

# Cultivating Your Marriage Through Heart Change and New Habits

Dr. Tim Lane

# Session 1

## Grounding Your Marriage in Grace

Ephesians 4:1-16

C. S. Lewis  
Putting First Things First

*When I have learnt to love God better than my earthly dearest, I shall love my earthly dearest better than I do now. In so far as I learn to love my earthly dearest at the expense of God and instead of God, I shall be moving towards the state in which I shall not love my earthly dearest at all. When first things are put first, second things are not suppressed but increased.*

# Ephesians 4:1-6

## Building Unity

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely **humble** and **gentle**; be **patient, bearing with one another in love**. <sup>3</sup> Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as you were called to **one** hope when you were called; <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 4:7-17

## Embracing Diversity

<sup>7</sup> But to **each one** of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.

<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be **built up** <sup>13</sup> until we all **reach** unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become **mature**, attaining to the **whole measure of the fullness** of Christ.

<sup>14</sup> Then we will **no longer be infants**, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will **grow to become in every respect the mature body** of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, **grows and builds itself up** in love, as each part does its work.

1. Why Is Your  
Marriage So  
Important?

**Ephesians 4:7-16**



## 2. What Character Qualities Will Foster a Redemptive Marriage? (Ephesians 4:2)

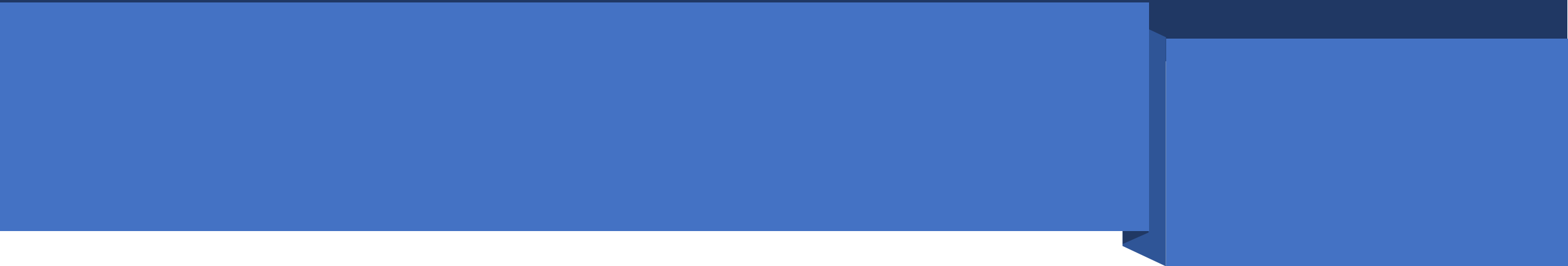
- Humility
- Gentleness
- Patience
- Forbearance

3. Who Can  
Enable Us  
to Foster a  
Redemptive  
Marriage?

Ephesians 4:2, 4-6



# Understanding Your Marriage Relationship

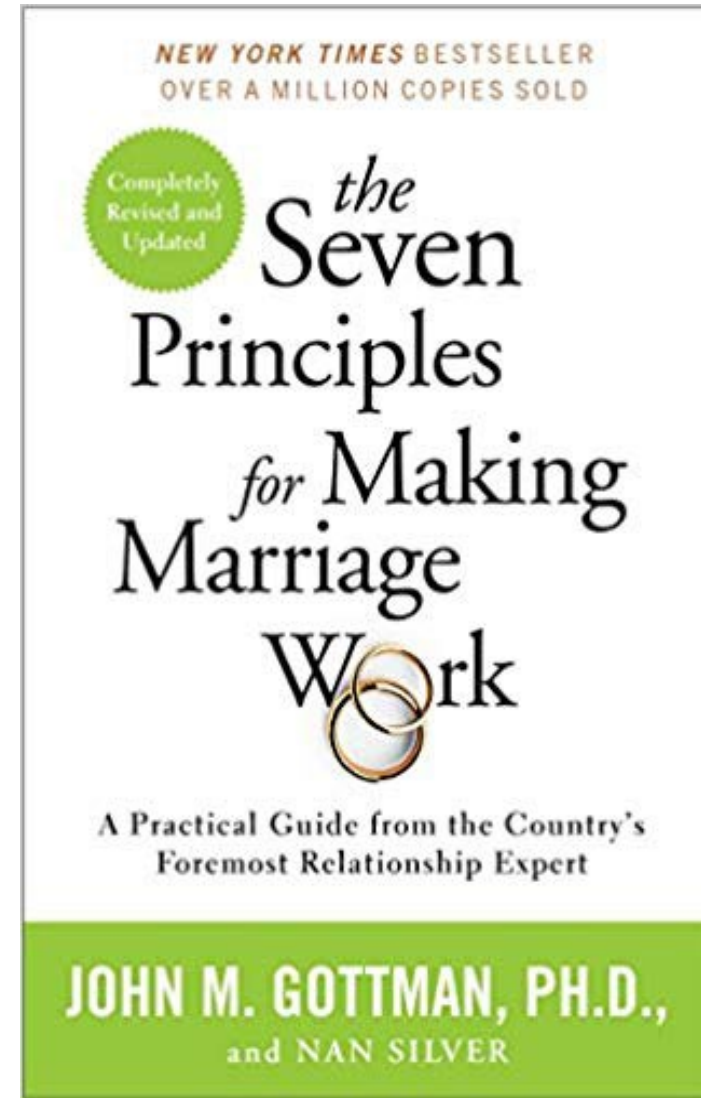


# Ephesians 4:1-16

## Two Important Dynamics:

1. Build Unity vv. 1-6
2. Embrace Diversity vv. 7-16

Understanding  
the Research of  
John Gottman To  
Help Build Unity  
and Embrace  
Diversity





**The Sound  
Relationship  
House**

**Create  
Shared Meaning**

**Make Life Dreams  
Come True**

**Manage Conflict**

- Accept Your Partner's Influence
- Dialogue About Problems
- Practice Self-Soothing

**The Positive Perspective**

**Turn Towards Instead of Away**

**Share Fondness and Admiration**

**Build Love Maps**

- Know One Another's World

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# Building Unity or Friendship

- **Build Love Maps**  
How well do you know your partner's inner psychological world, his or her history, worries, stresses, joys, and hopes?
- **Share Fondness and Admiration**  
The antidote for contempt, this level focuses on the amount of affection and respect within a relationship. (To strengthen fondness and admiration, express appreciation and respect.)
- **Turn Towards Instead of Away**  
State your needs, be aware of bids for connection and respond to (turn towards) them. The small moments of everyday life are actually the building blocks of relationship.
- **The Positive Perspective**  
The presence of a positive approach to problem-solving and the success of repair attempts.

# Embrace Diversity or Manage Conflict

- **Manage Conflict**  
We say “manage” conflict rather than “resolve” conflict, because relationship conflict is natural and has functional, positive aspects. Understand that there is a critical difference in handling perpetual problems and solvable problems.
- **Make Life Dreams Come True**  
Create an atmosphere that encourages each person to talk honestly about his or her hopes, values, convictions and aspirations.
- **Create Shared Meaning**  
Understand important visions, narratives, and metaphors about your relationship.

# The Two Pillars

- **Trust**

This is the state that occurs when a person knows that his or her partner acts and thinks to maximize that person's best interests and benefits, not just the partner's own interests and benefits. In other words, this means, "my partner has my back and is there for me."

