

Influence

Joined Together

Fusion Marriage Series

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INTRODUCTION: Joined Together

Fusion is the marriage ministry of New Life Community Church. The Fusion ministry exists to help connect couples to the Lord, to each other, and to the family of faith in the church. The goal is that marriages will be strengthened, lives will be changed, and families will experience God's power and blessing in every area.

The Fusion "Joined Together" curriculum is designed for use in small groups. "Joined Together" consists of 7 units with 4 sessions each. The titles of the 7 units are: UNITE, HEAL, COMMUNICATE, INFLUENCE, OVERCOME, INVEST, and DELIGHT. Each small group session is followed by homework that couples should complete on their own, outside of group.

In order to get the most out of these 4 sessions, make every effort to:

1. Attend the small group each week together as a couple.
2. Do the homework. Sometimes multiple homework options are offered. Complete the option that best meets your needs.
3. Don't give up!

We ask that couples abide by 4 Ground Rules:

1. What's said here, stays here (unless there is a threat of harm to self or others)
2. Check with your spouse before sharing a story that involves both of you
3. No put-downs
4. Confess your own sin rather than talking about your spouse's faults

INFLUENCE

God has designed us to be people of influence. The Lord's first command to the first couple in history was about influence. They were commanded to "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over...every living creature that moves on the ground" (Genesis 1:28). If you apply these INFLUENCE teachings from the word of God you have the opportunity to take the following steps:

- Implement a regular 'huddle time' as a couple to improve unity
- Develop a prayer time as a couple which produces growth
- Take a test to identify each of your God-given spiritual gifts
- Consider ways to support each other's giftings
- Brainstorm ways to use your gifts as a team

Sign below to make a commitment to follow the above guidelines as you participate in this unit.

Name _____

Date _____



"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh." Genesis 2:24

1. INFLUENCE THROUGH UNITY

God's definition of marriage is different than the world's definition. God has made it clear that marriage is a covenant relationship meant to reflect his deep sacrificial love for his people and commitment to our salvation (Eph. 5:21-33). However, our culture says that allegiance to your job is more important than your commitment to your family and spouse. Our culture emphasizes the pursuit of individual identity, dreams and goals at the cost of relationship with others. Finally, our culture often portrays the relationship between children and parents as stronger and more important than the bond between a married couple. Yet God's word is clear that the couple is the strongest link in the family and society, and He has commanded that we leave our families of origin and be united with our spouses (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5). The ability to positively influence others through our marriage begins with the critical step of separating from (or "leaving") our families of origin and becoming a brand new family unit which grows in unity and oneness through the practice of mutual submission, love and respect.

Read Genesis 2:18

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

Read Genesis 2:22-24

²² Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." ²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Read Philippians 2: 1-8

¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;

⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Discussion Questions

1. Why is it not good to be alone (without deep unity through relationship in community)?

2. Turn and talk with another couple, then share your answers with the group. Why do some people feel alone in marriage? What are some reasons that couples miss out on friendship, intimacy and unity?

3. What three things does Genesis 2:24 indicate should be true of married couples?

4. Turn and talk to your spouse. What are some practical ways we should "leave" our parents? How have you "left" your family of origin?

5. Assign each couple one question from 5A-5D. Each couple will read the verses from Phillipians 2 again and then answer the questions. Once everyone has their answers ready, take turns sharing the answers with the whole group.

5A. Verse 1 gives us the basis of living in unity with other people. Five things are listed that come to us as a result of following Christ and that set us up for great relationships. What are these five things in verse 1? How do they affect marriage?

5B. What does Phil. 2:2 say about how believers should live? What does it mean to live in unity? How would a marriage look where the couple lived this way?

5C. According to Phil. 2:4, whose interests we should prioritize? What does this look like practically? Give an example of how you or your spouse puts the other's interests ahead of themselves.

5D. Verse 5 tells us to have the mindset of Jesus. What is that mindset according to verses 6-8?

Close in Prayer

Sit with another couple to pray that God would help you embody attitudes of mutual love, submission and respect which foster unity.

Homework

You have 3 options for your homework. Complete the option that best meets your needs as a couple.

Option 1: Leave and Cleave

Take 5-10 minutes to complete the chart below as individuals to help you reflect on how well you have "left" your family of origin. Afterward, compare your answers with your spouse and the answer questions as a couple.

Rank yourself and your spouse in the following areas of leaving your parents (independence).

