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

Jesus' Teaching on Divorce, Part 4
Scripture: Matthew 19:10-12
Code: 2339

And again this morning, it's our great joy as we worship the Lord through hearing Him speak in the Word, to open our Bibles to Matthew chapter 19. As you know, if you've been with us the last several weeks, we have been examining this great chapter in our ongoing study of Matthew. We find that the first twelve verses contains our Lord's teaching on the subject of divorce. And that is a very pertinent subject today. And we've been examining exactly what the Lord says in this text and it's so important that we do that in order that we lay a strong foundation for our understanding of God's will relative to marriage and divorce.

Now, I want us to just return again to this text. I want to take you very, very hastily through the first part and then we want to pick it up at verse 10 where we left off. Keep in mind that the first two verses give us the setting. The Lord has finished the discourse on the child likeness of the believer which is recorded in chapter 18, given in Capernaum in a home there. And with the finishing of that discourse, we find the end of His Galilean ministry. For several years He has been there teaching, preaching, healing people, doing miracles, revealing His Messiahship, proclaiming the truth of God and now He's finished with Galilee and He begins His journey south. A journey which in a few months will culminate in His death and resurrection. But on the way, He crosses over the Jordan River to the east and goes into an area known as Perea, the beyond, it is called. And we have in chapters 19 and 20 what is known as the Perean ministry. Much like the Galilean ministry only much more brief, the Lord preaches, teaches, heals and the crowds follow Him. And no doubt, the majority did not believe but some did.

And so, in the midst of the Perean ministry as it begins, He is confronted in verse 3 by His archenemies the Pharisees, who are totally intimidated by Him and His teaching because both He and what He says are so contrary to them. And they ask Him a question that is really no question at all. In other words, by that I mean they had no intention of hearing an answer, theywanted no information, all they wanted to do was trap Him. And it says in verse 3 they were testing Him and they said, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for every cause?"

Now, the intention in asking the question was to publicly discredit Jesus because they knew that it was a popular view that you could divorce your wife for every reason. And that's the way it was in that world, and they figured if Jesus said no, it is not and they knew He would because He had taught that already, if they could get Him to be discredited among the people of Perea, they could immediately eliminate is ministry. And those people were use to divorce. It was part of heir culture. Everybody did

it. It was just a freewheeling kind of thing and if Jesus drew a hard line, maybe the people would stop following Him, they thought.

And so, our Lord is confronted with a question in a time not unlike our own time. Because even in our time, to hold a strong view of marriage, a strong biblical view of divorce, is to be very unpopular. Not only outside the church, but in many cases even in the church. And so, they were attempting to discredit Jesus in the eyes of the people by having Him become a very hard-line kind of legalistic person.

Secondly, the ruler of that area was a man named Herod Antipas who had already beheaded John the Baptist for such a strong stand and they thought maybe they could do more than discredit Jesus, maybe they could even destroy Him if they could get Him to take a strong stand because He would be contrary to Herod Antipas and his own illicit incestuous marriage to his brother's wife and maybe that would result in the death of Jesus which would please them very much. And so, they asked the question, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for every cause?" That's what we called the attack. And it is an attack.

The second point we looked at was the answer. And Jesus does answer them but He doesn't answer them on His own, He quotes God. Takes them all way back to the book of Genesis: Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:24. And He says to them in verse 4, "Have you not read?" In other words, your argument is not with Me, your argument is with God. I remember hearing old Dr. Bob Jones say one time, "If you don't like what I'm saying, don't call me, call heaven." God said this. Your argument is not with me, it's with Him. And that's true. And Jesus is saying the same thing, He's saying if you have an argument, it isn't with Me, it's with God. If you don't like the particular view, it isn't your argument is with Me, it isn't the debate with Me, it is God that you must approach. "Have you not read that God said one man, one woman," and He says it in Genesis 1:27, He made them a male and a female. In other words, it's obvious what God intended when He created. He made one man, one woman and no spares. And He intended it to be one man and one woman for life. That was the pattern.

Secondly, God said they were to cleave, that's the word glue or stick, strong bond. Then He said thirdly, they two would be one flesh and when two become one they're no longer two, so they can't be divided. And finally, marriage is an act of God for what God has joined together, let not man divorce.

