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HOME TO HOME:

PASSING ON FIVE CORNERSTONES OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

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Acknowledgments

Barbara and I want to express our deepest appreciation to Lorraine Broom not only for her competent editing work on **Home to Home** but also for her clarity in helping us to express ideas on paper. Developing biblical, transferable material on marriage that fosters the building of deep relationships between several couples is no easy task! Her keen insights into Christian marriage, the church, and discipling relationships have helped this material immensely!

Dedication

Barbara and I would like to dedicate **Home to Home** to our seven children, each of which we love dearly and are extremely proud of:

Sara, Alisha, Dan, Jon Vincent, Anne, Sarah, and Brittney

HOME TO HOME

A five-lesson Couple-to-Couple discipling experience to strengthen marriages built on the Lord Jesus Christ.

With Jesus Christ as the foundation, marriages can be all that God wants them to be — solid and enduring when rough times come, lively and contributing, and a joy to everyone who observes them.

This discipleship material by Jim and Barbara Grunseth is an excellent tool that couples can use to influence one another through interaction and encouragement as they study God's perspective on the marriage relationship and learn to depend on His power.

Al and Lorraine Broom

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AUTHORS

Jim and Barbara Grunseth serve with Priority Associates of Campus Crusade for Christ. Jim is a graduate of West Point and holds a Masters in Counseling-Psychology from Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. He has served on staff for almost thirty years. Jim and Barbara are the authors of **Remember the Rowboats** *Anchor your Marriage to Christ, and Embracing the Truth.*

Barbara graduated from the University of Wisconsin with a degree in deaf education. She has taught many years at Faith Christian School. She has been on full time staff with Campus Crusade for Christ for ten years. Together, they have seven children and six grandchildren.

Jim

My first wife, Julie, and I would have been married for twenty years, missing our anniversary by only seven days. We were blessed with four wonderful children and were serving the Lord full time.

During my final year at seminary, Julie was diagnosed with breast cancer. She fought valiantly through seven years of chemotherapy, radiation, hair loss, eight surgeries, a bone marrow transplant, and five unsuccessful trips to the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, Maryland. When the disease spread to her lungs, the time came when she could no longer breathe. The Lord took her home.

As our family lived through those very painful years, our faith in God grew. We learned to keep our eyes on Christ who is our life.

Tim, my good friend and prayer/accountability partner, woke up one night and sensed clearly from God that he should encourage me to call Barbara, whom I had never met. I did! God is gracious and faithful.

Barbara

My first husband and I were both Christians before we married in 1974. After eight years of marriage, my husband slowly began to turn away from the Lord and set his heart on worldly success and all of its alluring deceptions.

After the birth of our third child, he disclosed to me the adulterous affair he was having. Shortly thereafter, he served me with divorce papers. Wanting to save our marriage, I tried to change his mind by striving to be more pleasing to him, and I also went to a Christian Marriage Counselor.

All efforts failed. The Lord prompted me to eventually let him go into His hands. I simply obeyed. I felt like I was ripped in half; my life's dreams died. A number of friends no longer approved of me. The church did not know what to do with me.

Through this terrible time, I made the decision to cling to God and God alone. I was a single parent for eleven years, choosing not to search for a mate but entrusting all of my needs to my Lord. I decided never to marry again unless God brought to me a faithful man who would want our marriage to glorify and serve Him.

The Lord is faithful and good! I received a phone call out of the blue one day from Jim. We talked for two hours. It soon became evident that God had a plan for us beyond our dreams! With kindred spirits and seven children between us, we were married. God is restoring the years the locusts have eaten (Joel 2:25).

INTRODUCTION

Home to Home: Passing on Five Cornerstones of Christian Marriage is a six week "couple to couple" Bible study and discipleship tool that helps develop strong, caring relationships built upon the Rock—the Lord Jesus Christ.

In our churches we are fighting a spiritual war of immense proportions. Too many homes are built upon the shifting sands of our godless culture. Over 50% of all marriages are destroyed by divorce. Children are left to pick up the pieces.

Godly homes produce godly children, who are to grow and be sent out to reach the world for Christ. The hate, shame, isolation, and despair that divorce causes often neutralizes people, stunting their spiritual growth and fruitfulness. Satan will do whatever he can to thwart the advance of the Gospel.

We want to serve you and your church. Like you, we know that your church is only as strong as her families. If marriages continue to be destroyed, the enemy will have done much to hinder men and women in our churches from being equipped for effective ministry and from shining Christ's love and Gospel to others.

Our passion is: ***To help marriages, families, and individuals find lasting hope and a future in the Lord Jesus Christ.***

Our prayer is that **Home to Home** will be used as a reproductive discipling tool where one married couple, the **Host Couple** (leaders), will meet with one other couple, the **Guest Couple**, for six weeks to:

1. Become strong in the Lord and His Word by developing hearts for God.
2. Develop healthy, supportive relationships that are genuine and encouraging.
3. Grasp the importance of evangelism and discipleship and be actively involved in reaching new couples for Christ.
4. Capture and promote the vision of being used of God to reach the world for Christ through their marriages, families, and churches.
5. Equip and train that Guest Couple to fulfill the role as Host Couple with a new Guest Couple.

Our relationship in marriage is to mirror God's gracious, loving relationship with each of us.

We pray that these Five Cornerstones of Christian Marriage (Loving Faithfulness, Reverence, Understanding, Purpose, and Nurturing) will help accomplish that.

Please note that the Host Couple's Guidelines and the Guest Couple's Introduction are in the back.

Home to Home is not to take the place of professional counseling, psychotherapy, medical care, or appropriate psychiatric outpatient or inpatient care.

Jim and Barbara Grunseth



*Passing on Five Cornerstones
of Christian Marriage*

Cornerstone #1
LOVING FAITHFULNESS

♦ *Think about this:*

If the Lord Jesus Christ is first in your life, then your mate will be treasured in your heart.

♦ *Memory Verses*

Deuteronomy 31:8

Please print or write this verse and be prepared to share it from memory when you meet with your Home to Home Host Couple.

◆ LESSON OVERVIEW

A. What is Loving Faithfulness?

1. Unconditional love.
2. Passionate, unwavering loyalty.
3. Sincere desires to uphold, protect, and complete another. These desires are continually acted upon so that the recipient is secure in and assured of a safe, treasured, and blessed status.

B. Loving Faithfulness toward whom?

1. God's loving faithfulness toward us.

Jesus Christ, our Lord—the Almighty, Sovereign, All-Powerful God of the Universe—Maker and Ruler of Heaven and Earth loves you so much that He is faithful to enter into and maintain an everlasting and loving Father-child relationship with you. He never fails. He keeps and blesses you, His beloved, forever!

2. Your loving faithfulness toward your mate.

Your mate is God's **wonderful provision for you**. You are to show him/her the same loving faithfulness God shows you. You are to model God's loving faithfulness for the world to see.

Note: Your mate's strengths and weaknesses compliment yours. Focus on the Provider—not the provision. Your mate sins and is in need of grace, mercy, and forgiveness just like you.

Placing judgmental focus on your mate will surely lead you to subtly or overtly reject him/her. When you are feeling judgmental, choose to lean on God's authority, integrity, and ability. This, of course, requires

TRUST

In **Genesis 2:20-25**, Adam was lonely and in need of a suitable companion. Hippos, birds, frogs...were nice, but none of them would do. God knew Adam inside and out. He knew exactly what he needed.

After making Eve, the woman, from Adam's rib, he brought her to the man (verse 22). Adam gladly welcomed and received her with open arms.

He knew God. He knew God did not make mistakes. He trusted God.

Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.... **Ephesians 5:22-25**

This is a central verse dealing with the absolute requirement and need for loving faithfulness in your marriage.

Husbands, you are to love your wives by **laying down your life** for her. Changes may need to be made in your career, your ministry schedule, your travel, your hobbies, and especially in your attitude toward your wife. Do you see her as a **burden** or a **blessing**?

Wives, the principles from this passage are vital if you desire to model before your husband God's loving faithfulness **toward you and your family**. You are to **model** to your children and to the world what it means to mercifully love and faithfully submit to your husband.

Husbands and Wives, your mate is designed to be blessed by your:

- Servant's heart.
- Tender attentiveness.
- Focused attention.
- Comforting, affirming countenance.
- Godly integrity, especially when alone. Wisdom is learning to trust yourself less and less, and to trust God more and more. Allow a godly person of the same gender to hold you accountable.
- Consistent quiet time with God in His Word and in prayer.
- Right priorities. Do not sacrifice your mate's needs on the alter of work, ministry or hobbies.
- Fulfilling your marital vows.

C. Why is Loving Faithfulness so important?

1. Because the Lord is lovingly faithful toward you, His child!
 - a. He created you in His image.
 - b. He died for you.
 - c. He loves you with an eternal love that will never diminish in its intensity or depth.
 - d. He will not fail. Even when you are unloving and unfaithful, He will remain loving and faithful. His loving faithfulness toward you is **not dependent** on your ability to earn it or maintain it.
2. Because without Christ and His loving faithfulness you are in a hopeless condition.

The Bible says:

*...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. **Romans 3:23***

Apart from Christ, you would remain lost and in spiritual darkness forever. You would spend an eternity in hell, spiritually dead—never being able to experience the joy and peace of being in the presence of a loving God.

God chose to do something drastic to save you, knowing that you could do absolutely nothing to save yourself. Remember: A corpse can do nothing to give itself life.

ONLY THE LORD JESUS CAN GIVE A SPIRITUALLY DEAD CORPSE NEW LIFE.

For the wages of sin is death.... (spiritual separation from God)

Romans 6:23

Your own passive indifference or your willful rebellion against God will condemn you to hell.

Jesus says:

*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. **John 14:6***

Jesus is your only hope for your eternally fatal condition.

The Bible says:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. **John 3:16***

Jesus saves you not by your **attempt** to earn or perform your way into Heaven, but by His sacrificial demonstration of love on the Cross.

PUT YOUR TRUST IN JESUS.

If you, like many people, are trying to become acceptable to God based on your own merit, performance, or good deeds, God wants you to know that:

*. . . all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.... **Isaiah 64:6***

God does not want you to trust in your effort, your obedience, or how active you are in your church.

He wants you to trust only in Jesus and His ability to forgive you and save you. He alone can "make" you righteous. You can't try hard to become righteous. You are "**made**" righteous **by Him (II Corinthians 5:21).**

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. **Ephesians 2:8,9***

To know these truths is not enough. You must individually receive Christ.

Listen to the comforting and assuring Word of God:

*Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God. **John 1:12***

*And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. **Acts 2:21***

RECEIVE (GLADLY WELCOME) JESUS CHRIST INTO YOUR LIFE AS YOUR SAVIOR AND LORD.

Have you already received Him? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Right now, if you are not His, will you receive (welcome) Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord?

Please pray this prayer:

Lord Jesus,

I need You. I confess I am a sinner and without Your forgiveness and new life I will remain forever lost and separated from You by my sin. Right now, I choose to receive You into my life. Come in, Lord Jesus. Thank You for forgiving all my sin—past, present, and future. Make me the kind of person you want me to be. Thank you, Lord.

date

signature

Note: If you have already received Christ in the past, please go ahead and **sign your name above** as well. Try to write the approximate month and year you believe you became a Christian. If there has been any doubt, let your decision to sign your name today clear up all doubt.

If you chose with sincerity to sign your name, you can trust with **certainty** that Jesus has saved you and has given you Eternal Life. He is a God of His Word. You cannot lose your salvation. You are His forever!

Because you belong to Him, He will never leave you nor forsake you. He will **never break His promise** to love you faithfully even when your love and faith fail at times.

As one who was called, chosen, saved, forgiven, reborn, and redeemed, God entered into a "forever" covenant with you. Rest! Rejoice! You are **eternally secure** as a child of God. You are forever a citizen of Heaven.

Nothing can separate you from His love once you are His!

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38,39

Because of this wonderful promise, love and receive your mate unconditionally. He/she should never feel that the security of your marital relationship is **threatened** in any way. Not even the hint of it should be present. By the way, going to bed with unresolved anger or a buried argument is such a hint.

When you live by faith and by the Word of God, He enables you to love your mate unconditionally.

◆ INDIVIDUAL PREWORK

LOVING FAITHFULNESS: The first Cornerstone of marriage.

* **You and your mate are to do sections A and B separately**

A. Depend on God

Please read the following **Psalms 119:20, 29-35** (Amplified):

My heart is breaking with longing that it has for Your ordinances and judgments at all times. Remove from me the way of falsehood and unfaithfulness (to You), and graciously impart Your law to me. I have chosen the way of truth and faithfulness; Your ordinances have I set before me. I cleave to Your testimonies; O Lord, put me not to shame! I will (not merely walk, but) run the way of Your commandments, when You give me a heart that is willing. Teach me, O Lord, the way of Your statutes, and I will keep it to the end. (steadfastly). Give me understanding, that I may keep Your law; yes, I will observe it with my whole heart. Make me go in the path of Your commandments, for in them do I delight.

Underline a phrase from the passage above that best expresses the prayer desire of your heart. Please share why.

God is searching for the **broken** heart. He longs for the heart that is needy and hungry, placing no hope in itself. He yearns for the heart that is fed up with man's wisdom, self-reliance, and independence. He desires for you to continually depend on Him. He rejoices when, daily, you forsake your own way and willingly abandon the rights to your life to Him.

He desires for you to **humbly** cast yourself at His feet. He wants you to **depend** only on His Spirit directing you through what is revealed in His written Word, the Bible. **Give up** trusting in yourself. Then your Heavenly Father will begin to work mightily within you.

Lean fully on His Spirit to enable you. **Cling** moment by moment to the guidance and comfort provided by His Word. **Hide** the Scriptures in your heart. **Treasure** them. **Trust** what they tell you regardless of your experience, feelings, and pain. **Obey** the Lord Jesus at all cost.

If you want a godly, fruitful marriage, there is just no other way.

