WORKBOOK

CHIP INGRAM Pastor, Author and Nationally Syndicated Radio Host, *Living on the Edg*

MARRIAGE BUILTTOLAST

Living Intentionally & Loving Biblically



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Brian Mosley: Executive VP, Product Development Randy Petersen: Writer Jackie Mosley: Editor Phil Warner: Senior Producer Bill Roberson: Communications Director Steve Gee: Graphic Designer

ISBN-10: 1-57275-208-4 ISBN-13: 978-1-57275-208-5

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For information, write: Permissions Bluefish TV 3304 Essex Dr. Richardson, Texas 75082

Bluefish TV is a non-profit ministry.

Published by Bluefish TV. Printed in the United States of America.

Bluefish TV Mission

Our heart-felt mission is to assist the church in taking the transformational message of Jesus Christ to the world. We aim to teach, mobilize and connect millions of Christians to opportunities where they can use their God-given passions and spiritual gifts to make a difference across the street and around the world.

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LEARNING FROM THE PAST AND LEANING INTO THE FUTURE by Brian Mosley

I was so inspired sitting on the couch with Chip and Theresa Ingram. Chip is a great teaching pastor and does a phenomenal job in this series teaching about what it takes to have a marriage built to last. But I was even more impressed when we interviewed Chip and Theresa about their triumphs and trials in marriage. Their story is a remarkable example of how God honors the hard work couples pour into their relationship.

Tomorrow my wife, Julie, and I have a meeting with the District Attorney and Child Protective Services. We had a similar meeting a few months ago. As foster parents, we love the children that come into our home, but we're not quite used to the loss of privacy and extra meetings that have invaded our life.

A meeting like this gets you thinking about the seasons in life that led up to this point.

Our Heritage

Julie and I were married on January 1, 2000. We didn't think specifically of the words "built to last," but if you had asked us on our wedding day, both of us would have said our marriage will stand the test of time. It's all we knew.

Both sets of our parents have been married for over 35 years. They made it through the ups and downs in the economy, through surgeries and health crises, through five kids (that's diapers to empty nest and everything in between). Julie and I are products of marriages that were built to last.

In fact, our four sets of grandparents modeled this too. Julie's grandparents all passed away having lived a lifetime committed to their spouses. Both sets of my grandparents have celebrated over 50 years of marriage and are still setting the example for the rest of us.

As I look back, it's obvious that our parents were products of our grandparents' marriages. And the cycle continues through Julie and I. Now, I'm not saying there's a magic formula or equation: grandparents married for life + parents married for life = Julie and I married for life.



Brian and Julie with their parents

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Brian in India, 2000

It would be nice if a formula did exist because then I wouldn't have to worry about my kids or even work that hard at my marriage. The cycle would just naturally continue without any effort.

Just like the formula above isn't a sure thing, the opposite formula isn't true either: *divorced grandparents and/or divorced parents = you will get divorced.*

But as I think about the phrase "built to last," I'm realizing more than ever that the only way for marriages to endure is with a lot of intentionality. It's what I have seen in our grandparents and what I see in our parents. They worked at it **together**.

Opening Our Eyes

In 2000, Julie and I traveled to India to do some filming for a documentary at an orphanage. For the first time, we felt the hurt and pain children feel when they don't have a mom or dad to hold them, love them, and share Christ with them. It was eye-opening.

In 2001, our small group at church watched a Bluefish TV DVD resource where one of the stories highlighted a young couple faithfully serving others. We were so inspired watching that story. We began searching for ways we could serve **together** based on our skills and passions.

In 2002, we had another overseas experience in Romania to serve children in need. Julie spent the week with babies who barely got enough physical and emotional attention to function as healthy humans. I witnessed the long-term results of neglect with teenagers who acted like 8 year olds. They would rock back and forth as a natural habit because they didn't receive enough hugs and kisses as babies. It was heartbreaking as our eyes were opened even wider.



Julie in Romania, 2002

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Later that year, Julie became good friends with a girl in her office named Lori. In natural conversation, Lori told Julie about a friend of hers who was a foster parent. Julie was intrigued by the stories Lori would tell, and Julie shared those stories with me.

At the same time, I was involved with creating a conference called LeadNow for pastors and volunteer leaders across the country. The goal of the conference is to teach and inspire leaders to mobilize their people to action... to find ways to serve God and others.

Julie and I realized it was time for us to take the LeadNow message and make it personal to us with less talking and more obeying. So we started pursuing the steps to become foster parents. It was clear that God had given us experiences in the past that opened our eyes and hearts to children in need. It was also something we could do **together**.



Brian in Romania, 2002

We knew that in becoming foster parents, we wanted to be the hands and feet of Jesus to whatever little child came into our home. We knew that we might have a child for two weeks or 12 months before the court would send them back to their family. But no matter how long they would be in our home, we wanted to model a marriage and a family that honors Christ.

Our Mission

Over the past two years, I learned that I've taken my parents and grandparents for granted. I didn't realize what a blessing it is to have a stable home with parents who are committed to each other. Julie and I have seen a glimpse into a world where there is no good, working model for these children—they don't have a heritage that reflects marriages built to last.

It hasn't always been easy for Julie and me. Our marriage has seen its share of disagreements (like whose family to spend Thanksgiving with); its share of loss (like our miscarriage); and its share of trials (like fretting over job decisions). I think this mission of becoming foster parents has superseded the other hurdles that could have slowed us down. We're on mission *together* and it gives purpose and meaning to our marriage.

And so, tomorrow we meet with the DA and representatives from Child Protective Services. We are in a position to possibly adopt the precious little "angel" who has been in our home the last ten months. We're nervous and eager and hopeful and stressed all at the same time. It could be that in a few months we'll officially become Dad and Mom to this little girl. Or it could be that the courts decide something different.

MARRIAGE: BUILT TO LAST

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Either way, we are in this *together*. We have prayed together with more fervor. We have lifted each other up when the other was down. We have communicated more deeply and openly. We have a greater appreciation for one another.

