

ONE  
Mark 10:1-12

INTRODUCTION

Buckle your seatbelt for this one.

**TEXT: Mk 10:1–12**

*1 And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them.*

*2 And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” 3 He answered them, “**What did Moses command you?**” 4 They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.” 5 And Jesus said to them, “**Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. 6 But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ 7 ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.**”*

*10 And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. 11 And he said to them, “**Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, 12 and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.**”*

**OBSERVATIONS FROM THE TEXT**

**1. The Pharisees are seeking to test Jesus in order to trip Him up.**

The Pharisees, of course, believed it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife. Perhaps they had heard that Jesus had taught on the subject and wanted to point out that He was wrong about the scriptures. Of course, He is too smart for them. He asks them, “What did Moses command?”

They wanted to discuss the Scriptures, so they thought that they had Him. They quoted Deuteronomy 24:1, which says:

*“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house,”*

The Rabbis saw here permission to divorce one’s wife; however, they did argue over what constituted indecency. Some said only sexual indiscretion could be called indecency. On the other end of the spectrum, a rabbi famously ruled that burning supper could qualify.

In any case, the Pharisees expected Jesus to trip on this point, either by giving wrong qualifiers for divorce or by forbidding it all together.

**2. The Pharisees focused on the exception, not the rule**

They asked Jesus if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife. The answer Jesus will give is, “No. It is not lawful.” That said, if he does it anyway, he is to give his wife a certificate. Jesus says that Moses said this because of their hardness of heart.

In other words, men, who are hard-hearted, will send out their wives, putting them at a social and financial disadvantage in society; therefore, they should give her a certificate in writing so that she is free to marry another and be provided a place in a family if needed.

Jesus pointed them to the rule, not the exception. He went back to Genesis, to when Moses wrote of how God created man and woman. He established the rule of marriage to answer

the question. I would like to spend the rest of our time talking about Jesus' answer to them, but first, because of the age in which we live in, I'd like to briefly tackle the subject of divorce and remarriage.

### **3. When a man or woman breaks the marriage to take another spouse, that person has committed adultery.**

This explanation was not given to the Pharisees at this time, rather Jesus was in the house, explaining things to His disciples. This statement would have been equally difficult in that day as it is today. We live in a culture where divorce is common. It was common in the time of Jesus also.

Christians today wonder if they have been divorced, can they remarry? This issue is not as simple as some would like to make it. I do not plan on tackling it today. Rather, I will give a couple of guiding principles.

First, all sins are forgivable, including divorce.

Second, if you wronged your first spouse and married another person, or if your spouse wronged you and you remarried, remain married to your current spouse.

Third, Paul says that a believer is "free" if his spouse leaves him because of his faith in Jesus. Free to remarry? Some say yes. Some say no.

Fourth, Jesus gives an exception, saying that one may divorce if the spouse has committed "pornea" which can be used to refer to most sexual indiscretions, including adultery, fornication, prostitution, etc. Some would hold that this frees a person to remarry, since the first spouse has united with another person, breaking the bond. Others disagree.

At Harvest, we treat each case individually. We also honor each marriage, no matter how it came about, and seek to strengthen and preserve it.

You may have many questions beyond this, but time does not allow an exhaustive explanation that includes all possible questions. [Please send me your questions!] Let's return to the heart of the text, and that is the foundation for marriage.

#### THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Jesus takes the question of divorce not to the one passage in Deuteronomy that explains how divorces are to be administered. Instead, He explains God's formation of mankind. Here is that portion of His answer again:

*6 But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' 7 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. 9 What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."*

Jesus begins at the beginning. God made them male and female from the beginning. And, having made them male and female, He then made them one. Since God joined them, no one should take them apart. So, Jesus' answer is, "No. It is not lawful for a man to divorce his wife." There is a lot here. I would like to take some time to go through the most important parts.

#### **IMPLICATIONS OF JESUS TEACHING ON MARRIAGE**

##### **1. Creation sets the pattern that Jesus expects us to follow for marriage.**

If you create a thing, you create its functions and operations at the same time. God created man in His image, with specific plans for our functioning. Jesus is arguing that God displayed His intent for marriage in creation.

## **2. Marriage is of primary importance in the human race.**

At time of creation, marriage is instituted. Marriage did not arrive as a social convention. When God made the human machine, He intended marriage to be the normal operation. Adam and Eve, sinless at this point, were intended to be two who are one. They were intended to have children. As we know from the Ten Commandments, which would come much later, God made children to honor their parents –but notice that marriage is of greater importance than honoring parents, for an individual “leaves” father and mother in order to marry.

## **3. Male and female are from the beginning**

Marriage, not being a social nor evolutionary construct, is the joining of a man and a woman. In this, the woman is of equal value with the man, and the two become one. The man’s leadership role is established throughout the scripture in his being created first, in the woman coming from the man, in the woman being sent to help him fulfill the mission God made him for, etc. But what is also established is that the value of both is equal, though the two are not the same. The two become one and reflect the image of God combined in a way they could not if they were alone.

## **4. God performs marriages**

Jesus points out that it is God who joins together a man and a woman. Marriage gains its sacred status because God ties the two together. Marriage is sewn into the garment of humanity, and God is the Tailor.