B. Demonstrate Loving Faithfulness toward your mate.

It is not enough to know God is faithful and loving toward you. This, by itself, will not enable you to demonstrate loving faithfulness toward your mate.

Please look up the following verses and write down what must happen in order for you to **demonstrate** loving faithfulness toward your mate.

Psalm 119:9 _____

Psalm 119:10 _____

Psalm 119:11 _____

Mark 8:34-35 _____

Mark 10:7-9 _____

Galatians 5:13 _____

Circle the passage from above that meant the most to you and share why.

Now please look up **Malachi 2:15-16**.

What is God saying to you through these verses?

Read **Galatians 5:16-26**.

What are the **results** (fruit) of daily choosing by faith to surrender your will to be filled, controlled, and empowered by God's Holy Spirit? (This is what happens when you want what God wants more than what you want.)

Without God's loving, empowering Spirit, do you personally have the capability to remain faithful and loving toward your mate?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Will you **choose daily** by faith to allow the Lord Jesus Christ to lead, prompt and enable you to demonstrate loving faithfulness to your mate?

☐ Yes ☐ No

* **Complete section C together**

C. Compare and discuss your answers from sections A and B of the Individual Prework with your mate.

1. As a result of going over your individual homework together, what truth or principle concerning God's loving faithfulness stands out as being the most helpful or important to you both as it now applies to your marriage?

2. As a couple, how do you think your **praying** out loud together—not only for God's loving faithfulness to take root in your marriage but also for God to protect and bless each of you—serves to **strengthen** and **enrich** your marriage? (**Note:** One study showed that less than one in a thousand marriages breaks up that pray openly and regularly together.)

3. If you both sincerely want your Heavenly Father to build His supernatural loving faithfulness into your relationship, then please pray **out loud** before each other and the Lord the following prayers:

Husband's Prayer

Dear Lord,

I humbly admit I am unable to demonstrate Your loving faithfulness by myself. I need Your help every day. Please enable me to love You and my precious wife with Your loving faithfulness. Help me to bless and serve her and honor You from this day forward.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wife's Prayer

Dear Lord,

I also humbly confess I am unable to show Your loving faithfulness by myself. I also need Your help every day. Please enable me to love You and my beloved husband with Your loving faithfulness. Help me to respect and encourage him and honor You from this day forward.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Husband's signature

Wife's signature



*Passing on Five Cornerstones
of Christian Marriage*

Cornerstone #2
REVERENCE

♦ *Think about this*

Reverence is a quality foreign to our culture of demanding, unsatisfied, and shallow people. Don't you think it's time we brought this precious quality back to our lives and culture?

♦ *Memory Verses*

HUSBAND — *Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, For no man ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and carefully protects and cherishes it, as Christ does the church.*

Ephesians 5:25,28,29 (Amplified)

WIFE — *....and let the wife see that she respects and reverences her husband—that she notices him, . . .honors him, prefers him, . . .and admires him exceedingly.*

Ephesians 5:33 (Amplified)

◆ LESSON OVERVIEW

A. What is Reverence?

1. Worshiping God with adoration and awe.
2. Holding in high regard.
3. Honoring and highly esteeming.
4. Regarding with great devotion; cherishing.

B. Reverence toward whom?

1. **Toward the Lord.** Reverencing Him is our privilege and joy. He is worthy of all praise and worship.
2. **Toward your mate.** Because we reverence God, we **choose by faith** (a decision of the will) to reverence our mate. Reverencing our mate will be a living example of how others observing us are to cherish their mates and honor God.

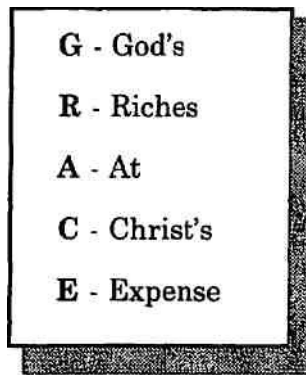
C. Why is Reverence important?

1. God is God and we are His handiwork. With reverence in your heart, gratefully acknowledge Him as your Creator and Sustainer.
2. God sent His only Son, Jesus, to live, die, and rise again for us. Through Christ, our sins are forgiven (past, present, and future), and our guilt and condemnation washed away forever (if we are his child through faith). Be grateful for all God has done. **Gratitude is the backbone of reverence.**
3. God is honored when you reverence your mate with an attitude of thankfulness.
4. Your children will learn from your example and will be an example to their children some day.
5. Reverencing God and your mate might just become contagious to others in your church, neighborhood, and community!

D. God's grace is the key to our gratitude and reverence.

1. Receive God's grace.

*Even when we were dead (slain) by (our own) shortcomings and trespasses, He made us alive together in fellowship and in union with Christ. He gave us the very life of Christ Himself, the same new life with which He quickened Him. For it is by **grace—by His favor and mercy which you did not deserve**—that you are saved (delivered from judgment and made partakers of Christ's salvation). **Ephesians 2:5** (Amplified)*



- a. You are **put right** with God because Christ became sin for you.

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. II Corinthians 5:21

Since you are put right with God, rejoice over the grace He continually bestows upon you and begin to think and behave like the favored and privileged child of God you are!

- b. You **can't earn** this standing with God. To receive His saving grace:

- You don't have to measure up.
- You don't have to perform.
- You don't have to earn approval.
- You don't have to do more or be better.

. . .He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. Titus 3:5a

- c. Your position **in Christ** is secure because of what He has done, not by anything you have done.

*For it is by **grace** you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the **gift** of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8,9*

- d. God **continually** pours out His grace on His children. All of His wonderful resources are available to you.

*And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the **incomparable riches of his grace**, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. Ephesians 2:6,7*

OH BELOVED CHRISTIAN—

Remember these **truths** about who you are in Christ:

1. You are God's own daughter or son. **John 1:12**
2. You are a fellow heir with Jesus. **Romans 8:17**
3. In Jesus, you are a brand new creature. **II Corinthians 5:17**
4. You ARE RIGHT NOW a saint! **Ephesians 1:1**
5. You are Heaven's citizen—not Earth's. **Philippians 3:20**
6. You are made righteous. You didn't earn it! What relief! **II Corinthians 5:21**
7. Jesus will NEVER leave or forsake you. **Hebrews 13:5**
8. You are redeemed and forgiven forever! **Colossians 1:14**
9. You are not really living! Jesus is living in and through you! **Galatians 2:20**
10. You can never be condemned again! NEVER! **Romans 8:1**

Please circle one of the above truths that encourages you the most.
Please share why.

For more on who you are in Christ, please read Neil Anderson's books, **The Bondage Breaker** and **Victory Over the Darkness**.

- e. Your **response** to God's grace.

When we truly realize who God is and all He has done for us and how He continually lavishes His grace on us, we will respond to God's grace with:

Gratitude, Reverence, Love, and Obedience

2. "Grace" your mate.

As you **receive** God's grace, you can then, in turn, "**grace**" your mate. To "grace" your mate means to have the same heart attitude toward your mate as God has toward you.

- Giving of yourself for the good of your mate.
- Loving and treasuring your mate.
- Honoring and esteeming your mate.

Give of yourself for the good of your mate.

As you daily depend on God, learning to trust Him more and more, His grace will work in you and then "spill over" through you to your mate. You will be able to give freely as God has freely given to you.

.... *Freely you have received, freely give.* **Matthew 10:8b**

Love and treasure your mate.

Listen to what the Apostle John is telling us:

Dear friend, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. I John 4:11

Listen to what Jesus is saying to you in the Gospel of John:

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. John 13:34

God commands us to love one another the way He loves us. To do otherwise is disobedience and sin.

Are you trying to change your mate? Instead, ask God where you need to change.

What is your heart attitude? Your countenance, body language, and your daily priorities reveal your heart attitude toward God and your mate.

Who are you listening to? Are you listening to your culture, carnal friends, and T. V. and Facebook too much rather than listening to God?

Honor and esteem your mate.

God is honored when you honor and esteem your mate by looking for opportunities to admire, appreciate, and build up your mate, not only when you two are alone, but especially in the presence of others. Others will be drawn to God and His love when they observe you going out of your way to notice and build up your mate.

... Those who honor me I will honor... I Samuel 2:30b

3. Two reasons we don't "grace" our mates:

- a. We can't give what we don't receive for ourselves.

If we block God's grace from working in our lives, through sin, indifference, and trying to earn His love and approval, we will be unable to lavish the grace of God on our mate. We will be unable to generously give of ourselves.

- b. We wrongly believe that grace won't work.

If we have tried to "grace" our mate in our own power, we say it doesn't work. And it doesn't! But if we believe we are **saved** by grace, **loved** by grace, and **kept** by grace, then it follows that we can love and accept others (our mate, our children) by the same grace God gives us. **We cannot do this in our own power.** His Holy Spirit within us will enable us to love in this manner as we **surrender** to Him.

If you are yielding every area of your life (public and private) to God and possessing a heart of gratitude, you won't notice your mate's foibles, imperfections, and "things that bug you" as much.

God is working in you to help you want to do what pleases Him. Then He gives you the power to do it. Philippians 2:13 (Everyday Bible)

4. Consider the following **Gracing Prayer**. Does it apply to you?

Dear Lord,

I confess that I have not been gracing my mate. Please forgive me. It is wrong to try to change him/her. By your Holy Spirit enable me to think and act like the Saint that I am in order to grace and love my mate like You love and accept me.

I cannot do this in my own power! Thank You!

Date

Signature

A word of warning to the mate being "graced." Do not use this as an opportunity to sin, take advantage of, or be hurtful toward your mate who is "gracing" you. **Galatians 6:7,8** (NASB) warns:

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption.

E. Reverence God!

It is crucial that you meditate and lean on God's Word. Spend regular times with Him. Talk with Him, Worship Him. Ask Him to change your heart that you might learn to trust and revere Him. *"Search me, O God, and know my heart ..."* **Psalms 139:23**

Please meditate with a humble and grateful heart on the following verses:

*Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb, when He said to me, Assemble the people before Me to hear My words so that they may learn to revere Me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children. **Deuteronomy 4:10***

*Establish Thy word to Thy servant, As that which produces reverence for Thee. **Psalms 119:38** (NASB)*

*But for you who revere My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. **Malachi 4:2***

*Since we have these promises dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God. **II Corinthians 7:1***

*Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. **Ephesians 5:21***

Underline the phrase from one of the verses above that speaks to you the most about reverencing God. Please share why.

Be of good cheer, for God is not an angry, temperamental tyrant. Instead, He is a loving, caring Heavenly Father.

*The Lord your God is with you, He is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing. **Zephaniah 3:17***

We can be comforted by God's **unchanging**, tender character toward His beloved children. Read the verse again and **rejoice**. It is good to reverence such a wonderful God!

◆ INDIVIDUAL PREWORK

REVERENCE: The second Cornerstone of marriage.

* **You and your mate are to do sections A, B, C, and D separately**

A. JUST FOR WOMEN

Please look up these verses and write down what you believe your Heavenly Father is saying to you. **Circle** your key passage.

Proverbs 12:4

Proverbs 15:1,4

Proverbs 31:10-31

Ephesians 5:33

Titus 2:3-5

Hebrews 13:4,5

I Peter 3:1-6

B. JUST FOR MEN

Please look up these verses and write down what you believe your Heavenly Father is saying to you. **Circle** your key passage.

Proverbs 15:1,4

Proverbs 27:23

Ephesians 5:25,26

Ephesians 5:28,29

I Timothy 3:2-5

Hebrews 13:4,5

I Peter 3:7

- C. **"Gracing your mate"** in the same way your Heavenly Father graces you is the key to allowing your mate to be "freed up" from the silent torment of feeling never quite good enough for you.

Are you quietly, or not so quietly, giving your mate this wrong message?

You just don't measure up to my standards . . . or . . .

I would be happier and would love and reverence you more if you would be a better Christian wife/husband.

When you grace your mate, he/she experiences God's gracious, affirming, and unconditional love. Your mate senses that you are not merely **"putting up with"** him/her, but instead, you are **upholding** and **favoring** him/her.

CHOOSE TO GRACE YOUR MATE

Every morning when you wake up **choose** to grace your mate. This will please your Heavenly Father.

. . . find out what pleases the Lord. Ephesians 5:10

Place an **"X"** on the line below indicating the extent to which you feel you **"grace"** your mate.

○ ———— ○ ———— ○ ———— ○ ———— ○
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Now place an **"X"** on the line below indicating the extent to which you feel totally, graciously, and reverently **accepted** just the way you are by your mate.

○ ———— ○ ———— ○ ———— ○ ———— ○
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Finally, place an **"X"** on the line below indicating the extent to which you sense your mate feels **"graced"** by you.

○ ———— ○ ———— ○ ———— ○ ———— ○
0% 25% 50% 75% 100%

Remember: The extent by which your parents "graced" you, and your willingness to trust that the Lord Jesus "graces," accepts, and favors you just the way you are, will influence your answers above. However, we all are **without excuse**. Each of us is fully accountable to the Word of God. We are to take responsibility for our words and actions.

D. Please answer these questions.

1. What does your mate say or do that **makes you feel** respected, esteemed, protected or valued?

2. Please give a "**real life**" example of your answer to question #1 that you can share with your mate and then, later, with your Host Couple.

3. What are two qualities that you **admire** about your mate?

3. What in your life or in your priorities **hinders** you from reverencing God and your mate?

4. Write down and implement one **action step** that will reverence God.

5. Write down and implement one **action step** that will reverence your mate.

6. What is your **heart** attitude?

Do you desire to surrender to God and what He wants for your life and for your marriage? Do you yearn to be able to love and receive your mate the way God loves and receives you?

☐ **Yes** ☐ **On the fence** ☐ **No**

Unforgiveness, bitterness, and resentment toward anyone, including your mate and children, are sins that can prevent your relationship from being reverent, loving, and close.

... even as the Lord has freely forgiven you, so must you also forgive.

