

Restored by Grace



A Christian Marriage Workbook

Restored by God's Grace: A Christian Marriage Workbook

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This workbook has been carefully created to provide biblical guidance and practical tools for facilitating meaningful conversations about marriage. While every effort has been made to ensure the content aligns with Scripture and sound theology, this workbook is not intended to serve as a definitive resource for interpreting Scripture or as a substitute for pastoral counsel.

Users are encouraged to:

- Speak directly with their pastor or spiritual leader regarding questions or concerns about their marriage.
- Consult the Bible, which is the inerrant and inspired Word of God, as the ultimate authority for life and faith.

The application of the materials in this workbook is at the discretion of the user. Port Adelaide Counselling Service does not assume responsibility for any decisions or outcomes resulting from the use of this workbook.

For further support or guidance, please reach out to a trusted pastor, biblical counsellor, or spiritual advisor.

Scripture Reference: *2 Timothy 3:16-17* — "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work."

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Introduction: Rediscovering God's Plan for Marriage

Key Scripture: *Ecclesiastes 4:12* — "Though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken."

Marriage is one of God's most profound gifts to humanity. It is a covenant relationship designed by God to reflect His love and faithfulness. In a world that often views marriage as a temporary arrangement based on personal happiness, Christian couples are called to a higher standard — to build their marriages on the foundation of God's Word and to reflect the gospel through their relationship.

This workbook, *Rekindled by God's Grace: A Christian Marriage Workbook*, is designed to guide couples through the biblical principles that form the foundation of a healthy, Christ-centred marriage. It combines theological insights, practical exercises, and reflective questions to help you grow closer to each other and to God.

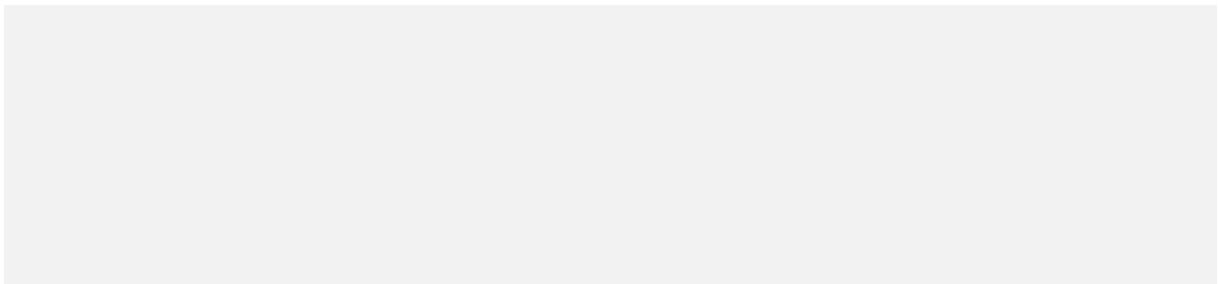
Why a Christ-Centred Marriage Matters

A Christ-centred marriage reflects the relationship between Christ and the church. In *Ephesians 5:25-33*, the Apostle Paul describes marriage as a living parable of the gospel. Just as Christ loves and sacrifices for His bride, the church, so husbands are called to love their wives sacrificially. Wives, in turn, are called to respect and support their husbands, reflecting the church's devotion to Christ.

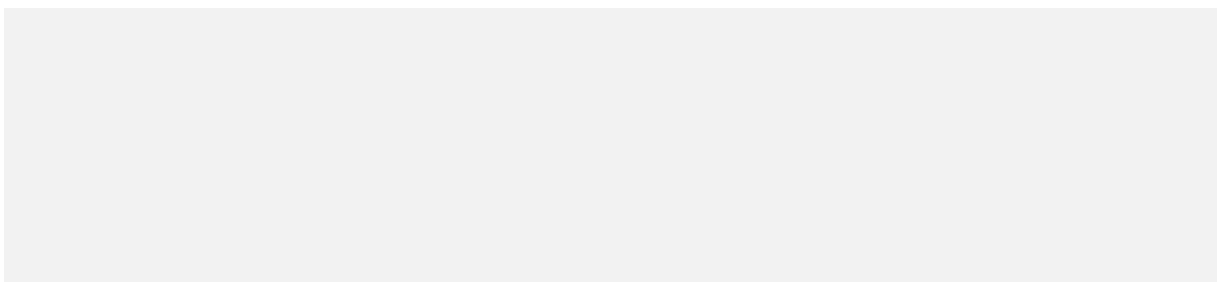
When marriage is rooted in this divine purpose, it transcends cultural definitions and becomes a powerful testimony to God's love and grace.

