

*Marriage  
Is A  
Ministry*

**Session Two**  
*Our Greatest  
Companionship Need*



Marriage Is A Ministry

**Our Greatest Companionship Need**

We cannot fulfill our spouse’s unique companionship needs apart from love.

**Four Basic things that motivate all humans**

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 3. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 4. _____ |

**What motivated Jesus to die for you?**

**John 3:16** For God so *loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

\_\_\_\_\_

**Colossians 3:8** But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

**Proverbs 15:28** The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil.

\_\_\_\_\_

**James 1:19-20** So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.

Respond in \_\_\_\_\_!

**Proverbs 14:29** He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, But he who is impulsive exalts folly.

\_\_\_\_\_

Truth means we have informed our heart and mind with the Word of God. This is our only measuring tool!

**Matthew 22:36-39** "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

\_\_\_\_\_

God’s Word tells us the value of each person.

How we treat our spouse indicates the value we place on them.

**Colossians 3:14** But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection.

\_\_\_\_\_

Am I demonstrating to my spouse my choice to put on or put off love? \_\_\_\_\_

How do I demonstrate that I really want to change? \_\_\_\_\_

**Description of Love – what it is and is not.**

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8** Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails....

## Marriage Is A Ministry

### THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT LOVE IS = HATE = SIN

#### 1. Love is not impatient – The opposite of being longsuffering.

---

---

**Galatians 5:22** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, (long-suffering), kindness, goodness, faithfulness.*

#### 2. Love is not unkind – The opposite of kindness.

---

---

**Romans 12:10** *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.*

##### **Esteeming others above self:**

- To regard or consider his/her feelings above my own.
- **Think First!** How should I share my feelings or opinions so they will not hurt or tear down our bridge of communication and my spouse will understand what I am trying to say!
- **Use wisdom, gentleness and self-control** – not harshness.
- **Be specific.** Do not speak in general terms.

**Communication Destroyers:** You always..., you never..., you will never change..., there you go again..., you're a 'Blank', you're just like your 'Blank!', lying, bringing up past mistakes or failures, etc...

---

---

#### 3. Love does not envy

Envy or jealousy can exist toward:

- ◆ Each other
- ◆ Our relationship with our children – don't play favorites or put any child ahead of your spouse
- ◆ Our relationship with friends
- ◆ Hobbies, work or other interests
- ◆ A special event or opportunity comes up
- ◆ Don't provoke your spouse to jealousy or envy

**James 3:16** *For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.*

---

---

#### 4. Love does not parade itself, brag and is not arrogant.

---

---

Arrogance is when any spouse belittles the other spouse to make him/her feel less important, or promotes oneself to appear better of more important.

Marriage Is A Ministry

**Proverbs 27:2** *Let another man praise you, and not your own mouth; a stranger, and not your own lips.*

**5. Love does not behave rudely or act unbecoming**

- Purposefully embarrassing and/or demeaning your spouse.
- Using rude jesting or sarcasm toward one another.
- We know what hurts one another and what bothers each other.

**Instead learn how to:**

- Speak blessings and truth to each other.
- Pray over one another.

---



---



---

**Wives To Husbands:**

You're my man  
 You are my lover  
 The kids sure look up to you  
 You're a good provider  
 You look handsome in that...

**Husbands To Wives:**

You are such a great mom.  
 I love the way you show affection to the kids  
 Man! The house looks great  
 You are so beautiful  
 You are so sweet

---



---



---

**Ephesians 4:29** *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.*

**6. Love does not seek to have its own way**

---



---

It can be as simple as being selfish in:

1. (Communication) Spending time talking with one another
2. Working around the house together
3. Doing something with the kids together.
4. Taking care of the kids so my spouse can go do something he/she enjoys.

**1 Corinthians 10:24** *Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.*

---



---

**7. Love does not think evil**

Never keep score of their failures...only to beat them over the head whenever we get a chance.