Colossians 3:13b (Amplified)

Right now, would you ask the Lord to reveal any unforgiveness, bitterness, or resentment you might have in your heart toward anyone in your past (especially your mate)? People you may need to forgive: father, mother, ex-mate, sibling, children, in-law, boss, pastor, teacher, neighbor, etc.

Forgive them, accept the consequences and pain for their sin, and release them into God's care. Pray this prayer for each person that comes to your mind:

Dear Lord,

The pain and injustice _____ has caused me is severe and real. By a choice of my will and a humble desire to obey you, I now accept the results of his/her sin, and I forgive and release _____ into your care.

* * * * *

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. I John 1:9 (NASB)

Confess to God the grudges you have:

Lord, I now ask you to forgive me for holding grudges of unforgiveness, bitterness, and resentment toward these people in my life. I want to be totally clean before you and others. Thank you Lord.

You see, unconfessed sins can open the door to satanic strong-holds in your life. These strong-holds can hurt and possibly destroy your Christian example, your marriage, and your family.

Also, these sins and any other unconfessed areas of sin bondage can be passed on to your children, which could affect their own marriages. It is good to face your sins, renounce and forsake them, and **submit** to God every day. **James 4:7** states:

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

* **Complete section E together**

E. Compare and discuss your answers to sections A, B, C, and D of the Individual Prework.

Remember: Try to listen with sensitivity and be as supportive and encouraging as you can. Put yourself "in your mate's shoes."

What are some **benefits** of reverencing the Lord and your mate?

If you both sincerely want to reverence God and each other, then please pray **out loud** before each other and the Lord the following prayers:

Husband's prayer

Dear Lord,

I need you. Please enable me to reverence You in every area of my life. Help me to forsake anything that hinders me from being totally committed to honoring and reverencing You. I ask also that You enable me to reverence my wife. Enable me to grace, cherish, and treasure her as You do.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wife's prayer

Dear Lord,

I need you. Please enable me to reverence You in every area of my life. Help me to forsake anything that hinders me from being totally committed to honoring and reverencing You. I ask also that You enable me to reverence my husband. Enable me to grace, respect, and affirm him as You do.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Husband's signature

Wife's signature



*Passing on Five Cornerstones
of Christian Marriage*

HOME TO HOME DESCRIPTIONS

Warning: Be careful as you read these descriptions. Your inclination might be to assign certain negative descriptions to your mate. This would be to Satan's delight.

Instead: Ask only that the Lord examine your heart. Ask Him to use these descriptions in your life in order to serve and love your mate in a more godly, healthy, and balanced manner.

Note: You have two weeks to read these descriptions. Please answer the questions concerning them during the "Descriptions" homework of Cornerstone #4 PURPOSE.

1. Too Nice Mate
2. Overprotective, Oversacrificial Mate
3. Nonprotective Mate
4. Present, but Absent Mate
5. Subtle Cyanide Mouth
6. Submission
7. Tough Love
8. Insult for Insult Mates
9. Emotional Hook Mate
10. Codependent Mate
11. Gracing Mate vs. Shaming Mate
12. Controlled Christian Mate: Two Types
13. Suffering Mate
14. Parent-Honoring Mates
15. Controlling Mate
16. Two-Faced Mate

1. TOO NICE MATE

This is an overly passive "milk toast" mate who demonstrates a **low self-worth** by almost always giving in to the whims, desires, and ideas of the other mate.

Example: "John, where would you like to take me out for dinner tonight?" "Well, Gee, Mary, I'll go wherever you want to go." "John, I'd rather have you (lead once) choose." "Oh Mary, let's go wherever you would be the happiest!" Mary, half out of her mind by now, "I think I'm sick to my stomach, John! Let's not go out at all!"

Avoid being a "Too Nice Mate." Demonstrate some backbone once in a while, John. Take the lead a little. Add some **mystique** and let her know that **you** are taking her out.

2. OVERPROTECTIVE, OVERSACRIFICIAL MATE

This mate is imbalanced in sacrificing all of his/her needs and desires—one who goes overboard on protecting his/her mate.

Example: "Tom, let's face it. You don't like to visit my parents. You also don't like me going out for lunch with Karen, my best friend. So I'll tell my parents that we just won't be coming over...hardly ever. And I'll also stop seeing Karen."

"Sandy! You'd love me that much?" "Yes, Tom. Jesus died for me so I'll die **socially** and **emotionally** for you..." In the meantime, Tom's selfish irresponsibility is enlarged and several important needs of Sandy's will now go **unmet**. This will lead to an ingrown, tense-filled relationship that will lead to certain troubles, burnout, and resentment.

3. NONPROTECTIVE MATE

This mate is imbalanced and lacks the proper **self-control** to properly protect.

Example: "Bill, I just can't take it any longer! Every time we go to your parents' home, your mother belittles and embarrasses me right in front of our kids and YOU! I feel so vulnerable, unprotected, and defenseless. Bill, you just seem to sit there and let them get away with it. Where is your allegiance to me?"

"Well, Donna, I just don't know what to do. I don't want you feeling threatened and I sure wouldn't want to hurt or offend my parents. They've been so good to us..."

Note: If Bill does not **choose to take command** and confront his parents in love, his parents will continue to show disrespect toward Donna; their marriage will be in deep trouble. Bill is a fence sitter. He needs to be decisive. With little explanation, he needs to respectfully tell his parents that if such behaviors continue, consequences will follow. If he gets **trapped** into always having to explain his decisions, his parents will be able to control him from a distance.

4. PRESENT, BUT ABSENT MATE

This mate may be home near the family but is certainly not "with" the family. His mind is constantly on work, office drama, his own sagging self-image, church responsibilities, phone calls to return, the meeting tomorrow...

Or he has become "**one**" with the personal computer, video games, or the couch as in COUCH POTATO, with attention to the "one-eyed Trojan Horse," **THE TV**. This mate may feel that he deserves all these breaks today while, in reality, he is carrying on an affair with the above mentioned activities. The one married to such a selfish person goes bananas after awhile!

He actually says, "Ah...see, Martha! I didn't bring any work home tonight from the office!" The problem is that he brought home his "**mental**" briefcase.

5. SUBTLE CYANIDE MOUTH

This mate's words produce discouragement, despair, and blame—words that cut instead of heal—words that bring down instead of lift up—words that try to **catch others** doing something wrong instead of catching them doing something right—even partially right.

She nags and loves to use "always" and "never." "YOU ALWAYS...!" or "YOU NEVER...!" She thinks she is good at telling someone the truth. Often, though, she is giving "piercing, truthful" feedback without love. She thinks she is right because she is **telling a truth** the person deserves or **needs** to hear.

If you have to correct, reprove, or rebuke someone, be sure to give your message enveloped in loving kindness. Timing, respect, and understanding are everything. Ask yourself if your goal is to "put down" or "build up." Then share, with the Lord directing you.

6. SUBMISSION

To submit is to **voluntarily** come under the authority of someone; to reverently and respectfully look out for the other's best interests.

It does not mean that you serve as a "**doormat**" or a "**slave**." It does not mean that you should obey a mate who is sinning overtly, obviously, or blindly against God and you.

If your husband is establishing a pattern of disobedience and rebellion against the Lord, and he is asking you to do likewise, or to endorse his sin, or to cover for him, ask God to help you determine what words and actions on your part would be best for your husband's spiritual welfare.

God will help you deal with your husband properly. Timing, patience, and honesty are important. You may need to tenderly confront him. You are his helpmate. If you don't help him see his sin, who will?

Love and respect him, but do not fall into the trap of condoning or being a party to his sin and foolishness.

7. TOUGH LOVE

This is loving action that goes **against the tide** of sin and irresponsibility, such as in alcohol abuse, continued physical abuse, and unrepentant adultery. Tough love does not feed someone's sin. It **starves** the sin.

Example: If your husband is an alcoholic who, instead of being wise in his weakness, remains foolish, you may need to reverently, respectfully, and firmly **refuse** to rescue or enable him.

With a spirit of firm, determined gentleness (tough love), you may need to let him miss work, get fired, and **hit rock bottom**. Many alcoholics will live in denial until reality is allowed to come crashing in. This is also often true of those who are in bondage to other sin addictions.

If you "**soft love**" him by always rescuing him, cleaning up after him, lying to cover for him regarding his job and church...

You won't be loving him at all!

You certainly won't be looking out for his "best interests." You will, on the other hand, be **ENABLING** him in his irresponsibility and in his sin. In "soft love" everyone loses. The "soft lover" who ends up enabling and, in reality, promoting her husband's hurtful attitudes and behaviors will also experience damage to her emotions.

Tough Love always has restoration, godly character, and strengthening of the marriage as its goal.

Tough love honors God and is strong.

8. INSULT FOR INSULT MATES

These mates were probably raised in homes where family members subconsciously returned disrespect and insults to each other—as a **habitual way** of life.

When one mate (the sending mate) insults, belittles, or degrades, it becomes a natural reflex for the receiving mate to send back a similar insult—usually one that **will inflict** the most pain and damage. This destructive cycle can continue on for years and can be **passed on** through future generations.

We see this on TV shows and in world news every day: Someone treads on your turf—so you tread on theirs! After all, they deserve it. Right? Revenge has become the international past time.

Example: Joe says to Jane, "Thanks a lot! You're never interested in the pressures I'm facing at work! All you want me around for is to get a bunch of things on your "TO DO" list done—jobs around the house, yard work,...!"

Jane, an "**insult for insult**" mate like Joe, might respond in many ways—two of which are:

Instant Insult Return

- ➡ She might play the "silent" game awhile to punish Joe, or flee to another room to pout.
- ➡ She might hurl back an insult like, "Well! All you ever do is work, work, work! You don't care about me! You're married to your job! You're just like your father, Bill! I think I'll just call you 'BUT' from now on! Bill!!!"

Delayed Insult Return

- ➡ Jane says to herself as she **plots**, "I'll be nice and forgiving to him now BUT the next time he wants to get romantic, I'll put him in his place!"

➡ She further plots in her mind, "Ah ha! He wants to visit his brother next weekend. Well, I'll **be nice until** the day we are to go and then I'll tell him I don't want to go, or that I'm not feeling well, or whatever will get him back for what he said! He'll think twice about insulting me next time!"

"Insult for Insult" mates need to ask God to reveal the sin in their hearts—such as unforgiveness, resentment, and bitterness. Returning insults is a part of the devil's plan to isolate and destroy, creating a **deep wedge** in their relationship. If this "Insult for Insult" cycle continues, the relationship will spiral down to destruction. Joe and Jane need to confess their self-centeredness to God and to one another.

The Lord desires us to receive our mates unconditionally and choose to return undeserved blessings, even when we don't **feel** like it. When this is done God will be honored in our marriage. Read **I Peter 3:8-12**; the central focus is verse nine:

*Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult,
but with blessing,
because to this you were called
so that you may inherit a blessing.*

In the power of the Holy Spirit, we can **choose to return blessings**, rather than insults, by replying with gentle, quiet, understanding **words** that build, heal, and encourage. We also can choose to return blessings by demonstrating loving **conduct**, such as writing a loving note, providing a favorite meal by candlelight, or preparing a hot bath!

9. EMOTIONAL HOOK MATE

Usually due to parental modeling and conditioning when growing up as a child, this mate learns to get what is wanted by making loved ones (like a mate and children) feel guilty. Many do this without even knowing it. They learn to control family members by using improper, manipulative emotions. Others feel smothered; there is little peace in the home.

Example: Jack buys his wife a brand new sewing machine—just what she wanted! But wait! There's more! There's a lot more to this gift than meets the eye! Look! There are strings attached!

Yes, Jill loves the gift and now is **made to feel** that she owes it to Jack to allow him to go on his week-long fishing trip next week. This puts Jill in a bind. He **"hooks"** her. She has not been feeling well, being pregnant, and she is not sure she can take care of the household and care for their two small children if Jack is going to be gone for a whole week!

Even though Jack does not say it out loud, with his body language, attitude, and **"emotional hookery"** he clearly communicates to Jill that she would be ungrateful if she did not give him her blessing to go on his trip.

If this "emotional hookery" is not stopped, in time, many other areas of their family relationships may be affected, such as sexual manipulation or making adult children feel guilty for not "coming home" more often. Their relationship may soon be "tumbling down the hill"!

10. CODEPENDENT MATE

This mate is in pain—emotional pain and possibly even physical pain. This type of mate is experiencing real pain because of making some very unhealthy, ungodly choices regarding relationships.

The codependent mate would clearly disagree with this. She would say that she is trying as hard as she can to keep the marriage or family together. She would even go so far as to say that she is not trying hard enough!

A typical scenario goes something like this: A husband struggles in some area of his life such as alcoholism, overcontrol, rage, physical or emotional abuse, gambling, lust, or some other addiction. Since he **refuses** to acknowledge that he even **has** a problem, the codependent mate, wanting to be valiant and oh so responsible, begins to assume responsibility for her mate.

She begins to believe that she is responsible for his problems—anger outbursts, sin, and other unresolved issues. If she does not feel responsible for causing his problems, then she usually feels that it is "on her shoulders" to correct, make better, heal, straighten out, or fix these problems. The more she tries to "fix" his sins or problems, the more he will "look at her" as the one who is **responsible** for it all.

This is why a codependent wife will tend to become an extension of her alcoholic husband's "very ill—very sinful" personality. She tends to lose her own identity. When he's up, she's up. When he's down, she's down. He, in his denial, refuses to own or face up to the fact that he has a very serious problem. He is in sin and **blatant rebellion** against God.

He tends to make her "the problem" or "the cause" of his drinking. He might say, "You drive me to drink!" She will **believe him**. She will take on the blame and become the martyr. She will, no doubt, feel guilty most of the time. Since she feels responsible, she runs herself ragged trying to be a better, nicer, more supportive, less nagging wife. Very few of her needs are getting met.

