

## Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

### What God Thinks of Divorce

Scripture: Selected Scriptures

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I recently saw a book entitled *The Death of the Family* written by a British physician. He suggests that what we need to do in the world is to do away with the family. He says because the family is the primary conditioning device for a western imperialistic worldview. And if we're gonna get rid of that, we've gotta can the family.

You've probably heard of Kate Millett, who is very involved in the ERA kind of thing. And she's written a book called *Sexual Politics*. And she says the first thing that has to go is the family. We've got to get rid of the family unit because it is the basic unit of oppression in women.

Now this is a sampling of just tons of material coming out against the family. I recently had the opportunity in my church to preach a series on the family. One of the things that interested me was recently a series of articles came out written by Armand Nicholais, who is a very, very astute professor at Harvard Medical School. He is a psychiatrist, an M.D. He is well respected in the field of psychiatry and also as a Christian. And he wrote an article which was carried in *Christianity Today* indicating some of his viewpoints regarding the family. And he just reiterated everything I had said. Only you know with the Harvard Medical School and all of that, everybody is, "Wow." And they printed it, you know, and all of this kind of thing, and it's basically the same.

And this is what he said. "Certain trends prevalent today will incapacitate the family, destroy its integrity, and cause its members to suffer such crippling emotional conflicts that they will become an intolerable burden to society. If any one factor influences the character development and emotional stability of an individual, it is the quality of the relationship he or she experiences as a child with both parents. Conversely, if people suffering from severe non-organic emotional illness have an experience in common, it is the absence of a parent through death, divorce, etcetera."

And he went on to say that divorce will create in the next generation mental illness more than any other single factor. It is gonna give us a legacy of problems in the future. Nicholais said that there are many things that create these trends toward the disruption of a whole person. And he listed these. "Number one, married women with children, working outside the home." He says, "My clinical experience indicates clearly that no woman with young children can do both at the same time without sacrificing either the quality of her work or the quality of her childcare. Further, the tendency for families to move frequently. 50% of the United States population has lived at a different address five years ago."

Another one, "the invasion of television into the home. One-fifth of the next generation 80 year old will be spent watching television. He'll spend a total of 4,000 days of his 80 years watching television. The lack of controls in our society, he says, are gonna result in deep moral confusion, no standards to live by. And thus people, because they don't have a standard, they don't know where to stop. They learn to be unable to control their impulses and that's why we have a rise in violent crimes and sexual perversity and homosexuality and whatever else."

And then he says another problem is a lack of communication in the home. And they did a study in a small United States town and they found out that the average father spends 37 seconds a day with his young child. No communication, 37 seconds, that's right. But he says, "The major cause - and these all are causes, but the major cause of the collapse of the next generation is gonna be divorce." He said, "The quick and easy trend toward divorce and the ever increasing divorce rate subject more and more children to physically and emotionally absent parents. The divorce rate has risen 700% in this century and continues to rise. There is now one divorce for every 1.8 marriages. Over a million children a year are involved in divorce cases, and 13 million children under 18 have one or both parents missing."

And he concludes, "What about the future? What can we expect if the trends continue? First, the quality of family life will continue to deteriorate producing a society with a higher incidence of mental illness than ever before. 95% of our hospital beds will be taken up by mentally ill people. It's devastating to a person to have no relationship in a family. This illness," he says, "Will be characterized primarily by a lack of self control. We can expect the assassination of people in authority to be frequent occurrences. Crimes of violence will increase, even those within the family. The suicide rate will rise, and as sexuality becomes more unlimited, more separated from family and emotional commitment, the deadening effect will cause more bizarre experimentation and widespread perversion."

That's what we're looking at in the next generation. It's a frightening picture. And what do we do about it? Well, we can talk about psychology and we can talk about putting band-aids on cancer and that type of thing, but what we really need to do is look at the Bible and find out what God has to say. And that's what I want us to do tonight.

So I want us to look at just two verses. Verse 31 of Matthew 5 and then verse 32. "It hath been said whosoever shall put away his wife," and that's a Greek word meaning divorce, "Let him give her a writing of divorcement. But I say unto you that whosoever shall divorce his wife except for the cause of sexual sin causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries her that is divorced commits adultery."

Now strangely enough, this simple statement of Jesus has caused an awful lot of confusion. And when we want answers to what is right and what is wrong in divorce, we simply need to go to the word of God and take our time to unfold what Jesus is saying here. If we had Jewish background like the hearers did that day, it would have been very simple to understand. You know, one of the things a Bible teacher has to do is close gaps. This is what we call the science of Hermeneutics. You've gotta close some gaps. In order for you to interpret the Bible, you've got to close some gaps.

