



Becoming Your Best US

Marriage Conference

Friday, February 9th 6:00 – 8:45

Saturday, February 10th 8:15 – 3:30

CONFERENCE WORKBOOK

Prepare ~ Enrich ~ Crisis

Step-Family ~ First Responders

www.allinmarriage.com ~ www.facebook.com/AllInMarriage





AIM — v. to intend for or direct toward a particular goal

“Where there is no vision, the people perish.” Proverbs 29:18 (KJ)

Where is your marriage **intentionally** directed?

Give "marriage insurance" to the engaged – at least a 95% guarantee that their marriage will go the distance if they participate in this plan. Some will learn to avoid a bad marriage before it starts though their assessments. Of couples taking this assessment, doing the feedback sessions & exercises AND having a mentor couple:

- 10% didn't marry
- Of the 90% that married, **97%** are still married after 10 years!

Prepare-Enrich (assessment and 8 feedback sessions)

Mentor couple from pre-marital through their first years of marriage

Saving Your Marriage Before it Starts

P R E P A R E



A cord of three strands is not easily broken!
Ecclesiastes 4:12

i-Marriage

Sacred Marriage

Love & Respect



Enrich all existing marriages to be **intentional** about the care of their marriage through training, date nights, conferences and mentor couples. Mentor couples are for new marriages, good marriages wanting to be great or couples in any transition that requires the marriage to make adjustments (i.e. birth of a child, teenager in crisis, health issues, empty nest, etc.). Couples are matched based on the transition with a mentor couple who has experienced the same transition. If we don't get couples at Enrichment, we will probably get them at Crisis or Stepfamily!

The healthiest marriages will be connected in a marriage small group to learn tools and have support, as well as being a mentor couple that is investing in another marriage and will have a mentor couple investing into their marriage too.

Prepare-Enrich (assessment and 8 week feedback sessions)

Monthly Date Night w/childcare

Annual Marriage Conference/Events (on & off site)

Deep Love Assessment and Small Group Study

i-Marriage/Sacred Marriage/Love & Respect

The Art of Marriage//Visionary Marriage/How We Love

Crisis/Separated

Restore four out of five troubled marriages with trained "back-from-the-brink couples" (whose own marriages once nearly failed) to mentor couples currently in crisis. A couple nearly driven apart by adultery who survived - has something to say to a couple in a crisis over adultery. They can describe how they rebuilt trust and be a walking parable of hope and a testimony to the power of Christ!

Prepare-Enrich (assessment and 8 week feedback sessions)

Marriage 911 Class (12 wks)

Marriage on the Mend (12 weeks)

Crisis Mentor Couples

Before the Last Resort



Help stepfamilies succeed by creating "Stepfamily Support Groups" that give couples with children from a previous marriage or a previous relationship, a place and a plan to learn how to be successful parents and partners. Instead of losing 70% of stepparents to divorce, this method saves 80% of stepfamilies.

Prepare-Enrich (assessment and 8 week feedback sessions) /Remarriage Checkup Study

Smart-Step Family DVD Study (8 wk)

Support Groups (ongoing/meets as agreed)

First responder marriages are at high risk for marital issues as you work long hours, face frequent danger and witness countless traumatizing events. We will help you to be a First Responder Family and learn to save your own! We will do this in several ways:



- We will have small groups designed to support & train, first responder mentor couples, breakouts at marriage conference
- We will provide help on the allinmarriage.com site through blog articles

All In Marriage Ministry Overview

www.allinmarriage.com

MARRIAGE AS DISCIPLESHIP



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Conflict resolution, communication, kindness, affair proofing, attachment theories, skills and tools training are all helpful to any marriage. But they work from the outside in, and the marriage of two Christ followers should be distinctively different by working from the inside out. We are called to die to ourselves then live out of that with each other and others.

There is a key in how to live this way. We must put on humility. 1st Peter 5:5 says, "...clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"

Put On Humility

1. Get the vertical right
2. Take the log out of your eye
3. Have courage to look deep in the mirror (not a layer or two, but a long stare)
4. Take credit, but don't seek the glory
5. Serve others in the way Jesus did (Saved people, Serve people)



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Phil.

2:1-11

GOD

What is
humility?

SELF

SELF

"love your neighbor as yourself"

What empowered Jesus to love us? Philippians 2:1-11 tells us to love well, take on the attitude of Christ, a humble heart. He had power and prestige, but did not use it. He instead served with humility. Humility affects the vertical with God and the horizontal with others.

Reverend Richard Whitcomb states, "Pride is 'Contending for supremacy with God.' It is placing yourself above God, and declaring that you are your own god."

Pride/Humility Dynamic

The Humility Paradox: We bow, He lifts

The Pride Paradox: We lift ourselves, He opposes

This works vertically with God and horizontally with others too.



