

Group Discussion Guide for Week of 3/06/2023

Riverside Home Group Discussion Guide

Scripture Text to accompany the themes of the Sunday Sermon; *Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-10 (NIV)*

Matthew 5: ³¹ “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³² But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Matthew 19: ³ 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?”

⁴ “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵ 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?’ ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

⁷ “Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”

⁸ Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

¹⁰ The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.”

General Question Bank

Observation (what does the text say?) **Interpretation** (what does it mean?) **Application** (what does it mean to me/us?)

Know (what does the text say about God?) **Be** (what does it say about us?) **Do** (what does it call us to do?)

Together (What is our communal identity/response according to the passage/Holy Spirit?)

Discussion/Topic Starter (Ice Breaker)

- Do you have people in your life who model marriage or singleness in a particularly inspiring and wise way? Can you identify specific traits that set them apart?

Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-10

O: What things in the text strike you or jump out at you? Why?

****Another way to ask: “Choose one verse or phrase from the passage that stands out to you. This could be something you’re intrigued by, something that makes you uncomfortable, something that puzzles you, something that resonates with you, or just something you want to examine further.” Now share it with the group*

O: The House of Shammai taught that divorce was permitted only in extreme cases. The House of Hillel and R. Aqiba taught that it was permitted for any and every reason. How does this help us to understand the Pharisees’ “test” question (19:3)?

I: What does Jesus pointing back to Genesis (19:4-6) teach us about God’s design for marriage?

I: The Pharisees refer to Moses’ instructions about divorce as a “command” (v. 7). What does Jesus’ reply teach us about divorce (v. 8)? (or, what’s the difference between “command” and “permit” in this conversation?)

I: What similarities and differences do you see between 19:9 and 5:31-32?

I: How is divorce applied differently today and how does Jesus’ teaching contrast with today’s views concerning marriage, remarriage, and divorce?

I: Consider Matthew 19:10. Why are the disciples suggesting this, and what points might favor or contradict their suggestion?

A: What wisdom do these passages and your group have for those who are (A) considering marriage, (B) married and struggling, (C) divorced and considering remarriage, or (D) single and discerning a call to celibacy.

-How WILL you respond this week? What one question do you want us to ask of you next week in regard to this?

Recommended Follow-up:

Pray: Pray together, and really focus in on that we are meeting with God, He’s in the room, and He wants us to KNOW Him. Pray together, spend some time being silent.

Respond: Spend this week responding to God’s word as fleshed out in the group time, as well as journey through this week’s devotional guide.

An explanation on how Riverside structures these discussion guides*:

Riverside defines a disciple of Jesus as a **“Know, Be, Do”** person. And since Jesus told us to “make disciples” we use the “Know, Be, Do” framework in our discussion guides. We believe the process for this transformation happens in community, hence the **“Together”** part of the Riverside mission as well.

Riverside leadership regularly asks questions around these areas:

- “What do we need to **know** about God?”
- “Who do we need to **be**?”
- “What do we need to **do**?”
- **“Together**, what is our communal identity/response according to the passage/Holy Spirit?”

Here is what we mean by “Know, Be, Do” (based on [Colossians 1:9-10](#), see below)

Know – *“to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives..., growing in the knowledge of God.”* Not just knowing about Jesus, but knowing Him personally, intimately, and deeply. This is also about knowing the scriptures, knowing the voice of the Holy Spirit, even knowing yourself.

Be – *“so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way.”* Becoming more like Jesus (sanctification). This is about our character and our heart and our motivations, our passions and convictions change the more we get to Know Jesus (and others).

Do – *“bearing fruit in every good work, ...”* Knowing Jesus and Becoming like Jesus practically will change our actions. As we grow in these areas we will naturally DO the things that Jesus did while in the flesh on earth (living and loving like Jesus). Some broad categories around DO are evangelism and justice and service.

Notice *“bearing fruit in every good work”* then yields more *“growing in the knowledge of God.”* In other words, while “Know, Be, Do” are three distinct words, they are deeply interconnected.

As a side note, the next chapter states: *⁶ So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, ⁷ rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness. ⁸ See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the elemental spiritual forces of this world rather than on Christ. (Col. 2:6-8)*
To aid in this process Riverside also has a **daily devotional guide available each week**.

Colossians 1:9-10, NIV

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,...

* As discussed in Riverside’s HGLT (Home Group Leader Training), these guides are to be starting points for home group leaders to develop their own guides and approaches to leading group discussions. This is a resource tool, not a rigid “go through this guide word-for-word.” There are intentionally too many questions for a single home group time. This guide was created in consultation with *The Sermon on the Mount and Human Flourishing*, Jonathan Pennington, 2017; *Sermon on the Mount: LifeGuide Bible Studies*, John Stott; *Matthew for Everyone Bible Study Guide*, N. T. Wright; and *The Story of God Bible Commentary: Sermon on the Mount*, Scot McKnight; *Sermon on the Mount*, Amy-Jill Levine; *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, 2020; *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, David Martin Lloyd-Jones, 2011.