

## ***Monday Marriage: A Study Guide***

Written by authors Marlene and Gerald Kaufman, e-mail: [gwlmk@dejazzd.com](mailto:gwlmk@dejazzd.com)

October 2005

Arranged for 9 Sessions

### **A word for the teacher**

*Monday Marriage* presents a new approach to marriage. It is *not* a scientific study about marriage. It *is* about accepting mystery in marriage. It is *not* a psychology textbook about personality. It *is* a book about human character. It is *not* a book about marital ecstasy. It *is* a book about marital contentment. Monday Marriage advocates honesty, reality, and sacrifice in marriage. It invites couples to discover the highest form of marital intimacy.

You should expect this approach to make some people uncomfortable. Many have been convinced by the pop culture that marriage should be intensely romantic, strengthened with technical communication skills, and should possess a perfect understanding of personalities. On the other hand, that same culture promotes individualism, career addiction, busyness, and temporary commitments. Is it any wonder, then, that so many couples are confused about marriage? Monday Marriage invites spouses to a different understanding of marriage. One that is much richer and deeper in meaning. It promotes a realistic understanding about marriage. It also invites spouses to give selflessly to marriage.

If people in your group are troubled by this approach encourage them to be patient. Welcome them to raise questions during the study, but ask them to keep an open mind as they go. Encourage them to tell stories from their own lives about the small things in their marriage that often get overlooked. Help them treasure the things that really matter in their relationship. When people embrace reality they can discover a marriage that is surprisingly satisfying.

### **Chapter one: Introduction to Monday Marriage**

Main ideas:

The chapter begins by defining Monday Marriage. It clarifies why ordinary events in marriage are cause for celebration. It invites people to a more realistic view of marriage while at the same time encourages them to give to marriage what it needs to remain strong. Many couples are influenced by them misinformation that comes from the pop culture.

Discussion:

1. Is the book selling out to mediocrity?
2. Why shouldn't you try to have a great marriage?
3. Especially one that is filled with passion?
4. As scientists learn more about human behavior, shouldn't that information be applied to marriage?
5. Isn't the idea of covenant and sacrifice out of date?
6. If you are happy in a career shouldn't that make you happy at home?

### **Chapter two: Weddings: Starting Marriage the Right Way**

Main ideas:

Expecting too much from marriage begins by having excessive weddings. Costs and hype keep expanding. They are fueled by a wedding industry that makes money from excesses. This has compromised the sacredness of weddings. It has also created a spirit of self-centeredness and unreality that can carry over into marriage.

Discussion:

1. Have couples reflect on their wedding experience, including the planning for the wedding.
2. Did it set the right tone for your marriage?
3. How?
4. Would you do anything different?
5. Is it the kind of wedding you would want your children to have?
6. Should the church have more control over weddings?
7. How can weddings be celebrations without being offensive?

### **Chapter three: Accepting Personality Differences**

Main ideas:

Much is made about the value of having a scientific understanding of marital personalities. Through various tests couples are analyzed to see how they will match up. However, the tests are subjective and create categories that can be arbitrary; i.e. you are either an extrovert or an introvert. They also provide spouses with negative labels that can be used against each other during times of conflict. Perhaps most importantly, analyzing marriage make it into a scientific project. This can take away a sense of mystery that is important to couples.

Discussion:

1. Have the group discuss their personality differences.
2. Did you take any of the personality tests?
3. Do you fit into neat, clear categories?
4. How do these categories affect your marriage?
5. Did what you learned from them help or hinder your relationship?
6. Do you believe your spouse should change his/her personality?
7. Can you?
8. What happens if they don't?
9. Are some personalities better than others are?

### **Chapter four: Being Realistic about Sex**

Main ideas:

Perhaps more than any other aspect of marriage, the sexual life of couples has been profoundly affected by the pop culture. It has made sex into a performance. Spouses are often disappointed with the results. Misleading information about sex is abundant and is carried into the bedroom. In real life, couples often fall short of the expectations. However, this culture teaches couples very little about real intimacy.

Discussion:

Because of the sensitive, personal nature of this subject, it is not recommended that spouses reveal personal aspects of their sex life in the group. Not only is this information private but revealing it creates some risks for all group members.

