

# BEACON COMPANION GUIDE

**Companion Guide | 52-Week Bible Study for Married Couples 8-Week Pilot Edition**

*Strengthening marriages through Scripture, reflection, and shared spiritual practices*

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## Table of Contents

BEACON .....	2
52-Week Bible Study for Married Couples.....	2
Contents .....	2
Pilot Overview.....	3
How to Use This Guide .....	3
Pilot Themes (Weeks 1-8).....	3
Tips for Success .....	3
WEEK 1 .....	4
God's Design for Marriage .....	4
WEEK 2 .....	8
Covenant vs. Contract .....	8
WEEK 3 .....	12
Leaving and Cleaving .....	12
WEEK 4 .....	16
Becoming One Flesh.....	16
WEEK 5 .....	20
Self-Centeredness: The Enemy of Marriage .....	20
WEEK 6 .....	23
Biblical Roles: Headship & Submission .....	23
WEEK 7 .....	26
Communication: Speaking Truth in Love .....	26
WEEK 8 .....	29
Listening Hearts .....	29
PILOT PHASE COMPLETE! .....	32
Pilot Completion Reflection .....	32

# BEACON

52-Week Bible Study for Married Couples

## *8-Week Pilot Content Package*

### **Quarter 1: Foundations of Covenant Marriage**

Weeks 1-8

*English Standard Version (ESV)*

December 2025

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## Contents

1. *Pilot Overview*
  2. *Week 1: God's Design for Marriage*
  3. *Week 2: Covenant vs. Contract*
  4. *Week 3: Leaving and Cleaving*
  5. *Week 4: Becoming One Flesh*
  6. *Week 5: Self-Centeredness: The Enemy*
  7. *Week 6: Biblical Roles*
  8. *Week 7: Communication*
  9. *Week 8: Listening Hearts*
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# Pilot Overview

Welcome to the **Beacon** 8-week pilot program! This content package represents the first phase of a 52-week journey designed to strengthen your marriage through Scripture, reflection, discussion, and practical application.

## How to Use This Guide

Each week follows a consistent 7-day rhythm:

Day	Activity
<b>Day 1 (Sun)</b>	<b>Theme Introduction:</b> Primary Scripture and devotional insight (10-15 min together)
<b>Days 2-3</b>	<b>Individual Reflection:</b> Supporting Scripture and journal prompts (5-10 min individually)
<b>Day 4 (Wed)</b>	<b>Couple Discussion:</b> Biblical couple study and discussion prompts (20-30 min together)
<b>Days 5-6</b>	<b>Practical Challenge:</b> Actionable exercise to apply the week's theme
<b>Day 7 (Sat)</b>	<b>Joint Prayer &amp; Reflection:</b> Guided prayer and week review (10-15 min together)

## Pilot Themes (Weeks 1-8)

- **Week 1:** God's Design for Marriage — Genesis 2, Matthew 19
- **Week 2:** Covenant vs. Contract — Malachi 2, Ephesians 5
- **Week 3:** Leaving and Cleaving — Genesis 2:24, Ruth 1
- **Week 4:** Becoming One Flesh — Ecclesiastes 4, 1 Corinthians 6
- **Week 5:** Self-Centeredness: The Enemy — Philippians 2, Matthew 20
- **Week 6:** Biblical Roles — Ephesians 5:21-33, 1 Peter 3
- **Week 7:** Communication — Ephesians 4, James 1, Proverbs 15
- **Week 8:** Listening Hearts — Proverbs 18, 1 Samuel 1

## Tips for Success

- **Schedule it:** Put your couple time on the calendar like any important appointment.
- **Protect it:** Phones away, distractions minimized. This is sacred time.
- **Be honest:** The discussion prompts work best when you're vulnerable with each other.
- **Give grace:** If you miss a day or week, don't give up. Pick up where you left off.
- **Pray together:** Even if it feels awkward at first, praying together is transformative.

*Let's begin the journey together. May God bless your marriage as you seek Him through His Word.*

# WEEK 1

## God's Design for Marriage

**Theme:** *In the Beginning — Understanding Marriage as Divine Institution*

**Biblical Couple Focus:** Adam & Eve — The First Marriage

**Core Scriptures:** Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 2:18-25, Matthew 19:4-6

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### Day 1 (Sunday): Theme Introduction

#### Primary Scripture — Genesis 2:18-25

##### Genesis 2:18, 21-24

*“Then the LORD God said, ‘It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.’... So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 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.’ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*

— ESV

#### Devotional Insight

Before there was sin, before there was struggle, before there was any brokenness in the world — there was marriage. God looked at His perfect creation and declared something “not good”: Adam’s aloneness. This wasn’t a flaw in Adam; it was a divine setup for something beautiful. God’s solution wasn’t to give Adam a project, a purpose, or even more fellowship with Himself. He gave Adam a wife.

