

# FIGHTING FOR MARRIAGE

A Seminar or Workbook

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# FIGHTING FOR MARRIAGE

## Session One

Marriage is God's foundational plan for humankind. It's His pattern for successful living. That's why it's so seriously under attack by the devil, the world, and the cultural norms of today.

- If marriage can be destroyed everything topples. God's pattern is shattered. Chaos results. We cannot underestimate or ignore the cultural war raging against marriage and families. History and heritage are lost. Godly living goes by the wayside. The movement to destroy life, as we know it, could result in those following us having no knowledge of God's plan for His creation.
- As external forces arrayed against marriage work to devalue and destroy marriage, they try to join with internal forces within our marriage relationships to combine for the final assault. The old military strategy of "infiltrate and destroy from within" then becomes the most dangerous weapon to do what cannot be done from the outside alone. That's what marriage faces today. That's what the fight is all about. Today, we're going to look at the biblical weapons God provides for us to overcome this assault on marriage. It begins with the heart.

### *1 John 2:15-17 (ESV)*

*"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. {16} For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride in possessions—is not from the Father but is from the world. {17} And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever."*

### *1 John 2:15-17 (TPT)*

*"Don't set the affections of your heart on this world or in loving the things of the world. The love of the Father and the love of the world are incompatible. {16} For all that the world can offer us - the gratification of our flesh, the allurements of the things of the world, and the obsession with status and importance - none of these things come from the Father but from the world. {17} This world and its desires are in the process of passing away, but*

*those who love to do the will of God live forever.”*

As the Scripture says, “Love to do the will of God.” We are here with you, men and women who love God, to talk about loving to do the will of God. Today we will specifically look at patterns with which we can establish to do this. We are here to talk about God’s will and divine purpose for marriage. How do we arm ourselves to not only withstand the battle, but to come out victorious?

*Matthew 7:24-25 (ESV)*

*“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. {25} And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.”*

The acid rain of today’s culture is trying to erode the foundation of marriage. The floodwaters of life’s circumstances rise suddenly; and, the winds of time keep blowing. But our marriages will stand against the attacks of the storms of life. They will not fall if they are built on the Rock. Our best weapon is our determination to have and maintain a strong, vibrant marriage, based on the Word of God.

Our purpose for being here with you today is to help you walk into a closer, more enriching marriage relationship for your own benefit and beyond that, to be an example to others. You can do your part to win this far-reaching battle for marriage. Your marital relationship may be strong or it may need some repairs or upgrades. Our prayer is that the Holy Spirit will touch your hearts and minds and you will walk through a door of opportunity to experience more of the fullness of marriage as God designed it to be.

Let’s rise to the challenge of being leaders and examples not only in our workplace, and daily lives, but also in our roles as husbands and wives. This dovetails perfectly into the mission statement of the church in which this seminar was first given - Truth Center in Roslyn, New York (Pastors Keith and Barbara Pettus):

*“Building people who change the world’s image of God by maintaining God’s image in the world.”*

Jesus gave His disciples a “new commandment” that is a cornerstone for maintaining God’s image in the world... and for success in marriage.

*John 13:34-35 (ESV)*

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. {35} By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

Husbands and wives and let others see your love for one another. Purpose in your hearts that your marriage will *“maintain God’s image in the world.”* Be an agent of change. Take your marriage to a place where it can influence today’s culture and encourage those around you to join you in “fighting for marriage” the way God designed it.

None of us has a perfect marriage. We all have struggles and challenges to overcome. The important thing is that we make it our personal goal to work towards and fight for a marriage that will not only bring joy, peace and love to us and our families, but will touch others, will glorify God, and impact the Kingdom. Then, it can sure be delicious! Psalm 34:8 teaches us that when people see your marriage, they should be able to “Taste and see that the Lord is good.”

*Matthew 5:14a, 16 (TPT)*

*“Your lives light up the world... {16} So don’t hide your light! Let it shine brightly before others, so that the commendable things you do will shine as light upon them, and then they will give their praise to your Father in heaven.”*

We are to be light to this darkened world, shining upon others. How can you accomplish this? This first session is focused on strengthening and fortifying yourselves both individually and as a couple. You do that by bringing to remembrance the foundation that marriage was built on. From the very beginning, God established the foundation for marriage. The Bible calls this foundation, “ONE FLESH.”

*Genesis 2:24 (ESV)*

*“Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”*

*Ephesians 5:31 (ESV) - New Testament confirmation*

*“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”*

Marriage is God's way of weaving the destinies of two people onto a single path. God’s Word simply says, “They shall become one flesh.”

When the authors of this seminar, Dr. Bob and Nancy Abramson were married over thirty years ago, Ephesians 5:31 was read over them. They were united by God.

