Jesus' Teaching on Divorce, Part 1
Matthew 19:1-6
2336

This morning for our lesson in the Word of God, we come to the 19th chapter of Matthew. Take your Bible, if you will, and let's look together at Matthew 19:1-12. In this particular section of Matthew's gospel, we have the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ on the subject of divorce. And there could be a few other subjects as pertinent to our own time as this one. Listen as I read Matthew 19:1-12 and establish the setting for our look at God's Word.

"And it came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the borders of Judaea beyond the Jordan; And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. The Pharisees also came unto him, testing him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for every cause? And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he who made *them* at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they two shall become one flesh? Wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh.

"What therefore God hath joined together, let not man divorce. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to divorce her? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of hearts permitted you to divorce your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, not on the grounds of fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whosoever that marrieth her who is divorced doth committeth adultery.

"His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with *his* wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, all *men* can receive this saying, except *they* to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, who were so born from *their* mother's womb: and there are eunuchs, who were made eunuchs by men: and there are eunuchs, who made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive *it*, let him receive *it*."

Now this great passage is going to be ours to study for the next couple of weeks as we see the unfolding of the teaching of our Lord on the subject of divorce. In *Newsweek* recently, a journalist asked a rather simple question, and yet profound. He said, "Is there anyone left in the land who has not heard a friend, or a child, or a parent describe the agony of divorce?" And I suppose the answer to that question is no.

Divorce has become not only epidemic, but pandemic, to the point where all of us are touched by it in our family or circle of friends. There were last year in the United States one million divorces plus, and this year there will be at least a million more. And beneath the rubble of those numbing statistics lie the crushed lives of men, women, and children.

For if there are one million divorces, there are two million spouses, and maybe two to three million children or more, and maybe we're talking five to six million people a year being impacted by divorce. And that goes on year, after year, after year.

Divorce is a severe and staggering problem. Forty-eight out of the 50 states have no fault laws, which make divorce as easy as getting married, except you don't need a blood test. Now in past years, families and marriages were held together. This is a relatively new phenomena. The divorce rate in America has doubled in the last 20 years, and threatens to do so again in the next.

But in past years, marriage seemed to be able to hold together, and I think there were three reasons. First of all, there was family moral force. In other words, you had a family, and a family meant something to you. Mom meant something, and dad meant something, and your husband, and your wife, and your kids, and your uncles, and your aunts, and your brothers, and your sisters. In other words, family was really important. Life revolved around family. There was love there, and there was caring there, and there was hope there, and was comfort there. And all of the things that security meant really found their place in the family.

And then, as the family began to fly apart by the invasion of television, and by people all leaving to go to work, and the mobility of our society, and the automobile, and all the other things; as the family began to disintegrate there was no longer that cohesive unit that could force a moral value system on its members.

Just to give you an illustration of that, I have a friend who pastored a very large church of 2000 to 3000 people, and he said 60 percent of the people in his congregation were single, 60 percent. People who are cut off from normal family relationships.

There's a second factor that held marriage together and that was community expectation, a certain amount of community tradition, a certain amount of peer pressure. A divorced person was a scandal even as near as 25 years ago. There was a certain pressure applied by the expectation of a community that valued marriage, and that also is gone.

Community today has abandoned that tradition, and if it has any tradition left, it's awfully hard to find. Then there was a third, and perhaps the most powerful of all the forces that held marriage together, and that was the doctrine of the church. But that, too, has been jettisoned conveniently as the slide has progressed, and now you have even in the Christian church an emasculating of the biblical statements about divorce. So that the church has moved to acquiesce to the demands of its constituency, which is pleading for more and more concessions all the time.

And so divorce becomes literally a staggering reality. The family can't hold a marriage together anymore, the community can't, and it seems as though the church is willing to abandon its role as well as the others. It interests me that of the major legal issues in our country, those which reach the courtrooms, the number one case load belongs to family law. It is the largest list on the dockets of our civil courts in the United States, and sometimes the cases drag on for years, and years, and years, and years.

Now, for every two marriages, there's one divorce. I guess the spirit of it all comes down to an ad I

saw in *The Daily News* not long ago. It went like this, and it was in a little box, right in a very visible place in the paper. “Divorce $25.00, Divorce Centers of California, call - ” and it gave a number, and then it said “ - unload that turkey!” Unload that turkey. That’ll tell you where we are.

