



Our culture puts a lot of emphasis on picking wisely when it comes to marriage, but couples quickly learn that marriage is a lifetime of choices that determine health and happiness. This series will explore the big decisions that followers of Jesus must regularly make to build a marriage that thrives.

These questions are designed to extend the impact of the weekend message. Use them to go deeper in your personal study time, with your family and/or with a group.

1 Rick began by noting that *“This pandemic has revealed that some couples are barely married.”* How has proximity during this time been both a blessing and a challenge for relationships? Follow up: Share one practical thing you’ve done to combat this.

2 *Most marital conflict is “what I want versus what you want.” For us the most important question is “What does God want?”* Why is that so significant to know as we explore the topic of marriage? Follow up: *Marriage is a lifetime of decisions to say yes to one thing and no to another. And the most important is to choose die over my.* **Read Mark 8:35.** Why is this principle important for every relationship -- especially marriages?

3 YOUR MARRIAGE needs the gospel. *A Christian worldview affirms that we are doing life as married and single believers in a world that is broken and marred by sin.* How can reminding yourself of the gospel help you to live out God’s design for marriage? Follow up: Why is the authority of Scripture an important thing to remember as we focus on the topic of marriage?

4 JESUS SAYS... the institution of marriage will last. *Jesus had a high view of marriage.* **Read Matthew 24:37-39.** What stands out to you from this passage? Follow up: Rick mentioned that *“no culture has found a better solution for aloneness, for intimacy,*

and for a stable child-rearing environment than God’s gift of faithful, monogamous marriage.” In what ways have you seen this to be true? In what ways does our culture often go against this view?

5 JESUS SAYS... God wants our marriages to last. *Jesus views divorce as a concession, not as a command.* **Read Matthew 19:3-10.** Why is remembering that marriage is intended to be a permanent institution essential for pursuing God’s design for marriage? How can keeping this in mind help you through difficulties in marriage?

6 JESUS SAYS... a married disciple will be “last.” *A disciple of Jesus is the first to choose to be last.* **Read Mark 8:34.** Why is self-denial such a core value for followers of Jesus and how can doing so make marriages better? Follow up: In what ways are most marital problems actually a “kingdom problem?”

7 THE GOSPEL needs your marriage. *Our marriages are billboards for Jesus’ relationship to his bride, the church.* **Read Ephesians 5:31-32.** What do these two verses tell you about the ultimate purpose of marriage? Why is it significant to remember that *“our marriages have a bigger goal than our mutual happiness”* and how does that remind you that the gospel needs your marriage? Follow up: What is one thing you can put into practice this week to make your marriage and other relationships better?





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1 Rick mentioned that the emphasis of this series will not include much “how to” material, but instead is “*focusing on some of the most important decisions we will make when we bring a kingdom agenda to our marriage.*” With that in mind, in what ways might a kingdom agenda impact the counsel we would give a couple considering marriage?

2 MARRIAGE IS... a submission competition. Read Ephesians 5:21-33. What are 1-2 things that stand out to you from this passage? What value does a passage like this have for you if you aren’t married? Follow up: **Married Christians will choose we over me.** What does mutual submission look like in the context of marriage? What is one practical way you try to live this out daily?

3 EPHESIANS 5... assumes commitment to Christ and submission to the Spirit. *Paul understands that he is giving marital advice that nonbelievers do not have the desire or power to obey.* Why is it so important to consider Christ first when deciding how to deal with your spouse? Follow up: **Read Ephesians 5:18-21.** Share an example of how being “filled” with the Spirit and pursuing intimacy with Christ has blessed your marriage.

4 EPHESIANS 5... assigns to each mate the responsibility to surrender “me.” *Spirit-filled people do not focus on their rights, but on their responsibilities.* Why is it significant to realize that our responsibility to others never depends on the other’s deservedness or

capacity to reciprocate? What does it depend on? Follow up: How has that been a challenge for you recently?