Marriage is not a human invention or cultural construct — it is God’s idea, born in paradise, designed for flourishing. When God brought Eve to Adam, He wasn’t just solving a problem; He was revealing something profound about His own nature. The Trinity exists in eternal relationship, and humanity — made in God’s image — was designed to reflect that relational reality.

Your marriage is not merely a social contract or romantic partnership. It is a divine institution with eternal significance.

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## Days 2-3: Individual Reflection

### Day 2 Scripture — Genesis 1:26-28

#### Genesis 1:27-28

*“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it.’”*

— ESV

#### Personal Journal Prompts:

- What does it mean to you that marriage was God’s idea, not humanity’s invention?
- How does knowing you are made in God’s image affect how you see your spouse?
- Reflect on the phrase “helper fit for him” (Hebrew: *ezer kenegdo*). This same word “helper” is used of God Himself in Psalm 54:4. What does this tell you about the dignity and importance of the helper role?

### Day 3 Scripture — Matthew 19:4-6

#### Matthew 19:4-6

*“He answered, ‘Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh”? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.’”*

— ESV

#### Personal Journal Prompts:

- Jesus quotes Genesis when discussing marriage. Why do you think He points back to “the beginning”?
- “What God has joined together” — take a moment to thank God for joining you to your spouse.

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## Day 4 (Wednesday): Couple Discussion

### Biblical Couple Study: Adam & Eve

Adam and Eve’s marriage was unique — they had no parents to leave, no cultural baggage, no past relationships. Yet their story establishes patterns we still follow: leaving, cleaving, becoming one flesh. They also show us what happens when couples face temptation apart rather than together (Genesis 3). Adam was “with her” when Eve was deceived, yet

remained passive. Their story reminds us that marriage requires active partnership, not passive presence.

#### **Discussion Prompts (20-30 minutes together):**

1. Share with each other: What was your understanding of marriage before we got married? How has it changed?
  2. Read Genesis 2:25 together: “And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” What does emotional and spiritual “nakedness without shame” look like in our marriage? Where do we still hide from each other?
  3. In Genesis 3, Adam and Eve faced temptation separately even though they were together. How can we be more intentional about facing challenges as a united team?
  4. What does it mean practically for us to “hold fast” to each other in this season of life?
  5. If marriage is God’s idea and design, how should that change the way we approach difficult seasons?
  6. What is one thing you want our marriage to reflect about God’s character to those around us?
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### **Days 5-6: Practical Challenge**

#### **“Back to the Beginning” Date**

This week’s challenge invites you to remember and celebrate God’s work in bringing you together.

- **Share stories:** Take turns sharing your perspective of how you met, your first impressions, and when you knew this relationship was different.
  - **Trace God’s hand:** Identify 3-5 moments where you can now see God orchestrating your relationship — circumstances, timing, or people He used to bring you together.
  - **Create a timeline:** If you’re creative, sketch out a simple timeline of your relationship’s key moments from meeting to present.
  - **Thank God together:** End by praying together, thanking God specifically for bringing you together and asking Him to deepen your understanding of His design for your marriage.
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### **Day 7 (Saturday): Joint Prayer & Reflection**

#### **Weekly Reflection Questions:**

- What is one insight from this week that you want to carry forward?
- How did the practical challenge impact your perspective on your relationship?

- What is one way you want to grow in the coming week?

**Guided Couple Prayer:**

*Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of marriage — Your idea, Your design, Your blessing. Thank You for bringing us together and joining us as one. We confess that we often approach our marriage with worldly expectations rather than Your eternal purposes. Teach us to see our union through Your eyes. Help us to leave behind anything that competes with our commitment to each other. Give us grace to hold fast to one another in every season. May our marriage reflect Your faithful, covenant love to everyone who sees us. We surrender our marriage to You afresh today. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

✓ **Mark Week 1 Complete**

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## WEEK 2

### Covenant vs. Contract

**Theme:** *The Binding Promise — Understanding Marriage as Sacred Covenant*

**Biblical Couple Focus:** God & Israel — The Ultimate Covenant Model

**Core Scriptures:** Malachi 2:14-16, Proverbs 2:17, Ephesians 5:31-32

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### Day 1 (Sunday): Theme Introduction

#### Primary Scripture — Malachi 2:14-16

##### Malachi 2:14-16

*“But you say, ‘Why does he not?’ 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. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. ‘For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.’”*

— ESV

#### Devotional Insight

In our culture, marriage is often treated as a contract: an agreement between two parties that remains valid as long as both sides fulfill their obligations. If one party fails, the other is released. But Scripture presents marriage as something far deeper — a **covenant**.

A covenant is not merely a legal arrangement; it is a sacred bond witnessed by God Himself. Notice that God doesn't merely approve of marriage — He is a *witness* to it. He is present at every wedding, not as a passive observer, but as an active participant who joins the couple together.

