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*3Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?” 4And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, 5and said, ‘FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH’? 6“So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.” 7They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?” 8He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. 9“And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”*

*10The disciples said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.” 11But He said to them, “Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. 12“For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother’s womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.”*

This is one of those passages. The weightier sections and the weight hangs over us. We don't want to get this wrong. Better preachers than me, that I have sat under, would make a 6 sermon series out of this. One guy I listened to spent 9 months exhausting this subject.

This is of utmost importance to the church. We need to hear these things, and understand them. Especially now! Especially now, so the weight of responsibility is heavy on me, and I'm already feeling very small as an expositor thinking we're going to spend just these few minutes here, and move on.

Our first thought is, this is about divorce. But it's so much more. The question about divorce begins the discussion, but Jesus gives us the whole doctrine of marriage. Right here! In 12 verses.

To try to give some due diligence, I bought and read Al Mohler's new book, *We Cannot Be Silent*, which covers all of these current issues that the church has found herself swept up into.

It turns out this doctrine is in fact going to be the hill that the church dies on. This doctrine that Jesus very clearly states, as Jesus always does, with an economy of words that no mere man could ever conceive of, this doctrine of marriage, is going to be the stumbling block that divides the church in America.

Why is that? Well, it turns out that God created us as sexual creatures, and that the fall into sin in the garden has made us broken, sinful, sexual creatures, and what Jesus says here addresses those problems, and it's very narrow. Constrictive to this world. Non-sensical to our current culture.

Look around you and count up for me, how many millennials are in this church. How many people from the generation that is between 18 and 30?

Pretty much a black hole, right? And why is that? Well, you could blame it on the music, but that's a shallow argument. I believe the reason is right here before us in this passage. Clearly stated. Our culture hears these words and says, that's the most ridiculous constrictive nonsense anyone ever came up with.

One man, one woman, cleaving together as a single unit, for a lifetime? No other options! At least no other options where you can enjoy God's gift of sexuality. That's insane. Repressive. Damaging. Horrible. Unhealthy.

So says our culture.

What's astonishing is that this happened in one lifetime. Let's talk for a minute about where we're at in the culture today, and how we got there.

Women under 30 and married today; less than 20%. In 1960 that number was 60% and even at that, it only reflected some late starters that were on track to get there and had reasons to take a bit longer.

So, in my lifetime, the expectation was for almost all of young people to be finding a life mate.

Those numbers are radical. What drove the change? We could fudge things a bit and say we've gone from 80 percent of young people expecting and accomplishing marriage and children to 80 percent skipping the marriage part.

What changed is simply this. 60 years ago, our culture had a sense of God, and sin, and if your body was telling you steady sex is something that is a top priority, (and most of us were getting that message from our early teens on) you need to find a wife. Not just Christians. Our whole culture.

Now that's Donald Trump frankness and perhaps even seems vulgar at first thought to you, but it's exactly right. Maybe I could have been more delicate?

You say, that's not very flattering to your wife, and I'll say, maybe not, but by God's design I found a wife and kept her, and I can tell you, after 41 years, we flourished. Neither of us would have enjoyed all of the good years we've had except we stumbled into God's design and it happened to be the best design.

You can call it dumb luck. I prefer to call it grace.

What changed? Here's an abbreviated list. In the 1960's the pill disconnected sexual activity and child bearing. Before 1960, obviously, people sinned. But with every sin there was the chance of a new life. That was a substantial restrainer. The pill allowed society to engage in easy promiscuity.

Looking back with 20-20 hindsight, I have to say, evangelicalism had little or nothing to comment about that phenomenon when it occurred. It was the Catholics that cried foul.

Concurrently with that, in California, Ronald Reagan decided that the divorce laws which honored marriage and forbade divorce for almost any reason except infidelity and something called mental cruelty, where just compounding the problem and making some innocent party a liar in order to get the divorce, so they came up with so-called "no fault" divorce.

So that blew wide open. Put a bunch of people in Reno out of business. Want a divorce? Get one. No good reason required. That was a huge stab in the heart of marriage as an institution. Again, the evangelicals were mostly silent, but the Catholic church has held strong on this, mostly, there's cracks in the dam and water is leaking out, but mostly, to this day.

A generation later with secularism in full force, the marriage and divorce problem was solved. Don't bother getting married. Don't need a divorce.

