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Faithfulness in Marriage & Speech

Matthew 5:31-37; 19:3-9

There is almost no unhappiness so painful as that of an unhappy marriage. And there is almost no tragedy as great as when a relationship God meant for love and fulfillment degenerates into a nonrelationship of bitterness, discord and despair.

GROUP DISCUSSION. Your group has been asked to write an article for *Good Partners magazine* entitled “The Top Ten Reasons Why Marriages Fail.” What reasons will you give for the breakup of marriages?

PERSONAL REFLECTION. If you are married, ask God to use this study to give you some insight into your marriage. If you are single, ask God to use this study to help you encourage someone who is married.

Divorce is a controversial and complex subject that touches people’s emotions at a deep level. Yet in spite of the painfulness of the subject, I am convinced that the teaching of Jesus on this and every subject is good—intrinsically good for individuals and for society. In this passage, Jesus calls us to faithfulness in marriage and honesty in speech. *Read Matthew 5:31-37 and 19:3-9.*

1. How do Jesus' statements contrast with the questions he was asked?

2. Rabbi Shammai taught that divorce was permitted only in extreme cases. Rabbi Hillel taught that it was permitted for any and every reason. How does this help us to understand the Pharisees' "test" question (19:3)?

3. Jesus points back to Genesis. What does this teach us about God's original design for marriage (19:4-6)?

4. How can you prepare for a marriage that meets God's original design?

What difference does God's design make in living as a married couple?

5. The Pharisees refer to Moses' instructions about divorce as a "command" (v. 7). What does Jesus' reply teach us about divorce (v. 8)?

In what ways might divorce reveal the hardness of our hearts?

6. What similarities and differences are there between 19:9 and 5:31-32?

How do these verses stress the seriousness of divorce?

7. How does Jesus' teaching contrast with today's views you and your peers have held concerning marriage and divorce?

8. Read *Matthew 5:33-37*. How might the issue of oaths and vows be connected to the topic of marriage and divorce?

9. The Pharisees had elaborate formulas for oaths, with some being binding and some not (see *Matthew 23:16-22*). Why is Jesus opposed to oaths?

10. Does this mean, for example, that we should refuse to give evidence under oath in a court of law? Explain.

11. Why should oaths be unnecessary for Jesus' followers?

Ask God to help you resist the pressures to compromise in marriage and in speech.

Now or Later

The group discussion topic was to create the article “The Top Ten Reasons Why Marriages Fail.” Work now on the article “Top Ten Tips for a Strong Marriage.”

If you are married, review the vows you have made with your spouse. Have you been faithful in keeping all the promises you made?

If you are unmarried, consider your present sexual behavior. What is your responsibility toward a future spouse?