

Study Guide

for

Walk with Me:

Pilgrim's Progress
for Married Couples

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Getting Started

If you've already read *Walk with Me: Pilgrim's Progress for Married Couples*, you may recall the part where Peter and Celeste stopped at a gathering hut on their way to King's City (pages 133–137). There they met with other couples to discuss the challenges of being married. As they spent time considering God's Word with fellow pilgrims, they were encouraged in their journey. This study guide is designed to give you the same opportunity.

Each of the nine sessions is based on a chapter from *Walk with Me*, and draws on biblical wisdom, focusing on how we can love as God has loved us.

For Group Discussion and Individual Study

The study guide offers three separate tracks: Discuss, Going Deeper, and Reflect. You can choose the track that best meets your needs, or you can do a combination.

- 1) **Discuss** offers questions designed for an adult Sunday school class or small group. If you choose this track, you'll want to allow about 50 minutes for discussion.
- 2) **Going Deeper** has questions that give a more in-depth look at the topic, suitable for small groups. Each session in this track also takes about 50 minutes to complete. If you prefer, you can combine the Discuss and Going Deeper tracks together for a longer session. You'll want to allow about 90 minutes to cover both.
- 3) **Reflect** offers questions for personal reflection. You can go through these questions alone or discuss them with your spouse without being part of a group. Group members may also want to use these questions for individual reflection in between meetings.

In whatever way you decide to use the study guide, you certainly don't have to cover all the material. The main goal is not to answer every question but to reflect on what makes a strong and healthy marriage.

What You'll Need

Each person can print out a copy of the study guide for his or her own use. In addition, having a Bible and a copy of *Walk with Me* on hand will help you get the most out of your study.

If you're meeting in a group, it's best to read the appropriate chapter in the book and think about the questions before you gather. Writing down your responses can also help you reflect.

Alternative Session Plans

At the end of the study guide, there are outlines for a 6-week study and a 12-week study.

On the King's Way: Becoming Partners

» Discuss «

The Great Question: Deciding to walk together

- 1) Take a few minutes to share briefly how you and your spouse met.
- 2) Peter and Celeste discovered they had a mutual love of kicking pebbles (pages 25–26). What attracted you initially to your spouse?

The Cords of Commitment: Getting married

- 3) Peter and Celeste had a cord woven around their wrists to symbolize their commitment to each other (page 30). The three strands of the cord were:
 - their strengths and values they had in common
 - their love and laying down their life for each other
 - their promise to stay together

Which of these strands is most important in a marriage? Why?

- 4) What are some key ingredients a couple needs to remain committed to each other?
- 5) The guide, Devotion, mentioned several advantages of being married (page 32):
 - doubling joy
 - dividing grief
 - the strength of two halves making a whole
 - enjoying life together
 - physical intimacy
 - children

What other benefits would you add to this list?

Which ones have meant the most to you and why?

6) If there is time, share something memorable about your wedding day.

On the King's Way: Becoming Partners

» Going Deeper «

The Great Question: Deciding to walk together

1) Share some interests and activities you and your spouse have in common.

The Cords of Commitment: Getting married

2) If you were designing your own Cords of Commitment, what would your three strands symbolize and why (page 30)?

3) How has your marriage strengthened your faith?

In what ways has your faith strengthened your marriage?

4) Although marriage is not just for Christians, what difference do you think being a follower of Christ can make in a marriage and why?

5) The guide, Devotion, cautioned Peter and Celeste about the difficulties couples can experience (pages 31-32):

When they set out for the Mountains of Maturity, as everyone must, they came to challenging routes they never knew existed. Soon the excitement of being partners disappeared, and they discovered their partner had flaws and limitations they had never seen before. . . . You will be traveling together longer than you have already lived, and on a path harder than you have ever walked. You may begin to feel like a prisoner, and your braided cords will feel like handcuffs.

Do you think Devotion was being too pessimistic about the challenges of marriage? Why or why not?

On the King's Way: Becoming Partners

» Reflect «

The Great Question: Deciding to walk together

1) What three qualities do you admire most in your spouse?

The Cords of Commitment: Getting married

2) Peter and Celeste's Cords of Commitment became worn and frayed during their journey (page 171). Reflect on the current state of your marriage commitment. In what areas do you need to strengthen your commitment to your spouse?

In what area does the bond between you need to be repaired?

What steps could you take to do that?

