

ONENESS

Small Group Bible Study Guide



Rekindle Your Marriage
by God's Design

Eric & Erin Coss

Oneness

God's Design for Marriage

A Christian Worldview Bible Study

BY

Eric & Erin Coss

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Contents

About the Authors	6
Leader's Guide.....	8
Leading the Study	14
Introduction	16
Week 1 God's Design for Oneness	18
Week 2 Speaking Life Together	24
Week 3 Responding to Conflict with Wisdom and Grace	29
Week 4 Trusting God With Your Finances	36
Week 5 Building a Marriage That Enjoys Each Other	43
Week 6 Building a Lasting Legacy	49
The End of the Study, Not the End of the Story	55
Grow Deeper in God's Word.....	57
Believers of the Last Hour Series	58

About the Authors

Who Are Eric and Erin—and Why Listen to Them?

A fair question to ask when reading any marriage book is: *Who are these people—and why should we listen to them?*

Eric and Erin Coss write from experience, not perfection—shaped by decades of marriage, hardship, and faith. They began dating at fifteen years old as high school sophomores after meeting during a school production of *The Crucible*. Eric worked stage crew; Erin was part of the drama club. What began as a teenage relationship grew into a lifelong covenant.

They were engaged and married in 1999 and have now been together for over thirty-two years, married for more than twenty-six. Their marriage has been tested, stretched, refined, and strengthened through real life. Their story is marked by real hardship. They have endured seasons of long-distance living, walked through a cancer diagnosis and recovery, and navigated autism diagnoses for two of their five children. They adopted two of their children while simultaneously managing the demands of law school and significant financial strain. There was even a season when they found themselves spiritually in different places—learning firsthand how fragile oneness can feel and how essential Christ is to restoring it.

Through these seasons, they learned that marriage doesn't improve on its own—you have to work at it. What you put in is what you get out. Oneness doesn't happen accidentally; it takes humility, repentance, perseverance, and faith.

Eric brings a steady, thoughtful perspective shaped by both education and lived experience. He holds an MBA and a Juris Doctor and approaches marriage, faith, and leadership with clarity, wisdom, and honesty—grounded in Scripture and practical in application.

Erin holds a bachelor's degree in theology and is an ordained Assistant Pastor. She has a deep love for God's Word and a calling to help others understand and live it out. Through teaching, writing, and ministry, she

encourages believers to pursue spiritual maturity, healing, and purpose with courage and grace.

Together, Eric and Erin have raised five children, lived in three states, and now make their home in Central Ohio. *Oneness* is their first book written together, born not out of perfection, but out of perseverance and submission to Christ. Their shared conviction is simple and hard-won: when husband and wife pursue God side by side, oneness is not only possible—it becomes a testimony of His faithfulness.

They do not claim to have all the answers. They simply point, again and again, to the One who does.

Leader's Guide

A Biblical Approach to Shepherding Couples

Leading a marriage study is more than facilitating discussion—it's shepherding hearts toward Christ and fostering an environment where couples can grow in unity, vulnerability, and biblical truth.

Scripture uses the Hebrew word רֹעֶה (ro'eh) to describe a shepherd—one who feeds, tends, guides, nourishes, protects, watches over, and keeps the flock safe (Strong's H7462).

This word captures both provision and protection, reminding us that biblical leadership is not about control but about care. As you lead this six-week study, your role reflects this shepherding heart: guiding gently, guarding wisely, nurturing spiritually, and continually pointing couples toward the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ.

This guide will help you lead with confidence, clarity, and grace.

Creating a Welcoming Environment

A peaceful, comfortable setting helps couples open up, focus, and feel safe. This isn't about entertaining—it's about biblical hospitality. Whether you are hosting or meeting in another location, keep these guidelines in mind:

1. Provide a Clean and Comfortable Location

Your space doesn't need to be perfect, just peaceful, and distraction-free.

Helpful considerations:

- Tidy the main area
- Clean the bathroom
- Provide a spot for coats and belongings
- Turn off TVs and reduce background noise

The goal is a calm environment where people feel relaxed and at ease.

2. Arrange Seating for Connection

Be intentional with the layout:

- Can everyone see each other comfortably?
- Is seating arranged for discussion, not spectatorship?
- Can couples turn toward one another for private reflection?

Avoid lecture-style seating. Circles or semi-circles work best.

3. Be Mindful of Pets, Smells, and Allergies

Not everyone is comfortable around animals or strong scents.

Consider:

- Keeping pets in another room
- Asking about allergies beforehand
- Avoiding strong candles, diffusers, or mothball/cedar scents

A distraction-free room helps the group stay focused.

4. Provide a Light Snack or Drink

Simple hospitality goes a long way:

- Water
- Coffee or tea
- A basic snack (fruit, cheese and crackers, cookies, etc.)

This isn't entertaining—it's welcoming.

5. Respect People's Time

Honor participants by:

- Starting on time
- Ending on time
- Being consistent

This especially blesses parents with childcare and those with busy schedules.

6. Prepare Materials Ahead of Time

Have ready:

- Bibles
- Pens
- Printed copies of the study

Preparedness communicates care.

7. Minimize Distractions

Before beginning:

- Silence phones
- Reduce foot traffic through the meeting space
- Ensure children are settled or supervised elsewhere

This sets the tone for meaningful conversation.

8. If Meeting in Another Home

If someone else is hosting:

- Communicate expectations gently

- Thank them for serving
- Offer help with setting up or providing snacks

Partnership strengthens the study.

Preparing Your Heart and the Group

1. Pray Before Each Session

Ask the Lord for:

- The Holy Spirit's leading
- Wisdom and discernment
- Softened hearts
- Unity within marriages
- Protection from spiritual attacks
- Respectful and life-giving conversations

2. Create a Safe and Honor-Filled Environment

Set ground rules in Week 1:

- Confidentiality is essential
- No spouse-shaming or public criticism
- Speak from personal experience ("I" statements)
- Extend grace—every couple is in process

Your leadership is essential to a healthy group.

3. Understand the Purpose of the Study

This study is not for:

- Venting frustrations

- Fixing each other
- Comparing marriages

This study is for:

- Pursuing Christ
- Learning God’s design for marriage
- Practicing biblical oneness
- Strengthening unity
- Encouraging one another as the Body of Christ

Keep the focus on transformation and growth.

Leading Discussions Well

Your role is to guide and shepherd, not lecture.

