



# CANYON HILLS

COMMUNITY CHURCH

Series: Mark

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## **Inseparable Marriage**

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While we are preparing to give, I'm going to encourage you to open your Bibles to the gospel of Mark, chapter 10. That's where we've come to. If you're new, we're working our way through the gospel of Mark, verse by verse.

Just by way of reminder and context, in the first eight chapters of the gospel of Mark, Mark is really emphasizing the divine power and authority of Jesus. He wants to establish the true identity of Jesus as the Son of God, and so he shows many of the miracles that were taking place in the ministry of Jesus early on in the gospel.

Now, for the next eight chapters, beginning in chapter 9, Mark is going to primarily emphasize the divine wisdom and the mission of Jesus. His mission as the Savior of all who would believe in him for the forgiveness of sins, a forgiveness that results in eternal life and being saved from the wrath of God that's coming upon the sin of all mankind.

Now, today, we're going to jump into another teaching passage on a very important subject, a subject that all those who love Jesus and call him their Savior desperately need to continue to have God's clarity on, especially in the culture in which we live. With that said, let's go ahead and stand, as we always do, for the reading of God's Word. We're going to pick it up right where we left off. Chapter 10, verse 1, in the gospel of Mark:

**"And [Jesus] left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them. And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?' He answered them, 'What did Moses command you?' They said, 'Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.'**

**And Jesus said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, "God made them male and female." "Therefore a man shall leave his father and 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.'"**

**And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. And he said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.'"** Let's stop right there and pray.

God in heaven, our prayer and thanks right now is that your instruction is so clear. We pray, God, that you would help us to learn, and more importantly, help us to believe. God, we ask that you would help us to enjoy who we are, so far from being perfect, especially in this matter, yet perfectly and deeply loved by you. So, God, we just pray that as we open our hearts to your truth, you will teach us and correct us where needed. Give us great faith, God. We trust you. In Jesus' name, amen.

Now, depending on where you are, this passage obviously carries with it some varying degrees of emotion and some questions. Some of you in the church are unequally yoked. You're married to someone who doesn't share your love for Jesus, and that has some ramifications in your marriage. Others of you are widowed now, and there is perhaps a hole in your heart where there was once a spouse that you deeply loved.

Others of you are married, but there are struggles. There may be more pain in your marriage than paradise, I guess. Others sit amongst us divorced, and there are all kinds of residual effects of that. Sometimes it's just pain, hurt, guilt, or confusion. Others are single, just curious, and maybe even wondering if marriage is in your future or if you even want marriage to be in your future. There are all kinds of emotions that start to surface in a passage and topic like that.

Now, in spite of that, this passage is not without its hope. Through Jesus, we can see the perfection of God's love and grace in God's heart for marriage. In the infinite wisdom of Jesus, he responds to their divorce question with a picture of an inseparable marriage: "**...let not man separate.**"

What I noticed here and what I want us to remember is that every divorce question is first a marriage question, isn't it? You get the marriage answers right and you have a better chance of getting the divorce answers right. More importantly, if we get the God answers right, we'll get all the questions right.

So, I want you to notice that when Jesus starts talking about marriage here, he starts out by talking about God. So, Christian, listen. We cannot have the marriage and divorce discussion without God. We just can't. We can't leave him out of the discussion, because how we worship God determines our view of marriage, which will also determine our view of divorce.

Let me say that again. What we think about God and how we worship him as God absolutely has everything to do with the divorce, marriage, and remarriage discussion. This is so right and so good, and this is where I want to begin the application of this passage. Inseparable marriages are

basically, according to Jesus, built on three foundations. There are three foundations for having a marriage that's inseparable.

1. *Worshiping God as the final say on marriage and divorce.* The inseparable marriage is built on two people believing God is our highest authority when it comes to the protection and plan of marriage as well as the permission for divorce. It has to begin there.

