



The Marriage Mystery

DISCUSSION GUIDE



THE MARRIAGE MYSTERY FOUNDATION

Genesis 2:18-25

READ THE TEXT - What phrases, words, or instructions stick out to you?

NOT GOOD TO BE ALONE (v. 18)

1. If Adam had remained alone, how would this have affected his ability to accomplish God's mission to be fruitful and subdue the earth (1:28)? What does this tell us about the importance of marriage in accomplishing God's mission?
 - In your marriage, how has your spouse helped you accomplish God's mission?
 - Does this verse mean that singleness is inherently bad? Why or why not?
2. The second task God gave man in Genesis 2:15 was to "work it and keep" the garden. God saw that Adam needed a helper, so he created a woman. How did God create Eve to complement Adam?
 - How does God create man and woman to complement each other in marriage?
 - Can same-sex relationships reflect this design?

LEAVE AND CLEAVE (v. 24a)

1. What is the right understanding of verse 24a? How do we reconcile this command with the fifth commandment to "honor your father and your mother"?
 - Parents, how have you encouraged your married children to "leave and cleave"? What are some challenges to allowing this process?
 - Couples, what are some challenges in leaving and cleaving?
2. How can a single person "leave" their parents in a similar way to those who are married?

ONENESS (v. 24b)

1. How have you seen others demonstrate a godly oneness in their marriage? What are consequences that arise when a couple is not living in unity?
2. How would you encourage a couple experiencing discord in their marriage?

NAKED AND UNASHAMED (v. 25)

1. Verse 25 closes the chapter by describing the relational, emotional, and sexual openness between the man and his wife. What sins can hinder openness and bring shame into a marriage?
2. What are some steps for a husband and wife who are experiencing shame to pursue forgiveness and reconciliation in their marriage?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. What is marriage?
2. Think of a married couple you know—whether it's mom and dad or someone else you're close with. How does this couple work together? What might their relationship show you about God?
3. Consider doing a puzzle with your children. As you do, share how putting a puzzle together is similar to what God does with married people. He puts them together to make one beautiful picture.

APPLICATION

1. If you are married, write a brief note to your spouse in order to express your gratitude for how they complement you.
2. Make a list of qualities in which you are deficient. Ask God to show his power in your weakness as it relates to those areas.
3. Couples, develop a list of single people you are close to and pray for them to find rest and satisfaction in Christ. Singles, make a list of some married couples you're close to and do the same thing.
4. Make a double-sided list. On the left, write down characteristics of a marriage that is striving to glorify God. On the right side, write down consequences that can arise when a married couple is not striving to glorify God (i.e. not living out the characteristics on the left side of your list).



THE MARRIAGE MYSTERY DESIGN

Ephesians 5:22-33

READ THE TEXT - What phrases, words, or instructions stick out to you?

THE WIFE (vv. 22-24)

1. What are some words you would use to describe a wife's role in relation to her husband?
2. What does "submit" mean in this context? How has the biblical idea of submission been abused? How has it been neglected?
 - Share what was going wrong in these situations, and how a healthy understanding of biblical submission would have helped.
3. What is the foundational basis for a wife's submission to her husband? Is this a difficult task? Why or why not?

THE HUSBAND (vv. 25-33)

1. How would you describe a husband's role in relation to his wife?
2. How is a husband called to "love his wife" according to these verses? Read 1 Peter 3:7. What is the warning given to husbands who fail to love their wives and live with them in an understanding way?
 - How would a wife's understanding of her husband's role (as defined by Scripture) impact her in a struggle to submit to her husband?
3. According to verses 28-30, what role is the husband called to mirror? Is this a difficult task? Why or why not?

THE LORD (vv. 22-33)

1. How does Christ model true leadership? How should this affect a couple's trust when things are difficult in a marriage?
2. How does Jesus display perfect submission to the Father? How was Jesus's submission on earth different than a wife's submission to her husband?
3. Reread verse 26-27. How has Christ lived out this verse for us? How did Christ do this for his Church in ways that are different than what a husband is able to do for his wife?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. What is a wife?
2. How is the wife different than a husband?
3. Think of some married couples you know who love Jesus. How do they act toward each other? What ways do they show their love for Jesus to each other and to others?

APPLICATION

1. Find a dedicated time each day this week to pray for marriages. Pray:
 - For those around you who are married, that God would be the center of their marriage
 - For those who desire marriage, that God would answer this desire according to his goodness, wisdom, and sovereignty. Pray also that these individuals would find ultimate contentment in Christ.
2. Make a list of the areas in which you are called to submit (Ex. work, church, etc.). Ask your spouse or a close friend to help you follow Ephesians 5:21, which calls us to “[submit] to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

**THE MARRIAGE MYSTERY
INTIMACY**

1 Corinthians 7:1-5

If you are going through this guide as a Small Group, consider breaking off into gender specific groups for this week.

THE CONTEXT (vv. 1-2)

1. Some in church history have wrongly interpreted verse one to say that sexual intimacy is not good. Look carefully at the wording in this verse. Who makes that statement? Does Paul agree with it?
2. In verse two, Paul seems to argue for the validity of sexual intimacy. According to his words, in what context should we pursue sexual intimacy?
 - How can we affirm a godly view of sexual intimacy in our lives and in the discipleship of others (family, friends, neighbors, etc.)?
 - Why should we not allow for sexual intimacy in any context?
3. Is this limitation of sex prohibitive? Why are good laws beneficial?

