

I CAN RELATE

PHILIPPIANS 2:5 NIV
*'IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS
WITH ONE ANOTHER, HAVE
THE SAME MINDSET AS
CHRIST JESUS'*

A Devotional Discussion Collective

Biblical wisdom for real connections into Christlike relationships

What Is This Series About?

At the heart of the I Can Relate series is a call to approach every relationship in our lives; friendships, marriages, families, and parenting, with the mindset of Christ. **God IS community.**

As **Philippians 2:5** (NIV) encourages us, *“In your relationships, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.”*

His mindset, marked by humility, love, sacrifice, truth, and grace is the lens through which we’ll explore God’s design for healthy, gospel-shaped relationships. Relationships can be deeply personal and incredibly complex. Our church family includes people in every season: single, married, widowed, divorced, those longing for children, estranged from family, or thriving in community.

That’s why this series isn’t about offering one-size-fits-all advice. It’s about anchoring our relationships in the truth of Scripture, which speaks to everyone. Through biblical teaching, personal stories, and honest conversation, we’ll confront the brokenness that often surrounds relationships, while holding fast to the hope of Jesus our Great Reconciler.

Whether you feel full or empty in this area, our prayer is that through the Word and the Spirit, you’ll find both comfort and clarity, and come away equipped to relate to others the way Jesus does: with wisdom, compassion, and purpose.

Collective **THREE** / Marriage God's Design

INTRODUCTION

Here, we explore God's original and ongoing design for marriage, a sacred covenant rooted in love, sacrifice, and mutual submission. Marriage isn't just a social contract or romantic pairing; it's a spiritual picture of Christ and His Church. Through Scripture, we see that God honours marriage, calls husbands and wives to reflect His character, and uses this relationship to reveal His heart to the world.

Whether you're married, preparing for marriage, or simply wanting to understand God's vision for it, this study offers a biblical foundation that speaks to every season. Together we'll unpack the meaning of covenant, the posture of Christlike love, and the purpose of marriage in the Kingdom of God.

CONNECT GROUP STUDY

KEY SCRIPTURES

- **Ephesians 5:21–33** (NIV) – “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ... Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church... the two will become one flesh.”
- **Genesis 2:24** (NIV) – “That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”
- **Hebrews 13:4** (NIV) – “Marriage should be honoured by all, and the marriage bed kept pure...”
- **Colossians 3:18–19** (NIV) – “Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands... Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.”
- **1 Corinthians 11:11–12** (NIV) – “...woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. But everything comes from God.”

DISCOVERY

Marriage in Scripture is presented not as a casual agreement, but as a covenant; a divinely blessed union that reflects God’s character and mission. The Hebrew word *berith* (covenant) describes a solemn, binding commitment, often marked by sacrifice and sealed with God’s blessing. This isn’t a contract based on convenience, but a promise rooted in faithfulness, endurance, and love.

Ephesians 5 paints a powerful picture of this: Christ’s love for the Church is the model for how a husband should love his wife; and the Church’s response to Christ models the respect and trust of a godly wife. Genesis reminds us that this union is designed by God, for intimacy, companionship, and purpose.

Marriage is a refining space; not always easy, but always holy when centred on Christ. It’s a place where selfishness is challenged, love is tested, and transformation is possible through the work of the Holy Spirit.

DISCUSSION

Starting Questions:

- When you think of marriage, what words or images come to mind?
- What do you think makes a marriage “God-honouring”?

😊 “Marriage: where two become one... and then spend the rest of their lives figuring out which one.” (Inspired by Genesis 2:24 - with a little side of sanctification.)

Exploring Questions:

- According to Ephesians 5, how are husbands and wives called to reflect Christ in their roles?
- How does understanding marriage as a covenant (not a contract) change the way we approach it?
- In Genesis 2:18–25, what can we learn about God’s intention for intimacy and partnership?
- In what ways have culture’s ideas of marriage clashed with Scripture’s?
- How do forgiveness, grace, and mutual submission play out practically in marriage?

😊 “Love is patient, love is kind... until someone loads the dishwasher wrong.” (1 Corinthians 13: the marriage remix.)

Action Questions:

- If you are married: What is one way you can love your spouse more like Christ this week?
- If you are not married: What have you learned about God’s design for marriage that speaks to your season right now?
- What’s one thing you can pray or act on this week that supports a healthier view of marriage in your life or community?

😊 “God said, ‘It’s not good for man to be alone’ - and married people everywhere said, ‘So... what’s your return policy?’” (Genesis 2:18, but make it married-life real.)

DEVOTION

Take time to reflect silently or journal:

- What area of your life has been shaped by the marriages around you - for better or for worse?
- Is God revealing a mindset shift He wants to bring about in you around relationships or marriage?