So that partially solved the problem of babies holding back illicit sex. Total societal promiscuity. Then in 1973, if the pill didn't work and a child was formed, we adopted murder as a solution. Again, the evangelicals didn't have much to contribute, it was the Catholic church that cried foul. Credit where credit is due. The evangelicals did finally wake up.

Couple those developments with modernism. A low view of God. A low view of this book. The Bible lost its place of final authority. Higher learning trumped an ancient book. Secularism and Godlessness became the accepted norm. Now all that was needed was time. A generation. Wait for the old folk who believed the stuff about God and His rules, to die off. Nothing's replacing them. They'll all be gone soon.

Pinch yourself. Here we are. A bunch of folks with white hair that

believe a doctrine that the world around us not only thinks is ridiculous, but rapidly, is becoming a doctrine that the world will say, if you believe and teach that, you must be punished.

Marriage as a respected and honored institution is gutted. Functional families are destroyed. God is replaced with evolution.

Listen to a small excerpt from a piece called *The Single American Woman* published February 22, 2016 in New York Magazine by Rebecca Traister.

*It is a radical upheaval, a national reckoning with massive social and political implications. Across classes, and races, we are seeing a wholesale revision of what female life might entail. We are living through the invention of independent female adulthood as a norm, not an aberration, and the creation of an entirely new population: adult women who are no longer economically, socially, sexually, or reproductively dependent on or defined by the men they marry.*

That's our culture speaking. She's writing about women, but the same paragraph can be written about whatever preferred pronoun group you want to assign it to.

Our culture has grown up. We don't need God. We don't need mates. We don't need a husband or a wife. If we feel like having sex, we will. And it'll be with who we want, when we want, how we want, and for how long we want, with no holds barred. We are completely independent.

That's where we're at. The sexual revolution is complete. The dream is realized. And any insignificant voices like mine that might cry out, "wait a minute, Jesus has a different plan for human flourishing," must be crushed.

Our society is shaking their collective fist at God and saying, how dare you tell me I can only have sex with one person of the opposite sex who I'm bound to for life. How dare you tell me I'm not an independent person free to do whatever is right in my own eyes. How dare you tell

me that engaging in sex with people the same gender as I am, is sinful. How dare you give me male dna when I've made up my mind, I'm really female. How dare you.

Listen to Psalm 2

*1 Why are the nations in an uproar  
And the peoples devising a vain thing?*

*2 The kings of the earth take their stand  
And the rulers take counsel together  
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,*

*3 "Let us tear their fetters apart  
And cast away their cords from us!"*

*4 He who sits in the heavens laughs,  
The Lord scoffs at them.*

*5 Then He will speak to them in His anger  
And terrify them in His fury, saying,*

*6 "But as for Me, I have installed My King  
Upon Zion, My holy mountain."*

Our culture says; *"Let us tear their fetters apart  
And cast away their cords from us!"* Whose fetters? Vs. 2 the LORD and His Anointed. This is a war on God.

It sounds like yesterdays headlines, doesn't it. It sounds like what Rebecca Traister wrote that I quoted. Our culture is in a frenzy to be free of God. Independent agents. Un fettered. Un bound. And angry with anything that challenges that dream.

Let's consider Jesus words. You see, we're just on the threshold of the dream. Secularism's triumph is still new. They are drunk with the thought of the unbounded pleasures and possibilities that lie in the valley below the mountain top they've ascended. They think they see a

path to unfettered flourishing. But, it's empty. And it's cold. And it's dead.

In the end, Jesus simple words, are the key to human flourishing.

*1When Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; 2and large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there.*

Matthew begins this section with the same formula that he uses in all 5 of the lengthy teaching sections. After the sermon on the mount, and the discipleship lesson, and the lesson about the Kingdom by parables, Matthew says "*when Jesus had finished these words.*"

I've called the teaching section in Matthew 18 the "one another's" section. How do we sinful creatures get along with other sinful creatures? Love one another. Forgive one another. Be kind to one another. And Matthew officially closes out the chapter 18 one another section with the same formula he's used before, but what happens is a question is going to find it's way to Jesus that is about the most difficult of all of the "one another's"

*1When Jesus had finished these words, He departed from Galilee and came into the region of Judea beyond the Jordan; 2and large crowds followed Him, and He healed them there.*

We said this ministry formula was sort of over. Jesus is going to concentrate on His disciples in these final months. But here we are again with large crowds following the Jesus show, and they've moved down to the area around the Jordan. And that's important.