Again, I want you to notice the question the Pharisees asked Jesus in verse 2 is about divorce. **"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"** Jesus does what he always does when people were trying to trick him in the New Testament. He answers their question with a question. He says, "Well, what did Moses say?"

Now, he knows their hearts and he already knows what their answer is going to be, because Jesus already knows what Moses said. So, the first thing Jesus is going to do is clarify why Moses permitted divorce. We see here, in verse 5, that divorce exists because the worship of God doesn't.

In verse 5, Jesus reminds them that divorce is the fruit of a sinful, hardened heart, first toward God and ultimately toward the spouse. Divorce was never a part of the original plan. It's the result of the blindness of a heart hardened by sin. That's what Jesus says, very succinctly. He said, in verse 5, **"Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment."**

Now, you need to know that contextually, back in Moses' day, divorce was cruel and utterly devastating to a woman. It would often result in their debilitating shame and poverty. They became social outcasts, and it was definitely a sentence to being childless and barren the rest of her life. It was brutal. It was a death sentence to hope and happiness for a woman back then. By God's grace, Jesus reminds them, Moses permitted to allow a way for compassionately dealing with such a destructive and devastating sin.

Now, by Jesus' day, when this takes place in our passage, divorce was becoming absolutely rampant amongst the Jews. Moses' law was being so abused by the Jewish men that their wives were being kicked to the curb like used luggage for any and every reason, and they were blaming Moses for it. So, Jesus quickly exposes their hard hearts with the truth. Divorce was never intended to be a part of marriage, ever.

Yet we also see in Jesus' response to them that God's laws are always higher than man's. The purpose and plans of God are always our infinite authority. You kind of get this here as he says, in verses 5 and 6, **"Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But..."** That word, *but*, there is really important. It's huge.

It indicates that everything Jesus is about to say from that point forward will trump and have authority over anything that was going on in the Old Testament with Moses and their permission for divorce. Everything that follows from that word forward in Jesus' discussion defines the divine terms of marriage and divorce.

Now, when I was studying this, I was just reminded of how it is with us as people. Proverbs 14:12 says there's a way that always seems right to a man, to us, but its end is the way of death. There are plenty of man-made laws, definitions, and interpretations of marriage and divorce today. There are so many ideas that are out there that are acceptable. In fact, they're all acceptable. You're bound to find some definition of marriage or some reason for divorce that fits the acceptability of the culture we live in.

I would say to you if we desire the protections and joys of the inseparable marriage Jesus describes and defines here, we must decide to obey God rather than man. Inseparable marriages, Jesus says right here, off the bat, are made up of two people who worship God as the final word, the final authority on all things related to marriage and divorce. I pray that you make that decision today, if you haven't.

2. *Worshipping God as the creator of marriage.* God is the divine authority on marriage, yes, because he's the origin of it. Let's not forget this. It seems obvious at first, but I think many times this thought just escapes our minds when we're having these discussions. Jesus says, in verse 6, **"But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them...'"** Jesus takes them right back to creation. The whole structure, the whole plan of marriage was God's idea. It originated in the holy mind of God, and that's what makes marriage so sacred and pure.

So, he takes them back to creation, where God began it all, and reminds them that God says marriage is one man and one woman. Now, if you look at verse 6, he says, **"But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'"** That's where the whole marriage discussion began with Jesus and it's where it began in creation.

Now, we've talked about this issue at length in our series on biblical sexuality not too long ago, and you can go online or on your app and you get that series of messages where we talk very specifically about that. Yet I need to say, followers of Jesus, I exhort you with everything I have to cling tightly to God's Word on this subject.

Part of the plan of God's creation was marriage. In Genesis, chapter 2, we read a more detailed description of the creation of man and woman which ultimately culminated in the sacred institution of marriage. The whole place of marriage in creation is predicated on two sexes, two genders: one male and one female.

