



So You Want to Get *Married?*

TEST PHASE VERSION



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So You Want to Get Married?
Chapter 1

Test Phase Version

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Intimate Life Ministries

SO YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED?

UNLOCKING THE SECRETS OF LIFELONG LOVE

Marriage is a Mystery

You may or may not realize it but you're about to embark on a mysterious journey. There are aspects of your partner's heart and life that are so exciting and intriguing – yet so hidden; it will take a lifelong journey to discover them. You can have the thrill of touching the very depths of your partner's tender soul. You can experience the amazing wonder of capturing your partner's heart while embracing his/her strength. Unveiling the mystery of your marriage partner can empower intimacy beyond your wildest dreams.

Marriage is – A Divine Mystery

Marriage is not only filled with mystery through the complexities of your beloved partner, it is filled with intrigue because of its Creator. A key to lifelong love is viewing marriage through the eyes and heart of the One who created it – confident that He's written down in His book – the Bible – how to make it work.

Think about those times when you've driven a new car or tried to operate a new electronic device - and you've been unable to determine what all the buttons, switches and knobs do? Eventually, most of us reach for the owner's manual because the "one" who made the car or the new device has written down how to make it work.

We'd like to invite you to study the Creator's plan for how to make your marriage work. We also want you to take the time to celebrate the marvelous union that is about to begin. Celebrate the divine mystery of lifelong love, as He joins your hearts together. His plans are unfailing, unconventional and yet written so that we might experience the ultimate intimacy in marriage. Then not only are you blessed, but so also is He! Experiencing marriage as God intended unlocks the mystery of how God receives glory and honor through the "created."

When God unites the heart of a man and a woman, He is faithful to nurture, strengthen, and sustain the love they entrust to His keeping.

Welcome to the journey!

SO YOU WANT TO GET MARRIED?

Unlocking the Secrets of Lifelong Love

As you begin your journey of lifelong love, you'll want to stop along the way to consider these road-markers. These markers will serve as points of reflection as you discover God's best for you and your partner.

- ◆ **CELEBRATION** – Before you say, “I do”.... Begin now to celebrate your “special one.” The joy of pre-marital excitement brings the heart-throbbing cry of “You’re the one!” And a key to lifelong love is to solidify this confirmation that we are divinely destined to be together. When times of richer or poorer, better or worse, sickness and health come – you and your partner can be prepared with the knowledge that I know, that I know, that I know – you’re the one for a lifetime. During each session together, You will be able to celebrate, “I’m confident we were destined to be together, so let me count the ways!”
- ◆ **PREPARATION** - Preparing for a wedding can help prepare you for a lifetime! We’ll study both the key ingredients for a great wedding (and honeymoon!) – plus the same principles that can undergird your lifelong love. For example:

Communicating openly and respectfully about your dreams and hopes for a wedding – can help prepare you with lifelong communication skills.

Serving one another in your wedding decisions through the caring deference of love – prepares you for a life of mutual giving.

Knowing each other deeply through the countless details of the pre-marital journey – encourages you to become a lifelong “student” of your partner, knowing them intimately like no one else!

- ◆ **DEFINITION** – Before you embark on this lifelong journey, it will be important for you and your partner to develop a common and clear definition of your destination! Do you know where you’re going? Have you ever seen the kind of loving and fulfilling marriage you hope for? You may have seen such examples - and if so, we’ll want to learn from them. But, you also may be one of the many couples today – longing for a deeply intimate and blessed marriage – which they’ve never seen! We’ll take frequent stops along our journey together to illustrate what closeness, passion and unity in marriage really look like.

We’re ready for the first stop in our journey together. Pack your bags. Here we go!

Session I
DESIGNED FOR LOVE:
The Mystery of Turning Not Good into Very Good

On Wednesday, October 14th, 1987, eighteen-month-old Jessica McClure slipped down the eight-inch pipe of an abandoned well shaft. When rescue workers arrived, she was twenty-two feet below the ground, where she would be trapped for the next fifty-eight hours.

