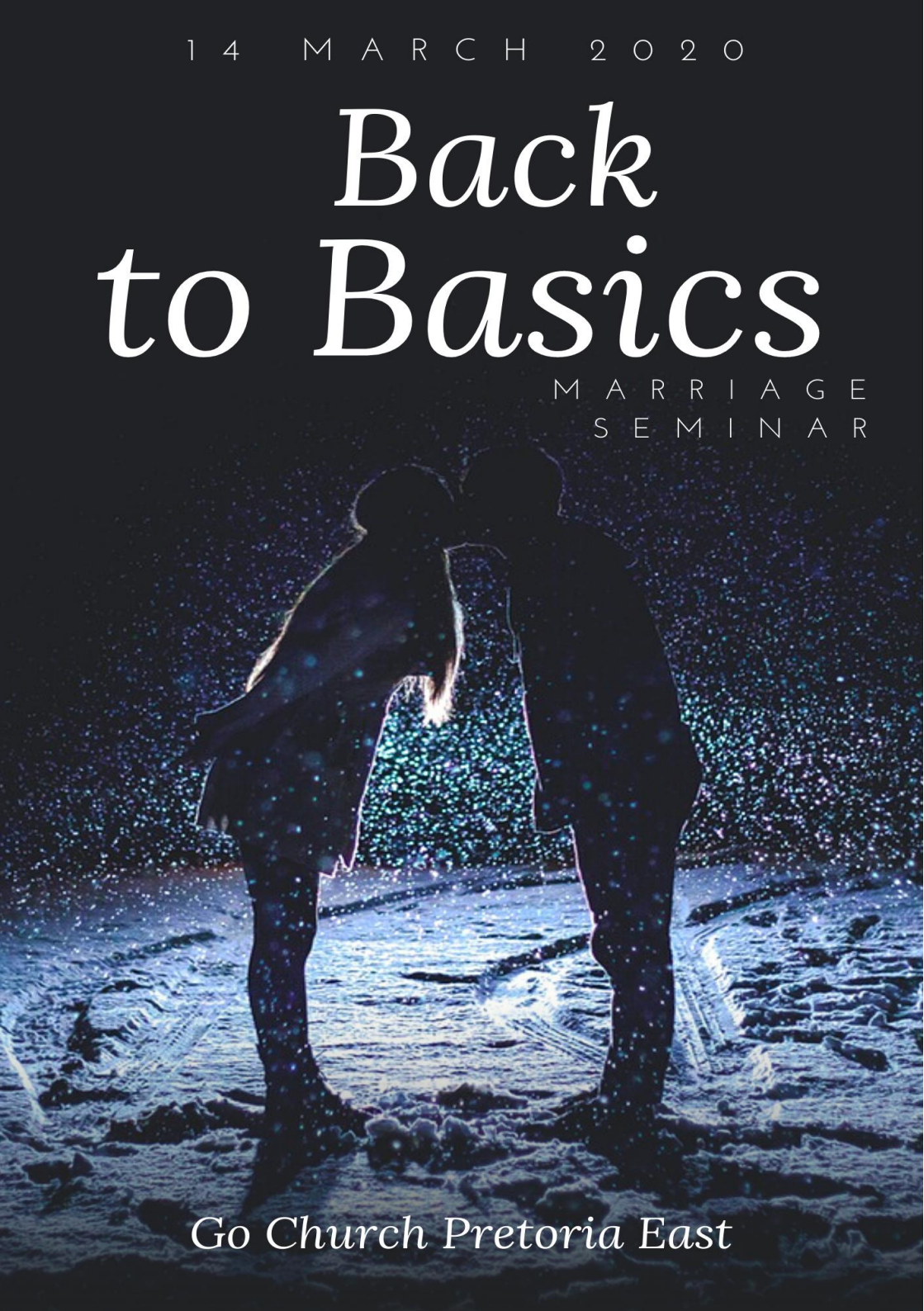


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Back to Basics

M A R R I A G E
S E M I N A R

A romantic scene of a couple in silhouette on a beach at night. They are standing close together, looking out at the ocean. The sky is dark and filled with many small, bright stars or lights, creating a magical atmosphere. The beach is sandy and reflects some of the light from the sky.

Go Church Pretoria East

Welcome to the Back to Basics Marriage Seminar, well done for taking time to invest in your marriage. We look after our cars by taking them to periodic car services, we inspect our homes for cracks and leakages but how often do we get to service or do a repair job on our marriages. Your marriage is one of the most important relationships needing all your attention in order to make it work. We applaud you for taking time to do just that today.

SEMINAR OUTCOMES

By the end of this seminar, you will have learnt:

- The principle of leaving and cleaving
- Three pillars that underpin a healthy marriage

1. The principle of leaving and cleaving

There are very few things that have a huge impact on your marriage like abiding by the leaving and cleaving principle. The violation of this principle has wrecked marriages that had the potential of being blissful in the long run.

