

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

How Does Faith Affect Family Life?
Matthew 19:1-15

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

As you introduce the lesson, be sensitive to those who have experienced divorce or disruption in family life.

Bible Study Leader:

Prayerfully prepare for today's lesson. This is the teaching of Jesus Himself and it must be understood. But our presentation of it can be either loving or harsh. Make sure

through prayer and compassion that you, as the leader, present the passage in love and that the participants participate in the same manner, the way that Christ would do so.

Hurt feelings or feeling that one has been judged and found guilty can easily destroy a small home church. Be loving! Be careful!

Worship Time Leader:

Prepare the scripture passage for the three readers and enlist them ahead of time if possible. Make copies from the final page of this session.

Music Sources:

We Have Come Into His House, *The Worship Hymnal* # 666; CCLI # 17212

O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus, *The Worship Hymnal* #171; CCLI #4414137

Your Love is Amazing, *The Worship Hymnal* # 100; CCLI # 2678212

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)***How Does Faith Affect Family Life?*****Focal Text**

Matthew 19:1-15

Background Text

Matthew 19-22

Main Idea

Jesus calls for husbands and wives to be committed to each other for life, for singleness as well as marriage to be considered acceptable in God's eyes, and for children to be recognised as being of special concern to him.

Question to Explore

What does the Christian faith say about marriage, singleness, and the place of children?

Teaching Aim

To help participants summarise Jesus' teachings about marriage, singleness, and the place of children and identify implications for individual Christians and churches.

Gathering together:

Sing **O The Deep, Deep Love of Jesus**

First thoughts:

If you have been a part of a home church for some time which uses the material from **homechurchonline.com**, you will have studied the place of the family in both Old and New Testament passages. This is indicative of the importance of family life in any culture and the importance of faith in family life. The passage in Matthew 19:1-15 represents the teachings which Jesus gave concerning divorce. But it is concerned with more than the justification of divorce. Jesus was concerned with our understanding the concept of becoming "one flesh" and the great pain which is caused when separation and divorce occurs. This will be a painful passage for some for there are few families in modern life which have not experienced divorce within their family circle. Like so many

of Jesus' teachings, this is an "up front" teaching. Decisions which are made early on in life affect the decisions we make later. Pray that we study this session and learn from it with all the love that Jesus expects of us who know the Lord who first loved us.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

How Does Faith Affect Family Life?

Focal Text

Matthew 19:1-15

Background Text

Matthew 19-22

Main Idea

Jesus calls for husbands and wives to be committed to each other for life, for singleness as well as marriage to be considered acceptable in God’s eyes, and for children to be recognised as being of special concern to him.

Question to Explore

What does the Christian faith say about marriage, singleness, and the place of children?

Teaching Aim

To help participants summarise Jesus’ teachings about marriage, singleness, and the place of children and identify implications for individual Christians and churches.

Introduction to your personal study:

An old story goes like this: A middle-aged single woman approached her pastor while he was working in his study. “Pastor, I’ve come to talk to you about God’s plan for marriage.”

“Well, Mildred, you know what God has taught us – one man with one woman for life. We dare not change that,” her pastor replied.

“Oh, I don’t want to change it, she replied. I just want to know how to get in on it!”

It's an amusing anecdote, but sadly many people seem to be anxious to 'get in on' marriage before they've given any thought to God's plan for families. The result in our society is that the divorce rate is spiralling and families are destroyed. God's Word helps us to focus on his truth and his wonderful plan for our lives.

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you, as well.

Focusing on the Meaning:

Tricky Questions 19:1-6

1-2 At this time Jesus left Galilee and travelled to Judea on the other side of the Jordan River. Here he continued his ministry of healing and teaching among the crowds which always followed him.

3 The Pharisees posed a question to Jesus – not seeking information or truth, but to stir up controversy. They asked if divorce was lawful for any reason. Several schools of thought were common among the rabbis of that time. Some permitted divorce for any flimsy reason, while others held that divorce was only possible because of adultery. The Pharisees plan was to trap Jesus into taking sides in the controversy.

