

Great Expectations Ministries COGIC

# Vacation Bible School 2025

CURRICULUM

*Run* **THE RACE**

HEBREWS 12:1-2

## BREAKOUT SESSION

**MARRIED COUPLES**



## SERIES ON RUN THE RACE

### OVERVIEW

In a world where narratives often celebrate the rise to power but overlook the challenges faced along the way, there's an undeniable allure in stories of perseverance and triumph.

The Bible is rich with characters whose lives unfold like epic sagas, filled with trials that would make even the strongest among us falter.

Yet, what sets these remarkable figures apart is not just how they began their journeys, but how they persevered through adversity and ultimately finished strong.

From faith-filled leaders to humble servants, these biblical heroes demonstrated unwavering resilience and steadfast commitment to their divine calling.

As we delve into the lives of these inspiring Bible characters who finished strong, we discover valuable lessons about courage, faithfulness, and redemption.

Their stories resonate across time—reminding us that setbacks are often setups for comebacks.

Whether overcoming personal failures or facing immense societal pressures, each character's legacy invites reflection on our paths and encourages us to strive for a finish worthy of our beginnings.

### ***BREAKOUT SESSIONS for MARRIED COUPLES FOR DISCUSSION***

LESSON 1 \* The Foundation of Biblical Marriage

LESSON 2 \* Respect and Courage

LESSON 3 \* **Trusting God**

LESSON 4 \* **MARRIAGE AND FAMILY ARE ABOUT THE GLORY OF GOD.**

**According to the Bible**, marriage is a sacred, lifelong covenant between one man and one woman, established by God, with the purpose of companionship, unity, and procreation. It is understood as a mirroring of the relationship between Christ and His Church. The Bible emphasizes the importance of leaving one's parents, cleaving to one's spouse, and becoming one flesh.

Marriage, as described in the Bible, is more than a social contract; it is a covenant before God that emphasizes unity and love. Genesis 2:24 speaks about becoming “one flesh,” highlighting the deep connection that marriage entails. Similarly, Ephesians 5:25 calls husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church, setting a high standard of sacrificial love and commitment.

Marriage is a public union. While intimacy is, and must be, private, the nature of the union is to be public. The man and the woman promise before witnesses that each will be faithful to the other until one of them dies.

The gospel of Jesus offers grace for sexual failures. After a list that focuses especially on sexual sins, Paul writes, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” ([1 Cor. 6:11](#)). We are all scarred by sexual sins, whether our own, in what we have thought, what we have seen, what we have read, or what we have done. In the gospel we find forgiveness and the joy of being washed clean. Joyfully, we hold out to others the cleansing we ourselves have found in Christ.

Marriage lessons from the Bible are practical and timeless, aiming to strengthen bonds and enrich spiritual and emotional well-being. From learning the essence of patience with Abraham and Sarah to understanding divine purpose through Joseph and Mary, these stories provide rich insights for every couple.

## LESSON 1 \* The Foundation of Biblical Marriage

**Main Scripture Text:** Hebrews 12:1-2

**Lesson Text:** Genesis 2:18–24

**Lesson Focus:** Unity

**Memory Verse:** Genesis 2:18 "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him,"

### **Introduction:**

Biblical marriage is viewed as a sacred union between one man and one woman, established by God. It's a lifelong commitment, rooted in faithfulness and mutual love. Biblical principles for a healthy marriage include honoring each other, respecting needs and feelings, giving up one's will for the relationship, serving each other, and praying together. Marriage is also seen as a reflection of God's covenant relationship with his people.

Genesis 2:18–24 is the foundational passage in Scripture about marriage. God created and officiated marriage for his unfallen creation, and “the root of our understanding of marriage is that, in it, the husband and wife become one flesh”

### **Discussion:**

Unity in marriage means you're on the same team. When something good happens to one spouse, it's a win for both. When challenges arise, you face them together. Regularly confess your sins and set your mind on the Spirit. *Romans 8:5* says, “For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit.”