A well-known TV/movie lady that you all know, if you know anything about TV, claims to be a born-again Christian, and represents the attitude of many people are even in the church today. She’s divorcing her husband, she says, to pursue her career. He is a liability. She said this. “I’m happier than I was before the divorce, because I’m my own person making decisions on my own.” Selfishness is such a wonderful virtue. She doesn’t believe, she said - I added that part, she doesn’t believe, she says - you knew that, right?

She doesn’t believe, she says, that divorce affects her religious beliefs in any significant way. Quoting her, “In my mind, God is a forgiving father and he loves me despite the divorce. So I’m hoping I’m not judged as Christian on the basis of a divorce. Chuck and I are both happier being divorced friends than married enemies.” It all sounds so nice.

We are forced today to recognize and deal with the fact, a very disturbing fact, that the sacred bond of marriage is being ruptured at an incredible rate. Even the church has not proven immune to this, but is caught the world’s perspective more than it should, and has emasculated the biblical doctrine.

Now that brings us to our passage and to our subject. We have two choices: We can either listen to the world’s opinion or the Lord’s Word. Now those are the only two choices. Either we go with the flow of what’s happening in our society and give in to the whole system, or we hold up the Word of God and say, “This is what God requires.” And as for me and my house, we will hear the word of the Lord.

Now you say, “But even when you say that, John, you still run into a problem, because there seems to be an awful lot of confusion about what the Bible teaches. You can find somebody who claims to take the Bible and teach almost anything about divorce.” Let me see if I can help you think a little bit on that. I am really amazed, I mean I’m amazed, frankly, that there is so much discrepancy. Because I don’t think the Bible is that unclear. I think the Bible is very clear on what it says about divorce and remarriage. It’s as clear as it’s ever going to get. It’s been saying the same thing ever since it was written.

I think the problem is not that the Bible is unclear, but that thinking is fuzzy. And what fuzzes up people’s thinking is that they go to the Bible with certain preconceptions. For example, you have some people who are looking at the divorce rate and saying, “We’ve got to stop divorce.” And so in order to stop divorce, we’ll just have to come up with a doctrine that says no divorce, no time, for nobody, for no reason. So we have people who are doing that, and they’re advocating the fact that there’s no divorce, for nobody, forever, for any reason whatever, and absolutely no remarriage anytime for anything.

That sounds like a very good thing. In fact, I wish I could believe that doctrine, because it would end an awful lot of problems. We would just say, “All divorce is wrong, period, paragraph.” Therefore no remarriage, and we wouldn’t have to counsel people. It would be very nice if it was that air tight. But you can’t look at the problem in the world and say in order to stop the problem, we’ll take the Bible’s standard and raise it. That’s not right.

But on the other hand, you have the people who look at the world and they say, “Look at the problem. We’ve got to minister to these people. We’ve got to care for these people. We’ve got to love these people. We’ve got to accept these people. So we’ll lower the standard to accommodate everybody so we don’t put any undue pressure on them. And basically we want them all to be happy, so we’ll just tell them to work it out the best way they can, and the Lord will forgive them.”

So on the one hand, you have people who want to raise the standard, on the other hand you have people who want to lower the standard, and what we must we do is go back and see what Jesus said and what God says in the pages of Scripture. And we’re going to do that in verses 1-12.

Let’s begin in the first two verses, and that’s the setting for the Lord’s teaching. Verse 1, “It came to pass, *that* when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the borders of Judaea beyond the Jordan; And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there.” Now that’s a very important passage, and most people studying the Bible might just sort of skim right by it and get to the meaty stuff in verse 3 with the Pharisees, and the questioning, and all that.

But I want you to stop with me for a moment on those first two verses, because they mark a very, very significant transition in the life of our Lord. This two verses spells the end of the Galilean ministry. It is a monumental moment in the life of our Lord. Since the 4th chapter of Matthew, and around the 12th verse, when the Lord began the ministry in Galilee, he has been flowing through that area of Palestine ministering, and preaching, and teaching, and healing. It is to Galilee of the Gentiles that the light has come, but as always men love - what? - darkness rather than light, and as long as the light was there, the mass of the population never really came to the light. Now the light goes out in the sense that part of his ministry is over.

For two years or so, he has been ministering in Galilee, the last few months of that two years primarily with the disciples, preparing them for what is ahead. But this marks the end of that ministry, and the Lord turned from Galilee in the north to go south. And where is he headed? He is headed to Jerusalem and we are now moving into the last phase of the life of our Lord as he begins to move towards the cross, toward his passion, and his resurrection.

