



Dear Friend,

I am so glad you're part of this series on 5 Values for a Rock Solid Marriage. Whether you are married, single, dating, engaged, or divorced, this series is for you. God has created us for and put us all in significant relationships of one kind or another. This series is meant to bless you and invite you further into our church's mission to *Join in God's Restoration*. Restoration is the business of Christ. He longs to bring us closer in all of our relationships because healthy and thriving relationships here on earth give us a sample of what our relationship with God is meant to be.

This series is also designed to help us live out our church vision of growing *Deeper in Christ, Daring to Serve, Together in Joy*. By looking at marriage and the most important relationships in our lives, we can grow *deeper in Christ*. As we look at how we treat those whom Christ has entrusted to our care, we can *dare to serve*. When the grace and mercy of God is central in them, we can discover a deep, abiding *joy* in all relationships.

The following are questions to facilitate discussion these coming weeks. The questions and assignments are broken down week-by-week, and include readings from *The Love Dare* and Tim Keller's *The Meaning of Marriage*, which is a book that heavily influenced the outline of this series. You can buy a copy of either book on the church patio.

Know I am praying for us as a church as we journey together and learn from one another how we can achieve God's best. He's still working on me, friend, and I know without a doubt he wants the best for you too.

With much joy and expectation in Christ,  
Pastor Henry Hansen

## OVERVIEW OF FIVE VALUES FOR A ROCK-SOLID MARRIAGE

<b>DATE</b>	<b>SCRIPTURE</b>	<b>MAIN IDEA</b>
<b>May 5</b>	Matthew 22:34-40	The Priority of Faith: Faith vs. Feeling
<b>May 12</b>	Matthew 19:4-6	It's a Covenant: Covenant vs. Contract
<b>May 19</b>	Ecclesiastes 4:9-12	Friendship First: Friendship vs. Fulfillment
<b>May 26</b>	Genesis 2:4-25, Ephesians 4:1-6	Unity in the Spirit and Habits that Bind us Together: Unity vs. Underperformance
<b>June 2</b>	John 17 1 Thessalonians 5:23, Genesis 2:27-31	Mission Minded: Mission vs. Me

# Week 1

## GETTING STARTED:

1. Describe one of the most meaningful wedding ceremonies you've ever been to. What made it so memorable and what details were important or drew your attention? Consider the music, readings, bridal party, vows, homily, and setting.
2. What's something you're looking for in this series in terms of your understanding of marriage or relationships in general?

## REFLECTION:

Read Matthew 22:34-40.

1. Consider all of the dimensions of a person, like heart, soul, and mind. Mark's Gospel also includes to love God with all of your "strength." Talk about the differences between these dimensions. How do the unique faculties function together?
2. What does it mean to "love" God?
3. According to the greatest commandment, how do we put "first things first"? What makes this so hard? What other relationships (including to our work or other priorities) often get put first in our lives? Name at least 3.
4. Have you ever noticed your relationships becoming healthier as a result of putting God at the center of your life?
5. What mechanisms do we have for keeping God first? (Example: Christian worship)
6. How can couples put God first in their relationship?
7. What image or metaphor from Sunday's message stood out to you?

## APPLICATION:

1. Identify one practice you and your spouse can apply to your marriage to keep centered on Christ. If you are not married, what practice can you and someone close to you apply to make your relationship more centered on Christ?
2. Choose one practice you can individually incorporate that applies to putting God first. What gets in the way of you putting God first? How can you eliminate one of these obstacles?

## FURTHER EXPLORATION:

Use *The Love Dare* as a daily devotion to benefit your marriage.  
Read the introduction and Chapter 1 of *The Meaning of Marriage*.

# Week 2

## GETTING STARTED:

1. What's a significant promise someone made to you growing up that the person kept?

## REFLECTION:

Read Matthew 19:4-6.

1. What's the deal with "the two becoming one"? Do they share an identity? Are they still distinct, separate people? Can you make a case for either of these perspectives?
2. What is a covenant and how is it different from a contract? Give examples of the use of "covenant" in Scripture. What does this word say about God, us, and his commitment? How does it describe the commitment God desires for us in marriage?
3. What happens in a marriage ceremony when a couple says "I do" and "I will"? What's the commitment being made?
4. Consider the idea that "constraint leads us to greater freedom." How does the constraint of being committed to one person through marriage free us to deeper love?
5. How does marriage differ as a theological construct versus a social one?
6. Is there virtue in a lifelong, faithful marriage that has bitterness and anger festering at the core of the relationship? Consider the concept of love as not only everlasting, but as something that involves our continuous work and investment. The constancy of marriage is important, but so is its substance.

## FROM LAST WEEK'S READING:

1. Is there anything from *The Love Dare* or *The Meaning of Marriage* you wish to contribute to the discussion with your group?

## APPLICATION:

1. Think upon your own commitment in marriage. Is it truly "for better or for worse until death do us part"? Is there a struggle there?
2. How can you apply intentional love so that you're not only considering the permanency of marriage, but the affection, intimacy, and love that should be at its center? Is there anything you need to eliminate or let go of to make that possible?
3. If you're not married, how do you reflect on covenant in terms of your relationship with God? How might this covenant extend to your relationship with others?

