

“If Marriage is God’s Design, Why is it so Hard?”



*Remember: The goal of small group is
100% participation. Everyone talks.

OPEN IT

- **Hard but Worth It.** What is something in your life that is genuinely hard but that you're really glad you didn't give up on?
- **The “1900s” Problem.** What is something from your past that would be much easier today because of technology—but was surprisingly difficult when you had to do it the old-fashioned way?

READ IT:

- John 5:24 — Crossing from death to life through faith in Jesus
- Proverbs 27:17 — Iron sharpening iron
- Ecclesiastes 4:9–10 — Two people helping one another through work and difficulty
- James 1:2–4 — Trials producing perseverance and maturity
- 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 — What God-shaped love looks like
- Galatians 6:9 — Persevering in doing good

EXPLORE IT:

- **Hard Doesn't Mean Wrong.** The message says that something being difficult doesn't necessarily mean something is wrong or not good. Why is that an important distinction? Where have you seen this principle play out in your own life?
- **Iron Sharpens Iron.** Read Proverbs 27:17. What do you think it means for one person to “sharpen” another? Why can the people closest to us sometimes see things in us that we don't see in ourselves? What makes being sharpened helpful rather than hurtful?

- **The Gift of Being Known.** The message says, “Sometimes the person closest to you can see things others can't.” What is something you have learned about yourself because of living or working closely with someone else? If you're comfortable sharing, what is one way someone has helped you become more like Jesus?
- **Who Picks You Up?** Read Ecclesiastes 4:9–10. What stands out to you about the assumption that people will sometimes “fall down”? How can healthy relationships become a source of strength when life gets hard? Where could you be better at allowing others to help you?
- **Let Perseverance Finish Its Work.** Read James 1:2–4. James doesn't say that trials are enjoyable; he says they can produce perseverance and maturity. What's the difference? How might this change the way we respond when a difficult season doesn't go away quickly?
- **Love When It's Hard.** Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–8. Which description of love is easiest for you to practice when a relationship is going well? Which becomes most difficult when you're frustrated, hurt, or tired? What might God be inviting you to practice?
- **When Am I the Problem?** The message acknowledges that sometimes marriage is hard because one or both people are selfish or immature. Why can it be easier to identify someone else's contribution to a relational problem than our own? What might help us become more willing to ask, “*What part of this might God want to change in me?*”
- **The Happiness Trap.** The message says marriage isn't designed primarily to make us happy. How can unrealistic expectations about what marriage—or any relationship—should do for us make relationships harder? What might change if we approached relationships asking, “*How is God using this to shape me?*”
- **Don't Give Up Too Quickly.** Read Galatians 6:9. How do you know the difference between persevering through something God is using to grow you and recognizing that a situation needs a significant change? What role can wise, trusted community play in helping us discern the difference?
- **What Is God Sharpening?** Think about a difficult relationship, responsibility, or circumstance in your life right now. Without needing to share anything you're not comfortable sharing, what might God be using that situation to develop in you—patience, humility, perseverance, self-control, kindness, trust, or something else?

DO IT:

- **Name the Lesson.** Identify one current difficulty in your life and write down one character quality God might be developing through it. Pray specifically about becoming that kind of person rather than simply asking God to remove the difficulty.
- **Practice 1 Corinthians 13.** Choose one quality from 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 that you find difficult when you're frustrated. Look for one specific opportunity this week to practice it intentionally.
- **Ask What Others See.** Ask someone who knows you well, “What's one thing you think God is trying to grow in me right now?” Resist the urge to explain or defend yourself. Simply listen and pray about what you hear.
- **Pick Someone Up.** Identify someone walking through a difficult season and do something tangible to encourage or serve them this week. Don't try to fix their problem; simply help carry some of the weight.
- **Don't Grow Weary.** If you're currently tempted to give up on something good because it has become difficult, spend time praying through Galatians 6:9. Ask God for wisdom about your next faithful step and for the perseverance to take it.

PRAY IT:

God, thank You that difficulty does not mean You have abandoned us or that something good is necessarily broken. Give us the humility to recognize the ways You are using hard things to sharpen us, the perseverance to keep doing what is good, and the wisdom to recognize where our own selfishness or immaturity needs to change. Help us love one another patiently, kindly, unselfishly, trustfully, and hopefully, becoming more like Jesus through every season. Amen.