A SHORT BIBLE STUDY

Building a Marriage That Lasts

Living It Out · Book 1



Love, respect, and commitment in Christ

Andrew Dominguez

Trinfinity Enterprises

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A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Book

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this book direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

Introduction

Couples usually start out with plenty of excitement. Sooner or later jobs, kids, bills, and old habits wear on a relationship, and the marriage that once ran smoothly starts to sputter. That does not mean the marriage is over. It usually means it needs attention.

My wife and I met through friends in 1988. She agreed to one date. We married in 1990, and 36 years later I have learned the hard way that love is not a feeling you coast on. It is daily honesty and putting your spouse ahead of your own pride. I wrote this book for couples who want a marriage built on Scripture instead of guesswork.

God designed marriage, and He knows what makes it work. This book looks at His design, the love He calls husbands to, the respect He calls wives to, the work of communication, and the commitment that keeps a marriage strong for a lifetime.

1 God's design

When Jesus was asked about marriage, He went back to the beginning. He said, "Have you not read that He who made them from the beginning made them male and female" (Matthew 19:4, SLB). Genesis 1:27 (SLB) says "God created mankind in His image" and "male and female He created them."

Men and women are different, and that is by design. The differences are not wrong. They are part of how a husband and wife together reflect God's image. Many conflicts in marriage come from forgetting that and

expecting a spouse to think, feel, and react the way we do.

Research has also found what Scripture already teaches. Children raised by parents in a healthy marriage tend to do better in school and in life, and husbands and wives in healthy marriages tend to be healthier and more stable. God knew those benefits when He created marriage. A 2002 Child Trends research brief, Marriage from a Child's Perspective, reached the same conclusion about children. Modern studies simply echo what His Word says.

My working life has been spent fixing problems and moving to the next task. That habit does not work in a marriage. A marriage is not a project to manage. It is a covenant God designed, and it grows when we follow His pattern instead of our own schedule.

2 Love and respect

> *Nevertheless, you also, each one individually, let each so love his own wife as himself, and the wife* ***must see*** *that she fears the husband.*
> **Ephesians 5:33 (SLB)**

Ephesians 5:33 (SLB) gives husbands and wives different instructions. Husbands are commanded to love. Wives are told to see that they fear their husbands. Fear here means deep respect and honor, not being afraid, which is why most English Bibles say respect. Both need love and respect, but in conflict a wife often feels unloved and a husband often feels disrespected. Emerson Eggerichs has written about how each spouse's reaction can feed

the other's hurt and set off a cycle that keeps spinning.

The love a husband is called to is the same kind of love God showed us. Ephesians 5:25 (SLB) says, "Husbands, love your own wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her." That is not a feeling. It is a sacrificial choice made every day.

Scripture uses several ideas for love. There is the self-giving love God shows in sending His Son. There is the love of friendship, the natural affection of family, and the romantic love between husband and wife. A strong marriage has room for all of them, with God's self-giving love at the foundation.

One year I led a couples marriage retreat with a woman from our church. I taught the men, she taught the women, and we brought the couples together for the rest. It was small on purpose, about ten couples. Watching husbands and wives hear the same truth and then turn to each other showed me how much a marriage grows when both people sit under God's Word together.

3 Four kinds of marriages

One way to picture marriage is to look at two choices. A husband can choose to love or to be harsh. A wife can choose to respect and support or to resist. Those choices produce four kinds of marriages.

In the worst kind, both spouses are selfish. He is harsh, she is resistant, and each is trying to get his or

her own way. In another kind, the wife goes along but resents her husband because he makes decisions for himself instead of the family. In a third, the husband loves, but the wife fights him at every turn.

The marriage God designed is the one where a husband loves his wife the way Christ loves the church, and a wife respects and supports her husband. Neither one is a doormat. Both are giving themselves to the other. Selfishness is the road to emptiness. Giving is the road to joy.

A marriage can stall when two people live like roommates instead of partners. When I led a small couples retreat, about ten couples, the first step was always the same: an honest look at where you stand, in the light of Scripture. I had to do that myself when my drinking came out. Honest self-examination is the first step toward growth.

4 Learning to talk and listen

Good communication does not happen by default. It takes time, energy, and practice. Personality matters, and so does the way we were raised. If my parents fought loudly or never fought at all, I probably learned a pattern I bring into my own marriage.

Men and women also tend to communicate differently. Many husbands read the headlines, and many wives read the fine print. I may hear only the facts when my wife is telling me how she feels. That is how a simple question like "Where do you want to go to dinner?" can end with someone hurt and confused.

I once heard about a marriage teacher who told the husbands in his class to go home, ask their wives how they could be better husbands, and listen. Then his own wife asked whether he had taken his own advice. That conversation with his wife took an hour. It is a fair question for every one of us. People change as the years go by, and we never stop needing to get to know each other better.

Conflict will come. James 1:19 (SLB) says, "let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger." That one verse would settle a lot of arguments before they start.

For years I hid my drinking. I told myself I was protecting my marriage and my reputation. When my wife caught me on May 29, 2020, I saw that hiding the truth was the very thing hurting us most. Real communication starts when we stop pretending and speak the truth in love.

5 Commitment that holds

Love is a decision, not just a feeling. First Corinthians 13:4-7 (SLB) says love "is patient, is kind," "does not seek its own things," and "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." None of those are emotions. They are choices.

Marriage is not a fifty-fifty deal. It is each spouse giving one hundred percent. There will be times when we fail as friends, fail in our love, and even question our commitment. In those times, God's love does not fail. We can ask Him to love our spouse through us when we fall short.

A healthy marriage needs regular care. Warning lights include feeling bored with each other, focusing on differences, daydreaming about a perfect spouse, avoiding each other, and chasing separate goals. When those lights come on, the answer is to spend more time together, not less, and to bring Christ back to the center.

Proverbs 17:17 (SLB) says, "At every time the friend loves." The best marriages I know are built on that kind of friendship, held together by commitment, and rooted in the love of God.

When we met in 1988, my wife agreed to one date. Thirty-eight years later she has stood beside me through career changes, raising two daughters and my hardest seasons. That kind of faithfulness taught me that commitment is proven on the hard days, not the easy ones.

Building a Marriage That Lasts

✦ ✦ ✦

Jobs, kids, bills, and old habits can wear down any marriage. This book looks at God's design for marriage, the love He calls husbands to, the respect He calls wives to, how to talk and listen, and the commitment that keeps a marriage strong for a lifetime.

Nevertheless, you also, each one individually, let each so love his own wife as himself, and the wife must see that she fears the husband.

Ephesians 5:33 (SLB)

Book 1 of 10 in the collection Living It Out

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