THE HUMILITY (vv. 3-4)

1. In verse three, we are given a general principle for the guidelines of healthy and godly sexual relations. According to this verse, who is in charge of the sexual relationship—the man or the woman?
 - Who has the rights? Why should either partner be willing to participate in sexual activity?
2. In verse four, Paul says that the husband and wife do not have authority over their own bodies (in the context of intimacy). Does our culture agree?
 - What prevents one spouse from sexually abusing the other? If neither has authority over their own body, what happens if they do not agree on the frequency or mode of intimacy?

THE AIM (v. 5)

1. Verse five says sexual relations are not ultimate. How does Paul teach that?
 - Paul says that sexual intimacy should only be halted by mutual consent and for a spiritual purpose. When might you see that happening today?
2. What warning does this verse give in regard to regular sexual intimacy? How might a couple experience this consequence today? How frequently should a couple be involved in intimate relations?
3. Reread verses 26-27. How has Christ lived out this verse for us? How did Christ do this for his Church in ways that are different than what a husband is able to do for his wife?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. What is marriage (take time to affirm what your children know about marriage and help them see the bigger picture of the beauty of marriage and what it points to)?
2. Why is it important that mommies and daddies stay together (using age-appropriate words, talk about the importance of the permanence of marriage, marriage vows, and unity in marriage. Be honest about the reality of hardship)?
3. Why is it important that mommies and daddies love each other a lot (using age-appropriate words, talk about God's design for intimacy in marriage)?

APPLICATION

- In which areas have you struggled to follow the direction from this text? Spend time asking the Lord and listening for his answer. As he reveals those weaknesses, share them either with your spouse (if you are married) or with a close friend (if you are single). If appropriate, you may want to seek counsel from a trusted Christian brother or sister of the same gender.
- If you are married, sit down with your spouse and use this passage to help you write down some guidelines for a biblical pattern of sexual intimacy. Talk through what it would look like for you to love each other in a way that seeks to “outdo one another in showing honor” (Rom. 12:10). Consider finding a trusted couple to counsel you in this area. If you are single, take this opportunity to pray about your singleness. Share your joys, frustrations, and longings with the Lord. Ask him how you can better honor him in your singleness, as it relates specifically to your sexuality.
- Psalm 101:2-3 says “I will walk with integrity of heart in my house. I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless.” Write down how you will resist the temptation of the devil through self-control and integrity of heart. Pray and commit yourself to walk with integrity.

THE MARRIAGE MYSTERY

MARRIAGE ACCORDING TO THE GOSPEL

Song of Solomon 8:6-7

READ THE TEXT - What phrases, words, or instructions stick out to you?

THE POWER OF LOVE

1. What are some of the things love is compared to in this passage?
 - Which quality strikes you the most? Why?
2. Read 2 Timothy 1:8-10 and Ephesians 5:2 and compare them to Song of Solomon 8:6-7. How does Christ model perfect love in his love for us?
 - What are your personal weaknesses when it comes to this kind of sacrificial love?
 - How would your relationship with your spouse look differently if you modeled this love (as described in 2 Tim. 1:8-10, Eph. 5:2, and Song of Solomon 8:6-7) to him/her? How would your relationships with others look differently?
3. Reread verse 7. In what ways has our culture devalued love and traded it for lesser things? What have you personally been tempted to trade true love for?

REVIEWING "THE MARRIAGE MYSTERY"

1. Which week of this sermon series (foundation, design, intimacy, grace) has challenged you the most? Why?
2. How have your relationships changed or deepened as a result of the series?
 - Consider your relationship with your spouse, if you are married, as well as your relationship with God, with those of the opposite gender, and with those whose relationship status differs from yours.
3. What was your definition of love prior to this sermon series? What is your definition of love now?
4. In what areas do you want to continue to grow?

FAMILY DISCIPLESHIP QUESTIONS

1. Take out your wallet and ask your children how much money they have in their piggy banks. After adding it all up, ask: "Is this how much love is worth?" Together, discuss why love is more valuable than money.
2. Get a large bowl or container and fill it with water. Take out an empty plastic water bottle or a stick and ask the children if they think it will sink or float. Together, discuss how love, just like this object, cannot be drowned no matter what.
3. Ask: how is the love that mommies and daddies have for each other similar to the love that God has for us? How is it different?

APPLICATION

- Take some time to pray for marriages in the following ways:
 - Pray for marriages you know are going through a difficult season right now. Pray that they would show humility toward their spouse and seek reconciliation in a loving and understanding way.
 - Pray for those who are unmarried, that they would submit all of their hopes, desires, and plans regarding marriage to the Lord. Pray that they would be content with God's providence for their life.
 - Pray for those who have experienced the difficulties of divorce. Ask for God to sustain them and for them to cling to Christ, the sure and steady anchor for the soul.
- Whatever situation you are in, whether single, married, separated, divorced, or widowed, think of at least three people you know who are in a different situation than you are. Write down their names and commit to praying for them. Also commit to encouraging them in their situation and then tell them how you see God using them for his kingdom in their present circumstance.