

The image features a romantic and symbolic background. Two hands are shown in silhouette, gently holding each other. The background is a soft-focus sunset or sunrise, with a bright sun low on the horizon, creating a warm glow of orange and red. The sun's reflection is visible on the water below, creating a vertical streak of light. The overall mood is peaceful and intimate.

"Heirs Together of the Grace of Life"
Marriage Retreat & Study Weekend

God's single, overarching spiritual
objective of the marriage is the salvation
of the husband & wife

But to save them, He must first transform
them into new people

To the extent we cooperate with God's
design (regarding marriage) we can
receive the blessings He intended

We want to forget all that we've heard,
learned or thought about marriage as to the
the world's view of it

The outcome of a human marriage
relationship is happiness

The outcome of a godly marriage
relationship is not just happiness,
it's salvation

In God's wisdom, he uses our spouse,
the person we love the most, to help us
in the transformation process

It's worth a couple's time to learn how
God defines the marriage relationship &
to strive to establish His principles –
if they don't, their marriage defaults to a
human marriage relationship

Two things are essential for true
marriage in the Lord –
total devotion of both people to God,
and total devotion to each other

If I want to be a good spouse, I must
first be a good disciple

In other words, I can't be a
good/godly spouse without first
being a faithful disciple

Marriage is a relationship
we build one piece at time

If we stop building, it stops growing

It must be constantly renewed,
refreshed & given new life

It can just as easily be torn down
as it can be built up; there is nothing
guaranteed, apart from what the 2 people
are willing to put into it

The real enemy of a godly & happy
marriage is our human nature

The marriage relationship is the ideal place
for our character failings to be exposed:

*so they can be repudiated &
the necessary changes made*

What better person to hold us accountable
to make needed changes
than the person whom we love the most &
who loves us the most

God dearly wants to save our families

God did not create husbands to be independent creatures...without Eve, Adam was incomplete

Husbands: we need to see our wife as God's spiritual gift to us – He gave her to us because she is who we need for God to save us

The proof that God is involved in selecting our spouse is found in Jesus' words, "what therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt 19:6)

God doesn't just witness our vows, He was actively involved in bringing us together

*A moral implication:
how dare anyone put asunder a
relationship God has joined together*

“a prudent wife is from the LORD”
Prov 19:14

The Divine principle of “Oneness”:
“...and they shall be one flesh” – Gen 2:24

God is looking for a couple to develop a closeness & affinity for each other, in which they see themselves as ONE, to view their relationship as being special, unified, inseparable

A couple should cherish their special relationship together above all other relationships

And be willing to nurture it, protect it, grow it, and make the personal contributions and sacrifices such a special relationship is worthy of

The wisdom of the Oneness:

There is spiritual strength & a power for
good in being One

The stronger the Oneness, the greater the
ability for each spouse to be helpful to the
other to grow spiritually & be transformed

*God can bring 2 people together, but He cannot
control the level of Oneness they achieve –
that is left to each couple to determine*

Strengthening Your Oneness

Assignment:

1. Each person writes down (front/back cover of manual):
 - a) 3 things you could do in your marriage to strengthen your Oneness
 - b) 3 things you could eliminate or reduce in your marriage that would also help to strengthen your Oneness
2. Share your list with each other and discuss

We'll spend 7-10 minutes on this exercise

It's absolutely appropriate that the couple
make a vow before God, to covenant
themselves together

This relationship is so special & unique that
they both promise to remain together

The wisdom of the unbreakable covenant –
it's not punitive, it's designed to save both
people by preventing the flesh from
convincing them they can
walk away from each other

Session 1 review: He made them one

1. God has specifically designed the marriage relationship to transform our character in order to prepare us for the Kingdom
2. He has assigned different roles & responsibilities to the husband & wife based upon how each were created – to the extent we learn to cooperate with these, He will be successful in transforming us, and enable a couple to reap the blessings He intends from marriage
3. The aim of a human marriage relationship (based on man's wisdom) is happiness; the aim of a Godly marriage relationship is salvation
4. Marriage is total commitment & devotion to God & to each other

