

social networks

Week 1 Leader Guide

THE WIN

The group member will understand the context of marriage beginning in the tri-une God-head by examining case studies and determining which study reflects a Christ-centered marriage.

3-5
minutes

SERMON RECAP: WHAT DID THE TEXT MEAN? WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Roles in marriage are important to understand and meant to reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church. There is no room in a marriage for a husband to exhibit authoritarian leadership or lazy passivity. God has called husbands to provide servant leadership to his wife and family. For wives, resentful passivity or dominating your husband is both contrary to Scripture and outside of God's design for your role in marriage. Both husband and wife are to experience the joys found in the giving and receiving of relationships. Husbands are commanded to lay aside every desire, wish, and dream in order that he may lift high and love his wife. Wives are commanded to respect their husbands as if she was revering Christ Himself. This is the teaching we find in Ephesians 5:22-27. The bar is set high for both husbands and wives. However, when both are fulfilling their divinely ascribed roles, marriage can flourish.

3-5
minutes

WARM UP

Share with the group a season in your marriage when you were the happiest. Describe what made you so happy.

- What was your work life like? Home life? Spiritual life?
- Can you say, without reservation, that your spouse was equally as happy? If not, why?

30-35
minutes

THE TEXT: WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR ME?

READ THIS:

"So only if you have the ministry of the Spirit in your life will you be fully furnished to face the challenges of marriage in general. And only if you are filled with the Spirit will you have all you need to perform the duty of serving your spouse in particular."¹

ASK THIS:

¹ Keller, Timothy, *The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God*, New York: Dutton Books, 2011, 52-53.

-
- In your experience what are some specific challenges couples face in marriage?
 - How do those challenges manifest themselves in your own marriage?

DO THIS:

Divide up into groups of 3

ASK THIS:

What is the ministry of the Spirit and how does it work in and through you?

Leader Tip: Have the groups research their answer in Scripture and report back after 5-10 minutes. A type of answer could be:

"The Holy Spirit's ministry is to take truths about Jesus and make them clear to our minds and real to our hearts-so real that they console and empower and change us at our very center. To be 'filled with the Spirit,' then, is to live a life of joy, sometimes quiet, sometimes towering."²

READ THIS:

Ephesians 5:21

ASK THIS: (bring people back to 1 large group)

- Often times how we treat our spouse relies on how they have treated us. Why is this the case?
- With Ephesians 5:21 as our instruction, how much should our spouse's attitude/actions inform our attitude/actions towards them?

SAY THIS:

It's important to see that 'being subject to one another' / 'submitting to one another' is not based on whether our spouse deserves our submission. Notice our reason for submission, reverence for Christ. Paul is referencing Christ's work on earth, in Christianity we refer to this as the Gospel.

ASK THIS:

Can someone quickly share with the group: What is the Gospel?

SAY THIS:

Since the foundation of our mutual submission is found in the Gospel, let's look at some features of the Gospel that will help us understand Paul's instruction more completely.

Leader Tip: Split up into groups of 3. Have each group search for answers for about 5-10 minutes. For sake of time, only have a couple of groups report back to the larger group.

- What are some features of Jesus' nature? Make sure to back up your answers with Scripture.

Leader Tip: Here are the types of responses you're looking for:

Jesus is God. He is a person in the Tri-une God-head. Eternal. Equal to the Father and Spirit. Comprised of the same essence as the Father and Spirit. While on earth, Jesus was fully God yet temporarily emptied himself and submitted himself to the desires of the Father. Jesus was not forced or coerced to empty himself and become fully man, He chose to out of love for the Father. (John 1:1-5, Phil 2:8)

- Jesus loved you so much that he laid down his life for all so that all may reconcile to the Father. So, how is the church to follow Jesus? Why?

Consider the words of Dr. Gilbert Bilezikian: (Professor and founder of Willow Creek Community Church)

Leader Tip: Have someone in the group read this quote aloud. Perhaps break it up into sections to keep them alert.

² Ibid. 51.

When he (Jesus) ordained his followers to be salt and light in this world, Christ expected the fellowship they would form to become a distinctive community that would serve as a model for the world. This would require that Christians be different not only in their individual lifestyles but also in the way they relate to each other. Therefore, Jesus expressly and severely forbade his followers to structure their communities according to patterns borrowed from the secular world (Matt. 20:25-28). The only model they were allowed to follow was the interrelationships of oneness within the Trinity (John 17:11, 20-22). Because oneness is the sole option prescribed by God for the structuring of relationships among adult in church and family, believers are forbidden to conform their communities to the patterns of this world. They must be transformed by the renewing of their mind (Rom. 12:1-2) in accordance with God's ideal for community.³

So, the church is to pattern themselves after the relationships experienced within the Trinity. The Church is to submit to Jesus as Jesus put the needs of the Church first and ultimately died for Her.