Working on this *Marriage: Built to Last* DVD series has heightened my passion for the message of marriage. I love that our Bluefish TV team partnered with Chip Ingram to help put marriage at the front and center of small groups across the country. Strong marriages are the foundation to healthy families. These families come together to form the church. It's the church, Scripture tells us, that is the bride of Christ. But when marriages unravel, it neutralizes the church's influence to a broken world.

Built to Last

So if the goal is a marriage built to last, then maybe there are patterns from the past that we have to break. We have to go against the hijacked version of marriage that culture throws in our face every day. Maybe we need to have the guts to say that what we're currently doing isn't working.

This will take <u>effort</u> to establish new patterns.

This will take <u>intentionality</u> to abandon culture's me-centered message and live as one flesh.

This will take couples <u>committing</u>, to each other and to God, to <u>pursue</u> Biblical marriage.

Julie and I don't have it all figured out. We have learned to be thankful for our heritage, to be observers of other marriages ahead of us in the journey, and to be intentional about our purpose as a couple.



Brian, Julie, Abby, Grant and foster daughter

We are hoping and praying that tomorrow's meeting will be a step closer towards adopting this little angel into a family tree with deep roots. If God answers this prayer, then we'll start praying that growing up in our home will provide a foundation for her future marriage (built to last).

Brian Mosley is the Sr. Producer for Bluefish TV and Director of The RightNow Campaign

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ARE YOU A TRADER?

What do you want to be remembered for? What is your passion? What gifts has God given you? How can you use them? **Does your life matter?**

When these questions go unexplored, our senses become dull and we find ourselves going through the motions of life and pursuing the American Dream.

The RightNow Campaign is shaping a movement within this generation of people who are willing to **trade** in the pursuit of the American Dream for a world that desperately needs Christ.

Being a **trader** means being intentional with your time, your money and your passions.

A **trader** is a new kind of missionary - not defined by geography - but marked by a willingness to apply the parable of the Good Samaritan and "go and do likewise."

If you are looking for opportunities where you or your group can put your faith into action, search our ministry website **rightnow.org**. We have posted thousands of local and international service opportunities and we have a team of coaches who are available to provide further help.

It's time *right now* for the people of the church to step up and find tangible ways to use their God-given passions and skills to bring hope and change to the world.

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Just a few things to check out at RightNow.org



up mentors for fatherless boys in your community



Looking for people to give money and raise awareness to solve the water crisis for an entire country

EVANGELISM FROM YOUR LIVING ROOM

Respond to phone calls and email from those already looking to learn more about Jesus



Orightnow.org

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ABOUT CHIP INGRAM



Chip Ingram is the Founder and Teaching Pastor for Living on the Edge, an international ministry that provides guided pathways to authentic discipleship. His passion is to help everyday Christians actually "live like Christians" by raising the bar of discipleship.

Chip has been a pastor of growing churches in Texas and California for over 25 years. He spent five years as President of Walk Thru the Bible. Chip holds an M.S. degree from West Virginia University and a Th.M. degree from Dallas Theological Seminary.

Chip is author of 10 books, including *Good to Great in God's Eyes, Effective Parenting in a*

Defective World, God: As He Longs For You to See Him, Overcoming Emotions That Destroy, and Love, Sex and Lasting Relationships. His teaching can be heard on hundreds of radio stations world-wide, multiple television outlets, and on the internet. Chip and his wife, Theresa, have four adult children and six grandchildren.

LivingontheEdge.org

ALSO FROM CHIP INGRAM:



Love, Sex & Lasting Relationships



Experiencing God's Dream for Your Marriage



Effective Parenting in a Defective World

ADJUSTING TO EXPECTATIONS



GETTING ACQUAINTED

A scene from TV or movie: What is it saying about marriage?

VIDEO NOTES

What would you say to the people in the real-life stories? What issues strike you as important? Any words or phrases pop out that you want to remember?

TALKING IT OVER

In the video Kurt Warner said: "You know, you get into that mode where . . . I don't want to take that next step until I'm financially set or until I know what my future is going to be or until I know where I'm going to be."

Do you think this is pretty common? Do people wait to accomplish things in their own lives before committing to a marriage? Is this a good idea? Why should that personal uncertainty keep a person from moving into marriage?

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In the video Kurt Warner said: "As I grew to know [God] more personally . . . I was able to step out and ask Brenda to marry me."

How would his spiritual growth lead him to make this commitment? Is marriage a spiritual issue?

How do you think Brenda got through those times when Kurt was obscure and underpaid, just chasing a dream? How would you deal with that?

In the video Kurt Warner said: "When everything took off from a football standpoint, it forced Brenda and I to become closer. So many new things came flying at us that we didn't understand, that we didn't know how to deal with. This kind of blew us both out of the water." What do you think is more taxing on a marriage, the struggle to succeed or the attainment of success?

In the video Brenda Warner said: "He's better than anybody that I've ever met but I don't trust him 100%." Did you find it surprising that Brenda would say that?

How can a couple develop trust in each other?

In the video Chip Ingram said: The "Hollywood model" for marriage: "You're going to find the right person. Then you're going to fall in love and you set your hopes and dreams on them. You get married and there's the pretty dress and it's wonderful. Then you're going to move in together and it's going to be awesome."

What's wrong with that picture? Isn't that the way it really happens? If we go into marriage expecting the "Hollywood model" of awesomeness, what happens?



Genesis 1:26-28

We see a phrase repeated several times. Man was made "in God's image"? What do you think that means?

In verse 28, what are the first commands God gives to humans?

What does this tell us about God's vision for humanity?

Genesis 2:18-20

What does God decide to do?

Genesis 2:21-23

What did God do to resolve the problem?

According to this text, why is it important that the woman was made from a part of Adam's body?

Genesis 2:24-25 What three things happen here? 1.

2.

3.

Did Adam do these three things?

A CLOSER LOOK

In what ways does a married person need to "leave" his or her parents? What does that mean? Does this mean that we cut all ties with our parents?