Tips:

- Allow silence—people think during silence
- Encourage deeper reflection: *“Tell me more...”*
- Redirect overly talkative participants kindly:
“Thank you for sharing—let’s hear from someone else.”
- Protect the group from unhealthy sharing
- Always point back to Christ and the scriptures, not self-help or the internet

The goal is to cultivate meaningful conversation rooted in Scripture.

Handling Sensitive Moments

Marriage topics can surface emotion, past wounds, and tender areas.

If someone becomes emotional:
“Thank you for trusting us with that.”

If spouses begin to argue:
“Let’s pause—this may be best to discuss privately or with pastoral support.”

If trauma, abuse, or deep crisis is mentioned:

- Do not attempt on-the-spot counseling from yourself or others
- Encourage pastoral or professional biblical counseling
- Follow up privately if appropriate with the couple and pastor

Your job is to care, not fix.

Keep the Group Christ-Centered

Redirect conversations regularly back to:

- God’s Word and character
- God’s design for marriage
- God’s power to transform

This guards the study from drifting into:

- Complaints
- Opinions
- Cultural messages

Scripture remains the anchor.

Be Prepared, But Remain Flexible

The tone of the group may shift week to week. Lead with sensitivity, not rigidity. Trust the process and let the Holy Spirit lead.

Leading the Study

This study is designed to last **approximately two hours** each week. While the content is rich, honoring the time you've committed to your group is more important than getting through every question. If discussion begins to run long, feel free to **skip one or two questions per section**. Depth and connection matter more than completion.

Weekly Preparation

Each week, you will cover material drawn from the *Oneness* book, typically spanning one to three chapters. If participants have access to the book, encourage them to read the assigned chapters before your meeting. This helps the group engage more deeply, but don't let lack of preparation become a barrier—everyone is welcome to participate.

Each session includes:

- An opening paragraph or two to set the tone
- Scripture and teaching content
- Reflection and discussion questions
- A practical challenge for couples to complete during the week

Opening the Group

Begin each gathering with prayer. You may pray yourself or invite someone else in the group to open in prayer. This helps center hearts and reminds everyone that God—not discussion—is the focus.

Before diving into the material, you can always ask a simple, open-ended question such as:

- “Did anything stand out to you from the reading this week?”
- “How did last week's challenge go for you?”

- “Was there anything that felt encouraging or challenging?”

Be mindful of time here. Asking everyone to share details about their week can easily consume the entire session. If conversation begins to drift, gently guide the group forward.

Leading the Discussion

You may choose to read the opening paragraphs yourself or ask someone else to read them. As the leader, it's helpful if you read the discussion questions aloud. This allows you to guide the pace of conversation and easily skip or move past a question if time is running short.

Each chapter includes paragraphs and reflection questions meant to foster thoughtful conversation—not debate or comparison. Your role is to facilitate, not to fix.

Weekly Challenge

At the end of each session, a challenge is presented for couples to practice during the week. Encourage participation but avoid pressure. Growth happens through small, consistent steps.

Closing the Group

Always end with prayer, and end on time. This is extremely important. Respecting time builds trust, honors busy schedules, and greatly increases group retention. Based on years of leading groups, we've found that couples are far more likely to return when they know the group will start and end as promised.

Introduction

A Six-Week Journey Toward God's Design for Marriage

Welcome! Eric and I are so glad you've decided to work through the Oneness Bible Study. Over the next six weeks, you'll walk through what Scripture teaches about marriage and how God calls husbands and wives to live as one. This study is based on the book *Oneness*, which reminds us that marriage is not just a partnership—it's a covenant designed to reflect Christ and the Church. Whether you've been married five months or fifty years, there is always more God wants to strengthen, heal, and grow.

This study isn't about comparing marriages or pretending everything is perfect. It's about creating a safe place to learn, talk honestly, and allow God to shape us. Every one of us brings strengths and struggles, victories and regrets, hopes and fears—and that's exactly why we need Jesus at the center. He alone can make two people truly one.

Each week you will explore a key aspect of biblical oneness:

- God's design for oneness
- Speaking life into your marriage
- Honoring Christ with your finances
- Resolving conflict with forgiveness
- Intentionally pursuing intimacy and friendship
- Partnering in parenting while cultivating legacy

You'll hear from Scripture first and then discuss practical ways these truths apply in everyday marriage. Our goal is not perfection—it's direction. Step by step, we want to grow into the kind of unity God designed.

Throughout this study, you'll have opportunities to:

- talk honestly with your spouse

- learn from other couples
- ask questions
- and take simple steps that build lasting change

No matter where your marriage is today—strong, struggling, or somewhere in between—God delights in meeting you right where you are. He restores. He strengthens. He heals. And He calls us to walk this journey not alone, but together.

Group Expectations: Creating a Safe and Honor-Filled Space

To make this a life-giving experience for everyone, we ask each couple to keep a few simple guidelines in mind:

1. Confidentiality is essential.

What is shared here stays here. This protects trust and encourages honesty.

2. Honor your spouse in how you speak.

This is not a place for spouse-shaming, blaming, or listing past failures. Speak with grace, even when sharing struggles.

3. Share from your own story.

Use “I” statements rather than speaking for your spouse or diagnosing another couple.

4. Give space for others to speak.

Some people process quickly; others need time. We grow best when every voice is respected.

5. Avoid giving unsolicited advice.

Encourage one another, but let solutions come through Scripture, the Holy Spirit, and personal reflection.

6. Extend grace.

Every couple is in process. We’re not aiming for perfection—but for humility, honesty, and growth.

Week 1

God's Design for Oneness

This week we're laying the foundation for everything that follows. As a group, we'll be drawing from Chapter's 1-3 from the book *Oneness*—three chapters that remind us that genuine unity in marriage begins with a shared relationship with Jesus. Before we can be one with our spouse, we must first be one with Him. When Christ is at the center, everything else—communication, intimacy, decision-making, and forgiveness—flows naturally from that shared spiritual foundation.

We've seen in our own story that a marriage held together by human effort eventually runs out of strength. But when Christ is at the center—a true third strand—marriage becomes more than a partnership; it becomes a living picture of His relationship with the Church. Our relationship with God comes first, then our covenant with each other, then our children, and everything else after that.

This week we'll talk about:

- what it means to be equally yoked and spiritually aligned
- why marriage is a sacred covenant, not just a contract
- and how abiding in Christ—*together*—shapes the way we love, forgive, serve, and endure

Together, we'll dig deeper into what it means to be one in Christ and one in marriage—the way God intended from the very beginning.

