

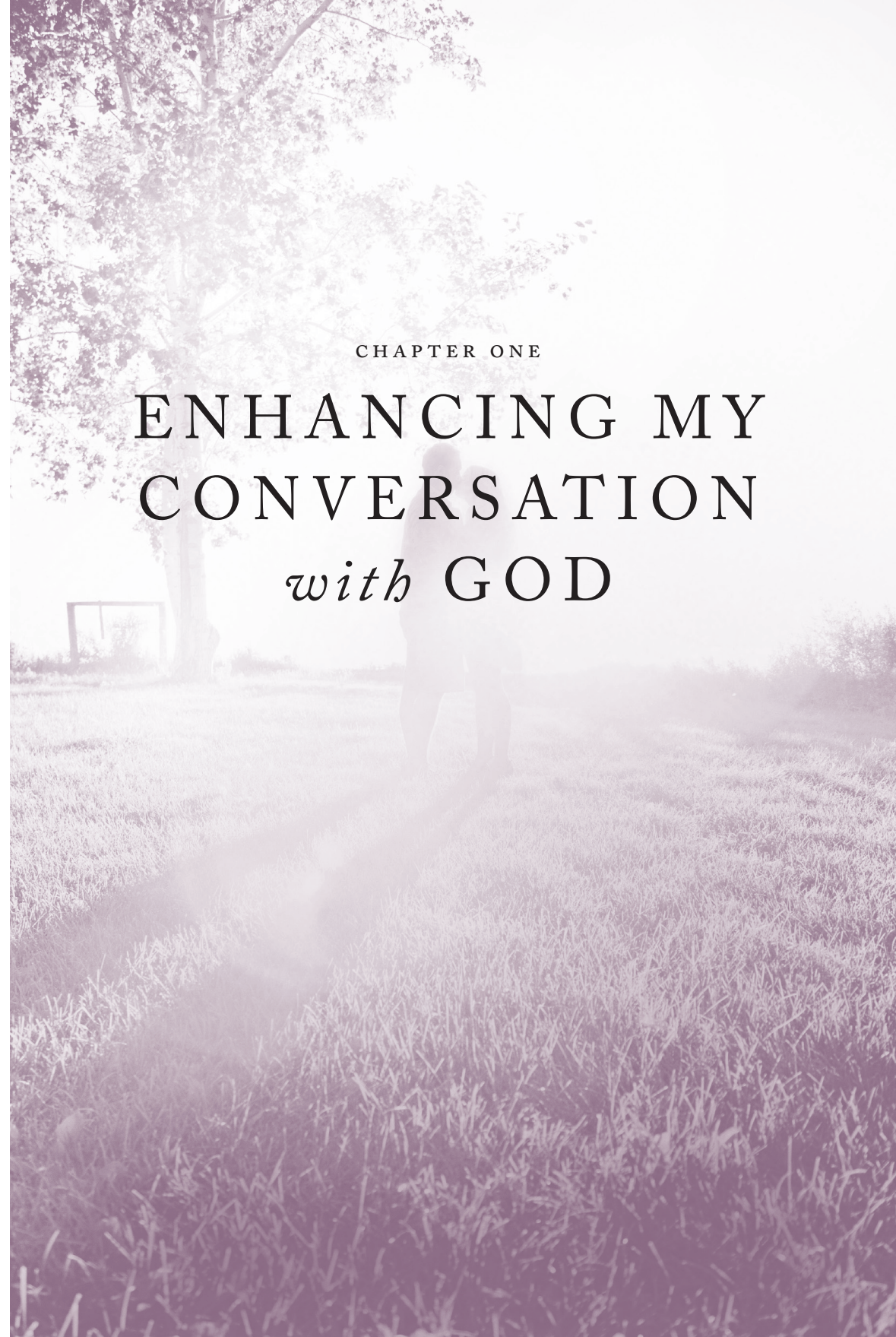
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A person is standing in a field of tall grass, looking towards a large tree on the left. The scene is bathed in a soft, purple light, creating a serene and contemplative atmosphere. The person is positioned in the center of the frame, slightly to the right of the tree. The tree's branches are spread out, and its leaves are visible. The field extends to the horizon, with some distant trees and a fence line visible on the left. The overall mood is peaceful and reflective.

CHAPTER ONE

ENHANCING MY
CONVERSATION
with GOD

The fundamental building block in any relationship is conversation—two-way communication. I share my ideas and you listen. You share your ideas and I listen. The results? We understand each other a little better. Continue conversation over a period of time and we get to know each other. The same is true with God. The only way we get to know God is to spend time conversing with Him.

Many Christians have viewed Bible reading and prayer as formal religious exercises. In reality, Bible reading should be equated with listening to God, and prayer is the process of talking and listening to God. Many Christians have also tended to see Bible reading and prayer as two distinct experiences. We read the Bible, close it, and then start praying about things totally unrelated to what we have read. It is as though we say to God, “What You have said is relatively unimportant. Now You listen to what I have to say.” All of us have encountered people who respond to our comments in a similar manner. That is, when we finish speaking, they change the subject and begin telling us something unrelated. Most of us don’t care to be around such people. The greatest insult we can give another person is not to listen when he

or she speaks. It is not any different with God.

If you are going to learn effective communication with God, you must join Bible reading and prayer. One way to do that is to mark your Bible as you read and then go back and talk with God about what you marked. Begin your Bible reading with this prayer: “Lord, I will read this chapter from Your Word.

I want to hear what You have to say to me. Keep my mind alert and speak to me as I read.” Then, with pencil or pen in hand, read the chapter and mark anything that impresses you. Various ways to mark a passage are suggested in the box on this page.