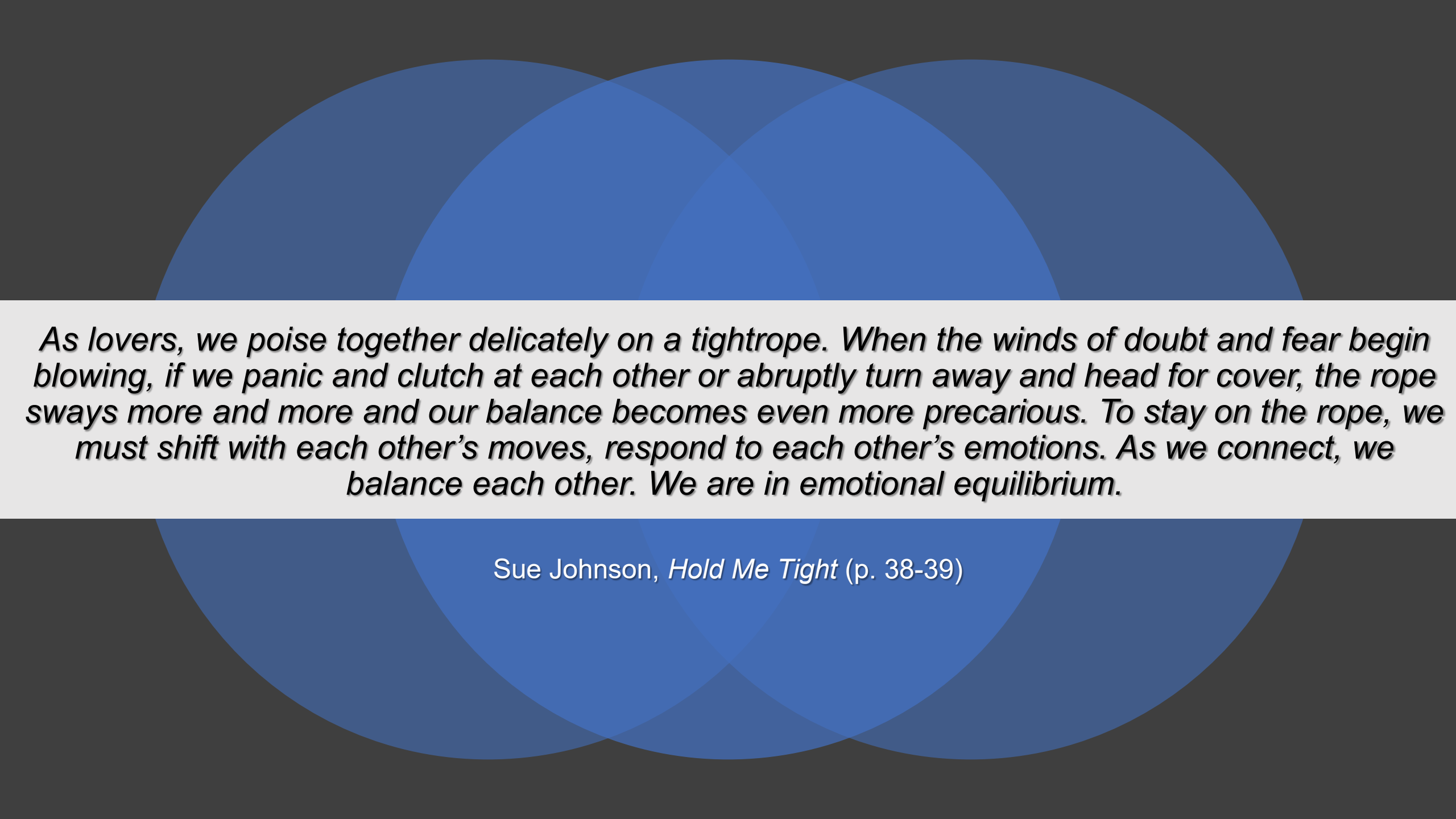
- **Commitment**

This means believing (and acting on the belief) that your relationship with this person is completely your lifelong journey, for better or for worse (meaning that if it gets worse you will both work to improve it). It implies cherishing your partner's positive qualities and nurturing gratitude by comparing the partner favorably with real or imagined others, rather than trashing the partner by magnifying negative qualities, and nurturing resentment by comparing unfavorably with real or imagined others.

When marriages fail, it is not increasing conflict that is the cause. It is decreasing affection and emotional responsiveness....Indeed, the lack of emotional responsiveness rather than the level of conflict is the best predictor of how solid a marriage will be five years into it. The demise of marriages begins with a growing absence of responsive intimate interactions. The conflict comes later.

Sue Johnson, *Hold Me Tight*





*As lovers, we poise together delicately on a tightrope. When the winds of doubt and fear begin blowing, if we panic and clutch at each other or abruptly turn away and head for cover, the rope sways more and more and our balance becomes even more precarious. To stay on the rope, we must shift with each other's moves, respond to each other's emotions. As we connect, we balance each other. We are in emotional equilibrium.*

Sue Johnson, *Hold Me Tight* (p. 38-39)



# Marriage Application

## Praying Together

*Take time to pray together. In light of his grace for you in Christ, ask God to give you the energy and commitment to grow in humility, gentleness, patience, and forbearing love.*

# Three Critical Gospel Virtues That Enable Your Marriage to Flourish

The Virtue of Good Communication



The Virtue of Good Conflict



The Virtue of Practicing Forgiveness

# Session 2

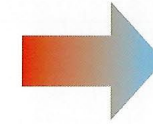
## Cultivating the Virtue of Good Communication

Ephesians 4:17-32

These Four  
Behaviors/Attitudes  
Fuel Conflict and  
Destroy Friendship

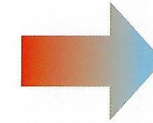
## Stop the Four Horsemen with their Antidotes

**CRITICISM**



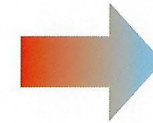
Use Gentle  
Start Up

**DEFENSIVENESS**



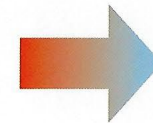
Take  
Responsibility

**CONTEMPT**



Describe Your Own  
Feelings and Needs  
*Don't Describe Your Partner*

**STONEWALLING**



Do Physiological  
Self-Soothing

# The Four Horsemen Descriptions

## The Second Sign: **2** The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse

Negative communication patterns, if allowed to run rampant, are predictors of relationship failure.

### First Horseman

#### **CRITICISM**

This horseman involves bringing up an issue in a way that focuses on your partner's character or personality flaws rather than on what you would like him or her to do differently. Criticism implies that there is something wrong with your partner, that he or she is defective. This may include blame, name-calling, or a general character assassination.

### Second Horseman

#### **CONTEMPT**

A form of disrespect that arises from a sense of superiority over your partner. Sarcasm, cynicism, eye-rolling, name-calling, mockery, and hostile humor are types of contempt. Contempt is fueled by long-simmering negative thoughts about your partner and conveys disgust. It is the most destructive of the Four Horsemen and strongest predictor of relationship dissatisfaction and demise.

### Third Horseman

#### **DEFENSIVENESS**

Defensiveness is an attempt to protect one's self, to defend one's innocence, or to ward off a perceived attack. It is really a way of blaming the partner. You're saying, in effect, "The problem isn't me, it's you." Defensiveness escalates the conflict, which is why it's so destructive. There are two ways to be defensive: to counter-attack or to whine (playing the "innocent victim").

### Fourth Horseman

#### **STONEWALLING**

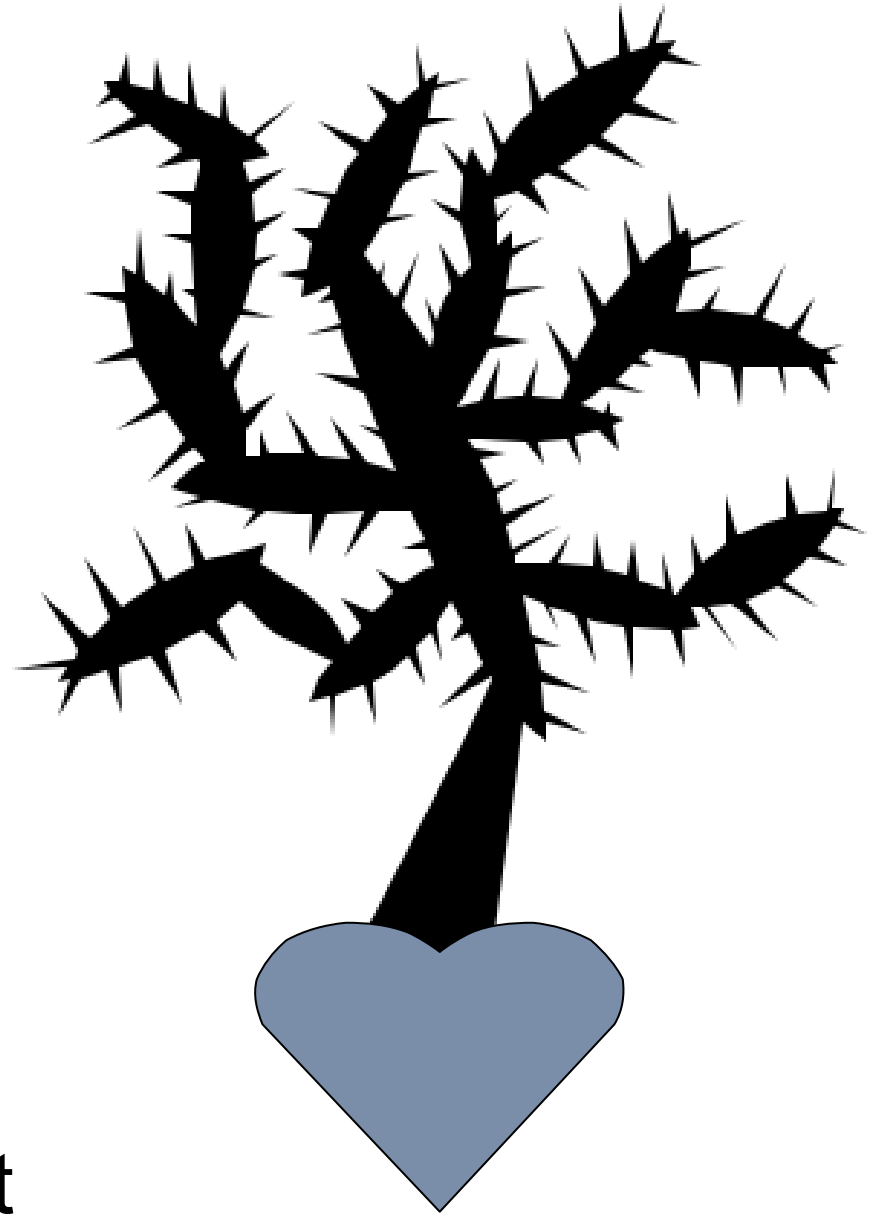
The ultimate "turning away" response, stonewalling is when one partner tunes out or completely disengages from the other partner in an effort to avoid or end conflict.

