

# Marriage and Divorce

## Mark 10:1-12

### Introduction

We come to the topic of marriage and divorce – as we are working our way thru Mark’s Gospel

#### **A story is told:**

Adam was walking around the Garden of Eden feeling very lonely, so God asked Adam, "What is wrong with you?"

Adam said he didn't have anyone to talk to.

God said he was going to give him a companion and it would be a woman. God said, "This woman will cook for you and wash your clothes, she will always agree with every decision you make. She will bear your children and never ask you to get up in the middle of the night to take care of them. She will not nag you, and will always be the first to admit she was wrong when you've had a disagreement. She will never have a headache, and will freely give you love and compassion whenever needed."

Adam replied: ‘Wow - What will a woman like this cost?’

God said, "An arm and a leg."

To which Adam said, "What can I get for just a rib?"

The rest is history

As we look at Jesus’ teaching on marriage and divorce

We are reminded of several important truths  
God invented marriage – His idea

God values things like commitment / faithfulness

God knows what is best for us and for human flourishing – and so He has designed marriage to be a life-long covenant.

The bible allows for divorce as a concession to human sinfulness and hardness of heart – but it is not God’s model or ideal for the marriage relationship

### **I. Quizzing Jesus on Marriage - vv. 1, 2**

Jesus is approached by some Pharisees about the topic of marriage and divorce

Mark tells us that they came *testing* Him

This means that they aren't really interested in what Jesus has to say – they are hoping to entrap Him in a statement that will get Him in trouble with the crowds / etc.

The issue of divorce was debated in Jewish society in the 1<sup>st</sup> century

There were basically two schools of thought

Rabbi Hillel – the liberal party / divorce for any reason – if the wife can't cook / if she won't bring you chips and dip while you are watching the game - easy divorce

Rabbi Shammai – conservative view / very narrow parameters - divorce [only for unfaithfulness]

In today's culture – there are all kinds of reasons given for divorce

- We disagreed about money
- We disagreed about parenting
- She nags too much
- He ignores me / forgot my birthday
- It's just taking too much work [the marriage] – we gave up [Donald Trump]
- They married too young – didn't know what they were doing
- Not enough sex in the marriage

The songs of the culture reflect some of the common fractures in relationships:  
Relational challenges are often the subject of pop music

- Taylor Swift: 'Baby – now we've got bad blood – it used to be mad love  
Now we've got problems – I don't think we can solve them [hey]
- Rick Springfield: 'He's done everything for her – she's done nothing for him.'
- The Righteous Bros.: She's lost that lovin' feeling
- Bon Jovi: 'He played his part and she played her game – she gave love a bad name'

We recognize: Marriage is a challenge in our fallen world – because it is the union not of two angels but of two sinners

There are no perfect marriages when you are dealing with two sinners

What does marriage need? / to survive and thrive?

- 1) Commitment to God and to each other
- 2) Grace / forgiveness

Commitment – is woven into the very nature and fabric of God's commands respecting marriage and sexuality

The 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment – ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’ - - - be faithful / committed to your spouse

The fact that God says He hates divorce – speaks of commitment

**Mal. 2:15, 16 - 'Let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth - for I hate divorce - says the Lord.'**

The marriage vow speaks of commitment: ‘to love, honor, and cherish til death do you part.’

John and Ann Betar – have the longest marriage in America  
They have been married for 84 years – [that is commitment!] married in 1932  
They were 21 and 17 years old  
He is now 105  
She is 101

Their secret to a long- lasting marriage:

“We struggled in the beginning, but luckily we were content with what we had. It’s just important to be content with what you have.”