So it’s a very critical point. And the little statement “he departed from Galilee,” perhaps you ought to underline, because it marks the end of the Galilean ministry. The people had their opportunity, they had their day in the sun, they had their moment of truth, and now it ends for them. And how sad, how pathetic that he was rejected, and even in his own town, they tried to kill him.

It also says, “when Jesus had finished these sayings.” That’s a very interesting little phrase. What is it referring to? Well, obviously, the sayings of chapter 18, when Jesus had finished teaching on the childlikeness of the believer. Do you remember chapter 18 was a discourse? A “discourse” means “a sermon, a lesson, a unit of teaching.” And you know that as we go through Matthew, we find many such discourses, or sermons, or lessons given by the Lord.

Chapter 18 was a great one on the childlikeness of the believer. He had been in Capernaum. He had been in a home. He had in his lap a little infant, and he used that infant as an illustration and taught all those great truths we learned in chapter 18. Now, it says, “when Jesus had finished these

sayings." Now that little statement itself is a very interesting statement because it pops up several times in Matthew, and it pops up at the conclusion of major discourses. It's almost like signing off a major discourse.

For example, the first major discourse in Matthew is chapter 5, 6 and 7, and that's known as the sermon on the mount, right? The sermon on the mount ends the same way. In 7:28, "Jesus finished these sayings." It's either identical or very close to that same phrase. You come to chapter 10, you have the next great discourse. In chapter 10 is the discourse on discipleship. Chapter 11 begins the same way. "Jesus finished those sayings." You come to chapter 13, you have the great discourse on the parables of the kingdom, it ends the same way, 13:53, "when he finished those sayings."

And you find it right here in chapter 19 as he looks back to chapter 18. You'll find it in chapter 26 at the end of the Olivet discourse, "Jesus had finished these sayings." So it's a very important signature used by Matthew to point out to us that the Lord has just concluded a great discourse, a great sermon, a great lesson of significance.

So the Lord finished that discourse, and then it says he departed from Galilee. Where did he go? He came into the region, or area, or borders of Judaea beyond the Jordan. Now you know the land of Palestine, don't you? It's split down the middle, really, by the River Jordan. It runs from the very far north into the Lake of Chinnereth or the Sea of Galilee, and it runs down from there to the Dead Sea.

And the Jordan River is a very important point in the center of Israel. Galilee is in the north and Judah is in the south. Galilee is a rural area. Judah is the more populated area where Jerusalem is. The Lord is leaving Galilee, but instead of going straight down to Judah he goes east, crosses the Jordan River, goes down the back side of the Jordan on the eastern side, and the will cross again south by Jericho, ascend up the mountain to Jerusalem. That's the route that he takes.

And it is of great import that he takes that route, because it takes him into a very interesting region. The area beyond the Jordan was called by the Jews "the beyond." That's what they called it, "the beyond." Why? Because it was beyond the Jordan? The term is *peran*, and *peran* is the name or the term from which we get the name Perea, which means "the beyond."

So Jesus goes into what is known as the area of Perea, P-E-R-E-A. So from the Galilean ministry - mark it now - we enter into the Perean ministry, and chapters 19 and 20 discuss our Lord in the area of Perea, the beyond area east of the Jordan River. In years past, it had not been a very densely populated area, but had become rather densely populated, and by the time of our Lord, the population had greatly increased. It was a territory also under the control - and this is very important - of Herod Antipas. It was his territory, and you remember he was the one who had John the Baptist beheaded.

So the Lord, having ministered in Galilee, goes east and beyond the Jordan to minister in Perea because of the many Jews that had taken up residence there. Also, any Jew traveling from the north to the south would go that way, because if he went straight south, he would have to go through the land of the Samaritans, and they didn't want to do that because they thought the Samaritans to be a defiled people, and also a rather dangerous people. So they would go east and down that area of Perea, which meant that this close to the Passover and the feast season, there would be a lot of pilgrims going that way, as well. So the Lord would be able to minister to the inhabitants of Perea, as

well as to the pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem. So it was a very careful thing the Lord did as he approached Jerusalem from this route.

So he goes east and down towards Jerusalem from the back side of the Jordan. Now verse 2 says, “Great multitudes followed him.” This we found to be the case in Galilee, 4:25 says when he began his ministry there “great multitudes followed him,” and it says that “he healed them there.” These healings were the manifestation of his Messianic credentials. They showed his power and his compassion.

