

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Marriage, The Image of God

Questions written by Mark Collins

February 10, 2008



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Small Group Announcement – ATTENTION—THERE HAS BEEN A DATE CHANGE!!!! On February 17th the Rock Small Group ministry will be hosting a new kind of Small Group sign-up. We are asking every Rock Small Group to be represented that day to promote your group in a “Ministry Fair” type atmosphere. We ask that your small group be a part of helping the Rock Body find greater Biblical Community. To sign up all you have to do is go to www.therocksandiego.org/eventcalendar/3646/. For more information call Mark @ 619-764-5146 or contact him at mark.collins@therocksandiego.org for more details.

Global Announcement - “Right now, some people in your life are far away from God. What if you took the risk to pull together an informal, non-threatening gathering at a coffee shop where seeking friends could raise their questions about Christianity?”

Join us on March 8th as Garry Poole, from Willow Creek Community Church, one of America largest churches, equips us to reach our city with the love of Jesus Christ in a revolutionary way.”

Garry has been Willow Creek’s key evangelism leader since 1992, and is widely recognized as the nation’s leading innovator in reaching spiritual seekers through informal discussion forums. Passionate about impacting people for Christ, Garry and his team have trained thousands of facilitators to effectively assemble gatherings for spiritual seekers to explore biblical truths in their own settings. His award-winning book, *Seeker Small Groups*, provides a detailed blueprint for engaging spiritual seekers in life-changing conversations. Garry is also the author of *The Complete Book of Questions*, primary author of the *Tough Questions* series, and co-author of *Experiencing the Passion of Jesus*.

For more information contact Keith Twigg at keith.twigg@therocksandiego.org

MINISTRY PRAYER REQUESTS

As “small groupies,” you are the heart and soul of this ministry--who better than you to lift up the Small Group Ministry in prayer? So, it’s up to you, you can spend time in your small group praying for these things (weekly or occasionally), or you can pray during the week on your own time. If you’d like to be added to our Pastor’s Prayer Team, just let us know. Mark Collins, the Small Group Pastor, would love your prayers! We send out a monthly email of his personal and ministry prayer requests. Just contact Andy Rodgers at andy.rodgers@therocksandiego.org. May God work through your prayers mightily!

Reaching the Lost: Pray that all of our groups participate in our up coming Small Group sign up. Also, in March, the Small group ministry will be training and deploying a new type of small groups called: Coffee Shop Communities (See Global Announcement).

Current Small Group Leaders/Small Groups: Pray that all of our Small Group leaders and group members ask God if He is calling them to a fast, and the courage to be obedient during this unique spiritual time.

Potential Small Group Leaders: Pray that our current leaders continue to give their ministry away and develop future leaders to reach their full potential in Jesus.

Small Group Staff: Pray that God gives us the favor and wisdom to rebuild the Small Group team. Ask Him to order our steps in every decision we make.

The Rock Body: Pray that the Rock Army grows deeper and deeper in the stewardship of their lives in Christ.

MEMORY VERSE

Then God said "Let us make man in Our own image, according to Our likeness... Genesis 1:26a

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS – MARRIAGE, THE IMAGE OF GOD

It's been said by countless voices that the Gay Marriage issue is a matter of Civil Rights. Personally, when I think of the term "civil rights" my mind rewinds back to the images of the 60's where past generations of African-Americans suffered cruel and unusual punishment. The images are forever burned into my memory: black people being prevented from drinking from public water fountains, or being sprayed down by fire hoses in public parks because they dared to protest lawful injustice. I still hear the clear and true voice of Dr. Martin Luther King during his march on the Washington, "I have a dream;" those famous words that eventually changed the direction of a nation. Now a new and powerful voice of the minority would like us to believe that their voice should be heard and heeded along with those great reformers of the past. They shout "Everyone should have the right to marry whomever they want." Yet this so called right is not so *black* and *white* as racial discrimination that prevailed in the 1960's. One difference is that Gay people today are not regarded as three-fifths of a person in the Constitution...and they do not require the Voting Rights Act to have a right to vote.

Should a prudent society forfeit all guidelines when it comes to marriage? If it's an alienable right of a person to marry whomever they please how could the government say "no" to a woman who wants to become the third wife of a polygamist? How about the father who decides that he is "in love" with his daughter and applies for a marriage license. Should the State retain the right to reject him? Some would like us to believe that allowing same-sex marriage is directly proportional to allowing interracial marriage. Yet marriage should have nothing to do with race. In fact, marriage has everything to do with bringing men and women to build a domestic life together. Racism is about keeping races apart, marriage is about bringing a man and a woman together regardless of their race. It's one thing to say, "I have a Korean mother and a Hispanic father" than to say, "I have two moms." Same sex marriage redefines the very nature of marriage. Therefore, sexual preference is *nothing* like skin color, and homosexuality is not a civil right.

Getting Started

1. What sort of family did you grow up in? How did your family shape the hopes and expectations about marriage?
 - a. What factors—in popular culture, in churches, or in politics—do you think have made the gay marriage debate so prominent?
 - b. How might the debate on gay marriage affect how the church and state interact?
 - c. What do you think may qualify churches to speak with unique authority about the meaning of marriage?

Digging Deeper: God’s Intention for Marriage is Clear

Today, certainly this issue is hotly debated, yet the Bible is very clear and straight forward when it comes to the subject of marriage. In fact, if you read the Bible without knowing the historical context you may assume that homosexuality and same-sex unions were a non-issue when the Bible was written, but nothing could be further from the truth. Both the Old and New Testaments were written to societies (outside the Hebrew culture) who were struggling with this very issue.

2. Read Genesis 1:26-27; Gen 2:24; Gen. 5:1-2. Why did God create human beings as male and female? What gifts do you see in the differences between men and women?
3. Why do you think Western society has, for thousands of years, defined marriage as the lifelong union of a man and a woman?
4. Many critics suggest that only the Old Testament condemns homosexuality, read Mark 10:5-9; Romans 1:20-27. Here the Bible is very explicit how a same sex relationship would differ from a heterosexual marriage union. What does the Bible reveal about the long-term effects of all types of inappropriate relationships both emotionally and spiritually?
5. Read Ephesians 5:31-32. Here Paul repeats the foundational teaching in Genesis, and then adds: “This is a profound mystery—but I’m talking about Christ and the church.”
 - a. How should it affect you to realize that marriage is an image of the eternal love between Christ and the church? Can you recall times in your life when you saw this clearly? When have you seen this image distorted?
 - b. Both Jesus and the Apostle Paul remained single during their ministries. How does their incredibly high view of biblical marriage affect your opinion of marriage? How does God view singleness? (For help look at 1 Cor. 7:7)
 - c. How does marriage symbolize God’s love in a way that even the most selfless friendships cannot?
6. The Bible makes it clear: God’s standard in relationships is celibacy before marriage and monogamy between a man and a woman within marriage. Since marriage is a symbol of Christ’s love for His church, what would any concept of having multiple partners in relationships imply about Jesus or His church?

7. What about sex unites a couple so powerfully that it takes the relationship into a spiritual realm, whether good or evil? (See: 1 Cor.6:15-20)

Bringing it Home

Many people today have friends or family members who are openly homosexual. Imagine that person invited you to a ceremony blessing that relationship. Would you attend the ceremony? How could you support and show love for the person without damaging your convictions. Take a few minutes and try to come up with some solutions of how the body of Christ and your small group could be more loving towards those who are struggling with these issues. What could the church do internally to become a safer place of acceptance without losing moral distinctiveness?