

LOVING FOR A LIFETIME [marriage]

THIS WEEK

Face it—society's view of marriage is deteriorating. Marriage problems abound. More and more couples are living together without getting married. It's no wonder that teenagers may question the purpose and meaning of marriage. This TalkSheet gives your group the opportunity to discuss the truth about marriage, within a Christian context and from a Christian perspective—and clear up the misconceptions, low expectations, and false ideals that society has given them.

OPEN

Whether you are married or not, start out by presenting this case scenario to role play with your group. You are a 20 year old girl or guy. You've just broken up (for good) with the love of your life who you thought was "the one." Now you're questioning what marriage is all about and why anyone would ever want to get married. Why do you want to keep dating to find someone else? What should your reasons for marriage be?

Have your kids brainstorm their ideas and write down a master list on a whiteboard or poster board of the reasons for marriage. Some will be straight up obvious (companionship, sex) and some won't be ("someone to cook for you"). Have them list everything they think of when they hear the word marriage and why marriage beats living together beforehand.

THE DISCUSSION, BY NUMBERS

1. Ask your kids share their choices and why they chose the age they did. What are the pros and cons of each age group?
2. Discuss the three most popular answers and the three least popular answers. Encourage your group to debate these answers. Why or why not they are important? What reasoning do they have for each? Then rank them again as a group on a poster board or whiteboard.
3. Living together is a popular alternative to marriage today. Many young people have been affected by divorce or their parents live in boyfriends or girlfriends. Many are scared of marriage as a result. Debate the pros and cons of living together, and challenge them to give their honest opinions. Save yours—and biblical beliefs—for the closing statement.
4. Allow the group to debate their preferred traits with each other. You may want to make a master list of the favorites and discuss them further.

Have them rank which ones are the least important to most important.

5. Go through these passages to hear which ones they picked and how they summarized them. What did the passages teach them about love and marriage?

THE CLOSE

Share a brief biblical view of marriage.

Communicate that that despite the failures of today's marriages, it is holy and instituted by God—it shouldn't be taken lightly. Marriage is one of life's most important of decisions, and—with God's help—marriage can be successful.

Go back to your list from the intro and compare their list with God's intentions for marriage. Point out that God created marriage for all those good things—all those bonuses that come along with having a forever friend. Have any of them changed their idea of what marriage is?

Challenge your kids to think seriously about what they are looking for in a marriage partner. How can they start today to think about healthy marriages? What can they learn from society's mistakes and portrayal of marriage and divorce?

Finally, encourage those who have experienced the pain of divorce to forgive their parents and give their hurt to Christ. Point out that Christ can heal broken and hurting relationships—he's there for them with open arms. And, be sure your kids know that you are available to talk more one-on-one.

MORE

- Have a group that's more visual? Show clips of or have each of your kids watch a TV show with a married couple in it. How is marriage portrayed? Is it good and bad? What problems or arguments did they have? Have them discuss their conclusions and how media portrays marriage as opposed to reality.
- Or have a Q & A session with a married couple or a divorced person to openly discuss their marriage experiences and have your kids ask questions about how to handle dating, communication, and life as a couple. Try to keep your kids on track with the larger issues (not just sex questions). Finally, challenge your kids to ask their parents about being married, and encourage them to support their parents who may be going through marriage struggles.