## Marriage Is A Ministry

**Ps 139:17-18** *How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand; when I awake, I am still with You.*

- Are you harboring bitterness – ignoring, pouting, and staying angry?
  - Not forgiving is a choice, not a feeling; do not wait until you feel like it.
- 
- 

**Hebrews 12:14-15** *Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking diligently lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.*

**1 Corinthians 13:5** *“Love... is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong.” (TLB)*

- **Unforgiveness is a poison one takes, hoping it will kill the other person.**

### **HOW MUCH SHOULD WE FORGIVE?**

**Ephesians 4:32** *And be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.*

---

---

#### **8. Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness**

- Do you get some pleasure when your spouse gets an earful from one of the kids, a speeding ticket, or even gets hurt?
- 
- 

**Proverbs 14:9** *Fools mock at sin, but among the upright there is favor.*

#### **9. Not rejoicing in the truth**

- **Do you praise your spouse regularly?**
  - Do you point out (only or mostly) their weaknesses or failures?
  - We need to always keep this in check, remember...speak love and truth into their lives.
  - To appreciate means to acknowledge their value...if you don't know how, pray and ask your spouse how. Invest yourself into learning how.
- 
- 

**Romans 12:9** *Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*

#### **10. Not bearing all things**

Don't give up by telling yourself you can't take it anymore.

We need to commit to God's plan and purpose, putting our trust in Jesus – not our spouse.

---

---

Marriage Is A Ministry

**Galatians 6:2** *Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

**"Bear..."** = *To take up in order to carry, to put upon one's self something to be carried.*

---

---

---

**11. Not believing or hoping all things**

**Are you doubting God right now?**

- God wants you to put your trust in Him.
- God wants us to work towards a hopeful and trusting relationship even after previous mistakes.

**A relationship without trust is no relationship at all!**

**Mark 3:25** *"And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.*

**Romans 5:5** *Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

**Jeremiah 29:11** *"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you", says the LORD, "thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope."*

---

---

---

---

**12. Not enduring all things**

- To endure means to last or to tolerate, to suffer patiently.

**Love has an attitude that you believe and trust in an Almighty God who desires to bless you in and through your marriage.**

---

---

---

**Do you depend upon God for strength or are you relying upon your own strength?**

**1 Corinthians 13:8** - *Love never fails.*

**Ephesians 4:29-31** *Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.*

---

---

---

---

---





*Marriage  
Is A  
Ministry*

**HOMEWORK SECTION**

**FOR**

**Session Two**

*Our Greatest  
Companionship Need*



## SESSION TWO HOMEWORK DESCRIPTIONS

Each piece of the homework is important to the progress of any disciple. Remember, a true disciple of Christ is not simply trying to acquire intellectual knowledge; a true disciple invests himself/herself to learn and to live according to the principles God teaches in his Word. Your investment in learning and living according to the principles God reveals to you through this material will transform your life as God desires.

### 1. **The Biblical Principles of Forgiveness and Reconciliation** (pages 12-15)

- Follow the steps outlined on page 14 under, *As an act of the will, we must*: Unforgiveness toward anyone in the past (father, mother, a family member, or another person) or present (spouse, children) can contaminate other current and future relationships (see Heb. 12:14-15). There is only one Biblical antidote for removing the root of bitterness or hurt that may be keeping us from trusting God. Once removed we are no longer held captive by it and are free to walk in the light of God's Word. When we put our trust in Christ and forgive another person, then the Lord can heal our heart and the grace of Christ is then poured out to help our lack of trust in Christ and/or bad habits to be broken.

### 2. **Breaking the Cycle of Unloving Communication** (pages 16–19).

- Complete these pages each time you have any unloving communication over the course of a day. You will need to make copies before you begin so you both can practice this when necessary. Pray and ask God to reveal the wrong thoughts or motives that provoked the unloving communication you used toward your spouse no matter how they treated you. Follow steps three and four on the bottom of page 18 of the worksheet each time you demonstrate unloving communication and God will help you grow to respond in love to your spouse over time. Remember, God blesses obedience.

