

SAMPLE PAGES FROM LESSON 8: COMMITMENT, DATING AND MARRIAGE

How did Jesus indicate that not all marriages would make it? Why would they not make it?
He indicated that divorce was and is too common. Divorce often happens because people are so selfish and cold-hearted.

Matthew 5:31-32 It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery. (NIV)

This scripture is a part of the “Sermon on the Mount”. In the first part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talked about the “blesseds” (blessed are the poor in spirit, meek, etc.). In the second part, from where this scripture was taken, the emphasis is on “but I tell you”. Each section (murder, adultery, divorce, etc.) starts with “It has been said” and finishes with a “but I tell you” teaching. In each case, Jesus’ commands went beyond the commonly understood interpretations. He was emphasizing something that was really important.

Again, do not let the group get sidetracked into fruitless arguments about various church stands on the subject of divorce and remarriage. Each of the following questions has been designed to keep focus on the central theme of the importance of commitment and making a marriage work.

What does this scripture tell us about wife swapping or sex for hire?
It is unthinkable. It flies in the face of everything that scriptures teach about love and commitment.

Who will God blame for the sins of others that occur when a husband divorces his wife for no good reason?
God will blame the husband. He is responsible for not just himself but for everybody around him that he damages.

Jeremiah 3:20 But like a woman unfaithful to her husband, so you have been unfaithful to me, O house of Israel," declares the LORD. (NIV)

How important is sexual purity in marriage relationship? How is it like our relationship to God?
It is sacred to the Christian. It is a picture of what our devotion to God should look like.

APPLICATION

Discussion Exercise



Below are Scenarios that represent one or more points presented in this lesson. Analyze each as a group and come up with recommendations.

Situation 1: Tonya has been living with her boyfriend for three years now. She would like to be married, but her boyfriend does not seem interested. How should she handle this?

She should face the fact that a marriage commitment is unlikely. She should stop letting the boyfriend live with her. This arrangement displeases God and prevents something better from even being possible. She should realize the importance of mutual commitment outweighs any other if a relationship is to last.

Situation 2: John and Sally are married but there is no spark left between them. They do not even like each other. It has been suggested that they see a counselor, but they do not see any point in it. How would you, as a friend, explain that they should give it a try? Why might there still be some hope for them?

Their vows of commitment, Christian values of love and concern, and their desire to please God should be enough for them to make every effort. Most likely, the marriage can be saved if the right things are done. The counselor may be able show them new ways of doing and viewing things that will start things moving in a different direction. The Christian message is “do not give up so soon”. The couple may eventually rediscover love that they were sure they had lost.

Situation 3: Tony and Joan have been living together while unmarried for twenty years. Now that they have started living for God, they are confused as to what they should do. What should they do?

They should probably get married. They should not continue living together while being unmarried. This would be a good time for them to consider how committed they really are to each other.

Situation 4: Tom and Beth are a married couple, and both have had many extra-marital affairs. They are wondering if it is too late for them now. How could you encourage them?

This would be a wonderful time for them to set new priorities and attitudes about commitment. Their marriage could be better than ever if the right things are done. Christ teaches repentance and forgiveness. Beautiful things can happen when we turn to God and observe his principles.



TRUE/FALSE TEST

Choose True or False for each lettered response.
Share your answers with the group.

1. Commitment between two dating persons ...
 - T* a. needs to exist because each deserves respect.
 - T* b. may take the form of giving in to the other.
 - F* c. does not apply because they are not married. *We are all committed to love others whether married or not. We are to treat others with respect and love.*
 - F* d. is not necessary as long as no one gets hurt. *Same as above.*
 - F* e. means that neither will have to say he or she is sorry. *None of us is perfect.*

2. If one dating partner wants a commitment and the other does not, the couple should ...
 - F* a. live together for another year to see if things will change. *This kind of relationship does not usually lead to marriage. They should not live together without commitment and marriage.*
 - F* b. just continue on as before and not bring up the things that would just cause more conflict. *This will not solve anything.*
 - T* c. be practical and end the relationship. *They should end this type of living relationship.*
 - F* d. None of the above. This is more complicated than it seems. *It is simple. They should not continue this type of relationship. Response "c" is correct.*

3. The Bible teaches that divorce ...
 - F* a. is never justified.
 - F* b. is a good option when one person stops meeting the needs of the other.
 - F* c. is all right if you find someone else and that person will marry you if you legally divorce your partner first.
 - F* d. is all right if the other person is not a Christian.
 - F* e. None of the above. The Bible does not say anything about divorce.

4. Many marriages could be saved if ...
 - T* a. each partner became more unselfish.
 - T* b. one of the partners became more unselfish.
 - F* c. the mother-in-law would stop coming over so much.
 - T* d. each person stopped blaming the other for the failure of the marriage.

5. Why is commitment a beautiful thing?
 - T* a. It is a refreshing alternative to living in a lonely world.
 - T* b. It reflects God's faithfulness to us.
 - T* c. It encourages closeness and intimacy.
 - F* d. None of the above. There has already been too much emphasis on commitment in marriage.