

Start off this message by saying...If you have been divorced...you are loved...grace

- Message may be hard to hear...b/c God opposes divorce, but He doesn't oppose you
Romans 8:1 – "there is therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"
Divorce, under wrong circumstances is sin...but there is forgiveness for sins through JC
I'm gonna preach this message as it stands in the text, but if you have divorced feel loved
Christ loves you...Christ died for you...Christ had restored you...Christ has forgiven you

There are some words that are easy to say but difficult to live with – Divorce is one of them

- You can sign the papers in an afternoon, but the consequences can last for years
- A marriage may end with a signature, but the story doesn't end there

Children who Blame – Families Divided – Friendships Complicated – Hearts carry Wounds
Stand Friends – "For better or for worse. For richer or for poorer. In sickness and in health."
Everyone celebrates b/c they believe they are watching the beginning of a lifelong covenant
But years later, those same two people can sit across from one another in a lawyer's office
and hear the words, **"Your marriage is over."**

Tragedy is between the wedding vows and divorce papers, the covenant became a contract

- A **contract** is based on exchange – "You do this and I'll do that" – Paint a house
- The Bible uses **covenant** to describe God's binding relationship with His people
 - Contract is based on what the other person does for me
 - Covenant is based on the commitment I make to the other person – **Divorce Breaks**
- **Divorce is not a theoretical issue in our culture - 672,502 divorces 2025 | 2.4 per 1000**
 - Behind every statistic is a story – Husbands / Wives | Children | Parents | Churches
 - Some marriages ended b/c of years selfishness, unfaithfulness, or hardness of heart
 - Others involve deep/painful circumstances require wisdom, protection, and pastoral

So when Jesus speaks about divorce in Matthew 5, He isn't giving us a cold legal rule

He is calling us back to God's design for marriage

³¹ "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' ³² But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Words of Jesus, we are reminded marriage is not a legal arrangement—it is a covenant
He addressing heart's attitude toward commitment we make when we enter into marriage

- What makes this especially challenging: **faithfulness is easiest when marriage is easy**
- The real test of our commitment comes when communication breaks down
- when feelings change, when conflict becomes frequent, when disappointment sets in
- when loving your spouse requires sacrifice – This is when marriage gets hard

Jesus is calling us to a righteousness ...simply asking, "What am I legally allowed to do?"

The question is, **"How can I faithfully honor the covenant I made before God?"**

As we look at Jesus' teaching on divorce, we need to remember this central truth

Big Idea - Honor your marriage covenant even when faithfulness becomes difficult

- Marriage is not, "I will remain faithful as long as this marriage makes me happy."
- It is, "I will honor the covenant I made before God, even when doing so requires patience, forgiveness, sacrifice, and perseverance."
- Jesus is not minimizing the pain and brokenness that can exist in marriage
- He is calling His people to take the marriage covenant seriously because God takes covenant faithfulness seriously

Today I am going to give you 3 things to remember when it comes to marriage and divorce

1. **Recognize the Seriousness of Marriage**

³¹ "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'

Jesus is not merely discussing divorce - How seriously God takes the marriage covenant
In Jesus' day, divorce had become an easy way for people to escape a difficult marriage

- Pharisees had taken something God intended sacred and reduced it to a legal question:

"Under what circumstances can I get out of my marriage?"

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 addresses divorce in the OT – Certificate for anything indecent
Point was protecting women – Some men would stay married and put women streets

Giving them a certificate of divorce meant they were free to marry another man

Jesus brings it back to God's design - Marriage was never intended to be disposable

Malachi 2:16 KJV "For I hate divorce," says the Lord God of Israel.

- It is a covenant commitment where husband & wife promise faithfulness one another

a. **Marriage was established by God**

Gen. 2:18 "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helper fit for him."

Adam didn't invent it - Society didn't invent it - Government didn't invent it – God invented
Imagine you invent something and you bring it into a room where no one has seen it before

Some dude gets up and starts telling everyone what your invention is – works – purpose

Dude...you're wrong...that's not what it does and that is not it's intended purpose

This is what people and the government have done with marriage...repurposed it...wrong

Because God invented it he gets to define it: One Man and One Woman in a Covenant

Genesis 2:24 - "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh." **LEAVE – HOLD FAST – BECOME ONE**

Marriage involves a new primary earthly relationship

A husband and wife are joined together in a covenant relationship God Himself designed

b. **Jesus is correcting a sinful behavior**

- Problem wasn't Moses had created easy way escape marriage...problem using the law

⇒ **Divorce had become easier to justify than it was meant to be**

- People were just handing out certificates of divorce all willy-nilly | **Burned pot roast**

⇒ **People were using Scripture to justify their own desires**

- Instead of asking, *"How can I remain faithful to my covenant?"*
- The question had become, *"What biblical permission do I have to leave?"*
- The word in Deuteronomy is anything 'indecent' – Definition had gotten broad
- Jesus exposes that kind of heart-level legalism...telling them their motives wrong

⇒ **The certificate did not make an unjust divorce righteous**

- A piece of paper could make the separation legally recognized
- It could not change the moral reality of what was happening.
- Morally all the reasons they were coming up with for divorce were sinful

Imagine an airplane with an emergency exit - The door is there for a legitimate purpose

"I don't have to stay in my seat. I can open that door whenever I become uncomfortable."

