



IDMC
MOVEMENT

LIFE GROUP STUDY MATERIAL

STRONGER TOGETHER



SESSION #7

WHEN 'I DO' BECOMES 'I DON'T'

LESSON AIM

To equip believers to understand God's design for marriage and His grace for broken relationships.

VIDEO LESSON

Link to video: https://www.youtube.com/live/rI4jyMQ648g?si=8_zkaLrQotk8x_6V

SCRIPTURE READING

Matthew 19:3-9

3 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" **4** He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, **5** and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? **6** So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." **7** They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" **8** He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. **9** And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

Matthew 19:3-9 ESV

INTRODUCTION

In Matthew 19:3–9, the Pharisees tested Jesus by asking if divorce was lawful for any reason, reflecting an ancient debate between two rabbinical schools, one permitting divorce for trivial causes and the other only for serious sexual sin. Jesus shifted the focus from finding grounds for divorce to understanding God's original vision for marriage, emphasizing that the real issue is cultural confusion about what marriage truly means. As disciples, we must hold grace and truth together, extending compassion without compromising biblical principles.

We need to wrestle with the key question: If marriage is God's idea, why does it break, and what hope exists when it does?

We can learn three things about marriage from Jesus' reply to the Pharisees:

1. The Creation: What God Designed
2. The Concession: What Sin Distorted
3. The Compassion: What Grace Delivered

The Creation: What God Designed

When questioned about divorce, Jesus responded by pointing back to God's original design for marriage in creation. In Matthew 19:4–6, He emphasized that God made them male and female and established marriage as a covenant where a man leaves his parents, cleaves to his wife, and the two become one flesh—a spiritual, emotional, and physical union. This union is God's work, not man's invention, and therefore should not be separated. Marriage is a divine institution, a lifelong covenant, and a comprehensive oneness that reflects the relationship between Christ and the Church. Unlike cultural views that treat marriage as therapeutic, consumeristic, or contractual, biblical marriage is covenantal. Marriage is based on promise, mutual surrender, and unconditional commitment. Jesus reminds us that before discussing divorce, we must understand marriage as God's blueprint and a gospel metaphor that displays His love to the world.

The Concession: What Sin Distorted

Jesus explained that while God designed marriage to be permanent, sin and hardened hearts led to concessions such as divorce. In Matthew 19:7–9, He clarified that Moses permitted divorce because of human sinfulness, but it was never God's original intent. Divorce is allowed only under specific biblical grounds: sexual immorality (Matthew 19:9), desertion by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12–15), and domestic abuse (Ezekiel 21:10–11).

These concessions exist to protect the vulnerable, not to normalise divorce. Cultural reasons like "falling out of love," incompatibility, or lack of happiness are unbiblical because marriage is a covenant, not a contract or consumer transaction. Love is a decision rooted in faithfulness, and compatibility is forged through mutual sacrifice. Ultimately, God's goal in marriage is holiness, not mere happiness, and divorce should only occur under scriptural grounds, with reconciliation always preferred when possible.

The Compassion: What Grace Delivered

The question of remarriage after divorce centers on biblical legitimacy. Scripture permits remarriage after a **legitimate divorce**, such as those based on sexual immorality (Matthew 19:9) or desertion by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:12–15), because the person is no longer bound to the covenant.

However, remarriage after an **illegitimate divorce** for reasons like incompatibility or unhappiness, is considered adultery in God's eyes, even if legally recognised. If someone has already remarried after an illegitimate divorce, the Bible teaches us not to break the second marriage but to remain faithful in the current covenant (1 Corinthians 7:17, 20, 24).

Living together without marriage or in a de facto relationship is also regarded as adultery. Ultimately, God calls His people to honor marriage as a covenant, avoid sinful relationships, and pursue holiness and faithfulness in whatever state they are now in.

Conclusion

When someone feels trapped in a sinful or broken relationship, the Bible offers three steps:

1. Repent sincerely,
2. Receive God's forgiveness and
3. Pursue reconciliation.

Whatever relationship you are in now, honor God by making it a covenant marriage and remain faithful. As a church, we must be pro-marriage without being anti-divorce, holding grace and truth in balance, supporting God's design for marriage while showing compassion to those who are divorced. Ultimately, the goal is restoration, holiness, and honoring God in every season.

Reflection Question for Someone Considering Divorce: Have I given God a chance to heal what feels impossible to fix?

Reflection Question for Someone Already Divorce: Will I let God's grace heal my heart and write a new story?

Reflection Question for Someone Already Remarried: How can I honour God and be faithful in the marriage I'm in now?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Instructions for group facilitators: Every group is different. You may modify the discussion questions to suit your group and you do not need to use all the questions in the group discussion.

Question 1: Why do you think Jesus pointed back to creation when asked about divorce? How does understanding God's original blueprint (leave, cleave, weave) shape your view of marriage today?

Question 2: Which cultural lies about marriage (therapeutic, consumeristic and contractual) do you see most influencing relationships today? How can we guard against these in our own lives?

Question 3: How can the church hold grace and truth together when ministering to people who are divorced or remarried? What does "pro-marriage without being anti-divorce" look like in practice?

Question 4: What are the biblical grounds for divorce? Why is reconciliation always preferred even when divorce is permissible?

Question 5: If someone has remarried after an illegitimate divorce, why does Scripture teach us to remain faithful in the current marriage rather than undoing it? How does this reflect God's grace?

Question 6: How can we as a group "show up" for friends or church members who are divorced or struggling in their marriage? Which of the steps (use healing words, offer practical help, use active listening, and pray with them) do you find most challenging?

NEXT STEPS

Marriage is God's gift and His covenant, designed to reflect Christ's love for the Church. If you are married, fight for your marriage. If you are divorced or remarried, embrace grace. If you are single after divorce, know that you are loved and valued.

As a community, let's commit to being pro-marriage without being anti-divorce, upholding God's truth while extending His grace. Show up for those who are hurting, listen well, use healing words, offer practical help, and pray together. Above all, let's honor God in every season, trusting that His mercy restores, His truth guides, and His love never fails.