

The Diamond Marriage
*How to have ultimate purpose in your
marriage*

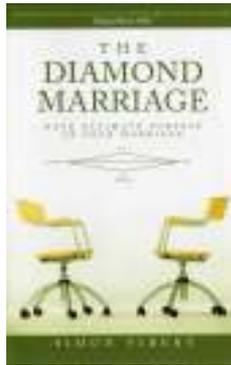
6 week Course

by

Simon Vibert

Participants Workbook

(designed to accompany *The Diamond Marriage*
book, published by Christian Focus, 2005)



The Diamond Marriage (Christian Focus, 2005) incorporates a course which helps Christian couples work towards an ultimate sense of purpose in their marriages.

The following material is designed to help the leaders and participants of small groups to make the most of the material in the book and facilitate discussion.

For leaders, there are references in the margin which relate to the pages in the book. Participants who chose to buy the book may find these useful too. My suggestion is that the course is printed out and bound as a workbook for each participant. The word to leaders (see below) should be omitted from participants copy.

In my experience it takes some time for groups to feel comfortable to talk through these issues. Leaders should be encourage open communication between the couples, but not necessarily expect that every participant will want to share intimate details of their married life with the whole group!

From week two onwards, all participants have Preparation Questions to be worked through in advance of the meeting. At the end of the session there are Practical Exercises which I suggest couples complete individually, but then find sometime to discuss together before the following session.

For further help, please see pp.173-176 of *The Diamond Marriage*

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First things first – a word for leaders.

How to run the Diamond Marriage Course

The Diamond Marriage course has a two fold purpose. First, it is designed to help Christian Couples prepare themselves for marriage. Secondly, it aims to help married couples (however long they have been married) to foster joy and devotion – to God and one another - in their marriage.

Practically, this may mean that people come on the course with very different expectations. Some may have been required to come on the course by the minister who is due to marry them. Many of those who have come for marriage preparation are not yet Christians. Others have been married for a considerable amount of time and are hoping to revive their love for each other. This does mean that you, as a leader, need to be aware of the group dynamics. It may take sometime for people to open up.

The course leaders (preferably a married couple) should be mature Christians who are aware of the dynamics of a small group – encouraging people to participate, but also being aware that some will feel more comfortable to listen for a while. In my experience the groups have opened up as weeks have gone on. Encouraging participants to complete the preparation and practical exercises also helps because it means that they will have engaged with the material during the week. Encourage couples to complete the exercises separately and then find time as a couple to discuss them before the next meeting.

You are free to make copies of this course for the purpose of running *The Diamond Marriage* course in conjunction with the *Diamond Marriage* book. It is laid out in such a way that it can be bound along the left margin and turned into a booklet.

Suggested timetable

Week One

- 7.30pm Refreshments/meal *
- 8.15pm “Getting to know you” exercise
Hand out course booklets
- 8.30pm Testimony from couple leading the course
- 8.45pm Explanation of the purpose for the Diamond Marriage Course and introduction to the course material
- 9.15pm Give out dates for future meetings and explain Preparations Questions to be completed prior to the next meeting
- 9.30pm Close with prayer

Weeks Two - Five

- 7.30pm Refreshments/meal *
- 8.00pm Go over the answers to the Preparation Questions
- 8.30pm Teaching material for the evening
- 9.15pm Explanation of the Practical Exercises to be completed during the following week (along with the preparation questions for next week)
- 9.30pm Close with prayer

Week Six

This final session includes a review of the Practical exercises from week 5 and an explanation of the Pledge Form.

It would be good to have a meal together here, share some testimonies from participants and encourage them to complete the Diamond Marriage Course feedback form

* At St Luke’s Church we have chosen to have drinks/snacks during weeks 1-5 and share a meal on week 6

Participants Notes to Accompany the Diamond Marriage Course

Week One Introduction

Getting to know you

- How did you first meet?
- What attracted you to your partner?