5 Rick went on to say that “*Paul expects husbands and wives to surrender ‘me’ in ways that are unique and concrete.*” **Read Ephesians 5:33.** Why do you believe Paul assigns wives the responsibility to *respect their husbands*? What does that look like in practical terms? Follow up: Why do you believe Paul assigns husbands the responsibility to *love their wives* (see **5:25** too)? What does that look like in practical terms?

6 EPHESIANS 5... asserts that Christian marriage has an agenda bigger than its own health. *Not all are called to marriage, but every marriage has a calling.* **Read Ephesians 5:31-32.** What primary agenda should marriages have? How have you seen this lived out in the example of another marriage? Follow up: What connection does this have on how Satan often attacks marriages? Homework: **Read Ephesians 6:10-20** this week and focus on ways you can stand up against Satan’s schemes to attack your marriage.

7 WE OVER ME needs He over us. *The way we view marriage determines the way we do marriage.* Do you view your marriage as a way to display the lordship of Christ? If so, how do you do that on a regular basis? Follow up: How can you and your spouse keep these ideas from this message as a common part of your marriage?





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1 Rick and Jamie began by reminding us that *“just because something is good doesn’t mean it is easy.”* How have you experienced that to be true in a relationship recently?

2 SO TRUE! We must choose truth over myth. *Your marriage has an enemy.* What is one main reason Satan attacks every marriage between believers? Follow up: **Read Ephesians 6:10, John 8:44, and 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.** What do these verses say about Satan’s tactics? From your experience, what are some other lies (in addition to the ones below) that the enemy uses to attack relationships? What is our “counter-strategy” to defeat satanic deception? In what ways does what we believe shape how we behave?

3 NOT TRUE! “Marriage shouldn’t be this hard.” *Even if the marriage was made in heaven, it has to be lived in a fallen world.* Why is it important to know this going into a relationship? What is one example of how marriage has been hard for you? Follow up: **Read Hebrews 12:14.** What is one specific way you have to constantly “work” on yourself and your marriage to make it better?

4 NOT TRUE! “I married the wrong person.” *The great task of marriage is learning to love the stranger you pledged to live your life with.* Rick and Jamie mentioned several things every couple must learn to wrestle with (*family of origin issues, different temperaments and personalities, sin natures, and our own set of wounds*). Which of those have been most challenging for you? Follow up: **Read Colossians 3:14.** Share a practical example of how God has taught you to “love the different.”

5 NOT TRUE! “I’m not the one with the problem.”

There is no doubt your mate needs to change; we all do... But you are not called to be your mate’s Holy Spirit. Rick also noted that you can do 2 things in this regard: (1) *Give up control and pursue influence (1 Peter 3:1-4).* and (2) *Be the healthiest person you can be (2 Peter 3:18).* What does that look like in practical terms? What is one thing you need to focus on? Homework: each day this week regularly ask yourself one question: *“What is it like being married to me?”*

6 NOT TRUE! “If he/she loved me they would not.”

It is unrealistic to expect sinners to live together and never wound one another. **Read Ephesians 4:31-32.** What are some practical ways you can apply these words from Paul to improve any relationship? Follow up: If you’re married how have you specifically applied these verses in your marriage?

7 NOT TRUE! “There is no hope for our marriage.”

Many struggling marriages see only two options: divorce or living in misery. Why do you think most people get stuck here without focusing on the third option Rick and Jamie mentioned (resurrection)? How can remembering **1 Corinthians 13:7** help you to always choose the third option? Follow up: Rick and Jamie closed by reminding us, *“To take our vows seriously we must take Easter seriously.”* Why is that so true and how has it impacted your marriage recently?





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1 Rick began by pointing out that *“Most newlyweds think they are about to embark on a journey of ‘happily ever after.’ They soon learn the marriages that last learn the importance of ‘happily even after...”* How have you seen that to be true? Why is it so important for couples to see the distinction?

2 Followers of Jesus choose holy over happy. *Kingdom people place a priority on pursuing holiness, and especially in all things marriage.* Why is the pursuit of happiness the wrong thing to pursue in a marriage? Follow up: **Read Hebrews 13:4.** In what ways have you seen God use marriages as a platform for displaying holiness? How have you experienced God using your marriage as a platform for developing holiness?

