

Unite

*Joined Together*

*Fusion Marriage Series*

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## MEMORY VERSE

*...Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.  
Matthew 19:6*



## **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.

## **UNITE**

In this unit we will discuss, plan, and seek to grow in the area of unity. If you apply these UNITE teachings from the word of God and work together you have the opportunity to take the following steps:

- Create a vision statement for your marriage
- Renew your wedding vows and evaluate threats to your marriage
- Evaluate your priorities and prioritize your time
- Practice daily prayer together as a couple
- Develop an action plan to eliminate compromise in your marriage

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

---

Name

Date





*...Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.  
Matthew 19:6*

# 1. EMBRACING VISION

A vision is a picture of a better future. In this lesson we will talk about the picture of a better life for you and your family. Most of us can quickly identify parts of our lives that we wish were different, or patterns of behavior we want to change. However, it is easy to be so busy in life that we stay distracted and never deal with difficult issues in our marriage or family. It is also easy to try and cope with problems by simply indulging in enjoyable experiences to make up for hard times. It is good to take a hard look at your marriage and think through areas that need change. These visions of a better future can propel us forward, energized by the power of the Holy Spirit. We will use the story of Nehemiah as an example of how vision becomes reality.

Nehemiah is not specifically about marriage but it is a story of leadership, vision, teamwork, and overcoming problems. These principles apply directly to marriage and family. The book of Nehemiah in the Old Testament tells the story of a man with a God-given vision to re-build. Nehemiah's story begins around 446 BC (nearly 2500 years ago). Nehemiah was a government leader among the people of Israel. The Israelites had been defeated in war years before and were essentially immigrants in the land of Persia (modern day Iran). Nehemiah felt called by the Lord to gather people to return to their Mother-land of Israel to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. Nehemiah was very upset because he knew that Jerusalem should be different and that the people should be experiencing blessing instead of 'great trouble and disgrace'. Jerusalem was supposed to be a strong, prosperous, secure, beautiful place. He had a God-given vision of Jerusalem that was very far from the reality. Similarly, the Lord wants us to desire change. This is reflected in the part of the "Our Father" that says "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

As we explore his story, we will see how God helped Nehemiah stay free of compromise, focus on priorities, cultivate a unified team and overcome internal and external threats to fulfill his God-given vision. In the same way that Nehemiah and his people overcame challenges with God's power, we can fight together as couples, on the same side, as we stand against the forces that threaten our marriages.

### **Read Nehemiah 1:1-11**

<sup>1</sup> *The words of Nehemiah son of Hakaliah: In the month of Kislev in the twentieth year, while I was in the citadel of Susa, <sup>2</sup> Hanani, one of my brothers, came from Judah with some other men, and I questioned them about the Jewish remnant that had survived the exile, and also about Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> They said to me, "Those who survived the exile and are back in the province are in great trouble and disgrace. The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire."*

<sup>4</sup> *When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven. <sup>5</sup> Then I said: "Lord, the God of heaven, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, <sup>6</sup> let your ear be attentive and your eyes open to hear the prayer your servant is praying before you day and night for your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you. <sup>7</sup> We have acted very wickedly toward you. We have not obeyed the commands, decrees and laws you gave your servant Moses.*

<sup>8</sup> *"Remember the instruction you gave your servant Moses, saying, 'If*



*you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations,<sup>9</sup> but if you return to me and obey my commands, then even if your exiled people are at the farthest horizon, I will gather them from there and bring them to the place I have chosen as a dwelling for my Name.'*

<sup>10</sup> *"They are your servants and your people, whom you redeemed by your great strength and your mighty hand. <sup>11</sup> Lord, let your ear be attentive to the prayer of this your servant and to the prayer of your servants who delight in revering your name. Give your servant success today by granting him favor in the presence of this man." I was cupbearer to the king.*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Take a few minutes to talk with your spouse about questions 1A & 1B.

1A. The book of Nehemiah describes the rebuilding of a wall. If your marriage was a wall in Figure 1, which wall would it be, and why?

