

How does Jesus' approach of going back to God's original design in Genesis challenge our cultural tendency to redefine marriage based on contemporary values?

In what ways might couples today be fighting against each other rather than for each other, and what practical steps can reverse this pattern?

How does understanding that sin is the root problem in marital conflict change the way we approach disagreements with our spouse?

What does it mean practically for a husband to lay down his life for his wife as Christ did for the church, especially in a culture that prioritizes career success?

How can the church better support couples who are struggling in their marriages while still upholding the biblical standard that marriage is a lifelong covenant?

Why do you think Jesus emphasized that divorce was permitted because of hard hearts rather than commanded, and what does this reveal about God's heart toward marriage?

How can couples cultivate the kind of perseverance that keeps them committed through decades of marriage, similar to how Christ persevered to the cross?

What role does repentance and confession of hidden sin play in maintaining the oneness that God designed for marriage?

How should the church respond with both truth and grace to those who have experienced divorce or are in remarriages that may not align with biblical guidelines?

In what ways can married couples intentionally model lasting faithfulness to younger generations who are increasingly skeptical about marriage?

# Small Group Guide: Building Marriages That Last

Based on Matthew 19:1-12

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## Opening Prayer & Icebreaker

**Icebreaker:** Share about the longest-lasting marriage you've witnessed personally. What stands out to you about that couple's relationship?

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## Key Scripture

**Matthew 19:4-6** - "Haven't you read that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

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## Main Takeaways

1. **Marriage is God's design, not culture's to redefine** - Jesus points back to Genesis to establish God's original intent for marriage.
  2. **Lasting marriages require fighting FOR each other, not AGAINST each other** - Perseverance and commitment are essential.
  3. **Sin is the problem in every struggling marriage** - Every marriage is two sinners becoming one; unconfessed sin destroys unity.
  4. **Divorce is never God's ideal** - While biblically permissible in cases of unrepented adultery or abandonment, it's always painful and not God's original design.
  5. **Christ-centered marriages are stronger** - Couples devoted to Jesus together have more resilient relationships.
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## Discussion Questions

**Understanding God's Design (15-20 minutes)**

1. **Why do you think Jesus reached back to Genesis instead of just answering the Pharisees' question about Deuteronomy?** What does this teach us about God's perspective on marriage?
2. **What does it mean practically that "two become one flesh"?** How should this reality shape the way married couples approach conflict?
3. **The sermon stated that "divorce is always because of hard hearts." Discuss what a "hard heart" looks like in a marriage relationship.** How does sin harden our hearts toward our spouse?

### Applying to Our Lives (20-25 minutes)

4. **The pastor said, "You cannot fight for your marriage if you're feeding your sin."** What are some common ways people "feed their sin" that damage their marriages? How can confession and repentance restore unity?
5. **For married individuals: What does it look like practically to "fight FOR each other instead of AGAINST each other" in your marriage?** Share specific examples if comfortable.
6. **The sermon mentioned that only 58% of Gen Z expects to marry.** Why do you think marriage is losing cultural value? How can the church better celebrate and support marriage?
7. **Discuss the statement: "God did not call you to be successful at work and absent at home."** What are the challenges men face in balancing career ambitions with being present and invested at home?

### Responding with Action (15-20 minutes)

8. **What are some practical ways married couples can stay intentional about investing in their marriage,** especially when things are going well?
9. **The pastor encouraged couples not to allow the "D word" in their vocabulary.** How does removing divorce as an option change the way a couple approaches problems? Is this realistic? Why or why not?
10. **For those who are single or dating: How does this sermon shape your thinking about preparing for marriage** or choosing a future spouse?
11. **How can our group better support marriages within our community?** What specific actions could we take?

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## Personal Reflection Questions

Take 5 minutes of silence for personal reflection:

- **Married:** What is one specific area where you need to fight FOR your spouse this week instead of against them?
- **Single/Dating:** What steps do you need to take to prepare yourself to be a godly spouse someday?