Session 1 review: He made them one

5. If you want to be a godly spouse, you must first be a godly disciple
6. The real enemy of a godly marriage is our nature; yet marriage is the ideal place for the weaknesses of both spouses (who love God, each other & are committed to one another's salvation) to be exposed & properly dealt with
7. Adam without Eve was “not very good”; God provided a “helper”, a companion, as a gift (someone he needed) to fill a missing piece
 - Our spouse is God's special gift to us & we need to treat them as such; it's who we need based on our strengths/weaknesses; God is responsible for bringing us together (“*whom God has joined together...*”), to specifically address our respective character flaws

Session 1 review: He made them one

8. God designed the marriage relationship to be unique & to create a special affinity/intimacy between the couple
 - He seeks for a couple to develop the highest possible level of Oneness/unity in our relationship
 - The stronger the Oneness, the more spiritually helpful we can be to each other (*Use the one-on-one discussions this weekend to strengthen your Oneness*)
9. The marriage relationship is of such importance that God has the couple enter a lifelong covenant; it is not intended to be punitive, but to keep the couple bound together & to overcome natural thoughts of separation when troubles arise
10. It's critical for a couple to make time for each other to grow their relationship/Oneness; set aside 2 hours/wk: Plan, Prioritize & Protect

In Eph 5, Paul equates the marriage relationship to Christ & his bride at least 7 times in 12 verses; raising it to a much higher plane than a human marriage relationship

The husband bears the responsibility to be Christ & to save his wife

The 3 principle aspects of the relationship

- 1) spiritual (vv23-28)
- 2) emotional (vv29-30)
- 3) physical (v31)

Strengthening the Spiritual & Emotional parts of your relationship

Part A: Each person should write down 3-5 things you could do to strengthen the spiritual component of your marriage relationship

Part B: Each person should write down 3-5 things you could do to strengthen the emotional component of your relationship

Part C: Discuss your answers with each other

We'll take 10 minutes for this exercise

Headship is a responsibility God assigns
to the husband

God's definition of headship/leadership:
*the responsibility to save those over
whom you have been made the head*
(priests, judges, kings, prophets, elders & Christ, who
was made the head of the race in order to save it)

Headship is not about power & authority,
it's about responsibility to save

A marriage can run into trouble in its infancy because the early (romantic) love wanes – this love alone will not sustain a marriage

The romantic love needs to blossom and mature into the salvation love

The romantic love is not replaced, it's added to – the love of Eph 5 is added to the love of the Song of Solomon

A spiritual wife will cherish & respond to a husband who devotes himself – out of love – to her salvation

Husbands, God takes us to the cross and says,
“there is the love we need to have
for our wife” – Eph 5:25

See God's wisdom! It's only when He teaches
me to love as Christ loved, that He can save me

So He aligns my salvation with my responsibility
to save my wife – He uses our marriage
relationship to teach me how to love like His Son

Learning to love our wife with the love of Christ
will transform our marriage

No husband seeks to bear the
responsibility of being Christ to his wife
– it's a daunting responsibility

Wives: how can you support your
husband in this daunting responsibility?

*Be the helper “fit for him” – do all you
can to help him be the best possible
Christ to you that he can be*

God assigns the husband a very demanding responsibility – to be Christ to his wife

A husband needs this standard to live by if his character is to be transformed

God aligns the reward of the Kingdom, our love for our wife, the need to love our wife like Christ, our desire to see her in the Kingdom and our responsibility to save her

1 Pet 3:7 – *Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.*

Husbands, be sensitive to the needs of your wife; not just because that is her desire, it's God's command!

“Give honour” to her – treat her as royalty (2:17)

As the “weaker vessel” she is vulnerable; don't take advantage of her vulnerability;
do the exact opposite – honour her!

