

Community Groups are used extensively as the primary vehicle for discipleship at The Gathering and run on a quarter system. There is one in the fall, one in the winter and one in the spring. During the summer weeks we don't meet in Community Groups but we still offer the Growth Guides as a tool to help you grow personally. The Growth Guides are designed to help you dig deeper into the weekly sermon on your own or with your family and are available each week along with the note sheets at church as well as online.

COMMUNITY GROUPS BEGIN THE SPRING QUARTER THIS WEEK!

Consider...

Use the summary and discussion below to review and apply this week's message:

Message Summary

Marriage is a sensitive subject, because it seems that all of us have been touched in some way by either a failed one or a bad one (personally or in a friend's or family member's life). What that means is that it's very easy to bring shame to a study of the biblical plan for marriage, and that's exactly what the enemy of our soul wants. He wants us to feel the shame of failure, but God has another plan. In fact, marriage is part of God's game plan for displaying his grace and mercy to the world, and in Ephesians 5:21-33, the apostle Paul lays out how marriage fits into God's game plan. Though it's easy to see this as instruction to ONLY husbands and wives, Paul actually addresses three sets of people:

1. **Something for EVERYONE:** Are you single? Divorced? Widowed? Married to a jerk? There are so many ways that we can try to "opt out" of teaching on marriage, but Paul addresses this right from the start when he tells us that ALL OF US are to submit to one another out of reverence for Jesus. Put another way, before we talk about God's game plan, we need to make sure we're actually in the game, and that happens by following Jesus, or what we would call being "born again" or "saved" or "in Christ." When we are, our values change. We aren't in relationships for what we can get, but for what we can give. In Mark 10:42-45, Jesus said it like this: the world has one way, but "not so with you."
2. **Something for the LADIES:** In 3 verses, the apostle Paul rocks American culture by writing the word "submit." Men rejoice, and women cringe, and both do so because neither understands what submission isn't and what it is. It isn't about POWER as much as it's about POSITION. God's game plan includes EVERYONE because all of us have the same value to God. Submission ISN'T shutting up or always letting the husband have his way. It IS trusting that God can use the husband to accomplish His best for the wife. Wives submit to Jesus first, and as a result, to the husband.
3. **Something for the MEN:** Men are the head of the home, period. The question is what kind of head will he be? A godly one or a jerk. Paul took 3 verses for the women, but 9 for the men! Think about that. Men are called to love their brides like Jesus loves His bride. How does Jesus do that? Sacrificially, as a servant to make her the best she can be, in a way that cleanses her and makes her radiant. Jesus' love purifies His bride and pulls her closer to Him. When husbands love like that, it's not hard for wives to give themselves fully in that relationship. Men are the head of the home, but women submit to a bowed head much easier than a bullying one.

Discuss

Use the following questions to review and apply the points learned in the message.

- Take a few minutes to allow the married couple to share with the group how they met their spouses.
- Which famous TV family reminds you the most of yours? (Bradys? Huxtables? Simpsons? Others?)
- What kind of examples have you seen of godly marriages? Of poor marriages?
- Why do you think God picked marriage as an illustration of His love for the church?
- In light of God's game plan for marriages, how committed do you think He is to our marriages? How does that give us hope when we're working through submission and servant hood to our spouses?