

THE GRACE AWAKENING STUDY THIRTEEN

A Marriage Oiled by Grace

Selected Scriptures

My counsel is this: operate in grace, and in your marriage, you will experience mutual equality, mutual dignity, mutual humility, with a mutual destiny. What a pleasure that will be!

—Charles R. Swindoll

IN ancient times, oils processed from olives and herbs were applied to skin as a healing balm and refined as medicine or costly perfume. Today, we use oils in similar ways: in ointments to soothe sunburned skin and lotions to return suppleness to dry hands. We massage oil into achy muscles to ease pain or pour drops of purified oils into diffusers to fill the air with revitalizing scents. In industry, oil lessens friction in machinery and keeps the gears humming.

Grace in a marriage relationship is like oil in many ways. It reduces relational friction, heals hurt feelings, and restores vitality during an emotionally dry spell. Apologizing to our spouse after making a cutting comment is like applying soothing ointment to a wound. We massage the oil of grace into our marriage when we listen attentively as our spouse shares deep feelings or offer encouragement when our spouse needs a lift. The variety of applications of the oil of grace in marriage is limitless and so are the benefits!

Three New Testament passages describe common areas in marriage that need the restorative and healing properties of grace. These passages outline the three Rs of marriage: *realities*, *responsibilities*, and *roles*.¹



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

The psalmist described harmony in a relationship as “precious as the anointing oil that was poured over Aaron’s head” and flowed down his beard to the bottom of his priestly robe (Psalm 133:2). If you’re married, are you experiencing precious harmony? Or has disharmony filled your home? Perhaps you feel tension with your spouse or a hurt that won’t heal. If so, ask the Lord to anoint every aspect of your relationship with the oil of grace—from top to bottom! Pause for a moment of prayer as you prepare your heart to study God’s Word.



YOUR TURN IN THE SCRIPTURES

In the first passage, we’ll *observe* the benefits of grace regarding three realities of married life. In the second passage, we’ll *interpret* Paul’s instructions regarding the responsibilities specific to wives and to husbands. And in the third, we’ll *correlate* what we learned from the first two passages with Paul’s description of the feminine role of wives and the masculine role of husbands.



Observation: The Grace to Face Marital Realities

In *1 Corinthians 7:3–5*, Paul used phrases such as “should fulfill,” “gives authority,” and “do not deprive.” To what aspect of marital life was Paul referring? And what were Paul’s instructions?

As you look closer at these verses, do you observe the theme of *mutuality*? Paul instructed husbands and wives to treat each other with mutual respect, dignity, and love. What attitude was Paul encouraging?



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This attitude applies not just to sexuality but all areas of marriage and points to the first marital reality: *marriage requires mutual unselfishness*.

Read [1 Corinthians 7:10–13](#) to discover a second reality. Notice the repetition of the phrase “must not.” Write down each time Paul used that phrase and the instructions he was giving.

Paul’s instructions highlighted the reality that *marriage is a lifelong commitment*. Paul’s counsel in these verses couldn’t be more emphatic. No less than four times does he underscore the permanency of a marriage relationship. Separation and divorce are heartbreaking, and God’s Word does address these issues in more detail. If you wish to read more, we recommend Chuck’s booklet [Divorce and Remarriage According to Jesus](#), which can be purchased online.

A third reality pops off the page as we read [1 Corinthians 7:26–28](#). In the last sentence of 7:28, what stands out as a reality about which Paul reminded his married readers?

The reality is that *marriage includes times of trouble*. Misunderstandings, financial hardship, in-law disputes, loss of employment, illness, and all sorts of misfortunes can capsize a marriage without grace at the helm.

It takes grace! Grace to accept. Grace to forgive. Grace to respect. Grace to understand. Grace to affirm. Grace to restrain. Grace to give and take with gratitude. I don’t know how many times Cynthia’s just taken my hand, looked me in the eye, and said, “Honey, we’ll make it through.” That took grace. —Chuck Swindoll



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Interpretation: The Grace to Accept Personal Responsibilities

Now, let's interpret Paul's instructions on marriage in Ephesians 5:21–30 to discover the husbands' and wives' responsibilities. Paul laid the groundwork for his instructions with this foundational command: “submit to one another out of reverence for Christ” (Ephesians 5:21).

A Principle for Wives

Upon this basis of mutual submission, Paul instructed wives,

For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of his body, the church. As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. (Ephesians 5:22–24)

The relationship between Christ and His church sets the pattern for a wife's relationship to her husband. In what ways, according to Paul?