This changes everything. When challenges come (and they will), a contract-mindset asks, “What am I getting out of this?” A covenant-mindset asks, “How can I remain faithful to my promise before God?”

Timothy Keller writes that the essence of marriage is not finding the right person, but *becoming* the right person through covenant faithfulness. Your marriage is not just about your happiness — it's about your holiness, and ultimately, about displaying God's faithful love to a watching world.

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## Days 2-3: Individual Reflection

### Day 2 Scripture — Proverbs 2:17

#### Proverbs 2:17

*“...who forsakes the companion of her youth and forgets the covenant of her God.”*

— ESV

#### Personal Journal Prompts:

- This verse connects the marriage covenant to “the covenant of her God.” How does your relationship with God affect your commitment to your spouse?
- What does it mean to you that your spouse is the “companion of your youth”?
- In what areas are you tempted to treat your marriage more like a contract than a covenant?

### Day 3 Scripture — Ephesians 5:31-32

#### Ephesians 5:31-32

*“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”*

— ESV

#### Personal Journal Prompts:

- Paul calls marriage a “profound mystery” that points to Christ and the church. What does this tell you about the spiritual significance of your marriage?
- How does Christ’s covenant faithfulness to the church model what your marriage should look like?

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## Day 4 (Wednesday): Couple Discussion

### Understanding Covenant: God & Israel

Throughout Scripture, God uses marriage language to describe His relationship with His people. He calls Israel His “bride” (Isaiah 54:5), grieves over her unfaithfulness as adultery (Hosea), and promises to betroth her to Himself forever (Hosea 2:19-20). This is not merely metaphor — it reveals that human marriage is designed to reflect divine love. When we keep our marriage covenants, we put God’s faithful character on display. When we break them, we misrepresent His nature.

### **Discussion Prompts (20-30 minutes together):**

1. What promises did we make to each other on our wedding day? Can you remember them? (Consider re-reading your vows if you have them.)
  2. Contract thinking asks “What’s in it for me?” Covenant thinking asks “How can I serve and honor my commitment?” Where do you see contract thinking creeping into our marriage?
  3. God remained faithful to Israel even when Israel was unfaithful. How does this model shape your understanding of marriage commitment during difficult seasons?
  4. What practical difference does it make that God was a “witness” to our marriage covenant?
  5. If our marriage is meant to display Christ’s love for the church, what is one way we can better reflect that love?
  6. Is there any area where we need to renew our commitment to each other?
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### **Days 5-6: Practical Challenge**

#### **“Covenant Renewal” Exercise**

This week’s challenge invites you to revisit and renew your covenant commitment.

- **Find your vows:** Locate your original wedding vows (or write down what you remember promising).
  - **Read them aloud:** Set aside 15-20 minutes to read your vows to each other again, looking into each other’s eyes.
  - **Add specifics:** After reading the original vows, each spouse shares one specific way they want to honor that covenant in the coming year. Be concrete: “I covenant to pray for you every morning” or “I covenant to put my phone away during our conversations.”
  - **Seal it:** End by holding hands and praying together, asking God to be witness to your renewed commitment.
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### **Day 7 (Saturday): Joint Prayer & Reflection**

#### **Weekly Reflection Questions:**

- How did renewing your vows affect you emotionally and spiritually?
- What is one “contract” mindset you want to replace with “covenant” thinking?
- How can you remind each other of your covenant when challenges arise?

#### **Guided Couple Prayer:**

*Lord God, You are the covenant-keeping God. You have never broken a promise. You remained faithful to Israel even in her unfaithfulness, and You remain faithful to us through Christ. We confess that we sometimes treat our marriage like a contract — keeping score, looking for what we can get. Forgive us. Transform our hearts to embrace covenant love — love that gives without demanding, that perseveres without conditions, that reflects Your steadfast faithfulness. Help us to remember that You witnessed our vows and that You are present in our marriage. May we honor You by honoring each other. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

✓ **Mark Week 2 Complete**

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## WEEK 3

### Leaving and Cleaving

**Theme:** *New Family Identity — Establishing Healthy Boundaries*

**Biblical Couple Focus:** Isaac & Rebekah — A Divinely Arranged Union

**Core Scriptures:** Genesis 2:24, Genesis 24:67, Ephesians 5:31

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### Day 1 (Sunday): Theme Introduction

#### Primary Scripture — Genesis 2:24

##### 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.”*

— ESV

#### Devotional Insight

This single verse contains God’s three-part blueprint for marriage: **leave, cleave, become one**. Notice the order — leaving comes first. Before you can fully unite with your spouse, you must establish appropriate separation from your family of origin.

This doesn’t mean abandoning your parents or dishonoring them. It means establishing a new primary loyalty. Your spouse is now your closest human relationship.

“Leaving” involves more than geography — it includes emotional, financial, and decision-making independence. Many marriages struggle because one or both spouses have never truly “left” home. They still look to parents for approval, defer to parents in decisions, or allow parents inappropriate influence in their marriage.