- 1 = No dependence on mother and/or father
- 2 = Little dependence on mother and/or father
- 3 = Some dependence on mother and/or father
- 4 = Strong dependence on mother and/or father
- 5 = Total dependence on mother and/or father

TOPIC	HUSBAND	WIFE
Financial Dependence	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Social Dependence	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Marital Advice	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Acceptance and Approval	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Parenting Advice	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Housing	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
Childrearing	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

1. What has been challenging for you and your spouse about "leaving" your parents?

2. Use the chart to identify one area where independence from parents and growth in unity is still needed.

3. How can you support one another's efforts to "leave" and unite in the area you identified in question 2? Try to identify three action steps you could take.

a.

b.

c.

Option 2: Couple's Problem Solving Meeting

There are two parts to your assignment: identifying a problem area for your unity in Part A and discussing this area in a problem solving meeting in Part B.

Part A: *Identify a Problem Area.* Think about your relationship with your spouse as you look at the list of areas for unity below. What are some areas where you don't feel as though you have mutual understanding about your approach to the topic or how you will handle this area? Check off three areas where you really want to grow in unity.

Area of Unity

_____ **Spiritual:** church, fellowship, growth habits, groups

_____ **Mental:** learning or experiencing something together

_____ **Emotions:** discussing feelings, stress, good and bad

_____ **Physical:** romance, affection, sexual relationship

_____ **Parenting:** investing time with children, training

_____ **Social:** time together with family and friends

_____ **Finances:** budget, plans, managing money

_____ **Recreation:** enjoying something fun together

_____ **Household:** projects, tasks, life maintenance

_____ **Other areas:**

Part B: *Couple's Problem Solving Meeting.* Compare what you checked off with your spouse. Together, pick one area for growth in your marital unity. Agree on a time for a couple's problem solving meeting about that area and how long the discussion will last. Use the tips in the Appendix to run your couple's meeting well.

Before your meeting comes, pray about and seek God for unity in

this area, and ask Him that you would reflect the "mindset of Christ" and characteristics in Phil. 2 as you approach the discussion. Prepare for the discussion by collecting your own thoughts and opinions to respectfully share.

Topic for greater unity: _____

Date we will discuss topic: _____ Start time: _____ End time: _____

Option 3: Huddle Time for Maintaining and Growing Oneness

The goal in marriage is not to think the same, but to think together. Have a "Huddle time" as a couple. Look at the Marriage Huddle Chart in the Appendix. Think about how well your needs were met last week in the areas shown in the chart. If it is easier, you can give yourself a number ranking your satisfaction, with 10 being the most satisfied and 1 being dissatisfied. Exchange books with your spouse, and discuss what you did and how happy you were with your relationship for at least 15 minutes. Also write out specific ideas of what you would like to do differently or do together next week in the "next week" column. Be sure to approach this in a positive way and without fault-finding.

We will get together this week to evaluate last week and plan next week on the following day and time:

Date: _____ Start time: _____ End time: _____



*"Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."
Hebrews 4:16*

2. INFLUENCE THROUGH PRAYER

Ephesians 6:10-18 says that we are in a spiritual battle and emphasizes that as we fight, we must "pray in the Spirit at all times." It is clear from God's Word that prayer powerfully influences both small and large scale events (for examples, see Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 1 and Hezekiah's prayer in 2 Kings 19). Prayer is the foundation of all spiritual influence, and without prayer, we will never be effective in ministering to our families or the world around us. Jesus stated that a group of two, like a husband and wife, are a very powerful force in prayer: "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:19-20). Yet prayer remains one of the most challenging disciplines for believers in general and married couples in particular. In this lesson we will examine what to pray for, consider obstacles to prayer together as a couple, and work towards praying more together. As A.W. Tozer said, "Prayer is never the least we can do; it is always the most!"

Read Mark 9:17-29

¹⁷ A man in the crowd answered, "Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸ Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not."

¹⁹ "You unbelieving generation," Jesus replied, "how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me."

²⁰ So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. ²¹ Jesus asked the boy's father, "How long has he been like this?" "From childhood," he answered. ²² "It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us." ²³ "If you can?" said Jesus. "Everything is possible for one who believes." ²⁴ Immediately the boy's father exclaimed, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!" ²⁵ When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. "You deaf and mute spirit," he said, "I command you, come out of him and never enter him again." ²⁶ The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, "He's dead." ²⁷ But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up. ²⁸ After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" ²⁹ He replied, "This kind can come out only by prayer."

Read Luke 22:31-32

³¹ "Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift all of you as wheat. ³² But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers."

Read Colossians 4:12-13

¹² Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. ¹³ I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.

Read Ephesians 6:18

¹⁸ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.

Discussion Questions

1. Turn and talk with another couple. What actions did you take to build unity based on the homework?

2. Assign each couple one question from 2A-2D. Each couple will read the verses and answer the questions. Once everyone has their answers ready, take turns sharing the answers with the whole group.

2A. What does Mark 9:23-24 say about belief (faith)?

