

SERMON ON MOUNT-THE CHRISTIAN AND DIVORCE

Matthew 5:31-32, Matthew 19:3-10

This week we are looking at the Sermon on the Mount
And the DNA of Christian Character in Marriage
In this sermon Jesus is expanding the 7th commandment.
"Thou shalt not commit adultery!"

Marriage has taken a beating in our society.
Someone has said that "Marriage is like twirling a baton, turning handspings
or eating with chopsticks. It looks easy until you try it."

The speaker at a Women's Club was lecturing on marriage
and asked the audience how many of you want to "mother" your husbands.
Only one woman raised her hand.
The speaker asked: "You do want to mother your husband?"
Oh, the woman said: "I thought you said smother." *Reader's Digest, October, 1993.*

We all understand that marriage is not always easy.
And even relationships that start well don't end well.

Author Fay Angus said there are "Four D's of marriage"
depression, despair, drink and divorce."
Wow did she miss the joy God intended for his people.

Not only do we have an escalating problem,
We have an erosion of principles.
Sixty percent of American children born today will see their parents divorced.
Of those children who have suffered this pain of divorce,
half of them will see a second divorce before they are 18.

E Lawson said: Fifty years ago parents were apt to have a lot of kids.
Nowadays kids are apt to have a lot of parents.

God's word on divorce is diametrically opposed to the teaching of our society.
The question is: "Has the church taken a secular view of divorce and marriage?"
The Pharisees came to Jesus to question him about divorce.
The first thing Jesus did was to

I. JESUS AFFIRMED MARRIAGE

**⁴"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' ⁵and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? ⁶So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."
Matthew 19:4-6**

Jesus quickly moves to impress the sanctity of the family.
And the blessing of a marriage with the wife of your youth,

THAT MEANS your first wife.

Too many young people think that they can always get out.
That the second or third wife is better, or grass is greener.

When yachtsman Fuller E. Callaway, Jr. died his will

stands as a witness to us of the chances for happiness in multiple marriages.
He left \$100,000 to his first wife, \$10,000 to his second, and \$1 to his third. L. M. Boyd,
Spokesman-Review, July 28, 1992.

Jesus moved from being trapped into talking about divorce.
To enforce the importance of marriage.
He spoke about the biblical principles of marriage.
Because even in the early church too many people were ignorant about marriage.

Jesus said: **"Haven't you read, that at the beginning the Creator made them male and female... Matthew 19:4a**

This admonition was not just to ADAM and EVE
the first married couple.

But to us their descendants.

Jesus is here repeating Genesis 2:24

⁵ 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? Genesis 2:24

Adam and Even didn't have a mother or father.

This statement was not made for their benefit but for ours.

Jesus sets up for every married couple a scriptural principle of commitment
"So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." Matthew 19:6

These are not mans words carelessly repeated in the marriage ceremony.

But they are Jesus words to us.

Society has ignored them and that is why were in serious trouble today in our marriages.

Jesus affirmed marriage because it protects the status of women and children.

Jesus wanted to emphasize that.

The **first principle** is that marriage is a permanent union in God's eyes.

The second principle is that marriage is pleasing to the heart of God.

In God's parade of creation in Genesis

Every time he created something he said: It was good.

But his creation of Eve for Adam in marriage: Was VERY GOOD.

So if you're married there are four things you can do to enhance your marriage.

1. Be protective of your marriage. Avoid risky situations of lunches with a co-worker or drinks for two after work. Most people do not plan to be unfaithful.

2. Be positive. Look for what is right in your spouse and tell him or her daily. \

3. Be polite. Always talk to your spouse with respect. Show courtesy and caring in the way you treat and speak to one another.

4. Be playful, and make fun, sex, and humor a mainstay in your marriage. Schedule time and have a 'date night', or time for just the two of you, at least once a week.

Dr. Arthur Sazbo German psychologist did a study that showed if you give your spouse a kiss before you go to work each day.

You miss less work because of illness,
you have fewer auto accidents,
you earn 20- 30 % more monthly and
live about five years longer.

He believe the kiss is a seal of approval,
And leaves the person feeling good about themselves,
And they begin the day with a positive attitude all with a kiss.
Wouldn't that make a great book:
Pucker up and Grow Rich, Feel Good, and Live Longer.

BUT THE PHARISEES WOULDN'T BE PUT OFF WITH JESUS TALKING ABOUT MARRIAGE.

So they get more specific about Divorce.

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

⁷"Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?" Matthew 19:3,7

II. JESUS CORRECTED THEIR MISCONCEPTION OF DIVORCE.

Jesus knew the Pharisees understood the OT teaching that God allowed divorce

1. First of all for Adultery, or indecency

Deut 24:1 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, Deuteronomy 24:1

Adultery always breaks the marriage covenant.

It doesn't mean you have to have to get a divorce, but that divorce is allowable.

Jesus does give this same concession

⁹I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery." Matthew 19:9

But Jesus reminds them that Moses decreed divorce because of their sinful hard hearts.

⁸Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. Matthew 19:8

The Pharisee hearts had moved even farther from the OT to "any cause."

Is it lawful to divorce a wife for any cause? Matthew 19:3

David Instone-Brewer Senior research fellow in rabbinics at Tyndal house, Cambridge did research on this question.

"For any Cause" came from the Hillelites

who had invented a new form of divorce called the “Any clause” divorce.
 In Jesus time this “**any cause**” had become so popular
 That you could divorce a wife for burnt meal, wrinkles,
 Idleness, coming home late, or being untalented.

