

# Study Guide



## Matthew 5:31-32 – Divorce October 8, 2017

### Welcome (40 Minutes)

Be intentional to have authentic relationships...

### Worship (5 Minutes)

As the group transitions from of a time of fellowship to a time of intentional study of the word, it is important to facilitate that transition with a time of worship. This can look like praying together, singing songs together, or rejoicing in what the Lord has done throughout the week.

### Word (45 Minutes)

As we look at Jesus' five discourses in Matthew, we see Matthew and the other disciples "at the feet of Jesus." These teachings are in the context of Jesus' calling and equipping the twelve apostles to go and make disciples of all nations. In our nine months of studying Jesus' five discourses of Matthew we will be sitting at the feet of Jesus learning the ins-and-outs of being disciple-makers ourselves. Our prayer is that we will be challenged to understand that we were saved in order to be disciple-makers and that we will be inspired to sit at the feet of Jesus to be equipped for our calling to be disciple-makers.

For further study on this weeks study please check out the following pages...

## Action Step

This week use the paragraph you wrote out from Matthew 5:20 and explain the gospel to someone. Then share how the conversation went with your Community Group.

## Calendar

September 17th— [Connection Group](#)  
September 17th— Kid's Shine  
October 7th— [Parenting Conference](#)  
October 29th— [Fall Festival](#)  
November 12th— Member's Meeting

## Welcome (40 Minutes)

As you fellowship with one another, please be intentional about sharing what the Lord is doing in your lives. Get to know one another and encourage one another. Are your conversations pointing one another toward Christ?

## Worship (5 Minutes)

If you are looking for a song to sing this week, here are the lyrics to "[Come Thou Fount](#)":

Come, Thou Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing Thy grace  
Streams of mercy, never ceasing call for songs of loudest praise  
Teach me some melodious sonnet sung by flaming tongues above  
Praise the mount, I'm fixed up, on it  
Mount of Thy re- deeming love

I was lost in utter darkness 'til You came and rescued me  
I was bound by all my sin when Your love came and set me free  
Now my soul can sing a new song, now my heart has found a home  
Now Your grace is always with me  
And I'll never be a- lone

Come, Thou Fount, come, Thou King; Come, Thou precious Prince of Peace  
Hear Your bride, to You we sing, come, Thou Fount of our bless- ing  
Come, Thou Fount, come, Thou King; Come, Thou precious Prince of Peace  
Hear Your bride, to You we sing, come, Thou Fount of our bless- ing

O, to grace, how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be  
Let Thy goodness, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to Thee  
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love  
Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it  
Seal it for Thy courts a- bove

Come, Thou Fount, come, Thou King; Come, Thou precious Prince of Peace  
Hear Your bride, to You we sing, come, Thou Fount of our bless- ing  
Come, Thou Fount, come, Thou King; Come, Thou precious Prince of Peace  
Hear Your bride, to You we sing, come, Thou Fount of our bless- ing

In Matthew 5:31-32, Jesus addresses the view of marriage at the time. During the first century there were two views on divorce that were held. One view taught from Deuteronomy 24:1 and took a rigorist line saying, “the sole ground for divorce was some grave matrimonial offense, something ‘unseemly’ or ‘indecent.’” On the other side was a very lax view which was the more common and practiced view. It seemed that the Pharisees leaned toward the very lax view of divorce and agreed a man could divorce his wife for any reason at all. She could be a bad cook and burnt her husbands food, or if he lost interest in her because of her plain looks and because he became enamored by some other more beautiful woman, these things justified him in divorcing her. Therefore a certificate of divorce was given out and allowed women the right to remarry.

In this passage we are given an abbreviated summary of Jesus’s teaching on divorce, but if we look at Matthew 19 we see a fuller version to his response on divorce. It is wise to look at the two passages together and to interpret Matthew 5:31-32 in light of Matthew 19:3-9. With the Pharisees view of divorce in mind, we read their question to Jesus in Matthew 19:3, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” They were testing to see what side of the debate Jesus was on, and whether he belonged to the rigorist view or of laxity. John Stott explains Jesus’s reply to their question in three parts and this is what we will look at in summary below.

First, Stott says, the Pharisees were focused with the grounds for divorce and Jesus was focused on the institution of marriage. The Pharisees framed their question to draw Jesus on what he considered to be legitimate grounds for divorce. Jesus did not reply to their question but instead he asked them a question about their view of scripture. Referring them back to Genesis 1 & 2, both to the creation of male and female and to the institution of marriage by which man leaves his parents and cleaves to his wife and the two become one. This biblical definition of marriage implies that marriage is both exclusive and permanent. Jesus responds to their question by stating that marriage according to the Lord is a divine institution by which God makes permanently one two people who decisively and publicly leave their parents in order to “become one flesh.”

Second, Stott says, the Pharisees saw Moses’ provision for divorce a command and Jesus called it a concession to the hardness of human hearts. The Pharisees responded to Jesus’s first response with the question, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” (See also Matt. 5:31 and Deut. 24:1-4). Jesus shares the Pharisees view of scripture disregarded what was really said and implied. He attributed divorce to the hardness of people’s hearts. He did not deny that the regulation was from God, but implied that it was not a divine instruction or command, but a divine concession to human weakness. This is why Moses allowed you to divorce (Matt. 19:8). Then immediately referred again to God’s purpose of marriage, “But from the beginning it was not so” (Matt. 19:8). This divine concession for divorce was only for the hardness of human heart and was inconsistent with the divine institution of marriage God created it to be.