## FURTHER EXPLORATION:

Use *The Love Dare* as a daily devotion to benefit your marriage.  
Read Chapters 2 and 3 of *The Meaning of Marriage*.

# Week 3

## GETTING STARTED:

1. Describe the qualities of a best friend. Do you have any BFFs?

## REFLECTION:

Read Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 and Proverbs 2:17, 27:9, and 22:24-25.

1. We are designed for relationship and relationship is made for human flourishing. What does this say about God? Share several traits it illustrates in terms of God's nature, work, salvation, and any other thoughts you have about our unique design.
2. What's different about Christian friendship versus non-Christian friendship? Tim Keller suggests on page 125 of *The Meaning of Marriage* that Christian friendships have the traits of spiritual transparency (confession of being a sinner) and spiritual constancy (bearing one another's burdens and building each other up). What are your thoughts?
3. Can a married couple really take the path of being "friends"? Consider the elements added in—intimacy, sex, sharing space (your spouse is your permanent roommate), raising kids, and stewarding resources (home, finances, and time). Where's the friendship element and how does that fit in?
4. Is it appropriate and useful that couples seek to help each other become our "future glory selves"? Tim Keller suggests the "mission of marriage" is to become the best version of ourselves on this side of the kingdom. In other words, marriage is a vehicle for the sanctification of the believer. Do you agree or disagree?

## FROM LAST WEEK'S READING:

1. Is there anything from *The Love Dare* or *The Meaning of Marriage* you wish to contribute to the discussion with your group?

## APPLICATION:

1. What characteristics of friendship do you think are appropriate and fitting for you and your marriage partner to apply? How does this notion of friendship fit? Where does it break down? How good of a friend are you to your spouse in daily life—really?
2. If you're not married, be especially intentional to practice friendship exceedingly well with at least two of your closest friends. Tell them what they mean to you.

## FURTHER EXPLORATION:

Use *The Love Dare* as a daily devotion to benefit your marriage.  
Read Chapter 4 of *The Meaning of Marriage*.

# Week 4

## GETTING STARTED:

1. Recall a time when you witnessed lack of unity with a team, production, committee, or some type of effort. What chain of events caused that reaction of disunity?

## REFLECTION:

Read Genesis 2:4-25 and Ephesians 4:1-6.

1. Drawing from Ephesians 4, why is unity so important in the Christian life? Consider all of the references made to Christ, baptism, and faith in the passage.
2. Reflecting on the creation account in Genesis 2, look at the last three verses. How do we contribute to the unity of marriage? What does union with Christ have to do with our intimacy/closeness to our spouses?
3. What are core practices that bind you together as a couple? You might consider hobbies, sex, child rearing, habits of affection, and habits like prayer and worship.
4. How does unity in the church and as a couple make a difference in how we are able to bless and influence others?
5. What does marriage have to do with “church?” Is there any correlation at all?
6. It has been said in classic Christianity that marriage is a “church within the church.” How would you put that idea in your own words?

## FROM LAST WEEK’S READING:

1. Is there anything from *The Love Dare* or *The Meaning of Marriage* you wish to contribute to the discussion with your group?

## APPLICATION:

1. Identify some important contributors to unity in marriage. Practice them as a couple.
2. Talk with your spouse or significant other about how your marital health impacts the Body of Christ. How might the health of both be connected, based on God’s design? Can you implement a habit in your marriage that you believe would further uphold the unity, strength, and mission of the church?
3. If you’re not married, look at your own alignment with the church and its striving toward greater unity. How do you help this unity?

## FURTHER EXPLORATION:

Use *The Love Dare* as a daily devotion to benefit your marriage.  
Read Chapters 5 and 6 of *The Meaning of Marriage*.

# Week 5

## GETTING STARTED:

1. Describe a time when you were “on a mission.” It could be a mission trip, day trip, a goal you achieved, or something that demanded you to gear up and think, plan ahead, and then execute.

## REFLECTION:

Read John 17, 1 Thessalonians 5:23, and Genesis 2:27-31.

1. Share at least three ways John 17 relates to the idea of “mission” and what God intends for our lives.
2. What does it mean to be fruitful apart from having kids? Explain.
3. How do you see your marriage today as a “ministry unit”? Perhaps you can begin personally—how are you looking outward as an individual? How can you share that perspective with your spouse?
4. How can couples practice mission regularly? How might the church be involved in this?

## FROM LAST WEEK’S READING:

1. Is there anything from *The Love Dare* or *The Meaning of Marriage* you wish to contribute to the discussion with your group?

## APPLICATION:

1. Choose three key ways you and your spouse will practice the mission of serving others.
2. If you are not married, how can you partner with others and allow your life to be one of giving toward a greater cause or group of people in Jesus’ name?
3. Identify one to three marriage challenges this series presented to you and develop a plan to meet those challenges proactively.

## FURTHER EXPLORATION:

Use *The Love Dare* as a daily devotion to benefit your marriage.  
Read the final chapters of *The Meaning of Marriage*.