

## Summer on the Mount: What Jesus Said About Divorce

### Based on Matthew 5:31-32 and Matthew 19:1-12

#### BEFORE YOU MEET

Encourage group members to reflect on the following question before gathering:

Think about a time when a stressful situation revealed something unexpected about your character or your closest relationships. What did that moment teach you?

#### KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE SERMON

- God created marriage. Mankind created divorce. Divorce was never commanded by God but permitted as a concession because of the hardness of human hearts.
- Jesus refused to get caught in a debate about the grounds for divorce and instead pointed people back to God's original design in Genesis 2, the beauty and permanence of two becoming one flesh.
- The Pharisees focused on the letter of the law and looked for reasons to exit their marriages. Jesus called people to examine their hearts and look for reasons to stay.
- Marriage, according to Ephesians 5, reflects the relationship between Christ and the church. Husbands are called to sacrificial love. Wives are called to respect. Both are called to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.
- God hates divorce, but God loves divorced people. Grace and truth exist together.
- Divorce is permitted under certain circumstances, including sexual immorality, abandonment by an unbelieving spouse, and death of a spouse. Situations involving abuse require serious attention to personal safety, community support, and repentance.

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

##### Opening Up

1. The pastor opened with a story about being lost on a mountain in the dark. Think about a difficult or stressful situation you have navigated in a close relationship. What did that experience reveal about how you handle conflict?
2. Before today, what was your general understanding of what the Bible teaches about divorce and remarriage? Has your thinking ever shifted on this topic? If so, what caused it to shift?

##### Going Deeper

3. Jesus pointed the Pharisees back to Genesis 2 rather than engaging in their debate about Deuteronomy 24. Why do you think He did that? What does it tell us about how Jesus approaches difficult questions?
4. The sermon drew a distinction between a command and a concession. Moses permitted divorce as a concession to protect women in a hard-hearted culture, but he never commanded it. How does understanding that distinction change the way you read the Bible's teaching on divorce?
5. The pastor noted that the Pharisees were collecting reasons to get out of their marriages rather than looking for reasons to stay. In your own experience or in what you have observed, how does that same mindset show up in relationships today?
6. Ephesians 5 presents marriage as a picture of Christ's relationship with the church. How does that picture change the way you think about the daily choices a husband and wife make toward each other?
7. The sermon addressed both husbands and wives with specific challenges. Husbands were called to love, care for, and present their wives as radiant before God. Wives were called to respect their husbands out of

reverence for Christ, even when it is difficult. Which of these challenges do you find harder to live out, and why?

8. The pastor said, "If you can't respect him for his sake, can you respect him for Christ's sake?" How does keeping Christ at the center of a marriage change the motivation behind the choices we make in that relationship?
9. The sermon acknowledged that some people in the room have experienced divorce, either personally or through a family member. How can a church community hold a high view of marriage while also genuinely loving and welcoming those who have been through divorce?
10. The pastor mentioned that 85 percent of millennials and Gen Zers believe marriage is unnecessary for a fulfilled and committed relationship. How do you think the church should respond to that cultural shift? What does a biblical vision of marriage offer that the culture cannot?

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## Bringing It Home

11. The sermon closed with a call to examine our hearts. Jesus was not asking people to simply follow a rule. He was asking them to want something better for their marriages. What is one area in your own marriage or closest relationships where you sense God is calling you to a change of heart?
12. The pastor encouraged the congregation to be a church that celebrates the marriage union and comes alongside couples rather than encouraging them to exit their relationships. What is one practical way your small group could support marriages in your church community?

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## PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Consider choosing one or more of the following this week:

- If you are married, take time this week to revisit your wedding vows. Read them aloud together. Talk about what it means to you today to have made that promise before God.
- If your marriage is in a difficult season, take a step toward help this week. That might mean calling a counselor, asking a trusted couple to pray with you, or simply having an honest conversation with your spouse about where things stand.
- If you are single, spend time this week reflecting on what a Genesis 2 and Ephesians 5 vision of marriage looks like. How does that shape what you are looking for and how you are preparing yourself for a future relationship?
- If you have been through a divorce, spend time this week sitting with the truth that God hates divorce but loves divorced people. Ask God to speak to any area where shame or guilt has kept you from receiving His grace fully.
- Identify a couple in your life whose marriage you admire. Reach out to them this week to express your appreciation and ask them what has made their marriage last.
- Pray specifically this week for marriages in your church, your family, and your neighborhood. Ask God to protect them, strengthen them, and make them a witness to the watching world.

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## CLOSING PRAYER GUIDE

Close your group time by praying together. Consider dividing your prayer into the following areas:

- Gratitude for God's design of marriage as a gift
- Strength and wisdom for marriages in your group and church that are in difficult seasons
- Healing and grace for those who have experienced the pain of divorce
- Boldness to live counter-culturally in a way that honors God's vision for committed relationships
- Wisdom for how your group can support and celebrate marriages in your community

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## FOR FURTHER STUDY

- Genesis 2:18-25 -- God's original design for marriage
- Deuteronomy 24:1-4 -- The passage the Pharisees cited and Jesus addressed
- Matthew 19:1-12 -- The extended teaching on divorce
- Ephesians 5:22-33 -- Marriage as a picture of Christ and the church
- 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 -- Paul's teaching on marriage, divorce, and the unbelieving spouse
- 1 Peter 3:1-7 -- Living faithfully in a difficult marriage relationship
- Malachi 2:16 -- God's heart toward divorce