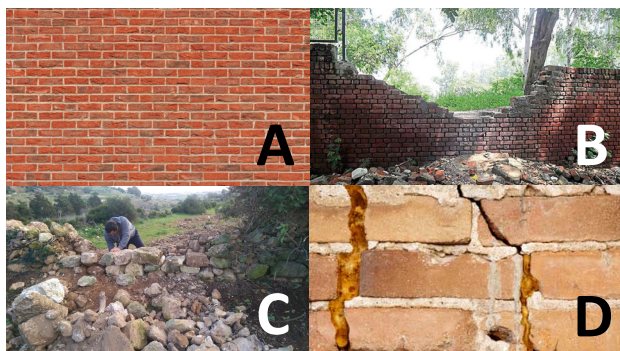


Figure 1

1B. What is the ideal picture of your marriage (and family, if applicable)? In other words, what type of marriage/family do you want to have?

2. Let's have one or two couples volunteer to share their answers to question 1B with the group. Who would like to share what type of marriage/family you want to have?

3. Assign each couple one question from 3A-3D. Each couple will read the Bible passage, then prepare an answer to the question. Once everyone has their answers ready, take turns sharing the answers to your questions.

3A. Nehemiah asked his brother and some other men to give him a report about the people in Jerusalem. What do they tell him (v. 3)?

3B. How does Nehemiah respond to the bad news about the Israelites who returned to Jerusalem (v. 4)?

3C. Why do you think Nehemiah mourned, fasted, and prayed?

3D. What does he pray about in v. 5-7?

4. Nehemiah stopped to evaluate what God wanted him to do about the problems in Jerusalem (v.4). How do you stop and evaluate the condition of your marriage and family? Do you have a regular 'huddle time' to address good and bad situations? Share any insight.

5. Turn and talk to your spouse. Notice this phrase from verse 6, "I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father's family, have committed against you." It is vital in marriage to confess sins to each other and also to come together and confess to the Lord. How does confession and repentance (turning away from sin) open the door for our marriage to improve?

6. Let's look at what Jesus said about marriage in Matthew 19:4-6: "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate." What does this passage tell us about God's vision for our marriage?

7. Take a look at the Homework section. What questions do you have about it?

8. Turn and talk to your spouse. Set a time when you will sit down together for about 30 minutes and complete the homework. When do you plan on getting together this week?

### **Close in Prayer**

Sit and pray with your spouse. Pray the "End of Day Prayer" included in the Appendix.

### **Homework**

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

#### **Option 1: Marriage Assessment**

Take some time to evaluate the condition of your marriage. You can go on-line and take an assessment to discuss at <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/focus-on-marriage-assessment-2> or complete the questions below and discuss them.

1. One good thing about our marriage
2. One thing about our marriage that I want to see change

### 3. Steps we can take to move toward positive change

#### **Option 2: Daily Prayer Together**

Make a choice to pray together every day this week. Pray together one of the prayers found in the Appendix. Place a check next to each day when you pray.

☐ Mon   ☐ Tue   ☐ Wed   ☐ Thur   ☐ Fri   ☐ Sat   ☐ Sun

#### **Option 3: Marriage Vision Statement**

Take about 30 minutes to create a vision statement for your marriage. This is a description of the marriage you want to have. Here are some ideas to help you.

- Make a vision board. Cut out words from magazines that you feel represent the direction, passions and interests you have as a couple. Once you have all the words cut out, create a collage with the words on a piece of larger paper or posterboard.
- Develop vision key words. Use several words with the same initial letter to represent key vision ideas. Example: "Our vision has 4 priorities: Faith, Financial stability, Friendship, Family time."
- Make an acrostic vision statement. Use the first letters from your last name to write some statements that represent your vision. The example given is used with permission of R. & A. Vales (2017).