### Nancy's Testimony

Nancy has testified that at the time she thought she understood the depth of the concept of "one flesh." However, over the years she struggled with issues that were a clear indication that she just had not fully gotten it. For example, Nancy and Dr. Bob have done a lot of ministry together. They've preached sermons together, done teachings and seminars together. Nancy always says it's a blessing to be able to share the pulpit. However, when blessed with an offering, regardless of who did the majority of the ministry, even when she had the Sunday morning service for herself, the offering check came in Dr. Bob's name only. Nancy has testified that it always aggravated her. Imagine working on a project with a co-worker and them getting all the money! Each time it happened, she would have to work through the feelings and get her pride under control. But the next time it happened she would have to crucify her flesh all over again. Nancy says, "I wanted my own way. I wanted to feel important. I wanted to feel valued. I wanted, I wanted, I wanted. But I never stopped to ask myself, "What does God want?""

Nancy further said that she was happy to report that while working on this seminar, she got revelation from the Lord. Her value has nothing to do with a name on a check or who gets "top billing." That's how the world measures value." God put Dr. Bob and Nancy together as "one flesh," so they could fulfill His will, plan and purpose. For Nancy, it was liberating to get this revelation!

Nancy said, "The devil can no longer lie to me that I am second-class, or not as valuable as my husband. Although we are individuals, Bob's victories are my victories, his blessings are my blessing, and his challenges are my challenges. We are one flesh in God's eyes and need to be one flesh in each other's eyes. There is no place for jealousy, envy, or pride in a marriage. When you are faced with a challenge in your marriage and find yourself saying, "I want" it should set off a Holy Ghost alarm that reminds you to check and see what God wants."

In God's eyes, not only are you and your spouse one, but He designed your marriage to be a threefold spiritual, covenant relationship. It became

a triangular covenant agreement when you stood before God and said, “I do.” He’s the third Person in the agreement.

## What is a Covenant?

A covenant is an agreement between two or more persons. In particular, the marriage covenant is an agreement between husband, wife *and* the Lord. The Hebrew word for covenant means, “to bond.” We can understand this to mean, “to be glued together permanently”.

*Malachi 2:14b (NKJV)*

*“...she is your companion and your wife by covenant.”*

God designed marriage to be a covenant relationship, glued together in a three-fold *spiritual* bond. A complete, successful marriage will depend on whether the glue holds. God will do His part. The rest is up to the two covenant marriage partners.

*Ecclesiastes 4:12b (ESV)*

*“...a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”*

A rock-solid commitment to a covenant is the foundation of marriage. It’s not romance. It’s not emotion.

## Nancy’s Story

“As a young girl I was raised on fairy tales. The story and expectation were always the same. The princess ended up with her prince charming and they lived happily ever after. But real life is not a fairy tale. Relationships are full of challenges, disappointments, and hurts. That’s why it is so important to do life God’s way. It is the only way to experience happily ever after - all the way into eternity.”

- If you think your marriage can flourish with just a foundation of feelings, your feelings will let you down. You can’t have a strong marriage based on what you feel... or don’t feel.
- A strong, satisfying marriage is based on what you know from the unfailing truth of God’s Instruction Book. That’s the glue... and that’s what refreshes and then maintains the feelings! This requires staying in close relationship with the Lord and His Word.
- Demand of yourself that the Word of God becomes the basis for your conduct... and the foundation of your marriage.

It can be a battle to take your marriage from good to great, but it's a battle God will equip you to win! The victory is in your reach because God and His ways are in your reach. Won't you take this opportunity as a couple to embrace His ways, as we go through them with you? (We're talking about fighting for marriage as God designed it.)

Let's talk about the winning strategy for battles. There's one common denominator in the battles God's people successfully fought in the Bible. They listened to God and did things His way. When the children of Israel crossed into the Promise Land, the first city God told them to conquer was Jericho. Listen to His instructions on how they were to do it.

*Joshua 6:2a, 3-5a (ESV)*

*“And the Lord said to Joshua... {3} “You shall march around the city, all the men of war going around the city once. Thus shall you do for six days. {4} Seven priests shall bear seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark. On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, and the priests shall blow the trumpets. {5} And when they make a long blast with the ram's horn, when you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout, and the wall of the city will fall down flat...”*

How's that for a logical battle plan? God instructed Joshua to *“March around Jericho six days and on the seventh day, do it seven times and then blow seven trumpets. Then everyone will shout and the walls will fall down flat.”* Joshua must have thought to himself something like this: “It sounds weird but God said to do it His way, and that's how we're going to do it!

There's another example of someone who listened to God, when it didn't seem to fit who he thought he was. His name was Gideon. He was busy hiding from the Midianites in a winepress, threshing wheat. The narrative is found in Judges, Chapters Six and Seven.

