



*To Have  
and to Hold*

NAVIGATING THROUGH  
MARRIAGE TOGETHER

# To Have and to Hold



**EVERY NATION**  
PRODUCTIONS

## **To Have and to Hold**

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Produced in the Republic of the Philippines

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## INTRODUCTION

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Marriage is God's idea, where He brings two individuals together in love and companionship. In this relationship, the two become one and make a commitment to be faithful in loving one another. In the Victory group material *A Cord of Three Strands*, we talked about the biblical foundations of marriage. We learned that marriage is not just a partnership, but a union that God establishes between a man and a woman to accomplish His kingdom's purpose.

We also saw how man veered away from God's original design when sin entered the picture. Because of sin, conflicts are inevitable in any relationship, including marriage. Our material *For Better or Worse* gave insights on the root of conflicts in the context of marriage and how married couples can overcome and resolve these conflicts through God's guidance and grace.

God's word offers invaluable guidance on how couples can navigate through different challenges, emphasizing principles of love, forgiveness, and humility. *To Have and to Hold* is a material where we explore key biblical teachings on conflict resolution in marriage, highlighting the importance of placing God at the center of the relationship as well as communication, forgiveness, and selflessness.

In marriage, a couple would have to brave through several issues together. Whether it stems from communication, money, physical intimacy, or relating with in-laws, conflict can either tear a couple apart or bring them closer to each other.

The good news is that God did not leave us to face challenges on our own. He gave us His word to guide our path. The Bible provides a wealth of wisdom on how couples can navigate through these challenges. God also gave us the Holy Spirit who empowers us to live victoriously in all areas of life. Through His power at work in our lives, we are able to make our marriages

work, despite the challenges. In turn, we can also help others experience His victory in their lives.

May this material help deepen our faith and provide fresh perspectives to help us navigate through challenges in a way that honors God and strengthens our marriages. May it help cultivate a love rooted in faith that will point people to God and bring marriages back to His original design.

### *For the Victory Group Leader*

For some people in your Victory group, discussing these topics may result in a conversation beyond your time together, professional counseling, or further ministry. Here are a few tips:

- Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom and approach each topic in a sensitive manner, trusting God to reveal to you how to best minister to those in your Victory group. Prepare ahead of time and be open to how the Holy Spirit will direct the Victory group meeting.
- Listen without assumptions or judgment. Do not be dismissive when people open up and share their stories by saying things like, all you need is faith, just pray, and other people have it worse. Tread lightly on these topics, understanding that people may have misconceptions and hurts related to each topic.
- Speak the truth in love. Ask God for discernment and wisdom, trusting Him to transform us. Remember the process of change: truth, repentance, and faith. We are all in the process of sanctification, and spiritual health is a journey. We are after progress, not perfection. While we may not have all the answers, we do not expect immediate results and are committed to journeying together in discipleship.
- Ask for help from other Victory group leaders and your pastors, as needed. Consider and respect the privacy of the people in your group, and be discerning about disclosing private information.

Together, let us effectively minister the truth of God's word with love and compassion.

Other materials available for Victory groups, which can provide a foundational understanding on marriage, include:

- *For Better or Worse*
- *A Cord of Three Strands*
- *Managing God's Money*
- *In His Image*

# 1 Conflict Is Inevitable

## WARM-UP

- What do you think the ideal marriage looks like? In what ways do you see this in your own marriage?
- When conflict arises in your marriage, what is your initial response?
- Recall instances when you have an argument with your spouse. Do you find that your initial goal is to win the argument or to find an agreement?

**WORD** <sup>24</sup>*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* <sup>25</sup>*And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.* **GENESIS 2:24-25**

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"* **GENESIS 3:1**

(Read also **GENESIS 3**, **JOHN 10:10**, and **EPHESIANS 5:24-25**.)

Some of us may be familiar with wedding terminology, such as wedding bells, honeymoon, and the famous line that serves as the highlight of the ceremony: "You may now kiss the bride." Lovers marry the love of their lives. A husband marries his dream girl, while a woman marries her knight in shining armor. Many love songs have been written about this sweet and beautiful love. The wedding seems to promise living happily ever after.

This is how it was in the beginning. Adam and Eve were *both naked and were not ashamed*. They enjoyed their union—spiritually, emotionally, relationally, and physically—and their relationship with God. Everything was seemingly perfect, until

the serpent came along and deceived them. The woman sinned, followed by the man, who was with her. In this lesson, we will take a deeper look at how conflict in marriage began.