# Hurtful Speech Grows Out of the Old Heart

Ephesians 4:17-19

v. 19  
Bad fruit

vv. 17-18  
Old Heart



# Ephesians 4:17-19

<sup>17</sup> So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. <sup>18</sup> They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. <sup>19</sup> Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.



# Helpful Speech Grows Out of a New Heart

Ephesians 4:20-32

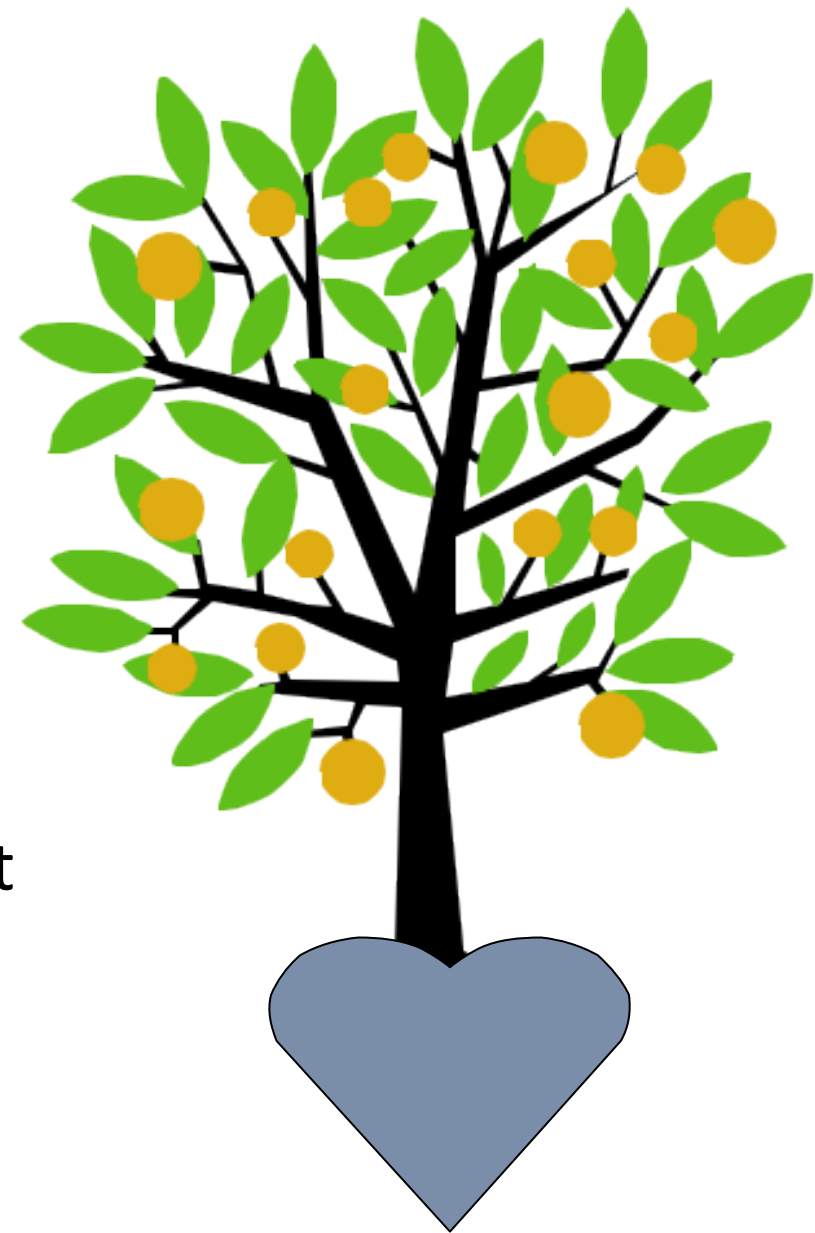
vv. 25-32  
Specific types  
of good fruit



v. 24  
General  
description of fruit



vv. 20-23  
New Heart



## Ephesians 4:20-32

<sup>20</sup> That, however, is not the way of life you learned <sup>21</sup> when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. <sup>22</sup> You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; <sup>23</sup> to be made new in the attitude of your minds; <sup>24</sup> and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

<sup>25</sup> Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. <sup>26</sup> "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil a foothold. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need.

<sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. <sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

# 5 Characteristics of Helpful Speech

The slide features a dark blue background. At the bottom, there are two horizontal blue bars. The first bar is a solid blue rectangle. The second bar is a blue rectangle that starts to the right of the first bar and has a 3D effect, appearing to be a tab or a piece of paper that is slightly offset and has a shadow on its left side.

# 1. Be Honest

Ephesians  
4:25

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## Some common errors:

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a. Saying one thing and meaning another

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b. Gossip

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c. Flattery

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d. Criticism

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e. Careless words

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f. Silence



## 2. Keep Your Accounts Current

Ephesians  
4:26-27

- Holding grudges

### 3. Attack the Problem and Not the Person

Ephesians  
4:29

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a. Exaggeration

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b. Labeling people

---

c. Low blows

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d. Assuming motives

# 4. Put Off Anger

Ephesians 4:31

# 5. Speak Words of Confession & Forgiveness

Ephesians 4:32



## The Healing of Our Speech: James 3:9-12

<sup>9</sup> With the tongue **we praise** our Lord and Father, and with it **we curse** human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. <sup>10</sup> **Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.** My brothers and sisters, this should not be. <sup>11</sup> Can both fresh water and salt-water flow from the same spring? <sup>12</sup> My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

“Yahweh”  
U2

*Take this mouth  
So quick to criticize  
Take this mouth  
Give it a kiss*

# 2 Habits to Cultivate the Habit of Good Communication

## 1. Learn to Turn a Criticism into a Complaint

a. *When you do* \_\_\_\_\_

b. *It makes me feel* \_\_\_\_\_

c. *It would help me if you would*  
\_\_\_\_\_.

## 2. Nurture Your Fondness and Admiration

Relationship Application:

“I appreciate you because...”

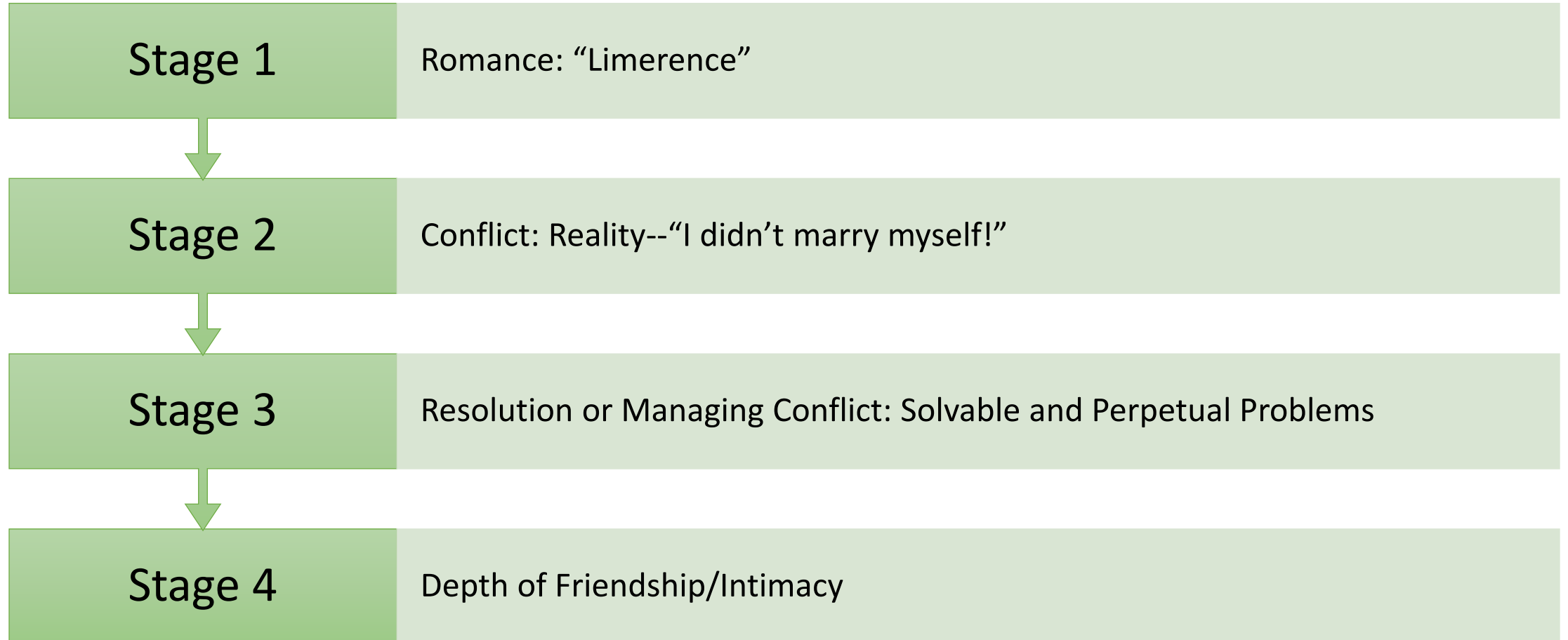
*List 25 things that you appreciate about your spouse and share 3-4 of them with them.*