### 3. **Loving Communication Self-Evaluation** (pages 19A-B)

- To see how effective a listener you are, complete this worksheet individually. It is designed to help husbands and wives identify the source of ungodly thoughts, feelings or behaviors that have been leading them in the unloving communication they have exhibited toward their spouse. Once you realize how the enemy has deceived you into acting inappropriately toward your spouse, you can follow the steps found on pages 18 and 19 for confession, repentance and reconciliation with God and your spouse. This homework should be completed each time there is unloving communication between a husband and wife until the understanding is complete and the practice of forgiveness and reconciliation becomes a regular part of the relationship. This process will enable any disciple to strengthen their walk in the spirit when communicating with their spouse everyday.
- After completing this worksheet, go to our website at [www.parentingministry.org](http://www.parentingministry.org) to view or download the Key To Score Your Loving Communication Self-Evaluation. Ask the Lord in prayer to help you become a better listener in the areas in which you gave yourself a low score.

### 4. **Improve Your Loving Communication Habits** (page 19C)

- Complete individually according to the instructions. Make sure you follow through with steps 1-4 as much as depends on you. If your spouse will not pray with you, then return to the Lord in prayer privately. This homework has **3** primary purposes: **First** to help you identify those specific areas you need to work on. **Second** to help you make a prayer list of the areas you need to daily ask God to help you improve to be a loving communicator. **And third** to provide a structure for biblical forgiveness and reconciliation for past failure toward your spouse. God is merciful when we will follow His prescription for healing past hurts and failure. His prescription heals our hearts and can heal the hearts of our spouse if they will also yield to God's will and forgive. This worksheet should be reviewed and discussed as a couple, if possible.

## SESSION TWO HOMEWORK DESCRIPTIONS

### Remember:

- God blesses obedience.
- Our faithfulness in completing all of the homework is the beginning of a truly wonderful relationship with our spouse in Christ.
- Our transformation happens only as we abide in Him. This means our daily devotions and our obedience to His Word, including confession and repentance of our mistakes, are critical to this process.
- To see Jesus work miracles, the disciples had to follow Him.

Remember, practicing loving communication and biblical forgiveness and reconciliation are the tools God uses to break up the hardened soil of our hearts and our spouse's heart so His Word and grace can have the impact He desires. He will have victory if we will come to Him, hear Him and do what He says.

A suggestion for anyone that does not yet practice daily devotions is to use a workbook that interacts with the Bible, like ***The Biblical Principles for a Strong Foundation***. This topical workbook teaches from the Bible using a structure that encourages daily reading of the Word and journaling. It challenges the disciple using scriptural references and quotes from well known Bible teachers whose lives exemplify their messages. You may obtain a copy of the workbook, ***The Biblical Principles for a Strong Foundation*** from your leader who has it on a PC disc contained in the *Marriage is a Ministry* kit.

You may also email us at [www.parentingministry.org](http://www.parentingministry.org) with your questions.

## Marriage Is A Ministry - Homework

### *The Biblical Principles of Forgiveness and Reconciliation*

(Review and discuss as a couple)

---

The word, *forgive*, means literally, *to give away*. When a debt is forgiven, the rights to payment are *given away*. If someone injures me and I forgive him or her, I *give away* the freedom to continue being angry and resentful towards the one who wronged me. I absorb the loss myself. The word *pardon* is derived from the Latin word, *perdonare*, meaning to *grant freely*. True forgiveness is undeserved, unmerited, and free. It is not *just* or *fair*. In the Scriptures, *to forget* means, *to let go from one's power*.

#### ☞ **The Cost of Unforgiveness**

When we refuse to grant forgiveness, choosing rather to maintain our *right* to demand payment for wrongs done to us, we must be willing to absorb the cost incurred by that choice. Forgiveness is free, however unforgiveness carries with it a costly price tag. Unwillingness to forgive produces *resentment*. Resentment means, *to feel again*. Resentment clings to the past, reliving it over and over. Resentment, like *picking a scab*, prohibits our wounds from healing.