## 1 | Conflict in marriage is inevitable because we have an enemy.

*Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?'"*

**GENESIS 3:1**

(Read also **GENESIS 3:2-7**.)

Satan wants to destroy God's design for the world—including marriage and family. This enemy, the devil, is out to steal, kill, and destroy marriage (John 10:10) by throwing lies and accusations against you, your spouse, and God. "Did God actually say that?" "Did you and your spouse really hear from God?" These lies make us question the will of God and sow mistrust with one another. This is why conflict in marriage is inevitable. When you are in conflict with your spouse, have you considered the possibility of third-party involvement? Who should you allow to influence your mindset and attitude: the devil or the Holy Spirit?

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## 2 | Conflict in marriage is inevitable because of the Fall.

*To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you."*

**GENESIS 3:16**

(Read also **GENESIS 3:6-13**.)

After Adam and Eve sinned, their eyes were opened to evil and their disobedience, shame, and guilt. They hid from God, the one who brought them together, and tried to cover their shame and guilt. Instead of running to God for help, they ran away out of fear. When God found them, they blamed others. The man blamed the woman, and the woman blamed the serpent. Nobody wanted to take responsibility for their actions. When sin entered the world, so did conflict in relationships. In marriage, this is what God said it would look like: the desire of the woman will be contrary to her husband, but the husband will rule over her. Why do you think it is important to understand that conflict in marriage arises because of sin?

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### 3

## **Conflict in marriage is inevitable, but it can be resolved by the grace of God.**

*And the LORD God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skins and clothed them. GENESIS 3:21*

God pronounced judgment on the man and the woman because of their sin (Genesis 3:14–19). But He also displayed His care for them by making garments from animal skin and clothing them. To cover their nakedness and shame, an innocent animal was sacrificed. This foreshadowed the way God would redeem all of mankind from sin—through the sacrificial death of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. His death reconciled us to the Father and to one another. In Him, wives are empowered to submit to their husbands and husbands are called to love their wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her (Ephesians 5:24–25). Remember that as husband and wife, you are united as one, and in covenant with God. Together, like a cord of three strands, you can triumph over any conflict, problem, or trials in this world by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. How does the restoration

of our relationship with God affect our relationship with each other?

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## APPLICATION

- What was new or stood out to you in this topic? In what ways were you challenged or encouraged?
- How can the truths we learned today help the way you and your spouse deal with conflicts or arguments? What wrong mindsets or attitudes will need to be changed in your life by God's grace?
- In light of what we've learned, what practical steps can you take starting this week to help you and your spouse deal with conflicts?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for His grace for you, your spouse, and your marriage. Pray for a deeper appreciation of the love of God for you and your spouse, and for both of you to become more like Christ every day.
- Pray that you will be united, as allies and partners, not enemies, as you face any conflict or trials in your marriage. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you resolve any conflict.
- Pray for protection for one another and for your family. Know that greater is Jesus who is in you than he who is in the world.

## 2 Together through it All

### WARM-UP

- Do you consider yourself to be confrontational? How do you usually settle disagreements with your spouse?
- How do you usually respond when conflicts aren't settled the way you think they should be, especially in your marriage?
- Have you set “rules of engagement” in your marriage? In what ways have these been helpful for you?

**WORD** *<sup>1</sup>I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, <sup>2</sup>with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, <sup>3</sup>eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. **EPHESIANS 4:1-3***

In the previous lesson, we established the undeniable truth that conflict is an inherent part of any relationship, and in the context of marriage, this reality becomes even more pronounced. When two distinct individuals share their lives over an extended period, they are bound to encounter friction and offense. Yet, it's crucial to recognize that through the grace of God, conflicts can be resolved. What transforms the impact of these marital conflicts is the perspective, mindset, or disposition with which we approach them. By embracing a biblical perspective, we not only safeguard our marriage from severe damage but also seize the opportunity for tremendous personal and relational growth when conflict arises.