“*that your prayers be not hindered*” – if we fail to care for our wife as commanded, God won't listen to our prayers

A wife's focus is to be on her home & children; submitting to her husband doesn't come naturally, it's a spiritual skill that must be learned

God doesn't ask a wife to place her faith in her husband; she is to submit to him,
but her faith remains in God

The spiritual wife finds motivation & power to obey her husband, not because he deserves it or due to his worthiness,
but because of her love for God

A wife shouldn't view the command to submit to her husband as an imposition; it's not designed to feed his ego – it's what he needs if he is to fulfill his responsibility as the head

The wisdom of God!

The wife is commanded to submit to the very man who bears responsibility to God for her salvation! It's a wonderful design!

She won't stand at the Judgment Seat & be responsible for his salvation, but he will stand there & be responsible for hers

A wife is to reverence/respect her husband
(*Eph 5:33*)

This doesn't mean mindless agreement; your
husband needs your counsel

It's what Bathsheba showed to David,
but Vashti challenged

A wife shouldn't demean her husband to others;
God has placed her in a privileged position
to see his failings;
she shouldn't betray this confidence

The wisdom of God!

God first commands the husband to be Christ to his wife – an incredibly tall order!

Then God turns to the wife and commands her to do all she can to support her husband in fulfilling his responsibility!

If both do their part, they will be transformed & God can save both

Exercise: Respect's hidden value

After suitable consideration and discussions by you both concerning a financial matter, your husband makes what turns out to be a poor decision

Wife's assignment: how could you show respect/reverence to your husband in the way you react and respond to this situation?

Husband's assignment: describe to your wife how her response to the situation would impact your relationship if:

- a) She maintains respect for you in dealing with the situation
- b) She fails to maintain her respect for you in dealing with the situation

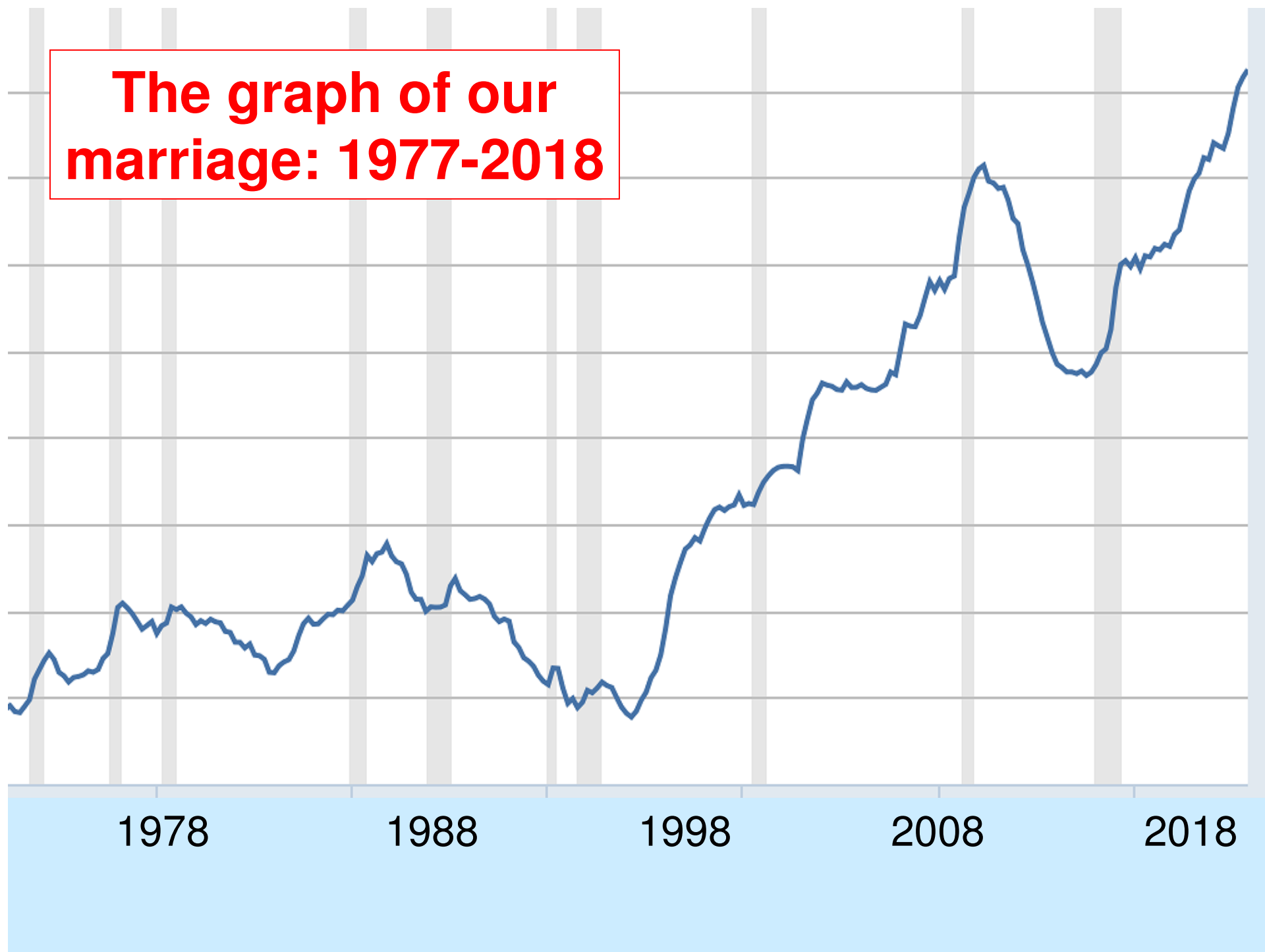
(10 minutes)

