



The Marriage of Your Dreams

STUDY GUIDE

Experience The Marriage Of Your Dreams

In four sessions, Paul Tripp will encourage you with what the Bible has to say about marriage:

1. Disappointed Dreamers

No matter how long you have been married, you must continually realign your expectations so you aren't discouraged and disappointed by the reality of your relationship.

2. The Spouse Of Your Dreams

Learn how to treat your husband or wife with integrity and faithfulness so they fully entrust themselves to your care. Work through the bonus Trust Questionnaire with your spouse or fiancé for added application.

3. What Dreams Are Made Of

Why do couples fail to experience the marriage of their dreams? They point the finger of blame and hold grudges. Instead, discover how to fight for your relationship by practicing confession and forgiveness each day.

4. All You Need Is (Cruciform) Love

There are many definitions of love out there, but you only need to follow one example: the cross of Christ. Remind yourself how with the bonus 23 Things That Love Is And Does worksheet.

Session One

Disappointed Dreamers

Marriage is a beautiful thing that only reaches what God designed it to be through the methodology of a painful process.

Key verse

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you (**Matthew 6:33**)

Discussion Questions

1. When you were single, engaged, or a newlywed, what dreams did you have for your marriage? Were any of your early dreams unrealistic? Selfish? In what ways may you still be holding on to an impractical and self-centered vision for your relationship?
2. How have you been surprised or disappointed by marriage? Listing reasons how your spouse has fallen short is probably is not helpful! Instead, consider difficulties that you faced together that were not initially planned for the marriage of your dreams.
3. How can you view these surprises and disappointments (in biblical language, “trials” and “tests”) through the lens of 1 Peter 1:6-7 and James 1:2-4? What practical steps can you take to shift your dream for marriage from that of personal happiness to God’s design for personal holiness?
4. How has God been faithful to you through all these trials and tests? Think specifically of how the Bible can prepare you for every future surprise and disappointment you will face.
5. What is one difficulty that you and your spouse are currently experiencing? How can you become united and stronger together with the help of God’s Word, the Holy Spirit, and the body of Christ?

The Spouse Of Your Dreams

Trust = Being so convinced of the integrity, strength, character, and faithfulness of another that you are willing to place yourself in their care.

Key verse

Do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil. **(Ephesians 4:26-27)**

Discussion Questions

1. On a scale from 1-10, how would you rate the level of trust in your marriage currently? Why did you choose that number?
2. At what point during your marriage did you experience the highest level of trust? (It could be today, by the grace of God.) Why was, or is, trust at an all-time high? What factors contributed to increased confidence in the other?
3. On your own, review Part A from the Trust Questionnaire. Identify two areas where you are failing to build trust. How can you take practical steps to change this with your words and behavior?
4. Ask your spouse to share an additional area from Part A of the Trust Questionnaire where they believe you need to grow in trustworthiness. Ask the Lord for open eyes to see personal weakness and a soft heart to confess.
5. Review Part B of the Trust Questionnaire together. Use these questions to start an honest and gracious conversation where you develop practical solutions to strengthen trust in your relationship.

A Trust Questionnaire

PART A

1. Do you do what you promise, in the time that you have promised?
2. Are you attentive to what your spouse views as important?
3. How often do you make excuses for failing to do what you promised, compared to how quickly you confess to breaking your promise?
4. Do you listen well to your spouse and act on what you have heard?
5. Do you follow through with mutually agreed-upon plans?
6. Do you work with your spouse on planning and scheduling priorities, or do you demand that they do it your way?
7. Do you openly share your thoughts, desires, hopes, dreams, and concerns with your spouse? Is it easier for you to share this with someone else?
8. Do you share things with other people about your spouse that you have not first communicated to him or her?
9. Is there evidence that you have withdrawn from the other in protective distance instead of fighting for your marriage?
10. Do you harbor bitterness, or do you approach your spouse when they have wronged you?

11. Do you confront with love, patience, and grace, or do you retaliate when you have been hurt?
12. Are there ways in which you have been selfish in your sexual relationship?

PART B

1. Do you ever wonder what your spouse is doing when they're not with you?
2. Are you conscious of editing your words and withholding your feelings because you can't trust your spouse to deal with them properly?
3. Is your sexual relationship mutually satisfying?
4. Do you ever fear that you are being manipulated or taken advantage of in any way?
5. Do you look forward to sharing time together, and when you have these times, are they peaceful and enjoyable?
6. Are there problems between you that remain unsolved because you don't have the bond of trust necessary to work together on a solution?
7. Do you ever wonder if you made a mistake in marrying the person who is your spouse?
8. Would you say that your spouse is your best friend in life, or has this kind of companionship evaporated?