By conforming to God's design, you'll stay united. *Matthew 19:5-6* reminds us, “‘a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ So, they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

A strong marriage is built on three key pillars: spiritual closeness, emotional closeness, and physical closeness. The Bible provides timeless wisdom on how to nurture these aspects, ensuring a marriage that not only survives but thrives.

### **Spiritual Closeness**

Genesis 2:24 says, “A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” This verse sets the foundation for the spiritual unity that should exist in a marriage. When two people come together in marriage, they are not just joining their bodies but also their spirits. This spiritual closeness is essential for a strong, resilient marriage.

Ephesians 5:25 further emphasizes the importance of spiritual unity: “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.” This kind of sacrificial love requires deep spiritual connection and commitment. Couples are encouraged to pray together, study the Bible together, and seek God's guidance in all aspects of their marriage.

### **Emotional Closeness**

Emotional closeness is about understanding and supporting each other through life's ups and downs. Proverbs 31:10 celebrates the value of a virtuous wife, saying, "An excellent wife who can find? She is far more precious than jewels." This verse highlights the importance of emotional support and mutual respect in a marriage.

To build emotional closeness, couples should communicate openly, listen actively, and show empathy. Simple acts like expressing gratitude, giving compliments, and spending quality time together can go a long way in strengthening emotional bonds.

### **Physical Closeness**

Physical closeness is also an important aspect of marriage. It goes beyond mere physical attraction and involves a deep sense of intimacy and connection. The Bible encourages healthy physical relationships within the bounds of marriage. Genesis 2:24 mentions becoming "one flesh," which underscores the importance of physical intimacy in a marital relationship.

Maintaining physical closeness can involve simple gestures like holding hands, hugging, and spending time together without distractions. It's about making an effort to connect physically in ways that are meaningful and loving.

**Conclusion:** Combining these three pillars—spiritual, emotional, and physical closeness—creates a strong foundation for a biblical marriage. By following these principles, couples can build a relationship that is resilient, loving, and fulfilling.

### **Questions/Discussion:**

1. What denotes that you're on the same team in marriage?
2. *Matthew 19:5-6* tells us what?

## LESSON 2 \* Respect and Courage

Main Scripture Text : Hebrews 12:1-2

Lesson Text Esther 4:14

Lesson Focus: King Xerxes and Esther

**Memory Verse:** *“And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?”*

### Introduction:

Esther’s marriage to King Xerxes began under unusual circumstances. Despite being an arranged marriage, they developed mutual respect and love. Esther showed great courage by approaching the king unannounced to save her people from Haman’s evil plot (Esther).

Through her respectful and strategic approach, Esther revealed Haman’s plan, saving her people and earning the king’s favor.

Esther’s story teaches us the importance of respect and courage in marriage. By understanding and respecting each other’s positions, couples can navigate challenges and support one another effectively.

### Discussion:

The Jews had been exiled to the land of Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar because of their disobedience to God’s laws, particularly for Sabbath-breaking and idolatry (Jeremiah 17:21-27; 25:6-7).

Despite their disobedience and subsequent punishment, God still cared about them and had future plans for them (Jeremiah 29:11). He had not completely rejected them!

Though some Jews had returned to Jerusalem about 60 years earlier because of King Cyrus’ edict (Ezra 6:1-11), thousands of Jews remained in other areas of the Persian Empire. (To learn more about King Cyrus and the return of some of the Jews to their homeland, read “Daniel 9: The 70-Year Prophecy of Jeremiah.”) So, during Esther’s time, her people were scattered around many areas of the Medo-Persian Empire.

Some have attacked the book of Esther for never directly mentioning God’s name. But that doesn’t mean God wasn’t present. In fact, His fingerprints are seen throughout the book—in the same way that we often see His guidance and deliverance in our lives today. God’s intervention can be seen throughout the book through a series of extraordinary events:

- Esther stood out from all the young girls throughout the land and was chosen to be the queen of Persia (Esther 2:15-18). *God’s hand was clearly at work to place her in this position.*
- Mordecai uncovered a plot to kill the king of Persia, King Ahasuerus. Mordecai reported the plot to Esther, who informed the king in Mordecai’s name, and the assassination

attempt was foiled. This incident later elevated Mordecai before the king (Esther 2:21-23; 6:1-2). *God's hand was clearly behind Mordecai's learning of this plot and being able to report it to Esther.*

