

Chapter 6: Your Partner in Crime [Spouse]

What to expect today:

Icebreaker Questions

- Who is your favorite celebrity couple?
- What is your favorite romance movie?
- What is your favorite fairy tale?

Class notes: Teaching Time

- The Great Dilemma
- Signing Up for Crucifixion
- The Waiting Game

Group Discussion Questions

Imagine the wide-open sea that you are embarking on as post grads. Now envision riding the boat with a partner alongside you. This fellow sailor is steering the boat in a completely different direction than you thought you were going. You are holding a compass pointing one way, and your mate has a totally different destination in mind. Say “hello” to trouble in paradise. How do you both choose a common destination? How do you choose who is in your boat? How do you chart your course as a team? How will you handle leaks on the boat? Will you work together as a team to fix the leaks?

This chapter is not about encouraging you to get married. It’s about encouraging you to set your sights high, and to find a mate that will honor God and show the world a love that’s sacrificial and focused. Dating isn’t really dating at all. It’s about finding your mate. It’s not a game. It’s your life.

The Great Dilemma

The human heart desires companionship. We were beautifully designed this way. Most people want to find someone they love; but sometimes, this can make us shortsighted. Instead of visualizing what it would be like to married at 40 years old, walking through life as parents to crazy teenagers, and working for a mortgage with responsibilities, many settle for the first person who says they care for them.

Rarely do people ask the tough questions. Is this person on board to follow God wherever He leads me? Does this person value family the same way as I do? Are they kind to people? Are they generous? Do they pray for me and encourage the people around them? Instead of thinking about character and the future, we at times only think about the present and whether they fit in our lives right now. When you want a relationship now, more than a relationship forever, you face a dilemma that can dramatically impact your life.

Timothy Keller, author of *The Meaning of Marriage* writes, “To be loved but not known is comforting but superficial. To be known and not loved is our greatest fear. But to be fully known and truly loved is, well, a lot like being loved by God. It is what we need more than anything. It liberates us from pretense, humbles us out of our self-righteousness, and fortifies

us for any difficulty life can throw at us.” His wise words speak such truth about the sanctifying process that marriage is.

Ecclesiastes 4 says, “Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart.” You don’t just want someone. Someone may not like your dreams. Someone may not pursue God the way you do. They might not have the same view about family and calling. They may not be your forever partner. They may just be a “good enough for now” someone. When you think about your spouse, you want to choose someone with character that you admire. Choose someone who will value you and your God-given future. When you meet the right someone, the choice will be easy to date them, because you’ve envisioned it and prayed about it for years.

Lili’s Experience

I have had a crush on my husband since I was 17-years-old. We have been dating for over a decade. To save years of time, I’ll summarize and share that Tim is the reason I know Jesus today. Tim is endlessly supportive, encouraging, and kind to me. He listens and builds me up. He challenges me to try things way out of my comfort zone. He prays for me. He holds me accountable to my actions and words. He is excited about my dreams, and he has so much wisdom to offer.

Tim and I spend time together unpacking how his passions (science and nature) can be utilized for the Kingdom. I cheer him on for every decision he makes for his (and our) life. We pray together about his career and choices. I pray for him and his individual gifts. I’m at his bike races and supporting his hobbies. I go back-country-skiing with him (because I know he loves it). I am willing to try new things, and I show interest in the things he enjoys, because I deeply care about what is enjoyable to him.

Our relationship has been transformative in so many ways. Scripture teaches that purpose of marriage is a sacrificial commitment to the good of the other (Ephesians 5:25-30). Tim sharpens me and inspires me. Tim makes me braver and stronger. He points me towards Jesus. Together we are looking in the same direction: pursuing God. Our individual strengths and weaknesses make us a resilient team, and we are better together. Tim is my greatest earthly gift.

Signing Up for Crucifixion

This season as post grads isn't just about choosing the right guy or finding the right woman. The biggest challenge for many twenty-somethings will be coming to the understanding that the only way to a glorious marriage is through death. No one wants to hear this, but it's the reality. In our lifetime beyond our covenant with Christ, marriage will be the most life-altering covenant in which we engage.

In Ephesians, Paul is aware of our desire to put ourselves first. He encourages us to "give ourselves up." (Ephesians 5:1). Post grads, do you accept that getting marriage means you need to die to yourself? John 3:31 says "He [Jesus] must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less." The blessing of dying to self is that God gets the glory.

Happily Ever After

Everyone wants a fairytale... yet the world accepts that marriage is hard. The world makes jokes like referring to marriage as the good old "ball and chain." What a sad image of marriage. That is not what it was designed for. Real issues can emerge when a husband or wife falls for the illusion that marriage (and your spouse) should be perfect. But no people are perfect, are they? We are all a mess! So how can we expect a "perfect" marriage? We can't expect a perfect marriage, but we can truly seek God's design for it.

