

Conversation Starters

- Think back to your wedding day...what was it like?
- What commitments did you make that day?

Discuss

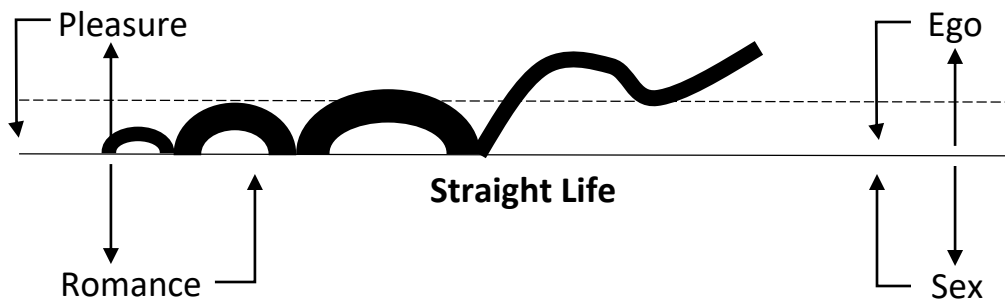
How do you stay together when life is tearing you apart? The preceding idea to entering this conversation is to first recognize that marriage needs to include three people: husband, wife, and God. Marriage is not a social convenience or custom; it is a gift from God.

- How does this idea impact your view of marriage?

God-Centered vs Man-Centered Marriage

Marriage is an institution created by God, and the guidelines He provides for it are for our benefit. A God-centered marriage includes commitment, for the full marathon of marriage and to God's guidelines for it, all to glorify Him. In contrast, a Man-centered marriage says "together, until..." and it often becomes easy to loosen our hold on that original commitment we made.

Think of marriage as a straight line, representing the day-to-day realities of being married – the Straight Life (illustration below). When we lose focus on glorifying God in our marriage, we can be drawn away from the Straight Life. There are four primary voices that call us away: pleasure, romance, sex, and ego.



When you leave the Straight Life, often times you end up just establishing a new one, and continue to get further and further away from the real one. And it's because you are looking for something that you will never find apart from the true Straight Life. So the key is to bring those voices into your marriage; which means learning to die to yourself, being unselfish. And the best place to start is by learning to love God more, and keeping Him at the center as He transforms our hearts.

- Think back to your wedding again...how may have you lost sight of some of those commitments?
- In what ways does culture compound to pulling you away from the Straight Life?

Remove the Exit Sign

Having a marathon marriage takes work. It's not easy. No relationship grows without intentional work and time invested. There will be conflict and challenges. But if you choose to work through those, it can be a beautiful thing. And one of the first things you must do is to remove any exit sign from over the door to your marriage. This changes how you approach conflict; when there is no other solution than to come to a solution.

There are many tools to help you along the way too: reading books on marriage, finding mentor couples who are further along than you, taking a class or attending a seminar, learning to communicate and fight well for healthy conflict resolution. It can be extremely difficult at times, but making it last is worth every fight!

- What are some ways you can work to keep a God-centered marriage?
- How has this series helped you look at your marriage differently?

Next Steps

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. (1 Corinthians 13:6-7)

Reflect on this verse throughout the week. Revisit the practical steps and actions that were discussed throughout this series – go on a date with your spouse, make time to communicate, and find ways to keep God at the center. Now, take the steps to work these into your marriage, and enjoy the marathon.

Pray

Father, thank you for the gift of marriage. Thank you for relationship, with friends, with a spouse, and above all with You. Give us wisdom and strength as we work to build our marriages around You and learn to be unselfish, and to make it for the full marathon with joy. All to glorify You.