There's a spiritual reason we want to
become good listeners & good
communicators in our marriage:

Meaningful communication
builds connection & understanding,
which build a strong Oneness

*(A strong Oneness can't develop without
ongoing meaningful conversations)*

**The graph of our
marriage: 1977-2018**



Our marriage: 1977-2018

**Graph of effective
communication in our
marriage**



The communication spectrum:

“where is our conversation on this spectrum?”

A good self-test,

“is what I am about to say to my spouse:”

T – true?

H – helpful?

I – inspiring?

N – necessary?

K – kind?

A review of yesterday's sessions

1. Eph 5 identifies 3 parts of the marriage relationship; each is needed to contribute to a couple's Oneness, but the foundation of a Godly marriage is the spiritual component, upon which the other two are built
2. God assigns mammoth responsibilities to the husband:
 - ✓ to be the head – to be Christ in the marriage relationship, not as a type but as a reality
 - ✓ to show Christ's self-sacrificial love; God takes husbands to the cross & says, "there is the example to follow, there is the love to have for your wife"
 - ✓ to save his wife
 - ✓ to sanctify, cleanse and wash (bathe) her with the Word, so that she can be presented to Christ, *ready for salvation*, without spot, wrinkle or any such thing, but be holy & without blemish

A review of yesterday's sessions

3. God knows He cannot save a husband unless He can teach him to learn to love with Christ's love; He therefore commands a husband to learn to love his wife with this love
4. The wife is to support her husband by following his divinely appointed responsibility to lead
 - while she submits to her husband, her faith remains in God, as Sarah teaches by her example (1 Pet 3:5-6)
5. Headship is not about power & authority to rule/dominate; it's about responsibility to save the one over whom you have been placed as the head
6. Massive inadequacies & failings do not eliminate a husband's responsibility to be Christ to his wife
 - A wife's role is to support the head, to encourage him, to help him be the best possible Christ to her that he can be, especially because of his many inadequacies