First Reflections

1. When you said, "I do," did you know how much your faith would shape your marriage?

2. Can you think of a couple whose marriage has inspired you because it's clearly built on Christ? What about their relationship encourages you?
3. What aspect of God's design for marriage is still difficult for you to fully understand or apply?
4. In what ways do you see culture's view of marriage differing from God's view in Scripture?

What Does It Mean to Be One with Christ?

Read: John 15:4–5 (NKJV)

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

Strong's Concordance defines the Greek word *abide* (*menō*) as:

“To stay (in a given place, state, relation, or expectancy): abide, continue, dwell, endure, be present, remain, stand, tarry.”

Abide is a verb—an action word. It almost feels like an oxymoron: we are called to *actively remain*, to *intentionally dwell*, to *purposefully stay*. Abiding in Christ isn't passive; it requires effort, focus, and faith. It's choosing, moment by moment, to stay connected when everything in life tempts us to drift.

To be one with Christ means to live in constant connection with Him—not just on Sundays or in times of crisis, but in every season and circumstance. Eric and I have learned that leaning on Christ isn't a single moment but a lifelong commitment to depend on Him in both the good and the hard times. When we try to hold our marriage together in our own strength, we quickly find ourselves exhausted and isolated. But when we abide with Him together, His presence becomes our strength, His Spirit sustains our unity, and He becomes the third strand woven into our covenant.

Reflection

1. What's the difference between *believing* in Jesus and *abiding* in Him?
2. Jesus said, "*Without Me you can do nothing.*" What does that truth reveal about how dependent we are on Him?
3. How do you recognize when you've started to drift from abiding — spiritually, emotionally, or relationally?
4. In what ways could abiding in Christ change how you respond to pressure, conflict, or disappointment in your marriage?

Remaining in Christ doesn't mean being passive — it means inviting Him into everything you do. It's the daily decision to rest in His presence while continuing to move forward in obedience. In a world that constantly pushes us to hurry, chase, and strive, abiding feels countercultural. Yet it's in that still, steadfast connection that we find our true strength and stability.

The Marriage That Abides in Christ

Read: Ephesians 5:31–32 (NIV)

"For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church."

From Chapters 1–3 of *Oneness*:

- Marriage is God's idea, not man's.
- It is a sacred covenant, not just a contract.
- It is meant to reflect Christ and His Church.
- It is held together and strengthened when both husband and wife are united in Christ.

Marriage was never meant to exist apart from God. A husband and wife can love each other deeply, but without Christ, that love eventually runs out of strength, patience, and grace. When Jesus is at the center, marriage becomes more than a partnership — it becomes a reflection of His relationship with the Church.

To be one with Christ together means your marriage isn't just *for* God — it's *with* God. As you abide in Him, His presence becomes your strength, and His Spirit sustains your unity. He is the third strand woven into your covenant. His Word directs your steps, and His love becomes the model for how you love one another.

Being one with Christ in marriage means:

- You pursue His presence together, not separately.
- You make decisions through prayer and unity, not competition or control.
- You forgive as you've been forgiven.
- You serve one another as Jesus served.
- You reflect His character in how you handle pressure, disagreement, and joy.

Being one with Christ in your marriage doesn't mean you never struggle—it means you know where to turn when you do. The strength of your relationship isn't measured by perfection, but by your shared willingness to return to Jesus again and again. When both hearts are surrendered to Him, you're no longer pulling in opposite directions—you're moving forward together. The Spirit of God becomes the bond that holds you steady when life feels heavy.

A Christ-centered marriage is not simply two people trying harder to make it work. It is two people walking in step with one Savior, under one Spirit,

toward one purpose—trusting that what God designs, He also faithfully strengthens.

Discussion Questions

1. Define the words “Sacred” and “Covenant.” What makes marriage a spiritual covenant rather than just a contractual agreement?
2. What does it practically look like for a couple to be guided by the Holy Spirit in their decisions, parenting, finances, or communication?
3. In your own words, how is marriage meant to reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church (Ephesians 5:31–32)?
4. Practically and spiritually, what does it mean for a husband and wife to abide in Christ, so their marriage bears lasting fruit?

This Week’s Challenge

- Pray together at least 3 times this week (even if it feels awkward).
- Choose one small habit that aligns your home under Christ (read one verse together, attend church side by side, speak one intentional encouragement each day).
- Ask each other: “*Where do you see God at work in us?*” and thank Him for it.

[illegible]

Week 2

Speaking Life Together

Last week, we laid the foundation: oneness begins in Christ. This week, we move into two of the most practical—and most revealing—areas of oneness: how we speak to each other and how we show respect to our spouse.

Chapters 4 and 5 of *Oneness* remind us that communication and respect are not side issues in marriage; they are core spiritual issues. Our words either agree with God's heart for our spouse or align with the enemy's plan to divide. Our tone, our jokes, our silence, our eye rolls, and our daily choices to honor or dishonor all either reinforce oneness or slowly erode it.

This week we'll talk about:

- how our words can build or break
- how respect shapes safety and unity
- and how speaking life is an overflow of a heart rooted in Christ

The goal isn't perfection—it's choosing Christlike responses that strengthen our marriage over time.

First Reflections

1. Growing up, what did communication in your home look like—raised voices, quiet tension, open conversation, lots of humor, avoidance? How has that influenced how you communicate now?
2. When you think about your own marriage, which comes more naturally: speaking life or criticizing quickly?
3. Have you ever caught yourself joking negatively about your spouse in public (or heard others do it)? How did it affect how you felt?

4. Can you think of a couple who models kind, honoring communication? What stands out about the way they speak to and about each other?

Speaking Words That Build

Read: Proverbs 18:21 (NKJV)

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”

Chapter 4 of *Oneness* reminds us that Scripture isn’t exaggerating—our words really do carry the power of life and death. Eric and I have witnessed this firsthand in our own marriage. Some of our hardest seasons weren’t caused by big crises, but by small, careless words that slowly chipped away at connection. And some of our most healing moments came when one of us chose to speak life when frustration would’ve been easier. Those choices mattered. They always do.

What we speak over our spouse can build a home filled with trust, safety, and connection... or slowly burn that home down. Harsh words, sarcasm, mockery, contempt, and even “weaponized silence” don’t just create bad moments; they weaken the foundation of oneness. When we use our words to belittle, control, or punish, we aren’t reflecting Christ—we’re aligning ourselves with the enemy’s desire to divide.