*Judges 6:12 (ESV)*

*“ And the angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him, “The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.”*

God said to Gideon, “You are a big time warrior, *“a mighty man of valor.”*” Gideon said, “He must be talking to someone else.” Then the Lord gave Gideon his marching orders. He told Gideon to send everyone home except for 300 men. (They started out with over 32,000 and God sent 31,700 of them home.) The Lord said that all the remaining 300 needed

to do was break their pitchers to expose the light from the torches within, and shout, *“The sword of the Lord and Gideon.”* (Judges 7:20)

It certainly didn't make sense to face a vastly superior army, who were *“as numerous as locusts”* (Judges 7:12) when Gideon's 300 men only had trumpets, pitchers and lamps, Gideon believed what the angel of the Lord told him, and he obeyed. He did just as the angel of the Lord said. God then moved among Gideon's enemies, causing a great fright and panic among them. They turned on each other and destroyed themselves. To the natural mind it seems an impossible way to defeat all those thousands, but God's way always works.

Here's the point of both narratives. Joshua and Gideon heard the voice of God. They trusted His instructions and followed them.

- It's all about attitudes when you fight for your marriage. You don't have to fight for your victory; you fight *from* your victory... if you do it God's way.
- Joshua and Gideon embraced God's view of the battle, in obedience and faith, trusting that they were on the way to victory.
- There was no argument or second-guessing the Lord. It was about doing it His way... and still is.
- In “fighting for marriage,” you have to listen carefully. Hearing the voice of God in our marriages isn't always easy.

Listen to this story about finding a lost watch.

(It's from Phillip Gunter in *“Fresh Illustrations for Preaching and Teaching, from the editors of Leadership.”*)

### “Keeping Very Still in the Sawdust.”

“Before refrigerators, people used icehouses to preserve their food. Icehouses had thick walls, no windows, and a tightly fitted door. In winter, when streams and lakes were frozen, large blocks of ice were cut, hauled to the icehouses, and covered with sawdust. Often the ice would last well into the summer.

One man lost a valuable watch while working in an icehouse. He searched diligently for it, carefully raking through the sawdust, but didn't find it. His fellow workers also looked, but their efforts, too, proved futile. A small boy who heard about the fruitless search slipped into the icehouse during the noon hour and soon emerged with the watch.

Amazed, the men asked him how he found it. “I closed the door,” the boy replied, “lay down in the sawdust, and kept very still. Soon I heard the watch ticking.”

Often the question is not whether God is speaking, but whether we are being still enough, and quiet enough, to hear.”

It must be an act of your will, in which you deliberately come aside, turn down the noise of your circumstances and your own thinking, so you can do nothing but listen for God’s voice. This will take some focus and in most cases, a serious dose of patience and willpower. It will be worth it, when the Holy Spirit speaks to you and directs your next steps to take your marriage to places you never thought it could, but now can.

*Psalm 46:10a says, “Be still and know that I am God.”* Be still. Listen and learn God’s view of the path you are to take... and then, take it! The result will go far beyond victory for the moment, but will establish a pattern for successful married life. Getting in step with God’s view of marriage, and acting accordingly, will enable you to win the battles that come against marriage and be an example to other couples. God sees you together as overcomers and people of influence. It’s time you saw yourselves as such and lived out your victory for all to see.

Achieving the maximum potential for your marriage hangs on whether you learn along the way to see and embrace God’s view of it... and put it into practice, both individually and as a couple. This will, in time, displace any wrong expectations, attitudes and actions we may have brought with you into the marriage.

With the guidance of the Word of God, you’ll never doubt the right way to nurture your marriage. The path to a successful marriage is a quest that should last the two of you a lifetime. It will result in a continuing process of transformation in your thinking, your attitudes and the way you see your spouse.... and yourself. Great marriages are between people who understand and are willing to change, grow and give evidence of it with their lives together.

*Romans 12:2 (ESV)*

*“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

*Romans 12:2 (TPT)*

*“Stop imitating the ideals and opinions of the culture around you, but be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit through a total reformation of how you think. This will empower you to discern God’s will as you live a beautiful life, satisfying and perfect in his eyes.”*

God wants a very real part in designing and fulfilling your relationship as husband and wife. He wants to help you build on the good things you already share in your marriage experience. Remember, in God's eyes, your marriage vows established that threefold covenant with Him.

It's a mistake to see marriage as just a partnership between two people. There will always be that potential third partner. If it's not God, it will surely be the devil. Satan wants you to join with him in breaking the marriage covenant. His mission is to poison your marriage. Stop partnering with him! There's no future in it! Remind the devil of his future and send that piece of garbage packing!

- Complacency, bitterness, selfishness, isolation and the like, can make you an unwilling or unaware partner with Satan. The list goes on and on.
- It's time for a transformation – “*a total reformation*” ...and it all depends upon honoring your threefold covenant agreement with God.

