

What Couples Are Saying About The Marriage Prayer

The format fits our busy lifestyle—small chunks, lots of illustrations that made us pause to share a laugh or a comment about topics we still deal with after thirty-five years of marriage. This book should be required reading for couples considering marriage, those recently married, and those of us who are still working on getting it right.

—Dave and Kathy, married thirty-five years

Finances are often a major point of contention in marriage, but rarely addressed by marriage book authors. We were happy to see that The Marriage Prayer covered this important topic.

—Josh and Karlene, married six years

We both found the format entertaining and engaging. The Marriage Prayer is a very positive focal point. We liked the practical applications focusing on the emotional and spiritual health of our spouse.

—Clark and Ann, married thirty-three years

The His and Her prayers are a great way to keep that commitment fresh in your mind, reminding you to give your best to your spouse every day!

—Colby and Renee, married seven years

We enjoyed the unique format of this book. The conversational writing style was easy to follow and the exercises helped us think about and apply the information presented.

—Johnny and Christy, married sixteen months

We've gained a new attitude and heart toward Jesus, each other, and anyone else, which came about from The Marriage Prayer ... "Help me love You more than her/him, and her/him more than anyone or anything else."

—Jeffrey and Julia, married seven years

We appreciated the examples, quizzes and practical applications suggested throughout the book. It does not matter how long you have been married, these suggestions are always helpful and a much need reminder that any marriage is a work in progress.

—Steve and Becky, married thirty years

I absolutely loved your Big Idea #6—"Marriage works well when we worship well." Ideas and thoughts jump off of the page wanting to be learned and implemented. We are looking forward to using this book in pre-marital and marriage counseling.

—Mike and Leslie, married thirty-two years

Every successful marriage needs the type of practical applications offered by The Marriage Prayer.

—Steve and Sue, married thirty-one years

THE
MARRIAGE PRAYER

**PATRICK MORLEY
AND DAVID DELK**

**MOODY PUBLISHERS
CHICAGO**

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PATRICK MORLEY AND DAVID DELK

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Editor: Jim Vincent

Cover Design: Levan Fisher Design

Cover Photos: © George Doyle & Ciarin Griffin/Stockbyte

Interior Design: Cathleen Kwas

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Morley, Patrick M.

The marriage prayer : a prescription to change the direction of your marriage / Patrick Morley and David Delk.

p. cm.

ISBN 978-0-8024-7550-3

1. Marriage—Religious aspects—Christianity. I. Delk, David. II. Title.

BV835.M675 2008

248.8'44--dc22

2008020248

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820 N. LaSalle Boulevard
Chicago, IL 60610

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Printed in the United States of America

Pat dedicates this book to the marriages of his daughter, Jen, and husband, Jay, and to his son, John, and wife, Kristie. And also to the memory of his father, Bob, and his mother, Alleen, who had a beautiful 54 year marriage. They lived for each other. Both passed away in 2002 within a few weeks of each other and went to be with Jesus.

David (and his wife Ruthie) dedicate this book to couples all across the country who, when facing devastating sin and difficult circumstances, are choosing to stay the course. A few of you have shared your story with us. You are our heroes.

Acknowledgments

All books are the products of many authors, but none more so than this.

A special thanks to Ruthie Delk for the Herculean effort you put forth. This book is so much better because you were involved. Thanks also to Ryan, Sarah, and Kyle for patience with early mornings, late nights, and more than one Saturday morning.

Thanks to Cathleen Kwas for infinite creativity and unlimited patience—a rare combination. Your work on design and layout is amazing.

We are grateful to work with a tremendous staff at Man in the Mirror. Many of them heard the concepts in this book being taught, while others gave their feedback on the manuscript. You all are amazing: Pam Adkins, Jim Angelakos, Ruth Cameron, Sharon Carey, Bernie Clark, Brett Clemmer, Will Fox, Joanne Hunt, Vanessa Jones, Donna Keiderling, Kelly Laughridge, Michael Lenahan, Stephanie Lopez, Liz Luke, Michael Maine, Daphne Mayer, Scott Russell, Tracie Searles, Jim Seibert, Jamie Smith, Antonio Stevens, Svana Tolf, Greg Wilkinson, and Rise Wilson.

At the risk of forgetting a few, we'd also like to thank all the couples who shared their stories and/or field-tested the book (in no particular order): Glen and Kimberly, Steve and Sue, Chuck and Linda, Dan and Alisa, Clark and Ann, Steve and Becky, Charles and Kim, Jay and Becky, Ken and Lee, Mike and Michelle, Chris and Lorraine, Scott and Pam, John and Angie, Steve and Sue, Jeffrey and Julia, Mike and Leslie, Robert and Kitty, Lyle and Marge, Bill and Beth, Robert and Sarah, Mike and Holly, Lance and Sonya, David and Lynn, Craig and Leigh, Rod and Judy, John and Lori, Keith and Lisa, Fred and Deb, Tony and Pat, Josh and Karlene, David and Karen, and Colby and Renee.

