

GROUP LEADERS NOTES – STUDY 10

In this study it is as important as ever to ensure that the group concentrates on what the passage says; rather than what we assume it to say.

Make sure that the group are clear from the beginning that we are not carrying out a comprehensive study on the subject of divorce; but touching on it from the viewpoint of Jesus' specific teaching in The Sermon on the Mount.

Be aware that there will be members in your group who have experienced divorce in their own lives; either before or after they became Christians. For some it will be a sensitive subject; so it is essential to keep to the subject in hand and measure all questions that arise against the Scripture references in this study.

Question 1

- a) God has a high view of marriage.
- b) Marriage was to be permanent.
- c) Marriage was to be between one man and one woman
- d) When God instituted marriage it was the intention that a man and woman would become one person.
- e) There was no provision; or any need for any provision, for divorce under God's creation ordinance.

Question 2

- a) Although God's design did not include divorce, He knew that in a cursed world because of sin it would be a reality.
- b) We see this in Jesus' words in **Matthew 19:8**. God permitted divorce because of the people's hardness of heart.
- c) From what Jesus teaches we therefore conclude that divorce was permitted by God in the law; but only on the grounds of sexual immorality.

Question 3

- a) Verse 31 is on the surface consistent with the law itself; where a certificate of divorce was required.
- b) As often is the case, the interpretation of the law became obscured and by Jesus' day, some even taught that it could be some imperfection in the wife as trivial as serving her husband food that she had accidentally burned.
- c) Divorce certificates were being used like confetti!
- d) The religious leaders had turned the Law that had permitted divorce under certain conditions into a command to divorce. That was a gross distortion of what the Law said, for nowhere in Scripture goes God command divorce!

Question 4

Read: Deuteronomy 24:1-4

- a) The point that Jesus is making in referring to Deuteronomy 24 in Matthew 5 is not that divorce for anything that the husband finds obnoxious about his wife is legitimate.
- b) The point He is making is that divorce for anything less than adultery causes adultery.
- c) Therefore, if somebody divorces his wife for something short of adultery he forces her to commit adultery; he forces the man who marries her to commit adultery; he forces himself to be guilty of making her an adulteress... and so on.
- d) Basically the act compounds the sin of unlawful divorce with the sin of adultery (already dealt with in the previous section of the Sermon on the Mount). And it doesn't just affect one person.
- e) By distorting what God had said the Pharisees and Scribes were causing people to sin.

Question 5

- a) It is easy to base our understanding of a biblical issue either on 'selective reading' of Scripture or information that has been passed on to us from other people's understanding.
- b) What we have discovered in this study may agree with what we already knew to be true, but perhaps we have not looked closely before as to the exact meaning of the particular texts.
- c) This study is a reminder of the importance of "*rightly handling the word of truth*" (2 Tim 2:15).