# Session 3

## Cultivating the Virtue of Good Conflict

James 4:1-12

# Stages of a Marriage



Conflict

*Fighting For Your  
Marriage*

James 4:1-12



# Conflict and Change

**1. *The Situation:*** What is going on? The occasion not the cause.

**2. *The Response and Consequences:*** What did you do? What motivated the response?

**3. *The Change Dynamic:*** The grace of Christ and daily faith and repentance.

**4. *A New Response and Consequences:*** What did you do? What motivated this response?

# Situation, Response and Motivation

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Normal Daily Life is Where the Battle is Won or Lost

James 4:1-3

*What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but you don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.*



# The Change Dynamic

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God's Grace Rescues Us From Ourselves

James 4:4-10

*You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you think that Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us tends toward envy, but he gives us more Grace? That is why Scripture says, 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*

# A New Response

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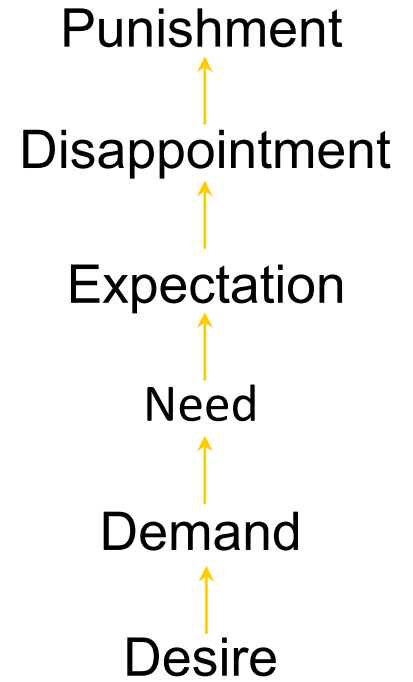
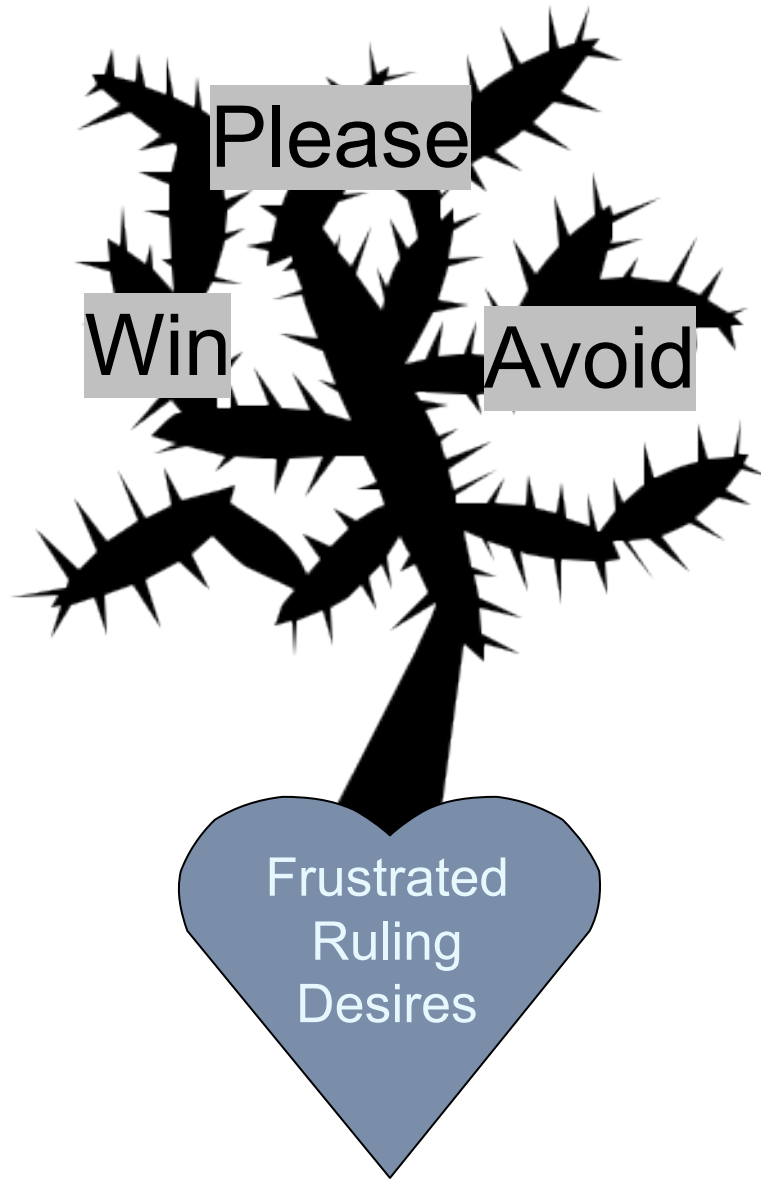
God's Grace Rescues Others from Us

James 4:11-12

*Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbor?*

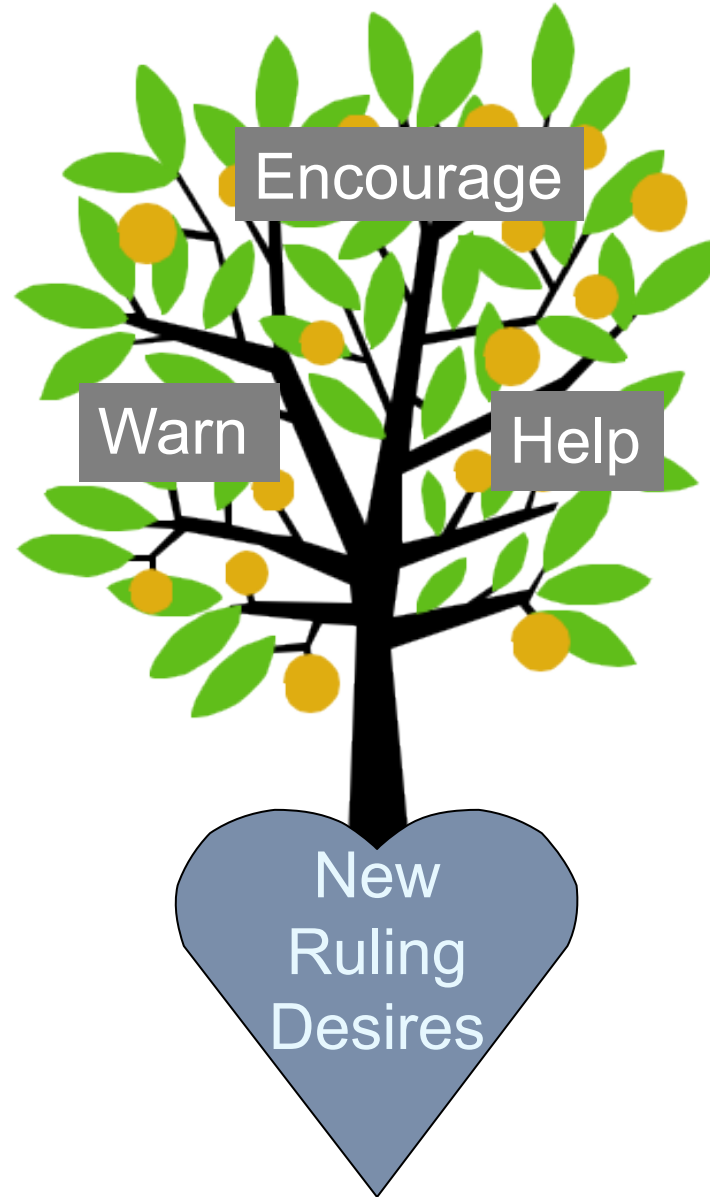
Ungodly  
Conflict:

James  
4:1-3,  
11-12



Godly  
Conflict:

James  
4:4-10



4. Godly Conflict  
I Thess. 5:14

3. Other Awareness  
James 4:11-12

2. Gospel Awareness  
James 4:4-10

1. Self Awareness  
James 4:1-3

I Thessalonians  
5:14

And we urge you, brothers and sisters, **warn** those who are idle and disruptive, **encourage** the disheartened, **help** the weak, be patient with everyone.



## Exercise

1. Dreams Within Conflict
2. Art of Compromise

# Dreams within Conflict

*Work on a Gridlocked  
or Perpetual Problem:*

*Help Your Partner Understand  
the Underlying Dreams, History,  
Beliefs or Values in Your Position  
on This Issue.*

## SPEAKER'S JOB

Your task is to honestly talk about your feelings and beliefs about your position on this issue. Explore what this position means to you, what the **dream** might be behind your position, tell the story of the source of this dream or this belief: where it comes from and what it symbolizes. You must be clear and honest. What do you really want on this issue? Why is it important to you? Try to make your partner understand.

*Don't argue for nor try to persuade your partner of your point of view; just explain how you see things. Tell your partner your thoughts and feelings about your position on this issue.*

You may want to look over the list on the following page for a sample of dreams that people sometimes have (or have lost) that could underlie the position you have taken on this issue.