The truth is that this codependent thinking and rescuing type of behavior **never works! In** fact, it fuels the whole mess! She gets so frustrated and discouraged that she will lie for her husband, buy him liquor, and clean up his messes to try to appease him. In other words, she will **enable** him.

She thinks, "What would happen if the neighbors or his boss found out?" Deep down in her heart she tends to feel if people found out, not only would her husband be looked down upon, but **more important to her**, she would be looked down upon. After all, she feels the whole mess is **her fault** and her responsibility! She feels she would look like a failure! "We shouldn't talk about this problem. We'll pretend there is NO PROBLEM!"

To be a part of the solution, she needs to continue to love her husband and realize that she is **NOT RESPONSIBLE** for her husband's sin addiction. She does not "drive him to drink"; he drives himself to drink.

She needs to firmly, reverently, and respectfully **refuse** to rescue him, cover for him, lie for him, or in any way enable him in his destructive choices. If need be, he may need to lose his job and hit rock bottom before he begins to own responsibility for his life and actions.

This is "tough love." This brave lady will need encouragement and support if she is going to keep from sliding back into codependency. She could **benefit** greatly from a church group based on prayer and Scripture.

Satan will accuse her of not "gracing" and not loving her hurting husband. He will tempt her with thoughts like, "After all, doesn't the Bible tell wives to love, support, serve, and respect their husbands?"

Let me be clear! This wife will be loving, submitting to, respecting her husband and helping him the most if she:

- Gives up trying to be responsible for her husband's hurtful, sinful choices; lovingly insists that he be responsible for his own choices.
- Finds ways to affirm him and bless him as long as her choices don't feed or encourage his problems and sins. Be gentle and respectful.
- Prays for him and asks the Lord to help her break out of her codependency.
- Talks about the "problem" and doesn't bury it.

Although she is "one flesh" with her mate, she is to have her own separate healthy, growing identity in Christ.

She is to worship God and God alone. Codependency is sinful because it takes what is due God and gives it to man. It is clearly a sinful, destructive choice that disobeys and dishonors God and leads to the preoccupation of the soul not with God, but, instead, with people and self. Codependency is idolatry.

11. GRACING MATE VS. SHAMING MATE

Gracing Mate

This mate receives gratefully the Lord's love, forgiveness, and unmerited favor. He understands that he is made righteous by Christ's substitutionary death on the cross and His victorious resurrection. He does not have to **earn it**.

He embraces the truth that he is totally and forever accepted by God. He is thankful that because of this, he is the apple of God's eye. He knows as fact that he is forever in God's family! **Nothing** in the universe can ever shake or alter this eternal truth to those who love Christ.

Wanting to model God's amazing love and blessing, he will look upon his mate with thanksgiving. As a gracing mate he will bestow unmerited favor upon her. He will love, accept, and delight in her, regardless of performance. He will be kind and gentle.

The receiving mate of such grace will tend to feel loved, affirmed, and valued. She will tend to feel free from the tyranny and bondage of having to improve, measure up, earn approval, or meet standards of performance. By God's grace, she will **want** to grow spiritually, pleasing and reverencing God and her "gracing" mate.

Ideally, God's desire is that both mates grace and affirm each other. However, whether or not the other mate "graces" back, the "gracing" mate will continue to "grace" with reverence, respect, and tough, steadfast love.

Shaming Mate

This mate, although a child of God, feels he has to earn God's love by being a good citizen and going to church, at least more than the "Jones." He tries to appease what he believes to be an angry, hard-to-please God. **He believes a lie!**

He feels like he has to **measure up** to an impossible set of standards. Most likely, he feels he had to **earn** this kind of approval from his parents and, sad to say, possibly even from his church, which might have been legalistic or performance-based. (The more you do for us, the better you should feel and the more we'll like you!) Therefore he measures his mate's performance by the same legalistic standard he has imposed on himself.

The shaming mate seldom affirms, praises, or encourages his mate. He feels, "Why should I? My mate doesn't deserve it!"

The "shaming" mate feels "**stuck**" or even "sentenced" to live out his life with his mate. This "shaming" mate tends to belittle, ridicule, and tear down his mate.

Through words, attitude, body language, or priorities, the "shaming" mate communicates that his mate:

- Is not good enough.
- Needs to improve to earn favor and love.
- Simply does not measure up.
- Is flawed, was a mistake to marry, and now has to be tolerated.

The mate being shamed feels like there is **always something wrong** with who she is. She feels flawed, permanently unacceptable! She believes that she just can't "measure up" to be the kind of person the shaming mate wants or demands her to be. She **assumes** God also rejects her in this manner.

Shame is not the name of the game!

12. CONTROLLED CHRISTIAN MATE: (There are two types)

Chapter 5 of Galatians is helpful here. There is spiritual warfare!

Christian Mate Controlled by the Flesh:

This mate, either out of ignorance or rebellion, chooses to run her life in **her own way**. She wants God and others to revolve around her own goals and dreams.

Even though Jesus has saved her, she refuses to let Him "empower and direct" her life. **She tries to live** the Christian life without appropriating the power and love of the Holy Spirit who lives within her. Fatigue, frustration, and misery are inevitable. Only Jesus can live the Christian life. He wants to live this "abundant life" (**John 10:10**) in and through her, but she refuses to surrender or yield.

Her independence from God opens the door to other sins such as worry, fear, impatience, anger, resentment, ambition, idolatry, and immorality. The harder she tries to live right, the greater will be the struggle. Her marriage and family suffer! Satan is pleased! She thinks she is in control, but she is fooled by Satan and is actually out of control. This is not what God wants. This is sin!

Christian Mate Controlled by the Holy Spirit:

This wise mate has found that the key to the Christian life is not struggle but **SURRENDER!** This mate wants what Jesus wants for her life more than what she wants for her life (**Job 22:21**).

She desires God's Holy Spirit to fill, direct, control, and empower her life. **By faith**, she will go throughout the day depending on the Lord. She recognizes that yielding to God is an hour by hour, minute by minute choice.

She is sensitive to the conviction of the Holy Spirit when she does allow self to be in control. She responds by confessing her sin and yielding to the Lord, asking the Holy Spirit to once again control, direct, and empower her life by faith.

She chooses not to shame, insult, manipulate, or nag her mate or children since these "**choices**" would be sin and would be acts indicative of the flesh that wants to take command!

Her life will show the Spirit's fruit. **Galatians 5:22** says:

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love,
joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness, gentleness and self-control...*

This Spirit-controlled Christian **desires** this fruit to develop in her life in order to bring glory to God.

13. SUFFERING MATE

The Suffering Mate may feel that no one understands what he is experiencing. He has gone through **terrible times!** His heart is filled with tears that still have not been shed.

He may have suffered the loss of a dearly beloved family member or friend. He or a loved one might be suffering **pain and fear** from enduring a long, dismal battle with cancer, AIDS, MS, heart failure, or some other medical problem. Perhaps he struggles with depression, or faces difficulties at home, work, or church. Perhaps he is grieving because of an unfaithful mate. It is possible other church members have judged him and set him aside.

Turtle?

Porcupine?

He may respond like a **turtle** and then a **porcupine**. Because the trauma or illness in his life is ever present, it will serve as a mean, ruthless club!

The pain and tension will beat him mercilessly. He may be drained, wiped out, and weary. He may feel 10, 15, or even 20 years older than he is. Migraine headaches, digestive problems, and overeating may occur. Sleeping problems are common.

Dangers!

One of the dangers the Suffering Mate faces is that of **retreating emotionally**. Like the turtle, he may hide inside his shell, building up a wall of isolation. He may distance himself from loved ones and pour himself into his work. He may be a prime candidate for an affair.

Another danger is that the suffering mate may **radiate emotional pain**—almost like there is an invisible circle of pain surrounding him. In addition to retreating like a turtle, he may now send out painful emotional barbs like a porcupine.

Here it seems to be true that the suffering mate **hurts most the ones he loves most**. The family members being hurt are simply in the suffering mate's circle of pain. If both mates are suffering, and they usually are, each mate in each other's "porcupine barb range" gets barbed quite often.

Needed: The Gift of Understanding

This hurting mate is crying out for someone to understand him. He doesn't need words that tell him, "Oh just wait! Things will get better soon! Aunt Tilly had that and she's doing fine now." or "Well, you messed up years ago. You're done as far as serving the Lord goes. You're on the shelf."

No! What he needs is **understanding**. He wants people to cry with him and just sit quietly with him or go for a walk with him. He needs loyal friends to enter into his world of pain and tell him things like, "Tom, what you are going through must be awful. How you must hurt. There's not much I can say but I just want to be' with you. I care for you."

Needed: Awareness and Encouragement

These suffering mates need to be aware of these symptoms and dangers, and they should not be hesitant to ask others for help through their difficult time. They need kindness, time, understanding, alone think-time, and good friends who will shoot straight with them if need be. They need to realize that the pain they are experiencing is real and that others are in pain also. This will help them stop the "**blame game**" or the "poor me" game if they are tempted to play them.

They may need to **forgive** others and **release** all to God. Praying, walking, talking, and having some fun are all helpful. They are not alone in their struggle! The Lord understands!

14. PARENT-HONORING MATES

In **Exodus 20:12**, God speaks the following words:

*Honor your father and your mother
so that you may live long in the
land the Lord your God is giving you.*

Today we hear much about **assigning blame** to our parents for all of the struggles, hang-ups and weaknesses that we now face. If we can just understand our past, the way we were raised and the "wrong choices" our parents made in raising us, then we can "rightfully" place blame on them and somehow we will then feel better. Then we can blame them for **our** foolish, irresponsible living.

This, however, is very **destructive**! This blaming of our parents, grandparents, and in-laws leads to resentment, pride, and despair. However, looking appropriately at our past and our family experience in order to see some of the foundational causes of our problems is beneficial.

Forgiveness is required. **Owning** our own adult choices and being accountable to God are also mandatory. We stand alone before God.

When we understand the framework and dynamics of our struggles, our "struggles" begin to **lose power** over us. Wisdom can break these chains, allowing the light of Christ to enlighten, heal, and free us.

Whatever we do, let us not blame our parents! Instead we need to **bestow** grace and mercy upon them. We need to thank God for them even if they hurt us deeply. You see, we are to forgive as God has forgiven us. *Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*

Colossians 3:13b

The Parent Honoring Mates will understand that their parents did a good job in many areas of raising them as well as falling short in other areas. In most cases, parents do the best they can with what resources and knowledge they have.

These mates realize that, **apart from** God's kindness and grace, they would easily fall and probably do a poorer job at marriage and parenting than their parents. The Parent-Honoring Mates will be committed to what God desires—that they honor their parents.

Two sides to every coin

Just as there are two sides to every coin, there are also two sides to honoring parents and in-laws:

Honor: Side One

Make it a point to genuinely revere your parents and be thankful for them. Don't forget, it was God who chose them for you.

"Grace" them. You are to **grace and bless** them because God graces and blesses you every hour of every day. Also He commands you to honor them (**Exodus 20:12**). Forgive them if forgiveness is needed. Hold them in high regard.

You might honor your parents with a **tribute** by writing on paper what they mean to you. This is an opportunity to thank them and appreciate them. Have it framed. It is a gift they would always treasure.

Honor: Side Two

This side requires you to spend time on your knees in prayer before God. You see, many Parent Honoring Mates have parents who are either not Christians or who simply do not approve of or respect their adult married children's values, convictions, interpretation of the Bible, or their life style.

Some have parents who try to manipulate (emotional hookery), who use shame and ridicule, placing demands on them. Some parents may give generously, but subtly have strings attached. Some, with sweet, poisonous words, will attempt to cause friction in their children's marriages. Sometimes they will want to **maintain control**.

Parent-Honoring Mates may have to confront the offending in-laws or parents. This should always be done with **reverence and respect**. Going to an offending, abusive, or shame-oriented parents' house alone may be too threatening and damaging to their own marriage. They may need to go together.

The Parent Honoring Mates are not to judge them, give lengthy or repetitive explanations, or be disrespectful. They are to be kind, loving, and **very firm!** If they are not firm and decisive here, Satan will use their parents to **cause division** and the taking of sides" in their marriage. Make no mistake about it! If these problems are not dealt with, they can destroy a marriage.

It is painful. Parents may throw everything in their arsenal at their married children. They may accuse them. They may try to somehow punish them. They may even threaten to disown them. They probably won't understand. Remember: They don't need to.

With loving kindness and firm gentleness, the Parent Honoring Mates will **stick** to their convictions and decisions. It will not seem or feel like they are bringing honor to their parents, **but they are.**

*Therefore what God has joined together, let **man** not separate. Mark 10:9*

"Man" includes parents and in-laws!

15. CONTROLLING MATE

This mate is so insecure that he ends up trying to control everyone in the family. He has to be **at the center** of all decision making and usually is at the center of tension and conflict in the home.

Instead of serving, leading, or encouraging, he controls. Again this mate probably learned this controlling technique from observing a controlling parent. He is, however, **without excuse**. He stands alone before God.

He may use shame, guilt, sarcasm, or rage. He controls by use of moods and temper. Sometimes just "**that look**" will get other controlled family members to "**shape up**" or else! They feel they must "walk on eggshells" whenever he is around.

He may puff up like a blow fish when things are not going his way. He may get angry, his eyes may widen, his jaw may tighten, and he may try to become bigger than he really is. He may even overeat and gain weight to wield more power. You see, he needs to get bigger to try to compensate for how terribly **small he feels** inside.

Sometimes a controlling husband will spiritually abuse family members. He might command his wife to do or not do certain things all in the name of headship and submission. Then he might inflict the cruelest type of guilt upon his wife by telling her that God will punish her if she does not obey him. He might also **abuse her** or other family members by dredging up past times when they have failed or sinned. This is the devil's way.

It is important for a wife to set boundaries and limits on what she will tolerate from a controlling mate. She must firmly confront him on his destructive attitudes and behaviors, and let him know what consequences (such as leaving the house) there will be to any abusive behavior. Then she must be sure to follow through. It would also be wise to get help from a pastor, biblical counselor, or police if necessary.