“Bruce Wilkinson says in his 25 plus years of counselling he has come to the conclusion that just about every marriage problem he has encountered has been the result of one or the other partner in a marriage not following the leaving and cleaving principle laid out in the Bible”

One of the most important verses relating to marriage is the one that speaks of leaving and cleaving.

Genesis 2:24 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall cleave to his wife and they shall become one flesh.

To indicate the importance of this principle, Christ quotes the same words in Mark 10:68

1.1 The 3-stage process of the Leaving and Cleaving Principle

The idea of marriage was and remains God's idea - after creating everything and calling it good, the only thing that was not good was for a man to be alone. Taking a closer look at Genesis 2:24, you will discover that the leaving and cleaving principle is composed of three dimensions:

- Stage 1 - Man and woman must leave (NB the emphasis was on the man but it applies to both parties).
- Stage 2 - They must then cleave (bond, glued)
- Stage 3 - Become one flesh (inseparable, completely unified)

Let's take time to explore each of these stages in more detail.

1.1.1 Stage 1 – The Leaving Principle

This is probably the toughest of this 3-stage process of building a healthy marriage and yet the most important one. How well you leave will determine how well you will cleave. As long as you still have residuals from your past life, cleaving will be a challenge proposition to live by.

The Hebrew meaning of the word “leave” in Genesis 2:24 is to “leave behind,” “depart from,” or “let loose.” In other words, letting loose is the releasing of something that once was tied.

It therefore involves the family and past relationships that are left behind to let go and the new family that has been created to want to leave.

Leaving home happens in different ways for different people, for some it is instantaneous, for some there is a gap between leaving and cleaving. The gap between the leaving and the cleaving could be from the time you left home for college, got a job, moved into your own place etc.

For a healthy cleaving to take place, both husband and wife ought to leave. The closer you remain to your past, the bigger the gap between you and your spouse. Let’s explore the different dimensions of leaving:¹ (adopted from Ted Cunningham author of Trophy Child):

a) Leave physically.

¹ Ted Cunningham - From Focus on the Family website article on Marriage means leaving home and cleaving to each other

b) Leave relationally.

c) Leave emotionally.

d) Leave financially.

e) Leave spiritually.

1.1.2 Stage 2 – The Cleaving Principle

a) How does cleaving look like in practical terms:

- What does it mean ‘to cleave’? From Genesis 2, it means ‘to adhere to, to stick to, to be attached by a strong tie and your life depends on it.’
- It implies wholehearted commitment to each other
- It involves unwavering loyalty to one’s spouse

Cleaving will prompt you to always consider the impact of an action on your union – *“Will this action, word, decision, or attitude draw us closer together or further apart? Will it build up or tear down our relationship?”*

- A Christian marriage ought to consider any action that has potential to destroy the cleaving as contrary to God’s design for a marriage covenant².
- Samantha Krieger puts it this way: *“To cleave has meant that we are now one. We’re no longer two individuals with our separate agendas and plans. Everything*

²Samuel Bacchiocchi, Ph. D - The Biblicalperspectives.com article, “The Institute of Marriage”

*we do affects one another, somehow and some way. We're now our own family, distinct from the families we grew up in."*³

- Give examples of actions that have potential to destroy the cleaving principle.

b) The implications of cleaving

- It prompts a realignment of priorities - it cannot be business as usual.

- It necessitates the reconfiguration of your value system

³ Samantha Krieger - From her web site article, "Cleaving: What Does it Mean in Marriage, Anyways?")

1.1.3 Stage 3 – The one flesh Principle

What does it mean, then, that a man and woman become "one flesh" in marriage?

- The apparent way of becoming one flesh is the sexual act that happens in the marriage context⁴. Paul highlights this principle in 1 Corinthians 6:16 where he even says a man sexually involved with a prostitute becomes one flesh with her.

1 Corinthians 6:16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh."

- Going back to the beginning, the term one flesh came from the account of creation of Eve (Genesis 2:21-24), whereby Eve was created from Adam's rib – Adam realised that Eve was part of him.

Genesis 2:23 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man." 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

- The term "one flesh" means that just as our bodies are one whole entity and cannot be divided into pieces and still be a whole, so God intended it to be with the marriage relationship.
- In a physical way, the act of consummation brings about the oneness in the flesh, which would result in children. It is then metaphorically an expression of what happens in the union.

⁴ <https://www.compellingtruth.org/one-flesh-marriage.html>

- Becoming one is also brought about by feeding, housing and repairing of each other.
- The married couple starts doing things in a greater dimension of unity and may even start looking alike (Emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, financially, and in every other way).
- Being one in flesh implies that you start representing your other in every respect – its no longer just your body but its now his body.