“Cleaving” (Hebrew: *dabaq*) means to cling, stick, or be glued to. It’s the same word used of Ruth clinging to Naomi and of Israel clinging to the Lord. It implies fierce loyalty and permanent attachment.

You chose each other. Now you must continue to choose each other — over parents, over children, over career, over everything except God Himself.

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### Days 2-3: Individual Reflection

#### Day 2 Scripture — Genesis 24:67

## **Genesis 24:67**

*“Then Isaac brought her into the tent of Sarah his mother and took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her. So Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.”*

— ESV

### **Personal Journal Prompts:**

- Isaac had been grieving his mother’s death. Rebekah became his comfort. What does this tell us about the unique role spouses play in each other’s lives?
- Notice: “Isaac... took Rebekah, and she became his wife, and he loved her” — love followed commitment, not the other way around. How does this challenge modern assumptions about love and marriage?
- Reflect honestly: Are there ways you still haven’t fully “left” your family of origin emotionally or practically?

## **Day 3 Scripture — Ruth 1:16-17**

### **Ruth 1:16-17**

*“But Ruth said, ‘Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.’”*

— ESV

### **Personal Journal Prompts:**

- While this passage is Ruth speaking to Naomi, it beautifully captures the cleaving commitment of covenant relationship. What would it look like to speak these words to your spouse?
- “Your people shall be my people” — How well have you embraced your spouse’s family, background, and heritage?

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## **Day 4 (Wednesday): Couple Discussion**

### **Biblical Couple Study: Isaac & Rebekah**

Isaac and Rebekah’s marriage began with one of the most dramatic “leaving” stories in Scripture. Rebekah left everything — her family, her homeland, her culture — to marry a man she had never met, based on her family’s blessing and her own faith. When asked if she would go, her immediate answer was “I will go” (Genesis 24:58). She didn’t cling to the familiar; she embraced the unknown with God’s faithful servant.

Isaac, too, was ready to receive her — he brought her into his mother’s tent, signifying that she was now the primary woman in his life. Their story shows both the courage required to leave and the intentionality required to cleave.

### **Discussion Prompts (20-30 minutes together):**

1. On a scale of 1-10, how well have we “left” our families of origin? Discuss specific areas (emotional dependence, financial ties, decision-making, holidays, etc.).
  2. Are there any ways either of our parents has inappropriate influence in our marriage? How can we lovingly establish better boundaries?
  3. How do we balance honoring our parents (Exodus 20:12) with prioritizing our marriage?
  4. What does “cleaving” look like practically in this season of our life? Where could we be more intentional?
  5. If we have or plan to have children: How can we model healthy leaving/cleaving so they learn to form their own marriages well someday?
  6. Is there a decision we’ve been letting parents make (or overly influence) that we need to own as a couple?
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## **Days 5-6: Practical Challenge**

### **“United Front” Exercise**

This week’s challenge helps you establish and communicate healthy boundaries.

- **Identify one boundary:** Together, identify one area where a boundary with extended family would strengthen your marriage (examples: holiday expectations, unsolicited parenting advice, financial requests, drop-in visits, comparison comments).
  - **Agree on the approach:** Discuss specifically what the boundary is and how you will communicate it. Agree to present a united front — never throw your spouse under the bus (“She won’t let me...”).
  - **Pray together:** Ask God for wisdom, courage, and grace in how you communicate this boundary. Pray for your parents’ hearts to receive it well.
  - **Take action:** If appropriate this week, begin to communicate or implement this boundary. If the timing isn’t right, calendar when you will address it.
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## **Day 7 (Saturday): Joint Prayer & Reflection**

### **Weekly Reflection Questions:**

- What did you discover about your “leaving” and “cleaving” through this week’s discussions?
- How did the boundary conversation go? What did you learn?

- What is one way you want to prioritize cleaving to each other more this week?

**Guided Couple Prayer:**

*Father, thank You for our families of origin. Thank You for the ways they shaped us, loved us, and brought us to this moment. We honor them as You command. Yet we also recognize that You have called us to leave and cleave — to form a new family unit with each other as the priority. Give us wisdom to know how to honor our parents while prioritizing our marriage. Give us courage to establish boundaries when needed and grace to do so with love. Help us to cling to each other with the fierce loyalty You intend. May we become more united with each passing year. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

✓ **Mark Week 3 Complete**

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## WEEK 4

### Becoming One Flesh

**Theme:** *Spiritual Unity — The Mystery of Two Becoming One*

**Biblical Couple Focus:** Christ & the Church — The Ultimate Picture of Oneness

**Core Scriptures:** Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, 1 Corinthians 6:16-17, John 17:20-23

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### Day 1 (Sunday): Theme Introduction

#### Primary Scripture — Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

##### Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

*“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”*

— ESV

#### Devotional Insight

“One flesh” is one of Scripture’s most profound descriptions of marriage. It speaks to a union that transcends the physical — an interweaving of two lives, two stories, two souls into one shared existence.