16. TWO-FACED MATE

This mate is moody and seems to be always on **somebody's "case"** at home. She may yell or brood or hold grudges. While at home (or with the private family) she seems like the furthest thing from being a Christian. There is little mercy, little forbearance, and a lot of accusation. She is self-focused.

Ah ha! Once she steps out of the house and mingles at church, at a Bible study, at work, or at a party, she instantly transforms herself into "**The Public Princess**." She is nice, tenderhearted, and a good listener. The "perfect" Christian! No one would believe what she is like once back at home.

Her mate is frustrated! The children are confused! They wonder, "Who is our real mom?" Their understanding of a true Christian is **greatly hindered**. Will the real mom please step forward? Only **one face** is needed. And may Christ be the One who shines through that one face!

Home To Home



Passing on Five Cornerstones of Christian Marriage

Cornerstone #3 ***UNDERSTANDING***

♦ *Think about this:*

If it can be achieved by men or women, then it is not worthy of God's intervention.

♦ *Memory Verse*

Ephesians 4:32

Please print or write this verse and be prepared to share it from memory when you meet with your **Home to Home** Host Couple.

◆ LESSON OVERVIEW

A. What is Understanding?

1. Striving to **comprehend**. Working earnestly to grasp the "full" or accurate meaning.
2. Being **considerate** of another and working toward embracing his/her best interests.
3. Trying to fully **appreciate** the other's position—looking at the situation from the other's point of view.
4. Being **willing** to communicate with a humble, genuine, and caring presence:
 - Having good eye contact, helping the person to feel safe.
 - Listening without interrupting.
 - Choosing not to get defensive.
 - Having the attitude of "believing in" and "wanting the best" for the other person—wanting that person to actually feel you're on his/her side.
5. **Going out of your way** to be considerate of another's needs, struggles, desires and ideas.
6. **Treating** others so they feel valued and appreciated.

Circle a definition above that is the **most important** to you.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO YOU?

B. Understanding Who?

1. **Understanding God's perspective.** The Scriptures teach us that although it may cost all we have, we are commanded to "gain understanding."

Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Proverbs 4:7

With a humble and teachable spirit, we are to seek to know the Lord and His ways so that we may follow Him, rather than follow the ways of our society or our own fleshly desires.

2. **Understanding your mate.** Depend on the Lord to give you the **desire** to understand and seek the will of God with your whole heart. As you draw closer to Him, He will give you the **desire** to understand your mate, the kind of understanding in which your mate will feel understood.

Loving, empathic communication helps you to understand your mate. What is needed from you is a humble and teachable heart attitude. Become more concerned with what, how, when, and why your mate is experiencing certain thoughts and feelings.

It is vital that you—

"BECOME A STUDENT"

of your mate's interests, desires, frustrations, worries, hopes, and needs.

Become less concerned with insuring that you win—that you get your "two cents in"—that you get your point across.

Although your needs are important, if you want to understand your mate, trust that the Lord will meet your needs as you seek to meet those of your mate's.

*And my God will meet all of your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. **Philippians 4:19***

Note: Your needs ARE IMPORTANT and personal dignity needs to be maintained. You are not to become a doormat or a slave to an abusive, foolish, or extremely insensitive mate. This is not understanding your mate. This is foolishly enabling his/her hurtful, destructive, or irresponsible behavior to continue and grow. In a way, this is hurting your mate. See "**TOUGH LOVE**" in the Descriptions section.

C. Why is Understanding important?

1. Without gaining **understanding**, your heart attitude will become cold and self-centered. If you are living a **selfish**, carnal life, you will possess little or no desire to understand or be considerate of your mate's needs and feelings. Thus, you will become defensive, hardened, and focused on your own needs.
2. If you seek to know the Lord and understand the Scriptures so as to please and obey Him, **then** you will be given the **heart's desire** to understand your mate. Then God will bless your marriage richly.

*... find out what pleases the Lord. **Ephesians 5:10***

*Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart. **Psalms 37:4***

- a. Understanding your mate requires **loving empathy**. Even if you want to "get defensive" with your mate, you should make a sincere choice by faith to return a blessing and enter into his/her point of view.

The Holy Spirit will honor such a choice and He will empower it. **Remember:** The choice is up to you; the empowering is up to Him.

- b. Exercising loving empathy requires **humility**. Therefore, understanding your mate requires humility.

Put your feet into your mate's shoes. Walk around awhile. Begin to get a feel for what life must be like for him/her, taking into consideration gender,

background, health, personality, strengths, weaknesses, the way he/she was raised, fears, doubts, stressors, etc.

Ask God to help you **listen attentively** so that you may be able to hear the unspoken words, or those emotions and unmet needs that are camouflaged behind words of pain, loneliness, silence, or despair.

Ask God to enable you to experience your mate's perspective as he/she sees it.

This will take humility and practice. This will also take a God-trusting, mate-honoring, heart attitude.

◆ INDIVIDUAL PREWORK

UNDERSTANDING: The third Cornerstone of marriage.

* **You and your mate complete section A separately**

A. Please look up and read each passage below. What does the Lord seem to be saying to you through each passage regarding "understanding"?

Psalms 90:12

Proverbs 1:5

Proverbs 2:1-11

Proverbs 4:1,5,7,23

Proverbs 14:29

Ecclesiastes 5:1-3,6a

Daniel 10:12

Ephesians 4:29-32

Ephesians 5:10

Colossians 4:6

James 1:19,20

I Peter 3:7-12

CIRCLE THE PASSAGE FROM ABOVE THAT MEANS THE MOST TO YOU.

Be prepared to discuss its significance when you meet with your Host Couple.

*** You and your mate complete section B together**

B. The following are guidelines for answering the BRIDGE BUILDER QUESTIONS in this section:

1. With the goal of understanding one another in a loving way, **take turns** asking and answering the questions out loud.
2. While your mate is sharing, do not interrupt, correct, or get defensive.

Remember: Your mate does not want your **answers**. He/she wants your **understanding**. Your mate does not want you to solve his/her struggles and remove his/her pain. Your mate wants you to embrace his/her struggles and experience his/her pain with him/her.

3. Listen with your ears, and value your mate with your eyes.
4. After your mate has fully finished, if appropriate, rephrase, condense or summarize what he/she said to make sure you understand his/her opinions, feelings, or frustrations. This can be put gently into a question.

EXAMPLE: "Sandy, I want to make sure I understand fully what you've just said. Is it correct that you feel angry and frustrated and unloved when I watch TV and don't 'look' at you when you're trying to talk to me?"

5. Make sure your **goal** here is to understand clearly and empathize fully where your mate is coming from—not where you are coming from!

UNDERSTANDING YOUR MATE REQUIRES LOVING EMPATHY.

6. Your natural inclination may be to become uptight and defensive. Instead, make it your goal to **enter into** your mate's world of feelings, opinions, considerations, fears, and wishes.
7. Sometimes, it may be difficult to express your feelings (Men wrestle with this the most). So try to:

PAINT A PORTRAIT

of your thoughts and feelings with words.

Create a story in terms that your mate will comprehend. For example:

"Bob, this story may help you understand how the kids and I feel when you choose not to come to church with us on Sunday mornings—

It's like the Sunday football game on TV. Bob, imagine watching the Green Bay Packers playing the Chicago Bears.

You want the Packers to win, but on the first play and every play thereafter, as the Packers line up on the scrimmage line, their quarterback sits down on the ground and doesn't get involved with helping or leading his team to victory.

Bob, we love and respect you but we feel like the team—waiting for their quarterback to join them. We want you to be a part of our family team. It's really important to us."

8. When asking and answering the BRIDGE BUILDER QUESTIONS, do so in a spirit of respect and admiration.

ENCOURAGE EACH OTHER.

DO NOT CONDEMN OR JUDGE.

Remember:

God desires oneness.	Satan wants isolation.
God desires for you both to look at Satan as the enemy.	Satan wants you to look at your mate as the enemy.
God desires empathy.	Satan wants misunderstanding.
God desires the tearing down of barriers, masks, strongholds, and resentments.	Satan wants defensive walls built up.

BRIDGE BUILDER QUESTIONS

If possible, answer these questions on a date or in a setting where there are no interruptions.

Husband: Ask your mate the first question.

Wife: After you have fully answered, ask your mate the same question.

Husband checks box and **Wife** checks box for each question answered.

- ☐H ☐W 1. Thinking back, what was the most uplifting, memorable time of our marriage?
- ☐H ☐W 2. When do you feel loved, valued, or respected by me the most?
- ☐H ☐W 3. What has been the most treasured gift that I have given you and why?
- ☐H ☐W 4. If there is one thing that I do—a priority that I uphold, or an attitude I express—for which you are thankful or proud, what is it?
- ☐H ☐W 5. What is your greatest wish, dream, or hope?
- ☐H ☐W 6. What is your deepest fear or worry?
- ☐H ☐W 7. Please share with me your greatest need right now.
- ☐H ☐W 8. What could I do to be more considerate so that you would feel more loved, valued or listened to?
- ☐H ☐W 9. What area of my life do you see as needing work?
- ☐H ☐W 10. If there was one prayer request that God would most certainly grant about our relationship, what would it be?

CIRCLE TWO QUESTIONS ABOVE THAT HELPED YOU THE MOST.

* * *

Promise each other that you will take *15 minutes a week* to have a:

BRIDGE BUILDING TIME
Just between the two of you

- Take the phone off the hook.
- Perhaps light a candle.
- Go for a walk or go on a date.
- Take turns sharing with each other **three "planks"** that when laid down will help bridge the gap between you and your mate which the pressures of life create:

Plank #1: Share one thing that is draining, bothering, frustrating, or discouraging you.

Plank #2: Share one thing that is bringing you hope, fulfillment, and joy.

Plank #3: Share one thing that you are wishing for, dreaming for, or praying for.

Note: Satan delights in moat digging and stocking. He wants each of you on opposite sides of the moat thinking that piranha and crocodiles are stocked in it. Don't believe his lies! He hates bridges that bridge his moats.

Spend time together on a regular basis, building a supportive, listening oriented, and nonjudgmental bridge of sharing and understanding—and be sure to pray **out loud** together at the end of your time. Your marriage will be strengthened!

Be aware, though, that since the enemy does not like this, he will try to use even a very simple disagreement to pull you apart.

Keep on Building Bridges!

If you both desire to gain understanding in your lives and marriage, then please pray **out loud**, before each other and the Lord, the following prayers:

Husband's Prayer

Dear Lord,

I confess I lack understanding of Your ways. Through Your Word and empowered by Your Holy Spirit, I fully submit myself to You.

I want to gain understanding and wisdom more than anything! Please help me to love my mate in an understanding way.

Help me to be more gentle and tender, and to listen to her.

Work in my life in such a way that she will feel more appreciated, understood, and valued by me.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wife's Prayer

Dear Lord,

I also confess I lack understanding of Your ways. Through Your Word and empowered by Your Holy Spirit, I fully submit myself to You.

I want to gain understanding and wisdom more than anything! Please help me to affirm my mate in an understanding way as well. Help me to be more gentle and tender, and to listen to him.

Work in my life in such a way that he will feel more appreciated, understood, and encouraged by me.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Husband's signature

Wife's signature



*Passing on Five Cornerstones
of Christian Marriage*

Cornerstone #4

PURPOSE

♦ **Think about this:**

Will your marriage reflect: the hope found in serving one another and growing together in relationship with Jesus Christ or the emptiness of faithless living where the main purpose is to serve yourselves, be "happy," and just get by?

♦ **Memory Verse**

Philippians 2:2

Please print or write this verse and be prepared to share it from memory when you meet with your **Home to Home Host Couple**.

♦ LESSON OVERVIEW

A. What is Purpose?

1. Something that you set before yourself as an objective to be attained.
2. An end or aim to be kept in view.
3. That sense of mission or destiny that filters and focuses your thoughts, attitudes and actions, and also fuels your life with vision and meaning.

B. How do we find our Purpose?

1. By knowing God's Word.
2. By yielding and surrendering to the Lord Jesus Christ.
3. By having a heart's desire to "**purpose**" that which God considers important.

C. Why is Purpose important?

1. Seneca, a Roman philosopher and statesman, once said, "A ship cannot set it's sail in the right direction until it knows what port it is headed toward."
2. Without purpose in your life and marriage, you will have no solid direction. You will tend to drift through life. Our purpose determines our actions.
3. Without a Christ-centered and Christ-directed purpose in your marriage, you will naturally drift into Satan's purposes for marriage. His purposes include:

Dissention • Self-centeredness • Resentment • Rejection • Quarreling • Immorality • Shallowness • Isolation • Passivity • Destruction

There will be little commitment, little reverence, and little understanding. The impact of your marriage and family will only touch the **temporal**. They will not impact the **eternal**.

Your children, if any, will pick up (absorb) these worldly purposes. No doubt, they will lean further in the direction of what our secular, humanistic society has to offer—a self-indulgent, despairing, and godless outlook.

**WHERE THERE IS NO LOVE,
THERE IS NO PURPOSE.
WHERE THERE IS NO SERVANTHOOD,
SELF IS EXALTED.**

Our love for God, our purpose, and our servanthood are all related.

As you seek to know and love God more and more, He will empower and direct you to serve Him more effectively.

He will direct you in your marriage, family, and church to serve others for His glory. Godly purpose for your marriage always involves godly service.

Without an intimate and growing relationship with God, you will be driven by self-protective, self-gratifying desires instead of being led by the Spirit, and you will look for ways to avoid serving others. There will be little peace in your life. Relationships will be tense and shallow. Your existence will be hurried and exhausting.

You will focus on how you are being offended by people instead of how you can entrust yourself to God and choose not to be offended.

By maintaining a close relationship with God, you will be able to carry out God's purpose in your life. Only as you live in total dependence on Him will His life "shine through you" as you serve your mate, your family, your church, and others.

