

Before class: Read chapters 3 & 10 in **“Things I Wish I’d Known Before We Got Married”** by Gary Chapman and finish assignments from previous week.

FAMILY DYNAMICS

Speaker Notes

Small Group Discussion

- **Read Genesis 2:24. Marriage involves “leaving and cleaving” and “becoming one.”** Discuss at least one area in which you have an opportunity for growth in this area.
 - How might “leaving and cleaving” apply to where you and your spouse will live, celebrate holidays, raise/discipline children, or resolve conflict?
 - Where are you holding on to the way “my family has always done things?”
- How do the similarities or differences in your family of origin impact your current relationship?
- Quickly complete the **Hidden Rules** exercise on the next page. Randomly select a few items and share where couples might be in disagreement and why. (Make sure couples discuss further as part of their homework).
- What from your family of origin would you like to continue in your relationship? What would you like to change? How can you start making those changes?
- Since the success or failure of your marriage will also include each other’s family, what do you perceive as discussion topics regarding your in-laws, grandparents, siblings and/or other relatives? Where might you need to set boundaries with your parents as you move towards maintaining a balance in your relationship?
- What things from your childhood could influence your upcoming marriage? (e.g., perfectionism, procrastination, impulsiveness, compulsions, overworking, withdrawing, depression, worry, overeating, low self-esteem, laziness, selfishness, work/life balance, abuse, or risk taking)

Additional Resources:

- “A Change of Heart” by Margaret Miller and Andrea Evens
- “Boundaries” by Henry Cloud and John Townsend

Hidden Rules

Please mark YES or NO next to each question identifying what is normal for you. Please find a time to discuss each statement with your partner. When in disagreement, work towards understanding and resolution.

1. Married women only work until babies are born. Then they stay at home.
2. The fun of Christmas morning is sleeping late.
3. Sex is never to be discussed.
4. The fun of Christmas morning is waking up early and getting completely dressed for a big family breakfast.
5. Two people who really love each other should never argue.
6. No home is complete without a cat.
7. You’re married for life, so you never need to talk about it.
8. Men always do the driving.
9. Two people who really love each other have plenty of arguments.
10. Husbands always plan the vacations.
11. Two children – max.

12. Gaining weight is a sure sign that you no longer care about your spouse.
13. Men do not need to engage in deep conversation. It's not natural.
14. Being on time is critical.
15. Men always initiate sex.
16. Women whose husbands don't engage in deep conversation are free to tell their friends about it.
17. Life is fun.
18. How many children a couple has is up to God.
19. Kitchen cabinet doors are a nuisance, which is why they should be left open.
20. Women hide their purchases from their husbands.
21. Men don't do housework.
22. Alcohol, in any form, is a bad idea.
23. Except for anger, men do not show their emotions.
24. The house should always be immaculate.
25. Cars are to be idolized and should never be dirty.
26. Dinner isn't dinner without a glass of wine. Football isn't football without a beer.
27. Cars are transportation. Period.
28. Saying a prayer before a meal is nonnegotiable. Even at McDonald's.
29. Husbands write the checks.
30. Men should volunteer to do housework without being asked.
31. A man should always hold the door for his wife.
32. Sandwiches are always made with white bread.
33. Wives do the books.
34. It's not necessary to say a blessing before every meal. God knows we're thankful.
35. Sitting quietly and reading a book is a complete waste of time.
36. A woman should never make more money than her husband.
37. No home is complete without a dog-a really big dog.
38. A hot breakfast will only be possible if you put a lighted match to your cornflakes.
39. A loving husband should be blind to his wife's weight gain. Anything else is conditional love.
40. Watching sports on television is a complete waste of time.
41. Wives are responsible for the warmth and tenderness in the relationship.
42. In-laws are never to be consulted.
43. Screaming is always a bad idea. We never raise our voices. We never yell.
44. Women should be willing to move to follow their husbands' careers.
45. Men do yard work.
46. Couples should never borrow money from their parents.

Taken from *The Most Important Years of a Man's Life* by Robert Wolgemuth & Mark Devries, pp. 46-57.

Couple Devotional

Families are interesting. We don't get to pick them and a lot of who we are is a result of the family we grew up in. Most of us would be able to recognize the good and perhaps the not so good in our extended families. The families represented in the Bible are no different. They experienced both great things, as well as challenging circumstances. Take some time and read about the dynamic between two brothers in the Old Testament.

