



Family Christian Center

340 45th Avenue, Munster, Indiana ~ 219.922.6500

Family Life Development & Application {FLDA} Department

FCC Equip Overseer: Pastor John Ponder ~

jponder@fcc4me.com FLDA Directors: Elders Robert & Natalie

Watts ~ watts@fcc4me.com FLDA Marketing & Advertising |



CLASS NAME: Prep for Marriage – Enter the Marriage Garden | **Lesson 1: Green Thumb in Love: Initiators of Love**

SESSION: Sunday Feb 14, 2021 @ 11 a.m. **LOCATION:** Zoom Conference

INSTRUCTOR(S): Elders Conell and Rhonda Hollins | Marketing & Advertising Directors ~ me2weministries@gmail.com |

Initiator of Love

The Gender Role of Love

1 John 4:7-9 New International Version (NIV)

God's Love and Ours

⁷Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because **God is love**.

To understand love and to truly nurture your marital garden. You must understand rich soil produces life. God is the breath of life and **God is love!** To ensure growth in your marital soil, your marital garden must not only be implanted with both the breath of life and God's love, but it must be cultivated with a special loving touch such as a **green thumb** to be truly cared for.

Green Thumb Meaning. To be **naturally skilled** at **gardening**; to be able to **help** plants **grow well**.
Origin. One theory is that this idiom came into being in the early 1900s and was thought to refer to the mud-stained fingers of gardeners.

In fact, the mud-stained fingers are Gods and the soil we were created in was embedded in love. God created man in love from the dust of the ground. It was within the Garden of Eden, where he breathed life into man; one of his many acts of devotion upon the creation of earth.

Genesis 2:7

Amplified Bible

⁷ then the LORD God ^{la}formed [that is, created the body of] man from the ^{lb}**dust of the ground**, and **breathed** into his nostrils the **breath of life**; and the man became a living being [an individual complete in body and spirit].

The Gift of Cultivation

The Lord took great care to craft and shape Adam in his own image then he gifted him the spirit of **“cultivation”**.

Genesis 2:15

Amplified Bible

¹⁵ So the LORD God took the man [He had made] and settled him in the Garden of Eden to **cultivate and keep it**.

Man-Made vs. God-Made

Creating an atmosphere of Initiation and Imitation of Love

1 Corinthians 3:7

Amplified Bible

⁷ So neither is the one who plants nor the one who waters anything, **but [only]**
God who causes the growth.

Typically, in a man-made garden, the gardener must find the perfect conditions to plant and water the right seed. However, in the **Master Gardner's**, garden, He creates growth in the atmosphere to create the perfect condition to surround the marital garden. **That's what real love does!** It takes root! It sprouts and survives the most perilous conditions. The growth of real love and intimacy create an atmosphere of love to inspire those within that atmosphere to **imitate** their surroundings.

Ephesians 5:1

Amplified Bible

Be Imitators of God

5 Therefore become imitators of God [copy Him and follow His example], as well-beloved children [imitate their father];

Adam, from his inception was made in the likeness of God; like most children it was Adam's responsibility **as a man** to **imitate** God-to follow his example and cultivate his marital garden. Because man is the first in the heavenly hierarchy of the household and is also first in succession under the Lord, it is up to the husband to not only create the atmosphere of intimacy in his relationship, but it is the husbands' key role to be the **initiator** of love in his marriage.

The Husband Must Love His Wife

*"The main responsibility of the man is summed up in three words: **"Love your wives"** (Ephesians 5:25). Husbands hold the key to a flourishing marriage. Men are to be initiators. The wife comes into full **fruition** and submission **in response** to the husband **loving her as he should.**"*

The Role of the Husband in Marriage | Harvest Church

Definition of *Fruition* - fru·ition | \ frü-'i-shən

1: pleasurable use or possession : **ENJOYMENT** the sweet *fruition* of an earthly crown

2a: the state of bearing fruit the fields needed rain for *fruition*

b: **REALIZATION**

Genesis 1:28

King James Version

²⁸ And God blessed them, and God said unto them, **Be fruitful, and multiply**, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

The Fruits of Your Labor!

