



Discipleship Course

Honouring God in marriage and singleness

Love your neighbour as yourself- session 6

Intro: Why it's important to know God's plan for marriage

→ Marriage and society

→ Marriage and me personally

1. Two good gifts from God

“I wish all men were [single] as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that”

The apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 7:7

2. The gift of marriage

a. *Marriage is part of God's created order (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:18-24, p. 4)*

→ **Marriage is to be between one man and one woman**

→ **Sex is for use only within the permanent exclusive commitment of marriage**

b. *Marriage is about serving God (Genesis 2:15-18)*

c. *Marriage is a visual aid of the gospel (Revelation 21:1-3, p. 1249)*

→ **Sacrificial love**

→ **Committed faithfulness**

3. The gift of singleness

a. *Understanding the challenges*

b. *Having the right perspective*

c. *Making the most of the opportunities (1 Corinthians 7:32-35, p. 1149)*

Helpful resources on marriage and singleness

St Mary's Website

Go to 'Media Library' on the website and use the search box

Sermon on 1 Corinthians 7:1-24	A passage all about how to honour God in your marriage. Includes a word to those married to a non-Christian, and lots of practical application.
Sermon on 1 Corinthians 7:25-40	A passage all about how to honour God in singleness. Also of great relevance to those who are married.
Sermon on 1 Corinthians 11:2-16	A passage that helps to explain what 'male headship' is. Sam Allberry helpfully unpacks why although it's culturally unpopular, it's important to listen to what God says about it.

Homosexuality

www.livingout.org	A fantastic website with contributions by various Christians who are same-sex attracted, but seeking to follow the Bible's teaching
Is God anti-gay?	A short and helpful book written by our own Sam Allberry

Marriage and singleness

Marriage refreshment course	Sue Bauhahn organizes this occasional course. Contact her directly to enquire about the next one.
Some great books out there!	Have a look in the 'recommended books' for some great books on marriage and singleness

Small Groups: Ephesians 5:22-33

1. Whatever our own marital status might be (married, single, divorced, bereaved), why is it important to be clear on God's plan for marriage?

Paul's instructions for wives and husbands are counter-cultural. In our own day, talk of 'submission' makes us nervous. But in Paul's own day (when women were routinely mistreated), his teaching to husbands was pro-women in a revolutionary way.

A word for wives... (v22-24)

2. What is Paul's basic instruction to wives? What reason does he give for it?

In 1 Cor. 11:3-12, Paul explains that male 'headship' is rooted in God's ordering of creation. Man and women are completely equal in God's creation, but have been made, not to be identical, but to complement each other. This complementarity includes being given different roles, which when lived out will lead to the flourishing of both partners.

3. There times, Paul uses the word 'as' to make a comparison. What comparisons are being made in each case?
4. We can easily think of 'headship' as dominance, and 'submission' as subjection or inferiority. How does the comparison with Christ and the church show that thinking to be horribly wrong?
5. What is the practical challenge of this teaching for wives? And for husbands?

A word for husbands... (v25-33)

6. What is Paul's basic instruction for husbands? What example are they to follow?
7. What are the different ways that Christ shows his love for the church in v25-27?
8. What would such love look like in a husband towards his wife?
9. In v28-31, what second reason are husbands given to love their wives?
10. Paul spends much longer talking to the husbands! What are the practical challenges of his teaching for husbands?

11. v31 is a quote from Genesis- what do we learn from it about God's design for sex and marriage?
12. In v32 Paul says that the 'one-flesh' union of marriage is a 'profound mystery', but then goes on to say that he's also talking about Christ and the church. How is the 'one-flesh' of marriage a picture of Christ and the church?
13. Marriage is not the ultimate thing- it's a *picture* of the ultimate thing: a relationships with Christ.

*How will this stop married folk from idolising their marriages?
How can this encourage folk who struggle with being single?*

Reflect: *If you're married, how can you grow your own marriage to better reflect God's design for marriage? If you're single, how will this help you set your own expectations if and when you do marry, and how can this help you better support friends who are married?*

One to one in the week

- Talk through the 'reflect' questions from last week together, and share your own thoughts on these with each other
- Read through **Acts 18:24-28, and Romans 16:3-4**. Priscilla and Aquilla were a married couple who were friends of the apostle Paul.
 - *How did they use their marriage as a means of serving God?*
 - *If you're married, what might this look like in your own circumstances?*
 - *If you're single, are there any married couple you know who you could praise God for, for using their marriages like this?*
 - *If you're single, but hope to be married, how will this affect our priorities in finding a husband/wife?*
- Share a prayer request, and pray for each other.

Next week: Matthew 18:21-35

In 2 Corinthians 8-9, Paul encourages the Corinthian Christians to be generous in giving, and in particular to give money towards an 'aid-package' for the troubled church in Judea, being collected across the churches Paul had established.

1. What would you say are the main reasons generous giving is something we often tend to 'put off?'
2. Why does Paul tell the Corinthian Christians about the Macedonian church? (8:1-8)
3. 'Grace' means the same kind of thing as 'generosity'. How has Jesus been generous to us? (8:8-9)
4. How does Paul address the fact that we all have different levels of wealth? (8:10-15)
5. How much trouble does Paul go to in arranging this gift? (8:16-24)
6. Before the gift is collected, Paul is sending an 'advance' party. Why? (9:1-5)
7. How does Paul's metaphor in v6 apply to giving? How does Paul go on to unpack what it means to 'reap generously'? (9:6-11)
8. What results from being cheerfully generous in v12-15?
9. In the OT, the Israelites were commanded to 'tithe' (give 10%). Why do you think that Paul doesn't stipulate a fixed amount, or even a fixed proportion to give?
10. In 1 Corinthians, Paul has already given them some help on the logistics of giving. What does he encourage? (1 Cor. 16:1-4, p. 1157)

Reflect: What will cheerful and sacrificial generosity look like in your circumstances at the moment? What concrete action can you take to put into practice the teaching of 2 Cor 8-9?

Recommended books for this term

<i>Relationships- a mess worth making</i>	Timothy S. Lane & Paul David Tripp	An introduction to what the Bible teaches about our relationships in life
<i>The Living Church</i>	John Stott	A wonderful introduction to God's vision for his church
<i>True Friendship</i>	Vaughan Roberts	How we can be grow in our friendships as Christians
<i>Serving without sinking</i>	John Hindley	A great book thinking through our motivations and priorities in serving others
<i>Forgiveness</i>	Julia Marsden	Very short, but very helpful book on growing in forgiveness
<i>Married for God</i>	Christopher Ash	How to live out God's purposes in marriage
<i>The meaning of marriage</i>	Tim Keller	Slightly longer than Married for God, but very thoughtful and well applied.
<i>The single issue</i>	Al Hsu	What does the Bible say about being single?
<i>The heart of Singleness</i>	Andrea Trevenna	A book particularly for women who are struggling with singleness
<i>Counterfeit Gods</i>	Tim Keller	How money, love and power can become 'gods' in our lives
<i>Gospel Centred Work</i>	Tim Chester	A book introducing God's plan for work and how we fit in with it
<i>Honest Evangelism</i>	Rico Tice	A short book helping us to see why telling others about Jesus is hard, but still worth doing!

Prayer Points