



SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

THE NOTEBOOK: I WILL BE HERE

Gene · Weekend of September 26 and 27, 2026

SCRIPTURES

Song of Songs 2:3-5 · Ephesians 5:31-32 · Matthew 19:26 · Matthew 6:21

THE MESSAGE

Noah and Allie begin where most couples begin, in the stage of flowers and long walks and bad poetry, and the movie follows them all the way to a care facility where she can no longer remember his name. The weekend used that arc to name the one every relationship runs. Romance gives way to reality, and reality reveals what romance concealed. For a relationship that has already broken down, the message named two options, breaking up or trusting God for a breakthrough, and then made the point that plenty of people who believe God raised Jesus from the dead quietly believe their own marriage is the exception. When Allie asks what will happen when she cannot remember anything at all, Noah tells her he will be here.

BEFORE YOU START

This message was preached to a room full of couples, and your group is not that room. You likely have people who are single, people who are dating, people who are divorced, people whose spouse did not come tonight, and at least one person whose marriage is the hardest thing in their life right now. Every question here works for a relationship of any kind. Say that out loud before you start, or the people who are not married will sit quietly for an hour.

Do not let this become married people talking while everyone else watches.

If a couple is at your table, ask each of them to answer for themselves rather than about each other. Nobody should hear their marriage evaluated in front of the group. And when someone names a relationship that ended and never healed, do not go looking for the lesson in it. Stay there with them, and follow up during the week.

Question two is where the weight sits, so go first on question one and set the honesty level early. If you give a safe answer, you will get safe answers all night.

You will not get through all eight questions, and you are not meant to. Choose the ones your group needs and take them in whatever order serves the conversation.

ICEBREAKER

The message ran through the romance stage: the '65 Mustang, the disco shirt with the wide collars, the mullet, the grunge wardrobe. What were you wearing or driving when you were trying hardest to impress somebody, and did it actually work?

Keep this to five minutes. It is a warm-up.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These work for any close relationship, not only marriage. Question two is the heaviest one in the set.

1

The message ran a list of the same trait seen from two different stages. He is so focused becomes he is a workaholic. She is so organized becomes she irons her socks. He is good with money becomes he pinches every penny. Think of somebody you are close to now, married or not. What charmed you about them at the beginning that wears on you today?

Take the first turn, and pick something small and real. People will follow whatever you model.

Matthew 19:26

2

For a relationship that has broken down, the message named two alternatives: break up, or trust God for a breakthrough. Then it asked the harder question. People will say they believe God parted the Red Sea and raised Jesus from the dead, and still not believe he can relight a fire that has gone out in their own house. Where is that true for you, and what makes that one thing feel like the exception?

Somebody in your room is living inside this question. Nobody has to name the relationship out loud. Naming the doubt is enough, and it is plenty.

Matthew 6:21

3

Where your treasure is, your heart follows. The message put it plainly: if you are not investing time, energy, or money into a relationship, your heart will not be there, and it will drift. Look at the last two weeks honestly. Where did your time and attention actually go, and what does that tell you about where your heart has been?

Calendars and bank statements answer this better than memory does. Ask people to picture specific days rather than a general sense of how they have been.

4

Three kinds of intimacy came up this weekend. Day to day, which is keeping track of each other, the text in the afternoon, the sitting down at night to ask about someone's day and actually wanting to know. Heart to heart, the conversation that goes somewhere because it was given enough time to go somewhere. And soul to soul, praying and worshiping together. Which of the three is strongest in your closest relationship, and which one has gone quiet?

Soul to soul is the one people are most embarrassed to admit they have never tried. Say that out loud and the honesty comes more easily.

5

Allie asks what is going to happen when she cannot remember anything anymore, and Noah tells her he will be here. That is a promise made with nothing coming back. Who has been that person for you, and have you ever told them?

This one runs warm, and it is a good place to land before Go Deeper. Some people in your group have been on the other side of that promise and watched somebody leave. Leave room for that answer too.

GO DEEPER

The first is for the people who love the text, the second opens up a question the group can argue about, and the third asks for a commitment.

GD1

Read Ephesians 5:22-33 all the way through. Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 about two becoming one flesh, calls it a profound mystery, and then says plainly what he means by it. What is he actually claiming, and how does that change the way you read the instructions he gives husbands and wives earlier in the chapter?

Worth knowing before somebody reads the next line: verse 32 says the profound mystery is about Christ and the church. Paul is saying the one-flesh union points beyond itself to that. The phrase got used this weekend as a description of how baffling marriage feels, which is true to experience and lands well in a room, but it is not the claim Paul is making in that verse. If someone in your group notices, you can say both things without any embarrassment.

Song of Songs 2:3-5

GD2

Song of Songs sits in the middle of the Bible as love poetry between two people, and the lines quoted this weekend are about as unguarded as scripture gets. Read the passage in context. Why do you think a book like this is in the Bible at all, and what does its presence say about how God views desire, delight, and the body?

Jewish and Christian readers have long read the book as a picture of God's love for Israel or Christ's for the church. Others read it as exactly what it looks like, poetry between two lovers. Both readings go back a very long way and the book itself does not settle the question, so if your group splits, let it split.

GD3

Name the relationship you have been giving the least of yourself to lately. Say one specific thing you will do for that person this week, put a day on it, and say who in this group is asking you about it before you meet again.

The example from the weekend was not a grand gesture. It was a written card on every birthday, every anniversary, every Christmas, for over thirty years, and his wife kept all of them. Small and repeated beats big and occasional. Get a name and a day, because being more present will not survive the week.

CLOSE YOUR GROUP IN PRAYER

“With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Read the line out loud and then say the part the message added: he did not make an exception for your marriage. Ask everyone to bring one relationship to mind, name it silently, and then pray over your people by name. Pray for the marriages in the room that feel impossible, and pray just as specifically for the people who are single, divorced, or widowed, so the night does not close as though marriage were the only thing worth praying about.

Do not ask couples to hold hands or perform anything in front of the group. If someone tells you tonight that they want to say yes to Jesus, stop and pray with them right there, then email smallgroups@eastside.com so the team can follow up. Baptisms are happening at the close of this series, and that is worth mentioning before people leave.

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