2B. What does Mark 9:29 tell us about prayer?

2C. What does it mean to wrestle in prayer?

2D. What common concern was the focus of both Jesus' and Epaphras' prayers (see Luke 22:32 and end of Col. 4:12)?

3. Whose faith do you think you should be praying for on a regular basis, and who prays for your faith regularly?

4. Turn and work with your spouse. First take a few minutes to complete the checklist below independently to understand what barriers prevent you from praying together. Afterward, compare your answers with your spouse, and answer questions 4A-4B together. Then get ready to share your answers with your small group.

- I don't think it's important. It's not a priority.
- I've lost my passion for spending time with Jesus
- I'm discouraged because I haven't seen results
- I feel awkward and insecure praying out loud
- I'm not sure who should take the lead
- When we fight, I don't feel like praying together
- I'm afraid of God interfering in my life

- There's sin in my life and I feel guilty and unworthy
- I feel afraid and too vulnerable in front of my spouse
- We haven't found time. We're too busy
- I'm so hurt and angry I don't want to pray together
- Other _____

4A. What were some of the reasons you both checked as obstacles to prayer together?

4B. What are one or two specific steps you can take to increase and improve your prayer time together? Discuss them together, write them down, and make every effort to follow through.

5. If you are already praying together regularly, how has that affected your marriage? What suggestions do you have for other couples to become more consistent with prayer together?

6. Where is the best place for you to pray? A 'War Room' is a place set apart for you to pray. How could you develop your own 'War Room'?

7. Turn and talk to your spouse. Ephesians 6:18 encourages us to pray for all kinds of requests together. What are some areas in your marriage/family that need focused, unified prayer? Circle the concerns that you feel motivated to pray for as a couple and share them with the group.

8. What doubts might you need to confess to God and ask for help to "overcome your disbelief"?

Areas of Prayer for Families and Marriages

Protection over marriage
Spiritual growth
Health issues
Disciplining kids
Purity in our marriage
Major decisions
Freedom from past
Help for deep issues
Children

Financial provision
Faithfulness
Housing
One another
Salvation of extended family
Creating/ Maintaining boundaries
Choices (Time, school, housing, \$)
Schedules
Prodigals (people who left the church)

Close in Prayer

Ask God for growth in your prayer life as a couple and family, and that your faith would grow and remain strong.

Homework

You have 4 options for your homework. Complete the option that best meets your needs as a couple.

Option 1: Start Praying Together Consistently

Make a choice to pray together every day this week. You will need to deal with underlying barriers discussed in this lesson, but you also need to simply set a goal of praying together no matter how difficult it feels.

If you are not sure what to pray, try one of the prayers found in the Appendix. You could also buy a book that is specifically written with prayers for husbands and wives to prayer over one another, like *A Book of Prayers for Couples* by S. Ormartian (2011) or *Pocket Prayers for Married Couples* by P. & F. Baumer (2015).

Place a check next to each day when you pray together.

Mon_ Tues_ Wed_ Thurs_ Fri_ Sat_ Sun_

Circle any of these ideas you would like to try in prayer together:

- Start by praying together at meals
- Set a time and let the world know not to interrupt (inform in-laws, guests, children, visitors, etc.)
- Make it the same time every week
- Pray for each other and bless each other
- Make a list and pray for the kids and others
- Worship together with music from an online source or CD
- Go through a devotional together
- Make sure that your prayers are directed to the Lord and not hidden messages to your spouse

Option 2: Find a Prayer Partner

Connect with individual prayer partners from Fusion. These individuals should be of the same gender and someone with whom you can be vulnerable. Call your prayer partner weekly to pray for one another's faith.

Prayer Partner Name: _____

Prayer Partner Phone Number: _____

Day and Time of Weekly Prayer Together: _____

Option 3: Expand Your Prayer Influence

If you regularly pray for concerns in your family and marriage, start to expand your prayer influence to issues outside your relationship as Ephesians 6:18 suggests. Circle the concerns that you feel motivated to pray for as an individual and then compare to your spouse's answers. Consider regularly praying for one or two of the joint concerns.

- | | | |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Poverty | Hunger | Veterans |
| Homeless | Leadership | Addiction |
| Inequality | Children/Youth | Education |
| Slavery/Trafficking | Environment | Spread of the Gospel |
| Violence | Marriages | For those who are ill |

Option 4: Pray Consistently with Your Children

Pray regularly with your children by starting with prayer at bedtime and meal times. At bedtime, pray with each child individually for just a few minutes so you can address their individual concerns and specifically bless each child. A great resource for this is *Bedtime Blessings 1* by J. Trent (2009). Also pray together as a family at meal times. Keep prayer short and simple before the meal. Save longer prayer and/or the mealtime devotion for *after* the meal is eaten. One resource to help with mealtimes is *Mealtime Moments: 164 Faith-Filling Entrees To Stir Family Discussion* by Heritage Builders (2000).