Why is this important to a marriage? Does too much connection to parents hurt a marriage? How?

Have you seen (or lived through) situations where this occurred?

What does it mean to "cleave to" your spouse? In practical terms, how can we do that?

Four Factors

Allegiance/loyalty

Decision-making

Recognition of need

A death-blow to self

WORKING THINGS OUT

Here's a list of phrases that people said in the video. Look through these statements slowly and consider each one, whether it might apply to your marriage as well. Have you ever felt this way? After about three minutes, share your thoughts with your small group.

- After we got married the romance was done.
- Sometimes my husband doesn't validate me because he puts other priorities first. I feel like he doesn't think about my feelings.
- I feel like I argue with my wife over and over again about the exact same things.
- We fought a lot. We were really angry a lot. We both had unforgiveness issues.
- We both don't fight fair, and so in our house it has been a dig-in-until-you-win kind of thing for both of us.
- If others could see inside our house, I would be so humiliated, because we aren't acting like Christians.
- We knew . . . we weren't going to divorce, but at the same time we would still kind of throw around the word.

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- I definitely sacrificed to be married.
- I actually decided to get married out of guilt.
- I had been in charge of my life for so long that it was really hard to bring another person in and to know you're not in charge.

Continuing the discussion, consider the following three categories. As you talk together and spur each other's thinking, see if you personally can come up with at least two things to put in each category.

A. Things I expected about marriage that turned out to be true

B. Things I expected about marriage that turned out to be false

C. Things I didn't expect about marriage that turned out to be true.

In the video Julie said: "I think being a woman you want this fairytale marriage. You want it to be perfect and when it doesn't go perfect, you just feel like you're not being validated." How do you think your expectations of marriage have differed from those of your spouse?

We've taken a good look at our own expectations for marriage, but we've also looked into Scripture for God's expectations. Genesis 2:24 gives us the principle of leaving, cleaving, and becoming one.

Have I done a good job of "leaving" my parents behaviorally? (They no longer control my actions.)

Have I done a good job of "leaving" my parents emotionally? (My spouse is more important to me.)

Have I done a good job of "leaving" my parents financially? (We are economically independent from them.)

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Is there some other entity—a job, possession, hobby, or person—I ought to "leave" in some way, so that my spouse has top priority?

How can I do this?

Do I "cleave" to my spouse by showing loyalty in public situations?

Do I "cleave" by making my spouse the most important person in my life?

Do I "cleave" by making decisions with my spouse and for our mutual benefit?

Do I "cleave" by emotionally needing my spouse?

What one thing have I done in the past week to "cleave" to my spouse?

Is there one cutting-edge issue, in which I need to "leave" or "cleave" more effectively? What is it?

TOGETHER AT HOME

Consider making time this week to talk together about your expectations and surprises and disappointments. But respect each other's processes. Maybe one of you needs to think through this a little more. Maybe you're not ready to open up just yet.

When both of you are ready, take out your workbooks and work through these issues—and pray through them—some more. Figure out how you can both "leave" and "cleave" and find a greater intimacy.

SESSION 2

LEARNING TO COMMUNICATE CLEARLY



GETTING ACQUAINTED

Communication exercise: You're talking with your spouse about things that that happened that day. Each statement you each say needs to start with the next letter of the alphabet. Or, you're making plans for the weekend. The first line can start with any letter, but then every line must start with the last letter of the previous line.

VIDEO NOTES

What would you say to the people in the real-life stories? What issues strike you as important? Any words or phrases pop out that you want to remember?

TALKING IT OVER

In the video Chip Ingram said: "You can love each other with all your heart, [but you'll have trouble if] one kind of emotionally speaks French and the other German." Do you think the differences are really that drastic? Is it really like speaking a different language? What have you experienced?

In the video Brooke said: "I escalate; I raise my voice a lot." Adam said: "I want to think about it and I want to process things and try and figure it out."

Have you ever experienced that, where one of you is trying to be funny, but the other gets hurt by it? Or a good, fun time suddenly turns bad? How can that happen?

In the video Tiffany said: "For me, I need that moment to just calm down, think about what was said and try to understand what happened." Ed said: "I want to deal with it now!" Do you and your spouse handle disagreements in different ways like these couples? Is one way better than the other?

How can a couple work through problems if they have such different approaches to those problems?

In the video Chip Ingram said: "The key of communication is the meeting of meanings. We need to learn to understand. We learn to become students of one another. We need to have other-centered, grace-filled, pulling-down-the-walls, risk-taking events called communication—and that doesn't happen unless you recognize: (1) I'm going to tend to be selfish; (2) our personalities are really different; (3) I'm a man, she's a woman (or vice versa); and (4) . . . we all have baggage."

The "meeting of meanings." What does that mean?

We saw some people in the video who got into bad shape financially, and this put a serious strain on their relationship. Why do money issues have such power to pull couples apart?

What can we do about that? How can we deal effectively with money-based conflict?

In the video Chip Ingram said: "Communication is the highway on which love travels. It's a lot of hard work, but we can learn to share hearts instead of just exchange words." How is communication a "highway"? What did he mean by that?

PG 20 What does it mean to "share hearts instead of words"?

BY THE BOOK

Ephesians 4:1-2

What sort of life are we supposed to live?

What "calling" have we received?

What sort of people do we need to be patient with? What sort of behavior do we need to "bear with"?

Ephesians 4:12-16.

What does "speaking the truth in love" mean to you?

Why is it difficult to do ... especially in a marriage?

Ephesians 4:22-24

What are we supposed to take off, and what are we supposed to put on?

In these verses, what are we told to do or not do?

Do

Don't do

PG 21

Is it wrong to be angry?

A thief who comes to Christ should stop stealing, but what should he do?

What is "unwholesome talk"?

Through Christ, God forgave us for our sins. Paul makes that clear. How should that affect the way we treat others?