In addition, we are so grateful to work with a wonderful team at Moody Publishers—Janis Backing, Dave DeWit, John Hinkley, Holly Kisly, Paul Santhouse, Greg Thornton, and Jim Vincent.

Thanks so much to Robert Wolgemuth, Erik Wolgemuth, and Andrew Wolgemuth, for the great work they do as our representatives.

Thanks also to the men and women who open their lives to us week by week—it's a great privilege to walk this journey with you.

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How to Use This Book

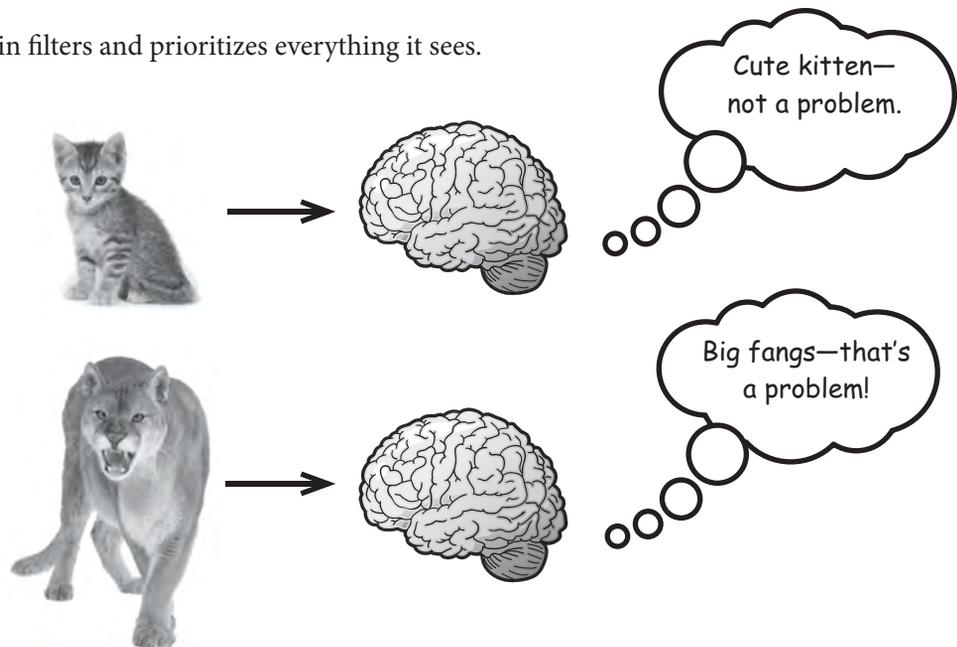
You've probably noticed that this book is different from most other books at the bookstore. You may even be wondering exactly what to think about it.

We'll grant you that it's not your ordinary book on relationships. Yes, it has a lot of content that summarizes what the Bible says about marriage, but it's presented in a completely different way.

Why?

There's been a lot of research done in the last few years on how people learn. There's also been a lot of work done on what actually leads to changes in behavior.

You see, your brain filters and prioritizes everything it sees.



Your brain automatically helps you by keeping low-priority items from cluttering your thinking. Unfortunately, studies show that the text of traditional books is usually treated as low-priority by your mind. It's really difficult to overcome the fact that your brain says boring, old text just must not be that important. That means you have to work extra hard to learn and apply information presented in the traditional way.

So we decided to do something different. We've used this research to design this book for maximum impact. We wanted you to not only understand the ideas in the book, but also put them into action. We learned what kicks your brain into gear and designed the book based on these ideas.

What are the key design features we use and why are they important?

We integrate images to communicate ideas.

Studies have shown that images lead to up to 89 percent improvement in recall and transfer. We want the ideas in this book to be *understandable* and *memorable*. You'll also see that the graphics we've included are not just added to the book. **They're as much a part of the "text" as the text.**



We help you to think—really think.

We try to *motivate*, *encourage*, *chide*, *cajole*—and several other verbs—to get you to really consider how these ideas apply to your life. That's the whole purpose, right? But we keep it fun. You'll find discussion questions, puzzles, fill-in-the-blank, rating scales, and other activities all designed **to take your reading beyond the surface.**

We write in a conversational style.

If you're an English professor, watch out. Some of our sentences in this book aren't complete. Like this. That's because studies show up to **40 percent better retention** from a *conversational tone* than formal writing. So we tell *stories* instead of *lecture*. And while we take the subject of marriage very seriously, we try not to take ourselves too seriously.

We use true stories.

People learn best from seeing how real people deal with real problems. We had some great couples open their lives to us so we could tell you their stories. We know some of these will echo your experience in ways that are rich and real.