#### **VALES Marriage Vision**

**V**-Value our marriage forever (Heb. 10:24)

**A**-Always wear the Armor of God (Eph. 6:10-18)

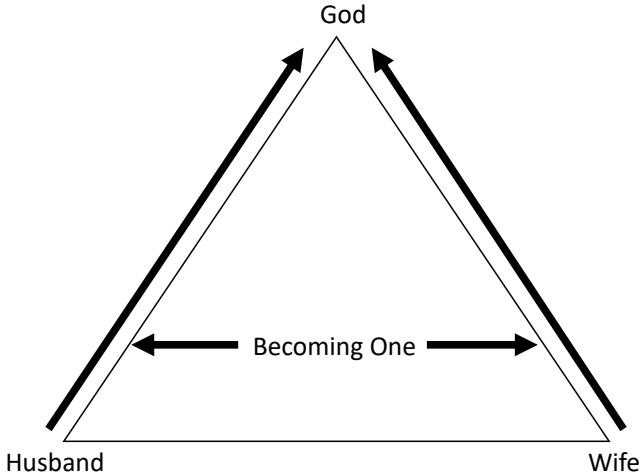
**L**-Love God and keep him in the center of our marriage (Ecc. 4:14)

**E**-Exemplify God's grace in our marriage (Matt. 5:16)

**S**-Spend quality time, not quantity time in our marriage. (Heb. 10:25)

### **Marriage Takes Three**

“...Therefore what God has joined together,  
let no one separate.” Matthew 19:6



As we grow closer to God, we grow closer  
to each other and our unity increases.

*Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and  
awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters,  
your wives and your homes. Nehemiah 4:14b*

## **2. RESISTING OPPOSITION**

In this lesson, we will explore how Nehemiah cultivated a sense of unity and teamwork among the Jews rebuilding the wall in Jerusalem. We will see how he overcame both internal and external threats to persevere toward his God-given vision. Just like Nehemiah, we must learn to deal with threats to our marriages as a united team in order to persevere and achieve the vision God has planted in our hearts. The Bible is clear that in marriage the two become one (Eph. 5:31). In marriage we have a partnership, a unity, a one-ness with our spouse that is unlike any other relationship. Unity exists in a marriage when the husband and wife have agreement, harmony, and the same purpose and goals. We will never be completely unified in every way but a married couple should have a deep oneness of mind and emotions. As we each grow closer to Christ, our values align and unity

increases. Unity brings peace, joy, productivity, and closer relationships. Disunity brings conflict, anger, frustration, sadness, waste, and broken relationships.

### **Read Nehemiah 4:6-18**

<sup>6</sup> So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.

<sup>7</sup> But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem's walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. <sup>8</sup> They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. <sup>9</sup> But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, "The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall." <sup>11</sup> Also our enemies said, "Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work." <sup>12</sup> Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, "Wherever you turn, they will attack us."

<sup>13</sup> Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. <sup>14</sup> After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, "Don't be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes."

<sup>15</sup> When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work. <sup>16</sup> From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah <sup>17</sup> who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, <sup>18</sup> and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Turn and talk with another couple. Share about your Vision Statement or other homework from Session 1, or share what interfered with completing it.

2. Read verses 8-9 again. Nehemiah and his people did two things in response to the threats. What two things did they do?

3. Notice the use of the word "We". "We were rebuilding the wall" (v. 1); "We are despised..." (v. 4); "We rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height" (v. 6); "we prayed to our God..." (v. 9). Why was it important for them to work as a team? What would have happened if Nehemiah was more independent?

4. Turn and talk to your spouse, then share with the group. What has helped you both to stand together to fight against opposition and overcome problems that would separate you?

5. Read verses 10-12 again. One of the problems was that the people were getting tired and there was so much work left to do. How can teamwork in marriage help solve the problems caused by fatigue?

6. A turning point takes place in v. 14. Nehemiah tells the people to "Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome..." How did this help the people? How can it help your marriage if you "Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome..."?

7. Take a few minutes to talk with your spouse about questions 7A & 7B. Then get ready to share your answer to 7B with your group.

7A. Who is like a "Sanballat" or "Tobiah" in your marriage? Without mentioning names, is there someone or something that constantly opposes your marriage? You can list these threats in the table in the homework.

7B. Nehemiah told the people to “Fight for your families” (v. 14). How can you fight for your marriage and family? After you discuss with your spouse, discuss this with your group.

8. Notice in verses 15–18 that Nehemiah assigned different roles to workers (construction and security) when they were under threat. He did this so that the vision would become reality on time and peacefully. How does clear delegation of roles help create unity? What are the main roles you each have in accomplishing your marriage vision?

### **Close in Prayer**

Sit with your spouse to pray. Pray that God would help you identify and deal with internal and external threats to your marital unity.