DO THIS: Role Play

Leader Tip: Assign 2 people in each group to role play this out to their subgroup.

You: God I'm so grateful for everything you've done for me. What can I do to express my gratitude?

God: I want you to shower down all of your gratitude onto your spouse. Go, submit to your spouse out of reverence for Christ. Put their desires, wishes, and dreams ahead of your own.

You: God, you don't know what my spouse has done! They can't be trusted. This is impossible.

God: It's not about them. *Submit yourself not out of reverence for your spouse.* No matter if they don't deserve it. No matter if they mistreat your submission. No matter if they don't follow Jesus. You are to place your spouse's desires, wishes, and dreams ahead of your own.

You: Why?

God: Because I put you first. And now, I command you to do for your spouse what I did for you through my son, Jesus. Can you imagine what your marriage would look like if you put their desires, wishes, and dreams ahead of your own? And likewise, they put your desires, wishes, and dreams ahead of their own?

SAY THIS:

That is the essence of mutual submission and servant leadership. Both yielding to one another because of what Christ did for you. As a result, both sets of needs get met and Christ is given the glory.

ASK THIS:

- What thoughts/feelings did this role play activity stir up in you?
- What are a couple of practical steps you can take in order to live out Ephesians 5:21?

10-15
minutes

DIGGING DEEPER

In groups of 3, study the below case studies and discuss how each reflects or does not reflect Christ-centered mutual submission and servant leadership.

³ Bilezikian, Gilbert, *Community 101: Reclaiming the Local Church as Community of Oneness*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997, 49.

Kelly & Katie

Kelly & Katie began their marriage with great intentions and were surprised when they encountered issues early on in their marriage. Both had come from solid families, raised in church and believed their parents had set great examples for marriage. Kelly had learned by his own father's example to lay down his life for his wife. He had observed his own father make choices that he knew were for the benefit of his mother rather than what his father may have chosen. Although it was not easy, Kelly eventually made a conscious choice to follow his father's example and put Katie first. Katie also learned by observing that her role as a woman was one of encouraging and respecting Kelly. She found herself looking for fun and new ideas to express her respect to him. She also learned that she needed to encourage him when he expressed his frustrations of work rather than taking up his offense of another person. Katie also learned that when Kelly opened up and shared his struggles with her, then it was his story to tell others, not hers. These times were what Katie cherished in her heart.

Joe & Jill

Joe was a type A personality who had grown up in a "successful" family. His dad was always starting one business venture after another, provided well for his family, and was even a leader in their church. The family never seemed to lack anything materially. Joe never heard his mother complain about his father's absence from the home and his mother was very active socially with the next church event or fundraiser for a "good" cause. Joe was determined to have that kind of life.

Jill on the other hand had grown up with an alcoholic father and a mother who was always trying to "keep the peace" even if it meant lying concerning her father's absences at work or their school functions. Jill too learned to "keep the peace" and not voice her concerns, feelings, or lack of trust.

When Joe & Jill married, their models for marriage set them up to have the "perfect storm." Initially Jill was satisfied with all the nice things Joe could buy, but she did not get married to have nice things. Jill eventually realized she wanted companionship, the freedom to express her feelings and to be understood. The more Jill tried to talk to Joe about her concerns, the more time Joe spent away from home. He did not know what to do with a woman who complained; after all he was doing his best to give her "the perfect life." Joe eventually began to confide in his admin about his frustrations at home. After all she would understand, because she could actually see how hard he worked for his family.

Sam & Sarah

Sam & Sarah had only been married a few years and both were very committed to having a "happy" marriage. They were consistent in attending church as well as discussing what was going on in each other's lives. They even were faithful in setting aside a time each week for a date night. Yes, the happy marriage seemed to have a good foundation, but they both carried a secret. At times of frustration and only on occasion, Sam would find himself looking at porn online. He justified his behavior because Sarah was not always available sexually. Sarah also had her secret. She had been raped as a teen by a guy who she had just met at a party. She had never told anyone about it, because she felt stupid for putting herself in that situation. They both believed their choices were not affecting the other or their relationship.

CLOSING THOUGHT

While marriage is many things, it is anything but sentimental. Marriage is glorious, but hard. It's a burning joy and strength, and yet it is also blood, sweat, and tears, humbling defeats and exhausting victories....At times, your marriage seems to be an unsolvable puzzle, a maze in which you feel lost...And that is why, like knowing God himself, coming to know and love your spouse is difficult and painful-yet rewarding and wondrous.

-Timothy Keller, From Chapter One of The Meaning of Marriage