We've made the applications believable and achievable.

You'll notice a bunch of tiny, bite-sized “next steps” in this book (like the sample “connection point” below). That's because we know that *if we can get you moving* in the right direction, chances are *you will keep moving*. And if you need to turn around from where you are headed now, **it's a lot easier to do that with a small step than with a giant leap.**

 **Connection Point**

How much honesty is there in your communication today compared to five years ago?

Him: Much Less Honesty Less Honesty Honesty More Honesty Much More Honesty

Her: Much Less Honesty Less Honesty Honesty More Honesty Much More Honesty

We write so you can discuss this book with other couples

You'll find many places in the book where we ask you to share your thoughts with your spouse, and then with a group. If possible, find some friends and work through this book together. Life's too short to go it alone. If you're a group leader, be sure to check out our Leader's Guide at the back of the book.

We speak to your heart.

We know that you'll **remember and act on things that you care about**. So we speak to your emotions—with *humor*, elements of *surprise*, appeals to your *curiosity*, and *stories* of real people.

We know change isn't easy.

There are no formulas for a perfect marriage. The Marriage Prayer isn't a mantra you can repeat to make everything turn out okay. We offer this book as a part of the process of change that God wants to work in your heart.

We include Scripture.

The best writing and insights in the world have no inherent power to change a human heart. God promises His word will transform lives. So most of the time when we reference a verse we include the entire text as well. If you skip some stuff in this book, don't skip the Scripture.

In addition, this material has been taught on numerous occasions to groups of men and women, and we also had groups field-test the presentation. They helped us refine the content and the layout so that it will be more effective for you. We are grateful to our publishers for being willing to experiment with something new and different.

By the way, you and your spouse can share this book. We'll ask you to grab some scratch paper a few times, but other than that it won't be a problem. We hope you enjoy the new format, but more than that, we pray God will use it to help grow your marriage.

Finally, we also owe a debt of gratitude to Kathy Sierra and Bert Bates, the creators of the Head First series of books. The lessons learned from these leaders informed much of the learning theory we have implemented in this book.

We've had a blast working on this book. It's been great to talk to so many couples and hear all that God has done in their lives. We consider it a privilege that you are investing your time and energy to have a better marriage! It's a joy to be on the journey with you. Thanks for reading, and may God bless your marriage.

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Bert Bates' and the signature on the right is 'David Delk'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.

Introducing The Marriage Prayer

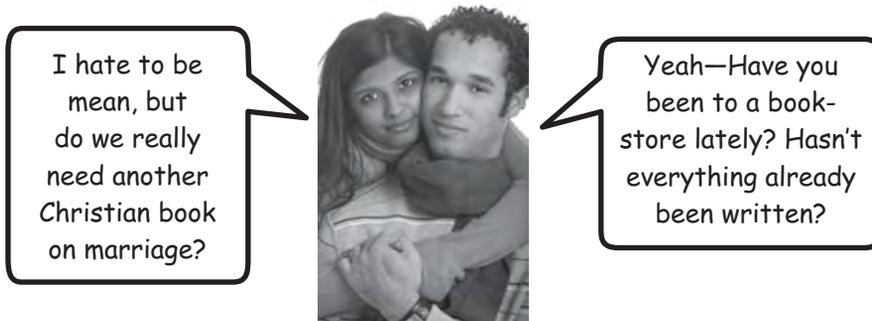
We've been working with people—especially men—for a long time at Man in the Mirror. Men struggle with a lot of things. But if we were to take the marriage issue and put it on one side of the scale, and take all of the other problems men deal with and put them on the other side, the marriage issue would outweigh all the others combined. By a ton.

We live in a fallen world, and marriages are often not working the way God planned.

When it's going good, marriage can be the best thing in the world. There is no greater joy than experiencing the unadulterated love of another person.

When it's going bad, marriage can be horrible.

Another Book on Marriage?



That's a fair question. And our answer is, basically, yes.

So why would we write this book? If our goal was to compile more information about marriage, we wouldn't have. But that's not our goal. If you're like most of us, you probably already *know* a lot more about relationships than you actually *do*.

When you know a lot more than you do in a marriage, you end up like most people in a “get along” marriage. They’re getting along. These are not bad marriages, they’re good...but they’re not great. These marriages are a pale shadow of the full potential we see in the Scriptures for a thriving marriage.

How do you build a thriving marriage? We’ve found consistently over the years that people end up doing what they really want to do. So one of the first steps in building a thriving marriage is to **want** to build one. Our desires change not so much based on what we know, but more often based on what we **believe**. So we hope to help you really believe some things about marriage, God, your spouse, real love, Jesus, and the love and forgiveness God has for you.



Exactly. That’s what *The Marriage Prayer* is all about.

