Marriage.

Tray Murphy



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ISBN 978-1-945589-91-1 Printed in the United States of America

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Friends,

I am sitting up tonight to write this after watching an amazing sunset on the Sea of Galilee on my birthday with my best friend, my wife.

Tricia and I have been married for more than 28 years and it has not always been easy. It has been a journey of learning how much our broken, shameful and sinful selves needed to be healed. Our marriage has not survived simply because we were tough or willed ourselves to be great marriage partners.

We had the shoulders of so many other couples before us that modeled, instructed, motivated and walked with us through our marriage. Counseling, tears, failures and friends have allowed us to find our way despite all the baggage we brought in. The glory for our journey is most credited to the Holy Spirit's work in each of us. The life and call of Jesus has equipped us with a divine set of tools that has preserved this beautiful gift.

After all this investment into one another we now can appreciate the journey others have taken. Like classic cars that have been preserved and cared for, marriages that have stood the test of time and not simply survived but thrived have a classic beauty that has become so attractive to both of us. The first part of Hebrews 13:4 says "marriage should be honored by all," and we feel that call and passion more than we ever did 28 years ago. We had no idea what our vows to God for one another would actually cost but also had no idea how blessed we would be if we could honor the gift of marriage.

This material is not mine or Tricia's alone. It has been gleaned over the years from many other staff and volunteer couples at Green Bay Community Church that have made the same commitment to preserve the gift of marriage. It is the result of prayers, books, counseling, friends, long nights, scriptures, children, family, personal failures and honest conversations that have kept us not simply together but made our union a classic marriage.

May you honor the gift of marriage and may the creator of this gift give you His blessing of oneness with a spouse that exceeds your wildest dreams.

Together,

Troy Murphy



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TOOLS TO HELP YOU HAVE A GREAT SMALL GROUP EXPERIENCE

- Notice there are three sections in the Table of Contents: (1) Sessions,
 (2) Appendices, and (3) Small Group Hosts. Familiarize yourself with the Appendices. Some of them will be used in the sessions themselves.
- 2. If you are hosting or co-hosting a small group, the Small Group Hosts section will give you tips for effective leadership, encourage you, and help you avoid a few common obstacles.
- 3. Use this workbook as a guide, not a straitjacket. If the group responds to the lesson in an unexpected but honest way, go with that. If you think of a better question than the next one in the lesson, ask it. Take to heart the insights included in the Frequently Asked Questions pages and the Small Group Hosts section.
- 4. Enjoy your small group experience.
- 5. Pray before each session—for your group members, for your time together, and for wisdom and insights.
- 6. Read the Outline of Each Session on the pages that follow so you understand how the sessions will flow.

Autline Each &

1. WEEKLY MEMORY VERSES

Each session opens with a Memory Verse that emphasizes an important truth from the session. This is an optional exercise, but we believe memorizing scripture is a powerful way to grow spiritually. We encourage you to give this important habit a try. The verses for each session are also listed in the appendix.

2. INTRODUCTION

Each lesson opens with a brief thought that will help you prepare for the session and get you thinking about that week's topic. Make it a practice to read these before the session. You may want to have the group read them aloud.

3. SHARE YOUR STORY

The foundation for spiritual growth is an intimate connection with God and one another. You build that connection by sharing your story with a few people who really know you and who earn your trust. This section includes some simple questions to get you talking, letting you share as much or as little of your story as you choose.

4. HEAR GOD'S STORY

In this section, you will read the Bible and listen to teaching in order to hear God's story—and begin to see how His story aligns with yours. When the study directs you to, you will watch a short teaching segment on video. You will then have an opportunity to read a passage of scripture and discuss both the teaching and the text. The goal isn't only to accumulate information, but to apply the insights from scripture to your daily life.

5. STUDY NOTES

This brief section provides additional commentary, background, or insights on the passage you have studied or on some aspect of the video teaching.

6. CREATE A NEW STORY

In this section, you will have an opportunity to go beyond Bible study to biblical living. This section will also have a question or two that will challenge you to live out your faith by serving others, sharing your faith, and worshiping God. Everyone is at a different spot in their spiritual journey, so this section offers a variety of ways to engage with the study.

A TYPICAL GROUP SESSION FOR THIS STUDY WILL INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING SECTIONS. THIS WILL GIVE YOU AN IDEA OF HOW EACH GROUP MEETING MAY BE STRUCTURED.

7. FOR ADDITIONAL STUDY

If you have time and want to dig deeper into more Bible passages about the topic, we have provided additional passages and questions.



You can use them during the meeting or as homework. Your group may choose to read and prepare before each meeting in order to cover more biblical material. Or, group members can use the additional study section during the week after the meeting. If you prefer not to do study homework, this section will provide you with plenty to discuss within the group. These options allow individuals or the whole group to expand their study while still accommodating those who can't do homework or are new to your group.