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Pride/Humility Dynamic

"Though He scoffs at the scoffers and scorns the scornors, Yet He gives His grace [His undeserved favor] to the humble [those who give up self-importance]."
~ Proverbs 3:34

"He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."
~ Micah 6:8



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- The Pride Paradox ("I've got this"; self-sufficiency; fight for glory and position)
- The Humility Paradox acknowledges and depends on God; and heart receives and is primed for the Holy Spirit to teach us, break us, and empower us to love and serve others in the way that Jesus did. Saved people serve people and give.
- Humility softens the heart of God, but since it is also a horizontal parallel, it softens the heart of your spouse, children, etc. It also invites grace, kindness, and the willingness to forgive. Verses pride's "I've got this, I don't need to consider your thoughts, or discuss what you would like to do." This pride gets opposition with others, just as with God!



Session 1: TIME FOR YOUR US

Bottom Line: When we give ourselves time to just be, we get everything that comes with that decision.

Scripture: Luke 10:38-42

Core 4 Habit: Have Serious Fun

INTRODUCTION

- A. Technology has given us back time, but we seem busier and more distracted than ever.
- B. When it comes to having space in our calendar, when it comes to having time just to be, we feel a little bit uncomfortable.
- We start trying to fill that time.
 - We start to change things.
 - We start plugging into everything. *[Like a power strip stuffed full of cords.]*
 - We convince ourselves we've got the capacity to make it all happen.
 - And we're going to say yes to this and yes to that.
 - But we plug into so many things.
- C. There are so many options, yet we seem to feel a little uncomfortable having any time to just be.
- D. Why do we need to just be?
- Because in the margin is grace.
 - In the margin is connection.
 - In the margin is laughter.
 - In the margin is the ability to say, "I just wanna stay home," and then be able to do it.
 - We have to create some margin.

TENSION

- A. Why do we do refuse to allow ourselves some margin?
- Our desire for significance.
 - The other influencing factor here is our culture.
- B. The authors of the Bible consistently, continually tell people, "Hey, this is how culture is affecting your relationship with God and also your relationships with one another." Why? Because in our culture, we tend to do what those around us are doing.

TRUTH

- A. The great thing is, and I don't know if it's good news or bad news, but while technology has changed, human nature has not. It's the same. That's why the Bible remains relevant, remains brilliant as it speaks into our lives—even in this area of being too plugged in.

- B. I want to read a passage for you from Luke. It says: *“As Jesus and His disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him” (Luke 10:38 NIV).*

Some of us would be like, “Come on in!”

Others of you would start thinking, *Are they going to stay? Am I going to have to feed these people? Are they going to spend the night?*

I can relate to Martha. I can see her stressing out. But she had an ace in the hole. She had a sister named Mary. Culturally, Martha’s job was to take care of people and be hospitable and take care of Jesus.

- C. We know what Mary did: She *“sat at the Lord’s feet listening to what he said” (Luke 10:39 NIV).*

Can you imagine? You’ve got Mary sitting over here, staring up at Jesus, thinking, *Jesus, You’re so great.*

- D. And then Martha; this is what happened to Martha. The passage says, *“But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made” (v. 40 NIV).*

She started thinking about feeding everyone and getting things done. She got distracted.

Have you ever felt like this when you’ve got too much going on? Remember this ugly sight next week when you get too busy. *[He puts the power strip with all of its cords around his neck.]* Martha had all this going on and she was distracted, which means “encumbered.”

- E. The passage says she came to Jesus and asked, *“Lord, don’t You care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself?” (v. 40 NIV).* Think how culturally bold this is. This was a time when women could not speak to men in public and she walks up to the Man and basically goes, “Hello? Uhhh.”

Here’s what Martha said to Jesus: *“Tell her to help me” (Luke 10:40 NIV).*

But we understand how she’s feeling. Most of us get this because when we’re plugged into all this stuff, we never think about unplugging, do we? No, we don’t think about that for a second. We think about finding more people to help and more technology to get us organized and we need to hire somebody else at work because this thing’s getting crazy. And we never do this *[turns off the power strip]*. We never turn this thing off. *“Tell her to help me.”*

I love You, Jesus. I want to serve You so much. I want to do so much for You. Please, just tell her to help me. I’ll be with you in a minute, but I can’t stop doing this. I can’t forget about that. I need to handle this other there.

- F. He says, *“Martha, Martha,” (v. 41 NIV).*

The passage says, *“The Lord answered, ‘You are worried and upset about many things’” (v. 41 NIV).*

It’s very obvious, Martha. We can tell that your insides are churning because your outsides are letting us know. We can tell all this. And then I love this. Jesus says, *“But few things are needed—or indeed only one” (v. 42 NIV).*

The word “needed” here can be translated “appetite.” Jesus is saying, “You’re in there cooking up a storm, but the only thing needed in this setting is *this* appetite. There’s only one thing I want you to be hungry for.”