*James 4:6b-7, 8a, 10 (ESV)*

*“God oppose the proud, But gives grace to the humble.” {7}  
Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. {8} Draw near to God and He will draw near to you... {10} Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will exalt you.”*

When your third covenant partner in marriage is God, His presence is always with you. Psalm 139 makes that perfectly clear.

*Psalm 139:7-10 (ESV)*

*“Where can I go from your Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? {8} If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in sheol, You are there! {9} If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, {10} Even there your hand shall lead me, And Your right hand shall hold me.”*

What's required of you is to remain aware of the presence of the Lord throughout the day. Moses understood the power of God's presence. In Exodus 33:14 (ESV), God told him to lead the people into the Promised Land. He then assured Moses, saying, “*My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.*” In verse 15, Moses replied, “*If your presence does not go with us, do not bring us up from here.*” If you take hold of the incredible gift of His divine presence, and allow Him to guide you through

life as a couple, His spiritual weapons become your spiritual weapons in the fight for your marriage.

*2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (ESV)*

*“For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. {4} For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. {5} We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ,”*

*2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (TPT)*

*“For although we live in the natural realm, we don’t wage a military campaign employing human weapons, using manipulation to achieve our aims. Instead, our spiritual weapons are energized with divine power to effectively dismantle the defenses behind which people hide. {5} We can demolish every deceptive fantasy that opposes God and break through every arrogant attitude that is raised up in defiance of the true knowledge of God. We capture, like prisoners of war, every thought and insist that it bow in obedience to the Anointed One.”*

“Fighting for marriage” is all about agreement with God. Fight this fight with the weapons He’s made available to you. This will enable you to strengthen and keep that vital connection to Him. Stay connected and He will provide you with the power to have a lasting, vibrant marriage.

Success in “fighting for marriage” depends on how you embrace and apply the many spiritual weapons God provides for you. In the next session we will focus on them... and doing the necessary maintenance, repairs and enhancements to your relationship as husband and wife, and with God.

If you are leading this seminar, take questions from participants now. Then, take a short break and begin Session Two.

Here are suggestions for “ice breaker” questions:

1. There is no place for jealousy, envy, or pride in a marriage. What is your greatest temptation toward any of these when you look at your spouse’s life?
2. What is your greatest distraction when it comes to listening to your spouse? How would you change this?

3. What's your greatest excuse for not listening to God, or not listening often enough for His voice?
4. What one thing can you take from this first session that has touched your heart the most, and what will you do about it?

Notes

Please go to the following page and begin Session Two.

## FIGHTING FOR MARRIAGE

### Session Two

#### Review from the first session:

In the first session, we focused on how we strengthen and fortify our marriage by remembering the foundation it was built on. God sees marriage as “one flesh” and a covenant partnership with each other and most importantly, with Him.

In this session we will focus on doing the necessary maintenance, repairs and enhancements to your relationship as husband and wife, and with God.

Success in “fighting for marriage” depends on how you embrace and apply the many weapons that God provides for you in His spiritual arsenal. Like the young boy in the “Ice House story,” quietly listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit as we continue.

Near the end of the first session, we read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5 in The Passion Translation. Here it is again:

#### *2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (TPT)*

*“For although we live in the natural realm, we don’t wage a military campaign employing human weapons, using manipulation to achieve our aims. Instead, our spiritual weapons are energized with divine power to effectively dismantle the defenses behind which people hide. {5} We can demolish every deceptive fantasy that opposes God and break through every arrogant attitude that is raised up in defiance of the true knowledge of God. We capture, like prisoners of war, every thought and insist that it bow in obedience to the Anointed One.” (It’s a war for our thoughts.)*

Here’s the first weapon in our spiritual arsenal: It has to do with our thoughts. We call it “Capture, Contain and Control.”

To “Capture, Contain and Control” is a classic military strategy. In the context of “fighting for marriage,” it’s a weapon we can use to exercise the effective capture of those thoughts that are not pleasing to God. We take away their freedom by containing and controlling them.

We willfully and forcefully capture the worldly, carnal thoughts that want to dictate our surrender to them. When captured and contained, they will lose their power to control our thinking, and thus, the quality of our marriages. Any thoughts that negatively influence your attitudes about marriage, your spouse, and your covenant commitments will be exposed and cancelled. Every lie about what the future holds for the two of you will be neutralized. Yes, it's a war!

“Capture, Contain and Control” is a Threefold System.

FIRST: Take captive every thought that tries to hurt your marriage.

The Scripture in 2 Corinthians talks about manipulation, deception and arrogance. Add to these the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21, like “*jealousy... anger, divisions, and envy.*” When we yield to these kinds of thoughts, we put selfishness and self-centered attitudes on the throne. Ungodly thoughts must be captured. Otherwise, they run rampant in our minds and find their way into our hearts and our speech.