3 MARRIAGE HELPS ME be more like Christ. *Marriage is going to change you.* What is one way your marriage has changed you for the better? Follow up: **Read Ephesians 5:25-27.** What do you think of the idea that you are to help your spouse become the person God wants to eventually make him or her? What does that require of you?

4 BECAUSE... it helps me see the selfish in me. *God’s wedding gift is a mirror: “Here’s what you really look like.”* What is something your marriage is currently teaching you about yourself? Follow up: *A marriage proposal is an application for servanthood.* **Read Philippians 2:3-4.** What is challenging about the idea of putting your spouse’s

happiness ahead of your own in response to what Jesus has done for you? What is one way you’ve seen your spouse put your happiness ahead of his or her own?

5 BECAUSE... it calls me to will when I don’t feel. *No marriage that puts “feel” over “will” can survive.* Reflect on that statement for a moment, why do you think that is true? **Read Luke 6:31-33.** How does this description of love challenge you? Follow up: *God wants you to do what love does even when you’re not feeling it.* **Read 1 Corinthians 13:7.** What are some practical actions you can take to love your spouse even when you’re not feeling affection for him or her?

6 BECAUSE... it gives me a place to grow in grace. *A Christian marriage should be the union of two good forgivers.* **Read Colossians 3:13.** Share an example of how you’ve seen your spouse apply this verse in your marriage. Follow up: What are some things you could do to recognize the change and growth God is producing in your spouse’s life?

7 MARRIAGE HELPS ME want more of Christ. *Even the best marriages realize something is missing.* What’s the danger of asking your mate to fill what only Christ can fill? What is one way you currently encourage your mate to pursue God? **Read Ephesians 1:16-17.** What is one thing you can focus on this week in your marriage (or other relationships) to bring you closer to Jesus?





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1 What principles or insights have resonated with you the most from this series (*Die Over My, We Over Me, Truth Over Myth, Holy Over Happy*)? Which one is most challenging for you? Share one example of how those truths can help you make your marriage better. What other resources have been a blessing to your marriage recently?

2 Rick ends this series by acknowledging that *some marriages don't last*. How has divorce directly or indirectly impacted your life? Follow up: **Choose better over bitter.** *What should a follower of Jesus want to do when they have to go through what they never wanted?* With that question in mind, how do you normally face hard times?

3 TRUTH AND GRACE: Truth – God hates divorce! *God is against anything that attacks and destroys what He is for.* **Read Malachi 2:13-16.** How does it make you feel knowing that God hates divorce? What are some key reasons God loves marriage and hates divorce? Follow up: How does that challenge you to treat marriage?

4 TRUTH AND GRACE: Grace – God does not hate the divorced! *God is always on the side of the wounded.* How does it make you feel knowing that God does not hate the divorced? How should that impact your response to people who have been divorced? Follow up: **Read John 8:10-12.** What stands out to you the most about the response Jesus gave this woman who had been “caught” in adultery?

How can you maintain the balance between upholding the biblical standard for marriage and acting with sensitivity and grace?

5 What blessed you the most from Jenni New’s story? If you have been through a divorce, how have you seen God redeem that pain of that experience for His glory? Follow up: If you are married, how could you and your spouse invest in someone else’s marriage? If you are divorced, what is one thing you would want married couples to remember?

6 GRACE AND TRUTH: Truth – Confess the truth about your past. *What does God want you to learn from your failed marriage? What does God want you to own? How would you respond to either of those questions?* Follow up: **Read James 5:13-16.** How have you experienced confessing your sins to others to be healing in your life?

7 GRACE AND TRUTH: Grace – Receive His grace for your future. *God will always hold up the ideal. God will always stoop for those who do not meet it. And that is all of us.* What are some of the barriers that keep you from fully accepting God’s grace and forgiveness? **Read Romans 3:23-24.** How do these words from Paul encourage you to receive God’s grace for your future? Follow up: Are there any “messes” you are still holding on to? Close by praying that all marriages would become better and that all “messes” would be redeemed.