For example, you have a language gap. The Bible was written in Hebrew and Greek and we have it in English. You have a history gap. That is, there was something going on historically then that isn't going on now. We've got to reconstruct it. You have a culture gap. You have a geography gap. You have all of those factors that separate us from the people to whom these things were written and we've got to reconstruct the scene. So what's gonna take a little time is for you to understand what they were thinking when Jesus said that and how simply His words unfold.

Now there are many people today who are giving us answers about divorce. Some people are saying, "No divorce no time for nobody under no circumstances." Others are saying, "Yes there is divorce, but no remarriage. You can get a divorce, but you can never remarry anytime under any circumstances." Then other people are saying, "Divorce for anybody anytime and remarriage for anybody anytime." That's the other extreme. And then there are some saying, "Yes, there is divorce and there is remarriage, but not for anything and only for special things." And so you've got those who say, "No divorce anytime." Some say, "Divorce, but no remarriage." Some say, "Divorce and remarriage all the time." Some say, "Divorce and remarriage, but only some of the time."

And invariably, you read books and you will find all these varying views. And I am saying that to say it's not an easy subject. But I think where most of the people fail is in really reconstructing the setting of what's going on. And it seems to me that Jesus' words just simply unfold very simply to us. You've got to understand this.

In verse 31 there's a little phrase. "It has been said." This is a code all through the Sermon on the Mount. You see it in verse 21. "You have heard that it was said." Verse 27. "You have heard that it was said." Verse 31. "It has been said." Verse 33. "You have heard that it was said." Verse 38. "You have heard that it was said." Verse 43. "You have heard that it was said." Where did they hear this? This was the common traditional Rabbinic system that they had established. This is not necessarily the Old Testament, although in most cases they took it out of the Old Testament and kind of twisted it around to fit their own situation.

And so what he's saying is, "This is what you have been taught." On the other hand, verse 32 begins, "But I say unto you." So Jesus, first of all, is saying, "Here is your view and then here is My view." And so He is playing off where they were at. And it's very important to understand that. And we understand that the Lord is really dealing with them in terms of their own system. Now, I think it goes

without saying that marriage is sacred, right? I don't have time tonight to go all the way back to Genesis and reconstruct Genesis two, how God made two one and talk about all of that. But you know that God invented marriage as a sacred thing, right?

They too are to become what? One flesh. And from the very beginning God's intention was monogamous lifelong marriage, and indivisible oneness. One cannot be divided. And they became one and it was indivisible, monogamous, lifelong marriage. And that is why our Lord said in Matthew 19 when they asked Him, "Well, what about a bill of divorcement?" And He said to them, "But from the beginning it was not so. Wherefore let no man put asunder what God has put together." And by the way, the Greek work put asunder means divorce. "Let no man divorce what God has put together."

From the beginning God wanted monogamous marriage. In fact, anything that violated marriage was just a serious issue. Did you know that if you committed sexual sin as a non-married person, the punishment was different than if you committed it as a married person? That's right. If you committed, for example, you had a sexual relationship with somebody before you were either married - either of you were married, there was a certain judgment, but it was not death. But if you committed adultery outside of marriage, you died, stoned, according to Deuteronomy 22.

Why? Because the marriage institution itself was so sacred that sinning against that covenant carried a greater judgment than sex sin among single people. That doesn't mean that that's right. It doesn't mean that it's a good thing to do that. It just means that it's much more serious when marriage is involved. God did everything He could possibly do to protect marriage. He said, "If you do commit adultery," and this was the way it was laid out in Deuteronomy 22, the punishment is death. That was to be a deterrent. That would be a fairly severe deterrent.

Not only that, did you know that when they built the tabernacle in the temple and it talks about it in Exodus 20, they were not to put the alter up any stairs because in those days they wore a certain kind of a skirt and God wanted to make sure that when people went up the stairs nobody down below saw their nakedness. And you know, in 2 Samuel 10, some Jewish people were humiliated when their enemies came and cut their clothes, cut their robes right off just below their rear ends. They had also shaved their beards, and of course, a beard was a sign of dignity. But to go around with your tale hanging out, you know, in our society today, that's just, you know, part of the act.

But in those days you wouldn't do that. Why? Because God was protecting from the look that leads to adultery as much as was possible within the society. 2 Samuel 10 talks about that. Polygamy was forbidden in Leviticus 18. So God was building everything he could around the marriage to sanctify and to try to hold on to that because He knew it was gonna fly apart if man was given his own way.

God established marriage as a spiritual, sexual, social union of two people for life. It was always that way from the very beginning. And so the first reality you have to understand is that one. It's very simple. I don't have time to really go into it Biblically, but I just want to lay it out.

