

The Power of Promise

Part 2


The Promise of Pursuit

2021.4.18



TALKING POINTS WALKING POINTS

Leaders' Guide

A publication of , the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

Triangle Community Church aims to be a "transforming church". We exist to be used by God as He transforms ordinary people into extraordinary followers of Jesus Christ. TCC believes not only that life-change is possible—but that it is to be expected. Growth is God's will for his people. But transformation does not happen by accident. It requires intentional, intelligent, action. 1 Timothy 4:7 instructs us to "discipline ourselves for the purpose of godliness." "Talking Points, Walking Points" is useful both for individual reflection and for group discussion. The section entitled "Digging Deeper in your Daily Quiet Time" helps us continue to grow and change throughout the week, and prepares us to gather again as a family on Sunday.

Questions for Community Group Discussion

- 1 Tell us about an area (such as tennis, software engineering, home decor—anything) in which you've pursued and achieved a degree of expertise. What did that teach you about "the promise of pursuit"?
- 2 What **most** attracted you to your spouse? How do you respond to that trait **now**?
- 3 When you were dating, you probably poured lots of energy into "the pursuit". **Why**?
- 4 Since you've been married, has the amount of energy you pour into the pursuit increased, decreased, or stayed the same? **Why** do you think that is?
- 5 The first promise we are to make is to make our spouses our top priority, after God. What would an objective outside observer conclude about you and the Promise of Pursuit? What evidence could they appeal to?

- 6 A dynamic, fulfilling, God-honoring marriage needs three things:



Which of these do you think **your spouse** would say is the **strongest** in your marriage? the **shakiest**?

- 7 **Application-Challenge** Which one would **you** say is the **strongest**? the **shakiest**?

- On a date this week, ask your spouse: "Of the ways Doug said we can pursue each other, which one would be most meaningful or helpful to you?"
- Ladies—pursue your husband with admiration, reassurance, help and passion.
- Men—pursue your wife with conversation, thoughtfulness, affection and protection.

- 1 This is a “soft-ball” question, so it’s good to start with, but try to milk the question, “What did that teach you about ‘the promise of pursuit?’” for insights that can be used in the later questions about marriage.
- 2 This question will probably draw some laughs, but pay attention—this uncovers an important principle: things which used to endear him/her to you, often now annoy you. Why is that? This is an important issue for couples to come to grips with. This may, or may not, be brought into the discussion at this point, but it’s something we each need to own up to (and, likely, to repent of).
- 3 The short (ugly!) answer to this question is, “Because I had to, in order to win him/her.” (But now I don’t—because I’ve already got him/her. See what I mean? It’s an ugly truth.) Often we appear very “others’ centered” when wooing our future mate—but was it **really selfless**? Compare this to how an angler relates to a fish—before versus after it’s caught! Maybe our motives were just as selfish while dating—we just used the strategy necessary “to land ‘em”. Just sayin’...
- 4 Use insights gained from 3 to help folks grapple with the ugly truth which may be uncovered here. The point of the “promise of pursuit” is to learn to pursue our spouse out of love **for them**, rather than (as too often was the case) out of love **for ourselves** disguised as love for them. (I’m **not** saying that while dating we consciously, deceptively acted polite to win our spouse, but rather that, in reality, selfish motives were mixed in. Too often we love how someone makes us feel, rather than loving them—evidenced by the fact that when they cease making us feel good, we cease serving them.
- 5 The promise of pursuit (this week’s topic) flows naturally from last week’s topic, the promise of priority. Regardless of what we say, we pursue whatever truly is our priority. So, this question is asking for actual evidence that we’re pursuing our spouse (which is evidence that they are our top priority).
- 6 Read this statement (and, if necessary, review the Sermon Summary). Discuss the diagram, and then ask group members to respond to these questions:
Which of these do you think **your spouse** would say is the **strongest** in your marriage? the **shakiest**?
Which one would **you** say is the **strongest**? the **shakiest**?