Notice the three dimensions Solomon highlights: **mutual support** (lifting each other up), **mutual comfort** (keeping warm together), and **mutual protection** (withstanding together).

But then comes the crucial insight: “a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Two strands are strong; three are unbreakable. What is the third strand? God Himself. A marriage with Christ at the center — where both spouses are pursuing Him individually and together — has a strength that human love alone cannot provide.

The mystery of “one flesh” is not just about physical intimacy (though it includes that). It’s about identity fusion. Your spouse’s wins become your wins. Their struggles become your struggles. Their reputation is your reputation. You are no longer two independent people living parallel lives; you are one unit moving through life together.

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### Days 2-3: Individual Reflection

#### Day 2 Scripture — 1 Corinthians 6:16-17

## **1 Corinthians 6:16-17**

*“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.’ But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him.”*

— ESV

### **Personal Journal Prompts:**

- Paul connects “one flesh” between spouses to becoming “one spirit” with the Lord. How does your union with Christ shape your union with your spouse?
- The context here is warning against sexual immorality. How does the “one flesh” reality inform why God places boundaries around sexuality?
- In what areas of life do you and your spouse operate more as “two” than as “one”? (finances, decisions, parenting, schedules)

## **Day 3 Scripture — John 17:20-23**

### **John 17:21-23**

*“...that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.”*

— ESV

### **Personal Journal Prompts:**

- Jesus prays for believers to be “one” as He and the Father are one. The Trinity models perfect unity in diversity. How can this shape your marriage?
- Notice: Jesus says the world will “believe” and “know” based on our unity. What does your marital unity communicate to those around you?

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## **Day 4 (Wednesday): Couple Discussion**

### **Understanding Oneness: Christ & the Church**

The deepest picture of marital oneness is Christ’s union with His bride, the Church. Paul says this is the “profound mystery” that marriage ultimately points to (Ephesians 5:32). Christ gave everything for His bride — His very life. He doesn’t abandon her in her failures. He is patient with her growth. He is committed to her final perfection. In return, the Church finds her identity, purpose, and joy in Him. This is the oneness your marriage is designed to reflect: sacrificial, patient, committed, identity-shaping love.

### **Discussion Prompts (20-30 minutes together):**

1. Where do you feel most “one” with each other right now? Where do you feel most disconnected?
  2. Ecclesiastes mentions a “threefold cord.” How central is God in our marriage currently? What would it look like to make Him more central?
  3. Are there areas where we’re operating as two individuals rather than as one unit? (Think: finances, schedules, social lives, spiritual practices)
  4. What spiritual practices could we develop together to strengthen our “threefold cord”? (Prayer, devotions, church involvement, serving together)
  5. How can we support each other better — lifting each other up when we fall?
  6. What is one way we can present a more united front to the world this week?
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## Days 5-6: Practical Challenge

### “Three-Strand” Spiritual Practice

This week’s challenge invites you to establish or deepen a shared spiritual practice.

- **Choose a practice:** Select one spiritual practice to do together this week. Options: pray together before bed each night, read one chapter of a Gospel together, take a prayer walk, attend a church service together (if not already), listen to a worship song together each morning.
  - **Schedule it:** Put specific times on your calendar. Treat this appointment as non-negotiable.
  - **Start simple:** If you’ve never prayed together aloud, it may feel awkward at first. That’s okay. Start with written prayers or take turns with short sentence prayers. The goal is connection, not eloquence.
  - **Evaluate together:** At the end of the week, discuss: How did this practice affect our sense of unity? Should we continue it?
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## Day 7 (Saturday): Joint Prayer & Reflection

### Weekly Reflection Questions:

- How did the shared spiritual practice affect your sense of connection this week?
- What is one insight about “oneness” that you want to remember?
- Do you want to continue the practice you started? Adapt it? Try something else?

### Guided Couple Prayer:

*Lord Jesus, You prayed that Your followers would be one as You and the Father are one. We ask that same unity for our marriage. Forgive us for the times we’ve operated as two instead of one — pursuing our own agendas, protecting our own interests, going our own ways. Weave us together more tightly. Be the third strand*

*in our cord that cannot be broken. Help us to lift each other up when we fall, to comfort each other in difficulty, and to stand together against anything that threatens our union. May our oneness reflect Your love to everyone who sees us. In Your name, Amen.*

✓ **Mark Week 4 Complete**

**Quarter 1 — 30% Complete!**

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## WEEK 5

**Self-Centeredness: The Enemy of Marriage**

**Theme:** *Dying to Self—The Path to Thriving Together*

**Biblical Couple Focus:** Abraham & Sarah — When Self-Protection Hurts Marriage

**Core Scriptures:** Philippians 2:3-8, Matthew 20:26-28, Galatians 5:13

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### Day 1 (Sunday): Theme Introduction

**Primary Scripture — Philippians 2:3-8**

**Philippians 2:3-5**

*“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.”*

— ESV

### Devotional Insight

Timothy Keller identifies self-centeredness as the main enemy of every marriage. Not conflict. Not finances. Not incompatibility. *Self-centeredness.*

We enter marriage with expectations: expectations of how we'll be treated, how our needs will be met, how our spouse will change to accommodate us. And when those expectations aren't met, conflict erupts. The root issue isn't that your spouse failed you — it's that self demanded its way.

