

Series - Better Together!

Date/s - 30 July 2017

Topic - Thriving Marriage: Love and Respect
(Ephesians 5:21-33)

Speaker/s - Pastor Dinah Lee

Welcome [15 min]

You may want to look up the following websites for *icebreakers* suitable for your cell.

www.thesource4ym.com/games/

www.christianitytoday.com/smallgroups/articles/icebreakersbeyond.html < go to LEAD, click on ICEBREAKERS >

Worship [15 min]

Suggested songs: Look To The Son, Glorious One, Here I Bow, What A Beautiful Name, Blessed Be The Lord God Almighty

Spiritual Objectives

At the end of the cell discussion, cell members will:

1. Understand the principle of mutual submission to one another in Christ; and
2. Understand how to model the agape relationship that exists between Christ and the church.

Word [45 min]

Pastor Dinah Lee started by sharing her personal story on how she had cultivated ungodly beliefs about marriage from her childhood, and how her own marriage was a journey of faith in discovering God's will for marriage. She also shared that society today and pop culture perpetuate the false notion that marriage is blissful and should make us happy, leading many to harbor selfish, carnal and unrealistic expectations when they enter marriages, unfortunately setting their marriages up for failure.

As a "reality check", Pastor Dinah then shared the results from the Whole Life Inventory survey conducted last year among RiverLife participants. A total of 576 married adult respondents were surveyed on their marriages, of which 8% of respondents were married to pre-believing spouses. The results show that majority of respondents were in their 20th- 30th year of marriage. A higher proportion of wives surveyed had considered divorce before at some point in their marriage. As for the areas of needs which respondents would want more help from the church in terms of equipping and support, the top three indicated needs were marriage mentoring by a more mature couple (25%), conflict resolution or couple mediation (24%), and coping with "empty nest syndrome" (15%).

Next, Pastor Dinah shared from the book of Ephesians (chapter 5: 21-33), which teaches us the purpose of marriage, and how our conduct as husband and wife fulfills that purpose. She expounded on the following principles from this passage on how to have a thriving marriage built on love and respect:

a) We are to live by the principle of mutual submission to one another in Christ.

- Everyone, regardless whether married or single, is to submit to one another- v 21
- A wife should submit to her husband as her leader- vv 22-24, 33b
 - o Follow her husband's lead – Colossians 3:18
 - o Respect her husband

b) We are to model the agape relationship that exists between Christ and the church.

- Husbands are to love their wives as Christ loves the Church- vv 25-27

- Take the cue from Christ – v 25
 - Selective love
 - Sacrificial love
- With the purpose – vv 26-27
 - For her salvation and sanctification, through private discipleship.
 - For the good of their marriages and themselves.
- Husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies – vv 28-33a
 - Parallel mystery- Colossians 3:19
 - Eternal reality: union of Christ and His body – vv 30, 32
 - Earthy marriage: oneness of husband and wife – vv 31,33

Discussion Questions

1. **Pastor Dinah shared how she cultivated ungodly beliefs about marriage from her personal upbringing, and how it is easy to get the wrong ideas of marriage from modern society, media and pop culture, which encourage us to have a “consumerist” mindset that marriage is all about making us happy. What were/are some false beliefs/expectations you may have had/ still have about marriage? Share your personal perspective or story. [10 min]**

Leader’s Notes: *This is a recap and ice-breaking question for cell members to share about erroneous beliefs (either informed by culture or their own upbringing) which they may hold about the institution and purpose of marriage, but which run counter to God’s design. Leaders can encourage married members to reflect and share stories from their own marriage journey about how God shaped, transformed and sanctified their belief systems and expectations about marriage.*

2. **Pastor Dinah shared how marriage was designed by God to be a life-long, covenant relationship between a man and his wife, modelled after Jesus’ love and commitment to His church. For singles, how can we be committed in heeding God’s call to give ourselves to love His church and people? For those who are married, how can we be committed to loving our spouses in the same way Jesus loves us? [10 min]**