Reflection:

How does your current understanding of marriage align with God's design?



What areas of your marriage could better reflect Christ's love?



The Purpose of This Workbook

This workbook is divided into four parts, each addressing a critical aspect of marriage:

1. **Foundations of a Christ-Centred Marriage** — Understanding God’s design for marriage, the covenant commitment, and the purpose of marriage as a tool for sanctification and service.
2. **The Heart Issues in Marriage** — Addressing sin, conflict, communication, and forgiveness in a biblical way.
3. **Practical Tools for Growing Together** — Building spiritual intimacy, managing finances, and nurturing emotional and physical connection.
4. **Persevering in Marriage** — Facing trials together, parenting as a team, and leaving a lasting legacy of faith.

Each chapter includes key Scriptures, theological insights, practical exercises, and discussion prompts to help you apply what you learn. The goal is not just to impart knowledge but to foster transformation through God’s Word.

How to Use This Workbook

1. **Read and Reflect** — Begin each chapter by reading the key Scriptures and theological insights. Take time to reflect on how these truths apply to your marriage.
2. **Discuss and Engage** — Use the discussion prompts to talk with your spouse about the topics covered. Be honest, open, and gracious in your conversations.
3. **Apply and Pray** — Complete the practical exercises together, and end each session in prayer. Ask God to strengthen your bond and guide your marriage according to His will.

Practical Tip:

Set aside regular time each week to work through this workbook together. Whether it’s during a date night, after church on Sundays, or during a quiet evening at home, consistency is key.

A Journey of Grace and Growth

Marriage is a lifelong journey of grace and growth. You will face challenges, joys, sorrows, and triumphs. Through it all, God’s desire is for your marriage to be a reflection of His covenant love.

Remember, you are not alone on this journey. God is with you, guiding you through His Word and the work of the Holy Spirit. As *Ecclesiastes 4:12* reminds us, a marriage with God at the centre is strong and resilient — a threefold cord that is not easily broken.