But God calls us to something better:

- Speak to build up rather than tear down
- Speak to give grace rather than guilt
- Speak to reflect the covenant we’re in—not the culture around us

We won’t speak life perfectly. No one does. Oneness in communication isn’t about getting it right all the time—it’s about noticing when our words hurt, owning it, and working to make things right. Speaking life is a habit formed over time—a choice to let the Holy Spirit shape our tongue so our marriage bears the fruit God intends.

Reflection

1. Proverbs 18:21 says our words hold “death and life.”
What do you think Scripture means by that? How have you seen this truth play out in everyday relationships?
2. Why do you think the Bible places such a strong emphasis on the tongue?
3. In Ch. 4, Eric shares how tone and unspoken expectations fueled unnecessary tension. How have you seen tone or assumptions influence the outcome of a conversation?
4. In Ch. 4, Erin shares how she used silence to punish. Have you ever used silence, sarcasm, or dismissal as a form of control or self-protection?

Communication in a Christ-centered marriage is not about winning arguments; it’s about honoring the oneness God designed. Speak life. When you fail, fix it fast.

Honoring the One You Chose

Read: Romans 12:10 (NKJV)

“Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another.”

Ch. 5 of *Oneness* points out a hard truth:

You cannot have deep oneness without mutual respect.

Respect shows up in:

- How you speak to your spouse
- How you speak about your spouse (especially to friends, coworkers, kids)
- How you weigh their thoughts, time, fears, and needs.

- Whether you see them as your partner or your problem.

Disrespect isn't always loud. Sometimes it's eye rolls, dismissive jokes, constant correction, making big decisions without them, or venting about them to others. Over time, it hollows out trust.

God's design:

- Husbands sacrificially love
- Wives intentionally respect
- Both outdo one another in showing honor (Romans 12:10)

Respect isn't about agreeing on everything; it's about valuing your spouse. It says, "You are God's gift to me, not my enemy."

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think it's often easier to be kind and respectful to strangers than to our own spouse?
2. Where do you see "casual disrespect" most commonly show up in marriages (jokes, public comments, dismissing opinions, etc.)?
3. How did the stories in Ch. 5 (about decisions made alone, or quietly honoring fears and limitations) challenge your view of respect?
4. How can we, as a group, create a culture where we build up our spouses instead of tearing them down?

This Week's Challenge

1. **No Trash Talk:** Commit this week to not speaking negatively about your spouse to anyone. If you slip, own it and correct it.

2. **One Life-Giving Sentence a Day:** Speak one specific encouragement over your spouse each day. Not generic—name something you see and appreciate.
3. **Own Your Words:** If your tone is harsh or your words cut, apologize quickly and clearly: “I’m sorry. That was wrong. You don’t deserve to be spoken to that way.”
4. **Honor in Public:** Brag on your spouse in front of someone else at least once this week.
5. **Check-In Conversation:** Ask each other: “Do you feel heard and respected by me?” Listen without defending.

[illegible]

Week 3

Responding to Conflict with Wisdom and Grace

“Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your anger, nor give place to the devil.”

— Ephesians 4:26–27

By now, we’ve seen that oneness in Christ, along with oneness in communication and respect, lays the groundwork for a strong, Christ-centered marriage. But even in healthy marriages, conflict is unavoidable. Two sinners, one covenant. Two stories, one home. Sparks will fly. The question isn’t whether we’ll disagree, but how we’ll handle it—and what we choose to do afterward.

Tonight, we’re pulling from Chapters 6 and 7 of *Oneness*, which remind us that how we handle conflict and forgiveness shapes the health of our marriage more than almost anything else. These chapters teach us that we can walk through conflict in a way that preserves our covenant—or in a way that punishes our spouse. And when hurt inevitably happens, we can hold on to it and slowly poison our marriage, or we can forgive and breathe life back into it. The way we respond in these moments determines whether we drift apart or grow stronger in the oneness God designed.

This week we’ll talk about:

- How to fight *for* your marriage, not *against* each other
- How to guard your heart from bitterness and the enemy’s foothold
- How humility and forgiveness act as the glue that keeps oneness from cracking

We’re going to be honest, practical, and full of grace. This is where a lot of couples get stuck—so this is where we slow down and let God do deep work.

First Reflections

1. Growing up, what did conflict look like in your home—explosive, silent, sarcastic, honest, avoided? How has that shaped the way you handle conflict now?
2. When you and your spouse disagree, what's your typical response: shut down, blow up, withdraw, chase, fix, defend, make jokes, or avoid?
3. Without naming details, would you say you tend to “fight fair” or “fight to win”?
4. Have you observed a couple navigate conflict while staying united? What do they seem to do differently?

Fighting *For* Each Other, Not *With* Each Other

Read: Proverbs 29:11 (ESV)

“A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back.”

Oneness in conflict can sound contradictory, yet it's simply learning to address disagreements in ways that strengthen your covenant instead of harming it.

In *Oneness*, Chapters 6 and 7 reveal that most marital conflict isn't about the surface issue—it's about the deeper fears, wounds, and stories we bring into the moment. Eric shares how his instinct to walk away during arguments wasn't really about anger; it was about fear of failure and not knowing how to stay emotionally engaged. Erin shares that silence didn't feel like space—it felt like abandonment. These are the hidden layers many couples bring into conflict: one spouse gets loud because they feel unheard, while the other shuts down because they feel overwhelmed. One fights to resolve, the other fights to retreat. Without understanding these dynamics, the argument becomes a battle of defenses instead of the pursuit of unity.

But *Oneness* also reminds us that when Christ is at the center, even conflict becomes an opportunity for connection—not disconnection. A covenant-

centered mindset says, “We are on the same team—even when we’re upset.” It means recognizing the moment your flesh wants to win and choosing instead to protect the relationship. It means refusing to weaponize your spouse’s vulnerabilities or past failures. It means being brave enough to name the real issue instead of attacking the symptoms. Above all, it means remembering that unity is not a feeling—it’s a choice made in the heat of the moment. When we fight with humility, listen with empathy, speak with restraint, and return to the table with forgiveness, conflict stops being something that tears us apart and becomes something God uses to draw us closer together. In a Christ-centered marriage, conflict doesn’t have to be a doorway to division; it can be a pathway to deeper oneness.

