

Message Discussion Guide THE GOSPEL AND DIVORCE

The Church at Brook Hills,

Dr. David Platt

June 22, 2008

1 Cor. 7:10-15; Mt. 19:3-12;
Deut. 24:1-4; Gen. 2:24

This guide is to help you facilitate discussion with your Small Group. Use it as a resource to lead your group in discovering and owning the truths of God's Word. There may be questions 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 their relationship with God. Your role is to facilitate this experience not to complete the discussion guide. Use this as a flexible teaching tool not a rigid teaching task list.

Connect . . .

Use one or both of the following options to introduce the discussion time to follow.

Option 1

Ask how many members of your group have been directly affected by divorce. Ask the question, "Who did the divorce hurt?" Invite members to share briefly about their experience of who the divorce hurt or how they personally were hurt by it. Then, ask the following questions:

- How does/can our experience with divorce affect our view of marriage?
- How does/can the experience of divorce affect children's view of marriage?
- How does/can our experience with divorce affect our view of God?

Option 2

Read the following quote once given to an engaged bride and then answer the following questions:

"Spend as much time preparing for your marriage as you do for your wedding, and you'll be getting a great start to your relationship."

- Have you known people who spent a lot of time and money preparing for their wedding, but spent very little time preparing for their marriage?
- Why do you think that many engaged couples today neglect the marriage for the sake of the wedding?
- How does this behavior reflect our culture's idea of what marriage is?
- Do you think that we anticipate divorce by not putting work into marriage relationships before we get married? How about after we get married?

Review the Message . . .

The Church and Divorce . . .

- We have **insulated** ourselves.
- We have **isolated** each other.
- We have **ignored** the problem.
 - Christians are running to the **courts** when they should be running to the **church**.
 - We are **discrediting** the testimony of the **Church**.
 - We are **disgracing** the name of **Christ**.
- The responsibility of the church . . .
 - **Comfort** one another with love.

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- **Confront one another with truth.**

Discussion Questions

- Enlist a volunteer to read 1 Corinthians 6:1-8.
- Who is Paul indicting in this passage? Why?
- Who does Paul instruct believers to take their problems to?
- What harm could come to unbelievers by witnessing believers demonstrating sin in their disagreements? What harm could come to believers by having unbelievers decide their cases?

Application . . .

- How has the church (have we) shirked their (our) responsibility in helping believers deal with conflict? What affect has this had on relationships inside the church? What affect has this had on how unbelievers view the church?
- When is the legal system necessary in dealing with conflict?
- How has the church typically dealt with the issue of divorce with believers? What does this behavior indicate about how the church values marriage?
- According to this 1 Cor. 6:1-8 passage, what is the ideal way to deal with potential divorce inside the church? How could this be accomplished? How could this affect the Gospel?
- How should the church respond to those who have already experienced divorce?

God and Divorce . . .

- God **created** marriage.
 - Marriage is **permanent**.
 - Only God can make marriage.
 - Only God can **break** marriage.
 - Marriage is a **covenant**.
 - Marriage is a **demonstration** to the world of Christ's covenant with His people.
- God **hates** divorce.
 - God hates the **causes** of divorce.
 - Divorce is **always** a result of sin.
 - Divorce is **almost** always sinful.
 - God hates the **consequences** of divorce.
 - Divorce negatively affects **physical** offspring.
 - Divorce negatively affects **spiritual** offspring.

Discussion Questions

- Enlist two volunteers to read Genesis 2:24 and Matthew 19:4-6. What are the implications of these verses to marriage? What do they indicate about God's intention for marriage?
- Based on God's intention for marriage, how should marriage reflect God's relationship with His people?

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- What is the difference in viewing marriage as a covenant instead of a contract?
- Invite two volunteers to read Malachi 2:16 and Matthew 19:7-8. How does God feel about divorce? (Explain that the word “hate” is also used by God to indicate His regard for sin.) What does the verb “hate” indicate about how God regards divorce?
- Why do you think God hates divorce so much?
- How do the consequences of divorce affect relationships—between each other and between us and God?
- What is the difference in saying, “I hate divorce and I hate divorcees”?
- What reason does Jesus give for God allowing divorce? What, then, is the cause for divorce?

Application . . .

- How does our sin in divorce mar the image of God to the world?
- If believers are following Christ and His commands, why are there so many divorces within the church? Do we hold a true biblical view of marriage?
- If we fully grasped how much God hated divorce, how do you think it would affect people’s decisions of choosing a spouse or choosing to get married at all?
- Remembering that marriage is the union of a sinful man and a sinful woman, how do we not let sin run rampant in our marriage relationship? How can we protect ourselves from divorce?
- **God regulates divorce.**
 - **One ground for divorce among believers: unrepentant adultery.**
 - **Divorce is possible in this situation.**
 - **Divorce between believers is never desirable.**
 - **We are not looking for reasons to divorce.**
 - **Divorce between believers is never inevitable.**
 - **We are looking for reconciliation to occur.**
 - **One ground for divorce between a believer and an unbeliever: unsaved abandonment.**
 - **Divorce is preferable in this situation.**
 - **Remarriage is biblically permissible only after biblical grounds for divorce.**
- **God redeems divorce.**
 - **Your Eternal Husband is always forgiving.**
 - **Your Eternal Husband is always faithful.**
 - **He will never commit adultery against you.**
 - **He will never abandon you.**

Discussion Questions

- Read Matthew 19:9 and 1 Cor. 7:10-15. What two reasons do Jesus and Paul give in these passages for permissible divorce? Who are the ones addressed for each biblical reason for divorce?
- Keeping in mind that divorce was never a part of God’s design for marriage, is divorce necessary or inevitable? Why?

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- What do these passages indicate about the possibility for remarriage? Who is given permission to remarry? Why/how would remarriage after an unbiblical divorce create problems in marriage?
- Despite human problems with marriage and covenant relationships, God never fails in His covenant with His people. He ALWAYS remains faithful. How does this truth apply to the lives of all of those who have been hurt by divorce?

Application . . .

- How do our own experiences with divorce affect how we view it? Is there a danger of allowing our own preconceived notions of divorce to influence how we interpret Scripture?
- How do we try to justify other reasons for divorce? What is the danger in that?
- Why aren't physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, or drug abuse, alcoholism, or other additions included as grounds for divorce? How should believers respond if their spouse is guilty of one of the above?
- How can a reconciled marriage reflect God and His relationship with His people?
- What is the church's role (our role) in journeying with others as they are in troubled marital relationships?
- How does God's faithfulness to us affect how we view Him?

The Gospel and Divorce . . .

- **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 of the Gospel and the power of the Gospel.**
- **If you are divorced for a biblical reason . . .**
 - **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 Christ as you stay single.**
- **If you are divorced for an unbiblical reason and married . . .**
 - **Repent and reflect the Gospel in your current marriage.**

Application . . .

- Do I need to repent from any sin against God?
- Is there anyone from whom I need to seek forgiveness?
- In my current marital status, do I need to seek reconciliation with anyone?
- How can I best glorify God in my current marital status?