God not only created marriage to be one man with one woman, but God also says marriage is one family. He says, in verse 7, **"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife..."** Jesus is quoting from his Father, God, directly from Genesis, chapter 2, verse 24.

The husband is commanded by God to leave the structure and the authority of his family origin in order to create a new family with his wife. The birth of the new family is only possible with one man and one woman, that union. I find it humbling that God addresses this command to the husband. Men, I hope you are humbled by this.

**"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife..."** Certainly, leaving and cleaving applies to both husband and wife. We see that implied by other teaching on marriage in the Bible from Jesus and the apostle Paul. It's not just the husband, but I find it humbling that God addresses it first and foremost and only to the husband in the book of Genesis.

I guess we could assume, men, that this is because it may be most important that we men get this right. If you're not convinced that it might be because it's most important, then it might be because it's most difficult for us to get this right. Interesting, isn't it? I was thinking this week. I think, for a wife, for the woman, they're naturally prone to leave and cleave to us when we lovingly leave and cleave and accept the role and responsibility we have as confident, loving, loyal, and tender leaders in our own families.

Let me see if I can just say that again. I think the reason it's addressed to us, men, is because God created a woman to much more naturally desire to leave her family of origin and cleave to her husband when her husband accepts the responsibility, the role, and confidently, lovingly, and tenderly leads his family and home.

I've seen marriages sadly torn apart by a husband's unwillingness to cut the cord. The only thing more disturbing and sad than that is when the parents are unwilling to cut the cord with their children. I want to say that leaving and cleaving is not a rejection of extended family. In fact, when we leave and cleave, it honors God as the glue that holds our marriage and our family together.

When we leave and cleave, it honors our spouse as our deepest love and commitment. When we leave and cleave, we are actually honoring our parents and our extended family by declaring that their role and responsibility is complete and ultimately celebrated in our marriage bond. Good or bad, their job is done and now we get to celebrate what we have watched and learned in our own homes. Refusing to leave and cleave is to dishonor God. It's to dishonor our spouse, and it is actually to dishonor our family, our parents.

God created our marriages to perform at the peak of happiness when both spouses see their marriage as the start of a brand-new family. Husband, wife, your loving duty is first and foremost to each other, and anything less than that is to invite much pain into your marriage. So, all the decisions and traditions that are made in your home are first and foremost by you and your spouse.

God not only created marriage to be one man with one woman with one family, but he also says marriage is for life. In verse 8, Jesus says, **"...the two shall become one flesh."** Inseparable marriages are one-flesh marriages. I love that term, *one flesh*. It's an incredible metaphor to describe the commitment, unity, and intimacy of human marriage. There's really no better picture of the marriage God created.

This means when I enter the marriage covenant, we are no longer two separate individuals who happen to live and sleep together. I no longer look at my life as my own, so everything I do and

everything I say affects Tammi. Every decision impacts her. My use of money, time, free time, resources... All of it is an expression of my commitment to this person in my marriage.

Once I say, "I do," we live as one. No longer two, but one flesh. This is what makes divorce so violent. You can't separate flesh without a death occurring. It can't happen. It's why God says, "I hate divorce," in Malachi 2.

If you're married, my question is, are you living this way? Are you living in a one-flesh relationship? Are your thoughts, desires, day-to-day plans...the way you talk to your spouse and the way decisions are made and future dreams are dreamt... Are they *we* or are they *me*? Inseparable marriages thrive on *we* and *us*.

Getting this wrong will doom your marriage before it ever starts. If you don't understand the one-flesh-for-life union of marriage, it's doomed before it starts, because our culture has turned marriage into a no-win situation. You understand this, don't you? Outside of Christ, marriage is a no-win situation in our world because the world says marriage is primarily a path to personal happiness, which requires temporary commitment at the most.

We even have pre-marriage agreements so, "I will have no further commitment after I decide that I don't want to be with you anymore." That's the culture we live in. Marriage as a pathway to personal happiness is a disaster and devastating to culture, and we are seeing it right before our eyes. The result is we're constantly redefining marriages. We're even reassigning genders.