## LISTENER'S JOB

**Your job here is to make your partner feel SAFE enough to tell you what's behind their position on the issue: their belief, dream or story.** Toward this end, you will *LISTEN*, the way a friend would listen. **Ask the questions** that are listed on the next page as sample questions for the dream catcher which draw out your partner and his or her point of view. You can contribute to this climate if you **suspend judgment** and don't act like a judge but like someone who wants to hear your partner's story, and the dream behind the story. Just hear it and don't judge it.

**Don't try to solve the problem.** It is much too soon for that. You first need to end the opposition of dreams and become one another's friend instead of one another's foe. Try to understand the meaning of your partner's dream. Be interested.

*It is important to realize that the goal is not to solve these problems. The goal is to move from gridlock to dialogue, and to understand, in depth, their partner's position.*

**Do not argue for your point of view!  
Just listen and ask questions.**

### SAMPLE QUESTIONS for the Dream Catcher *(the Listener):*

1. Do you have any core beliefs, ethics or values that are part of your position on this issue?
2. Is there a story behind this for you, or does this relate to your background or childhood history in some way?
3. Tell me why this is so important to you.
4. What feelings do you have about this issue?
5. What would be your ideal dream here?
6. Is there a deeper purpose or goal in this for you?
7. What do you wish for?
8. What do you need?
9. Is there a fear or disaster scenario in not having this dream honored?

#### ***The bottom line about dreams is this:***

You don't want to have the kind of relationship in which you win and are influential in the relationship but wind up crushing your partner's dream. You want the kind of relationship in which each of you support one another's dreams. If your dreams connect, so much the better.

### SAMPLE DREAMS for the Dream Speaker

1. A sense of freedom
2. The experience of peace
3. Unity with nature
4. Exploring who I am
5. Adventure
6. A spiritual journey
7. Justice
8. Honor
9. Unity with my past
10. Healing
11. Knowing my family
12. Becoming all I can be
13. Having a sense of power
14. Dealing with my aging
15. Exploring a creative side of myself
16. Becoming more powerful
17. Getting over past hurts
18. Becoming more competent
19. Asking God for forgiveness
20. Exploring an old part of myself I have lost
21. Getting over a personal hang up
22. Having a sense of order
23. Being able to be productive
24. A place and a time to just "be"
25. Being able to truly relax
26. Reflecting on my life
27. Getting my priorities in order
28. Finishing something important
29. Exploring the physical side of myself
30. Being able to compete and win
31. Travel
32. Quietness
33. Atonement
34. Building something important
35. Ending a chapter of my life
36. Saying goodbye to something
37. Love

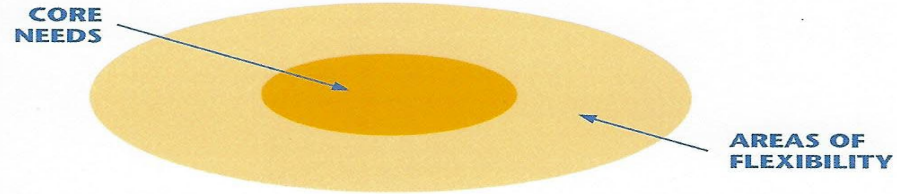


## FEELING WORDS

<b>MAD</b>		<b>SAD</b>		<b>GLAD</b>		<b>AFRAID</b>		<b>CONFUSED</b>		<b>ASHAMED</b>		<b>LONELY</b>	
Bothered	A Little	Down	A Little	At Ease	A Little	Uneasy	A Little	Curious	A Little	Uncomfortable	A Little	Out of Place	
Ruffled		Blue		Secure		Apprehensive		Uncertain		Awkward		Left Out	
Irritated		Somber		Comfortable		Careful		Ambivalent		Clumsy		Unheeded	
Displeased		Low		Relaxed		Cautious		Doubtful		Self-Conscious		Lonesome	
Annoyed		Glum		Contented		Hesitant		Unsettled		Disconcerted		Disconnected	
Steamed		Lonely		Optimistic		Tense		Hesitant		Chagrined		Remote	
Irked		Disappointed		Satisfied		Anxious		Perplexed		Abashed		Invisible	
Perturbed		Worn Out		Refreshed		Nervous		Puzzled		Embarrassed		Unwelcome	
Frustrated		Melancholy		Stimulated		Edgy		Muddled		Flustered		Cut Off	
Angry		Downhearted		Pleased		Distressed		Distracted		Sorry		Excluded	
Fed Up		Unhappy		Warm		Scared		Flustered		Apologetic		Insignificant	
Disgusted		Dissatisfied		Snug		Frightened		Jumbled		Regretful		Ignored	
Indignant		Gloomy		Happy		Repulsed		Unfocused		Remorseful		Neglected	
Ticked Off		Mournful		Encouraged		Agitated		Fragmented		Guilty		Separated	
Bristling		Grieved		Tickled		Shocked		Dismayed		Disgusted		Removed	
Fuming		Depressed		Proud		Alarmed		Insecure		Belittled		Detached	
Explosive		Lousy		Cheerful		Overwhelmed		Dazed		Humiliated		Isolated	
Enraged		Crushed		Thrilled		Frantic		Bewildered		Violated		Unwanted	
Irate	Defeated	Delighted	Panic Stricken	Lost	Dirty	Rejected							
Incensed	Dejected	Joyful	Horrified	Stunned	Mortified	Deserted							
Burned	Empty	Elated	Petrified	Chaotic	Defiled	Outcast							
Burned Up	Wretched	Exhilarated	Terrified	Torn	Devastated	Abandoned							
Outraged	Despairing	Overjoyed	Numb	Baffled	Degraded	Desolate							
Furious	Devastated	Ecstatic		Dumbfounded		Forsaken							

# The Art of Compromise

**Yield to Win:** Compromise with me like I am someone you love.



**My inflexible area or core need  
on this issue is:**

**My more flexible areas  
on this issue are:**

**Getting to "Yes"**  
Discuss these questions with your partner:

*For issues where a Dreams Within Conflict exercise has not been used:*

- Help me understand why your inflexible area is so important to you.
- What are your core feelings, beliefs, or values about this issue?

*For all compromise issues:*

- Help me understand your flexible areas.
- What do we agree about?
- What are our common goals?
- How might these goals be accomplished?
- How can we reach a temporary compromise?
- What feelings do we have in common?
- How can I help to meet your core needs?

**Our compromise that honors both our needs and dreams is:**

# Session 4

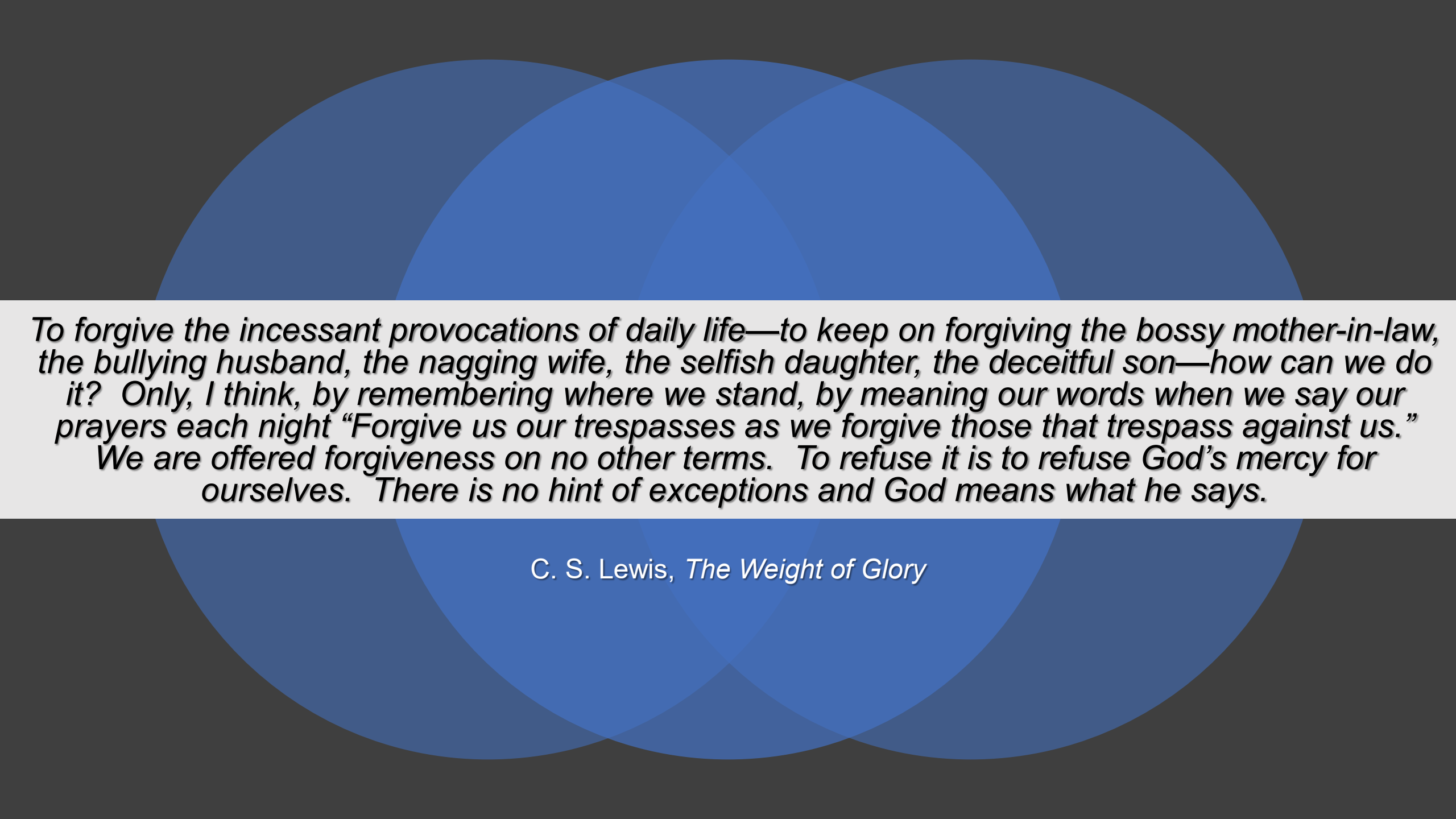
## Cultivating the Virtue of Forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-35