Ways to Mark Your Bible

underline key sentences

○ circle key words or phrases

* star ideas that seem especially helpful

[] use brackets around longer passages dealing with same subject

#, ?, ! use other markings that you find helpful

Having read the chapter, go back to those statements you marked and respond to God.

- You may respond to God by asking God a question. “Lord, is this verse really saying what I think it is saying?” or “Lord, I don’t understand. How is this verse related to the verse I read last week on this subject?”
- You may respond to God by thanking Him for some truth you have marked. “Lord, thank You that You do love me with an unending love. That really makes me feel secure. Thank you, Lord.”
- You may respond to God with praise. “Father, I want to praise You that You are indeed, as this verse says, ‘the creator of the ends of the earth.’ I praise You as Creator and Sustainer of all life, including me.”
- You may want to respond to God with a request. “Oh, Lord, I really do want to love others. Pour Your love in my heart today and show me how to express love to my spouse.”

Your responses to God will be as varied as your responses to others. You should express your honest feelings, thoughts, and ideas to God. That is the purpose of communication. God shares His ideas with you and you respond to what He has said.

Having talked with God about the things He has brought to your attention, you are now free to change the subject. You may then talk with God about something unrelated to what you have read. You share with God your concerns, feelings, and desires. Pray for your family, your job, your church, and other concerns.

This two-way process of talking and listening to God should be a daily experience for the Christian. Few things are more important in developing a relationship with God than your personal time with Him each day. Thus, our goal this week is to begin establishing a brief time each day to have an open conversation with God. This will be a regular part of *A Couple’s Guide to a Growing Marriage*. Remember from the introduction that this is one aspect of your daily growth exercise. With



your Bible and pen, find a quiet place and begin today. We suggest that you read through one book of the Bible before beginning another. If you have not already chosen a book, you may want to begin with Philippians. List the chapter you read each day below.

- Monday _____
- Tuesday _____
- Wednesday _____
- Thursday _____
- Friday _____
- Saturday _____
- Sunday _____

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read John 17:3: *“This is the way to have eternal life—to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, the one you sent to earth.”* Write Jesus’ definition of eternal life according to this passage: _____

2. Briefly describe how you get to know someone. _____

3. All relationships have a beginning point. When did your relationship with God begin? _____

ENHANCING MY CONVERSATION WITH GOD

4. Read Psalm 119:105: *“Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.”* All relationships are enhanced by communication. According to Psalm 119:105, what is God’s primary means of communication? _____

5. Read Psalm 119:9–11: *“How can a young person stay pure? By obeying your word. I have tried hard to find you—don’t let me wander from your commands. I have hidden your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.”* Check some of the results of hearing and obeying God’s Word.

- Live according to God’s Word
- Seek God with all my heart
- Never have problems
- Not sin against God
- Not stray from God’s commands
- Be happy

6. Read Jeremiah 15:16: *“When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name, O Lord God of Heaven’s Armies.”* According to this passage, what effect did the Word of God have on Jeremiah? _____

What does it mean to “devour” God’s Word? _____

7. Read Psalm 119:12–16: *“I praise you, O Lord; teach me your decrees. I have recited aloud all the regulations you have given us. I have rejoiced in your laws as much as in riches. I will study your commandments*

and reflect on your ways. I will delight in your decrees and not forget your word." List several ways found in these verses in which the psalmist responded to God's Word. _____

8. David said, "*I will not forget your word*" (Psalm 119:16). What are some of the activities that will help us remember the Word of God?
- Writing it down
 - Meditating on it
 - Applying it
 - Memorizing it
 - Saying it aloud
 - Discussing it with others

*Your word
is a lamp to
my feet and
a light for
my path.*

9. Did you list *memorizing* as one method of remembering? In *A Couple's Guide to a Growing Marriage* we will memorize key verses that give us *life principles*, truths that will shape our relationships in marriage. One such verse is, "*Be kind to each other, tenderhearted*" (Ephesians 4:32).

We will concentrate on learning this portion of this verse this week. At least once a day repeat the reference, the verses, and the reference again. Repeat this sequence now.

Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to each other, tenderhearted.

Ephesians 4:32

10. Write one way you could express kindness to your spouse this week.

(If you cannot think of one, ask your spouse and write the answer above.)

- Check here when you have expressed the kindness you noted above.

ENHANCING MY CONVERSATION WITH GOD

Note one way you were not kind to your spouse during the past few days.

(If you cannot think of one, ask your spouse and write the answer above.)

11. Not only does God talk to us through Scripture, but God wants us to talk to Him about His Word. Read Psalm 119:33–40. Match the Scripture passage with the requests David made of God. Write the letter on the line beside the reference.

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| ___ v. 33 | a. Turn my eyes from worthless things. |
| ___ v. 34 | b. Make me walk along the path of your commands. |
| ___ v. 35 | c. Renew my life with your goodness. |
| ___ v. 36 | d. Reassure me of your promise. |
| ___ v. 37 | e. Give me understanding. |
| ___ v. 38 | f. Give me an eagerness for your laws. |
| ___ v. 39 | g. Teach me your decrees. |
| ___ v. 40 | h. Help me abandon my shameful ways. |

Check your answers below.

12. Read this passage again as a prayer to God emphasizing the words *me*, *my*, and *mine*. Make it a personal prayer.

(answers to Bible study item 11: g, e, b, f, a, d, h, c)

LEARNING EXERCISE

As you begin this study, list three things you would like to see happen in your relationship with God and with your spouse in the next few weeks.

My Relationship with God

Three things I would like to see happen in my relationship with God:

1. _____

*Not only
does God
talk to us*

2. _____

3. _____

My Relationship with My Spouse

Three things I would like to see happen in my relationship with my spouse:

*wants us to
talk to Him
about His
Word.*

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Include these desires in your personal prayers this week, as you have your daily time of listening to and talking with God.