

XVIII. Contending and Defending the Faith in Biblical Perspective  
*Contending and Contenders—Defending and Defenders*

“Marriage: Who, What and Why?”

Mark 10:1-12

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We will start by looking at Mark 10. We are taking this subject of marriage in our culture, contending and defending it, and looking at this new proposal of redefining marriage then producing same sex marriage and or civil union and how we should responds to those things in particular in our next study of this series. These are difficult things to deal with but I’m only going to God’s Word that He inspired and He said these things are to be read and expounded when the people of God gather. We will do this tastefully and pointedly for God has given us this instruction as His people live in this continual pull of this culture, the death spiral of paganism and how to contend and defend. Let’s look in Mark 10 for this is God’s Word. It’s the truth.

Mark 10:1-12 says [1] *And he 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.*

[2] *And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”* [3] *He answered them, “What did Moses command you?”* [4] *They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away.”*

[5] *And Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. [6] But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ [7] ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, [8] and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two but one flesh. [9] What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”*

[10] *And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. [11] And he said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, [12] and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

I have a question for you. There was a territory a century and a half ago that wanted to come into the United States and become a state. They applied for statehood but they were turned down unless they did one thing. This was a territory that was full of minerals, an economic boom communities and it was something that any nation would be glad to have because it would contribute to the economic well-being of society but the Utah territory also housed a religion that had distorted the doctrine of marriage into polygamy and therefore our government said “we’d love to have this territory as a state but first you must legally repudiate polygamy and affirm the historic, natural law revealed, Bible-defined doctrine of marriage – one man, one woman, one life.”

Why would our nation do that? At that time we understood that the most foundational institution for a culture was family and the most foundational and essential element of a family is a monogamous, heterosexual marriage. So our nation at that time

was willing to turn its back on all the economic benefits of that territory unless they did that.

Now we have a culture with a judicial branch on a rampage in order to undo the historical definition of marriage. In fact our country was the first western country in 2001 to affirm a redefining of marriage from the historic – one man, one woman, one life – to a new definition of marriage which says that marriage as of 2001 is a contractual commitment between consenting adults.

How did we move from there to here? What should we as believers do as the family is destroyed by the distortion of marriage where marriage is essential for family and family is essential for culture? What is the response of the church? Clearly there is as one writer has said, a tsunami wave of a sexual revolution, a marriage transformation, distortion and deformation. How do we handle this unfettered pursuit of sexual eroticism and redefining the institutions of marriage in order to affirm and approve this pursuit of sexual anarchy in our society? Clearly we should respond with Gospel evangelism and discipleship but should we say anything in the public square?

The rapidity of this movement is so profound that there is confusion in the church and its response of silence. When we began this series we learned that Satan has two strategies – infiltration and intimidation. The church responds to intimidation by a diligent and determined defense of the faith. How does the church respond to the infiltration of false teaching as we see church after church fall and adopt the world's new definition of marriage? Jude tells us that we're to contend for the faith and certainly the focus of the faith in terms of the Gospel but also all those glorious doctrines that are attached to it, including marriage which is unbelievably, infallibly and resolutely attached to the doctrine of marriage. We will go deeper into this in a few moments.

Do we respond to this in silence or denial (which is my coping mechanism of life)? The church is told to be silent on this matter because if we speak out we'll marginalize ourselves, we'll be on the wrong side of history, it's an unwinnable issue, you'll offend a group of people that you want to win to Jesus Christ and therefore for those reasons we're to be silent. What's the Gospel? It's that you are saved from sin and I'm supposed to be silent about sin in order to communicate the Gospel? I don't understand that.

I find Paul going to Corinth and Athens to the capitals of rebellion, immorality and sexual perversion and promiscuity and speaks directly to it for the purpose of evangelism and discipleship. The church is not only to be an instrument of redeeming grace but common grace. So there is silence, intimidation and infiltration in the church or accommodating these new definitions of a civil union or the two kingdom view. Do you actually think the world is going to leave you alone? So how do we respond?

We have learned that we're to contend for the faith with courage and conviction without contentiousness and we're to defend the faith with diligence and determination without personal defensiveness. So if marriage is under assault then how should you respond? Jesus contended and defended pretty well on this subject matter. So here in Mark He is in a situation where marriage is under assault. We have this thing called a no-fault divorce that started in the late 70s and 80s and in Jesus' day it was any-fault divorce. I don't have time to cover the parallel passages to Mark 10 but if you go read them you'll see that the question they ask is "Is it permissible for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?"

