

I. Intro

A. Text: **Matt. 19:1-10**

¹ Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, that He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. ² And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there.

³ The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?”

⁴ And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”

⁷ They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?”

⁸ He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.”

¹⁰ His disciples said to Him, “If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” (Matt. 19:1-10)

B. Cultural Setting for Relationships

II. What is Marriage all about?

A. **Marriage:** Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is/ God’s unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression through biblical standards and the means to procreation of the human race.

1. **Covenant:** a treaty, alliance, pledge, will, testament

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- a. Biblical Covenants (wills) are ratified in blood.
 - i. Costly
 - b. Biblical covenants are not only ratified by blood, but are only dissolved by blood.
 - i. Blood in, Blood out.
 - c. Biblical Ex. (Gen. 15:5-21): God promised Abram that he would give him so many descendants that it go beyond the number of stars in the sky.
 - i. Abram couldn't fathom such a commitment, so he questioned it.
 - ii. Bring me a heifer, a goat, a ram, and two birds.
 - iii. Tradition would be that both parties of the covenant would walk between the bloody carcasses to establish that they were bound together by blood... forever... until their own blood was spilled at death.
 - d. The American word used for covenant is simply "Commitment".
 - i. Close, but a watered down version of the biblical term covenant.
 - ii. In America, we don't even know much about the watered down version
 - e. The misuse of covenant/ commitment is not simply an American problem.
 - i. It's a worldwide problem.
 - f. Not just the problem of this generation, covenant commitment has been a problem across the continent for thousands of years.
2. God's view of marriage is covenant commitment for a lifetime.
- a. God is absolutely a covenant keeping God, and He honors covenant (even when we don't).
 - b. Somebody would have to die to break the commitment.

B. **Question:** If marriage is held in such a high esteem by God, then how can you possibly get out of a marriage with someone you're incompatible with?

1. Answer: It depends on who you ask.
2. Two major schools of thought (when it came to interpreting Hebrew laws) during the time of the gospels were: The House of Shammai and the House of Hillel.
 - a. **Shimmei:** No divorce except for in cases of serious transgressions (like adultery).
 - b. **Hillel:** Divorce is allowable in cases of serious transgressions as well as some trivial offenses.
 - i. Led to men in Israel divorcing wives for just about anything.
 - ii. She is no longer attractive to me.
 - iii. She no longer makes navy white beans and hot water cornbread on Sundays.
 - c. This was an ongoing debate, discussion and argument in religious Jewish circles.
3. But what does Jesus say?
 - a. Jesus had just left Galilee and approached Judea. Hadn't even crossed the Jordan yet.
 - b. Since this know-it-all young Rabbi who claimed to be the very son of God was in town, the Pharisees decided to blindside him to find out how good his rabbinical credentials really were.

³ *The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?" (Matt. 19:3)*

- c. Remember... it was a test that was tailor-made for Jesus.
 - i. Just months earlier, John the Baptist was imprisoned and lost his head for his strict stance on marital commitment. John approached Herod and told him that it was against God's will for him to have his brother, Phillip's, wife (**Matt. 14:1-12**).

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- ii. Tried to back Jesus into a corner.
 - iii. Smh. But we often try to back God into a corner with our shenanigans.
- d. Is it cool to divorce her for just any reason?
- i. Current Divorce Petition
 - ii. Notice that all the “out questions” were for men in that culture. Women didn’t have an out in marriage?
 - iii. The exception (loophole) to keeping covenant: *“How can a man get out of the covenant and maintain his integrity?”*
 - iv. How can a man do what he really wants to do and have it be acceptable?
- e. Who you ask the question to, determines what is acceptable for breaking covenant.
- i. Dr. Phil., Oprah, Scholars, theologians, preachers.

C. God Created Marriage According to a Specific Design?

⁴And He [Jesus] answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” (Matt. 19:4-6)

1. When Jesus answered the question of divorce, He took them back to the beginning (in the garden).
 - a. Same text quoted in the last 3 sermons (**Gen. 2:24, Eph. 5:31**)
 - b. God made 1 man and 1 woman, 1 flesh.

