

LEADER'S GUIDE  
SAMPLE

DIVORCE *Care*<sup>®</sup>

Find Help • Discover Hope • Experience Healing





# HELPLINE AND ONLINE ACCESS

DivorceCare exists as a ministry to help you as you help others. Feel free to contact us with questions, problems and success stories!

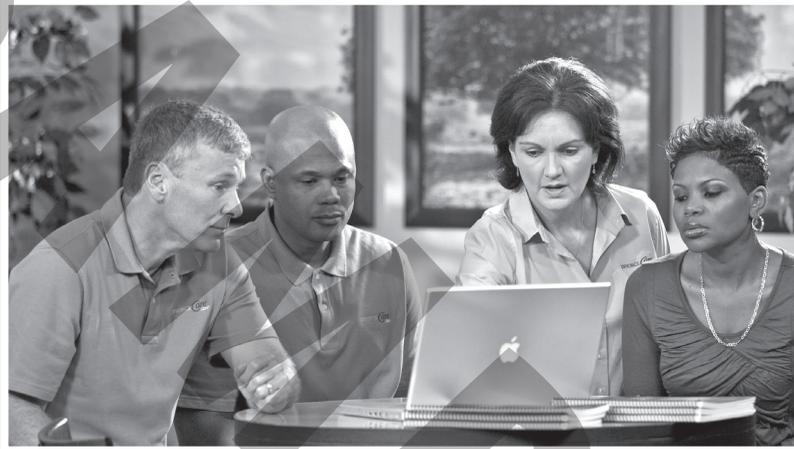
## HOW TO CONTACT US

Phone: **800-489-7778** (US/Canada)  
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Web: [www.divorcecare.org](http://www.divorcecare.org)

Office hours: Monday–Friday,  
8:30 a.m.–5:30 p.m., eastern time



## LEADERZONE

The online LeaderZone is a resource hub for “leaders only.” Download DivorceCare logos and advertising art. Need another set of Session Agendas & Discussion Questions? Find them at the LeaderZone. All reproducible pages in this book are available for download and reprint on the LeaderZone, [www.divorcecare.org/leaderzone](http://www.divorcecare.org/leaderzone). A list of all downloadable forms and articles mentioned in this book are listed on page 115. The LeaderZone is also where you can order additional DivorceCare workbooks and supplies for your group.

## LEADERS’ FORUM

Communicate easily and regularly with other DivorceCare leaders and our DivorceCare consultants through this online forum. You can ask questions, share ideas, make prayer requests and react to messages posted by other Forum members via web or email. To begin participating in the Leaders’ Forum, go to [www.divorcecare.org/leaderzone](http://www.divorcecare.org/leaderzone).

## “FIND A GROUP” ONLINE SEARCH ENGINE

This powerful publicity tool helps people find your group. It is located on the main DivorceCare website for the public to view. You input current information about your group at the LeaderZone, [www.divorcecare.org/leaderzone](http://www.divorcecare.org/leaderzone).

### Invite all members

of your DivorceCare leadership team to sign up for the Forum.

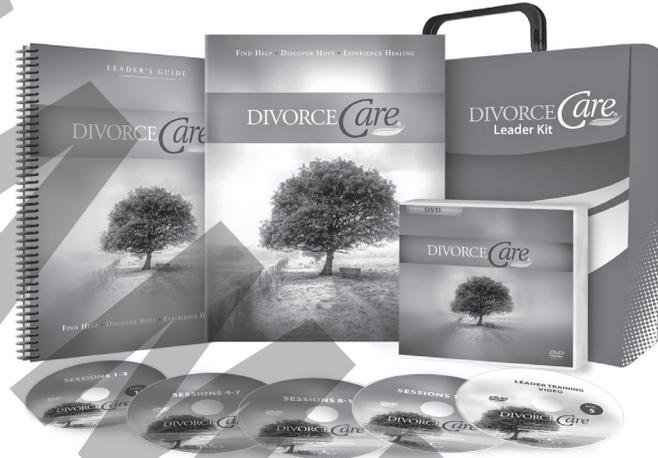
They will be greatly encouraged and learn valuable information to assist them in being effective leaders.

This is a free service for participating DivorceCare churches.