Once you have consistency with bedtimes and meal times, you can expand to praying outside of these times with your children. Try to incorporate intercession for missionaries, the global church, your neighborhood and the nation.

Below is a list of ideas for expanding family prayer. Circle ones you would like to try:

- Take a look at this blog for creative, fun ideas for implementing prayer with children of different ages. <http://flamecreativekids.blogspot.co.uk/p/creative-prayer.html>
- Create a prayer dice. You can buy a wooden block at a craft store and glue images on the six faces, or just make one out of paper from a template on the blog above. The images could be countries, continents, missionaries, or family members. Roll the dice and pray!
- Buy a small globe or world map. Let the children take turns spinning or pointing to different countries for prayer. Watch a Prayercast video of the country together before you pray for it (<http://www.prayercast.com/nations.html#alpha>).
- Get a prayer calendar from Voice of the Martyrs to pray together daily as a family for the global church (<https://secure.persecution.com/p-6894-2018-vom-prayer-calendar.aspx>).
- Practice drive-by prayer as a family. When you drive by any kind of institution (school, church, prison, etc.) pray for it!



*"We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us..."
Romans 12:6*

3. INFLUENCE THROUGH GIFTS

Another way to become a powerful spiritual influence as a couple is to identify your spiritual gifts and use them together in ministry inside and outside of your family. Romans 12:6 tells us that "We have different gifts according to the grace given to each of us." We are saved by grace but also empowered by grace to serve the Lord and bless other people. It is important for you to know your spouse's spiritual gift and support that gift. Sometimes we inadvertently discourage our spouse from using their spiritual gift because it is inconvenient or different from our own. It is important to accept our spouse's spiritual gift and avoid pressuring him or her to be something that they are not. Rather, encourage your spouse to be all that they can be and make room in your marriage for your spouse to use their spiritual gift! Husbands need to make a special effort to help their wives exercise their spiritual gifts, especially if they are stay at home moms. Including your wife's spiritual gifts in your ministry as a couple will help her fully develop her spiritual identity.

The Bible contains several passages with lists of gifts that overlap. There is some debate about the difference between a spiritual gift and a natural talent. In addition, there seem to be some areas of gifting that are seen in scripture but not specifically listed as a gift. It is still good to be aware of different gifts even if some details are not clear.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-14

⁴ There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.

⁵ There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶ There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. ⁷ Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. ⁸ To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, ⁹ to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, ¹⁰ to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines. ¹² Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

Read Romans 12:4-8

⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us. If your gift is prophesying, then prophesy in accordance with your faith; ⁷ if it is serving, then serve; if it is teaching, then teach; ⁸ if it is to encourage, then give encouragement; if it is giving, then give generously; if it is to lead, do it diligently; if it is to show mercy, do it cheerfully.

Discussion Questions

1. Turn and talk with another couple. Share about your homework from last week, or explain what interfered with completing the homework.
2. Assign each couple one question from 2A-2D. Each couple will read the verses and answer the questions. Once everyone has their answers ready, take turns sharing the answers with the whole group.
 - 2A. What does 1 Cor. 12:4-7 say about spiritual gifts?

2B. What does 1 Cor. 12:4-7 say about God?

2C. 1 Corinthians 12:8 says that gifts are "given through the Spirit." What does this mean? How does the Holy Spirit give us gifts and work through us?

2D. 1 Cor. 12:11 says that the Spirit has determined what gifts each person should get. What does this tell you about yourself and your gifting?

3. The Church is sometimes called "the body of Christ" (see 1 Cor. 12:12-14 and Rom. 12:4). Why would God give a few gifts to each person rather than giving everyone all the important gifts? How does the distribution of gifts among believers challenge and grow the church?

4. How does the distribution of spiritual gifts challenge our marriages?

5. Turn and talk to your spouse to answer 5A-5C.

5A. Look at the list of spiritual gifts and circle where you believe you and your spouse are most gifted. Two of the best ways to discern your gifting is according to desire and results. What do you like to do, and in what areas do people respond to you best?

Spiritual Gifts List

ROMANS 12	1 COR 12	EPHESIANS 4	OTHER
Prophecy	Wisdom	Apostles	Preaching
Service	Knowledge	Prophets	Exhortation
Teaching	Faith	Evangelists	Worship Leading
Encouragement	Healing	Pastors	Worship Team
Giving	Miracles	Teachers	Craftsman
Leadership	Prophecy		Administration
Mercy	Discernment		Communication
	Tongues		Hospitality
	Interpreting tongues		

5B. What “grace” or “gifting” do you believe the Lord has given to you each, based on what you circled above?