Moses intend was to allow for the cause of immorality or more literally

“A thing of nakedness.” Deut 24:1

The Hillelite rabbis thought the word **thing** gave them another ground for divorce.

For a “cause”

The Shammaites another group of rabbis, disagreed with this

They said Moses words were a single phrase--- “Except immorality.”

The Pharisees wanted to know where Jesus stood

With the Shammaites, or the Hillelites?

Is it lawful to divorce your wife for any cause?

When Jesus said: “No”

He wasn’t condemning “divorce for a specific cause,”

but rather the newly invented divorce for “Any cause”.

Or our now popular “no fault” divorce.

Jesus corrected them by saying

There must be a lawful cause for a divorce.

1. The First lawful cause was adultery or uncleanness.

2. The second lawful cause was for neglect.

If he marries another woman, he must not deprive the first one of her food, clothing and marital rights. ¹¹ If he does not provide her with these three things, she is to go free, without any payment of money. Exodus 21:10-11.

Exodus says that everyone, even a slave wife,
 had three rights within marriage—

These three rights for a Jewish marriage vows

Have been found in marriage certificates found near the DEAD Sea in Israel.

1. The rights to food,

2. Clothing

3. And love.

The wife had to cook and sew,

The husband provided food and materials, or money.

Both had to provide the emotional support of marital love,

though they could abstain from sex for short periods.

Think about the vows we still take today?

For better or worse,

For richer or poorer

In sickness and in health

To love and to cherish

Until death do us part.

If these were neglected, the wronged spouse had the right to seek freedom from that marriage. Even women could get divorces for neglect—though the man still had to write out the divorce certificate.

Rabbis said he had to do it voluntarily, so if he resisted, the courts had him beaten till he volunteered to sign. Thus the courts in the OT were already set up To protect women from spousal neglect or abuse. Even Moses recognized that hard-hearted cruelty could be worse than divorce.

3. The third lawful cause Paul shared was for Abandonment.

Paul deals with abandonment when he says to all believers that they may not abandon their partners, and if they have done so, they should return. I cor. 7:10-11

In the case of someone who is abandoned by an unbeliever—someone who won't obey the command to return—he says that the abandoned person is no longer bound.

¹⁵But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. ¹⁶How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? I Corinthians 7:15-16

Divorce is allowed for a limited number of grounds found both in the OT and affirmed in the NT

1. Adultery Deut 24:1 and Matthew 19 by Jesus
2. Neglect Exod 21:10-11 and by Paul in I Cor 7
3. Abandonment and abuse affirmed in I Cor 7

God's law is both practical and loving. Therefore, while divorce should never happen, And was not God's original intention, God allows it when your partner breaks the marriage vows.

And in first century Palestine divorce certificates ended with the words: "You are free to marry anyone you wish."

Jesus was making the point that Marriage needs a spiritual solution.

III. MARRIAGE NEEDS A SPIRITUAL SOLUTION

⁴"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'⁵and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? ⁶So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." Matthew 19:4-6

Hard hearts can only be softened by the Spirit of the Living God.

God hates divorce because it creates so many more problems.
With the kids and in the next marriage.

The cause of marital problems is not incompatibility.
It is sin and disobedience.
The answer is not a liberalized approach,
But a return to Biblical Principles.

A young man was talking with his fiancé about the frailty of marriage he ask: "What if you wake up one morning after were married and don't love me anymore?" She immediately responded, "There's always obedience."
Not obedience to one another,
But Obedience to God.

Sex has become such an over emphasized thing in our world today.
That the Apostle Paul passes this admonition to husbands and wife.
He said: "that married couples owed each other love I cor 7:3-5

³The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. ⁴The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife. ⁵Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I Corinthians 7:3-5

We have a responsibility to one another in our marriage covenants.
To care for one another.
To provide for one another
And to love one another.
We as Christians ought to do it best.
As we submit to the Holy Spirit as we work together.

Your marriage is responsible for every marriage yet to be.
By the way you live and demonstrate forgiveness and grace in your marriage
Our pride can lead people to reprehensible behavior
And keep them from confession, restitution, forgiveness, and reconciliation.
This "hardness of heart"

I know that there are all kind of abuses in our relationships
That why
Samuel Butler said of Thomas Carlyle,
It was very good of God to let Carlyle and Mrs. Carlyle
marry one another and so make only 2 people miserable instead of 4.

‘THE HARDNESS OF OUR HEART’ refers to our pride.

That is also why it is important for us to have premarital testing and counseling.
 To help people prepare for marriage
 I have never seen couples get married with the expressed intention
 of destroying each other.

Someone said: "Marriage teaches you loyalty, forbearance, self-restraint and
 a lot of other qualities you wouldn't need if you'd stayed single."

Let me close by saying:

I know that in this worship service today
 there are many who have suffered the pain of divorce.
 Some remained single and some of you have remarried.
 As a church we offer the ministry of a Divorce Care support group.
 Many people have found healing through such a supportive relationship.
 Divorce is a pardonable sin like any other.

Jesus redemptive work restores the hearts of men and women
 and turns them back to him.
 God can bring light out of darkness.
 Even the darkness of divorce.

As the prophet of **Ezekiel 36:26**

**A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will
 take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.**

A soft heart for a hard heart,
 That is the great exchange.
 Will you honor your marriage or premarital covenant?
 And start to live a holy life --beginning today.
 Our churches goal is to prevent further separations,
 Build stronger families and
 Stop the generational cycle of divorce.