Romance that is born out of self-sacrifice and choosing the other above oneself. These unselfish qualities are the pulse of an incredible marriage. Service leads to deeper joy. Ultimately, the goal of marriage is to please God (2 Corinthians 5:9). The real question is this:

“What will make God happy?” and how can this be demonstrated through marriage and actions towards one other.

Divorce

God hates divorce. (Malachi 2:16). As my husband and I are approaching 30, we are starting to see connections that are going through divorce. When a marriage union stops putting God first, who can you cling to through the storms?

Gary L. Thomas, author of *Sacred Marriage* writes, ‘Knowing why we are married and should stay married is crucial... will we approach marriage from a God-centered view or a man-centered view? In a man-centered view, we will maintain our marriage as long as our earthly comforts, desires, and expectations are met. In a God-centered view, we preserve our marriage because it brings glory to God and points a sinful world to a reconciling Creator.’ In *Sacred Marriage*, Thomas asks: ‘How can we use the challenges, joys, struggles and celebrations of marriage to draw closer to God? What if God designed marriage to make us both happy and holy?’

When you start seeking fulfillment from your spouse rather than God, disappointment will drive you apart. Fairytales do exist, but they happen because of a couple’s ability to navigate life together selflessly and for the benefit of one another.

Waiting Game

Some of you will find your spouse in your twenties. For others, your twenties may be more of a waiting game. While single, don’t stop seeking out all that God has for you! He has so much in store for you. Apostle Paul tells us, “It is good for a man not to marry.” (1 Corinthians 7:1). Most single people don’t like this idea. Paul is getting at this point: this is the only time in your life that you are both old enough to understand God’s calling and you are also gifted with so much free time! Twenty-somethings that get this point are busy living the life God is putting on their hearts. Those people don’t wait long typically for marriage.

You may want to be married right now, but that might not be your story. Lean into God during this time. God has so much for you. Pray for your future spouse. Choose wisely who you date, and learn to lay your life down for the benefit of others. In perfect timing, may you have the fairytale God has for you.

Zach's Experience

I am a planner and a hopeless romantic, so waiting is the worst for me. Mix those issues with social media wedding and baby announcements, and waiting becomes my nemesis! My past relationships have either been forced or not pursued because of I wanted to control the path our relationship would take. It all boils down to pride and the belief that I can create a better relationship for myself than God can.

Instead of letting social media, romantic comedies and pride take over my heart, I have to give it over to God. It takes a lot for me to give it to God, and I must remind myself daily to do it, but when it's in His hands, it's going to be better than I could ever manage. I know that God is working on me and my character right now so that when my future spouse comes along, I'll be the man that I am meant to be for our future Godly relationship.

Group Discussion Questions

Why do you want to get married? Or, why do you not want to get married?

What is the meaning of headship and submission in the Bible and in marriage?

What are some examples of marriage in the Bible? What can we glean from them?

Reflections

If you are in a relationship right now have you pursued God's direction regarding our relationship?

If you are single right now, are you patiently waiting and using your time to live a life that God has for you? Or are you frustrated? How can you lean into God during this time?

If you are in a relationship, does your relationship draw you closer to God? If you are single, are you choosing who you date wisely?

Are you willing to submit to Jesus in a relationship and live in obedience? Are you willing to submit to self-sacrifice?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. If you are in a relationship, do these qualities of love exist in the relationship? Which are less evident? Consider what this passage means to you.

Do you know of an incredible couple? What do you think makes them that way?

How have the relationships in your life affected the way that you view marriage? How has the church?

Challenge: go interview a Christian couple that you would consider 'incredible'

Ephesians 5:25–27

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.

1 Peter 4:8

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Genesis 2:18

Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.”

Lord, thank you for providing us the gift of relationships and marriage. We pray for those that are married or in relationships, that they continually seek You first in order that their marriage grows stronger. We pray for those that are single, that you guard their hearts and encourage them to lean on You as they seek out relationships. We pray that we are men and women that glorify You, no matter where we find ourselves relationally. Amen.

Chapter 7: From Glory to Glory

What to expect today:

Icebreaker Questions

Have you ever been through a corn maze?

Have you ever played a video game and found a secret shortcut to a passageway?

Class notes: Teaching Time

Dreams & Humble Beginnings

The Big Question on the Test

The God Who Graduates

A Kingdom Whose Glory Never Fades

In Between

Group Discussion Questions

In 2 Corinthians 3:1-24, Paul links the effects of our salvation with what happened to Moses when he encountered God's glory on Sinai. Remember that when Moses came down from the mountain? He was shining and reflecting God's glory! The glow on his face was so startling that he put a veil over his face (Exodus 34:29-33) to not scare anyone.

