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1: Security

Helping Your Spouse Feel Safe in Your Love

Throughout this book you'll find short exercises to do. We promise they won't take long. Even if you are the type who never does these things, PLEASE DO THEM. Just this once, okay? We'd say "please" one more time, but we don't want to start the book by annoying you. Here's the deal—if you're going to read this book anyway, you may as well add 10 percent more effort and get two or three times the benefit. (Besides, your spouse will really appreciate your making the extra effort.)



Think back to the days after you met your spouse. What was it like when you finally realized this was the person for you? As you remember how you felt, what are the first words that come to mind?

Him

- | | | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ecstatic | <input type="checkbox"/> Scared | <input type="checkbox"/> Thrilled | <input type="checkbox"/> Relieved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous | <input type="checkbox"/> Loved | <input type="checkbox"/> Cautious | <input type="checkbox"/> Excited |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pressured | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Her

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ecstatic | <input type="checkbox"/> Scared | <input type="checkbox"/> Thrilled | <input type="checkbox"/> Relieved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nervous | <input type="checkbox"/> Loved | <input type="checkbox"/> Cautious | <input type="checkbox"/> Giddy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Secure | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Take no more than five minutes to discuss the words you chose. (We want you to be willing to do the exercises later.) What surprises you about your spouse's choices?



A (Slightly Disguised) True Story about... Security and Significance Justin and Erin

Erin (walking in door at night after a Brownie leadership meeting): "Hey honey—how was your meeting tonight?"

Justin (watching TV in the living room): "Good."

Erin: "What did they serve for your dinner?"

Justin: "Uhh... prime rib."

*A pretty ordinary exchange, right? **Except that Erin already knew that the Contractors' Association dinner meeting was actually next week.***

Yesterday, she'd asked Justin if he could pick up their daughter from a friend's house after work. He'd told her the meeting for his new association was that night. She made other arrangements.

When he found out the next day that he didn't have the meeting, he didn't call Erin. She went online during the day and found out the real date.

Neither of them said anything more that night after their brief exchange. Then, at about two in the morning, Erin rolled over and punched Justin in the shoulder. "I checked online and I know you didn't have your meeting tonight, you big jerk."

To be continued...

Sound familiar? Stuffing something rather than talking about it?

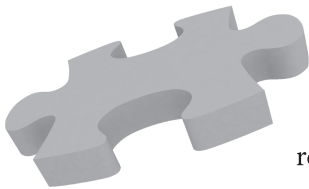
How long has it been since you listened to a story around a campfire? Last year? Twenty years ago? No matter how long it's been, there's just something magical about hearing an interesting tale around a crackling fire.

Imagine what it would have been like thousands of years ago sitting around a fire at night with the Israelites. Since that was an oral culture, those times together would have been treasured and valued. When Moses told how the world began, you would have heard him say five times, "It was good." Then a sixth time he says, "It was very good."

Can you picture it in your mind? "It was good... It was good... It was good... It was good... It was good... It was very good."

After all that, it would have been quite a shock when you finally heard—"It is not good..." What isn't good? "The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone'" (Genesis 2:18). In other words, the whole creation was good—everything—but it was not yet complete, because man did not have woman.

You and your spouse were literally made for each other.



Have you ever gotten down to the last piece of a jigsaw puzzle and realized you couldn't find the last piece? You look and look but it's nowhere to be found. Then, as a last resort, you move the sofa and there it is.

Finding your spouse is like finding that final piece. There's a "rightness" that every human being longs to experience.

*Did you read the introduction? If not, **PLEASE READ IT NOW.** It's really important. We tell you why we give you lots of small action steps in this book. (They'll help your marriage—we promise.)*

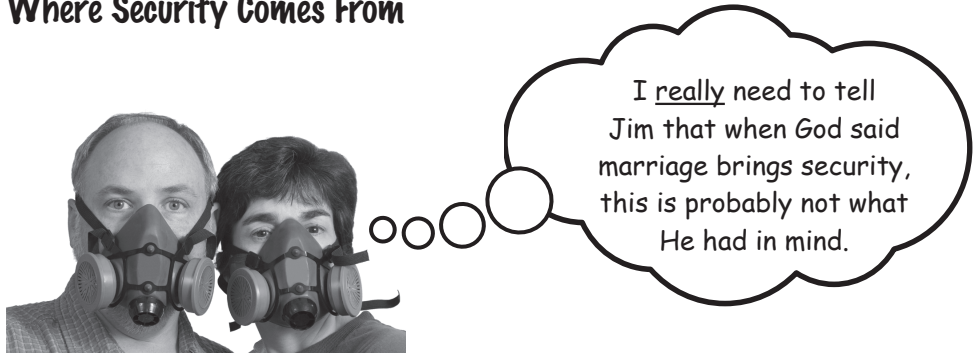
PLEASE DO TRY THIS AT HOME



What's one way that you know your spouse was made for you? Is there a characteristic about them that "just fits"? Share that characteristic with your spouse and why you appreciate it.