- 7 Urge group members to commit to doing these steps of Application-Challenge. Remember: life-change **only** occurs as a result of disciplined application (1 Timothy 4:7-10).

The offer of a free “marriage tune-up” (see “Digging Deeper” section) always stands.

Sermon Summary

In Genesis 2:24-25 we learn of our second promise, the Promise of Pursuit. Here, God is saying that husbands are not only to make their wives their top priority, but they are to consciously pursue them. In fact, both husbands and wives are to do all that they can do to maintain a close, intimate, one-flesh relationship with one another. Every strong marriage has three components: commitment, friendship, and romance. It is a covenant commitment that provides security, as well as the motivation to work things out. But strong marriages tend to have two other relational dimensions: friendship and romance. Almost every marriage begins with these components, but if they're not constantly cultivated, they can begin to wither and die. What does it look like to pursue one's wife or husband?

Husbands: 1. Pursue your wife with your conversation. One of the most important ways your wife feels connected with you on a daily basis is through conversation. If you don't pursue conversation with one another, you will become strangers. And that is not God's plan for marriage. 2. Pursue your wife with your thoughtfulness. For example: Take care of the kids in the evenings. It will give her a needed break, and will help you connect with your children. Do a household chore that she would typically do. 3. Pursue your wife with your affection. Tell her you love her often. Hold her hand in public. Be gentle and tender with her. 4. Pursue your wife with your protection. Defend her before others. Demand that your children honor and obey her.

Wives: 1. Pursue your husband with your admiration. There is something about the male ego, the way that men are wired, that makes them long to be respected and admired—especially by their wives. When you convey to your husband that you don't respect him, he dies inside. 2. Pursue your husband with your reassurance. The truth is your husband is not always as confident on the inside as he might convey on the outside. He needs you to believe in him. God has designed women to help their husbands become all that they can be. It is amazing what a man can accomplish with the reassurance and help of a supportive wife. 3. Pursue your husband with your help. In fact, this is one of your most important roles as a wife. In Genesis 2:18 God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." So ladies, as a wife, you are to come alongside your husband to help him in whatever way you can. It is your most important role as a married woman. It is more important than what you do in the community. It is more important than what you do at church. 4. Pursue your husband with your passion. This is a powerful and important area of our lives. Marriage is the one legitimate place where our God-given sexual needs can be met. And when we withhold this area from our spouses, we are inviting trouble into our marriage.

First of all, rejection by our mate in this area strikes at the very core of our being. It is devastating. Second, when our physical needs aren't met in our marriages, we become much more vulnerable to the temptation of having an affair. This doesn't in any way justify having an affair—but it does make it more likely. We become more tempt-able (see 1 Corinthians 7:4-5). The truth is, when you get married, you assume some God-given responsibilities and obligations to one another. You no longer have sole authority over your body. That is what the Bible teaches, and it reflects great wisdom.

Having a great marriage is really not all that complicated. Determine to follow God's blueprint for marriage. Affirm and live out the promises we talk about in this series. Even if your spouse won't, you can determine to be obedient to what God calls you to do. That may just be the leverage God uses to change your spouse's heart.

Won't you determine to live out the Promise of Pursuit this week?

Talking To God About This Week's Message

"Heavenly Father, today I want to be a 'doer' of the Word, and not just a 'hearer'. Amen."

Proverbs 21:21 promises that “He who pursues righteousness and loyalty finds life, righteousness and honor.” Who doesn’t want “life, righteousness and honor”? So let’s explore how to pursue righteousness and loyalty!