Practicing  
Forgiveness

*Keeping Short Accounts*

Ephesians 4:32  
Matthew 18:21-35



*To forgive the incessant provocations of daily life—to keep on forgiving the bossy mother-in-law, the bullying husband, the nagging wife, the selfish daughter, the deceitful son—how can we do it? Only, I think, by remembering where we stand, by meaning our words when we say our prayers each night “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us.” We are offered forgiveness on no other terms. To refuse it is to refuse God’s mercy for ourselves. There is no hint of exceptions and God means what he says.*

*C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory**

# Matthew 18:21-27

<sup>21</sup> Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?”

<sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

<sup>23</sup> “Therefore, the kingdom of heaven is like a king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. <sup>24</sup> As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand bags of gold was brought to him. <sup>25</sup> Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

<sup>26</sup> “At this the servant fell on his knees before him. ‘Be patient with me,’ he begged, ‘and I will pay back everything.’ <sup>27</sup> The servant’s master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

# Matthew 18:28-35

<sup>28</sup> “But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred silver coins. He grabbed him and began to choke him. ‘Pay back what you owe me!’ he demanded.

<sup>29</sup> “His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it back.’

<sup>30</sup> “But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt. <sup>31</sup> When the other servants saw what had happened, they were outraged and went and told their master everything that had happened.


<sup>32</sup> “Then the master called the servant in. ‘You wicked servant,’ he said, ‘I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to. <sup>33</sup> Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ <sup>34</sup> In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.


<sup>35</sup> “This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

# Matthew 18

- Forgiveness is canceling a debt  
(vv. 27, 32)
- Failure to forgive involves making the other person pay  
(vv. 28, 30)
- Forgiveness is an event and an ongoing process  
(vv. 21-22)



- 
- Failure to forgive turns victims into victimizers (vv. 28, 30)
  - Forgiveness is not peace at all costs (vv. 15-20)
  - Forgiving others is costly (vv.24-27; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13)



*To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket - safe, dark, motionless, airless - it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. The only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.*

C. S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory*

- Forgiveness is First Vertical and Then Horizontal (Mark 11:25; Luke 17:3)
- Forgiveness is Not Forgetting (Jeremiah 31:34)
- The Way You Ask For and Grant Forgiveness is Crucial
- Rebuilding Trust May Take Time
- Granting Forgiveness May Take Time

# Why it is Hard to Forgive

- You don't truly believe that you need to be forgiven.
- You don't think you are forgivable: guilt and shame.
- You are truly a Christian, but the utter shock of his forgiveness of you has grown dull.

- *And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood?*
- *Died he for me, who caused his pain?*
- *For me, who him to death pursued?*
- *Amazing Love!*
- *How can it be that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

*“And Can it Be” – Charles Wesley*

# Application

When was the last time you said these words to someone?

*I was wrong. Will you forgive me?*

When was the last time someone said these words to you?

*I was wrong. Will you forgive me?*

Did you forgive them? What did you say? Describe what it was like? What motivated you to forgive?

When was the last time you chose not to forgive someone? Describe what it was like and what motivated you not to forgive?

# Application

What misunderstandings of forgiveness have you had and how have they hindered your practice of forgiveness?

In light of some of the reasons we fail to forgive, is there one that seems to be most prominent in your own life?

Is there an opportunity, recently, where you need to ask for or grant forgiveness?

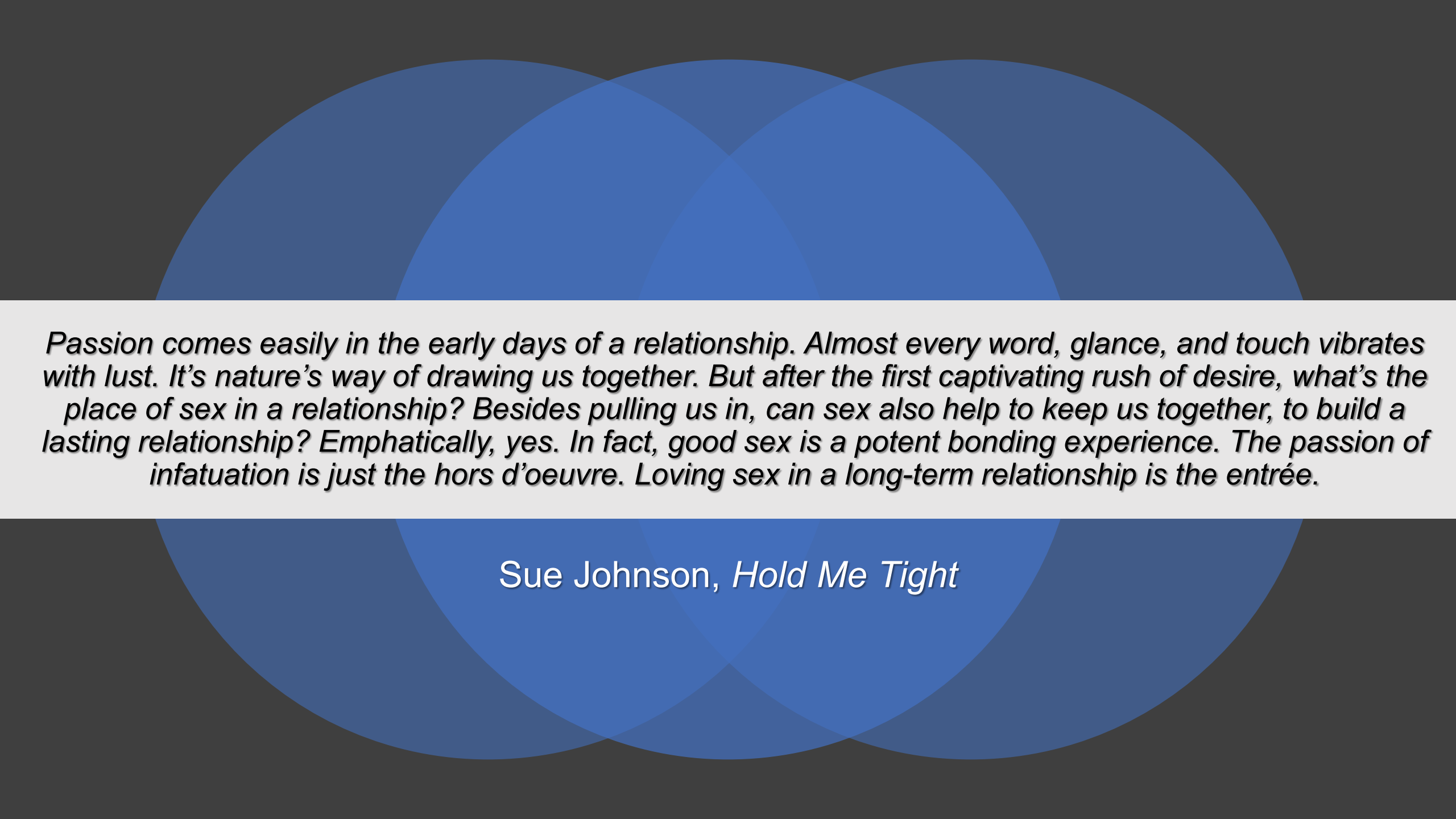
If an un-forgiven heart is an unforgiving heart, what does that say about you and your functional belief in the Gospel?

