**Five Threats to Every Marriage**

Every marriage is either moving toward **oneness** or drifting toward **isolation**.

 **Threat #1: Difficult Adjustments**

1. There is little in our culture today that\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ two people to make the difficult adjustments required to achieve marital oneness.

***Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled.***

**—Hebrews 13:4**

1. Contrasting backgrounds:

Values, vocations, religion, fiancés, family history, past relationships, painful experiences.

1. Superficial motivations:

Feelings, sexual attraction or involvement, cultural or family pressures, escape

1. Differing Expectations:

Roles, expectations, expressions of love, sexual performance, plans for the future.

**Eliminate Threat #1**

Recognize the differences you brought into your marriage.

**Threat #2: Performance-based Love**

***Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.***

**—I John 4:7-8**

 A. A very popular pattern is a 50/50 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ relationship.

1. Acceptance is based upon performance—“You do your part, and I’ll do

 mine.”

 2. Giving is based upon merit—affection is given when one feels it is

 deserved.

 3. Motivation for action is based upon how one feels.

 B. This pattern (50/50 performance relationship) is destined to

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because of:

 • My inability to meet *all* unreal expectations

 • My tendency to focus on weaknesses in my spouse

 • My disappointment in my spouse, which paralyzes my performance

 • My desire to get revenge when wronged

 • The impossibility of knowing if my spouse has met me halfway

**Eliminate Threat #2**

Change the default setting on their marriages from the cultures pattern to the gospel it develops oneness.

**Threat #3: Inevitable Difficulties**

***Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.***

**—James 1:2-3**

A. There are two failures in our response to difficulties:

1. There is a failure to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_the certainty of difficulties and

 problems.

 2. There is a failure to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to difficulties and

 problems.

 B. Difficulties do not mean something is wrong with your marriage.

 C. Your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to difficulties will either drive you apart or bind

 you together.

• Some respond to problems by trying to suppress or escape the pressure.

 • Others respond to problems by blaming or attacking others.

 D. You must have a plan to move through these times without rejecting or

 withdrawing from your spouse.

**Eliminate Threat #3**

Let God use the difficulties as fertile ground to grow you together rather than drive you apart.

**Threat #4: Extramarital “Affairs”**

***For the lips of a forbidden woman drip honey, and her speech is smoother than oil, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword.***

**—Proverbs 5:3-4**

1. An extramarital “affair” is an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from reality or a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for fulfillment outside of marriage.
2. Extramarital “affairs” take many different forms:

• Activities affair

• Materialism affair

• Career affair

• Family affair

• Fantasy affair (which can include pornography or romance novels)

• Love affair

1. We are seduced by our culture into believing that we deserve complete

 fulfillment and perfect happiness.

**Eliminate Threat #4**

Remember the high cost and devastating consequences of artificial sweeteners to your marriage.

**Threat #5: Selfishness**

***Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.***

**—Philippians 2:3-4**

A. Everyone has a natural tendency to be \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and

 destructive in relationships.

 B. Our culture today promotes and encourages \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

 C. Because we marry with “stars in our eyes,” we do not see this

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

 D. Selfishness robs the relationship of its \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Eliminate Threat #5**

Allow the full weight of the gospel to transform your ability to love someone beyond yourself.

**God’s Plan for Marriage**

 ***“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”***

* **Genesis 1:27**
1. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: The first responsibility is to establish independence from your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.**

***“Therefore shall leave his father and his mother…”***

**—Genesis 2:24a**

A. Leaving must be done in the context of honor to one’s parents.

B. Beware of overdependence on parents.

1. It is essential that your spouse is the\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ relationship in your life.

2. Be careful not to be financially dependent on your parents.

**The degree to which you leave is the degree to which you can cleave.**

1. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: The second responsibility is to establish \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to one another.**

***“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife …”***

**—Genesis 2:24 KJV**

1. God created Adam with an unmet need: Adam was \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

***“Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”***

**—Genesis 2:18**

B. God showed Adam his \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

***“So out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him.”***

**—Genesis 2:19-20**

C. God \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_for Adam’s need by creating Eve.

***“So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib* *that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman* *and brought her to the man.”***

**—Genesis 2:21-22**

D. An important question for Adam was, would he \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Eve?

***“Then the man said, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”***

**—Genesis 2:23**

1. In this passage, God illustrates a cornerstone\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for marriage:

*We must choose to receive our spouse as God’s perfect provision for us.*

a. We must focus on God’s character and His goodness in providing our spouse.

 b. Receiving our spouse is NOT based on our spouse’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

2. Adam enthusiastically received Eve because he knew and trusted God, not because of Eve’s performance.

**3. BECOME ONE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_: The third responsibility is to establish \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with one another.**

***“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.***

**—Genesis 2:24 KJV**

A. Becoming one flesh is not just getting married or having sex; it is a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that helps us grow as individuals and grow closer as a couple.

