



God's Purpose for Marriage

Ice breaker: Where do you like to vacation? Do you have any plans for vacation this summer? (Winter is getting long, so let's talk about what we are looking forward to when it's warmer!)

Marriage from the Beginning:

1. God intended marriage to be beautiful and to make each person's life better.

See: Genesis 2:21-24 (NLT)

2. Sin corrupted the perfect potential of marriage, but not God's original intent for it.

See: Genesis 3:16 (NKJV)

Process the following statement:

"God's original intent was for marriage to be a perfect partnership."

Discuss:

- What emotions and reactions does that bring up for you?
- How can we allow God to heal us to move closer to the perfect intent He has for our marriages?
- The purpose of the Law was to show us that we are sinning. It gives us a standard to know what is right and how far we fall short of that requirement. Jesus made up the gap.
- How does Jesus filling the gap manifest in your marriage?

Marriage During the Time of Jesus:

Read: Matthew 5:31-32, Deuteronomy 24:1, Matthew 19:3

Consider:

Wasn't it interesting to learn about the two schools of thought on marriage and divorce?

Recap:

Shema school of thought held that the only reason for divorce could be sexual unfaithfulness.

Halel school of thought would justify divorce due to just about anything under the guise of "uncleanness."

Discuss:

- Halel was really more about finding loopholes and ways to justify something they knew was wrong. Can you think of ways that you justify doing things that you know are wrong?

Jesus addressed the heart issue as he answered the Pharisees that were trying to trap him. Read on.

What Is Jesus Saying to Us About Marriage?

1. We are to be preoccupied with making marriage work, not with trying to find ways to get out.

Discuss and/or Reflect:

- What are some ways as a single person that we can prepare ourselves to make marriage work?
- As a married person, what are some ways that you can actively work on your marriage to make it better?
- Have you ever had the thought of what you would do to 'get out'?
- Ask God to show you the root of why you long for that change.
- The original intent was for us to see our marriage as a representation of the way God interacts with His Bride, the church. What can you do bring yourself into alignment with God's original intent?

What about Divorce?

1. All divorce is the result sin.
2. Jesus offers forgiveness, healing and cleansing from the sin of divorce.

Pastor Jason encouraged us that God is a healer. The Gospel of Jesus always offers HOPE, not condemnation. Take a few moments to pray for anyone in your group that may be feeling discouraged. The enemy comes to steal, to kill and to destroy. One of the main things he does when we touch on topics like divorce is to bring division due to opinions and condemnation.

Has Pastor Jason's explanation been your experience?

Examine your heart and ask these questions:

1. Have I judged someone for getting divorced? Ask God for forgiveness.
2. Have I gotten divorced and felt condemnation from others? Ask God to help you forgive and to bring about good communication to those relationships in which you felt judged.
3. Have I gotten divorced and allowed guilt or sadness to rule my life afterwards? Ask God to give you HIS perspective and hope for your future.

Pray together for the following, interceding on the behalf of each person in your group:

That God would strengthen the marriages in your group, each individual separately and as a couple.

For those that are single and desire marriage, pray that God will equip them to be a person that fights for a marriage as God intended it and to be infused with hope.

For those that are single and do not desire to be married, pray that God would equip them to glorify Him in their hearts and in their relationships.

Our *hope* is Jesus, and His gospel is *peace*. Ask God to fill you with all peace and hope no matter what your experience with divorce has been.

Blessings to all of you!