It is important to choose:

What direction your marriage and family are headed.

- Do you have a clearly defined "**port**" that you are headed toward?
- Do your children, if any, embrace this purpose, this calling?
- Do they see in you a servant's heart or do they see a heart that wants to be served?

It is time now to make up your minds—both of you.

- Who are you dedicated to?
- For what eternal purpose do you want to make your marriage and family count?

◆ INDIVIDUAL PREWORK

PURPOSE: The fourth Cornerstone of marriage.

* **You and your mate are to do sections A and B separately**

A. What does the Lord seem to be saying to you through each of the following scriptures regarding the issue of "PURPOSE" in marriage? Take time to listen to God's "still, small voice" as you contemplate.

Genesis 1:26-28

Deuteronomy 5:32,33

Deuteronomy 6:1-7

Proverbs 22:6

Micah 6:8

Matthew 4:18-20

Matthew 5:13-16

Matthew 28:18-20

Galatians 2:20

Galatians 5:13

Ephesians 4:32

Philippians 2:2

Philippians 3:8-10,13,14

CIRCLE ONE passage from above that inflames your heart and helps you most clearly to envision God's passion and purpose for your marriage.

Be prepared to discuss its significance when you meet with your Host Couple.

B. Please finish reading the HOME TO HOME DESCRIPTIONS.

Which of the Descriptions do you identify with the most?

Give example(s) of your own similar behavior.

1. _____ Page # _____

Example: _____

2. _____ Page# _____

Example: _____

3. _____ Page# _____

Example: _____

*** Complete sections C through J together**

C. Compare and discuss sections A and B of the Individual Pre work.

D. Dr. Howard Hendricks, noted speaker and authority on family issues, has said:

"I see the Family as a divinely appointed tool, an instrument to impact a hungry and thirsty society with the reality of Jesus Christ in human experience."

E. Ask for the Lord's wisdom as you develop a PURPOSE STATEMENT for your family.

This brief statement should capture what you both sense is God's specific purpose or mission for your family.

In addition to benefitting from His everlasting love, mercy, and kindness, you sense that this is God's passionate, irrevocable calling on your lives, marriage, and family. Ask yourselves, "Why is our family on this earth?"

Keep your purpose statement simple as possible. One family got together and prayerfully forged the following PURPOSE STATEMENT:

“To help marriages, families, and individuals find lasting hope and a future in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Another family decided to select a particular verse from the Bible each year to remind them of their purpose on earth as Christ's ambassadors. They chose **Micah 6:8**. The Lord requires you:

'To act justly and to love mercy and walk humbly with your God.'

Everything the family thinks, says, and does, and every family project they consider (such as providing groceries, gifts, and money to needy families at holiday time, or opening up their home to serve those in need of kindness and hospitality) are **filtered** through and fueled by this Purpose Statement. The recite it from memory sometimes after praying at supper time. It glues them together and keeps them from drifting off course.

If you have children, allow them to **get involved** in developing one, or to help find one in Scripture. Let them own the project.

It does not have to be set in concrete. As your marriage and family mature, God may lead you to **revise** your Purpose Statement or choose a new verse each year.

Think how you might fulfill such a Purpose Statement by **serving** in some capacity through your **local church**. It is crucial that you regularly attend and serve in a Christ-centered, Bible-believing church. Let your Purpose Statement (or verse) be centered around **servanthood**.

Use the following spaces to carefully handcraft your:

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Use the lines to write out 1st and 2nd drafts if needed.

1st Draft _____

2nd Draft _____

Final Draft _____

F. Memorize your PURPOSE STATEMENT and, if you have children, talk together about it.

For younger children you can even put some musical notes to it and sing it together.

Let the Lord use this as a **rudder** and **filter** in your home life. Consider your home the Lord's mission station where His love, peace, and service abound.

G. Consider sharing your newly formed PURPOSE STATEMENT with a close friend or relative this week.

H. Right now, would you both pray about becoming a Host Couple and taking another couple through these Five Cornerstones of marriage?

The need is great! Prayerfully consider this challenge and ask the Lord with whom He might want you to share this material.

Names of couples that might be interested:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

I. Please take the time, if you have children, to share with them these Cornerstone principles. Pray that God will instill them in your children as they are reflected through you.

- J. If you both sincerely desire God's calling and plans for your marriage and family, then pray out loud before each other and the Lord the following prayers:**

Husband's Prayer

Dear Lord,

I desire with all my heart that my life, marriage, and family be pleasing to You. I love You and am grateful to You for everything. Enable me and my family to serve You by serving others for Your glory.

Enable us to live out Your calling and purpose for our lives. Give us a passionate sense of mission and destiny as we serve through our local church. May our servanthood touch all You bring across our paths.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Wife's Prayer

Dear Lord,

I also desire with all my heart that my life, marriage, and family be pleasing to You. Hove You and am grateful to You for everything. Enable me and my family to serve You by serving others for Your glory.

Enable us to live out Your calling and purpose for our lives. Give us a passionate sense of mission and destiny as we serve through our local church. May our servanthood touch all You bring across our paths.

In Jesus' name, Amen.

Husband's signature

Wife's signature



*Passing on Five Cornerstones
of Christian Marriage*

Cornerstone #5
NURTURING

♦ **Think about this:**

Desire to build up, protect, and preserve your marriage relationship rather than look to your mate as the one who lives to meet your needs. Serve your mate first.

♦ **Memory Verse**

I Thessalonians 5:11

Please print or write this verse and be prepared to share it from memory when you meet with your **Home to Home** Host Couple.

◆ LESSON OVERVIEW

A. What is Nurturing?

1. It is that process which nourishes.
2. It is that which promotes the development of something.
3. It is the act that feeds and encourages growth.

B. What requires Nurturing?

1. Your relationship with the Lord.

It is essential to develop a deep yearning for God and a dependence on Him. Make it your top priority to take the time to cultivate your personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Your marital relationship.

Place a high priority on nourishing and preserving your marriage.

It would be wise to consider your "marriage" as a **separate personality**—one that possesses the heartbeat of your life together.

Your marital relationship needs to be fed, lifted up, encouraged, and continually refreshed. Outside influences and pressures can weaken your relationship. **You must be careful!**

C. Why is Nurturing so important?

1. If you desire a wholesome, deepening relationship with your mate, cultivate with eagerness the discipline of **regular** devotional times with your Lord. It is also essential that you continue to pray **out loud** together on a regular basis. This fosters oneness and prevents isolation.

Spend regular, focused, uninterrupted time with the Master so that His love, power, and guidance may be **imparted** to you through meditating on His Word, and through prayer and praise.

If you want to serve and nurture your mate, then you must seek the Lord, love Him and be able to experience His nurturing love for you.

Satan abhors nurturing. He delights in isolating you from your mate. **Isolation** in marriage is much like **rust** on a car. If you don't tend to it, the rust will spread and eat through the car. Nurturing one another, individual time with the Lord, and praying out loud together remove marital rust. God works in you to remove this rusty:

ISOLATION BUILD-UP

2. Remember! Desire what God wants for your life **more** than what you want. Upholding His honor, resting in Him, and pleasing Him—let these be the driving force of your life.

3. **Be totally committed** to nurturing your relationship with God and with your mate.

Don't forget! The mission of demonic spirits is to isolate, discourage, and destroy your relationship. Satan fears Christ's love might shine through your marriage to your kids and to the world (**Ephesians 6:10-18, I Peter 5:8,9**).

4. Marriage is such a **beautiful reflection** of Christ's marriage to His Church and of His unwavering commitment to us—His Beloved. He would never think of rejecting us. Why, then, would we ever consider rejecting His precious gift to us—our mate?
5. Think of your marital relationship as—

A SENSITIVE FLOWER—

that is nestled within a flower garden (the garden symbolizes your relationship with the Lord). Caring enough for the development and growth of the garden will **directly affect** the flower. Likewise, neglecting the flower will affect the garden and cause it to suffer as well.

If you have ever had a flower garden, you know that maintaining it takes planning, hard work, tender loving care, and attention. Your flower garden and each flower are precious to you. If you want them to grow in beauty, depth and health, you will—

Nurture them.

You will weed, fertilize, trim, water, cover if frost is predicted and cultivate with precision and timing. Your flower and flower garden are **precious** to you. You will tend to them, not just because you know the consequences if you don't, but because there is joy in doing so.

Will Your Marriage Last Without Constant Care?

Some think so. They actually think their marriage is able to withstand neglect. Neglect can be a number of things, such as:

- Overlooking my mate's needs and hurts.
- Putting off showing special attention to my mate.
- Not listening attentively to my mate.
- Forgetting to value the ideas my mate shares with me.
- Disregarding the importance of sharing my life with my mate.

Like the flower that is delicate, sensitive to light, in need of rain (not too much or too little), a marriage **is affected** by "coldness," and will wither without continuous nourishment, focused care, and attention.

Weeds and Diseases

Isolation, rejection, resentment, and estrangement are weeds that can **subtly** and **gradually** strangle the flower of your marriage, causing a slow, almost unnoticeable death.

Just as there are diseases that can damage a flower, there are diseases that can **slowly** and **subtly** infect and damage your marriage, such as:

complacency
mediocrity
passivity
discourtesy
rudeness
worldliness

Nurturing your marriage and your relationship with God will help to prevent these deadly weeds and diseases from injuring either of them.

6. The Devil will **try to convince** you that your mate is your enemy—

Instead of himself.

Revelation 12:9 (NASB) states that,

. . . the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world

Do you think your mate is **d**

r
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 you down?

If you begin to believe that your mate is dragging you down—holding you back—from work or ministry or fun—you'll begin to feel that the person to whom you are married is one big hindrance—one big roadblock!

If this has happened, Satan has you right where he wants you:

Deceived!

◆ INDIVIDUAL PREWORK

NURTURING: The fifth Cornerstone of marriage.

* **You and your mate are to do sections A through E separately**

A. How would you honestly and fairly rate the present condition of your:

Relationship With The Lord? (check one)

○ ——— ○ ——— ○ ——— ○ ——— ○ ——— ○ ——— ○

Really Starved Mediocre OK but Active Growing Fully
Dead! Starved Frustrating Needs and with Alive Fully
In a Rut Help Hopeful Excitement Nourished!

Relationship With Your Mate? (check one)

○ ——— ○ ——— ○ ——— ○ ——— ○ ——— ○ ——— ○

Really Starved Mediocre OK but Active Growing Fully
Dead! Starved Frustrating Needs and and with Alive Fully
In a Rut Help Hopeful Excitement Nourished!

Note: Relationships with God and mate are directly proportional. If the circles checked have a difference of (3) or more between them, your perception of the situation may be wrong. How you see yourself may be different from how it really is. Ask God to reveal truth in the situation.

The following are a few suggestions that might be nurturing to your marriage relationship:

Men, be gallant. Open the car door for her. Pull out a chair for her at a restaurant. Don't sit down until she is seated. When she walks into a room where you are seated, stand up to honor her. Always help her with her coat. Go out of your way to pamper her. Take her on a date at least once a week. Let the kids know that at 9:30 p.m. on week nights and from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. on Sundays, your bedroom door is locked. This is your time to nurture, talk, and love. Help her to feel safe.

Men, be romantic. It is a choice. Cards, flowers, candy, surprise phone calls or visits during the day, etc., will nurture. Walk up to your wife, hold her in your arms, and tell her how special she is to you. Plan a special "get-a-way" weekend—just for the two of you. Pour a hot bath for her. Share with her your inner thoughts, hopes, fears, and concerns. Ask for her advice. She craves to know the "real you"—the one who lives inside your skin!

Men: *Underline any suggestions you want to put into action.*

Women, let your words be sweetened with grace and gentleness. Perfume, intimate apparel that he likes, candles, his favorite meal, a short love note to encourage him, walk up to him and hold him tightly, etc.—all of this will nurture.

Women, affirm him. Let him lead. Defer to him. Build him up and defend him in public settings. Never slander him. Never! Gently caress the back of his neck, rub his shoulders, and tell him you missed him when he comes home. Tell him you are proud of him and need him. Respect him.

Women: *Underline any suggestions you want to put into action.*

B. With the goal of nurturing your relationship with God, read each passage below.

What does the Lord seem to be saying to you through each passage?

Psalms 32:7

Psalms 37:4

Psalms 42:1,2

Psalms 61:4

Psalms 62:5

Psalms 63:1-8

Psalms 103:2-5

Isaiah 66:13

Matthew 5:6

Matthew 6:33

Circle a passage from above that is meaningful to you.

Be prepared to discuss its significance when you meet with your Host Couple.

C. With the goal of nurturing your relationship with your mate, read each passage below. What does the Lord seem to be saying to you through each passage?

Proverbs 3:3,4

Proverbs 10:21

I Corinthians. 13:4-8a, 14:1a

Ephesians 4:2

Philippians 2:3,4

Philippians 2:14

Colossians 3:12-14

Colossians 3:15,16

Circle a passage from above that is meaningful to you.

Be prepared to share its significance when you meet with your Host Couple.

D. Ask the Lord to examine your heart attitudes and your behaviors.

1. Please write down one attitude or behavior that, with God's help, you will

STOP

in order to nurture your marriage in a greater way.

2. Please write down one attitude or behavior that, with God's help, you will

CONTINUE

in order to keep nurturing your marriage.

3. Please write down one attitude or behavior that, with God's help, you will

START

in order to nurture your marriage in a greater way.

E. On a separate sheet of paper, write a one or two paragraph CARE LETTER to your mate.

This special love letter should affirm your mate because of the character traits, convictions, conduct, priorities, and attitudes you see in him/her.

This letter should **clearly communicate** that he/she is:

loved,

valued,

appreciated.

The following is an example letter:

Note: Write your **CARE LETTER** from your heart. If you feel led to write yours from a different approach.

Please do so as the Lord leads.
Do not worry about eloquence.