A CLOSER LOOK

1. Be Honest – speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15, 25)

2. Be Angry – deal with anger appropriately (Ephesians 4:26-27)

"Do not sin"

Deal with it today

I-statements?

3. Be Diligent – work hard on your relationship (Ephesians 4:28)

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4. Be Positive - don't wound with your words (Ephesians 4:29-31)

5. Be Forgiving - be the first to say, "I'm sorry" (Ephesians 4:32)

WORKING THINGS OUT

1. How would you describe the communication pattern you observed in your family growing up?

2. How does this affect the way you communicate in your home now?

3. Experts say that, on average, only 7% of our communication comes through our words, 38% through our tone of voice, and 55% through our body language and facial expressions. What do you think the percentages would be for you personally in your unique style of communication? What would it be for your spouse? *Fill in the charts below in the appropriate proportions*.



YOU Words alone Tone of voice Body language/Face YOUR SPOUSE Words alone Tone of voice Body language/Face

4. Other experts have identified five levels of communication.

Level 1. Clichés Level 2. Facts Level 3. Ideas/Judgments (my thoughts about the facts) Level 4. Feelings Level 5. Open Communication (honesty, vulnerability)

In all of your interactions throughout the week--not only at home but at work, in the neighborhood, etc.—what percentage of your communication would be in each level. Obviously this is just a broad estimate, but jot down a number for each level (and those numbers should add up to 100%).

All Interactions

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Clichés	Facts	Ideas	Feelings	Open

5. Now, in your communication *with your spouse*, what would the percentages be? (NOTE: Do not share these numbers with the group, but do share them later with your spouse.)

Interactions with Your Spouse

Level 1 Clichés Level 2 Facts

Level 3 Ideas Level 4 Feelings Level 5 Open

TOGETHER AT HOME

THE CONFERENCE

Sit comfortably, face to face. Husband, ask your wife the first question, and listen carefully to the answer without interrupting.

1. What are you concerned about?

Wife, ask your husband the same question, and listen without comment.

Do the same with questions 2 and 3, husband asks wife, then wife asks husband.

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2. What do you wish?

3. What are you willing to do?

THE WORD PICTURE

Take a moment to think of some issue, perhaps some frustration that you haven't been able to adequately put into words. (It's probably best to start with something small, a minor irritation.)

Think visually about it. If you were to take a photo or paint a picture of this situation, what would it be like?

Describe that picture to your spouse.

THE "I LOVE YOU" LIST

Each of you takes pen and paper. List seven simple actions your spouse could do for you that would make you feel loved. (*I feel loved when you...*) Make sure these actions are do-able, not too expensive and not problematic.

Trade lists. Each partner should choose two of the items to do this week.





Financial Peace University is a life-changing program that teaches you how to make the right decisions with your money. You'll be empowered with the practical skills and confidence needed to achieve your financial goals and experience true financial peace!

For more information visit DaveRamsey.com



BREAKING DOWN WALLS



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GETTING ACQUAINTED

When was the last time your car broke down? How did it inconvenience you? What turned out to be the problem? How did you fix it?

VIDEO NOTES

What would you say to the people in the real-life stories? What issues strike you as important? Any words or phrases pop out that you want to remember?

TALKING IT OVER

In the video: Gary had some difficulty, as the stepfather, when he tried to discipline Elizabeth's kids. How did this cause a problem in their marriage?

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Why would it be important for a remarried mom to "put her husband first"? In any family situation, do you think the husband-wife relationship should be more important than the parent-child relationship?

Even in first marriages, when there are children that belong to both of you, how can they create barriers between a husband and wife?

In the video: Looking at the real-life stories of Kevin and Amanda as well as Shane and Alissa, why is it so hard for us to get along with our in-laws?

Why would this put up a wall between a husband and wife? What barrier does this create?

Chip warned against "triangulation" in a relationship with your parents and spouse. What did he mean by that? How can you avoid it?

In the video: If you could have talked to Chris and Christie before they split up, what would you have said? What would you say to them now?

Chip talked about four car-related things that can keep our marriages running. Do you remember what they are?

1. The f	of c	<u>HELLE</u> LANDER	9
2. The o	of c	Carles Carl	ω
3. The t	of c	<u>1015</u> 338	
4. The n	of c		PC 27

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How does commitment fuel a marriage?

Why would communication be like the oil in a marriage?

How is caring like a tune-up?

What does Chip mean by "commission"? How is that like a car's navigational system?

BY THE BOOK

Genesis 3:1-6

What made Eve eat the forbidden fruit?

Where was Adam at the time?

Genesis 3:7-10

What was the immediate result of their sin?

Genesis 3:11-13

How did the man excuse his behavior?

How did the woman excuse her behavior?

A CLOSER LOOK

Genesis 3 has identified for us a number of spiritual barriers that continue to stand in the way of oneness in marriage.

Giving has turned to taking.

Building has turned to blaming.

Sharing has turned to shame.

Openness has turned to hiding.

Other "walls" in marriage:

PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES

GENDER DIFFERENCES

HISTORICAL BAGGAGE (what are ...)

- Habits, expectations, and values
- Traumatic events from your past
- Your unique spiritual history
- Past relationships

WORKING THINGS OUT

						-				0.318.3	
PERSONALITY DIFFERENCES Below you'll see a continuum for each of four different sets of characteristics. On each one, put an initial or symbol at the point that would mark <i>your</i> personality and another initial or symbol to mark your spouse's personality. Then consider the questions for each.											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Intro	vert								Extro	vert	
Would you consider this difference between your personalities minor, moderate, or major?											
Has this difference (if there is one) ever caused a problem in your marriage? If so, when?											
What could be done to make this difference <i>complementary</i> rather than <i>conflicting</i> ?											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Asse:			nis diffor	onco he				Lu	sy-Go	oing rate, or major?	
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Has th	is differe	ence (if	there is	one) ev	ver caus	ed a pro	oblem ii	n your m	narriage	? If so, when?	
What o	could be	done to	o make	this diffe	erence (complen	nentary	rather t	han cor	iflicting?	
0	I	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
	ematio	;							ontane		
Would	you cor	nsider th	nis differ	ence be	etween	your per	rsonaliti	es mino	r, mode	rate, or major?	
Has this difference (if there is one) ever caused a problem in your marriage? If so, when?											
What could be done to make this difference complementary rather than conflicting?											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Factu									Abst		
Would you consider this difference between your personalities minor, moderate, or major?											
Has this difference (if there is one) ever caused a problem in your marriage? If so, when?											
What could be done to make this difference <i>complementary</i> rather than <i>conflicting</i> ?											