B. This growth begins as we break dependencies with our past and cleave to one another.

C. Growing toward oneness makes it possible for a man and a woman as a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to become more than they ever could have been apart.

D. Physical intimacy is an expression of this ultimate oneness.

***“And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.”***

**—Genesis 2:25**

**4. Why is God’s plan difficult to experience?**

1. Our natural \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Differences are not \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_to achieving God’s purposes in your marriage.

2. Differences are God’s \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_to teach us to trust Him and His goodness.

B. Our natural \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. Weaknesses are not justification for rejecting our spouse.

2. Weaknesses have divine purposes in our lives.

C. Our natural \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. We must admit that we are selfish.

2. Receiving our spouse is demonstrated by placing their \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ahead of our own.

D. To reject your spouse in any way is to:

1. Reject God and His provision for your life

2. Reflect negatively on the character of God

3. Demonstrate unbelief and disobedience toward God

4. Fail to fulfill God’s plan and purposes for marriage

E. God uses our natural differences, weaknesses, and selfishness to build oneness.

F. As an act of your will, you must \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(not just accept) your spouse as God’s gift made personally for you.

**Man to Man**

1. **A man takes responsibility to follow Christ.**

***“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.”***

**—I Cor. 16:13-14**

A. He acknowledges Christ as the absolute \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_in his life.

* He follows Christ.

***“Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”***

**—Matt. 16:24**

* He obeys Christ.

***“If you love me, you will keep my commandments.”***

**—John 14:15**

* He depends on the Spirit moment to moment.

***“If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit.”***

**—Galatians 5:25**

B. He courageously assumes the responsibility to love and lead his wife and family.

1. **A man takes responsibility for his role as a husband.**

A. God has designated the husband as the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_of the relationship.

***“For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.”***

**—Ephesians 5:23**

 1. His leadership is not based on superior abilities but on divine placement.

 2. Headship means:

* Assuming responsibility for the marriage
* Being accountable to God
* Not being a bully or boss or dictator

 3. God has designed the husband and wife with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

***“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”***

**—Galatians 3:28**

 4. A wise husband values his wife as his partner and helper.

***“Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”***

**—Genesis 2:18**

B. He sacrificially loves his wife.

***“Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church.”***

**—Ephesians 5:25, 28, 29**

 1. He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_his wife by:

* Being trustworthy
* Making her load lighter, not heavier
* Listening to her
* Praying with her
* Putting her needs ahead of his own

2. He \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_his wife by:

* Helping her develop and utilize her gifts and abilities
* Helping her fulfill her purpose and dreams
* Showing her and telling her he loves her
* Making romance a priority

***“Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you[***[***a***](http://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=i%20peter%203:7&version=ESV#fen-ESV-30415a)***] of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”***

**—I Peter 3:7**

C. He courageously leads his wife.

***“But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.”***

**—I Corinthians 11:3**

 1. His leadership includes providing for his wife’s needs by:

* Taking the initiative to meet his family’s material needs
* Managing the family’s finances wisely
* Making sure his wife and children are taken care of first

***“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.”***

**—I Timothy 5:8**

 2. His leadership includes protecting his wife by:

* Taking the initiative to meet his family’s emotional and spiritual needs
* Keeping her safe from physical harm
* Shielding her from destructive relationships

**Abdicating or abusing your responsibilities as a husband is taken seriously by God.**

***“But you say, “Why does he not?” Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth.”***

**—Malachi 2:14-15**

* If we ***abdicate*** our responsibilities, we force our wife to learn to live without us.
* If we ***abuse*** our responsibilities, we force our wife to either run or retaliate.

**Making it personal (For Men Only)**

In light of everything we just talked about, rate the statements below by circling a number from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree):

The world’s plan has distracted me from my 1 2 3 4 5

responsibilities as a husband and father.

My leadership style makes biblical submission 1 2 3 4 5

easy and reasonable for my wife.

My leadership style makes my wife feel cherished 1 2 3 4 5

and understood.

My leadership is characterized by taking the 1 2 3 4 5

initiative.

I verbalize acceptance and honor to my wife. 1 2 3 4 5

I show love for my wife with sacrificial action. 1 2 3 4 5

I demonstrate love even when I don’t feel it. 1 2 3 4 5

I know my wife’s needs. 1 2 3 4 5

I esteem my wife in her role as a wife (and mother). 1 2 3 4 5

I live with my wife in an understanding way. 1 2 3 4 5

I am growing spiritually. 1 2 3 4 5

My wife knows she is my top priority. 1 2 3 4 5

**Woman to Woman**

1. **How does a woman become the kind of wife and mother God has designed her to be?**
	1. She orders her life according to God’s priorities.
		1. Growing in her relationship with God comes first.
		2. Respecting and supporting her husband comes second.
		3. Teaching and training her children come third.
	2. She orders everything else in her life (outside activities, job and career, volunteer work, etc.) around these top three priorities.