Jesus responds by saying what Moses said but that Moses said what he did because of the hardness of your heart. In other words, this gift of God's grace and mercy to someone who is being violated in marriage through the sinfulness of someone else is something added after Genesis 3. It was not in Genesis 1 and 2. Divorce is never a solution for anything. It is a protection device from God's grace and mercy for those who are being violated in the covenant of marriage, but from the beginning God made them male and female and then Jesus quotes from Genesis 2:24. There is five times in the Scriptures in which marriage is being dealt with because of the insatiable, incessant attack against marriage in the world. It always happens.

Who is the first person born with a sin-nature in opposition to God? It was Cain and he rebelled against God. When he rebelled against God he went after the sanctity of life. Then he went after marriage for he introduced polygamy. When the patriarchs were saved out of the Gentile nations, they were saved out of nations that were practicing polygamy. So you have generation after generation where God is restoring their right view of marriage for these that are saved out of a polygamist's society because the expression of rebellion against God that humanity always uses is sexual rebellion of promiscuity or perversion. To accommodate that society always attacks that is to house the gift of sexuality which is marriage. It will attack it by distorting it and redefining it.

It happened with Cain and throughout the Scripture. It happened when David walked away from the Lord for he went into polygamy and conspiracy to murder. Saul abandoned the Biblical doctrine of marriage with all his wives. Now in the days of Jesus they have monogamy back on the table but now if she is not meeting my needs then it's okay for me to divorce her right? So this tortured definition of divorce is put into practice in the days of Jesus so what does Jesus do?

Jesus says first He'll explain why divorce is here but let's first understand marriage. Marriage is one man, one woman, for one life. God made man male and female. God made marriage so that male and female could do what He gave them to do. He gave them three things to do. They were to subdue the earth, rule over the creation, and be fruitful and multiply. Then in creation He said it wasn't good for the man to be alone for he couldn't do all three of those things alone. So God gives him a woman from his side to complete him. Now the Triune God is imaged in fullness where the male and female are made in His image.

Then God gives the covenant of marriage and He officiates the first marriage. *[24] Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh* (Genesis 2:24). God has put a miracle into His creation where one plus one equals one. He has done in something called the covenant of marriage. So Jesus says, 'let's go back to that' here in Mark 10. You are majoring on a provision called divorce but you're really trying to undo what God has made – one man, one woman for life. How long in Genesis 1 and 2 would have been the life of Adam and Eve? It was forever. Can you imagine that? Then sin comes which brings death and death brings the end of marriage. Then comes the violations of the covenant of marriage, abandonment and adultery.

In the Old Testament what would have happened if you committed adultery? You were stoned to death. What happened to the marriage? The marriage was over, done because you're dead as an adulterer. Now we get to the New Testament and God pulls the sword away from His covenant people and puts capital punishment in the hands of the

government but God still protects those who are violated in the covenant of marriage by the two grounds of marriage which are adultery and abandonment. Yet divorce is not a solution, it's a protection for them. Now He extends mercy to the violator for in the Old Testament you would have just been put to death. Now you still live and are given the opportunity to repent. Jesus says if you want to understand marriage then don't go to the provision because of Genesis 3 which is divorce, you go to the creation institution itself, marriage and He quotes it.

Now what are the five essential elements of marriage, revealed in creation and affirmed in His Word according to Jesus? So if you have a problem with this then you have to take it up with Jesus. I'm just giving you what He says. He quotes Genesis 2:24 and gives you five essential elements of marriage.

Number one is that marriage is God-designed. It is not a social evolutionary process. It wasn't that people looked around and said 'let's try this or this or this.' If you leave it up to society – sin, Satan and the world – then it always attacks marriage. They don't evolve it but they devolve it into polygamy, same-sex marriage, and civil union for they will devolve it in revolution and not evolution but God designed and delivered marriage in the creation to accommodate and facilitate the way He had designed and delivered male and female. Together in marriage the culture is sustained by subduing the creation, ruling over the creation and being fruitful and multiplying. So marriage is God-designed and God-delivered.

It is not a social evolution. Sorry President Obama who said his ideas on marriage had evolved. No, they have devolved. It was not an evolution that he went through but a devolution because of a revolution that he is accommodating in our society. It is not new for it has happened throughout history. Man and his rebellion against God will attack the institution of marriage into distortion but God had designed one man, one woman for one life.

Secondly, that means the two shall become one for marriage is a conjugal relationship. How is a marriage established? Here is the way it comes from the Bible – Old Testament and New Testament. The man comes to ask for the woman's hand in marriage. The woman is given to the man. The man leaves his father and mother to cleave to this woman and as they leave to cleave he has a covenant commitment he makes to her. It is called a betrothal in the Bible. We call it engagement today. After that covenant commitment that culminates in a covenant ceremony, the ceremony will end with a statement that says "Upon the consummation of this union before God I pronounce you man and wife."