Existence of an emergency exit wasn't designed passengers to use it whenever they want

Divorce was meant to be used 'in emergencies only' and God has defined those emergencies

c. **Marriage Requires Faithfulness**

- Marriage is supposed to display something about Christ – **Closest relationship Gospel**

- Christ doesn't love His church because she is always easy to love...**we're terrible**

He loves sacrificially – He loves unconditionally – He loves completely...like marriage

Revere the Covenant - Reinforce the Commitment - Reflect Christ's Character

2. Reject the Casualness of Divorce

³² But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

We live in a culture where ending your marriage can come with limitless reasons

- No-fault divorce = “We just don’t want be married anymore” – [Government approved](#)
Imagine standing at the front of a church on your wedding day - You don't say:

- *"I promise to love you as long as things remain convenient."*
- *"I promise to remain faithful until someone more attractive comes along."*
- *"I promise to stay married until this relationship becomes difficult."*
- *"For better or for worse, richer or poorer, sickness and in health, until death do us part."*

The Bible actually only gives us two justifiable reasons for divorce and one is found here

Recognize the destructiveness of unfaithfulness - [except on the ground of sexual immorality](#)

Jesus takes seriously the destructive consequences of breaking marital faithfulness

- Jesus is not saying sexual sin makes divorce mandatory – You CAN but don’t have to
- Rather, He recognizes sexual immorality as a serious violation of the marriage covenant
[Home Ownership – Which would you rather have...a crack in a wall or a crack in foundation](#)
[Sexual immorality in marriage is like that - It attacks the foundation of trust and faithfulness](#)
[and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery](#) – This one is tough in our day and age
Divorce does not automatically erase obligations and moral reality of the original marriage
[If man divorces his wife for an illegitimate reason & she subsequently marries another man, second marriage is adultery b/c first marriage was not legitimately dissolved in God's eyes](#)

You cannot use a legal document to make an immoral divorce morally acceptable

[Adultery is the first reason you can divorce your spouse and remarry without adultery – 2nd](#)

Abandonment of an unbelieving spouse

[1 Corinthians 7:15 - If the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace | Read Paragraph](#)
[Protect your Marriage – Pursue your Spouse – Practice Grace and Forgiveness](#)

3. Reflect God’s Faithfulness in Marriage

[Because marriage reflects God’s faithful design and Christ’s faithful love, husbands and wives should faithfully honor their marriage – Three ways to do just that](#)

a. Remember God’s Design for Marriage

[Matthew 19:4-6 “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”](#)

Marriage is God's design that He gave to humanity – [Don’t mess with the creator](#)

- That means we don't get to redefine marriage according to our preferences.
- If God designed it, we need to understand it according to His Word

b. Respect the Sanctity of Marriage

[Hebrews 13:4 “Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.”](#)

- **Marriage is to be honored** - Marriage is not something we should treat casually
- **Marriage is to be kept pure** - Represents the sexual relationship within marriage
- **Marriage unfaithfulness is taken seriously by God** – God hates sexual infidelity

c. Reflect Christ’s Love Through Your Marriage - [Ephesians 5:22, 25, 31-32](#)

[Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord...Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church](#)

- Wives reflect Christ through willing submission
- Husbands reflect Christ through sacrificial love
- Both spouses reflect Christ through faithful love
[Have a marriage that preaches – Gospel – Your marriage should be a killer sermon](#)
[Protect Your Unity - Practice Faithfulness – Point to Christ](#)

[We’ve covered divorce...last thing I’ll say is: All Christian divorces should involve elders](#)

- Every situation is different and the elders will help you through the process
- 1. Recognize the Seriousness of Marriage
- 2. Reject the Casualness of Divorce
- 3. Reflect God’s Faithfulness in Marriage

[Honor your marriage covenant even when faithfulness becomes difficult](#)

The Bible never commands divorce, and it only gives specific permission in the case of adultery and abandonment of an unbelieving spouse. While Scripture doesn’t give a simple provision for divorce outside of adultery, we know there are cases where a separation and perhaps a legal divorce are needed. Here's how such cases should be handled biblically:

If the offending spouse is an unbeliever, we go to Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16. If the unbelieving spouse has separated or abandoned the believing spouse, divorce is permitted. It may also be permitted if they don't allow the believing spouse to live as a Christian. This lack of permission doesn't have to be verbal, but could be the consistent action of prohibiting the believing spouse from living in a way that honors God or from doing the things God requires of him/her. This may include the unbelieving spouse physically abusing the believing spouse in a way that puts him/her or their children in real physical danger; keeping them from attending and fellowshiping at any church; not allowing them to teach their children the truth about Jesus and the Bible; or prohibiting them from essential spiritual practices such as prayer or studying Scripture.

If the offending spouse is a believer and is doing any of these things or has other recurring sin that affects the marriage, we rely first on Matthew 18:15-18: we confront the spouse individually, and if there’s no genuine repentance we follow the process: bring 2 or 3 others, then if needed bring the sin before the members of the church. If they still won’t demonstrate repentance, we're instructed to treat them as an unbeliever. If we reach that point, Paul’s teaching from before applies and it may be that the spouse is free to leave.

All of this should be done under the guidance of wise Christian counsel including the elders of the church, and the goal should always be restoration and the preservation of the marriage covenant. It should also be done in a way that ensures the physical safety of the spouse and children, which may mean a temporary separation is necessary as the process plays out.