



LOVE LIFE

GOD'S DESIGN FOR DATING, MARRIAGE AND SEX.

Small Group Discussion Guide
LOVE LIFE



PREPARATION

■ STUDY

Spend the week studying Song of Solomon 8:5–14. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools to enhance your preparation.

■ DETERMINE

Which discussion points and study questions will work best for your group.

■ PRAY

Pray for our pastors and this week's message, the upcoming group time, your group members, and their openness to God's Word.

■ LANDING POINT

Forever love is commitment to God and my spouse in all seasons.



GROUP DISCUSSION

■ **CONFIDENTIALITY** | What's said in the group stays in the group.

■ **NO CROSS-TALK** | Be considerate of others as they share. Refrain from side conversations and texting during group time.

■ **NO FIXING** | We are not in the group to fix each other. Jesus does that part.

■ **SHARING** | Be sensitive to the amount of time you share. Don't talk too much or too little. Every person brings something valuable to the group.



INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

GOING THE DISTANCE

There was a time when the road to marriage seemed simpler. Today, however, views on marriage are shifting. Statistics show that people are choosing to get married later in life, and they are dating and breaking up with more people before committing to marriage.¹ People still want to get married, but making a life-long commitment to someone is becoming more and more complicated.

God created marriage to last a lifetime. That was His plan from the beginning. At times, marriage can make you feel like life is all roses. But roses have thorns. Marriage is wonderful, but it can also be very difficult.

Solomon and his wife had a love that went the distance. They had a forever love that endured the hard times. In them we see unity and devotion to God and each other. We see the kind of commitment God desires for every marriage.

Q: *Why are many people reluctant to get married? What reasons have you heard?*

Q: *Explain how marriage is both wonderful and very difficult?*



LEARN

Select 2-3 questions from this section to answer.

OUT OF THE WILDERNESS

In Song of Solomon 8:5, we find Solomon and his wife coming out of the wilderness. In the Bible, the wilderness symbolizes a time of great trial and testing. It also symbolizes dryness. As they leave the wilderness she leans on him, gently resting her head on his shoulder.

The love they were patient to wait on is now awake. They are united, and their commitment is to one another

forever. They are in the full embrace of love physically, emotionally, and spiritually. The woman goes on to declare her undying devotion to her husband. She wants to be a seal on his heart and arm. A seal ascribed ownership to an object. She's telling Solomon, "I am yours exclusively."

READ: *Read Song of Solomon 8:5–14. Imagine what their wilderness experience was like. Describe it.*

Q: *What happens when you're not united to your spouse physically, emotionally, or spiritually?*

WORDS OF WISDOM

In verse 7, she speaks of the power of love. Love is strong and fierce. The most powerful natural forces (water and fire) cannot put it out. This is a kind of love that guards. They protect the love they share and will give it to no one else. This is forever love. The book ends with a scene of Solomon and his wife dwelling together in the garden of love. God has brought them together and their love will sustain them through all seasons.

Q: *Think of your own metaphor to describe what love is like and share it.*

Q: *In what specific ways can you guard your love in a relationship?*



LIVE

Select 2–3 questions from this section to answer.

ENDURING DROUGHT AND DIFFICULTY

Solomon and his wife endured a lot. They overcame her insecurity (1:5–6). They overcame the foxes that threatened their relationship (2:15). They overcame big differences (5:2–7). As they overcame these things they leaned on each other. They knew if they fell the other would be there to pick them up.

Marriage is about commitment. You need to commit to endure the droughts and difficulties that often happen. You need to:

- *Decide.* Make a decision that, no matter what, you're fully committed to each other.
- *Climb.* Seek greater things for your marriage. Don't just settle. Keep climbing to get to greater happiness, satisfaction, growth, and fruit in your marriage.
- *Work.* Work through the hard stuff together. Do this believing that forever love never gives up. It has hope even when it's hard.
- *Remember.* Take time to reflect on God's activity. What has He done? How has He changed you and your spouse? Recall the memories of your love when you were young and how it grew and deepened over time.
- *Look.* Never take your eyes off of Jesus. See Him as the greatest example of forever love. That His love was longsuffering (1 Corinthians 13:7–8a).

