

THE GETTING EQUIPPED™ SERIES

The Christian Family

Lesson- 2



EQUIPPERS GROUP INTERNATIONAL

THE FOUNDATION OF MARRIAGE

Equipping for the Christian Journey



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OBJECTIVES OF THE LESSON

1. To learn God's definition of marriage
2. To understand that covenant is the foundation upon which marriage is built
3. To know that the closer a couple is to Christ, the stronger their marriage relationship will be

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AT END

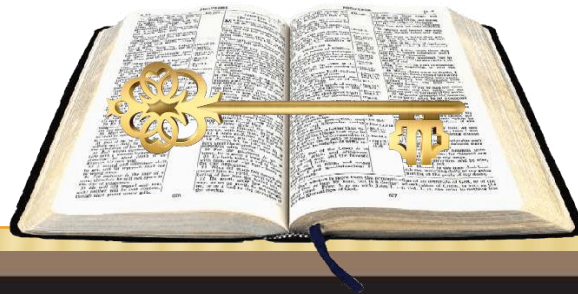


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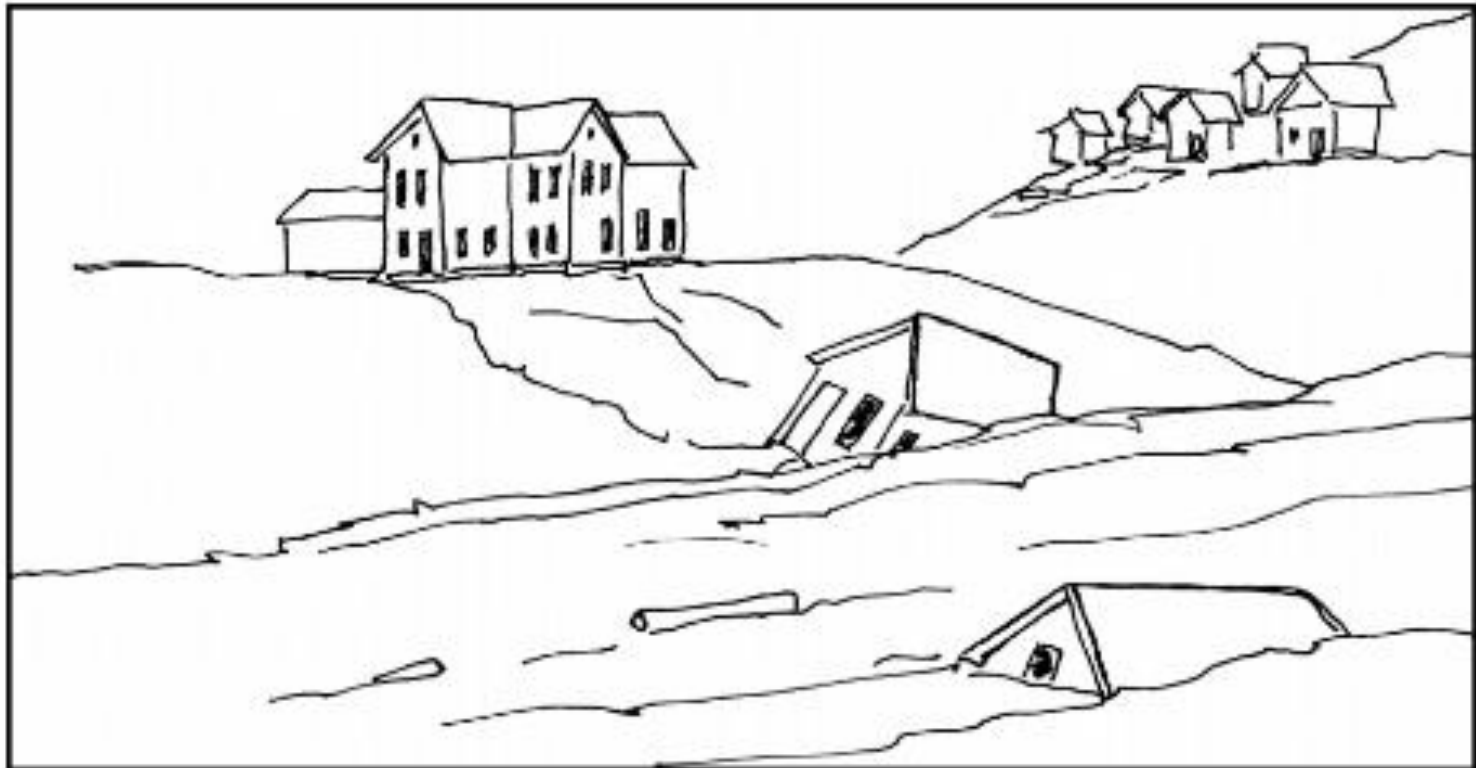
KEY VERSE

Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.