- Conflict is inevitable; destruction is optional
- The issue is rarely the true problem—it’s the unhealthy patterns we fall into revisiting old hurts, slipping into sarcasm, walking away, shutting down, or responding with hurtful words
- Unchecked anger and unresolved tension can give the enemy a foothold in your home

Oneness in conflict means:

- I remember you are not my enemy
- I refuse to aim my words at your identity
- I can be honest without being cruel
- I will not resort to name-calling
- I can step back to cool down without abandoning you
- I care more about restoration than being right

Reflection

1. What does Proverbs 29:11 reveal about the difference between reacting in the flesh and responding with wisdom?
2. In Ephesians 4:27, Paul warns, “Do not give the devil a foothold.” How can our conflict patterns (tone, silence, withdrawal, sarcasm) create that foothold in a marriage?
3. How does remembering “we are one flesh” (Genesis 2:24) challenge the idea of fighting to win? In a covenant marriage, what does “winning” actually look like?
4. In what ways can conflict—when handled biblically—actually deepen intimacy and trust rather than weaken it? Have you ever seen an example of this?

Fighting fair doesn’t silence disagreement; it transforms it. It means you disagree with dignity, stay committed to resolution, and guard your words because your spouse is not a target—they’re your teammate.

Letting Go for the Sake of Oneness

Read: Ephesians 4:32 (NKJV)

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.”

Ephesians 4:32 reminds us that forgiveness isn’t optional for believers—it’s foundational. You can communicate well, show respect, and learn to fight fairly, but if you refuse to forgive, your marriage will eventually suffocate. Unforgiveness loosens the bonds of oneness; even small resentments can slowly unravel a great love. Holding on to offenses—even justified ones—lets bitterness take root, and Scripture warns that bitterness defiles everything it touches (Hebrews 12:15). In *Oneness*, Eric realized he was quietly keeping score, and Erin saw how unspoken resentments shaped her reactions. That’s what unforgiveness does: it distorts how we see our

spouse. The offense becomes the identity. Instead of a teammate, we start seeing a threat. And in that space, the enemy whispers lies that divide. Jesus doesn't treat forgiveness as optional—He ties it directly to our relationship with the Father (Matthew 6:14–15). Refusing to forgive is refusing the very grace we depend on daily.

But biblical forgiveness in marriage is not passive or naïve. It doesn't mean pretending it didn't hurt, excusing sin, or ignoring patterns that need to change. It certainly doesn't mean staying in abuse or danger—Scripture calls for wisdom and boundaries. Forgiveness means releasing the right to punish, refusing to weaponize past failures, and choosing reconciliation over being “right.” It's laying down the stones we've carried so healing can begin. It's remembering how deeply Christ has forgiven us and letting His mercy soften our hearts.

Forgiveness in marriage is not:

- Pretending it didn't hurt
- Approving of sin or ignoring patterns that need to change
- Staying in abuse or danger (get help, set boundaries)

Forgiveness is:

- Releasing the right to punish
- Refusing to weaponize past failures
- Choosing reconciliation over being “right”
- Remembering how deeply Christ has forgiven you—and letting that soften your heart

Restoration begins in oneness—where humility disarms pride, confession replaces defensiveness, and grace overcomes resentment. Forgiveness may not erase the past, but it frees the future and reinforces the covenant that binds us.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think many couples see conflict as a threat instead of an opportunity to grow closer?
2. Jesus ties our forgiveness of others to God's forgiveness of us (Matthew 6:14–15). How should that truth reshape the way we respond when we feel hurt or wronged?
3. Ephesians 4:32 calls us to be, “kind, tenderhearted, forgiving.” What part of this verse is hardest for you to live out, and why do you think that is?
4. How can we tell the difference between a real wound that needs to be addressed and something we simply need to let go and not fixate on?

This Week's Challenge

1. **Make a New Rule:** Together, agree on one “we will not do this in conflict anymore” boundary (e.g., no threats, no name-calling, no leaving without assurance you'll return).
2. **Own Your Part:** Sometime this week, say: “*I was wrong for _____*. *Will you forgive me?*”
3. **Release One Thing:** Each of you privately ask God, “*Is there one offense I've been holding?*” Choose to lay it down before the Lord.
4. **Pray After a Disagreement:** The next time you clash, when it calms, pray together—even a short, simple prayer asking God to unify and soften your hearts.
5. **No Scorekeeping:** For one week, refuse to bring up past mistakes in new conflicts.

[illegible]

Week 4

Trusting God With Your Finances

“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

— Matthew 6:21

This week we’re looking at a part of marriage that often feels scary to place in God’s hands—money. It’s practical on the surface, but deeply spiritual at its core.

Finances are one of the most common sources of stress, secrecy, and division in marriage. One of you might be a saver, the other a spender. One loves spreadsheets, the other avoids bank statements. One feels safe when the account is full; the other feels free when money is flexible. Left unaddressed, those differences don’t only cause financial stress—they cause emotional and relational stress.

Chapter 8 of *Oneness* reminds us that every dollar we have belongs to God. We’re not owners; we’re stewards. When we see our finances as His, we stop fighting for control and start pursuing unity.

This week we’ll talk about:

- how money reveals what we value and trust
- how financial decisions can strengthen or strain oneness
- and how learning to trust God—and each other—with your resources can bring peace instead of pressure

First Reflections

1. Growing up, what did you see modeled about money—fear, generosity, secrecy, stress, discipline? How has that shaped you?
2. Did you talk about how each of you views money before marriage, or did those differences show up over time?

God Owns It All: From Ownership to Stewardship

Read: Psalm 50:19-12 (NIV)

“For every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird in the mountains, and the insects in the fields are mine. If I were hungry I would not tell you, for the world is mine, and all that is in it.”

Oneness in finances begins with one simple, transforming truth: **It’s all God’s**. Psalm 50 reminds us that everything in creation—every resource, every dollar, every opportunity—already belongs to Him. In *Oneness*, Eric shares how he once viewed money as something he had earned and therefore something he had to control. That mindset created pressure, secrecy, and separation. If the money was “his,” then every financial decision felt like a threat to his security or a challenge to his authority. The turning point came when God confronted that belief and showed him he wasn’t an owner—he was a steward. As stewards we manage what God provides, but we do not carry the weight of ownership. That change in thinking loosened fear’s grip and opened the door to unity rather than competition.