# GETTING STARTED

## CHECK YOUR DIVORCECARE MATERIALS

Please check the contents of your DivorceCare materials shipment. We've packed it with care, but we want to make sure you have everything you'll need for your ministry:



### 📍 SIX DVDS (WITH CASE)

- **Discs 1–4** containing 13 DivorceCare video programs
- **Disc 5:** Leader Training Video and promotional videos
- **Promo video disc:** Short videos to publicize your program, plus promo videos for other Church Initiative ministry programs

📍 **LEADER'S GUIDE:** Instructional and promotional leader training materials, plus Session Agendas & Discussion Questions for each session (each primary leader will need a Leader's Guide; make sure you also have a copy to share so that all leaders have the opportunity to read it)

📍 **PARTICIPANT WORKBOOKS:** Each leader and participant will need a copy; *please note that workbook pages are protected under U.S. copyright law and may not be photocopied*

📍 **PUBLICITY BROCHURES AND POSTERS** for mailing, distributing, bulletin inserts and bulletin boards

📍 **STURDY, POLY CARRYING CASE** for easy storage and transport of DivorceCare materials

If you are missing any of these items, please contact us, and we'll quickly send you the needed materials.

Additional Leader's Guides, workbooks and publicity materials can be purchased by phone (800-489-7778) or at [www.divorcecare.org/leaderzone](http://www.divorcecare.org/leaderzone).

## 30-DAY SATISFACTION GUARANTEE

The DivorceCare kits are sold with a 30-day guarantee. If you are not satisfied with your purchase, return it to us for a refund (excluding shipping charges). The 30-day return

### IMPORTANT

It is ESSENTIAL that you view your DVDs within 30 days of receipt to confirm quality. We will be happy to replace any defective DVDs within 30 days after you have received your DivorceCare kit. Replacement cannot be made beyond this 30-day period.

# ABOUT DIVORCECARE

DivorceCare is a network of thousands of divorce recovery support groups meeting worldwide. Our goal is to help you, in the context of your church, to lead an effective, weekly group that helps people experiencing separation and divorce to find help for their hurts, discover hope for the future and experience God's healing.

## THE NEED FOR DIVORCE RECOVERY MINISTRY

Divorce is widespread. Throughout your community, people hurting from the pain of separation and divorce need help and will often turn to a church for help. When they come, it might be the first time they've set foot in a church, or they might be returning after a long time away.

Sadly, even marriages within the church are breaking up, leaving a trail of hurting families and congregations that struggle to find the right response.

Your church has made the strategic decision to offer a structured program to help people recover from the trauma of separation and divorce. DivorceCare is carefully designed to equip your church to offer effective lay-driven divorce ministry.



## THE DIVORCECARE SOLUTION

DivorceCare is a program designed to equip churches to conduct ongoing ministry to separated and divorced people. The DivorceCare program takes a biblical approach to divorce, separation and related issues such as reconciliation, remarriage, forgiveness and the effect of divorce on children and families. DivorceCare emphasizes that real healing from the intense pain of divorce must begin with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

The DivorceCare program is helping thousands of churches to conduct ongoing ministry to separated and divorced people:

- Who attend your church (inreach)
- Throughout your community (outreach)

The easy-to-implement, video-based design of DivorceCare makes it simple for lay leaders to start and maintain an ongoing, effective ministry.

The program consists of:

- **COMPLETE TRAINING MATERIALS** for church lay leaders and other leadership team volunteers

[www.divorcecare.org](http://www.divorcecare.org)

- Find DivorceCare groups worldwide
- Sign up for the daily emails
- Read the Foundation for Healing

# DIVORCECARE DISTINCTIVES

Through our research and our experience in equipping thousands of churches worldwide for divorce support group ministries, we have developed the DivorceCare program around a set of key distinctives. We have seen this ministry model help many people find Christ-centered healing.

## THREE-COMPONENT DESIGN

DivorceCare is built around three components: video seminar, small group discussion and workbook.

- 📍 **THE VIDEO SEMINAR PORTION** offers expert teaching on topics important to people in separation and divorce.
- 📍 **THE SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION** segment allows participants to discuss how the video concepts relate to their own experiences.
- 📍 **THE WORKBOOK** provides a video note-taking tool and a daily Bible study for personal application.