3) Read I Corinthians 13 and look at the qualities of love that are mentioned. Which one do you find is easiest to put into action with your spouse?

Which one has been the most difficult for you?

Which of these does your spouse do well?

4) Peter and Celeste learned about the Highlands, an allegory for spiritual maturity in marriage (pages 36–37). In what areas of your marriage have you made good progress towards the Highlands?

Where do you think you need to grow in maturity?

- 5) Spend some time looking at pictures from your engagement and wedding and reflect on how you and your spouse have grown since then.

In the Low Country: Learning to Live Together

» Discuss «

At Lady Sophia and Lord Will's: Getting guidance

1) What was the most helpful advice you received at the start of your marriage?

The worst?

2) Will said that he and Sophia needed time to learn to walk together (page 51). What one quirk of yours did your spouse discover in the early days of your marriage?

3) Will and Sophia shared several items of advice about being married (page 51–52):

- develop good walking patterns together
- pay attention to weakness and troubles and deal with them immediately
- keep the Cords of Commitment on
- climb Skull Hill
- keep love for the King strong
- serve the King with heart and soul
- keep on the King's path
- listen to guides
- visit gathering huts
- share with other travelers
- persevere

Which of these has been most meaningful to you in your marriage so far and why?

Through Echo Gap: Relating with parents

4) When did you first hear yourself say something your mother or father said?

What was it (pages 53–55)?

5) Read Matthew 19:4–6 about two becoming one. What are some of the challenges a couple faces in leaving their parents?

In the Burr Patch of Unkind Words: The power of what we say

6) After being stuck with burrs, Peter and Celeste read Ephesians 4:29–32, which talks about building people up with our words (page 64). Who in your life has been a good example of that?

Would you say those people are naturally gifted in this or is it something they have developed over time?

How do you think a person can mature in this area?

In the Low Country: Learning to Live Together

» Going Deeper «

At Lady Sophia and Lord Will's: Getting guidance

- 1) Sophia gave Peter and Celeste a copy of the guidebook and said it was for everyone, married or single (page 50). Two Bible passages Will and Sophia mentioned are Colossians 3:13 about forgiveness and Philippians 2:14 about not complaining. Read those verses and discuss how a spouse might live them out in marriage.

- 2) Peter and Celeste suffered painful bee stings on the Forbidden Path (pages 43–44.) Later they noticed Will and Sophia's scars (page 47) and heard about wounds other couples experienced. Then they were given a rag of compassion soaked in the Servant's tears (page 49). Read Luke 19:41 where Jesus weeps over Jerusalem and John 11:33–35 where Jesus weeps at the death of Lazarus. What does this kind of compassion look like in a marriage?

Through Echo Gap: Relating with parents

- 3) Read Deuteronomy 5:16, which commands us to honor our parents. Then read Ephesians 5:31, which instructs us to leave our parents and be united with our spouse. What do you think honoring parents looks like after marriage?

What doesn't it mean?

In the Burr Patch of Unkind Words: The power of what we say

- 4) The burrs fell off Peter and Celeste when kind and compassionate words were spoken (page 64). Share an example of when hearing kind words has helped you.

5) Read the following verses on speech:

- Proverbs 12:18—*The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.*
- Proverbs 15:1—*A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.*
- Proverbs 16:24—*Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.*

How can a married person put these verses into action, both positively and negatively?

In the Low Country: Learning to Live Together

» Reflect «

On the Forbidden Path: Choosing our way

- 1) Read Psalm 119:30–35, which talks about following God’s way. What are some of God’s commands that you find particularly difficult to obey in your marriage?

How might obeying them benefit you?

Through Echo Gap: Relating with parents

- 2) What echoes do you sometimes hear from your past (pages 53–55)?
- 3) Celeste and Peter were told that whispering sweet loving phrases can counter the negative messages they heard when they were younger (page 54). What affirmation does your spouse need to hear? Make it a point to share it with him or her this week.
- 4) On page 57, family strings were tied over the Cords of Commitment. In what ways have your family ties interfered with your commitment to your spouse? What can you do to leave your parents in these areas?

In the Burr Patch of Unkind Words: The power of what we say

- 5) What are the most affirming things someone has said to you recently?

How did it make you feel?

- 6) What burrs or barbs have you thrown recently?

What kind words can you say to help remove them?