SECOND. Contain these captured thoughts so they cannot escape.

*Psalm 141:3 (ESV)*

*“Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips!”*

The Septuagint reads, “*set a fortress door before my lips.*”

### Nancy's Testimony

“The only fortress I have been in was when I worked for the Public Defender's office in Miami. I had to go to the Dade County Jail to see defendants we were representing. Once admitted into the jail, I was faced with a heavily barred door. The electronic barred door slid open and I stepped in. The bars closed behind me with a loud clang. To my surprise, when the bars had closed behind me, I found myself facing another closed barred door in front of me. I could not go in nor could I go back out. There I was, contained between two sets of bars. I was trapped.”

We must do the same thing with the ungodly thoughts we capture. Once you seize the thoughts you need to keep them contained and confined. You cannot stop an ungodly thought from entering your mind, but do not let it escape. Do not let it form into words that pass through your lips. The

thoughts that used to be free to perform their will over your marriage need to be contained in obedience to Christ.

THIRD: Once the ungodly thoughts are captured and contained, you can control what thoughts do rule your mind, heart and words.

*Romans 12:2a ESV*

*“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...”*

*Romans 12:2a in TPT*

*“ Stop imitating the ideals and opinions of the culture around you, but be inwardly transformed by the Holy Spirit through a total reformation of how you think.”*

This “*reformation of how you think*” elevates God-given thoughts to a place of control and a position of empowerment. These thoughts, when expressed in words, result in your spouse being respected, honored and covered by your encouragement and support. You deliberately and repeatedly send a message of security and love that affirms your marriage.

God’s standards by which we measure our thoughts is found in Philippians 4:8:

*Philippians 4:8b (ESV)*

*“...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.”*

If the thought you are having is not true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, or worthy of praise, capture and contain it. Replace it with a thought that lines up with the Word of God.

- Some of us will have speech patterns that are difficult to contain or change. For example, you may have a habit of making sarcastic remarks. Sarcasm is not funny. It’s not a joke. Sarcasm is a dagger that cuts into the heart and can destroy a person. It’s a wedge against “one flesh” togetherness.
- You may struggle with criticism or constant correction of your spouse.
- Whatever it might be for you, each of you has buttons we can push that cause hurt to your spouse.

## “Do You Know What Hurts Me?”

Madeleine L'Engle, “Walking on Water.” Christianity Today, Vol. 30, no. 14. (2005)

“A rabbi [was] renowned for his piety. He was unexpectedly confronted one day by one of his devoted youthful disciples. In a burst of feeling, the young disciple exclaimed, “My master, I love you!” The ancient teacher looked up from his books and asked his fervent disciple, “Do you know what hurts me, my son?”

The young man was puzzled. Composing himself, he stuttered, “I don't understand your question, Rabbi. I am trying to tell you how much you mean to me, and you confuse me with irrelevant questions.” “My question is neither confusing nor irrelevant,” rejoined the rabbi. “For if you do not know what hurts me, how can you truly love me?”

The rabbi's wisdom is worth repeating: “For if you do not know what hurts me, how can you truly love me?” Be conscious about what hurts your spouse and make a decision not to go there, no matter what. Capture and contain any thoughts that cause hurt to your spouse, and anyone else.

A common expression for carpenters before they saw a piece of wood is “measure twice, cut once.” When it comes to our thoughts we need to measure our words twice, or three times, or four times, so we don't even cut once.” Honor your covenant marriage partner by the flavor of words you speak. Let them be evidence that you chose to “Capture, Contain and Control” your thoughts and how you express yourself. Perhaps the most effective way of doing this can be to recognize when the Holy Spirit speaks to your heart and says “No, don't say that.” Then, refuse to speak. Sometimes, we just have to get out the “spiritual duct tape.”

This threefold system of “capture, contain and control” sends a consistent message to your spouse and to the world, in which the two of you live and function as “one flesh.” You protect each other from negative thoughts and words. You provide an emotional fortress in which your spouse can take refuge and find peace. (Psalm 91:3-4)

### 1 Corinthians 13:4-6 (ESV)

*“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant {5} or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; {6} it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. {7} Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”*

You've got to capture every negative thought that carries potential for the destruction of your relationship. You've got to contain what you capture. Imprisoning those thoughts. Refuse to give them life. They're relationship killers! Then, as this happens, you can control what you say, and how you say it.

Even when you silently communicate through a compassionate look or gesture, you can enrich your marriage and strengthen the covenant. God is pleased and His blessings will flow. The question becomes: Will you settle for the way things are, or will you continue to change and grow?

Here's the second weapon in our spiritual arsenal. It's a "Commitment to Speak the Truth." It's found in the book of James.

