

Marriage and Divorce (Part 1)

Mark 10:1-12

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Introduction

The quickest way to destroy a society is to destroy the marriage institution of one man and one woman. The foundation for the family that God has instituted starts with marriage. God created it and blessed it. From the designs of marriage, the bedrock of family, God created stability and order. Marriage is the bedrock of community and of society because it is the lifeline of stability. Marriage is built on mutual respect, submission, and fidelity. By destroying marriage, we destroy stability and order. We destroy the glue that holds human society together.

In the past 50 years, we have seen our marriage institution under fierce assault. We have seen increases in divorce and decreases in number of marriages. Men and women today are delaying marriage at a later age than ever before. The stigma of cohabitation has completely faded from our culture. We have no-fault divorce laws which is divorce for any and every reason. The church today has not escaped this trend. The percentages of divorces in church members have risen in the last 20 years. Many people in the church have divorced and remarried. The church has failed to even slow down the divorce rates in our country. For us the church to correct this, we need to get back to what Scripture teaches about marriage and divorce and follow His original intent.

Mark 10:1-12 *Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to Him, and as was His custom, He taught them. 2 Some Pharisees came and tested Him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" 3 "What did Moses command you?" He replied. 4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." 5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. 6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." 10 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11 He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."*

I. The Challenge (1-2)

- The scene
 - Jesus left that place (Capernaum—**Mark 9:33**)
 - End of Galilean ministry
 - Into Judea, across Jordan (east side of Jordan River)—Power point map

Note: Matthew and Mark do not talk much about Jesus' Judean ministry. **Luke** talks about it in **chapter 10 through 18** and **John** in **chapters 7 through 11**.

- Perea—Herod Antipas' territory (same Herod who had John the Baptist killed)
- Crowds gather around
- He began to teach (**Matt 16:2**, He was healing also)
- The Pharisees
 - Once more they are relentlessly trying to discredit or destroy Him
- The trap
 - Asking Jesus if divorce for any reason is lawful
 - Why? How is this a trap?

- Perea = Herod's jurisdiction

Mark 6:17-19 For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. **18** For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." **19** So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him.

- Herodias divorced her husband to marry Herod
- John had spoken against that and was imprisoned and killed for his words
- Pharisees are hoping that the same would occur to Jesus
- They knew Jesus' position on divorce

Matthew 5:31-32 It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.' **32** But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

- They were hoping He would say it loud and clearly so people would react strongly against His statement (If you do this, you are an adulterer)
- Rabbinic teaching on divorce
 - The question

Matthew 19:3 Some Pharisees came to Him to test Him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"

- For any and every reason
 - If man dislikes his wife's cooking
 - Letting her hair down at the wrong moment
 - Speaking negatively of his mother
 - Being uglier than the other woman

II. The Certificate (3-5)

- What did Moses command you?
 - He is not avoiding the question
 - He is ripping apart tradition
 - He is exposing their hearts—that they can change their wives as often as they like
- Moses wrote a certificate of divorce
 - They quote from Moses to justify their acts
- What did Moses write?

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, **2** and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, **3** and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, **4** then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

- Indecent about her
 - Rabbinic interpretation—anything husband finds shameful—divorce her
- What does it really say
 - The certificate of divorce is not a command
 - It is descriptive
 - The only command is that the man not to remarry the woman who he has divorced and has been married to someone else
 - What is “indecent about her”
 - Indecent = shamefulness
 - Adultery? No because adultery is punishable by death
 - Doing things that are shameful (habitual things)
 - Principle in Moses’ statement is this:
 - You better think twice about rejecting your wife. Once you divorce her and she becomes a wife of another man, you cannot get her back, even if he divorces her or dies.
- Why did Moses allow certificate of divorce?
 - Hardness of heart
 - This is actually a last resort in dealing with sin of spouse (short of adultery)

Note: This is after a failure in helping to set someone straight. God is graciously protecting the innocent party from further influences of sin. However, the Pharisees mistook this for God’s approval for divorce not because they were interested in preserving marriage, but so that they can get out it when it suits them.

III. The Command (6-9)

Note: Jesus goes back to Genesis to explain God’s purpose in marriage. In between the lines, Jesus is telling them that God hates divorce. The Genesis statements are binding to all people. He gives us four reasons why God hates divorce.

- Union of one man and one woman
 - God made them male and female

Genesis 1:27 *So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.*

- Their union was unique
 - There were no extra men or women to choose from or to find the right match
 - Once they married, divorce was impossible
- Strength of the union

Genesis 2:24-25 *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. 25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.*

- Leave father and mother and to be united with wife
 - Adam and Eve did not have parents; therefore it is a rule for all generations
 - United with = cleave unto
 - Glue yourself to your spouse
 - To pursue hard for your spouse
 - Total commitment

- One flesh
 - Two become one—you cannot break it down anymore!
 - Divorce is a tearing and ripping apart the union
 - Union of two produces children to become family
- Marriage is God's work
 - All marriage is an act of God—His gracious gift
 - By breaking up marriage, we are ripping up His work
- Marriage is sacred in God's eyes

Note: Two of the Ten Commandments have to do with marriage.

- Adultery was punishable by death (**Exodus 20:14**)

***Leviticus 20:10** If a man commits adultery with another man's wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.*

- He also tells us not to covet neighbor's spouse

***Exodus 20:17** You shall not covet your neighbor's house. **You shall not covet your neighbor's wife**, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.*

- Why do divorce happen?
 - Fallen world and curse on men and women

***Genesis 3:16** To the woman He said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."*

- This was not the original design!
- He will rule over you
 - He will be authoritarian over you by position
- Your desire for your husband
 - Is this a good thing?
 - No
 - To desire means to control

***Genesis 4:7** If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.*

- Woman's desire is to control or dominate her husband
- Divorce happens because
 - Woman wants to be independent and be dominant in the relationship
 - Man tries to overcome this rebellion (fight fire with fire)—becomes a tyrant
 - Conflict happens and then leads to estrangement and divorce

Jesus is saying, "There is conflict between men and women, but this doesn't change what God has intended or planned."