Around the Mountains of Maturity: Watching Out for Distractions

» Discuss «

Into the Sand Dunes of Foolishness: Taking an easy path

- 1) Think about a time when you climbed a mountain or did something physically challenging. What part was most difficult?

Did you ever feel like giving up?

What was the most rewarding part?

- 2) Instead of starting up the Mountains of Maturity, Peter and Celeste chose a path to the beach. As a result, they became trapped in the Sand Dunes of Foolishness (pages 67–74). What are some decisions a married couple can make that might seem good at the time but later have negative consequences for them?

- 3) How were Peter and Celeste affected by their stay at the beach?

What impact did it have on their relationship (page 72)?

What effect did it have on their spiritual life (page 73)?

Up to Pigeon Hole Pass: Studying but not living God's Word

- 4) Jesus often warned His followers about false holiness. Read Matthew 23:25–28 where Jesus speaks against this. In what ways did the emphasis on external compliance of the Pigeon Holes affect people's relationships there (pages 84–85)?

5) Although the Sand Dunes of Foolishness and the Pigeon Holes appeared to be very different, both were spiritually dry places. Peter helped Celeste leave the Sand Dunes (pages 73–74); then Celeste helped Peter leave the Pigeon Holes (pages 88–89). In what concrete ways can a spouse encourage his or her partner’s spiritual life?

How might they discourage it?

6) What do you think would have been the long-term effects on Peter and Celeste’s marriage if they hadn’t left the Sand Dunes?

If they had stayed at the Pigeon Holes?

Around the Mountains of Maturity: Watching Out for Distractions

» Going Deeper «

Into the Sand Dunes of Foolishness: Taking an easy path

- 1) What are some examples of irresponsible or foolish living you have seen in real life?
- 2) Several key necessities were missing at the Sand Dunes of Foolishness. What do you think each of these allegories represents: shelter, fresh water, solid ground, food, protection from the lion?

How does each one help a person stay spiritually alive?

Up to Pigeon Hole Pass: Studying but not living God's Word

- 3) What are some of the drawbacks to living at the Pigeon Holes?

On the Split Path, and Yielding at Submission Pond: Submitting to each other

- 4) Peter and Celeste each faced a personal challenge: Peter at the Split Path (pages 90–98) and Celeste at Submission Pond (pages 122–131). Do you think it is possible to love without having respect for the person?

To have respect without having love?

- 5) Share a story about someone you know who is a good example of sacrificial love.
- 6) Read Mark 10:42–45 where Jesus says that the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve. When one or both spouses put this passage into practice, what concrete differences does it make in their marriage?

Around the Mountains of Maturity: Watching Out for Distractions

» Reflect «

Into the Sand Dunes of Foolishness: Taking an easy path

1) With whom do you identify most in this section, Peter or Celeste?

Why?

Up to Pigeon Hole Pass: Studying but not living God's Word

2) When in your life have you been more concerned about your external righteousness than your internal holiness?

What effect did it have on your relationship with God?

Your relationships with others?

3) What challenged you the most in this section?

4) To leave the Sand Dunes and the Pigeon Holes, Peter and Celeste needed to help each other (pages 73-74 and 88-89). What is one way you can encourage your spouse's spiritual life this week?

On the Split Path, and Yielding at Submission Pond: Submitting to each other

5) Peter and Celeste each faced a personal challenge, Peter at the Split Path (pages 90–98) and Celeste at Submission Pond (pages 122–131). When do you find it difficult to love your spouse sacrificially?

When do you find it difficult submit to your spouse?

6) What is one way you can serve your spouse this week?

Across the Swamp of Selfishness: Growing in Maturity

» Discuss «

Lost in the Quagmires: Looking for firmer ground

- 1) Peter and Celeste decided to go straight through the Swamp of Selfishness (page 102). When did a short-cut take much longer than you expected?
- 2) To avoid the Swamp of Selfishness, Peter and Celeste would have had to climb the Mountains of Maturity. Read 2 Peter 1:5–7. In what ways might persistence, self-control, patient endurance, godliness, kindness, love, and virtue help a married person love his or her spouse better?
- 3) The swamp had many quagmires—including greed, self-indulgence, and ingratitude. What might those look like in a marriage relationship?

Beneath the Burdens of Their Bags: Dealing with the past

- 4) Peter and Celeste discovered they were carrying unacknowledged burdens from the past, such as unconfessed sin, hurts from others, traditions, and self-righteousness (pages 115–119). How might these affect a marriage?
- 5) What is involved in getting rid of these burdens?

