

Divorce, Grace, and God's High Standard Concerning Marriage

Lakewood Family Church | Dr. Jonathan L. Vorce | 3-22-2026

Matthew 5:31-32 (KJV)

"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."

Introduction

- In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus elevates the heart behind the Law, calling us to a righteousness that exceeds the scribes and Pharisees. Today we continue by examining His teaching on marriage and the painful reality of divorce.
- Marriage is God's sacred covenant yet divorce touches so many families today. Jesus does not ignore the pain—He sets a high standard while extending grace. However, even in the difficult and painful event of divorce, God's heart remains merciful, and He offers forgiveness to those who need it.
- Today we will see Jesus' teaching on the effects of divorce, the limited biblical permissions for it, practical steps to build a firewall around our marriages, and the healing and hope available after divorce.

I. Jesus' Teaching Reveals the Seriousness of Divorce

- A. Jesus references the Old Testament provision for divorce (**Deuteronomy 24:1-4**).
- B. **Jesus raises the standard:** Divorce for any reason other than fornication leads to adultery upon remarriage (**Matthew 5:32**).
- C. God's ideal from creation remains: *"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder"* (**Matthew 19:6; Genesis 2:24**).

II. Biblical Standards Permitting Divorce

- A. Adultery/Sexual Immorality – the primary exception given by Jesus Himself (**Matthew 5:32; Matthew 19:9**).

- B. Abandonment – when a believing spouse deserts the marriage (**1 Corinthians 7:10-11**).
- C. Abandonment by an Unbelieving Spouse (Unbelief) – the believer is not under bondage if the unbeliever departs (**1 Corinthians 7:12-15**: *“But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart... God hath called us to peace”*).

III. Creating a Holy Firewall Against Divorce

1. Make Christ the Center of Your Marriage (The Threefold Cord)

“Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour... And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” (**Ecclesiastes 4:9-12** KJV)

- When Jesus is the third strand, no storm can snap your bond.

Practical everyday tips:

- Begin each morning with 5-10 minutes of joint prayer—hold hands and thank God for one another.
- Attend church together every Sunday (no excuses!) and do a short devotional or Bible app reading side-by-side before bed.
- This daily spiritual rhythm insulates your relationship with the Word and invites the Holy Spirit to guard your home.

2. Commit to Open, Honest, and Loving Communication

“Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another.” (**Ephesians 4:25** KJV)

Also, *“Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”* (**James 1:19** KJV)

- Clear, kind words prevent small cracks from becoming canyons.

Practical everyday tips:

- Set a daily “heart-check” time (15 minutes after dinner works great)—no phones, just listening.
- Use “I feel...” statements instead of blame.
- End every conversation with an encouraging word or hug.
- Practice this even on busy days; it becomes your marriage’s safety valve.

3. Practice Biblical Love and Respect

“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” (Ephesians 5:33 KJV)

Ephesians 5 Overview

Paul calls believers to *“walk worthy”* of their calling in three progressive ways:

♦ **Walk in love and light (vv. 1–14)**

- ⇒ Imitate God as dear children by loving sacrificially (v. 2).
- ⇒ Flee sexual immorality, impurity, and greed (vv. 3–7).
- ⇒ Live as children of light, exposing sin and awakening to Christ (vv. 8–14).

♦ **Walk Wisely and Spirit-filled (vv. 15–21)**

- ⇒ Redeem the time in these evil days (vv. 15–16).
- ⇒ Be continually filled with the Spirit, not wine (v. 18).
- ⇒ Overflow with worship and mutual submission out of reverence for Christ (vv. 19–21).

♦ **Walk in a Godly Marriage (vv. 22–33)** — the heart of the chapter teaches us that marriage is a living picture of Christ and the church

⇒ Wives (vv. 22–24):

“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord... as the church is subject unto Christ.”

-Voluntary respect and cooperation, mirroring the church’s response to Christ’s headship.

⇒ Husbands (vv. 25–33):

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...”

- Love sacrificially — give yourself up completely.
- Sanctify and cherish her as your own body.
- Leave, cleave, become one flesh (Gen 2:24 quoted).
- This is a profound mystery: marriage reveals Christ’s unbreakable union with His bride.

♦ One-sentence summary for marriage:

“Husbands love like Christ gave Himself; wives respect like the church honors Christ.”

- ◆ Quick daily applications
 - ⇒ Husbands: Ask, “**How can I give myself up for her today?**”
 - ⇒ Wives: Affirm his leadership with words of respect.

4. Forgive Quickly and Completely

“Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” (Colossians 3:13 KJV)

“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” (Ephesians 4:32 KJV)

- Unforgiveness is poison—flush it out before the sun sets.

Practical everyday tips:

- Never let the sun go down on anger (Ephesians 4:26).
- Say “**I forgive you**” out loud and mean it.
- Keep a short “grace list” in your phone of ways you’ve been forgiven by God and your spouse.
- If an old wound surfaces, pray together right then and release it to the Lord.

5. Serve One Another Selflessly

“For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.” (Galatians 5:13 KJV)

- Marriage thrives when both spouses out-serve the other.

Practical everyday tips:

- Ask every morning, “**How can I serve you today?**”
- Take turns handling the other’s least favorite chore.
- Surprise each other with their favorite coffee, meal, or foot rub.
- When you feel taken for granted, serve anyway—Jesus modeled this from the upper room to the Cross.

6. Nurture Intimacy—Emotional, Spiritual, and Physical

“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband... Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time...” (1 Corinthians 7:3-5 KJV)

- Regular connection keeps Satan from gaining a foothold.

Practical everyday tips:

- Plan a weekly date night (even if it's a walk or ice cream at home—no kids, no phones).
- Give daily affection—kisses at the door, hugs after work.
- Talk openly about needs in a safe, loving way.
- Schedule intentional alone time monthly; it rekindles the flame God designed.

7. Honor the Marriage Covenant and Seek Help Early

“Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” (Matthew 19:6 KJV)

“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24 KJV)

- God hates divorce because He loves marriage—treat yours as sacred.

IV. Divorce Is Not the End – There Is Healing and Life After Divorce

- A. Divorce does not disqualify you from God's love or purpose; His grace abounds for the repentant heart.
- B. God promises to heal the brokenhearted and bind up every wound (**Psalm 147:3; Isaiah 61:1-3** – *beauty for ashes*).
- C. Embrace new beginnings: you are a new creation in Christ with fresh mercies every morning (**2 Corinthians 5:17; Lamentations 3:22-23**).
- D. Walk in wisdom for the future—pursue restoration where possible, or step into new seasons of singleness or remarriage in God's timing—always trusting that *“all things work together for good”* (**Romans 8:28**).

Conclusion & Prayer

- **Recap:** Jesus sets a high bar on divorce, permits it only in the specific biblical cases of adultery, abandonment, and unbelief, calls us to build strong firewalls around our marriages, and offers complete healing and new life afterward.
- **Challenge:** If you are married, strengthen your firewall today. If you are divorced or separated, run to the Healer—your story is not over.
- **Call to action:** Commit your marriage or your pain to God right now. Let this church family be a place of support, restoration, and hope.