

Luke

Carefully Investigating the Gospel ... Together

SSBC Luke Bible Study #59

Take this Bible Study home and use it to guide your exploration of the scripture passage that next Sunday's sermon will be focused on.

Passages: Luke 16:14-18
Matthew 19:3-12

Sermon Date: Nov 5, 2006

God, What Do You Say About Divorce?

You've heard the divorce statistics before. One out of two marriages ends in divorce. There are about 2 million marriages each year in the United States. There are about 1 million divorces each year.

You know a few of those 1 million.

You may be one of them.

You know their children.

You may be one of them.

Where is God in this?

God invented marriage. It is his design by which life on earth is sustained. In the beginning, he created man and woman, and united them in marriage. Then sin entered the world. And death. Now imperfections abound. "I, Jack, take you, Jill, to be my wife ... for better or worse, in sickness and in health, until death do us part."

And they lived happily ever after?

We live in a divorce-ravaged land. Many of us are deeply wounded. Let's turn to God for counsel, ... for healing.

These studies are produced by South Shore Baptist Church in conjunction with our weekly sermon series. Studies are distributed one week prior to the sermon as inserts in the church bulletin and posting at www.southshorebaptist.com/sermons/. Sermons are also recorded and can be listened to later by visiting that same website. Have feedback or questions? Contact studieditor@southshorebaptist.com

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Bible Study:

1. Read this week's Bible passage and use the chart below to note your observations and any questions you have. Also read and make observations about Matthew 19:3-12, which is a longer passage that provides the Bible's most comprehensive teaching about divorce.

Scripture	Your Observations & Questions
<p>Luke 16:14-18</p> <p>¹⁴ The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. ¹⁵ He said to them, "You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of men, but God knows your hearts. What is highly valued among men is detestable in God's sight.</p> <p>¹⁶ "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it.</p> <p>¹⁷ It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law.</p> <p>¹⁸ "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.</p>	
<p>Matthew 19:3-12</p> <p>³ Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"</p>	

Scripture	Your Observations & Questions
<p>⁴ "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'^{a5} and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'^b? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."</p> <p>⁷ "Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"</p> <p>⁸ Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. ⁹ I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."</p> <p>¹⁰ The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."</p> <p>¹¹ Jesus replied, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹² For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage^c because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it."</p> <p>a Genesis 1:27 b Genesis 2:24 c Or 'have made themselves eunuchs'</p>	

2. Mt 19:8 says “it was not this way from the beginning.” What is God’s ideal plan for marriage? (Gen 1:27-28, 2:24 and Mal 2:13-16)

Exploring the teaching of the whole of scripture on a topic such as divorce is called a “topical” study. A good place to start a topical study is by using a concordance or a topical Bible to find all the passages that deal with or at least mention the topic you wish to study. **Nave’s Topical Bible** is one example. You can access a public domain edition at www.studylight.org/con/ntb (it’s also a good book to get a copy of for your personal study library). Doing a search of the word ‘divorce’ in Nave’s yields the following:

- General scriptures concerning Exodus 21:7-11; Deuteronomy 21:10-14; 24:1-4; Ezra 10:1-16; Nehemiah 13:23-30; Jeremiah 3:1; Micah 2:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31,32; 19:3-12; Mark 10:2; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-17
- Disobedience of the wife to the husband, a sufficient cause for, in the Persian empire Esther 1:10-22
- Figurative: Isaiah 50:1, 54:4, Jeremiah 3:8

This gives you a collection of verses to explore. This is a difficult topic to sort out, and also a painful one for many of us. So explore these verses, work together with others, and trust God to help you grow.

3. OLD TESTAMENT: The OT passages about divorce are rather different from the NT, and reflect a very different culture than today’s. Explore them and note briefly the gist of what each says about divorce.

a. Exodus 21:7-11

b. Deut 21:10-14

c. Deut 24:1-4

d. Ezra 10:1-17

e. Jer 3:1

f. Micah 2:9

g. Malachi 2:14-16

h. Now summarize the picture you see of divorce from the OT passages above – how does God seem to view divorce?

4. NEW TESTAMENT: Now read some NT passages that mention divorce and see what else you learn about how God views divorce.

a. Mt 5:31-32

b. Mt 19:3-12

c. Mk 10:2-12

d. 1 Cor 7:10-17

e. How does the NT treatment of divorce illuminate and/or refine the OT laws and guidance about divorce? (If you're feeling like you have more questions than answers, the resources suggested below may help you.)

5. After doing your own analysis of the relevant scriptures, another helpful step in doing a topical study is to collaborate with others who have been down the same path. This might look like talking with a Christian friend or small group Bible study that has also looked into the topic. Another form is consulting the works of Christian writers who have addressed it. Bible encyclopedias and dictionaries offer concise topical reviews. You can find a number of these at www.studylight.org. Here's one of the shorter ones about divorce:

DIVORCE — The dissolution of the marriage tie was regulated by the Mosaic law (Deut. 24:1–4). The Jews, after the Captivity, were required to dismiss the foreign women they had married contrary to the law (Ezra 10:11–19). Christ limited the permission of divorce to the single case of adultery. It seems that it was not uncommon for the Jews at that time to dissolve the union on very slight pretences (Matt. 5:31, 32; 19:1–9; Mark 10:2–12; Luke 16:18). These precepts given by Christ regulate the law of divorce in the Christian Church. [Easton, M. 1996, c1897. *Easton's Bible dictionary*.]

These resources will often validate your own sense of what the scriptures say, but they will as often stretch your thinking. But be careful – always start with your own reading of God's Word on the subject so you can protect yourself from errant teachings of men.

➡ Try looking up divorce in some of the other encyclopedias and dictionaries at www.studylight.org (the study resources are listed in the bottom left of the website).

6. Divorce leaves deep emotional scars on the spouses involved, their children, and other loved ones in their lives.

a. How has divorce impacted your life?

b. List below some names of people you know who have experienced divorce personally or in their immediate family. Then take a few minutes to (1) pray for them and (2) talk and listen to God about these instances of divorce.

c. What questions or concerns remain in your mind or on your heart about divorce and God's perspective, God's role, God's plans?

7. How can you apply what you learned in this Bible study?

Our God is Jehovah Rophe (raw faw') – the God who **heals**. He is also a God of **grace** and **forgiveness**. Close your study time by reading or praying through the passage Jesus first read from when he began his public ministry. Be comforted to know that God cares for you. He gave up his own son in order to bind up our wounds and brokenness. He makes us whole again.

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me,
because the LORD has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim freedom for the captives
and release from darkness for the prisoners,
to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor
and the day of vengeance of our God,
to comfort all who mourn,
and provide for those who grieve in Zion –
to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of mourning,
and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.
They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.*

(Isaiah 61:1-3)