



*Lord of the Rings*

This is the fourth week of *The Lord of the Rings*, a series designed to address issues related to marriage, sex, dating, etc. The topic for our discussion this week is Roles and Goals.

- Do you find it easy or hard to submit to authority? Why?
- Do you find it easy or hard to lead a group of people? Why?
- Read *Galatians 3:28* and *Colossians 3:18-19*. Discuss the view of men and women in these two passages.
- Read *1 Peter 3:7*. How does this verse address the apparent conflict in the previous passages?
- Eric led us in communion during the service. Communion is a picture of Christ's relationship with the church. **How is the marriage relationship similar to the relationship between Christ and the church? How is it different?** (See *Ephesians 5:22-33*)
- As you consider the comparison between Christ's relationship with the church and the marriage relationship, **what one thing can you adjust in your life to better reflect Christ to those around you?**



*Lord of the Rings*

Hey folks!

I have been hearing some great feedback from the discussions this series. I really think that God is setting us up for some big wins in peoples' lives as we continue. The following discussion is a little more in-depth look at a topic we touched on briefly a couple weeks ago. This week's topic is on Role and Goals in relationships.

Depending on how your discussion went previously about submission/leadership/etc, you will need to be extra prepared for the following discussion. If you find that it is not a big deal in your group, you may find yourself progressing through the questions quickly with extra time at the end.

If your group gets in a heated discussion, primarily on the submission issue, be a peacemaker, but also maintain a focus on the Bible and the truth we are trying to live out through this topic. Try not to get wound up into details as to how far submission and/or leadership should go, but be willing to help your folks set some practical guidelines in their marriages that line up with the principles we talk about. I've tried to arm you with a bunch of information, so if you foresee any issues, try to be as prepared as you can.

If your group happens to move through the information quickly, you may want to take some time to brainstorm with your group about opportunities to serve in the community. Personally, I am going to challenge my group to get involved with a Habitat for Humanity project, or to find another practical place of service in the community before the end of the year. Challenge your groups to get out in the community. You may even want to cancel your regular group meeting to make a service project happen. Get out there and do some life together!

Have a wonderful week!

Andrew

---

This is the fourth week of *The Lord of the Rings*, a series designed to address issues related to marriage, sex, dating, etc. The topic for our discussion this week is Roles and Goals.

The first two questions are meant to be non-controversial, simple questions to break the ice and get the thought juices flowing. You will probably get an "it depends" type of answer from most of the people in your group. This is a great way to follow up with the "why?" and to set up the discussion that follows. Most people will admit that good leaders are easy to submit to and bad ones are hard to submit to. Additionally, it is easy to lead people who are willing to follow and to help reach the end-goals with order and understanding. However, it is very hard to lead people who want to have it their way or they won't cooperate.

As we discuss to roles of men and women in marriage as it compares to Christ's relationship with the church, sometimes it is easy, and sometimes it is very hard. When both partners understand their role as God designed it, and are both seeking to live according to that role, it is a lot easier to operate in that role. When one partner steps outside of their role, it is a whole lot harder for the other to live in their role.

- **Do you find it easy or hard to submit to authority? Why?**
- **Do you find it easy or hard to lead a group of people? Why?**

- Read *Galatians 3:28* and *Colossians 3:18-19*. **Discuss the view of men and women in these two passages.**

*Galatians 3:28* - The two primary points we want to highlight in this verse are:

“There is neither male nor female . . .” and “. . . for you are all *one* in Christ Jesus.” (emphasis mine).

The primary point in this verse is: Men and Women are equal as it relates to our spiritual standing in relationship to Christ. However, by making the statement, Paul admits that there are some differences in races and gender, but that they are of no consequence in our position as forgiven Christ-followers.

Additionally, there is nothing that can bring these differences together better than the forgiveness found in Jesus Christ.

*Colossians 3:18-19* - This passage sets up the role relationship within marriage: women submit and men have loving leadership.

