Connect Group Discussion Guide

LEADER
EPHESIANS - PT 9
11/8/2026

PASSAGE SUMMARY

In the first sphere of submitting to each other in Christ, Paul moves into the Christian marriage. He speaks both to wives and husbands with the gospel-church dynamic in view.

Paul connects the submission and sacrificial love between husbands and wives to gospel dynamics, making marriage a sacred mirror... albeit with smudges.

The gospel is the pattern we embrace, and the practices follow in its wake.

BACKGROUND

Ephesians teaches us how to discern what in our lives is from the old way, which is full of death, and the new way, which is full of life. Paul's letters often connect ideas and practice, faith and love in action through our works.

This section focuses on how we relate to each other in our closest relationships, constant proving grounds for faith and love. Everything comes from Christ, is for Christ, and Christ empowers us to relate to each other in love and service to Him.

WARM UP

Open your group time with casual fellowship/questions. Taking a few minutes to connect before jumping into discussion helps create an environment where people feel known, valued, and ready to engage. See Series Introduction for tips and ideas.

TIPS FOR YOUR CONVERSATION

- You don't have to fill every silence. Ask the question, give people time to think, and resist the urge to answer it for them. Use a simple follow-up like, *"What makes you say that?"* or *"Where do you see that in the passage?"*
- Your don't have to have all the answers, just help your group discover God's truth together!
- Feel free to break down any question into parts, especially when there are terms someone in your group might not understand. This gets everyone on the same page about what is being asked.

READ THE PASSAGE

Ephesians 5:21-33

Have someone read this all the way through once. Then, on the second time, after each instruction, pause and ask "why?" (Example: "Wives to your own husbands, as to the Lord. **Why?** For the husband...")

Use this exercise to separate this section into two categories: Instruction (what to do) and explanation (the reasons behind it).

ENGAGE WITH THE PASSAGE

1. **How does this scripture's picture of marriage relate to or differ from the one you grew up witnessing?**

Be careful to evaluate the picture you saw with honesty and grace. No marriage is perfect, but there may be things worth celebrating and examples worth following. What did you witness that reflected God's design for marriage? What may have been missing or unhealthy? Help the group recognize both the good they experienced and the ways God's design offers a better picture of marriage.

2. **Ephesians 5:21 calls us to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. What does it look like to submit to Jesus?**

Submission to Jesus means surrendering our own desires to follow His leadership and example. Look back at Ephesians 4:1–3, 4:32, and 5:1–2. These verses remind us to walk in humility, kindness, forgiveness, and sacrificial love. This is the foundation for how husbands and wives are called to love and serve one another.

3. **How did Christ love the church and give Himself up for her?**

This will teach husbands the way to love their wives. Retrace the life of Jesus and the things He gave up in love for all of us. How can the husbands in the group follow that example?

4. **If we could draw a picture of that holy relational dynamic describes between Christ and the church, what would that picture look like?**

Married couples: Is this dynamic present in our relationship? Is there something missing on my end that can move this toward the picture of Christ and His church? Avoid pointing fingers or placing blame. Focus on your own response.

Singles: You get a modified question because this focuses on marriage relationships. Women are not asked to submit to every man, nor are men to have the intimate love for all women that Christ has for His church. Your question: **Have you seen marriages where this dynamic is present? What marriages have shaped your perspective of how Christ and His church relate?**

5. **Matt shared 6 questions for us to look at in our marriages. Let's focus on number 6: *In wisdom, what tools will we use? How will we be intentional?***

Take time as a group to share books, practices, prayers, or other resources that have helped you grow in your relationship with Jesus and live out His example of love and submission. For married couples, what has helped you be intentional in reflecting Christ's love and serving one another? How can we encourage, support, and pray for one another as we put these things into practice? Singles, chime in with tools you've found useful in your relationship with Christ!

***Leader note:** If there are tools people in your group need, reach out! You can share rockbridge.cc/resources with your group for Resources on Marriage, Mental Health, and Spiritual Habits. Counseling services are also now available for Rock Bridge Members! Visit rockbridge.cc/counseling for more info and to get connected. You can also connect them with your Coach or Campus Staff.

NEXT STEPS

As you consider your next step, take a few moments to reflect honestly:

1) Men: Do I tend toward domination or abdication in my relationships? How can I turn back toward Christ's example in the gospel of sacrificial love and leadership?
2) Women: Do I tend toward control or looking to others to fulfill a role only Jesus can fill? How can I turn back toward trusting Christ and His design for my relationships?

Give your group a few moments to reflect on their answers to the questions above. Then invite group members to share what they feel comfortable sharing. You may want to break into smaller groups of two or three so everyone has an opportunity to share and receive prayer for the needs they're taking before the throne.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

Last week: We took a first attempt at "examen prayer," inviting God to review each day's events with us before bedtime. Were you able to do this? How did it go?

This week: Let's continue the examen prayer, but with a focus lens this time. We can review the day's events before going to sleep, like we did last week, with one tweak:

Ask a specific question about how the day went in regard to putting into practice the things we've learned in Ephesians so far. Wives, husbands, and single folks can all ask, "Jesus, how was my reverence and submission toward You today?" (v. 21)

Married couples can do this exercise together this week, spending time praying for your marriage and each other. Reflect on the 6 tools Matt gave us:

A. What is our frame of reference?
B. What is the source or motivation?
C. Is the cross and the path on display?
D. Is sanctification part of my plan and purpose?
E. Am I aware of the serpent?
F. In wisdom, what tools will we use? How will we be intentional?

Here is an article to read more about the practice of "The Examen Prayer."

***Leaders - check in with your group members at least twice this week. Share your own experience with this exercise and encourage others to do the same!

RESOURCES IN THE ROCK BRIDGE APP!

Take a few minutes to explore the Rock Bridge App as a group. Tap **Daily Habits** to walk through the daily devotion, journal, gratitude, and prayer prompts. Then, show your group **Community Prayer**, found in the bubbles at the top of the home page. This feature helps you stay connected in prayer and engage with God's Word throughout the week.

Challenge: Encourage everyone to open the app at least three times this week and spend time praying for one of the requests in Community Prayer.

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