# Session 5

## Cultivating the Virtue of Intimacy and Sex

Various Passages





*Passion comes easily in the early days of a relationship. Almost every word, glance, and touch vibrates with lust. It's nature's way of drawing us together. But after the first captivating rush of desire, what's the place of sex in a relationship? Besides pulling us in, can sex also help to keep us together, to build a lasting relationship? Emphatically, yes. In fact, good sex is a potent bonding experience. The passion of infatuation is just the hors d'oeuvre. Loving sex in a long-term relationship is the entrée.*

Sue Johnson, *Hold Me Tight*

# Sue Johnson, *Hold Me Tight*

*Good sex, it turns out, is integral though not paramount to happy relationships. Research shows that contented spouses... attribute only 15 to 20 percent of their happiness to a pleasing sex life, but unhappy couples ascribe 50 to 70 percent of their distress to sexual problems. Satisfied partners see sex as just one of many sources of pleasure and intimacy, while despondent partners home in on sex and often view it as the chief source of trouble. Why? Because typically it's the first thing affected when a relationship falters. It's not the true problem, though. Think of sexual distress as the relationship version of the "canary in the coal mine." What's really happening is that a couple is losing connection; the partners don't feel emotionally safe with each other. That in turn leads to slackening desire and less satisfying sex, which leads to less sex and more hurt feelings, which leads to still looser emotional connection, and around it goes. In shorthand: no safe bond, no sex; no sex, no bond ( p. 186-187).*

# Three Kinds of Sex

Sue Johnson, *Hold Me Tight*

## **1. Sealed-off sex:**

The goal is to reduce sexual tension, achieve orgasm, and feel good about our sexual prowess. It happens with those who have never learned to trust and don't want to open up, or who are feeling unsafe with their partners. The focus is on sensation and performance. The bond with the other person is secondary. This kind of impersonal sex is toxic in a love relationship. The partner feels used and objectified rather than valued as a person.

## 2. Solace Sex:

Occurs when we are seeking reassurance that we are valued and desired; the sex act is just a tagalong. The goal is to alleviate our attachment fears. There is more emotional involvement than in Sealed-Off Sex, but the main emotion directing the sexual dance is anxiety. When sex is an antianxiety pill, it cannot be truly erotic.

### **3. Synchrony Sex:**

When emotional openness and responsiveness, tender touch, and erotic exploration all come together. This is the way sex is supposed to be. This is the sex that fulfills, satisfies, and connects. When partners have a secure emotional connection, physical intimacy can retain all of its initial ardor and creativity and then some. Lovers can be tender and playful one moment, fiery and erotic another.



# How Does Scripture Talk About Sex?

- Reproduction - Genesis 1:27-28
- Relationship - "to know" Yada!
- Recreation/Passion - Song of Songs 4:9-15; 5:10-16, Proverbs 5:19
- Covenantal Renewal: Theologically and Physiologically

# *Song of Songs: He Describes His Bride*

4:9-15

*You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride; you have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes, with one jewel of your necklace. <sup>10</sup>How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much more pleasing is your love than wine, and the fragrance of your perfume more than any spice! <sup>11</sup>Your lips drop sweetness as the honeycomb, my bride; milk and honey are under your tongue. The fragrance of your garments is like the fragrance of Lebanon. <sup>12</sup>You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain. <sup>13</sup>Your plants are an orchard of pomegranates with choice fruits, with henna and nard, <sup>14</sup>nard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with every kind of incense tree, with myrrh and aloes and all the finest spices. <sup>15</sup>You are a garden fountain, a well of flowing water streaming down from Lebanon.*

# *Song of Songs: She Describes Her Husband*

## **5:10-16**

*<sup>10</sup>My beloved is radiant and ruddy, outstanding among ten thousand. <sup>11</sup>His head is purest gold; his hair is wavy and black as a raven. <sup>12</sup>His eyes are like doves by the water streams, washed in milk, mounted like jewels. <sup>13</sup>His cheeks are like beds of spice yielding perfume. His lips are like lilies dripping with myrrh. <sup>14</sup>His arms are rods of gold set with topaz. His body is like polished ivory decorated with lapis lazuli. <sup>15</sup>His legs are pillars of marble set on bases of pure gold. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as its cedars. <sup>16</sup>His mouth is sweetness itself; he is altogether lovely. This is my beloved, this is my friend, daughters of Jerusalem.*



# I Corinthians 7:1-7

Now for the matters you wrote about: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”<sup>2</sup> But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband.<sup>3</sup> The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.<sup>4</sup> The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.<sup>5</sup> Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.<sup>6</sup> I say this as a concession, not as a command.<sup>7</sup> I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

# I Corinthians 7:1-7

- Sex is holy and good (vv. 1-2)
- Pleasure is good (vv. 1-2)
- Pleasure is “other-directed” (v. 3)
- Sex should be regular and continuous (vv. 3-5)

# I Corinthians 7:1-7

- Frequency is determined by satisfaction principle vv. 3-4
- Either spouse can initiate v. 4
- Sexual bargaining is forbidden v. 5

# Tim Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*

*Here, at a time in which women were legally considered the possession of their husbands, Paul makes the revolutionary claim that “the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.” This was a major blow to the traditional double standard—namely, that men were expected and allowed to have multiple sexual partners but if a woman did she was despised. Paired with the previous statement, that the wife’s body also belongs to her husband, Paul was teaching that each partner, male and female, had the right to mutual sexual relations. Nothing like this had ever been said before.*

# Continued.....

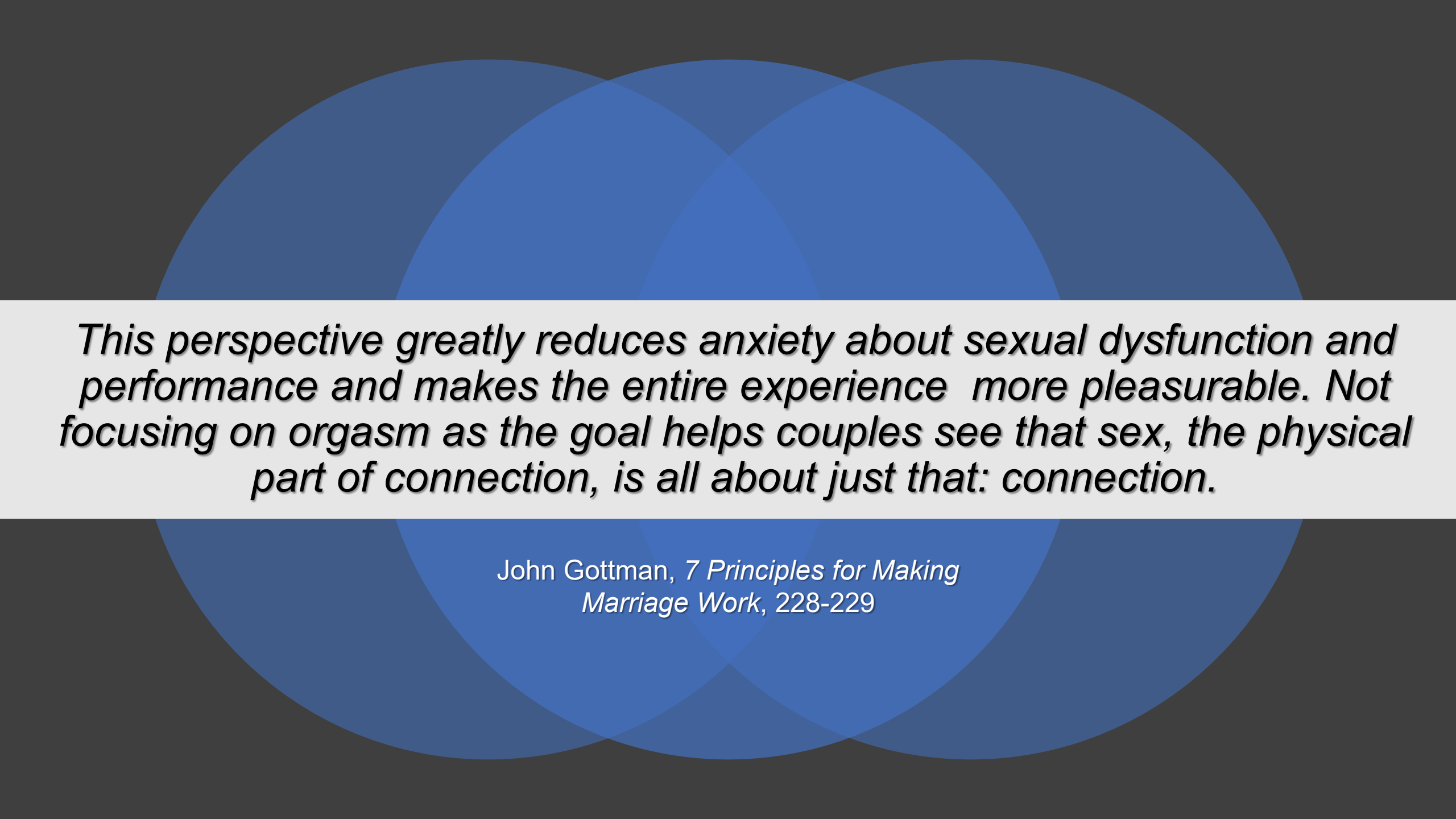
*Historians point out, however, that “Paul, in effect, redefines marriage as a context for the mutual satisfying of erotic desires in contrast to the pagan philosophical idea that the purpose of marriage was the procreation of legitimate heirs who would inherit and continue the name, property and sacred rites of the family.” In other words, Paul is telling married Christians that mutual, satisfying sexual relations must be an important part of their life together. In fact, this passage indicates that sex should be frequent and reciprocal. One spouse was not allowed to deny sex to the other. (pp. 266-267)*

How Do You  
Increase  
Sexual  
Intimacy?

