

Relational Fidelity

Small Group Discussion Guide

Marriage and Divorce

1 Corinthians 7:10–16

Main Idea: Commit to the fidelity of marriage as your Christian witness.

Welcome

Marriage and divorce touch nearly every family represented in our churches. Some come to this passage with joyful marriages, others with painful memories, and still others with unanswered questions. Today's study is not intended to reopen old wounds or assign blame. Instead, it invites us to hear God's Word with humble hearts and discover His design for marriage, His mercy in brokenness, and His grace for every believer.

As you begin your time together, ask the Lord to give your group humility, wisdom, and compassion as you study His Word.

Breaking the Ice

Think about a promise someone has faithfully kept to you over many years. How did that person's faithfulness strengthen your trust in them?

OR

When our culture talks about marriage, what words or ideas seem to come up most often? How do those compare with the way Scripture speaks about marriage?

Read the Passage

Read **1 Corinthians 7:10–16** aloud together.

As you listen, pay attention to the commands Paul gives, the reasons he gives for those commands, and what this passage teaches us about God's heart for marriage.

Looking Closely at the Text

Observation

The first step in Bible study is simply noticing what God has said before deciding what it means.

1. As you read the passage, what different groups of married people does Paul address? Why is it important to recognize that he is speaking to more than one situation?
 2. What repeated commands do you notice throughout the passage? Which words or phrases seem especially important?
 3. What instructions are given to a husband and wife who are both believers?
 4. How does Paul's counsel change when one spouse is a believer and the other is not?
 5. What reasons does Paul give for encouraging a believing spouse to remain in the marriage?
 6. According to verse 15, under what circumstance does Paul permit a marriage to end?
 7. How does Paul conclude the passage? What hope does he leave with believers who are married to someone who does not know Christ?
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Understanding the Passage

Interpretation

Now consider what Paul intends to teach the Corinthian church—and us.

1. Paul begins by reminding his readers that his teaching reflects the instruction of Jesus Himself. Why do you think Paul intentionally anchors his teaching in Christ's authority?
2. Throughout Scripture, marriage is presented as a lifelong covenant rather than a temporary contract. What does this passage reveal about God's design for marriage?
3. Why might some believers in Corinth have believed they should leave an unbelieving spouse after becoming Christians? How does Paul challenge that thinking?

4. Verse 14 says that the unbelieving spouse is "sanctified" through the believing spouse. What does Paul mean by that statement? Why is it important to understand what he is **not** saying?
 5. Paul places great emphasis on reconciliation whenever possible. What does this reveal about God's character and His heart toward broken relationships?
 6. Why do you think Paul instructs believers not to force an unbelieving spouse to remain in the marriage if that spouse insists on leaving?
 7. How does this passage balance God's high standard for marriage with His compassion for people living in difficult circumstances?
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Connecting with the Sermon

Pastor Jon summarized the passage with three central truths.

1. The Ideal Command

By God's grace, make your marriage last a lifetime.

Jesus affirmed God's original design that what God joins together should not be separated.

Discuss together:

- Why do you think our culture increasingly views marriage as temporary while Scripture consistently presents it as lifelong?
 - What practices help husbands and wives cultivate lifelong faithfulness rather than simply staying together?
 - How does remembering that marriage is a covenant—not merely a contract—change the way couples approach conflict?
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2. The Merciful Exception

In God's mercy, limit divorce.

Although divorce exists because we live in a fallen world, Scripture consistently points believers toward reconciliation whenever possible.

Discuss together:

- Why is reconciliation such an important biblical theme?

- Can you think of ways forgiveness reflects the gospel inside a marriage?
 - How can the church encourage struggling marriages without minimizing genuine pain or difficult circumstances?
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3. The Missional Reality

Invest in your marriage as a Christian witness.

Paul reminds believing spouses that God often uses their faithful lives to influence their families.

Discuss together:

- How can a healthy Christian marriage become a testimony to neighbors, coworkers, friends, and children?
 - Why is a consistent Christlike life often more persuasive than winning arguments?
 - What encouragement does verse 16 offer to believers who faithfully pray for loved ones who have not yet trusted Christ?
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Living God's Word

Application

God never gives His Word merely to increase our knowledge. He speaks so that our lives might be transformed.

1. As you studied this passage, what truth challenged or encouraged you the most? Why?
 2. If you are married, what is one specific way you can intentionally strengthen your marriage this week?
 3. If you are single, widowed, or divorced, what principles from this passage still encourage your walk with Christ and your relationships within the church?
 4. How can our church faithfully uphold God's design for marriage while also demonstrating Christ's compassion toward those whose marriages have been broken?
 5. Is there someone you know who needs encouragement in their marriage? What practical step could you take this week to encourage them?
 6. Spend a few moments quietly asking the Lord whether there is an area of your own life where He is calling you to greater faithfulness, forgiveness, or perseverance.
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This Week's Challenge

Choose one way to live out this passage during the coming week.

- Pray intentionally for your spouse every day this week.
 - If you are unmarried, pray for three marriages within our church family.
 - Encourage another couple with a handwritten note or thoughtful conversation.
 - Ask forgiveness where you have contributed to conflict.
 - Read Mark 10:1–12 and compare Jesus' teaching with Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 7.
 - Thank God for His covenant faithfulness and ask Him to help you reflect that same faithfulness in your own relationships.
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Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You for creating marriage as a beautiful picture of Your faithful love for Your people. We confess that because we live in a fallen world, every relationship bears the effects of sin. Strengthen the marriages in our church with love, humility, forgiveness, and perseverance. Bring healing to those who have experienced the pain of divorce or broken relationships, and remind them that Your grace is greater than our failures. Help each of us reflect the covenant faithfulness of Jesus Christ in the relationships You have entrusted to us. May our lives and our homes bear witness to the transforming power of the gospel.

In Jesus' name, Amen.