

LIFE
TOGETHER
DISCUSSION GUIDE

Singleness

1 Corinthians 7.7-9; 25-35

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Share plans for future Community Group gatherings and the following happening in the life of the church:

- **DUDES AND DONUTS October 21st** | Saturday AM while the ladies are away on their retreat.
- **MEMBERS' MEETING Monday, November 6th @ 7p** | We'll be holding officer elections, talking about the ministry year, and spending time in worship and prayer.
- **PUMPKINLAND PLAYDATE Tuesday, October 24th @9:15am** | Parents of small kids, a great outing. Cost is \$5 per person (1yr+). Check the bulletin or online for payment and registration info.
- **PEANUT BUTTER DRIVE for City Gospel Mission** | City Gospel Mission has asked New City to provide 275 15oz jars of peanut butter for their annual Thanksgiving Food Exchange again this year. If you're willing and able to help with the drive, you can drop off your jars of peanut butter in the Commons or on the Kersey's front porch (4413 Floral Ave). The deadline to bring the peanut butter in is Sunday, November 12th.

Again this week, talk briefly about your group's format and schedule for the semester.

We believe that people experience and grow in their faith when they spend time reflecting on God's Word, and also hearing from other Christians. That's what we're hoping for tonight.

OPENING PRAYER

Open your group in prayer. Pray extemporaneously, or use this prayer:

Father, we thank you for the chance to be together tonight. As we talk and reflect on the Scriptures, may we take these things to heart. Help us to bring our lives more and more under the direction and care of your Word. Bare with us when we fail. Help us to help each other. Amen.

OPENER

Especially in these early weeks, taking time to introduce yourselves and getting to know each other is important. Open by asking folks to **introduce themselves**: *name, and other interesting tidbit if you'd like (i.e. hometown, where you live in Cincinnati, what you do during the day).*

Then ask, *If there was trick or treating just for grown ups, what would you hope to get in your basket?*

STUDY/DISCUSSION

Our series this fall is called "Life Together." We'll be working our way through the first 10 chapters of 1 Corinthians.. This week we come to Paul's teaching on Singleness (and a bit about marriage too).

1. **Read 1 Corinthians 7.7-9.** What is Paul saying about the single life in these verses? Why would this have been a surprising idea to his first century audience? Is there any way this idea is still surprising today?
2. **Read 1 Corinthians 7.25-31.** [NOTE: the word for betrothed there probably refers to anyone and everyone of marriageable age]. What is Paul's counsel concerning singleness and marriage?
3. What do you think Paul means when he says "for the present form of this world is passing away"? How does this concept shape his view of our relationship to the concerns of the present world?
4. **Read 1 Corinthians 7.32-35.** What is Paul's practical consideration in these verses?
5. On Sunday Josh said that Biblically "*a gift is an ability God gives that you can use to build people up.*" In that sense, how is singleness a gift? How is marriage a gift?
6. What does it look like for a church to be a community that values BOTH singleness and marriage? In what practical way can you contribute to a community like that?
7. **Read the Companion Handout together.** What stands to you as significant or helpful?
8. In what ways does this passage point us to Jesus?

PRAYER:

Spend some time together in prayer. In the early weeks, this can be a challenge for a group just getting to know one another. You may elect to just lead the group in a closing prayer, pray together as a large group, or break into smaller groups to pray. You can share requests, or simply pray about the things you discussed tonight.

COMPANION HANDOUT

Both singleness and marriage are necessary symbolic institutions for the constitution of the church's life as [it] witnesses to God's kingdom. Neither can be valid without the other. If singleness is a symbol of the church's confidence in God's power to effect lives for the growth of the church, marriage and procreation is the symbol of the church's understanding that the struggle will be long and arduous. For Christians do not place their hope in their children, but rather their children are a sign of their hope that God has not abandoned the world. (Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character*)

[In the modern world], the love partner has become the divine ideal within which to fulfill one's life... After all, what is it that we want when we elevate the love partner to the position of God? We want redemption—nothing less. We want to be rid of our faults, of our feeling of nothingness. We want to be justified, to know that our creation has not been in vain. (Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death*)

Traditional societies say, "You're not a complete person if you don't have a family." Modern western societies say, "You can't possibly be fulfilled without love and sex." The apostle Paul says to both, "Meh." (from Sunday's sermon)

Paul says (in verse 30), don't mourn too much when you mourn; don't rejoice too much when you rejoice. That is, don't put all your emotional eggs in the basket of this world, which is passing away. Don't put your ultimate hope in your possessions, your work, your dating, your marriage, or in your achievements *here*. (from Sunday's sermon)

Accepting singleness, whether temporary or permanent, does not hinge on speculation about answers God has not given to our list of whys, but rather on celebration of the life he has given. I am not single because I am too spiritually unstable to possibly deserve a husband, nor because I am too spiritually mature to possibly need one. I am single because God is so abundantly good to me, because this is his best for me. It is a cosmic impossibility that anything could be better for me right now than being single... I may meet someone and walk down the aisle in the next couple of years because God is so good to me. I may never have another date... because God is so good to me... The psalmists confirm that I should not want, I shall not want, because no good thing will God withhold from me. (Paige Brown, "Singled Out By God for Good")