October 5 / 6
Matthew 5:31-37
"Freely Limited"

If you try to find out what is the divorce rate in America, you're probably going to be frustrated. It's a difficult number to nail down. While it's not true that half of all marriages end in divorce, each one of us has been touched by divorce in some way. As we look at this week's passage, it's important to remember that it falls in the broader context that begin with Jesus saying that our righteousness must surpass that of the religious leaders. They were great at keeping the letter of the law, but not good and seeing the deeper heart issues. Accordingly, Jesus' goal is not to say everything that needs to be said about divorce and remarriage, but to bring those deeper issues into the conversation.

Sermon Notes:

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Welcome

- Introduce anyone new to the group.
- Optional icebreaker question: How has divorce touched your family (or extended family)?

Opening Prayer

It's important to begin with prayer. Pray that God would help each person hear exactly what they need through your time together.

Duckling Discipleship

If you are using this Discovery Bible Study guide, one of the huge strengths of DBS, and a big part of why we choose to use this method at Crossroads, is that it is so easy to model. Jesus showed us how discipleship "works" – one person does, another person follows. When the follower has learned to do, they train a third person. And so on. It's like a mother duck with ducklings lined up behind her. Only one duck is following the mother – the others are just following the one in front of them. So here's a question: Whom are you training in your small group? Have you asked someone else to lead DBS for your group? If not, pray about it this week and make the ask within the next 7 days.

Look Back

- Over this past week, what is one way you saw God move?
- Is there someone whom you have helped take a step toward Jesus? Have you shared your story or God's story with someone?
- Did you follow-through with a step of obedience that you shared the last time your group met?

Look Up

Women were the victim of the way divorce was practiced in Jesus' day. Divorce was a very casual thing and hardly required any grounds. The religious leaders felt their only responsibility was to make sure the paperwork was right. They didn't lift a finger to help prevent divorce in the first place. The only moral issue was: Did we dot our i's and cross our t's? Jesus' point is that there are much larger issues at stake. God's design is that it be a lifelong commitment, not something to put on and take off like an outfit. And it's actually living within the limits of the marriage commitment, and really any promise we make, where true flourishing and freedom is found.

- Read Matthew 5:31-37 together as a group.

What especially caught your attention as you read this passage? What did you like? What is challenging or difficult to understand?

- "True freedom is found with healthy limits rather than infinite options." Agree or disagree?

- Have you experienced a time where limits actually increased your sense of freedom? How did that work, since that seems counter to how we normally think?

- Jesus puts marriage/divorce in the same context as keeping one's word. What do the two have in common?

- In what ways do getting married, and giving your word, limit your future options? How is there freedom in that?

- One of the reasons we don't keep our word is because we believe the truth is not good enough. We overpromise because we believe that what we can actually do is not adequate. What is the connection between contentment and keeping our word?

Read the passage again. What does it say about God? What does it say about us?

- How does commitment in marriage reflect God's nature and character?

- Why do you think our culture has become so commitment averse? Why is it so important that we keep our options open?

Look Ahead

- Take a few minutes to reflect quietly on what you have discussed.
- Is there someone God is calling you to move toward for the purpose of reconciliation?
- What is the name of the person you will share this passage with this week?
- Take a few minutes to pray for one another