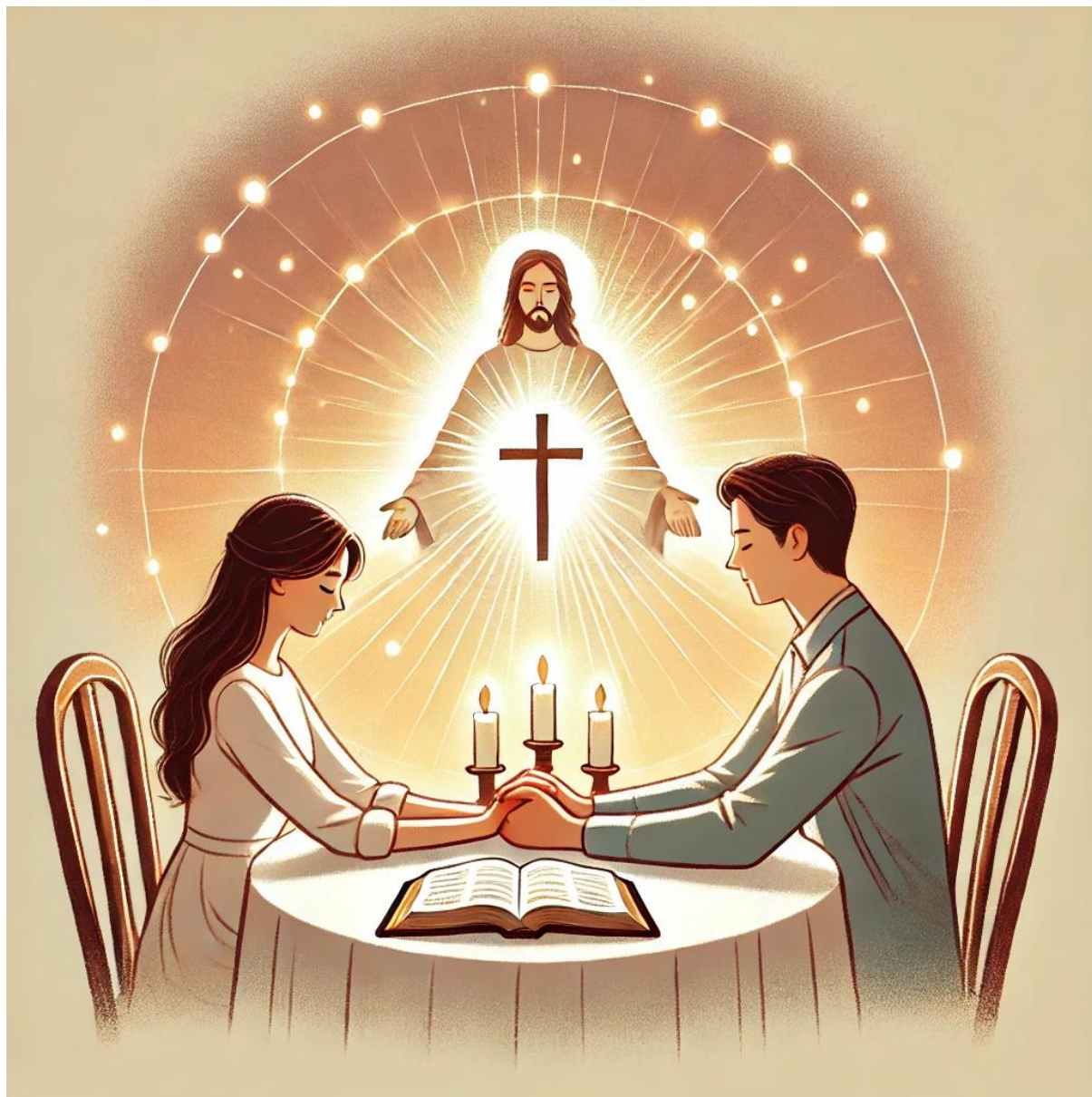
May this workbook be a tool that helps you rediscover the beauty of God’s plan for marriage and rekindle your love and commitment to each other.

Challenge:

As you begin this journey, commit to praying for your marriage daily. Ask God to open your hearts to His truth, strengthen your bond, and help you grow together in faith and love.

Let's begin this journey together, seeking to honour God in our marriages and build a legacy of faith for future generations.

Part 1: Foundations of a Christ-Centred Marriage



Chapter 1: God’s Design for Marriage

Key Scripture: *Genesis 2:24* — "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

Marriage is one of God’s most beautiful creations. From the very beginning, God designed marriage as a sacred covenant, reflecting His relationship with His people. Yet, in today’s culture, the meaning of marriage is often misunderstood. To have a thriving, God-honouring marriage, we must return to the Bible to understand its true design.

I. The Origin of Marriage in God’s Plan

Marriage was not invented by humans but established by God at creation. In *Genesis 2:18-24*, we see that God declared it was not good for man to be alone, so He created woman as a suitable helper. This act signifies that marriage is foundational to human flourishing.

A. Marriage is God’s Idea

- God created marriage before sin entered the world, which means it was part of His perfect plan.
- The union between Adam and Eve is a model of companionship, love, and unity.

Reflection:

How does knowing that marriage is God’s idea change your view of its importance?

