

COMPL EMENT

Discussion Guide

DISCUSSION

1. Jamie and Aaron both share memories of various marriages they witnessed as they grew up. Do any of these marriages sound familiar to you? Which ones?
2. As you look back on your life, which marriages most informed your view of love or marital norms? How so? What sort of expectations about love did these marriages instill in you?
3. What cultural assumptions about marriage have crept into your thinking? (Examples: Do you consider it bland, archaic, or boring? Constraining? Destined to be difficult? Or perhaps on the other end of the spectrum, have you over-idolized it, or assumed that it is supposed to be the end-all-be-all of happiness? Do you assume a spouse will complete you? Do you consider marriage as the only source of joy or the only way a person can be whole or happy?)
4. What usually tempts you to think your marriage can't be vibrant?
5. What do you think the difference is between a spouse completing you versus *complementing* you?
6. Why is marriage worth the fight?
7. What sorts of expectations do you put on your marriage? How do you expect your marriage to fulfill only that which God can?

CHAPTER 1: LOVE

1. Have you ever assumed, like Jamie and Aaron, that loving someone shouldn't be hard, or that it shouldn't have to require hard work? Why or why not?
2. Why do you think it is so hard to remember that love is a choice and an action more than a feeling?
3. Have you ever run into your own inability to love someone in a sacrificial way? What was that like?
4. Aaron reminds us from 1 John 4 that "God is love." Why is God's love for us so crucial to understand before we can love someone else, especially a spouse?
5. What does it mean to "love like Jesus loves"? How did Jesus show his love to you?
6. In what ways have you made marriage more about getting your way than laying down your life?
7. Why is it freeing to know that in Christ, we can pour ourselves out completely for our spouse and then leave the results to God?

CHAPTER 2: SERVE

1. In what ways do you try to be the “Best Spouse in the World”?
2. What misconceptions or faulty assumptions does the world have about “serving” a spouse? What impact have these misconceptions had on your own attitude toward your marriage? How does Jesus’ character and example help correct your faulty assumptions?
3. Have you ever served your spouse, like Jamie did, for the primary purpose of keeping your spouse from leaving you? Or, like Aaron, do you sometimes serve in a numb heart just to get things done? If not, from what other wrong motivations do you sometimes serve your spouse? What is a healthier motivation?
4. Aaron reminds us that “serving your spouse well requires knowing your spouse” and encourages us to serve our husband or wife in ways that are most meaningful to them (instead of the ways we’d prefer to be served). What acts of service are most meaningful to your spouse?
5. How is the attitude of “I’m going to serve you as long as you are serving me” unlike Jesus?
6. Jamie helps us see that “serving each other is an equal opportunity command” and reminds us that serving “one another” includes our spouses. In fact, she goes on to say it should start with our spouses. How does this challenge you? As you consider all the ways you serve others in a given week, where have you failed to start with your spouse?
7. Romans 12:10 encourages us to “outdo one another in showing honor.” What might “outserving one another” look like in your marriage?

CHAPTER 3: CHEER

1. What person (or people) in your life do you naturally “cheer on”? Why?
2. In what areas of life do you feel more cheered on by others than your spouse? On the flip side, in what areas of life is your spouse cheered on more by others than you?
3. What holds you back from being the primary cheerleader for your spouse?
4. Have you ever spoken negatively about your spouse in public? Why? Or, in your private speech, in what ways have your words revealed that you sometimes cherish being right or understood more than you cherish your spouse? How do these habits harm your marriage over time?
5. Aaron encourages us to consider this commitment: “I’m going to choose to uplift you with words, not push you down.” Jamie puts it this way: “You will not find anyone cheering louder for my man than me.” What would your marriage look like if both parties chose to approach your speech this way?
6. Have you ever thought about the fact that encouraging someone means to instill courage within them? How does this change the way you view your words and the power they hold in your marriage?
7. What are some creative ways you can cheer on your spouse in this upcoming season of your marriage?

CHAPTER 4: LEAD

1. What are some common misconceptions our culture has about leadership? How does Jesus' life debunk these assumptions?
2. In what family situations has God used you to be a leader? Conversely, in what situations has God used your spouse to do this?
3. What's your initial reaction to Ephesians 5:22–24? Why?
4. Jamie and Aaron remind us that, like the call to serve, the call to submit in Ephesians 5:21 is something the entire church is supposed to do: "submitting first to Christ, and then because of our love for him, submitting to others." How does this both encourage and challenge you?
5. Jamie and Aaron show us that according to the book of Ephesians, a husband's call is to love his wife and a wife's call is to submit to her husband. How is this ultimately a call to Christlike sacrifice on both parts?
6. Aaron challenges husbands by saying they should be the Lead Submitter, the Lead Servant, and the Lead Lover. If you're a husband, how might your marriage look different if you rose to this challenge?
7. Jamie challenges us to "lead like Jesus led, follow like Jesus followed, serve like Jesus served, and lay down our own wants and desires like Jesus did." What sort of inner reaction do you have to this challenge? Why?

