

Scripture: Mark 10:1-12

Text: Mark 10:6-9

Three Things You Should Know About Marriage

Beloved in Christ, Jesus now enters Judea. He is on His way to Jerusalem to give His life as a sacrifice on the cross for the sins of His people. In Mark 8:31 and 9:31 Jesus has spoken of His forthcoming suffering. Luke reminds us in this context that Jesus “*steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem*” [9:51].

Multitudes gather around Jesus to hear Him. In Mark 10, He teaches them about the place of marriage [1-12], children [13-16] and property in the kingdom [17-31]. Today we focus on Jesus’ teaching about marriage.

In verse 3, the Pharisees are testing Jesus, trying to trap Him. They are questioning Him about divorce and the specific permission Moses gave. Brokenness in marriage is a reality we deal with today as well.

Because of the reality of sin, there are no “three easy steps to a happy marriage.” Speakers and books that talk this way are misleading you.

But you do need to know three broad themes about marriage from the Bible. Think in terms of creation, fall [sin], and redemption. First, God established the institution of marriage at creation. God made it and He made it good. Second, marriage today is marred by sin, by the fall of man into sin. There is much brokenness. Only Adam and Eve had the perfect marriage. Marriage, therefore, in the third, place needs the power of Christ’s redemption.

In the question regarding divorce, Jesus in Mark 10:6-9 points back to the way things had been from the very beginning of creation. We see,

1. God made marriage

Not man. Marriage is not something man made up. Jesus reminds us in **verse 6**, that “*from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female*” – only two genders [see also Genesis 1:27]. Jesus goes back to the beginning of history. The Bible tells us that God created Adam before Eve, and that He created him specifically male. God did so with a specific view to Adam’s intimate union with Eve, whom He created from the rib of Adam, and as a female.

The first wedding recorded in history is found in Genesis 2. After God formed the woman from the rib of Adam, He brought her to the man. And Adam sang a song, the first wedding song, “*This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man*” [Genesis 2:23].

The woman was not made out of thin air or out of the dust of the ground, but “from the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man.” Woman is uniquely designed to complement man [complement: to complete him; compliment: expressing admiration. Note the difference!]. God made woman to suit man, to be his suitable helper. Uniquely designed, made to fit each other! Not just a companion. A companion, yes, but also a complement. Another man or animal can’t do this. She is exactly what the man needs; a suitable helper, equal to the man but also his opposite. God made the woman from the man and also for the man. God made marriage to be between one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.

“For this reason” says Jesus. Jesus now reaffirms what happens in marriage, quoting Genesis 2:24. We read in **verse 7**, “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” What happens in a marriage? Leaving, cleaving, and weaving.

The meaning is this, ‘for this reason a man shall leave behind his father and mother and be glued to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ A husband is not married to his family, but to his wife. A wife is not married to her family, but to her husband. Otherwise, you will have problems. Marriage involves three things: cutting off parental ties [parents no longer first after God, but spouse is], second, commitment to each other, and, third, a sexual relationship that binds you together as one’ [weaving].

Yes, respect and enjoy family relationships, but in marriage your primary tie or attachment is to one another [after God]. This is the way God intended it. Jesus confirms it. This is something every newly married couple needs to learn and grow into and parents need to remind them of. Many marriages suffer because parents interfere in the decision-making processes of a young couple. Marriages suffer because emotional ties to parents are not cut.

God designed man and woman for each other. Jesus is not only describing what happens here. He is saying what God intends in marriage. God made marriage. He made it beautiful – that the two be loving, giving one self to the other in a life-long commitment. Marriage is the basic to the orderly development of society. Husband and wife complement [complete] each other and begin a new home. God’s design in marriage is for male and female, one man and one woman to complement each other, first, and then, second, to have children. But before we say more about this, we need to ask ‘why are so many marriages broken?’ This leads us to our second broad theme from the Bible

2. Sin hurts, threatens and even breaks marriages

Through the fall [disobedience] of our first parents, sin came into the world and death through sin. By disobeying God, we turned against Him. It doesn’t stop there. Because of sin, we turn against one another. This happens in marriage too, the most intimate of relationships. There is so much pain and brokenness today. Think about why.

Consider the next chapter Genesis 3, God says to the woman, *"Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."* Sin affects the marriage relationship. The wife will desire to control her husband, even usurp his role as head in the marriage, and he in turn may rule over her harshly, even abusively.

This is why Jesus reinforces what the Bible says concerning marriage from the beginning. The debate or discussion, as we saw earlier, is over divorce. Divorce is tearing apart of what God has brought together. This is why divorce or separation in marriage is so painful.

The religious teachers among the Jews, the Pharisees, were soft-peddling the institution of marriage. They were using Moses' concession in Deuteronomy 24:1-3 in a wrong way to approve of 'easy divorce', using lame excuses, as long as the husband filled out the required paper work. A man could send his wife away simply for burning his dinner!