The Current State of Marriage

- Comparing Divorce Statistics for Christians and non-Christians

The 2 Audiences for which this Course is Written

Who do you more readily identify with:

- Jack and Linda
- John and Anne

Introduction,
pp.9-36

Putting the
Pieces
Together
pp.162-164

Introduction to the Diamond Marriage

Horizontal Implications

Initially, many couples look upon their marriage purely in terms of a 'horizontal' relationship, as illustrated in figure one.



Figure One

Vertical Implications

However, as we shall come to see there are a number of biblical passages which encourage us to perceive of marriage as a triangle, with the Lord as the inextricable third party to a healthy Christian marriage. This is illustrated by the triangle in figure two.

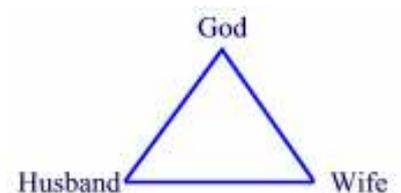


Figure Two

Eternal Implications

We will also see that the complete biblical picture of marriage is not a triangle, but rather a diamond. This is illustrated by the diamond in figure three. This diagram illustrates the fact that marriage is to be viewed, not just horizontally and vertically, but also, eternally. By understanding more of the eternal purpose of marriage, couples should be able to use their marriage to relate to the world as God intended.

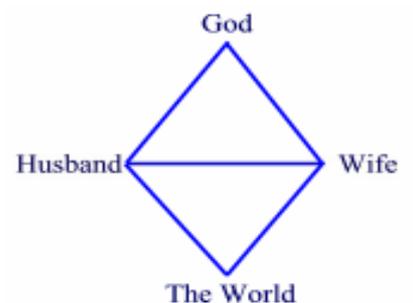


Figure Three

**Week Two - Joy in Creation
Horizontal Building (Genesis 1-3)**

Chapters 2 & 3

pp.41-68

Preparation Questions:

Every marriage begins with high ideals.

- ❖ What expectations did you have for your marriage?
- ❖ Did you discuss your future marriage together?
- ❖ Do you still hold to those expectations? How many of those were unrealistic ideals, and how many were good principles which may need reviving?
- ❖ To what extent do you think that your marriage has matured/grown?
- ❖ To what extent do you think that you have lost some of the good ideals you began with?
- ❖ Have you set any recent goals for your marriage? Should you?
- ❖ How might an understanding of Genesis 1-2 help you improve your relationship with your spouse?

My notes on the talk, Genesis 1-3 “Joy in Marriage”

Practical Exercises

1. Leave, Cleave, One Flesh

Leave

The word leave could be translated 'abandon' because it refers to a radical departure from one's birth home and family

- ❖ Are there areas in your relationship with your parents and in-laws that may suggest that you have not "left" home?
- ❖ When it comes to deciding a place to live, schooling of the children, structure of your family home or allocation of time, do you put your spouse above your parents' interests?
- ❖ Do you praise one another – particularly in the presence of others?
- ❖ Do you have previous or current social or sexual relationships which you need to leave?
- ❖ Have you developed a happy, open and communicative relationship with your in-laws? How can you be close to them, and offer care for them, without losing the space your marriage needs?

Cleave

'Cleaving' includes the idea of sticking to each other with steadfast loyalty.

- ❖ Do you see the husband/wife relationship as primary?
- ❖ Have you recognised temperamental/personality differences which impinge upon your relationship together? Have you resolved to improve yourself rather than seek to change your spouse?!
- ❖ In what ways can children/parents take the primary place of husband/wife?
- ❖ How can you be sure that you do not substitute children/parents where husband/wife should be?

- ❖ Do you make sure that you have time together as a couple? Arrange to go on a date night with your spouse and try to do something they enjoy most.
- ❖ Have you recently recalled your marriage vows? Find some time to do this and remind your spouse that you still mean them!

<u>The Bridegroom's Promise</u>	<u>The Bride's Promise</u>
<p>I (____) take you (____), to be my wife, to have and to hold from this day forward; for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish and worship, till death us do part, according to God's holy law; and this is my solemn vow.</p>	<p>I (____) take you (____), to be my husband, to have and to hold from this day forward; for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish and obey, till death us do part, according to God's holy law; and this is my solemn vow.</p>

- ❖ Read through Revelation 2:1-7.
- ❖ Examine the relationship between Christ and the Ephesian church and consider what is implied about reviving the first love in your relationship:
 - In what areas do you need to remember your first love (vv.4-5a)?
 - Are there things of which you must repent (v.5b)?
 - What kind of habits or disciplines might you need to revive (v.5b)?