The hard work and expertise of hundreds of workers – and the prayers of a nation – came to a triumphal ending when paramedics wrapped Jessica on an immobilization board and headed for the surface. The little girl was fine.

Perhaps the one thing that gave Jessica the strength and determination to persevere was the fact that the rescue workers immediately and continually communicated with her – they removed her “aloneness.”

At the beginning of the tragic accident, a microphone was dropped into the hole to establish communication. Later, a video camera was used to establish visual contact. A police officer recounted, “We took turns staying by the hole talking to her. Every time she’d cry or whimper, it was kind of a ‘Help me, I’m hurt’ kind of whimper. Sometimes she would go thirty or forty minutes without a sound, and we’d get hysterical and start calling her again until we’d get a response.

Jessica was hurting, but she wasn’t hurting alone. And that probably helped to save her life.

The “Not Good”

God begins His plans for marriage in the book of beginnings – Genesis. He looks into the garden of paradise and declares, “It is not good to be ALONE.” It wasn’t good to be alone in paradise. It isn’t good to be alone in New York, London, or Vienna for that matter. It isn’t good to be alone – period.

ALONE is to be without – a close companion, an intimate friend, a caring soul mate, a valued counselor, or a trusted confidant. To be without these things - that’s “not good.”

ALONE is to miss out on – celebrating together, quiet talks, holding hands, common interests, or shared laughter. To be without these things - that’s “not good.”

Reflect for a moment . . . Have you experienced “being without” a close companion, trusted friend or caring soul mate? Can you verify that to be without, was not good? Isn’t

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that a part of what makes your relationship with your partner now so special? You've felt the "not good" of being alone, but now you're experiencing the joy of relationship.

Designed with a Purpose

From the opening of creation, it appears that God designed within each of us an emptiness - an aching void - a deep longing. And He created it so - on purpose. God created us with a relational isolation and emotional alienation that He called aloneness - but with a clear purpose in mind.

An important key to unlocking the mystery of lifelong marriage is to explore this divine purpose: **God intended for marriage to bring a screeching halt to the pain of aloneness.**

As we continue to read from the book of beginnings, we find the creation of the first marriage. God doesn't just create us with an empty void and leave the scene; He creates again. As we see His handiwork, we gain important insight into the character of God. He doesn't only announce problems, He solves them! We also gain great hope for the future as the pain of emptiness gives way to His provision. The same One who brought forth the light, the land, the sea - and all that is created - says, "I will create for you a helpmate." Marriage was God's idea! Marriage is a God-thing!

FOR LIFELONG LOVE - YOUR MARRIAGE IS TO BE A GOD THING!

Remember, it was God who said, "I will create for you" - God has a special gift for Adam - and for you in your marriage partner. Think of it - the God of the Universe has a special gift just for you - your marriage partner.

FOR LIFELONG LOVE - CHERISH YOUR PARTNER AS GOD'S SPECIAL GIFT.

Only God can take two people He's intended for each other and guide them through the years, till they discover one another.

Only God can take two people with their preferences and goals and blend their gifts and talents and unite their hearts and souls.

Only God can take two people with joys their dreaming of and make them one in marriage through the miracle of love.

Day Spring

MARRIED - BUT STILL ALONE!

We've all seen them - maybe it's been in our own families or with our close friends - or perhaps we've lived this way ourselves - couples with the same last name - but no lasting love. We've seen . . .

couples with the same address - but few of the same interests.

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couples dining out for a meal together – but with nothing to say.
couples sharing a home – but with separate lives.

You may be saying to yourself: *It can't happen to us, we're too in love. It won't happen to us, we're perfect for each other.* But what happens when the wedding is over and the honeymoon pictures have been put away?

- The humdrum of routine sets in, the “new” wears off?
- Children arrive; or we want to have them and can't; children we already have don't seem to “blend” well into our newly formed family?
- Career interests change – or a job is lost?
- Instead of experiencing *richer, better and health*, we experience *poorer, worse and sickness*?