- One night the king asked for the historical records to be read to him to help him sleep. Mordecai's good deed was read to him, and the king then decided to honor him. At the same time, Haman entered the king's court to ask to have Mordecai executed on the gallows. But before he could make his request, the king asked Haman for his advice on how to honor someone. Long story short: Haman was forced to show honor to Mordecai instead of hanging him (Esther 6:1-11). *God's hand was clearly behind the king's desire to honor, not execute, Mordecai.*
- Esther gained favor with the king and was able to use that favor to reveal Haman's genocidal plan to the king. This allowed Haman's true colors to be made obvious, leading to his death and the deliverance of the Jewish people (Esther 7 and 8). *God's hand was clearly behind the king's favoring Esther so much that he listened to her over his trusted, but evil, official.*

God's invisible hand was working in many ways and on many levels to save His people.

The lesson for us is that God is still working in the lives of His people today. The Bible assures us that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

This same lesson was expressed by the prophet Hanani to King Asa: "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him" (2 Chronicles 16:9).

#### **Conclusion:**

Esther was a remarkable woman who helped save her people from an attempted genocide. The book of Esther is an amazing account that shows God's hand in the deliverance of His people. It shows how He used an extraordinary young woman, Esther, to help save the Jewish people from an attempted genocide by a maniacal official in the Persian Empire. The lessons contained in the book are very relevant to Christians today. Esther risked her life by approaching King Xerxes without being summoned to save her people from a planned genocide. With wisdom and courage, Esther persevered, revealing the plot against her people and securing their safety. We may not always be called on to show courage in major, history-altering events as Esther was. But Jesus taught that faithfulness begins in the small things (Luke 16:10). We can show the same courage of Esther in much smaller ways—by refusing to compromise on obedience to God's law, for instance, or by continuously rejecting the sinful ways of society around us. And sometimes courage isn't standing up in the face of something but removing ourselves from a temptation.

#### **Questions/Discussion:**

1. How does Esther show courage?
2. What are the six powerful life lessons from the book of Esther?
3. What is the famous verse of Esther?

## LESSON 3 \* Trusting God

Main Scripture Text : **Hebrews 12:1-2**

**Lesson Text** Genesis 18:12-14

**Lesson Focus:** Abraham and Sarah

**Memory Verse:** “Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?”

### Introduction:

The marriage of Abraham and Sarah is one of the most recognized in the Old Testament. They were promised a child by God, a significant part of His covenant with them (Genesis 15:5). However, their journey was far from smooth.

Abraham lied about Sarah being his wife, calling her his sister to protect himself from Pharaoh (Genesis 12:10-20). They also doubted God’s promise of a child due to their old age, leading them to take matters into their own hands by having Abraham father a child with Sarah’s maid, Hagar (Genesis 18:12-14).

*At its core, discipleship is about trusting and following Jesus (see Mark 1:14-20 and John 1:35-51). Trust in (belief in) Jesus is necessary if we are to follow him as God’s ways are often not what we would expect. This month we will look at four snapshots of what it means to trust God.*

It had been over 20 years since God had promised Abraham and Sarah a son. Why was it taking so long? Surely God knew that they were looking like fools for trusting him.

It had been easier at first. When God gave Abraham the promise of a land, a family that would become a great nation, and that all the families of the earth would be blessed through his offspring, Abraham trusted God and left Haran with his family for Canaan (Genesis 12:1-9). That first step of trust was clear.

Abraham was not naive. He realized he would not live to see the complete fulfillment of what God had promised (see Hebrews 11:8-10). But one thing was for sure: God had clearly said Abraham would have offspring – which meant he had to have a son. And that son still had not come.

### Discussion:

As the months and then years wore on, Abraham and Sarah were forced to act out their trust in God despite the bitter disappointment of Sarah still not being pregnant. Their intellectual belief was not enough. Their trust was demonstrated every time they had sex, hoping that this time would be when Sarah would finally conceive a son.