**2. A discerning woman chooses God’s design, rather than yielding to other influences.**

A. She intentionally pursues a relationship with God.

B. She welcomes God’s design for her marriage.

 1. God created the man to be the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_in marriage.

2. God created the woman to be man’s helper and completer in marriage.

***“Then the Lord God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.”***

**—Genesis 2:18**

* “Helper” is a title of worth.
* God refers to Himself in Scripture as our helper.

***“Behold, God is my helper; the Lord is the upholder of my life.”***

**—Psalm 54:4**

3. Husbands and wives have equal value but different roles, responsibilities, and purposes.

***“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”***

**—Galatians 3:28**

 C. She actively works at being the best wife she can be.

***“The wisest of women builds her house, but folly with her own hands tears it down.”***

**—Proverbs 14:1**

 1. Her marriage is her most important human relationship.

2. This relationship takes priority over her relationship with her children, other family members, and friends.

 D. She gives significant daily attention to her responsibility and call as a mother.

**3. A strong woman demonstrates love for her husband by respecting and supporting him.**

***“However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”***

**—Ephesians 5:33**

A. Every man has a longing and desire for his wife’s respect and support.

B. Respect is a choice to receive your husband in spite of his weaknesses. This choice \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_your husband to become the man God created him to be.

C. Communicating respect involves your attitude, your words, and your actions.

D. Support is a choice to follow your husband’s leadership. It empowers him to be all that God intends him to be.

 1. The Bible calls following his leadership *submission*.

***“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior.”***

**—Ephesians 5:22-23**

2. Submission is a complementary, not competitive, way of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_to your husband.

 a. Submission does not mean:

* You are inferior or lose your identity.
* You blindly obey or submit to verbal of physical abuse.
* You follow your husband into sin.

b. Submission does mean:

* Giving up your desire to control.
* Cooperating with him as he seeks to lead your marriage and family.

E. Demonstrating support or submission also involves your\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, your words, and your actions.

 F. With his wife’s respect and support, a husband becomes more confident.

G. God is calling you to trust Him and follow His plan, even though a positive response from your husband is not guaranteed.

**Making it personal (For Women Only)**

In light of everything we just talked about, rate the statements below by circling a number from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree):

Our culture’s influence has distracted me 1 2 3 4 5

from my responsibilities as a wife and mother.

My attitudes and actions toward my husband 1 2 3 4 5

show him respect.

My attitudes toward my husband reflect support 1 2 3 4 5

and confidence in him.

My attitudes and actions toward my husband 1 2 3 4 5

show him love.

My attitudes toward my husband reflect 1 2 3 4 5

Contentment and trust in God.

My husband knows I admire him. 1 2 3 4 5

I am willing to follow his direction for our home. 1 2 3 4 5

I accept him regardless of his performance. 1 2 3 4 5

I consider him my top priority. 1 2 3 4 5

**We Fight Too**

1. **Where does conflict come from?**

***“What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask.”***

**—James 4:1-2**

1. Conflict occurs when our desires are not fulfilled – when we don’t get what we want.
	* 1. Our “rights” have been violated.
		2. Our expectations have not been met.
		3. We have been hurt.

B. Our unfulfilled desires may result in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

***“For the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”***

**—James 1:20**

C. Our unfulfilled desires lead to fighting and quarreling.

D. For conflict to be resolved, both husband and wife must be committed to oneness.

**2. Resolving conflict requires loving confrontation.**

A. Before you confront, examine the offense.

 1. Determine if the offense requires confrontation.

***“Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.”***

**—James 1:20**

 2. Consider your contribution to the conflict.

* What role did I play?
* What pattern or habit of mine contributed to the conflict?

3. Examine your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

 Are you trying to:

* Retaliate?
* Restore?
* Punish?
* Pursue peace?

**Remember, your mate is not your enemy.**

B. Lovingly confront.

***“Until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ…”***

**—Ephesians 4:13**

 1. Speak the truth in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

***“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**

 2. Approach confrontation carefully.

* Make sure the timing is right.
* Make sure your focus is right.

 Focus on: Rather than:

 One Issue Many Issues

 The problem The person

 Behavior Character

 Specifics Generalizations

 Facts Judgment of motive

 ”I” Statements ”You” Statements

 Understanding Who’s winning or losing

 3. Choose your \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ carefully.

* Confront with humility.
* Speak the truth in love.