This book is different from any marriage book we’ve ever seen. It’s not so much a book as it is a user’s guide. If it’s tough to put together a bookshelf without the directions, why should we think we can build a marriage?

The one main idea that permeates this book is this—your relationship will improve dramatically if you start to pray a prayer every day that summarizes what you hope for in your marriage.

The applications come every few pages in bite-sized pieces that you can actually do.

Our goal is to motivate, encourage, and help you take real steps to a better marriage. We’ve worked really hard to make things biblical, simple, believable, and compelling.

We pray God will use our words to change your mind, your heart, your behavior, and your marriage—for His glory.

The Marriage Prayer

The first step we would suggest to improve your marriage is to begin praying The Marriage Prayer every day. The text of this prayer summarizes a biblical view of marriage. In the rest of the book, we'll walk through each of the concepts and draw lots of practical applications.

Start right now by reading the prayer on the next page, then say it as a prayer to God. Hopefully, as you continue through the book, the prayer will come to mean more and more to you every day.

Guys, this one's for us. Remember, pray it every day.



The Marriage Prayer—For Him

Father,

I said, "Til death do us part"—I want to mean it.

Help me love You more than her,

and her more than anyone or anything else.

Help me bring her into Your presence today.

Make us one, like You are three in one.

I want to hear her, cherish her, and serve her—

So she would love You more and we can bring You glory.

Amen

Ladies, here's ours. Pray it daily for your husband.



The Marriage Prayer—For Her

Father,

I said, "Til death do us part"—I want to mean it.

Help me love You more than him,

and him more than anyone or anything else.

Help me bring him into Your presence today.

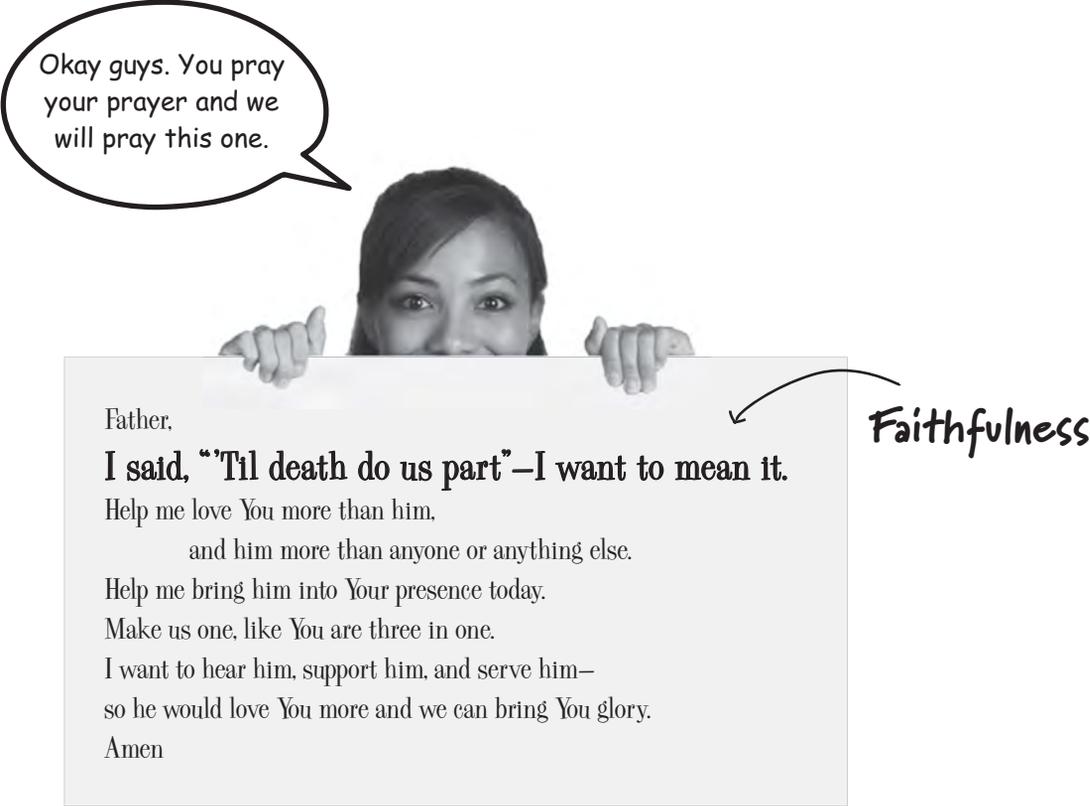
Make us one, like You are three in one.

I want to hear him, support him, and serve him—

So he would love You more and we can bring You glory.

Amen

Section 1: Faithfulness



Okay guys. You pray
your prayer and we
will pray this one.

Father,

I said, “Til death do us part”—I want to mean it.

Help me love You more than him,

and him more than anyone or anything else.

Help me bring him into Your presence today.

Make us one, like You are three in one.