B. The Difference Between Covenant and Contract

Contract	Covenant
A legal agreement based on mutual benefits and can be broken if one party fails to deliver.	A sacred bond before God that remains regardless of circumstances.

Marriage is not a 50/50 deal; it’s a 100/100 covenant where both partners commit fully to one another in love, reflecting God’s unwavering commitment to His people.

Exercise:

Discuss with your spouse how your marriage can better reflect a covenant relationship rather than a contractual one.

II. God's Design: The Roles of Husband and Wife

In Ephesians 5:22-33, the Apostle Paul outlines the roles of husbands and wives. These roles are not cultural constructs but divine instructions for a healthy marriage.

A. The Role of the Husband

- *Ephesians 5:25*: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her."

Husbands are called to:

1. **Lead spiritually** — The husband is the spiritual leader of the home, responsible for guiding his family in faith.
2. **Love sacrificially** — Just as Christ sacrificed Himself for the church, husbands must lay down their own desires for the well-being of their wives.
3. **Protect and provide** — This includes emotional, spiritual, and physical protection.

Personal Reflection:

Husbands, ask yourself, "Am I leading my family closer to Christ?"
If not, consider how you can start.

B. The Role of the Wife

- *Ephesians 5:22-24*: "Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord."

Submission does not imply inferiority but a willingness to respect and support the husband's leadership. It reflects the church's relationship to Christ.

Wives are called to:

1. **Respect their husbands** — Respect is a key way wives demonstrate love.
2. **Support their husbands' leadership** — This includes encouraging him in his spiritual responsibilities.

Clarification: Biblical submission is mutual.
Ephesians 5:21 reminds us to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Personal Reflection:

Wives, reflect on ways you can show respect and encouragement to your husband.

III. The Purpose of Marriage: Reflecting God’s Glory

Marriage is not just about companionship or procreation. It is a profound image of Christ’s relationship with His church.

A. Marriage as a Reflection of Christ and the Church

- *Ephesians 5:31-32*: “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”

The selfless love and commitment in marriage point to the gospel. When husbands and wives love each other sacrificially, they show the world a picture of Christ’s love for His people.

Discussion Prompt:

How does your marriage reflect the gospel to those around you?

B. Companionship and Oneness

- *Genesis 2:18*: “It is not good that the man should be alone.”

God created marriage to meet the human need for companionship. This companionship leads to a “one flesh” union that encompasses emotional, spiritual, and physical intimacy.

Application:

Plan a weekly time to pray together and discuss your spiritual growth as a couple.

IV. The Fall and Its Impact on Marriage

Sin disrupted God's perfect design for marriage. Genesis 3:16-19 reveals that the fall introduced conflict, selfishness, and brokenness into the marital relationship.

A. Sin's Effect on Marital Roles

- Husbands may neglect their leadership or abuse their authority.
- Wives may resist submission or try to dominate.

This conflict can only be resolved through Christ's redeeming work.

B. The Need for Redemption in Marriage

- *Colossians 3:13*: "Bear with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgive each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive."

Through Christ, we can overcome the effects of sin in our marriage. Redemption leads to restoration, healing, and renewed commitment.

Practical Tip:

Make forgiveness a daily practice in your marriage.

V. Practical Applications and Exercises

A. Reflection Questions

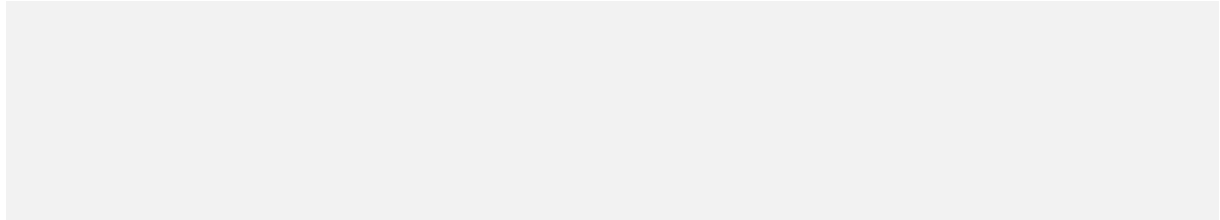
1. How does your view of marriage align with God's design?

