

# COURSE OVERVIEW

*Marriage Should Be Awesome.*

## MODULE 0

### INTRODUCTION LESSON

Before you begin anything, it's always good to mentally prepare yourself to be the best you can be! This initial lesson focuses on the emotional and spiritual preparation couples should strive for in order to get the most out of our course. This includes preparation to be open, vulnerable, humble, transparent, and trusting with your spouse. We also introduce the idea of working through the uncomfortable or difficult situations to gain openness, vulnerability, loss of pride, transparency, and trust--because these will make an amazing marriage!

## MODULE 1

### LESSON 1: COMMITMENT

*What is oneness and why is it so important?*

Without being fully committed, any undertaking is vulnerable to failure. Marriage is not different. In this lesson we talk about the importance of oneness, and being 100% committed to each other and the marriage, with no room for a backup plan. We explain that marriage can be constant work, but also how beautiful it can be when healthy. The reason this is hard work is because this will likely require some changes that you'll have to be active about implementing--the biggest healing and growth comes from the hardest work to overcome the deepest wounds from your past and the worst habits from your present.

### LESSON 2: SELF-AWARENESS & HUMILITY

*How can I know where I need to improve?*

We must be healthy as individuals before we can have a truly healthy marriage. Here, we go over tips to become and remain your best self, as well as the dangers of complacency. We also discuss self-awareness as a couple and the methods to use to become fully aware of yourselves.

### LESSON 3: NORMAL VS. HEALTHY

*Is a “normal” marriage the same as a healthy marriage?*

In this lesson we talk about how most people weigh what is and isn't “normal” by their own life experiences. We challenge that belief and the desire to be “normal,” instead turning to a definition of “healthy” that deepens relationships and strengthens marriages.

## MODULE 2

### LESSON 1: LISTENING

*Why should I listen to my spouse when it's so obvious that they're wrong?*

“All listening is the same, right?” We challenge this belief, explaining the differences between active and passive listening. We also provide tips for how to listen well and value opinions that contrast with our own.

### LESSON 2: COMMUNICATION

*What does it mean to communicate well?*

In a world of texts and emails, we challenge the cultural definition of “communication.” We go over the differences in communication styles and the dangers of sarcasm. Finally, we present a new perspective that in marriage, it doesn't matter who is “right,” nearly as much as if each person feels heard, respected, and valued in their opinion.

## MODULE 3

### LESSON 1: COMPLAINT VS. CRITICISM

*Is it true that complaints can help a marriage?*

These two may look very similar on the outside, but we go deeper to explain the differences and the damage that criticism can have on your relationships.

### LESSON 2: FIGHTING FAIR

*How do I fight well with my spouse?*

Conflict is inevitable, so when it happens, we want to treat each other the best we can, but it's hard sometimes! In this lesson, we talk about how to respect and honor your spouse in the midst of a fight. It's not husband against wife, it's the husband/wife team against the issue!

### LESSON 3: PRAYER AS A COUPLE

*Why is prayer the single most important thing we can do every day for our marriage?*

Praying together is perhaps the single most powerful thing in a marriage. It breaks down walls and allows God to shape our hearts. The divorce rate of couples who pray together regularly is less than 1%. As you both draw near to God, He will bring you closer together. In this lesson, we talk about how to start praying with your spouse, and how to continue to deepen that relationship.

## MODULE 4

### LESSON 1: GRACE

*How should I respond when my spouse has blown it?*

Nobody is perfect--we all mess up sometimes. It's how we grow. A marriage should be a safe place to fail, lift each other up, and help each other grow. One of the most important things to learn is how to allow spouses a do-over when they've blown it instead of making them pay for it. In this lesson, we help to provide a deeper understanding of grace, the need for it, and how to give it when it is least deserved.

### LESSON 2: LEAVE & CLEAVE

*Why is it important that I work through life with my spouse instead of running to others (even family) first? What needs to be in place for this to happen?*

A new marriage is a beautiful seed that needs time to develop into a sturdy oak tree. It's important that the new couple hold their marriage as the single most important relationship in their lives. It's important to work through struggles with your spouse rather than going to others to "fix" them unless there is a safety issue. Here, we'll talk about what a healthy version of leaving and cleaving looks like, the emotional safety that needs to be in place to successfully do so, and talk about how to maintain your relationships with your family as you transition into this new stage of life!

