

# VIBRANT UNION LESSON 1

## Breaking the Survival Cycle *From Surviving to Thriving*

### ICE BREAKER (5 minutes)

**Instructions:** Have couples sit facing each other. Give them 2 minutes each to answer this question:

**"If your marriage was a TV show, what genre would it be right now, and what would you want it to be?"**

Options: Comedy, Drama, Reality Show, Documentary, Action/Adventure, Romance, Mystery, News Program, Game Show, Cooking Show, etc.

*Allow a few couples to share their answers with the group for laughs and connection.*

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### PRIMARY SCRIPTURE: Genesis 2:18-25

*"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.'... That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame."*

### QUOTE OF THE WEEK:

*"A good marriage is the union of two good forgivers." - Ruth Bell Graham*

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### OPENING COMMENTS (3-5 minutes)

Hey everybody! First off, can I just say how pumped I am that you're here tonight? Seriously, look around this room—you're surrounded by couples who said "YES!" to something amazing. You didn't choose Netflix and chill tonight. You didn't scroll social media until your eyes bled. You showed up because you believe your marriage can be EPIC, and honestly? That gets me fired up!

Over the next six weeks, we're going on an adventure together that's going to completely flip the script on what you thought marriage could be. We're not here to simply fix what's broken—we're here to build something extraordinary. We're not here to survive—we're here to absolutely THRIVE.

Now, I've got to be real with you about something. I've been doing this marriage thing for a while now, both personally and professionally, and I've noticed that most couples today are

living in what I call "survival mode." And friends, survival mode is the silent dream-killer of modern marriage.

Picture this: You wake up, coffee, kids, work, errands, dinner, homework help, Netflix, bed, repeat. Sound familiar? You're busy, you're productive, you're checking boxes—but somewhere along the way, you stopped building something beautiful together and started just... managing life side by side.

But here's what I want you to know: That is NOT what God had in mind when He invented this crazy, wonderful thing called marriage. He didn't design you to be roommates with matching last names. He created marriage to be an adventure, a partnership, a force for good that changes everything it touches.

So, here's the question that's going to guide everything we do together: **Is your marriage a source of energy that fuels the rest of your life, or is it just another thing on your to-do list?** Because by the time we're done here, you're going to know exactly how to make it the kind of relationship that makes other people go, "Okay, what's their secret?"

Ready to get started? Because what happens next is going to be absolutely game-changing!

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## **THE STRUGGLE (12-15 minutes)**

Okay, let me tell you a story that's probably going to hit way too close to home. It's Monday morning at 6:30 AM, and your phone alarm is going off with that annoying sound you've been meaning to change for six months. But there's no time to think about ringtones because your brain just switched into full-on chaos mode.

Kids need breakfast. Someone forgot their science project. The coffee maker is making that weird noise again. You're mentally calculating if you have time to shower OR pack lunches, but definitely not both. Your spouse passes you in the hallway like ships in the night, and you manage a quick "Can you grab milk on the way home?" before diving back into the beautiful disaster that is your morning routine.

Fast forward through eight hours of work stress, traffic that makes you question all your life choices, grocery store lines that move slower than continental drift, homework battles that require a PhD in patience, and a dinner that's technically edible but nobody's winning any culinary awards. By 9 PM, you're both collapsed on the couch, scrolling your phones in comfortable silence because talking requires energy you just don't have.

Sound familiar? If you're nodding right now, welcome to what I call "Survival Mode"—the place where good marriages go to become... well, just okay marriages.

## **Here's what Survival Mode looks like in real life:**

### **Your conversations become purely transactional.**

You know everything about each other's schedules but nothing about each other's dreams. Your deep conversations consist of "Who's picking up Emma?" and "Did you pay the electric bill?" When's the last time you talked about something that actually mattered to your heart?

### **Intimacy becomes a scheduling challenge.**

Physical affection gets reduced to that quick peck goodbye, and emotional intimacy? Forget about it. You're too tired to share your feelings, and honestly, you're not even sure what your feelings ARE anymore because you've been in functional mode for so long.

### **Conflict becomes either explosive or extinct.**

Either you're snapping at each other over stupid stuff like who left the dishes in the sink (again!), or you're avoiding any real issues because who has time for that drama? Neither option is working, by the way.

### **Your dreams go into hibernation.**

Remember when you used to talk about traveling to Italy? Or starting that business? Or just... doing something fun together? Yeah, those conversations died somewhere between soccer practice and PTA meetings.

### **You stop growing as individuals.**

Personal development? That's cute. You're just trying to keep everyone fed and the house from falling down. Self-improvement feels like a luxury you can't afford.

And here's the kicker—our culture has convinced us this is NORMAL! People actually say things like, "Welcome to married life!" or "Just wait until you have kids!" as if becoming boring roommates is some kind of inevitable rite of passage.

But can I tell you something? That's complete nonsense, and I'm not buying it for a second. Survival mode isn't happening TO you—it's happening BECAUSE of choices you're making (or not making). It's not about your circumstances; it's about your mindset. Somewhere along the way, you started prioritizing getting stuff done over actually connecting with the person you promised to do life with.

The good news? You can change this story starting tonight. But first, you've got to admit that "fine" isn't actually fine, and "busy" isn't the same thing as "fulfilled."

Your marriage wasn't designed to be a business partnership with shared expenses and coordinated calendars. It was designed to be an epic adventure with your favorite person on the planet. So the question is: Are you ready to get that adventure back?

## **THE REMEDY (15-18 minutes)**

Alright, let's flip this script! Time to go back to the original blueprint and see what God actually had in mind when He invented this whole marriage thing.

