

MARRIAGE PREP 101

GETTING READY FOR THE BIG DAY

MIKE MAZZALONGO

TEACHER'S GUIDE

bibleTalk^{TV}



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Marriage Prep 101

Getting Ready for the Big Day

Mike Mazzalongo

This series is designed for those hoping to marry or re-marry. It will provide information to help shorten the learning curve in relationship building and establishing priorities and guidelines when seeking a mate for life.



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Overall Teaching Strategy

It is recommended that teachers use a combination of informal lecture and guided discussion to present these lessons. Teachers must be familiar with the associated scriptures, video, and/or text for the lesson. There are discussion questions for with each lesson with recommended responses. Teachers may use and/or supplement their own questions and responses. A student note guide is also provided for each lesson.

Students should read the scriptures, view the associated video and/or read the text for the lesson. This helps them come to the class ready to discuss the lesson and to formulate questions of their own. Teachers should begin the class with a review of key points from the video/reading before starting the discussion.

Begin each lesson with appropriate introductory statements that help students focus on the lesson. Teachers should also provide a summary of the previous lesson and an overview of key points of the new lesson. This helps students see the ongoing narrative of scripture.

Conclude the lesson by summarizing, or having students summarize the information from their notes. It is also helpful to ask questions from the lesson to determine that students grasp the concepts. Asking questions in this manner also serves as an assessment to ensure objectives are met.

Challenge students with a call to action to apply this information to their lives to help them grow spiritually and help others to do so as well. This can be accomplished by asking questions of students as to how this information relates to their spiritual development at this time and moving forward.

For more information on teaching adults, please visit:

<https://bibletalk.tv/101/teaching>

Lesson #1 – Desperately Seeking Someone: Finding Mr./Ms. Right

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on dealing with the stress and discouragement of seeking a marriage partner. Of special note is determining the suitability of a marriage partner.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Identify critical elements for determining suitability of a marriage partner.
- **Feel:** Commit to God’s plan for marriage.
- **Do:** Apply the principles from God’s word for marriage.

Support

- Series – Lesson Title; Mike Mazzalongo, Marriage Prep 101
- Video/Text – Lesson 1 – Desperately Seeking Someone
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 1

Body of the Lesson

- 1.0 Overcoming obstacles
- 2.0 Don’t be desperate
- 3.0 Know what you are looking for
- 4.0 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. What are some obstacles today in forming intimate relationships and how do we overcome them?

Answers will vary. Here are some examples of obstacles today from the text:

- The isolation of individuals from reliance on technology
- The demands of a fast-paced society on our time and availability
- The lack of close-knit families and social environments.

There are many ways to overcome obstacles to finding a suitable mate. Some ideas related to the specified obstacles from the text include making the effort to rely less on technology and more on building interpersonal relationships. Technology by itself is not necessarily a bad thing, but reliance on technology to establish relationships is a weaker process than actual live contact. NOTE: It is also important that once a relationship is established, we must keep technology in its proper place and continue to focus on building and sustaining relationships.

We need to look at our life and determine what are our real priorities. We must work to not let the pace of life interfere with establishing relationships.

Family support, or a similar support system is critical to a quality life. As in other areas, this takes focused effort.

2. Discuss potential problems from feeling desperate to find a suitable mate?

- Desperation can lead to poor decisions.
- Desperation can lead to compromised moral standards.
- Desperation can lead to unnecessary stress.

3. What are some considerations for selecting a suitable mate?

Do not marry an unbeliever (2 Corinthians 6:14). Some feel that they can later convert their mate to Christ. Although this is certainly possible, it is very difficult, especially after marriage. Marrying someone with a different spiritual value adds unnecessary stress on the relationship.

Do not marry for lust...marry for love. (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

Do you truly know the person (quality of character)? It is important to see the person in a variety of situations, so you have a clearer view of their character. For example: How do they interact with others? Are they kind and considerate to others? What is their level of commitment to spiritual issues and how do these relate to their daily life?

Does the person demonstrate in visible and sincere ways his or her love for you? One should never have to assume or guess at the love the other has for you.

Communicating love goes beyond verbal statements. It involves demonstrating love in all situations.

NOTE: A follow-up question might be to ask participants what made their mate suitable to them.

4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Marriage was created by God to meet our needs. Among these are our spiritual needs. Finding a suitable mate should never be out of desperation. It should involve a lot of consideration, including the spiritual development of our mate. Both parties in a marriage must support and encourage each other's spiritual development. That is God's plan.

Lesson #2 – Mature Enough for Marriage?: Romance vs. Love

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is helping couples understand their readiness for marriage. Of special note is the difference between love and romance.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand elements of readiness for marriage.
- **Feel:** Develop an awareness of readiness for marriage.
- **Do:** Develop strength in the elements of readiness for marriage.

Support

- Series – Lesson Title; Mike Mazzalongo, Marriage Prep 101
- Video/Text – Lesson 2 – Mature Enough for Marriage
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 2

Body of the Lesson

1.0 Romance and Love

1.1 Commitment

1.2 Discipline

1.3 Building on love

2.0 Knowing when you are ready

2.1 Self-control

2.2 Personal happiness

2.3 Values

2.4 Emotional stability

2.5 Relationship with parents

3.0 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. What is the difference between romance and love?

Romance is an idealized version of what we want someone to be like and treat us. Love is a commitment to another’s welfare equal to or greater than our own and the discipline to maintain the commitment. Note: Both have a role in a lasting relationship with our mate.

2. Discuss reasons why romance, although important, cannot make a marriage last a lifetime.

Romance can produce wrong expectations. Marriage requires a realistic view of preparation for a lifetime relationship. This includes gaining knowledge and skills to provide for one another through all of life’s phases.

Romance demands perfection. No one is perfect in every way. If the relationship is based entirely or too heavily on romance, then it is subject to disappointments and threats as the person fails to live up to an unattainable and unsustainable standard.

Romance does not take advice. Romance can blind one to the realities of an individual and circumstances.

3. Discuss the two major elements of love.

A commitment to consider some else's welfare equal to my own.

This is the highest demonstration of human love. Note, it is also the love God has for us by sending Jesus to die for our sins. It is a love that focuses outward onto another rather than inward on self. The commitment is sustained regardless of wealth, health, and other such human foibles. It is acceptance of your responsibility to care for each other through life.