Finding the one God gave you to spend your life with brings a powerful sense of security. You know that whatever else life might bring, there's one person who will always be right there with you. God said "It was not good..." because we need this sense of security that comes from real relationships, particularly within marriage.

Where Security Comes From



If you've been married more than a few months, you know that the wonderful rush of those first heady days often doesn't last. If you've been married a few years, you've probably slogged through dirty diapers, sales contests at work, or rushed dinners as you both run different directions. If you've been married a decade, you've likely had a first house, church committees, and trips to the emergency room.

It's easy in the honeymoon phase, when everything we do is right. But how are we supposed to find and provide security for the long term in our marriage?

Physically, we feel secure when we are in a safe place. We need to feel protected. We need to have our basic needs met—for food, clothing, and shelter.

It's the same way relationally. We feel secure in a relationship when we feel safe and we know that our needs are being met. Security comes when we are loved unconditionally by another person. Security comes when we know that it really is "til death do us part." But relationally, security also comes when we **give** as well as **get**, so part of feeling secure is being able to serve and meet the needs of our spouse. That's what we'll talk about in the rest of this chapter—how you **get** security in marriage and how you can **give** security to your spouse.

God gives us marriage for mutual support and encouragement. It's meant to be a safe

harbor of love and respect. **But if we don't feel secure in our marriage, we'll spend all of our time worrying about that and none of our time growing and developing into the person God wants us to be.** So it's important to be secure; but it's also important to create security for our spouses so they can grow as well. In order to make it until "til death do us part," you need to help your spouse feel secure. To do that, you need to understand how to help them meet their greatest needs.

A (Slightly Disguised) True Story about...
Security and Significance
Justin and Erin (continued)

*After she punched Justin, Erin's next reaction was to tell him **she** was sorry. She felt bad that she hadn't told him she knew his meeting was changed. She was afraid he would be angry that she was checking up on him. This was a holdover from a pattern that dominated the early years of their relationship.*

←
A lack of security...

Both Erin and Justin carried a lot of destructive habits into their marriage. Neither of them grew up in a Christian home, and they weren't Christians until after they had been married for several years.

As a young man, Justin drank after work and occasionally ended up visiting topless bars. For many years into his marriage, several times each month he turned his cell phone off after work and then finally arrived home after midnight.

←
A lack of security...

Erin just hoped this kind of behavior would go away. She couldn't tell anyone—she didn't want to make Justin or herself look bad. They had no friends they could open up with; she certainly couldn't tell anyone in their families.

A lack of security...

When he stumbled in late one night, she met him at the door in tears. “Why do you treat me this way? I would never do this to you!” Justin’s response was his standard—“Can we talk about this tomorrow?”

Justin knew deep down that he was wrong, but he didn’t want to admit it. He felt like a failure as a husband and as a man. He protected his self-image by getting angry and forcing Erin to back down.

To be continued...

A Man’s Greatest Need

What do men want? We think you can boil it down to three things.

1. We want something we can give our lives to—a **cause**.
2. We want someone to share it with—a **companion**.
3. We want a reasonable explanation for why number one and number two are so difficult—a **conviction**.



That’s right. Men need to give themselves to a cause that makes sense.

Men want to be significant. They want to do something with their lives. When a man finds a place of significance he feels secure. He knows that this is how God has wired him to be.

Even men without a lot of ambition or motivation want it to matter that they have lived. The trouble comes when a man finds himself consistently blocked from satisfying this desire to be significant. Often, these men go into a funk that affects everyone and everything around them. Perhaps that’s happened to you.

ASK YOUR HUSBAND...

(Wife, read these questions to your husband.)

*Do you agree that most men want a cause, a companion, and a conviction?
How would you say this in your own words?*

A Woman's Greatest Need

After God said, "It is not good for man to be alone," what did He say?

"I will make a helper suitable for him" (Genesis 2:18). The woman was made by God to be a companion in relationships. Men need a female companion, and females need a male companion.



A woman is designed to be a companion, a nurturer, and a helper. That doesn't mean a husband doesn't help his wife, but her basic nature is that she wants to be a companion, she wants to satisfy the "aleness" that men feel. She's made to desire that connection with a man.

One way of talking about a woman's greatest need is to say that she wants **intimacy**. *Intimacy* means to be known, accepted, and loved at the deepest level of who she is.

Does she want to do something significant with her life? Does she want a cause? Does she want a mission? Of course! But even more than that, she longs for her husband to know and treasure her for who she really is.

