



# UPSTATE GROUP GUIDE

*Culture Wars*

*March 2-8*

*Matthew 19:1-11*

## *Things to Know*

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**Gospel Connections and Conversations**

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## Studying God's Word *In Community*

*Reminder: The goal of group time is not to re-preach the sermon, but to understand and apply God's Word together.*

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## Sermon Recap

In Matthew 19:1-11, Jesus addresses the question of divorce, pointing people back to God's original plan for marriage. He reminds us that marriage is a sacred union between a man and a woman, meant to last a lifetime. While human sin has led to brokenness and the allowance of divorce, God's ideal design is a lifelong covenant marked by love, unity, and faithfulness to reflect His relationship with us.

## God's Design for Marriage

God designed marriage as a divine institution, a covenant between one man and one woman. Marriage is not a legal contract, but a lifelong, sacrificial relationship (Ephesians 5), meant to reflect our relationship with Christ. Divorce is a result of fallen humanity, as the marriage covenant was never meant to be broken.

## Our Sin's Impact on Marriage

The greatest threat to marriage is the sin of fallen man. Because of the fall, every marriage involves broken sinners; God uses marriage to sanctify us into the image of Christ. Our sin ultimately destroys the divine union in which God has given, no matter if this happens gradually or in a moment.

## Our Responsibility in Marriage

Our call is clear: we must follow Christ with our whole hearts. Only when we follow Jesus can we love our spouse well. Wives, as the church submits to Christ, your call is to submit to your husband. Husbands, as Christ gave his life for the Church, so give your life for your wife: to love, lead, protect, and provide for her.

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## Discussion Questions

1. What does being “one flesh” communicate about the depth of marriage?
  2. Where does culture pressure us to view marriage differently than Scripture does?
  3. What are subtle ways we can treat marriage as conditional instead of covenantal?
  4. What does it look like to reflect God's covenant love in daily life?
  5. How does the hardness of our hearts damage marriage?
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## Read

**Read Matthew 19:1-11 and make observations about the text.**

- What is God teaching us in the passage?
  - What does this reveal about who God is, what God has done, and how I should respond?
  - Which part of the text was most meaningful to you and why?
  - What do you need help understanding about this passage?
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# Scripture

## Matthew 19:1-11

<sup>1</sup> Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from <sup>n</sup>Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. <sup>2</sup> And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

<sup>3</sup> And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?” <sup>4</sup> He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, <sup>5</sup> and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? <sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” <sup>7</sup> They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?” <sup>8</sup> He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. <sup>9</sup> And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”

<sup>10</sup> The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” <sup>11</sup> But he said to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given.

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Matthew 19:1-11.

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## Living on Mission In Community

Strong marriages strengthen the community of God’s people; in a world full of broken marriages and sin, the church must be a beacon for something better and deeper. Only when the church is living in faithful community together can marriages truly thrive; while a married couple is one flesh with each other, we are also all individually members of one another as the Church.

Here’s a Couple of Questions for Spiritual Inventory, Conversation, and Reflection:

- If you are married, are you intentionally praying for your spouse, your marriage, your purity?

- As a group, are you regularly praying for the marriages of one another? If you are single, are you praying together for your purity and your future spouses?
- Ask God to expose areas of your life where sin is still present and forsake that sin this week?

*How is God leading me to respond to His Word this week?*

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## Optional Breakout Questions

*Consider making time at the end of the group to break out into groups of 2-4 (keep them gender specific). Have them answer these three questions about their weeks:*

1. How did you feed yourself?
    - *(What have you been doing to feed your spiritual life, and how is it going?)*
  2. How did you feed others?
    - *(How did you share the gospel or gospel truth with someone this week?)*
  3. How did you feed your flesh?
    - *(What sins did you struggle with this week? How can your friends hold you accountable?)*
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# *Leader Resources - March 2-8*

## **Small Group Curriculum - Matthew 19:1-11**

### **1. Session Overview**

Matthew 19:1–11 involves a debate among Jewish religious leaders in the first century about the grounds for divorce under Mosaic Law. Trying to trap Jesus in the question, He responds by pointing back to Genesis, affirming God's original intent for marriage as a permanent union. His stricter stance, allowing divorce only for sexual immorality, challenged the more permissive norms of the time and surprised even His disciples. While our culture presents marriage as contractual and shallow, Jesus elevates marriage to something far more holy and divine.

### **2. Opening**

#### **Prayer:**

“Lord, we thank you for the gift of marriage- that it points to your glory and your gospel. We know the enemy wants nothing more than to destroy our marriages; help us to stand firm and faithful following you and loving our spouses steadfastly. May our marriages point to you in every way. We ask this in the mighty name of Jesus, Amen. ”

Icebreaker question:

Break into groups of 2–3.

#### **Ask:**

What is one piece of marriage advice you’ve heard that turned out to be surprisingly true?

### **3. Scripture Reading**

Have someone read Matthew 19:1-11 out loud.

### **4. Teaching Points (Systematic Walkthrough)**

#### **1. God Designed Marriage**

Marriage is rooted in creation, not culture. Because God designed it, He defines it.

Therefore, the foundation and sustaining grace in marriage is trusting and following Jesus.

**Theological Insight:**

Marriage is a part of creation order; it was given as a gift to mankind before sin entered the world.

**Pastoral Insight:**

When we drift from God's design, we invite confusion and pain.

## 2. Godly Marriages Require Daily Surrender

Godly marriages are not sustained by feelings, but through loving our spouses as Christ has loved us.

**Theological Insight:**

Jesus demonstrates his love for us through his sacrificial life and death; this is the depth to which we are called to love our spouse.

**Pastoral Insight:**

Healthy marriages are formed by two people who are individually submitted to Jesus.

## 3. Godly Marriages Require Intentional Unity

“One flesh” speaks to total life-union.

This includes:

- Spiritual unity (praying together, pursuing Christ together)
- Emotional unity (regular and honest communication)
- Physical unity (faithful intimacy)
- Missional unity (serving God together)

**Pastoral Insight:**

Men, marital headship looks like you leading and fostering unity in each of these areas.

## 5. Discussion Questions

1. What habits help build unity over time?
2. What tends to divide couples the most – and why?
3. How can spouses encourage one another toward holiness?
4. What does it mean for Christ to be at the center of a marriage?
5. What are common cultural lies about love and fulfillment?
6. How can the church model a better vision of marriage?

## 6. Application

Matthew 19:1–11 calls us to honor marriage as sacred. Whether married or single, we are called to reflect God’s faithfulness in our relationships.

Marriage flourishes where:

- Christ is central,
- Hearts are soft,
- Repentance is regular,
- Commitment is unwavering.

### Prayer:

“Lord, we praise you that your ways are so much better than our own. You have given us a calling to love our spouses like you have loved us. Give us strength to do just that, all for your glory. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen. ”

## 7. Memory Verse

“So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”  
Matthew 19:6

## 8. Leader Notes

- Create a space of vulnerability.
- Point to the hope, mercy, and grace found in the gospel.
- Lead people to repentance.
- Foster conversations on personal marriage experiences.