Discipline – We need self-discipline to carry out our promise of lifetime love. It is critical to sustain the commitment of our promise to love. It is necessary to put another's welfare over our own.

4. Defend the following statement:

“Relationship that build on the basis of love can look forward to a lifetime of love as their experience.”

Look for responses that focus on the other's welfare as a critical and sustainable element of the relationship. We grow in our commitment to where it becomes our focus. All other feelings, emotions, and choices flow out of that commitment.

5. Discuss the following indicators of readiness for marriage and their importance to a successful marriage.

Self-control – Self control is an indicator of maturity and is critical for both parties in the marriage. Through it they seek and fulfil what is best for each other, especially in their spiritual wellness.

Personal happiness – A marriage should bring both personal happiness but the true focus is bringing happiness to the other. If the one is unhappy in life, marriage by itself will not guarantee it.

Values – Having and practicing biblical values is important to one's life and to the marriage relationship. These values must be shared between both marriage partners.

Emotional stability – Like self-control, emotional stability is a sign of maturity and vital for a successful marriage.

Relationship with parents – We learn to relate to others by relating to parents (or a parent figure). Over dependence, rebellion, and other threats to maturity will bring difficulties to a marriage.

6. How does maturity in marriage support your spiritual growth and the spiritual growth of others?

There are similarities between spiritual maturity and marriage maturity. For example, focusing away from self and towards another is the type of love God demonstrates and desires from us. We focus on serving our Lord and not self. In a similar way, we focus on what is best for our spouse above our own self. Another example is to desire to know and understand more of our Lord's will. In a similar way, we seek to better know and understand the needs and desires of our spouse. Then we work to satisfy them.

Lesson #3 – What to Look for in a Man: The Ideal Man

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on the qualities and characteristics to look for in a man for marriage. Of special note is a contrast between the modern version of an ideal man verses God’s ideal. It is recognized that although none of us are “ideal”, we can strive to become what God wants us to be. This is the first part of two. In the next lesson we’ll look at the ideal woman.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand God’s version of the ideal man and woman for a lasting marriage.
- **Feel:** Recognize the importance of becoming who God wants us to be.
- **Do:** Work to become the version God wants us to be as an ideal man.

Support

- Series – Lesson Title; Mike Mazzalongo, Marriage Prep 101
- Video/Text – Lesson 3 – The Ideal Man
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 3

Body of the Lesson

1.0 Why finding a good man is important

2.0 Contrasting ideal

2.1 The modern ideal

2.2 The true ideal

3.0 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. Discuss why finding a good man to marry is important and why.

Look for responses that include:

- He recognizes his role as a spiritual and moral leader, especially in the family. This is God's ideal for every father (Ephesians 5:25-33; 6:4). It is the father's specific role that must not be abdicated to another. As fathers, we will be held accountable for this role.
- He recognizes his responsibility to support, protect, and lead the family. (I Timothy 5:8) Providing to the best of our ability is another critical aspect of being an ideal husband and father.
- He recognizes his role as a model for his children of quality character traits. As with being a spiritual leader in the family, the father must lead the family. This is best done through his personal example.
- He is dedicated in all ways to serving our Lord, especially in the home.

Collectively we see in the ideal the goodness, self-control, and dedication to wife and family. He also transfers these beyond the family to the workplace, marketplace, and society beyond. In doing so, his life brings glory to God and a good name for himself and his family.

Note Joshua's words in Joshua 24:15, "And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

Also note the references in Acts 10 with the conversion of Cornelius. Not only was he converted to our Lord, but so were all his household. This is due in large part to his personal spiritual leadership.

Note also in Acts 16 with the conversion of the Philippian jailer. He and all his family were baptized. Again, the Philippian was instrumental in bringing his family to the Lord.

2. Differentiate between what the world sees as an ideal man and the true attributes of an ideal man.

Modern ideals:

- Physical looks – The world places a high premium on good looks.
- Potential – The world places value on one’s potential for success to gain wealth, fame, or great skills.
- A “post-modern” man – Someone not adhering to “old fashioned” standards. Instead he projects progressive attitudes to social concerns.

A true ideal man:

- Honest (Proverbs 21:28) – Honesty is important in all relationships and interactions. The true ideal man is someone who loves truth and rejects falsehood.
- Kind (Proverbs 19:22) – Kindness means to do good for others. This kindness is given to all, regardless of whether the kindness is returned or rejected. It is the opposite of self-centeredness and selfishness. Kindness is part of the love we are to show towards others. This love looks for the best for others.
- Pious – Pious means devoted. In particular, it usually means devoted to God. A pious man is devoted to things that lead one to heaven. He also seeks to lead his family to heaven.
- Devoted to family – An ideal man recognizes the importance of his wife and family. He focuses on helping meet their physical, spiritual, intellectual, emotional needs.

3. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

In God's plan, men are spiritual leaders in the church and family. Therefore, it is critical that we develop godly traits in ourselves and to help others develop them as well. The ultimate success of self, society, and family is based on how well we follow God's plan in all things. In doing so, we give glory to Him.

Lesson #4 – What to Look for in a Woman: The Ideal Woman

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on the qualities and characteristics to look for in a woman for marriage. Of special note is what the Bible says is an ideal woman. It is recognized that although none of us are “ideal”, we can strive to become what God wants us to be. This is the second part of the lesson on the ideal man and ideal woman.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand God’s version of the ideal man and woman for a lasting marriage.
- **Feel:** Recognize the importance of becoming who God wants us to be.
- **Do:** Work to become the version God wants us to be as an ideal man and woman.

Support

- Series – Lesson Title; Mike Mazzalongo, Marriage Prep 101
- Video/Text – Lesson 4 – The Ideal Woman
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 4

Body of the Lesson

- 1.0 The description of the ideal woman (Proverbs 31:10-31)
 - 1.1 Good manager and hard worker
 - 1.2 Good character and reputation
- 2.0 What the passage doesn’t say about her
- 3.0 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. Restate Proverbs 31:1-12 in your own words placing emphasis on the part you consider most important.

The intent is to help the learning focus on what he feels is most important in the qualities and characteristics of an ideal woman as described by God.

Answers will vary but look for emphasis on value, rarity, and the importance of seeking.