What are some first steps a person could take?

- 6) Look at Matthew 11:30 (“my yoke is easy”), and Matthew 16:24 (“take up their cross and follow me”). What is the difference between carrying an unnecessary burden and carrying one’s cross?

Across the Swamp of Selfishness: Growing in Maturity

» Going Deeper «

Lost in the Quagmires: Looking for firmer ground

- 1) Peter and Celeste each received kingly gifts when they started their journey (page 47): humility (thinking of others), the righteousness of Christ, the grace of God's favor and forgiveness, and the desire to praise God. How could these be helpful in a marriage and why?

- 2) Read Galatians 5:19–21 and look at the qualities of a self-oriented life: envy, pride, greed, self-indulgence, ingratitude, slander, jealousy, fits of rage. Which of these do you think could be most harmful in a marriage?

The Snapping Turtles: Being wounded by words

- 3) While battling the snapping turtles, Peter and Celeste used their clubs on each other briefly (page 109). In what ways can words be used like clubs?

The Little Traveler Joins the Journey: Passing love on

- 4) Celeste grows more secure in Peter's love (page 120). What can a person do to help his or her spouse feel more secure?

- 5) When Peter and Celeste have a child, they decide to make some changes (pages 121–122). How can having children make a difference in a marriage?

Across the Swamp of Selfishness: Growing in Maturity

» Reflect «

Lost in the Quagmires: Looking for firmer ground

1) Peter and Celeste turned away from the Mountains of Maturity: Persistence, Self-control, Patience, Godliness, Kindness, Love, and Virtue (2 Peter 1:5-7). In which of these are you now growing?

In which of these do you need to start growing?

What steps can you take to begin?

2) The Swamp of Selfishness was filled with quagmires: envy, pride, greed, self-indulgence, ingratitude, slander, jealousy, fits of rage. Which is the deepest quagmire in your marriage right now?

What can you do to get out of it?

3) Celeste helped Peter out of the quagmire of self-pity (page 113). If your spouse is stuck in a selfish quagmire, what could you do to help him or her get out of it?

4) Peter and Celeste met a couple who advised them to put aside irritations and grievances (page 107). What irritations about your spouse do you need to put aside?

The couple was also working on listening to each other instead of getting angry. Where do you need to listen better to your spouse?

Beneath the Burdens of Their Bags: Dealing with the past

5) What are some burdens that have you been able to leave behind?

What burdens do you still need to get rid of?

What could you do this month to begin that process?

6) Consider how the Good Samaritan helped the man who had been beaten (Luke 10:30-37). In what ways has your spouse's love helped heal wounds from your past?

What wounds has your spouse suffered in his or her life?

What can you do to help tend these wounds?

Under the Disillusioning Sun: Staying Faithful

» Discuss «

At the Gathering Hut: Joining with others for encouragement

1) Share an event or tell about someone who encouraged you during a challenging period of your marriage.

2) The guide of the gathering hut, Encouragement, talked about the help God gives as we follow Jesus (pages 135–136):

- He remains faithful even if we aren't (2 Timothy 2:13).
- The Holy Spirit teaches us and reminds us (John 14:26).
- We are given challenges not as punishment but to help train us (Hebrews 12:5–13).
- He comforts us (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

Which of these do you find the most encouraging and why?

Into the Plains of Distance: Renewing intimacy

3) Peter and Celeste faced several challenges crossing the Plains of Distance. They couldn't see the Mountains of Maturity, the Highlands, or the King's City (page 147). But they looked at postcards of what they wished their marriage could be (pages 148–149 and 153–156). What effect do you think unfulfilled dreams might have on a marriage relationship?

4) What counsel would you give to a couple who is drifting apart from each other? What steps could they take to renew their relationship?

5) When Peter and Celeste were at the gathering hut, they listened to the guide, Encouragement (pages 135–137). He shared Matthew 11:28–30 from *The Message* which talks about learning how to live freely and lightly by keeping company with Jesus. How could this kind of life help a person in his or her marriage?