- G. Now did He not appreciate what Martha was doing? Absolutely, He appreciated her work. He understood her desire to meet needs and get the work done. He was human. He liked to eat too. But while He appreciated her efforts, in this setting, in this moment, only one thing is needed. And He said, “*Mary has chosen what is better*” (Luke 10:42 NIV).

And I am convinced that relationally, whether it’s your close friends or your spouse or your kids, despite all the activity of doing, what the people who love us need the most is just to be with us. I need your being more than I need your doing because it’s our being that loves. It’s our being that pauses, that listens, that’s intentional, that’s where our relationships are made. And Jesus said Mary had chosen what is better—just being.

- H. And then He says this: “*And it will not be taken away from her*” (Luke 10:42 NIV).

In other words, Mary gets everything that comes with this decision. It’s not going to be taken from her. So Martha can get all mad and flustered, but Mary is doing what’s better and she gets everything that comes with that.

APPLICATION

- A. So what comes with just being? Well, for Mary, it meant just being with Jesus. Wow. Can you imagine? She got the connection; she got the love; she got to listen to the One who makes the world go round. But what do we get when we just “are” with each other? We get so much. And that decision will not be taken from us. But here’s the catch and we know it’s true—we get everything that comes with that decision to just be.
- B. And for some of us, it may cost us something. If we don’t pick up the phone all the time because we’ve decided to unplug at home, there may be a cost.
- C. When we make that kind of decision, a person at work might decide you are not as accessible as another coworker, and that might mean you don’t get the promotion and someone else does.

time



- A. What is one thing you can do in your life to unplug that will help you connect with each other more regularly? It can be no tech after a certain time each night or # nights each week so you can have time for each other. What is one thing you can do in your life to unplug that will help your family connect more regularly? It can be something small, like turning off your phones during dinner. We are going to give ourselves more **margin**. We are going to say this is a no-technology zone for a certain amount of time. And we get everything that comes with that decision.
- B. In what area of your life can you give yourself some personal **margin**? Remember, when you choose that, you get everything that comes with that decision. You get connection, you get peace, love, grace, freedom and you get relationship.



Session 2: BELIEVE in Your US

Bottom Line: In every relationship, there's a gap at some point and your ability to stay in love is determined by what you put in that gap.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Luke 6:31

Core 4 Habit: Love God First

INTRODUCTION

- A. Everybody who is in love makes this choice or this kind of choice almost every single day.
- B. The way you approach this choice, will have a lot to do with whether or not you are able to stay in love.
- C. This is something you did intuitively when you fell in love. But as time goes by we fall out of this habit, and consequently, we begin to undermine our own love relationships.

TENSION

- A. First Corinthians 13 says: *“Love is patient [check], love is kind [okay, that makes sense]. It does not envy [okay], it does not boast [okay, I don't need to be like the arrogant husband or the arrogant wife], it is not proud [yeah, you know pride can be a problem relationally; gotcha, Paul, I'm with you].*

It does not dishonor others [okay, good idea if I'm in a relationship; I don't want to dishonor the other person], it is not self-seeking [got it; self-seeking works against love so I need to work on that one], it is not easily angered [okay, anger issues; we've all got some kind of anger issue; got to work on that]” (1 Corinthians 13:4-5 NIV).

- B. Here's a big one: *“It keeps no record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:5 NIV).*
- C. *“Keeps no record of wrongs [yeah, we probably all need to work on that]. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth [that is, you celebrate the wins; you don't camp out on the other stuff]” (1 Corinthians 13:5-6 NIV).*

TRUTH

- A. Then Paul gets to verse 7, and here's what he does: He takes a little Greek word and he uses it four times, and he matches it up with four different Greek words or phrases.
- B. Four times, he rapidly says four different things that all go together to make one specific point. If you pull any of these out by themselves, they don't make a lot of sense. But together, Paul uses them to emphasize one of the most important habits, one of the most important practices in a love relationship, especially a romantic one. Here's how he says it in verse 7: *“It [he's talking about love] always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres” (NIV).*

Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. The New American Standard Bible says it this way: *“Bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”*

- C. I would see that phrase *believes all things* or the NIV, which says *always trusts*, and I would think, *I don't know about that one*. But the apostle Paul is communicating an invaluable principle here. And he does it not just with one phrase—he does it with all four of them.
- D. In every relationship at some point there is a gap between what we expect and how people behave. In every relationship. There's a gap at some point. We think, *I expected you to do this, but in actuality you did that*. I see some people nodding your heads. No elbows, just nod your head. Take personal responsibility for all of this, right?
- E. Now here's the choice you make all the time. In every one of these gaps, we put something. We either choose to believe the best or assume the worst. Every single time.
- F. There are two things that determine what you're going to put here in this gap:
1. What you see. What determines what you put here is what you see—"Well, they haven't done what they said they would do, again"
 2. Who you are. What you've experienced, your hurt, your pain, your joys, what you saw growing up, what you experienced in previous relationships, your fear of being abandoned, your fear of being on your own, whatever it might be.