Now I want you to look with me for just a minute at Malachi. It's the last book of the Old Testament, one book to the left of Matthew. And you remember that in Malachi 2:16, here God is indicting the children of Israel for divorce. Verse 14 says, "They were dealing treacherously against their wives. They were unheeding the cheers and the agonizing cries of their wives, who were trying to hang on to a marriage." They were just putting their wives away turning a deaf ear to their sorrow. And verse 16, "For the Lord the God of Israel says he hates divorce." He hates it. "'For one covers violence with his garment,' saith the Lord of Hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit that you deal not treacherously." Uses pretty vivid language.

He says, "A man who puts away his wife or vice versa garments himself with violence." In other words, sometimes you can catch a criminal because he has the evidence on himself. I'll never forget a situation that happened some years ago when I got involved in attempted murder. And I was in the church and there was two guys who were beating up a fellow in the church parking lot. And so I ran out, you know, to try to stop the fight. And of course I was - you know, I don't even know what to do. I was a local minister and the secretary said, "There's a fight out there. You better go stop it, you know." So I felt like I had a civic duty and I went out there. And I saw these two guys, they had a guy on the ground and they were just kicking him, just pummeling his body with their feet. I found out later they were professional rugby players, or at least they were semi-professional rugby players who also worked at Stevadors.

You know, they weren't real swift upstairs, you know. But they were brutes. They had long police records. Anyway, they had - somehow this guy had irritated them. They didn't know him. He was just walking down the street and they started shouting obscenities at his and he said something back and they decided to kill him. Well I thought it was a fight and I yelled out them, "Break up the fight." And they didn't do anything. And a crowd was gathering in the corner, so I thought I better walk over, you know. The closer I got, the bigger they got. They were monstrous guys.

I always said I'd fight anybody smaller than me who's had a recent illness. But, you know, get in over my head. So I got out there and I said, "Break it up." And I heard this guy say, "Kill him. Kill him." And there was blood all over everywhere. His face was mangled and distorted. His nose was bleeding. His mouth was all bleeding. His teeth were knocked out. They had blood all over their pants. And so I really didn't know what to do at that point. The biggest guy turned toward me and started after me, kind of a - you know, I kept going backwards, you know. He kept coming after me and I went backwards. And finally I got to the church door. I figured I'd jump in and go, "King's X, you know."

But anyway, I got back to the church door and I jumped back in and he came right in. You know, the nerve. And he came right in the church and all of this. Finally, we were able to get the police out there and by this time they had made a getaway and the police caught them. I'll never forget what the police guy said. I said, "How'd you find them?" He said, "Well, we tracked them to their residence. We went in, we found blood all over their clothes, so we knew it was them." Blood all over their clothes, that's exactly what Malachi's saying.

When you divorce your wife, you've got blood all over your clothes just like somebody who kills. See, that's how serious God viewed divorce. He covers his garments with violence. And so I just point out those Scriptures from Genesis to Malachi, from the first part of the Bible to the last book of the Old Testament, God's view never changes. God hates divorce. And so He is consistent all the way through.

It's very important that you understand that because there are people who teach that the Old Testament teaches divorce. It doesn't and I'll show you why. What has happened, if God has this beautiful, glorious picture of two people living together for their lifelong period of time and God hates divorce, what messed it up? Let's go back to Genesis 3 and find out.

Genesis 3. Now you know that before the situation in Genesis 3, when sin entered the world everything was blissful. Everything was wonderful. And then of course, Eve fell to temptation. She induced Adam into the same kind of a deal. And they both fell into temptation. And immediately there came a curse. And I don't know if you really understand that curse because not a lot of people understand it. But I want to show you something.

Everything involved in this sin got cursed. Verse 14 of Genesis 3. "And the Lord God said unto the serpent," who had done the tempting, of course Satan had used the serpent as his instrument of approach. "Because thou has done this, thou are cursed of all cattle, of every beast of the field on the \_\_\_\_\_ belly shalt thou go and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." The serpent was cursed. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman." And here is the curse of Satan himself.

"And between thy seed and her seed, he shall bruise thy head and thou shall bruises heal." And here, of course, you have Satan being cursed. Satan who attacked man and temptation will be by man defeated. By one man, in fact, the man Jesus Christ. The only time a woman ever had a seed. The seed is otherwise in the man. So Satan himself is cursed in verse 15. The snake is cursed in verse 14. And then we find in verse 16 the man and the woman are cursed.

"Under the woman," he said, "I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception. In sorrow thou shall bring forth children." And the first part of the curse is that a woman would have pain in childbearing. That is a part of the curse. And further, and watch this one. "Thy desire shall be to thy

husband and he shall rule over thee."

Now people do not understand that. They say, "Well that means that from now on the woman would desire her husband." No. She always desired her husband. That isn't anything new. In fact, it was prior to the fall that desire was pure and uncluttered. Although they were in a sense coregents in the created world, and although they ruled together and had dominion together, the husband was always the head and you find that reiterated again and again in the Scripture.