Under the Disillusioning Sun: Staying Faithful

» Going Deeper «

At the Gathering Hut: Joining with others for encouragement

- 1) The guide, Joyful Heart, mentioned several benefits of being part of a church community (page 134): rest, encouragement, support, the opportunity to give and receive. How might these benefits help a married couple?
- 2) In the previous chapter, Peter and Celeste encountered Snapping Turtles (page 104), selfish quagmires (page 108), and troubles with the burdens they were carrying (page 114). How can a church community help a couple in these situations?
- 3) The guide, Encouragement, shared how loving God includes loving other people (page 136). Read 1 John 4:19–21 and discuss how this might apply to a marriage relationship.

Passing by the Vehement Volcano: When frustrations escalate

- 4) Reread the section that leads up to the eruption of the Vehement Volcano (pages 139–144). What frustrations helped escalate the conflict between Peter and Celeste?

What steps do you think a couple can take to reduce aggravations like these?

Into the Plains of Distance: Renewing intimacy

- 5) What are the main reasons that a husband and wife drift apart?
- 6) Revisit the section where Will and Sophia gave gifts to Peter and Celeste, including an hourglass (the gift of time), a rag of compassion, a basket for memories, and kindling for affection (pages 47–49). How could each of these be used when a couple is experiencing emotional distance in their marriage?

Under the Disillusioning Sun: Staying Faithful

» Reflect «

At the Gathering Hut: Joining with others for encouragement

1) Peter and Celeste stopped going to the gathering huts for various reasons including loss of interest, distractions, not wanting to take the time, and the effort involved (page 133). What might deter you from going to church?

2) What motivates you to go to church?

How do you think being part of a church community can benefit your marriage?

3) Where do you need to draw on God's love in order to love your spouse (page 136, and 1 John 4:19-21)?

Passing by the Vehement Volcano: When frustrations escalate

4) Peter and Celeste gave up trying to imitate the Servant, claiming that it was enough that they were walking on the King's path (page 140). In what area in your marriage do you no longer have the priority to become like Christ?

What steps do you want to take to change that?

Through the Dry Wash of No Arguments: When silence isn't golden

5) After the eruption of the Vehement Volcano, Peter and Celeste stopped talking to each other (page 145). Later, they met a man who described how silence harmed his marriage (pages 146-147). What topics have you stopped talking about with your spouse?

At the Camp with Faithfulness: Taking stock

- 5) Read Ephesians 4:22-24, which talks about giving up the old self and putting on a new self. After Peter and Celeste gave up their postcards, the journey did not get easier for them. How would you counsel each of them to deal with the loss of their postcard dreams?

Through the Way of Winter: Needing to rekindle affection

- 6) Peter and Celeste went through snow as they climbed Loveless Peak. What do you think a couple can do to remain affectionate and warm toward each other instead of turning cold?

Into the Orchard of Earthly Delights: Keeping the Goal in View

» Discuss «

Into the Orchard: Enjoying God's gifts

1) What do you enjoy most about God's creation? (For ideas, look at Psalm 104:10-30.)

2) Do you think it was wrong for Peter and Celeste to stop at the Orchard of Earthly Delights (pages 157-160)? Why or why not?

3) The guide, Heavenly Devotion, said traveling to the King's City could be a weekend job or full-time occupation (page 168). What would you say is the difference between the two?

How does following Jesus full-time affect a marriage relationship?

4) When Peter and Celeste left the orchard, Celeste wondered if she had to give up pleasure on the way to the King's City (page 168). How would you respond to her?

At the Camp with Faithfulness: Taking stock

5) Read Ephesians 4:22-24, which talks about giving up the old self and putting on a new self. After Peter and Celeste gave up their postcards, the journey did not get easier for them. How would you counsel each of them to deal with the loss of their postcard dreams?

Through the Way of Winter: Needing to rekindle affection

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Into the Orchard of Earthly Delights: Keeping the Goal in View

» Going Deeper «

Into the Orchard: Enjoying God's gifts

- 1) Peter and Celeste told each other they were staying in the orchard because of the little travelers (page 161), although the orchard had an ill effect on the entire family. What were some of the problems they experienced as a result of living there?
- 2) What struggles do couples face as they provide for their family while keeping an eternal perspective on life?

At the Camp with Faithfulness: Taking stock

- 3) Peter and Celeste both struggled with the gap between “what might be” and “what is” in their relationship (pages 173 and 175). Besides romance and sex, what other postcard dreams might someone have for his or her marriage?
- 4) Faithfulness gave Peter and Celeste advice for continuing their journey (page 178):
 - don't give up
 - don't constantly dredge up the past
 - don't avoid Skull Hill
 - don't avoid the bridge of forgiveness
 - don't avoid unpleasant paths

Rewrite the don'ts (above) to make them positive steps a couple can take.