4-6 Rather than answering their question about divorce, Jesus took the Pharisees right back to the beginning of creation. He quoted Genesis 2:24 to show God's purpose and ideal for marriage – one man for one woman for life. The marriage (what God had joined together) was not to be dissolved by man.

More questions and clarification 19:7-9

7 The Pharisees countered with another question based on Deuteronomy 24:1. Why did Moses command divorce?

8,9 Jesus indicated that Moses allowed (not commanded) divorce only because of the hardness of their hearts and failure to obey God. From God's perspective divorce violates the ideal for marriage. However, it shouldn't be regarded as an unforgivable sin. Jewish women of that day had very few rights; they were certainly not allowed to initiate divorce proceedings against their husbands. Jesus was protecting the position of women by saying that divorce is only permissible because of adultery. Divorce should always be the final option, not the quick and easy way out.

To marry or stay single 19:10-12

10 Jesus disciples reacted to this teaching on divorce with much amazement. They felt that since God's standards for marriage were so high, it would be better not to marry at all.

11,12 Jesus helped his disciples understand that marriage may not be for everyone, and that is okay. Jesus did not advocate celibacy over marriage, but he did say that there are excellent reasons why some people might choose to remain single. Physical traits, emotional complications, family responsibilities, and vocational commitments might be some reasons for not marrying. Jesus himself was unmarried, as were John the Baptist and Paul. Each had a commitment to service of God that precluded marriage and family.

A lesson from children 19:13-15

13-15 The teaching lesson on marriage and divorce was interrupted by some parents who brought their children to Jesus to be blessed. A blessing for children was part of Jewish tradition. The disciples were unhappy with this interruption, perhaps because they wanted to protect Jesus' schedule, or perhaps because they saw children as being of little use in God's kingdom.

But Jesus overruled the disciples and invited the children to come to him. He indicated that those whom the world might regard as worthless were a precious part of his kingdom. These children were privileged to have Christ take them in his arms and pray for them. Check Mark 10:13-16 for a parallel account of this incident that gives greater detail. There is nothing in this passage that gives credence to infant baptism or salvation.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

Jesus reaffirms in this passage that one man for one woman for life is God's ideal pattern for marriage. It must not be entered into or broken casually. Even if there has been adultery within a marriage, there can be forgiveness and healing. This is primarily true if couples are willing to place Christ at the centre of their lives and marriage. Happy marriages require commitment, understanding, and hard work. This passage also affirms that singleness is a valid option for some, and that children are precious in the sight of Jesus.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

How Does Faith Affect Family Life?

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc. Children who stay with their parents in the Youth/Adult study should have the material on worship as suggested in **The Children's Corner** at the beginning of this **Unit** of studies. (Ask your leader who downloads the studies for those suggestions).

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Matthew 19:1-15

Background Text

Matthew 19-22

Main Idea

Jesus calls for husbands and wives to be committed to each other for life, for singleness as well as marriage to be considered acceptable in God's eyes, and for children to be recognised as being of special concern to him.

Question to Explore

What does the Christian faith say about marriage, singleness, and the place of children?

Teaching Aim

To help participants summarise Jesus' teachings about marriage, singleness, and the place of children and identify implications for individual Christians and churches.

Connect with Life:

When the group has assembled, conduct an informal survey. Is there anyone who has not been touched by divorce in their family—in their extended family? Discuss the major causes of divorce in our culture. Be sensitive to time and to keeping one person from monopolizing the time.

Guide the Study:

Have a group member read Matthew 19:1-9.

Call for ideas about what the Pharisees hoped to accomplish with this line of questioning.

Outline Jesus' position on marriage and divorce.

Ask someone to read Deuteronomy 24:1 aloud and share their thoughts about Moses' instructions on divorce.

Ask: Was it really a command?

Pose the question, "In verse 9, was Jesus advocating that a person should divorce an unfaithful mate?"

Call attention to verses 10-12. Examine why the disciples reacted with despair.

Ask: Can anyone describe how the laws regarding divorce differ in our nation from the time, place, and culture in which Jesus lived and taught?

Discuss this statement 'Not everyone is "cut out" or appropriate, well-suited for, or fit for married life'.

Ask: What might be a valid reason for remaining single?