Jesus went into the wilderness and passed the test (Luke 4:1–12). His relationship with the Father anchored Him as He responded to Satan's temptations. It also anchored Him as He hung on the cross. The Bible tells us He endured the cross "for the joy that was set before Him" (Hebrews 12:2). He knew the cross was the only way to bring us back to God. So He submitted to the cross to accomplish the work given to Him by the Father. He suffered to give us the joy of salvation and a relationship with the Father.

Q: *Recall a wilderness experience in your marriage (or at any time). What did you learn about yourself and God through it?*

Q: *What one greater thing do you want for your marriage?*

EXCLUSIVELY YOURS FOREVER

God wants your love to be exclusive. Forever love isn't shared with anyone else. Forever love says "no" to the foxes—affairs, lust, pornography, and fantasies about someone other than your spouse—that try to make their way into your marriage. Forever love is possessive. You cherish your spouse and you guard your marriage.

Forever love is always faithful. At the altar you make a promise (or covenant) before God to be committed to one another all the days of your life. The ring you put on your spouse's finger represents the truth that in marriage two become one. You give yourself totally to your spouse.

Q: *When are you most vulnerable to the foxes mentioned above?*

Q: *Why does someone hesitate to give themselves totally to their spouse?*



LEAD

Select 1 question from this section to ask your group.

YOUR CAPTAIN, YOUR ANCHOR

Think of your marriage as a boat on the sea. When God isn't at the center of your marriage, your boat goes off course. When God is at the center, you let him captain the boat. You follow His directions because the destination He has in mind for your marriage is far better than where you would go without Him at the center.

God should also be your anchor. When God is your anchor, you have reasons to hope and be thankful, even when you're going through the wilderness. God promises to see you through the storms of life and get you to the other side.

Q: *What's one thing you can do this week to put God at the center of your marriage?*

Q: *How can hope and thankfulness keep you anchored in God in marriage?*



PRAY

Thank God for His forever, seen in Jesus. Confess any ways you have lacked full commitment in your relationship with God and with your spouse. Ask God to give you the will and desire to make Him your captain and anchor in your marriage.



FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up email to your group with some or all of the following:

- Read Ephesians 5:1–21 and reflect on specific ways you can walk in love.
- Ask the group to share any stories or lessons learned where they see God at work in their lives.



COMMENTARY

MARRIAGE: A COVENANT The concept of a covenant is a “central, unifying theme of Scripture, establishing and defining God’s relationship to man in all ages.”² Essentially, a covenant is a promise made between two parties to enter into a relationship. Covenants can be made between individuals and groups and are sealed by swearing an oath and agreeing to certain conditions. A covenant is more than a legal agreement (or contract). Marriage is a type of covenant God established to reflect the type of relationship He has with His people.³

THE APPLE TREE The “apple tree” refers to a place to make love. The image of childbirth compliments the apple tree image and could refer to: 1) the natural result of sex or 2) the physical similarities between sex and childbirth (e.g., wrenching of the body).⁴

PROTECTIVE LOVE “In many cultures such as Israel the brothers protected their sisters’ virginity (Genesis 34; 2 Samuel 13:22–33).”⁵

PROTECTIVE LOVE God’s design for marriage was forever (Genesis 1:27; 2:21–25). God hates divorce, because it is a breaking of the marriage covenant He created between two people. Important passages on divorce include: Leviticus 20:10–21; Deuteronomy 24:1–4; Matthew 5:31–32; 19:3–9; Mark 10:4–12; Romans 7:1–3; 1 Corinthians 7:10–16, 39.

ENDNOTES:

1. Barna Group, “The Trends Redefining Romance Today,” Barna Group, February 9, 2017, <https://www.barna.com/research/trends-redefining-romance-today/>.

2. Steven B. Cowan, “Covenant,” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 355.

3. Scott Hahn, “Covenant,” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).

4. George M. Schwab, “Song of Songs,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Proverbs–Isaiah* (Revised Edition), ed. Tremper Longman III, Garland David E., vol. 6 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 426.

5. D. A. Carson, ed., *NIV Zondervan Study Bible: Built on the Truth of Scripture and Centered on the Gospel Message* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 1297.