- do
- do
- do
- do
- do

Through the Way of Winter: Needing to rekindle affection

5) What would you say to encourage a couple like Peter and Celeste who are going through a cold period in their marriage?

Into the Orchard of Earthly Delights: Keeping the Goal in View

» Reflect «

Into the Orchard: Enjoying God's gifts

1) What are some gifts God has given you to enjoy (pages 157–160)? Spend some time thanking Him for them.

2) Read John 6:27 and 35. How well fed is your soul these days (page 162)?

What could you do to improve your spiritual diet?

What difference could this make in your marriage?

3) Read Mark 4:18–19 and think about the thorns Jesus mentions: worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth, and the desire for other things. Which of these do you need to pull out of your heart?

At the Camp with Faithfulness: Taking stock

4) What unreal dreams do you have for your marriage?

What postcard scenes might express these dreams?

5) Where are your postcards right now: in your back pocket, in front of you, in front of your spouse's face? What do you need to do in order to get rid of them?

6) What advice from Faithfulness (page 178) have you found most helpful in your own marriage?

What advice of his do you need to take to heart now?

Through the Way of Winter: Needing to rekindle affection

7) Peter and Celeste suffered cold on Loveless Peak, without the kindling of affection or the sheepskin of humility, which they left behind. This week, what can you do to be more affectionate toward your spouse?

In what ways do you need to be more considerate of your spouse?

Along Desolate Canyon to Revenge Chasm: Facing Challenges

» Discuss «

Down into Desolate Canyon: Hearing about regret

- 1) If you were writing your wedding vows today, what would you want to be sure to include?
- 2) No couple ever sets out for the Desolate Canyon, yet many end up walking along the River of Unfaithfulness. Look again at the vows Peter and Celeste made when they got married (page 35): to love, honor, give affection, walk with no one else, stay together no matter how dark or cold the path and no matter how weak their partner, until they reach the King's City. Which vow do you think they found the easiest to keep and why?

Which vow was the most difficult for them to keep and why?

With the Honey Woman: Choosing to resist

- 3) Peter asked himself what harm could come from simply talking to another woman (page 193). How would you answer his question?

Along Revenge Chasm: Deciding to forgive

- 4) When Peter and Celeste refused to cross a bridge of forgiveness, the guide, Pardon, discovered they had been keeping account books of each other's failings (pages 200–203). Read Luke 6:37–38, which talks about forgiveness. What could Peter and Celeste do to apply this passage to their marriage?

At the Valley of Cut Cords: Keeping together

5) The guide, Faithfulness, mentioned four events that helped bring Peter and Celeste to the Valley of Cut Cords (page 205):

- their preoccupation with their postcards
- their sojourn in the Swamp of Selfishness
- splashing in the River of Unfaithfulness
- refusing to cross the bridge of forgiveness

Consider those key turning points in their journey. What specifically do you think they could have done to avoid the Valley of Cut Cords?

6) Faithfulness blessed Peter and Celeste before he left (page 212). What would your blessing be to a couple who is going through difficult struggles in their marriage?

Along Desolate Canyon to Revenge Chasm: Facing Challenges

» Going Deeper «

Down into Desolate Canyon: Hearing about regret

1) Peter and Celeste met a woman who had become separated from her partner (page 189). How would you answer her question, “How could I help it?”

And how would you respond to the real disappointments she experienced with her partner?

With the Honey Woman: Choosing to resist

2) Peter betrayed his vows because he gave his heart to another person (page 194). What is involved in giving your heart to someone?

3) Peter took several actions in order to leave the Honey Woman behind (page 194):

- He drew on the sympathy of the Servant.
- He remembered the breath of the King.
- He plugged his ears.
- He held his nose.
- He walked away.

What do these allegories look like in real life?

What else can do you think a person can do to resist a tempting relationship?

Along Revenge Chasm: Deciding to forgive

- 4) Read 1 Peter 1:13–16 which talks about being self-controlled and holy. How could Peter and Celeste have put this passage into practice at this point in their marriage?

At the Valley of Cut Cords: Keeping together

- 5) Look at what the guide, Faithfulness, said to encourage Peter and Celeste at their darkest moment (pages 208–209). What counsel would you give to someone who may be considering divorce?