Matthew 7:24-27



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A home that is not built on biblical principles will not last. It is like a house built on sand.



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The Foundation of Marriage

Foundations are intended to give stability and strength to the structures which are built upon them. In the key verse for this lesson Jesus reveals that the foundation for life, and therefore marriage, is nothing less than the Word of God.



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Why is this foundation important?

Jesus says that the practice of doing what God's word says builds a foundation that helps us withstand the storms of life.

If the family is the foundation of society and marriage is the foundation of the family, then marriage needs to be held up by the firm foundation of God's word in order to support a successful society.

Understanding marriage as God defines it is critical for it to be the kind of foundation that establishes the family as a whole.



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The Definition of Marriage

Marriage is the binding covenant agreement between one man and one woman who commit themselves before God to be each other's companion for life.



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What makes a relationship between a woman and man a marriage?

Marriage vs. Living Together

Marriage

Have relationship

Share home, food, bed

In a divine covenant with God and each other

Living Together

Have relationship

Share home, food, bed

NOT in covenant and can therefore leave at will

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COVENANT MAKES A MARRIAGE

The thing that determines whether a man and woman ARE married can be summed up in one word: **COVENANT**. The word covenant means: a formal, solemn, binding agreement, or promise usually under seal between two or more parties especially for the performance of some action. Marriage is a divine covenant.



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Three important aspects of marriage:

1. It is a covenant agreement
2. It is a spiritual picture of the New Covenant through Christ
3. It is also companionship



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Marriage: A covenant agreement

- God instituted marriage on a covenant.
- In Bible times, covenants were taken very seriously and were sacred, even to the point of death.
- Covenants are held together by a verbal agreement from each party to keep their promises to one another.
- A break of covenant was a break of relationship.



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Vows = verbal agreement = Covenant

Man and Woman make verbal promises to keep each other in marriage and fulfill certain obligations as long as they live.

These verbal commitments become the covenant that binds them in relationship to one another for life.

God expects the obligations of the marriage covenant to be upheld as long as both the husband and wife are living.



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Outward symbols of the covenant

- Many cultures use a visual symbol of marriage: rings and other jewelry, special clothing, special hairstyles or adornments, and cosmetics.
- Rings are most common and are a visual symbol of the unending (circle) commitment of the individuals.



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God relates to humans through covenant

- *Noah*—Genesis 9:8-17
- *Abraham*—Genesis 17:2-14
- *Moses*—Exodus 6:2-8
- *David*—2 Samuel 7:8-16 and
Psalm 89: 28-29



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Marriage: A spiritual picture of the New Covenant



- The greatest and “New Covenant” came through Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- The covenant was instituted during the final Passover meal with His disciples.
- Jesus gave the bread and cup of Passover new meaning as a remembrance not of the sacrifice of the lamb of old, but of his impending sacrifice on the cross.
- The marriage promise is a symbol of the covenant-keeping nature of God.



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Marriage: A spiritual picture of the New Covenant

Every part of the Christian life rests on the fact that God does not lie and is committed to keeping His covenant. The Christian couple should reflect that part of God's character and nature in their marriage relationship as well. Christian marriage should be a spiritual picture of the relationship Jesus has with His bride, the church.



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Marriage: Covenant and companionship

*A cord
of
THREE
strands
is not
easily
BROKEN*



- *Adam and Eve*—Genesis 2:20-24
- *Two people in companionship with each other and with God create a strong bond*—Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- *The Rock of Jesus supports a good marriage*—Matthew 7:24-27





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Divorce is NOT God's design

Divorce breaks two covenants—between the two people and between the people and God

Divorce is often the result of not building a relationship on God's foundation

Divorce is a forgivable sin, but should try to be avoided



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A Cord of 3 Strands



- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- Solomon says that two people working together can overcome much, but that a third cord gives the added strength when life become too much for the two.
- The “third strand” is Jesus holding the couple together when the pressure comes.



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The marriage triangle



- Christ is the one who completes the marriage relationship.
- He gives the grace needed for each day.
- He gives the wisdom and strength the couple needs to face problems that arise.



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Jesus' active authority in marriage provides

Grace to cover sin

Love to help forgive

Solutions to problems

Healing for pain

Hope in a foundation that does not move

A reason to stay together

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SUMMARY OF PRINCIPLES

- Integrity and strength of everything built in life is determined by the foundation upon which it is built.
- The foundation upon which marriage is built is covenant. Without it, marriage has no strength.
- The power of this covenant is found in the Christian couple doing the things God asks of them in the relationship.
- Beyond that, their covenant relationship will be protected as they seek Christ first in their personal lives and allow Him to be central in their relationship with one another.



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When these things are in place, God's promise to the husband and wife is clear. No storm in life will ever have the power to destroy their relationship or their home. They will live under the blessing of God. It is then that God is pleased.



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



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Discuss the following definition of marriage:

Marriage is the binding covenant agreement between one man and one woman who commit themselves before God to be each other's companion for life.



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What part does “covenant” play in the marriage relationship between the husband and the wife?

Remember, in this lesson, “covenant” is defined as a binding agreement between two people.



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Why is “commitment” important in marriage?

Who is to make this commitment – the husband or the wife, or both?



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Discuss the fact that a marriage provides a companion for the husband and the wife for life.

What is a companion?

How is the companion instructed to treat their spouse?

Why is this so important?



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Read Malachi 2:13-16 where God said He hates divorce.

- Discuss how a couple can avoid divorce.
- What are the consequences of a husband or wife breaking their covenant with one another?



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Review the “Cord of 3 Strands” and the “Marriage Triangle.”

- Discuss the fact that a marriage will become stronger as the husband and wife grow closer to Christ.
- Who is represented in this “cord of three strands?”
- Discuss the concept that a “cord of three strands” is strong and will not unravel.



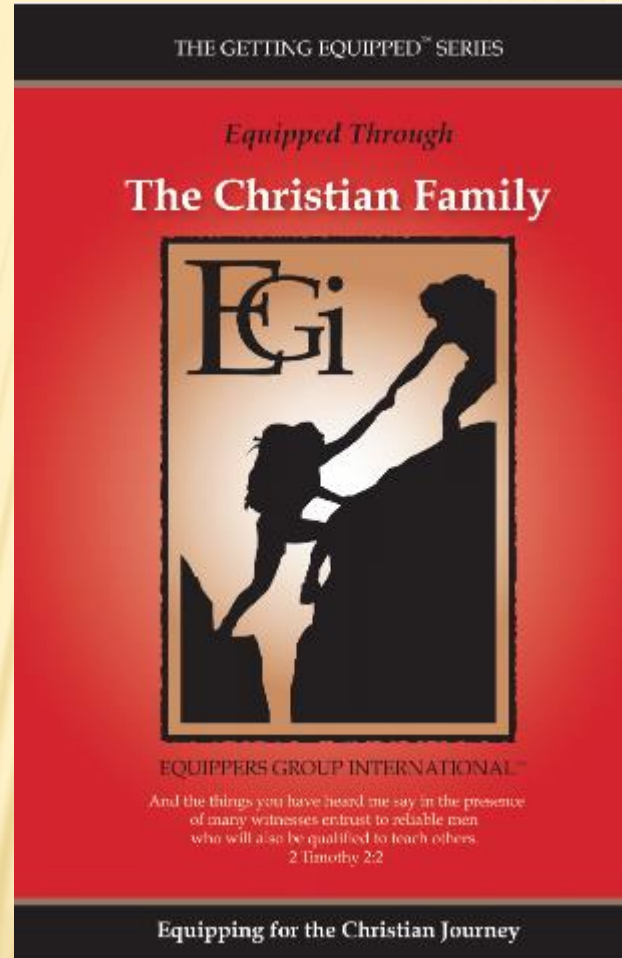
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APPLICATION

1. Prayerfully consider your own marriage. Does your marriage line up with the definition presented in this lesson? Write your thoughts.
2. Discuss with your spouse how your marriage can be improved. Are you good companions? As a couple, do you reflect Christ-like character? If not, discuss how you can improve this situation.



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