And her desire had always been toward her husband. Then in what sense is this a curse? Well, people don't understand that. It's got to be something different than what it was. In what sense is the woman's desire toward her husband? I want you to notice something here. The Hebrew word for desire and the Hebrew word for rule. The word for rule is *massal* in Hebrew. And it is a different word than the word used in Genesis 1:28 when it says, "They rule together." When they rule together, the word rule there has a difference connotation. The word here means and it says, "He shall rule over thee." It is a word that means to be set in an elevated position.

They used to rule together before the fall. There was a co regency, even though the man was the stronger vessel, as Peter implies. And even though the man had headship, they had such a beautiful knitting together of the roles that they ruled together. And by the way, that can only be restored in Jesus Christ. And in Christ, you don't have this kind of relationship, you have this kind, only each knows his place and in each place they rule together.

But you see when the fall came, you got another word. They don't rule together. It's not the same word. All of the sudden the man finds himself elevated into a place of authority. Now this is just part of the curse. "He shall rule over you." People say to me, "Well, you know, is the Bible against women? Does the Bible teach male chauvinism?" No, not any more than anything else that's sinful. I agree that all throughout history women have been abused by men. I agree that men have been chauvinistic. I agree that men have dominated women. I agree that men have oppressed women. I agree that men have pushed women down. I agree with all of that, and I see it start right here.

"He shall elevate himself in a position over you." That's part of the curse. But you see the other side of it. "Thy desire shall be to thy husband." Now what does that mean? Well, this is equally important for us. The word desire is *chuka*. Now what's interesting about this is this is usually made to refer to sexual desire, but it doesn't have that meaning. This word is only used one other time in the whole Pentateuch, the five books of Moses, and only one other time in the whole Bible. But only one other time in the Pentateuch and that is just a few verses later in chapter 4 verse 7.

Now whenever you see the same Hebrew word used in the same context twice, it will have the same meaning. That's a simple principle. And here in verse 7, and you'll have to take my word for it, translating it for you, it's talking about Cain. And it says, "If thou doest well shalt thou not be

accepted? And if thou does not well, sin lies at the door and it desires you, but you must rule over it." That is almost an identical Hebrew phrase from chapter 3, verse 16.

Now stay with me on this. And what 4:7 is saying is this. "Sin desires you Cain, but you must rule over it." And that is the exact phrase that you find in 3:16. "The woman desires to dominate the man, but he must rule over her." You have the battle of the sexes beginning in the curse in Genesis 3:16. See that's why there's conflict.

It's indicated to me that the woman desired to rule when she took the mood first, right? To sin. She took the lead when she shouldn't have. And when the man followed along, you know, and said, "Well, whatever you do honey, I'm gonna do the same thing." He forfeited his right and now he has to fight for the rest of existence for his right to rule.

And so what you have here, and you have it in Hebrew, I think it's obvious what it's saying, is you have the battle of the sexes beginning. Man's got one problem outside his home. He's gotta till the ground. The woman's place is in the home, so her problem in the home is pain and childbearing.

But the problem they're gonna have together is the fact that she is gonna want to rule him and he is gonna want to crawl on top and dominate her and the battle of the sexes begins in 3:16. That's why you have women's lib throughout all history and you have male chauvinism throughout all history, and the only time it ever gets resolved is in Jesus Christ in Ephesians 5, see.

That's why there's divorce because everybody's fighting for his own square inch trying to enslave the other. Only in Christ can a husband love his wife the way he should and a wife submit to her husband the way God intended and they rule again together as heirs together, Peter says, of the grace of life. Now that points out why even though God has established monogamous lifelong marriage, and from the beginning to the end of the Old Testament never changes his viewpoint, all the way through the story of the Old Testament and even today there's gonna be problems in that area. And God know it, because of sin.

Now with that kind of a background, let's go back to Matthew 5:31. So now listen to me, the Bible assumes divorce. Did you get that? God never condones it. God never advocates it. God never commands it. God never suggests that it's the solution to anything. It just assumes that it'll happen. It is the logical result of the battle that begins in the curse of sin. It's gonna happen, that's all. It is going to happen. Jesus is not saying it is right, wrong, or indifferent. He just says it's gonna happen. And when it does, here's the standard. It's gonna happen, just like every other sin is gonna happen.

Now I want to take you through four things very rapidly. Number one, the teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees. Verse 31. This is what they taught. "Whoever shall divorce his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement." Now, no conditions, right? Whoever divorces his wife, I mean if you want



to divorce her, divorce her. Just make sure you do the paperwork, that's all. Make sure you give her the paper and follow the legal deal so that you're okay with the law. That's the way they lived their life. And so they were chucking their wives ad lib, all over the place.