In Hebrews 12:15 we learn that bitterness, like a deep root, takes a firm hold in the human heart, then grows, and produces *fruit*. However, rather than nourish others, this fruit is bitter, causes trouble, and defiles others.

*"See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled."* Hebrews 12:15

Most of us do not readily admit that we have been harboring unforgiveness. However, Ephesians 4:31 teaches that there is undeniable evidence in an individual's life that the bitter tree of resentment is growing within their heart.

*"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice."* Ephesians 4:31

**Wrath** – An outburst of a strong, vengeful anger or indignation, seeking retribution.

**Anger** – A state of mind marked by fretfulness and grief.

**Evil speaking** – Unkind words, verbal abuse against someone, slander, wounding someone's reputation by evil reports, backbiting, insult and defamation.

**Malice** – Hateful feelings that we nurture in our hearts. A desire to see another suffer.

#### **"Fruits" of Unforgiveness**

- Pride
- Health problems
- Self-centered
- Self-righteous
- Self-pity
- Emotional disturbances
- Judgmental & critical of others
- Anxiety, tension & stress
- Lack of trust in relationships
- Lack of peace
- Thinking you are superior to others
- Ultra-sensitive & easily offended
- Absence of peace & joy
- Eating Disorders
- Broken fellowship with Jesus

## Marriage Is A Ministry - Homework

### ☪ *Why Forgive?*

Besides the before mentioned devastation that results from unforgiveness, we are indebted to forgive because:

#### **1. God commands it!**

Obedience to the Father is not optional. If we pick and choose when we will and will not obey God's commands, we will live unfruitful, ineffective, and spiritually barren lives.

*"But love your enemies, and do good...and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." Luke 6:35,36*

#### **2. In forgiving, we resemble Jesus, and bear the family likeness.**

The term *Christian* means *little Christ*. As Christians, we are called to carry the name of Christ to a lost world. We must be willing to bear His image; to be like Him. Christ demonstrated forgiveness. He came to this earth to bring forgiveness to the guilty. He gave the commission to the church to continue proclaiming forgiveness. We must, if we are to rightly bear His name, forgive those who have offended us!

*"...the one who says he abides in Him ought to walk in the same manner as He walked."*  
1 John 2:6

#### **3. It is the only means of breaking the cycle of blame and pain.**

Forgiveness offers the way out! It does not settle all questions of blame and fairness, often evading those questions altogether. It does allow a relationship to start over, to begin anew.

This truth is demonstrated in the life of Joseph in Genesis chapters 37-45. Though he was mistreated, betrayed, abandoned by his brothers, and sold into slavery, he refused to allow the root of bitterness to take hold of his life. Shortly before being reunited with his brothers, he testified of the healing work that God had done in his life during the years of separation, as demonstrated in the naming of his sons. In Genesis 41:51,52 we read:

*"Joseph named the firstborn Manasseh, "For," he said, "God has made me forget all my trouble in all my father's household."*

*"He named the second Ephraim, "For," he said, "God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction..."*

To *forget* in this sense does not mean to cease to remember, but *to let go*, to cease to let the memory of hurtful things control your present life. Joseph's *fruitfulness* was directly related to his *forgetfulness*. Remember that resentment means *to feel again*. Joseph chose to trust God with his past. Unforgiveness imprisons us to the past and locks out all potential for a fruitful life.

During Joseph's years alone in Egypt, he allowed God to heal his heart, which had been broken by his own brothers. Later, when given the opportunity, Joseph extended love, forgiveness, and grace to his brothers. Joseph speaks to his brothers in Genesis 45:5, 7, & 15.

*"Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life...and to keep you alive by a great deliverance...He kissed all his brothers and wept on them, and afterward his brothers talked with him."*

## Marriage Is A Ministry - Homework

There was no blaming, no explanations demanded, only the voice of mercy and forgiveness. The way was cleared for Joseph and his brothers to be reunited and begin a new relationship.