## MODULE 5

### LESSON 1A: PRAISING YOUR SPOUSE

*How do I uplift and encourage my spouse?*

If you've ever played a sport or competed as a team in any area, you know the importance of teamwork. Your marriage is the ultimate team. As a member of this elite two-person team, your words have more power to uplift or crush you spouse than anyone else's. Appreciating and praising your spouse is an often-overlooked area that we sometimes start to forget after we get married. In this lesson, we'll talk about the power that your words can have, and offer some helpful tips to get started on this powerful path.

## LESSON 1B: HOW TO RESPECT AND LOVE YOUR SPOUSE

*What does it mean to respect and love each other?*

What does it look like to love your spouse when they're not there? How about respecting them and your marriage when they'll never know if you did or not? How you speak of your spouse when they'll never know is a huge indicator of the success of a marriage. As part of the same team, we want to be praising our spouse to others, and giving them the utmost respect, protecting them with all we have, no matter what. The side of them that only you see should stay between the two of you. That builds strong trust and a deep relationship that lasts. In this lesson, we talk about what to do, what to avoid, and offer tips for growth.

## LESSON 2A: IMPORTANCE OF COUNSEL

*Why is outside perspective essential?*

If you think you can handle everything that comes up in your marriage flawlessly, you'd be wrong. Dangerously wrong. If your car breaks down, and you're not a mechanic, you take it to an expert on cars to fix it. If you're gravely ill, you go to see an expert on health to get well. Why should your marriage be any different? After all, it's the most important thing you'll have on this earth! In this lesson, we debunk many of the myths we've been told about counseling our whole lives. We also talk about the many types of counsel, the right types of relationships to have in place to feed your marriage, and how to find a good counselor.

## LESSON 2B: COMMUNITY

*How can having great people in our lives make us better?*

We've said this before, but it's worth saying again--you can't do it alone! Having a community of the right people involved in your lives helps you to grow as individuals and as a couple. Now, when we say "community," we mean your inner circle, not your neighborhood (unless you're so blessed that they're one in the same!). In this lesson, we talk about how to find and keep the right people in your inner circle, the types of people that can be toxic to your marriage, some potential stumbling blocks, and some huge benefits of having a close community.

## LESSON 3: BIBLE STUDY AS A COUPLE

*Life is busy--how do we keep God at the center?*

God designed marriage, so it only makes sense that you seek him as a couple as well as on your own. This can be a bit intimidating at first, but trust us, it's a huge blessing! In this lesson, we'll talk about the benefits of seeking God together, and some practical steps you can take to make this a regular part of your life.



## MODULE 6

### LESSON 1: LOVE STYLES

*How can I best love my spouse?*

How we show love can vary widely from person to person. We tend to assume that everyone feels love the same way we do. One spouse may feel most loved when they receive a meaningful gift, while their mate may feel most loved when they're curled up together on the couch talking. No one is more right than the other, but it's important to be aware of how your spouse feels love most deeply so that you can truly connect with their heart. In this lesson, we'll go over different styles of love and share tips and tricks on learning how each of you feel love the most. You'll gain a deeper understanding of each other and feel so much more connected once you put this into practice!

### LESSON 2: INDIVIDUALITY

*What does individuality look like when we're called to be one?*

When we get married, two become one, but that doesn't mean we spend every second of every day together--if you've been married for very long, you'll understand the appeal of some alone time no matter how much you love your spouse. God gives us each different skills and passions, and we need to value those differences and nurture our individualities so we can be the best we can for our spouse. In this lesson, we'll explain how we can't be everything for our spouse and why that's a good thing. We'll also talk about how to incorporate time for your dreams and hobbies, support your spouse in theirs and have lots of fun in the process.

## MODULE 7

### LESSON 1: IMPORTANCE OF TIME TOGETHER

*Why should we make time for fun in a busy life?*

Perhaps the simplest need of any strong relationship is time. Sometimes it'll be serious, but it also needs to be lots of fun! Playing together bonds us with our spouse and helps us get through anything as a team. Everyday fun, getaways, and date nights help to bring lightness, but so do the simple things like a conversation over a cup of coffee. As odd as it may sound, sometimes having fun is conscious work! Having fun together is part of creating an intentional marriage. In this lesson, we'll talk about how to have fun together despite busy schedules, and how to make play a regular part of married life!