I believe a lot of that is all in a longing to find what God originally designed and created as a union of unconditional, sacrificial, lifelong loving commitment of one man with one woman in one family for life. That's what the world is desperately trying to find, and the faster they run away from God the farther away they get from the very thing they're longing for.

3. *Worshiping God as our loving sovereign.* Jesus says, "**What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.**" People get married for all kinds of reasons, motives, and circumstances, many of which we shouldn't blame God for, yet we should confess with each other and before God.

Something I'm learning in marital counseling that I just kind of have stumbled across but have seen the fruit... There are some couples who get married because they got pregnant before they got married and that led to their marriage. For that, there's much grace, but what I am finding as I'm asking couples who are struggling in their marriage years down the road... I eventually get to the question, "Have you ever asked each other for forgiveness for that sin?"

I've learned that those decisions and choices carry with them many residual emotions into the marriage that were stuffed and never dealt with or talked about because you weren't really sure what they were. I have seen couples back up in counseling to the beginning, however long ago that was, and humbly confess that that was wrong. They go there and ask each other for forgiveness as appropriate for the circumstances. I have seen freedom begin at that point. That is true.

You see, the application for verse 9 there, "**...let not man separate,**" is that God knew both the difficulties and the joys that would make up your marriage. He already knew about all the grace and mercy it would require to keep you two together. As Paul Tripp taught us in our marriage conference a few months ago, he said something like, "God isn't shocked or dismayed at the collision of two sinners coming together as one bigger sinner. He's not shocked at that. What God has joined together, let not man separate.

He knew all the pressures, sadness, and stresses that would work to break you apart and he is committed to using all of it as a means of transforming each of you and each of your hearts toward more holiness. In other words, there's a sanctifying purpose to marriage, isn't there? Because God sovereignly brought you your spouse as part of his plan to make you more like Jesus.

You see, marriage has a way of exposing our pride. It has a way of exposing our impatience, envy, vengeance, unwillingness to forgive, anger, or harshness. God knows all the weaknesses of our hearts. He knows our fears. He knows our anxieties. He knows our weak faith in him. He knows our doubts about ourselves and about our spouse. He knows our struggles with selfishness and self-centeredness, and none of it was a surprise to him. He knew and he knows.

Here's the hope we have. The minute we say we believe marriage is rooted in worshiping God as our authority, as our Creator, and as our sovereign, the minute we say, "I do," we're acknowledging that our marriage is bigger than us. Your marriage is bigger than you, and that is actually good news. It means God is in your marriage. It means God is for your marriage. It means God's reputation and fame is connected to your marriage, and God will not give up on that.

Now, I want to circle back to verse 10. Jesus is alone with the disciples in a house. Apparently, they left that discussion with the Pharisees. The disciples notice that Jesus really never talked about the devastation of the Moses-blamed divorce system that was wreaking havoc in their world, so Jesus addresses the unmerciful divorces of the day, divorces for everything and anything except for what God mercifully allows.

Jesus says, in verses 11 and 12, "**Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.**" Now, to kind of fill in the blanks of that teaching, you have to go back in the gospel. You can go to Matthew, chapters 5 and 19. God allows, in his compassionate mercy, for divorce for two reasons in Scripture.

One is sexual unfaithfulness, marital unfaithfulness, adultery. He allows for divorce in that horrible circumstance. The apostle Paul teaches, in 1 Corinthians 7, also permission when an unbelieving spouse says, "I want out. I don't want anything to do with your God or you, if you're going to stay with God. I'm out," and they leave. God says it's okay for you to remarry. In those circumstances, divorce and remarriage are permitted, but outside of that, Jesus says divorce is not permitted, and if one gets divorced and remarries, it is considered adultery.