Out of a woman's heart of devotion to her Savior and her confidence in Him flows her respectful devotion to her husband. A wife fulfills her responsibility when she *knows herself so well and respects herself so much that she gives herself to her husband without hesitation*. Such submission is possible only in a relationship of security and trust—which husbands cultivate when they fulfill *their* responsibility.

A Principle for Husbands

Paul instructed husbands,

For husbands, this means love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, washed by the cleansing of God's word. . . . In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. (Ephesians 5:25–26, 28)



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In what ways did Paul teach husbands to follow the example of Christ?

A husband fulfills his responsibility in marriage when he *loves the Lord so deeply and likes himself so completely that he is able to give himself to his wife without conditions*. Grace takes the “ifs” out of a husband’s love. He doesn’t say to his wife, “If you give me what I want or do what I say, then I’ll love you.” No, a husband who has experienced the grace of Jesus loves his wife with an equal measure of grace, unconditionally and sacrificially, just like the One who “gave up his life for her” (Ephesians 5:25).

How did Paul summarize the responsibilities of wives and husbands in *Ephesians 5:33*?

The more spouses embody the grace of God, the more secure wives feel to respect their husbands and the more confident husbands feel to love their wives. We submit without feeling threatened and lead without abusing authority. Grace oils the gears of authority and submission so they work together with ease.



Correlation: The Grace to Fulfill Distinct Roles

Husbands and wives express their responsibilities through their masculine and feminine roles. Although these distinctions tend to blur in our culture, Scripture brings them into sharp focus.



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The Wife's Role

How did Peter tell women to express their role in a difficult marriage with men who are not believers, and how might their behavior touch their husbands' hearts (*1 Peter 3:1–4*)?

The wife's role is *to model true femininity with character traits that are precious to God and impressive to her husband.*

The Husband's Role

Regarding husbands, what did Peter say about how to love their wives (*1 Peter 3:7*)?

Peter's words could be translated, "live with your wife according to knowledge." He urged men, "Really get to know your wife—her hurts and fears, hidden talents, and deepest joys. Use your strength as a man to honor, nourish, and cherish her." We summarize the husband's role this way: *to provide genuine masculinity through unselfish and sensitive leadership that strengthens the home and gives dignity to his wife.*

The better acquainted I become with the grace of God, the less I care about authority, and the less threatened I am. The more I experience the grace of God, the more I want to affirm and release my wife and the less I want to dominate and control her. Grace gives room for my wife to grow, to be, to discover, and to create. —Chuck Swindoll



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Application: Equal Partners in God's Gift of New Life

Peter's concluding insight wraps up our study: spouses are "equal partner[s] in God's gift of new life" (1 Peter 3:7). How can you practically translate into your relationship each thought in this phrase?

How can you express mutual equality: "equal"?

How can you express mutual dignity: "partners"?

How can you express mutual spirituality: "God's gift of new life"?

Think back on your opening prayer for harmony in your home. Review the principles in the passages we studied and draw out one thought that you can put into practice this week. How can you apply the oil of grace in this one area of your marriage?



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Only by God's grace can we experience harmony in our homes. Grace is the lubricant that lessens the friction and keeps the gears of our relationships running smoothly. Grace is the ointment that restores vitality and promotes healing. Apply a little grace to your marriage today . . . and every day!



A FINAL PRAYER

Father, I commit to You my life and my marriage. If anything is missing, Lord, open my eyes so I can see what I must do to bring harmony into my home. I truly desire Your grace, both for my soul and my relationships. Help me be less selfish, more humble, and more committed to You and my spouse. I pray in the name of Jesus, who is my example for living, amen.

ENDNOTE

1. This study is about grace in marriage, but the principles may be applied to any interpersonal relationship. If you are single, think about relationships with close friends or family members as you study the passages and answer the questions. You may use the applications to help others in their marriage or file them away for your own future marriage.



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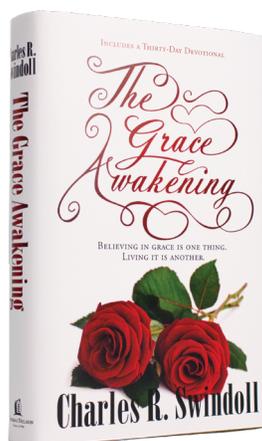
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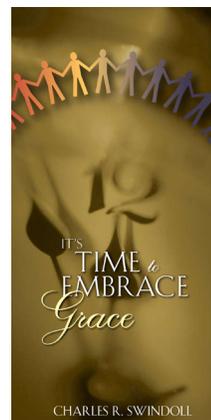
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For the 2019 broadcast, this *Searching the Scriptures* study was developed by Bryce Klabunde, executive vice president of Pastoral Ministries, based upon the original outlines, charts, and transcripts of Charles R. Swindoll's messages.



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