In our study of God's plan for the best of marriage, we must look beyond the wedding day – beyond the honeymoon – to the realities of marriage. Because the key to lifelong love in the face of these and countless other challenges will not be about possessions we acquire, status we achieve or accomplishments we make. The key to lifelong marital love: **IS MY PARTNER A LITTLE LESS ALONE TODAY THAN YESTERDAY?**

Reflect for a moment: You've been overjoyed with the excitement of finding the one person who makes your life's puzzle complete. In the midst of your courtship, you've been concentrating on how wonderful it feels to not be alone. God's plan for an intimate marriage filled with lifelong love is possible as you keep this same focus: **IS MY PARTNER FEELING LESS ALONE TODAY THAN YESTERDAY?**

CELEBRATING YOUR SPECIAL ONE:

Take a moment to reminisce about your partner helping turn the “not good” of aloneness into the very good of loving oneness. Think about your life before you met your special someone, then complete the following responses:

I remember being very alone when _____
(For example: *I remember being very alone when I was in a class full of people. I was struck with the fact that I was surrounded by people and had a few friends, but still felt very lonely. I longed for someone to really know me and let me know them.*)

When I met you _____
(For example: *When I met you it felt like that void in my life had finally been filled. I really could have a close, intimate relationship with someone. I found the love that had been missing for so long.*)

I remember feeling _____
(For example: *I remember feeling incredibly happy and at peace. I could finally look forward to the future; I could really enjoy life like never before.*)

Take turns sharing your responses above and then rejoice together in them. Your rejoicing might sound like:

“I’m so glad I could be there for you.”

“Thanks for your love. I’m absolutely thrilled to be a part of your life.”

Finally, take a moment to reflect on how much joy you are now experiencing because of the relationship with your partner. Think specifically about the special qualities in your special someone that you find attractive and have been a blessing to you. Verbalize your gratefulness for your partner by sharing your response to this statement:

With you, I’ve found the joy God intended. And I know that years from now, you will still be the one who brings me more joy than I’ve ever known. I know this because of your . . .

(For example: *I know that years from now, you will still be the one who brings me more joy than I’ve ever known. I know this because of your generous heart and readiness to give. I can always count on you to look for ways to serve me and others.*)

PREPARATION: SKILLS FOR LIFELONG LOVE

Rejoicing or celebrating together removes aloneness! You and your partner will want to make it a habit to celebrate the good things of life. You’ll want to take time to consistently look for reasons to rejoice with one another. You and your partner will find that the positive events of life are even sweeter now that you have someone there to rejoice along side of you.

Think about a recent positive event, pleasant experience or blessing from the Lord.

It was really great when _____

(For example: *It was really great when my boss acknowledged my contributions on the project.*)

I felt _____ because _____

(For example: *I felt so appreciated and valued because I had sacrificed so many hours for that project. It felt great for those hours to be noticed and commended.*)

Romans 12:15 tells us to *Rejoice with those who rejoice*. So take turns sharing your responses above and then rejoice with one another.

“That’s terrific, I’m so glad that happened.”

“Wow, how wonderful! I’m thrilled for you.”

From now till your wedding day, schedule times of sharing together about the joys and blessings – even in the little things. Share with one another for the expressed purpose of celebrating together. You’ll need this discipline for your lifelong journey.

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm 118:24

IT'S NOT GOOD TO BE ALONE BUT WHAT DOES "GOOD" LOOK LIKE?

“For this cause, the cause of marriage – man shall leave ---cleave to his wife --- and the two shall become one flesh.” Genesis 2:24

BECOMING ONE

The “not good” of aloneness is transformed into the “very good” of lifelong love as man and wife become one. It’s this oneness – or intimacy – that fills the void and occupies the emptiness. Intimacy in relationship is God’s “very good” that removes aloneness. But the solution to human aloneness is not found solely in direct relationship with God, nor is it found solely in human relationship with another person. The very good of lifelong love is found in the mystery of a triune relationship between man, woman – and their Creator!