APPLICATION

- A. People who stay in love learn to do this. People who stay in love, either intuitively or by force of habit or however they get there, regardless of circumstances, they consistently learn to go here.

These couples still have a gap. There will always be gaps. But believing and assuming the best.

- B. A group of researchers who wanted to study successful relationships. So they got a group of people together who were considered happy, and they did lots and lots of interviews. They found a group of people who were very, very happily married and who had been together for 10 years or more. They asked each couple, "What is the common denominator? What is the one thing these successful couples share?" When they tested these happy couples that had been together 10 years or longer, they discovered that the spouses actually had a very *unrealistic* view of each other.
- C. Where do you naturally go with this? Do you quickly go to the negative? Or do you assume the best? That's your decision.

Listen to 1 Corinthians 13:7 again: "*It [love] always protects*" (NIV). What does it protect? Love protects the integrity of the relationship. Love does not look for an opportunity to put something in the negative column. Love tries to protect this relationship. Love tries to find something to put in the positive column. By trying to protect this relationship, you are looking for a way to keep love alive.

"*Always trusts.*" Love looks for a generous explanation.

"*Believes all things*" (NASB). "*Always hopes*" (NIV). That is, hopefully, there's a good explanation. Hopefully, there's something I don't know. Hopefully, he didn't mean to. Hopefully, I'm not going to give up hope until proven otherwise.

"*Always perseveres.*" Love always looks for the good.

D. How do you do with this? Have you and your spouse gotten into a cycle?

Here's what I want you to hear: When you choose to assume the worst, even if there's plenty of history to back it up, every time you choose to go negative you have contributed to the demise of your relationship. You are a participant.

E. When you go negative, what it communicates is this: No matter what you do, no matter how hard you try, you will never measure up. You will never hit the standard. You will never get to where I expect you to be. And every time you overtly or covertly or subtly communicate that in your relationship, you push that person further and further away and they feel like they disappointed you.

F. One of the most powerful things you can do to communicate that someone has not disappointed you is to fill the gap with believing the best.

G. Let me tell you, if you have consistently assumed the worst, they're afraid of you.

H. So that's why when you believe the best, even when there's a gap, you create margin.

And what you communicate is: I trust you. I trust you. I trust you. Even before I hear your explanation, I trust you.

Even before I hear the circumstances, I trust you. I trust you. I trust you.

Trust in a relationship means I accept you; I accept you.

Acceptance means you have not disappointed me; you have not disappointed me; you have not disappointed me.

I. I'm not saying you don't have difficult conversations. I'm not saying you don't confront the realities of the relationship. What I'm saying is that after the conversation, when everybody's had their say and everybody's tried to work it out and even when you're mad, the next time there's a gap you still have a choice to make. And you will choose to believe the best or assume the worst.

Our hearts are drawn toward environments of acceptance.

LANDING

A. Every time there's a gap, you make a decision of acceptance or rejection.

B. If I know absolutely, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that there's no excuse, then we're going to have a tough conversation. And when that conversation is over, I choose to put trust right there in the middle.

C. How do you do with that? How are you doing with that? Here's how Jesus summed the whole thing up. You've heard this before. Here's what He said, and isn't this brilliant? *"Do to others as you would have them do to you"* (Luke 6:31 NIV).

You make a choice.

D. But there's something that makes this even more important. Our greatest opportunity for impact in culture is not just going to church, it's learning to fall in love and stay in love and to love each other the way our heavenly Father through Jesus Christ loved us.

- E. Love continues by understanding that we have junk in our heart, so we have to monitor it. Then love continues as we learn to make a decision every single day to fill the gap with faith and trust, not with suspicion and hostility. The goal of marriage is not to make points and win arguments. The goal is to fall in love and stay in love forever.

And we're able to say, "It's not because we're great. It's not because we're smart. It's because of our heavenly Father and what He's done for us, and what He's done in us through His Son."

If you're not in love, I hope you fall in love and I hope you fall in deep. And I hope you stay there forever.

believe



- A. Where do you naturally go when there's a gap between expectation and behavior?
- B. Couples that learn to make choices to believe the best, to find the most generous explanation and **believe it**, over and over, can create an "upward spiral of love" effect. That allows their marriages to be more enjoyable for themselves, their children, those around them, and speaks more clearly the truth about Jesus and 1 Cor. 13:7 to everyone they connect with. Do you want this? If so, what plan must you intentionally create to attain this?



Session 3: FIGHT for Your US

Bottom Line: We shouldn't *create* conflict, but we've got to press into conflict.

Scripture: Psalm 51:5; James 1:5; Proverbs 15:23; 2 Timothy 1:7; Proverbs 20:3; Ephesians 4:32; Ephesians 4:26-27

Core 4 Habit: Respect & Love

INTRODUCTION

A. We've had our share of conflict through the years because we are different.

1. We come from different backgrounds, and because of that, to be married means that there is conflict.
2. We have learned through the years that problems are not solved when you avoid talking about them. Problems are not dealt with when you hide from them.