One Flesh

This phrase speaks of the new body/single unit that the two married people now make. They are united in an indissoluble union.

- ❖ Social Oneness (1 Cor. 6:16). “One flesh” principles imply that the husband and wife should become one with each other. This does not mean that they have no separate activities. However, they may need to find things that they can do together as well as separately. Peter encourages husbands to “live with their wives” (1 Pet. 3:7). Do you merely inhabit the same dwelling? Or do you live joint lives? Do you really know each other?

- ❖ Sexual Oneness. Being “one flesh” clearly assumes that there will be physical intimacy between husband and wife. We shall explore this subject in greater detail in chapter 6.
 - Reading a book such as Intended for Pleasure, can help revive enjoyment in this area of the relationship. Trying some of the following may be helpful.¹
 - Have a night in together without the telephone plugged in.
 - Eat a leisurely meal together.
 - Have an evening without the television on, listening to music, talking, or massaging each other...
 - Organize someone to look after the children for a night if that is possible, so that you can go away from home for a romantic break.
 - Change your routine in lovemaking: time of day, venue and so on.

- ❖ Spiritual Oneness. Consider the implications of the following passages of Scripture: 1 Cor. 3:16; 1 Cor. 6:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:14; 1 Thess. 5:18; Phil. 4:11-13.
 - Have you cultivated a spiritual dimension to your marriage relationship?
 - When do you find time to read the Bible and pray together?

¹ *Intended for Pleasure, or The Act of Marriage* (op.cit.).
Also, Lee, N. & S., *The Marriage Book*, London: HTB Publications, 2000

- Have you thought about the implications for the “spiritual union” (i.e. the “one flesh” union spoken of in the course) you now enjoy with each other?
- What kind of things do you pray about for your marriage?
- Look again at 1 Corinthians 6:12-20. What is implied about the spiritual oneness which the one flesh relationship brings?

2. Paradise Lost

Address some of the issues which are associated with Genesis 3:

- ❖ Feelings of Shame. It may be that you will have to discover whether these feelings are legitimate and therefore repentance is needed; or whether they are there because of misplaced guilt about former relationships, lack of self-confidence or other failures.
- ❖ Blame-shifting. Try to break cycles of incrimination when things go wrong. Be quick to apologize and remember the principle of Ephesians 4:26. Resolve to talk through differences in private without sarcasm, aggression or bitterness. Sometimes it may be helpful to do this with a mature married couple or a marriage counsellor.
- ❖ Dissatisfaction in Gender Roles. Discuss some of the pressures which you feel in trying to work out male/female roles in your marriage. How can you learn to live with societal expectations? Try to work out domestic chores and who is going to make big decisions about things – such as money, holidays, discipline of children, time off, and how those decisions will be shared out.

3. Enjoying Creation

Spend time enjoying the richness of God’s creation and the diversity of all that he has made. In particular, appreciate the creative talents God has distributed between husband and wife, and enjoy each other’s complementary skills and roles.

❖ Helpful Reading Material

Lee, N. & S., The Marriage Book, London: HTB Publications

Wheat, E. & G., Intended for Pleasure, London: Scripture Union

Week Three
Joy in Redemption – Vertical Building (Ephesians 5:21-32)

Preparation questions

- ❖ Have you ever considered the vertical aspect of your marriage (namely, the relationship between you, your spouse and the Lord)?
- ❖ In what ways do you feel God is involved in your marriage? What difference does it make?
- ❖ How may you relate as a couple before the Lord?
- ❖ Are there ways in which you think God could be more involved?

