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The Power of Influence



SESSION 2

The world says, “Follow your heart”
but God wants us to lead our hearts.
If you are not leading your heart, then
someone or something else is. The people
you listen to and the influences you allow
into your life can impact your very
destiny as a couple.





OPENING THOUGHTS AND CONVERSATION STARTERS

1. **Enjoy letting your group get a glimpse of the story of your life and marriage.**

How did you meet your mate?

What crazy things have you done as a couple?

Who do you admire?



*“Therefore, submit to God.
But resist the Devil, and he
will flee from you.”*

JAMES 4:7, HCSB

YOUR LOVE DARES IN ACTION

Days 1-5 in *The Love Dare* challenged you to live in kindness and patience with each other. If the past week was difficult, realize that you have an enemy who detests your choosing to participate in this journey of demonstrating genuine love.

2. **What was your greatest obstacle in setting aside time for the Love Dares this week?**

How difficult was it “to demonstrate patience and to say nothing negative to your spouse at all”?

What did you learn about your spouse this week? Yourself?

Love requires thoughtfulness, on both sides—the kind of thoughtfulness that builds bridges through the constructive combination of patience, kindness, and selflessness. Love teaches you how to meet in the middle, to respect and appreciate how your spouse uniquely thinks.

Together let's examine positive and negative influences on our lives and love.

3. It's hard to grow a rose in a house fire! How does the metaphor of a fire out of control reflect the state of many marriages today?

“A woman is like a rose.

If you treat her right,
she'll bloom.

If you don't she'll wilt.”

MICHAEL IN

FIREPROOF

To the difficulty in our culture of trying to succeed in marriage?

Which of these influences pose threats to marriages in our community, church, and circle of friends? Rank them 1-6 (with 1 highest threat).

Fire Hazards

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| _____ Media/Internet | _____ Money/debt |
| _____ Relationships | _____ Schedules |
| _____ Work | _____ Other: |
| _____ Recreation | |

What are the top three influences in your life?



Gear Up

ENGAGING IN RELEVANT SCRIPTURE STUDY



MOVIE MOMENTS

Watch FIREPROOF clip 3 and debrief with question 5.



As you look at influences in your life and marriage, try to answer the question *Who's whispering in your ear?*

4. **In terms of influences, what differences did you observe between Catherine's conversation with her friends and Caleb's conversation with his father?**

How are you strengthening your marriage with your words?

"Marriage is hard work! For two people in a marriage to live together day after day is unquestionably the one miracle the Vatican has overlooked."

BILL COSBY

Michael proved to be a constant friend to Caleb, who is not yet ready to accept Michael's counsel. Catherine's friends, on the other hand, thought themselves to be supportive but were actually endangering their marriage.

Even some of Jesus' best friends, out of love for Him, tried to talk Him out of going to the cross. Imagine if He had followed their advice!

Well-meaning friends, in an attempt to look out for what's best for us, can provide strong negative influence. See the e-mail on the next page.

Hey Dan

Thought I'd send you this e-mail because I know you are going through some pretty difficult stuff. You mentioned you and Jan were having trouble and that sometimes it seems the entire marriage is falling apart.

I know you're committed to marriage but if you are that unhappy, maybe you should just go ahead and divorce. I know you're concerned about your kids, but just remember that tons of kids go through the divorces of parents and turn out fine.

Plus, if you really want to help them, you are going to have to find your joy, and it certainly seems like there's no joy in your marriage. Just some friendly advice ...

- 5. What lies do you think this friend has bought into? How have they influenced his view of marriage?**



...(Satan) is a liar and the father of liars.

JOHN 8:44

- 6. According to Proverbs 20:8, "A king sitting on a throne to judge sifts out all evil with his eyes." How does this proverb encourage a wise spouse to respond to negative influences in marriage?**

MORE ON
THE POWER
OF INFLUENCE
Proverbs 1:10-15
Ecclesiastes 4:5-7
Matthew 5:29
1 Corinthians 12:2
Acts 9:31

Like many proverbs, this one contrasts wisdom with foolishness. A wise spouse is able to recognize influences that could harm his or her marriage and quickly divert attention from them. While some negative influences are easy to spot, others are much more challenging to recognize.

7. In the “He Said/She Said” segment, Caleb said, “Our marriage has been fine until this year.” Do you believe this to be true? Why or why not?

Based on Genesis 3:1-6, how does Satan use subtlety to turn a spark of influence into an outright blaze?

