



# **Cultivating Marriage Intimacy...**

**By  
Grace!**



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## Session 1: Marriage is a New Way of Seeing

### 1. Can we keep the 'rules' of love?

### 2. The gospel is the hope for our marriage.

**“In mirrors I see myself. But in mirrors made of glass and silver I never see the whole of myself. I see the me I want to see, and I ignore the rest. Mirrors that hide nothing hurt me. They reveal an ugliness I’d rather deny...My wife is such a mirror. When I have sinned against her, my sin appears in the suffering of her face. Her tears reflect with terrible accuracy my selfishness. My self! But I hate the sight and the same selfishness I see now makes me look away.**

**“Stop crying!” I command, as though the mirror were at fault. Or else I just leave the room. Walk away. Oh, what a coward I am, and what a fool! Only when I have the courage fully to look, clearly to know myself – will I admit my need for healing. But if I look away from her whom I have hurt, I have also turned away from her who might forgive me. I reject the very source of my healing.**

**My denial of my sin protects, preserves, perpetuates that sin! Ugliness in me, while I live in illusions, can only grow the uglier. Mirrors that hide nothing hurt me. But this is the hurt of purging and precious renewal – and these are mirrors of dangerous grace.” Walter Wangerin, Living the Passion**



## **Session 1: Marriage is a New Way of Seeing (cont.)**

### **3. Marriage is a mirror.**

### **4. Marriage is a place of glory.**

**“To spiritually benefit from marriage, we have to be honest. We have to look at our disappointments, own up to our ugly attitudes, and confront our selfishness. We also have to rid ourselves of the notion that the difficulties of marriage can be overcome if we simply pray harder or learn a few simple principles. Most of us have discovered that these “simple steps” work only on a superficial level. Why is this? Because there’s a deeper question that needs to be addressed beyond how we can “improve” our marriage: What if God didn’t design marriage to be “easier”? What if God has an end in mind that went beyond our happiness, our comfort, and our desire to be infatuated and happy as if the world were a perfect place?”**  
**Gary Thomas, Sacred Marriage**



## Session 1: Marriage is a New Way of Seeing (cont.)

### 5. We get married thinking we know how to love.

**“It is really only God who can give us the strange desire to know the whole truth about ourselves and the strength and courage to live wide-open, exposed lives before one another. And how does he do it? How does He slip us this bitter pill, coated with intense desire and determination? Fortunately, the pill is also lavishly coated with the mystery we call love, which is the only thing in heaven or on earth which can shield us from the horror of knowing what we are really like. That, in fact, is what God’s love is: it is His armor, an armor of forgiveness and acceptance that we put on over our corruption...an armor of worth or worthiness that completely covers our own worthlessness. God’s love is, in a sense, the courage to go on living in the face of our sin, in the full knowledge of who and what we are. This intolerable knowledge of self, must, indeed be exchanged for knowledge of the Lord, and supremely for the knowledge of His saving power through the love of His Son Jesus Christ. That is what it means to “put on” Christ. It is to assume His strength and purity and goodness, recognizing that we have none of our own.” Mike Mason, Mystery of Marriage**



**Heart to Heart**  
**Follow-up for Session 1**

- 1. Share with each other the way you see your marriage as a mirror and a place of glory.**
  
- 2. Ask each other this question:  
“What am I not seeing about myself that you want me to see?”**
  
- 3. If you are here as a single, please use this time to reflect on how you might discuss these things with a close friend.**



## **Session 2: Married to Mr. and Mrs. Always Right**

- 1. Marriage reveals how much we like to be right or be seen as right.**

**"You can choose either to live by pretense and self-righteousness or to be broken by your sin and surrender to the gospel. Jesus is the one who gives us the grace that allows us to acknowledge our own sins and also to forgive the sins of our spouses." Allender/Longman, Intimate Allies**



## Session 2: Married to Mr. and Mrs. Always Right (cont.)

### 2. The gospel gives us Christ's perfect rightness and reputation.

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." Romans 1:16-17.

**"Marriage is the soil for growing glory. We must see our spouses in light of what they are meant to become, without becoming bitter or complacent about who they are. Marriage requires a radical commitment to love our spouses as they are, while longing for them to become what they are not yet. Every marriage moves either toward enhancing one another's glory or toward degrading each other."**  
Allender/Longman, Intimate Allies



## Session 2: Married to Mr. and Mrs. Always Right (cont.)

### 3. Intimacy grows as we know our heart better and the eyes of our heart are opened.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” Psalm 139:23-24

“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.” Ephesians 1:18-19

“There is no suffering like the suffering involved in being close to another person. But neither is there any joy nor any real comfort at all outside of intimacy, outside the joy and the comfort that are wrung out like wine from the crush and ferment of two lives being pressed together.” Mike Mason, Mystery of Marriage