If appropriate for your group, discuss the situation where a person may feel that they want and need to be married but, for whatever reasons, have not found a mate.

Ask for the group to consider this situation in the light of scriptures that teach about the will of God for every person. Be very careful to not allow the idea that, if a person feels that they should be married and are not, that they are "out of God's will". They may be in the center of God's will but just not understand it, nor necessarily be content with it."

Seek suggestions from the group regarding situations other than marriage where a person or a family may be in God's will but may not be content. You may need to encourage dialog with the following ideas:

A family from an impoverished nation who wants to immigrate to a wealthy nation but cannot gain permission or funds to do so.

A person working in a job that they feel is less than he or she is capable of doing but has little chance for promotion or vocational change.

A person must be away from their family for long periods of time because of their employment.

A family that wants children birthed by them but cannot conceive a child.

A family that must care for a family member whose mental or physical condition makes life seem almost impossible to endure.

A person that has a terminal illness – or has a loved one with a terminal illness.

A person who is being requested (or perhaps commanded) to accept a position or responsibility for which he or she is sure is beyond her or his abilities – or simply one that they just don't want.

Seek opinions on this: How would you encourage or reassure friends or family members who came to you with one of these problems and who questions you regarding God's will in their lives, especially if you, yourself, have never faced such a situation?

Suggest to the group that compassion and prayer on our part may be far more effective than the "pat" answer that "it is just God's will". Confessing that you may not have the answer but you will walk with them in compassion as they contend with the situation may be the best answer you can give.

Have a person read verses 13-15.

See if the group can recall other scripture passages that emphasize the value of children. Consider whether there is any evidence in our nation today that we are learning the importance of children.

Urge the group to consider ways that your church could make it even more evident that your church truly values children.

Look for opinions and solutions to this: How can the children of every age be more included in the study, worship, and ministry of our church.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Call on group members to share personally how faith in Christ helps us overcome problems in marriage. Have a time of prayer specifically for families that might be going through difficult days. Remind the group to hold each other up in prayer during the week.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

How Does Faith Affect Family Life?

Matthew 19:1-15

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Shema!

Look up the Jewish concept of Shema in a Bible dictionary or online. Read Deuteronomy 6: 4-9 and rewrite it in modern day language. You may want to read ***The Message*** for another interpretation in modern day language. Or try another Bible version in contemporary language. But try writing it on your own first.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***How Does Faith Affect Family Life?***
Matthew 19:1-15**Beginning the Service:**

Sing songs from those listed in Music Sources.

Have several youth or older children read today's scripture passage. Assign it, if possible, as follows below:

Be sure that the rest of the congregation is following along in their own Bibles. You will need to remind them of the reference (Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

First reader:

Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it.

Second reader:

so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.

Third reader:

O, Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and you may multiply greatly, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you in a land flowing with milk and honey.

First reader:

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Second reader:

And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart;

And you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Third reader:

And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Offering:

Praying for the World:

The Nile River Valley, stretching south from Cairo to the Sudanese border and also known as Upper Egypt, is home to more than 24 million Saidi Arabs. Saidi Arabs have intensely held on to their traditions and values through centuries of change. For many of them, poverty and a lack of basic human services is the norm, but so is a remarkable hospitality. They are proud to be Egyptian and proud to be Muslim. Pray for this people group.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

**The Family in the Presence of God
Deuteronomy 6:4-9**

In today's Bible study lesson we have struggled with questions about marriage and divorce and the role of children. Often, our discussions about divorce begin at the wrong starting point. We look at the issue from the wrong perspective.

The old, old passage in Deuteronomy where Moses passes on the expectations of the Lord for family life to the Israelite people is still our best guide.

In it, Moses refers to the ***“land where you are going over to possess”***. For the Israelites, that was the Promised Land – a promise of God fulfilled and a land flowing with milk and honey. That is, it was a land with plenty of food and other good things.

For the new couple on their wedding day, the ***“land where you are going over to possess”*** is not the promised land of the Israelites, but it is nonetheless a promised land – a land filled with goodness. Even though the couple’s first home may be a student apartment or a basement flat, it is a home filled with goodness. The Christian couple sees their marriage and their home as a fulfillment of God’s promise to them. The happiness of that day is felt by all who share the wedding celebration when the couple has truly sought God’s leadership in choosing and finding a mate.