B. Conflict really means that we confront the barriers in our lives that hinder us from intimacy.

C. We shouldn't *create* conflict, but we've got to press into conflict.

1. The vision for marriage is oneness—not necessarily sameness, but oneness. We're to live out what Genesis 2 describes, the grand vision when God brings Eve to Adam and makes this declarative statement that these two are to become one flesh and cleave appropriately.
2. We're stuck to each other. It is the living declaration, that oneness, that intertwining of our lives that destroys the barriers in us.

D. There are seven big lessons that we have learned about conflict and communication.

FIRST LESSON: We need to accept the reality that we are flawed.

A. Psalm 51:5: "*Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity*" (NKJV).

B. It might get cleaner and clearer and less dominant as we live, but we did not marry someone who was perfect.

1. I'm not talking about justifying our sinfulness.
2. Love is not perfection. Love is acceptance. Love is not mired in performance. Love extends from grace, and mercy is all around love.

C. You marry the bents and the dysfunction and the pain of your pilgrimage, and the ups and the downs and the stress and the struggles and all of that stuff.

D. That doesn't mean that we're hopeless. It means that we see that through a Savior who needs to help all of us.

SECOND LESSON: Silence does not solve issues or resolve conflicts.

A. Different communication styles.

1. A blower is "Let's get it done. Let's talk it out."
2. My word is a "stuffer": "Let's not deal with it now. Let's talk about it later."

B. Unfortunately, stuffers do more harm than is intended. But let me give me three suggestions if you are a stuffer or you use silence:

1. Be willing to listen.
2. Don't be defensive.
3. Don't walk away or emotionally disconnect.

C. Both the stuffer and the blower have to commit to a place to regularly discuss these issues and keep the communication lines open.

THIRD LESSON: Wisely choose what offends you.

A. Ask yourself, "Is this a deal breaker for our marriage?"

1. "Will this break our marriage?"
2. "Will this issue that I'm really tripping over add value and strength to my marriage?"

B. James 1:5 says: *"If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God"* (NIV).

Ask God if the offense or the thing that I'm tripping over is it really worth the emotional energy.

C. Second, get some perspective from a godly friend.

1. Proverbs 15:23 says: *"A person finds joy in giving an apt reply—and how good is a timely word!"* (NIV).

FOURTH LESSON: Trust and transparency cause us to address issues with a sense of confidence.

A. Second Timothy 1:7 says: *"God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control"* (ESV).

1. It could be that it's our fear, our pride, our insecurities that become barriers to us trusting and being honest with our spouses.

B. Here are a couple of suggestions.

1. Personally be willing to work through those obstacles—is it fear; is it pride; is it insecurity?
2. Be clear and honest when you communicate.
3. Listen and embrace change.

FIFTH LESSON that we've learned: Not every issue is of equal weight.

A. Do I really wanna go down this road?

B. Proverbs 20:3 says: *"It is an honor for a man to keep aloof from strife, but every fool will be quarreling"* (ESV).

C. Listen, we've got 6 silver bullets and 24 targets. You can't shoot at everything.

1. Some of us have fighting personalities.
2. We're brittle, we're insecure, we're highly threatened, and we're always drawing lines in the sand.
3. I want to ask you this question. "You want to blow this up over that? Back up a little bit."

D. There's always something to fight about. There's always something to be offended by. Always. So we need discernment. We need to build a tolerance for the nonessential stuff.

1. What's the bottom line?
2. What's of the essence?

3. What really threatens the oneness here?
4. Why am I attaching that emotional energy to this issue?

E. It may not be a big deal to you, but it may be a big deal to your spouse.

This is where “others” orientation comes in. No, not every single issue is of equal weight, but don’t tell your spouse to get over it if something is a big deal to them. My love for them says it is a big deal to me too.

SIXTH LESSON: Forgiveness is the pathway to resolution.

A. Ephesians 4:32 says: *“Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you” (ESV).*

1. Paul is saying is that he commands us to forgive and he commands us to be kind.
2. Why? Because forgiveness is a given. It’s a given. If you’re close to anybody you have to express and receive forgiveness.

B. Three observations:

1. Forgiveness is an act and an attitude.
2. Forgiveness releases grace in your marriage.
3. Forgiveness washes away defensiveness.

SEVENTH LESSON: Take clear, direct, specific action.

A. If you’re going to change stuff, then you’ve gotta act like stuff needs to be changed.

B. The Bible says in Ephesians 4:26-27: *“Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil” (ESV).*

1. “Don’t let the sun go down on your anger” doesn’t mean that you put toothpicks under your eyelids so you can stay awake and not go to sleep.
2. You should gain a proper perspective about the issue and not let the anger control you—but let the anger drive you to action.