2. Why would the writer of Proverbs 31:11-31 place such value of the woman to her husband?

Her husband places value for a variety of reasons and tries to be counted worthy of her. An example of her value is trustworthiness. Her husband places great trust in her. This trustworthiness is beyond that to her husband, but as a person. It is a core quality of her character in all things and relationships. Other value includes:

- She is a good worker and manager – Doesn't complain in her work (31:13)
- She is in control of what affects her (31:15)
- She has good instincts in business dealings (31:16;24). Many wives control the family budget and finances much more effectively than husbands.
- She possesses strength (31:17).
- She provides for her family's needs (31:21-23)
- She is wise, helps others in need, and has confidence (31:25-27)
- She is virtuous (31:28-29) and is praised for her virtuousness by her family
- Her reputation is seen and praised by others (31:30-31)
- Her motivation is her relationship with God and obeying His will in all things.

3. What is not found in Proverbs 31:10-31 that are false or fleeting worldly standards?

- Physical beauty
- She doesn't consider self-centered independence as a virtue
- Gaining education, although important, is not her primary focus

4. What is the relationship between the qualities of a good man and a good woman, and what are anticipated results?

There are many shared qualities and values. Here are a few:

- Both the good man and good woman put serving God and providing for each other and their family first.
- They have a good reputation in their community.
- Outward characteristics such as physical beauty and handsomeness are not the most important thing to them.
- Honesty, good work ethic, and love for others are highly valued.

5. A question for men and women to answer: What can we do to be worthy of such a person as described as an ideal man or ideal woman?

There are no set answers for this. Each of us must determine for ourselves and dedicate ourselves to be counted worthy.

The intent of this question is to cause introspection of how we seek to develop quality characteristics and to be counted worthy of the love and respect of our spouse.

6. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

God knew from creation what men and women need for and from each other. He created each of us to provide what the other needs. When the relationship is developed on our love for God and for each other, and our desire to grow in these relationships, we grow closer to God and each other. This is God's plan for us and one that offers the rewards now and an insight into what wonderful blessings God has in store for His faithful followers.

Lesson #5 – Top 10 Marriage Myths – Part 1

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is dispelling myths associated with marriage. Of special note is the reality of God's original design for marriage. This lesson is divided into two parts. Part one discusses the various myths associated with marriage. Part two will look at the application of God's plan for marriage.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand God's original design for marriage.
- **Feel:** Recognize the superiority of God's plan versus modern misconceptions for marriage.
- **Do:** Commit to applying God's plan for marriage.

Support

- Series – Lesson Title; Mike Mazzalongo, Marriage Prep 101
- Video/Text – Lesson 5 – Top 10 Marriage Myths
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 5

Body of the Lesson

Part 1

1.0 Marriage myths

- 1.1 Living together before marriage helps the relationship
- 1.2 Have an affair to breathe new life into your marriage
- 1.3 Be prepared for sex to get boring
- 1.4 Keep your independence
- 1.5 If you spouse really loves you, he/she will know what you want/need
- 1.6 Keep peace at all costs
- 1.7 Always say what is on your mind
- 1.8 You can change your partner
- 1.9 A baby will bring you closer
- 1.10 Love is all you need

Part 2

2.0 Elements of the original design (Genesis 2:18-24)

2.1 The people involved

2.2 The covenant

2.3 Why this design

3.0 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

Part 1

1. Discuss the following 10 marriage myths and explain why they are a myth.

Living together before marriage helps the relationship – This leads to or reinforces non-committal in the relationship. It’s almost a self-fulfilling prophecy for failure.

1 Corinthians 6:9 warns against sexual immorality which is engaging in sexual activities outside of marriage. NOTE: A society may recognize homosexual marriage, but God does not. Therefore, practicing homosexuality is sexual immorality.

Have an affair to breath new life into your marriage – This is another violation of God’s plan for a family of one man/one woman and sexual purity in the relationship. Sex outside of the marriage relationship in any form is sexual immorality.

Be prepared for sex to get boring – This myth can also become a self-fulfilling prophecy. While it is true that the sexual relationship in a marriage may change, it is not true that it will become boring.

Keep your independence – Dependence, or better yet, inter-dependence is at the heart of a successful and healthy relationship. Each partner in the relationship brings to the other what is needed to meet desires and needs. This is not a form of dependency that fosters control, rather it is a platform for a deeper love and commitment.

If your spouse really loves you, he/she will know what you want/need – Contrary to popular culture, neither of us are not mind-readers. Communicating with one another about our needs is a vital part of how couples grow closer together. Lack of communication is among the major reasons for difficulties in marriage.

Keep peace at all costs – This is not an honest or truthful relationship. Some conflict is unavoidable. It doesn't mean there is an unhealthy relationship, rather, a healthy relationship helps us resolve conflicts when they occur. This has the effect of fostering an even closer and healthier relationship as it builds knowledge and trust between the two.

Always say what is on your mind – There is a difference between honesty and bluntness. Honesty is important but not when criticism is destructive. Tenderness and tactfulness are key to reinforcing trust and love in a relationship. If we must express something that is negative or critical, consider the other's feelings and the timing and delivery of our communication. (NOTE: This might be a bit humorous if there are some anecdotes about how we said the wrong thing at the wrong time or in the wrong way.)

You can change your partner – We can help bring about change in others, but this must involve an awareness of our own shortcomings. Also, it usually takes a significant event, often negative, to change someone's core nature. If a person has core characteristics that are harmful or destructive, then change will be difficult at best. When change occurs, it often takes a long period of time. Further, be aware that what we think needs to change may in fact involve change in ourselves as well. Our way is not always the right or best way.

A baby will bring you closer – Children in a relationship can be a wonderful blessing. However, the reality is that children often magnify issues and situations in a relationship whether good or bad. They bring greater stress and challenges in all areas of the relationship.

Love is all you need – Love is critical but is only one ingredient (element) of a lasting and happy marriage. These include elements such as commitment, emotional maturity, and willingness to put your spouse first. These elements help forge a lifetime bond.

2. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

God's plan for marriage is one man for one woman. They are to be united in their relationship with each other and to be committed exclusively to each other. This is true in their physical, emotional, and especially spiritual relationship. Their marriage is intended to bring them closer to each other and in their relationship with God. When we demonstrate God's plan, we show the world the wisdom of God and bring glory to Him.