Now, this opens the door for a whole giant conversation, which we have had many times from this pulpit as the passages have come to us. We have it all over our website and what we believe on this topic, print and electronically, and so I can't exhaust this situation beyond what I believe Jesus does in this passage.

There will be other opportunities to talk more about it, but for now, I want us to be reminded of God's deepest emotions related to marriage and divorce. I want you to turn to Malachi, chapter 2, chapter 13. It's the last book in the Old Testament. God is letting his people know what has resulted in his discipline and punishment in their lives. In verses 13-16, it says,

**"And this second thing you do. You cover the LORD's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, 'Why does he not?' Because the LORD was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant.**

**Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. 'For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the LORD, the God of Israel, covers his garment [life] with violence, says the LORD of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless.'"**

*Faithless* and *violent* are the descriptions from God of tearing apart the one-flesh union of marriage. I want to leave you with this thought. Every marriage problem is to some degree a worship problem. If we forget our sense of awe and fear of God as our law-giving, creator, Sovereign God, then ultimately the whole world becomes servant to my desires and my wants.

My whole world will shrink down to the size of my problems and struggles in my marriage and then people are just in my way on my path to my personal happiness. That's what happens when we leave God out. When our worship of God is not true the whole world becomes servant to me, and anyone just gets in my way if I don't get my personal happiness.

G.K. Chesterton wrote something like, "When we fail to worship God, we don't worship nothing. We'll worship anything." Now, S.J. Walker says... That would be me, by the way. Don't you just sound smarter when you use the initials? "S.J. Walker says..." This is what I say. I'm going to take G.K.'s quote and I'm going to make it S.J.'s here. Here we go. Are you ready? When we fail to worship our law-giving, creator, Sovereign God, we don't worship other gods; we worship ourselves. That's what we do.

So, you will always love your spouse best when you worship God most. See, more than likely, long before there's ever a marriage problem, there's a worship problem. I say all this to you because of the great hope that Jesus pictures here in an inseparable marriage. Worship God. Worship God as the final authority on all things related to your marriage.



Worship God as the creator of your marriage and the sovereign of your marriage. Your biggest problem is not your spouse. Worship God as he deserves to be worshiped and you will find that your marriage will start to look and feel much more inseparable than it probably does at the moment.

I'm going to ask all of us to close our eyes. I realize not everybody in here is married. I just pray that you have been encouraged somehow. With your eyes closed, just know there's an opportunity for you to just kind of do business with God on your own level and your own context.

It may be as a single person, a divorced person, a widowed person, a married person, or a separated person. I don't know, but based on what God has said to us today in his Word, what do you need to ask for? What do you need to pray? How do you need to worship him right now? Would you just take a moment in this quiet path and do it? Just you and him.

Father in heaven, with our heads bowed right now, we acknowledge that you have created marriage to be this perfect picture on a human level of how much you love us in Christ. Thank you for the picture of the church, which is your Son, the groom, and us, his bride, coming together as one, coheirs with Jesus, called your children. Thank you that marriage is to be a constant reminder of your beautiful love and redemption of our souls.

I pray for every married person in this room right now that today there would be a new level of worship taking place. God, within that worship, I pray that their love for each other would completely change, that it would be pure, holy, and safe because you are first. God, we love you. Help us enjoy, God, who we are: again, so far from perfect, yet perfectly and deeply loved by you. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Some of you in this room realize right now that you don't have a relationship with God through Christ and God has spoken to your heart today and he has opened up your heart to the truth of how much he loves you in Christ. If you have never repented of your sin, never asked Jesus to come into your heart, to forgive you, and be your Lord and Savior, we want to help you take that step. That's the first step to all of the rest of your life, whether you're married or not.

There are people standing all across up here who are ready and excited. They want to give you something to go home with. If you're ready to take that step and surrender your whole life to Jesus, that's where a healthy marriage begins, single or not. I pray you'll come and make that decision today.

God bless you. We'll look forward to seeing you next Sunday.