8. DAILY DEVOTIONS

Each week on the Daily Devotions pages, we provide scriptures to reflect on between sessions. This provides you with a chance to slow down, read just a small portion of scripture each day, and pray through it. You will then have a chance to journal your response to what you have read. Use this section to seek God on your own throughout the week. This time at home should begin and end with prayer. Don't get in a hurry; take enough time to hear from God and talk to him!



Let's start with the bad news: about half of all marriages will end in divorce, and even the couples who make it to their golden anniversaries will struggle at points throughout their relationships. Choosing to live with and sacrificially love one other person for a lifetime is hard work.

But now for the good news: it's hard work that's worth it.
God created marriage and beginning with the very first one—
Adam and Eve in Genesis—said that "it was good." In fact, He says that marriage is a gift. Whether you're a newlywed or a marriage veteran, married or re-married, there is help and hope for building the marriage you've always wanted, and today we begin by exploring God's perspective.

HOST NOTES

- If your group is new, welcome newcomers. Introduce everyone. You may even want to have name tags for this first meeting.
- Open your group with a brief prayer asking God for insight as you study. You can pray for specific requests at the end of the meeting or stop momentarily to pray if a particular situation comes up during discussion.
- 3. Before you start this first meeting, get contact information for every participant. Take time to pass around a copy of the Small Group Roster on pages 82-83 or a blank sheet of paper. Ask someone to make copies or type up a list with everyone's information and email it to the group during the week.
- 4. Whether your group is new or ongoing, it's always important to review your values. On page 77 is a Small Group Agreement with important values for sustaining



healthy, balanced groups. Choose one or two of these values—ones you have not previously focused on or ones in need of growth—to emphasize during this study.

5. The Small Group Calendar on page 81 is a tool for planning who will host each meeting. Consider rotating hosts and take a few minutes to plan future meetings. The Gift of Marriage
SESSION 1

SHARE YOUR STORY

Begin your time together by using the following questions and activities to get people talking:

- What brought you here? What do you hope to get out of this group?
- What's your favorite song about love?
 What is its core message?



Use the Notes space provided on pages 14-15 to record your thoughts and questions as well as the things you want to follow up on or remember. After watching the video, have someone read the discussion questions in the Hear God's Story section and start the conversation.



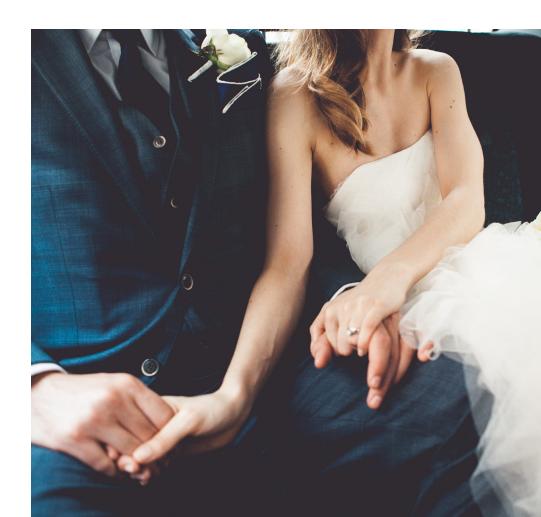
READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:

¹ If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. ⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. ⁹ For we know in part and we prophesy in part, ¹⁰ but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. ¹¹ When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. ¹² For now we see



only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. ¹³ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

- The word used for love in this passage is "agape," which means a self-sacrificing love like God has for us. Why would the apostle Paul have chosen this word when writing? How is agape love part of the gift of marriage?
- What does it mean to delight in evil? Why is that contrasted with rejoicing with the truth?
- In verses 11 and 12, why does the focus shift from describing love to describing our understanding of it?
- · How is love greater than faith and hope?



VIDEO NOTES

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The Gift of Marriage SESSION 1

Study

Because 1 Corinthians 13 is such a beautiful description of love – both the love we have for our spouse and the love God is calling us to have for other people – it's often read at weddings. As a result, you may have heard this passage so many times that it's difficult to consider the words in a fresh way.

Sometimes contemporary paraphrases of these Bible passages can deepen our understanding of the original text. Spend a few minutes reflecting on this version of 1 Corinthians 13 from "The Message" version. What can you learn about marriage as a gift from God? How can you grow in being an "ezer" for your spouse?



Mates

¹ If I speak with human eloquence and angelic ecstasy but don't love, I'm nothing but the creaking of a rusty gate.

² If I speak God's Word with power, revealing all his mysteries and making everything plain as day, and if I have faith that says to a mountain, "Jump," and it jumps, but I don't love, I'm nothing.

³⁻⁷ If I give everything I own to the poor and even go to the stake to be burned as a martyr, but I don't love, I've gotten nowhere. So, no matter what I say, what I believe, and what I do, I'm bankrupt without love.

Love never gives up. Love cares more for others than for self. Love doesn't want what it doesn't have. Love doesn't strut. Doesn't have a swelled head. Doesn't force itself on others. Isn't always "me first," Doesn't fly off the handle, Doesn't keep score of the sins of others, Doesn't revel when others grovel, Takes pleasure in the flowering of truth, Puts up with anything, Trusts God always, Always looks for the best, Never looks back, But keeps going to the end.