If you study the backgrounds to this, in the time of Jesus it's incredible the divorce rate that was going on. Do you know that in some Muslim countries today you can divorce your wife by simply saying three times over, "I divorce you. I divorce you. I divorce you." And that constitutes legal divorce. Well, in the time of Jesus, it was not very different than that. You just did the paperwork, handed her the paper, and showed her out of the house. That's all honey. You gave her the paper so she'd know she had a legal divorce, somebody wasn't thinking she's be an unfaithful wife, and so that you wouldn't have any more obligation to her.

Do the paperwork, no conditions, divorce her for any reason, and so forth. Well, if you know anything about the Old Testament and you think about the spirit in which God has laid down His principles, you know that this didn't please the Lord, right? But you see, the reason they did this was because it was the only way they could commit adultery and get away with it. They knew the Ten Commandments said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and so rather than committing adultery, they just kept divorcing their wives. Then they could do whatever they wanted with the woman they wanted to do it with, and when they got tired of her they chucked her and married another one, see.

You didn't need adultery in those days. You could divorce so easy. And so that's really what he's saying here. He is saying, "You're adulterers," in the passage, verse 27 and following. "And you commit adultery in your heart," verse 28. "And you commit adultery in your divorces," verses 31 and 32. So he's pointing out their sin. And when you do your divorces, you realize that you're simply revealing the sinfulness of your heart. So that was the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees.

Now let's go to a second point. It was based on the teaching of Moses, they thought. They had just really massacred a passage in Mosaic teaching. Turn back to Deuteronomy 24, the only passage in the Old Testament that says anything specific about divorce. Deuteronomy 24. And this is a really fascinating passage. Oh, this gets complicated. Now listen to - it's not complicated in this passage, it just leads to complication. I'm gonna read you the King James because the King James, believe it or not, people say, "Oh, you know, the King James is out of date and so forth."

But in this passage, the King James has perpetuated the old Jewish rabbinical era of a translation. And this is what the King James or authorized version says. "When a man has taken a wife and he married her and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eyes." After a while, he says, "I don't like you anymore honey." "Because he found some uncleanness in her." Now the word uncleanness here, mark it, is never used to speak of adultery, never.

It's a word that's root meaning is nakedness, but it came to mean so many things that the Jewish Talma translates it obnoxious. And some of the rabbis said it means if she burns the bagels, puts too much salt on your dinner, says bad things about the mother in law, or you find somebody who's prettier. Whatever. So the guy looks around, not adultery is involved, because if she'd committed adultery what would have happened her? She'd be dead.

So something short of adultery, and by the way, if the only way out of a marriage was adultery, and adultery brought death, then there was no way out, see. So in this case, something less than adultery. He finds some obnoxious thing about her, doesn't like her for some reason. And, "Then let him write her a bill of divorcement." That one statement there has created more problems than any other statement on this subject in the Bible. "Then let him write her a bill of divorcement."

Now some of you linguists might remember there's such a thing as a prothesis of an apodosis. Have you ever heard of that? If, if, if, if, then. If, if, if, if, prothesis apodosis then. In other words, if this is true and this is true and this is true, and if this and if this and if this, then this logically follows. And the old rabbis put the apodosis in here. They put the then here, but the then didn't belong here. And they gave us a legacy of confusion because they turned it into a command.

He finds something obnoxious, then let him write her a bill of divorcement. That's what the rabbis taught about this passage. We found it in rabbinical writings. And the translators of the King James - and I use the King James. I love its dignity. In most places, it's accurate. But here they picked up that same translation and they have turned this into a command. If you find something obnoxious about your wife, unload her.

And when she's departed, she may go and be another man's wife. Wait a minute. This is allowing divorce and remarriage. And then what happens if the latter husband hate her and write her a bill of divorcement and give it in her hand and send her out? Then if the latter husband die, what if the latter husband die? Now all of the sudden she's gotta marry somebody else. The other guy's died or divorced her, and her former husband has sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife. After that, she is defiled, for that's an abomination before the Lord.

In other words, if the guy sends her away and it is commanded, how come he can't take her back? How come she's an abomination if there's a command that he should do it? Well, you see, the passage is confused. Let me just simplify. If you have a new American standard, you have the proper way to read this. The apodosis does come until verse 4. This is the way it reads.

Verse 1. "When a man has taken a wife," it's only an illustration. "When a man has taken a wife and he married her and it come to pass that she find no favor in his eye because he's found her to be obnoxious, and he writes her a bill of divorcement." You see, it's not a command. It's just telling the rest of the story. "And he gives it in her hand and he sends her out of the house and she is departed

and she goes and becomes another man's wife, and a latter guy hates her and he divorces her and he sends her out of his house or he dies, her former husband then, who sent her away, may not take her again." You have if, if, if, if all the way to verse 4. Then then.