GENDER DIFFERENCES

Some researchers have suggested basic differences in the way men and women think. While there are many exceptions, these are suggested as general tendencies. On the following charts, for each set of characteristics, place yourself and your spouse, as before.

Men tend to						Women tend to					
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Strive for achievement Nurture relationship									ships		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Generalize/make theories Specify/gather details								etails			
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Focus on information Focus on emotion									otion		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Do Speak											
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Decide from facts Decide from intuition											

Understand two important things: (1) one side of this chart is not better than the other; (2) many people veer from the gender norm on some factors—that doesn't make you less manly or womanly.

With that in mind, are there any of these characteristics that have caused problems in your marriage? If so, when? How?

What could be done to make this difference complementary rather than conflicting?

As you finish filling out the charts individually, begin comparing notes with your spouse. Are you pretty close in your appraisal of the characteristics? Do you agree on any problem areas you have identified?

TOGETHER AT HOME

"A problem clearly defined is 50% solved." Consider working through the two more intense "walls" (Spiritual and Historical barriers) that can keep you from the oneness you desire.



As we talk about spiritual barriers, we're obviously talking about our relationship with God. There are actually *three* walls to tear down—not only the one separating husband and wife, but the ones separating each of them from God.

Is there sin I need to confess to God in order to restore my relationship with him?

Am I having trouble accepting God's forgiveness?

We're not perfect, but we can be forgiven. God invites us into a free, joyous, grace-filled relationship with him. As we turn back to the marriage relationship, we need to start with the understanding that, before God, we are both forgiven sinners.

Examining the marital relationship, let's use the symptoms we saw in Eden. (*Take a good long time to answer these questions. They may provide an important diagnostic for the spiritual health of your marriage.*)

In our marriage, has giving turned to taking? Where do we see this?

In our marriage, has building turned to blaming? Where do we see this?

In our marriage, has sharing turned to shame? Where do we see this?

In our marriage, has openness turned to hiding? Where do we see this?

The purpose of this exercise is not to create more shame or blame, but to come out of hiding, in essence to "get naked" in a spiritual sense.

Is there something I need to ask forgiveness for?

Is there something I need to grant forgiveness for?

How will we celebrate the miracle of grace?

32

HISTORICAL BARRIERS

List three (or more) habits, expectations, or values you learned from the family you grew up in things that might be different from what your spouse learned. Consider issues of housekeeping, money management, personal hygiene, boundaries with friends/family, politics, education, etc. Then discuss these differences.

Finish these sentences:

My upbringing taught me that I am...

My upbringing taught me that people are...

My upbringing taught me that God is ...

See how your spouse responded. Discuss any differences. Make sure you're ready for the next section.

What's the worst thing that happened to you between the ages of 0 and 18?

What's the best thing?

How have any of these things affected your life since then?

See how your spouse responded. Hug, pray, weep. Make sure you're ready for the next section.

When was the first time you were in love? What did you learn about romantic love from that experience?

What was the greatest pain you felt in a romantic relationship (or breakup or unrequited love), not including this marriage? What did you learn about romantic love from that experience?

Is there a past relationship that continues to haunt this one? How?

After sharing your answers and shaking off any jealousy or vengeance that may have arisen, try this: Brainstorm creative ways to mark the passing of any previous relationship or relational wound that still afflicts you to totally embrace this present relationship.

Working on marital issues can be hazardous because you might dig up some stuff you don't know how to deal with. If you do, get help. Contact your pastor or another professional counselor to help steer you through.

SESSION 4

RESOLVING CONFLICT



Session 4

PG 33

GETTING ACQUAINTED

What's your favorite movie of all time?

What would happen to those films if you took out all the conflict? How would you summarize the movie then?

VIDEO NOTES

What would you say to the people in the real-life stories? What issues strike you as important? Any words or phrases pop out that you want to remember?

TALKING IT OVER

In the video Bill said: "I didn't think she really respected the level I had achieved or the work it took to get to that level. Everybody else thought I was great, but when I was at home I didn't feel like she thought I was great."

Do you think Bill's complaint was valid? Why do you think this would happen?

Stacy said: "I blamed myself. What can I do to make him happy? Can I lose weight? Can I clean the house? Can I cook a better meal?" Why was Stacy thinking this way? How important is it in your marriage to respect and compliment each other?

Bill said: "There was just a lot of coldness and a lack of connection between the two of us. I already decided I didn't want to be in this marriage anymore." Why was he bailing out on the marriage?

In the video Doug said: "Conflict was completely new to me. Miranda grew up in an environment where conflict was the norm. It completely surprised me because, you know, never having that conflict, I responded with being frustrated, I responded with being angry." Did you learn to fight from the family you grew up in? Do you find yourself acting like your parents when you argue with your spouse? How?

It's very common for people to adopt the methods of their parents as they deal with conflict in their own marriage. What can you do about that? How can you deal with different ways of fighting?

In the video Kelly said: "We still weren't talking about the hard stuff. . . . It wasn't, 'How do you really feel about this? Are you sad? Are you scared?' We never had those conversations." Greg said: "I didn't really think that what I was doing in not communicating with Kelly was wrong. All I wanted to do was escape."

Kelly said: "I felt abandoned. I would start needling him, kind of just trying to dig, to get him mad at me, just because I felt hurt."

Greg and Kelly had an autistic child. How did they handle their stress and grief differently? How did this affect their marriage?

