

Small Group Guide: FAMILY LIFE - From Surviving To Thriving

Opening Question When you think back to your “dating days” (or a movie/TV couple you know), what’s one funny or stereotypical “lovebird” behavior that makes you smile?

Opening Prayer *Heavenly Father, thank you for your design for marriage and relationships. Thank you that you care about our homes, our hearts, and our everyday lives. As we talk together, would you give us wisdom, honesty, and hope? Help us hear what you want to say to each of us and give us courage to respond. In Jesus’ name, amen..*

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

God’s ideal for marriage is *harmony, unity, and intimacy*—two becoming one (Ephesians 5:31). Marriage is meant to move from merely *surviving* to *thriving*.

Marriage is a picture of Christ and the Church. It’s not just a human arrangement; it’s a living illustration of Jesus’ relationship with His people (Ephesians 5:32).

Communication is foundational.

Most marital problems have poor communication underneath them.

Only about 7% of communication is the actual words; the rest is tone and non-verbal cues.

We’re called to speak what is *good* and *edifying* and to “minister grace to the hearer” (Ephesians 4:29).

Consideration must be learned.

We’re told to *learn* to be considerate (1 Corinthians 1:10; Romans 15:2).

By nature we’re “me-first.” Christ calls us to move from *me* to *we* and to actively serve, help, and forgive one another.

Unforgiveness and selfish ambition create disorder in relationships (James 3:14–16; Colossians 3:13).

Commitment matters.

God says He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16) not because He hates divorced people, but because He loves people and knows the pain it causes.

Treating divorce as an “escape hatch” undermines the deep, covenant commitment that marriage is meant to be.

Healthy marriages are built more on *agape* (selfless love) and *phileo* (friendship) than *eros* (romantic/sexual love).

Christ must be the center.

Jesus is the key who unlocks God’s wisdom and knowledge for relationships (Colossians 2:2–3; Isaiah 33:6).

Marriage is strongest when both husband and wife love Jesus more than they love each other and invite Him into the center as the “third strand.”

Growth is possible.

Even when things feel like “rubble,” God can rebuild into something beautiful.

Moving from surviving to thriving takes intentional work: communication, consideration, commitment, and Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. **Read Ephesians 5:31–32.**

- What does it mean that marriage is a “great mystery” and an illustration of Christ and the Church?
- How might seeing marriage as a *picture of the gospel* change the way we think about conflict, sacrifice, and unity in marriage and in all close relationships?

2. **Read Ephesians 4:29.**

- According to this verse, what *filters* should we use before we speak (in marriage, family, friendships, church)?
- In everyday life, what are some examples of “unwholesome” communication vs. “good, helpful and edifying (building others up)” communication?

3. **Read Colossians 3:13 and James 3:14–16.**

- How do unforgiveness, envy, and selfish ambition show up in relationships (not just marriage, but friendships, family, workplace)?
- What do these passages say about the impact of those attitudes on our relational “climate”?

4. **Read Colossians 2:2–3 and Isaiah 33:6.**

- What stands out to you about Jesus being the “key” and “sure foundation”?
- How does making Christ central bring wisdom and stability to a home?

5. **Surviving vs. Thriving:** Pastor Dan said God’s ideal for marriage is harmony, unity, and intimacy.

- What does a “surviving” relationship look like compared to a “thriving” one—practically speaking?
- What are a few markers of a *thriving* Christ-centered relationship?

6. **Communication & Consideration in Real Life**

- Without getting too personal, where do you see relationships in our culture struggling the most: Communication, Consideration, Commitment, or Christ at the center? Why?
- What are some healthy habits couples (or close friends/family members) can build to improve communication and consideration?

7. **Commitment in a “Escape Hatch” Culture:** Pastor Dan talked about not using the word “divorce” as a threat and removing *the escape hatch* mentality.

- In what ways does our culture treat relationships as temporary or disposable?
- How can followers of Jesus model a different kind of covenant-commitment in marriage and in friendships?

8. **Christ-Centered Relationships for Everyone (Married or Single)**

- Whether you’re married or single, what does it look like for Christ to be at the center of your closest relationships this week?
- How can we as Christ followers move from “me-first” living to “Christ-first & Others-first” living?

Practical Applications (Choose one or two.)

1. **Schedule Real Conversation.**

Set aside at least 15–20 minutes one day this week (with your spouse, close friend, or family member) for distraction-free conversation—no phones, no TV. Ask each other open-ended questions (for example, “How are you really doing?”) and listen without interrupting.

2. **Practice Ephesians 4:29.**

For one week, intentionally run your words through this filter:

- Is it good?
- Is it edifying?
- Will it give grace to the hearer?

If it doesn't pass the test, don't say it—or rephrase it in a gracious way.

3. **Do One Unexpected Act of Consideration.**

Do something specifically *helpful* or *thoughtful* for your spouse or someone close to you (e.g., a chore they usually do, a note of encouragement, running an errand for them) without being asked and without expecting anything in return.

4. **Extend Forgiveness.**

Ask the Lord if there's anyone (spouse, family member, friend) you're quietly holding resentment against. Take a step this week toward forgiveness: pray for them, release the offense before God, and if appropriate, begin a gracious conversation.

5. **Recenter on Christ Daily.**

Spend a few minutes each day this week inviting Jesus to be at the center of your relationships. Pray something simple like, “Lord, be the foundation of my home and my relationships today. Help me love like you.” If you're married, consider praying this together at least once this week.

Memory Verse for This Week

Ephesians 4:29 (NIV)

“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen”

Closing Prayer *Lord, thank you for the time we've had together and for the truth we heard through Pastor Dan's sermon. Help us not just to hear these things but to live them. Teach us to communicate with grace, to be considerate and forgiving, to stay committed, and to keep Christ at the center of every relationship. Strengthen the marriages in our church and bless those who are single with Christ-centered friendships and community. Go with us this week and guide our steps. In Jesus' name, amen.*