Third, Stott says, the Pharisees regarded divorce lightly and Jesus took it so seriously that, with only one exception, he called remarriage after divorce adultery. This is what Jesus concluded with in her conversation with the Pharisees (Matt. 5:32; 19:9). Stott says, “Since God instituted marriage as an exclusive and permanent union, a union which he makes and man must not break, Jesus draws this inevitable deduction that to divorce one’s partner and marry another, or to marry a divorced person, is to enter a forbidden, adulterous relationship.” However, there is one exception, “except on the ground of sexual immorality.” This implies that when a divorce is obtained because of the sexual immorality of one’s spouse, then such a divorce is not morally wrong. But when a man divorces his wife wrongly the husband thus makes her commit adultery.

However, this matter cannot be left here. Jesus continues the accommodation to the hardness of the human heart. This passage like every other passage in scripture must be considered in the wider context of scripture which proclaim a gospel of reconciliation. We cannot begin a discussion on divorce and focus solely on the legitimacy of divorce or we find ourselves just like the Pharisees. We must focus first on God's original plan for marriage as an exclusive and permanent relationship, on God's putting two people into union which man must not break, and on God's call to love and forgive one another, and to be peacemakers in every situation.

What is to be done if someone has been divorced for other reasons than those given in the Bible and then has married someone else? In these passages we see Jesus says that in such a case the person has committed "adultery" (Matt. 19:9). But Jesus continues and says, "and marries another" with this he implies that the second marriage is in fact a marriage. Therefore, once a second marriage has occurred, it would be further sin to break it up, for it would be destroying another marriage. The responsibility of the husband and wife in such a case is to ask God for his forgiveness for their previous sin, and then for his blessing on the current marriage, and to strive to make your current marriage one that glorifies God.

### **Discussion - Read Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9**

1. Along with Matthew 5:31-32, also read Matthew 19:3-9 where Jesus gives his more complete teaching on marriage and divorce.
2. Looking at the 2 passages together, what was the focus of the Pharisees concerning marriage and divorce? What was Jesus focus concerning these topics?
3. From Matthew 5:31 and from Matthew 19: 3 what does it appear was the main question among the Pharisees?
4. The "certificate of divorce" that the Pharisees were talking about with Jesus was based on teaching from Moses in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. The Pharisees referred to this teaching as a "command" by Moses to issue a certificate of divorce. Jesus said it was a concession by Moses because of the hardness of the hearts of the people. After reading the passage from Deuteronomy is there any doubt in your mind whether it was a command or a concession?

5. In the Matthew 19 passage what was Jesus main emphasis? What were his two main points about marriage in these verses?
  
6. In Matthew 19:9 and 5:32 what was Jesus warning about divorce? Why was it an enabler of adultery?
  
7. Why is divorce inconsistent with the description of the Jesus followers found in the Beatitudes (especially Matt 5:9)?

## Action Step

**We must never forget that we have been sent by the Son of God to make disciples who make disciples.** Each week we are giving you action steps to take. Jesus has sent you out to make disciples and it begins by learning God's Word and engaging people. **The last few weeks we worked on memorizing Matthew 5:20 and wrote out a simple explanation. This week use the paragraph you wrote out from Matthew 5:20 and explain the gospel to someone. Then share how the conversation went with your Community Group.**

For example: If I'm talking to someone I might be able to say, "I used to think that if I was religious enough or righteousness enough I would go to heaven but then I learned what Jesus said about the most religious people of his day in Matthew 5:20. Jesus said, **"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"**. Jesus demands perfect righteousness which none of us can achieve. Thankfully in Romans 3:22 Paul says God offers **"the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe."** I now know that the only way to enter the kingdom of heaven is to receive the righteousness of God as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ.

## Walk (30 minutes)

After enjoying fellowship, worship, and time in God's word together, it is now time to pray together as a group and encourage one another in the faith. It is very easy for this portion of the group time to be consumed by the other portions. However, this segment of the group time is crucially important. It answers the question, how do we apply what we are learning in Matthew to our lives today?

Many groups have found that it is helpful to sometimes break up into a men's group and a women's group for the purpose of being able to be more transparent and honest as we encourage one another and keep one another accountable. I encourage you to try this in your groups.

In addition to praying for, and encouraging, one another, this portion of the group time should also be used for planning how your group can participate in God's work outside the walls of our church – "neighbors and nations." Discuss with your group some ideas on how you can be intentional with building relationships with your neighbors and co-workers. What can your Community Group do to impact the area around you?

Here is a list of local ministries Norris Ferry is actively involved in:

Hub/purchased  
Young life  
Heart of hope  
First priority  
Ark-la-Tex crisis pregnancy center  
Community renewal  
Grief counseling  
Celebrate recovery  
Samaritan counseling  
Last call ministries  
Golden age ministries  
Rescue mission  
Luke's lighthouse  
FCA

May the Lord bless and encourage you as you are in your groups this week! Know that we are praying for you on a weekly basis and that we are here to help you in any way that we can!

## Walk Prayer & Missions

For further information visit  
[norrisferrychurch.org](http://norrisferrychurch.org) or contact Jared  
Clary ([clary@norrisferrychurch.org](mailto:clary@norrisferrychurch.org))

## Calendar

October— Serve Shreveport  
November— South Sudan  
March— NOLA  
June— Serve Shreveport  
July— Central America