Mark 10:1 is a parallel passage, by the way, and in Mark 10:1 he says, he also “taught them.” So it’s very much like the Galilean ministry: A crowd gathers, he teaches, and he heals them, giving them the Word of God, and affirming its truthfulness and Himself as the spokesman of God by his miraculous compassion and miraculous power.

So there he is, though he moves towards the cross and his own death, he is still consumed with the needs of people, the teaching of the truth of God, and bringing them to an understanding that he is, in fact, the Messiah. So this is a very important point. You leave the Galilean ministry, you enter into the Perean ministry of our Lord, and they followed very same or similar patterns. And we’ll be in the Perean ministry, as I said, in chapters 19 and 20.

You might also note somewhere in your mind, or the margin of your Bible, or your notes that beginning in chapter 19, we now enter into the final phase of the gospel of Matthew. From here on out, we have the final presentation of the king, and the final rejection by the nation of Israel. So we’re moving into the final section. He presents himself, and is ultimately, finally rejected, crucified. While that seems to be the sweeping focus of this final phase of Matthew, keep in mind, too, that all the while, he is teaching his disciples.

So you have Jesus presenting himself in Judea and Jerusalem, you have him moving toward his passion, the crowds are there, the people are there, the populous is there, but interspersed and woven through all of that lessons, and more lessons, and more lessons for the disciples who are to carry on the ministry. So it’s a great time of transition for the Lord.

Now, as he moves along with this crowd and the healings, we come to verse 3 and this draws us right into our subject. “The Pharisees also came unto him - ” we’ll stop there for a moment. His steps were dogged by the Pharisees. They didn’t leave him alone. They’re his arch enemies. Sinister plots they hatch incessantly to take his life and discredit him. We found them in chapter 3, we found them in chapter 5, we found them in chapter 9, chapter 12, chapter 15, chapter 16, and now we meet them again in chapter 19, and we’re not through with them yet.

The Pharisees were the religious establishment, and they were being attacked head on by virtue of the truth that Jesus was preaching. They hated him, they despised him, they wanted to do everything they could to get him and to eliminate him. And so as we come to verse 3, we meet the Pharisees, and we come to the first point in our outline as we study this passage. We’ll call it “the attack,” the attack, verse 3.

“The Pharisees came to him - ” and it says they were “ - testing him.” Obviously, they wanted him to fail the test. They wanted to bring him to a test he couldn’t pass. They had two things in mind. It’s

very important that you understand this. They wanted to discredit him with the people so he would lose popularity. Secondly, they wanted to destroy him. They wanted him to become unpopular, first of all, and then they wanted him to become dead. And that was in their mind.

And so they have concocted a test. This is not a whimsical question they ask. This isn't something that some Pharisee shot off the top of his head. This is a calculated, studied, thought through question, and they come to test him, to discredit him, and bring about his destruction, and they say this, verse 3. "Is it lawful - " and they're talking about the divine law " - for a man to put away his wife for every reason?" That's the question.

Now, on the surface it seems like a rather innocent question, but they have thought this thing through. It is a clever question, it is a wily question, it is a sinister question, an astute question meant to attack Jesus Christ, to discredit him, first of all, and secondly to destroy him. Now let me tell you why.

First of all, let me tell you how they intended to discredit him. Divorce was a volatile issue among the Jews. It was a very, very major situation. Everybody knew about it, and divorce was very, very common. Women were treated as if they had no rights at all. And the Pharisees were leaders in this, not only by what they taught, but by the example of their lives. They were constantly and continuously divorcing their wives. They were also teaching that you could divorce your wife for any reason. That was basically their doctrine. That's what they believed, the majority of them. There may have been a few who were holding out for the hard line, but the majority of them, the consensus of them, and, by the way, the most popular doctrine of all the people was that you could divorce your wife for any reason. It's especially a popular doctrine among people who want to get a divorce. It plays to the lowest level. It accommodates sinners at the level of their sin.

Now, you remember that there had been a reigning rabbinical feud, because there was a rabbi by the name of Rabbi Shammai, and Shammai said there was to be no divorce. But he didn't find a great following because that is not a popular view. There was another rabbi by the name of Hillel, and Hillel, by the way, had just died 20 years before Christ's ministry so his influence was still around, and his view was the dominant popular view, and he said you can divorce your wife for any reason you want.

In fact, he said you can divorce your wife for burning your bagels. You could divorce your wife for burning your dinner. You could divorce your wife for putting too much salt on your food. You could divorce your wife if she spun around in the street and somebody saw her knees. You could divorce your wife for taking her hair down, for speaking to men. You could divorce your wife if she said something unkind about her mother-in-law. You could divorce if you found somebody prettier because then she became unclean in your sight, because she wasn't as nice looking as the one you saw.