*James 5:12b (ESV)*

*"...But above all, my brothers, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or by any other oath, but let your "yes" be yes and your "no" be no, so that you may not fall under condemnation."*

Let's be clear. We're not talking about being stubborn. We're talking about your words being trustworthy. One of the ways we can change and grow is to have an unwavering commitment to speak the truth... while keeping in mind the instructions 1 Corinthians 13 (the "love chapter").

Here's what we mean: In things related to your personal integrity, or your care and concern for your family members (and especially your spouse), let your "yes" be "yes" and your "no" be "no."

- This will create an atmosphere in which your spouse values your consistency and dependability. Even when he or she doesn't like what you say, they will agree with your consistent integrity, and trust in your faithfulness.
- It will cause you to increasingly value the strength of your own character. It will also reveal your godly character to others.
- You can't sit on the fence. Be known as a man or woman of absolute integrity, never a person of carnal compromise. The trust you bring to the table will be more than enough to fight the battle for your marriage!

When your "yes" is "yes" and your "no" is "no," your spouse will see that your integrity refuses to waver. He or she will see the strength you bring to the marriage and it will amplify the quality of your relationship.

It's like taking the sound of worship, softly sung to the Lord, and putting it through a church sound system. It's amplified, so it fills the sanctuary and becomes overwhelming in its power and beauty, glorifying God.

A commitment to speak the truth produces a lifestyle that increases the strength, effectiveness and influence of your words. It will profoundly and tangibly affect your marriage relationship. When you speak, the goodness of God is increasingly released from inside of you to others around you, and particularly to your marriage partner. You're not the same today as you were yesterday; nor would you want to be the same tomorrow as you are today. Hunger to become a stronger covenant marriage partner in every area of your life. Amplify the Christ in you. Your aim is to be well pleasing to God. Be determined daily, to hit what you aim for!

*2 Corinthians 5:9 TPT*

*"So whether we live or die we make it our life's passion to live our lives pleasing to Him."*

Let's review: Our first weapon was "Capture, Contain and Control" our thoughts. The second was, a "Commitment to Speak the Truth." In the final session, we'll look into our third weapon, a choice to be "All In."

If you are leading this seminar, take questions from participants now. Then, take a short break and begin Session Three.

Suggestions for "ice breaker" questions from this Second Session:

1. Refer to the questions from the first session to see if anyone wants to add to what's been shared earlier.
2. Do you have negative speech patterns that need to change?
3. Do you know what hurts your spouse?
4. What one thing can you take from this second session that has touched your heart the most, and what will you do about it?

## FIGHTING FOR MARRIAGE”

### Session Three

The third weapon in our arsenal for “fighting for marriage” is a choice you make. It’s a decision to be “All In.”

Have you ever watched an old western movie and in the saloon they’re sitting around a table playing poker? It always seems to come down to the moment when a player slides the whole stack of chips into the middle of the table and declares, “I’m All In!” What he or she has done is to make a full, irrevocable commitment to put everything on the table.

- This might remind us of Elisha’s attitude when he refused to leave Elijah, who was about to take a fiery chariot ride to Heaven (2 Kings 2). Three times Elijah instructed his servant Elisha to leave him as they journeyed to Elijah’s place of departure to heaven. All three times, Elisha said, *“I will not leave you.”* He was determined to be faithful and stay the course. He was “All In.”
- Elisha’s faithfulness to be “All In” in his relationship resulted in a *“double portion”* of what he had previously observed in Elijah.
- Perhaps the best Old Testament example of some one who was “all in” is Ruth.

#### *Ruth 1:16-17 (ESV)*

*“But Ruth said, “Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. {17} Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the Lord do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you.””*

- Ruth clung to Naomi and became part of the lineage of Christ. Let’s apply this to married life today. Are you “All In?” Are you committed for life?
- How many people, when the going gets tough, find themselves clinging to a “Plan B” or a “loophole” in their commitment? They were never “All In.” They reserved a way of escape that was not from God.

When you are “All In” you’re saying, “I’m determined that what you see in me will reflect that I’m fully committed to you... I will cling to you. I will reject any temptations that would cause any separation between us. “

You’re also saying, “I’m committed to becoming all God wants me to become. I’m God’s champion and will place the highest value on being as like Him as I can be. This will be evident in my personal relationship to you; and also, in how I represent Jesus to our family and to others.”

### Dr. Bob’s Thoughts on Being “All In”

“Are you committed to being a finisher of what your marriage vows began? Do this by taking “the high road.” When you’re “All In” you will consistently choose the “high road.” Let me explain. Like you, Nancy and I listen to lots of worship music, both in and out of church. We personally believe worship songs ought to magnify the Lord. It’s the same principle for “fighting for marriage.” What we say to each other ought to always magnify the Lord and the victorious life He’s leading us to.