**Heart to Heart**  
**Follow-up for Session 2**

- 1. Share with each other a fear or offensive way about yourself that causes you to defend, deny or dismiss the concerns of your spouse (or friend, coworker or relative).**
  
- 2. It is very difficult to be right and not hurt someone with it. Ask your spouse (or friend, coworker or relative) to give you a specific example of how you demonstrate your need to be right in your marriage (or relationship) and how it can hurt you both.**
  
- 3. If you are here as a single, please use this time to reflect on how you might discuss these things with a close friend.**



## Session 3: Nowhere to Hide - Marriage Without Fig Leaves

### 1. Intimacy in a fallen world.

### 2. The entrance of shame.

#### a. Shame destroys our capacity for worship.

#### b. The origin of shame is exposure.

#### c. Intimacy provides a climate for a powerful experience of shame.

**“Who cares, really to be known that well by another person? Who wishes to have the whole unexpurgated dossier of their lives opened up to such close surveillance? And yet that is the name of the game in marriage, where even the last vestiges of privacy are challenged. For hiding is not what marriage is about. Marriage means being in the spotlight, being under the scrutiny of another person, just as we are all under the constant gaze of the Lord our God. Marriage is about nakedness, exposure, defenselessness, and the very extremities of intimacy. It is about simple unadorned truth between two human beings, truth at all levels and at all costs, and it does not care what pain or inconvenience must be endured in order for the habit of truth to take root, to be watered, and to grow into maturity. Marriage is a sacrament of openness, of personal knowledge.” Mike Mason, Mystery of Marriage**



### **Session 3: Nowhere to Hide - Marriage Without Fig Leaves (cont.)**

#### **3. The function of shame.**

**a. Legitimate shame is a gift that can lead to repentance.**

**b. Illegitimate shame comes from a sense of failure or inadequacy.**

#### **4. Our response to shame is to hide and to blame.**

**“The free and loving exchange of nakedness that takes place between a husband and wife is just one of the spectacular ways in which the divine ordinance of holy matrimony actually sets about to reverse the curse of original sin. Marriage attacks original sin, in effect, at its visible root, in the shame of nakedness, and defeats and heals this shame by directly confronting it on the safe and holy ground of a covenant relationship.” Mike Mason, The Mystery of Marriage**



**Session 3: Nowhere to Hide - Marriage Without Fig Leaves (cont.)**

**5. When we are shamed, we often become contemptuous.**

**6. The gospel is the answer to shame.**

**“Our identities are very loosely stitched together. Shame exposes the fragments and sinful remnants of our souls. The polished and intact image we convey to others is an effort to deny our need of God. He is the only One who can integrate the fragments of our identity. And He does this through the restoration of forgiveness, made possible by Christ’s death on the cross. When we are shamed because we have failed to love, we can choose to chastise ourselves, polish our performance, and cover our tracks. Or, we can choose to respect the exposure as a gift that can guide us to productive repentance and deep gratitude for Christ.” Dan Allender, The Wounded Heart Workbook**



**Heart to Heart**  
**Follow-up for session 3**

- 1. Talk together about what makes you feel “unsafe” and not at rest in your relationship. What is one change that would make a difference?**
  
- 2. Share with each other an example of a time in your relationship when you felt shame and what kind of “fig leaves” you used to cover it up.**
  
- 3. How do you think shame impacts emotional, spiritual and physical intimacy between you?**
  
- 4. If you are here as a single, please use this time to reflect on how you might discuss these things with a close friend.**



## Session 4: Enhancing Sexual Intimacy in Marriage

### 1. Created equal but different.

#### a. Male and female sexual response.

#### b. Lust controls and consumes.

“We must look at sexuality as an important window into the heart of God. God’s plan is for us to pursue and know him in and through the sexual intimacy we have with our spouses. Spiritual intimacy and delight are not opposed to sexual intimacy. Spiritual intimacy is actually found in the midst of the relational, fleshly delight of union. A taste of the character of God is found in sexual foreplay, heightened arousal, orgasm, and quiescence. God is a God of passion. He adores joy, and he delights in our delight in glory...Eroticism is God’s playful creation, his delight in delighting the erogenous heart of his creatures.”  
Allender/Longman, Intimate Allies



## **Session 4: Enhancing Sexual Intimacy in Marriage (cont.)**

**2. Sexuality and spirituality are intimately connected.**

**a. Sexuality is an important window into the heart of God.**

**b. Sexuality gives us a picture of the gospel and a taste of worship.**

**“What is God’s purpose for sex? What are we to find as the joy in our sexual relationship with our spouse? God gave us sex to arouse and satisfy a hunger for intimacy. Sexuality arouses a desire for union. Sexual consummation satisfies the desire, but it also mysteriously creates a hunger for more – not only for more sex, but also for a taste of ultimate union, the final reconciliation with God.”**

**Allender/Longman, Intimate Allies**





## Session 5: Marriage Requires Repentant Relating

### **1. Growth in intimacy and love will occur as we are willing to become more repentant with one another.**

“This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says: “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it.” Isaiah 30:15

