



Reconstructing Love

a marriage seminar by Michael and Amy Smalley

**Four fundamental truths that can literally
redefine your marriage for the better.**



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How to Guide

The everything you have to know to be successful part!

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We want you to be successful in using this study guide, so we put together some important notes so you can be better prepared in organizing and teaching this study on Reconstructing Love. You will notice that each week starts with an introduction note. This note is meant to help launch the material you will be learning.

Each week is divided into three major sections:

Key Verses

These verses are the key verses used in the presentation DVD and we encourage you to have members of your group read them aloud to each other in the translation most comfortable to your group. The key verses are also a great way to get good discussions going for the group as well.

Discussion Questions

Discussion questions are meant to help foster meaningful conversation for your group time, but don't feel like you have to answer each one. If the group gets going in a different direction, then allow it to, we can't think of everything and sometimes it's better to go where people have a heart felt need. You will also notice in this section periodic "teaching points" that will help parents, couples, discussion leaders, teachers, or small group leaders with the discussion questions. The teaching points naturally flow from the discussion questions.

Action Points

The action points may be the most important part of this study. If change is going to happen in your family, or anyone's family, then something has to change. Action points are opportunities to apply the principles learned during the class. You will notice that after the first week, there is a follow up action point section, this is meant to be an accountability tool for the group. Make sure and highlight this for the group.

Each week can be copied easily on the front and back of one piece of paper if you just use the three major sections just mentioned (Key Verses, Discussion Questions, and Action Points). Most groups don't want to feel overwhelmed with too much material in their hands, so having just one piece of paper can often lead to better discussion time and more participation.

Group Directory

Making sure you stay connected

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The most important element to small groups or Sunday school classes is the relationship developed between the members of the group. In order to help this process, we want you to pass this sheet around your class or group and have everyone fill it out on each other's copy:

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
Zip: _____
Home Phone: _____
Mobile Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Name: _____
Address: _____
City: _____
Zip: _____
Home Phone: _____
Mobile Phone: _____
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Mobile Phone: _____
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Name: _____
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City: _____
Zip: _____
Home Phone: _____
Mobile Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Week One

Renewing your spirituality

One of the biggest complaints a Christian couple has is their lack of spiritual connectedness. Learning how to respect each other's spiritual differences is important if a couple is ever going to connect on a significant level spiritually.

This week is about helping couples learn how to turn their differences in spirituality into major strengths for their relationship. No one is ever raised exactly the same way when it comes to living out a daily walk with God. This is why many couples struggle in growing together spiritually, because they have such different backgrounds.

Amy and I grew up believing in Christ, but we lived this out very differently. When we first got married our differences were a major battle. Both of us were trying to change each other, to create little spiritual clones of ourselves. This is a poor strategy when trying to connect spiritually.

This session is going to help couples learn how to turn their differences in to strengths and it will also help the wife and the husband better understand how their gender impacts their spiritual relationship as well.

Key Verses

Philippians 2:5-8

Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form. And in human form he obediently humbled himself even further by dying a criminal's death on a cross.

Ephesians 5:25-26

And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by baptism and God's word.

Proverbs 10:11

The mouth of a good person is a deep, life-giving well, but the mouth of the wicked is a dark cave of abuse.

Romans 14:9

So then, let us aim for harmony in the church and try to build each other up.

Discussion Questions

1. How have your differences hindered your spiritual connection in the past?
2. What are the things you can appreciate about your spouse's spirituality?
3. What are some creative ways you could connect together as a couple in growing closer to God (i.e. bible studies, morning prayer time, small groups, etc.)?
4. Have a discussion together on ways you can grow together spiritually – ways that are meaningful to you. Then see how you can serve each other through this list.

Action Point

Set up a time this week to encourage each other spiritually. Make a list of the qualities you appreciate in your spouse spiritually and then share that list this week.

Week Two

Reconstructing anger

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Anger doesn't have to be destructive. In fact, anger is a very healthy emotion. It lets you know something is wrong or broken. The only time anger becomes a problem for your marriage is when you sin in your anger.

