THE FOUNDATION OF A GREAT MARRIAGE

Salvation and the Holy Spirit

Lesson 1

In order to have a godly, Christ-honoring marriage, it is vital that we have a proper foundation. Just as a house must have a solid foundation to support it, so must every marriage. In this lesson we will learn about the three-layer foundation, which every God-honoring marriage is built upon.

I. FOUNDATION LAYER ONE – A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST

Christians have a certain "lingo" they use when speaking of salvation. Many of the terms they use make no sense to those who don't know Christ. They talk about "being saved," being "born again," or when they "repented." These terms are confusing to most unbelievers. Apart from the Christian jargon knowing Jesus Christ as Lord of your life and Savior from sins is not that complicated to understand.

A. **First, you need to understand who God is.** The Bible says God is the creator of heaven and earth. He is a just and holy God who must punish all sin. Sin is any violation of His will either in thought or deed.

1. **Gen. 1:1** In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

2. **Isa. 5:16** But the Lord of hosts will be exalted in judgment, And the holy God will show Himself holy in righteousness.

3. **Neh. 1:3** The Lord is slow to anger and great in power, And the Lord will by no means leave the guilty unpunished. In whirlwind and storm is His way, And clouds are the dust beneath His feet.

B. **Second, you need to understand who Jesus is.** The Bible says that Jesus was God incarnate, which means He was 100% both God and Man. The Scriptures say that He was born of a virgin, lived a perfect life, died on the cross for the sins of the world, was buried and rose again on the third day, conquering death. Because of His love for us, Jesus voluntarily suffered God's wrath and became a curse for us.

1. **Isa. 9:6** For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

2. **Gal. 4:4-5** But when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, in order that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.

3. **I Cor. 15:1-4** Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, . . . by which also you are saved, . . . For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.

C. **Third, you need to understand who you are.** The Bible says that all men are sinners and fall short of God's holy perfection. Sin is doing anything which is contrary or which falls short of the perfection of God. Because God is holy and just, He must punish sin. Because every sin is an infinite offense to a perfectly holy God, man cannot "pay" or "work off" our debt to God. Everyone deserves the wrath of God for all have rebelled against Him.

1. **Eccl. 7:20** Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins.

2. **Rom. 3:10** As it is written,"There is none righteous, not even one.

3. **Rom. 3:23** For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

D. **Fourth, you need to know that you are not good enough to please God.** Your good works cannot save you, nor can they make you acceptable in God's sight. God demands perfection and you are not perfect. Since we cannot meet up to God's perfect standard we need someone to give us their perfect righteousness. This is why we must turn from our sins and believe in Jesus. He is the only one who can save you from the consequences of your sin. Jesus Christ paid the penalty of sin by dying on the cross. Because He was perfect, His sacrifice satisfied God's holy justice and wrath.

But just because Christ paid the penalty, that does not mean that you are saved. If someone bought you an airplane ticket to Hawaii, just having the ticket paid for does not get you to Hawaii. You would first have to receive the ticket, leave the place where you are, get on the plane and fly to Hawaii. In like manner, Christ has paid for your sins, but you must "receive Him" as your Savior, leave your sin, and trust in Jesus alone to save you. You must believe or have faith. Saving faith is not just agreeing that the facts about Jesus Christ and what He did are true. The demons believe those things (James 2:19). Saving faith is a volitional commitment or resolve to submit to Christ as the Lord and Savior of your life. It is to receive Him as "your" personal Savior, Lord, and Master. It is to trust Him by believing that His way is best and that your way is not.

1. **John 1:12** But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.

2. **Rom. 6:23** For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

3. **Eph. 2:8-9** For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.

4. **Tit. 3:5** He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.

II. FOUNDATION LAYER TWO - TAPPING INTO THE HOLY SPIRIT'S POWER

A. In **John 3:3-6** Jesus is speaking to Nicodemus about salvation and says:

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

1. Jesus told Nicodemus, unless one has something happen to them they cannot see the kingdom of heaven. What is it and what two procedures describe it?

2. What did Jesus say must happen in order to get to heaven?

3. What two things did Jesus use to describe what happens?

B. In **I Cor. 12:13** the Apostle Paul explains to the church at Corinth how all the members of the church work together even though they are different. He says:

I Cor. 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

C. When we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior:

1. What do we become a part of?

2. How do we become a part of it?

3. What were we all made to drink?

D. In **Eph 1:13-14 and 4:30** Paul tells us what happens to the Holy Spirit after we receive Him at Salvation.

In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

1. What do these verses tell us we are sealed with?

2. What are we commanded to not do?

3. How long does the Holy Spirit stay in the life of a believer?

E. How to Get Plugged in to the Holy Spirit's Power

Paul tells us how to get plugged into the Holy Spirit's power in **Gal. 5:16-23.**

Gal. 5:16-23 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh. **17** For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please. **18** But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. **19** Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, **20** idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, **21** envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.**22** But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, **23** gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

1. What command is given in **vs. 16**?

2. What is the reason for the command in **vs. 16**?

3. Which deeds of the flesh commonly pop up in most marriages (**vss. 19-21**)?

4. Why do people do these things?

F. Read Gal. 5:22-26 below.

Gal. 5:22-26 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. 26 Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another.

