

CRAZY, SEXY LOVE.

Making Love (Last) | Discussion Notes

As always, it's great to reflect on the series as a whole. Ask the group if there is anything in particular that has stuck with them or if there is anything they've decided to change.

This week we're asking how we can build relationships that last over the long haul. Start by giving your group a few minutes to answer the question: "what would a relationship to look like after 30 years of marriage?" You may want to do this by giving everyone some Post-It Notes or a sheet of paper and then coming back together to compare notes.

Read Matthew 19:1-6 together.

Philip explained how revolutionary Jesus' words are here. He reminds us that men and women are both created equally in the image of God, a unique idea at the time.

- Is there anything in this passage that you find difficult?
- What does this tell us about God's desires for our relationships?

COMMITMENT AND COVENANT

In the passage, Jesus quotes from Genesis to reiterate the importance of commitment. Covenant - all of me, for all of you - is the highest form of commitment.

- What does covenant mean and how is it stronger than other commitments?
- Philip said that whilst we ask 'how can love sustain commitment for a lifetime?', Jesus teaches us that 'commitment sustains love for a lifetime'. What do you think this means and do you agree?

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL

Commitment has two components:

1. Internal (or **Decision**) - these are things like choices we make to commit to one another and the promises we make to each other. It's about our free will, desires and wants.
2. External (or **Constraints**) - these are factors such as our living situation, social pressures, finances and legal commitments, our sex life and even the children we have

Philip explained that any long-term loving relationship needs both of these elements of commitment to be at full strength, like a jet needs both engines at full power to fly well.

- What happens if our commitment is mostly from external constraints rather than our internal decision and choice? How about vice-versa?
- Have you ever witnessed a relationship where the 'decision' commitment of one party was stronger than the other's? How did this play out? What were the consequences?
- What lifestyle or relationship choices can we make that put too much weight on the external constraints of a relationship? Do you feel pressure from society to rely on and accelerate external constraints (e.g. you should move in together to test the relationship or you should sleep together to see if you are compatible)
- What can we practically do to build a relationships with strong 'internal' commitment, even if it is harder in the short-term?
- How can we build our commitment muscles in general? Even if we're not in a romantic relationship? In what ways can commitment to church community strengthen this area?

Finally, take time to pray for a revelation of God's committed, covenant love for us. Pray for an experience of grace, no matter what our regrets, worries or wounds. Afterwards you might want to share the attached notes with the group for **further reading**.

Research Papers:

Cohabiting couples are 5x more likely to break up

Jay Teachman: Premarital Sex, Premarital Cohabitation, and the Risk of subsequent Marital Dissolution Among Women

Only 1 in 5 Cohabiting relationships lead to marriage

Schoen, Landale & Daniels: Family Transitions in Young Adulthood

Cohabiting significantly increases the risk of divorce

Regnerus & Uecker, Premarital Sex, quoted in Divine Sex, Jonathan Grant (this is a great book!)

Cohabiting couples experience overall poorer relationship quality

Toward a Greater Understanding of the Cohabitation Effect: Premarital Cohabitation and Marital Communication by Catherine L. Cohan and Stacey Kleinbaum

Further Reading:

<http://slidingvsdeciding.blogspot.com/2014/07/the-mystery-why-isnt-living-together.html>

<http://slidingvsdeciding.blogspot.com/2015/03/you-can-lower-your-risk-of-divorce.html>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/in-the-name-love/201303/does-cohabitation-lead-more-divorces>

<https://www.artofmanliness.com/articles/how-delaying-intimacy-can-benefit-your-relationship/>

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/science-shows-once-a-cheater-always-a-cheater-true-archives-of-sexual-behaviour-princeton-a7890656.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/jul/23/why-sex-is-better-in-a-long-term-relationship>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/meet-catch-and-keep/201407/should-you-move-in-together-or-not>

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/feb/02/it-stopped-me-having-sex-for-a-year-why-generation-z-is-turning-its-back-on-sex-positive-feminism>