Do you know what the Bible says about wedding rings? The Bible says nothing about wedding rings. The sacrament that initiates marriage and renews it is the conjugal relationship of the man and the woman. We have set up the covenant ceremony so that night is not a bed of adultery but it's the marriage bed that is holy and undefiled and the marriage is consummated. That same gift is also given for covenant renewal in the regular relationship and I'll speak more about that in the next two studies. Then through that comes covenant reproduction and a covenant promise where God says "I'll be a God to you and to your seed after you" which are those He gives through procreation. So it is a gift of recreation. It is a conjugal relationship to institute the marriage, for recreational blessing in the marriage, recreating the covenant dynamic in the relationship and also it is

there for procreation in the marriage with a promise from God to your seed. So here marriage is essentially conjugal.

Thirdly, it means that it is gender specific. You can't have a conjugal covenant relationship unless you have gender specific participants – a man and a woman. God made us that way. You don't have to look to the Bible for this, just look at natural revelation. Look at creation. The same God that made marriage created us to be able to have a God-designed, conjugal, gender specific, heterosexual covenant.

Fourthly, marriage is monogamous. It is one man and one woman. It is not one man with many women and it's not one woman with many men.

Number five is that marriage is a permanent relationship. It is one man with one woman for life. Has God given a provision with divorce with covenant breaking, immorality and abandonment? Yes, but marriage was designed to be one man, one woman for life. So it is only upon death that, that marriage is broken or by virtue of those things. For those who are single in our audience I have a five part series where I handle singleness in a Genesis 3 world and I commend that to you but bear with me as I address this foundational institution of the covenant of marriage.

Now that I've covered these five essentials of marriage which was what Jesus quoted from Genesis 2:24, we are getting close to the definition of marriage but before I give it to you let's go back to what the world now says is marriage. These five essentials is where we get our understanding of marriage and I didn't just give this to the church but I am giving this to all of creation for this is a creation institution, not a church sacrament. The world's definition of marriage is a contract commitment of two consenting adults.

There are some obvious questions I have here when I hear the world's definition of marriage. Why is it consenting? By what authority do we demand consensus? The majority says this. What if the majority says 'no'? It doesn't have to be consenting for you can just put somebody in a marriage. We're the government for we know best who you ought to marry. Do you think we're far from that? Why adults and on what basis? Why commitment? Why a contract? On what basis do you require all this? Why two?

The answer to this is equally obvious as to the questions that are asked of the world's definition of marriage. You have no foundation. You have no ethic for it just happens to be where you are right now and I promise you that you won't stay there. The devolution of marriage in the name of sexual gratification will descend much further than that and has in many nations and cultures. Here is the effort at redefining marriage. The effort is to affirm the unfettered sexual eroticism that dominates our nation. We sell hamburgers, cars and everything with it. We exist with it and that is what is at work so therefore whenever you have the charade of idolatries of humanism you will always end up with a sexual revolution, institutional deformation and distortion.

That is what Romans 1 told us in the last study. We are in a cultural death spiral. It is unstoppable unless there is a Gospel awakening that intervenes and God's people speak with common grace to the culture and redeeming grace to men and women. Why does that always happen? Here is what was unthinkable. When you get the unthinkable thinkable it becomes doable. How do we get the unthinkable thinkable? We do it through good stories and telling them with excellence. The thing that is unthinkable becomes the comedy character in the story. Everyone stops and looks at the TV show "Modern Family" and laughs, not knowing that they are making the unthinkable

thinkable. When it becomes thinkable it becomes doable. When it becomes doable then it becomes acceptable. When it becomes acceptable it becomes affirmable.

Do you actually think that the argument of sexual chaos is supposed to be tolerated? Where you are in your culture is not toleration, it's affirmation and it's not just affirmation for the church will be required to join its celebration and support the propagation of it. That is the honest assessment of our culture today and we're not the first culture to get there. The fact is most of us come from cultures where such barbarianism and Neopaganism reigns supreme, where evil was called good and good was called evil.

Within 15 years a person holding to a historic definition of marriage is now considered a bigot. So the culture moves in those directions and makes those pronouncements, the church gets intimidated and our pulpits get infiltrated. We become silent instead of speaking out in common grace to the public square and going to work at redeeming grace for there is a better way. You don't have to live your life with a sexual identity. I will get your attention when I say I am not an American. I happen to live there and I love America. I am made in the image of God. That is my identity. More than that by God's grace I am in Christ and Christ is in me. I am a Christian and that's my identity so don't put anything in front of that and hyphenate it. I am not a white Christian, rich Christian, poor Christian. I am a Christian and my pigmentation is white.