You could divorce her for anything. You could divorce her if she was infertile. You could divorce her if she didn't give you a child that was a boy. Now see, this became the popular view. Unload that turkey. That was the popular view. If you want to dump your wife, dump her. That was the view the Pharisees taught.

Now, I believe that the Pharisees knew Jesus didn't teach this, and they knew it because he had said

it before. In a confrontation with them in Matthew chapter 5, he had said to them, “You say you don’t commit adultery. I say to you are the worse kind of adulterers and you proliferate adultery all over the place,” he said in Matthew 5:31-32, because you get divorce without cause. And when you get divorces without cause, you cause adultery everywhere, because the person divorced who remarries is an adulterer and makes and adulterer of the one they marry, and you become an adulterer when you marry somebody, you’re making an adulterer out of them. You’re making adultery all over the place by your divorces without cause.

So they knew Jesus took a hard line. They knew he took a firm line on divorce, and that was not a popular doctrine. He had taught that previously. It’s recorded in Matthew 5, as I just mentioned, and also in Luke 16:17-18. And it must have gone like wildfire what his view of divorce was because of the high interest in that particular issue.

So, I think what they’re hoping here is that Jesus will come out with some very strong overt statement on divorce, and alienate and intimidate all the people who really don’t want to acquiesce to that, because maybe they’ve already divorced somebody and he’s, in affect, going to say to them, “You’re a bunch of fornicating adulterers.” And they’re hoping they can trap him into such a narrow-minded, rigid, hard line view point that his popularity would be devastated among the people. They want to show Jesus as being intolerant, and they also want to show him as not being committed to the great teaching of the rabbis, and the great teaching of the Pharisees. And they’re hoping they can discredit him by forcing him into a corner as some kind of a hard bound, hard-nosed legalist against the popular view.

If Jesus had simply blurted out an answer, “I’m telling you that’s exactly right. You can‘t get divorced for any cause. If you get divorced for any cause other than fornication - ” as he says in verse 9 “ - you commit adultery, and everybody else that gets involved commits adultery.” That’s what they want him to just blurt right out, hoping the people will therefore walk away, because they don’t want to acquiesce to that kind of doctrine, and as a bunch of sinners you know they always want to live at the lowest level, and they’ll reject him, they hope.

But more than that, they’re not only interested in discrediting Jesus, but they’re also interested in destroying him. They want him dead. Even if nobody believed what he said, he is a pain to them because of his intimidating confrontation of their errors in life and doctrine. So they want to destroy him. You say, “Well, how in the world could this cause him to be destroyed?” I’ll tell you how.

We don’t know much about Perea, but we know a couple of things about it. We know there was a city there called Bethany beyond Jordan, it’s mentioned in the New Testament. We also know there was a fortress there, a palace there called Machaerus, and Machaerus had in it a prison, and Herod Antipas had a place there, I guess a summer home, and he also had a prison there where he kept prisoners. One of the prisoners he kept there was a very famous man by the name of John the Baptist, and John the Baptist was a prisoner, and he was kept in the palace of Machaerus in the area of Perea. You say, “Is that important?” Yes, it is. I’ll show you why. Go back to chapter 14 of Matthew, and you’ll remember this. You will as soon as we look at it.

Most interesting, verse 3 says, “Herod - ” Herod Antipas, who ruled that area “ - had laid hold on John, - ” taken him prisoner “ - bound him, and put *him* in prison - ” Why? “ - because of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife.” That is a very important statement. Do you know who Herodias was? Herodias was Herod Antipas’ wife. You say, “Why does the Bible say ‘his brother Philip’s wife’?”

Because she used to be his brother Philip's wife before he seduced her and stole her. But God, in his Word does not recognize adulterous unions and call them marriage. Do you understand that?

When it says in the Bible Herodias was his brother Philip's wife, it is to say that in the eyes of God that's the way it still should be. What had happened was Herod Antipas had seduced his own brother's wife, taken her away from him, and then married her. Not only was she his own brother's wife, but she was his blood relative, so it was not only adultery, it was incest. So he had an incestuous, adulterous union, which the Word of God will not recognize. And it says who she is. She is his brother Philip's wife. It does not acknowledge the adulterous union with Herod.