Chapters 3 & 4
pp.71-113

My notes on the talk, Ephesians 5:21-32 “Joy in Redemption”

The Husband's Initiating Love

The husband needs to evaluate his love in the light of Christ's love for the church as outlined in the three main ways listed in the previous chapter.²

- ❖ First, the husband needs to do self-sacrificial things for the sake of his wife. This may mean giving up some hobby or activity if it takes away from the intimacy of the marriage, or, more positively, being the servant-leader in the household. Is your life self-sacrificial towards your wife?
- ❖ Secondly, the husband needs to be aware of the danger of thinking of love purely in terms of action, and not in terms of affection (see reading project below). Do you consider that your feelings towards your wife matter?
- ❖ Thirdly, do you see yourself as a redeemer to your wife?! I don't mean this in terms of being her saviour, only Christ can do that. Rather, do you consider the ways in which you can free her to be the person God wants her to be, to so love her as to liberate her?
- ❖ Fourthly, do you seek your joy in your spouse? Have you appreciated that duty is not enough? God wants you to find joy in your wife! How do you seek to 'please your wife'? (see 1 Cor 7:33-34).

The Wife's Responsive Submission

The wife needs to evaluate her love in view of the way in which the church submits to Christ.

- ❖ First, what are some of the common perceptions of submission which make this teaching difficult in contemporary culture? How do you work out the initiating/responding relationship in your marriage?
- ❖ Secondly, study Proverbs 31:10-31 together. Does this 'excellent wife' surprise you? In what ways? How do the principles of submission work out in this marriage?
- ❖ Thirdly, in what way do you feel that you and your spouse relate in a complementary way? Are there areas where you are too similar or have clashes of authority/responsibility? In the light of the previous chapter on Ephesians 5, how are you going to resolve these issues?

² Sacrificial giving (Ephesians 5:25), intimate caring (vv.28-29), joyful anticipation (v.22).

- ❖ Fourthly, it is sometimes observed that husbands are too passive in decision-making in the home; wives are too active in decision-making. Is this the case in your relationship? How might you change this situation?

Husband and Wife Together

- ❖ Try to evaluate your time, together and apart, before the Lord. Are there parts of your marriage where the lordship of Jesus is not being worked out in any of these areas?
 - Time commitments?
 - Prayer over big or little issues?
 - Church involvement?
 - Discipline and nurture of the children?
 - Joint and individual Bible reading?
- ❖ How is it evident in your household that Christ is the head of the family?

Practical Exercises

Consider further the dynamics of Initiating and Responding which we looked at in the Course:

- **Sex – initiating and responding**
 - Intimacy, Arousal and Orgasm
- **Communication – initiating and Responding**
 - ❖ Don't talk around things. Do talk through things.
 - ❖ Find something you enjoy doing together, even if it just going out for coffee or a stroll in the park. But, do make a date to do it regularly!
 - ❖ Be aware of each other's different needs in communication. Often, the woman needs to hear loving words and actions in order to feel loved. The man *does* have emotional needs, but they are, for the most part, different to the woman's.
 - ❖ A man will often make decisions based on emotional impulse more than the woman will, but, culturally, however, there is a lot of expectation that men will be emotionally independent.
 - ❖ The perception of the husband's importance and his success in his career as well as his perceived status among his peers, appear to matter more to men. Whereas, for the wife, relationships among family and friends feature more highly.

❖ Find some time to talk through these issues.

- **Busyness, Boredom and Exhaustion – Initiating and responding**

- ❖ Spend sometime thinking about the issues which affect you in this area, and how you will go about addressing them

❖ **Helpful Reading Material**

Gray, J., Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus or Pease, A. & B., Why Men don't listen and Women can't Read Maps and talk about what these books teach about the interrelationship between husband and wife. Also, consider what impact Ephesians 5 has upon the conclusions these books come to.

Piper, J., Desiring God chapter 8 and Begg, A., Made for His Pleasure, chapter 4.

