

# MARRIAGE RESTART

## Life Group Leaders Guide

### Directions

This packet contains the background information, series information, and weekly curriculum you will need to lead a life group during our *Marriage Restart* series. Everything on this page is to help you stay connected to the series as a whole. Behind this page is the individual curriculum to help you point people to Jesus. The *Purpose* and *Move* sections of the curriculum are for the leader to read or paraphrase to the group. The *Notes and Commentary* section is for the leader to get background information and go deeper into the passages before leading the life group. The curriculum was designed with your freedom in mind. Read through the curriculum and decide what will work best for your group. SOAP the passages with the group, use only certain questions, write your own questions, or use the curriculum verbatim. As the leader, you know what will point your people to Jesus.

### Series Overview

Whether you've been married for fifty years or five months, your marriage can get better but it takes work. It takes regular seasons of reevaluation and refreshment. Marriage Restart is a time to lay a fresh foundation to revitalize and strengthen your marriage. For people that are not yet married this a golden opportunity to learn the principles of how to build a strong foundation for marriage. To help all of our people to restart well, there will be a marriage conference and parents night out during the series to give couples the opportunity to put what they are learning into practice.

### Life Group Overview

During the *Marriage Restart* series our life group curriculum will generally cover the same topic that was covered from stage but using a different passage or set of passages. Each curriculum will begin with an unpacking of the previous Sunday's service to help the leader open up the topic for the study and also see how people responded to the Sunday teaching.

### Marriage Restart Series Schedule

Week	Sermon Date	Topic of sermon	Topic of life group
Week 1	2/4	New Language - Philippians 2:3-5	Authentic Communication - Various verses
Week 2	2/11	New Expectation - Ephesians 5:25-27	Forgiveness/Reconciliation - Ephesians 4:26-32
Week 3	2/18	New Habits - Ecclesiastes 4:9-12	Oneness - Genesis 2:18-25
Week 4	2/25	New Commitment - Matthew 19:1-10	New Kind of Love - 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

## The Point Church Life Group Curriculum

# Marriage Restart - Week 2 - Forgiveness and Reconciliation

## Purpose of Study

What we saw from stage this Sunday is that many of us brought impossible expectations into marriage. Expectations for marriage that are different than what God intended us to have. Marriage was never designed to be our primary road to happiness and fulfillment, instead it is another avenue to worship God and make Him known. Often our wrong expectations allow us to become frustrated and embittered with our spouse. This frustration can hold us back from the marriage Christ desires for us. Before we can truly form and live out of our new expectations for marriage, it is necessary for us to forgive and fight for reconciliation in the areas we have fallen short as a spouse. This curriculum was designed to help our people do that.

### IMPORTANT NOTE TO THE LEADER

This sermon series and life group curriculum were designed to unpack important characteristics of marriage. That topic can feel isolating to someone who is single (whether they plan on being single for life or are in a season of singleness). For a person hoping to get married, there is no better time to learn these truths than before marriage. For a person who feels called to singleness, our hope is that these passages will illuminate the beauty of their relationship with Jesus. While we cannot write curriculum to perfectly fit the demographic of every life group, we want to remind you to alter these studies on marriage to best benefit the demographic of your life group.

## Flow of Study

**Icebreaker:** What is one unreasonable expectation you brought into your marriage or you might have for a future marriage?

**Move #1:** Since the sermon series and life groups are covering similar topics, it might be a good idea (both for content and time) to begin the discussion with some unpacking questions from this Sunday's sermon.

1. Did anything stand out to you from the message this weekend?
2. Is there anything from the message this weekend that you want to apply?
3. Our key passages from this weekend were John 16:33 and 1 John 1:8 (posted below). Why do you think these verses are important for our relationships?

<sup>33</sup> "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

<sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**Move #2:** We will begin this study by looking at some directions that Paul gives the church in Ephesus. In the book of Ephesians, Paul spends the first few chapters explaining who Jesus is and what He has done for us. He then spends a few chapters showing how this should affect the different relationships in our life (church,

marriage, family, work, etc.). Much of Paul's teaching on marriage will be addressed at other points in this series so this study will focus on what he shares with the church in general...but of course...if it applies to how you should treat your neighbor it definitely also applies to how you should treat your spouse.

