

session 11 study guide

divorce

starter

FAMOUS PAIRS: Ahead of time, prepare index cards with the names of each of the following pairs written on them. Write one name per card. Make identical sets of 10 to 15 pairs for each team into which you will divide the group. Be sure each set is well mixed. Note that the following are just some suggestions from which to draw 10 to 15 pairs. Feel free to add some of your own—perhaps “famous” pairs in your group or church, the latest popular pairs in the media, and so forth. Divide students into four equal teams and see how many correct pairs they can match up in four minutes.

Romeo & Juliet	Ricky & Lucy	Marge & Homer
Angelina & Brad	Lyndon & Ladybird	Mary & Joseph
Bill & Hillary	Samson & Delilah	Pinky & The Brain
Adam & Eve	Ren & Stimpy	David & Bathsheba
Hansel & Gretel	Fred & Wilma	Kobe & Shaq
Jack & Jackie	Ronald & Nancy	Cinderella & Prince Charming
Abraham & Sarah	Ernie & Bert	
Barack & Michelle	Garfield & Odie	
Tom & Huck	Pebbles & BamBam	

message

Before beginning a study of divorce, we need to understand God's plan for marriage. Read Genesis 2:20-24 and Ecclesiastes 4:9-12. As you read each of these passages, consider the following questions: (1) What does it mean to become "one flesh"? (2) What are the benefits of marriage?

Genesis 2:20-23

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.

Now turn to Matthew 19:3-9. In this passage, the Pharisees are trying to lure Jesus into an argument about the Old Testament's view of divorce. Jesus has very strong words on the subject. As you read, consider the following questions: (1) In God's eyes, what are people doing when they divorce? (2) Why does God care about marriage so much?

Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"

Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."

dig

1. What does Jesus say about divorce in this passage?

2. Do you think divorce is a big deal? Why or why not?

3. In this passage, Jesus references Genesis 2:24, which states, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” What is the importance of this reference back to Genesis?

4. What are some of the most common reasons that people get divorced?

5. Today, one of the most common legal reasons given for divorce is “irreconcilable differences.” What does this mean?

6. Why isn't this a justifiable excuse in God's eyes?

7. What kinds of things are lost in a divorce? Make a list here.

8. Read Malachi 2:10-16. How does God feel about divorce?

9. Why do you think the New Testament is so strong on the subject when it comes to the issue of divorce?

apply

1. Divorce is never an easy thing. It divides parents from each other, from their children, and from their friends. Let's take a look at some of the facts about divorce. Take your best guess at these divorce statistics, and then check your answers below.¹
 - A. The percentage of *first* marriages that end in divorce is:
 - ☐ 35 to 40 percent
 - ☐ 40 to 45 percent
 - ☐ 45 to 50 percent
 - ☐ 55 to 60 percent
 - B. The percentage of *second* marriages that end in divorce is:
 - ☐ 30 to 40 percent
 - ☐ 40 to 50 percent
 - ☐ 50 to 60 percent
 - ☐ 60 to 70 percent
 - C. The percentage of *third* marriages that end in divorce is:
 - ☐ 60 to 65 percent
 - ☐ 65 to 70 percent
 - ☐ 70 to 75 percent
 - ☐ 75 to 80 percent
 - D. The average length of a marriage that ends in divorce is:
 - ☐ 5 years
 - ☐ 6 years
 - ☐ 7 years
 - ☐ 8 years
 - E. The percentage of American children who grow up with both parents in the home is:
 - ☐ 50 percent
 - ☐ 63 percent
 - ☐ 70 percent
 - ☐ 74 percent
 - F. The percentage of American children who live in homes without their biological father is:
 - ☐ 18 percent
 - ☐ 24 percent
 - ☐ 36 percent
 - ☐ 41 percent

G. The number of children who experience the divorce of their parents in the United States is:

- ☐ 250,000
- ☐ 500,000
- ☐ 750,000
- ☐ 1,000,000

Answers: (A) 45 to 50 percent; (B) 60 to 70 percent; (C) 70 to 75 percent; (D) 8 years; (E) 63 percent; (F) 36 percent; (G) 1,000,000.

2. Read the following case study and then answer the questions that follow.

David's family looked like the perfect family. His dad and mom sang in the church choir. They were typical active members. David was a leader in the high school youth group and his sister was one of the most involved middle school students.

Then one day David's dad just left. He had been having an affair with a business associate for two years. David was devastated. He even told his youth pastor, "Perhaps it was my fault. I didn't talk to Dad enough about God. My sister and I argued too much."

David's sister was too embarrassed to show up at church because she thought everyone would talk about her. David's mom was trying her best to keep a good attitude in the midst of her pain.

What advice would you give the family?

As a friend of David, what could you do to help him and his family?

3. It seems that everyone involved in a divorce reacts differently. Here are eight common behavior responses to divorce. Under each, write the possible consequence for a teen living out that behavior.

Pseudo-mature adolescent: They grow up quickly and typically don't have much time for teenage fun. They often get serious about a job to help the family.

Consequence:

Childish behavior: They get stuck at one age level and don't mature, but rather continue to display childish behavior. Some people in this category quit learning. They want to be taken care of.

Consequence:

Spouse replacement: Their goal in life is to make Mom or Dad happy. They try to meet most of the needs that a spouse would normally be able to meet.

Consequence:

Ping-Pong: They try to please both parents. They feel responsibility or pressure to keep everybody happy.

Consequence:

Money-wise: Finances are always on their minds. They often get consumed with money problems.

Consequence:

Misidentified: Perhaps they have lost the role model at home, so they search for an identity outside the home. They may be easily steered by peer pressure or the pressure to identify with a social group.

Consequence:

Oversexed: They miss the warmth of the love of a parent, so they seek attachment through a promiscuous physical relationship.

Consequence:

Jealous: They often sabotage Mom's or Dad's new relationships.

Consequence:

4. What other results or reactions have you seen in families of divorce?

5. What issues do children of divorced parents typically have to deal with?

6. Read Romans 12:13 and James 1:27. What does God's Word say about how we should relate to those who are troubled?

7. How can those in the Church demonstrate love, welcome and acceptance to families of divorce?

reflect

1. Why do you think there are so many divorces today?

2. What changes would help to lessen the number of divorces today?

3. Read Matthew 5:32. Under what circumstances is divorce allowed? Why does God allow for divorce in this situation?

4. What can someone do to survive the pain of divorce?

5. How does divorce change a person?

6. What can you do to help someone who has experienced or is presently experiencing a divorce in the family?

7. What can you do to ensure your future marriage will survive?

8. Can God use a divorce for good? Why or why not?

meditation



Be completely humble and gentle; be patient,
bearing with one another in love.

EPHESIANS 4:2

Note

1. Sources: (A-C) Jennifer Baker, Forest Institute of Professional Psychology, www.divorcestatistics.org; (D) “Untying the Knot,” *CBS Sunday Morning*, February 10, 2008; (E) “U.S. Divorce Statistics,” divorcemagazine.com, 2005; (F) Wade Horn, *Father Facts*, third edition (Gaithersburg, MD: National Fatherhood Initiative, 1998), p. 5; (G) “Divorce—Helping Children Adjust,” The American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000.