Along Desolate Canyon to Revenge Chasm: Facing Challenges

» Reflect «

Down into Desolate Canyon: Hearing about regret

- 1) Take a moment to remember your wedding vows. Which vow have you found the easiest to keep and why?

The most difficult to keep and why?

- 2) What is one promise about your marriage relationship that you want to keep this week?

Along Revenge Chasm: Deciding to forgive

- 3) In light of Peter and Celeste's account books (page 203), consider 1 Corinthians 13:5b, that love "keeps no record of wrongs." What wrongs of your spouse have you kept track of? After you write them down, decide how to destroy the list, and then do it.

- 4) Read Luke 6:41-42, which talks about specks and planks in the eye. What are some of your planks that affect your marriage?

What can you do this week to remove them from your life?

At the Valley of Cut Cords: Keeping together

5) What lesson have you learned that you could pass on to a couple who is approaching the Valley of Cut Cords?

6) Who do you know that is traveling through the Desolate Canyon in his or her marriage?

What can you do to reach out to that person and encourage him or her this week?

Through the Darkest Night: Choosing to Forgive

» Discuss «

At the Fencing Hut: Learning how to argue

- 1) Every couple has disagreements. What difference does it make when a husband and wife view themselves as partners rather than opponents (pages 218–219)?
- 2) Read Ephesians 4:2–3. How is it possible for a husband or wife to be gentle and patient during a disagreement?

Into the Darkness: Surrendering all

- 3) Celeste came to a garden filled with snakes (pages 225–226). In what ways do snakes illustrate how a person can be tempted?

What are some of the reasons a person is tempted not to surrender to God in his or her marriage?

- 4) The guide, Humility, joined Celeste as she climbed Skull Hill. How do you think the company of other Christians can help a person carry his or her cross in marriage?

Across the Bridge of Forgiveness: Deciding to erase the debt

- 5) After Celeste crossed the bridge of forgiveness, what did she do to love Peter (pages 235–236)?

What enables a person to give without expecting anything in return, especially in a marriage relationship?

At the Quiet Pool: Being renewed

6) What was the most encouraging reminder Abundant Provision shared with Peter and Celeste (pages 239–241)?

Why?

How could this practically help someone who is struggling in his or her marriage?

Through the Darkest Night: Choosing to Forgive

» Going Deeper «

Into the Darkness: Surrendering all

- 1) In the garden, Celeste had to decide if she would climb Skull Hill (pages 225–229). Read Matthew 16:25–26 about the paradox between losing and saving one's life. How might this passage help someone faced with Celeste's choice?
- 2) What enabled Celeste to climb Skull Hill (page 230)? What gave her strength?
- 3) At the top of Skull Hill, Celeste burned three objects: evidence of her wounds, her account book of Peter's failures, and her club. She had already given up her postcards. How do think she felt about letting go of these?

What else might a married person be asked to surrender?

Across the Bridge of Forgiveness: Deciding to erase the debt

- 4) Peter and Celeste both found difficulty in crossing the bridge of forgiveness. What would you say to someone who is hesitating at the bridge?
- 5) Three kinds of love are mentioned in the Bible: unconditional love, erotic love, and friendship love. Why are all three the ideal for marriage?

How can someone remain married if only unconditional love is present?

6) Discuss I Peter 4:8: "Love covers over a multitude of sins." What does this look like in a marriage relationship?

How does this differ from the cheap grace Paul describes in Romans 6:1?

Through the Darkest Night: Choosing to Forgive

» Reflect «

At the Fencing Hut: Learning how to argue

1) What lesson from the Fencing Hut do you need to apply most in your marriage (pages 216–219)?

Into the darkness: Surrendering all

2) Celeste's friend told her the parable of the unmerciful servant (page 220). Read Matthew 18:21–35. How might you apply this with your spouse?

3) What do you find to be the most difficult part of forgiveness: not picking wounds, giving up power, or extending mercy (page 201)?

What else holds you back from crossing the bridge of forgiveness?

In what areas do you need to extend forgiveness to your spouse?

4) What negative “snake” voices are hissing in your ear right now trying to get you to turn away from God's path?

What are they saying to you?

5) Celeste buried her postcards (pages 177–178), and destroyed evidence of her wounds, her account book of Peter's failings, and her club (pages 228–230). Which do you find the hardest to leave behind as you walk with your spouse?