5C. How are you using your individual gifts for the Lord right now?

6. Take a few moments to answer 6A–6B privately.

6A. How supportive are you of your spouse’s spiritual gift? Circle a number below.

Very Supportive
Unsupportive
 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

6B. How supportive is your spouse of your spiritual gifts? Circle a number below.

Very Supportive
Unsupportive
 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

7. What are three ways that we can better support and encourage our spouses to use their spiritual gifts?

Close in Prayer

As a small group, pray that you would support one another's spiritual gifts, both within the group and within your marriages.

Homework

Take the online spiritual gifts test at giftstest.com/test. Fill out the chart and then answer the questions below to help you discuss the results with your spouse.

Here are some important ideas to consider about the test:

- The score does not represent the strength of the gifting. In other words, you may have a gift but not be strong in it do to a lack of use or lack of development.
- The Bible is not clear about how many gifts an individual has or how this may differ between people. Most people seem to be gifted above average in a few areas so we will look at the top 3 on the test.
- Test results are not final and may or may not be your actual gifting. Discuss your results with a Christian brother or sister you know and trust, and pray about the results. These are a guess based on your answers. Two of the best ways to determine your gifting is what you enjoy doing and where people respond positively to you (your holy desire/burden and fruit).
- You will become a strong ministry team if you can learn to flow together in your strongest gifts or the gifts that complement one another!

MY SPIRITUAL GIFTS	HOW I CAN USE THESE GIFTS
MY SPOUSES' SPIRITUAL GIFTS	HOW THEY CAN USE THEIR GIFTS



"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' " Matthew 25:23

4. INFLUENCE THROUGH SERVICE

In this session, we will look at the lives of Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18) to help us envision a married couple in ministry together. Priscilla and Aquila modeled how couples become a strong ministry team when they flow in supporting one another's strongest spiritual gifts and find ways to use their gifts in a common ministry. A simple way to begin is by using our homes as a ministry center. God has commanded us to "Practice hospitality" (Romans 12:13) and he states "Do not forget to entertain strangers..." (Hebrews 13:2). By using our homes as a ministry center, we can influence and impact both our families and the world. Starting from this step, there is no limit to what we can do together with God's help!

Read Acts 18:1-3; 18-19; 24-28

¹After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ² There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³ and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them.

¹⁸ Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. ...¹⁹ They arrived at Ephesus, where Paul left Priscilla and Aquila. ...

²⁴ Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. ²⁵ He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. ²⁶ He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately.

²⁷ When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. ²⁸ For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.

Read 1 Corinthians 16:19

The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house.

Read Matthew 25:14-30

¹⁴ "Again, it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his wealth to them. ¹⁵ To one he gave five bags of gold, to another two bags, and to another one bag, each according to his ability. Then he went on his journey. ¹⁶ The man who had received five bags of gold went at once and put his money to work and gained five bags more. ¹⁷ So also, the one with two bags of gold gained two more. ¹⁸ But the man who had received one bag went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money.

¹⁹ "After a long time the master of those servants returned and settled accounts with them. ²⁰ The man who had received five bags of gold brought the other five. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with five bags of gold. See, I have gained five more.'

²¹ "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' ²² "The man with two bags

of gold also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two bags of gold; see, I have gained two more.'²³ "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'

²⁴ "Then the man who had received one bag of gold came. 'Master,' he said, 'I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed.'²⁵ So I was afraid and went out and hid your gold in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you.'

²⁶ "His master replied, 'You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed?'²⁷ Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest.

²⁸ "So take the bag of gold from him and give it to the one who has ten bags.²⁹ For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.³⁰ And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Discussion Questions

1. Turn and talk with another couple. Share what you have started implementing in your marriage from this booklet (i.e., weekly huddle times, prayer times as a couple, taking the spiritual gifts test, etc.).

2. Assign each couple one question from 2A-2D. Each couple will read the verses and answer the questions. Once everyone has their answers ready, take turns sharing the answers with the whole group.

2A. In the passages from Acts and 1 Corinthians we see several ways Priscilla and Aquila were involved in ministry together. What did they do?

2B. What do the passages from Acts and 1 Corinthians 16:19 tell us about Aquila and Priscilla's marriage and character?

2C. Aquila and Priscilla served side by side in the passages from Acts and 1 Cor. 16:19. What are some of the advantages and challenges of serving together as a marriage ministry team?

2D. Look at Matthew 25:14–30. What was the difference between the servant with 1 talent and the servants with 2 and 5 talents? What does this passage say about those who are passive with their gifts?