Who lives there? Well, the man who just months ago chopped off John the baptist's head lives there. Herod lives there with his brother's wife. Looking very much like our current culture. 2 independent agents engaging in promiscuous sex outside the boundaries of marriage. Who also have the power to chop off heads. So we aren't surprised at the question the pharisees ask.

*3Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?”*

I love how Hollywood juices up these scenes. In the Hollywood version, the pharisees would have gotten Herod, or at least some of his closest cabinet members, and especially his vindictive non-wife and her close servants, to be present when they ask this question. So there would be a direct link back to Herod.

That's Hollywood, but it may very well have gone down that way. Surely that is in fact the motive. Get Jesus to speak clearly about the sin of illicit sex, and maybe we can accomplish our goal. A headless Jesus.

Notice the question's phraseology. *“Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?”*

We have "no fault" divorce. They had "for any reason" divorce. Same concept.

In Israel at the time of Jesus, there were 2 schools of thought. Hillel, and Shammei. Hillel believed that the scriptures and traditions of the elders taught that divorce was possible for any reason at all.

Burn the bagels once, shame on you. Burn the bagels 3 times, shame on me. Get rid of her. Her chamber maid keeps giving you that *look*? Get rid of her. Loosey goosey. And, not surprisingly, popular.

Rabbi Shammei on the other hand was conservative. Divorce was only possible in the case of impropriety.

The pharisees pretty much knew which road Jesus was going to go down. They figured they had a win win. Either answer would be unpopular with Herod. And either answer would alienate some of the jews. We got Him.

*4And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE,*



Jesus doesn't get 4 words into His answer before He's already making people mad. He begins His answer with an insult. *Have you not read . . .*

Really? Really Jesus?? Do you have any idea who you're talking to? We're the experts of the law.

Jesus goes right to the book. Jesus answers the question and the final authority that He draws on, is the Word of God. *Have you not read???*

And then He solves another problem we modern's have. He believes in a literal creation scenario. He believes Genesis means what it says. There's no way around that. *“Have you not read that **He who created them from the beginning***

And now He's going to step on some modern toes; *Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE*, Jesus believes that God created 2 complementary sexes. Binary categories of people. Boys and girls. Men and women. Male and female.

You say, just a minute mister. There's a small number of folks who were born with a little of both, or variations of neither one.

And I'll just say, it clearly wasn't that way in Jesus words, from the beginning. Anomalies happened after the fall in the garden. And furthermore, God can glorify Himself with every single person.

But for the sake of the point Jesus is making here. God was pleased to make male and female. Period. Why? Jesus is going to tell us why.

*5and said, ‘FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH’? 6“So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.”*

God made little boys and little girls and created within them strong desires to separate from mother and father, find a partner of the opposite

gender, and join with that partner to make a new family, separated from the parental one.

That is God's plan. Complimentary genders. Leave father and mother. Find a wife. Join to her like glue. Create a new family.

This isn't complicated. Oh, it was complicated for the creator. Science has glorified the Creator by discovering the dna differences that make up little boys and little girls. That is highly complex and beautiful. Anyone who studies the intricacies of the human body and the differences God built in, and suppresses that knowledge and rejects intelligent design, is a wicked person.

Let me show you something else here that you may have missed. We dived right into the obvious. Boys and girls. God's design. Sexual attraction. Marriage. More boys and girls.

But listen carefully to Jesus, and what He affirms here. Follow the adverbs; “*Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, 5and said, ‘FOR THIS REASON*

He who created. That's God. Is the same person who in verse *5and said, ‘FOR THIS REASON*

But wait. Jesus has made an error. Moses said that! Jesus is affirming that what Moses said, originated with He who created. Jesus is affirming the inspiration of scripture, through human authors who are writing down what God has said.

OH, and by the way. Since God is the author through human agents, and He is also the creator, then, this book, has authority over men. God speaks. He who owns the creation has spoken. We have the very words . . . in this book.

*4And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE, 5and said, ‘FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND*

*MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'?*

For this reason . . . What reason? God made men and women, males and females. That is the gift of God, and it drives what comes next. Maleness and femaleness, that gift from God, is causal. For this reason.

It pleased God to design boys and girls, men and women, male and female in order that He would be glorified in what He says next. *FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'*

I'm going to spare you painting a picture of that physical union. But God designed it and He states that it was designed for our pleasure and His glory.

Boys and boys are precluded by God's design. Girls and girls are precluded by God's design. To do that is an abomination. It's shaking your little fist at the Creator and saying, I don't care about what you created and I don't care about your glory, I'm going to do something that is totally aberrant to that which is patently obvious.