A Man's Fruit is his Wife's Submission...

Proverbs 18:22

New King James Version

²² **He who finds** a wife finds a **good thing**,

And **obtains favor** from the LORD.

Understanding the gender roles within your marital garden is essential in blossoming not only romance in your marriage but increasing and defining foundational love as well. Love is not something that just happens overnight nor is the ability to pick the perfect mate. That is why God is the author and finisher of our fates. He knows the “*number of hairs on your head*” and “*knitted you together when you were in your mother’s womb*”. It makes sense, that he naturally knows the exact character measurements and emotional design of the perfect mates for us. However, in modern relationships impatience has taken the place of God’s perfect will; causing the mate selection process to drastically move out of Godly order such as, moving in before marriage, sex before marriage, children prior to commitment, and lust before love.

To be clear, no one is perfect and statements such as these are not meant to condemn you or your mate if you have stepped out of Godly order in your relationship, these statements or Godly convictions are stated to remind you that God has your best intentions in mind, and He has from the moment he created you! He knows what you need, and he knows what you want! Trust in the Lord with all your heart that he will provide a helpmate that is **suitable** to you.

Genesis 2:18

Amplified Bible

¹⁸ Now the LORD God said, “It is not good (beneficial) for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper [one who balances him—a counterpart who is] ^[a]**suitable** and complementary for him.”

A Blossom in Your Garden

How A Wife's Submission Comes into Fruition

“You’re not alone in wondering how to interpret biblical submission in marriage. It’s a touchy subject, not least because it’s often misunderstood as being sexist or no-matter-what obedience. Add in our Western culture — where a me-focused lifestyle is easy to come by — and the internal and external conflict you described is real.

A closer look at Scripture, though, shows the full picture of marriage: a relationship that mirrors the love between Christ and His Church. When a husband submits to the Lord, leading his wife with a servant's heart and nurturing her God-given talents, she can confidently submit to him — lean on him and trust his covering. That will always be relevant".

The Submissions of Wives to Husbands | Author: Focus on the Family

Ephesians 5:22-24

Amplified Bible

Marriage Like Christ and the Church

²² Wives, be *subject* ^ato your own husbands, as [a service] to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is head of the wife, as Christ is head of the church, Himself *being* the Savior of the body. ²⁴ But as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives should be subject to their husbands in everything [respecting both their position as protector and their responsibility to God as head of the house].

How to Increase Marital Garden Yields?

As a wife, the best way for submission to bloom in your marital garden is understanding that the word "**submission**" is not a bad word. ***Submit*** means "**to give over or yield to the power or authority of another**". It does not mean that you as a woman are inferior, Ephesians 5:22-24 lays out the line of succession, in marriage, the heavenly hierarchy of the household. However, to be clear submission is not domineering either.

The truth is many wives would feel more confident in submitting to their spouses if their husbands cultivated the atmosphere of love around them better. Meaning, sometimes it is hard to submit to being led down the garden path if you do not trust where your husband is leading you to. Wives need a destination, a growth plan to understand where the future of their relationship is going. It is essential to a wife to know where she stands in her marriage, this cannot be a mystery. A flourishing marital garden must be rooted in submission to gain submission. ***In Ephesians 5:21, it states, submit (or yield) to one another out of reverence for the Lord.***" This is where husbands and wives must water their marital gardens with "**yielding**" communication. As co-heirs to the throne of grace, make your feelings known to one another. Be "**Naked and Not Ashamed**" in your marital garden and tell each other what you need to feel safe. Submission in this context also mirrors Christ love for the church. Submission simply means "respect". Wives, will you respect your husbands' position in the household as initiator of love, as protector and as the spiritual head of your family? If you cannot...then why get married?