Becoming One in Marriage – doesn’t mean

- we’ll only have one opinion
- anyone’s identity is lost
- one of us will become unnecessary

MARRIAGE DEFINITION: WHAT AN INTIMATE MARRIAGE LOOKS LIKE

God has designed each of us with a soul, body and spirit. He has created us with these three dimensions and His desire is for us to experience fullness, intimacy and unity in each dimension. Therefore, . . .

An intimate marriage looks like - Two people growing together and deepening their experience of being . . .

BEST FRIENDS – What security it brings to have a built-in lifelong best friend; a safe place to come with life’s cares; Becoming one means never being alone with your dreams; always confident of loving support. God created your partner with the need to be “known.” It is a God-given desire planted deep within each of us, a yearning for someone to explore the depths of who we are. Best friends in marriage mine the riches of who God is making them each to be.

COMMITTED LOVERS – Loving embrace isn’t just a polite sign of welcome – it’s an affirmation of worth. A gentle touch and words of care declare value in a relationship. Commitment keeps such declaration of worth and value just for you! “I was thinking of

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you today” communicates the mysterious simplicity that I have you on my heart and mind at all times. Commitment keeps sexual intimacy until the marriage day and in lifelong faithfulness within the marriage.

FAITHFUL FOLLOWERS – Yielded together in loving devotion to the One who gave us such love and the capacity to share it with one another; acknowledging that the demands of marriage are so great, the intensity so close and commitment so complete – that divine “supply” and “empowerment” are essential. An unlimited supply of comfort, forgiveness and love will be required – and His name is Jesus. Left to ourselves resources wane – but walking together, following Christ in worship, prayer and service we find fresh strength, renewed hope and unexplainable joy. We come to find that the Lord has been loving our partner all along and we’ve now been invited to join Him. In some mysterious way, God is no longer alone in loving our special partner.

Marriage is a weaving together of two lives – a creation of passion, devotion, and soul. Never imagine that the tapestry of marriage is complete. For as long as you live and breathe, it will continue to evolve into patterns more intricate and more marvelous than either of you could render by yourself. And so this work, this weaving, this marriage should be honored, nurtured, and embraced.

Hallmark

VOWS OF INTIMACY **Your Declaration of Becoming One**

As you prepare to give your vows on your wedding day, take a moment to reflect on the depth of meaning behind the words you’ve heard so often.

- Promising to “love, honor and cherish” addresses the importance of being **BEST FRIENDS** with your partner.
- Committing to “forsake all others” is a declaration to remain a **COMMITTED LOVER**.
- Acknowledging “what God has joined together” is an encouragement to be a **FAITHFUL FOLLOWER** of the One who created marriage.

It’s this becoming one – or intimacy in friendship, physical closeness and spiritual fellowship and that unlocks lifelong love.

Marriage vows will be shared on your wedding day and it’s not too early to consider the importance of vows you have – or will make.

Vows to be shared represent the sealing of a covenant.

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- A covenant is a binding together in lifelong love – it differs from contracts which can be negotiated, revoked and cancelled; it differs from commitments which can be modified, altered and ignored.
- Covenants in a biblical sense require sacrifice, sacredness and faithfulness.
- The first and most important covenant vow any of us can make is when we come, helpless before a Holy God – trusting only in His love to bind us together with His Son as Savior and Lord.
- Marital vows we will share on our wedding day – through words expressed and rings exchanged. You will be declaring your covenant to God, to one another, and to a watching world.

CELEBRATING YOUR SPECIAL ONE:

To flourish in lifelong love, the marriage vows of covenant must nurture your relationship in the three areas of your friendship, your growing affectionate closeness and your spiritual life together.

1. Reflecting together in these areas encourages your communication, openness and giving.

I particularly sense your friendship with me as we _____
(i.e. I particularly sense your friendship with me as we set aside time just to talk each day. Or I sense your friendship with me as you care about the events of my life and want to share them with me.)

I sense your affectionate commitment to me when you _____
(i.e. I sense your affectionate commitment to me when you take my hand as we walk together. Or I sense your affectionate commitment when you kiss me goodbye each time we see one another and then again before we leave.)