When a husband and wife both embrace stewardship, finances become a place of partnership instead of tension. Decisions move from “mine vs. yours” to “Lord, what would You have us do?” Instead of hiding purchases or fighting for control, couples begin inviting God into their planning and inviting each other into their process. Letting go of ownership frees us to give generously, save wisely, and spend intentionally—not out of pressure, but out of obedience. It also reduces worry, because our provision no longer rests on the size of our paycheck but on the faithfulness of our Provider. When we trust that God owns it all, we stop fighting each other and start following Him together.

When we believe money is “mine,” we:

- allow pride to rule

- get defensive
- hide purchases
- argue over control
- and tie our security to the balance, not to God

When we understand that our money is actually God's, we:

- invite Him into our decisions
- plan *together* instead of a part
- give more freely and joyfully
- and worry less—because our Provider is bigger than our paycheck

Reflection

1. Why do you think money is such a spiritual battleground for marriages?
2. What emotions come up when you hear the phrase “God owns it all”? Relief? Fear? Resistance? Why do you think that is?
3. How might your financial conversations change if you both started with, “This is God’s money. How does He want us to use it?”

Trusting God First: Tithing, Generosity, and Faith

Read: Proverbs 3:9–10 (NKJV)

“Honor the Lord with your possessions,
And with the first fruits of all your increase;
So your barns will be filled with plenty,
And your vats will overflow with new wine.”

Tithing is one of the most tangible ways a couple learns to trust God together. In Erin and Eric’s story, it was once a major point of tension—she

longed to surrender their finances to the Lord, while he wrestled with giving when money already felt tight. The breakthrough didn't come through pressure, guilt, or budgeting strategies; it came through prayer, conviction, and watching God prove Himself faithful again and again. Over time, tithing stopped feeling like "losing" 10% and began to feel like inviting God into 100%. It shifted their hearts from fear to faith, their priorities from self to Kingdom, and their finances from something they controlled to something they stewarded together. Tithing doesn't magically fix poor spending habits or erase irresponsibility, but it does something far more important: it places your finances under God's authority. It becomes a declaration that He is your Provider. When a couple honors God first with what they have, they position themselves to receive His wisdom, His peace, and His provision in every part of their financial life.

When a couple tithes and gives together, something powerful happens:

- Their hearts shift from fear to faith
- Their priorities shift from self to Kingdom
- Their marriage shifts from "surviving" to "thriving"

Reflection

1. For many couples, tithing is one of the hardest steps of trust. What fears or hesitations make tithing difficult?
2. How does understanding that tithing is an act of obedience to God—rather than trust in an institution—help us navigate concerns about how the church uses funds?

One Budget, One Vision

Read: Amos 3:3 (NKJV)

"Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?"

Money touches nearly everything:

- housing
- food
- kids
- debt
- generosity
- rest and fun
- the future

If we're not unified financially, we won't feel unified emotionally.

Disconnection grows when one spouse feels unsafe, unheard, or out of the loop. Financial oneness isn't about sharing an account—it's about sharing a vision.

A healthy, oneness-building approach to finances looks like:

- Talking honestly about spending, saving, and debt.
- Asking what makes each of you feel secure or stressed.
- Agreeing on priorities: tithe, bills, debt, savings, generosity, margin, fun.
- Refusing secret accounts, hidden spending, or “surprises” that affect both without agreement.

Discussion Questions

1. What are some reasons a spouse might feel unsafe, unheard, or out of the loop when it comes to finances?
2. What practical steps can help a couple move from financial disagreement or disunity to walking in financial oneness?

3. In the marriages you've observed, how has inviting God into financial decisions made a difference?

This Week's Challenge

1. **Honest Money Talk:** Set aside some time to calmly look at your finances together: income, bills, debt, subscriptions, giving, savings. No blame—just honesty.
2. **Pray Over Your Finances:** Out loud, together. Surrender your accounts, debt, dreams, fears, and plans to the Lord.
3. **Define One Shared Goal:** Choose one short-term goal (pay off one bill, start an emergency fund, give to a need, start/restore tithing) and take the first step this week.
4. **No Financial Secrets:** Commit to no hidden spending, surprise debt, or secret accounts. If something is hidden, bring it gently into the light.
5. **One Act of Generosity:** As a couple, do one intentional, Spirit-led act of giving—no spotlight, no pressure—just obedience.

[illegible]

Week 5

Building a Marriage That Enjoys Each Other

This week we're talking about two gifts that are often neglected in marriage: sexual intimacy and friendship. In *Oneness*, Chapters 9 and 10 remind us that God created both—not as optional extras, but as essential parts of the covenant. Sex is God's idea, designed to bond husband and wife in joy, trust, and oneness. And friendship is God's provision for companionship, laughter, delight, and shared life, ensuring that marriage becomes more than a partnership of responsibilities. When intimacy is avoided or weaponized, and when fun quietly fades from the relationship, marriages rarely fall apart suddenly—they fade slowly. Couples begin to function like roommates instead of soulmates, and the oneness God intended gradually thins.

Tonight, we want to reclaim what God always meant to be good. We're going to talk honestly about sex as something holy, safe, and deeply unifying—not shameful, not transactional, not pressured, but sacred. And we're going to remember that friendship and enjoyment are vital to a thriving marriage. Playfulness guards against resentment. Joy softens stress. Shared laughter melts walls. Intimacy—both physical and emotional—is not separate from spiritual oneness; it is an essential part of it. This conversation is meant to be honoring and hope-filled, not awkward or shaming. It's an invitation for God to restore joy, rekindle affection, and bring connection back to the center of your marriage.

This week we'll talk about:

- Reclaim sex as something holy, safe, and good within marriage
- Remember that enjoying each other is vital to a healthy marriage
- Explore how intimacy and play actually strengthen spiritual oneness

First Reflections

1. Would you say you and your spouse are friends—do you genuinely enjoy each other? Why or why not?
2. When was the last time you remember laughing hard together? What were you doing?
3. In this season, which tends to get neglected first—intimacy or fun? What impact has that had?

Reclaiming Sex as God's Design

Read: Hebrews 13:4 (NKJV)

“Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”

Sex is not dirty, cheap, or unspiritual— it is a sacred gift God designed specifically for covenant marriage. In *Oneness*, Chapter 9 reminds us that sex was created to unite a husband and wife in joy, trust, and deep connection—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Yet the enemy works hard to distort this gift. Pornography, comparison, unhealed wounds, silence, and withholding as punishment all twist what God intended to be holy. When these distortions take hold, intimacy no longer feels safe; it becomes tense, avoided, or transactional. When intimacy is neglected, the unity God designed for marriage weakens—not all at once, but subtly over time.