8-10 Love never dies. Inspired speech will be over some day; praying in tongues will end; understanding will reach its limit. We know only a portion of the truth, and what we say about God is always incomplete. But when the Complete arrives, our incompletes will be canceled.

¹¹ When I was an infant at my mother's breast, I gurgled and cooed like any infant. When I grew up, I left those infant ways for good.

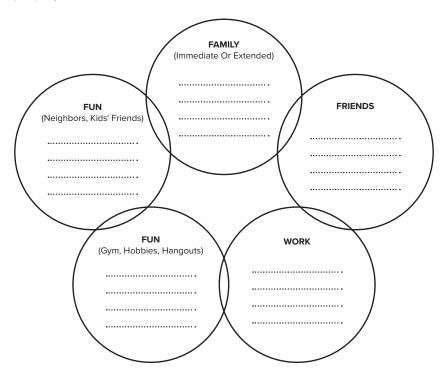
We don't yet see things clearly. We're squinting in a fog, peering through a mist. But it won't be long before the weather clears and the sun shines bright! We'll see it all then, see it all as clearly as God sees us, knowing him directly just as he knows us!

¹³ But for right now, until that completeness, we have three things to do to lead us toward that consummation: Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.

CREATE A NEW STORY

In this section, talk about how you will apply the wisdom you have learned from the teaching and Bible study. Then think about practical steps you can take in the coming week to live out what you have learned:

- · Why is marriage so difficult?
- Why is it important to honor or cherish marriage regardless of our own marital status?
- What does it mean that marriage is a gift? What does it teach us about God?
- How is this perspective different from viewing marriage as a right or something you deserve?
- Take a look at the Circles of Life diagram below and write the names of two or three people you know who need to know Christ. Commit to praying for God's guidance and an opportunity to share with each of them. Would they be open to joining the group? Share your lists with the group so you can all be praying for the people you've identified.



- This week how will you interact with the Bible? Can you commit to spending time
 in the Daily Devotions? Tell the group how you plan to follow Jesus this week, and
 then, at your next meeting, talk about your progress and challenges.
- Give each person an opportunity to share prayer requests. If you'd like, you can write these on the Prayer and Praise report on page 81.
- · Close your meeting with prayer.





Additional Study

Take some time between now and our next meeting to dig into God's Word. Explore the Bible passages related to this session's theme on your own. Jot down your reflections in a journal or in this study guide. You may even want to use a Bible website or app to look up commentary on these passages. If you like, share what you learn with the group the next time you meet.

READ EPHESIANS 3:14-20

What promises of blessing does this passage give us?	
What does it mean to be rooted and established in love?	
 Reflect on verse 20. What do you want God to do in your life through this study What are you praying He will do in your marriage? 	y ?
READ ECCLESIASTES 4:9-12	
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DAILY DEVOTIONS

Use these daily devotions for personal meditation and study:

DAY 1 // Read 1 John 3:1

See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!

REFLECT: Before we can love others, we must experience God's love for us. How has God shown His love for you?
DAV 2 // Parad Provides 27.47
DAY 2 // Read Proverbs 27:17 As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.
REFLECT: How does the gift of marriage sharpen us? If you are married, what are some ways your spouse has sharpened you?



DAY 3 // Read Romans 12:10

be devoted to one unotitel in love. Horior one unotitel above yourselves.
REFLECT: How would your marriage change if you lived out this verse? What are some practical ways you could do that this week?
DAY 4 // Read Proverbs 18:22
He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.
REFLECT: Take a few minutes to thank God for your husband or your wife today and the gift he or she is to you. This verse is about wives, but it applies to both spouses!



The Gift of Marriage SESSION 1

DAY 5 // Read Romans 15:5-6

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

REFLECT: What a great prayer as we begin this series! Take a few moments today to ask God for a spirit of unity with your spouse.	
DAY 6 // Use the following space to reflect on what you learned this week and what God is saying to you.	
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Keepin' Tt Classic



Troy Murphy is the lead pastor at Community Church in Green Bay, Wisconsin. He is known not only as a pastor, but as a creative consultant, a church planter, an NFL Chaplain for the Packers, a motivational speaker and a former U.S. Marine. Troy's authentic, direct speaking style is a breath of fresh air in a world full of uncertainty, division and chaos. With

vulnerability and openness, he challenges the Church to reach out and touch a hurting world in desperate need of the hope and love of God.

Troy and his wife, Tricia, have four grown daughters and their first son-in-law.

God gave us the gift of marriage and wants us to honor and cherish it. In this four-week Classic Marriage series, Pastor Troy Murphy and a team from Green Bay Community Church will explore what it means to have a marriage that not only stands the test of time, but thrives in the midst of life's joys and struggles. Troy's engaging teaching style along with group discussions and study guides will offer insight into God's intentions for marriage and how to live it out.





