



## Week 1 Discussion Guide

### Face the Issue:

We began a new series this week on love and marriage. During this series we are going to be talking about love and marriage, but this series is just not for married people. At the heart of everything, and especially the heart of New Testament marriage, and with life in general is an individual that we should all pursue. This series holds the promise to teach us all something about being together in this life as a married couple but also as a people.

Jeremy shared several statistics with us concerning marriage. One that he did not share is that over half of the marriages that happen this year are expected to end in a divorce.

Marriage, as Jeremy said, must first begin with a definite choice to love and submit to the other. This doesn't come natural to our fallen selves.

Brad Pitt, in an interview about his divorce from Jennifer Aniston after four and a half years of marriage, pretty much summed up the secular view of relationships: "The thing that I don't understand is looking at this as a failure. It's talked about like it failed; I guess because it wasn't flawless. I embrace the messiness of life. I find it so beautiful, actually. The idea that marriage has to be for all time, that I don't understand."

*Do you know people who would agree with Brad Pitt?*

*What are some other statements you have heard people use to defend, or even celebrate, divorce?*

### Into the Word:

The focus of our series will be Ephesians 5: 21-32 in which Paul addresses the marriage relationship directly. As Jeremy pointed out, before addressing marriage Paul writes about relationships in general. Paul continually points to how Jesus loves the church as an example of how we are to submit and love each other.

The Bible contains a lot of details on how we, the church, are to treat each other. The Bible does not lay out such a detailed plan for successful marriage, but the writer to the Hebrews gives some advice to a young church that can be equally applied to a Christ centered marriage.

### **Read Hebrews 10:24–25.**

Now reread it again but imagine that the writer is offering advice to a married couple (or to an engaged couple as part of pre-marital counseling.)

*How does sharing the experience of worship strengthen a marriage? What happens to a marriage when this element is missing?*

*How is Christian fellowship different from mere socializing? How can Christian fellowship grow a marriage?*

*Why do many couples struggle to pray together? What are the rewards of persevering in this struggle?*

*What are some other ways couples can “spur one another on toward love and good deeds”?*

### **Apply The Word**

In his book, Speaking God Together, Dr. David Stoop wrote:

“How does the reality of Christ within your personal life affect your marriage? Most people answer that question by saying, “Well, we have a Christian marriage because we’re both Christians.” Or, “We go to church together.” But when they go on to describe what happens between them, there is nothing evident that makes their marriage uniquely Christian.

What makes a marriage Christian is that we as a couple are seeking to restore what was lost back in Genesis. We become whole people again through the work of Christ, and our marriage becomes fully what it was designed to be—a complete, satisfying union of two people before God. In a marriage that is growing spiritually, both partners make the choice regularly to confront not only the shame, defensiveness, and fear that any two people are going to encounter in an intimate relationship, but also the brokenness in their relationship with God.”

*Take some time to reflect on the relationship that Adam and Eve had with God before the Fall. What is missing from that time that needs to be rebuilt in your relationship with others? Pray that God will guide you in ways to restore this intimacy with Him and your spouse (or others around you).*