1 Corinthians 7:4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

- The way you treat your body is a reflection of how you respect your spouse – it impacts on things like fitness, hair styles, clothing, use of alcohol, smoking etc.

1.2 Discuss with your Spouse

Which aspects of leaving and cleaving do you need to work on in your marriage?

2. THREE PILLARS THAT UNDERPIN HEALTHY MARRIAGES

For a structure to stand the test of time, it requires to have a firm foundation. In essence the foundation is the basic element of the building – it is so basic but key to the long-term existence of the structure. The same is with your marriage; there are certain foundations that are so basic but key to having a healthy marriage. In this session, you are going to be introduced to three basic pillars that are found in a healthy marriage

2.1 Marriage is a sexual relationship

- Understanding marriage as a sexual relationship will help you have a healthy marriage. Sex is so important in a marriage relationship and yet it has been portrayed in a very destructive way through media.

- Let's explore four biblical principles concerning the sexual relationship between partners

2.1.1 Sex is a little-big part of marriage.

- The act of sex probably takes a few minutes, if anything and yet it is of great significance to the marriage.

- Sexual intercourse is dealt with in detail in 1 Corinthians 7:1-5

Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. 2 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. 3 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

- You need to note that, the moment you are married, you have a duty and a responsibility to give your spouse his or her dues.

2.1.2 The primary purposes of sexual intimacy.

- At creation, God gave a mandate for man to multiply and to subdue the earth. There are polar opposing views in the church regarding the purpose of sex: On the one hand, some maintain that the only purpose of sex is to have children. On the other hand, others almost disregard having children as one of the chief purposes of marriage.
- However, the Bible addresses this matter – scriptures show that bearing and raising godly children is **one of the chief goals**, if not the chief goal, of family life; Genesis 1:28 and Malachi 2:14-15

Malachi 2:14 Yet you say, Why? Because Jehovah has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously; yet she is your companion and your covenant wife. 15 And did He not make you one? Yet the vestige of the Spirit is in him. And what of the one? He was seeking a godly seed. Then guard your spirit, and do not act treacherously with the wife of your youth.

- Therefore, one of the purposes of sexual intercourse is **procreation**
- Reading further into scriptures, you will find that sex is also meant to bring about **pleasure** in a marriage.

Proverbs 5:18 Let your fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of your youth.

- Where we have read in 1 Corinthians 7:1-7, a healthy sexual relationship is a **guard against (protection)** sexual temptation (verse 5).
- Thus, there are three purposes of sex:
 - Procreation

- Pleasure
- Protection

2.1.3 Have realistic expectations

- I am sorry to say, its not going to be steamy all the time - a good sexual relationship may not develop on its own, it requires hard work.
- TV programmes and movies portray sex in a very unrealistic manner, creating destructive expectations among couples.
- If you don't plan for it, it is not going to work. The amount of effort you put into building intimacy will determine the quality of your sexual encounters.

2.1.4 Sex is both a matter of passion and duty.

- The notion that you can only engage in sexual intimacy when you are in the mood and you feel like it has ruined a lot of marriages. Life happens to such an extent that you might not feel like it for weeks without end – then what?
- There are times in every marriage when one or the other partner enters the sexual relationship more out of duty than passion.
- This can only happen when you understand that in marriage you are meant to serve and to minister to your spouse. In the process of serving and ministering to your spouse, a happy and healthy relationship can grow and develop.

2.2 Marriage is a SACRED relationship

- The primary condition for happiness in marriage is the correct appreciation of the value of the institution.
- The value of the institution of marriage is intrinsically connected to the parties to the marriage. When you value something, you respect it – therefore you respect your spouse.

2.2.1 Your spouse holds a position deserving of respect

- You see your partner as one placed in a sacred position by the Lord – this is the basis of your respect for your spouse.
- Your respect for your spouse goes beyond them as a person but looks at the one who ordained him or her into that position. In other words, it is your respect for God that will translate into respect for your spouse.

2.2.2 Mutual respect guards the marriage against emotionalism

- When you take out respect in your marriage, love stops to exist and what remains is passion.
- Your marriage will experience ups and downs and in the moment of turbulence, it is only respect that will steady the ship. Down in the valley, passion alone will not be enough to see you through.
- The way a wife looks should not determine how the husband should behave towards her. If you respect your husband because he is able to provide, then your marriage is on a slippery slope.

- Respect in marriage should be driven by an appreciation of the position in which the Lord has placed your spouse.

Is your love for your spouse based upon (A) your passing moods and feelings, or (B) upon the position in which the Lord has placed each of you?	A	B
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- Be careful in the way you answer this question – if your answer was A, what are you going to do about your situation? Do not simply pass over this question. It is vital to your marriage.