### Read Ephesians 4:25-32 (NIV)

<sup>25</sup> Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor (YOUR SPOUSE), for we are all members of one body. <sup>26</sup> "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, <sup>27</sup> and do not give the devil a foothold. <sup>28</sup> Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. <sup>29</sup> Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen (YOUR SPOUSE). <sup>30</sup> And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. <sup>31</sup> Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another (YOUR SPOUSE), forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

1. To help these verses come alive to the married couples. Read back through them by replacing "your spouse" in any spot that refers to one another.
  - a. **Note to the leader:** This is done for you above to make your life easy. Because of that, you should probably make the point and be the person to reread it to the group.
2. In verse 25. Do you find it interesting that Paul doesn't just say "put off falsehood." Instead he commands that we fill the air with truth. In what ways is this different than just not lying?
3. In marriage, why is it so important for both partners to both keep from lying and also be truthful to each other?
  - a. **For the leader to use based on Question #3:** AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) has a saying "There is no addiction without lies, no recovery without truth." In the program they promote not just honesty, but what they call "Rigorous Honesty." Rigorous honesty means that we don't just tell enough of the truth to get by. We don't tell half truths. We don't omit truth when we know it is absent. Rather we tell the full and complete truth even if there may be consequences.
  - b. **For the leader to use based on Question #3:** As you will see hear more about at our one day **Restart Conference**, true intimacy is built on knowing and trusting one another. We cannot have true intimacy with our spouse as long as we are lying or telling half truths about who we are, what we are doing and how we feel.
4. Next Paul turns his attention to anger. However, he addresses anger by making clear that not all anger is sin, however, it can easily become sin if not dealt with appropriately. What do you think is the difference between anger and anger becomes sinful?
5. Paul gives clear instructions to "not let the sun go down while you are still angry." In some cases this is not entirely possible but the principle is clear. Deal with anger ASAP. How have you seen unresolved anger damage marriage relationships?
6. Have you uncovered any helpful tools to deal with anger?

7. Reread verse 29. This is a fantastic memory verse for those of us who struggles with speaking without a filter. What would a marriage look like if both partners only used words that built up their spouse instead of tearing them down?
  - a. **For the leader to use based on Question #7:** It is important to build your spouse up all the time, but it is absolutely critical in public. Make it a rule to never, ever, ever criticise your spouse in front of others! You should always be your spouse's biggest public advocate.
8. In verse 31 Paul commands a few more actions for Christians. Notice how Paul does not say "get better at these things" but instead remove them completely from your life. How does one "get rid" of bitterness, rage, anger, slander?
9. How have you seen your bitterness, rage, anger, or slander harm your marriage or another relationship?

**Move #3:** Much of the passage we studied was centered around anger and how we use our words. For many marriages, these are areas have caused lasting hurt to their spouse. But there is hope. At the end of the passage, Paul reveals the way to not let these issues rot your marriage from the inside out. **Forgiveness!**

### Read Ephesians 4:32 (NIV)

<sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

1. Paul does not just say "forgive people" instead he adds in "just as God has forgiven you." How does understanding God's forgiveness of us motivate our forgiveness of others?
2. If God has forgiven your many, many, many sins and faults is there any reason for us not to forgive our spouses?
3. Often, forgiveness can make the forgiven spouse feel a new degree of love and intimacy with their mate. As we will discuss more at the RESTART CONFERENCE when you are forgiven it increases feelings of intimacy because your spouse has chosen to love you in spite of knowing your faults. How have you experienced this in your marriage?
4. What do you think could be some helpful actions steps for a spouse who thinks they need to forgive the other?
5. Forgiveness in a marriage is not just something you should do...it is something your marriage won't survive without. What will a lack of forgiveness inside a marriage lead to?

**Next Steps:** The following are things you could challenge your members to do in order to take what you studied in this curriculum farther.

1. Set a time this week to talk using the Pray-Talk-Forgive-Pray model.
  - a. Pray together beforehand.
  - b. Share with one another areas of bitterness or unforgiveness with one another while being careful to be "kind and compassionate to one another" and with the goal of building up your marriage. about frustrations and bitterness that each spouse is experiencing using Ephesians 4:29 as the goal for every word spoken during this conversation.

- c. Forgive one another from the heart.
- d. Pray and ask God to protect the unity of your relationship and not allow Satan have the foothold of bitterness or unforgiveness.

**Prayer:** End your study with a time of prayer where people can share prayer requests and be prayed for before they leave. If possible, please steer some prayer towards what your group talked about during this study.