ASK YOUR WIFE...

(Husband, read these questions to your wife.)

Do you agree that a woman's greatest need is for intimacy? How would you say this in your own words?

A man was made for significance. A woman was made for intimacy. So the Scripture tells the wife to respect the husband (significance), and the husband to love the wife (intimacy). "However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:33).

Here are some other ways to understand how men and women typically find security. (Of course these are generalizations, and they don't hold true for every single man and woman. But they are generalizations because they do apply to most people to some degree. So, just because they are not always true, don't discount the fact that they are usually true.)

	Man	Woman
Greatest need:	significance	intimacy
Principal drive:	to be respected	to be cherished
Orientation:	to task	to relationship
Principal activity:	providing	nurturing
Direction of creativity:	work	home
Deepest fear:	failure to provide	losing a spouse or child
Risk-orientation:	taking risks	seeking security
Principal concerns:	money and meaning	husband and children



NBAS (No-Brainer Action Step)

Tell your spouse which line of the chart fits you best.
Which words on the chart would you change?

Making Your Marriage a Safe Place

Security becomes the foundation for everything else God wants to accomplish in your marriage. If you or your spouse doesn't feel safe in your relationship, you won't be able to have a vibrant marriage. Instead of being able to serve your spouse and help them grow, you'll be hung up trying to have your own needs met.

Security must first of all come from Christ, not your spouse. Jesus promises to give you everything you really need. "Preach the gospel" to yourself every day. What does that mean? It means that you need to help yourself remember that you are perfectly loved and accepted by God. Jesus protects and guarantees your eternal security. "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand" (John 10:27-29).

Our security in Christ flourishes when we realize:

- **we can abandon ourselves to His grace and**
- **we can risk everything for His glory.**

The gospel gives us the radical freedom to forget about ourselves because we know our ultimate needs will be met. We're like a person who can jump confidently from a cliff because he's wearing a safety harness, rope, bungee cord, and a parachute, with a giant air bag waiting at the bottom.

In contrast, if we don't get our security from Jesus first, then we'll place a burden on our spouse that they were never meant to bear. They simply cannot meet our deepest needs.

It's the difference between a vacuum cleaner and a hair dryer.



No security in Christ = you try to suck meaning from the people around you, and it sucks the life from them. You're like a relational vacuum cleaner.

Security in Christ = you are living out of the overflow of Christ's love, so you can "blow" His love to others, like a relational hairdryer.



Connection Point

For both of you: Rate yourself on this scale:

Him: vacuum cleaner hair dryer

Her: vacuum cleaner hair dryer

How does this affect your marriage?

How to Give Your Spouse Security



The **BIG** Idea:

After God, but before all others, make your spouse your top priority.

God gave you your spouse to be your first responsibility. After your relationship with Him, the most important thing is to help your spouse become all God wants him or her to be. When your spouse knows they are the most important person in your life, they will have security.

When we pray, “I said ‘til death do us part’—I want to mean it,” we are asking God to help us be faithful. If you make your spouse the most important priority in your life after God, faithfulness will follow. The rest of this book will show you practical ways to make your spouse your top priority.

WAIT! You can't leave me hanging. How can I help my husband find significance in our marriage?



You're right. That would be cruel. We'll cover a lot more later, but here are a few practical ideas to help a man find security.

- **Encourage him in tasks that have an impact.** What is something your husband is involved in that makes a difference? If you can't think of anything, encourage him to find an outlet—such as helping with a sports team, assisting in a class at church, or chaperoning a Boy Scout outing. If he's already involved, ask how you can join him. One friend finally realized coaching baseball was great for her husband. Instead of resenting it, now she is the team mom.

- **Show appreciation for the things he does.** Everyone needs encouragement. Your husband has a lot of pressures and demands on his time and attention. Let him know how much you appreciate his earning an income, fathering your children, and being your husband.
- **Help him find opportunities for success with you, the children, and others.** Set him up to succeed, not to fail. Small choices with positive results lead to more good choices and more positive results. Encourage him to take a short walk with you, to say a prayer with the kids before bed, or to talk over the sermon with the family at Sunday lunch.
- **Clearly communicate your needs.** Most husbands want to do a good job. But a husband can't read his wife's mind. Tell him how to serve you so he can succeed.
- **Minimize criticism that belittles or degrades.** Nagging gets you nowhere in the long run. If your husband is not living strong, it's probably because he's insecure and unsure of what to do. Belittling and criticizing only digs the hole deeper.

Implement one of these ideas today and see how God uses it in your relationship.



You're right. Again, that's pretty much what the rest of the book is about, but here are a few ideas to help you provide intimacy to your wife.