Now listen. What's it's saying is simply this. If you divorce your wife for something other than adultery, if you divorce your wife for just being obnoxious, something short of the act of adultery, if you divorce your wife for that, you could never take her back because she would be defiled. Why? Because there was no legitimate grounds for the divorce, so when she remarried she defiled herself in an adulterous union. She is a defiled person. You couldn't take her back.

Now watch. What this passage is teaching is simple. It is teaching illicit, illegal, unbiblical divorce leads to defilement, okay? That's the basic bottom line. And unbiblical divorce leads to adultery. When that woman was sent out of that house by her husband just because he didn't want her or for whatever reason it was, short of an adulterous incident, for which she should have lost her life. And by the way, I just have this footnote. It came to pass in the history of Israel that they didn't always kill the woman who committed adultery or the man for several reasons.

For example, at the time of Jesus, they couldn't do it because the Romans had taken away the right of capital punishment. And so during the time of Jesus, if a man found his wife an adulterous, he couldn't kill her because they didn't have that right in that time. So he would divorce her. Do you know what illustration of that? Joseph and Mary. When Joseph thought Mary was pregnant by somebody else, what did he decide to do? To divorce her, until he found out the truth.

But you see, that was what happened. So when there wasn't a situation where you could take the life or where they were gracious and didn't choose to take the life, where there was some mitigating circumstances and they wanted to spare the life, they could divorce in adultery, which was gracious really, because a person should lose their life. But what the passage is saying is if you divorce for any other reason less than adultery, some uncleanness other than adultery, then you'll defile that woman. You'll make an adulteress out of her, and you could never take her back because she's defiled.

And so what the passage is teaching is not to get a divorce for anything, but anytime you get a divorce for anything other than adultery, you'll turn your wife into an adulteress and whoever marries her will become an adulterer, and when you marry somebody else, you'll be an adulterer, and the person you marry will be an adulterer. And so what it's simply saying is an unbiblical divorce just creates adultery every place.

In Matthew 19, the scribes and the Pharisees said to Jesus, "Why did Moses command to give a bill of divorcement?" You see, they misread this passage too. Why did he command it? You know what Jesus said to them? "Moses, because of the hardness of your heart, permitted it." Don't confuse the

two. He allowed it because of sin. For cases of adultery, it's not commanded. You say, "Well, if your wife commits adultery boy, nail her." You know something? You should even be gracious then.

You ever read the book of Hosea? Hosea was a profit of God who was to live a pageant before God's people. Hosea married a woman named Gomer. She turned out to be a prostitute. I'd say anybody who'd marry a girl named Gomer is asking for trouble. But anyway, he married this woman named Gomer. And he married her in love. And he loved this woman. Read the book of Hosea. Fabulous. It is a picture of God's love for Israel. And God says to Hosea, "Be my pageant. Be my demonstration. Be my living illustration. Be my allegory."

And so what happens is Hosea loves this woman and he has three children by this woman. And one of them is Jezreel, God scatters. One of them is Lo-Ruhamah, which means not pitied. And one of them is Lo-Ammi, not my people. In other words, God says, "Just - I reject all of you." It's as if Hosea says, "I reject this child and that child and that child." And it may well be that they were born of her harlotries, not even of Hosea. She turned out to be a prostitute and she left him.

And you know what Hosea did? He loved her. And you read the second chapter and he followed her around everywhere she went. In all of her harlotries, he kept following her to pay her bills so she wouldn't get into trouble with bills.

He was behind the scenes paying everybody to take care of her. And she sewed deeper and deeper and deeper into the pit of sin until one day she wound up on a slave block in chapter 3. And they used to take women and strip them bare and stick them up on a slave block and auction them off. And Hosea and went to the place where they auctioned the slaves and he happened to see his wife come up on the block. And you know what he did? He bid for his own wife while she stood there naked. And he bought her and it was a small fortune.

Then it talks about so many pieces of silver. I think 15. And then it says a bushel and a half of barley. Can't you see the bidding? It gets up to the 15 pieces of silver and he's out. And somebody else is too. And the other guy says, "Fifteen pieces of silver and a bushel of barley." And Hosea says, "Fifteen pieces of silver and a bushel and a half of barley." And he got her. And he took her back home. And he says to her, "I love you and I will love you and abide with you the rest of my life."

Now that's how God treated Israel, right? Did Israel commit spiritual adultery? Again and again. And how is a husband to love a wife as Christ what? Loved the church. Have you and I in His church committed spiritual harlotries? Have we gone after others? Have we set our affections on the things of the world? Have we quoted the world? You better believe it.

