



For
Better
or for
Worse

Bayside
CHURCH

For *Better* or for *Worse*

“For better or for worse.” These are words repeated by nearly every bride and groom pledging their earthly lives solely to one another. Usually, couples see those two outcomes as unavoidable seasons of their marital experience. And in part, they are right. In the same way that every couple will have times of “sickness and health,” most will also experience some “better or worse.”

Yet few individuals realize how much influence they have over their relationship. While difficult times are guaranteed, the amount of struggle we have is often under our control. We influence the day-to-day experience of our marriages and relationships far more than we realize. Through **intentional effort, learned skills, and a willful desire to love one another well**, every couple can increase the amount of “better” they enjoy while decreasing the amount of “worse” they must endure.

This booklet is designed to assist you in this process. Over the next seven weeks, if you will do more than just listen to the sermon series but instead will **engage with active note-taking, reflection, reading, and response**, your relationships can get better. While we may not be able to control every outcome fully, intentional effort in your relationships will make them better, not worse.

In His Service,
Kevin Thompson

How to make the most of this series:

- 1 Read the scripture passages before the weekend.
- 2 Attend a weekend service.
- 3 Discuss the questions with at least one other person.



The Problem of Marriage

Why Women Get it Wrong, and Men Don't Get It

▶ Scripture: Ephesians 5:31–32, Genesis 1:28–2:18

Take some notes during the message or while you're reading:



RESOURCES

Tim Keller | *The Meaning of Marriage*
Sue Johnson | *Created for Connection*

Consider these questions:

1. What's the end goal or purpose of marriage according to God?
2. How is this purpose different from the one you set out with?
3. What does the creation account teach you about the benefits and difficulties of marriage?
4. What's something you want to see God do in your heart or in your relationship after hearing this message?

Relationship/Individual Vision Board Activity

1. What are the 3 things you think you were put on this earth to do?

2. What are 3 dreams you can visualize for your life?

3. Who are the people/couples that you want to be most like & why?

Fight Fair!

Conflict & Communication

► Scripture: Proverbs 18:21–22, James 4:1–3

Take some notes during the message or while you're reading:



Resources

Kerry Patterson, et al | *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High*
Kevin A. Thompson
Happily: 8 Commitments of Couples who Laugh, Love and Last

Consider these questions:

1. How would you describe your communication style?
2. What's a story that comes to mind that perfectly captures your conflict style?
3. How do relationships stretch you positively in the areas of conflict & communication?
4. What did God speak to you about communication and conflict through this message?

5 STEPS TO DATE NIGHT:

- 1** Pick a day & time
- 2** Make a plan for your kids
- 3** Choose something to eat
- 4** Choose something to do
- 5** Make room for conversation

Learning His/Her Language

Men & Women in Marriage

▶ Scripture: Genesis 1:26–27

Take some notes during the message or while you're reading:



Resources

Gary Chapman | *The Five Love Languages*

Henry Cloud and John Townsend
Boundaries in Marriage

Consider these questions:

1. What do you think is unique about how God created males? What about females?
2. Why do you think the differences between males and females tend to drive a wedge in our relationships?
3. What reason do you see to learn the language of a person of opposite sex?
4. What's one thing you learned today about the opposite gender?

TALKING POINTS FOR RELATIONSHIP CHECK-INS:

- 1 What's your favorite thing that we do together?
- 2 When do you feel the most known by me?
- 3 What do I do that makes your life easier?
- 4 What do I do that makes your life harder?
- 5 What can I do to make you feel more supported?

The Naked Truth

Let's Talk about Sex (Baby)

► Scripture: Song of Solomon

Take some notes during the message or while you're reading:



Resources

Shelia Gregoire | *The Great Sex Rescue*

Barbara Wilson | *Kiss Me Again*

Nancy Percy | *Love Thy Body*

Consider these questions:

1. What's the first emotion that comes to your mind when you think of a sermon on sex?
2. Besides procreation, why did God create sex?
3. How does the Book of Song of Solomon frame the concept of sex? Does this make you think differently about it?
4. What's one practical takeaway from this message that you'd like to try?

TALKING POINTS TO INITIATE INTIMACY (FOR MARRIEDS)

- 1 One thing you do that turns me on is _____
_____ .
- 2 When you're gone, all I can think about is _____
_____ .
- 3 My favorite part of your body is _____ .
- 4 Remember that one time when we _____
_____ .
- 5 Do you feel wanted by me?