My identity is Imago Dei for I am made in the image of God. My identity is not my sexual choices and sexual behavior is not a civil right. So with these stories, narratives and all these things are fostered upon the church and the church walks into silence. The church is intimidated and don't speak because we either don't understand the definition or you think you'll be silent because you'll get more of a chance to tell them about the Gospel when in actuality you're being silent because we think Christianity can wear the ill-fitting garments of political correctness. It doesn't wear well.

The Apostle Paul whether it's Corinth, the death of decadence Rome, or Athens, spoke the truth in love and he loved with the truth. If you sacrifice truth in the name of love you are really saying that you need their love more than they need True Love. If you deliver truth without love then you're also saying that you need to love yourself and exalt myself as a truth teller, instead of a lover of the lost with the truth. So what is the definition of marriage?

The definition of marriage is a creation institution designed by God as a covenantal, heterosexual, monogamous, conjugal relationship. If anyone of these essentials is not in the relationship it is not marriage. This definition is affirmed in natural revelation and it is defined in special revelation of God's Word. This stands the test of creation and redemption.

The takeaway is, knowing that the covenant of marriage is and will be targeted by Satan, sin and the world we must contend and defend for two reasons. It started with Cain and it continued. My tendency in family devotions is to skip Leviticus 19 because it is so graphic but He gives us this chapter because the nations around them had redefined marriage and sexuality. In this we see it was all around and this is always where the death spiral leads but 'you, My people are to be different and proclaim that difference to others.' Satan inevitably, irresistibly and seemingly will attack sexual activity within the bounds of marriage alone and the definition of marriage. He has, he will and he is. Sin attacks it. The world will use all its academic and artistic methods

unless it is affected by the salt and light of believers, will take all its culture shaping efforts to attack Biblical sexuality and therefore the marital foundation. It will be under the target of marital distortion, sexual promiscuity and chaos yet we keep having death because of it.

Now that we're known for our marriage in our nation we now have over 80 percent of children born out of wedlock. Sexually transmitted diseases now are not even known how to stop these developing strains which can't be touched by our sophisticated medicines. You break God's law and God's law breaks you but God has made another way. That way is that we can be redeemed when that law sends us to Jesus and Jesus writes that law upon our hearts. That includes the honoring of marriage and the honoring of the family. In the days of Jesus it was being attacked.

Now to the two reasons we must contend and defend marriage. The primary reason is to reveal the intimate and permanent covenantal relationship between Christ, the Bridegroom and His church, the bride. This can be life changing for you. I hope it is for it was for me a number of years ago. I've always thought we had marriage here because it was a good idea for human beings. It is a good idea for human beings but God put marriage here to give us and reveal to us the relationship that He has with His people. That is why He keeps calling us in the Old and New Testament His bride and that's why Jesus is called the Bridegroom. It is the God-ordained instrument from creation designed to tell people about the redeeming love of Christ in the Gospel.

Marriage was not an illustration they reached for to show this. No, marriage was an institution designed by God to reveal the intimate and permanent covenantal relationship we have with Him and not for life but for eternal life. Hosea the prophet was to go get a wife from the industry of prostitution and she would keep going back to the industry of prostitution. God told him to go back and get her. In this He is telling us how we were saved. We had gone the way of prostitution to the idols of this world to worship ourselves. God reached down by the Holy Spirit pursued us in love to bring to repentance and to Himself through Jesus Christ who paid the price (the dowry) at the cross for all of our sins and gave us His righteousness.

We are now intimately in Christ as He shows us in Ephesians 5. Our marriages are a reflection of this. This is what marriage is all about that Christ has loved His bride and His bride now comes as a joint heir alongside of Him, washed spotless by His blood and now clothed with His righteousness. He loves us and nothing can separate us from the love of Christ even when we go back into the prostitution He goes like Hosea and brings Gomer back home. He comes and convicts us, wins us and brings us to Himself. I will contend and defend the doctrine of marriage because it exists not as the captivity of society's whims and fads for the moment to accommodate its perversions, but to tell this world that there is a God who loves sinners, who have rebelled against Him, and this God has a love that is relentless. When He comes to you there is unbelievable true intimacy. You are in Christ, Christ is in you, a union in Christ and nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. That's why marriage exists and needs to be contended and defended.

The secondary reason is the covenant of marriage is foundational to the family and the family is foundational for human flourishing. This is not a welfare program. I believe in safety nets but that is not my point and welfare programs are not the issue. What is foundational to human flourishing is the redeeming grace of God that allows a people to embrace the common grace gift of God which is the family.