1. Instead, it would be helpful for spouses to talk about what brings them close to each other and how they know they are loved.
2. They should be encouraged to vent their opinions about distortions that they receive from the pop culture. Look at the various barriers that keep you from intimacy, like fatigue, busyness, and parenting.
3. Discuss boundaries around friendships with people other than your spouse, pornography, Internet, etc.
4. How should the church/friends intervene when lines are crossed?

## **Chapter five: Communicating Imperfectly**

Main ideas:

There is no perfect way to communicate. Spouses often communicate quite differently from each other. Some people are more skillful with words, while others are skillful at communicating with touch or with acts of kindness. We need to be good stewards of our words. Too many can inhibit communication. Harsh words can be hurtful. Most of the ways we communicate have little to do with words. Listening with both ears is helpful. Accepting each other's style of communicating is important.

Discussion:

1. Shouldn't talking things over thoroughly make things better?
2. Aren't words the best way to get your point across?
3. Should the spouse who talks too much learn to talk less and the quiet one learn to speak up?
4. Are you stuck with your communication styles?
5. If so, then what?
6. Shouldn't every couple be required to take classes on how to talk better?
7. What works well for you and what doesn't?

## **Chapter six: Honoring the Marital Covenant**

Main ideas:

We live in a culture that no longer takes the marital covenant seriously. Because more people see marriage as just a legal contract, divorce has become an option to them. The idea of marital permanence seems outdated. Some spouses feel that it restricts the freedom to pursue personal happiness. The church needs to encourage personal, spiritual, and marital maturity especially in upholding the marital covenant. It invites couples to an attitude of humility and service.

Discussion:

1. Are there some marriages that can't/shouldn't be kept together?
2. What does breaking their covenant mean?
3. What if both spouses aren't equally committed to the covenant?
4. What can the church/family/friends do when they see harmful patterns in a marriage?
5. What can you do to increase the levels of maturity in your lifestyles?
6. Does sacrifice/service/submission to a spouse mean giving up personal identity/rights?

## **Chapter seven: Keeping Work in Its Place**

Main ideas:

While work is important for financial and emotional reasons it can also be hazardous to marriage. The long hours demanded from work make us tired, frustrated, and leave little energy for our spouse. It is even more significant in dual income marriages. Additional risks now come from gender-integrated workplaces, especially when workers travel together or are in tasks that require workers to be in close contact. Some jobs create identities that influence the way spouses relate to each other at home. Spouses need to limit the ways their work influences their marriage.

Discussion:

1. Is it ever right to change jobs/careers for the sake of the marriage?
2. Especially if it means downsizing lifestyle?
3. Is it realistic to place marriage above career?

4. Is career success more important than anything else?
5. Are there times that both spouses shouldn't work full-time?
6. What should spouses do when their job requires mixed-gender travel?
7. How can spouses who are, say, teachers not be teachers at home?

### **Chapter eight: Taking Control of Free Time**

Main ideas:

We live in a world that fills every free moment with activity. That may be scheduled events for us and/or our children. Events like competitive sports, music, committee meetings, bowling leagues, and many other things. We also fill our free time with TV, reading, hobbies, or the computer. All of these activities steal time and focus from the marriage. Spouses have to reclaim their free time. Some may need accountability partners to help them recover from their busyness addiction.

Discussion:

1. Is it good for you and your children to be involved in activities because they stretch your minds and bodies, make friends, and do good things for your church and community?
2. Is it okay to watch a little TV to relax?
3. Especially if it is a good program?
4. Isn't it true that you can get useful information when you surf the net?
5. Do you really need somebody else to tell you how to spend your free time?
6. How can you know if your activities are harmful?
7. If activities make you happy personally will that make you a better spouse?

### **Epilogue: Monday Morning**

This is a summary of the entire book presented with many symbols and metaphors. It is subtitled "a homily" as a way of inviting the reader to a higher view of marriage. Our culture consistently devalues marriage leaving behind a trail of brokenness—much of it avoidable. The book reassures couples that it is good to have an "ordinary marriage." And that marriage doesn't need continuous critiquing or "work."

Discussion:

1. Have group members reflect on what they have learned from the book and from each other.
2. Has accepting the reality of marriage made you more comfortable with your spouse?
3. Have you become excited about your "ordinary" relationship? Why?
4. Have you increased your desire to become servants to each other?
5. To what extent are you able to reject the hype and individualism of pop culture?
6. We hope you will join us in saying that Monday Marriage is good.