So, the Lord says no, you cannot divorce your wife for every cause, for four reasons. God made one man for one woman, strong bond, one flesh, it was His creative work and you are not to divorce. Let not man divorce, the end of verse 6.

Well, they anticipated that Jesus would take this hard line no doubt. I don't know that they anticipated He would quote from Genesis, but they did anticipate His hard line and so they had a second question ready to confront Him with. And that takes us to the argument, verse 7. Here's their

argument. "They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement and divorce her?" If it's a no divorce standard that God laid down in the beginning, if God intention was no divorce, then why did Moses command divorce? Now you remember that we've discussed that. They took that from Deuteronomy 24 and they twisted it because in the text of Deuteronomy 24:1 to 4, Moses does not command divorce. There's only one command in that text and the command there is not to marry a defiled adulteress. There's no command there to get a divorce. You see, they were living the lie that God commanded divorce. And so they would divorce their wives and as a result, seem to be righteous. They were actually sort of advocating the selfrighteousness of divorce by turning Deuteronomy 24:1 to 4 into a command to divorce which it is not andwe saw that. Moses tolerated divorce and that's what our Lord says in the affirmation of verses 8 and 9. He affirms again the divine standard.

"Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning," that is from God's original creative intention, it was never to be. So, He says it wasn't a command, it was a permission. And we looked into that in some detail. There was a permission in the Old Testament for divorce**.** And verse 9. Jesus reiterates it. "I say unto you, whosoever shall divorce his wife other than on the grounds of fornication and marry another, commits adultery and whosoever marries her who is divorced, commits adultery." In other words, Jesus reiterates the one Old Testament grounds for divorce, which was adultery, comes under the broad category of fornication or sexual sin. It was not that divorce was to be there if a person committed adultery and then repented from that, it was that divorce was an option where you had hardhearted adultery from which the person would not turn and repent. If they repented, they were to be taken back in love, as God would have taken back His adulterous wife Israel.

But in those cases where there was a continual hardheart and there was no repentance, and the adulterous person wouldn't cease their adultery, then the Old Testament permitted, as a merciful concession, to the innocent party a divorce. And it isn't that big of a concession because the fact is that an adulterer deserved ... what? ... death. And if God killed the adulterer, the innocent party would have been free to remarry anyway. So, if God by His grace spares the life of the guilty, we can see how reasonable it is that divorce should free the innocent to remarry. And we went into that in detail.

So, the Lord simply affirms the Old Testament standard. And so, their question is very simple, "Can you get a divorce for everyreason?" He says no!... no, from the beginning, God intended no divorce. Why then did Moses allow it? He allowed it because of the harness of heart, but only for one reason was it ever allowed in the Old Testament and that is illustrated most graphically by our Lord Himself in Jeremiah 3:8 when after 700 years of Israel's spiritual adultery with idols, He finally says I divorce you. God divorced Israel for spiritual adultery. Now that doesn't mean you candivorce your partner for spiritual adultery, for something they do in their mind. When that filters down to human beings, it's for the adulterous union itself, the adulterous act itself and nothing less than that.

But God is the illustration of one who divorced on the basis of adultery. But divorce on any other grounds, says our Lord, causes people who remarry after that divorce to turn into adulterers and adulteresses, and you defile them all.

At that point, the Pharisees disappeared. The reason they disappeared was they had just been made into adulterers, because they were standing there, having had to face the reality that any divorce for other than adultery causes you to become an adulterer when you remarry, the fact is they had done that perhaps myriad times, represented by the group that were there and they were nothing but a lot of adulterers and they just fade. We don't see them anymore.

But by this time, the disciples literally are enraptured with this teaching of our Lord. And the scene moves into a house in verse 10**.** And the Lord sits down with the disciples and I'm sure they followed up on that discussion with a lot of other discussion about marriage. We wish we had that discussion. If there's any one category of truth that we think we'd like to have more of in the Bible, it's about divorce and remarriage. But we don't hear the conversation, we just get the response.

