

Small Group Discipleship Guide

Ice Breaker

Question: What is the hardest thing you've ever been asked to do — and what or who helped you get through it?

Scripture Reading

Have someone read **Ephesians 5:16-33**

Setting the Scene

Pastor Phil was upfront — this is one of the harder things in Scripture. The word *submit* makes almost everyone recoil. But he reminded us that this passage flows directly from last week: one of the signs of being filled by the Spirit is submitting to one another. Paul just spent a whole letter telling us we were dead in sin, that God made us alive, that we are to walk worthy — and now he gets to the place where that all gets tested most: our closest relationships. The question isn't just what does this mean for marriage, but what does it tell us about how Jesus relates to us?

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Message

1. Our flesh is *naturally* unable to submit — Romans 8:7 says the human mind is hostile to God and cannot submit to His law. How have you seen that play out in your own relationships? Where does submission feel most unnatural to you?
2. Paul ties submission in marriage back to being *filled by the Spirit* (v. 21). That means this isn't just a rule to follow — it's something the Spirit works in us. How does that change the pressure you might feel around this passage?
3. Pastor Phil raised an interesting question: Is Paul using Jesus' relationship with the church to describe what a healthy marriage looks like — or using a healthy marriage to describe what Jesus' relationship with the church looks like? What do you think, and why does it matter?

Going Deeper

4. For those who are married or hope to be: there are no conditions placed on either call — wives are to submit *in everything*, and husbands are to love *as Christ loved the*

church, regardless of how well the other person is doing their part. Where does that unconditional nature feel most challenging to you personally?

5. Pastor Phil said: *“Married guys — you know your own wants and desires and have no problem taking care of them. Do you know the wants and desires of your wife the same way?”* Whether you’re married or not, where in your closest relationships do you tend to prioritize your own needs over truly knowing and serving the other person?
6. This passage ultimately points to something bigger than marriage. Jesus gave his life for us without conditions, and now calls us to submit our lives to him. How does seeing what Jesus did make submission to Him feel different than submission to other people or structures in your life?

Personal Reflection

Read this slowly and sit with it:

God didn't leave us on our own to figure this all out... he's also willing to put in the work to help you submit, to work out your faith with fear and trembling. What a God we serve.

Ask yourself: - In what relationship or area of my life is God asking me to walk in submission right now? - Am I willing to ask Him to help me submit — not just try harder on my own?
