

*The Two Shall Become One Flesh*  
Mark 10:1-12  
Reading: Genesis 2:18-25

Bethany Baptist Church  
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*...pray...* After Jesus *left Capernaum in Galilee*, a period of several weeks (months) passed before Mark picks up his narrative.

1. Jesus traveled to *Perea*, the region just east of the Jordan River.
2. The *crowds* are drawn to Him, as before.
  - Mark paints a picture of crowds gathering all around the Son of Man as He ministers in Perea.
3. And as was His custom, He met their most important need – *the need to live in truth* – by teaching them.
  - I believe we can assume that the heart of Jesus’ teaching was still this: the Good News of the Kingdom – the need to *repent & believe* in the **Son of Man**.

B. Not surprisingly, Jesus was intercepted by **another group**. A *familiar* group. A *jealous, scheming* group.

1. The *Pharisees* had found Jesus in Perea.
2. They came to *test* Him, hoping to trap Him in a *no-win* situation by asking a question that was a religious & cultural *bombshell*!
3. “***Where do you stand on divorce, teacher?***”      PAUSE
4. You can almost hear the entire crowd *catch their breath*, then grow silent.

C. That question was just as *difficult* & just as *important* 20 centuries ago as it is today.

1. In fact, as we study our text this morning, we’re going to learn that *divorce has been troublesome issue for God’s people* since Moses led Israel out of *bondage in Egypt*.
2. No matter how Jesus answered, ***someone in that crowd was going to get mad!***
3. **What would you have done...?**

D. Let's read this morning's text in **Mark 10:1-12**.

1. The Jewish people were *divided* on this question of *grounds for divorce*. There were two significant factions:
2. The *majority* held to the teachings of **Rabbi Hillel**. His view was the *broader* view, the *easy-divorce* view: a man could divorce his wife for almost anything that he found displeasing:
  - If she *spoke disrespectfully* to you.
  - If she spoke *disrespectfully* of your parents.
  - If she spoke so *loud* the neighbors could hear her.
  - If she *burnt* your dinner.
  - If you found someone *better looking*!
3. The position of **Rabbi Shammai** was prominent, but much stricter...and less popular: *the only grounds for divorce was marital unfaithfulness*.

E. In Missouri, in 2003, there were over **22,000 divorces**.

- Those divorces effected **11,000 children**.
- According to the U of M.

F. *What did Jesus teach about this question that won't go away?*  
**What did He teach His followers about divorce?**

1. *The textbook on relationships* (v. 3 + reflected in vv. 4-8)
2. *The foundation of marriage* (vv. 6-8)
3. *The seriousness of divorce* (vv. 9-12)
4. *The provisions for our peace* (Matt 19; 1 Cor 7)

1. ***What is the source of truth? (Is there a source for truth?)***
  - A. How **would** you answer the Pharisees' test? Let's not miss this to start out with: *Jesus understood just what the Pharisees were up to – and He answered with courage.*
  - B. He forced His opponents to deal with this issue on the basis of *revealed truth*. Not *tradition*. Not *convenience*. **Truth**.
    1. **v. 3** – *And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?” (Deut 24:1-4; then Gen 1 & 2)*
    2. Do you see what Jesus did? He forced them back to their *Bible*.
  - C. Do you remember what we've learned together about God's Word in the Fall of 2005? *Five fundamental characteristics*:
    1. **Inspired** – 2 Tim 3:16: *All Scripture is God-breathed (theopneustos)... (cf. 2 Pet 1:19-21)*
    2. **Inerrant** – Psa 19:7: *The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul...*
    3. **Clear (Per spic uous)** - Psa 19:7b – *The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.*
    4. **Sufficient** – 2 Tim 3:16-17: *All Scripture is God-breathed, and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be completely equipped for every good work!*
    5. **Authoritative** – (makes sense!) Jer 2:1-2: *Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, “Go and proclaim in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD...’”*
  - D. It would be hard to imagine a more *difficult & relevant* issue facing the Church & culture-at-large than this question in our text. **And God has given us truth to live by.**