Week Four
Joy in Heaven - Eternal Building

Chapters 5 & 6

pp.117-149

Preparation Questions

- ❖ Have you ever considered the eternal perspective which the Bible spells out concerning marriage?
- ❖ Read these passages: Mark 12:25, 1 Corinthians 7:25-32, Matthew 22:30, Revelation 19:6-9.
- ❖ What effect might this perspective on marriage have upon your perception of your relationship?
- ❖ How might you encourage each other to trust God's ultimate purposes for marriage to be glorifying to him, when it is clearly implied that marriage, as we know it, will no longer exist in heaven?
- ❖ Have you ever considered your marriage to be a witness of God's saving purposes (see Eph. 5:32)?
- ❖ What implications might this teaching have for your relationship with those in the congregation who are widowed, orphaned or single?

Summary of Talk "Joy in Heaven"

In the Diamond Marriage Course we have looked at both individual and corporate/joint goals for the married couples:

1. Individually — Joy is found when any person realizes that heaven will ultimately answer the human longing for intimacy and companionship.

Goal: To appreciate that, whatever a person's marital state on earth, they will experience true marriage in heaven and, like the angels, enjoy the fullness of experience with God (Mt. 22:29-31).

2. Corporately — Fullness of joy will be found in heaven at the marriage of God's bride (the church) to God's Son. In heaven there will be no more death, mourning, crying or pain (Rev. 21:4).

Goal: To help husbands and wives appreciate that human marriage is penultimate, not ultimate, and thereby live their lives in eschatological anticipation of the completion of God's work.

Notes

Practical Implications

Marriage, Church and Being Family

We inferred from Genesis 2:18-25 that marriage was created as part of the divine answer to human loneliness. However, we also noticed that the complementary role of husband and wife is purposeful and not an end in and of itself. Moreover, it is clear that loneliness continues to exist both inside and outside of marriage.

We should not underestimate the partial answer to loneliness which is now provided by God in the church family (see Mk. 3:31-35, 10:29-31, for example).

We should also appreciate that marriage to Christ at the end of time will be the fulfilment of the human longing for fulfilment and intimacy experienced by married and unmarried (Rev. 19:1-9, 21:1-4).

- ❖ Do you have an 'open' home? Do you look out, especially, for the orphan, widow, single, divorced person?
- ❖ How can you protect the boundaries of your family and at the same have an open home?
- ❖ Have you got a pattern of corporate family worship? How do you plan to maintain this? Some suggestions below may help:
 - Use a scheme or plan for Bible reading – there are excellent resources available which can be done jointly as a family, or individually.³
 - Select a regular place and time of day which suites your temperament and routine
 - Encourage prayer about both the big and the little things, and remember to recognise answers to prayer!
 - Make the most of family meal times. Resist the temptation to take a tray in front of the TV, and perhaps extend 'grace' to include a more general prayer time.
 - Share the teaching and training of your children in prayer and bible reading. Help them to see you adopt this is a lifestyle and habitual practice. They won't grow up doing it if you aren't committed to it.

Marriage and the Gospel

Consider your Marriage's and the witness to the world around you.

- ❖ Do you feel equipped to 'give a reason for the hope you have'? (1 Peter 3:15). Remember the implications from our look at this verse:

³ Contact: *The Good Book Company* New Malden, Surrey, or Scripture Union, London for two sources of popular Bible Reading notes.

- First, Christ should be acknowledged as Lord in every area of the marriage (finances, childrearing, home-building, leisure, for example). When this happens it begs the question: “what gives them hope?” Do you feel able to *answer* that questions should they ask it?!
 - Secondly, they should think through ways in which they may prepare themselves for evangelising through their marriage. This may involve offering hospitality in the home, using opportunities at the school gate, or forming close friendships with other couples. How can you foster hospitality in your home?
 - Thirdly, their joint witness should be characterized by gentleness, respect and a clear conscience. In other words, their lifestyle should match up to their verbal witness.
- ❖ Alec Motyer has said: ‘Lip without life, is hypocrisy. Life without lip is an uninterpreted parable’
 - What do you think he meant by this statement?
 - Which is the greater weakness in your marriage? ‘Life without lip’ or ‘lip without life’?
 - Is your marriage a ‘living’ and ‘eloquent’ parable of Christ’s relationship with the Church?
- ❖ Train yourself to make the most of every opportunity to make Jesus known, which you have as a couple.
 - Understand better the world in which we are called to minister. Michael Green summarises the environment in which we live as follows:
 - It is a world without God – at least , the God of the Bible does not feature in most people’s thinking;
 - It is a world without love – for most people, love is nothing more than a chemical attraction;
 - It is a world without values – or rather, the values it holds, are arbitrary, subjective and relative;
 - It is a world without meaning – people have little sense of God as the creator or it all, or of real hope beyond death;
 - It is a world without freedom – the God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers (2 Cor. 4:4);
 - It is a world without fulfilment – People are hungry for meaning and significance;
 - It is a world without truth – there are no absolute standards to aspire or adhere to;
 - It is a world without hope – whether this be global concerns over environment, famine, war, or person directionless and despair.⁴