## 1 | “We are on the same team.”

*<sup>4</sup>There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—<sup>5</sup>one Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup>one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. **EPHESIANS 4:4–6***

In the journey of marriage, the principle of being on the same team is not merely a comforting notion; it’s a fundamental cornerstone for maintaining unity. Just as the apostle Paul reminded the Ephesians to strive for the bond of peace through their shared faith, Father, Lord, and Spirit, so too should husbands and wives recognize that they are on the same team that God has joined together. When conflicts arise, they are not opposing parties on different sides of an issue; they are teammates facing an issue together. Rather than fighting one another, they are to work collaboratively to seek God’s guidance in resolving the matter. This perspective fosters mutual respect, effective communication, humility, and empathetic problem-solving. How has this mindset helped you approach conflicts in your marriage?

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## 2 | “I am here to build you up in love.”

*<sup>15</sup>Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup>from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love. **EPHESIANS 4:15–16***

*<sup>25</sup>Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup>that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup>so that he*

*might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.* **EPHESIANS 5:25-27**

In the midst of marital conflicts, the principle of being present to build your spouse up in love from these passages takes on a particularly profound significance. When disagreements and tensions arise, remember that the objective isn't to win an argument or to defeat the other. Instead, it's an opportunity to speak the truth in love. This means that even in the heat of conflict, communication should be characterized by both honesty and compassion.

The goal is not to tear one another down but to build each other up, just as Christ's love for the Church is described in Ephesians 5:25-27. Husbands are called to love their wives sacrificially, seeking their sanctification and growth. This love extends to conflict resolution, where couples are to resolve their issues with a goal to strengthen their bond and nurture a love that mirrors Christ's love for His Church. Thus, with a mindset of building each other up in love, these conflicts become opportunities for growth, understanding, and deeper unity in marriage. How have you seen maturity and growth in your character and relationship with your spouse in the midst of conflict?

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### 3 | "I won't nurture my anger toward you."

*<sup>26</sup>Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup>and give no opportunity to the devil.* **EPHESIANS 4:26-27**

It's completely normal to feel anger during conflicts, but as the apostle Paul teaches us, we are called not to let anger lead us into sinful behavior. Moreover, the perspective we

should adopt is one that doesn't fuel our anger but actively addresses it. Procrastinating in dealing with anger not only divides us but also opens the door for negativity to harm our relationship. While some people might need a time-out during conflict, the key is to ensure that this break isn't spent dwelling on past mistakes or allowing negative feelings to grow. Instead, it can be an opportunity to seek God and yield to Him as He works on our own thoughts and emotions. With this perspective, how have you applied the principle of not nurturing anger into your own relationship?

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#### 4 | **"I am committed to forgive and be reconciled to you."**

*Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* **EPHESIANS 4:32**

This passage highlights the significance of forgiveness in marriage. We are urged to be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving toward one another, just as God forgave us in Christ. In marriage, conflicts and disagreements are inevitable, and sometimes, hurtful actions or words may be exchanged. However, the commitment to forgive and seek reconciliation is what can heal the wounds and maintain a strong marital bond. It's an acknowledgment that as imperfect human beings, we will make mistakes, but we're also enabled by God to extend grace to our spouse, just as God extends grace to us. This perspective considers forgiveness and reconciliation as the only option and conclusion after conflict. It's an understanding that no matter what happens, by the grace of God, forgiveness and reconciliation are possible. How do you envision embodying

this commitment to forgive and be reconciled in your own marriage, especially during challenging times?

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When married couples embrace biblical mindsets outlined in Scripture, it creates an environment that fosters love, unity, and personal growth. These principles guide couples through conflicts, nurturing a love that transcends disputes, promoting unity, and encouraging personal growth within the marriage. In this way, conflicts become opportunities to strengthen bonds, highlighting the enduring power of faith and biblical wisdom in building resilient marriages.

## APPLICATION

- Which of the four attitudes mentioned do you regularly practice in your life? Which one do you find challenging to incorporate into your daily life? What steps can you take to put this into practice?
- Think of a conflict you and your spouse had recently. Which of the principles you learned today could have helped you navigate that issue together?
- What mindsets or attitudes need to change in your life for you to be more like Christ and for the betterment of your marriage? Open your heart to God and ask for His help in these areas.

## PRAYER

- Thank God for your spouse and your marriage. Pray that you would not take for granted the love He expresses and extends to you through your spouse. Ask for forgiveness for the times you may have caused pain to each other.
- Ask for God's grace to grow in these four attitudes, even when you experience conflicts in your marriage. Hold on to His promise that the Holy Spirit within you will continue to renew your heart and mind in Christ.
- Pray for the strength and heart to humbly submit to God and His plans for you and your spouse. Pray that you would continue to keep in mind His word that shows us the way we ought to live and think.