Let's Pray Together:

"Lord, thank You for the gift and mystery of marriage. Help us honor it the way You designed it - with love, faithfulness, and selflessness. Where our views have been shaped by pain, disappointment, or culture, renew our minds through Your Word. Heal what's been broken, restore what's been lost, and equip us - whether married, single, divorced, or widowed - to see marriage the way You do. Amen."

PERSONAL REFLECTION GUIDE

What is God saying to you?

Marriage is not just a partnership, it’s a covenant and a calling to reflect God’s love.

1. Take Time

Slow down together. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart and unite you in purpose and peace.

2. Focus on God’s Word

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” - Ephesians 5:21 (NIV)

3. Reflect

Marriage is God’s idea, a relationship designed to reflect Christ’s love, sacrifice, and unity. Whether you're thriving or in a tough season, God is present in your marriage. He desires wholeness, mutual honour, and joy between you. His Word provides wisdom, and His Spirit offers help to love patiently, communicate kindly, and dream together.

How is God encouraging you in your marriage right now?

Is there something you feel led to strengthen, heal, or celebrate in your relationship?

What might a small step look like this week, a prayer together, a conversation, or a moment of fun?

FAMILY CONVERSATION STARTERS / TOP TEN TIPS FOR KEEPING THE LOVE ALIVE

Marriage is holy, hilarious, hard work and worth it.

"A strong marriage requires two people who choose to love each other even on the days they struggle to like each other." - Anonymous

1. Talk with each other, not just at each other.

- ✓ Yes, about your day.
 - ✓ Yes, about your feelings.
 - ✓ But also... talk about dreams, silly things, faith questions, what you're grateful for, and what's for dinner.
- #putyourphonedown

2. Keep learning from each other. People grow. Change. Evolve. Ask new questions.

- ✓ Try: "What's something that's bringing you joy right now?"
- ✓ Or: "What do you need more of from me this week?"

"Love is not just a feeling, it's a commitment to curiosity."

3. Make date night a non-negotiable. Don't overthink it. It's not about being fancy, it's about being intentional. Even if it's couch time with tea and no phones.

- ✓ Weekly or bi-weekly - book it in like you would a meeting.
- ✓ And yes, swap tracksuit pants for something snazzy every now and then.

4. Laugh together. Often. In-jokes. TikToks. Memes. Bad dance moves in the kitchen.

- ✓ Marriage isn't meant to be serious all the time.
- ✓ When tension is high, sometimes a silly face can lower the temperature.

"Couples who laugh together, last together."

5. Handle conflict with grace. You won't always agree. That's okay. But learn to disagree well.

- ✓ Fight fair (no low blows or historic throwbacks).
- ✓ Apologise quickly, forgive freely.

"In marriage, being right is less important than being kind."

6. Invite God in, daily. Pray together. For each other. Over meals, kids, work, and your future.

- ✓ It doesn't have to be long, just heartfelt.
- ✓ Let your spouse hear you bless them out loud.

"A cord of three strands is not quickly broken." - Ecclesiastes 4:12

7. Build a home culture you love. Your home is your safe place. Shape the atmosphere with intention.

- ✓ Decide what you want your home to feel like peaceful, playful, prayerful?
- ✓ Establish rhythms: Sunday slow dinners, family devotions, dance parties?

"What happens in your home is more powerful than what happens on your Instagram."

8. Find a shared mission. You're not just lovers, you're a team. A kingdom team.

- ✓ Serve together. Dream together. Raise kids together.
- ✓ What has God called your marriage to build?

"Marriage isn't just about each other it's about what God wants to do through you together."

9. Be generous with compliments and touches. Say nice things. Hold hands. Give long hugs.

✓ Text them something sweet just because.

✓ Praise publicly. Correct privately.

"A well-timed 'You look amazing today' can change the tone of the whole day."

10. Celebrate! Everything! Anniversaries, tiny wins, surviving toddler tantrums, making it to Friday.

✓ Create your own weird traditions.

✓ Pause, party together, even if it's just with pizza and gratitude.

"A marriage built on fun, faith, and forgiveness is a marriage built to last." - Someone wise (maybe you!)

A Closing Benediction

May the God who is the source of all relationship;

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - fill your heart with wisdom, your words with grace, and your life with love.

May He bless your conversations, and continue the work He's begun in quiet moments of reflection.

May the truths you've explored take root, and bear fruit in your friendships, your family, and your faith.

As you go, may you walk humbly, love deeply, forgive freely, and honour boldly.

May you build homes that reflect heaven, and live lives that draw others to Christ.

And may you always know: You are loved, you are called, and you are never alone.

Amen.