

Gathering Question:

Have your group come up with the “Top Ten Reasons Why Marriages Fail.” After you do that, work on this list for a few minutes, “Top Ten Tips for a Strong Marriage.”

Faithfulness in Marriage and Speech

There is almost no unhappiness that can compare with the unhappiness you will find in an unhappy marriage. And there is no tragedy as great as when a relationship that was supposed to last an entire lifetime comes to an end. Marriage is meant for love and fulfillment but when it degenerates into deep bitterness, discord, and despair, it can cause the deepest of hurts that a person can experience.

During the time when Jesus was here on earth there were two major schools of thought among the Jewish people about marriage and divorce. Rabbi Shammai taught that divorce was permitted only in extreme cases but Rabbi Hillel taught that it was permitted for any and every reason. Both were interpreting the meaning of Deuteronomy 24, but as you can see their interpretations were far apart.

Jesus’ response is very strict. Divorce should never take place unless there is unchastity in the relationship. When people decide to marry, they should plan to keep their promises to each other for a lifetime and they should plan on working out the problems that inevitably arise. Dissolution of a marriage is always to be the last resort according to Jesus. Marriages must be bathed in love and forgiveness and every effort should be made for them to last a lifetime.

Even though a discussion about divorce can sometimes be controversial and very complex and even though it touches many lives at a very deep level, the teaching of Jesus is good and it is important. Jesus calls us to faithfulness in every part of our lives.

Read:

Matthew 5:31-37; 19:3-9

Reflect:

1. Jesus points back to Genesis as he talks about marriage. What does this teach us about God’s original design for marriage?
2. How can two people prepare for a marriage that meets God’s original design for marriage? If you are married, how would you have changed your process of preparation before your marriage?
3. In what ways does divorce reveal the hardness of a person’s heart?
4. How might the topic of oaths and vows relate to the subject of marriage and divorce?