All three components are intertwined and essential for promoting effective results in your group. For instance, a seminar-only format is impersonal and does not offer the opportunity for personal sharing and group interaction. A support-group-only format does not provide teaching and information that can be crucial to a person in the middle of a divorce. A personal study is necessary to allow time to apply what is learned during the DivorceCare sessions.

## ONGOING MINISTRY

The DivorceCare program consists of 13 weekly sessions, designed to be repeated in regular cycles throughout the year. Participants are encouraged to attend more than one 13-week cycle. Our experience shows that they will absorb new levels of information as they continue to grow. In addition, participants will benefit from sustained interaction with their group, which becomes much like a family for most group members.

## CHRIST-CENTERED

We stress the importance of a relationship with Jesus Christ as the foundation for healing. The pain of separation and divorce is one of the most intense feelings a human being can

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# CURRICULUM STRATEGY

## *How was the DivorceCare program designed?*

If you are new to DivorceCare leadership, you might be asking questions like:

“Why don’t you put Reconciliation and Forgiveness at the beginning of DivorceCare?”

“Why is the New Relationships session presented later in the sequence, especially since many of my group members are already dating?”

“Why is the session on what the Bible has to say about divorce held until the sixth week?”

There is a carefully designed strategy behind how the DivorceCare program is structured, including the order of the session topics. The goal is to present information in a sequence in which group members can best absorb and apply the material. We want to show you how this design works. To begin, you need to understand what to expect in your group.

## **WHAT TO EXPECT IN YOUR GROUP**

Every group has a unique personality, but there are some clear trends based on our observation of thousands of DivorceCare groups.

- 📍 Up to 90% of your group will come from outside your church (if you promote in your community).
- 📍 Half will not be Christians.
- 📍 Nonbelievers and people who have drifted from their faith have experienced so much pain that they are willing to at least consider spiritual solutions for the problems they face.
- 📍 Nonbelievers are typically not familiar with biblical concepts behind separation and divorce. Most will initially find biblical teaching a radical departure from what they’ve experienced in culture.
- 📍 Virtually ALL group members, regardless of background, are typically nervous and uncomfortable with the concept of attending a divorce support group.

## **CREATING TRUST AND COMMUNITY IN A NEW DIVORCECARE GROUP**

Understanding the issues listed just above, we now have several important goals to address in establishing a new group. The topic sequence of the video sessions is designed to help you achieve these goals:

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# FINDING AND RECRUITING YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

One of the most important things you can do to ensure the success of your DivorceCare group is to find, recruit and train the right leadership. Warm, caring, mature group leaders (whom we call “facilitators”) set the tone for the group discussion time that follows the video seminars. Having the right group facilitators will help group participants feel welcome, comfortable and free to share their feelings and thoughts.

If your church is just beginning a divorce recovery ministry, you might be serving as administrator, group facilitator and snack caterer. If that’s the case, this section can help you get started in building a leadership team. As your group begins to grow, ask the Lord to help you identify people who can assist you in leadership. To prevent burnout, never do ministry alone! If possible, always have someone serving with you. Remember the model that Jesus provided us in Luke 10:1-3, when He sent disciples out “two by two.”

Ideally, you’ll have a team of four (two men, two women). At a minimum you should have two people on your team. Whatever you do, don’t try and start this ministry alone.

If you are a pastor or lay leader overseeing this ministry, you will also find help here as you build your divorce recovery ministry team for your church.

## WHAT KIND OF GROUP FACILITATORS DO YOU NEED?

The people leading the group serve as facilitators, guiding and shepherding the group. These facilitators do not need to be teachers or counselors (in fact, assuming these roles in a group setting is counterproductive). The primary role of the DivorceCare group facilitators is to create an atmosphere of warmth, caring and trust in the discussion group. Group facilitators must also encourage discussion about what was seen on the DVD and a time of personal sharing about what is going on in the lives of each group participant.

You can begin your DivorceCare group by recruiting a leadership team: a group primary facilitator and co-facilitator. One person can lead a group, but a team is preferable. You won’t be able to survive as a leader for very long if you don’t recruit and train people to help lead your DivorceCare program.

As your program grows, ask other people to join the team and help with tasks like administration, publicity, food, registration, etc. (See the LeaderZone Library for Job Titles & Descriptions.) Adapt the structure of your leadership team to meet the needs of your program and church. There’s no best way to organize these kinds of responsibilities. Create an organization that works effectively for you!