2. In what ways can you grow in reflecting Christ's love in your marriage?

B. Couple Discussion Exercise

Topic: What Does Covenant Love Look Like in Our Marriage?

- Share examples of how you have shown unconditional love.
- Identify areas where you need to grow in grace and forgiveness.



C. Prayer Exercise

Pray together, asking God to:

- Align your marriage with His design.
- Help you fulfil your God-given roles.
- Transform your hearts to reflect Christ's love.

VI. Conclusion: Embracing God's Design for Marriage

God's design for marriage is a gift that brings joy, purpose, and spiritual growth. By following His blueprint, couples can experience a thriving, Christ-centred marriage that reflects His glory to the world.

Challenge:

Make a commitment today to pursue God's vision for your marriage. Focus on loving your spouse with grace, humility, and a heart transformed by the gospel.

Chapter 2: The Covenant Commitment

Key Scripture: *Malachi 2:14-16* — "Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant."

A biblical marriage is more than a relationship; it is a covenantal commitment before God. Understanding the nature of this covenant helps couples embrace the permanence and sacredness of marriage, even through challenges and trials.

I. What Is a Covenant?

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Bible describes a covenant as a sacred and solemn agreement established by God with His people. Among these, marriage stands out as one of the most profound covenants, serving as a reflection of God's steadfast and unbreakable relationship with His people.

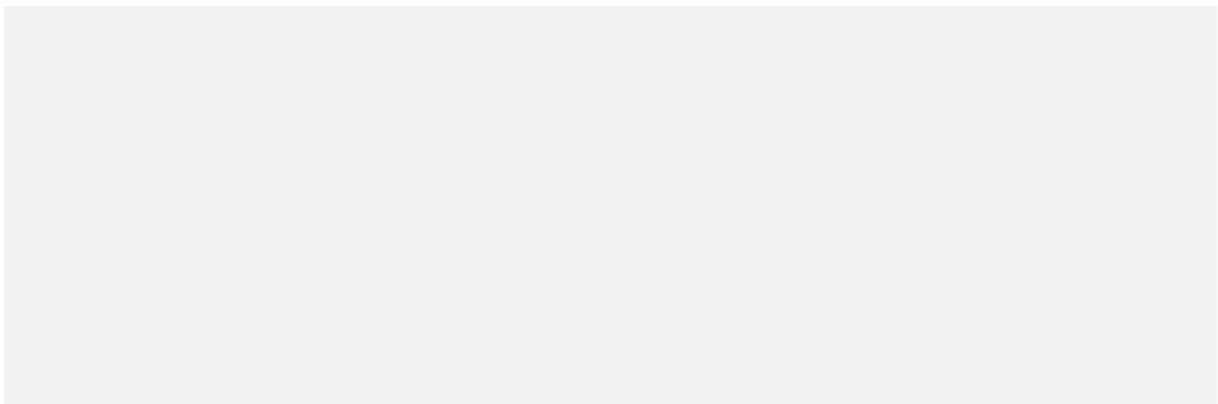
A. Covenant vs. Contract

- A **contract** is conditional and can be broken when one party fails to meet expectations.
- A **covenant** is an unconditional commitment based on promises before God.

Example: God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 15) was a one-sided promise that God would remain faithful, regardless of human failure.

Reflection:

How does viewing marriage as a covenant change your perspective on its permanence?



B. The Marriage Covenant

- *Proverbs 2:17*: "Who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God."

Marriage is a sacred bond that includes both human vows and divine witness. Breaking this covenant grieves God (Malachi 2:14).

Discussion Prompt:

Discuss with your spouse how understanding marriage as a covenant influences your commitment.