### 4. Forgiveness loosens the stranglehold of guilt in the offender

Joseph's brothers would have carried their grief to their graves if he had not extended forgiveness to them. Forgiveness, undeserved and unearned, can cut the cords and let the oppressive burden of guilt roll away.

*"...in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus."* Ephesians 2:7

If Jesus had not extended kindness to sinners, we would remain in the stranglehold of guilt. He made the first move toward us that made it possible for us to be reconciled to Him.

### ∞ Reconciliation

To *reconcile* is to restore to friendship or harmony, or to settle or resolve differences. It is the doing away of an enmity, the bridging over of a quarrel. Reconciliation implies that the parties being reconciled were formerly hostile to one another.

*"Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."*  
Ephesians 4:31,32

To be reconciled, the Scripture above simply instructs us to *"Let all bitterness... be put away from you... be kind... tenderhearted, forgiving..."* But *how* do we let bitterness be put away? *How* can we change our own feelings about a wrong done? *How* do we forgive?

#### ***As an act of the will, we must***

Confess our unforgiving spirit to God; ask Him to forgive us and to fill our heart with His love (1 John 1:9,10).

If possible, go to those we have wronged, share God's love and forgiveness with them, humbly make confession, and ask for their forgiveness (Matthew 5:22-24).

Spend time daily with the Lord in His Word, and in prayer (Matthew 6:33).

Ponder the meaning of the cross and the sacrifice Jesus made for your sins (Titus 3:3-5).

Ask the Holy Spirit to generate His love within your heart and give you the strength to obey and forgive others (Romans 5:5).

*"Forgiveness is not an emotion...  
Forgiveness is an act of the will, and the will can function  
regardless of the temperature of the heart."  
Corrie ten Boom*

*"Whenever I see myself before God and  
realize something of what my blessed Lord  
has done for me at Calvary, I am ready to  
forgive anybody anything, I cannot withhold  
it. I do not even want to withhold it."  
Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones*

*"The degree to which I am able and willing to forgive  
others is a clear indication of the extent to which I have  
personally experienced God my Father's forgiveness for me."  
Phillip Keller*

*Six of the most powerful words  
in the English language,  
"I was wrong. Please forgive me."*

## *Marriage Is A Ministry - Homework*

It is awfully hard to forgive. It is harder not to forgive. If we do not forgive, we deny what Jesus has done for us on the cross. Our experience of God's forgiveness is directly related to our ability to forgive. A readiness to forgive others is part of the indication that we have truly repented and received God's forgiveness. A broken heart toward God cannot be a hard heart toward others.

Pride and fear keep us from forgiveness and reconciliation. Refusing to give in, or be broken, insisting on our rights, and defending ourselves are all indications that our selfish pride is ruling our life, rather than the Lord. If fears of *what-ifs* are consuming and controlling you, you need to pray for the faith to trust and obey God. Enemies are very expensive to keep. Matthew 18:21-35 warns that an unforgiving spirit will put us in an emotional prison.

*"The first and often the only person to be healed by forgiveness is the person who does the forgiving... When we genuinely forgive, we set a prisoner free and then discover that the prisoner we set free was us."*  
Lewis Smedes

*You can go to our website at [www.parentingministry.org](http://www.parentingministry.org) to download a 13 page Workbook that may help you or someone you know further in this area.*



## Breaking the Cycle of Unloving Communication

**Step One:** Each night get alone with the Lord and ask Him to soften your heart and to speak to you on what you could have done differently in your discussions, arguments or situations with your spouse on this day.

**2 Corinthians 13:5 (NKJV) Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.**

**Ask the Lord:** Was there something I could have said or done with or to my spouse that would have glorified God better and/or stopped a situation from turning into an argument?

