

## DISCUSSION GUIDE :: WEEK 2

**STRETCHED THIN  
CHOOSE WHERE TO CHEAT  
EPHESIANS 5:21-25; MATTHEW 6:31-32  
09/25/2016**



### MAIN POINT

We must be wise in choosing our priorities so that we can both work and rest well.

### INTRODUCTION

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

**Have you ever felt pulled in too many directions at once? What are some things that compete for your time and attention?**

**What do you do when there isn't enough time to do everything well?**

Life is often very, very busy. Work demands our attention, our spouse desires our attention, our children need our attention, and we need to plan a little time for rest. Sometimes, there just doesn't seem to be enough time to give attention to all the things we have in our schedule. Unfortunately, this means that some things get neglected, and if we aren't careful, we will neglect things that are more important for the things that are less important.

Often, the temptation to prioritize work is strong because we can see when things get done. We can file our paperwork, do our customer service, and be on time for our appointments. Progress at home is harder to gauge, and we never get a raise for good work. It makes it easier to neglect, so we must be wise in our priorities!

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ EPHESIANS 5:21.**

**How can this verse help us learn what to prioritize in our lives?**

**Why is it so difficult for us to submit to others?**

We must keep in mind that while work is important, we are never called to submit to our careers the way we are called to submit ourselves to our families and our brothers and sisters in Christ. When we realize that the real needs of our families aren't being met, or that we are falling behind in our duties to the church and Christ's kingdom, we need to figure out how we can re-prioritize those things which are most important.

We have problems submitting to others because our natural inclination is to please ourselves first. When others make demands on our time, we can resent it. We have to walk in the Spirit to realize that our priorities here should look like Christ's priorities in the Scriptures. He served others first, even at great cost to Himself.

**How do these verses teach us about what submission looks like?**

**In what ways would these verses help us understand how serious it is for us to submit to one another?**

Submission can be a very frightening thing. Paul tells wives to submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ! We obey the Lord in everything. People's lives are uprooted as they leave home to do missions overseas, or they leave lucrative career opportunities to go into ministry. If we submit to our husbands as to the Lord, couldn't it mean that many things we want to do will be radically changed or cancelled?

Husbands are called on to love their wives as Christ loved the church. Christ loved the church so much He gave up everything, including His life, in order to save her. If a husband is willing to submit himself that much to his wife, won't that mean his career might suffer?

God wants us to love one another deeply and to take our relationships very seriously. If we are going to submit to one another as Christ calls us to, then it will mean a change in some of our personal ambitions. Our ambition cannot be to advance ourselves, but to advance those we love instead.

**How does worry cause us to mismanage our priorities with others?**

**When we are struggling with time to do everything we need, how can this passage help us pray?**

If we are worried about providing food and clothing for our family, that stress can cause us to be distanced from the family for whom we wish to provide. We may wind up with longer hours at the office while off-loading our home duties to our spouse. Because of worry, we may lose our family, not to hunger or lack of clothing, but to neglect.

God calls on us to submit to one another and serve one another, and He calls on us to trust Him for provision. So when time becomes an issue and we see that our family and friends are suffering due to our neglect, we ought to trust the Lord to provide and spend more time at home. We may have to be creative on how we manage it, but we must not sacrifice our family on the altar of personal ambition.

## **APPLICATION**

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**How can we help one another keep our priorities straight in our lives? Could we discuss our priorities with our families in order to make sure we aren't missing out?**

**How often do our priorities get confused due to fear? How can we combat this?**

**In what areas do you need to trust the Lord when your responsibilities are competing?**

## **PRAY**

In a time of group prayer, ask the Father to help us all submit ourselves to one another. Pray that our ambition will always be to serve others before ourselves. Ask the Father to help us be wise in how we prioritize our lives so that we will be able to prioritize our families and our service to Him.

### EPHESIANS 5:21-25

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5:25-30. The words translated love and loved are forms of the verb (Greek, agapao) used in John 3:16 for God's sacrificial concern for the world. Such love is more than mere affection or emotion; it includes actions based on care for the object of love. Although many husbands have literally died for their wives (and vice versa), Paul's focus is more on the responsibility of the husband to live for his wife than to die for her. These verses provide the theological foundation for understanding a husband's responsibility to his wife. To make her holy describes what happens now (in this lifetime) to believers as a result of Jesus' self-giving. Everything in our conversion as well as in our daily Christian living has as its goal setting us apart for Christ. Paul explained this as an experience of cleansing. The image of washing helps us understand what being holy means. To present the church to Himself describes what will happen (throughout eternity) to believers as a result of Jesus' self-giving. The verb present suggests a bride on her wedding day approaching her beloved groom, and the phrase in splendor hints at the bride's wedding attire. No bride would want to appear on her wedding day in a spotted, wrinkled gown. The words holy and blameless sum up the effect of Christ's love and sacrifice for His people. And the Lord will most certainly accomplish this result in His people, for holy and blameless are the same words used to describe God's plan for His chosen ones from the foundation of the world. Christian husbands are to love their wives in the same way that Christ does. This means they are to do all they can to make their wives more beautiful (in the spiritual sense of being holy and blameless). Husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. A husband is the head; the wife is the body; and the husband loves his body. It is as if their wives were an extension of the husbands' own bodies. When the apostle wrote that he who loves his wife loves himself, he used the verb loves (Greek, agapao, sacrificial concern).

### MATTHEW 6:31-32

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6:31-33. With these three verses, having illustrated and supported His theme, Jesus built His case. In verse 32, He made two more points about anxiety. First, it was downright pagan; anxiety was the attitude of those who were not a part of God's kingdom. Second, it was totally unnecessary to worry about what to eat or drink or wear, because your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

Three times in verses 32 and 33, we find the phrase all these things. We might imagine Jesus using it somewhat disparagingly. This was not to belittle the importance of basic necessities, but to place them at the back of the mind of His disciples, far behind His kingdom and righteousness in importance. "All these things" are what pagans (and the Pharisees) scrambled after. "All these things" are thoroughly known by the Father. "All these things" will fall into place when we put God's kingdom and righteousness in its proper place and serve the kingdom's interests.