

Small Group Guide: Marriage Panel Discussion

Question: What's one piece of marriage advice you received (good or bad) that has stuck with you over the years?

Advice for Your Younger Self

Group Activity:

- Give everyone 2-3 minutes to write down one piece of advice they'd give their younger self about relationships/marriage
- Go around and share
- Discuss: How can we apply this wisdom to our lives TODAY?

Key Takeaways from the Discussion:

1. The Power of Prayer in Marriage

- Less than 1% of couples that pray together regularly end up in divorce.
- Individual prayer for your spouse is powerful protection
- Praying together creates intimacy and vulnerability
- It's difficult for the enemy to infiltrate a marriage covered in prayer

2. Communication is Critical

- Communication, intimacy, and finances are the top three marriage issues
- Over-communication is often necessary (especially for men to hear!)
- Being candid becomes easier as trust and safety grow
- Processing before communicating prevents unnecessary conflict

3. Seasons Change, Love Deepens

- Empty nest seasons bring new opportunities for connection
- What matters early in marriage (being right) matters less over time
- Quality time looks different in various life stages
- Small, consistent gestures (texts, acts of service) make big impacts

4. God's Faithfulness Throughout

- God weaves relationships together in ways we can't see in the moment
- Difficult seasons test and strengthen faith when we lean into God
- Every struggle is an opportunity to trust God's plan
- Tithing and faithfulness bring God's provision

Discussion Questions

Section 1: Prayer & Spiritual Intimacy

1. **For Everyone:** Why do you think it's so difficult for couples to pray together, even when they pray individually? What barriers exist in your own life?
2. **For Men:** Jason mentioned that praying together requires vulnerability. What makes it harder to be vulnerable with your spouse than with God alone?
3. **For Women:** How does it impact you when your spouse prays for you (whether you know about it or not)?
4. **Action Question:** What's one practical step you could take this week to increase prayer in your marriage or future marriage?

Section 2: Communication

1. **Reflect:** Macy shared that she "over-communicates" and processes before bringing issues to Jason. What's your natural communication style, and how does it complement or clash with your spouse's?
2. **For Men:** Jeff admitted that early in marriage, he wanted to be right about everything. How has your need to "be right" affected your relationship? How have you grown?
3. **For Everyone:** Jason said Macy applies a "filter" before communicating difficult things. How can you communicate concerns without it feeling like a personal attack?
4. **Practical:** Share one area where communication has broken down recently. How could you approach it differently?

Section 3: Seasons & Perspective

1. **Reflect:** Jason's advice was "don't be quick to wish yourself out of the season you're in." What season are you currently wishing away? How might God want you to be present in it?
2. **For Parents:** How has your marriage changed since having children? What have you had to intentionally protect or prioritize?
3. **For Empty Nesters or Those Approaching It:** What advice would you give to younger couples about preparing for life after kids leave home?
4. **Challenge:** What's one "small thing" (like Jeff and Paula mentioned about quality time together) that you could implement this week to stay connected?

Section 4: God's Faithfulness

1. **Testimony Time:** Share a story of how you've seen God's faithfulness in your relationship—either in bringing you together or sustaining you through difficulty.
2. **For Those in Hard Seasons:** Macy and Jason shared about being angry with God during their son's illness. How do you process difficult emotions with God while still trusting Him?
3. **Perspective:** Looking back, where do you see "God's signature" in your relationship that you couldn't see at the time?

Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge: Choose One

Option 1 - Prayer Partners: Commit to praying with your spouse (or accountability partner if single) for 5 minutes before bed at least 3 times this week.

Option 2 - Communication Check-in: Schedule a 30-minute "communication date" where you ask: "How am I doing at making you feel heard? What's one thing I could do better?"

Option 3 - Present in the Moment: Identify one area where you're "wishing away" your current season and write down 3 things you're grateful for about THIS season right now.

Option 4 - Small Gestures: Send your spouse (or someone you're dating) one encouraging text message each day this week—just to let them know you're thinking of them.

Key Quotes to Remember

- **Jeff:** "Let her be right. Don't try it."
- **Jason:** "Don't be quick to wish yourself out of the season that you're in."
- **Paula:** "I can't imagine my life without him."
- **Macy:** "The Lord will fight for you and you shall keep your peace." (Exodus 14:14)
- **Pastor Jeremy:** "80% of the things we worry about never even happen. Live in the moment right now."

Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

Prayer Focus:

- Thank God for His design for marriage and relationships
- Pray for couples in difficult seasons
- Ask for wisdom to be present in current circumstances
- Request courage to be vulnerable in prayer and communication
- Commit to being intentional about connection this week

Optional Homework:

- Read Ephesians 5:21-33 together as a couple
- Discuss: What does mutual submission look like practically in your relationship?
- Journal about one area where you've seen growth in your marriage/relationships

Additional Resources

- Consider attending pre-marital or marriage counseling
- Read: "The Meaning of Marriage" by Timothy Keller
- Explore: The 5 Love Languages by Gary Chapman
- Connect with an older couple in the church for mentorship