

Crosswalk Communities Discussion Guides

July 31st

Icebreaker Questions (Pick at the least one question, but use as many as your group feels comfortable)

1. If you are married, what is your favorite thing to do on a date night? If single, what is your favorite thing to do on a night out with friends?

Bible Study Questions

1. Read Matthew 19:1-12
 - What do you notice in this conversation? What is Jesus teaching? How is his values different then the popular values of that time?
2. What have you observed about our culture's current attitude toward marriage?
 - In your lifetime, how have you seen attitudes about marriage change?
 - How would you define the popular definition of marriage?
3. Pastor Michael talks about marriage being a symbol of God's love for us. How should that sacred symbolism impact the way that we approach marriage?
4. Today, cohabitation is seen as a popular alternative to marriage. What is unhealthy about this? What would you say to a Christian couple who chooses to cohabite instead of choosing marriage?
5. What are lessons that you have learned, either in your own life or by observing others, in making marriages stronger?
6. It is in the church's best interest to have healthy marriages. How can the church create a culture that supports each other in this area? How can you help make other marriages stronger?
7. How do you think that singles are often treated in our church? How can we better embrace them?

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In Matthew 19 and 20, we have a collection of stories demonstrating how the kingdom of God has radically different values than that of the world. Matthew begins this collection of stories with a conversation that Jesus had regarding marriage and divorce.

I. **Question: When is divorce ok?**

A. **Jesus' culture viewed marriage as existing for the happiness of men. It was easily discarded:** The law of Moses mandated that when a man divorced his wife, he was required to give her a certificate of divorce which would offer protection. During the time of Jesus, rabbis debated what situation was required for divorce to happen. One popular school taught that divorce was permissible in any situation of a displeased husband and another school taught that it could only happen in the context of infidelity. Most viewed marriage as being about them, therefore it should be adjusted based on their preferences. The pharisees approached Jesus to discover where he stood on this popular debate.

B. **Jesus describes a marriage as created by God for divine purposes. It was a sacred and life long.** Jesus looked back to the creation story to show that God had invented marriage to be a life long relationship between a man and a woman (19:4-6). Divorce had been created as a way to do damage control after man messed up God's marriage design.

C. **uphold singleness as an acceptable way of life:** Jesus tells his disciples that some become single for the sake of the kingdom of God (19:12). During that time it was expected that everyone would marry. Jesus changes that assumption.

II. **Application for today**

A. **Kingdom people honor God's design for marriage as a sacred life long union representing his love for his people:** Our culture is very confused about marriage. Most would define it as a legal agreement between two (or in some situations more) consenting adults for the purpose of happiness and meeting each other's needs. Almost half of marriages end in divorce and more and more people are choosing to avoid marriage and just cohabit. Yet God calls us to treat marriage as something that is sacred and binding. It belongs to him and is meant to remind us of his love for his people. We aren't to view cohabitation as a way out, but a cheap and arrogant imitation of God's design.

B. **Kingdom people actively support marriages in our community:** If God values marriage, then we should also.

Marriage is difficult and the enemy is constantly targeting it. As a result, we should provide care to support marriages in our church community.

C. **Kingdom people value singles as a vital part of our church family:** Often in our family centric ministry models, we treat singles as being secondary. Our culture often suggests that something is wrong with someone if they aren't in a relationship. Yet Jesus prompts us to value singles as being precious members of the body of Christ.

Conclusion

As Christians, we know what marriage is about. It was created as a symbol to point us to the love of God. Our culture is confused, and they should be able to look to the church for answers. There they should find the model of unconditional love and faithfulness in marriage.