SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

Message Series: From This Day Forward
Message Title: Never Give Up
Speaker: Craig Groeschel
Date: March 15, 2015

Icebreaker:
Go around the group and describe the first time you saw your spouse. What was your first impression? What were your first thoughts?

Message Overview:
To wrap up this series “From This Day Forward,” Pastor Craig speaks on the fifth and final guideline for healthy marriages: Never give up. In Matthew 19:3-6, when the Pharisees ask Jesus whether or not it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason, Jesus’ response is explicit: when a man and woman are married they are united as one flesh. His final statement to the Pharisees is not a suggestion but a command, “Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” Pastor Craig goes on to teach marriage is a covenant, not a contract. He makes the following points:

1. A contract is based on a mutual distrust.
   A contract limits my responsibility and increases my rights. “I’m in as far as you’re in.”

2. A covenant is based on a mutual commitment.
   A covenant is a permanent relationship. Hebrew word for covenant is berith = a cutting.

Pastor Craig moves on to Galatians 6:7-9, illustrating sowing and reaping in marriage.

1. You reap what you sow.
   If you don’t like what you’ve been getting, look at what you’ve been giving.

2. You reap where you sow.
   Your marriage is as good as you decide for it to be
   The goal of a relationship is to win together. “If you win and your spouses loses, the relationship loses.”- PK

Discussion:
(Leaders: The questions that follow are designed to stir reflection and discussion on this week’s primary Message points. Please read through them prior to your meeting, so you can be prepared to prayerfully pace your group well. And remember, as leader, your goal is to promote increased biblical awareness, as
well as individual self awareness – a combination that with the help of the Holy Spirit, results in revelation and…transformation!)

Read Matthew 19:3-6 out loud together.

* Because we are sinful, our understanding of commitment is broken and tainted by sin. It may be all too natural to see our marriage as a contract rather than a covenant. In what ways do you sometimes view your marriage as a contract or an agreement rather than a covenant?

* Do you ever feel like you limit what you offer your spouse or even a close friend or family member based on what they offer you?

* What is the most clear and perfect example of a covenant marriage relationship? The most perfect and holy model of marriage that we have is Christ and his bride, the Church. As a group, think of ways that we can model our marriages after Christ’s example. Where we fall short in our marriages and relationships, where does Christ faithfully stand as the quintessential model of a perfect spouse? For example, Christ’s love for the Church is a covenant, not a contract. His love for us is unconditional and his grace and compassion knows no limit. Read Ephesians 5:25-27 as an example. Think of other examples of Christ’s model as a group.

Read Galatians 6:7-9 out loud together.

* Give some positives examples of how you are sowing into your marriage or relationships and share the results you are seeing.

* What do you desire to reap from your marriage or other relationships? How does that require you to adjust what you sow? Think of examples as a group.

* Pastor Craig makes the statement, “If you don’t like what you’ve been getting, look at what you’ve been giving.” Reflect on this statement as a group.

* Think about where you place your effort. Is it in your hobbies, your children, your career, your relationship with God? How much effort do you have left for your marriage? Reflect on your own or as a group.

* What are the challenges you face sowing into your marriage or other relationships. Prayerfully consider ways to overcome these challenges.

Wrap-Up/Close:
Pastor Craig calls us to remember that we do not face these challenges on our own. We can cling to the truth that God is love. God loves through us when we can’t love, and God forgives through us when we can’t forgive. “Let God do what you don’t have the strength to do.” He has not left us on our own to rely
on our own strength to build stronger marriages and relationships. As believers, those who are united to Christ, we put on His strength. Our imperfect prayers are substituted for His perfect and holy prayers, and our tired and weary efforts are rooted in the Perfect One. Deuteronomy 31:6 says, “Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified because of them, for the LORD your God goes with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you.”

**Throughout the Week: (Optional)**

Continue to reflect on the differences between marriage as a contract and marriage as a covenant.

Continue to reflect on what and where you sow. Honestly ask yourself how you need to adjust this in order to reap a stronger marriage or relationship.

Read through the gospels to gain a clearer understanding of Christ’s example of marriage, which we see through His relationship with the Church. As believers, this is the ultimate example that we possess of marriage and it is what we should continually strive to imitate. Christ never has and never will give up on his bride, the Church, therefore we are called.