Three studies have just been done in the last three months and one of them is even a government study. Here is what the three studies revealed. If you want to empty the prisons, poverty to be increasingly eradicated, and gangs to start disappearing then the studies showed that you need an intact family with a father and a mother to make these things happen. Wow! I think this all points back to Genesis 1. I think God has been telling us all along to honor our father and mother which is the first commandment with a promise. The foundational institution for culture is the family.

These studies went further. They said that the reason gangs exist is that they are substitute for families. The best predictor of poverty is a broken home. The best predictor of criminal behavior is a broken home. That is the number one predictor. Therefore the number one answer is to have unbroken homes. It is to have marriage with fathers and mothers and you want me to participate in a culture that is about to redefine marriage so that children are going to be cared for in this world, brought into this world and placed in homes by definition are fatherless or motherless? Here I have a study by the same government that is redefining marriages, consigning children to fatherless and motherless homes and they just said through this study they need fathers and mothers.

If there is no husband then there is no father. If there is no husband there is no marriage. If there is no man there is no husband. This study even went so far as to say that the number one of the two intact parents that most were suffering under, is the disconnected, disappearing, disinterested father.

I was watching this program on the guy who was the trigger-puller on Osama Bin Laden. He had a long discourse with his wife because he thought he wasn't coming back. It was no accident though, before he got on that helicopter thinking he wasn't going to come back, the last person he talked to was his daddy. If he had gotten shot he would have been asking for his momma. You need a dad and a mom and you can't have a father without a husband. You can't have a husband without a man. Marriage is a monogamous, heterosexual, conjugal, covenantal relationship. We are about to consign ourselves to it, even while we're doing the studies that tell us we're committing cultural suicide if we do it. Then we have people saying 'what should we do?'

I want to finish by saying you need to speak the truth of the Gospel and you need to speak truth into the culture in the public square with love. We need to speak on these matters. Then we need to manifest marriages that are Gospel framed, Christ centered and that are growing in grace. We need to take the steps of premarital counseling, supporting one another and caring for one another. We need to be a church that shepherds marriages and families. We need to make all those commitments that the world may see there is a better way and that better way comes from the redeeming grace of God even as it produces a common grace blessing to society.

We need to disciple and build strong marriages. I ask every student reading this to stay the course. I know it could cost you a sorority, a fraternity, a team, a classroom. I know it will cost you but the Designer has given you where sexuality belongs and marriage so embrace it out of love to Jesus Christ and then you lead us where we have led away from. We need you desperately. I was so blessed after the morning service when a college student said 'we believe our generation will be ready to take this on' with clarity, commitment and conviction without being contentious but we'll stay the course.

If we speak on this won't that lose our opportunity to speak about the Gospel? Pastor, that train has left the station, you've lost that argument. With all due respect to all



the football fans reading this, I ain't in it to win it. I already know it has been won. I am in it to be faithful. Pastor you'll be on the wrong side of history. Perhaps, but I want to be on the right side of theology and God and that will ultimately write history.

After Jesus taught on this, the disciples came to Him and said "Jesus if You keep teaching this men aren't going to like it. They'll just say it's better not to marry. Jesus You're on the wrong trajectory." Jesus took them right back to the creation institution of marriage. I hope and pray it's winnable in our culture but I think it won't happen without a Gospel awakening. I will tell you by God's grace and humble reliance on the Holy Spirit I will endeavor to be faithful to His Word and speak of this institution that so gloriously declares the redeeming love of Jesus Christ and the covenant of grace for His bride, His people and that is so desperately needed for a culture to flourish, because if a culture abandons this it will not last more than a couple of generations. I can promise you that. I am not a prophet nor the son of a prophet but when you rip the foundation out of family and the marriage, which is the essential for family, then it is lost.

Please join me with truth and love. Satan you do not own marriage. Sin, you will not define marriage. This world, you will not devolve marriage in the name of a moral evolution that's an immoral devolution and there is a better way. It is Jesus Christ and the love of Christ can compel you to faithfulness to Him in every institution, including this creation institution. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You, Father that this Word is so clear and I pray even beyond the inadequacies of the one who preached it. I pray that You would help us understand what natural law reveals about marriage, what Your Word says about marriage and then Father, bathed in the love of Christ, emboldened by the Spirit of Christ, with humble courage we will be instruments of common grace in the public square and redeeming grace as we win the day in terms of addressing the issues but our greatest desire is to win people, lest these appetites for death and depravity and the conspiracies of rebellion against God bring a whole culture into a death spiral. O God, bring life I pray to Christ our Lord and through Your people empowered by Your Spirit for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.