Part 2

1. Answer the following questions based on Genesis 2:18-22.

What was God's response as Adam saw there was not suitable mate for him, and what does this show about God's overall plan for His original design for a family?

God's response was to create a mate for Adam. This mate was a natural fit to fulfil the elements missing in Adam's life. By coming from Adam, she was made in his image (1 Corinthians 11:7). From this we can understand that together, man and woman complete and complement each other.

What impact did sin have on the relationship between Adam and Eve?

Sin caused a rift between them as well as between them and God.

What was God's response?

God imposed a new structure and order into the relationship. He established man to have dominance over woman. This dominance was not intended from a selfish perspective, but one of responsibility and leadership.

2. What are the elements of the original marriage covenant or contract?

- Respect and honor – A woman is equal in nature and value to man. (vs. 23)
- A change in priorities and responsibilities – The focus changed. (vs. 24a)
- An exclusive marriage union (vs. 24b)

3. What truly constitutes a marriage between a man and woman and why is this significant?

The marriage relationship is based on a covenant, contract, or promise made to one another. This has the impact of fulfilling God's design of exclusivity. NOTE: In a similar way, God's original plan was an exclusive relationship between Him and us, His creation (Exodus 20:1-60).

4. Discuss how God's design serves us.

Emotionally – We were not created to be alone (Genesis 2:18; 1 Corinthians 7:7; Proverbs 18:22)

Physically – The gift of a healthy sexual nature is satisfied by God's design. Contained within this is sharing love, comfort, support, and the way to procreate as God intended.

Spiritually – It helps us carry out our roles given by God. The union of husband and wife helps us render honor and service to God.

5. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

When we follow God's design for the marriage relationship, we will see spiritual growth as we dedicate our lives to God and each other. Others will see this and learn by our example, especially our children.

Lesson #6 – Now that We are Together

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on changes after marriage. Of special note is how these changes work to strengthen the marriage and encourage growing closer.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the changes to the relationship following the wedding and their impact on the marriage relationship.
- **Feel:** Embrace the changes that take place in the marriage after the wedding.
- **Do:** Focus on God's plan for marriage and grow closer together.

Support

- Series – Lesson Title; Mike Mazzalongo, Marriage Prep 101
- Video/Text – Lesson 6 – Now That We are Together
- Student Note Guide for Lesson

Body of the Lesson

1.0 Review of readiness to marry

- 1.1 A measure of self-control
- 1.2 Happiness and satisfaction with life
- 1.3 Shared values
- 1.4 Willingness to learn

2.0 Things that change

- 2.1 Legal status
- 2.2 New relationship
- 2.3 New identity
- 2.4 New role
- 2.5 New family

3.0 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. What is the importance of the following elements to readiness to marry?

The intent of this question is to review these concepts and their importance.

A measure of self-control – Self-control is essential for long-term relationships. In marriage, self-control helps us keep focused on the covenant we’ve made to one another.

As a possible follow-on question, discuss the relationship of the fruit of the spirit, especially self-control as a gift of the Holy Spirit and how they applies to marriage (Galatians 5:19-25). As in all things, when we turn our lives over completely to God, we submit ourselves to Him and His Spirit lives within us and helps us in our spiritual journey. The spiritual gift of self-control applies to all areas of our life, including our marriage.

Happiness and satisfaction with life – Generally, people ready for marriage are happy and satisfied with their life. The expectation is their happiness and satisfaction with life will increase through the marriage.

Shared values – A successful long-term relationship contains shared values, especially in matters of their relationship with God.

Willingness to learn – Marriage partners must learn from one another and adapt and change as they enter the marriage and sustain their lives together.

2. What are some changes that take place on the wedding day?

A new legal status – The marriage contract is legal and binding in many ways (ownership of property, wills, finances, guardianship of children, etc.) When we marry under the laws of a government, we are also legally married before God.

A new relationship (Matthew 19:5) – A new family has begun as God wills. It is an exclusive and permanent relationship. This takes precedence above all other relationships except our relationship with God.

A new identify – Our identity is now permanently linked to our spouse. Our individual hopes, dreams, joys, and sorrows are shared together. When others see us or think of us, it is a shared identity that includes our spouse.

A new role (Ephesians 5:22-28) – We are now placed in a special relationship with specific roles that carry expectations from God as well as from each other. A wife is the helper and companion to her husband. A husband loves, protects, and provides for his wife physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. These roles cannot be abdicated to another. As men, especially, we will be held accountable before God for how we've fulfilled these roles to each other and to God.

A new family (Genesis 2:24) – The family unit of one man/one woman in marriage was established by God. Our spouse becomes the primary focus beyond their other family ties.

3. Activity: (See text)

Without showing your spouse your responses, write down your responses to the following questions on a separate sheet of paper or on the associated note guide:

- **What are three things that remained the same after you were married?**
- **What are three things that changed after this time?**
- **What is one thing that surprised you?**

When finished answering the questions, have a conversation with your spouse about your responses. Be willing to make changes as needed to strengthen your relationship.

Lesson #7 – The 4 A's of a Successful Marriage: Part 1

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on continuing to develop a successful marriage. Of special note is four basic concepts to help grow and sustain a closer relationship with our spouse. Given the amount of information of this lesson, it is recommended that it be presented in two lessons.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand how to develop and sustain a successful and happy marriage.
- **Feel:** Appreciate the importance of continuing to work at a successful and happy marriage.
- **Do:** Apply the principles for developing and sustaining a successful and happy marriage.

Support

- Series – Lesson Title; Mike Mazzalongo, Marriage Prep 101
- Video/Text – Lesson 7 – The 4 A's of a Successful Marriage
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 7

Body of the Lesson

- 1.0 Review of the changes brought about by marriage
- 2.0 Why we want a happy marriage

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. What are the changes brought about by marriage?

This question is a review of previous information.

A new legal status – The marriage contract is legal and binding in many ways (ownership of property, wills, finances, guardianship of children, etc.) When we marry under the laws of a government, we are also legally married before God.

A new relationship (Matthew 19:5) – A new family has begun as God wills. It is an exclusive and permanent relationship. This takes precedence above all other relationships except our relationship with God.