# 3 Speaking Love

## WARM-UP

- How did the way you communicate change throughout your relationship when you were in courtship and now in your marriage?
- Share a funny story about miscommunication in your marriage.
- Share a time when you hurt your spouse deeply and were forgiven. How did you feel before and after you were forgiven?

**WORD** . . . <sup>22</sup>to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, <sup>23</sup>and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, <sup>24</sup>and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness. **EPHESIANS 4:22-24**

(Read also **EPHESIANS 4:25-32.**)

Communication is the glue that holds relationships together. Whether you've been married for one month, one year, or fifty years, you have to work on communicating with each other; it does not come naturally.

There is a story of a man who asked for help from his neighbor because his dining table got stuck in the doorway. The neighbor arrived and both of them started pulling and pushing to get the table out but couldn't until they got so tired they stopped. The neighbor said to the man, "This is impossible, we will never get your table inside your house." To which the man replied "Inside? I thought you wanted it outside."

Sometimes communication with your spouse is like that. We think we are saying one thing, but the other person is hearing another. In fact, because of the differing points of view we bring to a relationship, we often hear things that were never said and don't hear the things that were.

It's because men and women are wired differently, especially when it comes to communication. Additionally, our upbringing affects how we react to one another. This extra baggage we bring into marriage frequently results in disagreements and misunderstandings. How do we communicate properly, not just to avoid conflict, but to bring clarity and understanding to one another?

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul describes how, in Christ, we are transformed from the inside out. This includes our way of communicating with each other. Paul describes how we can put off old ways and dispositions and put on new attitudes and actions in how we communicate with each other, to develop a nurturing way of relating that results in greater connection with one another.

## 1 | **Be truthful and honest.**

*Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.*

### **EPHESIANS 4:25**

Paul exhorts us to put off falsehood and speak truthfully. Falsehood can include exaggeration, evading conversation, concealing the truth, and lying. Instead, honesty and openness are essential for effective communication. Speaking truthfully means being open to discussing all of your feelings and thoughts with your spouse, especially the challenging ones. It also entails being prepared to own your mistakes and to listen to your spouse's honest feelings and opinions, even if you disagree with them. When conflict

arises, which “falsehood” tactics does Satan tempt you to use when communicating with your spouse? Why do you think he uses these specifically for you?

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## 2 | Be ready to resolve conflicts.

*<sup>26</sup>Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, <sup>27</sup>and give no opportunity to the devil. **EPHESIANS 4:26-27***

In any relationship, conflicts are inevitable. How we handle those conflicts may cause either greater friction or greater cohesion. Usually, if there are issues that are difficult to resolve, it may lead to anger. The Bible tells us that there are two kinds of anger—righteous anger and unrighteous anger. Righteous anger is a loving response to sinful behavior, while unrighteous anger is an unloving response to issues between you and your partner.

Righteous anger is being angry at an issue that may be detrimental to your loved one. If you care deeply for someone, and they are repeatedly sinning or seriously jeopardizing the relationship, it should make you righteously angry, as long as you deal with it in a loving manner. Be careful that your righteous anger doesn't boil over into sinful anger. Set a time when both of you are ready to deal with it and put it aside. Don't let it fester for days so that you don't let the devil get a foothold in your life. Share a time when you have had righteous anger that turned into unrighteous anger. Do you argue to “win” or to “resolve?” How can you tell the difference?

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### 3 | Be encouraging.

*Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.* **EPHESIANS 4:29**

The apostle Paul commands us to put off unwholesome talk and put on or speak edifying words. Words can be very powerful. They can hurt or heal, build up or tear down. When we are angry, our words are often more hurtful than we intend them to be. We should take our time before we say anything, especially if we are feeling angry or upset. Even when you disagree with your spouse, treat them with respect. This means abstaining from insults, putdowns, name-calling, sarcasm, ridicule, mockery, gossip, slander, and blaming.

Words whose purpose is to wound, not heal, must be put off. We are not just to hold our tongues. We are to replace destructive words with words that build up the other person at his or her point of need. This is not because he or she deserves it, but because our God is gracious, and thus we are to be gracious in our speech. Which type of unwholesome talk do you tend to do when you are in the heat of the argument? How does your spouse respond to that type of talk?