### **Homework**

You have 4 options for your homework. Complete one or more options that best meet your needs as a couple.

#### **Option 1: Daily Prayer Together & Memorization**

Make a choice to pray together every day this week. Pray together one of the prayers found in the Appendix. Place a check next to each day when you pray.

☐ Mon   ☐ Tue   ☐ Wed   ☐ Thur   ☐ Fri   ☐ Sat   ☐ Sun

Write down these verses on an index card or small piece of paper. Place your note somewhere you will see it and commit the verses to memory.

*“Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.”  
Matt. 19:6*

*“Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families...” Neh. 4:14*

#### **Option 2: Renew Your Vows**

The act of renewing wedding vows is one way of strengthening your team. Find the marriage vows that you said to one another, or look up new ones online that you would like to say to each other. Then set aside some time to gather your family and recite the vows to one another in front of witnesses. You can make this as casual or formal as you like!



**Option 3: Evaluate and Address Threats to Unity**

Take 30 minutes for this activity. Complete the table below. Write down the main threats to your marriage and a plan to work together to overcome each threat. You may want to list initials instead of names if specific people are opposing you. Threats to your marriage could also be areas of sin like anger, pride, greed, lust, fear, etc. Opposition can also come from the difficulty of life including job stress, extended family problems, physical illness, financial debt, too much work, lack of sleep, etc. End your discussion with prayer. You can pray the “End of Day Prayer” for couples in the Appendix.

Threat/Opposition to our Marriage and Family	Action Plan to “Fight for our Family”

**Option 4: Discuss Roles to Increase Unity**

Take about 30 minutes for this activity. Look at the list of chores and life tasks that need to get done in a family on the next page. Check off how you would like the tasks to be assigned. Afterward, compare your list with your spouse and together make a choice in the final column about who will handle each task by writing down the person’s initials.

We believe that some of these tasks (like disciplining children) must be shared in order for the marriage to be strong. Remember that when situations change, the balance of responsibilities will probably need to be renegotiated. Use this list to help you discuss roles when circumstances change.

	Who Is Responsible?			
	You	Both	Your Spouse	Final Decision
Providing income	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Staying home with children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Handling finances	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Yard work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Vehicle care	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Laundry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Dishes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Cleaning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Cooking and baking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Grocery shopping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Shopping for other needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Caring for pet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Scheduling social events	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Maintaining relationship ties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Planning vacations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Initiating sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Decorating the house	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Making major decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Initiating talks about marriage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Keeping the house orderly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Disciplining the children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____



*"I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?" Nehemiah 6:3b*

### 3. REJECTING DISTRACTION

Making your marriage a priority means that you say no to other demands, opportunities, and invitations in order to build the relationship with your spouse. You refuse to give away the love, time, attention, money, and energy that is needed for your marriage. We all will disappoint some people and fail at certain things. However, we need to make sure we succeed at home and take care of our spouses no matter who else is upset with us. We need God's wisdom to help us make good decisions and avoid distractions. We will explore how Nehemiah accomplished this during the building of the wall, and how we can prioritize in our marriages, too.

If you have children, especially young children, then spending time raising, loving, teaching, disciplining, and training them is one of your

top priorities. It is also an area that will be challenged by all kinds of demands that tell you to leave your children to go and do something else. It is critical that we share our vision with our children and make every effort to dedicate our family to the Lord for the long-term. This can happen by making a daily choice to follow Christ and teach the word of God and our family vision to our children. We will look at some ancient wisdom from the Word of God on parenting. The words in Deuteronomy were written by Moses about 3500 years ago but they still are alive and work for us today.

### **Read Nehemiah 6:1-9**

<sup>1</sup> When word came to Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab and the rest of our enemies that I had rebuilt the wall and not a gap was left in it—though up to that time I had not set the doors in the gates—<sup>2</sup> Sanballat and Geshem sent me this message: “Come, let us meet together in one of the villages on the plain of Ono.” But they were scheming to harm me;<sup>3</sup> so I sent messengers to them with this reply: “I am carrying on a great project and cannot go down. Why should the work stop while I leave it and go down to you?”<sup>4</sup> Four times they sent me the same message, and each time I gave them the same answer.<sup>5</sup> Then, the fifth time, Sanballat sent his aide to me with the same message, and in his hand was an unsealed letter<sup>6</sup> in which was written: “It is reported among the nations—and Geshem says it is true—that you and the Jews are plotting to revolt, and therefore you are building the wall. Moreover, according to these reports you are about to become their king<sup>7</sup> and have even appointed prophets to make this proclamation about you in Jerusalem: ‘There is a king in Judah!’ Now this report will get back to the king; so come, let us meet together.”