⁴ See M. Green, *Evangelism Through the Local Church*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990, pp.251-282; See also, J. Chapman, *Know and Tell the Gospel*, New Malden: The Good Book Company,

- Educating ourselves in understanding the world which our friends, colleagues and family live in will help us in our witness.
 - Do we speak naturally and unthreateningly about God?
 - Do we show them the *agape* love of the bible?
 - Do we hold consistent Christian values?
 - Do we exude a sense of godly purpose?
 - Do we shine with the light of the Gospel?
 - Do we offer them meaning to life?
 - Do we take a stand on matters of biblical truth?
 - Do we exude Christian hope?

- Michael Green, similarly, encourages us to respond to the mental climate we live in:
 - We need to live attractive Christian lives
 - We need to ask sensitive, probing questions
 - We need to suggest an alternative
 - We need constant dependence on the Holy Spirit
 - We need constantly to build bridges

- ❖ Put into practice a plan to get to know some non-Christians. Quite obviously these relationships need to be fostered naturally. No one likes to feel like a 'target' for evangelism. And people soon know whether they are a 'project' or a genuine friend of you! Some practicalities may include:
 - Evaluate the key relationships in your life:
 - Family relations
 - Friendships
 - Work colleagues
 - Recreational networks
 - Find ways to spend more time with these people. Inviting friends to dinner is always good. Become a part of the local community – neighbourhood watch or residents associations are good. Perhaps, invite the parents you talk to at the school gate to coffee during the morning. I like golf because I find it a good way to get to talk to non-Christian (and Christian men). Here is 3 hours of uninterrupted natural, non-threatening conversation.
 - Grow in your confidence in sharing the contents of the faith with others. Look for natural opportunities as the events of the news of your community come into conversation. Invite people to specific evangelistic events at your local Church.

Marriage and Singularity

Adultery is a serious threat to marriage.

- ❖ The threat is so serious because
 - The world takes treats issue so lightly
 - The human heart is very wayward
- ❖ Brian Edwards speaks of adultery as ‘... the act of breaking out of a marriage or breaking into another marriage; or separating husbands and wives by turning their affections away from their marriage partners’⁵
 - Consider ways in which you can prevent breaking into to another relationship or breaking out of your own.
- ❖ The Puritan writer, Thomas Watson warned of adultery in the following ways
 - It is a thievish sin
 - It debases a person
 - It polluters
 - It is destructive to the body
 - It is a drain on the purse.
 - It destroys reputation
 - It impairs the mind
 - It incurs temporal judgements
 - If unrepented of, it damns the soul
 - It destroys the soul of another
 - It is abhorred by God.⁶
- ❖ Look at the positive and negative examples listed below. Take some time to read these biblical passages and discuss them together:
 - Joseph and Potiphar’s Wife (Genesis 39)
 - How did Joseph deal with Potiphar’s advances?
 - Why did she react the way she did?
 - David and Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11, Psalm 51)
 - Can you trace the beginning of David’s slide into adultery?
 - What other sins were committed apart from the act of adultery?
 - How does this warn your about the dangers of adultery?
 - Notice the specifics of his confession
 - Notice also, the consequences of his sin, despite God’s merciful forgiveness.

