

## Let's Go Group Studies

### Leader's Notes

1. We're providing this material to you to remove some of the stress and frustration of developing a plan to lead a specific group study. It isn't meant to replace your individual preparation to lead. Our hope is that you would use it as a guide to your engagement with the text and the Holy Spirit and allow Him to lead you as you help your study's participants to have their own relevant encounter with scripture and the Holy Spirit.
2. This plan isn't meant to constrain you to lead in any specific way. **Please do modify it to better meet the needs of your group and to honor your gifting and authentic style.** For example, when and how you pray and share prayer needs should be in a rhythm that is good for your group as long as you are praying as a group. For another, who reads and how scripture is read should fit your group and its needs as long as it is read somehow.
3. **Be authentic.** If you find yourself saying "They are asking" as in, 'I didn't write this question and I don't really understand why it is being asked.' Don't ask it. Ask something else. It is okay not to understand everything. No one understands everything. If you don't believe in what you're saying, why should anyone else believe it? One way to turn this into a positive is to admit to the group that you are struggling with figuring out a particular bit and allow someone else to contribute their God-given wisdom.
4. Some questions, especially earlier in the study, aren't meant to be a mile deep or transformative. These questions are intended to prompt the participants to notice what is there. They give the participants a way to begin to care about the specific words on the page and to begin to discuss the relevance of the scripture to their needs.
5. Portions of the plan in quotes are meant to be spoken out loud to the group as in, "Who's buried in Grant's Tomb?" You don't have to repeat the question or statement exactly as it appears. Restate it in a way that feels comfortable and natural for you.
6. Portions of the plan in *italics* are meant to be notes to you that you can use as prompts in aiding group discussion and aren't intended to be read verbatim to the group. They may not be the definitive answer but should be a good possible answer. As part of your preparation, please add to and edit the notes to fit where you intend to lead the discussion.
7. A **Follow up question** helps participants open up a little more and look a little deeper and is meant to be asked after there has been some discussion of the prior question.
8. The last page is the participant handout.
9. Please remember that our focus, purpose and practice is to **Love God, Love Others and Make Disciples.**

## Let's Go- Marriage and Divorce

- 1) Scripture: Mark 10:1-12; Matt 5:32 & 19:7-9; Eph 5:22-32; 1 Cor 7:2-5,15; Galatians 5:1; Hosea 3:1-3
  - A. Parallel accounts- Matt 19:1-12; Luke 16:18
- 2) Objective: After studying the listed scripture and participating in the discussion, each person should be able to list one idea they discovered in this study that gives them hope for their own experience with divorce or for someone they care about?
- 3) Resources: Book of Mark, Grassmick. The Bible Knowledge Commentary, Walvoord & Zuck, Easton's Bible Dictionary
- 4) Preparation:
  - A. Pray for guidance
  - B. Review Leader's Notes and read entire lesson plan
- 5) Prayer requests & Open in prayer
- 6) Intro:
  - A. "Last time I asked you to write down and attempt the first step you can take towards greatness? Would anyone be willing to share if you were able to do that and tell us how you feel about the results?" *If you closed last time's study with a different question or application, substitute your closing for this one.*
  - B. Tonight's study is a little different in that I am not going to ask to make a change or start something new. Divorce and remarriage for a believer in Jesus Christ is a complex subject on which committed Christians hold divergent viewpoints. We probably won't define an answer tonight that satisfies all people for all time.
  - C. As we try to harmonize what the Bible teaches about divorce and remarriage, I hope you'll find the hope God offers from your past sin and from the sin of others. God can lead you to peace and restoration whether you caused the damage, were damaged by another or, most often, both of those. For the spouse, divorce has been described as worse than the death of the loved one. Children can feel responsible for the divorce and abandoned by one or both parents. Parents, siblings and friends are all left to sort out something that is completely out of their control.
  - D. God wants marriage relationships to thrive, continue and bring you joy and peace. Where they stumble, He wants to restore. When hardness of heart won't allow that restoration, He wants you to be at peace. When we are done, I'd like you to list one idea you discovered that gives you hope for your own experience with divorce or for someone you care about."

## 7) The study

A. *The intent of this section is to make a first pass through the text in an efficient manner and help your group participants get a feel for the passage. Don't feel compelled to go deep in this part. You can take one short answer to each question and move on to the next part. This passage has technical aspects and implications that can only be briefly addressed in the time allowed. We will go more deeply on a few of those aspects after this section. As always, if you feel there is a better way for your group, please do it that way.*

i) Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 10:1-4

ii) Ask "What are the pharisees trying to do?"

(1) *The pharisees are trying to trap Jesus into saying something that would hurt his cause with a well-known point of Mosaic law. The pharisees likely felt quite comfortable with this question despite there being a spectrum of interpretation amongst the rabbinical schools of thought. Rabbinical tradition had obtained a rough equivalence with Mosaic law (See Mark 7:11-12 for another example) in how they chose to practice their religion. They would have tried to anticipate Jesus' possible answers and probably felt that he could only answer in a way that would alienate some or all of his followers.*

iii) Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 10:5-9

iv) Ask "How does Jesus answer?"