CHAPTER 5: FOLLOW

1. What are some relationships or situations, outside of marriage, that require us to submit to something or someone? Which of these are seen as strange or oppressive? Which of these are viewed as culturally acceptable or normal?
2. How does our society view the concept of submission? Why do you think our culture loves the idea of leading but hates the idea of following?
3. Aaron mentions that Jesus "[made] willingness to follow the first requirement for leadership," and that when Jesus turns ordinary people into great leaders, he starts by calling them to "extraordinary follower-ship." Whether you are a husband or wife, would you say this "willingness to follow" radiates from your character? What might pursuing "extraordinary follower-ship" look like in your relationship with God and others?
4. If you're a wife, which of the two "following avenues" are you more likely to lean toward? Why? If you're a husband, would your wife say that you love her more than you love the title of being a leader? Why or why not?
5. Jamie mentions that "you can't make your husband a gentle, self-sacrificial leader, any more than he can make you a respectful, trusting follower." For both husbands and wives, how might your marriage look different if you stopped trying to "make" your spouse into who they should be, and instead focused on what God is calling you to?
6. Jamie mentions that a wife's submission "should look different to us than what the world (and sometimes unfortunately the church) has painted for us." If you're a wife, in what ways could your submission look different?
7. What is most convicting to you in this chapter? How might your marriage change if you listened to God's conviction right now?

CHAPTER 6: FIGHT

1. Do you typically run away from conflict or run toward it? Why?
2. In your marriage, how often do you admit you are wrong? Why do you think this is the case?
3. What's the difference in fighting against your spouse, versus with and for them? How do these differences change the way you view conflict in your marriage? What are some specific ways you could fight for your spouse in this upcoming season of your marriage?
4. Jamie mentions that engaging in conflict well requires laying aside your pride, not laying aside your voice. Does this challenge or encourage you? Why?
5. Aaron says, "Winning a friend is always better than beating an enemy." How could your marriage change if you shifted to this new definition of winning?
6. When you fight with your spouse, what is your weapon of choice? What do you think using this weapon will gain you? What might it look like for you to become like Aaron says, "a sharpener and not a wounder"?
7. Jamie mentions that every marital conflict is an opportunity to imitate Christ. What might that look like for you?

CHAPTER 7: FORGIVE

1. When you think of what "victory" looks like at the end of a conflict, is forgiveness the thing that comes to mind? Or is winning what comes to mind? Why do you think this is your definition of victory?
2. Do you keep a proverbial "Moleskine journal" in your mind, full of wrongs that your spouse has done? Why?
3. Why do you think we not only rehearse the pain of a past wound in our minds but choose to stay in it? Why do you think it's such a struggle to finally release that pain?
4. When it comes to the "how" of forgiveness, Aaron says we only have one option. What is it? Why do you think this is our only option?
5. Jamie shared a sensitive story about how unforgiveness was hurting her marriage. Could you relate? How is your marriage being harmed by unforgiveness?
6. What barrier or hangup typically holds you back from forgiving your spouse? What might God be trying to tell you about that barrier?
7. If you're a Christian, does God still hold your sin against you? How does this help you when you think about your spouse's sin?

CHAPTER 8: SEX

1. Who was the primary teacher in your life when it comes to sex (parents, public school system, friends, purity culture, pornography, etc.)?
2. How has this “teacher” influenced your view on sex? How has it impacted your expectations on sex in your marriage, even to this day? How has it impacted your view of God?
3. Do you treat sex as if it’s primarily something you get or something you give? Why?
4. In what ways have you treated sex as if it’s bad or dirty? What might it look like to consider sex as a good, God-ordained gift for married couples?
5. In what ways have you treated sex as if it is ultimate, or perhaps, the only indicator for love? What might it look like to consider the relationship itself as more important than sex?
6. Aaron mentions that sex has boundaries and offers some helpful questions to discern what is “in bounds” for your marriage. Which of these questions was most helpful to you?
7. Have you ever thought about the reality that sex points to the gospel? What about this truth is challenging for you or encouraging for you?

CHAPTER 9: PARENT

1. How are you and your spouse wired differently as parents? What are the strengths and weaknesses that you both offer?
2. Though we all aim for the ultimate goal of raising Christlike kids, what other goals in your parenting end up eclipsing this sometimes (obedience, happy childhood, well-adjusted, smart, education, etc.)? What would need to change in your family rhythms to make the goal of Christlike kids the top priority?
3. Aaron mentions the importance of keeping your kids’ “adulthood” at the forefront of conversations in order to help children see that decisions today affect who they will be years later. Would you say this approach comes naturally to you? Why or why not?
4. What are the “main things” for your family? What are the “secondary” things? How are you and your spouse doing at keeping these in their proper places?
5. Aaron mentions that he and Jamie both “lay down some of our personal preferences of parenting, because we want to be unified in the big picture.” What are some personal preferences you may need to lay down in order to be unified with your spouse?
6. Think of each member of your family. How does each member contribute to the whole? How can you encourage each one of them this week, letting them know how valuable a “player” they are in this “team”?
7. Why do you think it’s important for your kids to see you worshipping Jesus together, repenting together, and getting back up together after mistakes? What might need to change in your life to allow your kids to see more of this?

CHAPTER 10: MISSION

1. What are the various misconceptions about marriage that Aaron and Jamie mention in this chapter? Which of these misconceptions are you sometimes tempted to believe?
2. Aaron mentions that a marriage is a “living painting” that reveals “just how good God is.” He says that ultimately, “marriage is mission” and its purpose is to “show the world God’s covenantal, unbreakable, unstoppable, unending love.” Did you know that God designed marriage this way? How does this encourage you?
3. Jamie mentions that marriage ultimately calls both parties to race to the same finish line—namely, raising Jesus’ name high and making disciples. Would you say this is the joint “finish line” of your marriage? Why or why not? What other goals have gotten in the way?
4. Do you sometimes think that “marriages on mission” are only for those in vocational ministry? How has this chapter helped debunk that assumption? What might it look like to be “all for the mission” in this season of your marriage?
5. Jamie mentions that marriages have a very real enemy. Who is this enemy? How has he distracted your marriage from its mission?
6. How have you seen God use your marriage as a ministry in the past?
7. In what ways might God be calling you to change some things so that your marriage can be a ministry to others even now?