

# “Marriage, Divorce, Singleness, and Children”

## Matthew 19:1-15

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**Intro.** God’s view of marriage, divorce, singleness, and children is very different than the unbelieving culture that we live in. Jesus wants us to know that if we do life God’s way we will discover the contentment that we seek and bring glory to God.

**Subject: Marriage, Divorce, Singleness, and Children**

**Object: Glorify God in singleness, marriage, and parenthood**

### **A. God’s view of marriage and divorce [1-10]**

**19** 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. <sup>2</sup> And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there.<sup>3</sup> 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?”

“These sayings” [1] refer to Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness [18:15-35]. Jesus is leaving the Galilee [1] for the last time until the Resurrection. Jesus is in Perea east of the Jordan [1]. Great multitudes followed and He healed them there [2]. The Pharisees also came to Him to ask, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just* any reason?” [3]. They were not seeking to learn from Jesus but hoping to alienate Him from the multitudes. No nation ever had a higher view of marriage than the Jews. The Jewish term for marriage *kiddushin* means sanctified or set apart. The Law of Moses provides a right of divorce for “uncleanness” [Deut 24:1-4]. At the time, there were two prominent rabbinical interpretations of “uncleanness.” Rabbi Hillel was the liberal view and was very popular. Hillel said a man could divorce for any reason (e.g. your wife burns your meal, she can’t have a child, or she says something negative about your mother). Rabbi Shimei was conservative and said that “uncleanness” meant adultery.

**What are some ways that marriage God’s way may be different than the world’s way?**

#### **1. What is the purpose of marriage? Marriage is a divine union that glorifies God [4-6]**

And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ <sup>5</sup> 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’? <sup>6</sup> So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” God’s design for marriage is revealed in the creation account long before the Mosaic Law [Gen. 2:24]. A husband and wife are to be united as one. The marriage relationship is to be prioritized to forge spiritual, emotional and physical intimacy [Gen. 2:18, Eccl. 4:9-12]. The purpose of marriage is not your happiness, but God’s glory. Yet, if you submit to do life God’s way assuredly you will be more content and satisfied than the culture around you.

**a. Marriage is a picture of Jesus’ relationship with His Church [Eph. 5:31-32]**

God created marriage, loves marriage, and seeks to protect marriage from being attacked. Marriage should reflect the faithful unconditional love and commitment that Jesus has with His church. God hates divorce [Mal. 2:16] because of the damage left in its wake. So Jesus implores us not to separate what God has joined [7].

**2. What is the biblical justification for divorce? Divorce is justified in the case of adultery [7-10]** They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?”<sup>8</sup> 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. <sup>9</sup> 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.”<sup>10</sup> His disciples said to Him, “If such is the case of the man with *his* wife, it is better not to marry.”

The Pharisees ask why then does the Mosaic Law provide for divorce? [7]. Jesus reveals that divorce is not God’s desire [8]. The divorce certificate was to protect a wife from a hard-hearted husband so that she could be free to remarry if her husband divorced her [8]. The divorce provision [Deut. 24:1-4] is not part of God’s instruction for marriage in Genesis or the original covenant in Exodus. But in Deuteronomy about 39 years after the original covenant after the hardness of heart was exposed. Divorce is allowed in the case of adultery [9] (not mandated) [Matt. 5:31-32]. Divorce for other grounds results in adultery [9]. Adultery destroys intimacy. The disciples are sobered about the serious responsibility of marriage [10]. Divorce is not the unpardonable sin but Jesus is urging us to appreciate the sacred union of marriage.

**B. God’s view of singleness [11-12]** But He said to them, “All cannot accept this saying, but only *those* to whom it has been given: <sup>12</sup> For there are eunuchs who were born thus from *their* mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept *it*, let him accept *it*.”

**1. Singleness can be a blessing that brings contentment and glory to God**

A literal eunuch is a castrated male. Some were made eunuchs [e.g. a servant guarding the king’s harem, or as an expression of devotion to an ancient king by his inner court. Sometimes prisoners of war were made eunuchs by conquering kings]. Some made themselves eunuchs for God’s kingdom does not refer to literal castration, but to choosing to live as a single for God’s glory. Being single gives a person an opportunity focus their life on serving God without the distraction of serving a spouse [1Cor. 7:7-32]. Being single and loving Jesus can be uniquely rewarding for singles. And choosing to be sexually pure as a single, and content in Christ all glorify God

**C. God’s view of children [13-15]** Then little children were brought to Him that He might put *His* hands on them and pray, but the disciples rebuked them. <sup>14</sup> But Jesus said, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” <sup>15</sup> And He laid *His* hands on them and departed from there.

**1. Jesus wants to bless children and wants us to bring them to Him**

Parent brought their young children to Jesus seeking His blessing for their kiddos. In that culture, children were seen as the least in position. The disciples are trying to protect Jesus

from the perceived annoyance and distraction. Jesus was greatly displeased that the disciples were obstacles to children receiving His blessings [Mk. 10:14]. Jesus wants the children to come to Him [14]. People of child-like faith and humility inhabit heaven [14]. Jesus' laying His hands on them is a symbol of blessing them [15].

**What advice would you give to parents to help bring their kids to Christ?**

**2. The most important thing we can do for our children is bring them to Jesus**

One of the purposes of marriage is to provide godly offspring [Gen. 1:28, Mal. 2]. Raising children to follow Jesus is a parent's top priority. Jesus rejoices when we help bring children to Him.

\*\* Consider application re volunteering for children's ministry

## **Study Guide**

- 1. How does the unbelieving culture that you live in view marriage?**
- 2. What might be some of the challenges and blessings of marriage God's way?**
- 3. What might be some of the challenges and blessings of singleness God's way?**
- 4. What might be some of the challenges and blessings of parenting God's way?**