Now, let me digress here and make a couple of statements that can go in the permanent record for the witch hunters to find later.

Modernism and something wrongly called science are telling us that same sex desires and inclinations are born in. For some. That for me to say *that* is sin, is evil. I'm the evil person.

I want to lovingly clarify that Jesus words are simple and clear, and that the Bible clearly states that homosexuality in all of it's forms is sinful. Along with a whole bunch of other sins.

The problem then is where does the strong inclination of one person to have sexual encounters with another person of the same sex come from. And the answer is also in Genesis. We are Adam's race. Every human on this planet from puberty forward, is broken. Every one of us has

broken inclinations to do evil in this area of our human sexuality. We're all broken. In some way.

Same sex desires are just an unfortunate inclination in some because of their father Adam. They have inherited that particular sin. I've inherited other ones. All of us get a dose. We're born in sin. Sinful desires and inclinations are common to every human from puberty forward. Welcome to Adam's race.

It isn't sin to have the desires. It is sin to carry them out. For all of us.

My heart goes out to the folks who happened by the luck of the draw, to get this particular hand though. It's difficult. It's a heart breaking problem. But there is a solution to every sin. Every color, every flavor, every kind.

And that solution is to agree with God that His idea and His glory is perfect, and anything else is sin. And then to confess and repent of however that sin has played out and ask for Him to forgive you and take control of the broken ness of your life.

The world says I'm the bad guy for calling sin sin. But all of the world's solutions are empty and dead. Sin is easily solved. We have a Saviour, who is Christ, the Lord.

We're not going to get to vs. 6 today. We'll pick it up after Easter Sunday. We'll come back together and finish these ground shattering truth's together.

But I want to circle back to something I hinted at earlier. Something I picked up on at one of the question and answer sessions.

We look around us in this church and indeed, 30's and younger's are a black hole. They're missing.

And it isn't just us. It's a problem caused by the culture clash I've talked about today. Most millenials would side with the culture that says, what I've taught this morning, is evil, not the other way around.

We are caught in a culture war. And the schism is getting deeper and wider, by the day. Each week we're reading headlines about new breeches. Secularism's triumph is spilling over so that old freedom's have to give way to new ones.

Freedom of speech and freedom of religion and freedom to act on my conscience because of the authority of this book over me, are all at risk.

The moral majority, isn't. What looked like a moral majority earlier in my lifetime, was a phantom. It wasn't really there. We could name that phantom; Therapeutic moralistic deism. We thought it was a huge force in this country. But now we know, it had no backbone. It was a phantom.

So, the culture of godless Secularism is definitely in the driver's seat. And the next few months, as they gain speed and force, will be telling. They're in the driver's seat and they're only now just realizing, they can run roughshod over the church.

What is the church to do? Well we're already seeing that unfold, I believe.

Old line denominations, excluding Southern Baptists, or at least some of them, have already capitulated. They were largely that phantom we thought we saw. Moralistic therapeutic deism. It was easy for them. They long ago walked away from this book having any authority. They don't believe it means what it says. So they simply folded into the new sexual revolution. It's nice for those folks to be able to go to church, if they're so inclined.

Evangelicalism. Great word. We're about to find out, it was a phantom too. What's a mega church to do? When the government says if you don't get in line, it's going to affect your cash crop. Mega churches have mega bills to pay. This will get interesting. Some of them have already been blown down like a feather. Hillsong.

What I learned at the conference in the question and answer session is this. The folks who get to the dead ends, and find out what they thought

was going to be human flourishing, is dead and cold and empty, some of them, by God's grace, are going to go looking for God and His word.

And already, the folks who are positioned well in churches that are Bible believing, Bible expositing churches are finding that when those folks come out of the dead secularism, they don't want a compromised wimpy spineless church. They want the real deal.

We're hearing stories of folks who have come out of the whole LGBT mess and the reason they're choosing strong Bible teaching churches with a high view of God and His Book, is, they've had the world. It was dead. They want something alive.

Therefore, my vision for this church, almost 2 years in, is to NOT try to look more like the world, but to be a place where it's obvious to people who come in the door, God is present in our midst. At any cost. If we commit ourselves to be that church, maybe the empty spots will little by little get filled in with young people.

We are going to hold God's book, and God's plan for human flourishing up high. Jesus words couldn't be any plainer.