Recently we heard a worship team sing a song that included the lyrics, “My faith is dead.” Both Nancy and I just stood there, dumbfounded. We could not sing along with that kind of negative confession.

It immediately came to our minds that people who lead others in Christian worship or in preaching the Word, or in living life in a family, ought to never use terms that verbally confess not having faith. Why? People catch what they hear, or what they participate in. Whose voice have you been listening to and what have you been singing along with?

Why live in ways that will take you down a “low road?” The “low road” only leads us to places lower and lower... or farther away from God and from each other. It’s the road to diminished or eventually, a complete lack of faith. It’s a marriage-killing road! This is in contrast to the “High Road.” The “High Road” leads people higher and higher... closer to God and therefore, to each other.

## Biblical Instructions for Taking the “High Road.”

It's the roadmap to being “All In.”

*Colossians 3:1-2, 5, 12-15 (ESV)*

*“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. {2} Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth...*

*{5} Put to death therefore what is earthly in you...*

*{12} Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, {13} bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. {14} And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. {15} And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.”*

- The “High Road” seeks the things that are above. What are you seeking? Will it reflect this threefold covenant marriage relationship with the two of you, and God? It can be an ever-increasingly close triangle, God, you and your spouse.
- On the “High Road” you can reject the pitfalls of carnal living. What does the Word of God say to do with these carnal pitfalls? It says, don't give them any place. It goes even further. It says *“put them to death!”*
- How do you kill those old “low road” carnal habits and ways of living? It's not always easy, but it's do-able. The Bible says, you've got to put off that kind of living like it was a used up, worn out garment. Discard it. Get rid of it. Trash it. Don't wear it any longer. Instead, put something new on: It's called *“compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, forgiveness, love.”* Allow these new garments to become garments of praise (Isaiah 61:3), removing any spirit of heaviness from your marriage.

The result will be a journey together on the “High Road.” You'll be in harmony. Together, you'll be “All In” ...and, you will share the peace of God as a result of the choices you make.

Which road is your relationship presently on? Is it time to consider the direction you are taking in your marriage? The “High Road” of choosing to be “All In” with each other is a walk of faith... faith in the Word of God,

and faith in each other. There is no “Plan B” when you take the “High Road!”

This brings us to our fourth spiritual weapon: Understanding how to properly “fight for marriage” with the “Power of Faith”

*1 Timothy 6:12 (ESV)*

*“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.”*

We must never allow the results of life’s circumstances to be the measuring rod of our faith. We have to stay fixed on our confident expectations that God is exactly who He says He is, whether the outcomes of life please us or not! Our faith cannot demand that God provides what we consider acceptable results. Faith simply believes, acts accordingly and trusts God in the outcome, whatever it is. All this brings us to these questions, below. (We will refer to them again at the end of the seminar and invite your answers or comments. For now, just think about them.)

1. What is the witness of your faith that your spouse sees? What do others see?
2. Do you allow unmet prayers or unmet expectations to discourage you or misdirect you away from the will of God?
3. When do you allow doubt to creep into your prayers?
4. Have any unanswered prayers or failed expectations kept you from keeping the marriage fires brightly burning in your heart?
5. Do you even pray... together?

Hebrews 11:1 says, *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*

Let hope rise up in your hearts together as you commit to fighting for marriage. Let faith in our all-powerful, all loving God fuel your resolve to work together to do your part in gaining the victory. Use the weapons God gives you in each and every battle and take the “High Road” of faith.

On the following page, we will recap the weapons in our spiritual arsenal that when used properly, can make a great difference in the quality of your marriage relationship.

Here's the recap the weapons in our spiritual arsenal.

1. Capture, Contain and Control our thoughts
2. A Commitment to Speak the Truth
3. Make a decision to be "ALL IN" ...and take the "High Road!"
4. The Power of Faith

Now that we have armed ourselves for the fight, we need to ensure we use our weapons effectively. We will call this strategy a "Targeted Advance." It's not an emotional flight away from something. It's a purposefully, deliberate charge toward whatever stands in the way of your marriage success.

Don't try to cover up, back away... or hide from the negatives or problems you face in your marriage. A "Targeted Advance" strategy involves directly facing them. We deliberately go after them, so we can crush them... obliterate them, render them impotent, and completely powerless.

### Dr. Bob's Testimony

"When training as a U.S. Marine, so many years ago during the Vietnam War, we were taught how to react to an ambush. We were taught never to run from it or cower, paralyzed in the killing field of fire. Instead, We were taught to react by charging the ambush in an aggressive "Targeted Advance," overwhelming it with powerful fighting action. This had to be drilled into us, as it required a state of mind that was foreign to our natural instinct for self-protection."