2.2.3 The contrast of marriage based on respect is marriage based on romance

- Your marriage is either being built on your partner's sacred position as your spouse, or on romantic feelings.
- Our culture has fed us the notion that for your marriage to work, you need to have fires of romantic love to be aflame all the time.
- The reality of the matter is feelings are fickle and will drop you most of the time.
- Romantic love should never be allowed to prescribe the nature of marriage.
- Couples who come to the despairing conclusion that *'we just don't love each other anymore'* should be told quite simply, *'learn to love each other'*.
- A successful marriage is more subject to our will to choose to love than it is driven by the prevailing emotions of love.

- In the eyes of God, romantic love is the outcome of a successful marriage – it is the by-product as opposed to the means to a successful marriage.
- The Lord commands you to love the spouse you are married to.
- Here is case study of a marriage in trouble – how would you counsel this couple:

Jabulani and Jacky have been married for 3 years and have two children. They want to get a divorce because they do not love one another anymore. Jabulani complains that there is no passion in their marriage. ‘Jacky is like an ice cube. She never wants to have sex. On the odd occasion when she does, it is not out of love but rather as if she were doing me a favour. Besides all this, she never submits to my instructions. At times, she is even rebellious.’ Jacky replies angrily, ‘You never talk to me or say you love me. After we have sex, you simply turn over and go to sleep. Why should I listen to you and submit to you when you treat me like a doormat?’

- Discuss this with your spouse – what would be your counsel to this young couple

2.3 Marriage is a sacrificial relationship

- The perception you have regarding your marriage, will determine how you treat it in the long run.
- Society portrays marriage in a very skewed way and unfortunately, people of God have subscribed to those views.
- What is the biblical view of the marriage relationship?

2.3.1 Marriage is not a contract but a covenant

- Every believer who has been around long enough, will tell you that statement – the sad part is that they know it mentally but not experientially.

- When we think of marriage, we usually do so in terms of a contract rather than a covenant. In reality, the two words are quite different:

	Marriage as a contract	Marriage as a covenant
1	Contracts are temporary and typically have a time limit. <i>"I am in as long as the relationship works"</i>	Covenants are intended to be permanent, until "death do us part." <i>"I give all of myself to you and I'm committed to this marriage for life"</i>
2	Contracts don't allow room for forgiveness	Covenants are anchored in forgiveness It does not condone bad behaviour but is ready to forgive.
3	Contracts are impersonal and do not consider the personal virtue of those involved. As long as one delivers what was promised, all other things don't matter	A Covenant stresses the personal virtue of those involved. Those involved live by virtues – fidelity, honesty, caring, kind etc.
4	Contracts can be employed with relational detachment.	Covenants are deeply seated in relationship. <i>They were naked but were not ashamed</i> – this shows the levels of intimacy and openness a wife and husband can have.
5	Contracts place personal needs first	Covenants place the needs of the relationship first. A covenant is fundamentally not a self-centred arrangement.

6	Contracts are neutral regarding holiness – they are circular in nature.	Covenants emphasize holiness – marriage is therefore holy. Holiness means your husband or your wife is set apart for a higher purpose
7	Contracts are steeped in distrust, hence the many clauses that make up a contract.	Covenants are built around an expectation of trust. A covenant means you are a trustworthy person making a life-time promise.

- Viewing marriage as a covenant, leads to the following conclusion:

Christian marriage is not about getting, but about giving

- Real joy in marriage comes from giving, not receiving – This is a true picture of the self-sacrifice which characterises the relationship between Christ and the church (Ephesians 5:31-33).

Three attitudes are espoused in Philippians 2:3-4: <i>3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.</i> Write down the attitudes
A:
B:
C:

- Discuss with your spouse:
 - What is your understanding of the three attributes and how they are reflected in your relationship?
 - Where do you fit on the scale of loving your spouse?
 - Rate yourself against the checklist below

A: Unselfish. Are you...	
Unselfish	
More unselfish than selfish	
More selfish than unselfish	
Selfish	
B: Humility. Are you...	
Humble	
More humble than boastful	
More boastful than humble	
Boastful	

C: A spirit of giving or sacrifice. Are you...	
Sacrificial	
More sacrificial than self-centred	
More self-centred than sacrificial	
Self-centred	

- No matter how you rated in the previous exercise, now is your chance to think of opportunities where you can give your spouse the love that Jesus showed for his church.

Acknowledgements

1. South African Theological Seminary (SATS) - Christian Relationships Study Guide
2. Samantha Krieger - From her web site article, "Cleaving: What Does it Mean in Marriage, Anyways?")
3. <https://www.compellingtruth.org/one-flesh-marriage.html>
4. Ted Cunningham - From Focus on the Family website article on Marriage means leaving home and cleaving to each other
5. Samuel Bacchiocchi, Ph. D - The Biblicalperspectives.com article, "The Institute of Marriage"

