

# 30 DAYS TO SAVE YOUR FAMILY

## Marriage and Divorce

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**Caution:** This is a challenging discussion. With half of all marriages ending in divorce, you will almost certainly have group members who have already experienced the pain of divorce. You may want to look quickly over the whole study and then begin your discussion.

### Connect

15 Minutes

1. What's your commitment style? Are you the kind of person who finishes what you start? Or do you have a stack of unfinished projects?

### Grow

30 Minutes

**Context for the key scripture passage:** Malachi was a prophet who lived about 400 years before Jesus was born. Although a prophet is often thought of as a person who can see the future, they primarily were people who boldly spoke the words God prompted them to speak.

At the time he lived, many of the Jews who had been exiled were returning home and rebuilding under the leadership of men like Nehemiah and Ezra. However, the people who returned were in many ways unchanged by their time in exile and were still very determined to do things their own way. And that included a selfish way of handling marriage and divorce.

As you read the following section of scripture, listen for the emotion behind Malachi's words:

*Here is another thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, weeping and groaning because he pays no attention to your offerings and doesn't accept them with pleasure. You cry out, "Why doesn't the Lord accept my worship?" I'll tell you why! Because the Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young. But you have been unfaithful to her, though she remained your faithful partner, the wife of your marriage vows. Didn't the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth. "For I hate divorce!" says the Lord, the God of Israel. "To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty," says the Lord of Heaven's Armies. "So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife." Malachi 2:13-16 NLT*

2. Why does Malachi say that God is not accepting their offerings and their worship?
3. What do you think when you hear the words, "I hate divorce?"
4. Does the absence of a disclaimer surprise you (i.e., I hate divorce except in bad marriages, except where the feelings have died, etc.)?

## **Before you continue, build a better understanding of the issue.**

5. God also spoke through the prophet Jeremiah and said,

*"Have you seen what fickle Israel has done? Like a wife who commits adultery, Israel has worshiped other gods on every hill and under every green tree. I thought, 'After she has done all this, she will return to me.' But she did not return, and her faithless sister Judah saw this. She saw that I divorced faithless Israel because of her adultery."* Jeremiah 3:6-8  
NLT

What do you notice after reading this passage?

"It is altogether true that God hates divorce. But He neither hates all divorces in the same way nor hates every aspect of divorce. He hates what occasions *every* divorce—even the one He gave to sinful Israel (p. 23, Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible)."

6. There are several lists of various sins in the Bible (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21, and Revelation 22:15). How do you understand the fact that divorce is not mentioned in any of these lists?
7. Romans 5:8 is a verse everyone should memorize. "God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us *while* we were still sinners." How does that make you feel knowing that God loves all of us?

## **We now return you Malachi and this week's discussion:**

8. In explaining why God wasn't blessing their offerings and worship, Malachi said, "*the Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made when you were young.*"
9. Malachi makes two similar statements in this passage: *So guard your heart; remain loyal to the wife of your youth,*" and "*So guard your heart; do not be unfaithful to your wife.*"

Why do you think he repeats the statement that they were to "guard their heart?"

10. How would someone "guard their heart?"

## **Surrender**

15 Minutes

11. If your group is larger than 6 people, consider sub-grouping for prayer this week. Best practice is to make this time guys with guys and gals with gals. Before you pray tonight, take a few minutes to allow your group members who are comfortable sharing to process the following questions:
- How well are you guarding your heart?
  - Is there an area where you need prayer?
  - Have you made a step in the right direction?