I want to hear him, support him, and serve him—
so he would love You more and we can bring You glory.

Amen

Faithfulness

The next two chapters are about FAITHFULNESS. It can be a daunting thing to realize that marriage is forever.

Our culture has certainly lost this perspective—often death is not the thing doing the parting anymore; a lot of other things are. But you’re reading this book because you want to be faithful to your spouse and to God.

In the next two chapters, we’ll examine two big ideas:

- ▶ **After God, but before all others, make your spouse your top priority.**
- ▶ **It is God’s will for this marriage to work.**

These chapters will give you practical ideas and proven steps to build security and deal with difficult times.

But we can't be faithful to our spouse in our own strength—that's why it's part of The Marriage Prayer. Begin each day asking God for continued faithfulness: "Father, I said 'Til death do us part'—I want to mean it..."



1: Security

Helping Your Spouse Feel Safe in Your Love

Throughout this book you'll find short exercises to do. We promise they won't take long. Even if you are the type who never does these things, PLEASE DO THEM. Just this once, okay? We'd say "please" one more time, but we don't want to start the book by annoying you. Here's the deal—if you're going to read this book anyway, you may as well add 10 percent more effort and get two or three times the benefit. (Besides, your spouse will really appreciate your making the extra effort.)



Think back to the days after you met your spouse. What was it like when you finally realized this was the person for you? As you remember how you felt, what are the first words that come to mind?

Him

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous | <input type="checkbox"/> Loved | <input type="checkbox"/> Cautious | <input type="checkbox"/> Excited |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pressured | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Her

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ecstatic | <input type="checkbox"/> Scared | <input type="checkbox"/> Thrilled | <input type="checkbox"/> Relieved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous | <input type="checkbox"/> Loved | <input type="checkbox"/> Cautious | <input type="checkbox"/> Giddy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secure | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Take no more than five minutes to discuss the words you chose. (We want you to be willing to do the exercises later.) What surprises you about your spouse's choices?



A (Slightly Disguised) True Story about... Security and Significance Justin and Erin

Erin (walking in door at night after a Brownie leadership meeting): "Hey honey—how was your meeting tonight?"

Justin (watching TV in the living room): "Good."

Erin: "What did they serve for your dinner?"

Justin: "Uhh... prime rib."

*A pretty ordinary exchange, right? **Except that Erin already knew that the Contractors' Association dinner meeting was actually next week.***

Yesterday, she'd asked Justin if he could pick up their daughter from a friend's house after work. He'd told her the meeting for his new association was that night. She made other arrangements.

When he found out the next day that he didn't have the meeting, he didn't call Erin. She went online during the day and found out the real date.

Neither of them said anything more that night after their brief exchange. Then, at about two in the morning, Erin rolled over and punched Justin in the shoulder. "I checked online and I know you didn't have your meeting tonight, you big jerk."

To be continued...

Sound familiar? Stuffing something rather than talking about it?

How long has it been since you listened to a story around a campfire? Last year? Twenty years ago? No matter how long it's been, there's just something magical about hearing an interesting tale around a crackling fire.

Imagine what it would have been like thousands of years ago sitting around a fire at night with the Israelites. Since that was an oral culture, those times together would have been treasured and valued. When Moses told how the world began, you would have heard him say five times, "It was good." Then a sixth time he says, "It was very good."

Can you picture it in your mind? "It was good... It was very good."

After all that, it would have been quite a shock when you finally heard—"It is not good..." What isn't good? "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone'" (Genesis 2:18). In other words, the whole creation was good—everything—but it was not yet complete, because man did not have woman.

You and your spouse were literally made for each other.



Have you ever gotten down to the last piece of a jigsaw puzzle and realized you couldn't find the last piece? You look and look but it's nowhere to be found. Then, as a last resort, you move the sofa and there it is.

Finding your spouse is like finding that final piece. There's a "rightness" that every human being longs to experience.

*Did you read the introduction? If not, **PLEASE READ IT NOW.** It's really important. We tell you why we give you lots of small action steps in this book. (They'll help your marriage—we promise.)*

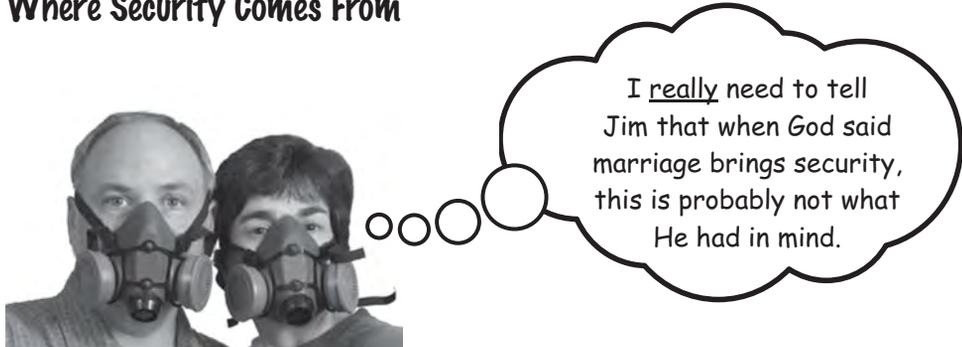
PLEASE DO TRY THIS AT HOME



What's one way that you know your spouse was made for you? Is there a characteristic about them that "just fits"? Share that characteristic with your spouse and why you appreciate it.