A new identify – Our identity is now permanently linked to our spouse. Our individual hopes, dreams, joys, and sorrows are shared together. When others see us or think of us, it is a shared identity that includes our spouse.

A new role (Ephesians 5:22-28) – We are now placed in a special relationship with specific roles that carry expectations from God as well as from each other. A wife is the helper and companion to her husband. A husband loves, protects, and provides for his wife physically, intellectually, emotionally, and spiritually. These roles cannot be abdicated to another. As men, especially, we will be held accountable before God for how we've fulfilled these roles to each other and to God.

A new family (Genesis 2:24) – The family unit of one man/one woman in marriage was established by God. Our spouse becomes the primary focus beyond their other family ties.

2. Why do we want a happy marriage?

Use the introduction to the chapter as a discussion guide. Look for elements of:

- The power of the relationship – It affects everything in the relationship
- A standard for a successful life – Our marriage success impacts our values
- Unique opportunity – Marriage is a relationship that has impacts throughout our life.
- Response to pressures – There is pressure to succeed from family and society.
- Pattern – A happy marriage is also a response to the pattern presented to us by family and society

3. Defend the following statement:

“The secret that successful couples know who have been married for a long time is that marriage can and do get better.”

Marriage happiness is not guaranteed or temporary. Both couples make a commitment to each other’s welfare, including physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual elements. As they mature, these elements will change, but their focus and need do not.

The elements of sexual attraction, similar interests, and idealism are part of the relationship, but are a foundation upon which the marriage builds for success.

Suggested Activity:

The purpose of this activity is to help couples focus on the things in their marriage that are positive and supportive, and to see how they have grown closer in their relationship.

Have each partner write down five things that they appreciate about their spouse and how this has positively changed over the period of their marriage. Then have the couples discuss with each other the things on their list and how it makes them feel loved, secure, or appreciated in the relationship. If present, have the couples especially focus on the things that they both listed.

Lesson #8 – The 4 A's of a Successful Marriage: Part 2

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on continuing to develop a successful marriage. Of special note is four basic concepts to help grow and sustain a closer relationship with our spouse. This is part 2 of this topic.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand how to develop and sustain a successful and happy marriage.
- **Feel:** Appreciate the importance of continuing to work at a successful and happy marriage.
- **Do:** Apply the principles for developing and sustaining a successful and happy marriage.

Support

- Series – Lesson Title; Mike Mazzalongo, Marriage Prep 101
- Video/Text – Lesson 8 – The 4 A's of a Successful Marriage Part 2
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 8

Body of the Lesson

- 1.0 Review of the changes brought about by marriage
- 2.0 The secret for a long-term marriage

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. How do each of the following elements contribute to a successful marriage.

Agape love – This critical form of love is the sacrificial love God has for us and that He requires we have for one another. It involves four areas:

- Commitment – A conscious choice to commit to another person permanently.
- Discipline – Discipline involves self-control. This helps us realize and stay focused on our commitment.
- Well-being of the partner – This flows out of our commitment to each other and to God. We are committed in all ways to the well-being of our partner. To the husband, theirs is a special level of commitment to the spiritual well-being of their spouse and family (Ephesians 5:25-33).

These three, commitment, discipline, and well-being of our partner together form the work of our successful and happy marriage relationship.

Attraction – God created in us the sexual drive and a way to satisfy it through marriage. He did so for the purpose of pleasure and comfort of the married couple, as well as for procreation. Within the marriage, sex becomes an act of love, faith in, and commitment for the couple. See Genesis 2:25; I Corinthians 7:3-4.

Appreciation – Both partners in a successful marriage learn to openly express appreciation for each other. We understand and support each other's roles. (**As a suggested activity** for this question, have each couple write down three things they appreciate about their spouse and have them share it with each other.)

Aid – We understand that we constantly need God's love and help as we live our Christian life. We also need the love and help of each other throughout the marriage as we grow together. Sometimes we also need to receive aid outside the marriage from credible and trusted sources to help us strengthen and sustain the marriage. We should not fear getting this aid as needed.

2. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Our marriage must be based on God's will for us. God created all elements of a marriage including the marriage itself. God blesses this relationship. Each partner knows the needs of the other and works together to strengthen each other, especially in spiritual areas. We also use our marriage to encourage faithfulness in others, especially within our own family.



Lesson #9 – What Makes a Marriage Christian?

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is a review of God’s plan for marriage. Of special note are the elements that are necessary to make a marriage a Christian marriage.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand what makes a marriage a Christian marriage.
- **Feel:** Value the relationship we have with each other through our relationship with Jesus.
- **Do:** Ensure the elements of a Christian marriage are foundational in our marriage.

Support

- Series – Lesson Title; Mike Mazzalongo, Marriage Prep 101
- Video/Text – Lesson 9 – What Makes a Marriage Christian
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 9

Body of the Lesson

- 1.0 Review of necessary practices within a marriage
- 2.0 God’s plan for marriage (Genesis 2:18-25)
 - 2.1 Knowledge of self
 - 2.2 Knowledge of our partner
 - 2.3 Unity
- 3.0 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. Use the following information to review the four elements necessary for marriages.

- **Agape love** – Seen in commitment to the wellbeing of our partner.
- **Attraction** – Maintaining the attraction towards one another that keeps the joy and excitement in the relationship alive.
- **Appreciation** – The effort to understand what our spouse experiences as our wife or husband.
- **Aid** – Mutual assistance in challenging times including the wisdom to seek appropriate help in troubling times.

2. What makes someone or something Christian and what makes a marriage Christian?

The term Christian means to be like Christ or of Christ. As it applies to an individual, it means the person has put on Christ through our belief and confession of our need for forgiveness through Jesus, repentance (turning our lives from self towards Jesus, baptism by immersion in water, and living faithfully to the teaching of Jesus. What makes a thing Christian is that it is based on the principles and teachings of Jesus. For example, we use the expression, “Christian school”. We mean by that, that the identity and practices of the educational institution are based on the teachings of Jesus.

What makes a marriage Christian is also seen in it being Christ based. We see this in our:

Knowledge of self – We ask ourselves if we are sincere in our Christianity. This must be answered first or we will never know what we are to be or do. It affects every other decision in our life.