Read together Genesis 27

Answer separately and then discuss together:

- What was one interesting thing you took away from reading Genesis 27?
- List two actions from this scripture passage that were morally wrong.
- What was the difference between the father's plan and the mother's plan?

Differences in parental perspectives exist even in today's culture.

Do you remember a time when your parents had a different perspective in regards to parenting you? Describe their differences.

The family we grew up in impacts who we are today. Rebekah's choice was "her plan/her will" not "God's plan/God's will." We can take that same path by choosing "our will" over "God's will."

- Are you able to identify a time in your life when you might have chosen "your plan/your will" over "God's plan/God's will"?
- If so, did it have a negative or positive impact on your life?
- What about a negative or positive impact on someone else's life?
- From Genesis 27, identify the consequences from Jacob taking Esau's blessing.

Pray Together:

The **Serenity Prayer** is the common name for a prayer authored by the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. The best-known form is:

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.

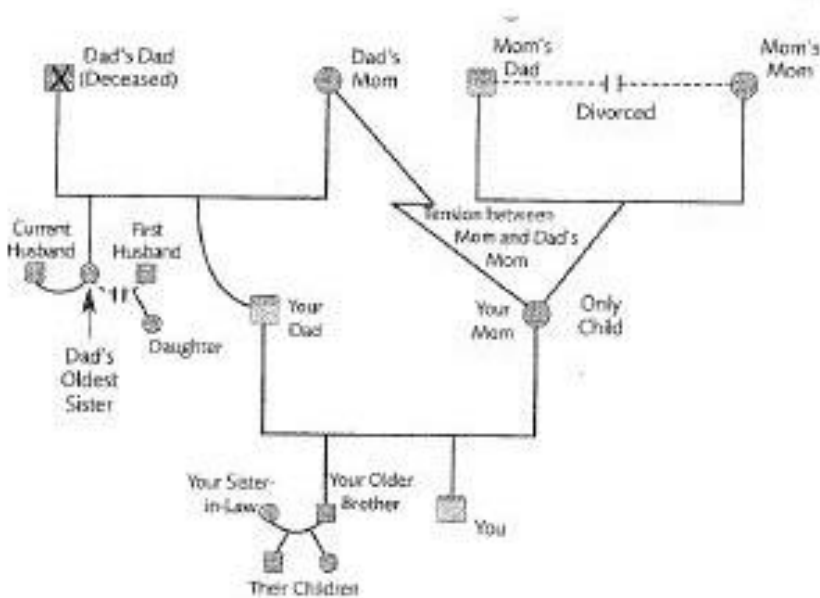
Here it is in complete form:

God grant me the serenity
to accept the things I cannot change;
Courage to change the things I can;
and wisdom to know the difference.
Living one day at a time;
Enjoying one moment at a time;
Accepting hardships as the pathway to peace;
Taking, as He did, this sinful world
as it is, not as I would have it;
Trusting that He will make all things right
if I surrender to His Will;
That I may be reasonably happy in this life
and supremely happy with Him
Forever in the next.
Amen.

- Underline at least one area in the Serenity Prayer you would like to work on.
- Pray together. Take turns praying for each other in regards to the underlined areas.

Couple Exercise

Answer separately, and then discuss together.



On a separate sheet of paper, construct a Genogram of your individual family.

- Together, describe your genogram to your partner.
- After the initial description, go deeper on information on your parents and grandparents by discussing:
 - What was their marriage like?
 - How did they deal with conflict?
 - What do you know about their spiritual life?
 - Were there any models of great marriages in your family system? If so, what were the great characteristics of their marriage?
- In what ways has your childhood experience been a good or bad model for your marriage?
- What changes would you like to make in your marriage?
- Who made most of the decisions in your family?
- What things do you hope your spouse will emulate or will not emulate from their parents?
- How important is it that your future spouse participates in your family events? What do you expect from them when you are invited to picnics, gatherings, birthdays, anniversaries, etc.?
- If conflict arises with your in-laws, how will you resolve it?
- What will you do if you and your family of origin hold a position strongly, but your spouse disagrees?
- What kind of relationship do you want with your in-laws? What relationship do you want your spouse to have with your parents?

For Previously Marrieds

- Since your previous marriage, how long have you lived alone? As a result of your independence, what areas may you have difficulty giving up?
- Since we all have baggage that we bring into relationships, list some mistakes that might be brought in from a previous marriage.
- What are potential problems with former/future in-laws?

- Are you confident you have settled the issues of your previous marriage and are ready to marry again? Explain.

Reminder: Read assigned chapter for next lesson.