Finding the one God gave you to spend your life with brings a powerful sense of security. You know that whatever else life might bring, there's one person who will always be right there with you. God said "It was not good..." because we need this sense of security that comes from real relationships, particularly within marriage.

Where Security Comes From



If you've been married more than a few months, you know that the wonderful rush of those first heady days often doesn't last. If you've been married a few years, you've probably slogged through dirty diapers, sales contests at work, or rushed dinners as you both run different directions. If you've been married a decade, you've likely had a first house, church committees, and trips to the emergency room.

It's easy in the honeymoon phase, when everything we do is right. But how are we supposed to find and provide security for the long term in our marriage?

Physically, we feel secure when we are in a safe place. We need to feel protected. We need to have our basic needs met—for food, clothing, and shelter.

It's the same way relationally. We feel secure in a relationship when we feel safe and we know that our needs are being met. Security comes when we are loved unconditionally by another person. Security comes when we know that it really is "til death do us part." But relationally, security also comes when we **give** as well as **get**, so part of feeling secure is being able to serve and meet the needs of our spouse. That's what we'll talk about in the rest of this chapter—how you **get** security in marriage and how you can **give** security to your spouse.

God gives us marriage for mutual support and encouragement. It's meant to be a safe

harbor of love and respect. **But if we don't feel secure in our marriage, we'll spend all of our time worrying about that and none of our time growing and developing into the person God wants us to be.** So it's important to be secure; but it's also important to create security for our spouses so they can grow as well. In order to make it until "til death do us part," you need to help your spouse feel secure. To do that, you need to understand how to help them meet their greatest needs.

A (Slightly Disguised) True Story about...
Security and Significance
Justin and Erin (continued)

*After she punched Justin, Erin's next reaction was to tell him **she** was sorry. She felt bad that she hadn't told him she knew his meeting was changed. She was afraid he would be angry that she was checking up on him. This was a holdover from a pattern that dominated the early years of their relationship.*

A lack of security...

Both Erin and Justin carried a lot of destructive habits into their marriage. Neither of them grew up in a Christian home, and they weren't Christians until after they had been married for several years.

As a young man, Justin drank after work and occasionally ended up visiting topless bars. For many years into his marriage, several times each month he turned his cell phone off after work and then finally arrived home after midnight.

A lack of security...

Erin just hoped this kind of behavior would go away. She couldn't tell anyone—she didn't want to make Justin or herself look bad. They had no friends they could open up with; she certainly couldn't tell anyone in their families.

A lack of security...

When he stumbled in late one night, she met him at the door in tears. “Why do you treat me this way? I would never do this to you!” Justin’s response was his standard—“Can we talk about this tomorrow?”

Justin knew deep down that he was wrong, but he didn’t want to admit it. He felt like a failure as a husband and as a man. He protected his self-image by getting angry and forcing Erin to back down.

To be continued...

A Man’s Greatest Need

What do men want? We think you can boil it down to three things.

1. We want something we can give our lives to—a **cause**.
2. We want someone to share it with—a **companion**.
3. We want a reasonable explanation for why number one and number two are so difficult—a **conviction**.



That’s right. Men need to give themselves to a cause that makes sense.

Men want to be significant. They want to do something with their lives. When a man finds a place of significance he feels secure. He knows that this is how God has wired him to be.

Even men without a lot of ambition or motivation want it to matter that they have lived. The trouble comes when a man finds himself consistently blocked from satisfying this desire to be significant. Often, these men go into a funk that affects everyone and everything around them. Perhaps that’s happened to you.

ASK YOUR HUSBAND...

(Wife, read these questions to your husband.)

Do you agree that most men want a cause, a companion, and a conviction?
How would you say this in your own words?

A Woman's Greatest Need

After God said, "It is not good for man to be alone," what did He say?

"I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). The woman was made by God to be a companion in relationships. Men need a female companion, and females need a male companion.



A woman is designed to be a companion, a nurturer, and a helper. That doesn't mean a husband doesn't help his wife, but her basic nature is that she wants to be a companion, she wants to satisfy the "aleness" that men feel. She's made to desire that connection with a man.

One way of talking about a woman's greatest need is to say that she wants **intimacy**. *Intimacy* means to be known, accepted, and loved at the deepest level of who she is.