⁵ B. Edwards, *The Ten Commandments for Today*, Day One Publications, 1996

⁶ T. Watson, *The Ten Commandments*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1995 (First printed 1692)

- Jesus' words which condemn lust in the heart even when it has not gone all the way to adultery (Matthew 5:28)
- ❖ Consider:
- What you wear – you must not cause another to stumble;
 - What you watch on TV – particularly, remind yourself of the list of damages which Watson mentioned above, for, TV will rarely portray adultery in this realistic light.
 - Who you meet with – never in compromising periods with someone of the opposite sex; frequently for prayer and accountability with someone of the same sex;
 - How you discipline your time – particularly, ensuring that you have a regular pattern of bible reading and prayer
 - Your points of most vulnerability
 - Michael Horton points out that when we commit adultery we sin against God, against our own body, against our spouse and against the partners spouse.⁷ Have you considered that avoidance of adultery includes
 - keeping our relationship with God healthy;
 - honoring your own body;
 - respecting your spouse;
 - loving your neighbor;
 - Resolve to put time and energy into your marriage, not least, so that adultery loses its attraction and draw.

Marriage and Winsome Faithfulness

- ❖ Resolve to speak only positively of each other, especially when in public
- ❖ Discuss ways in which the reality of 'true love' has become more apparent in the 'nitty gritty' of your marriage.
- ❖ Ask God to help you show the positive values of lifelong faithful love, and find ways to celebrate your love.

⁷ M. Horton, *The Law of Perfect Freedom*, Moody Press, 1993, p.188

Marriage and the End of Time

Marriage is an enacted parable of Christ's relationship with the church. In so far as a marriage displays covenant faithfulness and self-sacrificial love, and builds "one flesh" principles, it dramatically illustrates God's plan for the world.

To this extent a marriage will be at its most healthy when it appreciates that the future glorification of God in marriage will be fully manifested in the relationship between Christ and his church. Marriage is penultimate to the ultimate glorification of God.

I suggest that only this perspective on Christian marriage gives real hope for the future, and an appreciation that, even when death separates a loving married couple, they are able to appreciate that God is subsuming the chief end of marriage in a larger plan for his glorification and enjoyment.

- ❖ Spend some time considering the overlap between God's plans for the church and God's plans for marriage. How do you see biblical principles of headship, submission, and the glorification and enjoyment of God forever, worked out in your marriage and in the church?
- ❖ Read through Song of Songs and notice the covenant relationship between God and his people and the lover and beloved. How are the two relationships intertwined?
- ❖ How might understanding the penultimate nature of marriage help strengthen your marriage?
- ❖ Can you and your spouse identify periods in your married life when there has been the most tension or absence of joy?
- ❖ Listed below (week 5) are common areas of tension and stress in marriages. Grade the areas which are most likely to cause problems, or do cause problems at the moment in your marriage. I suggest you do this exercise separately and then discuss it together before the next session (no one else will see your responses).

Week Five
Joy in Marriage Lived Out

Preparation Questions

- ❖ Can you and your spouse identify periods in your married life when there has been the most tension or absence of joy?
- ❖ Listed below are common areas of tension and stress in marriages. Grade the areas which are most likely to cause problems, or do cause problems at the moment in your marriage. I suggest you do this exercise separately and then discuss it together before the next week

pp.148-149

Causes of Marital Friction

	LOW STRESS					HIGH STRESS				
Holidays	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Time off/time alone together	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Discipline of children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Communication	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Distribution of domestic chores	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Relationships with wider family	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Love-making	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Giving/receiving unconditional love	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Money	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Incompatible interests	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Church involvement/Attendance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

- ❖ As you discuss your answers together: Did you notice areas where there are large differences in your high/low stress scores to your spouse? If so, discuss why this is the case. Can you work out some specific ways to help resolve the areas of high stress?

My notes on the talk, Ephesians 5:21-32 “Joy in Redemption”

Practical Exercises

The Problem of Joylessness

My answer is not to simply get on with your duty because feelings don't matter. They do! My answer has three steps. First, confess the sin of joylessness. (“My heart is faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I”, Psalm 61:2). Acknowledge the coldness of your heart. Don't say that it doesn't matter how you feel. Second, pray earnestly that God would restore the joy of obedience. (“I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart,” Psalm 40:8). Third go ahead and do the outward dimension of your duty in the hope that the doing will rekindle the delight.