<sup>8</sup> I sent him this reply: “Nothing like what you are saying is happening; you are just making it up out of your head.”

<sup>9</sup> They were all trying to frighten us, thinking, “Their hands will get too weak for the work, and it will not be completed.” But I prayed, “Now strengthen my hands.”

### **Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

<sup>4</sup> Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. <sup>5</sup> Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

<sup>6</sup> These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts.

<sup>7</sup> Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. <sup>8</sup> Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. <sup>9</sup> Write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates.

## Discussion Questions

1. Turn and talk with another couple. Share something you learned from completing the Session 2 homework or share what interfered with completing it.

2. Sanaballat and Tobiah continue to oppose Nehemiah but they use a different tactic this time. How do they try to stop the work here?

3. Turn and talk with your spouse, then share your answer with the group. What are the great projects, or great works that you are doing in life? What are the persistent distractions that try to stop you from this great work?

4. Nehemiah gives a classic answer to this persistent distraction in verse 3. What does he say? Like Nehemiah, how can you give your 'best yes' to truly important priorities?

5. Notice this 4-word prayer by Nehemiah in verse 9, "Now strengthen my hands." How could adding this prayer to your life help with achieving your vision? In what areas do you need more strength from the Lord to accomplish priorities?

6. Read Deuteronomy 6:4-9 again. The Command in verse 5 is to love God with all our heart, soul, and strength. Verse 7 tells us to impress this upon our children. How can you try and influence your children to love the Lord?

7. Turn and talk with your spouse, then share with the group. Notice that Deut. 6:7 emphasizes talking about God's word when sitting at home, walking along the road (today we can include driving), lying down, and getting up. We should regularly talk about God and his message in daily life, not just in church. If you have children at home how can you build this into your daily time with your kids?

8. Deut. 6:8-9 emphasize posting scripture in places where you will see it. Do you have any scripture visible in your home? How could displaying scripture in your home help you remain dedicated to God?

### **Close in Prayer**

Pray as a group that God would help you to make wise choices with your time that prioritize your commitment to Christ and your marriage.

### **Homework**

You have 4 options for your homework. Complete one or more options that best meet your needs as a couple.

#### **Option 1: Review & Share your Marriage Vision**

Review the Marriage Vision Statement you created in Session 1, or share it with the other family members in your household. Have you been able to do anything to move toward that vision? Do you want to edit it?

#### **Option 2: Pray Together**

Choose a verse from scripture that you will 'pray back' to the Lord for your family. Take time to pray as a couple now and use that scripture or the "End of Day Prayer" from the Appendix.

#### **Option 3: Address Threats to Unity**

Review the "Threats to our marriage and family" that you listed in Session 2. Discuss anything you need to work on in this area this week.

#### **Option 4: Evaluate and Address Your Time Prioritization**

Take 30 minutes for this activity. Time is one of the most valuable and limited things in life. There are endless voices competing for our time. On the opposite page, use the categories listed to divide the circles

into slices representing your time. It might help to look at your calendar, too. See if there are any adjustments you can make to invest more time in your marriage. Afterward, discuss with your spouse what changes you will make to rebalance your time according to your priorities.