II. The Permanence of the Marriage Covenant

The Bible teaches that marriage is a lifelong commitment. Jesus affirms this in *Matthew 19:6*: "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

A. God's Intention for Marriage

- Marriage was designed to be permanent from the beginning (Genesis 2:24).
- Divorce was never part of God's original plan.

Practical Tip:

When facing challenges, remind yourselves that your commitment is not just to each other, but to God.

B. The Covenant and Forgiveness

- Forgiveness is essential in maintaining the marriage covenant.
- *Ephesians 4:32*: "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you."

Exercise:

Share with your spouse an area where you need to offer or seek forgiveness.

III. Upholding the Covenant in Difficult Times

Every marriage faces challenges. It is during these times that the covenant commitment is most crucial. Unlike worldly commitments, the biblical covenant of marriage mirrors God's covenant with His people — a bond grounded in His unchanging faithfulness. This covenant relationship is not sustained by human effort alone but by the work of God through Christ.

A. Trusting God's Faithfulness

1. God as the Covenant Keeper

- *2 Timothy 2:13*: "If we are faithless, He remains faithful—for He cannot deny Himself."
- In Reformed theology, the concept of God's covenant is central. God's covenant faithfulness is not dependent on our ability to remain faithful but on His sovereign will and unchanging character. He upholds both sides of the covenant through Christ's perfect obedience and sacrifice.
- Just as God fulfills His covenant promises to His people, we are called to reflect this same steadfast commitment in marriage. Even when one spouse falters, the marriage covenant is sustained by God's grace.

Reflection:

How does understanding God's faithfulness encourage you to remain steadfast in your covenant, even in difficult seasons?

2. Christ's Role in the Covenant

- *Romans 5:19*: "For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous."
- Through Christ, God fulfills both sides of the covenant. As sinners, we could never uphold our part of the covenant perfectly, but Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. This means that Christ's perfect obedience is credited to believers, enabling us to stand secure in God's covenant.
- In marriage, this truth reminds us that we do not rely on our own strength to uphold our commitments. Instead, we rely on the transforming power of the gospel to extend grace, forgiveness, and love to our spouse.

Application:

When facing marital struggles, meditate on Christ's obedience and the security it provides in God's covenant. Pray for strength to reflect His grace and faithfulness in your relationship.

3. God's Grace as the Sustaining Force

- *2 Corinthians 12:9*: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness."
- Reformed theology teaches that sanctification is a work of God's grace in the life of a believer. This grace not only redeems us but also sustains us in difficult times. God equips us to remain faithful in our marriages, even when we feel weak or inadequate.
- Trusting in God's grace involves daily surrender — acknowledging our dependence on Him and seeking His help to love and serve our spouse selflessly.

Practical Tip:

In moments of difficulty, pray together as a couple, asking God to strengthen your covenant and remind you of His sustaining grace.

B. Living Out the Covenant Through Christ

1. Extending Forgiveness and Grace

- As recipients of God's unmerited grace, we are called to extend grace to our spouse. This means forgiving as we have been forgiven (*Colossians 3:13*) and seeking reconciliation even in the face of hurt or betrayal.

- The gospel transforms how we respond to challenges in marriage. Instead of retaliating or withdrawing, we are empowered to love sacrificially and pursue unity.

Discussion Prompt:

How does reflecting on God’s grace change the way you approach conflict in your marriage?

2. Relying on the Holy Spirit

- The Holy Spirit works in us to produce the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). These fruits are essential for upholding the marriage covenant.
- Sanctification in marriage is a lifelong process. The Spirit enables us to grow in Christlikeness, helping us fulfill our covenant commitments with humility and perseverance.

Exercise:

Commit to praying daily for the fruit of the Spirit to be evident in your marriage. Identify one specific area where you need God’s help to reflect Christ’s character.