## LESSON 2: RESPONSIBILITY FOR SELF

*How can I be my best self in my marriage?*

In marriage, it's so easy to see what the other person is doing wrong and where they need to change. A better focus, however, looks inward: "How can I be better? Where can I make changes? Where do I need to take responsibility? What tools can I learn to be my best self?" When each spouse takes responsibility to improve themselves, lasting change happens. In this lesson, we'll talk about the benefits of sober self-assessment and openness with your spouse about your struggles and where you need to work. We'll also share how this openness lifts barriers and creates greater intimacy.

## LESSON 3: OUTSIDE INFLUENCES

*What influences can be destructive and how do we protect our marriage from them?*

Just as community can be a huge blessing as different people speak into our lives, there are many other influences vying for our attention that can have a destructive impact on our marriage if we're not constantly on guard. In this lesson, we explain the pitfalls of passivity and indifference, how to identify and defend your marriage against current dangers, and also how to reduce your exposure to new ones.

## LESSON 4: BIBLICAL ROLES

*Who has God called us to be in our marriage? How is biblical submission different than what the world says it is?*

Men and women are equal before God, but they have different roles. Masculinity and femininity should be embraced and honored rather than seen as superior or inferior. We need to find the beauty in who God made us to be in our gender differences. Ultimately, we are to submit to God FIRST, then to each other. In this lesson, we'll talk about biblical roles in marriage, how they work together, and shine a new light on the much-disagreed-upon topic of submission. Hint: It's not what you think!

# MODULE 8

## LESSON 1: EXPECTATIONS VS. REALITY

*How can expectations impact our marriage when reality is different?*

When we get married and the honeymoon ends, reality can be quite different from our expectations. Sharing our expectations with each other regularly helps to avoid hurt and disappointment. Spouses need to look at expectations and assess whether they are realistic expectations as well. Communicating expectations may seem a bit awkward at first, but will eventually become more natural. In this lesson, we'll talk about what it means to communicate your expectations in a clear way that your spouse can understand, how to work through the disappointment when an unrealistic expectation has been placed on a spouse, and also how to overcome other unmet expectations.

## LESSON 2: PERSONALITY & HOW WE LOVE

*How do we understand and love the differences in our personalities?*

God made each of us in a unique way. Naturally this includes our personalities. Sometimes ours will clash with our spouses'. That's okay. When we understand the intricacies of both our spouse's personality and our own, we gain clarity and can embrace them for who God has made them to be. In this lesson, we'll talk about personality types, how to see past the frustrations to your spouse's heart, and how to appreciate the beauty in the differences.

## MODULE 9

### LESSON 1: WOUNDS AND IMPACT OF PAST ON PRESENT

*How can struggles from long ago impact my marriage?*

Everyone has a past that has formed who they are today. When we're hurt by something and the emotional pain doesn't fully heal, the wound can fester and come up in areas of our marriages where we wouldn't expect it. In this lesson, we'll show you how to identify past hurts that have left a mark, and also how to address the root of these wounds in a way that allows for healing. From here, you'll be able to move forward and blossom as a couple.

#### LESSON 2A: FAMILY OF ORIGIN

*How have our families shaped who we are today?*

Unless you grew up in the same home as someone, you'll have different childhood experiences. Even siblings can view their childhoods in vastly different ways. In this lesson, we talk about how your childhood impacts your marriage in ways you might not expect. We'll address family values, priorities, and how to decide what to keep and what to change.

#### LESSON 2B: TRADITIONS

*What family traditions are important for us, and how do we establish them in our family?*

Every family has important events and traditions that make holidays special. It may be picking out a Christmas tree, carving pumpkins, a yearly ski trip, or that summer vacation every July. Whatever it is, these regular events become staples of our lives and important things that we want to carry forward into our marriages. Looking back to the "expectations vs. reality" lesson, this one's a hotbed of expectations! In this lesson, we'll talk about how to identify traditions you want to continue in your new family, how to work through conflicting traditions (like wanting to be in two different states with both sets of parents on a given holiday), and how to make sure nobody feels unimportant or slighted in the process.

