

## BIBLE READING PLAN

# Real Marriage

 **Day 1: Genesis 2:4-25**

1. Do you think v. 18 is saying that the cure to loneliness is marriage? If this is so what does that mean for those who are single? What might verses 5, 15, and 1:28 suggest instead is the reason why it was not good for a man to be alone? That is, how will the women help Adam with his task to fill the earth with God's shalom?
2. How has society reversed the order of verse 24?
3. What do you think it means that the man and woman were naked and not ashamed?
4. Matthew Henry speculates on why the woman was made out of man's rib: "Not made out of his head to rule over him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and hear his heart to be loved." Why is this a helpful picture of the relationship between a husband and wife?

 **Day 2: Songs of Songs 4:1-15, 5:10-16**

1. What do the frank expressions of physical delight by the husband (ch. 4) and wife (ch. 5) teach us about the place of sexual attraction and love in marriage?
2. What is the significance of the private garden image?
3. What does this passage challenge both prudishness and promiscuity. Old Testament scholar Tremper Longman writes: 'The role of the woman throughout the Song [of Solomon] is truly astounding, especially in light of its ancient origins. It is the woman, not the man, who is the dominant voice throughout the poems that make up the Song. She is the one who seeks, pursues, initiates. [In Song 5:10–16] she boldly exclaims her physical attraction ["His abdomen is like a polished ivory tusk, decorated with sapphires . . ." (14)]. . . . Most English translations hesitate in this verse. The Hebrew is quite erotic, and most translators cannot bring themselves to bring out the obvious meaning. . . . This is a prelude to their lovemaking. There is no shy, shamed, mechanical movement under the sheets. Rather, the two stand before each other, aroused, feeling no shame, but only joy in each other's sexuality. . . .'

 **Day 3: 1 Corinthians 7:1-7**

1. Why would verse 3-4 have been revolutionary when it was first written in a culture which saw women as the legal possession of their husbands?
2. How does this passage give a realistic and positive view of sex and marriage?
3. Why is sex to be an expression of erotic generosity rather than erotic consumerism?

 **Day 4: Ephesians 5:15-33**

1. Which is the real and which is the shadow marriage being spoken of in this passage? Why is it important to know the difference?
2. What misunderstandings and objections to submission and headship are answered in here?
3. What is the significance of verse 18 for marriage? That is, why is the kind of marriage Paul talks about only possible with the Holy Spirit?

 **Day 5: Matthew 19:1-12**

1. What does Jesus teach about:
  - a. the nature of the marriage relationship?
  - b. who creates the marriage?
  - c. the reasons why it is lifelong?
2. "Divorce is never an option, but is sometimes a reality because of the hardness of people's hearts." Do you agree or disagree? What does Jesus say about why Moses gave the command about divorce, and on what basis he permits divorce?
3. Jesus is here flexing the muscle of conviction. How important is it to flex the muscle of compassion when flexing the muscle of conviction when speaking to people about divorce?