**To prevent  
burnout, never  
do ministry alone!**

# DIVORCE MINISTRY FOR CHILDREN

The breakup of a marriage is really the breakup of a family. Many participants in your DivorceCare group have children who are hurting deeply.

## WHY YOUR CHURCH NEEDS IT

Sadly, children who experience the divorce of their parents often suffer alone in their grief. They have no access to support systems to help them understand what is happening. Divorce is the death of the only family they have known, and children need time to grieve the loss of their once-intact family. These children are found in every community and in almost every church.

Recent trends show that over a million children a year have experienced the divorce of their parents. Because children were thought to be resilient, for the most part they have been left out of divorce recovery ministries. Children's church leaders have known differently and for years requested a viable divorce recovery program for the children in their congregations. Church leaders see how beneficial the adult DivorceCare is for the adults, and they are beginning to realize children can find healing at the same time as the parent.

The church should be the place hurting children find healing! The church should be the avenue by which the divorce cycle is stopped.

DivorceCare for Kids (DC4K) is designed to minister to children of divorce in conjunction with the adult DivorceCare program. DC4K equips your church with the right tools and materials to start and sustain a long-term program to care for the children of divorce in your community.

## ABOUT THE PARENTS

Many participants who come to your DivorceCare group are so emotionally overwrought they are barely functional. For some it's all they can do to walk in the door of a DivorceCare group. They might want what's best for their children, but they don't have the ability to see beyond their own hurts and struggles.

Parenting alone is overwhelming. Children might encounter some of the negative effects of a home without the other parent, such as school failure, behavior problems, sleep

**DIVORCECARE**

**DC4K**

**FAMILY-  
FOCUSED  
MINISTRY**

See [www.dc4k.org](http://www.dc4k.org)  
for details.

# 1

# What's Happening to Me?

Session Agenda | Discussion Questions

## REGISTRATION/ORIENTATION NIGHT

As you make plans to start your 13-week cycle, consider having a Registration/Orientation Session prior to Session 1. See page 91 for more information.

## OVERVIEW

Participants will discover:

- The severity of their pain is normal
- Why divorce and separation hurt so deeply
- There is hope

## TARGET AUDIENCE

All participants should be welcomed, no matter what circumstances created their separation or divorce. It's likely your group will include a mixture of people who are divorced, separated and never married. Make sure you stress to group members that they are welcome no matter what circumstances led to their separation or divorce (or breakup) and that the information presented will be relevant to the issues they face.

## WHAT TO EXPECT

Many participants might be nervous about coming to the group this first time, especially about what might take place during the discussion time after the video. Acknowledge to your group that you understand this and encourage them to stick with the group. Many will feel much better by the end of the first session; others will take two to three sessions to become comfortable with the group process. Encourage each participant to commit to attending at least three sessions (most will become fully committed to the group in that time frame).

## 30–60 MINUTES BEFORE YOUR SESSION BEGINS

Leadership team arrives 30–60 minutes prior to start time for setup and prayer. Leaders should circulate and show warmth, care and compassion toward group members as they arrive.

## REGISTRATION

For first-time participants, have them:

- Complete a Registration Form and pay registration fee (if applicable).
- Get a personal copy of the workbook, a pen and any handouts.
- Make a name tag, giving their first name only.

After first-time participants have registered:

- Offer snack/drink if available.
- Introduce them to the other leaders and participants.

Allow 10–15 minutes for fellowship PRIOR to session start time.

## OPENING THE SESSION

Start the session promptly at the published time.

## WELCOME THE PARTICIPANTS

- Introduce your leadership team.
- Share any announcements.
- Begin session with a prayer.
- Session agenda (what to expect, schedule).
- Briefly share your experience with divorce.
- Briefly describe the DivorceCare program.
  - Video seminar
  - Support group
  - Workbook
- Give a quick overview of workbook sections and how they're structured. Be sure to explain how to use the perforated Care Cards in the back of the workbook.
- Encourage participants to do the On My Own exercises for the next week. Explain that this material will be reviewed during a portion of the discussion time.
- Encourage note-taking during the video; refer to the video outline in the workbook.
- Go over group guidelines.
  - Attendance
  - Dating within the group
  - Confidentiality and commitment levels that are expected from leaders as well as participants
  - Everyone having a chance to share (speak only from personal experience and do not force your opinion on others)