Are you committed to your spouse as you once pledged to be?  
Are you content? [that is a heart issue]

**Fidelity / faithfulness** in marriage flows not just from having a commitment to your spouse - - - but from having a commitment to God who gave us the marriage relationship and who tells us to be faithful

Paul Tripp: ‘At the foundational level, the difficulties in our marriages do not first come because we don’t love one another enough. They happen because we don’t love God enough; and because we don’t love God enough we don’t treat one another with the kind of love that makes marriages work.’ [What Did you Expect?, p. 36]

Marriage requires commitment – there will be challenges along the way

Those who lack a commitment to God and to each other – will be more likely to ditch their marriage when the challenges come

\*\*\* Marriage requires grace / forgiveness

**Eph. 4:32 - 'Be ye kind one to another - tenderhearted forgiving one another just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.'**

John Piper: ‘As the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive your spouse. As the Lord bears with you, so you should bear with your spouse. The Lord bears with us every day

as we fall short of His will. Indeed the distance between what Christ expects of us and what we achieve is infinitely greater than the distance between what we expect of our spouse and what he or she achieves. Christ always forgives more and endures more than we do. Forgive as you have been forgiven. Bear with as He bears with you . . . Let the measure of God's grace to you in the cross of Christ be the measure of your grace to your spouse.' [This Momentary Marriage, p. 46]

Marriage needs grace – or it will falter

## II. Back to the Bible - vv. 3-12

Here we come to Jesus' answer on the divorce question

v. 3 – Jesus says – let's look at the Scriptures – what do they say?

That is our authority - - - He takes them back to *Genesis 1, 2*

### *Gen. 2:18-25*

We see a couple of things

God created / God made male and female - - - one man / one woman

This whole relationship / marriage thing was His idea / the family unit

Today – we have questions not only about divorce and remarriage – but about the very definition of marriage itself

Some revisionists want to redefine marriage – to include the union of a man with a man / or a woman with a woman

One federal judge gave this definition: 'Marriage is the name that society gives to the relationship that matters most between two adults.' [What is Marriage? P. 65]

Marriage is simply a social construct – that's all – not rooted in any act of creation – or ordination by God

Marriage is just that very special relationship

We are becoming a world where anything goes in this department

For the Christian – we want to derive our beliefs about such things from the Scriptures – because we know that the world is lost and confused / steeped in rebellion against God – the Scriptures are given to show us the truth

God created marriage – He alone is the one who can tell us how it is to function

## Heb. 13:4

This passage raises the stakes – it says – your view of marriage can either honor or dishonor the institution - - - and those who transgress in the matter incur guilt – face the judgment of God

About 2 years ago – our church wrote up a statement on marriage to be added to our church constitution

### Church statement of faith:

*We believe that marriage as properly defined by the Scriptures consists of the union of one man and one woman in a holy covenant before God.*

*We further believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and merits the wrath of God which can only be averted through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*

That was an attempt to summarize and pull together the relevant biblical teaching to this area of marriage and sexual ethics in our own day and age

There are a lot of ways in which one can sin against the marital ethics of the Bible

Marriage is valuable and needs to be protected – with prohibitions against adultery / immorality / divorce / homosexuality / pornography

There is an arrogance or pride behind every sin that says – ‘I know better than God’- I can violate His laws and get away with it

Man is a sinner who is constantly tempted to go against God’s ways – he is an *eternal* protestor – he rejects God’s order – tries to set up his own order

He doesn’t like God’s boundaries – or fences – so he seeks to tear them down or move them to suit his own desires

When God forbids things – generally – it is to protect something which is valuable

Pornography is another way in which people sin against the institution of marriage and violate God’s standards for sexuality

David Jeremiah – in a book titled, ‘Is this the End?’ – refers to an online pornography site that released their annual statistics

On just one website – in one year – 2015 – consumers of porn watched 4 trillion / 300 billion hours of pornography / over 87 billion X rated videos were watched - - - which amounts to twelve videos for every man, woman, child on the planet

A Barna study found that most teenagers are so acclimated to the culture that they believe not recycling is a greater sin than pornography.

What is wrong with pornography?

