Citylight Marriage Seminar

March 6–7, 2026

SESSION THREE

Marriage: The Cultivation of God

BIG IDEA: GOD USES MEANS OF GRACE TO GROW MARITAL ONENESS.

MEANS OF GRACE ONE: PERSONAL REALITY WITH GOD

John 15:5 - I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

MEANS OF GRACE TWO: A CHURCH-CENTERED LIFE

Colossians 3:15-19 - And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. [16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. [17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. [19] Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.

MEANS OF GRACE THREE: COMMITMENT

> *Marriage is a covenant between a man and a woman in which they promise to be a faithful husband and a faithful wife in a new one-flesh union as long as they both shall live. This covenant, sealed with solemn vows, is designed to showcase the*

covenant-keeping grace of God…Christ's new covenant with his church is created by and sustained by blood-bought grace, therefore, human marriages are meant to showcase that new-covenant grace. - This Momentary Marriage, John Piper

MEANS OF GRACE FOUR: FORGIVE & OVERLOOK

Forgive.

Colossians 3:12-13 - Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, [13] bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

Ephesians 4:32 - Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Overlook

Proverbs 20:3 - It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling.

Proverbs 26:21 - As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a **quarrelsome** man for kindling strife.

Proverbs 21:19 - It is better to live in a desert land than with a **quarrelsome** and fretful woman.

Proverbs 17:14 - The beginning of strife is like letting out water, so quit before the quarrel breaks out

Proverbs 12:16a - The vexation of a fool is known at once…

Proverbs 27:5 - Better is open rebuke than hidden love.

The Lord bears with us every day as we fall short of his will. Indeed, the distance between what Christ expects of us and what we achieve is infinitely greater than the distance between what we expect of our spouse and what he or she achieves. Christ always forgives more and endures more than we do. Forgive as you have been forgiven. Bear with as he bears with you. This holds

true whether you are married to a believer or an unbeliever. Let the measure of God's grace to you in the cross of Christ be the measure of your grace to your spouse.

MEANS OF GRACE FIVE: LIKE-MINDEDNESS

Philippians 2:1-2 - So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, [2] complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Questions to Ask When Preparing For Marriage.

- **Pray for like-mindedness in theology**
- **Pray for like-mindedness regarding church**
- **Pray for like-mindedness regarding marriage**
- **Pray for like-mindedness regarding children**
- **Pray for like-mindedness regarding lifestyle**
- **Pray for like-mindedness regarding entertainment**
- **Pray for like-mindedness regarding work**
- **Pray for like-mindedness regarding health, fitness and sickness**

Philippians 2:1-5 - So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, [2] complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. [3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. [5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus…

MEANS OF GRACE SIX: CONSTANT FRIENDSHIP BUILDING

> *Friendship must be about something, even if it were only an enthusiasm for dominoes or white mice. Those who have nothing can share nothing; those who are going nowhere can have no fellow-travelers.* - C.S. Lewis

Christian friendship is not simply about going to concerts together or enjoying the same sporting event. It is the deep oneness that develops as two people journey together toward the same destination, helping one another through the dangers and challenges along the way.

Perhaps the richest and best relationships, however, are those that combine both the natural and the supernatural elements. Marriage, of course, can add the power of romantic love to the natural and supernatural bonds of friendship, and this is what can make marriage the richest of all human relationships.

This principle—that your spouse should be capable of becoming your best friend—is a game changer when you address the question of compatibility in a prospective spouse.

Your marriage will slowly die if your spouse senses that he or she is not the first priority in your life. But only if your spouse is not just your lover and financial partner but your best friend is it possible for your marriage be your most important and fulfilling relationship. - The Meaning of Marriage, Tim Keller

1. Spending quality time together doing something that at least one of you loves doing and enables you to communicate while doing it.
2. Show supportive loyalty for, as well as interest and pride in, the work world of your spouse.
3. Share each other's mental world.
4. Listen and open up to each other.
5. Build a household legacy together.

