



Lord of the Rings

Don't miss the Journey Family Tailgate on October 6th. We will begin before the AU vs Vandy game, and will continue with food after the game. Use this as a great opportunity to invite friends and get your unchurched friends connected to the folks at Journey!

This week, we begin a new series, *The Lord of the Rings*, which is a series designed to address issues related to marriage, sex, dating, etc.

- **What characteristics would you use to describe a healthy marriage?**
- Current statistics tell us that over half of all marriages in our country will end in divorce. This is true both for Christ followers and for those outside the church. **Why do you think so many marriages fail?**
- **What would you say is God's purpose for marriage?**
- **Read Ephesians 5:22-29, 1 Peter 3:1-7, and Hebrews 13:4. What do these passages teach us about God's design and purpose for marriage?**
- **Do you know your love language? Do you understand your mate's "Love Language" enough to live according to God's plan for marriage?**
1-Words of Affirmation, 2-Quality Time, 3-Receiving Gifts, 4-Acts of Service, and 5-Physical Touch
- **Does something in your view of marriage need to be adjusted to match up with God's design?**
- **How will having God's view of marriage affect your life in the coming week?**

Hey Growth Group Leaders!



Lord of the Rings

Thank you all for providing me with feedback on your groups. Continue to let me know who comes, any prayer needs, and how the discussion went. If you would like to see more information or have a problem with anything on the Travel Guides, please let me know so we can refine the process to make every group a success.

Please continue to look around you on Sundays to find potential group members. We have guests and regular attenders each week that need to get connected. We already have folks coming who are prospects for every group, we just need to help them get connected. Also, be looking for people disconnected from church throughout the week that may be prospects for your group. Perhaps a person's living room is a more inviting place to get connected to Journey than the school. Either way, keep looking for opportunities to grow your groups.

I am really excited about the new series launched this week: "Lord of the Rings." There are tons of relationship and family issues that we all deal with day-to-day that we will visit and see what the Bible has to say. Our culture feeds us all sorts of information about life and family. This is an awesome opportunity to see how all this stuff holds up to biblical Truth. Encourage your folks to come with questions. We want to meet the families and individuals in your groups at their point of need.

Single groups - you may struggle with bridging between some of these topics and "real life" with your group members. I will try to feed you information to keep it close to home, but also remind your folks that learning truth before you need it is a whole lot easier than dealing with it when it is too late.

Andrew

This week, we begin a new series, *The Lord of the Rings*, which is a series designed to address issues related to marriage, sex, dating, etc.

This week, we need to focus on one major truth: ***Success in marriage is directly related to surrendering to Scripture.*** While we are not doing an in-depth Bible study on marriage through the course of this series, be sure to highlight the passages we do focus on, and consistently remind your folks of this truth. Particularly as we discuss how relationships fail so often in our society. The more we understand how God desires for us to live in relationship with each other, the more we will understand how to make those relationships last.

A large part of this discussion is to help you as a leader understand where your folks are in understanding God's involvement in marriage and what His goal in creating marriage was. The first three questions are all diagnostic questions. *I definitely need some real good feedback from you on what you learn, so we can be sure to address all the issues that come up during the rest of the series.*

Be sure to watch your time on this Travel Guide. There's a lot of questions, and a lot that could be said about each. Try to get everyone involved, but be careful to keep the discussion moving forward to the end.

- **What characteristics would you use to describe a healthy marriage?**

This question is designed to simply get your folks thinking and talking about marriage. Listen for clues that will help you shift thinking toward Scripture as the discussion continues. You may even want to follow up with having folks talk about couples they know who have a healthy marriage and why they admire the couple so much.

Singles Groups:

I would definitely take some time to talk about couples the people admire. I didn't get married until I was 29, and I spent a lot of time watching several healthy couples around me. I owe a lot of the health Emily and I have experienced in our marriage so-far to getting to know some incredible couples who lived life together and loved God deeply in their marriages. I had a fairly healthy family growing up, but what I learned about the spiritual aspects of marriage and family from other people takes my own marriage to a level my family upbringing could have never provided. Encourage your folks to study healthy marriages around them carefully, and to spend time with those folks to learn all they can before they hit it head-on themselves.

For those of you with divorced people in your groups, try to stay positive and not let your folks get down because of their failures or to throw themselves pity parties. Encourage them to learn from their past and from the current series . . . to learn everything they can about God's truth for their situation. Perhaps God wants them to hold out hope for the restoration of their marriage. Perhaps there is biblical truth available to help them look forward to a fresh start. Perhaps God wants them to focus on helping people younger than them build quality relationships to avoid the situation they find themselves in. Be gentle, careful, and truthful, but definitely remain positive.