At the Quiet Pool: Being renewed

6) Peter and Celeste found much-needed rest at the Quiet Pool. When could you spend time with God this week to be refreshed? Pick one of the following passages and then reflect on how God has been good to you over the last two months:

- Psalm 23
- Psalm 139
- Ephesians 3:3-14
- Romans 8

Up to the Highlands: Experiencing Deeper Love and Support

» Discuss «

At the Warming Hut of Revelation: Taking off the masks

- 1) Peter and Celeste met a couple who stopped at the Warming Hut of Revelation where the man refused to take off his armor (page 244). Why do you think he put the armor on in the first place?

- 2) What was the most important moment during Peter and Celeste's time in the Warming Hut (pages 245-248)?

Why?

In the Highlands: Enjoying the fruit of faithfulness

- 3) Throughout their journey, Peter and Celeste encountered guides. In the Highlands, they spoke with Patience (page 248), Understanding (page 250), Peace (page 251), and Courage (page 260). What are some ways the guides helped Peter and Celeste along the way?

- 4) What positive role models have you had in your marriage?

What have you found most helpful about their examples?

Among New Meadows: Continuing together

5) Read pages 256–257 and consider how Peter and Celeste’s marriage changed from earlier in their journey. What do you think contributed most to these changes?

Toward the King’s City: Thinking about what lies ahead

6) As you reflect back on Peter and Celeste’s journey, which themes resonated with you the most and why (pages 260–261)?

With which part did you struggle or feel most challenged by?

Up to the Highlands: Experiencing Deeper Love and Support

» Going Deeper «

In the Highlands: Enjoying the fruit of faithfulness

- 1) Peter and Celeste met many guides who helped them on their journey. If you were a guide for other couples, what name would describe your character?

What would your spouse's guide name be and why?

Share guide names for others in your group.

- 2) If a couple came to you before getting married, what advice would you give them to help them reach the Highlands?

Among New Meadows: Continuing together

- 3) Peter and Celeste experienced difficulties they had no control over, such as a drought (page 258). What external problems might a couple face over which they have no control?

- 4) Peter and Celeste also discovered they had new burdens to deal with (page 260). Where did these burdens originate?

- 5) Do you think a couple ever reaches a point where they no longer have burdens or difficulties? Why or why not?

Up to the Highlands: Experiencing Deeper Love and Support

» Reflect «

At the Warming Hut of Revelation: Taking off the masks

1) What is something you want or need to share with your partner?

When could you find time and place to do that?

2) What conditions help create intimacy in your marriage?

What can you do this week to deepen intimacy with your spouse?

In the Highlands: Enjoying the fruit of faithfulness

3) In what ways have you and your spouse grown in your marriage (pages 247, 253–258)?

Where would you like to continue to grow?

Among New Meadows: Continuing together

4) To what do you look forward most in your marriage during the next ten years?

5) How do you and your spouse enjoy relaxing together?

When could you spend time having fun in the next week?

Toward the King's City: Thinking about what lies ahead

6) What would you do differently if you knew you only had six months left with your partner?

7) What change would you like to make in your marriage as a result of this study?

What is one step you can take this coming week to help that happen?

Plan for a 12-week or 6-week Study

Plan for a 12-week study:

Week 1: Session 1

Week 2: Session 2

Week 3: Session 3

Week 4: from Session 4, *Lost in the Quagmires* questions from Discuss and Going Deeper

Week 5: from Session 4, *Beneath the Burdens of their Bags* questions from Discuss; *The Snapping Turtles* and *The Little Traveler Joins the Journey* questions from Going Deeper

Week 6: Session 5

Week 7: from Session 6, *Into the Orchard* questions from Discuss and Going Deeper

Week 8: from Session 6, *At the Camp with Faithfulness* questions and *Through the Way of Winter* questions from Discuss and Going Deeper

Week 9: Session 7

Week 10: from Session 8, *At the Fencing Hut* questions from Discuss; *Across the Bridge of Forgiveness* questions from Discuss and Going Deeper

Week 11: from Session 8, *Into the Darkness* questions from Discuss and Going Deeper

Week 12: Session 9

Plan for a 6-week study:

Week 1: Session 2

Week 2: Session 4

Week 3: Session 5

Week 4: Session 6

Week 5: Session 8

Week 6: Session 9