You say, "Well, what does this have to do with Jesus talking about divorce?" Look at the next verse. "For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her." You want to know why John was put in prison? He was put in prison because he spoke up about God's law of divorce. You see that? And that's why he got thrown in prison and ultimately had his head chopped off, because he had confronted that evil man and his evil partner in adultery, Herodias. He had confronted them about the fact that it was not lawful before God to do what they did, and they cut his head off for it.

Now, if it cost John the Baptist his life to believe that and confront Herod with it, maybe if Jesus came up with the same view, he'd get his head chopped off, too. Do you understand the point? So I believe that they are bringing Jesus to the same point where he will be made to publicly pronounce the reigning monarch of the area as a fornicating adulterer, and therefore put his life in jeopardy. So this is not just a whimsical question. Do you understand now? They want to discredit him with the people, and they want to destroy him. Sinister attack.

But I want you to notice his response. It just staggers you. It is so profound, and so astute, and he evades them so marvelously. It's child's play for him. He's God. But for us it's utter genius. And this is the answer. The attack in verse 3, the answer in verses 4-6. "And he answered and said unto them - " I love this. "Have ye not read, that he who made *them* from the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they two shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man divorce."

Jesus didn't answer their question immediately from his own viewpoint. He went beyond himself, beyond the customs, beyond the rabbis, beyond the traditions. He went all the way back to God. And he says, "Let me quote God." And, boy, that really puts it in perspective. "Your argument," he is saying, "is not with me. God's Word is the foundation of this issue. The Word of God is the bottom line. Let's go back to the Word of God." And then I love his beginning he says - it's so sarcastic. They spend all their time reading the Bible, interpreting the Bible, and sarcastically he says, "Have you not read?"

You know they've been reading it, and he quotes Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:24. "Have you not read," he says. And he just points up their utter ignorance. That is a slap at their religious pride, their boasted knowledge of the law, and rather than affirm that, he indicts them because of their utter ignorance. You who are so clever, you who claim to be the ones who possess and maintain the law, and interpret the law have you not read, even the beginning? And then he goes on to quote God out of Genesis, and he gives - and here's the main part of what we're going to get this morning - four reasons why it is not lawful to divorce for any cause. "Let's get it from God," he says. "Let's just let God speak."

Four reasons why it is not lawful to divorce. Reason number one. One man was created for one woman. Did you get that? One man was created for one woman. Look at it verse 4, and he quotes from Genesis 1:27. “Have you not read that he who made *them* at the beginning made them a male and a female?” Now the word “made” here means “created.” He said, “Have you not read about the creation, men, fellows? You’re not aware of it? You haven’t gotten into that text? Do you remember what it says? That ‘he made them a male and a female.’ ”

And by the way they are in the emphatic position in the text. The male and the female is the emphasis. You see, when God created he created Adam and he created Eve. That’s it. Do you understand that? Adam and Eve, that was it. There were no spares. He did not create Adam and Eve and Ethel, just in case. He did not create Adam and Eve and Albert, just in case. He did not create eight people, or nine, or seven, or thirteen, or three and say, “Work it out. If it doesn’t work out, try somebody else.” When God created, he created Adam and Eve, period. There were not spares. There no options. There were no alternatives. And that was the divine intention in the very beginning: One man, one woman, divine plan, no option.

He did not make provision for polygamy. He did not make provision for divorce by making any spare people. It seems like a rather obvious point. There wasn’t anybody else around. You see, divorce for Adam and Eve was not advisable. You understand that? It could get very lonely in the garden. There was not an option. If they had divorced, my friends, Genesis would have ended in chapter 1, and so would everything else. There was no option, and that’s the whole point of what he’s saying.

When he made them, he made them a male and a female, and that was it. Not a male and two females, not four folks who could work it out the best way. Very basic. So, in the case of Adam and Eve, divorce was not only wrong, it was inadvisable. Not only that, it was impossible. It was absolutely impossible. There were no alternatives. There was nowhere to go, no one else to talk to, nothing. That’s the way God meant it. If it isn’t you two, it isn’t anything. This is God’s intended creation, a non-optional, indissoluble union. You understand that? One man, one woman, created that way.

When God did that, he set in motion for all of human history how it is to be. One man, one woman, no options, indissoluble. And just because spares came along as time went on didn’t change God’s original intention, you understand? It didn’t change it at all. And God never intended two people to be married and be poking around seeing if they like somebody better. That is not an alternative that God ever intended, and that’s obvious by virtue of his creation.