MEANS OF GRACE SEVEN: HIGH QUALITY & QUANTITY SEX

1. **God made marriage a one-flesh union, therefore, sex is very good and important**

Genesis 2:24 - Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

1 Corinthians 7:3-5a - The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. [4] For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the

husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. [5] Do not deprive one another…

2. Sex is for mutual delight

[15] Drink water from your own cistern,
flowing water from your own well.
[16] Should your springs be scattered abroad,
streams of water in the streets?
[17] Let them be for yourself alone,
and not for strangers with you.
[18] Let your fountain be blessed,
and rejoice in the wife of your youth,
[19] a lovely deer, a graceful doe.
Let her breasts fill you at all times with delight;
be intoxicated always in her love.
[20] Why should you be intoxicated, my son, with a forbidden woman
and embrace the bosom of an adulteress?

Song of Solomon 2:3-6 - As an apple tree among the trees of the forest, so is my beloved among the young men. With great delight I sat in his shadow, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. [4] He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love. [5] Sustain me with raisins; refresh me with apples, for I am sick with love. [6] His left hand is under my head, and his right hand embraces me!

> *If he is to give himself to her, then she should not only acquiesce to sex; she should ask for it in some way or other (words are very effective here). Consent for sexual intercourse is important, but mere consent is uninspiring. Regular requests for sex are one of the most powerful ways of improving marital intimacy and the marriage itself. This sometimes, but not always, takes more work for women than men; people are wired differently, and their appetites for sex can differ.* - Chad & Emily Van Dixhorn

3. Sex is for protection

1 Corinthians 7:5 - Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

> *We came to realize that orgasm is great, especially climaxing together. But the awe, the wonder, the safety, and the joy of just being one is stirring and stunning even without that. And when we stopped trying to perform and just started trying to simply love one another in sex, things started to move ahead. We stopped worrying about our performance. And we stopped worrying about what we were getting and started to say, "Well, what can we do just to give something to the other?"* - Kathy Keller

> *Without joyful, loving sex, the friction in a marriage will bring about anger, resentment, hardness, and disappointment. Rather than being the commitment glue that holds you together, it can become a force to divide you. Never give up working on your sex life.* - Tim Keller

MEANS OF GRACE EIGHT: BUILD A HOUSEHOLD

When Sinners Say "I Do," "…today matters because tomorrow can't be assumed. Even kids need to learn about the brevity of life.*"*

> *Indeed, Scripture sets forth an unfashionable goal for believers: God wants us to die well. This has nothing to do with estate-planning. It speaks of whether, through sanctification, our souls are prepared for the inevitable reality of death. The youth-fixated, pain-averse, escapist nature of western culture is an anomaly in human history. Here, preparation for death seems morbid. But throughout history, and in most of the world today, death has always been part of life and deserving of attention. The Puritans, in their admirable "Let's bring God into every moment" perspective, saw marriage as not simply a great way to live, but as a training ground for what lay beyond. Pastor Richard Baxter saw one of the goals of marriage as this, "To prepare each other for the approach of death, and comfort each other in the hopes of life eternal."*

Don't lose heart.
2 Corinthians 4:16 - So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

Be devoted in decay.
2 Corinthians 4:16 - So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day.

Lift each other's eyes to the marriage to come.

> *In that resurrection morning, when the Sun of Righteousness shall appear in the heavens, shining in all his brightness and glory, he will come forth as a bridegroom; he shall come in the glory of his Father with all his holy angels. And at that glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ shall the whole elect church, complete as to every individual member, and each member with the whole person, both body and soul, and both in perfect glory, ascend up to meet the Lord in the air, to be forever with the Lord.... Then will come the time when Christ will sweetly invite his spouse to enter in with him into the palace of his glory, which he had been preparing for her from the foundation of the world, and shall take her by the hand and lead her in with him; and this glorious bridegroom and bride shall, with all their shining ornaments, ascend up together into the heaven of heaven, the whole multitude of glorious angels waiting upon them; and this Son and daughter of God shall, in their united glory and joy, present themselves together before the Father;...and they shall together receive the Father's blessing; and shall thenceforward rejoice together in consummate, unin-terrupted, immutable and everlasting glory, in the love and embraces of each other, and in their shared enjoyment of the love of the Father.* - Jonathan Edwards