

Before Class: Read Chapters 5 & 6 in **“Things I Wish I’d Known Before We Got Married”** By Gary Chapman and finish assignments from previous week.

STAYING IN LOVE

Speaker Notes

Small Group Discussion

"When the satisfaction, security and development of another person become as significant to you, as your own satisfaction, security and development—love exists." ~John Powell

"Marital love requires the ability to put yourself in your partner's place, to understand that the differences that divide you are the differences of two unique personalities, rather than betrayals of your hopes and dreams. The unconditional willingness of each of you to understand and resolve these differences through the sharing of your deepest feelings, concerns, attitudes and ideas is a fundamental component of mutual love." ~From *Before You Say 'I Do'* by H. Norman Wright.

- After hearing the message today and reading the quotes above, how has your perspective changed on love and marriage?
- Read Luke 16:10. **Christ shows that if we are not faithful in trivial matters, we cannot expect to be faithful when confronted with weightier matters. God tests our faithfulness in our day-to-day activities, and it is in them that real Christianity emerges.** Name specific "little things" that are important for you and your spouse to work on.
- Discuss a few helpful perspectives on apologizing and forgiving from Chapters 5 and 6 in your book.
- Discuss romance versus commitment. How do you define these terms? What do they mean to you?

Couple Devotional

Forgiveness is a foundational truth in the Bible and a key component to marriage. We need to model forgiveness after how God forgives. God forgives us because of God's great mercy and our acknowledgement of Christ and what he did on the cross. Once we understand God's forgiveness, we in turn will want to show mercy and grant forgiveness to others.

Read Together Mark 2:7, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13–14

Answer separately and then discuss together.

As referenced in the Life Application Bible, the key to forgiving others is to realize and accept how much God forgave you. Realizing God's infinite love and forgiveness helps us to love and forgive others.

- Who is the one who grants ultimate forgiveness?
- How did God grant the forgiveness for our sins?

Forgiveness is:

- A decision NOT to hold an offense against the offender
- Difficult without the help of God
- Not always for the other person but more for you, the one who needs to grant the forgiveness.
- Needed regardless whether the offender has repented or asked for forgiveness, **we can and should be able to release the offense.**
- Not just saying the words but also the action to **fully remove the burden, grudge, offense** and promote **an attitude and disposition of change.**
- Reference a time when it was difficult for you to forgive someone who hurt you or wronged you.
- Have you been able to forgive them yet for this offense?
- Is there something you need to ask forgiveness from your future mate for? Ask your future spouse if there is something specifically for which you need to ask forgiveness. You may not be aware of this need.

Pray Together:

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy Name.

Thy Kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth,

As it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our trespasses,

As we forgive them that trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom,

The power, and the glory,

For ever and ever.

Amen.

Individually take time praying to God:

- Ask God for forgiveness of your offenses (list specifically if you can).
- Ask God to reveal people and circumstances you may need to forgive others.
- Ask God for the power to be able to forgive in areas where it has been difficult to forgive.
- Ask God to help you be the spouse He (God) desires you to be.

Couple Exercise

Answer questions separately and then discuss together.

- My parents (or significant figures) have had an impact on my relationships in the following ways _____.
- When you experience conflict in a relationship with a co-worker, friend, etc., do you tend to withdraw, shout it out, need to win, resolve or compromise?
- Recall one or two of your most vivid memories when your expectations were not met. How have you had difficulty with that expectation not being met from your youth until now?
- How well do you handle advice and constructive criticism? Would you rather hide or avoid instead of confront?
- Who comes to mind when you remember how you have had to forgive someone in the past because they did not meet your expectations? Did it take a long time? Explain!
- Do you have a tendency to retreat when things get difficult, or do you sit down and work things out? If you need time to get away and think about things, how long would that normally take? What would you like to change in the way you have behaved in the past?
- Women (as the future wife) – How have you already observed ways in which you will have to more loving and understanding with your future husband? In what areas do you think your husband will need to be encouraged/respected? How does he express honoring love toward you?
- Men (as the future husband) – How have you already observed ways in which you will have to be more loving and understanding with your future wife? Is she already encouraging/respecting you, how so? In what areas do you think your future wife will need to be encouraged/respected?
- Discuss which behaviors/strategies you use below. What has been your typical way to react? Check those areas below that best describe you.
 - ___ Avoid confrontation.
 - ___ Get people to laugh about it, then agree with you.
 - ___ Hold everything inside and let the other person decide.
 - ___ Work hard to win the debate.
 - ___ Seek out people who agree with you and support your views.
 - ___ Plan your strategies and present your case.
 - ___ Tendency to feel hurt and harbor resentment.
 - ___ Keep nagging until people give in just to get you to stop.
 - ___ If someone messes up, generally I am calm.
- How do you think you should deal with “the warning light going off in your relationship” that one or both of you seem to be ignoring? What could you agree to do ahead of time before you find yourself in this situation?

For Previously Marrieds

- **As couples who have been previously married, “leaving and cleaving” and “becoming one” can take on a different identity.** How will you begin letting go of ways “you’ve always done things” and begin to “become one family”? If you have children, how will you guide your children through this process?
- What did you learn about apologizing and forgiveness in your previous relationship? How will you apply those learnings to your current relationship?

Digging Deeper

View [Staying in Love](#) by Andy Stanley found on RightNow Media.

There are four sessions with practical advice tied to Biblical truths.

[Additional assignments](#) are offered on the next few pages.

Digging Deeper

Be Aware

Sociological research has revealed various background factors that usually affect marital happiness. These factors are worth discussing before marriage. There is, of course, nothing absolute about them, but the prudent couple will want to be aware of any potential challenge ahead. Some couples may, and perhaps should, at least delay getting married if there are any serious concerns.

Generally speaking, a couple's marital adjustment will be more difficult if:

1. The couple meets or marries shortly after a very significant loss (death, divorce, illness, unemployment). Two years of adjustment after a divorce or widowhood before beginning a new relationship greatly enhances the success of the new relationship.
2. The couple looks toward marriage as a way of getting out of their parents' home or a way of distancing themselves from their parents.
3. The couple's family backgrounds are significantly different (education, traditions, social class, values and ethnicity).
4. The couple does not share a common Christian belief and commitment.
5. Either partner feels empty or insecure on their own and looks to the other to fulfill his or her needs.
6. Either partner has had a drug or alcohol addiction and is not in ongoing treatment (A.A., N.A.).
7. Either partner has had an unhappy childhood or adolescence, or poor marital role models in their parents.
8. The couple is unable to work through disagreements to the extent that both partners are satisfied, or communication is stifled by one partner's refusal to express himself or herself.
9. The couple's roles are typified by care taking or parenting of one partner for another, rather than mutual respect.
10. The new couple will reside either extremely close to or at a great distance from either family of origin.
11. The couple will be dependent on either extended family financially, physically, or emotionally.
12. The couple marries before age 20 or after age 30.
13. The couple marries after an acquaintanceship of less than 6 months or more than 3 years of engagement.
14. The wedding occurs without friends or family present.
15. The couple marries out of a sense of guilt (e.g. for a past sexual relationship or because they do not want to hurt someone's feelings).

Digging Deeper

Love Letter

Use this page to write a love letter to your fiancé/future spouse. Write and express the answers to some or all of these ideas: qualities that attracted me to you, qualities I appreciate the most about you, or our differences that have helped me grow spiritually/emotionally.