Do you think men, more than women, have trouble processing and verbalizing their deepest emotions? If so, what can be done about that?

In Chip's comments, he talked about "sharks" and "turtles." Do you think it's better to be a shark or a turtle?

How can you keep from becoming a shark or a turtle?

BY THE BOOK

Philippians 1:15-18

What was going on? What sort of preachers were there in Philippi?

How did Paul respond to this?

Philippians 4:2-4

What seems to be the problem here? What do you think was going on?

How would you describe Paul's attitude toward conflict?

Philippians 2:1-2

Paul is asking the Philippians—and us—to do several things. How can we "make his joy complete"?

36

Does this mean we need to lose all our individuality and become "Christian clones"?

Paul was writing to the whole church. Does this apply to marriages? How?

Philippians 2:3-4

We know from chapter 1 that there was "selfish ambition" in Philippi. What's the remedy for that?

How would Paul's advice in these verses affect the relationship between you and your spouse?

Philippians 2:5-11

What is one specific way, in your relationship with your spouse, that you could "have the mind of Christ in you"? How could you act like Christ in your marriage? Be specific.

Philippians 2:14

Do you think this means that we should never bring up disagreements or problems?



- 1. Conflict is n
- 2. Conflict is an opportunity for g_

The question is not: *How can we avoid conflict?* (A "turtle" might ask that.) The question is not: *How can I win?* (A "shark" might ask that.) The question is: *How are we going to grow through this?*

3. Conflict must be d_____ (and d_____) or it will d___

4. Healthy conflict requires r _____ so that no one gets h

WORKING THINGS OUT

HOW TO DIFFUSE CONFLICT IN YOUR MARRIAGE

Define the problem on your own (Proverbs 15:14). Learn to separate the problem from the person. What's bothering me? When did this begin? What is it that I am feeling?

<u>For Group Discussion</u> Why do you think it's important to start with your individual analysis of the problem?

What does it mean to "separate the problem from the person"? Why would that be important?

Are there any questions you'd like to add to that list?

Initiate a time to talk (Matthew 5:23-24).

What is generally the best time for you and your spouse to have a discussion like this, or will it vary?

For Group Discussion

Do you think it's best to have this meeting as soon as possible after the problem, or should you allow a cooling-off time?

What happens if your spouse doesn't want to talk about it?

<u>Focus</u> on the perceived problem, not the person (Proverbs 18:19). In the video Chip Ingram said: "Don't use the words ought, should, always, never. 'You ought to do this,' 'You should be doing this'—that doesn't help. What's the issue?"
For Group Discussion Why would it be important not to use those words?

Would it help to use "I-statements"? I feel this way when this happens. Why or why not?

Feel their pain as though it were your own (Proverbs 17:17). In the video Chip Ingram said: "Until you begin to feel what's going on, you'll always be judgmental. In our fallen state, you'll always be the person who's 'right' and the other person needs to straighten up. That's not how you resolve conflict."

For Group Discussion

Isn't it a little phony to say, "I feel your pain"? Can we ever really feel the other person's pain?

How important are feelings in a husband-wife discussion like this? Don't you want to stick to the facts?

Uncover the root problem (Proverbs 20:5).

When you fight over	the root problem might be
Money	values, priorities, power/control
Sex	communication, unmet emotional needs, past history/baggage
In-laws	loyalty, expectations
Children/work	roles/goals

For Group Discussion Does every argument have a deeper "root problem"?

Once you've uncovered the root problem, how do you deal with that?

Set things right between you (James 5:16).

In the video Chip Ingram said: "You need to look the person in the eye and say 'I'm sorry, I want to own my part of this, I want to ask you to forgive me."

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For Group Discussion

It's great to ask for forgiveness, but what if it wasn't your fault?

What if your spouse won't forgive you, at least not right away?

Establish a specific action plan that addresses the issue discussed (James 1:22-25). What specifically are you going to do as a result of this meeting with your spouse?

I commit to ... by ... (when)

For Group Discussion Does conflict resolution always need an action plan?

What if you (or your spouse) don't follow through on this commitment?

Is this a plan that you could use to diffuse conflict in your marriage?

If not the whole plan, are there pieces of it you'd want to use?

TOGETHER AT HOME

Consider going through this model with your spouse *working through a specific issue*. It might be a current conflict you're facing, or you might "try out" the method by rehashing a conflict you've already worked through.

How to Diffuse Conflict in Your Marriage

Define the problem on your own (Proverbs 15:14). Learn to separate the problem from the person. What's bothering me? When did this begin? What is it that I am feeling? 40

Initiate a time to talk (Matthew 5:23-24). What is the best time for you and your spouse to have a discussion like this?

Focus on the perceived problem, not the person (Proverbs 18:19).

<u>Feel their pain as though it were your own (Proverbs 17:17).</u>

Uncover the root problem (Proverbs 20:5).

When you fight over	the root problem might be
Money	values, priorities, power/control
Sex	communication, unmet emotional needs, past history/baggage
In-laws	loyalty, expectations
Children/work	roles/goals
Our issue:	Possible root problem:
In-laws Children/work	needs, past history/baggage loyalty, expectations roles/goals

Set things right between you (James 5:16).

Establish a specific action plan that addresses the issue discussed (James 1:22-25).

What specifically are you going to do as a result of this meeting with your spouse? I commit to...by (*when*)...

Alternate homework; consider having "The Conference" from page 23 in this Workbook.

SESSION 5

RESTORING SEX & INTIMACY



PG 41

GETTING ACQUAINTED

What's the best gift you've received from your spouse? What made it so special?

What's the gift you felt best about giving to your spouse? Why?

VIDEO NOTES

What would you say to the people in the real-life stories? What issues strike you as important? Any words or phrases pop out that you want to remember?

TALKING IT OVER

Darin and Becca were sidetracked by a full family schedule. In the video Darin said: "You get to the end of the day and there are some times that there's just no energy left to be intimate with each other." 42

Have you ever felt like this?

What advice would you give Darin about this?