Listen. The magnanimous, idealistic, divine approach to marriage is not to say, "Boy, she committed adultery." It would be God like, even then to be gracious, wouldn't it? Even though I believe the Bible

would allow technically for divorce in the situation of adultery. That is precisely where we come now, to the teaching of Jesus. We've seen the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees. I've tried to help you with the teaching of Moses. Now let's see what Jesus says in chapter 5, verse 32. We'll wrap it up.

"But I say unto you." This is the truth. It's me speaking now. "That whosoever shall put away his wife." I'll skip the next phrase. "Causes her to commit adultery." You see remarriage is assumed, you see? She's gonna remarry. And actually the man who puts her away, or as Mark reverses the illustration, the woman who divorces her husband. You actually become guilty when she enters another marriage. You have incurred the guilt of adultery. That's what he's saying. You put away your wife and you cause her to commit adultery and whoever marries her that is divorced commits adultery.

And you add the text in Luke and Mark, and they say you become an adulterer. And whoever you marry becomes an adulterer. In other words, all Jesus is saying is you're a bunch of adulterers because when you divorce somebody without true grounds biblically, you proliferate adultery all over the place. And adultery is such a serious sin that it was to be punished by death originally.

That's what the Lord is saying. Now isn't that right - doesn't that square with what we know is God's view of divorce? God holds up marriage as so sanct - sacrosanct. In this sense what is God's definition of marriage in Ephesians 5? Is the symbol of Christ's relation to His church. And in the Old Testament of God's relationship to Israel. Oh, it's a sacred thing, sacred. Marriage is no more breakable than is God's love for Israel or Christ's love for His blessed church, see.

That's how God holds it up. People say, "Well, I can't live together with him." Listen, any two spirit filled people on the face of the globe could live together in harmony. Might not be all it could be, but it could be all it needed to be with Christ. Whatever it is, it ought to make the best out of it because God's choice is to stay together. You say, "Well, my partner's committed adultery." Yeah, well so did Hosea and so did Israel and so is the church. And God never stopped loving Israel and Jesus never stopped loving you. And Hosea went to the slave block and bought off his harlot wife and gave her the rest of his life.

You see what Moses in saying and Deuteronomy 24 is what Jesus is saying. Divorce is an evil thing because divorce just proliferates adulteries. With one exception. Verse 32. "Except for the cause of fornication." Now I've heard people try to explain this passage as an engagement passage. It's only talking about engagement. You can't do that. Deuteronomy 24 isn't talking about engagement. The scribes and the Pharisees weren't talking about engagement. And Jesus was talking about adultery in a marriage.

People say, "Well, why do they use the word fornication?" Because fornication is the broadest word to encompass sexual sin. It involves bestiality sex with animals. It involves sex perversion

heterosexually. It involves homosexuality. And I think any of those things defiles a marriage and legally and technically gives grounds for divorce. And sometimes, let's face it. When a partner is unfaithful, divorce is the only thing that's left. Maybe they just move out, shack up, and you never see them again. That's the only option left.

But I'll tell you another thing. When they commit that act of adultery or whatever it is and they come back and ask for you to put that union back together, you ought to be as gracious and loving as God has been to us, okay? And forgiving and redeeming. And so that's what our Lord is saying. What does God think of divorce? He hates it. He hates it. And He would like to see it stay together.

And so Jesus takes them to Deuteronomy 24 and says, "The standard has never changed. There is no divorce tolerated under any other circumstance than sex sin." And the broadest category is given. If you have been violated in a sexual manner in the sanctity of your marriage, you have that right if there's no other solution. But apart from that, you get a divorce and all you'll do is make adulterers out of everybody involved. See? In other words, what the Lord is saying is don't compound the evils of divorce with adulteries. That just makes things worse.

There's one other thing to add to this. And that would be the teaching of the Apostle Paul. Look at 1 Corinthians 7 briefly. And by the way, you know, we just flew along and didn't cover everything. I hope I raised enough questions to stimulate your thinking and answered enough to give you some direction. But I want you to look at 1 Corinthians 7 because Paul adds a further word to this, and that's one wonderful thing about the Bible. It is a progressive revelation. It doesn't go from error to truth. It goes from incompleteness to completeness.

And so there are things that are freshly given. You'll find in 1 Corinthians 7 that Paul here is talking about marriage. And sometimes he's quoting Jesus and sometimes he's adding a further word of revelation. For example, in verse 10 of 1 Corinthians 7, "Unto the married I command, yet not I but the Lord." He's there quoting the teaching of Jesus. He's there reiterating what Jesus taught. But in verse 12, "To the rest speak I, not the Lord." Now I'm done quoting Jesus. I'm gonna add some further revelation. This is what the spirit of God is saying through me now.