1. How can you know if you are being controlled by the Holy Spirit?

2. Do you think it's possible to be controlled by the flesh and Spirit at the same time? Why or why not?(**see Rom. 8:5-8** below)

Rom. 8:5-8 For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

G. **Read Psa. 66:18 and Mic. 3:4.**

Psa. 66:18 If I regard wickedness in my heart, The Lord will not hear;

Mic. 3:4 Then they will cry out to the Lord, But He will not answer them. Instead, He will hide His face from them at that time, Because they have practiced evil deeds.

1. When we display the deeds of the flesh or have unconfessed sin in our heart, how does God respond to our prayers? Why?

2. It is normal for us to sin, since we are all sinners. When we sin, we are following the fleshly evil desires within us and not the Holy Spirit. When we sin, the Spirit is grieved and we are walking in the flesh. We have shut off the power for a great marriage, but the power can be turned on again.

H. **According to I John 1:9,** how can we restore our relationship with God after sinning?

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I. What does it mean to confess and what does true confession require?

The **foundational key** to living a godly life and having a good marriage is being controlled by the Spirit of God. If we sin and then don't confess, our walk with God suffers and we disconnect ourselves from the power of the Holy Spirit by walking in the flesh. However, if we learn to confess our sins to God and one another immediately after sinning, we will find our sinful patterns slowly being exchanged with godly ones. Godly people are not people who never sin, but people who confess quickly after sinning.

We are walking by the Spirit, submitting ourselves to God, displaying the fruit of the Spirit and our marriage is great (Gal. 5:16).

Then we get selfish, submit to our sinful nature, walk in the flesh, sin against God, and grieve the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 4:30). This causes conflict and isolation in our marriage.

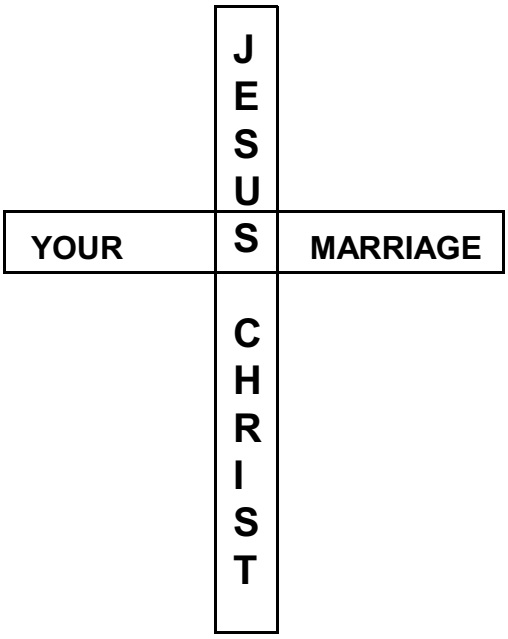
If we confess our sins to God, He cleanses us from all our sin and our relationship with Him is restored. We are no longer rebelling against Him. (I Jn. 1:9).

When our sins are confessed, we are walking by the Spirit again.

If we don't confess our sins, our spiritual lives will suffer until we confess and repent of our sins. We will usually feel far from God or that God is far from us. When we are in unrepentant sin, we usually try to hide from God rather than come to Him. God does not hear our prayers, and we no longer have the Holy Spirit's help to live a godly life because we are rebelling against God. God waits for us to confess our sins to Him in prayer.

How does the cross to the right illustrate how our horizontal relationship in marriage relates to our vertical relationship to Christ?

When it comes to confessing our sins, do we want to be like a bean bag that falls and doesn't bounce back or like a basketball that quickly rebounds after hitting the floor?



III. FOUNDATION LAYER THREE – FORGIVENESS

It is inevitable that we will sin against our spouse at times and hurt them. It is important that we know how to forgive. Some couples bring into their marriage all sorts of baggage learned from ungodly parents or previous relationships that cause conflict. This can go on for years slowly driving a wedge between them. Hurt feelings lead to bitterness, frustration, resentment, isolation, and oftentimes divorce. The solution is forgiveness.

Forgiveness is vital to any good marriage. The couple that does not forgive grows bitter, cynical, and isolated from one another. They become like two ships passing in the night. Their marriage might best be described as a business relationship rather than a close friendship. The offenses of the past build up like a huge wall that separates them from one another. The only way to knock down the wall is with the battering ram of forgiveness.

According to the verses below, who is the model of forgiveness?

A. **Psa. 86:5** For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in lovingkindness to all who call upon You.

B. **Col. 3:12-13** So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

C. Do we deserve to have forgiveness from God? Why or why not?

D. What kind of forgiveness does God offer us?

E. How many times should we forgive our spouse according to the text below?

F. **Mt. 18:21-22** Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus *said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.

G. According to the verses below what does God tell us we must do?

1. **Mk. 11:25** Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you your transgressions.

2. **Eph. 4:32** Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.

H. What are the consequences of not forgiving our spouse?

Mt. 6:14-15 For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

IV. HOMEWORK

A. Go on a date and work through the statements below:

1. If there is any bitterness, resentment, or an unforgiving spirit in your relationship, confess this to one another and to God.

2. Take time to tell each other at least five things you appreciate about them.

3. Make a commitment to go on a date or have a specific time that you spend with your spouse every week. Set aside a specific time and day that will be your “date day.” Take turns planning your dates. Make sure your dates aren’t merely watching a movie or a spectator sport, but include time when you can talk.

B. Starting tonight, for eight days, read one chapter of the Song of Solomon until you finish all eight chapters. Discuss what you find.