

# 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 4 - New Kind of Love

## Purpose of Study

In this study we will see what Jesus had in mind for loving others (most importantly our spouse). We will do that by reading through a passage that many people are familiar with but we will quickly learn that recognizing a passage and putting it into practice are two different things. For many people, the *Marriage Restart* series has been simply that, a way for them to restart their marriage. For those people specifically, this passage will give a blueprint to what loving your spouse (and anyone else in this world) is supposed to look like.

### 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:** When is a time in your life when you experienced unconditional love?

**Move #1:** Since the sermon series and life groups are covering mostly the same 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. This weekend we focused on the difference between viewing marriage as a contract vs. covenant. A contract is something you try to figure out a way to get out of. However, a covenant is something you try to figure out a way to stay in. A contractual love is conditional. However, a covenant love is unconditional.
2. Did anything stand out to you from the message this weekend?
3. Is there anything from the message this weekend that you want to apply?

**Move #2:** In this study we will be looking through a famous passage on love that makes its way into most marriage sermons. While this passage is commonly heard, it is hard to commonly practice. Today we will be looking at what it looks like to unconditionally love another person!

**Background on 1 Corinthians 13:** In this passage, the Apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthian church. The Corinthians were seeing that people in their church had specific gifts and abilities, however, they were using their gifts selfishly instead of unselfishly. They were working for their good instead of the good of others. Paul ends this dialogue and introduces what has become known as the love chapter by saying "*And yet I will show you the most excellent way* (1 Corinthians 12:31b [NIV])."

### Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. <sup>2</sup> If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. <sup>3</sup> If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

1. In verses 1-3, Paul is restating the gifts he was explaining in the previous chapter but does so to prove that all gifts, no matter how impressive, mean nothing without love behind them. How have you found this to be true?
2. What would it look like to do the right behaviors in marriage without love?

**Move #2:** What we will see in the next set of verses, Paul teaches us that love is not a feeling, but a continual choice.

### Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV)

<sup>4</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. <sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. <sup>6</sup> Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. <sup>7</sup> It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <sup>8</sup> Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.

1. Here we see an incredible definition of love illustrated with easy to understand actions. Which one of these actions really stands out to you as being important in a successful marriage?
  - a. **Note to the leader:** Paul is not trying to elevate one trait over the other but by asking this question you could allow the spouses in the group to hear what their partner views as important...which is always helpful.
2. Notice how all of these statements are action steps...not feelings. In what ways is that a different kind of love than our culture speaks of?
3. Which one of these “action steps” do you struggle with the most?
4. If married, which of these “action steps” is your spouse particularly good at?
5. Why is understanding the difference between love as a feeling and love as an action so important in a marriage?
6. How is defining love as a feeling dangerous in marriage?
  - a. **Answer:** How many of you have heard the classic breakup line “I love you, but I’m not in love with you.” Many marriages have flushed because feeling of love disappeared for a season.
  - b. **Answer:** We are not always in control of our feelings but we are always in control of our actions. If we define our marriage on how you feel, then you cannot control if you love your spouse or not.
7. How does defining love as a choice give you confidence in marriage?

- a. **Answer:** Defining love as a choice makes loving your spouse always a possibility despite how you feel at the moment.
8. How can acting as if love is a choice to unconditionally love your spouse, actually help loving feelings to return when they have been absent for a period of time?
    - a. **Answer:** As we described in our week 1 message about the 5 love languages. When you begin giving love without condition to your spouse, it begins to fill up their “love tank” which in turn causes the other person to begin to “feel” loving towards you and vice versa. Withholding loving actions when feelings are absent, causing relationships to go into a death spiral. However, giving loving actions when feelings are absent, actually reverses than cycle and feeling begin to return over time.
  9. Notice how this passage says nothing about reciprocation of love. In fact, it goes so far as to say love is not self-seeking. Why is this so important to know inside a marriage?
    - a. **Answer:** It means that reciprocation of love is never a precondition for giving love. It means that it is actually possible to love an unloving spouse! As a Christian we know that we are only able to love without reciprocation for long periods of time if we are being filled up with the love of Jesus as our primary source.

**Move #3:** In our last move let’s unpack some of what we have uncovered tonight and make it a little more personal.

1. Was there anything from tonight that you need to apply to your life or marriage?
2. What would you tell a person who was convicted by this study because they do not amount up to how Paul describes love? What should their next steps be?
3. What are some next steps that a couple could do to strengthen their marriage based on the passage we studied tonight?
4. If you are currently single, how are you doing loving unconditionally in your other relationships?

**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. Plan a time for this week to reread and discuss this passage with your spouse with respect to your own marriage. Be honest and discuss possible areas for improvement. Verbally commit to loving each other without condition.
2. If you realize you have not been living up to this in your marriage, consider taking part in a **Vow Renewal Ceremony** at The Point Church where you reaffirm to love one another: You agree “to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and health, until death do us part.”

**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 1 Corinthians 13:1-8:** If it is more excellent than even the greater gifts, then love itself cannot be a spiritual gift. Rather it represents the cardinal Christian virtue, the first on the list of the “fruit” of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22), which must be present with all the gifts if they are to be used in ways that will please God and have eternal value. (Blomberg)
- **On 1 Corinthians 13:1-8:** To say that certain gifts benefit the people exercising them only when they do so in love does not mean that we wait to use them until we can do so flawlessly! Communicating messages to God’s people instructs them even if the manner in which that knowledge is imparted is less than perfect. Giving our goods to the needy certainly helps them regardless of our attitude! But this chapter presents the ideal for which we should always strive, even as we are painfully aware of how far we still have to go to measure up. (Blomberg)
- **On 1 Corinthians 13:1-8:** It has often been observed that one could substitute the word “Jesus” for “love” throughout verses 4–7. Indeed, as the only sinless person in human history, he provides the perfect model for helping us to understand what patience, kindness, lack of envy, and so on, are. In so doing, we also guard against misinterpreting these attributes. If Jesus was all-loving, but could clear the temple in righteous indignation (Mark 11:15–18) or unleash a torrential invective against the hypocrisy of the conservative religious leaders of his day (Matt. 23), then our concept of love must leave room for similar actions. (Blomberg)
- **On 1 Corinthians 13:1-8:** The need for genuine, Christ-like love remains as great today as ever. Yet one of our greatest problems is defining love. Popular culture—in literature, music, advertising, and the visual arts—uses the word to mean just about everything except what the Bible means by it. So even Christians are easily misled into thinking love is primarily a feeling, something you fall in or out of. We equate it with lust or sexual intercourse itself, speaking of one’s “lover” (unless one is properly married, when the term actually would be appropriate) or of “making love.” But in this chapter, as throughout Scripture, love is first of all an action, an unconditional commitment, a promise that is never broken. (Blomberg)
- **On 1 Corinthians 13:1-8:** Love is primary for him [Paul] because it has already been given concrete expression in the coming of Jesus Christ to die for the sins of the world. Love is not an idea for Paul, not even a “motivating factor” for behavior. It is behavior. To love is to act; anything short of action is not love at all. (Fee)
- **On 1 Corinthians 13:1-8:** It is often pointed out that in this paragraph Paul seems best to capture the life and ministry of Jesus. So much so that one could substitute his name for the noun “love” and thereby describe love in a more personal way. After doing so, however, one does not want to miss Paul’s point, which ultimately is description for the purpose of exhortation. Perhaps that point could best be captured by putting one’s own name in place of the noun “love,” and not neglecting thereafter to find a proper place for repentance and forgiveness. (Fee)