## **5. The fall into sin ruined the plan**

God’s plan for mankind was perfect. But Adam and Eve, though they began without sin, they were very able to sin. And they did. Sin entered not only Adam and Eve, but all the human race who would descend through them.

The fall into sin did not do away with marriage, nor male and female, nor parents, nor families –but sin greatly crippled the human soul and the capacity to live properly.

Marriage was no longer a given. A man or woman could easily end up alone, never marrying or being abandoned by adultery or death. Divorce became a true possibility as two people, both flawed, faced the nearly impossible task of loving someone more than themselves, 24-7.

Sexual desire likewise became perverted and twisted. Homosexuality is a result of the fall into sin. Gay marriage does not exist, for two males or two females cannot marry, by definition. God will not join them. Polygamy became a human practice. In all these things, humans messed up God’s simple and good plan for humanity. Marry, have children who are raised by a loving female mother and loving male father, and then they grow and marry. This is God’s plan. But we, the children of Adam and Eve, have messed it up from the beginning. We are messing it up today.

God made marriage the central arrangement of adult humanity. To divorce, then, is no small matter to human thriving. Divorce is like pulling the wings off of a bird. To fallen man, marriage is devalued, seen as unimportant. People living together as married when they are not is

no big deal to mankind, but it is a grave insult to God. People being dishonorable towards their spouses, and changing wives and husbands is the trashing of God's good plan. Men marrying men or women marrying women is a perverse abomination.

We think, "What's the big deal? Live and let live." To us, marriage is an option made of modeling clay. We can have it if we want and shape it how we like. We can discard it also.

But to God, marriage is of utmost importance to the human race. And we have hopelessly broken it.

But there is good news.

## **6. God redeems marriage by saving the world**

The Bible has one story running through it. That story is a love story. The plot goes like this: there is a woman who is loved by, and engaged to, a great man, but she is a slutty girl and likes it. She leaves him. He comes back for her time and again, but she rejects him, mocks him, laughs at him, and goes for any and every man she can find. But the husband does not give up on her. Instead, he pursues her wherever she goes. And then, when she is thoroughly ruined, and ugly, and finds herself a slave, he pays the price to free her. That price is high –it costs him all he has to free her, even his life. But He is a powerful husband. After bankrupting Himself, He rises from the dead, having paid the price to free his bride. Because of His great love for her, He does this. And, magically, His great love transforms her from a faithless and disgusting hateful hag into a beautiful and loveable bride, worthy of him. Then, the story ends with a marriage ceremony, and great celebration. The great and loving husband and His beautiful bride then live happily ever after.

This is the story of the Bible. It is a story about a marriage.

Perhaps you did not know that was the story of the Bible? Perhaps you did not see it? It is there. We don't have time to read the entire story now, but I'll show you some parts that prove what I am saying to be true

First, from Hosea, chapter two. Hosea married a prostitute. She was very unfaithful to him, yet, he did not stop loving her. In fact, she ended up owned by a man, and he went and bought her back. God used Hosea to show His great love for Israel.

God called Israel unfaithful and wicked, like a wife who betrayed her husband –or in this case, her God. But then, through Hosea's teaching, God declared this:

*"Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak tenderly to her. And there I will give her her vineyards and make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. And there she shall answer as in the days of her youth, as at the time when she came out of the land of Egypt. "And in that day, declares the LORD, you will call me 'My Husband,' and no longer will you call me 'My Baal.' For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more. And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety. And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the LORD. –Hosea 2*

This is a clear prophesy that has yet to be fulfilled for the land is not at peace to this day. It is a prophesy of romance and of marriage. You might say, "Well, that's just a figure of speech." Really? Well, let me show you another glimpse of this story, from the New Testament.

*Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. – Ephesians 5*

What do we see here except that Paul quotes Genesis and the creation of man and woman, saying that it refers to Christ and the church?

Consider that. Jesus taught us that when God created us, male and female, to be married, God made us one. And now Paul shows us that in that moment of creation, God had an even greater plan in mind. He knew we would fail. He knew we would fall into sin. But He had already planned on our redemption. And when God said, "the two shall become one," He was referring to Jesus and us, the church.

What does all this mean?

It means a number of things. For example, it means that every marriage between a man and a woman is sacred to God because it tells the story of all of life. Additionally, it means that we should avoid divorce if at all possible. Even if a couple cannot live in the same house because of the sins of one or the other, they should not marry another person. It means we should see all sex before or outside of marriage as an evil and personal assault on the holiness of God. It means that men should not give up on faithless wives, but should lead the way in forgiving, for they play the part of copying the Lord. It means that women should honor their husbands, not because they are perfect, but because they are to copy the church's response to God.

But, more importantly than all of that, it means that God so loved you that He gave His only begotten Son to save you. And it means that His love and affection for you will never stop. And it means your sins do not dissuade His love; rather His love washes away your sins. It means that God loves mankind and the earth, and will fix all that our race has broken.

And it means you have been invited to a great wedding at the end of all things.

How then shall we live?

We must live every day with a consciousness that we are forgiven, cleansed, and adored by God. We must live every day with hope of a glorious future.