### LESSON 3: HOUSEHOLD ROLES

*How do we get our household to function smoothly?*

In a marriage, both spouses will inevitably contribute to the running of the household. What each spouse does, how much, and how often will look different from couple to couple, but they ideally share the responsibilities. In this lesson, we'll talk about working together to run your household, how to pick who does what chores, what that looks like practically, and how to win with a team mentality.

## MODULE 10

### LESSON 1: MONEY

*Why should we regularly work through our finances as a team?*

This is one of the two biggest topics of fights, hang on for this one! When a couple works together and handles money decisions as a team, it brings them closer together in other areas too! In this lesson, we talk about how to handle your money well, what it looks like practically to work as a team, basic budgeting skills, how to avoid money fights, and how to set and achieve financial goals.

### LESSON 2: PHYSICAL INTIMACY

*What is great sex and what are the secrets?*

FINALLY! (right?) God designed sex and blesses it in the context of marriage--it's a beautiful thing in the context of a safe, committed marriage. If we're being honest, it's a bit more complicated than one might think. It's something that should be talked about regularly, openly, and honestly within a marriage. In this lesson, we will dig into the tips behind great sex, the dangers to avoid, and how to spot what might be holding you back from even better sex.

## MODULE 11

### LESSON 1: PARENTS & IN-LAWS

*How do we have the best relationship with our parents and in-laws?*

The longest relationships in our lives prior to marriage are likely those with our parents or those who raised us. We learned so much about the world and for better or worse, we were shaped into who we are today largely because of them. When we get married, a change in that relationship occurs--we are called to become one with our spouse, and step up into the new roles of husband and wife, taking charge of our own lives. This is often a hard change for both parent and child, but it's an important one to see through to the end. Some parents and children transition naturally to this new stage of life, while others struggle to adapt. Sometimes parents need a little help to adjust.



Sometimes your spouse will need help adjusting as well. One thing is for sure--once you've learned to function as a team with your spouse, your marriage will be even stronger! In this lesson, we'll talk about how to lovingly navigate these confusing waters, hit the rapids head-on, and make sure your marriage is the top priority in everything you do.

### LESSON 2: BOUNDARIES

*How do we lovingly choose and set boundaries to protect our marriage?*

Not all relationships are easy--sometimes those close to us have a tendency of overstepping lines that they shouldn't. We may have let them do this for years as singles, but now that we're married these crossed lines don't just impact us anymore. We need to protect our marriage from these outside stressors, and that's where setting and maintaining boundaries come in. In this lesson, we talk about how to recognize where lines are being crossed, how to lovingly set boundaries for everyone's benefit, how to avoid being steered by guilt and manipulation, and the benefits of standing firm even when it's hard or there is strain on the relationship.

## MODULE 12

### LESSON 1: GOALS, PRIORITIES & PLANNING AS A COUPLE

*How do we set goals as a couple and stay on track?*

It's been said that a goal without a plan is a wish. If you don't know where you're going, it doesn't matter which way you go, and you'll never know if you get there. It's no different in marriage--if we want to accomplish something, we must set goals as a couple and plans to reach those goals. This helps us to feel a greater sense of purpose in our marriage. When we know where we're going, we can encourage one another. Once large goals are decided, making decisions becomes much easier--we simply ask ourselves the question- does this direction fit with our long term goals? If our long-term goal is to run a marathon as a couple, when we ask ourselves if we should go out for cake every night, the answer would be an obvious "no". In this lesson, we'll talk about the power and importance of setting short- and long-term goals, how to work through the process together, how to measure progress, and how to make sure our goals are maintained well.

### LESSON 2: GUARDING OUR TIME

*How do we make sure we have time for what matters?*

In a culture where we are pressured to constantly compete to be the best, we can sometimes lose track of what we want, instead focusing on what we feel pressured to do. We often feel like we don't control our own time. We have so many things to do, but we lack the best things in our lives because we often just don't have the time. We need to learn to say "no" to the things that will distract from the greater purpose, and "yes" to those things that will further our goals as a married couple. In this lesson, we'll talk about how to free up your schedule, how to make sure you have time for fun, and how to lovingly decline those "obligations" you don't want to do or feel pressured to do.