- Translated into the issues of this seminar, the correct reaction to the devil's attempts to ambush our marriages requires a powerful, "Targeted Advance." With the spiritual weapons God gives us, we can kill the lies with which the devil has ambushed us.
- Successful and significant change will come when you advance together, seizing the victory for your marriage.
- The devil has tried to use intimidating lies to cripple your opportunities for a great marriage. He's done his best to ambush you. God has given you powerful biblical resources to defeat these lies.

Remember David and Goliath in 1 Samuel, Chapter 17? You need that same giant-killer's attitude, like David had with Goliath. What used to be a giant issue in your married life needs to have its head cut off!

Stand up for your marriage. Stick your spiritual finger in that giant's face. Be like David. Tell every divisive issue that's trying to ambush your

marriage what you're going to do. The bigger they are, the harder they fall! Don't settle for anything less than cutting off its head. Then, climb out of that valley of intimidation and head for your spoils. A great marriage is waiting. Nothing is too big or overwhelming when God is on your side.

Each of us has our own particular battles to fight because we were all created as unique individuals, one of a kind. Nobody is like you. No marriage is like your marriage. One thing we all have in common is that the purpose of our relationships goes far beyond our own personal needs and aspirations. You are in the business of providing grace for your spouse... and others around you.

- The cost of being a dispenser of God's grace and lovingkindness may at times be great, but the joy of seeing your marriage grow and succeed will far outweigh the cost.
- Don't focus on the cost. Instead, count the fruit and all the potential that follows for even more fruitfulness. A question to ask is, "How can we promote and encourage more fruitfulness in each other, individually and as a couple?"
- Make it a pattern of your life to initiate grace towards your spouse. Love and care for him or her as your unique gift from God.
- Remember, none of us are perfect. Try not to be judgmental or critical. You can only fix yourself. In spite of your determination, you just won't be able to fit all your circumstances into a picture of a perfect marriage. Have faith in what God will do in both of you, if you allow Him to.
- In the midst of the teachable moments that come with the problems or issues in marriage, God will change you. In doing so, He will change your relationship for the better. Take advantage of these times. Speak biblical wisdom and Holy Spirit-led life into what you can't fix by yourself. Share your hearts together with conversation and prayers. Try praying together. Tell each other what it is that God is speaking to you.
- Perhaps equally as important, speak wisdom and life into those other couples God will give the two of you, who will need to hear what you have learned. This ought to be a primary focus and a reflection of your own covenant marriage relationship. It's one of the most powerful weapons you can fire at the devil in fighting for marriage.
- Every day, each of us has a choice of which direction we will take our marriages. Today could be a fork in the road for you. Which way will you choose - the path of your own will, or the "High Road" to the will of God? It's the only road that leads to victory in fighting for marriage according to God's design.

It is up to you as husband and wife to take action. Sit down together. Listen for the voice of the Holy Spirit and construct a biblically based vision for your marriage. It will impact your relationship, your children and the world around you. Listen once again to this portion of Truth Center's missions statement:

*"Building people who change the world's image of God by maintaining God's image in the world."*

Here's another look at Corinthians 10:3-5.

### *2 Corinthians 10:3-5 (TPT)*

*"For although we live in the natural realm, we don't wage a military campaign employing human weapons, using manipulation to achieve our aims. Instead, our spiritual weapons are energized with divine power to effectively dismantle the defenses behind which people hide. {5} We can demolish every deceptive fantasy that opposes God and break through every arrogant attitude that is raised up in defiance of the true knowledge of God. We capture, like prisoners of war, every thought and insist that it bow in obedience to the Anointed One."*

## Seminar Summary

The fight for marriage is real. Strengthen and fortify yourself with the truth from the Word of God. You are indeed one flesh, joined to each other and God in covenant. The glue that holds you together is a solid commitment to do it God's way. Listen for His voice. Obey His instructions. Follow His leading. When you allow the Holy Spirit to continue to change you as an individual and a couple, your light shines brighter and brighter for the world to see. Your commitment to one another as a couple will draw others to Christ, who can then join you in the fighting for marriage as God designed it.

If you are leading this seminar, ask for thoughts on the five questions from Page 22. (They appear on the following page.) Take final questions and comments from participants now. If you have time, testimonies from the seminar would be edifying to the participants. Then, pray for the couples in attendance.

Questions from Page 22

1. What is the witness of your faith that your spouse sees? What do others see?
2. Do you allow unmet prayers or unmet expectations to discourage you or misdirect you away from the will of God?
3. When do you allow doubt to creep into your prayers?
4. Have any unanswered prayers or failed expectations kept you from keeping the marriage fires brightly burning in your heart?
5. Do you even pray... together?

*May the Lord bless your marriage with an abundance of blessings.*

Dr. Bob and Nancy Abramson

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For more information on Dr. Bob and Nancy Abramson:  
[www.mentoringministry.com](http://www.mentoringministry.com)

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