



Sermon on the Mount RAISE THE BAR

Life Groups Discussion Guide

February 2, 2020

DIVORCE Matthew 5:31–32

CONNECT

1. Divorce touches us all. Share how divorce has impacted your life, your friends and your family. Be sure to not judge one another's stories or try to figure out who was at fault. Instead, simply listen so that we can understand how we've each been affected.

CELEBRATE

2. Read Matthew 19:3–6. What is Jesus' argument for preserving marriage? How does He raise the bar in His command in verse 6? How does this affect your understanding of marriage?
3. Read Matthew 19:7–9. Why does Jesus say that divorce was permitted? What was God's plan from the beginning when He designed us male and female? See also Genesis 2:20–25.
4. Jesus acknowledges one exception for divorce: pornea. The ESV bible translates this as "sexual immorality." How does this change your understanding of divorce? How does it raise the bar?
5. Despite providing this exception, Jesus never commands divorce. He always prefers healing, restoration and reconciliation if at all possible. This echoes Matthew 5:23–24, prioritizing reconciliation before worship. Take a moment to evaluate your life and any fractured relationships you may have—from divorce to frustration. With whom do you need to reconcile? Take a moment to pray for this and lay out a plan to pursue reconciliation this week.
6. Malachi 2:16 (NET) states: *"I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel, "and the one who is guilty of violence," says the Lord of heaven's armies. "Pay attention to your conscience and do not be unfaithful."* Why does God hate divorce? See 1 John 4:7–8, Deuteronomy 7:9 & Ephesians 5:32–33.
7. Read John 8:2–11. How does Jesus respond to this woman who is guilty? What does He command her to do? How do these answers shape the way we should treat those in similar situations?
8. It's human nature to justify desires we know are wrong. Moses allowed a concession for divorce, but only in the case of hardened hearts. Yet the Pharisees twisted his words to say the opposite. They said that Moses commanded them to give a divorce certificate allowing them to send their wives away for any cause (Matthew 19:7). Ask God to search your heart. Are you trying to justify a particular desire? If the Holy Spirit indicates this, take the opportunity to surrender this desire at the feet of Jesus.

CONTRIBUTE

9. In Matthew 5:31–32, Jesus elevates protecting the marriage covenant. Take time to discuss this topic in your group. How can we help each other strengthen our marriages? How can we help each other make our marriages more life-giving? Be as specific and vulnerable as you can be.
10. At New Hope Church, we offer many resources for dealing with divorce, emotional pain, healing and reconciliation. Visit the newhopechurchmn.org/marriage to explore information about marriage assessments and mentoring. Visit newhopechurchmn.org/prayer to explore emotional healing, forgiveness and reconciliation.