Knowledge of our partner – Knowledge of our partner’s sincerity as a Christian is also important. It helps ensure the success of our life and marriage when we are both committed to serving our Lord. Further, we each help and support one another’s spiritual growth.

Unity – This is working together devoting our marriage and its processes to Christ.

3. What is the commonality that makes a marriage legitimate and acceptable in God's eyes?

Although it is a common practice to be married in a church or some other such religious facility, and officiated by a person representing the religious institution, it is when the man and woman enter the marriage consciously and legally that God recognizes the marriage.

4. What did Adam express regarding his condition as seen in Genesis 2:18-20 and how does this relate to God's plan for marriage?

Adam expressed knowledge of self. He recognized he was alone and incomplete.

This relates to God's plan for marriage by creating a mate/companion that removed Adam's loneliness and provided completeness. NOTE: The completeness was provided to both Adam and Eve in their relationship with each other. In the same way today, we complete each other by providing for what is missing in each other's life and growing into the union as God designed.

5. What is meant by “social readiness” for marriage?

Social readiness means we understand what we want and where we want to go in life. This is a conscious awareness and conviction about things and our ability to function in society independently. The greater our readiness, the greater the likelihood of marital success.

6. What is meant by “emotional readiness”?

This is seen in our recognition of our need for marriage. This is not what others want for us, but what we want for ourselves. This involves a willing and permanent commitment to another person.

7. How is knowledge of our partner critical to a successful Marriage (Genesis 2:21-23)?

God created the family based on one man and one woman. As they grow together, they develop knowledge of each other's needs and wants and the desire to fulfill them. We learn of each other's physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual needs, and work to help satisfy them.

Regarding the physical or sexual knowledge gifted to the marriage by God, we are able to confirm our commitment, express loyalty, surrender self, establish a family, provide emotional comfort, and physical pleasure. These are gained through our knowledge of our spouse as we grow together through the life of our marriage. These are lacking when a sexual relationship exists outside of marriage and therefore does not provide completeness.

8. Explain the three rules to achieve unity in marriage?

Rule 1 – Separate to unite – We leave parents and unite wholly with our spouse. He/she becomes the priority in our life second only to our relationship with God.

Rule 2 – Permanence in permanent – Becoming one is spirit and flesh means there is no room for another. We are committed forever to each other as long as we live. We blend our lives together throughout the stages of life.

Rule 3 – Intimacy must be without fear - The final verse of Genesis 2:24-25 states that they were naked and unashamed. The use of naked goes beyond the physical to include opening up before each other all of our selves. We do this with trust and acceptance from, and commitment to each other. This is done without reservation and with full transparency. (NOTE: A good spiritual expression of this is seen when we come to God as we express in the hymn, “Just As I Am”.)

9. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

In several scriptures the relationship we have with God and the Church itself is seen through the explanation of a marriage (bride of Christ, etc.). We know that in a marriage one enters into a new relationship with each other separate from others while still maintaining our family relationship. In a similar way, when we are united with Christ through our faithful response and baptism, we are added to the church (bride of Christ). We are dedicated fully to Him while still maintaining our life in this world. But our focus shifts from the world to our new life in Christ.

Lesson #10 – Keeping Love Alive and Finding it Again When You Lose it

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is on rekindling marital love that has grown cold. Of special note are practical ways to achieve this.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand practical and effective ways to rekindle marital love.
- **Feel:** Seek to improve our marital relationship.
- **Do:** Apply the practical ways to rekindle and keep love alive.

Support

- Series – Lesson Title; Mike Mazzalongo, Marriage Prep 101
- Video/Text – Lesson 10 – Keeping Love Alive and Finding it Again When You Lose it

Student Note Guide for Lesson 10

Body of the Lesson

- 1.0 Keeping love alive
- 2.0 The Language of love
 - 2.1 Examples of the language of love in action
 - 2.2 Activity
- 3.0 Productive communication
 - 3.1 Honest
 - 3.2 Clear
 - 3.3 Complete
- 4.0 Activity

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. Defend the following statement:

“The feeling of love is not created by demands, sex, or manipulation, but through loving communication.”

The intent of this question is to solidify the understanding of what the feeling of love truly is.

Many in the world largely hold an erroneous view of what he or she gains from love. By this, it generally means a self-focused result, not the focus on the other. Also, the true feeling of love is created and maintained by loving communication. If our love weakens or diminishes, then look first at our communication with our mate.

2. Answer the following questions regarding the language of love.

What holds a marriage together? There are many things, but at the heart of a successful marriage is our love for one another.

What transfers love, builds love, and maintains love?

Our loving communication with each other.

3. How do each of the following communicate love?

Words – Our expressions of affection, loyalty, love, and admiration.

Gifts – Tokens of love and appreciation given willingly to each other.

Actions – Those things we do to please and comfort the other.

Time – Expressing devotion to each other by paying attention, dedicating time, focusing on listening.

Physical affection – The intimate touching, sexual and non-sexual intimacy.

4. In what ways do women and men differ in knowing they are loved?

See examples from the text for “Examples of the language of love in action.”

Consider using the following activity from the text at this point:

Have each spouse write down what they believe their own and their spouse’s love language and then share this information with each other.

5. What are some ways to have productive communication?

Be totally honest (Ephesians 4:15) – Honesty is the bedrock of productive communication. Marriage partners must be open and honest about their feelings and needs. The other side of this is acceptance of the communication by the other party in the marriage. Note: The objective of the communication is to be open and honest, not to hurt the other. Use effective communication techniques, including appropriate timeliness.

Clear – Productive communication also needs to be clearly transmitted concepts, feelings, and ideas. Do not use ambiguous terms or assume your partner will understand what you are communicating. Our words and actions must be consistent. The other side of this is the need for clear feedback to let each other know that what was communicated was intended.

Complete – Not only honest and clear, our communication must be complete. We must not shy away from any truth or areas where we are uncomfortable.

NOTE: These three elements are important but so too is how we communicate. We must do so tactfully and lovingly keeping in mind our objective is to grow closer in our relationship of love. We must refrain from hurtful words and actions. Three ways to do this are:

- **Mirroring** – confirming what you heard was what was said. Restate what you heard back to the person. Example: “I heard you say... Did I hear it right?”
- **Validation** – Confirming (recognizing) you see the other’s point of view, even if you may not agree. This involves listening to understand and not to refute. An example of how to do this is to say: “I can accept how you feel about this.”
- **Empathy** – Confirming that the other person’s feelings are valid even if you don’t feel them as intensely as they do. An example of how to do this is to say, “I understand what you are saying...” Note: mean it when you say it!