Does she want to do something significant with her life? Does she want a cause? Does she want a mission? Of course! But even more than that, she longs for her husband to know and treasure her for who she really is.

ASK YOUR WIFE...

(Husband, read these questions to your wife.)

Do you agree that a woman's greatest need is for intimacy? How would you say this in your own words?

A man was made for significance. A woman was made for intimacy. So the Scripture tells the wife to respect the husband (significance), and the husband to love the wife (intimacy). "However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).

Here are some other ways to understand how men and women typically find security. (Of course these are generalizations, and they don't hold true for every single man and woman. But they are generalizations because they do apply to most people to some degree. So, just because they are not always true, don't discount the fact that they are usually true.)

	Man	Woman
Greatest need:	significance	intimacy
Principal drive:	to be respected	to be cherished
Orientation:	to task	to relationship
Principal activity:	providing	nurturing
Direction of creativity:	work	home
Deepest fear:	failure to provide	losing a spouse or child
Risk-orientation:	taking risks	seeking security
Principal concerns:	money and meaning	husband and children



NBAS (No-Brainer Action Step)

Tell your spouse which line of the chart fits you best.
Which words on the chart would you change?

Making Your Marriage a Safe Place

Security becomes the foundation for everything else God wants to accomplish in your marriage. If you or your spouse doesn't feel safe in your relationship, you won't be able to have a vibrant marriage. Instead of being able to serve your spouse and help them grow, you'll be hung up trying to have your own needs met.

Security must first of all come from Christ, not your spouse. Jesus promises to give you everything you really need. "Preach the gospel" to yourself every day. What does that mean? It means that you need to help yourself remember that you are perfectly loved and accepted by God. Jesus protects and guarantees your eternal security. "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:27-29).

Our security in Christ flourishes when we realize:

- **we can abandon ourselves to His grace and**
- **we can risk everything for His glory.**

The gospel gives us the radical freedom to forget about ourselves because we know our ultimate needs will be met. We're like a person who can jump confidently from a cliff because he's wearing a safety harness, rope, bungee cord, and a parachute, with a giant air bag waiting at the bottom.

In contrast, if we don't get our security from Jesus first, then we'll place a burden on our spouse that they were never meant to bear. They simply cannot meet our deepest needs.

It's the difference between a vacuum cleaner and a hair dryer.



No security in Christ = you try to suck meaning from the people around you, and it sucks the life from them. You're like a relational vacuum cleaner.

Security in Christ = you are living out of the overflow of Christ's love, so you can "blow" His love to others, like a relational hairdryer.



Connection Point

For both of you: Rate yourself on this scale:

Him: vacuum cleaner hair dryer

Her: vacuum cleaner hair dryer

How does this affect your marriage?

How to Give Your Spouse Security



The **BIG** Idea:

After God, but before all others, make your spouse your top priority.

God gave you your spouse to be your first responsibility. After your relationship with Him, the most important thing is to help your spouse become all God wants him or her to be. When your spouse knows they are the most important person in your life, they will have security.

When we pray, “I said ‘til death do us part”—I want to mean it,” we are asking God to help us be faithful. If you make your spouse the most important priority in your life after God, faithfulness will follow. The rest of this book will show you practical ways to make your spouse your top priority.

WAIT! You can't leave me hanging. How can I help my husband find significance in our marriage?



You're right. That would be cruel. We'll cover a lot more later, but here are a few practical ideas to help a man find security.

- **Encourage him in tasks that have an impact.** What is something your husband is involved in that makes a difference? If you can't think of anything, encourage him to find an outlet—such as helping with a sports team, assisting in a class at church, or chaperoning a Boy Scout outing. If he's already involved, ask how you can join him. One friend finally realized coaching baseball was great for her husband. Instead of resenting it, now she is the team mom.

- **Show appreciation for the things he does.** Everyone needs encouragement. Your husband has a lot of pressures and demands on his time and attention. Let him know how much you appreciate his earning an income, fathering your children, and being your husband.
- **Help him find opportunities for success with you, the children, and others.** Set him up to succeed, not to fail. Small choices with positive results lead to more good choices and more positive results. Encourage him to take a short walk with you, to say a prayer with the kids before bed, or to talk over the sermon with the family at Sunday lunch.
- **Clearly communicate your needs.** Most husbands want to do a good job. But a husband can't read his wife's mind. Tell him how to serve you so he can succeed.
- **Minimize criticism that belittles or degrades.** Nagging gets you nowhere in the long run. If your husband is not living strong, it's probably because he's insecure and unsure of what to do. Belittling and criticizing only digs the hole deeper.

Implement one of these ideas today and see how God uses it in your relationship.



Hellooooo!!! If you're gonna help the ladies, the least you could do is give us a few ideas as well!