Second reason why divorce is not permitted for any reason is a strong bond. The first is one man created for one woman. The second is a strong bond. When God brought the one man and the one woman together, he really brought them together. It says in verse 5, “For this cause - ” that is, for the reason of this union between a male and a female “ - a man leaves his father and mother, and cleaves to his wife.”

Now he leaves, he breaks the relation in the home, and he cleaves to his wife. This is Genesis 2:24. Now we’ve moved from 1:27 to 2:24, still in the very primitive revelation of Scripture prior to the fall of man. God’s divine wonderful order. God’s perfect purpose and plan, and that they should leave their parents and cleave.

And the word “cleave” is the word we want to note. It means basically “to have a bond that can’t be broken.” It’s a word that’s used really for glue. It means “to be stuck.” And you say, “I’m in that biblical context. I’ve been stuck with this guy for 25 years.” Well, sorry, that’s exactly what it means. It’s a happy stuck and not a sad stuck. That’s the idea here. But you’re stuck. You are cleaving, the idea of glue. In fact, there’s a translation, I can’t remember which one it is, I was reading where it even uses the word “glue” in Genesis 2 to refer to this. “A man should be glued to his wife.”

There also is inherent in the word another thought that takes it into the heart a little more, and it’s sometimes used to speak of pursuing hard after something. And so you have the idea then of two people who are stuck together, and are so because they pursue hard after each other. So you have two hearts diligently and utterly committed to pursuing one another in love, stuck together in a indissolvable bond. Glued in mind, glued in will, glued in spirit, glued in emotion.

There’s a beautiful, I think, remnant of this intention of God’s original creation that finds itself in the Jewish language. They have a word for marriage, and the word for marriage they used in Hebrew kiddushin, and that is a very lovely word. Kiddushin basically means “consecration” or “sanctification.” To “consecrate” means “to set something apart to God.” To sanctify means the same thing, “to set something apart to God.” We talk about being consecrated to God or sanctified, set apart unto God, made holy. That is, it belongs only to God.

When a Jew said something was kiddushin they meant that it had come the personal possession of God. Anything totally surrendered to God was kiddushin, and that is their word for marriage. So marriage is a consecration of two people to each other. It is a consecration that says, “I am totally separated, apart from anything else unto you. I am totally consecrated and devoted to you.” It is a union, then, of two people whose utter devotion is to the other, who become the personal possession of the other person.

That’s why 1 Corinthians 7 says you do not belong to you, you belong to your spouse, and your spouse belongs to you. It is an exchange. It is an utter and total complete abandonment of myself to my partner. That’s kiddushin. And I see also inherent in the Jewish word the idea that marriage is not only a setting apart unto each other and a consecrating to each other, but it is a setting apart and a consecration of that union to God. And that is the purest perspective of marriage.

So when they talk about marriage in Hebrew, they talk about total commitment, total consecration, total setting apart, total sanctification, where one person becomes the utter and exclusive possession of the other person as much as a sacrifice brought by a Jew to the altar was kiddushin to God. So am I offering myself utterly, and totally, and fully surrendered to my partner. That is the essence of marriage, an indissoluble union with no option. Strong bond, pursuing one another, one male, one female.

There’s a third reason why marriage does not allow itself to be broken, and that is because of one flesh. One man, one woman, strong bond, and thirdly, one flesh. He says it at end of verse 5, “they too shall be one flesh. Wherefore they are no more two, but one flesh,.” And the point of the second statement, “they are no more two,” is this. You can’t divide one. One is the indivisible number. They aren’t two any more, so you can’t separate them any more. They’ve become one, and one is indivisible. You can’t have half a person. Half a person is nobody. They have become one person in

the union of marriage. It is an indivisible number.

Now you say, “What does that one person mean?” I think it is a divine perception. When those two people come together, they literally in God’s view become one person, one person. They abandon themselves to each other. They become the total possession of each other. They are one in mind, and spirit, and goals, and direction, and emotion, and feeling, and will, and that oneness ultimately is best seen in the child they produce, which is the perfect emblem of their union. Because that child bears all that they are in one, and becomes the emblem or the symbol or the representation of their oneness.

One is an indivisible number. You can’t talk about breaking up two people in a marriage. When you break up a marriage, you slice one person in half, and what do you got? You’ve got two halves and that’s nobody, to follow the same metaphor.

Then finally, the fourth reason, and this to me, is the coup de grace, this being the strongest of all biblical reasons why divorce is not God’s desire, the end of verse 6. “What therefore God hath joined together, let not man divorce.” Now the word “put asunder” that we say so often is *chōrizō,* it means divorce. It’s used that way in 1 Corinthians 7:11, same word. It means “divorce.” What God puts together, don’t divorce.