In verse 2 of this passage we are told what is the purpose of a family understanding and keeping the commandments and statutes and judgments of the Lord. The purpose is ***“so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God.”*** Although not every couple will choose to have children or be able to have children, the long, long look of family life is expressed here. From the foundation of this new home, everything you do, every decision you make, every stand for right, every way you honour another human being will influence your sons and daughters, your grandsons and granddaughters.

Children and grandchildren and great grandchildren do not always make the choices that we would wish for them to make. But in as far as it is in our sphere of influence to encourage them to make honest, just and upright choices, we must be true and faithful in our teaching. And that teaching begins in earnest on the very day the commitment a couple makes to one another is made.

Here, we accept with gladness the Jewish heritage of teaching children in the everyday acts of human life. We love the Lord with all our heart, all our soul and all our might and we make sure that our children understand that love. We thank God for the blessings of food and shelter – not a quick, formula kind of prayer, but a heart-felt thanksgiving for the fancy meal or the simple one; for the joy of being together; for one another.

We make sure children understand how God provides for financial needs and for health needs and for friendship needs and in those huge overwhelming desperate crises of life when we are almost in despair, we let our children know we are hanging on to God.

A young adult couple with three boys – ages 7, 5 and 3- sold their home and moved many miles to attend school in preparation for full time ministry. They moved to Canada in December and on their trip experienced a snow storm driving experience enough to make think about turning around and going back home. But with determination, they continued their journey.

Adapting to a new life which included both Mommy and Daddy’s studying many hours was accomplished by these three young boys because they clearly understood that God was preparing their parents for service. Doing without some of the advantages of a

home with two stable incomes was not a big deal because even at their young ages, the boys had an understanding of the promise that God had made to their family. In the fall, the husband's father became very, very ill and the family returned to be with him in the last days of his life. They completed their semester's studies long distance; the husband helped his mother with around the clock care of his father. The wife and boys stayed with her parents an hour's distance from the dad.

The time came for them to return to school and they reluctantly left their dying loved one and returned to the task God had called them to do. In only a few days, their dad had died and they returned once again to minister to family.

In a recent letter, the wife wrote, "the boys are so sensitive to everything; it is imperative that I live a squeaky clean life before them". What an amazing opportunity this young family has had to learn about family life. The boys have seen their parents respond to God's call; they have seen them care for a dying father and a grieving mother; they have been part of their grandfather's sharing about God's faithfulness in his life and in his death. Truly these parents know what it means to ***"teach diligently...your sons and talk with them about God when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up."***

Yes, the question about divorce which we asked in the Bible study hour is best answered by reflecting on the kind of marriage and family life that one purposes to have.

When God's presence and His teaching is the very heart and center of a family's existence, then that family, though not exempt from the difficulties of life or the temptations of the world, will most likely not be asking how to justify divorce. In Matthew 19:8, Jesus said, ***"Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning, it has not been this way." From the beginning it was "the two shall become one flesh."*** When we think of a couple having become "one flesh" we realize that Jesus understood the wrenching, searing pain that the separation of that "one flesh" represents.

Call to Commitment:

May we ask today that our hearts never be hardened to the goodness of family life which loves the Lord, seeks His guidance in every decision and includes Him in the daily conversation of ordinary life.

Concluding the Service:

Say: We will close our time in worship with scripture that reminds us how to spend our whole week in worship of our mighty God. Listen to this song from the Psalms:

***"Shout with joy to God, all the earth!
Sing the glory of his name;***

make his praise glorious!

***Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds!
All the earth bows down to you;
they sing praise to you,
they sing praise to your name."
Amen and Amen!***

Psalms 66:1,2,3a,4

Prepare three copies of this reading and enlist readers ahead of time if possible.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

First reader:

Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the Lord your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it.

Second reader:

so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the Lord your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged.

Third reader:

O, Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and you may multiply greatly, just as the Lord, the God of your fathers, has promised you in a land flowing with milk and honey.

First reader:

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

Second reader:

And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart;

And you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Third reader:

And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand they shall be as frontals on your forehead.

And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.