



Group Leader Guide “Marriage (And Singlehood)” - First Comes Love October 17-18, 2020

Group Creed

We come together as a Group with the goal of Spiritual Formation; encouraging one another to become the same kind of person that Jesus is, so that we can live out every part of our lives inside of His Kingdom.

// Message Summary

Teaching Pastor **Ben Foote** continues the “**First Comes Love**” series. Through Jesus’ own words, we learn the true importance of marriage and how it applies to our lives, whether we are married now or wish to be in the future. Jesus also addresses the importance of remaining single and how that is just as valuable and significant as being married. In today’s culture where divorce is rampant and marriage is represented poorly on all sides, Jesus helps us see what marriage (and singleness) is supposed to look like within the Kingdom of God.

// Biblical Background

Pharisees: The Pharisees were a religious group within Judaism at the time of Jesus. Estimates put their number around 6000. Their goal was to “interpret the law carefully and according to the traditions of previous generations of the pious.” They didn’t hold much political power (that belonged to another group called the Sadducees). Still, they were very respected for their scholarly knowledge. Though their name is synonymous with hypocrisy and legalism today due to their portrayal in the NT (and rightfully so), their views did align with his on some issues more so than some other groups, like the Sadducees.

Divorce Debate: Ben mentioned the cultural debate on divorce at the time of Jesus. The two sides of the debate were formed

by famous Jewish scholars of the time and were based on their interpretation of **Deuteronomy 24:1**, which reads, “When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house...”:

Bet Shammai: Shammai’s interpretation was that “indecency” meant an unseemly, moral failure. Therefore, a man could only divorce his wife if she committed a sexual sin (i.e., adultery). This is, indeed, the definition and connotation of the Hebrew word “*erwāh*.”

Bet Hillel: Hillel’s interpretation was much more liberal. He took Deuteronomy 24:1 to mean anything unseemly *or* moral, noting that even burning food would be grounds for divorce because that would be unseemly.

Rabbi Akiva: Akiva latched onto the phrase “finds no favor in his eyes” and interpreted the verse to mean that even finding someone more attractive was grounds for divorcing your wife.

During Jesus’ time, the dominant (read: official) position was that of the school of Shammai. However, other sources reveal that the positions of Bet Hillel and Rabbi Akiva were more generally practiced (thus, the debate). These views can be found in the Jewish Mishnah in *Gittin* 9:10.

// In Preparation

There is the possibility that discussion in your group could revolve around the issue of divorce this week, even though the discussion questions do not explicitly ask about it. That is perfectly ok. The questions are meant to be a guide for discussion, but if your group finds itself talking more about divorce, how it has affected their lives, personal views, etc. it is fine to let that happen. As long as your group is connecting, diving deeper into the message, and/or discovering more about what the Bible has to say about an issue, that is great! However, as a group leader, try to keep the conversation relevant to the week's topic and try to steer it back when it seems like the discussion is going off on a rabbit trail. But sometimes, the discussion questions don't touch on everything everyone in the group either got out of the talk or wants to discuss. So, please know that you have the freedom to go off-script if you wish. This group belongs to you all, and these questions are just a guide.

// References

eMishnah.com (2008). https://www.emishnah.com/Nashim_Vol_2/Gittin9.pdf

Keener, Craig S Ph.d. *IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. InterVarsity Press, 2014.

Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. AMG Publishers, 1994.



Group Discussion Questions

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// Bible References

Romans 8:35, 37-39; Matthew 19:3-6, 10-12; Genesis 1:27, 2:24

// Message Screenshots

- Divorce debate in Jesus’ time:
 - God only allows divorce, in the case of infidelity.
 - God allows divorce, for any and every reason.
- NT Cultural definition of marriage: Marriage is an institution created to serve and please men. And marriage is a contract that can be easily broken, whenever men don’t feel served or pleased by it anymore.
- Covenant: A spiritually binding promise that God makes to never leave or forsake his people.
- Kingdom of God definition of marriage: Marriage is an institution, for both the man AND the woman, that is designed to show the world what God is like. And marriage is a covenant that can’t be broken, without doing a lot of damage.
- Marriage is designed to show the world what God’s never-ending, never-quitting love and commitment look like.
- Staying single is designed to show the world what God’s never-ending, never-quitting love and commitment look like.

// Community Questions

1. How did your trusted person’s evaluation of your characteristics of love and the fruit of the Spirit go?
2. We all got to see Zoelle’s amazing vision of what her romantic life will look like. What was your childhood vision of romance and marriage?

// Core Questions

1. When was a time in your life where you “lost the ‘why’” to a value, routine, or habit?
2. What ended up happening once you lost the “why”?
3. Ben highlighted the cultural view of marriage at the time of Jesus was that it was an institution created to serve and please men, and it was a contract that could be easily broken by the man. Have you ever witnessed a relationship where one party of it clearly



- thought it was all about them? What was your take on that relationship?
4. Have you ever been selfish or self-serving in a relationship, thinking it was all about you? What was that relationship like? Was it healthy?
 5. Based on the “Kingdom of God” definition of marriage (see Message Screenshots) and how God treats us in our covenant with Him, how should we approach relationships, and in particular, marriage?
 6. How does/did your definition and understanding of the importance of marriage differ from what Jesus taught?
 7. What is something that you have desired, sought, or achieved simply because society or culture promised it would bring happiness?
 8. Have you ever felt like your environment (social, cultural, family, faith, etc.) was pressuring you to get married? If yes, how so?
 9. Ben explained how being married and staying single each demand sacrifices in order to be lived out according to God’s purpose. What would you be willing to sacrifice in order to live our God’s purpose for your life?
 10. How have you not been taking marriage or the single life as seriously as Jesus takes it?
 11. How might your life be better if you did take it more seriously?

// Challenge

Ben challenged us to really think through questions 10 & 11 this week. Take some intentional time this week to do just that. If you are married, focus on how seriously you have been taking your marriage. If you are single, focus on how seriously you have been taking your singleness. Also, if you are single and want to be married, focus on how seriously you have been taking your view of marriage, including why you want to get married and what you think it will provide you. Pray through all of that and take note of anything that God reveals to you. Then, think through and pray about how your life might be better if you aligned your view of the importance of marriage/singleness with that of Jesus. Finally, ask God to help you begin living your life in a way that reflects these newfound views of marriage/singleness. Come back next week ready to discuss any findings or revelations.



Student Group Discussion Questions
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// Scripture References

Romans 8:35,37-39

// Icebreaker

1. What's your longest streak? (Game, snapchat, etc)
2. What is a streak that you broke?

// Student Questions

1. What is something that you have seen last?
2. What is something that you have seen fail?
3. Do you think you have a relationship with God?
4. What does a relationship with God look like?
5. Read **Romans 8:35,37-39**. What do you notice about God's relationship with us?
What is the difference between God's relationship with us and our relationship with people?
Where have you seen God's unfailing love show up in your life?
6. What is a covenant?
(Give Ben's example: covenant: A spiritually binding promise that God makes to never leave or forsake his people. God's love is unfailing. The only example of a human covenant we have is marriage. Marriage is supposed to be a reflection of God's love for us. So is being single)
7. Are you taking your life and relationships as seriously as Jesus does about his relationship with you?
8. What is one thing you can do to make your relationships better this week?

// Pray

God help us become the type of people who love unfailingly like you do.

// Leader Feedback

Please let us know how these questions went over in your group. Email your answers to calebflowers@flatironschurch.com

- What was good?
- What was bad?
- What was confusing?