

The Family

By Benjamin Phillips

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, students will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Matthew 19:3–8 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: When the Pharisees asked about legitimate reasons for divorce, what was Jesus's first response? Based on Jesus's answer to the question about divorce in the law of Moses, how would you describe divorce—sometimes the best option, sometimes the least sinful option, or just wrong?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to Colossians 3:18–21 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: Are the responsibilities of a husband to his wife the same as a wife's to her husband? What limit does this passage place on a wife's responsibility to her husband? Does the passage place any limit on the husband's responsibility to his wife? What should the relationship between parents and children look like?

Assignment Three

Read Psalm 127; then read the comments related to Psalm 127:3–5 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: How do families having many children relate to the subject of verses 1–2 (the defense of a city and its economic growth)? What would happen over time if there were fewer kids than adults? What would be the effect on the city? What would be the effect on the families in it?

Scripture to Memorize

"Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge." Hebrews 13:4

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will respect and pursue the biblical teaching of marriage between one man and one woman for life.

Benjamin Phillips is associate professor of Systematic Theology, director of the Darrington Extension, and associate dean of the J. Dalton Harvard School for Theological Studies of Southwestern Seminary.

It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

A friend tells you that her parents have decided to get a divorce. As you try to tell her you're sorry to hear the news, she interrupts and tells you that she's glad and that it's a good thing. She reports that they've tried "everything," but they just don't want to be married to each other anymore. But it turns out that "everything" doesn't include embracing the gospel and God's power to help them love or respect each other the way the Bible teaches. Is divorce the best option?

Read Genesis 2:15–25 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 15–25

Verse 15. to cultivate it and keep it. God placed Adam in the garden of Eden for a purpose.

Verse 18. It is not good for the man to be alone. Adam couldn't do all the work to care for and expand the garden. (See also Genesis 1:28, "Fill the earth, and subdue it.") **I will make him a helper suitable for him.** God provided help for Adam. **Verse 19. God formed every beast . . . and brought them to the man to see what he would call them.** God created the animals first. Adam demonstrated his authority over them by naming them. **Verse 20. not found a helper suitable for him.** God deliberately created Adam's helper last.

Verse 22. God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man. Using Adam's rib said that she also was made in God's Image (see Genesis 1:26–27). **Verse 23. She shall be called Woman.** He then named her, acknowledging how God had made her, and also taking up his role as the leader under God in their relationship.

Verse 24. For this reason. God created Adam with His mission and Eve as his indispensable helper. This is the foundation for the core definition of the family as one man and one woman, united in marriage. **they shall become on flesh.** God's blessing of this union is most easily seen in birth of children (see Genesis 1:28, "Be fruitful and multiply").

Discussion Question

If the basis for marriage is God's creation of one man and one woman, then can the definition of marriage be changed by government? Can it be changed by churches?

Assignment One Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: When the Pharisees asked about legitimate reasons for divorce, what was Jesus's first response? Based on Jesus's answer to the question about divorce in the law of Moses, how would you describe divorce—sometimes the best option, sometimes the least sinful option, or just wrong?

Read Matthew 19:3–9 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 3–9

Verse 3. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all? In Jewish culture wives could not divorce their husbands.

Verse 4. Have you not read . . . ? Jesus's response was sharp, amounting to asking, "Have you ever even read the Bible?" Jesus quoted Genesis 1:27 and 2:24. **Verse 6. What . . . God**

has joined together, let no man separate. Jesus concluded that it is wrong for a man to divorce his wife.

Verse 7. Why . . . did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce? The Pharisees pressed the issue. If breaking a marriage is always wrong, then why did Moses command divorce certificates? **Verse 8. Because of your hardness of heart.** God knew that men would reject their wives. He required a divorce certificate to demonstrate that it was her husband who had sinned against her, not she against her husband. **Verse 9. whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality.** Jesus added that the man who divorces his faithful wife and marries another woman adds adultery to the sin of divorce. Divorce doesn't transform adultery into a legitimate relationship. If, however, she is unfaithful, then he is not adding adultery to the sin of divorce.

Discussion Question

What are the keys to making a marriage last? What do husbands and wives need to do often? What do they need to avoid? What are some of the "little things" that will make or break a marriage?

Assignment Two Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: Are the responsibilities of a husband to his wife the same as a wife's to her husband? What limit does Colossians 3:18–21 place on a wife's responsibility to her husband? Does the passage place any limit on the husband's responsibility to his wife? What should the relationship between parents and children look like?

Read Colossians 3:18–21 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 18–21

Verse 18. Wives, be subject to your husbands. Wives should help their husband fulfill God's calling on him and on them as a family. This parallels Eve's goal regarding Adam. **as is fitting in the Lord.** God's will expressed in the Bible distinguishes submission from slavery. "Submission" cannot justify disobeying God.

Verse 19. Husbands, love your wives. A husband must love his wife as Christ loved the church (see Ephesians 5:25–27). This means sacrificing his personal benefit for the sake of helping her flourish as the godly person God designed her to be.

Verse 20. Children, be obedient to your parents. Children are to learn from their parents as God's primary teachers in life and obey them in all things. **Verse 21. Fathers, do not exasperate your children.** Though speaking to fathers, the principle applies to both parents.

Assignment Three Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: How do families having many children relate to the subject of verses 1–2 (the defense of a city and its economic growth)? What would happen over time if there were fewer kids than adults? What would be the effect on the city? What would be the effect on the families in it?

Read Psalm 127:3–5 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 3–5

Verse 3. children are a gift. God gives children as good gifts. More children mean more workers and creators. Having more children also means greater security for the old and sick.

Verse 5. blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. As with arrows the more children you have, the better prepared you are for battle. Larger families can stand together, pooling their strengths and compensating for their weaknesses. Their enemies will not overcome them.

Discussion Question

How does our culture view children? Would you want to start a family early or wait until you have achieved certain lifestyle or career goals? Why? How many children would you want to have? What causes you to set the number where you do?

On Your Own

In the space below, list the qualities the Bible says a godly family will have. Then list the characteristics you need to find in your future husband or wife to help your family have those qualities.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven.

Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart (the real you) for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something in your life for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit says to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

The Bible's teaching on the nature of the family and the relationship of husbands and wives is controversial. This is true not only in society but even in churches and among believers.

Disciples can struggle with:

- The basic definition of marriage as one man and one woman (Genesis 2:15–25).
- The permanence of marriage as a union created by God (Matthew 19:3–9).
- The differing responsibilities of family members to one another (Colossians 1:18–21).
- The inherent value of children, as well as their contribution to a good life rather than their threat to a good life (Psalm 127:3–5).

Yet the disciple can embrace these truths in a way that brings healing, forgiveness, and strength to families by:

- Recognizing that God built something good into creation when He created marriage.
- Working to strengthen what God has joined together in the marriage relationship rather than looking for reasons to justify dissolving it.
- Seeing the unique roles of husbands and wives as opportunities to serve each other rather than as threats to personal autonomy and individual self-worth.
- Respecting parents as God's primary teachers in how to live.
- Valuing children so that we are more grateful for as many as God gives than we are for not having more.

Disciples who build and are part of strong, biblical families will be in the best position to impact a broken world with the message of the gospel and the truth of God's Word.

Parent Question

How does the Bible's teaching on the family affect your search for a spouse? How can you become the kind of person an ideal spouse would be seeking?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to teenagers who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.

For more information about the entire Making Disciples series, see www.disciple6.com.
For more information about Southwestern Seminary, see www.swbts.edu.