



Sermon Series: Mark: Living Everyday With Jesus

Sermon Title: Testing the Waters of Divorce

Date: 2/15/2026

Mark 10:1-12

Big Idea: Don't condemn the divorced; minister to the pain being experienced.

1. God's Design for Marriage is Permanent

Jesus traveled to Perea where crowds gathered to learn from him. The Pharisees arrived to test him: "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" Their motive was clearly stated - they hoped to trap him in the heated divorce debates of their day. Rather than take sides, Jesus redirected them to Scripture. He exposed their misreading of Deuteronomy 24, which never commanded divorce but simply regulated remarriage when it occurred - describing a reality in a broken world, not God's intent.

Jesus pointed to the heart of the issue: "**Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment**" (Mark 10:5). Then he reached back to Genesis 2, before sin entered the world, to reveal God's design. A man leaves his father and mother, holds fast to his wife, and the two become one flesh (Mark 10:7-8). This isn't poetic language - it's a complete union created by God himself. Marriage is God's creation, a covenant meant to last for life. Jesus told his disciples: "**Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery**" (Mark 10:11-12).

Jesus applied the same standard to both men and women, which was shocking in that culture. Scripture does provide grounds for lawful divorce in cases of sexual immorality (Matthew 5, Matthew 19) and abandonment by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15). These are concessions for a fallen world, not changes to God's original design: one man, one woman, joined by God, for life.

2. Divorce Exposes the Hardness of the Human Heart

The key phrase in Jesus' teaching is "hardness of heart." The Pharisees twisted Moses' regulation into a license for easy divorce, turning instruction meant to protect the vulnerable into approval for selfishness. Today's

culture often views divorce as a fresh start rather than the outcome of sin—sin that needs healing, repentance, and transformation.

God never presents divorce as neutral. It's always connected to sin—sometimes by one spouse, sometimes both. Even when someone is deeply wounded through no fault of their own, divorce still reveals human brokenness and a deviation from God's good design. Jesus' concern isn't primarily the divorce itself but what it exposes: someone's hard heart. Hard hearts resist God's truth, seek loopholes, and prioritize comfort over obedience.

Every person—married, single, divorced, widowed—has areas of hardness where we resist God's authority. We all need the same heart surgeon: Jesus.

Ezekiel 36:26 speaks of God's promise: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." Marriages thrive where hearts are soft—where mutual care, forgiveness, service, confession, repentance, and grace are present.

3. God's Grace Brings Forgiveness, Healing, and a Way Forward

Jesus' words are strong but meant to diagnose, not condemn. They call us to repentance, healing, and restoration. When Jesus encountered the woman at the well—married multiple times and cohabitating—he engaged her with truth and grace, not condemnation.

Divorce is not unforgivable. Jesus died for all sin, including those that shatter marriages. The cross shows both sin's deadly nature and God's precious grace. God doesn't ignore covenant breaking, yet he doesn't abandon victims or those who turn to him in repentance.

For those who sinned in marriage: real forgiveness in Jesus. For those sinned against: comfort and healing. For the remarried: walk faithfully under Christ's lordship. For married believers: treat your covenant as holy. For singles: God makes you complete. For the divorced: lay down self-justification and trust Jesus' grace. For all: cultivate a soft heart.

As God's people, may we hold marriage in honor, confront hardness of heart, and remember: Don't condemn the divorced; minister to the pain being experienced.

Discussion Questions:

1. How does understanding God's original design for marriage (Genesis 2) shape the way we view our own relationships or encourage others in theirs?
2. Jesus pointed to "hardness of heart" as the core issue behind divorce. What are some signs of a hardening heart in any area of life, and how can we guard against it?
3. Why is it important for the church to respond to divorce with both truth and grace? How can we minister to those experiencing the pain of divorce without compromising God's design for marriage?
4. This sermon mentioned that every person - married, single, divorced, or widowed - needs a soft heart toward God. What practical steps can you take this week to cultivate softness toward God in your own life?
5. How does the truth that "divorce is not an unforgivable sin" change the way we view ourselves or others who have experienced divorce? How can this truth bring hope and healing?