3. Turn and talk to another couple. Can you relate to Aquila and Priscilla, or any of the servants in the parable of the talents? Who do you relate to, and why?

4. Take a few minutes to complete questions 4A–4B as individuals. Write down the answers, then share with your small group.

4A. DESIRE: In what area would you like to serve more? In what area of society would you like to see change?

4B. FRUIT: Where are you effective? In what areas do you seem to have the best results with people?

5. TEAM: Turn and talk with your spouse. In what ways could you become a team like Priscilla and Aquila? Is there something you should start doing together to serve, influence, or bless people? Place a check next to the ministries in the chart that interest you, and compare with your spouse. Then list 3 ways to use your individual gifts together.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Inviting people over | <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting needy/hurting people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hosting a small group | <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitating a Fusion small group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Going on a missions trip | <input type="checkbox"/> Praying at the altar with couples |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mentoring other couples | <input type="checkbox"/> Being Fusion group apprentices |

Close in Prayer

Pray together as a couple that God would help you follow through on offering your gifts to meet needs that tug at both your hearts.

Homework

Spend time this week together to work on these 3 areas that will lead you to be a couple of greater influence. Go back and complete any homework that you did not complete from earlier sessions. What action step(s) do you want to take to increase your influence? Check them off.

1. Growing in Unity

- ___ weekly marriage huddles
- ___ have a problem solving meeting
- ___ work towards leaving and cleaving

2. Growing in Prayer

- ___ find a prayer partner
- ___ pray together consistently
- ___ pray with children consistently
- ___ expand prayer focus

3. Growing in Service

- ___ support my spouse's gift
- ___ start using my gift
- ___ get involved in a church ministry to use gifts together
- ___ volunteer outside of church to use gifts together

We will get together this week to discuss action steps toward unity, prayer, and service at the following time:

Day _____ Time _____

APPENDIX A: Couple's Problem Solving Meeting

Any good business has regular staff meetings to see how things are going, and assess progress, productivity, and goals. This exercise allows couples to do the same thing.

How to Run a Couple's Meeting

- Set a date to meet weekly from 45 minutes to a maximum of 1 hour
- Make sure there are as few distractions as possible
- Maintain good eye contact. Focus solely on each other
- Each person says one thing that is going well or right
- Identify any problems
- Pick one problem to solve
- One person speaks at a time
- Mutually respect each other, avoid put-downs
- Each will listen to understand their partner's thoughts and feelings
- Keep the focus on what you want, and ideas about how to get it-- not on complaints
- Use problem solving techniques to resolve the issue
- Plan a fun activity together for later in the week

Note: This is not the time to nag, complain, lecture, whine, withdraw, get defensive or criticize.

Problem Solving

1. Agree to work as a team on the solution. *Problem solving is not an argument.*
2. Work on one problem at a time.
3. Take time to understand the real problem.
4. Find solutions together. (Use prayer, brainstorming, asking for help from outside your marriage, researching solutions, etc.)
5. Write down ideas for possible solutions.
6. Evaluate the ideas carefully.
7. Plan for success.
8. Write down an action plan with assigned responsibilities.
9. Meet to reevaluate.
10. Get help outside your family if the problem persists.

APPENDIX B: Marriage Huddle

Rank your satisfaction in each area from 1 to 10, then plan next week.

ACTIVITIES	PAST WEEK	NEXT WEEK
Spiritual -attending church, praying together, reading or talking about spiritual things		
Mental Stimulation - reading a book together, attending group together		
Openness in Communication - both structured and spontaneous talks		
Romance - listening to music, taking a walk together		
Affection -affectionate touch or words, helpfulness		
Social - Time together with family and/or friends		
Entertainment and Recreation - Enjoying something together; having fun together		
Projects and Tasks -activities done together and separately		
Sexual Relationship -Understanding each other's needs and desires		
Unstructured time together -time together without any specific plans		
Parenting -investing time with children, training activities		

APPENDIX C: Prayers for Couples

Extended Marriage Prayer

Lord, you say about marriage "...Therefore what God has joined together let no one separate." (Matthew 19:6). We acknowledge that you have joined us together and kept us together. You want us to stay together so we choose to stay together and be united in marriage.

Lord, you tell us we can pray as you said "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:16). We ask for your mercy so we will not receive the punishment that we deserve from you. Forgive us our sins. We trust in Jesus and his work on the cross. We ask for your grace so we will receive the blessings that we don't deserve from you.

You have given us your spirit and told us "For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline." (2Timothy 1:7). So we reject fear and choose to live in faith. We receive your power so we can overcome sin, live our lives to the fullest, and have the marriage you want us to have. We receive your love so we can be whole and healed and influence others. We receive your self-control so we can say no to ourselves and submit completely to you.