In 2 Corinthians 3:18 Paul says, "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." Paul is essentially saying that we are all being transformed into the image of God; so much so that our faces will radiate like Moses. According to scripture, those who follow Christ will move from glory to glory. God is equipping you to shine!

When it comes to voyaging through your twenties in the wide-open sea, finding your way is complex. How do you grow spiritually? How do you develop character? How do you achieve your dreams? How do you move from one degree of glory to the next? There are no shortcuts in this journey! No secret passageways can be found. God is working right where you are.

Dreams & Humble Beginnings

Post grads, most of you have a dream. The problem sometimes is that these dreams are taking way longer than we thought they would. Pursuing them is sometimes harder than we thought it would be. That's the challenge and reward of this time period. Glory-filled lives require perseverance. If you can hold onto grit in your twenties, you are developing a trajectory for the rest of your life. Moving to glory means setting your sights on the end goal (letter Z), while being accepting of the process (starting at letter A). Lots of people dream, but not everyone perseveres until that dream is happening.

Your first footstep is to take a courageous move forward and begin. Most beginnings are small. They aren't much to look at. The circumstances are often humble. Back in 1976, Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniack and Ronald Wayne started a business out of a garage, putting together one of the first prototypes of their personal computers. Today, Apple is the most valuable technology company in the world. (Post grads, did you know that Steve Jobs was 21 years old

when he started at that humble beginning?) Starting small is still taking the first step, and God is using you.

The Big Questions on the Test

One question that is always good to ask – no matter what stage you’re at is this, “God, what am I supposed to be learning here?” Listen closely. If the post grad years are God’s classroom, then don’t forget to be asking what you are supposed to be learning! Circumstances for the post grad are ordained. You’ve been set-up, and it’s a good thing! God invites you into the process of becoming who you are becoming. When you ask, God can let you in on His plan and He is hoping you will learn. Most of the time, He is simply asking you to be faithful. Post grad, He is using you today. Rest in Him.

The God Who Graduates

God loves taking people from small beginnings and moving them into bigger things. The Bible is full of people like that. These people and stories are glory-filled. His glory is on display through this. Consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God (1 Corinthians 1:26–29). God uses all who humble themselves before Him.

God has much he’s hoping we’ll accomplish with all of us. Humility isn’t thinking less of yourself. Humility is having a proper sense of who is worthy, and who is King. This valuable life is about His Kingdom. This life is not about building individual sandcastles. What is difficult about the world we live in is that we are told this life is about making something of ourselves. How confusing and contrary that view is to the word of God.

Consider this passage by C.S. Lewis, “It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and

ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.” — C.S. Lewis, *The Weight of Glory, and Other Addresses*

In Matthew, Jesus understands the human heart is bent towards building things for themselves. (Read Matthew 6:25-33). Human nature is to be anxious about our lives. We are all guilty of being anxious about making money, finding the right career, and making good choices. Jesus is calling us out. He is telling us to not worry about OUR kingdom. For people that seek to build their own kingdom, they will constantly be seeking approval of the world, and they will struggle.

Jesus puts it this way – if you want to graduate to the next level, seek His kingdom first. It’s truly that simple. Our lives are best spent seeing God’s dreams come to completion. The most glorious lives are the ones that live for God’s desire. Seek Him first. He will take care of your ambitions too.

In Between

Post grads, this wide-open sea is full of many degrees of transformation. There will be many years spent in the in-between stages. You will walk between dependence and independence, marriage and singleness, spiritual haze and vivacity, first jobs and great jobs. Through all of these circumstances, you should be encouraged! Everything in your beautiful life is being used. Walking “in between” simply means that you are leaving a former glory behind. God always keep His word.

Faith is the belief in things unseen. Faith is your compass to navigate this big ocean. If you’re worried about your dreams, have faith. God wouldn’t have given this dream to you if He wasn’t bent on fulfilling it! If you are overwhelmed, have faith. God sees you, post grad. Your choice to believe in His provision is the key to enjoy these years.

Welcome to the post grad season, friends. It’s the most stunning and intense ride ever. God is on your side. God is with you. He is transforming you. He loves you. He is speaking to

you. There is a graduation and a glory directly ahead of you. God will mold us into the man or woman we need to be to accomplish his ambitions for His kingdom.

We go from glory to glory to glory

We'll never be the same, we'll never be the same

We go from glory to glory to glory

We're forever changed, forever changed

Reflections

What is your currently glory?

What dream has been placed on your heart?

Describe the season of life you're currently in – are you taking advantage of it? Are you allowing God to work in your life in this season?

Ask God, what am I supposed to be learning here?

Read the parable of talents (Matthew 5...)

*"I'm not afraid of storms, for I'm learning how to sail my ship." -
Louisa May Alcott*