

Divorce and Remarriage

By Evan Lenow

Pre-Session Assignments

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

Assignment One

Read the comments related to Matthew 19:3–6 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What does Jesus reveal about marriage from the creation story?

Assignment Two

Use a concordance or online Bible search to find where the phrase “hardness of heart” is used in the Bible. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What is the attitude of the people described with hard hearts?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to Matthew 19:7–10 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Should Christians pursue divorce and subsequent remarriage?

Scripture to Memorize

“So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” Matthew 19:6

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will recognize that God's design for marriage is that it would be a permanent covenant between a man and a woman.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

One of your friends comes to you in tears. She tells you that her parents are getting divorced and there is nothing she can do about it. Her parents told her they are no longer happy together and God would want them to be happy. Therefore, they are ending their marriage and leaving your friend to pick up the pieces of living in a broken home. She wants to know what the Bible says about divorce. What do you tell her?

What God Has Joined Together

Read Matthew 19:3–10 out loud.

Studying the Passage, vv. 3–6

Verse 3. Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all? The Pharisees wanted to know about divorce. Specifically, they were asking about Jesus's interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1–4. In that passage Moses addressed a situation where a man had divorced his wife because of "some indecency." She had subsequently remarried, but that husband had divorced her or died. Moses then prevented the first husband from remarrying her. The Pharisees wanted to know if that "indecency" represented any reason or if it must be something serious, like adultery, to warrant the divorce.

Verses 4–6. made them male and female. Rather than answering their question immediately, Jesus pointed the Pharisees to the original intent of marriage. He first referenced Genesis 1:27. Jesus wanted them to focus their attention on God's design for marriage. The first point He made is that marriage is between a man and a woman. **Verse 5. the two shall become one flesh.** Jesus then quoted Genesis 2:24, which describes the man and the woman becoming one flesh. In this verse we see that God's design for marriage is the union of two people into one.

Verse 6. God has joined together. After establishing that marriage is a union between one man and one woman, Jesus pointed out that God brings people together in marriage. In His sovereignty He oversees every marriage even if a couple does not acknowledge God. **let no man separate.** The final characteristic of marriage Jesus emphasized is its permanence. God's design for marriage did not allow for divorce when He created marriage. The simple answer to the Pharisees' question, then, is that divorce is not allowed.

Assignment One Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on what Jesus taught about marriage from the creation story.

Discussion Question

What can we learn about marriage today from Jesus's teaching? Does His standard for marriage still apply?

Studying the Passage, Matthew 19:7–8

Verse 7. certificate of divorce. The Pharisees were not satisfied with Jesus's answer. They pointed Jesus back to the tradition of giving a woman a certificate of divorce to indicate that she was no longer married. If you read Deuteronomy 24:1–4 carefully, you will notice that Moses never commanded the man to give her a certificate of divorce. It was simply his decision to divorce his wife.

Verses 8. hardness of heart. Jesus once again refocused the conversation and pointed to the real reason for divorce—hardness of heart. The Greek term translated “hardness of heart” describes someone who is obstinate and stubborn. Usually that person is unwilling to follow God’s will or commands. Jesus used this term to describe the reason Moses allowed some of the Israelites to divorce. **from the beginning it has not been this way.** Jesus pointed them back to the creation narrative once again to remind them that God never intended for divorce when He created marriage.

Assignment Two Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on the use of “hardness of heart” in Scripture.

Studying the Passage, Matthew 19:9

Verse 9. except for immorality. This is probably the most controversial phrase in the entire passage. Many people believe Jesus was giving an exception for divorce in cases where adultery has occurred. However, we also have to keep in mind other passages when interpreting this phrase. In Mark 10:2–12, we find the same encounter recorded by Mark. In that version this phrase does not appear. Luke also records a statement by Jesus that is similar to what we find in Matthew 19:9. In Luke 16:18, there is no exception either.

In 1 Corinthians 7:10–11, Paul recounts Jesus’s teaching on divorce and remarriage. He states, “But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife.” According to Paul, Jesus taught that believers should not get divorced, and if they do, they should stay unmarried so they can be reconciled.

The final passage that relates to Jesus’s statement in verse 9 is found in Matthew 5:31–32. In this passage Jesus referenced the certificate of divorce and then stated that the man who divorces his wife causes her to commit adultery unless she has already participated in some form of sexual immorality. The reason the man would cause her to commit adultery is that she would need to get remarried to have financial support. The wife who remarries or anyone who marries a divorced person is guilty of adultery according to these verses.

The only clear allowance for divorce we find in Scripture is in 1 Corinthians 7:12–16. Paul was talking to believers who were married to a spouse who was not a Christian. These people most likely married before one spouse became a believer. Paul’s instruction to the believing spouse is to stay married unless the unbelieving spouse leaves. In that case the believing spouse can accept a divorce from the unbelieving spouse.

Assignment Three Feedback

The student who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share an answer to the question: Should Christians pursue divorce and subsequent remarriage?

Discussion Question

How can we help prevent divorce in the church?

On Your Own

In the space below, write the names of some friends whose parents have gone through a divorce and how you can pray for them.

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

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to. . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to King Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Approximately 35 percent of all marriages in the United States end in divorce. That means you will encounter many people who have either gone through divorce themselves or someone close to them has gone through a divorce. It is a tragic circumstance that impacts more people every day.

The biblical position on divorce and remarriage is difficult for even Christians to adhere to in contemporary culture. We do not think of anything as permanent, even marriage. Instead, we typically view marriage as a contract that can be maintained or broken by the individuals involved. Yet this is not what Jesus taught about marriage. He taught that marriage is a permanent union between a man and a woman that brings them together as one flesh. In a world where the definition of marriage seems to be changing constantly, we need to return to the unchanging words of Scripture to find the true definition of marriage.

You can study a number of passages regarding divorce and remarriage. The key ones include Deuteronomy 24:1–4; Matthew 5:31–23; 19:3–10; Mark 10:2–12; and 1 Corinthians 7:10–16. Spend time in these passages to see what the Bible says about divorce and remarriage. Also take time to study the passages about God's design for marriage. These passages include Genesis 2:18–24; 1 Corinthians 7; and Ephesians 5:22–33.

It is time for Christians to change the tragic trend of divorce in our culture. We start by living out God's design for marriage. Then we need to take the focus off ourselves and start humbling ourselves to think of the needs of others above our own (see Philippians 2:3–4). When we do that, then our marriages will be a testimony of God's work to the world.

Parent Question

What is Jesus's perspective on divorce and remarriage?

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.

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