***Beloved, may I suggest that knowing where to go for the truth is reason for hope!***

### *The foundation of marriage (vv. 6-8).*

- A. Most of the men in that crowd probably embraced the *popular view* of *easy divorce*.
1. And like the Pharisees, they would appeal to a *much-debated* passage in the Torah: **Deuteronomy 24:1-4**.
    - a. The term in **v. 1** – *some indecency* – was debated. The **popular view** became: = *anything that made her husband unhappy*.
    - b. A **stricter** understanding (correct) would be: = *improper sexual relationships, including adultery, homosexuality, bestiality*.
    - c. That's because *sexual impropriety* violates the fundamental *one-flesh* nature of marriage (more on that in *just a minute*).
  2. This OT passage on divorce was a *concession* to the fact that sinful men & woman violate God's intent for marriage.
    - a. Deut 24 was not a *broad-base permit* for divorce; rather it served to regulate the process by which divorces were *documented*, and by which remarriage was *controlled*.
    - b. If a woman was *unfaithful* (v. 1), was then *divorced, remarried*, ...later divorced by her *second husband*, she couldn't go back to the *first* (vv. 2-4). *Such a pattern would be an abomination to God, bringing sin on the land* (v. 4)!
    - c. *This guideline also protected women*. It meant a man had to document why he was sending her away. Especially vital if the husband sought divorce under questionable grounds. It also meant that a man couldn't *exploit* a woman by a cycle of *casual divorce & then forced remarriage*.
    - d. Would you note something with me in Deuteronomy 24? If divorce is pursued for *sexual impropriety*, it's to be regulated. But divorce *isn't commanded*....

3. Why does divorce happen? Here's Jesus' *summary assessment* of why divorce happens:
    - a. **Sin.** Divorce happens because someone sins.
    - b. Let's return to Mark 10. Read **v. 5** w/ me.
      - i. Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was a regulatory *concession* given because of *hardness of heart*.
      - ii. The Greek term is σκληρο + *καρδια*
        - **Arteriosclerosis** – *hardening of the arteries*; physical issue.
        - **Sclerokardia** – *hardness of the heart*: spiritual condition.
    - c. Our world talks about *no-fault* divorce. Beloved, the Bible knows no such thing as *no-fault* divorce. I understand there are aggrieved parties in many divorces. Divorce happens because of *hardness of heart*...divorce happens because someone sins.
- B. The Pharisees were interested in knowing *just how much rope* the Law would give them. Jesus wanted them to understand *just how important* marriage is (read vv. 6-8).
1. **First things first:** you can't understand the Bible's position on *divorce*, until you understand God's *design for marriage*.
  2. Turn with me to the texts Jesus cited, first to **Genesis 1:27-28**.
    - Do you see something here: *God made men & women to be joined in marriage*.
    - It wasn't an *accident* that we aren't exactly the same!

3. Now let's read the story of the *first wedding*: **Genesis 2:18-25**.
- a. V. 18 – Marriage was **God's idea**, and He intended it for *your good!*
  - b. V. 18, 23 – God created woman to complement her husband: the idea in v. 18 is like *two puzzle pieces* fitted together.
  - c. **V. 24** – Here is the crux of Jesus' argument:
    - i. The marriage relationship is so important, that you *leave* the parents you're commanded to honor (Greek of Mark 10 is **strong** – lit. *abandon*).
    - ii. The marriage relationship is so vital, that you *cleave* to your husband or wife (*glued together*).
    - iii. The marriage relationship is so vital, that God sees you now as *one flesh*.
    - iv. **Sexual union** is fundamental to God's design for *one-flesh* marriage.
      - That's why Deuteronomy 24:1 is referring to *forms of marital unfaithfulness*.
4. Before we move on, I'd like to point out something that seems clear to me in our text: the Bible defines marriage as a God-ordained, one-flesh relationship between **a man & a woman**.
- No other understanding is *intellectually honest*.