Jesus modeled a radically different approach. Though He had every right to demand service, He served. Though He deserved honor, He humbled Himself. Paul says, “Have this mind among yourselves.”

In marriage, this means: stop keeping score, stop demanding your rights, stop protecting your comfort at your spouse's expense.

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### Days 2-3: Individual Reflection

**Day 2 Scripture — Matthew 20:26-28**

**Matthew 20:26-28**

*“But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

—ESV

**Personal Journal Prompts:**

- Jesus redefines greatness as service. What would it look like for you to pursue “greatness” in your marriage through serving?
- Honestly assess: In what ways are you self-centered in your marriage?
- What is one expectation you’ve had of your spouse that might be rooted in self-centeredness?

**Day 3 Scripture — Galatians 5:13**

**Galatians 5:13**

*“For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”*

—ESV

**Personal Journal Prompts:**

- Christian freedom is not freedom to serve self, but freedom to serve others. How does this reframe your understanding of marriage?
  - What is one way you could “through love serve” your spouse today?
- 

**Day 4 (Wednesday): Couple Discussion**

**Biblical Couple Study: Abraham & Sarah**

Abraham and Sarah’s faith is legendary, but their marriage also shows the damage self-centeredness can cause. Twice, Abraham asked Sarah to say she was his sister to protect himself (Genesis 12, 20). He prioritized his own safety over his wife’s honor. Sarah pushed Abraham toward Hagar when she grew impatient (Genesis 16). Both instances show self-protection damaging their partnership. Yet God still fulfilled His promises — a reminder that our failures don’t disqualify us, but they do cause unnecessary pain.

**Discussion Prompts (20-30 minutes together):**

1. Without blaming, share: Where does self-centeredness show up in our marriage?
2. What expectations did you bring into marriage that might have been self-focused?
3. What would it look like for each of us to “count the other more significant” this week?
4. How can we help each other grow in selflessness without nagging?
5. Is there an area where you need to ask forgiveness for being self-centered?

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## Days 5-6: Practical Challenge

### “Secret Service” Week

- **Identify their love language:** Think about what makes your spouse feel most loved.
  - **Perform 3 secret acts of service:** Serve your spouse without telling them it's an “assignment.”
  - **Don't keep score:** Resist tracking whether they notice or reciprocate.
  - **Reflect:** Notice what this exercise reveals about your own self-centeredness.
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## Day 7 (Saturday): Joint Prayer & Reflection

### Guided Couple Prayer:

*Lord Jesus, You came not to be served but to serve. We confess that we often expect to be served and have our needs met. Forgive our self-centeredness. Give us Your servant heart. Help us to consider each other more significant than ourselves. When we want to keep score, remind us of the cross. Transform us from the inside out so that serving each other becomes our joy. In Your name, Amen.*

✓ **Mark Week 5 Complete**

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# WEEK 6

Biblical Roles: Headship & Submission

**Theme:** Mutual Honor — Understanding Ephesians 5

**Biblical Couple Focus:** Christ & the Church — Sacrificial Leadership and Joyful Response

**Core Scriptures:** Ephesians 5:21-33, 1 Peter 3:1-7, Colossians 3:18-19

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## Day 1 (Sunday): Theme Introduction

**Primary Scripture — Ephesians 5:21-25**

**Ephesians 5:21-25**

*“...submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”*

— ESV

### Devotional Insight

Few passages generate more controversy than Ephesians 5. Yet when read carefully, we find something beautiful: mutual self-giving that reflects Christ’s love.

Notice: Paul begins with “submitting to *one another*” — mutual deference is the context. Husbands are called to love “as Christ loved the church and *gave himself up*” — not domineering leadership but sacrificial service. The wife’s submission is “as to the Lord” — a spiritual act of trust in God’s design.

Both roles require dying to self. Neither is about power; both are about love.

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## Days 2-3: Individual Reflection

**Day 2 Scripture — 1 Peter 3:7**

**1 Peter 3:7**

*“Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.”*

— ESV

### **Personal Journal Prompts:**

- “Live with your wives in an understanding way” — How well do you understand your spouse?
- Peter connects how husbands treat wives to prayer effectiveness. How does this motivate you?