C. Turn your anger toward a solution. Do something about what you see wrong.

FIGHT



A. The bottom line is to determine what needs to be done and the changes that need to be made, and do it. What one lesson above spoke most to you about yourself? What would you like to do about it?

B. The joy in your marriage is the measure of the depth of your oneness. What is the one biggest hindrance to your oneness? If you haven’t already address it this weekend, discuss how you can try to eliminate it, or at least begin to recognize it and begin addressing an intentional attack against it.

Remember your spouse is not the enemy, the enemy and the issue IS the real enemy!



Session 4: GROW Your US

Bottom Line: When you prioritize responsibility, your character matures and your marriage thrives.

Scripture: Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:6; Matthew 18:3; Hebrews 6:1; 1 Corinthians 13:11; Ecclesiastes 7:1-2

Core 4 Habit: Practice Your Promise

INTRODUCTION

- A. We love our kids . . . we know they won't be with us forever. Our job as parents is to make sure they leave home as adults.
- B. We want them to go out into the world prepared and mature.

TENSION

- A. Five milestones of adulthood. Here they are:
 1. Leave home.
 2. Finish school or an apprenticeship or some sort of job/vocational training.
 3. Find full-time employment.
 4. Get married.
 5. Start a family.

These are the five milestones for every generation.

- B. Today, what we're doing as parents is we're telling our children you can only do one at a time.
- C. Responsibility says, "I have to do all of these at once." But what we're doing now is we're taking all of these milestones and telling our children to slow it way down.

TRUTH

- A. The last part of Genesis 2:24 explains the reason you have to leave home. I tell young people you have to leave home physically, emotionally, financially, and if necessary, geographically.

"[The two] become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24 ESV). This is the biblical definition of compatibility.

Jesus echoed it in Matthew. He said: *"So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:6 ESV).*

Biblical definition of compatibility is two becoming one.

- B. We look at compatibility today with different eyes, with different lenses. Here's what we think about compatibility today—we think it's something you find, test for, or discover.

- C. But that's not compatibility. Compatibility flows from character. Character trumps compatibility. The decision to stay married for life flows from your character.
- D. You make the decision to divorce-proof your home.
You make the decision to enjoy life together. You choose this.
- D. As we're thinking through those milestones, we have an issue today called "prolonged adolescence." Prolonged adolescence simply means too much privilege and not enough responsibility. The gap between childhood and adulthood is growing larger.

I believe that prolonged adolescence is not *the* leading cause of divorce but it is a leading cause of divorce, because we have taken these milestones and stretched them out on this track of prolonged adolescence.

- E. Now here's how it goes in the Scriptures. In Matthew 18:3, we read this: *"Unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (ESV).*
- F. So there's value in being a child for a season. But when you look at discipleship as it's laid out in Scripture, the Bible says this: *"Let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity" (Hebrews 6:1 ESV).*

Meaning, at some point, you should be growing. You should be maturing. You should be learning more. And the author of Hebrews here is saying, "Let's not keep going back. Let's take what we've learned, put it into practice, do something with it, and then let's move on. Let's press on to maturity."

- G. *"When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways" (verse 11 ESV).*

We've got to change the trend of prolonged adolescence because for some it's a stage of life that lasts into the thirties and forties.

- H. We know this about compatibility: It requires maturity. If you met on match.com or eHarmony or Farmers Only, that's great. They connected you.

But you will never find compatibility on a website because compatibility—two becoming one—is something that takes place in marriage. It requires commitment in marriage.

- I. I'll be married 20 years this coming October, and we are still growing our compatibility. I do things she likes to do. She does things I like to do that she doesn't particularly like.

APPLICATION

- A. I'm going to give you five scenarios, and you're going to describe your marriage with these scenarios. Here's the key: You alone are describing this. You're not looking to the left or looking to the right. I want your eyes straight ahead. I want you looking at me. You've got to, or it won't work otherwise.

How are you doing at becoming one?

- B. How many of you would say, “**We were mature when we married**”?
- C. How about this next one: **We were immature when we married, but we grew up together.**
- D. **We were immature when we married; I grew up and my spouse did not.**
- E. **We were immature when we married; my spouse grew up and I did not.**
- F. **We were immature when we married and we still are.**

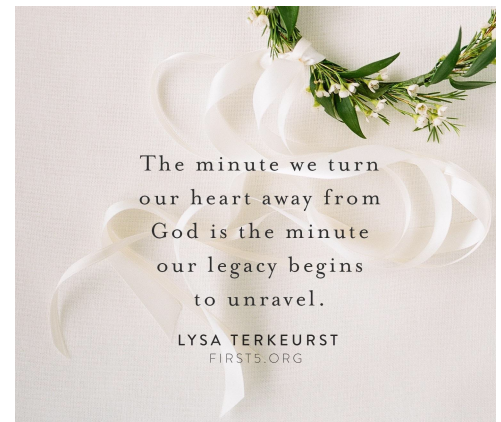
grow



1. Are there any areas of adolescence in your marriage that are hindering intimacy and oneness? Discuss this with gentleness, vulnerability, empathy and compassion as you both desire to Become YOUR Best US!