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- i. Completely united in every way (although different people).
 - ii. Undivided in essence and authority (although completely different/ diverse in function).
 - c. The beauty of the marital union highlights God's own being and character. God made mankind in his own image.
 - i. Father, Son, Holy Spirit: completely one, completely united; completely the same in essence and value.
 - ii. But diverse in function and role.
 - iii. The role of the Son is to glorify the Father.
 - iv. The role of the Father is to glorify the Son.
 - v. The role of Holy Spirit is to glorify the Son.
 - vi. No competition. No dissension. No selfishness.
 - vii. Just a unified circle of beautiful communion within Himself: God. The self-existent one.

*This type of unity is what the Father had in mind when He spoke prophetically: *"And the two shall be one flesh"*... Inseparable... Forever.

D. If Marriage was Designed with no Outs, Why Did Moses Allow Divorce?

⁷ *They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"* ⁸ *He said to them, "Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. (Matt. 19:7-8).*

1. Social Reasons for Divorce

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- a. Money, fell out of love, immaturity, incompatibility, grew apart, legal pressures, adultery, irreconcilable differences.
 2. Divorce only exists because of Hard hearts (sin)
 - a. Sin brought about divorce, but this was never God's will for you.
 - b. Don't blame it on Moses. Blame it on hard hearts!
 3. Actual Reason for Marital Problems: Hard Hearts (Sin).

E. The Only Exception That Moses Gave (Very Rare)

⁹And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.” (Matt. 19:9 – NKJV)

1. Every divorce except for divorces based on this one rare exception... are out of pocket.
2. God still sees you as married.
 - a. Man may give you a piece of paper to cease an arrangement that is no longer beneficial, but God honors the covenant (even when we don't).
 - b. God doesn't take his cues from judges who sit on earthly benches. He's the true judge.
 - i. When it comes to marriage, God sees the covenant as irrevocable.
3. Because of the mess going on in Israel concerning marriage, there was one sin that warranted an exception from the standard.
 - a. What exactly was the great exception to the law (that forbade divorce)? We tend to say “adultery” (and use Matthew 19 to make that claim).

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- i. My bible does not say that adultery is the exception.

°I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” (Matt. 19:9 – NIV)

°And I tell you this, whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery—unless his wife has been unfaithful. (Matt. 19:9 – NLT)

- ii. Adultery (moichaio #3429): *a married person committing sexual acts with someone other than their spouse.*

vs.

- iii. Fornication (porneia #4202): *an unmarried person committing sexual acts with someone other than their spouse.*

- iv. Because we interpret this passage loosely, we dangerously accept the premise that divorce is the rightful punishment for adultery.
- v. In other words, we have to put up with every other downfall of our spouse, but if they commit adultery... divorce is the remedy.

- 4. Note: Divorce was not the rightful punishment for someone who committed the sin of adultery (according to the law).

- a. **Lev. 20:10**: *“The man who commits adultery with another man’s wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor’s wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.”*

- b. Death was the lawful punishment for adultery.

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- i. Remember: Blood in, Blood Out*
 - 5. Pornea was the only allowed exception.
 - a. If all forms of pornea were included, it would not be a rare exception nowadays.*
 - i. Pornea in a wide sense is so prevalent today that every marriage would claim justifiable divorce.*
 - ii. No longer the exception, but the norm*
 - b. Is this exception even applicable in our day?*
 - 6. Whatever the exception was that Jesus used was so rare that it implied that there is no biblical, justified way out of marriage.
 - a. No way out of this. You're joined together; hopelessly inseparable.*
 - b. Evident in the disciples' response: "His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry." (Matt. 19:10)*

III. Conc.: "For the Lord God of Israel says that he HATES divorce..." (**Mal. 2:16**)

¹³And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the LORD with tears, with weeping and crying; So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.

¹⁴Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because the LORD has been witness between you and the wife of your youth, with whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

*¹⁵But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. (**Mal. 2:13-15**)*

- A. **The bad news:** God hates divorce. Divorce is sin and it defames the God who loves us and desires intimate relationship with us.

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1. Misrepresents the covenant relationship that God wants to display between Himself and His Bride.

B. **The good news**: God hates divorce. Although we've committed adultery with other lovers, He refuses to give us a certificate of divorce.

1. Although we've denied Him, He still pursues us.
2. He won't relent until He has us completely!
3. We don't deserve His fidelity, but He remains faithful.