Your word tells us that "If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you." (James 1:5) We ask for wisdom. Help us to know the best from the good. Show us how to use our time, money, relationships, and every opportunity you give us.

Lord, you tell us that in marriage the two become one. Enable us to get closer to each other, to experience unity, intimacy, and love together. In Jesus name, Amen.

Short Daily Prayer

1. Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name.

Lord I thank you that I can call you Father by virtue of the blood of Jesus. I choose to think on the fact that you are my Father. I choose to bless your name, Lord, over all others, for your name alone is hallowed, holy, set apart, unlike any other. Your name represents your authority, your power, and your presence. I honor you for who you are and I choose to submit to you and follow you today.

2. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

I ask that your kingdom will come in my life. As John the Baptist said about Jesus, 'He must increase and I must decrease'. I invite you to take more of me, change more of me, and use more of me.

I seek favor and grace for my family. I pray that they will turn away from the culture of the world and turn toward you. Put other people in their life to talk to them about you. Convict them and convince them of their need for you. Answer their prayers. Put your angels around them to protect them. Use me in their life.

Change our church. We need you completely in every part of our church life. Give us an ability to reach people far from you so they will be drawn to you and choose to follow you.

3. Give us this day our daily bread.

Lord, I know that ultimately you own everything and that you want to take care of us. You multiplied a few loaves of bread and a few fish to feed thousands and you can provide for us today.

I turn away from any sins I have committed regarding finances including greed, the love of money, trusting in money over you, discontentment, envy, jealousy, foolishness, laziness, and anything else that goes against you. I choose contentment, discipline, and generosity. I ask you to give me strength so I can provide for myself and my family. Open up doors so that we will be able to make enough money, pay our bills, give, save, and manage all that you provide.

4. And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Lord, I know that you came to earth to die in our place. You took our place on the cross and then defeated death by rising from the dead and ascending into heaven. I admit that I have done wrong. Forgive my sins.

I also choose to forgive anyone that has sinned against me. You alone are the judge. You will deal with their sin. Give me the ability to let them go and trust you with this situation.

Use me to be a peacemaker. I choose to forgive, to let go of bitterness, and to try and influence others to live a lifestyle of forgiveness also. I pray that a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation will move through our church. I pray especially for marriages to be healed and restored.

I pray for forgiveness to take place between husbands and wives, and between parents and children. I pray specifically for_____.

5. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

Lord, you know my weaknesses. I choose to stay away from things that cause me to sin. Lead me in the right paths and give me the grace to follow and obey you. I choose to clothe myself with Jesus Christ. I put on the armor of God. I ask for you to send angels around me. I pray against any demonic forces that may be around me or influencing me in any way. I ask that you send them away. I belong to Jesus and I shut any doors that have been opened to the enemy.

In the name and the authority of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.

APPENDIX D: Spiritual Gift Definitions

(copied from <http://giftstest.com/allgifts>)

Administration

The gift of administration is the divine strength or ability to organize multiple tasks and groups of people to accomplish these tasks.

Luke 14:28-30; Acts 6:1-7; 1 Corinthians 12:28

Apostleship

The gift of apostleship is the divine strength or ability to pioneer new churches and ministries through planting, overseeing, and training.

Acts 15:22-35; 1 Corinthians 12:28; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Galatians 2:7-10; Ephesians 4:11-14

Craftsmanship

The gift of craftsmanship is the divine strength or ability to plan, build, and work with your hands in construction environments to accomplish multiple ministry applications.

Exodus 30:22, 31:3-11; 2 Chronicles 34:9-13; Acts 18:2-3

Discernment

The gift of discernment is the divine strength or ability to spiritually identify falsehood, to distinguish between right and wrong motives and the spiritual forces at work in situations.

Matthew 16:21-23; Acts 5:1-11, 16:16-18; 1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 John 4:1-6

Evangelism

The gift of evangelism is the divine strength or ability to help non-Christians take the necessary steps to becoming a born-again Christian.

Acts 8:5-6, 8:26-40, 14:21, 21:8; Ephesians 4:11-14

Exhortation

The gift of exhortation is the divine strength or ability to strengthen, comfort or urge others to action through the written or spoken word and Biblical truth.

Acts 14:22; Romans 12:8; 1 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 10:24-25

Faith

The gift of faith is the divine strength or ability to believe in God for unseen supernatural results in every arena of life.

Acts 11:22-24; Romans 4:18-21; 1 Corinthians 12:9; Hebrews 11

Giving

The gift of giving is the divine strength or ability to produce wealth and to give by tithes and offerings for the purpose of advancing the Kingdom of God on earth.