4. Your goal is to restore oneness in your marriage.

***“Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted.”***

**—Galatians 6:1**

**3. Resolving conflict requires forgiveness.**

***“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”***

**—Ephesians 4:32**

A. The Bible teaches that all Christians are responsible to God to seek and grant forgiveness.

 B. The offender needs to seek forgiveness.

 1. Begin by admitting to God and to yourself that you were \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

* Be specific.
* Be willing to accept responsibility for the consequences.
* Consider and be willing to address the attitudes and desires that may have led to the offense.

2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_seek forgiveness.

Seeking forgiveness:

 1. Be willing to say you were wrong:

 “I was wrong. I shouldn’t have \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

 2. Be willing to say you are sorry:

“I am sorry I did \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and that I caused you to feel \_\_\_\_\_\_.”

 3. Be willing to repent:

“I know that I have hurt you deeply, and I do not wish to hurt you this way again.”

 4. Be willing to ask for forgiveness:

 “Will you forgive me for doing\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_?”

C. The offended spouse needs to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_forgiveness.

 1. True forgiveness is not:

* Pretending that something did not happen
* Conditional
* Forgetting
* An automatic cure for the hurt

2. Granting forgiveness is:

* A choice to set your spouse free from the debt of their offense
* An attitude of letting go of resentment and vengeance
* The first step toward rebuilding trust
* An act of obedience to God

Granting forgiveness:

 1. Do it privately first:

 “God, I forgive \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_for hurting me.”

 2. Do it specifically:

“I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”

 3. Do it generously:

“Let’s settle this issue and get on with building our relationship.”

 4. Do it graciously:

 “I know I’ve done things like that myself.”

D. Begin the process of rebuilding trust.

1. Trust is not automatically reinstated when forgiveness is sought and granted.

 2. Trust is rebuilt through consistent behavior over time.

 3. Your spouse’s hurt does not instantly disappear. Give grace and time.

 4. Ask God for patience.

**Habits for a Healthy Marriage**

A Godly family consists of three essential habits.

**Habit #1: The habit of extravagant love**

***“... you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.”***

**—1 Thessalonians 4:9b**

1. Extravagant love \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_the love of God.

B. Extravagant love is:

1. Exclusive—One person has your heart for a lifetime.

2. Expressed—It is repeated often through words and actions.

3. Extraordinary—It places your spouse’s needs above your own.

C. Extravagant love is a choice, not a feeling.

D. Extravagant love leads to genuine \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Habit #2: The habit of generous forgiveness**

***... if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.***

**—Colossians 3:13**

A. Generous forgiveness begins with humility.

B. Without the habit of generous forgiveness, marriages are filled with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

C. Generous forgiveness is:

1. Offered quickly

2. Applied freely

3. Expressed graciously—it keeps no record of wrongs.

D. Generous forgiveness leads to true \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

**Habit Habit #3: The habit of enthusiastic encouragement**

*“Therefore encourage one another and build one another up.”*

—1 Thessalonians 5:11

A. Enthusiastic encouragement believes in and motivates your spouse to grow.

B. Enthusiastic encouragement:

1. Openly affirms your spouse

2. Avoids critical words

3. Maintains a positive attitude, even in hard times

**Application project**

**Individual Section:**

1. When you show extravagant love to your spouse, you model the love God has shown for you. John 13:34 tells us, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”

What are some ways God has demonstrated His extravagant love for you?

1. What did you learn during the conference about some practical ways you can show extravagant love for your spouse? (And realize that it’s not necessary to spend a lot of money to show extravagant love. Instead, focus on your words and actions, and on placing your spouse’s needs above your own.)
2. What are some ways you’d like your spouse to show love for you?
3. Ephesians 4:32 instructs us to, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” What do you think it means to forgive your spouse as God has forgiven you?

What are some of the ways God has shown generous forgiveness to you?

1. How well have you shown quick, free, and gracious forgiveness to your spouse?
2. What are some ways you can offer generous forgiveness to your spouse in the next three months?
3. What are some ways your spouse could offer forgiveness to you?
4. The third essential habit for building oneness in your marriage is enthusiastic encouragement. First Thessalonians 5:11 says, “Therefore, encourage one another and build one another up.”

What are some encouraging things your spouse has said to you?

1. What can you do over the next three months to encourage your spouse?

**Interaction Section:**

1. Share your answers from the questions you answered individually.
2. We’d like to challenge you to make a commitment to building oneness in your marriage over the next six months (and beyond). From your discussion about extravagant love, generous forgiveness, and enthusiastic encouragement, choose three practical action points in each area – three ways you can apply each of these essential elements of oneness.

Over the next six months we will show **extravagant love** for one another by:

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Over the next six months we will show **generous forgiveness** for each other by:

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Over the next six months we will show **enthusiastic encouragement** by:

1. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_