You're right. Again, that's pretty much what the rest of the book is about, but here are a few ideas to help you provide intimacy to your wife.

- **Stay connected with her emotionally.** Your wife wants you to understand how she feels, and she wants to know what is going on in your heart and mind as well. Take a moment today and talk with her about one substantive thing going on in your life. God cares so much about this that He instructed the

newlywed husband to invest a year in nothing but the happiness of his wife—“he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married” (Deuteronomy 24:5).

- **Avoid criticism that threatens her sense of self.** Your wife faces a lot of pressure from our culture, her relationships, and her own self-image. She needs to know that you love her for who she is in spite of what she does or doesn't do. Tell her today that you love her no matter what.
- **Talk to her and pray with her.** Communication is a key to creating intimacy with your wife. Make time every day to have meaningful interaction. Ask questions about her day. Say The Marriage Prayer with her before you go to bed tonight. Look her in the eyes, ask how she's doing, and really listen to her answer.

A (Slightly Disguised) True Story about...

Security and Significance

Justin and Erin (continued)

Erin had spent years feeling unloved and unappreciated. She had the responsibility for the home and kids while Justin had the freedom to do whatever he wanted to do. But she never had the courage to really confront Justin.

Finally, Erin and Justin got involved in a small group with their church. After a few years of sitting in their leader's home and talking with their group, they came to realize that these people really cared about them. Due to some crises going on with other group members, they finally felt comfortable sharing their own story.

Over the next few months they grew in their understanding of God's love for them and their love for one another. Justin began to see how he should respect his wife and find his joy in their family. Erin finally felt secure enough to express her feelings to Justin without backing down and blaming herself.



Security in the love of Christ and in their love for one another...

Now they spend more time together as a family and are integrally involved in the life of their church. Their experience with Christ has transformed their marriage.

But like all of us, they're still a work in progress, Guess what? This story isn't an episode from years past—it happened only a few months ago. The difference this time? The episode ended with them talking and laughing in the middle of the night. That's progress.



Another Really Big Idea: The Emotional Bank Account

Every human being has what we might call an emotional bank account. Every interaction with your spouse is either a deposit or a withdrawal.

If you ignore your spouse when they are talking to you and continue reading or watching TV, that's a withdrawal. If you bring breakfast in bed, that's a deposit.

One way to help your spouse have security in your relationship is to make more deposits than withdrawals.

Every human being banks somewhere. Each person has emotional needs, and they attempt to have them met. If you don't fill these needs for your spouse, chances are that somebody else will. So be sure to memorize your spouse's account number. (And if you've forgotten it, ask your spouse—they'll be more than happy to remind you. 😊)

A Solid Foundation

Finding and providing security in your marriage relationship becomes a solid foundation for everything God wants to do in and through you individually and as a couple. Praying The Marriage Prayer can help you remember that your spouse is a gift to be treasured from God. When we pray in faith, He will answer and give us hearts to love Him and our spouse. When we make our spouse our top priority after God, we ultimately find the joy our hearts desire as well.

CHAPTER REVIEW

Using what you learned in this chapter, choose the correct answers for the multiple choice questions below. Give yourself 50 points for each correct answer.

1. In terms of relationships, you are either a ...
 - a. Pisces or Leo
 - b. hair dryer or vacuum cleaner
 - c. lizard tail or monkey foot
2. One of a man's greatest needs is ...
 - a. a remote control
 - b. tickets to local revival of *Les Miserables*
 - c. significance
3. One of a woman's greatest needs is ...
 - a. a bathrobe made from Peruvian yak fur
 - b. intimacy
 - c. Chanel #5
4. A key to providing security is to remember that your spouse has ...
 - a. flat feet
 - b. a large handgun in the closet
 - c. an emotional bank account

You Haven't Finished This Chapter Until...



We've got big hopes and dreams for this book. We've been planning, working, and praying so that God could use it to help your marriage. But He can't help you if you aren't open to Him really working in your life.

So, don't go on to the next chapter until...

- ❑ You've done all the exercises, including the Please Do Try This at Home (p. 21), No-Brainer Action Step (p. 27), the Connection Point (p. 28) and the sections
- ❑ Ask Your Spouse (pp. 25 and 26).
- ❑ You've begun saying The Marriage Prayer every day so that it is becoming a habit.
- ❑ Together, you've talked through the reflection questions (see below) either alone or with your group.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Use the questions to cement the ideas from this chapter into your marriage. Discuss them with your spouse and your small group of couples.

1. Is security an issue that you really struggle with? Why or why not?
2. What parts of Justin and Erin's "A True Story" in this chapter could you relate to? What aspects seemed foreign to you? What lessons could you learn from it for your marriage?
3. Does the big idea from this chapter resonate with you? Would your spouse say that they are your top priority after God?
4. What is one practical take-away you garnered from this chapter that you will implement in the next week? How will you do it?