

Spiritual Relationships That Last

What the Bible Says
About Dating and Marriage

Gary DeLashmutt & Dennis McCallum

Participants' Study Guide



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Leader's Introduction

This study guide follows, chapter by chapter, the book, *Spiritual Relationships That Last*, by Dennis McCallum and Gary DeLashmutt. We refer to ourselves in the third person in order to keep the focus on the text. The guide is arranged for use in any one of four venues:

- Individual enrichment
- Couples pre-marital study
- Married couples' enrichment
- Group study.

We have seen excellent results using this book as a basis for small group as well as in premarital counseling. If using *Spiritual Relationships That Last* as a premarital or marital counseling aid, you may want to read the chapter together before going over the questions.

Hundreds of couples planning their marriage have reported that this study brought to light the issues God wanted to call to their attention. May God use the material to richly bless your present or future marriage as well as the other relationships in your life.

How to lead a group study based on this book:

First, read the chapter from the book. Then, come to this guide to deepen and apply the principles you learn in the book. If studying in a group, obtain copies of *Spiritual Relationships That Last* for each member of the group. The book may be available at your local bookstore. You can order it directly from Xenos Christian Fellowship by calling 1-800-698-7884, or by placing an order on our Webstore (www.xenos.org/store). Quantity discount pricing is available. The facilitator may need to select which questions to cover on a given chapter because covering all questions may take too long.

You can obtain more copies of this study guide for free by downloading from the Web site (www.xenos.org/store/relationships/guide.htm). You can purchase study guide booklets for a nominal fee by calling 1-800-698-7884.

Please feel free to send us feedback about problems or positive results by email, to MccallumD@xenos.org, or DelashmuttG@xenos.org, or come to the Xenos Web Site at www.xenos.org, and send us response there.

4. DeLashmutt and McCallum think Christian love has to do with serving others more than it does with feelings. What do you think of the passages they cite on p. 14 to back this up?
5. The authors mention married couples whose “love seems to desert them” after marriage. Are you aware of any cases where this occurred? If so, what does it mean?
6. Are you aware of any cases where a married person came to believe that he or she was in love with another person other than their spouse? If so, what lesson(s) can be drawn from such episodes?
7. Your friend says, “I wouldn’t buy a car without driving it around the block, and I wouldn’t marry someone without a trial marriage.” How would you assess such a statement?

three

What Does Christian Intimacy Look Like?

How would you rate yourself in the following areas: (Circle the one that is most true.)

1. I’m a careful listener.

Yes, very much	Average	Area of some weakness
----------------	---------	-----------------------
2. I’m committed and faithful in expending time on my relationships.

Yes, very much	Average	Area of some weakness
----------------	---------	-----------------------
3. I’m able to share deeply in the emotional realm.

Yes, very much	Average	Area of some weakness
----------------	---------	-----------------------
4. I’m able to get outside of myself and draw others out.

Yes, very much	Average	Area of some weakness
----------------	---------	-----------------------
5. I’m a warm and enthusiastic person.

Yes, very much	Average	Area of some weakness
----------------	---------	-----------------------
6. I avoid excessive “pigtail pulling” with my friends, and can express direct affection.

Yes, very much	Average	Area of some weakness
----------------	---------	-----------------------
7. I am able to take an interest in others’ hobbies, sports or special interests.

Yes, very much	Average	Area of some weakness
----------------	---------	-----------------------
8. I’m not afraid to confront others for their own good.

Yes, very much	Average	Area of some weakness
----------------	---------	-----------------------

9. I am receptive to criticism from my friends.

Yes, very much Average Area of some weakness

10. I think and pray about my loved ones when I am not with them.

Yes, very much Average Area of some weakness

11. I don't look to other people for my sense of worth.

Yes, very much Average Area of some weakness

12. I control my feelings, avoiding unnecessarily hurtful expressions.

Yes, very much Average Area of some weakness

13. I feel good about my ability to help my loved ones maximize their potential.

Yes, very much Average Area of some weakness

14. I often encourage my loved ones, and let them know I love them.

Yes, very much Average Area of some weakness

Check your work

If you are studying with a fiancée or spouse, compare your answers. Do each of you agree with the other's self-assessment? Discuss any differences.

If you are studying with a group, you need not say which one you circled unless you want to. Discuss what someone who feels weak in each area could do to develop more in that area.

four Learning Christian Love

1. Do you agree with the authors that people need the experience of building one or more successful intimate relationships (non-romantic) *before* they can feel confident they will succeed in marriage? Why or why not?
2. Can you suggest an alternative method that would point toward likely marriage success?
3. Respond to the authors' question: "If we are not successfully loving people at the intimate level before marriage, what makes us think we will be able to do so after marriage?"

4. The authors also say: “Likewise, if we are married, but find no examples of intimate relationship outside our marriage, perhaps the problem is not with our spouse after all!” What are they suggesting? Do you agree?

5. Do your own relational inventory. What areas do you see as areas of strength? What areas need improvement?

five **Growing Together: Marriage and Community**

1. Biblical teachings about modesty suggest that privacy is appropriate in a marriage relationship. Yet, as the authors show, marriage is often cast in the context of Christian community. Where do you see the boundaries between the privacy of the marital relationship and the shared life of the Christian community?

Try to imagine things that might be inappropriate in the direction of encroachment by the community into marriage.

Try to imagine things that might be inappropriate in the direction of unqualified individualism and privacy.

2. Would you ask counsel of older Christians on your readiness for marriage? Or do you feel this is an area that is nobody else's business?

3. Why do the authors think parents and older Christians are a source of counsel but not a "chain of authority?" What is the difference? Do you agree?

