

Are you being too Defensive?

2024-06-17 • PASTOR MATT ROSE



James 1:19

FOR THE LEADER

These questions help you run the conversation. They are not your study. Get into the passage yourself first, because your group needs what God taught you, not just a list of questions. These also lean on Sunday's message, so a few will not land for anyone who missed it. Watch it before you lead.

WHAT THE MESSAGE WAS ABOUT

Somebody criticizes you, and your armor goes up. That is defensiveness, and Pastor Matt named its favorite moves: giving the wrong why, playing the victim, cutting the other person off. It is self-protection, and it keeps a conversation from ever finishing. Somebody has to end the cycle, and that means taking ownership before it feels fair. Pastor Matt's practice from his own marriage: pause mid-argument and silently ask how Christ would want him to respond. The temperature drops. The calling is to love them whether or not the love is coming back yet.

To get started

- What is your first instinct when someone points out something you did wrong?

Looking back at the message

He used himself as the example of playing the victim. Let the group laugh before it gets serious.

- 1 Pastor Matt admitted that when his wife asks him to connect in the evening, his instinct is to list everything hard about his day, playing the victim so her question feels unfair. When do you do that?
- 2 Pastor Matt said defensiveness is self-protection: guarding yourself instead of hearing the person in front of you. What are you usually protecting?
- 3 Pastor Matt suggested repeating back what someone said and asking, is this what you meant? He guessed it would defuse more than half our arguments. When have you tried something like that? OPTIONAL

Looking at the passage

Read James 1:19-20 and Ephesians 2:14-16. The second gives the model for taking responsibility.

- 4 Read James 1:19-20. What are the three instructions, and what reason follows them?
- 5 Read Ephesians 2:14-16. Who took responsibility for the hostility, and who had caused it?
- 6 Read Hebrews 4:15. What does it mean that Jesus sympathizes with our weakness?
- 7 Read 1 John 4:19. What is the order of loving, and why does it matter? OPTIONAL

Bringing it home

Pastor Matt said plainly that some people are in situations where safety is at risk. Say the same thing, and follow up privately with anyone who indicates it.

- 8 Pastor Matt said your job in a relationship is to love the other person, not to wait until they love you the way you want. Where is that hardest for you right now?
- 9 What would it take for you to be the one who ends the cycle?
- 10 Pastor Matt described pausing mid-argument to silently ask how Christ would want him to respond. What usually stops you from pausing like that?
- 11 Whose side of a story have you never really asked for, because you assumed you already knew it? OPTIONAL

The group together

Ending a cycle first feels unfair. Do not minimize that, and do not pressure anyone in a harmful situation to absorb more.

- 12 Why does going first in a conflict feel like losing?
- 13 Who has taken responsibility toward you when they did not have to? What did it change?
- 14 How could this group support someone doing the harder thing in a relationship?

BEFORE YOU FINISH

What is one thing you will own this week without waiting for it to feel fair?

You might pray about

- For the humility to go first
- For those in relationships where they feel unsafe, that they would find real help
- For love that does not depend on being loved back yet