This session helps you understand how to turn anger in to a growth opportunity. You will learn the negative side of anger as well as the positive side of anger. You will get an opportunity to learn how to share your feelings (especially when you're upset) in an effective way – in a way your spouse can receive your feelings. But one of the most powerful elements in this session is learning how to repair the damage done when you do not handle your anger effectively.

Key Verses

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James 1:20

Post this at all the intersections, dear friends: Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let anger straggle along in the rear. God's righteousness doesn't grow from human anger. So throw all spoiled virtue and cancerous evil in the garbage. In simple humility, let our gardener, God, landscape you with the Word, making a salvation-garden of your life.

Ephesians 4:26-27

Go ahead and be angry. You do well to be angry—but don't use your anger as fuel for revenge. And don't stay angry. Don't go to bed angry. Don't give the Devil that kind of foothold in your life.

1 Peter 3:9

Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

Proverbs 12:18

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

Discussion Questions

1. How have you handled your anger in the past? Good examples and poor examples.
2. How have you learned through this session to deal better with anger?
3. Have you been convicted of playing the “blame game”? If so, how can you take responsibility in the future for your part in the conflict?

Action Point Follow-up

Were you able to get together last week to encourage each other spiritually? If not, why? If you did, how was the experience?

Action Point

Spend some alone time in prayer this week and ask God if there is anything you need to seek forgiveness from with your spouse. If there is, then please go to your spouse this week and seek forgiveness.

Week Three

Refocusing your expectations

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How do you respond when your expectations are not met by your spouse? In this session you will learn how you don't have to let your expectations go, but rather, learn how to fulfill them in a new way that actually honors the relationship instead of stressing it out!

Discover the difference between what you need and what you expect – and how this difference is often times the greatest predictor of your unhappiness in life. You will learn that once you understand which of your expectations are actually healthy, you will then be able to tone down your unhealthy expectations and free your relationship to experience everything you desire.

Key Verses

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Romans 5:2-5

Through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we [a] rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

John 16:33

I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.

Philippians 4:11-12

Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to be content with whatever I have. I know how to live on almost nothing or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little.

Romans 15:7

Therefore, accept each other just as Christ has accepted you so that God will be given glory.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the unspoken expectations in your marriage?
2. What are the expectations you should keep in your marriage?
3. How can you respond differently when an expectation is not met?

Action Point Follow-up

Were you able to spend time alone in prayer last week about asking God if there is anything you need to seek forgiveness over?

Action Point

Make a point to meet this week as a couple to write down your healthy expectations of the marriage and then ask each other how those expectations can be met in the most loving and honoring way.

Week Four

Redefining men and women

What are the real differences, in today's world, between men and women? How do these difference affect your marriage? There are a lot of different ways to look at men and women; this session is going to help shed light on the biggest needs of men and women. You will also discover how the sexes communicate differently and what it takes to come together as one flesh.

Key Verses

Genesis 1:27

God created human beings; he created them godlike, Reflecting God's nature. He created them male and female.

Ephesians 4:29, 32

29 Watch the way you talk. Let nothing foul or dirty come out of your mouth. Say only what helps, each word a gift. 32 Be gentle with one another, sensitive. Forgive one another as quickly and thoroughly as God in Christ forgave you.

Matthew 22:36-40

36 "Teacher, which command in God's Law is the most important?" 37 Jesus said, "'Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence.'" 38 This is the most important, the first on any list. 39 But there is a second to set alongside it: 'Love others as well as you love yourself.' 40 These two commands are pegs; everything in God's Law and the Prophets hangs from them."

Discussion Questions

1. How are your differences as a couple good for your relationship?
2. How can you value the differences in your mate (i.e. if your wife loves to talk, if your husband like to do activities, etc.)?

3. What are your wife's biggest needs?

4. What are your husband's biggest needs?

Action Point Follow-up

Were you able to get together and discuss your marital expectations last week? Did you make the list of how to meet the healthy expectations?

Action Point

Celebrate your differences this week by writing your spouse a love bombardment letter that highlights all his or her character and personality strengths.