Matt and Jennifer had gone through some miscarriages and were struggling to have a child. In the video Matt said: "All the processes of the medicines that we had to take . . . kind of took the glamour out of it. The sex became less romantic and more procedural."

What advice would you give them?

How important is "glamour" in a couple's sexual intimacy?

Ken and Lisa went through repeated layoffs and bankruptcy. In the video Lisa said: "If you don't respect your spouse or if you're feeling any sort of contempt, then it's going to be really hard to open up to them physically. . . . I didn't respect him at the time; why would I want to be with him?"

Ken said: "It's amazing what stress can pull away from you. It robs you of your relationship with your family, with God, with everything, if you let it, and I did. I let it pull everything out." Do you think Lisa is right to feel that way?

What advice would you give her?

What advice would you give Ken?

Have financial challenges or job difficulties ever caused a problem for the intimacy in your marriage?

What can be done about this?

Chris and Kelly had a struggle with expectations and with pornography. In the video Chris said: "We really had these expectations of our wedding night, fireworks going off and just complete oneness, this great intimate night. Unfortunately, it was anything but that."

Kelly said: "I just felt, just hyper-focused on my looks, like I wasn't pretty enough, I wasn't attractive enough."

Chris said: "I really honestly thought that I was going to be able to handle it [his porn addiction] on my own and control it and to stop viewing it. Unfortunately that was not the case."

Do you think that people's expectations of sex tend to be too high?

How do you think a man's pornography habit affects the way he views his wife?

How do you think it affects the way she views herself?

What advice would you give this couple?

"Sex begins in the kitchen." What does that mean?

In the video Chip Ingram said: "Ladies, when your husband loses his job, when your husband doesn't like himself, when your husband doesn't make a sale, when your husband feels down on himself, when your husband gains a little weight, when a man starts to feel like he's less than a man, there are few things that you can ever do that make him feel more like a man, more respected, than when you initiate sexual relationships with him. . . . The real issue is not sex. It's that down deep men are desperately insecure, just like women. . . . A man desperately wants to be wanted and cared for."

Do you think this really stems from insecurity, or do men just like to feel that they're God's gift to women?

In the video Chip Ingram said: "A lot of the sex for your wife isn't about climaxes or orgasms. They enjoy that like all the rest of us, but what they really need to feel is cherished and loved. . . . A lot of sexuality can happen without intercourse. A lot of hugging, a lot of affirmation, a lot of deep talks. . . . It's the connection of your bodies with one another, but it's the heart, it's saying, 'I love you, I want to be close to you."

Is that just a good excuse to not have sex when you don't feel like it?

In the video Chip Ingram said: "God says that the marriage bed is sacred (Hebrews 13:4). There is a bonding that occurs when you come together physically. That's not like an optional thing if you get time. It is as important as the spiritual relationship. It's as important as the emotional relationship. And I think we've gotten some sort of flaky ideas that if it's not spontaneous and wild and passionate that, you know, it's just sex. Well, it's about communication of hearts and personhood."

What's he saying here? Should you feel compelled to have sex even if you don't want to? Do you agree with that?

According to Chip Ingram, how are sexual problems like the light on your car dashboard?

In the video Chip Ingram said: "God gave sex as a gift, and this [pornography] is an artificial poison from the pit of hell to seek to ruin your life and create a desire that can never be fulfilled."

How does a pornography habit change the nature of a marriage?

BY THE BOOK

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

What does this passage say about your physical body?

How is sexual sin different from other sins, according to verse 18?

What does that mean? How is it a sin against your own body?

1 Corinthians 7:1-2

Is Paul anti-marriage?

What reason does Paul give for getting married?

1 Corinthians 7:3-5

What are we being instructed to do?

What does this tell us about God's view of sex?

What do we learn here about the ownership of our bodies?

How do you feel about that? What are the implications of this joint ownership?

Under what circumstances could you abstain from sex?

45

A CLOSER LOOK

Matthew 19:6

What does this tell us about marriage?

Commitment: A lifelong choice of u_____ love to an i_____ person.

Ephesians 4:15-16

What does it mean to "speak the truth in love"?

Communication: A lifelong skill of I_____ to u_____ each other.

Genesis 2:18

According to this verse, what was "not good"?

Then what happened in this passage that is good?

Caring: Adventure of lifelong f_____, f____, and mutual f_____

Romans 16:3-5

What do we learn here about this couple, Aquila and Priscilla?

Commission: A v______ to i______ the lives of others for Christ.

46

WORKING THINGS OUT

Building Intimacy into Your Marriage

1. Ask your partner: What can I do to demonstrate my commitment to you?

Consider: spending more time at home, compliments, praying together, more involvement with the kids, etc.

Note: Sometimes the best way to show unconditional love is to do something you don't prefer doing in order to please the other.

2. What time can we put in our schedule on a weekly basis for significant communication?

Consider reserving a regular weekly time for The Conference, or something like it.

What are the times in our daily schedule when we can connect more casually?

Breakfast? Call from work? After dinner? After kids in bed? Before bed?

Note: You don't need to have major conferences each day, but it would help to identify those times of "checking in" that naturally happen during the day. Let those become precious to you.

3. List three activities you like to do with your spouse.

Jot down the three activities your spouse listed.

Can you schedule a weekly "activity time" to do some of these things, maintaining the fun and friendship in your marriage? When would that be?

This is not just frivolity; it's marriage maintenance. If your schedule doesn't allow a major activity every week, plan one for each month, but fill in with minor fun things.

Right now, talk specifically about one activity—what and when.

4. What ministries are you currently involved in, individually and as a couple?

Are there gifts and talents you have that aren't being used in ministry? Like what?

Has God placed on your heart a passion for a particular group of people, geographical area, or type of ministry?

Get your spouse's answer to these questions too.

As you put all these answers together, consider . . .

- could you get more involved in some ministry you're currently doing?
- could you both get involved in some ministry one of you is doing?
- is there a unique type of ministry that could combine the skills of both of you?
- do your God-given passions merge in any way, leading you toward a particular ministry?