C. **Here's Jesus' point:** when we understand how important our marriages are to God....

it will be clear that there is no such thing as *no fault, easy divorce*;

divorce is always the result of **someone's sin**.

### ***The seriousness of divorce (vv. 9-12)***

A. Jesus summed up His defense of marriage with a *warning*, didn't He?

- Craig – **read v. 9**

B. Jesus' response to the Pharisees makes it really clear that *marriage is serious (divorce is...)*

C. It was suddenly *really* clear to the disciples, and so back in the house, with the Pharisees & crowds behind them, they started asking questions.

1. **Matt 19:10** – *The disciples said to Him, "If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry."*
2. (But we know *that's not the right response*, because God intends marriage *for our good!*)
3. Still, they got this right: *divorce is serious!*

D. And here's the complete story.

1. *Divorce*, except for the narrow grounds given in the Bible, *is sinful* (that's what we've seen so far in Mark 10, Gen 1& 2, and Deut 24).
2. *Remarriage*, following an unbiblical divorce, *is sinful*.

- Jesus' says it's *adultery*.

**Why do so many people toy with divorce? *It's serious...***



### *The provisions for our peace .*

- A. As we read & studied Deuteronomy 24 together, you probably picked up on this point: *there are **biblical grounds** for divorce.*
- B. Specifically, there are ***two conditions*** under which the Bible permits divorce for the *protection & peace* of the offended party.
  - 1. ***Marital unfaithfulness.*** Let's turn to **Matt 19:9** together. In this verse, Jesus makes the true intent of Deuteronomy 24:1 clear.
    - a. Sexual unfaithfulness violates the one-flesh relationship. It gives the offended spouse biblical grounds for divorce.
    - b. Jesus had taught this same *exception clause* earlier, in the *Sermon on the Mount* (Matt 5:31).
    - c. (By the way, the Pharisees *may have known that* as they came to test Him.)
  - 2. ***Abandonment.*** To be more specific, the abandonment of a Christian by his/her unbelieving spouse. Let's look at 1 Cor 7:12-16.
    - a. Paul is writing about *mixed marriage*, here in which a man comes to Christ, but his wife *doesn't*.
    - b. **V. 12 & 13** – If the unbeliever agrees to live with you, maintain the marriage (*don't divorce*).
    - c. **V. 14** – Here's why: the marriage can have *redemptive effect* on the unbeliever & the kids (cf. 1 Pet 3:1&2).

d. **V. 15** – Yet if the *unbeliever* leaves, let them. *When an unbeliever abandons their Christian spouse, the Christian has a biblical basis for divorce.*

- The believer doesn't sin (*not under bondage*).
- God wants His children to live in peace.
- Here is the challenge for *believers & churches*: what constitutes *abandonment* in such cases?

3. *Remarriage*. Let's read **v. 15** again.

- Beloved, if you are the divorced under one of the two *biblical grounds*, you are *completely free* to remarry, in the Lord (i.e. to a another faithful believer).

Marriage is so precious! *Divorce is so serious.*

A. Parents, what are you teaching your kids about *marriage*?

1. Are you enforcing them the need to be *personally responsible* before they marry?
  - To **be** a *maturing* Christian.
  - To marry a maturing Christian.
2. Are you helping them understand the Bible's description of an appropriate *life-long* partner?
3. Will they consider *wise criteria* for readiness?
4. Do your kids understand their need to be *guided by God's Word*?
5. Are you teaching them (*modeling for them*) the seriousness of a relationship that *God instituted as sacred*?

B. We can't minimize the seriousness of divorce. But beloved, divorce, as serious as it is, is not the *unpardonable sin*.

C. God's grace is *never an excuse* to rush into divorce, yet God is *gracious!*

...*pray*...