(1) *He describes the motivation and intent of Moses' concession.*

v) Ask for a volunteer to read Mark 10:10-12

vi) Ask "From these three verses alone, what would you say is God's intent for the duration of a marriage?"

(1) *Once married, God intends for a man and woman to stay married to each other for life.*

B. Ask for volunteers to read Matt 19:7-8, Eph 5:25-29 and 1 Cor 7:2-5

C. Ask everyone to complete question 1 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

i) "Considering the passages we just read and the passage in Mark, what do you find that God wants a man and woman to cultivate and value in their marriage?"

(1) *Fidelity, sexual morality, humility, permanence, mutual love and care, unity*

(2) *See also Matt 1:19. Jesus' stepfather Joseph, who is called a righteous man, finding his betrothed Mary pregnant before they had shared a marriage bed would have had to legally divorce her in order to break off the betrothal. The practice of the time would have pressured him to do this to maintain his standing in the community as a righteous man. Was Joseph a good role model for Jesus?*

D. Ask for volunteers to read Matthew 5:32, 19:9 and 1 Corinthians 7:15.

E. Ask everyone to complete question 2 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

i) "What reasons do you find in Matthew 5:32, 19:9 and 1 Corinthians 7:15 for which even a believer may divorce his or her spouse?"

(1) *sexual immorality and abandonment by an unbeliever*

(2) *Please note that these reasons are allowances and not commands. God doesn't want you to divorce your spouse, but neither will He trample on your spouse's decision to continue in sin. We each bear the burden for our unrepentant sin until we confess and turn from it. Unfortunately, the innocent around the unrepentant sinner often also suffer negative consequences from that sin. God wants us to live in His peace and He wants to redeem the sinner. But He doesn't bind us to the unrepentant who wrong us forever.*

(3) *See Hosea 3:1-3 where God uses both of these sins to illustrate how His people abandon their relationship with Him and how dearly He wants to redeem them back into that relationship.*

(4) *Please make clear that we will never counsel someone to physically stay with someone who is harming them or their children. We will provide the assistance we are able to help someone find safe harbor from that harm. Please also be clear that we consider this separation as an obviously related but separate question from the final dissolution of the marriage.*

F. Ask everyone to complete question 3 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

i) "Consider Galatians 5:1 along with everything else we've studied tonight. When do you think it is okay for a follower of Jesus Christ to remarry after a divorce?" *Ideally, these answers come from the participants. Whether they get them from the study, the Sunday sermon or elsewhere, the best thing that can happen here is they are verbalized by the participants. If they struggle to answer...*

(1) *While any legally divorced person may legally remarry, the believer is called to a more complex standard that holds the preservation of the*

*marriage and the restoration of the sinner to a full relationship with God and his or her spouse as a best outcome.*

- (2) A divorced believer needs the counsel of mature believers and the time to fully engage in healing and restoration of their walk with God. This time needs to include a responsible, good faith effort for restoration of their spouse to God and to their marriage. If that effort fails, the divorced believer is no longer bound and may remarry a believer.*
- (3) When Jesus addressed questions about marriage and divorce, it was within the context of Mosaic law. He made clear that the hardness of man's heart was the cause of the violation of God's intent.*
- (4) Aside from the exception Jesus listed and that is expanded upon in the epistles, Jesus also makes clear that there is a responsibility to abstain from a marital or sexual relationship past the divorce as God considers that relationship adulterous. Meaning there is a mixture added now that was not originally intended in the purity of marriage relationships. It is not immediately clear in the gospels when or how that relationship can end. First Corinthians 1, Ephesians 5 and Galatians 1 provide expanded guidance on how a believer in this situation can find peace and freedom from guilt.*

G. Ask everyone to complete question 4 on the handout. Allow 3-5 minutes for them to finish and then ask for volunteers to share their answers.

- i) "This is a complex subject that touches us all. It obviously can't be explored fully in this brief Bible study. Can you list one idea you discovered in tonight's study that gives you hope for your own experience with divorce or for someone you care about?"

8) Summary:

- A. Encourage your group members to apply the ideas or principles they developed from question 4. Plan on asking them next week about the results.
- B. Close in prayer

# Let's Go- Marriage and Divorce

Mark 10:1-12

1) Considering the passages we just read and the passage in Mark, what do find that God wants a man and woman to cultivate and value in their marriage?

2) What reasons do you find in Matthew 5:32, 19:9 and 1 Corinthians 7:15 for which even a believer may divorce his or her spouse?

3) Consider Galatians 5:1 along with everything else we've studied tonight. When do you think it is okay for a follower of Jesus Christ to remarry after a divorce?

4) This is a complex subject that touches us all. It obviously can't be explored fully in this brief Bible study. Can you list one idea you discovered in tonight's study that gives you hope for your own experience with divorce or for someone you care about?

For next time... Read Mark 10:13-16