**Matt. 5:27-29**

Porn is adultery of the heart

It is escaping into a fake universe – seeking cheap thrills at a very high cost to one's soul

For the married man – it is discontent – greed – grasping at a fake world where the porn consumer surrounds himself with naked women

And – it has destroyed many marriages

God says – be a godly man / be holy / sex is for the marriage relationship of a man and a woman

Anything else is not God's will for you/ harmful to your soul – [I Thess. 4:3]

Biblical ethics – where embraced – allows culture to flourish – ascribes a worth and dignity to human sexuality that is otherwise cheapened / degraded where God's standards are ignored

Christianity has elevated the position of women in society – wherever it has been embraced – because of the high ethics of marriage / sexuality

I read an interesting reflection on Muslim culture / treatment of women

One writer refers to a New Year's Eve event – 2016 in Cologne Germany – and a few other cities – where roving packs of young men described as Arab or North African in appearance moved thru celebration crowds - - - typically 20 or 30 men would surround a single woman or group of women – sometimes attacking a woman and her husband

They were groping / sexually assaulting / robbing / stealing phones / snatching purses / several rapes occurred

Police estimated that some 2000 men were involved in the various attacks – most were refugees from Muslim communities

The mayor of Cologne said – 'we need to explain our New Year's Eve celebrations better to people of other cultures.' - - - a misunderstanding here

A Pakistani journalist – Shamil Shams – who is himself a Muslim wrote an opinion piece for a German web site – the Deutsche Well

He said:

I am a person from a Muslim background who has been living in Germany for many years, and have always been treated with respect and humility. I have always felt safer in Germany than in Pakistan . . . what happened in Cologne happens regularly in my homeland Pakistan. The men are never ashamed, never feel guilty, never show remorse about the way they treat women in that part of the world.

The men who sexually harassed the girls in Cologne were not demented; they knew what they were doing, and I am sure they did it with absolute contempt for the European culture, its norms and its people.’ [The Barbarians are Here, pp. 49-50]

The bottom line is – humanity is riddled with sin

Apart from Christ – we will not only mistreat one another – we will abuse and destroy the institutions God has given to us

Nothing but the grace of God can hold humanity back from its own bent towards self-destruction

God says: sex is for marriage – between a man and a woman

God says marriage is a covenant – a life long commitment

God says that children are a gift to be nurtured

There was a tweet storm this last week

CBS News tweeted that Iceland is on pace to virtually eliminate downs syndrome – thru abortion.’

Patricia Heaton responded: ‘Iceland isn’t actually eliminating Downs syndrome – they’re just killing everyone that has it. Big difference.’

A number of others chimed in

One lady named Ruthie: ‘Why is your headline sounding like this is a win? Look at this little girl – you’ve broken my heart. MSM has fallen so far from grace.’

You discard the bible – it’s downhill fast for society and culture

Is divorce allowable for any reason?

**Matthew 19:8-9** – [gives us a more lengthy account] the exception clause

The reason for divorce being given as a concession by God is man’s sinfulness

The purpose of divorce being granted was to reduce human hardship due to sin [where the innocent suffer being attached to an unrepentant / immoral person] - - but it was not given to encourage divorce – or make marriage weaker

God's original design: one man – one woman – a life long commitment

If a husband commits adultery – and the husband repents – is the Christian wife required to take him back? [no – not according to Jesus] / she can but she is not required to by God

Divorce is sometimes the right thing to do – *all things considered* - better than making an innocent victim suffer at the hands of an unrepentant adulterer or deserter

Christian view on divorce – permitted in cases of adultery / desertion [Matt. 19:9 / I Cor. 7:15]

If there are not biblical grounds for divorce – and someone initiates divorce – marries another – Jesus says that is a violation of the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment [adultery]

[The issue Jesus is addressing] - Does divorce allow a man to move from woman to woman without breaking the Ten Commandments?

I didn't commit adultery – I got divorced first / etc.

Jesus says, 'wrong' – you still violated God's law

### **Conclusion**

When Jesus encountered people who had fallen in these areas – He showed grace

John 4 - The woman at the well – she had had 5 husbands and the one she was with then – she was just living with – Jesus called her to trust in Him

John 8 – the woman caught in adultery

Jesus: 'Let him who is without sin be the first to cast a stone.'

Divorce is not the unpardonable sin – none of the sins against marriage are

There is grace at the cross for the repentant sinner – we praise God for His amazing grace

Sins merit the wrath of God but that wrath can be averted thru repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus