

DNA DISCUSSION GUIDE

SERMON ON THE MOUNT SERIES 2: THE WAY OF JESUS



THE WAY OF JESUS: DIVORCE

Discussion Guide

DISCOVER

This week's sermon covered Matthew 5:31-32, in which Jesus teaches on the subject of divorce. Jesus' teaching, while short, was paradigm shifting for his 1st century Jewish audience. In the passage and his longer exposition in Matthew 19, Jesus does two important things. First, Jesus holds all the men accountable by pointing out that the divorces that they had executed had not only been illegitimate but had actually been the cause of adultery. In the 1st century, it would have been very difficult for a single woman to survive in the world without a husband, which means a divorced woman would have to remarry. But if her husband had divorced her for illegitimate reasons, her second marriage would be considered adulterous. Jesus, understanding the situation and the great vulnerability that these women suffered from, pointed out the sin of the men and held them accountable for their reprehensible actions.

Second, he reiterates God's intentions for marriage by saying that only sexual immorality constitutes grounds for divorce. He proves the wisdom of this idea in Matt. 19 by rooting it theologically in the creation account. In Genesis 2:24, God declares that in marriage, he makes two individuals into one flesh. This is a mysterious and divine act that demonstrates just how special of a gift our sexuality is. Because of this supernatural union, divorce is a kind of violence in God's eyes (Malachi 2:16) because it severs one flesh back into two.

The implications of this are significant for everyone but also different depending on a person's circumstances and life stage. For the unmarried, Jesus' words should act as a warning to take marriage seriously and consider its "foreverness". For the married, it is a call to work. The presupposition of forever changes the conversation from "if" to "how" and this subtle change of language can also change the direction of your marriage. "If we make it through this" becomes "how are we going to make it

through” and that small change, changes everything. For the divorced, Jesus’s words invite us to acknowledge the wounds that divorce leaves on everyone involved. Only the wounds that are acknowledged get healed and we have a wounded healer for a savior who wants to heal those wounds.

NURTURE

1. Jesus said in Matthew 19 that Moses allowed certificates of divorce because of their “hardness of heart”, what does this mean and what does this say about God and his law? How do you think God is making accommodations for you in light of your hardness of heart?
2. The Way of Jesus is a vision for human flourishing and Jesus’s teaching on marriage here is specifically a vision of a flourishing marriage. How does Jesus’s vision compete for modern cultural visions of marriage and sexuality? What are the main differences? What are the big ideas that undergird each?
3. For the unmarried, this passage is a warning to take marriage seriously. What are some wrong beliefs that people sometimes take into marriage that can shipwreck it?
4. Married people are called to work for their marriage. Jesus gives them a vision of “one flesh” that is meant to be a vivid word picture. What are some of the implications of being one flesh?
5. Divorce leaves wounds and wounds leave scars, but the grace of God is far bigger than our wounds. How does God’s grace turn our scars into more grace?

ACT

1. How have you taken advantage of a system that is skewed towards you? How can you help equalize unjust systems around you?
2. How would you explain Jesus’s vision for marriage and sexuality to a nonChristian?
3. How would you counsel someone considering marriage? What kinds of questions would you ask to make sure they understand what they are getting into?
4. If you are married, what might the difference be if you changed conversations about marital challenges from “if” conversations to “how” conversations?

5. If you are divorced, have you ever considered the ways your divorce has impacted other people? Have you ever thought to repent or at least listen to friends or family who may have been impacted? If so, what has come of those conversations?