2. Are you making any decisions as parents that are prolonging adolescence and possibly preventing what God would have for their life?

3. Ecclesiastes 7:1-2 says: “*A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of birth. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, for this is the end of all mankind, and the living will lay it to heart*” (ESV). Do you want to embrace the responsibility that’s been laid before you to leave a Godly legacy? Discuss how your personal choices, sins, etc. in your lives, in your marriage, and family are affecting your life now and your legacy. Do you want to make the choices to have this life and legacy changed? If so, what is the intentional plan? Gary Thomas in Sacred Parenting says “We want God to use our family and marriage to tear apart our sins, otherwise, our sins tear apart our family and marriage.” It is our intentional choice. Discuss this choice.





Living loudly. Loving radically. Laughing uncontrollably.

AUGUST 15, 2017

35 Things I Know For Sure

WISDOM

By KRISTIN ADAMS

{In no particular order...}

1. The height of your joy is contingent upon the depth of your thankfulness.
2. Nothing will steal your joy quicker than comparing yourself to others.
3. God's ways > our ways.
4. Pursue your passion, not a paycheck.
5. Travel. Travel. Travel. You'll never regret one penny spent seeing the world.
6. Purpose to learn about other cultures, and find ways to interact with people who look different, think different and live differently than you.
7. Be quick to listen and slow to speak. (Still working on this; will probably ALWAYS be working on this)
8. "You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream." – C.S. Lewis
9. Think before you tweet. Stop before you Snap. Pause before you post. Your digital footprint matters.
10. Make it a priority to pursue and intimately know God – work your life and schedule around Him.
11. Love your neighbor as yourself.
12. Be wise with your money.
13. Our words create our worlds – so, choose them wisely.
14. Decisions determine your destiny, so make your plans, but allow God to order your steps.
15. If you're not bowing down to God, you're bowing down to something else.

16. "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven." – Ecclesiastes 3:1, The Bible
17. Laughter truly is the best medicine.
18. We were created on purpose, and for a purpose; by Love, and for love.
19. Trust and obey God – He knows your end from your beginning and what's best for you along the way.
20. Become an expert in praying for your spouse and children – no one will pray for them like you pray for them.
21. Love without expecting anything in return.
22. Be skilled at giving encouragement – especially to those in your household – an encouraging word is like spiritual oxygen helping others to function at a higher level.
23. Stop worrying - especially about what others may think.
24. Work like everything depends on you, pray like everything depends on God.
25. Don't be so hard on yourself.
26. Be careful with criticism.
27. Be quick to forgive. Your spirit, soul and body are not equipped to harbor unforgiveness.
28. Don't follow your feelings – feelings change and can straight up lie. Instead, follow the unchanging, redemptive truth of God's Word.
29. Be careful about what you continually see, hear and meditate on – because we ultimately become what we continually behold.
30. Waiting + patience are hard practices to keep, but necessary for our growth and refinement.
31. If Jesus is all you have, He is enough.
32. When your kids ask if they can play in the rain or dig in the mud, say yes. The experience and memory is worth far more than the time it takes to clean up the mess.
33. God is good.
34. You are loved.
35. Marriage and motherhood are all at once the hardest, the holiest and the happiest. (paraphrased from Ann Voskamp)

To My Porn-Watching Dad, From Your Daughter

Posted on December 12, 2014

Brian Orme

Dear Dad,

I want to let you know first of all that I love you and forgive you for what this has done in my life. I also wanted to let you know exactly what your porn use has done to my life. You may think that this effects only you, or even your and mom's relationships. But it has had a profound impact on me and all of my siblings as well.

I found your porn on the computer somewhere around the age of 12 or so, just when I was starting to become a young woman. First of all, it seemed very hypocritical to me that you were trying to teach me the value of what to let into my mind in terms of movies, yet here you were entertaining your mind with this junk on a regular basis. Your talks to me about being careful with what I watched meant virtually nothing.

Because of pornography, I was aware that mom was not the only woman you were looking at. I became acutely aware of your wandering eye when we were out and about. This taught me that all men have a wandering eye and can't be trusted. I learned to distrust and even dislike men for the way they perceived women in this way.

As far as modesty goes, you tried to talk with me about how my dress affects those around me and how I should value myself for what I am on the inside. Your actions however told me that I would only ever truly be beautiful and accepted if I looked like the women on magazine covers or in porn. Your talks with me meant nothing and in fact, just made me angry. As I grew older, I only had this message reinforced by the culture we live in. That beauty is something that can only be achieved if you look like "them". I also learned to trust you less and less as what you told me didn't line up with what you did. I wondered more and more if I would ever find a man who would accept me and love me for me and not just a pretty face. When I had friends over, I wondered how you perceived them. Did you see them as my friends, or did you see them as a pretty face in one of your fantasies? No girl should ever have to wonder that about the man who is supposed to be protecting her and other women in her life.