C. Encouragement for Difficult Seasons

1. Remembering the Covenant’s Purpose

- The ultimate purpose of the marriage covenant is to glorify God and reflect His relationship with His people. This perspective shifts our focus from personal happiness to God’s glory.
- *Malachi 2:14*: "She is your companion and your wife by covenant." This reminds us that marriage is a sacred bond, designed to reflect God’s steadfast love and faithfulness.

2. Clinging to God's Promises

- In times of difficulty, lean on God's promises for strength and hope. Remember that He is with you, working all things for good (Romans 8:28) and completing the work He began in you (Philippians 1:6).
- Trust that God is using your trials to sanctify you and deepen your dependence on Him.

Challenge:

This week, take time to write down one way God has been faithful in your marriage. Share it with your spouse as a reminder of His goodness and grace.

By understanding God's covenant faithfulness and relying on His grace, you can uphold your marriage covenant even in the most challenging seasons. Reflecting Christ's love and relying on the Holy Spirit, your marriage becomes a testimony of God's unchanging promises and transformative power.

IV. Practical Applications and Exercises

A. Reflection Questions

1. How do you view your marriage covenant in light of God's faithfulness?

2. In what ways can you strengthen your commitment?

B. Couple Discussion Exercise

Topic: How Can We Better Honour Our Marriage Covenant?

- Share specific actions you can take to uphold your covenant.

C. Prayer Exercise

Pray together, thanking God for His covenant with you and asking for His strength to honour your marriage vows.

V. Conclusion: Embracing the Covenant Commitment

Marriage is a reflection of God's unwavering covenant with His people. By understanding the sacredness of this commitment, couples can face challenges with hope, knowing that their marriage is grounded in God's unchanging promises.

Challenge:

Renew your commitment to your spouse and to God, focusing on love, forgiveness, and faithfulness.

Chapter 3: The Purpose of Marriage: Sanctification and Service

Key Scripture: *Romans 8:29* — "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers."

Marriage is about more than companionship, romance, or raising a family. According to Scripture, God designed marriage as a means of **sanctification** — the process by which believers are made holy and conformed to the image of Christ. Additionally, marriage is an avenue for **service**, where spouses serve each other and the world around them, reflecting God's glory in their relationship.

Let's explore how marriage serves as a tool for sanctification and a platform for selfless service.

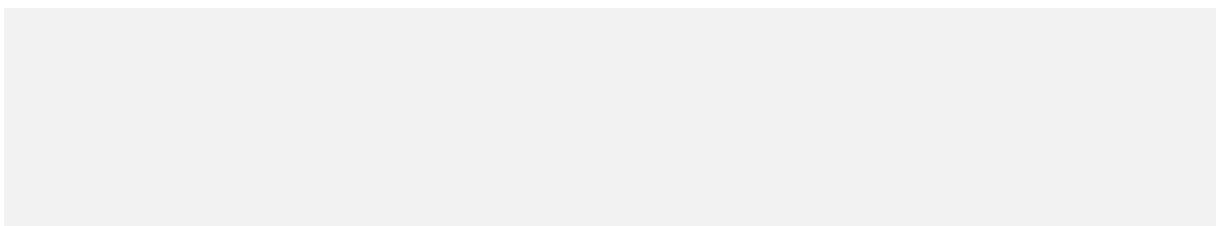
I. Marriage as a Tool for Sanctification

A. God's Purpose for Sanctification in Marriage

- Sanctification is the process of becoming more like Christ (*Romans 8:29*).
- Marriage provides unique opportunities to confront sin and grow in holiness.
- As two sinners come together in a lifelong covenant, God uses the relationship to reveal selfishness, pride, and other sinful tendencies, leading to repentance and spiritual growth.

Reflection:

How has your marriage exposed areas in your heart that need God's transforming grace?



B. The Role of Trials and Conflict

- *James 1:2-4* reminds us to "count it all joy" when facing trials because they produce perseverance and maturity.
- In marriage, conflicts, disappointments, and misunderstandings are part of God's sanctifying work.
- Rather than seeing challenges as reasons to give up, view them as opportunities to grow in grace.