Be genuine. Just be yourself.

Dear Sandy,

I really love and cherish the wonderful person you are. Your kindness and loyalty have helped me more clearly understand the way God loves me. Your gentle spirit is precious to me.

When the world seems so harsh and unfair at times, you are right there willing to help and encourage me.

I thank God for the loving gift you are to me.

MAKE IT A CARE LETTER TO REMEMBER ... A TOUCH FROM YOUR HEART

Use a separate sheet of stationary or use the space below.

* **Complete sections F and G together**

F. Please get together with your mate.

1. First, compare and discuss your answers from Sections A through E of the Individual Prework. (**F. 4 will explain what to do with the Care Letter**)
2. Think of your marriage as it is right now.

In a spirit of humility and cooperation, agree on at least one attitude, behavior, or priority that tends to hinder the nurturing process in your marital relationship. Be as detailed as you can.

3. Now having a better understanding of nurturing and how it's presence or absence can affect the life and vitality of your marriage, agree on one change you will make in your lives that **will enhance nurturing** in your marriage.

4. On a **date away from home**—perhaps at a favorite restaurant or a nice hotel for the night—take turns reading out loud your CARE LETTERS to one another.

Perhaps by candlelight over dessert, tenderly and respectfully share them:

Husband: Read out loud to your wife the CARE LETTER you wrote for her.

Wife: Now read out loud to your husband the CARE LETTER you wrote for him.

Then, as you are enjoying each other's company, simply spend some memorable moments just—

Caring for each other.

Note: The CARE LETTERS are only for you and your mate. They are not to be shared with your Host Couple. Feel free to share the experience, but not the content.

G. If you both desire to nurture your relationship with your Heavenly Father and with each other, then please pray out loud before each other and the Lord the following closing prayers:

Husband's Prayer

Dear Lord,

Thank You for helping me to more clearly understand the value and incredible importance of walking closely with You and cultivating a godly, lasting, and growing relationship with the beautiful woman I cherish. I humbly ask now that You work in my life in such a way that I will nurture my relationship with You and with her. Help my marital relationship to be one that is fresh, forgiving, and serving.

Please enable us to share these Cornerstones with other couples so that Your Kingdom work can be advanced in our nation and around the world!

In Jesus name, Amen.

Wife's Prayer

Dear Lord,

Thank You, also, for helping me to more clearly understand the value and vital importance of walking closely with You and cultivating a godly, lasting, and growing relationship with the wonderful man I love and respect. I humbly ask now that You work in my life in such a way that I will nurture my relationship with You and with him. Help my marital relationship to be one that is fresh, forgiving, and care giving.

Please enable us to share these Cornerstones with other couples so that their marriages will become equipped to shine Christ's love and truth around the world!

In Jesus name, Amen.

Husband's signature

Wife's signature

HOME TO HOME EVALUATION

Your name, address and phone number: (Optional)

 ()

1. How did God use **Home to Home** to minister to you?

2. Which Cornerstone meant the **most** to you, or had the greatest impact on your life and your marriage? _____ Why?

3. What did you **appreciate** the most about the regular "Get-Togethers?"

4. If you could **change** or **improve** one aspect of **Home to Home** to make it better, what would it be?

5. Now that you have received these Cornerstones, would you prayerfully select a couple and take them through **Home to Home**?

☐ Yes ☐ No

6. Please share your **comments** and **decision** with your Host Couple and return Evaluations to them at the last session. Please mail all EVALUATIONS to:

Jim and Barbara Grunseth
W4760 Steeple Chase Way
Elkhorn, WI 53121
(414) 642-5092
jgrunseth@centurytel.net
Please pray for www.marriageanchors.com



*Passing on Five Cornerstones
of Christian Marriage*

HOST COUPLE'S GUIDELINES

Dear Friends,

Thank you for your desire to equip homes in your church and community with these five biblical Cornerstones of Christian marriage. Your willingness to serve as a Host Couple is honorable. Other families will be reached for Christ because of you!

The spiritual battle is ever increasing to prevent godly homes and churches from spreading the love and the light of Christ to the world and to our future generations.

Only through the power of the Lord as we are faithful in prayer, accountable to Him and one another, can the battle be won.

Strengthening marriages in Christ will strengthen His Church. This is a major key to advancing the gospel and the cause of Christ.

Thank you for helping your church fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

The Kingdom of God will be advanced; our children and grandchildren will be blessed.

GOD BLESS YOU!

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR HOST COUPLE

- A. First things first. God has led or is leading you to a Guest Couple. Pray for them.
 - 1. Pray for wisdom and tenderness on your part.
 - 2. Pray for openness and teachability regarding your Guest Couple.
 - 3. Pray for spiritual protection from the powerful forces of darkness (Ephesians 6:10-12).
 - 4. Pray for a fruitful harvest in your marriage and in your Guest Couple's marriage that would far exceed anything that you could dream about or hope for.
 - 5. Pray that by Cornerstone #4, your Guest Couple will have captured the vision and will choose to become a Host Couple and "pass on" these Cornerstones to another couple in your church or community.
- B. Read through the "GUEST COUPLE'S INTRODUCTION on page "Host—16."
- C. When meeting with your Guest Couple, especially for your first "Get-Together" where the goal is FRIENDSHIP BUILDING:
 - 1. Be sensitive to their needs, struggles, and fears.
 - 2. Be warm and understanding.
 - 3. Avoid putting them on the spot or pressuring them.
 - 4. Although you are the Host Couple, emphasize that you have much to gain from your Guest Couple. Emphasize MUTUAL BENEFIT.
 - 5. Be open, informal, genuine, and relaxed. Your "realness" will draw them to lower their guard so they can be "real." If you come across like you know it all and never admit that you have struggles, you'll soon lose your Guests.
 - 6. Emphasize accountability. If homework is not finished you do not meet together.
 - 7. Never allow just one mate from the Guest Couple to come for a "Get-Together." Both must come with homework done.
 - 8. Remember: Discipleship is more than looking up verses and filling in blanks; it is sharing your life and also receiving from others.

GUIDELINES FOR DISCIPLING AN ENGAGED COUPLE

When a Host Couple (married) discipless a Guest Couple (not married).

If your Guest Couple is not married (is engaged), we ask that you honor God by holding each of the two people accountable (man to man, woman to woman) in two areas:

1. How are they doing regarding their walk with God.
 - a. Are they seeking the Lord fervently or are they drifting away from Him?
 - b. Are they getting to know the Lord by spending regular time with Him in prayer and in His Word?
 - c. What are they learning from Him?
 - d. Are they attending a godly church regularly?
 - e. What are their biggest concerns?

Note: If a Guest Partner is not yet a Christian (has not received Christ into his/her life to be Lord and Savior) then be sensitive to this. Your loving, gracious, and patient attitude may pave the way for a commitment to Christ during Home to Home.

2. How are they doing in their battle to remain sexually pure?
 - a. Are they abstaining from premarital sexual intimacy?
 - b. Are they conducting themselves wisely and honorably when they date?
Are they avoiding being alone together in a home, apartment, or motel?
 - c. Have they defined just how far their physical intimacy will go before marriage?

All behaviors and settings that would naturally cause them to fall into heavy, sexual interaction should be avoided.
 - d. Have they each signed both copies of the Prayer For Purity (page Host—18) where they will ask God to help them be wise and sexually pure?

Let the engaged couple know at the end of your first "Get-Together" that:

- (1) You will be asking to see their signed copies of the Prayer For Purity (page Host—18) when you meet for Cornerstone #1, your second "Get-Together."
- (2) They need to both read the Home to Home Guest Couple's Introduction (page Host—16) in addition to completing Cornerstone #1 during that next work week.
- (3) They should consider all referrals to husband, wife, and mate as future husband, wife, and mate.

HOST COUPLE'S GUIDELINES FOR GET-TOGETHER #1

(Friendship Building and Overview)

Time: Two hours

A. FRIENDSHIP BUILDING

After selecting a Guest Couple, invite them to your home for a meal or simply for coffee and dessert. Get to know one another.

1. Share a little of your backgrounds, then ask them to share theirs.
2. Share together how you first met your mate. Let them share.
3. Share together something funny, unique, romantic, or memorable about the early days of marriage, your honeymoon, first date, etc.

Remember: Your goal this first night together is to create a warm, light-hearted atmosphere in which your Guest Couple can feel accepted, lower their guard, and "bond" with you.

4. Share briefly what God has done in your marriage as a result of having received the five Cornerstones. Be as vulnerable as you can without giving too much detail about each Cornerstone.
5. Share that although you are the Host Couple, you have much to learn and gain from them.

IT'S A TWO-WAY LEARNING AND GROWING PROCESS

It is not to be a "teacher-student" atmosphere, but a "student-student" atmosphere where both couples desire to become all that God wants them to be.

6. Take time to listen to your Guest Couple. Help them feel at home.
7. Agree together to honor confidentiality.
8. Emphasize that it is best to hire a sitter (if there are children) so that full attention can be given to these "Get-Togethers."
9. If appropriate, you might find it encouraging for the two men to meet for coffee or the two women for lunch sometime to increase friendship and trust.

B. OVERVIEW

Explain the following **general format** of "Get-Togethers" to your Guest Couple. (Each "Get-Together" time will last about two hours.)

1. Arrival, greetings.
2. Man to man; Woman to Woman sharing (25 minutes)
 - a. Men pair off and women pair off; go to different rooms where they can't be overheard.
 - b. Share a few things during this brief "one-to-one" time. Both Guest and Host recite the memory verse and discuss its significance. Have a short time of prayer.
3. Break (5 minutes)

Rest room; maybe get coffee, soda.
4. Group Discussion (60 minutes)
 - a. Couples regroup in the living room or kitchen to discuss the material for that week's Cornerstone.
 - b. Share praises and prayer needs. Pray together.
5. Refreshments (30 minutes)

Time for coffee, dessert, laughter, and building friendships.
(Consider possibility of taking turns providing refreshments.)
6. Departure

C. AT THIS TIME

1. If you are discipling an Engaged Couple ask them to consider all referrals to husband, wife, and mate as future husband, wife, and mate.
2. Explain to them those three points at the bottom of page Host—3.
3. Stress the requirement of homework completion and the vital importance of praying out loud together on the last page of each Cornerstone.
4. Agree on a time and place to meet for the next "Get-Together."
 - a. The warmth of a home is best.
 - b. Try to meet no longer than two hours, otherwise effectiveness will decrease.

God bless you. Know that your investment in the lives of this Guest Couple, and the lives they, in turn, will touch, will greatly impact their church, this generation, future generations, and the Kingdom of God for all eternity!

HOST COUPLE'S GUIDELINES FOR GET-TOGETHER #2

(Loving Faithfulness)

Time: Two hours

A. Arrival

1. Greetings as Guest Couple arrives.
2. Everyone must have their homework completed in order to meet.

B. Man to Man; Woman to Woman sharing (25 minutes)

(Men and women go to separate rooms for "one-to-one" encouragement and accountability.)

1. Ask: "How have you been doing this past week?" Be sure you share openly how you've been doing also. Remember: mutual benefit.
2. Ask: "What was the most positive or rewarding aspect about this last week and what was the most difficult or frustrating aspect?" You are to share also. The more open and real you are, the better.
3. Ask for the Memory Verse to be recited. "Why is this verse significant to you? How will you apply it in your marriage?" Then you recite and share briefly.
4. Ask gently: "Did you sign your name on page 5 of the homework?" (This refers to the salvation decision and commitment to Christ.)

If he/she did sign and date it and did receive Christ (now or sometime earlier in the past) ask: "Do you have any doubts about your assurance of salvation?" If so, look up and read together John 6:37, John 10:27-29, Romans 8:35-39, and Romans 8:1.

5. Ask: "What is your number one personal prayer need?" Then share yours.
6. Pray together. (If your Guest is uneasy about praying, you just pray.)

Note: At this time, if you, the Host Couple, are discipling an engaged couple, ask to see his/her Prayer For Purity sheet (page Host—18). If it has not been signed and dated, ask: "Will you sign it now or during our 'break' in a few minutes?" If either Guest Partner refuses to sign, kindly let him/her know that getting together for Home to Home will be postponed until each sees the importance of this prayer. (Also, remember they are to sign each other's copy.)

C. Break (5 minutes)

Rest room; maybe have coffee or soda.

D. Group Discussion (60 minutes)

(Regroup in the living room or kitchen where all four of you will discuss the material on "Loving Faithfulness.")

1. Pages 1-3. Informally share back and forth about the meaning and importance of "Loving Faithfulness."
2. Page 6. Briefly discuss the importance of the phrases that were underlined.
3. Page 7. (It is best to look up each person's circled verses in your Bibles now.) Discuss why these passages are meaningful.
4. Pages 7-8. Feel free to share answers on these pages.
5. Page 9. Ask: "Did you pray out loud together and also sign your names?"
6. As the Lord leads, take time now to verbally share any prayer needs or praises—then close in prayer. Each person can pray. It's best if each person will pray and pray simply so all will feel comfortable to pray. However, there should be no pressure to pray out loud if someone does not wish to.

E. Refreshments (30 minutes)

Focus on friendship building, warmth, and laughter.

F. Departure

1. Suggest that you pray for each other during the week.
2. Bring up the possibility of building one of your next "Get-Togethers" around a special, fun meal together—perhaps a cookout or an international meal (i.e. German, Spanish, Scandinavian, Asian, African, or Italian night.)

HOST COUPLE'S GUIDELINES FOR GET-TOGETHER #3

(Reverence)

Time: Two hours

A. Arrival

1. Greetings as Guest Couple arrives.
2. Everyone must have their homework completed in order to meet.

B. Man to Man; Woman to Woman sharing (25 minutes)

(Men and women go to separate rooms for "one-to-one" encouragement and accountability.)