### **Day 3 Scripture — Colossians 3:18-19**

#### **Colossians 3:18-19**

*“Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.”*

— ESV

### **Personal Journal Prompts:**

- “Do not be harsh” — Where might harshness be creeping into your marriage?
  - What has shaped your understanding of roles — culture, family, past teaching?
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### **Day 4 (Wednesday): Couple Discussion**

#### **Discussion Prompts (20-30 minutes together):**

1. What was modeled about marriage roles growing up?
  2. Husbands: Where are you leading sacrificially? Where do you need to grow?
  3. Wives: Where is it easy or difficult to trust your husband’s leadership?
  4. How do you handle disagreements about direction?
  5. What would “mutual submission” look like in a specific area?
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### **Days 5-6: Practical Challenge**

#### **“Honor Your Spouse” Week**

- **For husbands:** Take responsibility for planning one meaningful thing without being asked.
  - **For wives:** Express respect and appreciation for your husband at least once daily.
  - **Both:** Share at week’s end how it felt to give and receive this honor.
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### **Day 7 (Saturday): Joint Prayer & Reflection**

#### **Guided Couple Prayer:**

*Lord Jesus, thank You for loving the church sacrificially. Help us reflect that love.  
For the husband: Give me courage to lead with sacrifice, not selfishness. For the wife:  
Give me grace to respect and trust. Together: Make our marriage a picture of  
the Gospel. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

✓ **Mark Week 6 Complete**

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## WEEK 7

Communication: Speaking Truth in Love

**Theme:** *Words That Build — The Power of the Tongue*

**Biblical Couple Focus:** Priscilla & Aquila — Partners in Ministry and Communication

**Core Scriptures:** Ephesians 4:15, 25-32; James 1:19-20; Proverbs 15:1

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### Day 1 (Sunday): Theme Introduction

**Primary Scripture — Ephesians 4:29, 32**

**Ephesians 4:29, 32**

*“Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear... Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”*

— ESV

### Devotional Insight

Communication is the lifeblood of marriage. Paul gives us a masterclass:

- **Truth-telling** — no hiding or deceiving.
- **Timely resolution** — don't let anger fester.
- **Building up** — every word should give grace.
- **Kindness and forgiveness** — the foundation of all communication.

The standard? “That it may give grace to those who hear.” Imagine every word passing through this filter.

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### Days 2-3: Individual Reflection

**Day 2 Scripture — James 1:19-20**

**James 1:19-20**

*“Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”*

— ESV

**Personal Journal Prompts:**

- Rate yourself: Are you quicker to listen or speak?
- What triggers quick anger in marital conversations?

### Day 3 Scripture — Proverbs 15:1, 4

#### Proverbs 15:1, 4

*“A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger... A gentle tongue is a tree of life, but perverseness in it breaks the spirit.”*

— ESV

#### Personal Journal Prompts:

- Think of a recent conflict. What would a “soft answer” have looked like?
  - How have gentle words given you life? How have harsh words broken your spirit?
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### Day 4 (Wednesday): Couple Discussion

#### Biblical Couple Study: Priscilla & Aquila

Priscilla and Aquila are always mentioned together — a picture of partnership. In Acts 18:26, they correct Apollos’s theology privately and graciously. They model communicating truth with love, addressing difficult topics with grace, and working as a team.

#### Discussion Prompts (20-30 minutes together):

1. What are our communication strengths? Where do we struggle most?
  2. Do we let the sun go down on our anger? What prevents resolution?
  3. What words or phrases feel most hurtful to you?
  4. How can we create space for difficult conversations that feel safe?
  5. Is there anything said recently that needs an apology?
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### Days 5-6: Practical Challenge

#### “Grace-Giving Words” Exercise

- **Establish a “time out” signal:** When conversations get heated, take 20 minutes to cool down and pray.
  - **Speaker-listener technique:** The listener repeats back what they heard before responding.
  - **Daily encouragement:** End each day by sharing one specific appreciation.
  - **No criticism fast:** For 48 hours, commit to zero criticism or complaints.
-

## Day 7 (Saturday): Joint Prayer & Reflection

### **Guided Couple Prayer:**

*Lord, You spoke the world into being. Words have power. Forgive us for tearing down rather than building up. Create in us clean hearts that overflow with grace-giving words. Help us be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger. May our home be filled with encouragement and kindness. Guard our tongues and transform our hearts. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

✓ **Mark Week 7 Complete**

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# WEEK 8

## Listening Hearts

**Theme:** *The Gift of Presence — Hearing Beyond Words*

**Biblical Couple Focus:** Elkanah & Hannah — A Husband Who Saw His Wife's Pain

**Core Scriptures:** James 1:19, Proverbs 18:13, 1 Samuel 1:8

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### Day 1 (Sunday): Theme Introduction

#### Primary Scripture — Proverbs 18:2, 13

##### Proverbs 18:2, 13

*“A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion... If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame.”*

— ESV

#### Devotional Insight

Last week we focused on speaking; this week we focus on the often-neglected discipline of *listening*.