Session Three

What Dreams Are Made Of

Confession is the doorway to growth and change in your relationship. Forgiveness is the fertile soil in which unity in marriage grows.

Key verse

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. **(1 John 1:9)**

All You Need Is (Cruciform) Love

Cruciform love is willing self-sacrifice for the good of another that does not require reciprocation or that the person being loved is deserving.

Key verse

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **(1 John 4:10-11)**

Discussion Questions

1. What initially attracted you to your spouse? Is that attraction still alive today? What is the difference between initial attraction and biblical love?
2. Dissect the definition of cruciform love and apply each aspect to your relationship:

Cruciform love is willing self-sacrifice for the good of another that does not require reciprocation or that the person being loved is deserving.

- **Willing:** When was the last time you did something for your spouse that appeared loving but was done with a hard heart or out of obligation? How can you grow in unprompted willingness?
- **Self-Sacrifice:** What is Christ calling you to sacrifice in your marriage today? Why is it such a struggle to give it up? What does this struggle reveal about your priorities and idols?
- **For The Good Of Another:** Are you aware of the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of your spouse? Create a list of their needs. What steps do you need to take each day to serve them and alleviate their burdens?
- **That Does Not Require Reciprocation:** When was the last time you served your spouse, but only in the hope that you would get something in return? How can this manipulation hurt your marriage?
- **Or That The Person Being Loved Is Deserving:** When was the last time your spouse loved you even when you didn't deserve love? How did this strengthen your relationship?

3. Review the list 23 Things That Love Is And Does. Choose one "LOVE IS" that you need to focus on most intentionally.

23 Things That Love Is And Does

- 1 LOVE IS being willing to have your life complicated by the needs and struggles of others without impatience or anger.
- 2 LOVE IS actively fighting the temptation to be critical and judgmental toward another while looking for ways to encourage and praise.
- 3 LOVE IS making a daily commitment to resist the needless moments of conflict that come from pointing out and responding to minor offenses.
- 4 LOVE IS being lovingly honest and humbly approachable in times of misunderstanding.
- 5 LOVE IS being more committed to unity and understanding than you are to winning, accusing, or being right.

- 6** LOVE IS making a daily commitment to admit your sin, weakness, and failure and to resist the temptation to offer an excuse or shift the blame.
- 7** LOVE IS being willing, when confronted by another, to examine your heart rather than rising to your defense or shifting the focus.
- 8** LOVE IS making a daily commitment to grow in love so that the love you offer to another is increasingly selfless, mature, and patient.
- 9** LOVE IS being unwilling to do what is wrong when you have been wronged but looking for concrete and specific ways to overcome evil with good.
- 10** LOVE IS being a good student of another, looking for their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs so that in some way, you can remove the burden, support them as they carry it, or encourage them along the way.
- 11** LOVE IS being willing to invest the time necessary to discuss, examine, and understand the relational problems you face, staying on task until the problem is removed or you have agreed upon a strategy of response.
- 12** LOVE IS being willing to always ask for forgiveness and always being committed to grant forgiveness when it is requested.
- 13** LOVE IS recognizing the high value of trust in a relationship and being faithful to your promises and true to your word.

- 14** LOVE IS speaking kindly and gently, even in moments of disagreement, refusing to attack the other person's character or assault their intelligence.
- 15** LOVE IS being unwilling to flatter, lie, manipulate, or deceive in any way to co-opt the other person into giving you what you want or doing something your way.
- 16** LOVE IS being unwilling to ask another person to be the source of your identity, meaning, and purpose, or inner sense of well-being while refusing to be the source of theirs.
- 17** LOVE IS the willingness to have less free time, less sleep, and a busier schedule to be faithful to what God has called you to be and to do as a spouse, parent, neighbor, etc.
- 18** LOVE IS a commitment to say no to selfish instincts and to do everything that is within your ability to promote real unity, functional understanding, and active love in your relationships.
- 19** LOVE IS staying faithful to your commitment to treat another with appreciation, respect, and grace, even in moments when the other person doesn't seem deserving or is unwilling to reciprocate.
- 20** LOVE IS the willingness to make regular and costly sacrifices for the sake of a relationship without asking for anything in return or using your sacrifices to place the other person in your debt.

- 21** LOVE IS being unwilling to make any personal decision or choice that would harm a relationship, hurt the other person, or weaken the bond of trust between you.
- 22** LOVE IS refusing to be self-focused or demanding, but instead looking for specific ways to serve, support, and encourage, even when you are busy or tired.
- 23** LOVE IS daily admitting to yourself, the other person, and God that you are unable to be driven by a cruciform love without God's protecting, providing, forgiving, rescuing, and delivering grace.