Suggested Activity:

Have the couple accomplish this exercise during the week and report back about the results.

This activity designed to develop our verbal and nonverbal communication skills between each partner in the marriage. It is best done in the evening.

The couple needs to be in a location free from distractions. Set a timer for 3 – 5 minutes. One partner shares without interruption the best part of their day, their “high”, and the most disappointing part of their day, their “low”. Meanwhile, the other partner can only use nonverbal techniques to convey empathy, understanding, and encouragement. When the timer goes off, the couple discuss their observations, feelings, and ideas. Each partner will then switch roles to get an opportunity to practice both skills.

Teacher Note: Use the following questions, or similar questions to discuss the results of the activity.

- What did you find most difficult to express in this activity and why?
- What did you find easiest to express in this activity and why?
- What was your main thoughts while your partner was speaking?
- What did you learn from this exercise that will help you communicate better with your partner?



Lesson #11 – The Blessings of Marital Fidelity

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is a review of the physical, emotional, and spiritual benefits of faithfulness in marriage. Of special note is God’s plan for marriage as one man for one woman.

Student Learning Outcomes

- **Know:** Understand the benefits of following God’s plan for marriage.
- **Feel:** Recognize the importance and benefits of following God’s plan for marriage.
- **Do:** Apply God’s plan to develop and sustain a loving and lasting marriage relationship.

Support

- Series – Lesson Title; Mike Mazzalongo, Marriage Prep 101
- Video/Text – Lesson 11 – The Blessing of Marital Fidelity
- Student Note Guide for Lesson 11

Body of the Lesson

1.0 Marriage fidelity

1.1 Complete fidelity

1.2 Lifetime fidelity

1.3 Growing fidelity

2.0 The blessings of marital fidelity

2.1 Peace of mind

2.2 Mature love

2.3 Joy on earth

3.0 Application

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson. There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts. These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. Discuss the following questions regarding marriage fidelity:

What is the basic definition of fidelity as applied to marriage?

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary defines fidelity as, “The quality of being faithful to your husband or wife.”

This illustrates the concept of exclusivity in the relationship.

What is complete fidelity?

Faithfulness of mind, body, and intentions. It is a holistic view.

What is lifetime fidelity?

Our faithfulness to our spouse if permanent. Separation is not an option when challenges and changes arise.

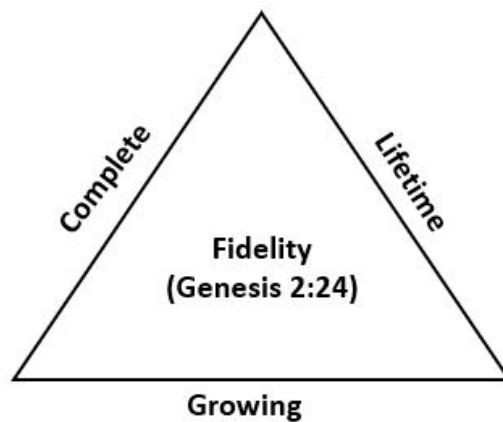
What is growing fidelity?

Growing fidelity is ongoing and results from our continued commitment to one another and our marriage covenant. (See Genesis 2:24).

How does these three basic components of fidelity work together?

They work together and build upon one another to form a sustained and lifetime committed marriage. Complete and lifetime fidelity are what we want to be. They represent an ideal as well as a goal.

The diagram below illustrates how these three are interrelated to fulfill God's plan for one man and one woman in a permanent marriage relationship.



2. What is the relationship between peace of mind and marital fidelity?

Marital fidelity is a critical aspect of peace of mind. The absence of doubt and mistrust support our commitment to each other and the growing love we experience.

Mature love, love that grows over a lifetime allows us to enjoy the sustained pleasure and benefits of the relationship. As life changes, so too does our physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual self. They too should mature. Loving someone for a lifetime leads to a closeness they experience with one another.

Joy on earth is another benefit from marital fidelity. It is the joy we experience that flows through the marriage. It is just a small taste of the joy we will experience someday in the presence of God.

3. How does marital fidelity bring joy and spiritual growth to our life and relationship with our spouse?

Being sexually pure and exclusively committed to our spouse is God's plan and pleases Him. When both partners in the marriage love God, they also commit to one another's spiritual growth and general well being. As we mature in our relationship with our spouse, so too will our relationship with God. What a joy it will be to stand together in the presence of God.

Lesson #12 – 8 Steps to Intimacy

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson continues to be a review of God’s plan for a successful and happy marriage. Of special note is a review of the true meaning, value and method of creating and maintaining intimacy in the marriage.

Student Learning Outcomes

Know: Understand the benefits of following God’s plan for marriage.

Feel: Recognize the importance and benefits of following God’s plan for marriage.

Do: Apply God’s plan to develop and sustain a loving and lasting marriage relationship.

Support

Series – Lesson Title; Mike Mazzalongo, Marriage Prep 101

Video/Text – Lesson 12 – 8 Steps to Intimacy

Student Note Guide for Lesson 12

Body of the Lesson

1.0 Developing intimacy

1.1 Intellectual/Emotional intimacy

1.2 Physical intimacy

1.3 Spiritual intimacy

2.0 8 Steps to developing intimacy

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson.

There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts.

These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. Complete the following statement and explain how it occurs. (See text)

“Intimacy is a learned things and cannot be contained or maintained without effort and practice.”

Total intimacy requires we develop our relationship in all ways, physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual. If any of these are missing in our relationship, then we do not have complete intimacy and are missing out on the benefits as God intends for a successful and happy marriage.

2. How does the image below support God’s plan for the relationship between a man and woman as stated in Ephesians 5:22-33?

Paul shows that all three areas are important for us to have a complete intimate relationship, with each other, as well as with God. They are often seen as different areas, but they work together to provide a complete person and relationship. As shown in this illustration, the foundation for this is our relationship with God. Everything is viewed from the prism of our relationship with God.