This is very different from saying: “Do your duty because feeling don't count.” These steps assume that there is such a thing as hypocrisy. They are based on the belief that our goal is the reunion of pleasure and duty and that a justification of their separation is a justification of sin. (Piper 2001: 31).

Growing Joy

- ❖ Spend some time reflecting on the big scheme that God begun when He called you in His Son... this should change your perspective on the whatever has happened this week!
- ❖ Think about ALL that God has given you in Jesus ... doesn't this help you be content in any circumstance?
- ❖ The Christian life is costly - it involves giving up everything - but the reward is joy!
- ❖ God doesn't waste circumstances, He uses them to make us more like Jesus!
- ❖ The Christian life is a combination of saying no to our natural inclinations and yes to God's Spirit. The result is: fruit that includes joy!
- ❖ Heaven is worth the wait ... fullness of joy will be mine forevermore!
- ❖ Find an occasion to fill in the marriage pledge form and present it to your spouse.

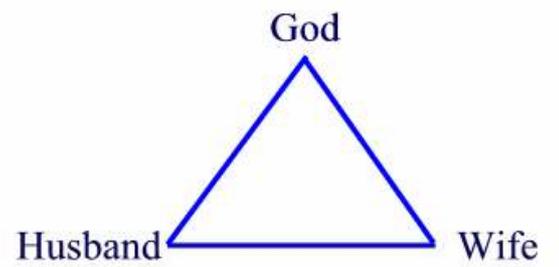
Week Six - A Marriage Celebration

The Diamond Marriage

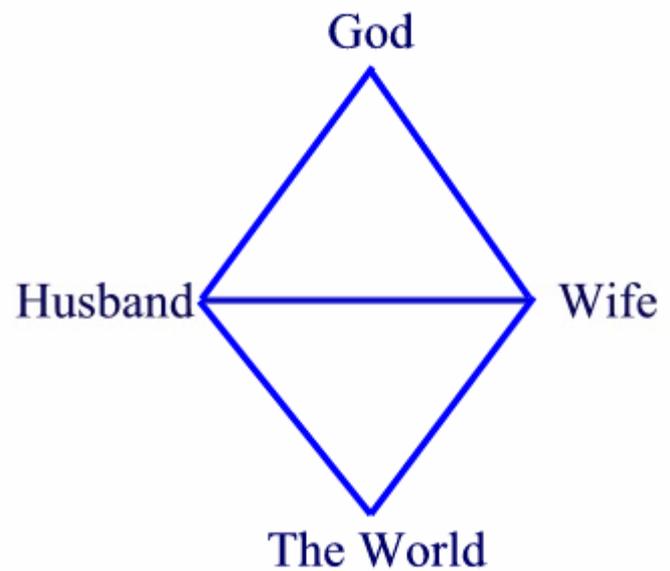
Horizontal Implications

Husband ————— Wife

Vertical Implications



Eternal Implications



Conclusion – renewal of covenant commitment to

“Leave; Cleave and become One Flesh”

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My Pledge to You

I _____ (name) pledge myself to _____ (spouse’s name) in recognition of God’s principles for marriage, to live as “One Flesh”. From this day forward I shall make it my aim to:

- **Leave behind things or people that hinder the two of us being one flesh and work hard at uniting with _____ (spouse’s name);**
- **Work out the principles involved in loving _____ (spouse’s name) as Christ loved the Church (or) submitting to _____ (spouse’s name) as to the Lord (delete as appropriate) and do all I can to have the Lord as the reference point for all we do in our marriage;**
- **view our marriage as an enacted parable of Christ’s relationship with His church and aim to so demonstrate my practical love towards _____ that our marriage may be a living witness to His purposes.**

Signed _____

Date _____

PS (Anything else you want to say!)

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The Diamond Marriage Course

Feedback form

1. What do you think has been the central message of this course?
2. What have you found most useful for your relationship?
3. What bits were least useful or unclear?
4. How do you think that the format, presentation or style of the course might be improved?
5. Who do you think might benefit most from this course?
6. Would you recommend it to anyone else?