The pain and humiliation of not having conceived wore on them. Sarah finally convinced Abraham to take her Egyptian servant Hagar in order to have a child through her. When God does not seem to act, it is tempting to take matters into our own hands and make something happen. Yet God was faithful even when Abraham and Sarah were not. It was after Ishmael’s birth that God gave Sarah the name Sarah – a name that was to be a statement of trust that God would indeed give them a son through her.

This is what trust in God sometimes looks like. It isn't always a huge step of faith like changing jobs or moving to another country. Sometimes it is simply doing the mundane, everyday task that God has called us to do. For Abraham and Sarah, it required them to have sex for years despite a lack of results. For us, it might be sharing the gospel for the 1,236<sup>th</sup> time with a family member. It might be insisting on what is true in a difficult work situation. It might be the lifelong task of raising children. It might be showing love yet again to that difficult neighbor.

Trust in God and have patience. Abraham and Sarah remind us that taking matters into our own hands can lead to unnecessary stress and complications. Trusting God, even when it seems impossible, is essential for a strong marriage.

**Conclusion:**

Whatever step of trust God is asking you to do, no matter how mundane and no matter how much you still don't see results, don't give up. It is God's task to make something happen. It is our task to simply trust and follow him.

By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. Therefore, from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as many as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

-Hebrews 11:11-12 ESV

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

-1 Corinthians 15:58 ESV

**Questions/Discussion:**

1. How was Sarah faithful to God?
2. What is the moral lesson of the story of Abraham and Sarah?
3. What did the covenant between God and Abraham and Sarah involve?

## LESSON 4 \* MARRIAGE AND FAMILY ARE ABOUT THE GLORY OF GOD.

Main Scripture Text : **Hebrews 12:1-2**

**Lesson Text** Genesis 1:27

**Lesson Focus:** Family

**Memory Verse:** So, God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.”

### Introduction:

Genesis 1:27 makes it clear, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” From the beginning, marriage has been central to God’s glory on planet Earth. The Bible begins with a marriage and ends with a marriage. What God designed, lifted up, and gave a transcendent purpose, man has dumbed down.

Many today make the purpose of marriage to be one’s personal happiness—of finding another person who meets my needs. God created marriage to reflect His image, to reproduce a godly heritage, and to stand together in spiritual battle. Your marriage, your covenant-keeping love, will be your greatest witness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Marriage is about the glory of God—not about the happiness of man.

### Discussion:

Women spell romance r-e-l-a-t-i-o-n-s-h-i-p. But men spell it: s-e-x. God, in His cosmic genius, has brought two very different people together in marriage who are to dance together. And what an interesting dance

Don’t let your busy schedule crowd out times of intimacy. If you are anything like us, you have a busy schedule. Your busy schedule is filled with important things that leave very little margin for one another, including those special times of intimacy. Sex is the glue that holds the marriage together. It is an amazing gift of God that is meant to be enjoyed, but frequent sex doesn’t just happen. Husbands and wives need to be intentional (and sometimes even creative) when it comes to finding time for one another.

**Conclusion:** A thriving marriage is not just about compatibility or shared interests; it’s about mutual commitment to following Jesus together. By integrating biblical wisdom into your daily life, you can build a marriage that not only lasts but flourishes.

Genesis 2:24 gives us a prescription from Scripture: Leave, cleave, and become one. The enemy of our souls does not want a husband and wife to be one. Instead, he wants to divide us.

In John 17, Jesus prayed for the church to be one. He realized that when we are in isolation, we can be convinced of anything.

Isolation kills relationships.

My challenge to you is this: As a couple, believe God for too much, rather than too little. Remember what A.W. Tozer said, “God is looking for people through whom He can do the impossible. What a pity we plan to do the things we can only do by ourselves.”

Life can wear you down. It can wear you out. Disappointment chips away at faith. As a couple, you must work on this to go to the finish line.

**Questions/Discussion:**

1. How can faith in Christ help a marriage?
2. Can you list some factors which made you want to be married?
3. How important is sexual adjustment and compatibility in a marriage?
4. How can differing views concerning spending affect a marriage?
5. Now that you are married, do you still date? How often?

## NOTES