- Current statistics tell us that over half of all marriages in our country will end in divorce. This is true both for Christ followers and for those outside the church. **Why do you think so many marriages fail?**

This is definitely an opportunity to revisit the main point: *Success in marriage is directly related to surrendering to Scripture*. Use the discussion around this question to begin shaping peoples' thoughts into the direction of this main point.

- **What would you say is God's purpose for marriage?**

This is our final diagnostic question for this discussion. Try to use it as a springboard into the verses, again revisiting the **main point**.

- **Read Ephesians 5:22-29, 1 Peter 3:1-7, and Hebrews 13:4. What do these passages teach us about God's design and purpose for marriage?**

Ephesians 5 - The word "submit" could be a buzz word for some of the ladies (or even some men.) Do not let it take over your conversation. Be sure to put it in the context of the husband giving himself up for his wife. When a guy's job is to lay down his life for his wife, it's a whole lot easier for her to submit to his leadership. Also, the reality is an honor issue. If a wife finds ways to encourage and honor her husband (stroke his muscles, as a friend of mine once said,) he will *feel* loved and the truth is lived out. On the flip-side . . . the man is to "LOVE" his wife and "give himself up for her." The idea is that the man should treasure her, dote on her, care for her, meet her needs, etc. etc. etc. (To the point where she gets annoyed with it.) When she knows that she is more important than anything else in her man's life, she will *feel* loved and the truth is lived out.

1 Peter 3 - This passage is intended to take the same truth taught in Ephesians 5 and apply it to someone who has an unbelieving spouse. By living God's design at your end of the marriage relationship, you may find your unbelieving spouse drawn both to you and to a relationship with God. This may be a hope for restoration for some in your groups. (For singles, this is NOT a license to marry an unbeliever, 2 Corinthians 6:14 is plenty clear on this issue.)

Hebrews 13 - Be sure to highlight how important marriage is to God. Marriage is a very high commitment. It is not to be taken lightly. As our culture increasingly diminishes the value of marriage, keeping a Scriptural view of marriage as immensely serious and important is essential for us to stand out as Christ-followers in this world. Point out that in this context, sexual immorality and adultery are not seen as "simple sins," but are seen as an affront to the high value God places on marriage. While the Bible tells us to resist temptation and to overcome sin in most circumstances, it places idolatry and sexual immorality on a special level and tells us to flee from them (1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14), as if they have a higher level of temptation and a larger impact on our influence for Christ when we fall into them.

- **Do you know your love language? Do you understand your mate's "Love Language" enough to live according to God's plan for marriage?**

The Five Love Languages are: Words of Affirmation, Quality Time, Receiving Gifts, Acts of Service, and Physical Touch. For those folks who are not familiar with this concept, encourage them to think about it through the course of the week. This would be their #1 practical application of this discussion.

For those who do know both their language and their mates' language, encourage them to think about the differences between the two and how it affects their marriage. Investing 10 minutes of time in your mate's language will reap 10 times the results in your relationship as investing 45 minutes of your own.

Single Groups: This could be a fun discussion. In all honesty, I thought I knew my language pretty well before I got married. Being married to Emily has helped me to realize that the language I thought was my own was often me trying to conform to people around me. Encourage them to think this through and discover themselves, and to look for the other languages in other people so they can begin to learn how to touch lives around them more deeply. (Not just potential mates, but even people that are disconnected from God, or friends, etc.)

For more information about the 5 Love Languages, visit <http://five-love-languages.com>. I will also put a direct link to The 5 Love Languages books by Gary Chapman up on my blog this week, there is also an edition specifically for single people.

- **Does something in your view of marriage need to be adjusted to match up with God's design?**

This is a bridge question to help your folks get ready for a practical application to live out in the coming week. There may not be much said here, but if there is, use it to move into goals to work on this week . . .

- **How will having God's view of marriage affect your life in the coming week?**

As always, be sure to encourage your folks to have a practical, measurable goal to reach for in their lives each week.

For married folks, maybe they need to discover their mate's love language. Maybe they need to be more conscious about communicating in that love language. Maybe they need to apply a scriptural truth they learned this week.

Single Groups: Finding practical application may not be easy, depending on how your discussion has gone. If someone has revealed a struggle or view of marriage that is distinctly against God's design, you can gently help them formulate a response. For your folks that are currently dating, there may be helpful truth in this discussion to help them have their relationship centered on God. There may be something they are doing in their relationship that isn't really who they are or needs to be adjusted. Let your discussion be your guide, but help them to realize that even a discussion on marriage has truth for them as unmarried people.

** Whatever your folks need to do, help them make it measurable so when they come back next week they can know for sure if they succeeded. You may even want to start writing down each person's goal and asking them how they did the following week.