**Step Two:** Read the following verses and let the Lord reveal to you your part in this situation.

**1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NKJV) Love suffers long *and* is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. But whether *there are* prophecies, they will fail; whether *there are* tongues, they will cease; whether *there is* knowledge, it will vanish away.**

1: Were you impatient? Suffering long means you exercised the fruit of the Spirit.

**Galatians 5:22 (NKJV) But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,**

Or did your flesh rise up and want justice or your own way?

---

---

---

2: Were you unkind? The opposite of kindness is unkindness. Did you provoke your spouse? Did you get angry, yell, say hurtful/mean things? Did you judge them, ignore them or were you resentful towards them?

**Romans 12:10 (NKJV) Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another;**

---

---

---

Marriage Is A Ministry - Homework

3: Was jealousy the motive behind your actions toward your spouse?

**Romans 13:13-14 (NAS) Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.**

---

---

---

4: Were you haughty or arrogant? Did you belittle your spouse or make them feel unimportant?

**1 Peter 5:5 (NKJV) Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to *your* elders. Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for *“God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.***

---

---

---

5: Were you rude or act unbecoming? Did you embarrass your spouse or say something bad about them in front of someone else? Did you do something rude toward them that they have asked you not to do?

**Ephesians 4:29 (NKJV) Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.**

---

---

---

6: Were you only thinking of your position or side and not considering your spouse's view? Did you become defensive and try to defend your position and/or excuse your actions?

**Philippians 2:3 (NKJV) *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.***

---

---

---

Marriage Is A Ministry - Homework

7: Were you harboring bad thoughts toward your spouse minutes, hours, or days before this situation occurred? God has told us not to harbor bad thoughts but to forgive.

**2 Corinthians 10:5 (NKJV) casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,**

We need to take responsibility when we allow our mind to be consumed with bad or evil thoughts toward our spouse. If God knows us, all our sin, past, future, and yet His thoughts toward us are only good – **Psalm 139:17-18** – then how can we justify evil thoughts toward our spouse?

---

---

---

8: Have you been allowing discouragement and hopelessness toward your marriage overwhelm you? Have you been doubting God and His almighty power to intercede for you? “Love hopes all things.” Not doubts all things. If you doubt God and focus on your past problems and not on the loving all-powerful God, you will become discouraged and you will act this out to or in front of your spouse.

**Romans 5:5 (NKJV) Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.**

**Jeremiah 29:11 (NKJV) For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.**

---

---

---

**Step Three:** Pray & ask for God's forgiveness.

**Step Four:** Pray now and ask God for the humility and the strength to sit down with your spouse and admit your faults and ask for forgiveness. Then pray together with your spouse and together ask God for His strength to break these ungodly and sinful habits that have been practiced for so long.

**Remember:** Understanding how to meet each others companionship needs as a husband and wife takes time and loving communication. It also takes an attitude and willingness of wanting to learn and change.

- Q: Do you agree?                       Yes                       No  
Q: Are you finished learning?       Yes                       No



<b>LOVING COMMUNICATION SELF-EVALUATION</b>
---

Complete the *Loving Communication Self-Evaluation* to help you become more aware of your listening habits. Answer each question thoughtfully and honestly, then discuss as a couple.

***Communicating Knowledge and Attitudes***

#	Do You...	Most of the Time	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost Never
1	...tune-out your spouse when you don't agree with him/her or don't want to hear?				
2	...concentrate on what is being said even if you are not really interested?				
3	...assume you know what your spouse is going to say and stop listening?				
4	...repeat in your own words what your spouse has just said?				
5	...listen to your spouse's viewpoint, even if it differs from yours?				
6	...remain open to learning something from them, even if it seems insignificant?				
7	...find out what words mean when they are used in ways not familiar to you?				
8	...form a rebuttal in your head while your spouse is still talking?				
9	...give the appearance of listening when you are not?				
10	...daydream when your spouse is talking?				
11	...listen for main ideas, not just facts?				
12	...recognize that words don't always mean the same thing to different people?				
13	...listen to only what you want to hear, blotting out your spouse's whole message?				
14	...look at your spouse when he/she is speaking?				
15	...concentrate on your spouse's meaning rather than how he/she looks?				
16	...know which words and phrases you tend to respond to defensively or resentfully?				
17	...think about what you want to accomplish with your communication?				

