



Discussion Guide

The Brilliance of Family

“Family Matters” Part 3
Jeff Wall 4-25 2010

If our relationships aren't right, our lives won't be right. In this discussion we'll focus on the husband/wife relationship as the core of the family, and on the need for it to be strong in order to set the course for the family. We'll discuss how to bring spiritual power into this key relationship so husbands and wives can support each other, encourage each other, and look together in the same direction spiritually. The Bible tells us:

- The Power of One is **FOOLISH**—It is prideful to think “I know better than God.”
- The Power of Two is **SMART**—A husband and wife can sharpen and encourage each other.
- The Power of Three is **BRILLIANT**—A healthy relationship with God is interwoven as a third strand.

OPEN YOUR GROUP WITH A PRAYER. THIS IS ONLY A GUIDE—SELECT THE POINTS YOU WANT TO DISCUSS.

1. THE INTERWOVEN COUPLE: A COUPLE WHO INVITES THE LORD INTO THEIR RELATIONSHIP THROUGH PRAYER.

According to James 5:16, how is a person healed?

- What are some barriers to being honest with yourself, with God, and with your spouse?
- Describe what it means to be a righteous person.
- In the battle to connect with a spouse, how might Satan use busyness to destroy relationships?

In 2 Corinthians 12:9, what is the result of boasting about our weakness?

- What is an example of how God's power can be made perfect in our weakness?
- How can you be a safe harbor or source of comfort to your spouse during stressful times?
- How can prayer keep you and your spouse interwoven with God's strength and protection?

Read 1 Peter 3:7. How does prayer repel evil, and what can hinder your prayer?

- Why might it be easier to support or encourage everyone else instead of your spouse?
- How can people remember to treat their spouse with respect every day?
- On a daily basis, what are some things you can tell your spouse to show your appreciation or love?

According to Romans 14:19, towards what should we make every effort?

- In Romans 14:19, to whom is the passage speaking?
- Why are conflicts or differences inevitable in relationships or marriages?
- Although conflict is inevitable, why is destruction optional in a relationship?

Ministry—This week, take an inventory of your marriage. What kind of effort are you putting into that relationship? How has it changed since its beginning? How are you serving your spouse? Start serving your spouse today by praying for him or her. Then, allow God to realign your heart and strengthen your marriage so that it will withstand the pressures of this world as you become an interwoven couple with Christ.

2. FIGHT FOR INTIMACY: WITH GOD INDIVIDUALLY.

In Romans 8:37–39, what things are unable to separate us from God's love?

- When do we sometimes forget that God loves us?
- Does a child loving a parent affect that parent's love? How is God's love different than a parent's love?

Insight: Security eliminates insecurity.

- What is often the source of our insecurities?

- Think of a typical insecurity. What security would help overcome that insecurity?
- Think of something you feel very secure about. What insecurities might that help with?
- How could being secure in God's love heal a person's insecurity?

Practice: Build a daily relationship with God.

- How can a person build a better relationship with a loving parent? How can we apply this to our relationship with God?
- Why do we sometimes forget that building a relationship is a continuous process?

Worship—Children often forget how much a loving parent gives them.. Throughout the week, think of the various gifts you have been given that you have taken for granted, and thank God. Worship God by pondering his inseparable love shown by all the gifts he has provided.

3. FIGHT FOR INTIMACY: WITH YOUR SPOUSE RELATIONALLY AND EMOTIONALLY.

What is important to God about marriage, according to Matthew 19:6?

- Why does God care so much about the relational and emotional health of marriages?
- What are some ways spouses begin to be separated from each other?
- What are ways to stay authentic, supportive, and lovingly close to people in your life?
- How can people measure or analyze the level of love and intimacy in their relationships?
- What are some of the top reasons spouses are not relationally and emotionally close?
- Describe examples of specific activities that will increase oneness in a marriage.

Read Ephesians 5:28–29. How are husbands instructed to love their wives?

- How do our weaknesses and differences challenge our marriage commitments?
- What are keys to long-lasting marriages you have witnessed?
- Why is conflict a natural part of a loving relationship? What does God teach us through conflict?
- What might be some first steps for someone to take who has not been partnering with a spouse in a loving, caring, giving, authentic, and Christian way?

In Malachi 2:15, what type of offspring is God desiring for couples?

- How is a marriage covenant able to withstand the temptations and realities of this world?
- What do children learn about life from their parents' marriage?
- How does God view someone who is a good Christian outside the home but is not a loving spouse or parent?
- In what ways can we support other married people?
- Why is the divorce rate so high even among Christians? How could it be lowered?

Insight: Isolation in marriage is destruction in marriage.

- What are some reasons people in marriages might begin isolating themselves rather than trying to become closer?
- How do forgiveness and grace fit into the foundation of marriage or of any type of relationship?

Practice: Attend marriage retreats, counseling; go on dates; make time for each other.

Fellowship—As followers of Christ we are called to be in relationship with others in the church. These relationships start in the home. It is too easy to take those we are closest to for granted, treating others with more grace and kindness. God calls us to love and honor our marriage covenant. This takes dedication, work, and faith. This week practice one new way of honoring your commitment to live out loving relationships.

4. FIGHT FOR INTIMACY: WITH GOD AS A COUPLE SPIRITUALLY THROUGH PRAYER.

What comparison does God make in Philippians 2:1–2 regarding our relationship and unity with Christ; and what will bring joy to him in our own relationships as couples? What state of mind should we adopt?

- How does pride inhibit our ability to follow the examples of Jesus?
- How do couples sometimes live separate spiritual lives? What are some common reasons for this?
- What are some initial actions a couple can take to begin to enjoy a spiritual connection?

Insight: Looking together toward God is how I move forward in God.

- What are some examples of internal battles we may have that keep us from coming together in our spiritual relationship as a couple?
- How would your discussions change if you talked to your spouse as if you were talking to God?

Practice: Sprinkle **SALT** to enhance your relationship: **Stop** (don't keep hurrying); **Ask** (care about your spouse); **Listen** (without fixing or judging); **Talk to God** (together, based on what you hear).

- What are some examples of daily self-imposed activities we could stop in order to take time for each other?
- How might asking more sincere questions of your spouse bring about a positive change as a couple?
- What are some typical negative responses we tend to have when hearing our spouse speak to us, or question us? Why do we do these things rather than just listen?
- What circumstances usually motivate you to talk to God? What obstacles or excuses prevent you from talking to God as a couple? What are some creative ways you can begin to pray together as a married couple?

Discipleship—Challenge each other in your fight for intimacy to take the time and stop, ask each other questions with sincerity, listen to each other with love and an open heart, and begin to talk to God in prayer together.