Monday—Read Romans 12:9

- Write out the text of this verse on a 3x5 card.
- According to the first sentence, “Love is to be _____.” Look up that word at **dictionary.com**. What do you find?
- The Greek word found there is “*anupokritos*” (the prefix “a-” [which negates what follows] attached to the word “hypocritical”). Look up “hypocrite” at **dictionary.com**. What insights does this add to your understanding?
- Describe love which *is* hypocritical. When are you most inclined to “give a false show of love”?
- 1 Peter 1:22 uses the same Greek word. According to the first part of that verse, what makes that kind of love **possible**?
- Although believers are **capable** of sincere love, why is it then **commanded** in the latter half of that verse? What does that tell you?
- What response does Romans 12:9 command us to have toward evil? Do you have that response? How do you know?
- What response does Romans 12:9 command us to have toward good? Do you have that response? How do you know?
- How are these two responses related to “sincere” (non-hypocritical) love?
- Throughout the day today, slowly and prayerfully review Romans 12:9 twenty times (marking your progress with “hash marks” (### ##)).

Tuesday—Read Romans 12:10-13

- What is commanded in v. 10a? Look up “devoted” at **dictionary.com**. What do you learn?
- Notice that our devotion is **to the person**, and we do it **in love**. How can you be devoted to your spouse today in love?
- What is commanded in v. 10b? How did Christ do this for others when he walked the earth? How can you do that today?
- What two things are contrasted in v. 11? How does this relate to “serving the Lord”? How can that help you love your spouse?
- Three things are commanded in v. 12. What are they? What descriptors are attached to each?
- Which of those do you find easiest? Hardest? How do they relate to unhypocritical love?
- Verse 13 (as with all of these verses) tells us how to relate to all believers, but what might be a specific application toward your spouse? What does your spouse need? How can you show hospitality to him/her?

Wednesday—Read Romans 12:14-18

- To “persecute” (v. 14) is “to pursue with harassing or oppressive treatment, to annoy or trouble persistently” (dictionary.com). Does your spouse ever persecute you? If so, how? How do you typically respond?
- To “bless” is “to bestow good of any kind upon”. Do you bless when he/she harasses/annoys you? Give examples.
- To “curse” (v. 14) is “to utter a wish of evil (or, actively to **do** evil) against someone”. Honestly, when your spouse attacks you, do you **more often** “bless” or “curse”? **How often** are you to bless? to curse?
- According to v. 17a, **how often** are we allowed to retaliate (“repay evil for evil”)?
- It’s really hard to “respect/do what is right” in the eyes of one’s own persecutor, isn’t it? But “put the shoe on the other foot”—when you’ve been obnoxious, does it help for the other person to be obnoxious back to you? Is it helpful when your kids are rude to each other (“She started it!”)? Have you ever said to them, “Two wrongs don’t make a right” or “Just ignore her”? How can you obey your own advice?

Thursday—Read Romans 12:14-18 (again).

- What is commanded in v. 15a? What does your spouse typically get happy about? Do you enter his/her joy?
- What is commanded in v. 15b? What typically upsets your spouse? Do you enter his/her pain?
- What is commanded (positively and negatively) in v. 16?
- What do you typically belittle or disdain in your spouse?
- Do you typically like your ideas better than your spouse’s? Look up “conceit” at **dictionary.com**. Are you “wise in your own eyes”?
- “Peace” is “a state of mutual harmony between people” (dictionary.com). **At this moment**, are you “at peace” with your spouse? If not, what more is possible **for you** to do (v. 18a)?
- Since you’re to be at peace “so far as it depends upon you”, are you allowed to wait for your spouse to “make the first move”?

Friday—Read Romans 12:19-21

- **How often** are we permitted to take revenge? How would your marriage be if you and your spouse adopted this policy? How would your marriage be if you unilaterally adopted this policy (ie, even if your spouse would not)?
- Who **will** take revenge (v. 19b)? How righteously and completely will he do it?
- What are we supposed to do instead (v. 20)?
- According to v. 21a, if we **do** take revenge, we are being “overcome by evil”. If we do what v. 20 says, we will “overcome evil”. Explain that.
- How will you “overcome evil” with your spouse today?

Saturday—Read Romans 12:9-21

- Make a list of the most important things you can **do** in pursuing your spouse.

- Make a list of the most important things you must **stop doing** as you pursue your spouse.

