

Small Group Guide DIVORCE AND DISCIPLESHIP

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

May 6, 2012

Matthew 19

This guide is a tool to help you lead your group into spiritual transformation. Use it as a resource to train your group into potential disciple-makers and lead your group in discovering, owning, and applying the truths of God's Word. There may be aspects you do not want to use and there may be instances where you just want to focus on a particular point or truth. Some questions may bring out emotions and cause people to dwell on an aspect of their relationship with God. Your role is to help facilitate this encounter with God in His Word with His Body, not just to complete the guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid group task list.

Relate . . .

Begin your group time by engaging in relational conversations and prayer that may include the following elements:

Welcome—a simple, brief time to greet one another (especially new friends), enjoy refreshments, and make announcements.

Review—a time to review the truths discussed last week and report on how members have had success or frustrations in applying those truths during the week. (The leader will want to provide encouragement and shepherding during this time.) Periodically, the leader will also want to review the gospel and allow members to share reports about opportunities they've had to share the gospel. Occasionally, the leader will want to review the vision for the group and discuss ways to accomplish that vision better.

Prayer—a time of general prayer with the whole group praying for struggles regarding the application of truths, for those with whom the group is sharing the gospel, and for understanding of today's truths.

Reflect . . .

Use the following summary and questions to review this week's message and reflect on its implications for our lives. (As a training tool, leaders might want to have various members summarize the teachings in their own words each week sharing how they think the Scripture applied to the original hearers and how the principles apply to us today.)

Message Outline

DIVORCE AND DISCIPLESHIP

Matthew 19

The Gospel and Divorce...

- God created marriage.
 - Marriage is defined by God.
 - Only God can make marriage and only God can break marriage.
 - Marriage is a covenant under God.
 - Marriage is a demonstration to the world of Christ's covenant with His people.
- God hates divorce.
 - Divorce is always a result of sin.
 - Divorce is almost always sinful.
- God regulates divorce.
 - One ground for divorce in Matthew 19: Adultery.
 - Divorce is possible in this situation.
 - We are not looking for reasons to divorce.
 - We are longing for reconciliation to occur.
 - One ground for divorce in 1 Corinthians 7: Abandonment.
 - Divorce is preferable in this situation.

Small Group Guide

DIVORCE AND DISCIPLESHIP

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

May 6, 2012

Matthew 19

- Remarriage is biblically permissible only for the offended spouse after a biblical divorce.
- God redeems divorce.
 - He is always forgiving and He is always faithful.
 - He will never commit adultery against you and He will never abandon you.
- Practically...
 - If you are single, maximize your singleness to advance the gospel.
 - If you are married, love your spouse in a way that portrays the gospel.
 - If you are considering divorce, remember the preciousness and power of the gospel.
 - If you are divorced for a biblical reason and single, rest in the gospel in your singleness or possibly in a future marriage.
 - If you are divorced for an unbiblical reason and single, repent and rely on the gospel to glorify God in your singleness.
 - If you are divorced for an unbiblical reason and married, repent and reflect the gospel in your current marriage.

Message Summary

Few circumstances are as painful and disruptive to families as divorce, and in Matthew 19, Jesus teaches on God's design for marriage and His regulation on divorce. Because God is the author and designer of marriage, He is also the only one who can define it, and He uses marriage to depict to the world the loving relationship between Christ and the Church. As a result, God hates divorce, and while divorce is always a result of sin, God has regulated two grounds for divorce – adultery and abandonment. His regulation of divorce is not because He approves of the action but in order to respond to man's sin. While divorce is almost always a sin, God does forgive confessed sin. Unlike humans, His love is not conditional, and He is always faithful even when those He loves are faithless.

Group Discussion

Use the following questions to help review the application of God's Word to our Head (What does God want me to know?), to our Heart (What does God want me to desire/value?), and to our Hands (What does God want me to do?).

- Because each person has a different background, family situation, and prior experiences, ask about their family's view of divorce. Was it acceptable, or was it vehemently opposed? If your group feels comfortable in sharing, ask who has had parents get divorced. For those who are married, what was your understanding of marriage's permanence and divorce's acceptability when you got married? Whether you are single or married, why is this passage important for you to study?
- Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-8. How does this passage inform how Christians respond to conflict, including divorce? How should the church body respond when marriages falter? For individuals who are contemplating divorce, how should this passage inform your path?
- Immediately preceding Jesus' instruction on divorce are his teachings on conflict resolution and the parable of the unforgiving servant. How do these two sections inform how spouses should relate to one another and respond to each other? Do you demonstrate the attitude of the king in the parable or that of the unforgiving servant? Both the husband and the wife are sinners, and neither person is completely innocent when there is conflict in the marriage. How should you respond to conflict according to Scripture? In Matthew 19:3, the Pharisees' question leans towards permissible reasons for ending the marriage, but Jesus focuses on restoring the relationship. Such restoration is not based on whether or not they deserve love, respect, and forgiveness but because you both have received undeserved love from God.
- In response to the Pharisees' question, Jesus quotes Genesis 2:24 and directs attention to the Creator's design for marriage. Synthesizing Genesis 2:18-25 and Matthew 19:4-6, what is God's definition of marriage? What is His intent for marriage? How has the culture defined marriage? How has the culture influenced your perception of marriage and divorce?
- Marriage is a demonstration to the world of Christ's covenant with the church (Eph. 5:22-33). Therefore, how should a husband interact with his wife? How should a wife demonstrate respect towards her husband? For those who are married, in what ways can you specifically improve in how you treat your

Small Group Guide

DIVORCE AND DISCIPLESHIP

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

May 6, 2012

Matthew 19

spouse? For those who are single, how can you encourage those who are married to faithfully portray the covenant between Christ and the church to the world?

- The one flesh union described in Matthew 19:5-6 depicts two people being cemented together. To separate the two through divorce would be like causing an amputation because marriage is designed to be permanent. Describe how divorce affects the couple, their family, and lives. Pray for healing and comfort for those you know who have been affected by divorce, and pray that those who are considering divorce would heed God's Word.
- According to verses 7-9, why does God regulate divorce when it is something that He hates (Malachi 2:16)? Read Deuteronomy 24:1-4 and discuss Moses' instruction on divorce.
- When Jesus is asked about divorce, He points people to God's Word. Why is this strategy so crucial, specifically when dealing with topics such as divorce?
- Read Matthew 19:9 and 1 Corinthians 7:10-16. Identify the two biblical grounds for divorce. If you are considering divorce, do you have biblical grounds for even contemplating it? If your reasons are not listed in these two texts, how should you proceed? Knowing that God's forgiveness is not license to sin, what should be your next steps? How should people respond when they no longer "love" each other, when they regularly argue, or when they feel alone in their marriage? How can we as the church come alongside and encourage such brothers and sisters without encouraging divorce in their situation?
- Those who divorce for unbiblical reasons commit adultery. How should such divorcees respond to their situation according to the gospel?
- How can the church body better care for those who have been divorced? What are practical expressions of encouragement and care that we can show? Is there someone who has experienced divorce in your normal rhythm of life whom you can help this week or month? How can you aid children whose parents are divorced?
- When is remarriage permitted in Scripture (see Matthew 19; 1 Corinthians 7)?
- In Matthew 19:10-12, what do the disciples' question indicate about the sinfulness of man? What is the meaning of Jesus' teaching on eunuchs? Given the Jewish attitude towards eunuchs (see Deut. 23:1), Jesus' statement would have been radical to his hearers, but what point is Jesus making about singleness (also read 1 Corinthians 7:32-35)?
- How does God redeem divorce? Pray and praise God for His unfailing, unconditional love for unfaithful sinners.

Respond . . .

Encourage your group to break out into smaller, same-gender groups where they will respond to the truths of today's study. These groups will share with one another based on the following questions and then close in prayer:

- What are some of the main truths that God wants you to know from this study?
- How do your thoughts need to adjust to align with these truths?
- According to the truths from this study, what does God want you to desire/value?
- How do your values need to change to align with His values?
- What actions does God want you to take according to the truths of this study?
- What is an action that you can start to implement today or tomorrow?
- What is going to be the most difficult aspect of this study to personally apply?

Close this time by praying for each other, specifically for strength to apply these truths, for personal needs, for the lost people with whom you are seeking to share the gospel, and for our weekly prayer focus as a church..

Small Group Guide DIVORCE AND DISCIPLESHIP

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

May 6, 2012

Matthew 19

Weekly Prayer Focus ... (from our worship guide)

- *Lives and Church: On this Sunday, we see Jesus' fateful journey to Jerusalem (and therefore to his death) officially begin in the Gospel of Matthew. As the reality of the cross grew closer, Jesus continued teaching his disciples to prepare them for what was to come. The religious leaders had already tried to trap him with questions about the Sabbath and signs and now they would try again with the topic of divorce. As you read this week, pray that the reality of Jesus' death and resurrection would not fade as we move away from Easter. Pray that our church would be given the simple faith of children, that many might enter the kingdom of heaven. Pray that the cost of following Jesus would be clearly seen, and that people would be moved to follow him no matter the cost.*
- *Local: This week we are praying for Brookwood Baptist Church, Jim Barnette, Pastor. We are also praying for the many students at Brook Hills who are graduating from high school.*
- *Global: This week we are praying for Brook Hills field partner Joel S. serving in the Middle East. Joel works to engage the unreached in the Middle East through business practices and mobilizing others to share the gospel.*