

The Meaning of Marriage *Discussion Guide*

CHAPTER 2: THE POWER FOR MARRIAGE

Introduction

We carry a cultural assumption that marriage is supposed to be a fifty-fifty proposition. If spouses meet each other halfway, a marriage should be successful, right? But Jesus modeled a different and much more radical way of living in community with others. The apostle Paul later applied Jesus' model to the unique relationship of marriage. A marriage thrives not when each spouse meets the other halfway, but when each tries to give 100 percent to the other. Paul calls on married couples to submit to each other—to put the other's needs ahead of one's own. That's a huge challenge because our wiring as human beings and the wounds we've experienced in life push us toward self-centeredness.

What would it look like in your marriage if you tried to put your spouse's happiness ahead of your own . . . and if your spouse did the same for you?

Icebreaker

Have each couple share memories from their first date.

Discussion Questions

1. As you read the chapter, what stood out most?
2. Keller closes out the first section of this chapter with this observation: *"If we look to our spouses to fill up our tanks in a way that only God can do, we are demanding an impossibility."* To what extent do you look to your spouse to be your source of joy? In what areas of your relationship does your focus need to shift?
3. Read Philippians 2:3–4. What is challenging about the idea of putting your spouse's happiness ahead of your own in response to what Jesus has done for you? What would doing so require of you?
4. What is one way you've seen your spouse put your happiness ahead of his or her own?
5. Talk about a time when you've found happiness by prioritizing your spouse's happiness above your own.

For the Ride Home

Talk about this question on your way home:

What is one thing I can do this week to prioritize your happiness?

Exercise

This week, complete this exercise in this order:

1. **Think** about how your spouse responded to the question, “*What is one thing I can do this week to prioritize your happiness?*”
2. **Write** down what you feel (good or bad) when you think about following through on what your spouse communicated.
3. **Acknowledge** what Jesus has done for you. Read 2 Corinthians 5:15 to remind yourself.
4. **Respond** to what Jesus has done for you by following through on what your spouse communicated.

Before the next group meeting, answer these questions with your spouse:

1. *How difficult was it to prioritize each other's happiness? What emotions did it stir?*
2. *How did it feel when your spouse prioritized your happiness?*

Moving Forward

The idea of putting your spouse first is easy to understand, but difficult to live. No matter how hard you try, you won't do it perfectly. No one does. Even in the strongest marriages, it doesn't happen 100 percent of the time. But the effort itself—the willingness to identify your own self-centeredness and the determination to minimize its influence on the central relationship of your life—will radically improve the quality of your marriage.

What would it look like if you regularly and consistently acknowledged that Christ put you first when he died for you and you responded by putting your spouse first?

Changing Your Mind

And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

2 Corinthians 5:15

