

Personal & Group Study Guide: February 27, 2022
Message Series: In Search of a Soulmate (Part Three)
Message Title: *Three Ways to Strengthen Your Marriage*

Series Intro: Dating was hard enough for single people *before* Covid, social distancing, lockdowns, mask mandates, and the politicization of this pandemic rocked our world. But now, for many single people, it feels all but impossible. Under pressure from their friends and family inside and outside the Church, many single Christians who long to find love are quick to build a wall between their faith in God and their desires for romance and intimacy. The Bible, however, couldn't be clearer: those desires we all experience are from God, and as far as He is concerned, our universal longing for love and commitment is a feature, not a bug.

How can Christians learn to date, relate, and marry in ways that reflect God's design and intention for our lives? By choosing to tear down the walls we build between our faith and our desires, we will see more clearly how to seek, choose, and cherish true love according to the principles of the One who hardwired us for romance.

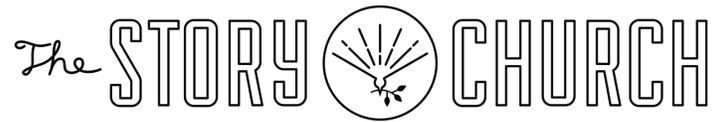
What is a *soulmate*, and why isn't the *Soulmate Philosophy* compatible with a biblical understanding of love and marriage?

Check out this quote on marriage from Dr. Stanley Hauerwas:

"Destructive to marriage is the self-fulfillment ethic that assumes marriage and the family are primarily institutions of personal fulfillment, necessary for us to become "whole" and happy. The assumption is that there is someone just right for us to marry and that if we look closely enough we will find the right person...[but] it fails to appreciate the fact that we always marry the wrong person. We never know whom we marry; we just think we do. Or even if we first marry the right person, just give it a while and he or she will change...The primary challenge of marriage is learning how to love and care for the stranger to whom you find yourself married."

What does he mean by "we always marry the wrong person" and why does it matter?

Why is marriage important to any society? And why should Christians hold marriage in high esteem (see Genesis 2:23-24, Proverbs 31, Hebrews 13:4)



3 Ways to Strengthen a Marriage (& 3 Questions Every Married Person Should Ask)

1. **Your** _____. (*What are you* _____?)

What was the real meaning behind the fig-leaf underwear that Adam and Eve made for themselves?

Read Genesis 3:21. What did God do when He saw their fig-leaf coverings, and what was the meaning behind His response?

When we're living in sin and selfishness, what sorts of "clothes" do we put on? (see Colossians 3:5-9) How can God give us something better to "wear"?

2. **Your** _____. (*Who are you* _____?)

Read Colossians 3:12-14. What are the new "clothes" God gives believers, and how can putting on these new clothes affect us over time?

For Paul and the first-century Christians, what important ritual involved literally taking off your old clothes and receiving new ones? What did that ritual represent for new believers?

3. **Your** _____. (*Why should you* _____?)

What is a covenant, how were covenants usually sealed, and what are some examples of covenants being made in the Bible?

Read Gen. 18:9-12. What promises did God make to Abraham and Sarah in Genesis, and why might they have doubted whether God would keep His promises?

Why is it important for married people to wait on the Lord to heal and renew their marriage covenant, instead of treating their marriage like a contract that can be rendered null and void? What might we miss if we choose to cut and run?