A review of yesterday's sessions

7. A wife is to submit to, be subject to & respect her husband; *exactly* what he needs to fulfill his responsibilities as the head
 - Her God-given strengths are not designed for leadership, but to devote her attention to her husband and children & to set the right example with a meek & quiet spirit
 - Respect includes a wife supporting her husband, especially when he makes poor decisions; and avoiding any discussion with others about his failings, remembering she has been placed by God in a privileged position to witness these so she can be helpful to him
 - She needs to be careful that she doesn't place a burden of materialism upon her husband by seeking things God hasn't provided
 - Prov 31 describes what submission, subjection & respecting a husband look like when put into practice

A review of yesterday's sessions

8. A wife needs to see the spiritual romance in Eph 5 – her husband devotes his life to her salvation by helping to slay the great enemy (dragon) in her life - Sin! So she can inherit an eternal Kingdom
9. The romantic love that forms during courtship must mature into a salvation love & also become part of (be added to) the relationship; only the latter will enable a marriage to withstand the trials the couple will face
10. Don't just see your role & responsibilities (natural outlook); also see how fulfilling your role & responsibilities will be helpful to your spouse (this is a spiritual outlook, Christ's outlook)

A review of yesterday's sessions

11. Effective communication (at the dynamic end of the spectrum) helps strengthen a couple's Oneness; communication (unlike health, finances, employment, ecclesial issues) can always be improved in the relationship if it has been lacking
 - spouses need to be good listeners and communicators
 - woman are typically nurturers and seek empathy; husband's are problem solvers; both are needed & both should be valued

A review of yesterday's sessions

12. Husbands possess a strong sexual drive, designed to strengthen their affinity/devotion to their wife (their Oneness), but it must be restricted to the marriage relationship
- a wife shouldn't resent it, but identify how she can best support her husband; expect to need to talk through the issue to find an agreeable way forward that keeps both on the path of righteousness
 - God hates infidelity; it destroys the marriage & all the spiritual good the relationship is intended to develop in both people

Don't forget the affection...



however you decide to include it

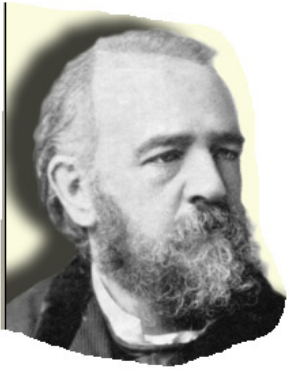
God's wisdom: under Christ's gospel, it should be impossible for a couple to remain unreconciled

Matt 5:23-24 – Go and apologize for your offence

- 23 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;
- 24 Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.

Matt 6:14-15 – Forgive every offence

- 14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
- 15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.



Forbear one another in love – bro Roberts

We ought not to take notice of everything; we ought not to speak of every weakness we see, because the flesh is a weak thing at best. **Let things slide**, unless there is a breach compromising the authority of Christ, or dishonouring and weakening to the truth...there are a thousand little weaknesses and faults that do not amount to deliberate or intended violation of Christ's law...which the individual is himself sorry for. If you take him to task, you destroy his sorrow and enkindle resentment, and evil is done.

The best thing is to forbear: this is the lesson of the apostle: *Forbear one another in love, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.* ...if we ourselves were to be measured by the standard we may be disposed to apply to others, we should be found greatly wanting. We have to be forgiven much and must forgive. There are many derelictions of duty—oversights, faults, offences, it may be—that God is pleased to pass by, at our request through Christ; and **we have to cultivate a similar disposition toward those who err through weakness.**

The Christadelphian: 1868

When I make a mistake is when I need
my spouse's love the most

The last thing I need is for her (him) to
belittle or to abandon me

I need her (his) love & forgiveness –
I haven't earned it & I don't deserve it,
but it's what I most need

*1 Peter 4:8 – “above all things have fervent love... for
love covers a multitude of sins”.*