Oneness teaches that sexual intimacy strengthens a marriage—not through pressure or guilt, but through connection built on honesty, safety, and grace. True intimacy grows through simple, honest conversations about needs and fears, and through a shared commitment to protect the marriage bed from anything that breaks trust. As couples learn to explore and enjoy one another, intimacy becomes a place of unity and delight. When both spouses experience sex as safe, fun, and mutually fulfilling, joy naturally spills into the rest of the relationship—affection increases, patience grows, and daily connection feels lighter. In this atmosphere, God doesn't just

heighten desire; He deepens joy, builds confidence, strengthens emotional safety, and reinforces the sense of being chosen and cherished.

Reflection

(Leaders: Gently remind couples to protect privacy by sharing general principles and lessons learned, not graphic, explicit, or intimate details that could make others uncomfortable.)

1. Growing up, what messages (spoken or unspoken) did you receive about sex? Positive, fearful, shame-based, silent? How has that shaped you?
2. Why do you think sex is so often twisted by culture and silenced in the church?
3. How can the church create a safe, biblical space to talk about intimacy instead of avoiding it?
4. How does viewing sex as God's idea change how we think about it?

The Couple That Plays Together Stays Together

Read: Proverbs 17:22 (NKJV)

“A merry heart does good, like medicine,
But a broken spirit dries the bones.”

Proverbs 17:22 reminds us that joy is not optional in marriage—it's medicine for the heart. In *Oneness*, Chapter 10 explains that most Marriages don't fall apart because of one major crisis; they fade because fun stopped, laughter left, friendship was replaced by logistics, and spouses began pursuing life separately instead of inviting one another in. Over time, conversations shift from connection to coordination—meals, schedules, bills, responsibilities—and the simple joy of being together begins to disappear. This is the “broken spirit” Proverbs warns about: the quiet erosion of joy that drains life from a relationship until it feels dry, distant, and weary.

Oneness also emphasizes that friendship is essential. Erin often says, “*The couple that plays together stays together*,” and she’s found it to be true in her own marriage. When she and Eric engage in activities they genuinely enjoy—playing video games, boating, attending church together—they naturally create more moments to talk, laugh, and bond. *Oneness* in friendship means you don’t just manage a home together; you enjoy each other. As couples choose to laugh together, explore together, and create “our thing” together, connection deepens. When husbands and wives intentionally pursue friendship, joy becomes a daily strength—fortifying the marriage, building unity, and reinforcing the oneness God designed from the beginning.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the things you currently enjoy doing together? And if life has gotten busy, what are activities you used to enjoy that you might want to revisit?
2. How easy is it for busyness, kids, work, or screens to crowd out time for fun and connection?
3. What intentional habits or routines have you observed (date nights, unplugged evenings, walks, shared activities) that help couples remain close long-term?
4. What’s one small, realistic way you can reintroduce laughter, play, or adventure into your week?

This Week’s Challenge

1. **Plan One Fun Thing:** Schedule one intentional, screen-light, kid-free (if possible) moment of fun—walk, coffee, game, hobby, drive, shared activity. Protect it.

2. **Encouragement + Affection:** Every day this week, speak one specific encouragement to your spouse and show one simple, non-sexual affectionate gesture (hug, touch, kind note).
3. **Honest Conversation:** Have a grace-filled conversation about your intimacy: “How are we doing? What would help you feel more connected?” Listen without defensiveness.
4. **Pray About Intimacy:** Pray together this week specifically over your intimacy and friendship, asking God to heal, protect, and deepen your oneness.
5. **Say Yes to Playfulness:** Look for one opportunity each day to smile, flirt, tease kindly, or laugh together. Lean into lightness.

[illegible]

Week 6

Building a Lasting Legacy

We've spent this study walking through God's design for:

- oneness in Christ
- oneness in marriage
- oneness in communication and respect
- oneness in conflict and forgiveness
- oneness in finances, intimacy, friendship, and joy

This final week, we zoom out and ask:

Chapters 11 and 12 of *Oneness* remind us that the health of our marriage today becomes the foundation our children build on tomorrow. Parenting is not just raising kids—it's modeling unity. We parent best when we parent as one: not child-centered, but Christ-centered and united in our decisions. Children thrive when they see their parents working together instead of pulling apart, supporting one another instead of competing, and maintaining balance rather than allowing schedules or stresses to take over the home. Partnership creates stability, and stability creates security. A strong marriage strengthens parenting, and a united couple naturally creates a united home.

But *Oneness* also reminds us that parenting is only one season. A day is coming when the house grows quiet and it will once again be just the two of you. Preparing for that season now is essential. Marriage isn't something to rediscover after the kids leave—it's something to cultivate all along the way. Couples who invest in friendship, intimacy, and shared purpose throughout the child-raising years enter the empty nest not with emptiness but with joy. Legacy is not only about what we hand to our children; it's about the marriage we continue to build. Choosing oneness today is how we finish well—strong, united, and full of purpose in every season ahead.

First Reflections

1. Have you ever caught yourself finding your identity more in “mom” or “dad” than in “husband/wife” or “son/daughter of God”?
2. What kind of marriage do you want your children or spiritual children to see modeled?
3. When you think about your future as an older couple, what words come to mind—excited, unsure, distant, hopeful?
4. How do you think your current priorities in marriage are shaping the legacy you’re leaving behind?

Parenting from a Christ-Centered Partnership

Read: Deuteronomy 6:5, 7 (NKJV)

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength... You shall teach them diligently to your children...”

Chapter 11 of *Oneness* exposes a common imbalance in many homes: children become the main focus and priority, Christ is crowded out, and the marriage gets neglected. Kids are a gift, not a god. Parenting is a calling, but not your core identity. Scripture places the marriage covenant as the anchor of the home—not the casualty of the children’s calendar. When Mom and Dad stay united, children gain stability and security. Oneness in parenting means you lead as a team, not as two contradicting voices. Boundaries, discipline, faith, and priorities flow from shared convictions, not from whichever parent reacts first or strongest. Kids flourish when they see a healthy order of loves: God first, marriage second, then parenting.

