

Sacred Marriage Session 1

God's Purpose for Marriage: More than we can imagine

Video Session Notes:

Home: It could be a holy place or a place of strife.

We know the “how to”, we’ve lost the “heart to” of marriage.

I believe that marriage is not just a mechanical relationship between two people that needs to be tweaked or fixed. I believe it is a sacred enterprise that God can use to reveal Himself to us and to season our soul along the way.

Marriage, rather than being a compromise, might be the most difficult ministry you will undertake. If you're willing to accept this spiritual challenge God can make something wonderful.

What if God didn't design marriage to be easy. What if God designed marriage to make us holy, even more than to make us happy – to help us grow in the nature and character of His son, Jesus Christ.

It creates so much disillusionment in our marriage when we take our spiritual emptiness, the alienation we have from not cultivating a rich relationship with God and expecting our marriage to fill that hole.

Most people get married today because of a romantic high... when the romantic high fades we think the relationship has run its course.

Have you ever considered that you can be married for the glory of God? What does that mean?

1. God designed us to be married. Marriage isn't something I created. God designed a man to marry a woman and be with that woman the rest of his life. This is the life God designed for us.
2. I don't expect the bulk of my joy and fulfillment to come from my marriage relationship but with my relationship with God. (Matthew 6:33) – our lives should be centered around his purposes. If I am not aligned in my walk with God, there isn't a single human relationship that can overcome the emptiness that I'm going to have in my heart – and ultimately I will break down those human relationships
3. I see marriage as one of the way God can shape me into the image of His son. (Romans 8:28). God's purpose for me is for me to conform to the likeness of His son. God uses marriage to help move us toward that.

Marriage isn't about happiness – even though there are many happy moments – marriage helps shape us into the image of Jesus Christ.

If you are afraid to face your sin – don't get married – because marriage will expose your sin... but God can use that.

We think the answer to the challenges in our marriage is if we can just get our spouse to behave. We need to use marriage as a call to listen. Ask God: “what are you teaching me?”

Once I accepted that God has designed marriage to make me holy more than to make me happy, I actually became happier in my marriage than I’ve ever been – because I finally died to those expectations that no human relationship can ever fulfill.

We need a new understanding of what God created marriage for.

Of course God wants you to be happy. Of course God wants you to have meaningful and fulfilled relationships. But we get there by setting our lives up based on the Glory of God not some vain pursuit.

Note from the book:

“This is a book that looks and points beyond marriage. Spiritual growth is the main theme; marriage is simply the context. Just as celibates use abstinence and religious hermits use isolation, so we can use marriage for the same purpose—to grow in our service, obedience, character, pursuit, and love of God... The ultimate purpose of this book is not to make you love your spouse more—although I think that will happen along the way. It’s to equip you to love your God more and to help you reflect the character of his Son more precisely” (page 26).

Session 1 Discussion Questions:

Why did you get married? Or, maybe to put it another way, what were you hoping to get out of marriage?

- When you were first married, what did you think was the purpose of marriage? What do you think now?

At one point, Gary says that he used to think that getting married was “taking the easy way out”. What do you think he means? Did you ever think that getting married would solve all your problems and make life easy? Did it work out that way?

What has marriage done to your image about yourself?

- Gary says when he looked at himself as a married man, “there was a side I didn’t like – there was a spiritual challenge in marriage that no one warned me about.”
- In his book, Gary wrote, “I found there was a tremendous amount of immaturity within me that my marriage directly confronted” (page 23).
- He warned, “if you are afraid to face your sin – don’t get married – because marriage will expose your sin.”
- Has that happened in your life? Does this encourage you or discourage you?

What do you think of Gary’s critique of romantic love as the basis—or measurement of success—for marriage? How have your attitudes toward romantic love changed over time?

Do you agree with Gary that, in one sense, moderns “ask too much of marriage?” If so, in what way?

What has your marriage revealed to you about your sinful attitudes, selfish behaviors, and other character flaws?

Most people, when they see the sin in their own life and relationship, rather than repent and grow from the process the temptation is to run from it and start over with someone else; someone who doesn’t know all their failings.

Gary says God is the One who ultimately fulfills us, not our mate. If this is so, what contribution does our mate make to our life?

How do you react to the idea that God may have designed marriage to make us holy even more than to make us happy?