**Redefine Sex**

**“Your typical bookstore”**

*Instead of isolating sex from the rest of your relationship, try a change of attitude. Stop thinking that sex is about orgasm and consider everything positive that happens between you as part of sex. That's why I suggest to couples that they consider all positive interactions to be sex. Foreplay occurs every time you turn toward each other in some little way throughout the day.*



*This perspective greatly reduces anxiety about sexual dysfunction and performance and makes the entire experience more pleasurable. Not focusing on orgasm as the goal helps couples see that sex, the physical part of connection, is all about just that: connection.*

John Gottman, *7 Principles for Making Marriage Work*, 228-229



# Sue Johnson, *Hold Me Tight*

**Physiologically, we were wired for connection and touch:** *When we are close to, hold, or make love with our partners, we are flooded with the “cuddle hormones” oxytocin and vasopressin. These hormones seem to turn on “reward” centers in the brain, flooding us with calm and happiness chemicals like dopamine, and turning off stress hormones like cortisol (27).*

*The approximately 18 square feet of skin we carry as adults is the largest sense organ we have. Tender caressing and stroking of our skin and the emotions these actions evoke are, for most of us, the royal routine into love relationships. Touch brings together two fundamental drives, sex and our need to be held and recognized by a special other. As the late anthropologist Ashley Montagu noted in his book *Touching*, skin to skin contact is the language of sex AND the language of attachment. Touch arouses, and it also soothes and comforts (191).*

# Identify Common Problems

---

General relationship is not good

---

Ignorance

---

Lack of self or body acceptance

---

Pre-occupation with self

---

Boredom

---

Guilt



# Identify Common Problems

---

Temporary life stress

---

Stage of life

---

Fatigue

---

Drug/alcohol/medication side effects

---

Poor communication

---

Lack of privacy

---

Common myths

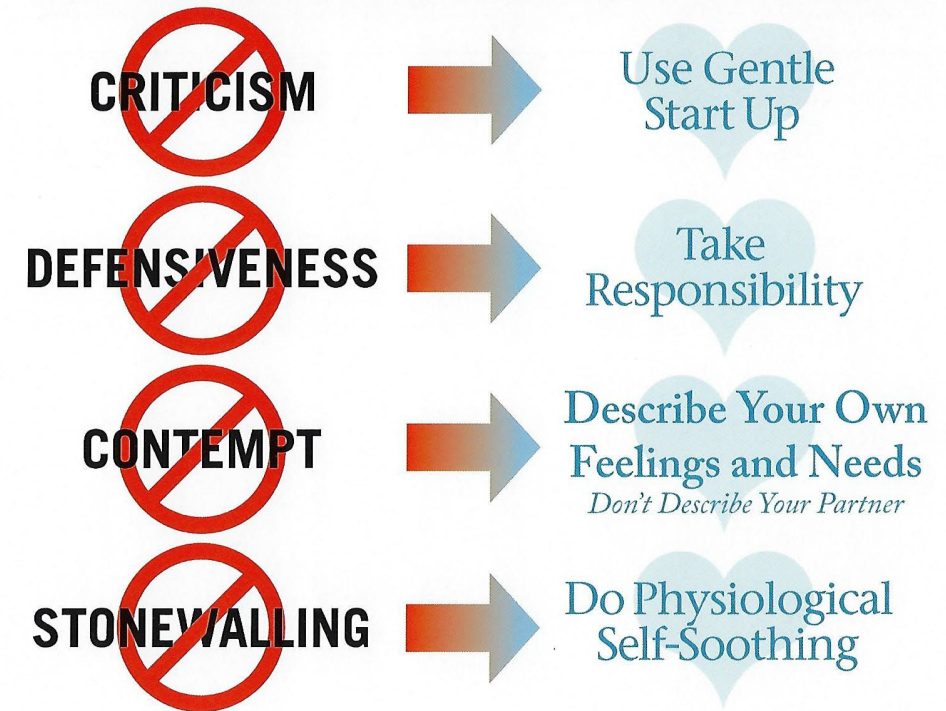
# Practical Things To Improve Your Sex Life

*Work on Your Sound Relationship House!*



Stay Vigilant  
to Keep the  
Four  
Horsemen  
From Taking  
Up Residence  
in Your  
Marriage

**Stop the Four Horsemen with their Antidotes**

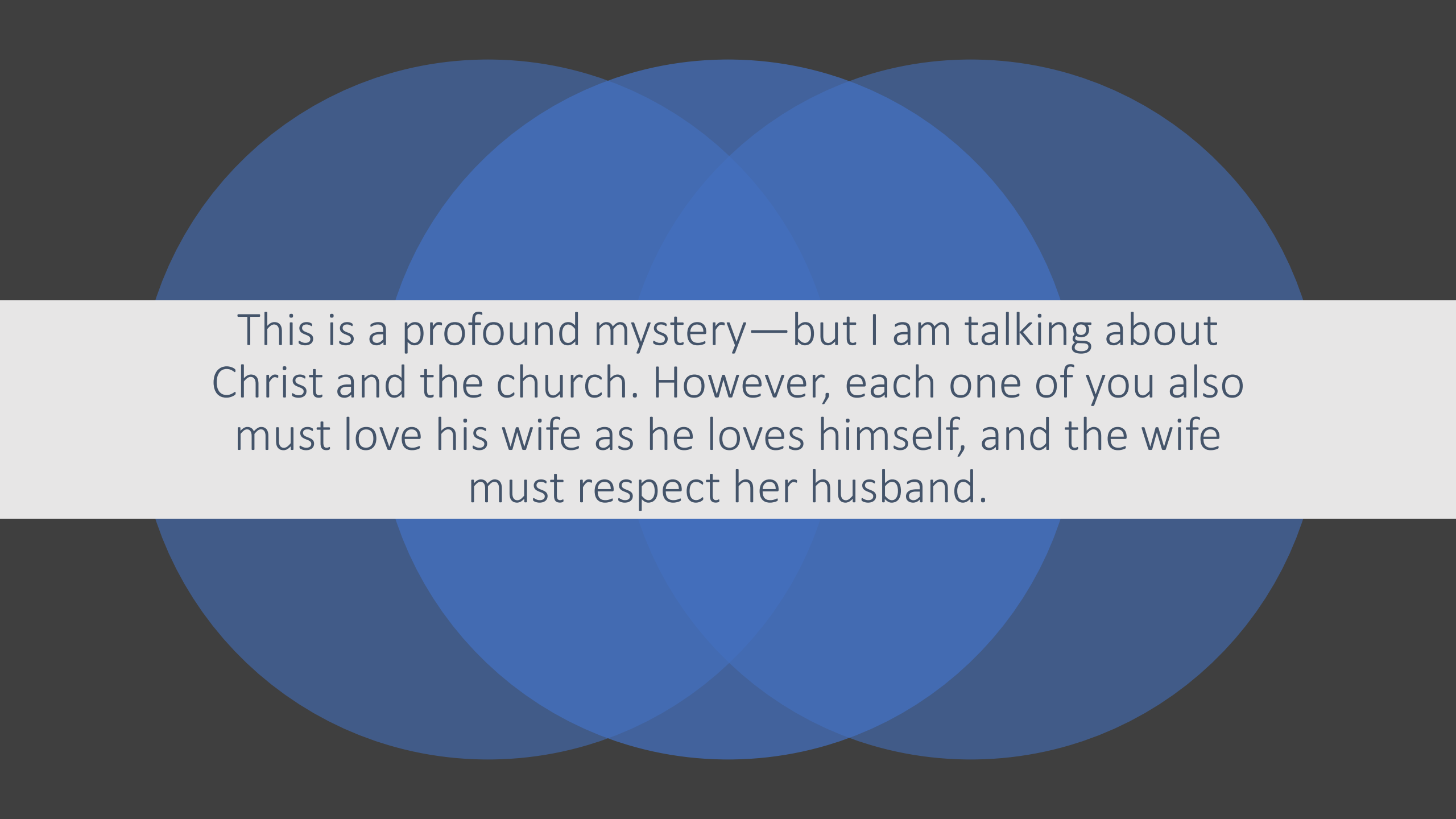


# Rekindle Sexual Chemistry

1. Change Your Pattern of Initiating Sex
2. Hold Hands More Often
3. Allow Tension to Build
4. Separate Sexual Intimacy from Routine
5. Carve Out Time to Spend with Your Spouse
6. Focus on Affectionate Touch
7. Practice Being more Emotionally Vulnerable During Sex
8. Maintain a Sense of Curiosity About Sexual Intimacy
9. Vary the Kind of Sex you Have
10. Make Sex a Priority



Keeping the Song in Your Marriage  
Ephesians 5:32

The background features three overlapping circles in a medium blue color, arranged horizontally. The circles overlap in the center, creating a darker blue area. The background is a dark grey color.

This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.



# Resources

*Hold Me Tight, Sue Johnson*

*Intimacy Ignited: Conversations Couple to Couple, Dr. Joseph and Linda Dillow and Dr. Peter and Lorraine Pintus*

*The Meaning of Marriage, Tim Keller*

*The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work, John Gottman (pp.222-235)*

*A Celebration of Sex, Dr. Douglas E. Rosenau*



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