So in some cases he's building on what Jesus said. In other cases, he's going a step further. Now he says, "This is what I want to add to what Jesus taught. If a brother has a wife that doesn't believe." Let's say you've got a wife that isn't a Christian. "And she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not divorce her." If you've got an unsaved partner, then stay together. Stay together. And the same thing in verse 13 is reversed. Why? Verse 14. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife. And the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband. Else where your children unclean, but now they are holy."

What he means is you're not automatically saved. What he's saying is that a Christian partner in a home will bring a sanctifying influence on the life of that non-believer. Listen, if you're a non-Christian, if you have a Christian wife or Christian husband, you don't probably realize what a wonderful blessing you have in that home.

You know why? Because you are one in God's eyes in marriage. And God has promised that saved partner, that Christian partner you're married to that they will be the recipients of all the blessings that He can pour out of the treasures of His love. And if you hadn't been one with that person, you're gonna get them, see.

Your life is gonna be enriched. And so what he's saying is if you've got an unsafe spouse and the spouse wants to stay together, let it be sanctified. And who knows? But what ultimately that partner will come to know Jesus Christ. Verse 16 says that. "What knowest thou oh wife whether thou shalt save thy husband. Oh how knowest thou oh man whether thou shalt save thy wife." Stay together.

You say, "What happens when that unbeliever wants out?" Verse 15. "But if the unbelieving departs," and by the way, the word depart here is a Greek word again used for divorce *charizo*. "Let him divorce." If the unbeliever says, "I can't hack Christ. I can't hack your Christianity. Let me out." Then let them go. "A brother or a sister is not under bondage." And the term bondage is the very same word used in Romans 7 to speak of bonds of marriage. So the marriage is broken when the unbeliever bails out. Why? Because God has called us to peace. He doesn't want you to live in a war the rest of your life.

Summing it up then, we say this. God hates divorce. In two cases, He allows it. One is where there's adultery. Two is where an unbeliever wants out. But in the case where there is adultery, if it's at all possible, be as forgiving and as redeeming as Hosea was, as God was, as Christ is to you.

Now that's the way God designed for divorce and marriage to work. He hates it. It is a concession to sin. And any divorce for any other reason and any remarriage for any other reason than these that have been indicated in Jesus' words and Paul's words, simply proliferates adulteries.

Now let me close by saying this. You look at your life and maybe some of you say in the past, "Oh, I had a divorce and it wasn't on Biblical grounds. It wasn't an adulteress situation. It wasn't an unbelieving departure. What about me?" Well, let me tell you some good news. You're a sinner, but God's in the business of forgiving sinners, right? I may not have had in my life the sin of divorce, but I'm here to tell you I can't make it through the Sermon on the Mount without getting shot down.

I escaped verses 31 and 32. I don't do so hot in the rest of them. It's just the matter that Jesus is covering a lot of ground and He gets us all somewhere. Realize this. No matter what you've done in the past, if you know Jesus Christ as your savior, your slate is absolutely clean. And all He's saying

to you is, "From here on out, do it My way, will you?" Why? Well, because when you live in obedience, He pours out blessing. And that's what it's all about.

"You live to My glory," he says, "And I'll fulfill your life." David said, "I set the Lord always before me, therefore my heart is glad." You want to have a glad heart? Set the Lord before you and obey His principle. Let's pray together.

Father, we know that the point of all of this that Jesus is saying is to show us that we're sinners. Some of us have sinned in committing adultery. All of us have sinned in thought. Some of us have sinned in unbiblical divorces. Others of us have sinned in hating our brothers, as the earlier portion of Matthew 5 talked about. Others of us have sinned in not keeping our word. We've all sinned. And oh God, how wonderful it is to know that you forgive us.

We can't even comprehend that, that you would have such a high view of marriage. Oh, such a holy view, that they too would be one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together let not man divorce. I hate divorce. God, we see the beauty, the glory of the high exalt of you. We look at our lives and Father, we mess up our marriages. Even when we stay together, we're not what we ought to be to our partners. We goof it up. And some of us have divorced without grounds. Some of us have even thought about divorcing the people we're married to right now.

Our hearts aren't right and yet Lord, it's just at that point in the desperation and the recognition of our sin that You come in to wrap Your arms around us and tell us how much You love us. Say, "Hey, I'm here to forgive your sin." Now we know Lord that that doesn't mean gonna trade on your grace because love doesn't do that, neither does thanksgiving. Lord, your grace, too grateful and too thankful to do that. But thank you for showing us we're sinners for the purpose of showing us You're our Savior. Forgetting the past Lord, help us to live in the moment and in the future to Your glory. In Christ's name. Amen.

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