*Marriage Is A Ministry - Homework*

**Communicating Knowledge and Attitudes**

#	Do You...	Most of the Time	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost Never
18	...plan the best time to say what you want to say?				
19	...think about how your spouse might react to what you say?				
20	...consider the best way to communicate (written, spoken, and/or the timing)?				
21	...always care about your spouse's emotional condition when speaking to him/her (if he/she is stressed, sad, worried, hostile, disinterested, rushed, angry, etc.)?				
22	...adjust your communication to your spouse's personality?				
23	...assume that your spouse knows and understands what you are communicating or have communicated to him/her?				
24	...allow your spouse to respectfully vent negative feelings toward you without becoming defensive?				
25	...regularly make efforts to increase your listening efficiency?				
26	...take notes, when necessary, to help you remember.				
27	...listen closely without being distracted by surroundings and/or children?				
28	...listen to your spouse without judging or criticizing?				
29	...restate instructions and messages to be sure you understand correctly?				
30	...listen to your spouse with preconceived assumptions or attitudes?				
31	... take responsibility for your part in the unloving communication by asking the Lord and your spouse to forgive you?				
32	... discuss with your children any difficulties you're having with your spouse?				

Note: Make sure you complete both pages of this self-evaluation as we will be using it in our next discipleship class.

Marriage Is A Ministry - Homework

**Improve Your Loving Communication Habits**  
(complete individually, then discuss as a couple)

---

---

Review pages 8 - 11 of your workbook and write out, by priority, any unbiblical communication habits you have been practicing in your home that you need God's strength to change.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

If you believe that you have not been demonstrating loving communication to your spouse, I strongly recommend that you follow the following steps to reconciliation.

- 1) Confess this to the Lord and ask Him to forgive you for not communicating love to *His* son/daughter.

1 John 1:9 *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*

- 2) Ask God to fill your heart with renewed love for your spouse.

Romans 5:5 *"Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us."*

- 3) Go to your spouse and confess your sin. For example, *"I love you, but I know that I have not been showing you that love with my words. I have been very impatient (unkind, etc.) and I apologize. Please forgive me. I love you and I am so glad to be your husband/wife."*

- 4) Pray with your spouse.

Write out a prayer of commitment to seek the Lord to empower you to change in these areas and to become the husband or wife that God desires you to be.

---

---

---

---

---

---

Marriage Is A Ministry – Self-Evaluation Scoring Sheet

To be used to score the homework on pages 19A & 19B

<b>Effective Listening Self-Evaluation Scoring Index</b>
--

Circle the number that represents the category you checked on each item of the *Effective Listening Self-Evaluation*.

#	Most of the Time	Frequently	Occasionally	Almost Never
1	1	2	3	4
2	4	3	2	1
3	1	2	3	4
4	4	3	2	1
5	4	3	2	1
6	4	3	2	1
7	4	3	2	1
8	1	2	3	4
9	1	2	3	4
10	1	2	3	4
11	4	3	2	1
12	4	3	2	1
13	1	2	3	4
14	4	3	2	1
15	4	3	2	1
16	4	3	2	1
17	4	3	2	1
18	4	3	2	1
19	4	3	2	1
20	4	3	2	1
21	4	3	2	1
22	4	3	2	1
23	1	2	3	4
24	4	3	2	1
25	4	3	2	1
26	4	3	2	1
27	4	3	2	1
28	4	3	2	1
29	4	3	2	1
30	4	3	2	1
31	4	3	2	1
32	4	3	2	1
<b>Total</b>				

**GRAND TOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_

110-120: Superior Listener	_____
99-109: Above Average Listener	_____
88-98: Average Listener	_____
77-87: Fair Listener	_____
<77: Poor to Very Poor Listener	_____