## Notes and Commentary

The following are pieces of commentary, facts, and links based on the passages of this study in order. Use them to help supplement your group time or for your personal preparation.

- **On grieving the Holy Spirit (v. 30):** Given the biblical doctrine of the Trinity, we know that each person of the triune Godhead delights in that which the other persons are doing. There is a mutual indwelling (perichoresis) among the persons of the Godhead — the Father in the Son and the Spirit; the Son in the Father and the Spirit; and the Spirit in the Father and the Son. To put on Christ, then, is to put on the Father and the Spirit as well, and living out the new life in Christ according to the pattern He gives us pleases our triune Creator. On the other hand, violating the standards given to the disciples of Jesus not only grieves the Son of God but also the Father and the Spirit. (Ligonier Ministries)
- **On grieving the Holy Spirit (v. 30):** The apostle Paul makes this very point in Ephesians 4:30 when he warns us not to “grieve the Holy Spirit of God.” When we sin, the Holy Spirit experiences grief in a manner appropriate to His deity. He cannot stand the presence of sin and hates it when we, His dwelling place, entertain transgression (Hab. 1:13). Yet even though the reality of His grief proves the Spirit’s personhood, His grief is not exactly the same as ours. The Spirit cannot be paralyzed by grief, and His grief is always holy, undefiled by sin, ungodly jealousy, and all the other flaws that often attend our sorrow. His grief, ultimately, is a mystery. John Calvin comments, “No language can adequately express this solemn truth, that the Holy Spirit rejoices and is glad on our account, when we are obedient to him in all things, and neither think nor speak anything, but what is pure and holy; and, on the other hand, is grieved when we admit anything into our minds that is unworthy of our calling.” (Ligonier Ministries)
- **On grieving the Holy Spirit (v. 30):** God’s Spirit is especially sensitive to sin because of His close relationship with us, those who have been saved and defined as the Lord’s holy people (1 Peter 1:13–16). The Spirit seals us “for the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30; see 1:13–14) — He dwells within us when we trust in Christ Jesus, marking us as the people of God who will be spared divine wrath on judgment day. By the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, we are increasingly conformed to our Savior’s image, and a return to a pattern of life wholly dominated by sin is impossible for all those whom the Spirit has sealed (Rom. 8:29–30). Still, even Christians may fall into significant sin, which grieves the Spirit, introducing a distance between Him and us. (Ligonier Ministries)
- **On Ephesians 4:26-32:** “In your anger do not sin” (v. 26) is a quotation from Psalm 4:4, which if rendered literally is, “Be angry and do not sin.” Most commentators today accept that the first imperative is concessive or conditional: “Although [or if] you get angry, do not sin.” This is the reasoning behind the NIV Some, however, still view this as a double command, placing a moral obligation on believers to be angry if the occasion requires but not to sin in that anger. This may be reading too much into the verse since Paul’s concern is the prevention of sin, not the obligation of anger. This verse may

presuppose the possibility of anger without sin, but its emphasis is not on “righteous anger.” Rather, it is on preventing anger from causing sin. The danger of anger is evident in its being used as a beachhead for the devil, and verse 31 excludes all bitterness, wrath, and anger. Clearly anger does not fit well with the new being. (Snodgrass)

- **On Ephesians 4:26-32:** That the sun is not to go down on our anger is a way of saying that anger must not endure. It must be dealt with quickly and then set aside. The word “foothold” in verse 27 is literally “place.” That is, we must not give the devil room in our lives to operate. Anger is one place of inroad for him, a Trojan horse for his attack.<sup>7</sup> In other words, anger usually leads to other sins. (Snodgrass)
- **On Ephesians 4:26-32:** The word “unwholesome” in verse 29 is used of spoiled fish or rotten fruit, but it is also used to describe stones that crumble. The metaphorical meaning connotes “foul” or “bad.” Although obscene speech may be in mind (see 5:4), the concern for “building up” later in the verse suggests “destructive” language. “Building up” reminds the reader of Paul’s concern in 4:16 to build up the body. With “may benefit” the NIV loses another connection with previous sections. Literally the text is, “that it may give grace to the hearers,” which links especially with the grace given to each person for the benefit of the church (4:7). We receive grace from God for salvation (chaps. 1–2) and ministry (chaps. 3–4) so that we may extend God’s grace to others. (Snodgrass)