



Note to Leaders: Every Small Group is Different. Don't feel like you have to answer every question. Pick questions that will stir up conversation and action among your group

## INTRODUCTION

When you got married, or if you are thinking about getting married, you will approach marriage with a **“box” of desires, hopes and dreams**. You move forward with the phrase “I imagine... I wish... I dream...” on various topics like: where you are going to live, how many children you are going to have, roles for the wife/husband, transportation and finances, etc.

All of these desires have one thing in common – **“I”**. You may even discuss these desires before you get married. Then you get married and at some point you begin to do things subconsciously that has an impact on the relationship. Without knowing why, you eventually begin to take all of your desires and begin to place all of these things into a different category. Desires become expectations.

**When your desires are translated into expectations your relationship becomes a debt and debtor relationships.** “You owe me” becomes the phrase in play on both sides and the focus remains on the big “I.” As long as you are dumping your desires on your spouse and your spouse is dumping their desires on you, the intimacy and the romance in your relationship will begin to disappear. Then, one of these things might happen:

1. **You leave.** You pick up your box of desires and you will bring it with you to your next relationship.
2. **You win.** The stronger partner wins and dominates the relationship.
3. **You conform.** This is the opposite of WIN where the weaker partner conforms for the sake of the marriage.
4. **You compromise** when necessary but you continue to focus on your desires.

Imagine a marriage where everything just stayed in the Desire Box. Imagine a marriage in which you spent your time trying to fulfill the dreams and desires of your spouse instead of trying to reach up to the expectations of the person your married. This is a covenant God has in mind for your marriage and it opens the opportunity for intimacy.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you define the purpose of marriage? What are some of the influences and experiences that shaped your definition?
2. Take a few minutes to write down some of your hopes, dreams, and desires. To what extent do you assume marriage can fulfill them?
3. When you run into conflict in a relationship, is your tendency to leave, try to win, conform, or compromise? How has that worked in the past?
4. Read Ephesians 5:1–2. Does the idea of “giving yourself up” to another person—without the expectation that they will fulfill your hopes, dreams, and desires—seem reasonable? Why or why not?
5. Do you think marriage is about compromise? Why or why not?
6. If you are single, or a divorced person, what can you take away from this?

## MOVING FORWARD

What does your spouse (or future spouse) owe you? Nothing. Happy couples know they owe each other everything, but are owed nothing in return. So, take your cue from Jesus' all-encompassing command: “As I have loved you, you are to love one another” (John 13:34).

## CHANGING YOUR MIND

Follow God's example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.  
Ephesians 5:1–2