

Get Smart: A Study in Proverbs

Growth Group Leader's Supplement

Study 6: Marriage and Sexuality

Growth Point Insights

Questions are always guidelines. Never feel obligated to cover every one. Always put a stress on participation. If someone has a different question, by all means pursue it.

Devotional Seed:

The devotional seed is intended to stimulate conversation as an introduction to the discussion.

Is anger sinful? Is it ever beneficial?

This is the theme of the study. The Ephesians passage in Question 3 below certainly distinguishes between anger and how we express anger. Not much is said about the benefits of anger in the scriptures. There is a sense that it could motivate us to pursue justice, but generally the danger is greater than the benefit.

Deeper Roots

These questions are intended to promote study and deepen understanding.

1. What are the similarities between sexuality and the pursuit of wisdom or folly?

Going back to the previous study you remember that wisdom and folly are presented as women. The pursuit of wisdom is portrayed somewhat seductively as both women call for our attention. Similarities also include the resulting damage of both folly and adultery as well as the need for passionate commitment to the pursuit of wisdom.

2. Is jealousy a positive or negative emotion?

Like most emotions, jealousy is natural and therefore positive. As with all emotions, the sin is not in feeling the emotion, but in how we deal with it. One would hope that a husband would be jealous of his wife if she were to give attention to another. Jealousy would be evidence of passionate love. In fact a lack of jealousy would be abnormal. This being said, jealousy should not lead to

a lack of forgiveness or vengeful rage. The fact that Proverbs describes jealous rage is more of an observation of reality than a prescription of morality. God describes himself as jealous (Exodus 20:5) therefore it is possible to be jealous and not sin.

3. What helpful instructions does Proverbs give to help one avoid the trap of adultery?

It warns of the severity of the damage (death)

It reminds us of the severity of a jealous husband

It reminds us that we probably won't get away with it (6:27-29)

It can sometimes start with mere lustful looks

It calls us to enjoy our own spouse (5:15-20)

It reminds us that it is a sin before God (5:21)

It counsels us to stay away from temptation (7:7-9)

4. What is your reaction to the sexual language of Proverbs 5:15-20? (Shocking? Embarrassing? Surprising? Freeing? Encouraging?)

Remember also the Song of Solomon. God is not embarrassed by sexuality. It is wonderful and spiritual in the proper context.

5. Do you think that Proverbs 18:22 is an encouragement or a discouragement to single people?

It will depend on the individual. Some will be encouraged to look for a marriage partner as part of God's blessing for them. Older singles may actually feel as if they have been left out of God's blessing. Be sensitive here.

See 1 Corinthians 7 for a discussion on singleness where Paul actually encourages singleness as a way to be more fully devoted to God.

6. Why do you think the trait of quarrelsomeness is singled out with respect to wives?

Perhaps this is a common danger that women fall into. Perhaps it is especially difficult for men to have such a wife.

7. Why do you think lack of love is singled out with respect to husbands.

Perhaps this is a common danger that men fall into. Perhaps it is especially difficult for women to have such a husband.

8. How does the material in Proverbs relate to the teaching on marriage in Ephesians 5:21-6:33.

The previous two questions are really a set up for this question. Ephesians calls for wives to respect / submit to their husbands, which is the exact opposite of being quarrelsome. It also called husbands to love their wives sacrificially, which is obviously the opposite of being unloving.

This connection suggests that these issues are very much central to a healthy marriage relationship.

In helping with a discussion that might branch out from Ephesians 5, here are some interpretive notes on Ephesians 5.

- a) In approaching this difficult passage of scripture, I want to offer to important grammatical and contextual pointers to help guide our interpretation.
- b) Notice that the section on wives and husbands (5:22-33) flows out of verse 21. In fact the verb in verse 22 does not exist and looks to verse 21. A more literal translation of verse 22 is “wives, to your husbands, as to the Lord” the verb submit is supplied from vs. 21.
- c) It is also interesting to note that verse 21 is not written as a command, but is dependent on verse 18. In fact verse 19-21 express how we are to be filled with the Spirit or rather what being filled with the Spirit looks like. A rough translation would be “Be filled with the Spirit (command) which results in speaking...singing...being thankful...and submitting to one another) Submission flows out of the Spirit’s work in our lives.
- d) The language is very specific that wives are to submit to their own husbands and husbands are to sacrificially love their own wives. This passage is about marriages not about the roles of men and women in society as a whole.
- e) It is interesting to note that this passage talks in terms of duties and not rights. Both husbands and wives are instructed in what to do/give and not what to expect/receive.
- f) This passage must be taken as a whole, looking to the cooperative and compatible roles of the husband and wife. Merely looking at one side can skew the picture.
- g) Headship primarily means leadership. The problem we are faced with is that leadership often wrongly implies superiority and authoritarian rule. But what should headship look like? Remember to interpret headship in context.
- h) Submission means to place your self under another. There is a strong connection with respect. The problem is that submission often wrongly implies compliance, weakness and inferiority. But what should submission look like?
- i) The verbs on submission are used reflexively. One submits themselves, one does not subject another.

Bearing Fruit

These questions are designed to be a little more personal and application oriented. Use these questions to focus more on sharing. It helps if as a leader, you are willing to share your life with the group.

Take extra time for prayer and make time for item 3 if possible. This could be a strong blessing in marriages and a good time for personal connection.

Branching Out

Each month your group will be asked to focus some time on outreach and service. Plan to spend some time planning and thinking about how your group can reach out together. We will use this space to help your group integrate with the larger outreach efforts of the church.

On Dec 10-12 we will have a Christmas outreach dinner called Together for Christmas. It will be a nice meal, conversation around the table along with a fun program filled with humor and interaction. It will be a great opportunity to invite guests. We need to help our groups get excited about inviting people. Create a list of possible invitees and pray for opportunity to invite and positive response.