Obviously, there is an apparent conflict between the two passages. However, the solution is simple: the first addresses our relationship to God as individuals. The other sets up a role relationship with each other within the context of marriage. By having these two verses discussed together, you can hopefully disarm some of the potential conflict in your group by highlighting our spiritual equality while setting the stage for differing roles within relationships.

Couples - You may wind up with some finger-pointing here. Remind them of the Growth Group Covenant, first of all . . . and second, lead them into the next question by encouraging them to live up to their end of the bargain first, so it will be easier for the other to live up to theirs. If the husband and wife are both showing up for Growth Group, they both have at least some desire to live up to God’s design for their life. Highlight this fact to encourage them that it could be worse. If you have a couple in your group where one spouse is not showing up, be careful with this example, as it will highlight the difficulty of their situation. Reading the larger context (*verses 1-7*) of the *1 Peter* passage in the next question will help with this situation.

Singles - this is a great opportunity for you to set the stage for future relationships. Challenge your folks to live up to the spiritual potential they have in Christ and also to live in accordance with their role in relationship to other people. Additionally, you can challenge them not to stay in relationships with people who are not living up to their spiritual potential or refuse to live in accordance with their role in relationships.

Single Girls: Are you a Christ follower? Get out of a relationship if he’s not a Christ-follower, and be very skeptical if he’s not going to be a spiritual leader. You will find it very hard to follow if he’s not going to lead. (See the context around the *1 Peter* verse below - *verses 1-7*.)

Guys: Are you a Christ follower? Get out of a relationship if she’s not a Christ-follower, and be very skeptical if she wants to have the reigns. You will find it very hard to be the spiritual leader if she’s not willing to submit to your leadership (See *Proverbs 27:15-16*).

- Read *1 Peter 3:7*. **How does this verse address the apparent conflict in the previous passages?**

First, Peter affirms the unity we have in Christ by having wives described as and “equal partner in God’s gift of new life.” (NLT) Or “heirs with you” as most translations say. There is therefore NO spiritual superiority given to the man. We are equal before God, both receiving “the image of God” at creation (*Gen. 1:27; Acts 17:25*)

Second, Peter affirms the role relationships in marriage. Verses 1-6 affirms the wife’s role in submission. Verse 7 affirms the husband’s role in leading and gives clear instruction on how he is to lead: “in an understanding way.” (ESV) AND, “treat them with respect” (NIV) or “showing honor to the woman” (ESV). Peter calls the woman the “weaker vessel.” I believe the context and word usage means “more fragile,” or even “more precious.” Our fine china is a weaker vessel than our plastic plates, but it receives significantly more honor and respect. MEN - we should view our wives in a similar fashion - they are precious and can be easily hurt if we treat them improperly, but when we treat them as they deserve, they are worthy of display at our finest occasions (and has a direct affect on our spiritual lives as well, “so that your prayers may not be hindered.” (ESV)

Finally, although it is not directly in this passage, the goal of proper roles in marriage is to maintain unity and to foster order instead of chaos. When roles are clear and in biblical order, success in marriage is the result.

- Eric led us in communion during the service. Communion is a picture of Christ's relationship with the church. **How is the marriage relationship similar to the relationship between Christ and the church? How is it different?** (See *Ephesians 5:22-33*)

I can only give you a few ideas to help the conversation move. I'd be curious to know some of the other stuff your folks come up with, so please send me some feedback here.

Similarities:

- The Bible gives us clearly defined roles of leadership and submission.
- The role of leadership is the role of greatest sacrifice and service (Matt 20:25-28).
- The role of submission leads to unity.
- The centrality of love as the guiding motivation.

Differences:

- The perfect nature of Christ vs. the imperfect nature and leadership of the husband.
  - Physical aspects of relationship.
  - The church's role is to bring others into the relationship (share Christ with others.)
- As you consider the comparison between Christ's relationship with the church and the marriage relationship, **what one thing can you adjust in your life to better reflect Christ to those around you?**

As always, encourage your folks to have clear, measurable goals so they know when they have reached them.