The Green House Effect

Don't Stunt Your Growth!

The grass is greener...where you water it! To attain your green thumb in love you must make sure your love is equal. Both the husband and the wife should be equally watered thus equally having an opportunity for growth. However, when you start your marriage garden on unequal footing, your marriage is often over before it even begins!

The Equally Yoked Mandate

2 Corinthians 6:14

Amplified Bible

¹⁴ Do not be unequally bound together with unbelievers [do not make mismatched alliances with them, inconsistent with your faith]. For what partnership can righteousness have with lawlessness? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

Why Introduce Pestilence into Your Garden?

Do not start your marriage of on the wrong footing?

Starting off on the Wrong Foot is an Understatement!

*The Greek meaning of unequally yoked or **Heterozygous**. (from **héteros**, "**another of a different kind**" **zygós**, "**a yoke, joining two to a single plow**") – properly, different kinds of people joined together but unevenly matched; hence "unequally yoked" (not aptly joined) or "**mismatched**" attaching or binding yourself to someone in marriage that is running contrary to faith.*

- ***Literally two individuals-running in two different directions at a high rate of speed while tethered together.***

Adjust, the earlier metaphor of starting off on the wrong foot. Marrying an unbeliever is more like having one broken right foot in a race for your life. Realize that throughout your **marriage race** that a broken right foot is a painful burden; especially the longer you attempt to stand upright, injured-the less likely that right foot will be able to heal properly, over time it will become infected and will not only hold you back but will contaminate your entire blood stream.

James 3:11-12

New International Version

11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? ¹² My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

The Perfect Love Garden

Knowing Love as it is not as you think it is...

It is vital to understand that how you love and your experiences with love is indicative of how successful you will be at receiving and giving love, especially in marriage. Are you willing to lay down your life under the right conditions or unconditionally lay down your life?

John 15:13

New International Version

¹³ Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.

Does Your Love Come with Conditions?

1 John 4:18

New International Version

¹⁸ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, **because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.**

Conditional Love Statements

• I will love you if you will listen more.
• I will love you if you don’t make me mad.
• I will love you if you love me first.
• I will love you if you give me what I want.
• I will love you if you follow my rules.

1 Peter 4:8

New International Version

⁸ Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

What is Love?

Is it self-seeking? "Love seeketh only self to please." -- William Blake
Or is it self-sacrificing?

Biblical Definition of Love:

Agape – unselfish love

Eph 5:25

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her,

John 15:13

Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

1 Cor 13:7

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

- Desiring, yearning, valuing, respecting above all else.

Philia – tender affection

John 13:23

One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was lying close to the breast of Jesus;

Eros – sexual love

1 Cor 7:3

The husband should not deprive his wife of sexual intimacy, which is her right as a married woman, nor should the wife deprive her husband.

Song 4:5-7

5 Your two breasts are like two fawns (*young unweaned deer*),
twins of a gazelle, that feed among the lilies.

6 Until the day breathes and the shadows flee,
I will run unto the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.
7 You are altogether fair, my love; there is no flaw in you.

God's love is a covenant love – He does not change His mind. We call that commitment.

Covenant- means "a coming together".

Contract- An agreement between two or more parties, especially one that is written and enforceable by law.

What is the difference between a Contractual and Covenant Marriage?

Contract: I take thee for me

Covenant: I give myself to thee

Contract: What do I get?

Covenant: What can I give?

Contract: I'll meet you halfway

Covenant: I'll give you 110%

Contract: I have to do it

Covenant: I want to do it

Love is selfless and causes you to love boundlessly. It encourages you to believe the best and hope the best. If you are simply looking to be loved, then you are not valuing what God's intention for love within marriage is.

The goal of a covenant marriage is not merely to enjoy each other's company nor is it to simply endure to the end. The goal of a covenant marriage is to glorify God in your relationship and to exemplify Christ to the world.