And, you know, I’ve heard this verse so misused. I’ve even read it in books and they say, “Well, that’s the out we were looking for, folks, because God didn’t put our marriage together in the first place, so we can get a divorce.” I wish I could tell you how many times I’ve heard people say that, and I’ve read that in print. “Well, God didn’t put our marriage together so we can get a divorce.”

That is stupid. That is unbiblical. That is violating the whole intent of the passage. You say, “What do you mean?” This is not talking about how you view each other. This is God laying down the truth about marriage. And God said, “I make marriages and you better not take them apart.” And he isn’t necessarily talking about Christian marriages or non-Christian marriages. He’s saying, “I make marriages. I put two people together in a union.” It’s a God-ordained institution. It is God who has made a man and a woman complement each other, so they come together with the capacity to enjoy each other, to be fulfilled by each other, to be strength to each other’s weaknesses, to product children, to procreate the world. I believe it is a miracle of God that every union exists.

Every single time that a couple comes together and experiences the joy of companionship, or the joy of friendship, or the joy of sex, or whatever else, they are experiencing the miracle of God. The miracle that man should so love a woman, and a woman should so love a man that they can abandon themselves to each other in the fullness of a meaningful relationship, that is an act of God.

Even unbelieving people can enjoy the joy, and the thrill, and the meaningfulness of a loving union. We know that. That’s a miracle of God, every marriage is. It is not an issue about whether or not you got married in “the will of God.” That’s not what it’s saying here. It’s simply defining that in the very beginning God said, “I make marriages,” and when you get a divorce as a pagan you are just as much ripping apart something God put together as if you were Christians doing it.

You can make a comparison of it. It’s like a child being born. I believe that every child born into the world is a creature of God. Do you believe that? God created everyone. It doesn’t matter if their

parents are both unbelievers. It doesn't matter if they're pagans in the middle of some tribe in Africa who don't have a clue about God. That child is a miracle of God, and the same is true of marriage. The marriage that produces the child is an act of God, whereby two complementary people are brought together to enjoy the fullness of human life. It is just as much an act of God.

That's why I say this. Abortion is to child birth what divorce is to marriage. As abortion kills the creation of God, so does divorce, and that's exactly what the verse means. "What God has joined together, let not man divorce." You better not break up a marriage, my friend, yours or anybody else's. You better not do that because you're tampering with the work of almighty God, who makes marriage.

So they say to Jesus, "Is it lawful for a man to get a divorce for any reason?" He says, "Listen to what God said. What God said is this. One man, one woman, and no options. What God said is strong bond. What God said is one flesh, indivisible number. What God said is, 'I make marriages. If you tear them up, you're tearing up what I made, and you're in a very, very serious position.' "

So next time you go out to fool around with somebody else's wife, just remember if you break up a marriage you've just broken up something God made. And don't give us any nonsense about the fact that the Lord led you. Oh, how I hate to hear that. The Lord led us out of our marriages and brought us together. Not the Lord, you just violated what the Lord did by what you did.

So what Jesus is doing is taking them all the way back to the beginning. And instead of losing credibility with the people he gains it, doesn't he? Because all he says is what God said in the Bible, and makes them look stupid by saying, "Haven't you read this?" And I say to you the same, before you ever think about divorce, as you sit and try to judge whether it's right or wrong, have you read this? It's fairly clear.

That's his answer, but that's not all the answer. We're going to pick it up from there next time. Let's bow together in prayer.

Our Father, we know that the world so easily presses us into its own opinions, makes us conform to its own mold, intimidates us into believing its own theories, overpowers us with a sea of lies. But, Lord, help us to stand true on your Word, on the fact that you've ordained marriage for two people for life with no options, to pursue hard after each other, to keep that strong bond, one flesh, that they may have the thrill and the joy of holding together what God made. Instead of tearing apart the work of God, of being committed to its fulfillment. Bless every marriage in this place. And Father, every person who's come from a broken marriage, bind up their wounds, give them a repentant heart and the desire from this time on to walk in your will. Thank you that you restore us.

Father, help us to hold high the standard of your truth, and to apply it to our messed-up world. And never to lower the standard, never to change it, but to leave it right where you put it. Give us the grace to be obedient to it, and the strength to proclaim it. And we pray that out of our obedience to you, you may be glorified.

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