3. Complete the following statements about intimacy. (See text)

Intellectual/emotional intimacy: Marital intimacy requires that the heads and hearts be close.

This results from knowing the other person's needs, wants, thoughts and feelings. We develop this through open and honest communication.

Physical intimacy: Physical intimacy is not the same thing as sex. They are separate things but necessary to perfect the other. Men's and women's physical intimacy differs in its relationship with emotional intimacy. Their view of and desire for sex and intimacy differ.

Spiritual intimacy: God established marriage and provides the standards and principles for it. Without a shared spiritual intimacy, we do not have the complete marriage as God intends.

Our shared faith is critical as we share together our devotion to God as well as each other.

4. Summarize key points from each of the 8 steps to developing intimacy.

Strong physical attraction: God reveals that strong physical attraction is a basic ingredient in the intimate bonding of people together in marriage.

A purified character: Physical elements of an intimate relationship may lessen, but one's character usually remains constant. When our character reflects the characteristics of God, it helps our attractiveness for each other.

The respect of others: Although intimacy is seen as between the two in the marriage, how others see us helps heighten our appreciation for each other. When our view of our mate is confirmed by others, it gives us confidence to pursue deeper levels of intimacy.

Biblical balance: Struggle for power in the home is an intimacy killer. Spiritual leadership is not about control. As Paul states in Ephesians 5, it is actually a self-sacrificial love. We cannot be intimate with someone we're fighting with for control. God's plan is for mutual respect, devotion, and an intimacy pleasing and blessed by God.

Security in the relationship: Intimacy needs security to mature. This security should grow along with our intimacy with each other.

Give praise: Giving consistent praise is important to building and sustaining confidence in the other. (Teacher's note: Consider having each couple write on a piece of paper something they appreciate about the looks of their partner then have them exchange it with each other. This is likely to be a private statement so do not ask them to reveal it to the rest. But consider asking the couple to think about how it makes them feel towards their partner.)

Continual focus: It is not the big things that kill intimacy, it is the daily neglect of each other in little ways that destroys our closeness. We must care for our marriage partner in ways that reflect and support our lifetime commitment.

Spiritual oneness: Total intimacy requires spiritual intimacy. Although many have a good marriage without a shared faith, but when two are equally committed believers, we can share mind, body, and spirit as God intended. To create or recreate intimacy in marriage, begin with spiritual intimacy.

Lesson #13 – Great Sex for Life

Teaching Strategy

The focus of this lesson is a continued review of maintaining and improving intimacy in a successful and happy marriage. Of special note in this lesson is the role of sexual intimacy as God designed.

Student Learning Outcomes

Know: Understand the benefits of following God’s plan for marriage.

Feel: Recognize the importance and benefits of following God’s plan for marriage.

Do: Apply God’s plan to develop and sustain a loving and lasting marriage relationship.

Support

Series – Lesson Title; Mike Mazzalongo, Marriage Prep 101

Video/Text – Lesson 13 – Great Sex for Life

Student Note Guide for Lesson 13

Body of the Lesson

1.0 The history of sex

2.0 God’s idea of sex

2.1 Sex is good

2.2 Sex is for marriage only

2.3 Sex is unselfish affection

2.4 Sex is uninterrupted

3.0 Communication is the key

Discussion Questions

Below are suggested questions to use during the guided discussion portion of the lesson.

There are also suggested responses to questions to help students grasp the various concepts.

These are provided to assist the discussion and are not considered as a “right or wrong” response.

1. Trace the stages of history of sex and a key element of each stage.

- Garden of Eden – In the pure and sinless Eden, sex between Adam and Eve was pure, natural, and completely satisfying (Genesis 2:24-25).
- The fall of man – Sin entered between God and man and resulted in a complexity in marriage. Since then, there continues to be struggles and misuse of sex.
- 4th Century – Sex is seen as a continuation of Adam’s sin passed on in a physical way.
- 17th Century – Views on sex changed to the opposite view sin in previous periods. Sex was considered dirty and only tolerated in marriage. Sex was seen primarily for procreation.
- 20th Century – Views on sex changed to the opposite view seen in previous periods. Sex is seen as fun and free from consequences. During the 1980’s sex became more serious due to the presence of sexually transmitted diseases. This led to the view that sex should be practiced safely. From 2000 to the present, sex is focused on an individual’s pleasure seen in the rise of pornography, homosexuality, and other gratification of self-desires.

2. Discuss key elements of God's idea of sex.

Sex is good (Genesis 1:27, 31). God created sex and established that when practiced within the marriage, it is natural and without guilt or shame (Genesis 2:24-25). See also Hebrews 13:4, Song of Solomon 7:1-9, Proverbs 5:18-19.

Sex is for marriage only – God clearly designed sex to be engaged freely within the context of marriage. It is the basic teaching of sex within the Bible. See Exodus 20:14; 8 Corinthians 7:1-2.

Sex is unselfish affection – Although there is pleasure for an individual in sex, it reaches the highest level of satisfaction when it is focused on pleasing the other person rather than self. When we please the other person, we will be satisfied. Good sex requires giving from both partners.

Sex is uninterrupted – Sex is meant to provide pleasure for all of married life. God created marriage to last for a lifetime, therefore sex within a marriage should last a lifetime as well. It is a myth that older married couple cannot enjoy sex.

3. How is communication the key to great sex for life?

Without effective communication we will misunderstand our partner's needs and desires. This especially includes our communication about sex. We understand that our views and abilities with sex change as our life changes and we age. Therefore, it is all the more important that we continue to communicate about all parts of our life.

Activity: The objective of this activity is to foster connection, closeness, positive feelings, and gratitude between each other. It is intended as an assignment to be completed at home and shared only between the two of them.

Each partner is asked to choose a compliment or positive quality to describe their partner for each letter of their partner's name.

They then read their list, while describing the impact to their feelings about themselves and their partner.

4. How can you use this lesson to grow spiritually and help others come into a relationship with Jesus?

Sex is a wonderful gift from God to help us grow closer with each other as we support, encourage, and express our love as He intends for us. In recognizing this, it offers us yet another reason to glorify God and to seek to discover more and draw closer to Him.

Our recognition of how God designed sex as part of the marriage, we help others discover God's will for purity in all things about our life.