Mark 12:41-44; Romans 12:8; 2 Corinthians 8:1-7, 9:2-7 65

Healing

The gift of healing is the divine strength or ability to act as an intermediary in faith, prayer, and by the laying-on of hands for the healing of physical, mental and spiritual sickness.

Acts 3:1-10, 9:32-35, 28:7-10; 1 Corinthians 12:9, 28

Helps

The gift of helps is the divine strength or ability to work in a supportive role for the accomplishment of tasks in Christian ministry with the ability to often see the need before others do.

Mark 15:40-41; Acts 9:36; Romans 16:1-2; 1 Corinthians 12:28

Hospitality

The gift of hospitality is the divine strength or ability to create warm, welcoming environments for others in places such as your home, office, or church.

Acts 16:14-15; Romans 12:13, 16:23; Hebrews 13:1-2; 1 Peter 4:9

Intercession

The gift of intercession is the divine strength or ability to stand in the gap in prayer for someone, something, or someplace, believing for profound results.

Hebrews 7:25; Colossians 1:9-12, 4:12-13; James 5:14-16

Word of Knowledge

The gift of knowledge is the divine strength or ability to bring truth to a situation by supernatural revelation. This is often accompanied by a word from God.

Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 12:8; Colossians 2:2-3

Leadership

The gift of leadership is the divine strength or ability to influence people at their level while directing and focusing them on the big picture, vision, or idea.

Romans 12:8; 1 Timothy 3:1-13, 5:17; Hebrews 13:17

Mercy

The gift of mercy is the divine strength or ability to feel empathy and to care for those who are hurting in any way.

Matthew 9:35-36; Mark 9:41; Romans 12:8; 1 Thess. 5:14

Miracles

The gift of miracles is the divine strength or ability to alter the natural outcomes of life in a supernatural way through prayer, faith, and divine direction.

Acts 9:36-42, 19:11-12, 20:7-12; Romans 15:18-19; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 28

Pastor/Shepherd

The gift of pastor/shepherd is the divine strength or ability to care for the personal needs of others by nurturing and mending life issues.

John 10:1-18; Ephesians 4:11-14; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:1-3

Prophecy

The gift of prophecy is the divine strength or ability to communicate God's truth and heart in a way that calls people to a right relationship with God.

Acts 2:37-40, 7:51-53, 26:24-29; 1 Corinthians 14:1-4; 1 Thessalonians 1:5

Service

The gift of serving is the divine strength or ability to do small or great tasks in working for the overall good of the body of Christ.

Acts 6:1-7; Romans 12:7; Galatians 6:10; 1 Timothy 1:16-18; Titus 3:14

Teaching

The gift of teaching is the divine strength or ability to study and learn from the Scriptures primarily to bring understanding and depth to other Christians.

Acts 18:24-28, 20:20-21; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11-14

Tongues (and Interpretation)

The gift of tongues is the divine strength or ability to pray in a heavenly language to encourage your spirit and to commune with God. The gift of tongues is often accompanied by interpretation and should be used appropriately.

Acts 2:1-13; 1 Corinthians 12:10, 14:1-14

Word of Wisdom

The gift of wisdom is the divine strength or ability to understand and to bring clarity to situations and circumstances often through applying the truths of Scripture in a practical way.

Acts 6:3,10; 1 Corinthians 2:6-13, 12:8

APPENDIX E: Influence Online Resources List

Session 1: Influence Through Unity

- Marriage Assessment by Focus on the Family: <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/focus-on-marriage-assessment-2>
- Couples' Bible reading plans: www.bible.com/app

Session 2: Influence Through Prayer

- 2 hour "War Room" movie about the power of prayer produced by Kendrick Brothers Productions. Watch the trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DbRwcrhiLA>
- Video teaching and preaching: search "Francis Chan Prayer" on YouTube
- Download an app and get started praying:
 - "Pray for your husband" https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.geoffreydagley.p4h31&hl=en_US
 - "Pray for your wife" https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.geoffreydagley.p4w31&hl=en_US
 - "Pray with your spouse" https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.geoffreydagley.pws31&hl=en_US
- Check out websites about prayer:
 - ransomedheart.com/pray
 - prayerpowerministries.com/handouts
 - Praying for your children: <https://fcm.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/PrayingForYourChildren.pdf>

Session 3: Influence Through Gifts

- Online spiritual gifts test: <http://giftstest.com>
- What are spiritual gifts? https://www.blueletterbible.org/faq/don_stewart/don_stewart_447.cfm

Session 4: Influence Through Service

- One couple's story: <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/growing-together-spiritually/growing-closer-by-serving-together>
- Serving God together as a foster family: <https://www.rightnowmedia.org/Content/illustration/164597>