- **Stay connected with her emotionally.** Your wife wants you to understand how she feels, and she wants to know what is going on in your heart and mind as well. Take a moment today and talk with her about one substantive thing going on in your life. God cares so much about this that He instructed the

newlywed husband to invest a year in nothing but the happiness of his wife—“he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married” (Deuteronomy 24:5).

- **Avoid criticism that threatens her sense of self.** Your wife faces a lot of pressure from our culture, her relationships, and her own self-image. She needs to know that you love her for who she is in spite of what she does or doesn't do. Tell her today that you love her no matter what.
- **Talk to her and pray with her.** Communication is a key to creating intimacy with your wife. Make time every day to have meaningful interaction. Ask questions about her day. Say The Marriage Prayer with her before you go to bed tonight. Look her in the eyes, ask how she's doing, and really listen to her answer.

A (Slightly Disguised) True Story about...

Security and Significance

Justin and Erin (continued)

Erin had spent years feeling unloved and unappreciated. She had the responsibility for the home and kids while Justin had the freedom to do whatever he wanted to do. But she never had the courage to really confront Justin.

Finally, Erin and Justin got involved in a small group with their church. After a few years of sitting in their leader's home and talking with their group, they came to realize that these people really cared about them. Due to some crises going on with other group members, they finally felt comfortable sharing their own story.

Over the next few months they grew in their understanding of God's love for them and their love for one another. Justin began to see how he should respect his wife and find his joy in their family. Erin finally felt secure enough to express her feelings to Justin without backing down and blaming herself.

← Security in the love of Christ and in their love for one another...

Now they spend more time together as a family and are integrally involved in the life of their church. Their experience with Christ has transformed their marriage.

But like all of us, they're still a work in progress, Guess what? This story isn't an episode from years past—it happened only a few months ago. The difference this time? The episode ended with them talking and laughing in the middle of the night. That's progress.



Another Really Big Idea: The Emotional Bank Account

Every human being has what we might call an emotional bank account. Every interaction with your spouse is either a deposit or a withdrawal.

If you ignore your spouse when they are talking to you and continue reading or watching TV, that's a withdrawal. If you bring breakfast in bed, that's a deposit.

One way to help your spouse have security in your relationship is to make more deposits than withdrawals.

Every human being banks somewhere. Each person has emotional needs, and they attempt to have them met. If you don't fill these needs for your spouse, chances are that somebody else will. So be sure to memorize your spouse's account number. (And if you've forgotten it, ask your spouse—they'll be more than happy to remind you. 😊)

A Solid Foundation

Finding and providing security in your marriage relationship becomes a solid foundation for everything God wants to do in and through you individually and as a couple. Praying The Marriage Prayer can help you remember that your spouse is a gift to be treasured from God. When we pray in faith, He will answer and give us hearts to love Him and our spouse. When we make our spouse our top priority after God, we ultimately find the joy our hearts desire as well.

CHAPTER REVIEW

Using what you learned in this chapter, choose the correct answers for the multiple choice questions below. Give yourself 50 points for each correct answer.

1. In terms of relationships, you are either a ...
 - a. Pisces or Leo
 - b. hair dryer or vacuum cleaner
 - c. lizard tail or monkey foot
2. One of a man's greatest needs is ...
 - a. a remote control
 - b. tickets to local revival of *Les Miserables*
 - c. significance
3. One of a woman's greatest needs is ...
 - a. a bathrobe made from Peruvian yak fur
 - b. intimacy
 - c. Chanel #5
4. A key to providing security is to remember that your spouse has ...
 - a. flat feet
 - b. a large handgun in the closet
 - c. an emotional bank account

You Haven't Finished This Chapter Until...



We've got big hopes and dreams for this book. We've been planning, working, and praying so that God could use it to help your marriage. But He can't help you if you aren't open to Him really working in your life.

So, don't go on to the next chapter until...

- ❑ You've done all the exercises, including the Please Do Try This at Home (p. 21), No-Brainer Action Step (p. 27), the Connection Point (p. 28) and the sections
- ❑ Ask Your Spouse (pp. 25 and 26).
- ❑ You've begun saying The Marriage Prayer every day so that it is becoming a habit.
- ❑ Together, you've talked through the reflection questions (see below) either alone or with your group.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

Use the questions to cement the ideas from this chapter into your marriage. Discuss them with your spouse and your small group of couples.

1. *Is security an issue that you really struggle with? Why or why not?*
2. *What parts of Justin and Erin's "A True Story" in this chapter could you relate to? What aspects seemed foreign to you? What lessons could you learn from it for your marriage?*
3. *Does the big idea from this chapter resonate with you? Would your spouse say that they are your top priority after God?*
4. *What is one practical take-away you garnered from this chapter that you will implement in the next week? How will you do it?*