Oneness also calls couples to embrace the practical side of unity. Eric urges men to be fully engaged—not passive—and for couples to avoid shaping the entire home around the children’s demands or a chaotic schedule. Balance protects both marriage and family. Erin encourages women to appreciate the God-designed differences between men and women rather than battling

them. Mothers and fathers bring different strengths to the table—and both are needed. Partnership is essential. When husbands are involved, wives are honored, and both lean into their unique roles, the home experiences greater peace, clarity, and unity. Parents who lead together create not only secure children, but a lasting Christ-centered legacy.

Reflection

1. How can couples practically keep the order God → Marriage → Kids without neglecting their children? Why do kids actually feel more secure when this order is protected?
2. In many homes, children become the center of everything. What signs show that a home has become child-centered instead of Christ-centered? How does this affect marriage?
3. What parenting decisions are most likely to divide couples?
4. How do men and women bring different strengths to parenting? How can appreciating those differences strengthen unity instead of creating tension?

Building a Marriage That Endures Every Season

Read: Isaiah 43:19a (NIV)

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?”

Chapter 12 of *Oneness* asks a question many couples avoid until it’s suddenly staring them in the face: *Who are we when the kids are gone?* For years, marriages often run on child-centered schedules—sports, homework, routines, logistics. As we’ve just discussed, it’s easy for couples to slip into “all kids, no us” without ever intending to. Eric and Erin note in *Oneness* that when this happens, the marriage slowly shifts from friendship to coordination. Then the nest empties, and the relationship can feel unfamiliar or distant. The empty nest doesn’t break a marriage; it simply reveals whether connection has been nurtured along the way. *Oneness* in

this season begins long before the kids leave—through investing in friendship, protecting intimacy, and choosing to grow together now.

God does not retire your marriage when your children move out—He invites you into a new chapter. The empty-nest years can be rich with purpose, hospitality, ministry, and deeper companionship. But just like planning for retirement or writing a will, couples must prepare *now* for the marriage they want *later*. Strong empty-nest marriages are not formed in a last-minute weekend getaway—they’re built through steady, intentional choices to prioritize one another throughout the parenting years. When couples cultivate oneness today, they step into the next season not with fear or distance, but with unity, purpose, and joy.

Discussion Questions

1. If you’re in the parenting years, what are you doing now that future-you (empty nester you) will thank you for in your marriage?
2. Are there patterns—like only talking about kids or never spending time alone—that you need to release so God can “do a new thing” in your relationship?
3. If you’re already in (or near) an empty nest season, what has surprised you the most—good or bad?
4. What new “dreams, hobbies, or callings” might God be inviting you to explore together in the next season?

This Week’s Challenge

1. **Re-order the Priority:** Together, name your biblical order (God, marriage, kids, everything else) and choose *one* practical adjustment that reflects that (ex: a weekly date night, guarding church/Sabbath, saying no to one activity).
2. **Pray Over Your Children (or Spiritual Children):** Pray together by name for your kids/grandkids/young people you

influence, asking God to use your marriage as a stabilizing, Christ-reflecting witness.

3. **Future Vision Conversation:** Spend some time dreaming about your next season—trips, ministry, hobbies, ways to serve together. Write down 3 things you'd love to do as a couple.
4. **Marriage Blessing Letter:** Each of you write a short note to the other: "Here's what I pray our marriage will look like in 10 years." Share them.
5. **Reconnect Intentionally:** Choose one ongoing activity (monthly date, quarterly overnight, weekly walk) that you will commit to beyond this study to keep investing in oneness.

The End of the Study, Not the End of the Story

Over the last six weeks, you've walked through:

- God's design for oneness
- Speaking life into your marriage
- Honoring Christ with your finances
- Resolving conflict with forgiveness
- Intentionally pursuing intimacy and friendship
- Partnering in parenting while cultivating legacy

If this study revealed something tender or unresolved—don't be discouraged. That's where God begins His best work. Where you've seen progress, give thanks—those are the fingerprints of His grace.

Remember:

- You are not two people trying to survive under one roof
- You are one flesh, one team, one testimony of God's covenant love
- Your oneness is a weapon against the enemy and a picture of Christ and His Church
- Seeking help from a pastor or counselor is a sign of wisdom and strength, not failure, when your marriage needs support.

This may mark the end of this study— but the pursuit of oneness continues every day.

Keep praying.

Keep choosing each other.

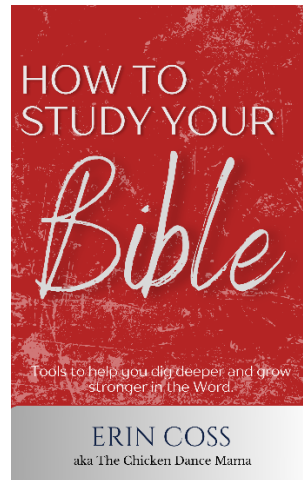
Keep running toward Jesus—together.

Because when husband and wife pursue God side by side,
their oneness becomes a legacy that outlives them.

Grow Deeper in God's Word

Your marriage is strongest when it's rooted in Scripture—so why not take the next step together?

As a thank-you for reading *Oneness* and pursuing God's design for marriage, we'd love to bless you with a free eBook.



***How to Study the Bible:
Tools to help you dig deeper and grow stronger in the Word.***

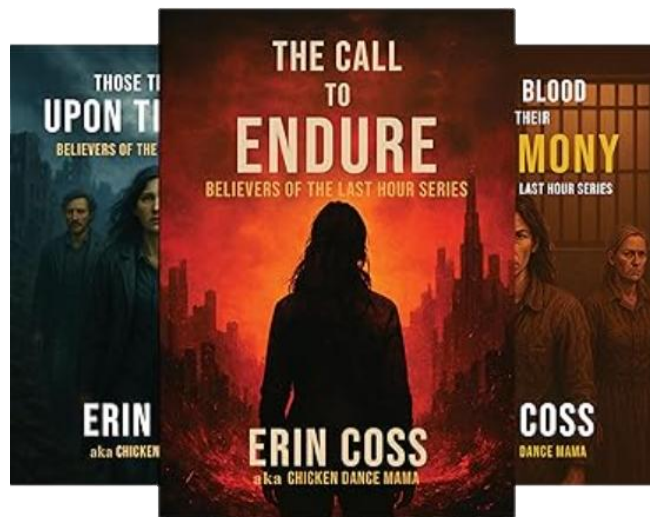
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"Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life." *James 1:12*

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