**MY TIME**

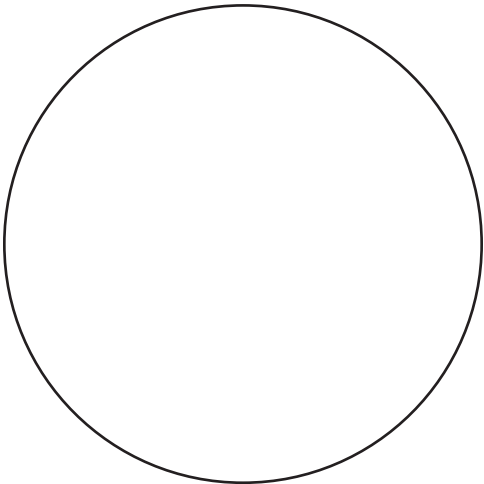
(adapted from Family Wellness Associates, 2004)

**Categories to use for dividing your time:**

Self    Family    Work    Couple    Play    God    Children

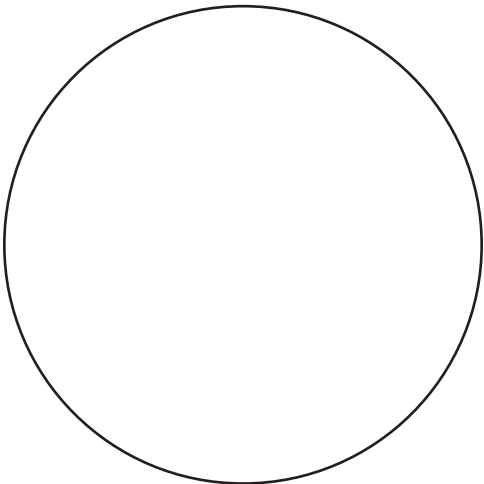
**What I Have Today**

Divide this circle into slices the way you presently use your time.



**What I Choose for Tomorrow**

Divide this circle into slices the way you want to use your time.





*Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. Deuteronomy 6:5*

## **4. EVICTING COMPROMISE**

In addition to developing a vision, being a team and prioritizing our lives, God calls us to be dedicated—to be set apart for him (Lev. 20:26). In this session, we will see that Nehemiah accomplished the short-term, God-given vision to rebuild the wall. However, Nehemiah had trouble in the long term because some people weren't dedicated to the Lord and compromised their obedience. They even gave special privileges to an enemy, Tobiah, and gave him a space in God's holy temple! Disobedience like this was the exact reason that Jerusalem was originally destroyed years earlier. Re-dedication and obedience to God were the solutions to this problem. Similarly in marriage, compromise can jeopardize the vision that God has given us, or prevent the vision from being passed down from one generation to the next. God asks us to be holy, just as he is holy and to stand firm in our beliefs.



Deviating from God's design for marriage is one way that we might compromise. There is a beautiful order and rhythm when a couple works, lives, and loves together under the Lord's authority. God has given us a powerful vision for marital decision making in Ephesians 5:21-33. In this scripture, God reveals that the husband is to be the head of the home like Christ is the head of the church, and wives are called to submit to their husband's leadership. The husband is intended to lead in a self-sacrificial way, just like Christ led the church by laying down his life for it. In fact, Paul wrote in Ephesians 5 that husbands should lovingly care for their wives just as they care for their own bodies. In the same passage, wives are called to submit to their husbands just like the church submits to Christ's leadership. This submission is 100% voluntary, and is done as an act of obedience and trust in God. Both husbands and wives must rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to fulfill their roles in the way God envisioned. Agreeing with God about these roles and functioning in them helps us to have truly effective teamwork. It helps us manage tough decisions about priorities and creates a sense of deep unity. Our culture preaches the opposite; that men are not meant to lead, and women should never submit. Living according to culture instead of God's vision is just like inviting Tobiah into the temple.

### **Read Nehemiah 13:4-9**

<sup>4</sup> Before this, Eliashib the priest had been put in charge of the storerooms of the house of our God. He was closely associated with Tobiah,<sup>5</sup> and he had provided him with a large room formerly used to store the grain offerings and incense and temple articles, and also the tithes of grain, new wine and olive oil prescribed for the Levites, musicians and gatekeepers, as well as the contributions for the priests. <sup>6</sup> But while all this was going on, I was not in Jerusalem, for in the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon I had returned to the king. Some time later I asked his permission<sup>7</sup> and came back to Jerusalem. Here I learned about the evil thing Eliashib had done in providing Tobiah a room in the courts of the house of God. <sup>8</sup> I was greatly displeased and threw all Tobiah's household goods out of the room. <sup>9</sup> I gave orders to purify the rooms, and then I put back into them the equipment of the house of God, with the grain offerings and the incense.