True listening is an act of love. It says, “You matter. Your thoughts matter.” Proverbs warns against the fool who only wants to express opinions. How often do we do this? Our spouse starts sharing, and we’re already formulating our response. We hear words but miss hearts.

Listening requires **presence, patience, curiosity, and empathy**. When your spouse feels truly heard, walls come down, trust grows, intimacy deepens.

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### Days 2-3: Individual Reflection

#### Day 2 Scripture — 1 Samuel 1:8

##### 1 Samuel 1:8

*“And Elkanah, her husband, said to her, ‘Hannah, why do you weep? And why do you not eat? And why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?’”*

— ESV

#### Personal Journal Prompts:

- Elkanah noticed Hannah's pain and asked questions. He was paying attention. How attentive are you to your spouse's emotional state?
- His final question ("Am I not more to you than ten sons?") shows he didn't fully understand her pain. When have you tried to "fix" your spouse's feelings rather than just listening?
- What might your spouse be feeling right now that you haven't taken time to ask about?

### **Day 3 Scripture — Proverbs 20:5**

#### **Proverbs 20:5**

*"The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out."*

— ESV

#### **Personal Journal Prompts:**

- "Deep water" — your spouse has thoughts, feelings, and dreams that lie beneath the surface. What questions could help you draw them out?
  - "A man of understanding" — understanding requires effort. What distractions prevent you from really listening?
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### **Day 4 (Wednesday): Couple Discussion**

#### **Biblical Couple Study: Elkanah & Hannah**

Elkanah loved Hannah deeply. He noticed her tears, her loss of appetite, her sadness. He asked questions. Yet even his loving presence couldn't fully ease her pain of infertility. He tried to be enough ("Am I not more to you than ten sons?") when what she needed was for him to simply sit with her in her pain.

Sometimes our spouse doesn't need solutions; they need presence. Elkanah got credit for noticing and asking, but the story also shows the limits of human comfort — ultimately, Hannah took her grief to God in prayer. The best spouses both listen well AND point each other to God.

#### **Discussion Prompts (20-30 minutes together):**

1. On a scale of 1-10, how heard do you feel in our marriage? What would raise that number?
2. What gets in the way of us really listening to each other? (Distractions, defensiveness, busyness?)
3. When you're upset, what do you need most — solutions, empathy, space, or something else?

4. Are there topics we tend to avoid because they're hard to discuss? How can we create safety to address them?
  5. What question could I ask you more often to help "draw out" what's in your heart?
  6. How can we balance listening to each other with pointing each other to God?
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## Days 5-6: Practical Challenge

### "Deep Listening" Conversations

This week's challenge creates intentional space for deep listening:

- **Schedule 20 uninterrupted minutes:** Phones away, TV off, kids asleep or occupied. Face each other.
  - **Take turns sharing:** One spouse shares for 8-10 minutes about something on their heart (joy, stress, dream, fear). The other listens without interrupting.
  - **Reflect back:** The listener reflects: "What I heard you say is..." and "It sounds like you're feeling..." No fixing, just understanding.
  - **Switch roles:** Then reverse, giving the other spouse the same experience.
  - **Close in prayer:** Pray for what your spouse shared — their concerns, their hopes, their heart.
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## Day 7 (Saturday): Joint Prayer & Reflection

### Weekly Reflection Questions:

- How did the "deep listening" exercise feel? What did you learn about your spouse?
- What made it hard to listen without responding or fixing?
- How can you build more intentional listening into your regular rhythms?

### Guided Couple Prayer:

*Father, You are the God who hears. You invite us to pour out our hearts to You, and You listen. Teach us to listen to each other the way You listen to us — with patience, without judgment, with full attention. Forgive us for the times we've been too distracted, too defensive, or too quick to fix. Give us ears to hear not just words but hearts. Help us to create a marriage where both of us feel truly known. Thank You for these eight weeks of growing together. Continue the work You've started in us. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

✓ **Mark Week 8 Complete**

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## PHASE 1 Recap

Congratulations on completing the 8-week Beacon pilot! You've laid foundational stones for a Christ-centered marriage. Take time to reflect on your journey and celebrate what God has done in your relationship.

### Pilot Completion Reflection

- What was the most impactful week or insight for your marriage?
  - What habit or practice do you want to continue?
  - How has your understanding of Biblical marriage grown?
  - What area do you most want to continue developing?
- 

*The full 52-week Beacon journey continues with:*

- **Weeks 9-13:** Quarter 1 completion (Prayer, Sabbath, Renewal)
- **Weeks 14-26:** Navigating Challenges Together (Forgiveness, Conflict, Finances, Intimacy)
- **Weeks 27-39:** Parenting in Faith (Raising Godly Children)
- **Weeks 40-52:** Legacy & Endurance (Perseverance, Mentoring, Eternal Perspective)

*May God continue to bless your marriage as you seek Him together.*

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