



bigIdea small group discussion

We all have vampires in our lives. They're not the ones with pale skin and bloodthirsty fangs – but they do suck the life out of us.

Some of the hardest vampires to hug are usually the vampires in our own family. The people we love the most have the opportunity to hurt us the most. So what's the answer? How do we deal with the vampires that sleep next to us? Many try to control the other person, but that never works. Others nag and nit-pick the person, but that just creates a barrier in the relationship.



BIG IDEA: Instead of focusing on the problems of your spouse, focus on the promises of God—and let God control your spouse.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When you were growing up, which holiday did you celebrate with enough food to feed a whole army?
2. When you have desires for your marriage that go unmet, what is your reaction?
 - a. Deny that those desires are valid (“I really don’t want ...”)
 - b. Distract yourself by staying busy
 - c. Demand that your desires be met
3. What are the downsides to each of these reactions?
4. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Samuel 25:2-3.* Nabal was a vampire. How does the Bible describe Nabal? How does the Bible describe Abigail?

David’s camping out amidst all of Nabal’s herds, and David’s 600 men are protecting his sheep. At sheep-shearing time, the owner of the herd throws a huge feast and brings in everyone who helped out with the care of his herds. Since David has been protecting the herd, he had every right to be at the feast.

5. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Samuel 25:4-13.* Why does David respond so violently? What breach of diplomacy and oriental cultural values is he reacting to?
6. Why does David act so differently with Saul than he does with Nabal? Why does David seek to kill Nabal?
7. Chris said, “a dysfunctional marriage, because everyone of us is dysfunctional.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Here’s the math of marriage: imperfect person plus imperfect person equals imperfect marriage.

8. Chris said, “You are not to be defined by the problem in your marriage.” How does setting healthy boundaries help you keep your identity? Where should our identity be found?
9. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read Romans 12:1-2.* What does your understanding of Romans 12:1 add to your understanding of true worship? (see also 6:13; 8:13)
10. How does the world squeeze you into its mold?
11. As a Christian, how does God renew our minds? (see also Psalm 119:11) Do you think renewing your mind is a one-time thing, or a daily thing that happens?
12. Chris said, “Rather than staring at the problem; rather than staring at the brokenness and the person sitting at the table across from you, you’re staring at the promises of God for your life.” How can changing who and what you’re focusing on change your attitude about your marriage?

GOING DEEPER

1. *With your Bible or YouVersion, read 1 Peter 5:6-7.* Biblical humility is choosing to put the desires of others before your desires. How can you begin to “clothe yourself in humility” towards others?
2. God opposes the proud, those who put their own desires first, by withdrawing His help. Why does God do this? Have you ever felt that you were struggling without God’s help because of pride?
3. Grace in this passage refers to the power to do what you need in the moment for the moment. It is God’s strength in your situation. Have you ever felt this when you humbly asked for God’s help?
4. “In due time” doesn’t usually mean immediately. Why would God wait to “lift you up”?
5. Why do we tend to dump our desires on our spouse and not on God? Which of the two is best able to meet our desires?
6. What are ways that you can cast your cares upon God?
7. How does it make you feel that God is concerned about you and your desires? Do you approach God as if He intimately cares for you?
8. How should you communicate your desires to your spouse?

MOVING FORWARD

What are the cares, desires, and anxieties that you need to cast on God? Take the time to make a list and begin to give these to God.

- Which of these desires should you share with your spouse?
- Which are unrealistic desires that you should not communicate to your spouse?

WHAT WILL YOU DO?

Unhealthy people create barriers based on past hurts and fears, which creates isolation. Healthy people define boundaries based on self-respect and honoring others, which creates community. Chris shared 4 things that can help draw boundaries in your marriage:

1. Be aggressive to deal conflict in our marriage. Fight for, not in, your marriage.
2. Adjust your expectations.
3. Love and give love with no strings attached.
4. Identify what you can and cannot control.
 - a. You can control your response to bad behavior.
 - b. You can control your connection to the people of God.
 - c. You can control your personal growth.

Share with your spouse how your expectations and desires of what you think they *should be and do* has hampered your marriage relationship and how you respond with unconditional love towards them.

1. Confess: Take responsibility for turning your desires into expectations.
2. Ask:
 - Where do you feel pressure to live up to my expectations?
 - What can I do to make our marriage richer?
3. Reward: Like you did when you were dating.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Romans 12:18