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### 4 | Be kind and compassionate.

*<sup>31</sup>Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. <sup>32</sup>Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.* **EPHESIANS 4:31-32**

Seek to understand before seeking to be understood. Being kind and compassionate means understanding where your spouse is coming from. This will help you develop a deeper connection with your spouse and may also help diffuse a tense situation. We ought to listen with the intent to understand our spouse's perspective, without judgment or criticism. It is a powerful way to build trust and rapport, and to resolve conflict.

Put yourself in your spouse's shoes. Try to see things from their perspective. Be open-minded and non-judgmental. Be willing to put your spouse's needs ahead of your own. Being kind and compassionate will go a long way toward nurturing your relationship. Share a time of conflict when you tried to see your spouse's perspective. What was the result? In what practical way can you show kindness to your spouse?

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## 5 | Be forgiving.

*. . . forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.*

### **EPHESIANS 4:32**

Everyone makes mistakes. Whether we intend to or not, we end up hurting others, especially our spouse. When your spouse hurts you, it's important to be willing to forgive them. Forgiveness doesn't let the issue slide, but it does mean letting go of anger and resentment and allowing God to move in your heart. Satan wants us to remain unforgiving and bitter so that we will continue to build walls between us and our spouse.

Forgiveness is a wonderful invitation for God to be gracious to your spouse, even when you feel that they don't deserve it. This decision to forgive then becomes both demonstrative and transformative. Through this act of forgiveness, we

demonstrate Christlikeness and, at the same time, transform both the one who forgives and the one who receives forgiveness. A sincere apology can lead you to mend broken relationships, strengthen connections through being radically vulnerable, and have a better understanding of the grace of Jesus Christ, who forgave us even when we didn't deserve it. How do you forgive your spouse, especially when you have been deeply wounded? What do you think that looks like in everyday life?

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Healthy communication isn't just about words—it's about connection. By being truthful, encouraging, and ready to resolve conflicts, as well as being compassionate and forgiving, you'll nurture a marriage garden that blooms with love, joy, and understanding. Remember, even amidst life's storms, a well-tended communication garden will weather any challenge and stand stronger than ever.

## APPLICATION

- Share a time when your spouse approached you with “truth in love” and how the conflict was resolved. What was your reaction? What was their reaction?
- How do you personally resolve conflicts and disagreements as a couple? What are some ways you can affirm your spouse even when you disagree? What are some practical things you do to avoid tearing down your spouse?
- Which of the aspects of healthy communication do you and your spouse need to grow more in? What practical steps can you take to grow in this aspect?

## PRAYER

- Pray for wisdom and courage to speak truthfully in love when discussing issues that need to be brought up.
- Pray for grace to speak encouragement rather than deflating words to your spouse and to your marriage.
- Pray for greater understanding and empathy toward your spouse to understand them better.

# 4 Money Matters

## WARM-UP

- What has been your biggest purchase as a married couple?
- When it comes to money matters, who between you and your spouse is inclined to save and who is inclined to spend?
- What are some of your financial goals as a couple?

**WORD** *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

**GENESIS 2:24**

(Read also **EPHESIANS 4:25**, **PROVERBS 24:3–4**, and **PHILIPPIANS 4:19**.)

One of the causes of conflicts in marriage is the managing and handling of finances. Most people claim that money is one of the primary causes of separation. This is why it is important for couples to learn how to navigate this with wisdom. God calls us to be good stewards of the resources He has blessed us with, and this is also true in marriage, as couples journey through life together. Today, we will look at some essential biblical principles on managing finances in marriage.

## 1 | Maintain unity.

*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* **GENESIS 2:24**

Marriage is a call to unity between the husband and the wife. This unity also extends to all financial matters. This includes areas such as earning money, managing the family budget, spending habits, and avoiding debt. It is important to be able to communicate openly and to work on managing finances together. Couples should discuss financial decisions, set budgets, and make financial plans together. Agree on important points on how you can achieve unity on your financial decisions. In terms of your finances, what strategies do you think would work best for you and your partner to improve the unity in your marriage?

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## 2 | Value honesty and transparency.

*Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members of one another.*

**EPHESIANS 4:25**

An important aspect in managing finances is honesty and transparency. As God has called us to speak the truth with others, this command is more important to follow in our marriages. Secrets, especially in the area of money, have no place in marriages.

Be open with each other about your financial situations, debts, and spending habits. Communicate and agree together. Effective communication is crucial in both marriage and financial matters. Whether in simple matters

or serious ones, it would be a good practice to have open communication with each other. What are some steps you can take to foster honesty and transparency in your relationship?

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### 3 | Seek God's wisdom.

*<sup>3</sup>By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; <sup>4</sup>by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.* **PROVERBS 24:3-4**

Seeking God's wisdom and guidance is foundational in both marriage and finances. When we seek God's wisdom, we realize that the finances given to us by God is something He entrusts to us and calls us to steward it properly. Planning as a couple is a wise practice done in managing finances. It is good to have dreams and visions for the future for your family, but it must be accompanied by a good plan. Proverbs 14:15 tells us that the *prudent gives thought to his steps*. Couples should have financial goals and work together to plan for their future, including saving for emergencies, retirement, and other needs. Our ultimate realization as we have our financial goals is understanding that God entrusted us with not just money, but wealth, riches, and prosperity. What is God teaching you in your current season in your marriage regarding the area of finances?

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## 4 | Trust God as your provider.

*And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. PHILIPPIANS 4:19*

Money becomes an issue when we don't see God as the source of provision and prosperity in our household. Philippians 4:19 reminds us that God supplies *every need* of ours. We can trust God as the source of our wealth because we know who He is. We can grow together as a couple in our trust and faith in God, that He is our abundant source. As we understand this truth, together we can honor God with our finances. We also understand that one purpose of our wealth is not just for our own benefit, but God can use us to be a blessing to other people. Are you trusting God as your ultimate provider? What can you do to grow your trust in God?

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### APPLICATION

- How can you maintain and grow the unity you have with your partner?
- Discuss with your husband/wife some areas you need to open up to build transparency and honesty.
- What is one financial goal you have as a couple? How can you grow in your trust in God to accomplish this goal?

## PRAYER

- Ask God to strengthen your relationship with Him and with your spouse in the area of unity, honesty, and transparency, especially as you handle your finances.
- Pray that you would continue trusting in God as your source of provision. Ask God for forgiveness if there are things you are holding on to instead of His abundant grace.
- Pray for God's plans and will for your family's financial resources. Ask God to enable you to become a channel of blessing towards other people as He gives you and your spouse wisdom to steward His wealth.

# 5 An Unbreakable Bond

## WARM-UP

- How do you usually show love to your spouse? In what ways do you want to receive love from your spouse?
- What do you use to hold things together? Do you prefer using a loose item, a binder, or an adhesive? Why?
- What are some things that you can't leave the house without? How important are they to you?

**WORD** *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

**GENESIS 2:24**

(Read also **1 CORINTHIANS 7:3-5**.)

Intimacy in marriage is a deep and meaningful connection between a husband and wife. It encompasses physical, emotional, relational, and most importantly, spiritual intimacy. As the Bible defines marriage as two people who have *become one flesh*, intimacy is an important part of the marriage union. A big aspect of intimacy is physical or sexual intimacy. As husband and wife, how should we view sexual intimacy in our marriages?

## 1 | Sexual intimacy in marriage is God's idea.

*"...<sup>5</sup>and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?'<sup>6</sup>So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."* **MATTHEW 19:5-6**

God is the author of marriage. When He called two people, a man and a woman, together in marriage, he declared them as one flesh. This doesn't just point to the physical

consummation of marriage or sexual intercourse, but being one in spirit. Jesus, when talking to the Pharisees about marriage, quoted this from Genesis 2:24, implying that this is God's original design and intent for marriage. Why do you think God designed marriage to be between a man and woman only?

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## 2 | Sexual intimacy in marriage is pure and undefiled.

*24. . . and they shall become one flesh. 25And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. GENESIS 2:24-25*

In the context of marriage, sexual intimacy is a beautiful gift from God to be enjoyed by both husband and wife. There is no shame in the act. When sexual intimacy is within God's design, it is pure and holy. As husband and wife, we are to keep the marriage bed pure and holy as well (Hebrews 13:4). In Christ, we have all been made new. Let us continue to live according to God's way and not let any impure act or any sin (pornography, sexual immorality, adultery) defile our marriages. How does purity in marriage reflect God's nature?