Our spiritual closeness together can be built upon the common foundation of our _____

(i.e. Our spiritual closeness together can be built upon the common foundation of our prioritizing church attendance. Or Our spiritual closeness can be built upon the common foundation of our commitment to prayer.)

Set aside time to share your responses to these statements. Your sharing will help you continue on the path toward oneness.

2. As you continue to celebrate God's partner for you, reflect on the ways that your partner gladly sacrifices for you – so you'll be less alone.

I'm grateful for God's confirmation of my marriage partner as I see him/her sacrifice . . .

For example:

*I'm grateful for God's confirmation of my partner as I see him sacrifice his lunch hour to support me with wedding plans.

*I'm grateful for God's confirmation of my partner as I see her sacrifice her own agenda in order to be with me during family get-togethers.

Express your gratefulness to God and your partner. Share appreciation with one another for sacrifices made. Then if you are comfortable, hold hands, pray silently and share your gratitude with God.

*God gave me a great treasure of immense and untold worth,
And brought a touch of Heaven to my lifetime here on earth,
For He sent me someone wonderful, an angel from above,
When He blessed me with the gift of you – my friend, my joy, my love.
God answered my heart's deepest prayer the day He gave me you.*

Emily Matthews

BECOMING ONE What's It Really Look Like?

PREPARATION: KEYS TO LIFELONG LOVE

Divine love always moves first! Prior to marriage is the best time to incorporate the disciplines of moving first to nurture your friendship, affectionate closeness and spiritual life.

NURTURING FRIENDSHIP:

- Listen, listen, listen – to hopes and dreams, anxieties and doubts.
- Enter your partner's world – get to know their likes and dislikes, strengths and struggles.
- Private and public praise – express pride in your partner! “You might not have noticed but you're the most wonderful person in the world.”
- Empathize – give your partner freedom to feel discouraged and to express frustration, anxiety or disappointment. “Be there” with sympathetic words and loving touch.
- Help out! - Come along side and help carry the “burden” – whether errands to run, chores to do, projects to complete.
- Back off – don't bother with the little things; let your partner miss a motorway exit or verbalize “wild ideas.” Don't panic – lifelong love together is a long journey

NURTURING COMMITTED LOVE:

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- Leave surprise cards and love notes, perhaps in a briefcase, purse or coat pocket.
- Initiate –initiate – initiate: be the first one to give a hug, a kiss or a love note --- try to beat your partner to it!
- Seize the “little” opportunities: sit together, hold hands while walking, develop “your” special song, restaurant, etc.
- Surprise your partner: with dates, cards, loving glances, gentle touches, special remembrances.
- Time together: to talk, relax, laugh and pray.

NURTURING OUR FAITH:

- Talk together – about “why we’re here” – “what’s life all about”
- Read together – Bible verses about marriage, love, family, communication, money
- Explore together – the example of Christ in the Bible as He listens, cares and comforts
- Share together – in worship and belonging with other couples seeking to follow Him and His promise of lifelong love
- Pray together – share hopes, fears or struggles, holding hands to pray silently; words can come later.

One of the profound mysteries of marriage is that God, the Creator can also be blessed through your marriage. One of the blessings He receives from your marriage is your partnership with Him in loving your spouse. God wants you to join Him in removing your partner’s aloneness through the intimacy disciplines of becoming one. He’s longing to see you follow His example of loving care:

- God cares enough to experience your tough times and walk through them with you.
- God cares enough to sacrifice Himself (through His Son) in order that you might be loved.
- God cares enough to know you and everything about you – so He can uniquely care for you.

Marriage is about joining the Creator in loving your partner well! God’s plan for marriage means committing myself to turning the “not good” of aloneness into the “very good” of intimate love.

Your marriage is a calling to be a reflection of Jesus Christ and His love . . . to walk daily in His peace and favor . . . and to know the blessings that flow from His heart through you to others.

Day Spring

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Trust . . . in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy.

I Timothy 6:17 NKJV

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