

we  ARE
Family



SERMON DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR CONNECT GROUPS

27 & 28 AUG 2022

“SEX, MARRIAGE, SINGLEHOOD: GRIEF OR GIFT”

1 CORINTHIANS 7.1-11, 32-35

Suggestions for Making the Most of your Group Time

1. Begin by reviewing the video of the sermon, preferably before you meet together (see <https://www.brmc.org.sg/services/sermons/>).
2. Read the Scripture passage together, before entering into discussion.
3. Spend time on both question components, namely:
 - a. Comprehension (*Who? What? When? Why? How?*);
 - b. Application / Transformation (*So what? What action should I take? Perspective should I adopt? Value should I uphold? Emotion should I embrace? Habit should I develop? Desire should I nurture? etc*)
4. Discuss as few or as many questions as best fits your group's current context and present stage in life.
5. Before ending your group session, allocate some time (15-20 min) to pray with and for one another.

4. Review 1Cor 7.7-9 and 32-35, and summarise how these verses describe singlehood as a gift.
 - a. Why is this gift sometimes not perceived as a gift?
 - b. The sermon mentioned five ways in which we become singles. Review and recall these 5Ds. How has the sermon and the Scripture opened your mind or moved your heart concerning singles and unmarried?

5. Look around at your Connect Group members.
 - a. Are there marrieds and singles in your group? Are there unmarrieds who are in the different categories of the 5Ds (default, death, divorce, desertion or design)? Are there persons in your group who have experienced sex, marriage, and singlehood – both as ***grief*** as well as ***gift***? (These might be individuals' own experiences, or that of their immediate families.)
 - b. What is one practical step you can take to better love, support, encourage, and care for one another in your Connect Groups, in the area of sex, marriage, or singlehood?
 - c. If your group is comfortable, close the discussion segment by saying this affirmation together:

Together, we affirm that, without exception, each one of us is made in the image of God.

We agree with the Bible – that marriage is God's good gift, and it is not to be taken casually.

We affirm that sex is God's gift – a gift which remains good only within the parameters set by the good Giver.

We recognise that singlehood is also God's gift

Yet we also acknowledge that we live in a broken world, that we ourselves are broken, that God's gifts have been experienced as a source of pain, sorrow, grief.

We confess the times when, through our own action or inaction, we in our brokenness have contributed to this pain, sorrow, grief. Saviour, forgive us. Lord, change us.

We lament the times when the brokenness of others has led us into an experience of suffering and grief. Lord, hear the cries of our wounded souls. Lord, comfort our broken hearts.

In all this, we affirm that Jesus Christ came to bear our brokenness, to heal our wounds, to reveal his glory in our suffering.

We affirm that our God is One who gives beauty in place of ashes, joy in place of mourning, praise in place of a faint spirit (Isa 61.3), who turns our grief into gift.

We affirm that God redeems. God is not only redeeming us, he is also teaching us and empowering us to live as a redeemed people in a broken world.

So, we join with God's people, our extended spiritual family, to journey together in this present time of brokenness and redemption, of grief and gifts. Until that day when we finally come to the perfect marriage, the wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev 19.6-9). Amen.

Prayer Items

6. Pray for one another, that we would be empowered by God to live out the specific areas of application and transformation raised during the discussion time. Pray also for any needs that were mentioned.

Further Background Information

God's family (the church) in 1st century Corinth

In the previous sermon titled "Living as God's Family", we heard of Paul's encouragement to the early Christians in Ephesus to live worthily as "members of the household of God" (Eph. 2:19). As disciples of Christ and stewards of God's love today, we are still called to live out the "one anothers"; to love, forgive, honour, serve... one another as God's household members. Paul's call for the church to live worthily also echoes Joshua's challenge to the Israelites to remain faithful to the LORD in light of the covenant they had just renewed (refer to the sermon on 21 Aug 2022 titled "Living for the Lord as a Family", on Joshua 24:14-24). But in our own human and fallen capacity, this call seems to be a futile (and lofty at best) endeavour.

Paul's letter (likely written with aid from his missionary colleagues) to the church in Corinth commonly known as "1 Corinthians" gives a unique insight to these challenges in a church struggling to live according to God's love demonstrated in the Gospel. These challenges included lacking an understanding of scriptural holiness (being set apart as God's family), the relationship between Christians and the surrounding pagan culture, the lack of orderliness in church activities and use of spiritual gifts, and matters concerning personal morality in the context of relationships (sex, marriage, singleness and love - addressed in this week's sermon). 1 Corinthians was not Paul's first letter to this church (1 Cor. 5:9), but a written response to the report he heard of serious problems of disunity, sexual immorality, and social snobbery (1 Cor. 1:10; 5:1; 11:18) plaguing the church in Corinth.

Despite the often stern tone Paul used to address the Corinthian church with, he was still very much thankful to God for this church, and loved them dearly (1 Cor. 16:24). He wrote this letter to encourage this church to become a well-constructed dwelling place for God's Spirit built on the foundation of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11-17).

(Adapted from <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/course/1-corinthians/#themes-background>)