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## 3 | Sexual intimacy involves our entire being.

*28In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church . . . EPHESIANS 5:28-29*

The sexual union between husband and wife is designed and ordained by God, therefore it is holy and pure. One flesh

refers to the personal union of a man and woman at all levels of their lives. Sex is a uniting act.

The Message translation of 1 Corinthians 6:16 states it best: *“There’s more to sex than mere skin on skin. Sex is as much spiritual mystery as physical fact. As written in Scripture, ‘The two become one.’* Sexual intimacy involves our bodies, emotions, minds, soul, and spirit. Sex is God’s way for a man and a woman joined together in marriage to say to one another, ‘I belong completely, permanently, and exclusively to you.’ If wholeness is what’s found in sex within marriage, how do you think premarital sex affects a person?

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#### 4 | Sexual intimacy strengthens the bond of marriage.

*Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.* **GENESIS 2:24**

Marriage is a union between two people. Sex and intimacy strengthens that union. It is like a superglue that bonds things together. They form something completely new. Intimacy is not about self-actualization but is meant to be about bringing pleasure and love to your spouse (1 Corinthians 7:3–5). God designed the physical act of sexual intimacy to strengthen the marriage bond. How have you experienced this in your own marriage? How does Proverbs 5:18–19 illustrate sexual intimacy within marriage?

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*And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”* **GENESIS 1:28**

God created and designed marriage and sexual intimacy. Just as how God told Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply, bringing Him glory in everything, sexual intimacy within the boundaries of marriage glorifies God.

## APPLICATION

- How is this lesson helping you have a healthy mindset and perspective about sex in marriage?
- Are you comfortable discussing sexual intimacy with your spouse? How will the lesson today open up such conversations to strengthen your relationship?
- In light of what we've learned today, what are some ways that you can maintain a healthy and vibrant sexual relationship with your spouse?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for the gift of sexual intimacy in your marriage that helps you enjoy and strengthen your relationship.
- Ask God for grace and a healthy mindset to keep your marriage and intimacy with your spouse pure and holy. As necessary, humbly repent and seek God's forgiveness for the ways you may have deviated from His design for sex and marriage.
- Pray that as you follow Christ and live by the Spirit, may He continue to strengthen your marriage and help you enhance and enjoy your relationship with your spouse.

## 6 In-Laws, Not Outlaws

### WARM-UP

- Are you fond of keeping things from your childhood? What is your reasoning for keeping or getting rid of these things?
- What are some of your family traditions? How important are they to you?
- What would you like your family to be known for (e.g., an adventurous family, a generous family)? Why?

**WORD** *Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.*

**GENESIS 2:24**

Marriage redefines the relationships of both husband and wife in regards to their allegiance, devotion, affection, intimacy, and priorities. This is summarized by the principle of leaving and cleaving as found in the passage above—*they shall become one flesh*.

Yet when you marry, you also become part of another family with its own set of expectations. Understanding the rich tapestry of Asian cultures, where family is at the heart of our identity, dealing with in-laws and extended family is a delicate balancing act that requires us to draw upon both cultural wisdom and timeless biblical truths. How do you navigate starting your own family through “leaving and cleaving” but also recognize and respect the expectations of extended family within reason? The following are three biblical principles applied to our local context that can help guide us through the delicate issues concerning extended family.

## 1 | **Paggalang: Give honor and respect.**

*<sup>2</sup>“Honor your father and mother” (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup>“that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land.”* **EPHESIANS 6:2-3**

In Asian cultures, honoring and respecting elders is deeply ingrained. Similarly, the Bible emphasizes the commandment to honor parents. As we also show this respect to our in-laws and extended family, we demonstrate humility and recognize the value of their wisdom and experiences.

While seeking guidance from elders is wise, remember that you and your spouse are a team. Practice open communication with your partner to ensure that decisions are made together. Set healthy boundaries, appreciating the wisdom of your in-laws while asserting your independence and unity as a couple.

Letting in-laws split, manipulate, or control you, or letting them have the final say in your marriage isn't showing love or respect. Sometimes, the most honorable response is to diplomatically but firmly say, “No.” Have both of you agreed on a set of healthy boundaries with regards to your extended family? Share them with the group and the challenges you encountered as you set them in your marriage.