The Bible tells us many times that Satan is “most cunning.” Even today he whispers in our ears, “It won’t hurt you”; “Did God really say that? He didn’t mean it” and so forth. The

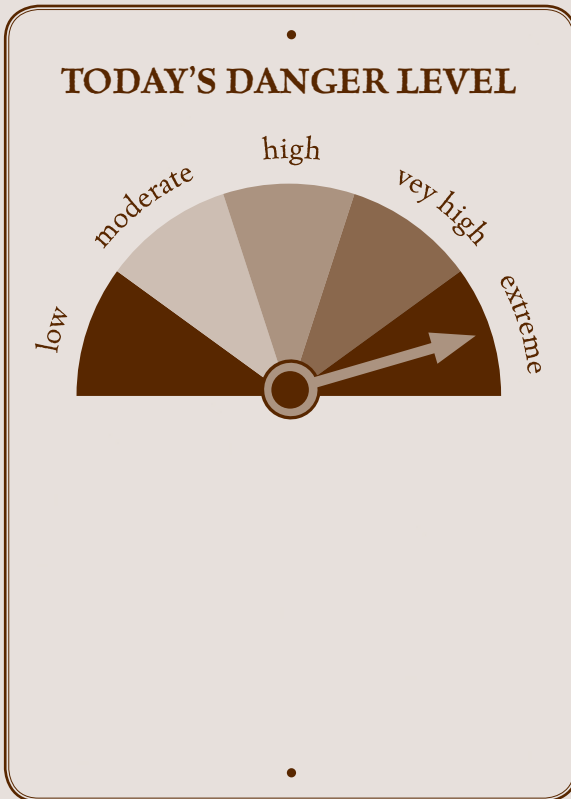
enemy uses his knowledge of God and Scripture to plant doubts and to entice us in wrong directions.

What subtle sparks of influence can you identify in your life? Do any have potential to become a roaring fire? List them on the sign below.

FOR HELP, CONSIDER THESE VERSES...

Titus 2:2-3

Proverbs 31



YOUR FIRE ESCAPE

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. God is faithful and He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape ...”

1 CORINTHIANS 10:13

One way you can choose to lead your heart is by replacing negative influences with godly ones.



Firefighting

COMPELLING COUPLES TO TRANSFORM THEIR MARRIAGES

Recognizing the sparks that threaten to burn down our marriages is one thing. Extinguishing the blaze is something entirely different. It is critical that we pursue godly advice, healthy friendships, and experienced mentors to benefit from the wisdom they have gained through their own successes and failures.

Proverbs 13:20 tells us, “The one who walks with the wise will become wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm.”

8. What are you looking for in a wise influence?

Couple Questions:

- **What couples do we know who bring a strong, positive mentoring influence to our marriage?**
- **What couple could we connect with to strengthen our marriage?**

Gaining wise counsel is like having a detailed road map and a personal guide on a long, challenging journey. It can mean the difference between continual success or the destruction of another marriage.

Fireproofing your marriage is about embracing the power of influence by resisting the negative hazards and inviting the positive influences to speak truth into your life and marriage. You not only safeguard your covenant relationship, you also become a positive influence to others.



Fireproof Now

COMMITTING THROUGH REFLECTION AND PRAYER

9. If you were to express a personal commitment based on the word love, what might it look like? Check an action that reflects your heart desire.

Lord, as I ask for godly influence to fireproof my marriage. I choose to...

— *L*ove my spouse by ...
... choosing to listen to godly wisdom and the Word of God.

— *O*bey God by ...
making wise choices for friends, mentors, and companions in the workplace, in recreation and other settings.

— *V*alue my marriage by ...
believing that God will honor my choice to stay within the covenant of marriage and by spending time and effort to make my marriage one that can influence others in a positive way.

— *E*xpress these truths by ...
continuing in this Love Dare journey and valuing this time of renewal and challenge.

A PRAYER FOR GODLY INFLUENCE

Father God,

I pray that Your voice will be so prominent an influence that my mind, will, and emotions desire to relentlessly pursue a God-honoring marriage.

I confess that my heart is easily influenced by lesser voices.

So give me an unfailing desire for Your ways, not mine. Help me to seek Your truth, not a false, deceptive counterfeit.

Bring people into my life who will guide me into a deeper love for You and my spouse. Amen.



LIVING THE LOVE DARE THIS WEEK

As you take a look at the next five Love Dares, continue to take action! Encourage others in your group; initiate conversations and e-mails during the week; and, pray for yourself, your spouse, and other couples.

Most of all, join God in His work to strengthen marriages and see what happens. Live the dare!

Next week in The Love Dare read and do:

Days 6-10