4. Are you aware of any time when a troubled marriage was helped by the Christian community?

5. Is your own involvement in body life superficial? Do you merely go to meetings? Or are you vitally involved in relationships and ministry? What are some steps you could take to upgrade your level of involvement?

six**Competent to Give:
Marriage and Ministry**

1. DeLashmutt and McCallum say that the same things that prevent people from developing a successful ministry also create problems in marriage. How true do you think this is?

2. Considering your own ministry, select the answer that most accurately represents your current standing: (Circle the one that is most true.)

Ministry Should Be Concrete.

Yes, mine is Partially true Not really

Ministry Should Include the Personal.

Yes, mine is Partially true Not really

We Should Be Able to Minister Separately.

Yes, mine is Partially true Not really

We Should Be Able to Minister When Together

Yes, mine is Partially true Not really

3. For each of the categories above you marked as partially or not true, think of ways you could possibly upgrade your involvement:

Ministry Should Be Concrete.

Ministry Should Include the Personal.

We Should Be Able to Minister Separately.

We Should Be Able to Minister When Together.

4. Do you agree with the authors' claim that a couple who minister only to their own family is engaging in corporate selfishness? Does God call us to serve others outside our family?
5. "The best time to get married is when two people feel that both will be more effective for Christ married than single." How do you react to this statement?

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Building on a Solid Foundation

1. The authors claim, "Many dating couples erroneously believe that positive spiritual habits will be easier to develop after they are married. In fact, the opposite is often true." Do you believe that married couples find themselves sharing, praying etc. less than they did when single? If you are single, interview several married couples and raise this question. What do they say?

2. For dating or engaged couples, assess where you stand as a couple in each of these areas recommended by the authors. For each recommendation, check the statement you identify with most:

Encourage Independent Growth

- Neither of us are possessive. We both pursue independent growth.
- One of us is a bit possessive. We are not always free to pursue independent growth.
- We don't see the importance of independent growth. We believe we are trying to forge unity, not independence.

Regular Scheduled Time

- We schedule time at least weekly for spiritual sharing.
- We don't schedule time, but we do well with spontaneous sharing and prayer.
- We hope to see improvement in this area.

3. Is it wrong to want your spouse to have a pleasant-looking body?

4. DeLashmutt and McCallum claim, “Those who practice premarital sex on an on-going basis are also deliberately reserving the right to exit the relationship easily, should they decide to. In other words, when someone calls on you for premarital sex, this person is really saying, ‘I want to use your body to meet my sexual appetite, but I want to remain free to reject you afterward.’” Can you suggest a different motive for premarital sex?

5. Does loss of sexual self-control necessarily inhibit communication in a dating relationship? Does it necessarily inhibit development of good spiritual habits?

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Are We Moving in the Same Direction?

1. The authors claim that the Bible teaches different sexual roles for men and women in marriage, including male leadership. Do you agree? Why or why not?

2. Why do the authors think centering a marriage around God’s authority is a basis for closeness?

3. Name some of the limitations you see on the idea of headship in marriage.

4. The authors say, “Our postmodern aversion to authority is incompatible with Christianity, not only because it flies in the face of biblical teaching, but because it is based on our fear of corrupt and self-serving authority figures.” How significant do you think “aversion to authority” is in our culture? Do you ever struggle with aversion to authority?

5. The authors also say, “Both partners in a marriage should understand and agree on their concept of headship before getting married.” If you are engaged, do you agree?

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Overcoming Obstacles From the Past: Relationships

1. DeLashmutt and McCallum say that romantic love is blind. What do they mean by this? Drawing from your own experience in this area, do you agree with this assertion?

2. How can you gain a more realistic assessment of the other person before marriage?

3. Take an honest inventory of the sexual damage you have incurred. What kinds of sexual sin have you been involved in? To what extent and over how long a period of time? What negative effects can you identify? How much healing has occurred in this area? What negative effects should you look out for in marriage?

Are you able to be content with what you have materially? Do you consciously distinguish between “wants” and “needs”? What is your history of consumer credit debt?

How regularly and generously do you give your money to God’s service?

What are your short-term and long-term spiritual goals?

How do you view retirement?

3. For seriously dating or engaged couples, discuss your history of serious psychological problems. What help have you received for these problems? To what extent are they under control?
Problems are “under control” when they do not substantially interfere with our ability to sustain close love relationships.

twelve **Personal Maturity**

1. If you are single, have you spent a significant time as a Christian without romantic involvement? What has God taught you about trusting him and about your own character during this time?

Those who have responded to the trial of loneliness properly, will be thankful for that trial because they have learned valuable lessons. Such lessons include: increased confidence that God will truly meet their needs, a lifestyle built around love-giving rather than love-taking, and transformation of character issues that affect relational ability (forgiveness; loving confrontation; emotional sensitivity; active listening).

2. If you are seriously dating or engaged, explain why you are confident that your partner is committed to spiritual maturity.

3. Take inventory of your maturity in functional responsibility: fiscal management and performance at school and work. If you have problems here, what practical steps can you take to improve?

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A Fulfilling Marriage *Is* Possible

We leave this chapter open for you to discuss as you see fit. The issues are simple and discussion may very well be included with the previous chapter in group study or counseling.

We hope you enjoyed your study of *Spiritual Relationships That Last*. You may also benefit from similar study guides for the authors' other books. These books and study guides are all available at the Xenos Web site (www.xenos.org/store), or at your local bookstore.

Books by Gary DeLashmutt:

Loving God's Way (Kregel). Discussion questions available at the end of each chapter.

Books by Dennis McCallum:

Christianity: The Faith That Makes Sense (Tyndale House).

The Death of Truth: What's Wrong With Multiculturalism, The Rejection of Reason, and the New Postmodern Diversity? (Bethany House).

Walking in Victory: Experiencing the Power of your Identity in Christ (Greydon Press).

The Summons a novel (Navpress). No study guide available.