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## 2 | **Obligasyon: Exercise responsibility.**

*But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.* **1 TIMOTHY 5:8**

In Filipino culture, *obligasyon* speaks of the sense of responsibility and gratitude we owe to those who have helped us. As Christians, we are called to show appreciation to our parents and extended family. By embracing this spirit of responsibility and gratitude, we can nurture positive relationships with in-laws and extended family, acknowledging their role in shaping our lives.

Usually, the expectation is that when you start working, you now have to help put your siblings through school or take care of your parents as they retire. However, it's crucial to recognize when this morphs into an unhealthy burden. A false sense of responsibility can strain marriages and hinder personal growth.

You and your spouse can discuss the ways in which you can help your extended family, especially if they are in dire need. It should not be dictated by your in-laws. This is an expression of a sense of obligation and gratitude within the boundaries the couple has set. This will prevent harm and abuse that may lead to resentment toward your spouse and your in-laws. Try to help as much as you can, as you have been directed by the Lord and in agreement with one another. How did you express a sense of responsibility or obligation to your parents or in-laws?

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### **3 | *Pakikisama*: Practice harmony and camaraderie.**

*Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.*

**ROMANS 12:16**

In an extended family, there's often an array of personalities, preferences, and roles. Rather than assuming hierarchical

positions, consider every member's unique strengths and contributions. The Bible encourages us to *live in harmony* with others, demonstrating humility and a willingness to relate to all people. Embrace each member's uniqueness as you would cherish various flavors coming together for a delicious feast. Humility helps us prioritize relationships over minor irritations.

Through *pakikisama*, we can foster an atmosphere of inclusivity, understanding, camaraderie, and love within the extended family circle. At the same time, be mindful that you are also setting your own values, culture, and identity as a family.

By embracing harmony, sharing joys and sorrows, avoiding unnecessary drama, and pursuing common ground, we create an environment where bonds strengthen and love flourishes. Let's remember that every family member is a unique ingredient, contributing to the vibrant tapestry of our shared lives. How can you actively seek harmony instead of rivalry within your extended family? Reflect on a time when your preconceived notions hindered unity. How could humility have changed the situation?

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By recognizing the importance of cultural values while establishing independence, couples can honor their families of origin while prioritizing their marriage. The idea of leaving and cleaving allows couples to build a new family identity rooted in love, unity, and forgiveness. This creates a legacy of strong and thriving relationships for generations to come. As Asian couples navigate this journey, they can find joy in the divine design of marriage and the blessings of leaving and cleaving in God's perfect plan.

## APPLICATION

- What is your greatest issue with your in-laws and why? How will the principles you learned today help you navigate this?
- Which one of the principles discussed today do you as a couple need to grow in? What practical steps can you take in light of this?
- Were there times you felt that relating with your family of origin or extended family became a burden more than joy in doing so? How did you resolve this?

## PRAYER

- Thank God for the families you came from and your extended family. Pray for wisdom on setting the right boundaries that will honor them while maintaining your own family identity and values.
- Pray to identify and lift false burdens that have been placed on you by your extended family. Pray for grace to communicate it properly. As necessary, release forgiveness upon them and seek God's grace to help restore your relationships with them.
- Pray for greater connection to the extended family so that you can be a salt and light to them. Pray for your marriage to be a testimony of God's grace and love to your family.

<sup>5</sup>“... Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?” <sup>6</sup>So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” **MATTHEW 19:5-6**

Marriage is God's idea, where He brings two individuals together in love and companionship. He designed marriages to be a union between a man and a woman that will accomplish His kingdom's purpose. In this relationship, the two become one and make a commitment to be faithful in loving one another. But because of sin, man veered away from God's original design, resulting in conflicts in all kinds of relationships, including marriage.

***To Have and to Hold*** is a material where we explore key biblical teachings on conflict resolution in marriage, highlighting the importance of placing God at the center of the relationship as well as communication, forgiveness, and selflessness. May this material help deepen our faith and provide fresh perspectives to help us navigate through challenges in a way that honors God and strengthens our marriages. May it help cultivate a love rooted in faith that will point people to God and bring marriages back to His original design.

## TOPICS

- Conflict is Inevitable
- Together through it All
- Speaking Love
- Money Matters
- An Unbreakable Bond
- In-Laws, Not Outlaws



**EVERY NATION**  
PRODUCTIONS