Leader’s Notes: *A relate question. Whether we are single or married, we are called to be devoted in love to one another, as demonstrated by Jesus’ love for the Church. Jesus lived a single life during His time on earth, devoted to loving others and dying on the cross for us. This question allows members, both singles and married couples, to share deeper about some of their common barriers/personal struggles preventing them from being committed to love in the same manner as Jesus did.*

3. **Read Ephesians 5:21-33. In this passage, the first major truth is the principle of mutual submission; both singles and married persons are equally called to live by this principle. Pastor Dinah shared that to submit is “to rearrange our lives in a way that is answerable to another”. In the same way, Jesus washed His disciples’ feet and was obedient unto death, we are likewise called to honour Christ in the way we relate to and treat others.**

Take some time to reflect on how we are living out this principle of mutual submission in our own lives. For wives, how have we been submitting to our husbands and meeting their emotional need for respect? What practical steps can wives take to give our husbands room to grow and lead? [10 min]

Leader’s Notes: *A reflect question. Have members explore how they are living by the principle of mutual submission. In the context of marriage, husbands and wives are to submit to each other, and each other is to put the other before himself/herself, so that God’s love governs the marriage. Members who are wives*

can discuss how submission looks like practically, in terms of honoring the responsibility placed on their husbands, following their leadership, and respecting their husbands. For example, some ways can include communicate respectfully and not with criticism, not undermining our husbands' leadership in front of our children, trusting our husbands more, etc.

4. **The second major truth from the passage is that all believers are called to model the agape love that exists between Christ and the Church. For husbands in particular, Pastor Dinah shared that they are to express their love to their wives through selective and sacrificial acts of self-giving, and through private discipleship to grow them spiritually.**

For husbands, what is one/two ways we can commit to better meet our wives' emotional need for love? List out some practical steps.

[10 min]

Leader's Notes: *This is a response question. As a husband care for his wife, sanctify and cleanse her with the Word, and show love and affection, he is in fact contributing to his marriage and loving himself, since she is a part of him. Have members who are husbands, state clearly some specific ways that they commit to loving their wives. It is important for husbands to take the lead and love their wives just as Christ loved the Church. Perhaps, leaders can talk around the following practical suggestions as follows:*

- a. Listen
- b. Communicate
- c. Sing her praises
- d. Pray for her and with her
- e. Value her individuality
- f. Put the toilet seat down
- g. Throw your dirty clothes in the laundry basket
- h. Turn off the TV
- i. Loosen the purse strings
- j. Practice servant-leadership
- k. Remember that intimacy is a two-way street
- l. Give her time to herself
- m. Set aside couple time
- n. Be careful with female friendships
- o. Continue to use good hygiene
- p. Be patient and control the anger
- q. Cherish the children
- r. Choose her over hobbies and buddies
- s. Provide for her needs
- t. Actively seek your wife's insights
- u. Learn to forgive
- v. Verbally express your love.

Leaders may get members to break into small groups to share more if time permits and to pray for one another, with a focus on marriage needs.

Works [10 min]

Let's pray:

1. We will live by the principle of mutual submission to one another out of the love for Christ Jesus.

Announcements**1. Marriage Preparation Course**

Sat, 19 Aug | 9am-5.30pm & Sundays, 27 Aug, 3, 10, 17 & 24 Sep | 1.45pm-5pm

\$260 Per Couple | Classrooms 214/ 215, RiverLife Church

Register at the Information Counter by Sun, 13 Aug.

For enquiries, please contact Christine Tan at christinetan@riverlife.org.sg or 65114141

2. Joining The Family

Sat, 12 Aug | 2-5pm | Victory Chapel

Sign up online at bit.ly/rlcjoiningthefamily or at the Information Counter by Sun, 6 Aug. For more

information, please contact Karen Koh at 65114142, or email her at karenkoh@riverlife.org.sg

3. Precept

1. Fatal Distractions: Conquering Destructive Temptations

Register at the Information Counter or online at <http://bit.ly/rlcprecept-aug2017> by Sun, 6 Aug

For more information, please contact Karen Koh at 65114142, or email her at karenkoh@riverlife.org.sg.