



LIFE Group Discussion Guide

September 27, 2026

Matthew 5:31-32

CONVERSATION STARTERS

What are some highs or lows you experienced this past week?

What Scripture has been shaping you recently?

Where have you seen God moving in your life this week?

What did you hear in today's sermon OR read in today's passage that you would like to discuss?

What did you learn about yourself in today's sermon/passage?

What did you learn about God in today's sermon/passage?

What convicted you as you listened to today's sermon OR read in today's passage?

OPENING

What qualities make a relationship strong and trustworthy over the long term?

Marriage is one of the most significant relationships God gives us. In Matthew 5:31–32, Jesus addresses divorce and challenges His listeners to look beyond legal requirements to God's deeper design for marriage.

Jesus' teaching reminds us that marriage is more than a contract. It is a covenant relationship that calls for faithfulness, commitment, love, and integrity.

Today we'll explore how Jesus calls His followers to honor the covenant of marriage with faithfulness, integrity, and a commitment to God's design.

SCRIPTURE READING

Read *Matthew 5:31–32* together.

Ask the group to listen for:

- What Jesus says about the seriousness of marriage.
- How Jesus responds to the prevailing understanding of divorce.
- What this teaches us about covenant faithfulness.

PASSAGE SUMMARY

Jesus is continuing His teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, where He explains the deeper meaning of God's Law.

In this passage, Jesus addresses a practice that had become increasingly casual in His culture. Some religious teachers had treated the legal certificate of divorce as though it made ending a marriage acceptable for almost any reason.

Jesus points His listeners back to God's intention for marriage. Marriage is not merely a legal arrangement. It is a covenant involving promises, faithfulness, and lifelong commitment.

Jesus' teaching also reflects God's concern for the vulnerable. In the culture of His day, a woman could face significant social and economic consequences following divorce. The passage should not be used to shame people who have experienced divorce. Scripture consistently calls God's people to show grace, compassion, and restoration to those who have experienced brokenness.

Jesus does identify sexual immorality as an exception in this teaching, while other passages of Scripture provide additional teaching about separation and divorce. Christians have historically differed on how those passages should be understood and applied.

The main point is: Jesus calls His followers to take the marriage covenant seriously and to pursue faithfulness, reconciliation, and integrity in their relationships.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

What does Jesus' teaching reveal about how seriously God views the marriage covenant?

Marriage is not something to be entered into or ended casually. God values faithfulness, commitment, and the promises made within marriage.

Why do you think Jesus addressed the issue of divorce in the Sermon on the Mount?

Some people had reduced God's Law to external rules while overlooking God's original intention. Jesus wanted His followers to understand the heart behind God's design for marriage.

How can treating marriage like a contract rather than a covenant affect a relationship?

A contract can encourage people to focus on what they are getting from the relationship, while a covenant emphasizes commitment, faithfulness, sacrifice, and keeping promises.

Why is it important to discuss divorce with both biblical conviction and compassion?

God's design for marriage should be upheld while recognizing that divorce often involves deep hurt, sin, betrayal, and brokenness. People who have experienced divorce need truth, grace, care, and support rather than shame.

What are some ways couples can intentionally strengthen their marriages?

Communicating honestly, praying together, studying Scripture, spending intentional time together, resolving conflict, serving one another, seeking wise counsel, and practicing forgiveness.

What can unmarried adults learn from Jesus' teaching about marriage?

They can develop a biblical understanding of marriage, take commitment seriously, establish healthy relationship patterns, and prepare to honor God in future relationships.

How can the church support marriages and individuals experiencing marital difficulty?

By providing biblical teaching, prayer, encouragement, counseling, mentoring, practical support, and a community where people can seek help before problems become overwhelming.

APPLICATION

How can you become more intentional about honoring God's design for marriage and relationships?

Consider your current relationships, friendships, dating relationships, or marriage.

Is there an area of your relationships where you need greater faithfulness, honesty, forgiveness, or commitment?

What would obedience to Christ look like in that area?

What is one practical step you can take this week to strengthen a marriage or relationship?

Examples:

- Have an intentional conversation.
- Express appreciation.
- Pray with your spouse.
- Seek forgiveness.
- Encourage a married couple.
- Seek wise counsel about a difficult relationship.

DIG DEEPER

Read **Genesis 2:18–24**. *What does God's original design tell us about marriage?*

Read **Matthew 19:3–9**. *How does this passage expand Jesus' teaching about divorce?*

Read **Ephesians 5:21–33**. *How does Christ's love for the church provide a model for marriage?*

Why is forgiveness essential in a healthy marriage?

How can churches become places where marriages are strengthened before they reach a crisis?

CLOSING THOUGHT

Jesus' teaching challenges us to view marriage as God intended—not simply as a legal arrangement, but as a covenant marked by faithfulness and commitment.

At the same time, we live in a broken world where marriages and families experience real pain. The church should be a place where biblical truth and genuine grace are both present.

Ask yourself:

Do I take God's design for marriage seriously?

How am I currently investing in the health of my relationships?

Is there a relationship where I need to pursue forgiveness or reconciliation?

How can I encourage and strengthen the marriages around me?

This week, take one intentional step toward strengthening a marriage or important relationship through encouragement, prayer, communication, forgiveness, or practical service.

Remember: God calls us to honor His design for marriage while extending grace and compassion to people experiencing the brokenness of relationships.

LOOKING AHEAD

Next week we will discuss **Matthew 5:33-37** as we continue the series, *The Greatest Sermon Ever Preached: The Sermon on the Mount*.

PRAYER FOCUS

- Thank God for His design for marriage and covenant faithfulness.
- Pray for marriages in our church to be strengthened and protected.
- Ask God to give husbands and wives wisdom, humility, patience, and love.
- Pray for those experiencing marital difficulty, separation, or the pain of divorce.
- Ask God to help our church provide truth, grace, and practical support to individuals and families experiencing brokenness.
- Pray that our LIFE Groups would be safe places where people can seek biblical wisdom, encouragement, and prayer.
- Pray specifically for the invitation portion of our worship services—that hearts will be open, the Spirit will move powerfully, and people will respond in obedience to Christ.

COMMENTARY

Matthew 5:31-32

In Matthew 5:31-32, Jesus corrects the loose divorce practices of His day. He states that divorces for trivial reasons, outside of sexual immorality, break God's intent for permanent marriage and cause unjust social harm.

The Context of the Law

- **Old background:** [Deuteronomy 24:1] require a written notice to protect women from sudden, informal abandonment.
- **Abused custom:** Religious teachers in Jesus' time twisted this rule to allow men to divorce wives for almost any minor reason.

Jesus' Correction

- **Higher standard:** Jesus shifts focus from legal loopholes to the sacred value of the marriage covenant.

- **The exception:** The phrase "except in a case of sexual immorality" points to marital unfaithfulness as the sole valid ground mentioned here.
- **Protecting the vulnerable:** Christ targets a culture where powerful men discarded wives easily, leaving women socially exposed and impoverished.