

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Message Series: "JUST" Married?
Message Title: JUST Forever
Speaker: Pastor Kevin Myers
Date: February 12, 2012

Icebreaker:

Pastor Kevin (PK) shared the story of someone who met his future wife when he pulled up beside her in traffic and asked for her phone number, then followed her to a gas station, bought her gas, asked her for a date... eventually wedding bells rang and they lived happily ever after. PK pointed out that asking a girl for her phone number in traffic doesn't usually work! What's the cheesiest pick-up line or tactic you've ever heard – or used yourself? If you're married, can you briefly share the story of how you first met your spouse? Do you remember your very first impression of them?

Message Overview:

We've learned a few key truths about marriage over the past few weeks:

- Marriage builds on **Love** and **Respect**
- Marriage breaks down with **Self-Deception**
- The Goal of marriage is **Oneness**

We wrapped up the series this week with some insight into how to sustain lasting love. The model for our relationship with our spouse should be the same as the model for our relationship with our Heavenly Father. In Ephesians 5, we're encouraged to love our spouse *"as Christ loved the church."* It's a love sustained by two things:

- **New Mercies** (*Forgive the Wrong*)
- **New Mornings** (*Fight for Right*)

The Message version of Lamentation 3:22-24 paints a beautiful picture of God's new mercies and new mornings for us:

"God's loyal love couldn't have run out, his merciful love couldn't have dried up. They're created new every morning. How great your faithfulness! I'm sticking with God (I say it over and over). He's all I've got left." Lamentations 3:22-24 (*The Message*)

Discussion:

(Leaders: The questions that follow are designed to stir reflection and discussion on this week's primary Message points. Please read through them prior to your meeting, so you can be prepared to prayerfully pace your group well. And remember, as leader, your goal is to promote increased *biblical* awareness, as well as individual *self* awareness – a combination that with the help of the Holy Spirit, results in revelation and...transformation!)

- Read Psalm 130:1-4, Psalm 103:11-12 and Hebrews 8:12. Rather than keeping a running list of our sins and failures, God chooses to forgive us and to not remember them at all. Do you keep a record of your own past sins? Have you ever found it difficult to accept God's loving mercy and forgiveness?
- In your marriage or other close relationships, do you have a tendency to keep a mental list of all the ways you've been wronged? Do you think that resentment over past hurts could be damaging your relationship? Could more communication – frequent, honest, problem-solving conversations – help you keep a “clean slate” in your relationships?
- Read Romans 7:18-19. Do you ever feel that way in your marriage or other relationships? You know the right things to do, and you want to do them... but you keep falling back into old selfish, sinful habits. When you're honest and humble about your own struggles, do you feel more compassionate and forgiving toward others (including your spouse)?
- In the traditional wedding vows, we pledge to love and cherish our spouse “for better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health.” On our wedding day, we're usually not too focused on the “worse, poorer, sickness” part. If you're married (or have ever been married), what are some challenges you've encountered that you couldn't have imagined or anticipated when you first married? How have these difficulties affected your relationship?
- PK said that the vow to love is a vow to problem-solve. In his marriage, tools for problem-solving include a weekly commitment to date night, using “fair fight rules” to resolve conflicts, and seeking wise counsel from books, friends, spiritual leaders and marriage counselors when needed. If you faced a conflict in your marriage that you couldn't resolve, would you be willing to seek professional counseling (or have you done so)? Would it be difficult for you to take that step? Why or why not?
- The Bible frequently uses wedding and marriage imagery to describe Christ's relationship with The Church. Read one short passage about the wedding feast to come, in Revelation 19:7-9. Whether you're married or single, how do you feel about weddings? Why do you think weddings stir up so many emotions? Why do you think God uses a wedding as an analogy for being united with Christ in heaven?

Wrap-Up/Close:

If anyone in your group made the vow for the first time today to give their life to Jesus and accept God's new mercies and new mornings, be sure to take time to celebrate with them and pray for them as they begin their new walk with Him!

Pray for all of the marriages represented in your group. Ask God to bring the truths of the “*JUST Married?*” series back to our minds, that we would be reminded to love and respect each other well, to break through our own self-deception, to persistently pursue oneness, and to give each other new mercies and new mornings in our relationships.

Throughout the Week: (Optional)

(Leaders: Share these optional exercises for further study and growth with your group.)

To memorize:

"Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness." Lamentations 3:22-23 (NIV)

If you're not familiar with the "Fair Fight Rules," or if you could use a refresher, they're posted on the datenight.12stone.com website, along with new Week 4 Date Ideas and Questions for date night discussion.