What's the next step you could take to explore these options?

When (specifically) will you get together to pray about this?

TOGETHER AT HOME

Commitment. Communication. Caring. Commission. Come back to your workbooks and keep talking about the things you started talking about here. Be open and honest about your expectations and desires with sex and intimacy in your marriage.

SESSION 6

STRIVING FOR A CHRIST-CENTERED MARRIAGE



GETTING ACQUAINTED

Do you like to dance? Why or why not?

There have been some TV shows lately that feature dancing. Do you watch any of them?

Why do you think dancing shows are so popular? What is it about couples dancing that people find so enjoyable?

VIDEO NOTES

What would you say to the people in the real-life stories? What issues strike you as important? Any words or phrases pop out that you want to remember?

TALKING IT OVER

In the video, Chip Ingram said: "God created marriage and he made it purposefully, after the fall, to frustrate you to some degree. To let you know, apart from His Son, you just can't get close to someone. ... You need Jesus Christ, not just in your life but in the center of your life in your relationship."

Session 6

How do you see that in your marriage?

In the video Gordon and Tanya had a conflict that seemed to center around joining the church. Do you think Gordon has a legitimate beef, or is he just looking for a way out?

What do you think the root of their conflict was about? How is this affecting their marriage?

What advice would you give them or any couple where their faith isn't "in sync"?

At this point in the video, Chip made an important distinction. "We are talking about the importance of having a Christ-centered marriage. We didn't say a going-to-church-centered marriage or a religious-centered marriage. We're talking about when each person has a personal relationship with Jesus Christ." What's the difference?

In the video Daryl said: "She's kind of a balance with me. When I'm a little firm, I'm a little tough, she's a little mercy, a little grace, so she kind of bring a balance to me."

Denise said: "He's my strength sometimes and I have to be his ease sometimes because he's a little strong-willed and I'm a little bit more passive, so we kind of balance one another out."

Chase said: "I get to see the love and the patience and the serving that she's able to do for these kids, and I just get to do it with her and it's a blast."

Elizabeth said: "I've just been able to see him be the hands and feet of the Lord to me, as I've been drained at the end of the day and he comes home and is able to kind of relieve me and get the girls back excited, and just to see his tender heart."

What do you see here? How do these husbands and wives complement each other?

Do you think that sort of balance happens immediately in a marriage, or does it develop over time?

50

If it "develops over time," how does it develop?

Chip talked about the "dance" of marriage. How is marriage like a dance?

BY THE BOOK

Ephesians 5:21-24

Who is verse 21 written to?

Why should we submit to one another?

What does it mean, then, to "submit"?

What, then, are wives called to do?

Is this any different from the mutual submission mentioned in verse 21?

What does it mean for the husband to be the "head" of the wife?

Ephesians 5:25-31

What are husbands called to do?

How did Christ love the church?

How is this "love" different from the "submission" we read about in verses 21-22?

Husbands are instructed to love their wives "as their own bodies." How does this compare with other passages we have read?

How, then, should a husband care for his wife?

Ephesians 5:32-33

What is the "profound mystery" Paul is talking about?

Ephesians 6:1-9

What groups of people are addressed?

Does Ephesians 5:21 serve as a good title for this whole section? Why or why not?

This passage clearly gives different instructions to husbands and to wives. Does this indicate that men and women have different God-given roles in a marriage?

If so, how would you define these roles?

A CLOSER LOOK

Marriage as a dance

A great dance needs a c_

A great dance requires m choreographer's steps.	S	to th	e
A great dance demands clarity of r			
A great dance results from p	, p	, and more p	
A great dance develops an incredible	t		
A great dance develops b s	, t	, r	, and
A great dance develops personal j	an	d mutual f	
A great dance is a thing of b			

WORKING THINGS OUT

Learning to Dance

1. What different roles did your parents assume in their marriage? What was their marriagedance like?

2. How would you describe the role you currently have in your marriage? Can you come up with three words to describe it?

3. Do you feel pressure from the culture, the church, your parents, or your spouse to take on a different role in your marriage? How? What?

4. Do you feel that your spouse should take on a different role? What?

5. Have you and your spouse ever talked specifically about the different roles you take in your marriage?

6a. (Men) What does it mean to you to "love your wife as Christ loved the church"? What specific thing could you do to accomplish that?

6b. (Women) What does it mean to you to "submit to your husband as to the Lord"? What specific thing could you do to accomplish that?

TOGETHER AT HOME

Now that you've had a sort of "dancing lesson," see how it comes together. This is a simple "intimacy survey" that asks a number of questions about three different areas of marital intimacy. Consider making some blank copies of this and stash them away to use again three, six, or nine months from now.

Intimacy Survey

Spiritual Intim		ng values and beliefs.		
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
2. We confess	our faults and si	ns to each other.		
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
3. We offer for	giveness to each	other when needed.		
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
4. We pray tog	ether.			
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully

5. We read Scr	ripture together.			
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
6. We are invo	lved in serving ot	hers together.		
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
Emotional Inti	macy:			
		our positive feelings with		
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
8. We feel com	fortable sharing	our negative feelings with	each other.	
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
0 We ack how	the other is feeli	ng about things that hann	on in our lives	
0 Not at all	1 A little	ng about things that happ 2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
o Not at all	I A little	2 Moderatery	3 7 101	41 uliy
		undivided attention.		
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
11. We talk reg	ularly about our	relationship.		
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
Physical Intim				
		o be alone with each othe		
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
13. We go on c	dates together.			
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
14 We are con	nfortable commu	nicating sexual desires an	d preferences with	each other
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
		C. Cr		
	ment each other i 1 A little		3 A lot	4
0 Not at all	TAIlue	2 Moderately	5 A 101	4 Fully
16. We often to	ouch, hug, and cu			
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
17. We have a	satisfying sex life			
0 Not at all	1 A little	2 Moderately	3 A lot	4 Fully
				A CONTRACTOR

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