### **Read Ephesians 5:21-30**

<sup>21</sup> Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. <sup>22</sup> Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

*<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— <sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body.*

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Turn and talk with another couple. Share something you learned from completing the Session 3 homework or share what interfered with completing it.

2. Remember from earlier in the book of Nehemiah that two of the men who opposed the work of God were Sanballat and Tobiah. These were evil men that tried to kill Nehemiah. We read about Tobiah again here at the end of the book. A priest named Eliashib was friends with Tobiah. What did he give to Tobiah according to Neh. 13:5?

3. In Neh. 13:7 we read that Nehemiah finds out this enemy had a room in the temple. How does he respond according to verses 8-9?

4. Turn and talk with another couple, then share your answers with the group. The temple of God was the place where God's presence was supposed to dwell fully so the people could experience Him. In our day the temple includes our body and the church. In a sense our homes should also be like the temple. What types of enemies, false gods, idols, or other hostile forces could exist in our homes or our marriages? What things could possibly be like a "Tobiah" in our temple?

5. How can you purify and dedicate your home to the Lord?

6. Handling decisions as a team is important when it comes to setting priorities. Women answer: What does it mean for a wife to submit to her husband? (Note: the word submit is controversial to some people. Some people use the word "respect" in addition to or instead of submit. Definitions of these words vary but if "submit" is too controversial try using the word "respect" which gets at the same idea.)

7. Men answer: What does it look like for a husband to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her?

8. How have you made the balance of Love & Submission (or Love & Respect) work in your home?

**Close in Prayer**

Pray as a group that God will give you the strength to accomplish your marriage vision by remaining dedicated for the long-term.

**HOMEWORK**

1. Review the homework from the first three sessions. Talk about how you can apply these truths to your lives for the long-term.

2. Identify one to three areas in your family or home that are a "Tobiah" and causing compromise. Decide together on an action plan to remove these areas of compromise from your life.

Area of Compromise

Action Plan

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

## **APPENDIX A: Prayers for Couples**

### **Marriage Vision Prayer (Prayer of commitment for a couple together)**

Matthew 19:4-6 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

Lord Jesus, we remember these words you spoke about marriage. You have made us male and female, we have been united together, and we have become one flesh. We are no longer two but one. You have joined us together and you don't want anyone or anything to separate us.

We ask you to fulfill your will in our marriage. Give us the grace to experience unity and oneness. We pray that you enable us to agree, to have the same perspective, the same attitude, and the same desires more and more. We accept the fact that we are joined together, we choose to stay together, to resist everything that drives us apart, and to follow you with every part of our lives. Open our eyes to see what you want for our marriage. We are willing to believe, persevere, and work for the marriage you want us to have. Thank you for bringing us together. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Prayer for Each Other (Prayer for your spouse when you are not together)**

Lord, I thank you for my spouse and I pray for them right now.

Give \_\_\_\_\_ an increased desire to know you and serve you today.

Fill \_\_\_\_\_ with your Spirit. I pray that he/she will experience your love, guidance, provision, protection, and direction today.

Strengthen \_\_\_\_\_ for everything he/she has to do today. Give \_\_\_\_\_ wisdom in dealing with people, power to overcome all sin and problems, love for you, love for other people, and self-control to do the right things. I pray that he/she will bring problems to you in prayer today and experience the peace from you that passes all understanding.

Protect him/her from all attacks of the enemy, lies, temptations, and deceptions. Put your angels around him/her and give them victory today. I also pray that you give us love and unity when we are together again. In Jesus' name, Amen.

**End of Day Prayer** (used with permission from <http://www.ransomedheart.com/prayer/>)

Our Father in Heaven, we pause at the end of this day to say thank You. We give You thanks for the blessing of life, for the blessing of each other, for the blessing of family, and for the blessing of a home. You have richly blessed our lives.

Restore us Father to Your Son Jesus. He is the vine and we are the branches and He has become our source of life. Open our hearts to receive the Holy Spirit's guidance, healing, and transformation. May our lives and our marriage bear the fruit of the Spirit. We surrender our lives and our marriage to You. You have our bodies, possessions, and spirits; we give You our hearts, souls, minds, and strength. We belong to You.

