attention to how the 5 senses are used in the couple's sexual (and nonsexual) relationship. Then discuss the following questions together.

1. Which of the 5 senses are you more drawn to during sex?
2. Are there any ways we can better incorporate the 5 senses in order to better improve our current sexual lifestyle?
3. How can I better serve you in this area of our marriage?

Some things to look for in Song of Songs may include:

Hearing – 2:12, 4:1-15, 6:4-10

Sight – 4:1-15, 6:4-10, 8:10

Touch – 7:8-9

Smell – 4:16, 7:13

Taste – 2:3, 5:1

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, as we finish up our group discussion this week we want to thank You for helping our marriage continue to grow and flourish. Our understanding of marriage and intimacy has been challenged, and we as a couple are better off for it. We pray at this time that you would continue to give us wisdom to better know one another, and better keep You as the center of our marriage. We realize that if You are at the center of our marriage, our friendship, intimacy, parenting, and all others areas of marriage will be a picture of the love You have for us. We worship You and praise You for bringing us together as a couple. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Meaning of Marriage
Evaluation / Comments

Thank you for participating in a study on “The Meaning of Marriage”. Now that you have completed the study, please answer the below questions so that we may continue to improve the material for future groups. Your feedback is deeply appreciated.

All responses may be emailed to donotdisturbblog@gmail.com. Thank you.

1. What did you enjoy most about “The Meaning of Marriage” small group study?
2. What did you enjoy least?
3. What questions challenged you the most?
4. What questions challenged you the least?
5. Would you recommend this study to other couples in the future? Why or why not?
6. Please leave any additional comments you may have for us: