

ONCE UPON A MARRIAGE—1
JACOB & LEAH (AND RACHEL)
-NEVER SATISFIED-

16 Now Laban had two daughters; the name of the older was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. 17 Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful. Gen 29:16-17

WHEN MARRIAGE IS YOUR ANSWER

1) YOU COMPROMISE MORE THAN YOU SHOULD.

18 Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, "I'll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel..." Gen 29:18

2) BECOME DEMANDING.

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife. My time is completed, and I want to lie with her." Gen 29:21

3) ALWAYS END UP DISSATISFIED.

23 But when evening came, (Laban) took his daughter Leah and gave her to Jacob, and Jacob lay with her... 25 When morning came, there was Leah! So Jacob said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? I served you for Rachel, didn't I? Why have you deceived me?" Gen 29:23, 25

31 When the Lord saw that Leah was not loved, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren. 32 Leah became pregnant and gave birth to a son. She named him Reuben, for she said, "It is because the Lord has seen my misery. Surely my husband will love me now." Gen 29:31-32

SEARCHING FOR THE WRONG ONE

- **TO REALLY BE FULFILLED IN LIFE, YOU HAVE TO FIND THE ONE.**

- **GOD IS YOUR ONE AND YOUR SPOUSE IS YOUR TWO.**

35 She conceived again, and when she gave birth to a son she said, "This time I will praise the Lord." So she named him Judah. Then she stopped having children. Gen 29:35

Note: Leah (not Rachel) was the mother of Judah. Through him, Jesus, the Savior of the world would one day be born.

This passage tells the story of Jacob's marriage to sisters Leah and Rachel. Jacob's actions mirror many people today who put the weight of their deepest hopes and desires solely on their spouses and ultimately crush their marriages with unreal expectations.

- How does the world's view of romantic love differ from God's view?
- Describe what your picture of an ideal marriage looks like. What do you think it takes to achieve the type of marriage that honors God?
- Discuss some of the successful marriages you have seen. How did these couples achieve an ideal marriage?
- Why do you think so many people try to find fulfillment through relationships rather than finding it through God?
- Describe a time when you tried to find fulfillment and satisfaction through a relationship rather than finding it through God. What did you learn from this experience and how did it ultimately affect your relationship with both God and the other person?
- Describe how different your marriage or dating relationship is when you put God first?
- How have you seen unmet expectations like Jacob had in Genesis 29 affect your marriage or your relationships with others?
- Who or what is your ONE in your life right now? What specific things can you do to ensure that God your ONE?

NEXT STEPS

Here are some specific things you can do this week to help you have a stronger marriage or prepare for a marriage that honors God.

Consider reading *Rescue Your Love Life* by Drs. Henry Cloud and John Townsend with your spouse or LifeGroup. This book will teach you how to set realistic expectations within your marriage, as well as how to improve communication and enhance romance. A study guide for the book is also available. You can learn more about the book and study guide at <http://www.cloudtownsendstore.com/reylolibo.html>.

Follow Dr. Kim Kimberling on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/kimkimberling> Dr. Kimberling is a licensed marriage counselor who posts a marriage booster each day on Twitter. These tweets suggest actions designed to strengthen and grow marriages.

Use these prayer tips to guide your time with God this week to expand your conversations both in person and online:

- Confess to God those things or relationships that you are putting before Him to gain satisfaction.
- Ask God in prayer to help you keep Him number one in your life. Ask Him to help you overcome the distractions in your life.
- Ask God in prayer to help you have the right kinds of expectations in your marriage and other relationships.
- Pray for your spouse that they will put God first. If you aren't married, pray for your future spouse.
- Share with God in prayer those areas in your life that you feel unsatisfied. Ask God to help you find satisfaction.

ONCE UPON A MARRIAGE—2 AHAB AND JEZEBEL

No one else so completely sold himself to what was evil in the Lord's sight as Ahab did under the influence of his wife Jezebel.

1 Kings 21:25 NLT

- **AHAB REPRESENTS THE PASSIVE HUSBAND.**
- **JEZEBEL REPRESENTS THE CONTROLLING WIFE.**

THE PASSIVE HUSBAND

2 Ahab said to Naboth, "Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth." 3 But Naboth replied, "The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers." 4 So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat. 1 Kings 21:2-4

THE CONTROLLING WIFE

5 His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, "Why are you so sullen? Why won't you eat?" 6 He answered her, "Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, 'Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" 7 Jezebel his wife said, "Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up. I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." 1 Kings 21:5-7

- **BELITTLES HER HUSBAND WITH HER WORDS.**
Jezebel his wife said, "Is this how you act as king over Israel?" (7a)

- **TAKES OVER.**
I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." (7b)

THE HUSBANDS'S CALL TO LEAD

- **THE PROVIDER**
- **THE PROTECTOR**
- **THE PASTOR**

GOD WILL HOLD THE HUSBAND ACCOUNTABLE

15 As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to sell you. He is no longer alive, but dead." 16 When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth's vineyard. 17 Then the word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite: 18 "Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. 19 Say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?' Then say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood — yes, yours!'"

Talk It Over Questions:

- Share your experiences with passivity. How have you seen it weaken a relationship?
- What kinds of controlling behaviors are damaging your relationships? If this is something you struggle with, what might be the source of this tendency?
- What changes do you need to make to step into the right role God created you to fill as a man or woman of God?

You will never have the marriage you desire without giving God control. Start by talking it over with someone this week. Join the conversation on Facebook. Get resources from www.lifechurch.tv/talkitover.

Talking through the message during the week helps you turn what God is saying to you into action steps. These talking points, questions, and scriptures are designed to help you take the next step.

With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Kings 21:1-29.

This passage tells the story of how Jezebel and her husband Ahab had Naboth killed so they could take his vineyard. The type of unhealthy marriage that Ahab and Jezebel had in this passage serves as an example of a husband who is passive and a wife that is controlling.

- What types of attitudes or circumstances can cause us to become passive not just in our relationships with others, but in our relationship with God as well?
- How have you seen passivity weaken a relationship? What types of experiences have you had with passivity?
- Ahab's and Jezebel's character flaws were a reflection of their own insecurities. How have you seen your own insecurities negatively affect your relationships?
- Jezebel controlled Ahab by belittling him with her words. What kinds of words would help you feel more able to maintain a healthy relationship? How can you strive to speak positively in your own relationships?
- What types of controlling behaviors have you seen damage your relationships or the relationships of others? If this is something you struggle with, what might be the source of your controlling tendencies?
- How can we be effective leaders in our lives and in our relationships without being overbearing or controlling?
- Describe a time when God held you accountable for a sin that you committed. What did you learn from this situation?
- What changes do you need to make that will allow you to step into the role that God created you to fill as a man or a woman?

NEXT STEPS

Here are some specific things you can do this week to help you have a stronger marriage or prepare for a marriage that honors God.

Spend time reading 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 each day and then reciting it aloud. As you recite these verses about what God's kind of love is like, insert your name into this passage. If you are married, recite this passage with your spouse and discuss the traits of love you do well and those you need to work on.

Take time to do a self assessment of your behavior to determine if you are either too passive or too controlling in your relationships. Spend time in prayer asking God to help you change your heart and improve these behaviors. If you are married, discuss with your spouse how you both can work together to break this cycle.

Use these prayer tips to guide your time with God this week to expand your conversations both in person and online:

- Have an honest conversation with God about passivity in your life. Ask Him to help remove your passivity.
- Pray and ask God to help you stop speaking any harmful or negative words in your relationships.
- Pray and ask God to enable you to be a better leader in all areas of your life including your relationships.
- Thank God for the relationships He has given you. Ask Him to help you make each of them the best they can be.
- Ask God to remove any controlling behavior that you may be exhibiting in your life. Allow God to be the one in control.
- Pray for your spouse. If you aren't married, pray for your future spouse or seek direction from God about His plans for your future relationships.

**ONCE UPON A MARRIAGE—3
ABRAHAM AND SARAH
FAITH-LESS OR FAITH-FULL?**

The Lord had said to Abram, "Leave your country, your people and your father's household and go to the land I will show you. 2 "I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing." Genesis 12:1-2

8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. Hebrews 11:8

FAITH-LESS SEASONS

1) WE FALL VICTIM TO FEAR.

As (Abram) was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. 12 When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. 13 Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you." Genesis 12:11-13

2) WE GET AHEAD OF GOD.

Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had borne him no children. But she had an Egyptian maidservant named Hagar; 2 so she said to Abram, "The Lord has kept me from having children. Go, sleep with my maidservant; perhaps I can build a family through her." Genesis 16:1-2

3) WE DON'T BELIEVE GOD WILL DO IT FOR US.

17 Abraham fell facedown; he laughed and said to himself, "Will a son be born to a man a hundred years old? Will Sarah bear a child at the age of ninety?" Genesis 17:17

12 So Sarah laughed to herself as she thought, "After I am worn out and my master is old, will I now have this pleasure?" 13 Then the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' 14 Is anything too hard for the Lord?" Genesis 18:12-14

19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead — since he was about a hundred years old — and that Sarah's womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. Romans 4:19-21

TALK IT OVER

- Share your earliest dreams about marriage. How is your life different from how you thought it would be?
- Discuss how each of the faithless seasons has played out in your life. Which one do you identify with the most?
- Even with faithless seasons, Abraham and Sarah are icons of faith. How will you live from now on so your life (and marriage) will be characterized by faith?

Take time to identify what next steps God wants you to take. Talk it over on the phone, over lunch, even in the car on the way home. For more, visit www.lifechurch.tv/talkitover.

Talking through the message during the week helps you put what God is saying to you into action. These talking points, questions, and scriptures are designed to help you take the next step.

With your Bible or YouVersion, read Genesis 12:1-9 and Hebrews 11:8.

These verses describe how Abraham obeyed God's calling to leave home. Even though he didn't know where he was going, Abraham and Sarah demonstrated faith in God by obeying.

- Describe a time when it took faith to do something that God led you to do? What did this situation teach you about trusting in God?
- What did your earliest dreams of marriage look like? How different is your life now from how you thought it would be?

Read Genesis 12:10-20.

Abraham gives into his fear in this passage. We see his faith falter as he asks his wife Sarah to pretend to be his sister so he isn't killed.

- Describe a time when you gave into your own fear and did not rely on God. What did you learn from this experience?
- How have you seen fear affect your relationships with others and with God?

Read Genesis 16:1-6.

Sarah grows impatient waiting on God's promise to give her a child in this passage, so she asks Abraham to marry Hagar so that she can give them a child.

- Why is it so hard for most of us to be patient while waiting on God to answer our prayers? Why do you think God makes us wait sometimes?
- Sarah's impatience caused her to get ahead of God's timing of keeping His promise. How have you seen impatience negatively affect your relationships?

Read Genesis 17:17, 18:12-14, and Romans 4:19-21.

Even though Abraham and Sarah endured faithless seasons, Romans 4 shows us that they did not lose faith. Their faith was ultimately strengthened when God fulfilled His promise.

- Discuss how each of the faithless seasons has played out in your life. Which one do you identify with the most?
- What are some specific things you can do to have the kind of faith that Abraham and Sarah had?
- Even with faithless seasons, Abraham and Sarah are icons of faith. How will you live from now on so your life (and marriage) will be characterized by faith?

NEXT STEPS

Here are some specific things you can do this week to help you have a stronger marriage or prepare for a marriage that honors God.

Spend time with your spouse writing a vision statement for your marriage based on faith in God not just your personal goals. Put this written document where you can see it on a regular basis.

Spend time reading Hebrews 11, known as the faith chapter. Let God speak to you as you read about the great things that have been accomplished as a result of having faith in God.

Use these prayer tips to guide your time with God this week to expand your conversations both in person and online:

- Confess those areas of your life in prayer where you lack faith. Ask God to strengthen your faith.
- Share with God in prayer the fears that have a hold on you. Ask God to help you remove all fears.
- Pray and ask God to give you more patience in all of your relationships and with God.
- Pray and ask God to help give you a vision for your marriage or any other important relationships in your life.
- Read Hebrews 11 and then ask God to stir the kind of faith within you that is described in this passage.

ONCE UPON A MARRIAGE—4
HOSEA AND GOMER
UNFAILING LOVE

When the Lord began to speak through Hosea, the Lord said to him, "Go, take to yourself an adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness, because the land is guilty of the vilest adultery in departing from the Lord." 3 So he married Gomer daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son. Hos 1:2-3

THE MOST COMMON MARRIAGE MISCONCEPTION

- **WHAT I'M MISSING IS BETTER THAN WHAT I HAVE.**

...She said, 'I will go after my lovers, who give me my food and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.' Hosea 2:5

GOD'S RESPONSE TO SPIRITUAL ADULTERY

- **RIGHTEOUS ANGER**

She has not acknowledged that I was the one who gave her the grain, the new wine and oil, who lavished on her the silver and gold... 9 "Therefore I will take away my grain when it ripens, and my new wine when it is ready. I will take back my wool and my linen, intended to cover her nakedness. 10 So now I will expose her lewdness before the eyes of her lovers; no one will take her out of my hands. Hosea 2:8-10

- **UNFAILING LOVE**

Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her. 15 There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. Hosea 2:14-15

GOD'S MESSAGE FOR THE BETRAYED SPOUSE

- **FORGIVE AND LOVE AS YOU'VE BEEN FORGIVEN AND LOVED.**

The Lord said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods..." Hosea 3:1

12 Sow for yourselves righteousness, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers righteousness on you. Hosea 10:12

TALK IT OVER

- Share an example of a marriage you know of that has been a good illustration of God's faithfulness. What can you learn from them?
- How will you keep from practicing for divorce whether you're married, unmarried, or divorced?
- What are some ways you've been unfaithful to God? What will your next steps be to restore that relationship?

Invite God to talk to you through this message. Talk it over with someone this week. Find more resources online at www.lifechurch.tv/talkitover.

Talking through the message during the week helps you put what God is saying to you into action. These talking points, questions, and scriptures are designed to help you take the next step.

With your Bible or YouVersion, read Hosea 1:1-11 and Hosea 2:1-15.

These passages tell the story of Hosea. God told Hosea to marry a prostitute named Gomer. Unfortunately, Gomer cheated on Hosea and bore children with other men. In chapter 2, God responds to Gomer's unfaithfulness first with righteous anger and then with unfailing love and forgiveness.

- In what ways does our society train people towards divorce?
- What are some changes you can make that will prepare you for a successful marriage whether you are currently single, married, or divorced?
- The most common marriage misconception is thinking what I'm missing is better than what I have. How have you experienced that misconception in your own relationships and what were the results?
- The story of Hosea and Gomer is a picture of what spiritual adultery looks like. What are some ways you have been unfaithful to God? What will be your next steps towards restoring that relationship?

Read Hosea 3:1 and 10:12.

God tells Hosea in these verses to forgive his wife and show her the same faithfulness that God shows towards us.

- How have you seen God demonstrate His unfailing love towards you when you have been unfaithful to Him?
- How do you tend to deal with a loved one who has wronged you in some way?
- Describe how you can better model God's faithfulness and forgiveness in your own relationships.

NEXT STEPS

Here are some specific things you can do this week to help you have a stronger marriage or prepare for a marriage that honors God.

Spend some time this week praying about someone that you need to forgive and model God's faithfulness towards. Begin the process of healing that relationship. Start by praying and allowing God to guide you on how best to work towards reconciliation.

If you are married, take time to openly discuss with your spouse specific ways you can work together to prevent unfaithfulness and create more accountability within your marriage. Look for ways you can guard against things that could come between you. If you are single, list some steps to implement now that will help you work towards preventing unfaithfulness in your marriage in the future.

Use these prayer tips to guide your time with God this week to expand your conversations both in person and online:

- Ask God to help you remain faithful in all of your relationships—starting with your relationship with Him.
- Confess those areas of your life where you have been unfaithful to God. Pray and ask Him for His wonderful forgiveness.
- Pray and ask God to help you model His faithfulness and forgiveness in all of your relationships.
- Thank God in prayer for His unfailing love, faithfulness, and forgiveness that He has given you throughout your life.
- Pray for someone that has wronged you. Ask God to guide you as you attempt to reconcile the relationship.