The Pharisees were far more interested in the permission or concession of Deuteronomy 24 than in God's intention for marriage from the beginning. Moses did not command this. Moses gave concession *"because of the hardness of your heart,"* says Jesus [verse 5].

Sad to say, the hardness of heart is with in marriage. In some marriages, couples live in the same house, but they are always fighting and not getting along. Marriages are affected by our self-seeking, self-loving, self-promoting, self-indulgent, self-willed natures. That's us, in Adam. Our sinful nature is not a good recipe for healthy marriages. Marriage needs the power of Christ's redemption – always and each day again.

Think also of the brokenness in the church of Corinth. It's so very real to life. Let's turn to 1 Corinthians 7 for a few minutes. We don't have enough time to focus on it. I encourage you to read it at home. In verses 10-11, the Lord through the apostle Paul confirms the teaching of Jesus in Mark. But there were some in the church in Corinth who came to faith in Christ, but their spouse did not. Others were single by divorce or by the death of their spouse or never got married.

But the Lord through the apostle Paul instructs the church: *"If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. . . . But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace"* [vv.12,13,15]. We may pray the Lord may use your witness to change his or her life.

In certain circumstances, God's Word allows one to remarry. In Matthew 5:32, Jesus, by implication, allows it on the grounds of sexual immorality; that is, if your spouse is not faithful to you. 1 Corinthians 7 seems to allow remarriage also in the case of desertion [v.14]. But remarriage must be "only in the Lord" [7:39]. But this is a different topic and a very complex one which we may save for another sermon or if you want to discuss privately with someone who can guide you.

But there is grace! There were believers in the church of Corinth who came out of a notorious past as 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 reminds us: a life of fornication, adultery, homosexuality. Paul says, *"such were some of you [notice past tense: "were"]*. But you were washed, but you were sanctified,

but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" [1 Corinthians 6:11]. This shows that a believer, from the date of his conversion to Christ, starts a new history from square one: washed, justified, sanctified! The past is forgiven! Christ is bigger than our sin! This brings us to our third broad theme,

3. Christ restores marriage

Jesus is able to restore our marriages to what God intended. This is why Jesus reinforces in Mark 10, the marriage institution of Genesis. He came into this broken world to conquer sin through His death and by the power of His resurrection. New life comes through faith in Him and by the power of His Spirit He applies this new life in sinners. Then we discover that life is no longer in ourselves but in Him. His life in us changes everything, including marriage. How so?

Jesus restores marriage so that it pictures the relationship between Christ and the church. What is that restored relationship like? Ephesians 5 says *"Husbands, love your wives, [how much?] just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her..."*. Husbands, sacrifice yourself for her, even if she is not lovable. That's what Christ did for His church. Ephesians 5 also says, *"wives, submit to your own husbands as to the Lord, . . . [how?] just as the church is subject to Christ . . ."* Wives, give yourselves to you husbands. Allow him to be head, trusting him, even if he makes mistakes.

Maybe your marriage or the marriage of someone you know is falling apart. There is one solution: Christ. God's grace, rich abundant grace in Christ. Think of the four 'r's: recognize your sin, repent of sin, be reconciled to God through Christ, trusting in Him and He renews your marriage by His Holy Spirit.

Jesus reminds married couples in Mark 10:8-9, that you *"are no longer two but one flesh."* A union -till death do you part. *"Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate."*

The words 'joined together' means literally 'to yoke together.' It is an agricultural metaphor, a reference to a team of oxen or horses working together. Likewise, as husband and wife, God has yoked you together, to think together, talk together, work together, pull together, play together, pray together, read the Bible together, and worship in God's house together.

Some here know of broken marriages from personal experience or close family members who have experienced it. Christ is bigger than our sin. We don't minimize sin or the painful brokenness it brings; rather 'we always maximize Christ and the power of His cross' [Adams, p.94]. God sincerely offers forgiveness to all who repent and believe in Christ who gave Himself on the cross for sinners.

To all who have experienced the pain of such separation, the same word 'separate' in 'let not man separate' is used in Romans 8:39: nothing *"shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* Human love is not so strong. It breaks. Marriages break. But when God joins you in union with Christ, no power can separate you from God's love. This love enables marriages on earth to flourish!

There are no three easy steps to a happy marriage. Marriages take work and sacrifice. But remember creation, fall, redemption. God made marriage beautiful; sin is the great spoiler; we need Christ. Christ, our Bridegroom, offers Himself to you. Trust in Christ. Believe His Word. He gives the grace you need for whatever state you are in! Be patient. God will do His work.

In the new creation, we will neither marry nor be given in marriage [Matthew 22:30]. We, as God's people, belong to the Lamb. He is making ready the marriage supper for His bride, His people. One bridegroom and one bride in union and communion forever. There is no greater marriage to look forward to! To Him be the glory. Amen.