- **Divorced/Remarried:** How can you move forward in faithfulness and grace from this point on?
  - **Everyone:** Is there unconfessed sin in your life that is affecting your relationships? What step will you take this week to address it?
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## Practical Applications

### This Week's Challenge:

#### For Married Couples:

- Schedule a specific time this week (at least 30 minutes) to have an intentional conversation with your spouse about the health of your marriage
- Identify one area where you've been "fighting against" rather than "fighting for" and commit to change
- Pray together daily, even if just for 5 minutes

#### For Singles/Dating:

- If living together unmarried, prayerfully consider the pastor's invitation to pursue biblical marriage
- Evaluate your current relationship (if in one) against God's design for marriage
- Begin praying for your future spouse

#### For Everyone:

- Reach out to one married couple this week to encourage them
  - If struggling in your marriage, take one step toward help (counseling, pastoral meeting, trusted mentor)
  - Memorize Matthew 19:6
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## Prayer Requests & Closing

### Group Prayer Focus:

- Pray for marriages represented in your group
- Pray for those struggling or considering divorce
- Pray for wisdom and strength to uphold God's design for marriage
- Pray for the next generation to value and pursue godly marriages

**Closing Prayer:** Have someone close in prayer, specifically asking God to strengthen marriages, bring healing where there's brokenness, and give the group courage to take next steps.

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## **Additional Resources**

- Check the church website for counseling resources mentioned in the sermon
  - Consider reading together as couples: "The Meaning of Marriage" by Tim Keller
  - Discuss doing a marriage study or retreat as a group
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**Leader Tip:** This topic can be sensitive for those who have experienced divorce or are currently struggling. Create a safe, grace-filled environment. Remind the group that God's grace covers all sin, including past mistakes, and that the goal is moving forward in faithfulness from today.

# 5-Day Devotional: Building Marriages That Last

## Day 1: God's Original Design

**Reading:** Genesis 1:26-28; 2:18-25

**Devotional:** Before sin entered the world, God created marriage as a sacred union—two becoming one flesh. This wasn't an afterthought; it was His intentional design from the beginning. When we face marital struggles, we often forget that marriage reflects God's image and His relational nature. The enemy wants to destroy what God has declared good. Today, reflect on God's original vision for your marriage. What would it look like to return to that foundation of unity, purpose, and intimacy? Ask God to help you see your spouse through His eyes—as a precious gift, not a problem to solve. Marriage thrives when we honor God's design above cultural definitions.

## Day 2: The Problem of Sin

**Reading:** Genesis 3:1-13; Romans 3:23-24

**Devotional:** Every marriage is the union of two sinners. After the fall, Adam and Eve's first instinct was to blame each other and hide from God. Sin always divides what God has united. The struggles in your marriage aren't ultimately about finances, communication, or in-laws—they're about sin. But here's the hope: Jesus came to solve our sin problem. When we confess our sin instead of hiding it, when we repent instead of blame-shifting, healing begins. Today, examine your heart honestly. What sin are you harboring that's creating distance in your marriage? Bring it into the light. Confession and repentance open the door for God's grace to restore what sin has broken.

## Day 3: Christ's Perseverance

**Reading:** 2 Thessalonians 3:5; Hebrews 12:1-3

**Devotional:** We often talk about God's love, but we need Christ's perseverance too. Jesus endured the cross, despising its shame, because He was focused on the joy set before Him. Lasting marriages require that same stick-to-itiveness. There will be seasons of difficulty, disappointment, and distance. The feelings that brought you together may fade temporarily. But perseverance isn't about feelings—it's about faithfulness. It's choosing again and again to fight for your marriage, not in it. Today, ask God to direct your heart into Christ's perseverance. What would it look like to stay committed when emotions waver? Remember: quitting is not an option when you're building something eternal.

## Day 4: Fighting For, Not Against

**Reading:** Ephesians 4:25-32; Colossians 3:12-14

**Devotional:** The couples married fifty-plus years didn't survive because marriage was easy. They made it because they decided to fight for each other, not against each other. This requires intentionality—putting off bitterness, anger, and harsh words while putting on compassion, kindness, and forgiveness. Your spouse is not your enemy; sin is. When conflict arises, ask yourself: am I fighting to win this argument or to strengthen our unity? Today, identify one area where you've been fighting against your spouse instead of for them. Choose to extend the same grace God has given you. Bear with one another. Forgive as Christ forgave you. A marriage built on grace reflects the gospel to a watching world.

## Day 5: Covenant Faithfulness

**Reading:** Malachi 2:13-16; Matthew 19:3-9

**Devotional:** God hates divorce because He hates what it does to people He loves. Marriage is a covenant, not a contract—it's a sacred promise made before God. While Scripture acknowledges that sin sometimes breaks marriages beyond repair, God's ideal has always been lifelong faithfulness. Your vows matter: "till death do us part" isn't just poetry—it's a pledge. Today, recommit to your covenant. If you're married, tell your spouse: "Divorce is not in our vocabulary. We're going to figure this out together." If you're struggling, seek help. Don't walk alone. The same God who joins two together will sustain you through every season. Covenant faithfulness displays God's unchanging love to a world that quits on everything.