

This weekly guide has been created as a tool to help you study individually and/or in a small group and live what you are learning from the Bible and weekend services here at RiverGlen.

In Acts 2:42 we are told that the people in the first church were living out what they were learning from the apostles' teaching. **The purpose of this guide is to equip you to put into practice what you learn.**



## Suburban Legends

This is our 2<sup>nd</sup> week in a new relationship series called "Suburban Legends" that continues through Father's Day. Each weekend we'll talk about a different legend or a myth regarding our relationships. This weekend we address a difficult, painful and all too common topic in our world today....divorce.

### Week 2: "Getting Divorced is Better Than Being Unhappy"

**Ice Breaker:** Think back to some of the family TV shows you watched as a kid growing up. How did the "TV world" portray Dad, Mom and marriage? What do you remember? Now compare and contrast this to the family TV shows we have today that our kids watch. How are Dad, Mom and marriage portrayed in today's world?

#### Read Exodus 20: 1-6

1. What is the first commandment God gives us?
2. What could "other gods" look like in our relationships? (Think specifically in the context of marriage.)
3. Paraphrase in your own words the second commandment regarding idolatry.

Idolatry is never listed as a leading cause of divorce, yet it can be one of the foundational problems lurking in the background of marital disharmony. Not many Christian couples would confess to being idolatrous in their marriage. One might even argue that divorce is proof that the couple did not value the marriage enough. Though this may be true on one level, on another level it may be that the opposite is truer—that the couple placed *too much* importance (i.e. *expectation*) on the marriage or on the spouse.

1. Whether you are married or not, what expectations do you have of marriage?
2. What may be some expectations you have (or have had ) of your spouse?

Often when a couple is embroiled in expectations, each person is demanding that the other change. The husband is waiting for his wife to change in ways that will inspire and empower him to love her back. The wife is withholding love or respect because her husband has not earned them by loving her. So, the cycle continues with

each partner waiting for the other one to change. Notice that in each of these cases the husband essentially is making his wife responsible for his attitude and behavior toward her. And the wife is doing the same in reverse.

3. Could this be a form of idolatry? Why or why not?

4. Turn to Ephesians 5:25-28. How is the husband commanded to love his wife?

I am not called to love my wife *if* she treats me a certain way. I am called to love her as Christ loved the church. Period. No excuses. No blaming. Just love. My problem is that I cannot do this very well in my own humanness and sinfulness. Without God's help the cycle continues and our relationship spirals downward.

## Read 1 Kings 18:16-39

The prophets of Baal, in their contest with Elijah to determine divine bragging rights for Israel, go from one level of desperation to another to get their god's attention. They even begin to cut themselves "until the blood flowed" in an effort to get their god to respond. No matter how hard they try, their god fails to bring fire.

1. In what ways does this scripture parallel a "blame" cycle that can occur in a marriage?

In a marital blame cycle, each partner seems to go from one degree of desperation to another in an effort to get his or her spouse to respond. But the problem is the same one that the prophets of Baal had—there is only one God who can *bring the fire*. When we are caught in a vicious cycle of blame, we are very aware of the grief, pain and disappointment that our spouse is causing us. We usually can point out in detail the things that he or she has done that have hurt us and made us angry. *However, there inevitably is a deeper, more subtle disappointment to which we are not paying attention—the disappointment that we have with ourselves.* Usually, the hidden grief and pain that we have over not *being* the person that we want to be is our biggest disappointment.

2. If you are currently caught in a blame cycle with anything in your marriage (or another relationship) take a moment to share or write down what grief, pain or disappointment you are experiencing.

3. Now take a few minutes and be willing to look at what could be the deeper issue or disappointment in yourself. Share or write a few words to express your thoughts.

## Read Psalm 130

With the divorce rate in America at 41 % for first marriages we have many people within our church and community who are hurting. Divorce fractures families, complicates and sometimes ends relationships with others. Yet divorce is not the end of your relationship with God...mercy, forgiveness and redemption are His plan!

1. In the depths of despair this Psalmist cries out to the only One who can help. Go through and count how many times he calls out to "Lord."

2. In your own words, how can Verse 7 be of comfort to those who are hurting from divorce?

**Reflection & Prayer** Lord God we thank you for Your Word that gives us the Truth regarding marriage in today's world. For those of us married, please show us when we are living with our expectations and idols and not as You have commanded; to love one another as You love us. And Lord for those of us divorced, we accept the price You paid with the life of Your One and Only Son.... not only for ourselves but for those who have hurt us. We ask You to grant mercy, forgiveness and full redemption to our lives. In Jesus Name we pray. Amen.