

Covenant - Part 2 (Marriage)

Genesis 2:24 | Ephesians 5:31-32

You might want to lead the group to do a short review of last week's message and discussion questions related to covenant.

Review the difference between a contract and a covenant. (*Promises/contracts are easily broken but a covenant is an agreement where one party will always make good on the promise regardless of the other party's decisions or actions.*)

- God keeps his promises even if we break them.
- Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant between God and His people, the church.
- God provides us the strength and power, through His Spirit, to live obediently.

Say, Christ followers model a covenant in two practical ways – through being a member of a local body of believers, which we talked about last week, and this week through the beautiful picture of a biblical marriage.

Ask, Was there anything that Michael said this week that either reinforced or challenged your thoughts/beliefs related to covenant? (You are looking for broad strokes here rather than intricate details. Keep it at a more broad level for now.)

Say, Contracts are one thing and covenants are really something else all together. Commitment and flexibility levels are different.

Say, Michael's first point was - Marriage is more intimate than living together. Read this Tim Keller quote that Michael shared.

"Love needs a framework of binding obligation to make it fully what it should be. A covenant relationship is not just intimate despite being legal. It is a relationship that is more intimate because it is legal. Why would that be so? We can begin by observing that making a binding, public marriage vow to another person is an enormous act of love in and of itself. Someone says, "I love you, but we don't need to be married," may be saying, "I don't love you enough to curtail my freedom for you." The willingness to enter a binding covenant, far from stifling love, is a way of enhancing it, even supercharging it."

(Allow time for people to respond to this quote being sensitive to the fact that there are people from diverse relationship backgrounds in your group. Do not allow for judgmental or negative comments to be made about individuals in or outside of the group.)

Explain the difference between a marriage contract and a marriage covenant.

Marriage contract - Two consenting people entering a mutually, beneficial agreement with each other

Marriage covenant - Two surrendered people (surrendered to God) in a binding covenant with God

Say, Michael's second point was Marriage is meant to be mysterious. This is best understood through Scripture. Ask a participant to read Genesis 2:24.

"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." Genesis 2:24

Say, The Apostle Paul quotes this same scripture in Ephesians 5:31-32 and expounds on it. Have someone read Ephesians 5:31-32.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”

Ask, According to Scripture, how is marriage a picture of Christ and the church?

Say, Since marriage is a picture of Christ and the church, it makes sense that marriage relationships will be filled with grace as they are a picture of Christ and the church.

Share this John Piper quote: “In Christ’s relationship to the church, he is clearly seeking the transformation of his bride into something morally and spiritually beautiful. And he is seeking it at the cost of his life.”

Say, the final point is that Amazing marriages have amazing grace.

Ask, What are some ways you have seen grace in marriage relationships? (They can either be personal examples in their own marriages or other marriages they have observed.)

Say, Michael made this comment in his sermon and is definitely one worth exploring. **You complete me rightfully is only said about Christ in our lives.**

Ask, Why is this statement useful for us as either single or married? (When our “completeness” comes through anyone else but Christ, then we are left high and dry when someone fails to complete us.)

Say, You amplify me and my love of Jesus.

Ask, How is this statement so much better for us?

Say, God provides grace and a way out of abuse. Staying in an abusive situation is not about amplifying someone and their love for Jesus. (Be sensitive to those who may be in an abusive situation and lean in without being judgmental, but be grace filled in being willing to helping them.)

Say, Grace is never earned! God is grace-filled and as His children, we are empowered through Him to extend grace to others.

Say, Trust is earned and once trust is broken it is wise and discerning to extend grace but not place oneself in a position where harm and deceit can be easily used to control and hurt.

Allow time for participants to share prayer requests and then close in prayer.