

Series:

**IN THE BEGINNING, GOD**

Discussion Guide #7

Lesson: "What Does It Take To Experience God's Ideal For Marriage?" (Part 2 of 2)

Texts: Genesis 2:23-25, Matthew 19:3-9

Aim: to discuss the practical implications of creating the kind of partnership that God intends.

**ICE-BREAKER QUESTION: In today's conversation we will discuss the very first union of husband and wife, so I want to know, what is the LAST wedding you have attended? I'll begin:**

**QUIZ: After the wedding comes the marriage. Let's see how we do on this marriage quiz.**

[Source: The following information comes from SmartMarriages.com]

1. Marriage researchers can now predict, with 90% accuracy, which engaged couples will succeed or fail, based on just one of the following factors. Is the key factor: A. Level of romantic love? B. Absence of any major disagreements? C. Ability to handle disagreements? D. Compatibility of backgrounds? ANSWER: C. Ability to handle disagreements.
2. Many divorces are on the grounds of "irreconcilable differences." Research indicates that successful couples: A. Always agree on every issue. B. Always agree on most issues. C. Have 2 to 5 unresolved issues. D. Have approximately ten irreconcilable differences. ANSWER: D. Have ten differences.
3. ALL couples – those that stay happily married, and those that divorce – tend to disagree the same amount and about the same five basic issues. What would you guess is one of those issues? ANSWERS: A. Money B. Kids C. In-laws D. Sex E. Time (leisure time/housework)
4. TRUE or FALSE. "Men are better off married. Women are better off single." ANSWER: FALSE. Both married men and married women do better, on average, on measures of health, wealth, longevity, happiness, and sexual satisfaction than do singles. (Children also fare better in intact families.)
5. TRUE or FALSE. If a young couple is unhappy, one proven way to increase their marital satisfaction is by having a baby. FALSE. The level of marital satisfaction usually goes down when children are born. It hits its lowest point when there are children in the house between the ages of 11 and 16.
6. TRUE or FALSE. "Unmarried couples who live together are more likely to be unfaithful to each other than are married couples." ANSWER: TRUE. Cohabiting men are 4 times more likely to be unfaithful than are husbands, and cohabiting women are 8 times more like to cheat than wives.
7. Good marriages can go bad, but bad marriages can also go good. When unhappy couples decide to stay together, can you guess what % describe themselves as "happy" five years later? ANSWER: **77%**

Those questions remind us that God designed marriage to be good. However, they also remind us that we cannot enjoy the benefits of marriage without effort! In this discussion we will return to the story of Adam and Eve to consider what it takes to create a God-blessed partnership in life.

TURN to Genesis, Chapter 2. READ Verses 23-25 We saw last week that when Adam says, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh" he is marveling at the creation of Eve and at the same time joyfully expressing the UNITY between them.

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS: 1. It is often difficult for individuals to imagine what the day-to-day reality of a successful marriage will be like until they have actually experienced married life for themselves. In order for TWO people to create ONE partnership, what are some of the adjustments they will have to make? Are there some practical aspects of creating a strong partnership that people might not think about until after they're actually married? 2. Adam and Eve didn't have any models of marriage to go by, since they were the first couple on earth. How about you? Is there a married couple that you believe has a great partnership? If so, in what ways were they a good example of marriage for you?**

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Suppose you have a good friend who is about to get married. He says to you, “I’m really looking forward to being married, but I have to be honest, it kind of scares me, because there are so many people who end up divorced these days. Can you tell me the secret of being successful at marriage?” How would you answer your friend? In your opinion, what are some things your friend can do if he wants to have a successful marriage?

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** The statement in verse 24 that “a man will leave his father and mother” is obviously for OUR benefit, not Adam’s; after all, Adam didn’t have any in-laws! Suppose you have a good friend whose child is about to be married. She says, “I’ve never been a ‘mother-in-law’ before and I’m not sure how to act.” What do you think is the best advice you could give a friend about being a good father-in-law or mother-in-law?

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** Now let’s look at that issue from a different perspective. Suppose you have a good friend who is about to be married. What do you think is the best advice you could give him or her about how to be a good son-in-law or daughter-in-law?

**DISCUSSION QUESTION:** There is one last perspective we need to consider. What do you think is the best advice you could give a friend about what a man can do to make sure there are no problems between his parents and his partner, or about what a woman can do to help her husband and her parents have a good relationship? In your opinion, what is the most helpful thing people can do to enhance the relationship between their partner and their parents?

**DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** 1. There has been a rapid and large increase in our society in the number of couples who live together before marrying. Suppose you had a friend who explained, “My boyfriend and I plan to live together first because we think it will help us be better prepared for marriage.” How would you respond? What would you tell your friend? 2. Couples who just “live together” report lower levels of satisfaction in their relationship than do married couples, and if couples that live together first DO get married later, they are 50% more likely to eventually divorce. Why do you suppose that is? Can you think of any differences between “living together” and being married that would explain those findings?

TURN TO the gospel of Matthew (the first book of the New Testament), Chapter 19. READ Verses 3-6. **DISCUSSION QUESTION:** When Jesus was asked about **DIVORCE**, he first talked instead about **MARRIAGE**. He went all the way back to Genesis and quoted the passage describing the union of Adam and Eve. Why do you think he did that? What point do you think Jesus was trying to make?

2. After quoting the passage from Genesis, Jesus then added the words “Therefore what **GOD** has joined together, let man not separate.” What are some practical ways that a husband and wife can build their partnership on God’s will? In what ways might the relationship between a man and woman look different, in day-to-day life, when they are building a Christian marriage?

[OPTIONAL – IF TIME PERMITS] READ Verses 7-9 **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:** 1. When the Pharisees asked if a man could divorce his wife “for any and every reason” it reminds us that human nature hasn’t changed! What do you think is the number one reason for the high divorce rate in our society today? 2. If you had to propose a solution to the high divorce rate, what is the first thing you would suggest?

**SUMMARY STATEMENT:** God designed marriage to be a partnership that blesses our life, and we can enjoy that blessing when we respect and follow His plan for marriage!

**NEXT WEEK** we will consider the question “Why Is It So Difficult To Be Good?” To prepare for that conversation, read Genesis 3:1-7.