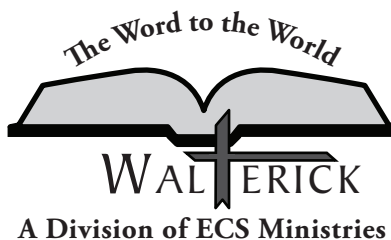


BETTER *Homes and* *Marriages*

O. J. Gibson

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How to Get the Most Out of Your Study

The following suggestions will help make this study more profitable.

Please note that the material is printed with a wide margin to enable you to make notes alongside the text as you study. Space has also been provided to write your answers in the Discussion Questions section of each lesson. The questions are designed to reinforce the lesson material and help you apply the truths in your life.

There are three approaches to studying; Personal, On-on-One, and in a Class Setting.

Before You Start Your Study

In each of these approaches, before you start ask God to help you understand His Word. Claim the promise of Psalm 119:130: “The entrance of Your Words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.” (NKJV) It is impossible to truly understand God’s Word without God’s help (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Reading the Lesson Material

This part applies for each of the approaches

Read the Notes

Read and reread the lesson. Underline key thoughts, mark anything that you do not understand or that you have questions about. Make notations in the wide margin at the side of each lesson.

Look Up Key References

As time permits, read all Scripture references from a modern translation such as the New American Standard Bible. A typical reference is written with the name of the book followed by the chapter number and verse number which are separated by a colon (example: Colossians 3:23). The abbreviation “cf.” means to compare two references (example: Psalm 45:6-7, cf. Hebrews 1:8). Most Bibles have a table of contents that lists the starting page number for each book of the Bible. After finding the page, locate the appropriate chapter and verse.

Answer Discussion Questions

Complete all items in the text and Discussion questions as directed. If you have trouble with a question pass on to the next one.

Personal Study

After completing each lesson, mediate and pray about what you have learned. Ask God to help you apply the truths to your life. Keep the notes for future reference and to share with others.

One-on-One Study

Select a partner for the study. After each of you completes the lesson (see Reading the Lesson Material above) meet to discuss your answers and then prayer together and help each other be accountable for applying the lessons in your lives.

Class Study

Complete "Reading the Lesson Material" (see above)

Attend Class Regularly

There will be a time for small group interaction as well as a lecture period. Your questions and comments will encourage others to share.

Save Your Notes and Material

These will help you in your further study and you may wish to share them with others.

Table^{of} Contents

Section/Title	Page
LESSON 1 One Flesh or Two Individuals?	7
LESSON 2 Understanding Genuine Love in Marriage	11
LESSON 3 Overcoming Selfishness in the Marriage Relationship	17
LESSON 4 Improving Communication in Marriage	21
LESSON 5 Three Principles for Getting Along	27
LESSON 6 Reducing Arguments and Misunderstandings	33
LESSON 7 Resolving Problems and Frustrations	39
LESSON 8 Understanding Areas of Sexual Differences	45
LESSON 9 Understanding the Husband's Biblical Role	51
LESSON 10 Understanding the Wife's Biblical Role	57
LESSON 11 Developing a Spiritual Life Together	63
LESSON 12 Improving Social Time Together	67
LESSON 13 Planning to Grow in Your Marriage	71



One Flesh Two^{or} Individuals

The title of this course is suggested by a well-known magazine, *Better Homes and Gardens*. In a sense, marriage and family are like a garden. It needs much care and hard work to keep it maintained and blooming properly. People who plant or trim in their yards and gardens and use enriching compounds can be expected to have the best results. So it is with marriage. Those who have as a major objective the cultivation of a healthy, happy marriage and family life, and *work diligently* to make it so, will have the best results.

Good results come when we pay attention to expert counsel. In the case of human beings, created by God in His image and for His pleasure, that expert is the Creator Himself. His “manufacturer’s manual” is the Bible, literally, “The Book.” Marriage was instituted by God immediately after the beginning of creation for the benefit of the creatures. He said, “It is not good for man to be alone. I will make him a helpmeet suitable for him” (Gen. 2:18). This does not mean that a single life cannot be successful. It means that a man is made a social being for companionship and fellowship. A primary way to fulfill this need is in marriage, although it can come in other ways. In particular, God made man to live as two sexes, male and female. He could have done it another way, as He demonstrated in other species.

God joined man and woman in marriage as “one flesh” (Gen. 2:24), an expression much more profound than people seem to realize. The Lord Jesus picked up this expression in His remarks about the enduring quality of marriage according to the intention of God (Matt. 19:4-6). Furthermore, marriage is used as an illustration and model, intended by God to be an object lesson of the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and His people, the Church (Eph. 5:31-32).

Husband and wife are not made to be two “individualists” but a team working together. This unity of “one flesh” is intended to be physical (sexual), social (companionship), spiritual (communion with God) and in other ways. It is to be carried out regularly in such a way as to increase mutual joy, serve God’s interests, serve others and model what God intended. Disunity and strife are not God’s will in any human relationship. This can be healed through mutual submission to God’s will, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Lack of harmony has its origin (in virtually every instance) in disobedience to God.

The secular world does not accept, but defies, God's order in many ways. Some human "authorities" promote such ideas as the denying of distinction between the sexes, other than those that are biological. They promote "egalitarian marriage," meaning equality in roles, thus denying the husband's assigned role as leader, among other things. They justify marital infidelity (adultery). They may encourage living for the purpose of promoting self-fulfillment. God is sometimes presented as being androgynous, meaning to have the characteristics of both male and female. Thus He may be referred to as "she" if desired, despite Biblical references to the contrary.

We do not believe a marriage can be truly successful in all dimensions without the Lord as an essential part, acknowledging His Word as authoritative. This means that *Biblical priorities* should be observed:

1. God and His Kingdom should be first (Matt. 6:33) if you want His blessings.
2. The eternal should take precedence over the temporal (the present time) (2 Cor. 4:18).
3. The spiritual should take precedence over the physical (Matt. 6:19-20).
4. People should take precedence over things (the material) (Mark 8:36-37).

We are vainly using our few precious years when we spend our lives in such things as pursuing material accumulations, abusing television use in place of family time together, continuing all-consuming work responsibilities, leaving inadequate time for the home or the Lord and in pursuing of pleasure as the source of happiness (called hedonism).

Marriage can be one of God's greatest blessings if we learn how to live together in harmony according to the will of God. Otherwise it can be a burden, a constant source of friction, even a curse. We may have begun marriage by choosing a partner unwisely. This is often the case. Still, the Lord is rightfully called "the God of Recovery." He can turn our mistakes into something that works. He can give us "beauty for ashes" (Isa. 61:3).

LESSON 1

One Flesh or Two Individuals?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. In practical terms, what has being “one flesh” with your marital partner meant?
2. Can you list at least two areas in which you tend to think and act individualistically where you should be more of a team player?
3. What are the priorities in your marriage relationship? To what extent are you both agreed in this area?
4. What has been the greatest blessing (or blessings) that you have enjoyed in marriage?
5. What has been the greatest challenge (or challenges) that you encountered in marriage? How have you dealt with them??