

Small Group Guide

A Better View of Marriage | Mark 10:1-12

Before You Begin

This is a sensitive topic that touches many people in deeply personal ways. As a group leader, set the tone early by reminding your group that this is a safe space. Shame has no place here. The goal is not to evaluate one another's stories but to hear what Jesus has to say and consider what faithful next steps look like from where each person stands today.

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

- Something has shaped the way every one of us sees marriage and divorce. The question is whether that view aligns with Jesus's view.
 - God created marriage and therefore gets to define it. His design is a fusion of two lives into a new "us" that is worth fighting for.
 - Taking God's view of marriage is countercultural, but it is ultimately a blessing to the people around us because it serves as a living demonstration of what God designed.
 - We cannot always untangle the past. Some things cannot be undone. But the gospel never asks us to pretend the past did not happen, and it never makes the past the final word over our lives.
 - Because of the cross, no part of our story is beyond grace. In Christ, we are new creations. Our identity is not defined by our worst chapter.
 - No one is without a next step. Wherever your story has taken you, there is a faithful way to follow Jesus from right where you are now.
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Icebreaker

Go around the group and answer this question: Growing up, what was your earliest picture of what marriage was supposed to look like? Where did that picture come from, whether a family member, a movie, a book, or something else?

Discussion Questions

Understanding the Text

1. In Mark 10:1-4, the Pharisees come to Jesus not with a genuine question but with a test. Why do you think they chose this particular topic to trap him? What does that tell us about how controversial and culturally loaded this subject already was in Jesus's day?
2. Jesus does not answer the Pharisees on their terms. Instead, he redirects the conversation all the way back to Genesis and God's original design. Why do you think he chose to do that rather than simply picking a side in the debate between Rabbi Shammai and Rabbi Hillel?
3. In Mark 10:6-9, Jesus quotes from Genesis 1 and Genesis 2, pointing to God making humanity male and female and describing two becoming one flesh. What does the image of two people becoming "one flesh" communicate about the nature of the marriage covenant? How does that image change the way you think about what is at stake in a marriage?

Connecting to Our Lives

4. Pastor Mike said, "Something has shaped the way that we see marriage and divorce. The question is, what perspective have you taken, and does it align with Jesus's?" Take a moment to honestly reflect. What has most shaped your personal view of marriage, whether positively or negatively? Has that shaped you toward or away from what Jesus describes?
5. Pastor Mike described taking God's view of marriage as "punk rock" and countercultural. Have you ever experienced a moment where your convictions about marriage, dating, or relationships put you out of step with the people around you? What was that like?
6. Pastor Mike said, "I don't care if someone is religious, church going, or belong to a faith: They want a marriage that's going to last." Do you agree with that observation? Why do you think so many people desire permanence in marriage but struggle to find it?
7. When Pastor Mike talked about "fighting for your marriage," he made a distinction worth sitting with. He said we are not fighting against each other but for each other. What does that practically look like in a real marriage? What are some of the specific ways he mentioned, and are there others your group would add?
8. Pastor Mike was direct in saying that God's design for permanence should never be used to require someone to remain in an abusive situation. Why is it important to hold both of these truths at the same time, that God's design is for lifelong marriage and that protection from abuse is not in conflict with that design?
9. Ephesians 2:1-10 was read near the end of the sermon. Pastor Mike highlighted the phrase "but God" as two of the most powerful words in Scripture. How does the grace described in that passage speak specifically to someone who carries guilt, shame, or regret connected to marriage or divorce?
10. Pastor Mike shared the story of his friend Charles, whose faithfulness to Jesus eventually led to a level of healing and reconciliation with his ex-wife that no one could have predicted. What does that story stir in you? What does it suggest about what God is capable of doing even in the most broken situations?

Moving Toward Application

11. Pastor Mike said, "Because of Jesus, your calling in Christ is not to spend the rest of your life trying to untangle the past. Your calling is to pursue faithful obedience in the calling that you're in today." What does faithful obedience look like in your current situation, whether you are single, dating, engaged, married, or divorced?
 12. He closed by saying that no one is without a next step. What do you sense your next faithful step might be after hearing this message? Consider whether it involves repentance, seeking forgiveness, pursuing counseling, receiving grace you have been resisting, or something else entirely.
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Practical Applications

For Married Couples

- Identify one specific area where you have been keeping score rather than serving. This week, choose one concrete action to serve your spouse without expectation of anything in return.
- If your marriage is struggling, commit to making one phone call to a licensed Christian marriage counselor this week. Do not wait until things get worse.
- If your marriage is healthy, ask yourselves what you are doing to protect and invest in it. Consider joining a small group or community where your marriage can be known and supported.

For Those Who Are Single or Dating

- Consider what view of marriage, dating, and relationships you are currently operating from. Write down where that view came from and whether it reflects what Jesus describes in Mark 10.
- If you are in a dating relationship, have an honest conversation with your partner about your shared convictions regarding marriage, cohabitation, and commitment.

For Those Carrying Pain from Divorce

- Identify one person in your life, whether a pastor, a trusted friend, or a counselor, with whom you can share what you are carrying. Do not continue to carry it alone.
- Spend time this week in Ephesians 2:1-10. Sit with the phrase "but God" and what it means for your specific story.
- If shame has been keeping you from fully engaging in your church community, take one step this week toward connection, whether that is joining a small group, attending a church event, or simply introducing yourself to someone new.

For Everyone

- Ask God honestly: Does the view of marriage I am living by reflect what Jesus describes, or has it been shaped more by culture, personal experience, or pain?
 - Pick up the list of trusted licensed Christian marriage counselors available at the information desk, even if you do not need one right now. Keep it somewhere accessible. You may need it someday, or you may know someone who does.
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Closing Thought

Pastor Mike said it plainly: "Grace does not mean that what happened doesn't matter. Grace means that what happened doesn't get the final word."

Whatever your history with marriage looks like, you are not defined by your worst chapter. You are a new creation in Christ, and there is a faithful next step available to you today. The question is simply whether you are willing to take it.

Closing Prayer

Close your time together by inviting group members to share one specific prayer request related to what came up in the discussion. Pray over one another, asking God for courage to take the next faithful step, grace for what has been, and hope for what is still ahead.