Picture this: God's looking at Adam in the Garden of Eden, and everything is absolutely perfect. I mean, EVERYTHING. Beautiful creation, perfect weather, no weeds, no mosquitoes, probably no traffic either. But then God says something that stops you in your tracks: ***"It is not good for man to be alone."***

Wait, what? This is literally the first time in all of creation that God says something isn't good. And what's the problem? Loneliness. Not productivity issues, not efficiency problems—LONELINESS.

So God creates Eve, and Adam's reaction is basically the first recorded "YESSSS!" moment in human history. The Hebrew literally suggests he was shouting with joy: "FINALLY! This is what I've been waiting for!" This wasn't about getting a personal assistant or a really good roommate. This was about finding his perfect teammate, his adventure partner, his person.

Then comes one of my favorite phrases in all of Scripture: "they shall become one flesh." This isn't just sharing a Netflix password, people. This is two completely different individuals becoming something brand new together—something better than either could be alone.

And here's the kicker: "they were both naked and were not ashamed." We're not just talking about physical nakedness here (though that's included!). This is about complete transparency, zero pretense, absolute safety in being totally, authentically yourself. No filters, no performance, no hiding. Just pure, unguarded connection.

THIS is what God designed marriage to be—not survival, but THRIVING!

## **Five Game-Changing Steps to Break Free from Survival Mode:**

### **Step 1: Stop Giving Your Marriage the Leftovers**

Here's some tough love: you cannot build an amazing marriage on whatever time and energy you have left after everything else. That's like trying to run a marathon on the fumes in your gas tank. Not happening!

Starting this week, you're going to protect time for your relationship like it's a VIP appointment that cannot be moved. Block it out on your calendar. Guard it with your life. Because here's the truth—everything else will try to crowd it out, but nothing else matters more.

### **Step 2: Bring Back the Connection (Both Emotional AND Physical)**

We're starting simple but powerful: fifteen minutes a day of actual conversation. Not "How was your day?" "Fine." I'm talking about real sharing. What made you laugh today? What's got you stressed? What are you excited about? What's been on your mind?

And physical touch? Game-changer. Twenty-second hugs when you reunite (yes, count to twenty—it matters). Hold hands during your evening show. Sit next to each other instead of on opposite ends of the couch. Touch creates connection in ways that words can't.

### **Step 3: Turn Conflict into Your Secret Weapon**

Plot twist: conflict isn't the enemy of good marriage—avoiding conflict is. When you learn to fight well, you actually build trust and intimacy. You prove to each other that your relationship is strong enough to handle differences and still come out stronger.

We're going to teach you how to turn arguments into breakthroughs, but here's the preview: focus on solving the problem together instead of proving who's right.

### **Step 4: Start Dreaming in Color Again**

When's the last time you talked about something you're excited to do together? Not next week's grocery list, but actual dreams. Where do you want to travel? What do you want to accomplish as a team? What kind of legacy do you want to build?

Your brain needs something to look forward to, and your marriage needs shared vision to pull you both in the same direction. Time to dust off those dreams and start planning some epic adventures!

### **Step 5: Invite God Back to the Center (This Is Where the Magic Happens)**

Listen, marriage is hard enough WITH supernatural help. Without it? You're basically trying to build IKEA furniture without the instructions while blindfolded. Good luck with that!

When God is at the center of your marriage, you get access to wisdom that's way beyond your pay grade, strength that doesn't run out when you're exhausted, and grace that covers all the ways you're going to mess this up. Plus, you get a purpose bigger than just making each other happy—you get to be a living example of God's love to everyone around you.

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## **CONCLUSION (3-5 minutes)**

Okay, real talk time. The choice between survival mode and thriving isn't a one-and-done decision. You're going to have to choose it again tomorrow, and next week, and probably next month when life gets crazy again. There will be seasons when everything feels overwhelming and you'll be tempted to go back to just managing life instead of actually living it.

But here's what I want you to remember: every small step counts. Every real conversation matters. Every conflict you handle with grace makes you stronger. Every dream you share together creates momentum toward something amazing.

You absolutely have what it takes to create the marriage you've always wanted. It's not going to happen overnight (sorry, no magic wands here), and it's definitely going to require some effort. But I've seen it happen over and over again—couples who were just going through

the motions suddenly come alive again and build something that makes everyone else go, "Okay, I want what they have."

Your marriage doesn't have to be another victim of busy schedules and endless demands. It can be the energy source that helps you handle everything else life throws at you. It can be your safe place, your adventure headquarters, your favorite place to be.

Here's the bottom line: transformation is absolutely possible. The only question is whether you're ready to do what it takes to make it happen.

So what do you say? Are you ready to stop surviving and start thriving? Because if you are, the next five weeks are going to be absolutely incredible!

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## **COUPLE'S COMMITMENT (5 minutes)**

**Instructions:** Have couples stand and face each other, holding hands. Read this commitment aloud, having them repeat after you phrase by phrase:

### **Weekly Commitment Declaration:**

**"[Spouse's name], this week I commit to you:**

**I choose to move from survival to thriving with you.**

**I will be intentional about our connection every single day.**

**I will prioritize our relationship, not just our responsibilities.**

**I will speak words that build you up, not just manage our logistics.**

**I will pursue your heart, not just function alongside you.**

**Together, with God's help, we will create something beautiful.**

**I love you, and I'm excited about what we're building together."**

*Have couples seal their commitment with a hug and brief prayer together.*

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## **TAKE-HOME TOOLS:**

1. **Daily Connection Ritual:** 10 minutes each morning for appreciation and planning
2. **Weekly Marriage Meeting:** 15 minutes every Sunday for appreciations, issues, and fun planning
3. **Quote Cards:** Draw one daily for discussion
4. **Survival-to-Thriving Action Plan:** Identify three specific changes to implement this week