

The Meaning of Marriage *Discussion Guide*

CHAPTER 4: THE MISSION OF MARRIAGE

Introduction

Friendship can be life changing. Friends—true friends—provide stability and predictability during the storms of life. They love us for who we are despite our flaws. They hold us accountable and challenge us to become better versions of ourselves. True friends give us the precious and all-too-rare opportunities to really know someone else and to really be known.

Our culture tends to reduce the purpose of marriage to a sexual commitment. That's certainly important, but it only describes one facet of the mission of marriage: to provide a unique friendship that is deeper, more intimate, and more profound than any other in our lives.

Icebreaker

Have each person complete this sentence: "Once characteristic I appreciate in my spouse is . . ."

Discussion Questions

1. As you read the chapter, what stood out most?
2. How has your definition of the purpose of marriage grown since your wedding?
3. What passions and interests do you share as a couple? How have those shared passions and interests helped to bind you in friendship and common purpose?
4. In "The Character of Friendship" section of the chapter, Keller writes, "There are two features of real friendship—*constancy* and *transparency*." Which comes easiest to you?
5. What do you think of the idea that you are to help your spouse become the person God wants to eventually make him or her? What would that require of you?
6. What are some things you could do to recognize the change and growth God is producing in your spouse's life?

For the Ride Home

Talk about this question on your way home:

What would you like your marriage to look like when you're sixty years old?

Exercise

This week, answer these questions on your own and then discuss them with your spouse:

1. *When you are sixty years old . . .*
 - *What kind of relationship do you want to have with God?*
 - *What kind of relationship do you want to have with your adult children?*
 - *What do you want your finances to look like?*
 - *What do you want to be doing in your retirement or your career?*
2. *If your life at sixty looked the way you described in the previous question, how would it influence your friendship with your spouse?*

Moving Forward

If marriage is a unique friendship, the purpose of that friendship is for each spouse to help the other grow closer and closer to God over time. Marriage is the primary context in which we get to practice the selflessness with which Jesus calls us to live. It's the primary relationship in which we have an opportunity to completely drop our guards and be fully known by another person as we also come to fully know that person. Our spouses are uniquely positioned to love us despite our faults and to help us reach our full potential as people and as children of God. And we're uniquely positioned to do the same for our spouses.

Changing Your Mind

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Ephesians 5:25–27

