

## **Sacred Marriage Session 2**

### **The Refining Power of Marriage**

#### **Introduction**

In the first session we looked at the idea that God uses marriage to make us holy even more than to make us happy. It was a strange concept; one that we seldom think about as we generally are focused on our own happiness as the chief goal in life.

In this session we look at the refining power of marriage; the reality that one imperfect person is joined together with another imperfect person. In his book, chapter 8, Gary talks about two continents that collide and build up the Himalayas. In a way, two persons who both stumble collide and through that union something beautiful can come up – but it's not easy, it's not without pain. But God can use this intimate relationship to refine, strengthen and grow us in amazing ways.

#### **Video Session Notes:**

God can use even our spouse's flaws to help us grow spiritually. Since all of us are married to imperfect spouses, that's a pretty important lesson for us to learn.

James 3:2, "We all stumble in many ways". This points to the inherent difficulty in marriage; it's not an easy relationship – yet people are surprised when they find themselves in a difficult marriage.

- God can do something wonderful even in the process of being married to someone who stumbles. He can shape us into the people He wants us to be.
- A good case in point: Abraham Lincoln (see chapter 8).
- "You could endure for 15 minutes what I've endured for 15 years" (Abraham Lincoln).

How do I finish this task that God has appointed for me?

God knows where our character, attitudes need to be refined. The people we rub shoulders with are the very people he will use to accomplish that purpose.

- Proverbs 27:17, "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another."

Beautiful people do not just happen. Mature people are not an accident. It's a process. We're born sinners and we have to be refined. It's not always a pleasant experience, but through it He's shaping us, He's refining us.

- What failing of your spouse might God be using to refine you? To build patience, kindness, selflessness in your life?

If marriage is the union of one person who stumbles in many ways to another person who stumbles in many ways, occasionally having sex and making little people who stumble in many ways, why are so many people surprised when they discover how difficult marriage can be?

Most couples don't fall out of love; they fall out of repentance.

### **Notes from Chapter 8**

“We have it so easy that we can begin to be lulled to sleep, thinking that life *should* be easy or that it will *always* be easy. Once it gets a little difficult, we tend to become consumed with trying to make our lives comfortable again. But by doing so we miss a great spiritual opportunity” (page 131).

“A heavyweight boxing champion who dodges all serious contenders to consistently fight marshmallows is derided and ridiculed – and rightly so. Christians who dodge all serious struggles and consciously seek to put themselves in whatever situations and relationships are easiest are doing the same thing” (pg 133).

“A good marriage is not something you find, it’s something you work for... you must crucify your selfishness. You must at times confront, and at other times confess. The practice of forgiveness is essential” (pg 133).

“A difficult marriage does not pronounce a death sentence on a meaningful life. It presents several challenges, to be sure, but it also provides wonderful opportunities for spiritual growth” (pg 152).

### **Discussion**

Whom do you admire for the way they handled difficulties in their marriage? What do you admire most about these individuals?

When you consider the truth of James 3:2, what does that say about a person who is waiting to get married until they find the “perfect person”?

On the other hand; what does this same verse say to the person who is having trouble in marriage and considering leaving a relationship in search for their “soul mate”?

- Why are people tempted to think that marriage will be better with someone else?

Gary said, “Most people don’t fall out of love; they fall out of repentance.” What do you think he means by this?

Do you think Abraham Lincoln and Anne Morrow Lindbergh would have accomplished what they did if both had been in relatively “easy” marriages? Why or why not?

In what ways do you and your spouse face the difficulties in your marriage differently?

- What can you learn from your spouse’s approach?
- What can your spouse learn from your approach?

In what ways do you think you are “crashing into” your spouse? How can you soften that?

As crashes are inevitable, how do you think God can use the specific difficulties in your marriage to refine your character and prepare you for future ministry?

- In what ways has God already done this? Is there something beautiful and honoring to God that has resulted through some of your hard experiences?
- In what ways has your past prepared you for something far greater than you realized at the time?
- Where do you think God will take you in your marriage?

**Preparation for Next Week:** Read chapters 2 and 10 of *Sacred Marriage*.