1. Ask: "How have you been doing this past week?" Be sure you share openly how you have been.
2. Ask: "What was the best thing about this past week and what was the worst thing about this past week?" Your authenticity and genuineness in your answers will do much to encourage your guest. This will allow your Guest to feel "safe" to do likewise.
3. Take turns reciting the Memory Verse. Then, each of you share why it is significant or how you might apply it in your life and marriage.
4. Ask: "What is your number one personal prayer need right now?" Then share yours.
5. Pray together.

C. Break (5 minutes)

Rest room; maybe get coffee, soda.

D. Group Discussion (60 minutes)

(Regroup in the living room or kitchen to discuss the material on Reverence.)

1. Page 12. Share back and forth about the meaning and importance of Reverence.
2. Page 14. Discuss the **truths** that were circled and why they are encouraging.
3. Pages 14-16. Discuss openly the importance of "gracing" your mate. Take a few moments to share why each of you signed or did not sign after the **Gracing Prayer** on page 16.

4. Page 16. Take turns discussing why the underlined scriptural phrases were meaningful.
5. Pages 18-19. (Just For Women and Just For Men) Everyone share why they chose their Key passages.
6. Page 19. Openly discuss where each of you placed your "X's." What is the Lord teaching you here?
7. Page 20. Briefly discuss a few of the seven questions in section "D." You may not have time for all seven, so follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.
8. Pages 20-21. Ask: "In dealing with such things as unforgiveness, bitterness, and resentment, why do you think God considers 'heart attitude' so important in reverencing Him and your mate?"

Note: If either Guest's past involves divorce, remarriage, occult involvement, failure, etc., assure him/her of the Lord's redemptive, forgiving nature. He knows we fail. He is on our side. He longs to pick us up and restore us. Don't let the enemy accuse any longer. You are in Christ! God looks upon His sons and daughters as having been given the righteousness of Christ (Phil. 3:9). Rest in His righteousness (Matt. 11:28-30). He is an amazing, tender, and merciful God.

9. Page 21. Briefly discuss any benefits.
10. Page 22. (Closing Prayer) Ask your Guest Couple if they experience any difficulties in praying together as a couple. Be sensitive and understanding. Many struggle here. The devil wants to discourage praying out loud together because it destroys his plans to isolate the two involved (James 4:7).
11. Page 22. Ask: "Did you sign your names?"
12. Share prayer needs and praises and then pray for each other.

E. Refreshments (30 minutes)

Focus on friendship building, acceptance, and laughter.

F. Departure

1. Explain that they have two weeks to read the Descriptions.
2. During "Get-Together" #5, questions concerning these Descriptions will be discussed as part of the Cornerstone on "Purpose."

HOST COUPLE'S GUIDELINES FOR GET-TOGETHER #4

(Understanding)

Time: Two hours

A. Arrival

1. Greetings as Guest Couple arrives.
2. Everyone must have their homework completed in order to meet.

B. Man to Man; Woman to Woman sharing (25 minutes)

(Men and women go to separate rooms for "one-to-one.")

1. Ask about this past week. Be sure you share.
2. Ask: "What has been the most helpful aspect of this Home to Home study so far?" Then you share.
3. Take turns reciting the Memory Verse. Each of you share why it is significant or how you will apply it in your marriage.
4. Ask: "What is your number one personal prayer need, concern, or worry right now?"
5. Pray together.

C. Break (5 minutes)

Rest room; get coffee, soda.

D. Group Discussion (60 minutes)

(Regroup in the living room or kitchen where all four of you will discuss the material on "Understanding.")

1. Page 24. Discuss the definitions of "Understanding" that each of you circled and their importance.
2. Page 25. Ask: "What does 'becoming a student' of your mate mean?"
3. Pages 25-26. Ask someone to define "loving empathy" in his/her own words.
4. Page 27. Take turns discussing why the scriptural passage you each circled was meaningful.
5. Page 30. Ask how the Bridge Builder Questions went. Take turns sharing about the two circled questions that helped each of you the most.

6. Page 30. Ask: "Were you able to promise each other to establish a 15 minute Bridge Building Time to be taken together every week to build understanding in your relationship?"
7. Page 31. Ask: "Did you pray out loud together and also sign your names?"
8. Share prayer needs and praises. Then pray together.

E. Refreshments (30 minutes)

Focus on friendship building and sharing.

F. Departure

1. Suggest that you pray for each other during the next week.
2. Also suggest calling each other just to encourage and build up one another.

HOST COUPLE'S GUIDELINES FOR GET-TOGETHER #5

(Purpose)

Time: Two hours

A. Arrival

1. Greetings as Guest Couple arrives.
2. Everyone must have their homework completed in order to meet.

B. Man to Man; Woman to Woman sharing time (25 minutes)

1. Ask: "How are you doing in your walk with God"? What are you learning concerning your marital relationship?" Then you share as vulnerably and transparently as you can. (It is wise to discuss limits of disclosure with your mate prior to your Guest's arrival.)

Note: Here, it might be appropriate to encourage your Guest to have regular devotional times with the Lord—perhaps starting with the book of John, then Psalms. Maintaining a personal journal for recording what the Lord is teaching and for a prayer record is highly recommended!

2. Ask: "What went well for you this past week? What was discouraging about your week?"

Psalm 62:8 exhorts us to "pour our hearts out" to God. This includes the "good, the bad, and the ugly"! Encourage your Guest to be completely open with God.

3. Take turns reciting the Memory Verse. Each of you share why it is significant and how you will apply it in your marriage.
4. Ask: "What is your number one personal concern or burden that needs prayer now?" You share yours. Be open and authentic.

Don't appear as though you have no struggles. Be willing to receive encouragement.

5. Pray for each other.

C. Break (5 minutes)

D. Group Discussion (60 minutes)

1. Page 34. Discuss "Purpose."

In light of A. 3, ask: "Why is it that most marriages and families don't possess any sense of mission or destiny?"

In light of C. 1, ask: "What do you think happens to a ship that does not set its sail in the right direction?"

2. Page 36. Every person share why the scriptural passage circled was meaningful to them.
3. Page 37. Take time to openly discuss all of your answers in reference to the HOME TO HOME DESCRIPTIONS.
4. Page 38. Ask: "Have you developed your PURPOSE STATEMENT and, if so, would you recite it from memory?" Then share yours from memory.

Note: If they are struggling with developing a purpose statement, offer help. Ask them to bring it back next week. It is vital for them to develop one before completing Home to Home.

6. IMPORTANT! On page 39 is the Guest Couple's challenge to "pass on the baton" and become a Host Couple hopefully within the next few weeks.

Ask: "Have you considered this? What couple are you thinking of?"

Let them know, in a spirit of encouragement and challenge, that the success of this Home to Home strategy and the fulfilling of the Lord's Great Commission will be greatly helped by building up other couples with what was learned.

If they have not thought of a couple, ask: "Will you pass on these Cornerstones by becoming a HOST COUPLE?"

If they are still not sure, ask them to please keep considering it. (Plan to ask them again next week.)

7. Page 40. Ask: "Did you pray out loud together and also sign your names?"
8. Share prayer needs and praises. Then pray for each other. Together ask God to lead you (Host Couple and Guest Couple) to the couples He wants you to reach.

E. Refreshments (30 minutes)

Focus on friendship building and light-heartedness.

F. Departure

1. If needed, gently remind them to firm up their PURPOSE STATEMENT and seriously pray about becoming a Host Couple.
2. Take a moment and thank them for their friendship and for being such a blessing to your marriage.

HOST COUPLE'S GUIDELINES FOR GET-TOGETHER #6

(Nurturing)

Time: Two hours

A. Arrival

B. Man to Man; Woman to Woman sharing (25 minutes)

1. Ask: "What are you learning in your 'regular' devotional times with the Lord?" Then you share.
2. Ask: "What is the most important concept or truth that you have learned so far in this Home to Home study?" Ask: "How is this affecting your marriage?" Then you share.
3. Take turns reciting the Memory Verse. Each of you share why it is important or how you will apply it in your marriage.
4. Ask: "What is your greatest struggle or challenge that you are facing in your marriage right now?" Respectfully share yours. (Don't say anything that would embarrass or discredit your mate, especially concerning your sexual relationship.)
5. Pray for each other.

C. Break (5 minutes)

D. Group Discussion (60 minutes)

1. Pages 42-44. Discuss together: 'Why is 'nurturing' so important to our relationship with God and with our mate?'
2. Page 45. Show and discuss where each of you checked your circles regarding your relationship with the Lord and with your mate. Keep this light-hearted.

Ask: "Is there any correlation between your checked circles of 'Relationship with the Lord' and 'Relationship with your mate'? WHY?"

Note: There is usually a direct relationship. A "Really Dead" with the Lord and a "Fully Alive, Nourished" with your mate simply does not make sense!
3. Pages 46-47. Take turns discussing why the two scriptural passages (one from section B, one from section C) you each circled are meaningful.
4. Pages 47-48. You and your mate share your answers to "STOP," "CONTINUE," and "START." Then invite your guests to share theirs. This might spark some laughs.

5. Page 49. You, the Host Couple, be the first to lovingly share one attitude, behavior, or priority that tends to hinder "nurturing" in your marital relationship. Now, invite your Guest Couple to share theirs.

Share the one change you agreed upon that will hopefully enhance nurturing in your marriage. Invite your Guests to share theirs.

6. Finally, in a spirit of great respect, ask how the experience of sharing the "CARE LETTERS" went. Don't ask to see them; if they insist—then fine. Then share how it went with you.
7. Try to get a firm commitment from them to become a Host Couple—the sooner, the better. If they do not start within the next month, they probably never will.
8. Page 50. Ask: "Did you pray out loud together and also sign your names?"
9. Have each person turn to page 51 and quickly fill out the:

HOME TO HOME EVALUATION

Explain that you will be sending in the completed evaluations to the address at the bottom of the form.

10. Share prayer needs and praises, giving thanks for your friendship and for what the Lord has taught you. Then pray for each other.

E. Refreshments (30 minutes)

Focus on friendship building. Maybe talk of a reunion a month from now for a family (kids invited) picnic, party, cook-out, etc. This can also serve as an opportunity to hold the Guest Couple accountable as to where they are in discipling a new couple with Home to Home. Remember: People do what you inspect, not what you expect.

F. Departure

If needed, be ready to help them in any way to get started with their own Guest Couple.

GOD BLESS YOU!

**THANK YOU FOR PASSING ON
FIVE CORNERSTONES OF CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE!**

HOME TO HOME GUEST COUPLE'S INTRODUCTION

Passing on Five Cornerstones of Christian Marriage

Couple-To-Couple Discipling that Makes a Difference!

This is a unique opportunity for you as a couple to become equipped with five Cornerstones of Christian marriage in such a way that you will be able to pass them on to other couples in your church or community. Thank you for being a part of this training.

The values and messages our culture gives us, for the most part, are not from God. Because of this, many marriages, including Christian marriages, are floundering and dying in despair at an alarming rate. We're excited that you've chosen to be a part of the "solution" instead of the "problem."

Get to know and appreciate your Host Couple. Good friends are a gift from the Lord!

Five Cornerstones of Christian marriage are:

Loving Faithfulness

Reverence

Understanding

Purpose

Nurturing

Here are a few helpful ground rules:

1. Be faithful to complete assignments before the "Get-Togethers."
2. Never say anything that would embarrass or hurt your counterpart.
3. Only share when you feel safe to share.
4. Just be yourself. It's OK to be in the process of growth in Christ.
5. Relax and have fun!

HOME TO HOME FOUNDATIONAL QUESTIONS AND VERSES

WHO BUILDS?

Unless the Lord builds the house, it's builders labor in vain. Psalm 127:1

WHO DISCIPLES?

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. Matthew 28:19,20

ONCE DISCIPLED, AM I TO REPRODUCE?

And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. II Timothy 2:2

BY WHOSE POWER CAN THERE BE RESULTS IN THE LIVES AND MARRIAGES OF THE PEOPLE WE DISCIPLE?

Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty. Zechariah 4:6(b)

We pray that you will not only enjoy and grow from this "couple to couple" discipleship, but that you will take the challenge and "pass on" these Five Cornerstones to other couples who will, in turn, do likewise.



FOR ENGAGED COUPLE

As an engaged couple going through Home To Home with a Host Couple (married), we require you to enter into encouraging accountability with your Host Partner (of the same sex) concerning sexual purity.

You need to let him/her know about your battles with sexual purity. Our culture marinates people with sensuality. No one is exempt from its tug. If you do not seek godly accountability here, there is little chance you will remain pure with your partner. You are wise if you seek it.

In humility and with an attitude of teachability, will you sign, before God, the Prayer For Purity to demonstrate your sincere desire to please and honor Him by remaining pure and honorable in your physical relationship as you continue to date and spend time together before marriage?

Although this accountability is required only for the time together with your Host Partner during Home To Home, we strongly encourage you to establish mutual accountability for the long term with a godly person of the same sex.

PRAYER FOR PURITY

Heavenly Father,

We humbly ask that You would help us to remain pure and respectful in our relationship as an engaged couple.

Lord, we desire to bring honor and glory to You in every aspect of our lives. We dedicate our lives to You. We sign the rights of our lives over to You.

Watch over us and enable us, moment by moment, to build a loving, growing relationship with You and with each other. Keep each of us hungering and thirsting after Your Son, Jesus Christ and His righteousness.

Keep us from stumbling. Help us to walk with You steady and true, using Your Word as our guide.

Man's signature (date)

Woman's signature (date)

(Please sign your copy and also your counterpart's copy)

Jim & Barbara's Passion:



“To help marriages, families, and individuals find lasting hope and a future in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Jeremiah 29:11-14, Deuteronomy 31:8

Our 1st Priority:

“Undivided love for Jesus and His Word.” Psalm 86:11

Online giving to our ministry: <https://give.ccci.org/give/View/0139150>

All **Gifts** payable to: **Cru**

Please check out our website: www.marriageanchors.com

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To order our book **I'm Getting Married!: Preparing your Heart for a Lifetime** go to:
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