It's More than Swiping Right

Dating & Singleness

▶ Scripture: Ruth 2:11–12, 2 Peter 1:3–9, Philippians 4:11

Take some notes during the message or while you're reading:



Resources

John Mark Comer | *Singleness + Dating: Loveology*

Rich Wilkinson | *Single and Secure*

Dan Houk | *Intentional Relationships*

Consider these questions:

1. Whether you're single or married, how do you think God feels about a single person's life?
2. What's an example of a dating life that reflects the glory of God?
3. Do you struggle with contentment surrounding singleness? If so, do you know why?
4. What are the benefits of being single?

TALKING POINTS FOR GETTING TO KNOW HIM/HER:

- 1 What do you think about _____
_____?
- 2 How do you feel about _____
_____?
- 3 What's something you want to make more time for
_____?
- 4 What's coming up that you're excited for _____
_____?
- 5 When do you feel the most relaxed _____
_____?

Raising G-Rated Kids in an R-Rated World

Parenting

► Scripture: Proverbs 24:3–4, Deuteronomy 6:1–12

Take some notes during the message or while you're reading:

Resources

Paul Tripp | *Parenting*

Phil and Diane Comer
Raising Passionate Jesus Followers

Kevin A. Thompson | *Fearless Families*



Consider these questions:

1. What's been the greatest joy and greatest struggle of parenting over the last year?
2. What fears are you currently battling surrounding raising children?
3. How do you deal with failures in your parenting journey?
4. What's one practical thing you will take from this message to invest in your family?

GUIDE TO A "YES DAY" WITH YOUR KIDDOS

- 1 Talk to your kids about a yes day– whatever they want to do, we do. (Within reason 😊)
- 2 Ask them for choices every step of the way.
- 3 Say yes, roll with it & have fun!
- 4 Repeat this once a quarter!

For Better or For Worse

3 Ways to Thrive Not Just Survive in Marriage

▶ Scripture: Genesis 1:28–2:18

Take some notes during the message or while you're reading:



Resources

- Ron Deal | *The Smart Stepfamily*
- Kevin A. Thompson | *Friends, Partners & Lovers*

Consider these questions:

1. How does the idea of “For Better or For Worse” encourage you and challenge you?
2. Is there a marriage in your life that you look up to? What about it makes you love it?
3. What are the number one reasons you think people are stuck in survivor mode in marriage?
4. What’s one thing you’re excited about for your relationship, future relationship, or future self?

How to Know If You Need Marriage Counseling

by Kevin Thompson

As a pastor, I see myself as a triage nurse for marriages. My office is often the Emergency Room for couples who worry they might have a relationship-threatening condition. I am not a counselor. I do not do marriage counseling. I can evaluate the situation and recommend the proper course of action.

Some people worry they are seriously ill, but I have the ability to reassure them they are on the right track. Problems which seem unique to one person can actually be universal to every couple. I can assess and send them home with no treatment.

Other people worry they are seriously ill, and they are. The affair is revealed; the addiction surfaces; years of ignoring the relationship becomes evident. I assess and refer to a professional.

13 Questions to Gauge if you need marriage counseling:

Here are 13 questions I use to determine if someone needs marriage counseling. The list is not exhaustive, but is a beginning tool to consider if someone can benefit from working with a professional.

Any of the issues listed can be resolved if a couple wisely recognizes the danger and willfully does what is necessary to heal.

1. Do you worry your marriage is headed in the wrong direction?
2. Is there a significant secret which you have not told your spouse?
3. Do you feel disrespected by your spouse?
4. Are you unable to discuss your concerns or feelings?
5. Is there a destructive behavior by you or your spouse which could destroy your relationship?
6. Do you feel there is an aspect of you or your spouse's life which you do not share?
7. Is there an unusual new stressor in your marriage (i.e. grief, child with special needs, sickness, etc)?
8. Is there a significant issue to which you cannot find a workable solution?
9. Do you sense you and your spouse are growing apart or living parallel lives?
10. Does either partner ever get emotionally or physically out of control?
11. Do you find yourself thinking regularly about someone else?

12. Do you experience the same conflict over and over without resolution?
13. Do you think with some effort your marriage could be better?

If you answer “yes” to any of the thirteen questions, I would highly recommend consulting a marriage counselor.

*Scan the QR code to connect with
a Bayside Care counselor*



What is hard now becomes easy. What is easy now becomes hard.

When I think about marriage counseling, there is one Biblical passage which comes to mind: Matthew 7.13–14:

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

Whenever we face problems in marriage, the easy and popular thing to do is to do nothing; that is the wide gate. However, ignoring something easy now will be more difficult later. Humbling ourselves, seeking help, exploring the fault lines in our relationships is a difficult process that few choose.