Lord God, sanctify our house and make it a home. We ask that Your Kingdom will come into our home so that this house will become a refuge from the world; filled with love, peace, joy, and hope for all who enter. Give us the wisdom to be good stewards of what You have blessed us with, and help us use these wonderful blessings to build Your Kingdom.

Blessed Father, if there are any issues that build up walls of separation between us, make us aware of them. Our desire is to handle these issues and to surrender them to You so we can prevent Satan from having a stronghold in our hearts and in our marriage. Give us the courage to make the first move, to receive each other in love, to be forgiving, to be patient, to be kind, and to be committed to each other regardless of the issue. Move us to prayer for each other, to support each other, and to encourage each other every day.

We ask for a shield of protection this night as we sleep. Send Your angels to war on our behalf and to keep evil from entering our home. Fill our minds and imaginations with sweet dreams and help us to fall into a deep and restful sleep, secure in the knowledge that You are watching over us.

Thank You Father for Your grace, love, and forgiveness. Into Your hands we place our marriage and our lives. Guide us to the place You want us to be. It is in the powerful name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, that we pray, amen.

**Cleansing Prayer** (used with permission from <http://www.ransomedheart.com/prayer/>)

I proclaim that "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree'" (Galatians 3:13). In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, I now receive the fullness of his cross, death, resurrection, life, and authority into my life. I bring judgment from the Lord Jesus Christ against every evil power, witchcraft, and curse.

In the name and by the blood of Jesus Christ, I break the power and hold of every curse that has come to me, my spouse, or my children through ritual or ritual sacrifice. In the name and by the blood of Jesus Christ, I break the power and hold of every curse that has come to me, my spouse, or my children through transfer by another human being. In the name and by the blood of Jesus Christ, I break the power and hold of every curse that has come to me, my spouse, or my children through words spoken. In the name and by the blood of Jesus Christ, I break the power and hold of every curse that has come to me, my spouse, or my children through occult practices.

In the name of Jesus Christ, I command all demonic spirits that have gained access to me or my family through curses and rituals cut off and banished from me and my household, in the mighty name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus, I ask you to send your angels now to completely disarm all curses from me and my family; disarm their every device and render them destroyed. I ask your angels to remove all evil spirits involved in these curses and send them away.

I now claim every spiritual blessing that my Heavenly Father has given to me, my spouse, and my children in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3). I claim those blessings right here in the very place of all cursing, by the authority and power of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in his name. Jesus, may these things be fully accomplished now through your mighty name. I give you thanks and honor and praise. All of this I pray by the authority and in the mighty name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## APPENDIX B: Unite Online Resources List

You can access these resources online at [nlc.io/fusion](https://nlc.io/fusion)

### Session 1: Embracing Vision

- Marriage Assessment by Focus on the Family: <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/focus-on-marriage-assessment-2>
- Bible reading plans: <https://theword.online/about.php>

### Session 2: Resisting Opposition

- 2 hour "Date Night" video seminar by comedian and speaker Mark Gungor : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZL5dkpjYEc>
- Christian podcasts to strengthen your team
  - Focus on The Family: <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/media/focus-on-marriage-podcast>
  - Various speakers: <http://www.marriageroots.com/marriage-podcasts/>
  - Dr. Eggerichs on Love and Respect: <https://www.loveandrespectpodcast.com/thepodcast/>

### Session 3: Rejecting Distraction

- 30 min. podcasts by Focus on the Family about priorities with guest Jill Savage:
  - <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/media/daily-broadcast/keeping-priorities-straight-in-your-marriage>
  - <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/media/daily-broadcast/redefining-your-familys-priorities>
- *Living with Less so Your Family Has More* is a book by Mark and Jill Savage about prioritizing: <http://a.co/cKgcdHX>

### Session 4: Evicting Compromise

- Christian podcasts to strengthen your parenting by Focus on the Family: <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/media/focus-on-parenting-podcast>
- Focus on the Family's parenting resources: <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/parenting>
- 2 hour *Like Arrows* movie about parenting produced by FamilyLife. Watch the trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S5DLx-WN1M4>
- *Spiritual Growth of Children* is a book by Focus on the Family to guide you through creating plans for spiritual growth of your family and children: <http://a.co/954Wdat>