#### **a. Our sexual relationship may be the area of our marriage in which we have been the most unholy.**

“Surely it was God’s full intention for the physical joining together of a man and a woman to be one of the mountaintop experiences of life...How horribly tragic, therefore, that it is here at this very point, here at this precious male-female encounter which ought to be overflowing with holiness, here that godless people have succeeded in descending to some of the most abysmal levels of human degradation.... Sex is sacred ground. It is a place where men may turn themselves into animals as effortlessly as a magician waves a wand, or else may begin to be transformed into the children of God. It is more conspicuously than anywhere else, the place where the angel and the animal in man meet face to face, and engage in mortal struggle. One of them must die.” Mike Mason, Mystery of Marriage



## **Session 5: Marriage Requires Repentant Relating (cont.)**

**b. Our view of headship may have the look and feel of lordship rather than of “give-up-ship”.**

**c. There may be no kingdom of darkness greater than the one that you know in your own heart.**

"Conviction over lack of love can run deep. If we limit our awareness of sin to such things as obvious moral failure and undisciplined living, we will tend to become a rigidly good person whose best relationships remain stiff. We will not learn to love. But when we become sensitive to subtle violations of love involved in our self-protective style of relating, we'll feel overwhelmed with personal sinfulness. When we face our sinfulness, its sheer ugliness can drive us to profound repentance that opens up a new dimension of love. The love that grows out of deep repentance over self-protective sin is penetrating and rich." Larry Crabb, Inside Out



## **Session 5: Marriage Requires Repentant Relating (cont.)**

**2. God has designed marriage in a way that allows for our spouse, the one who loves us most, to be his primary means of grace for our sanctification.**

**3. Our repentance is the key that opens the door for the Holy Spirit's power to deeply transform us and our marriage.**



**Heart to Heart**  
**Follow-up for session 5**

- 1. Agree together to start discussing all the questions in this manual sometime within the next week. Set the date now for your first time to do this, then pray together that the Lord will give you the grace to keep this mutual commitment.**
  
- 2. Repent before the Lord silently - or together.**
  
- 3. If you are here as a single, please use this time to reflect on how you might discuss these things with a close friend.**



## Recommended books for Marriage and Parenting by Grace

- Allender, Dan and Longman, Tremper. Bold Love  
\_\_\_\_\_ . Communication: Intimate Marriage Series  
\_\_\_\_\_ . Dreams and Demands: Intimate Marriage Series  
\_\_\_\_\_ . Family Ties: Intimate Marriage Series  
\_\_\_\_\_ . Forgiveness: Intimate Marriage Series  
\_\_\_\_\_ . Intimate Allies  
\_\_\_\_\_ . Intimate Marriage Leader's Guide  
\_\_\_\_\_ . Male and Female: Intimate Marriage Series  
\_\_\_\_\_ . Sexual Intimacy: Intimate Marriage Series  
\_\_\_\_\_ . The Cry of the Soul  
\_\_\_\_\_ . The Goal of Marriage: Intimate Marriage Series  
\_\_\_\_\_ . The Intimate Mystery: Creating Strength and Beauty in Your Marriage  
Allender, Dan. How Children Raise Parents: The Art of Listening to Your Family  
\_\_\_\_\_ . The Healing Path  
\_\_\_\_\_ . The Wounded Heart  
\_\_\_\_\_ . The Wounded Heart: A Companion Workbook  
Chapell, Bryan. Each for the Other: Marriage as it's Meant to Be  
Chapman, Steven Curtis and Smith, Scotty. Restoring Broken Things.  
Crabb, Larry. The Silence of Adam. Becoming Men of Courage in a World of Chaos  
Curtis, Brent and Eldredge, John. Sacred Romance  
Mason, Mike. Mystery of Marriage  
McCluskey, Christopher and Rachel. When Two Become One: Enhancing Sexual Intimacy in Marriage  
Meyers, Jan. The Allure of Hope: God's Pursuit of a Woman's Heart  
Miller, C John & Juliani, Barbara. Come Back Barbara  
Miller, Rose Marie. From Fear to Freedom  
Schaumburg, Harry. False Intimacy  
Seel, David John. Parenting Without Perfection  
Smith, Scotty. Objects of His Affection: Coming Alive to the Compelling Love of God  
\_\_\_\_\_ . Reign of Grace: The Delights and Demands of God's Love  
Thomas, Gary. Devotions for a Sacred Marriage: A Year of Weekly Devotions for Couples  
\_\_\_\_\_ . Sacred Marriage  
\_\_\_\_\_ . Sacred Parenting  
Tripp, Paul. The Age of Opportunity  
Tripp, Tedd. Shepherding a Child's Heart. Revised and Updated  
Turansky, Scott and Miller, Joanne. Parenting is Heart Work