I did meet a man. One of the first things I asked him about was his struggle with pornography. I'm thankful to God that it is something that hasn't had a grip on his life. We still have had struggles because of the deep-rooted distrust in my heart for men. Yes, your porn watching has affected my relationship with my husband years later.

If I could tell you one thing, it would be this: Porn didn't just affect your life; it affected everyone around you in ways I don't think you can ever realize. It still affects me to this day as I realize the hold that it has on our society. I dread the day when I have to talk with my sweet little boy about pornography and its far-reaching greedy hands. When I tell him about how pornography, like most sins, affects far more than just us.

Like, I said, I have forgiven you. I am so thankful for the work that God has done in my life in this area. It is an area that I still struggle with from time to time, but I am thankful for God's grace and also my husband's. I do pray that you are past this and that the many men who struggle with this will have their eyes opened.

Love,

Your Daughter

EVALUATION



Becoming Your Best US
Marriage Conference

NAME (optional): _____

e-mail: _____

How old are you? 20s 30s 40s 50s 60s+

How many years have you been married? _____

How did you find out about BYBU Conference?

Friend Church Facebook Other _____

Are you in a small group? Yes No

Rate the health of your marriage before/after the conference?

Before: unhealthy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 healthy

After: unhealthy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 healthy

What was your favorite part(s) of the conference?

What would you change?

What topics or activities would you like to see discussed or offered at All In Marriage events, small groups, blogs, etc.?

Would you be willing to **get more information** about joining AIM to help every marriage at every stage thrive? Your marriage does not need to perfect – since NO marriage is!! We have many ways to serve – as a mentor couple, small group leader, prayer team, media/website/blog, childcare, event volunteer. If you would be interested, please fill out the below information and someone will contact you soon.

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

e-mail: _____

Area(s) of interest: _____

Thank you for your joining us for the Becoming Your Best US conference. We also thank you for your feedback as we look forward to serving your marriages in the future!



Prepare ~ Enrich ~ Crisis ~ Blended ~ First Responders
www.allinmarriage.com / www.facebook.com/AllInMarriage



Becoming Your Best US

Marriage Conference

AGENDA

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9TH 6:00 pm – 8:45 pm

6:00 Childcare Check-in begins in Children's Center

6:00 Registration, Music, Photo Booth, Desserts and Coffee!

6:45 Welcome and **Marriage as Discipleship**

7:15 Worship with Caleb and Lindsay Blanton (Hope Community Church)

7:45 **Session One: Time For Your Best US/Have Serious Fun**

Taking time for your US—it's one of those things you know you should do, you may even want to do, but there are just so many other important things that demand your time. But your marriage needs your attention too. Your US needs time for you to unplug. When you do, it gives your marriage something no one or nothing can take away.

8:45 Saturday Instructions & Dismiss

SATURDAY, February 10TH 8:15 am – 3:45 pm

8:15 Childcare Check-in begins in Children's Center

8:15 Doors Open with Music, Breakfast and Coffee!

8:55 Worship with Caleb and Lindsay Blanton (Hope Community Church)

9:25 **Session Two: Believe in Your Best US/Love God First**

In every relationship, there's a gap at some point between your expectations and your spouse's behavior. He always . . . she always . . . any time we need to go somewhere, he/she . . . And in the gap, we insert beliefs, judgments, absolutes. We assume the worst, or we can believe the best. The great news is that you can choose to believe the best about your US.

10:45 Break

11:00 Topical Breakouts - Pre-Marital & Newlywed / Young Family / Empty Nest / Blended / Sizzle

12:30 Lunch/Couple Project

1:00 **Session Three: Fight For Your Best US/Respect & Love**

In every marriage, conflict happens. Why? Because you are two different people with two different expectations, histories, personalities. So how to do you handle conflict? But you really can learn how to respond in a way that fights for your US, and doesn't just . . . fight

2:10 **Session Four: Grow Your Best US/Practice Your Promise**

In many marriages, our US needs to grow. Maybe one of us is mature, the other isn't. Both of us are immature. Both of us are growing. Instead of being stuck in what Ted Cunningham calls a "prolonged adolescence," we can grow to become the spouse our husband or wife needs us to be

3:15 Rose Ceremony

3:25 Wrap up, fill out Evaluations and dismiss

A prayer team is upstairs during the conference praying for each couple & family participating by name and for the special requests submitted to the prayer box at the i-Desk in the back of the room.

Thank you for joining us for our 2018 Marriage Conference. We hope to see you at our monthly date nights! If you need mentoring or to join a marriage connect group, please visit www.allinmarriage.com.