Now, they're in the house and the disciples are gathered around the Lord. And the strength of His teaching about marriage and divorce has left a tremendous impression on them. They're actually shocked by it. They're frankly startled by it, because Jesus has not extended the Old Testament law one wit, He simply reaffirmed it, no divorce. And, frankly, if God killed the adulterers with a capital punishment that He assigns in Leviticus, there never would be any divorce. But God in His grace has let some adulterers live and so divorce can be a merciful concession there only when that adultery is hardhearted and irreconcilable. There's still a place for forgiveness where there's repentance. But any other thingno divorce. "No indecency" is grounds, no ... no...no thing less than adultery. And so they are very, very curious aboutthis because, you see, they have grown up in a culture where divorce was just rampant, very much like ours. And all that the Lord has said leaves them struggling and so we come to the fifth point in this little outline of these twelve verses and we call it the appropriation. How do these men appropriate to themselves this truth? How do they handle this? It's really provoked their minds. It is foreign to the experience of their day, the way they've been taught.

For example, they were raised in a culture where divorce was actually a virtue. Let me quote you from some of the Talmudic writings of the rabbis ... quote "Among those who will never behold the face of hell is he who has had a bad wife, such a man is saved from hell because he's expiated his sins on earth."

Here's another quote, "A bad wife is like leprosy to her husband. What is the remedy? Let him divorce her and be cured of his leprosy."

And thenthis, "If a man has a bad wife, it is a religious duty to divorce her."

Now, that's what they were taught. Could you imagine your children being raised under the teaching "if you get a bad wife, divorce her"? Well, that's the way they were being taught. And then the Lord comes along and says No divorce. And only mercifully will God concede a divorce. And all of a sudden the ... the obvious tension between what they're hearing from the Lord and what they've experienced in their society is so great that they're just nonplussed ... and they look at this very narrow, very hard standard and watch their reaction, verse 10: "His disciples say unto Him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry." You understand what they're saying? Boy, if you get into that deal and you cannot get out of it, you'd be better off never to get in it. That's what they're saying. To be tied to a wife that only her adultery could ever release and then to be compelled to put up with all the rest of her idiosyncrasies, short of adultery, I mean, if she's just a strange...or does strange things or...she doesn't make you happy and all that, you're stuck for the rest of your lifeforget it, better to be single.

Well, they ... they perceived pretty well what the Lord was saying, didn't they? They really did. They perceived it very well. y the way, may I suggest to you that they were not necessarily right? It isn't necessarily better to be single. You know, there are a lot of people who are like them today. They avoid marriage because they're not ready to make a lifetime commitment. You notice that? Boy, I'll never get married. The last thing I want is a lifetime commitment. And people today are avoiding marriage cause they don't want to make commitments. They just want to flit from one romance to another ... without commitment. And, of course, they forfeit the richest meaning in life and that is a true relationship of love that lasts a lifetime. They settle for a cheap counterfeit.

But listen to what it says, for example, in Proverbs...and we could look at a lot of text...but just a couple of them there, chapter 5 verse 15, "Drink waters out of thine own cistern, and running waters out of thine own well." What that means is have your own wife. "Let your fountain be dispersed abroad in rivers of waters in the street, let them be own ... be only thine own and not for strangers." In other words, your fountain here is your ability to procreate, and let it only be with your own wife. "Let your fountain be blessed and rejoice with the wife of your youth and let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe; and let her breasts satisfy thee at all times and be thou ravished always with. her love."

In other words, there... there's just a marvelous, wonderful, thrilling element of marriage and it's a good thing, it's a blessed thing, it's a Godgiven, Godordained thing. In Proverbs 18, it says in verse 22, "Who so findeth a wife, findeth a good thing and obtaineth favor from the Lord." And in chapter 19 it says in verse 14, "A wise wife is from the Lord."

So, the Bible has said that marriage is a good thing. Peter in I Peter 3:7 calls it the "Grace of life." It's kind of like the whipped cream on the top. It's the best thing about life. It's good. So, when they say it is not good to marry, what they're reflecting is a pretty common attitude. Boy, if I have to get into a

deal and stay there the rest of my life and can't get out of it, I'm not going in it. And we have that same kind of mentality today...where the reason people are not willing to marry and the reason marriages don't last is because people don't get married for the right reasons. They don't get married to make commitments. They don't get married out of an understanding of virtue and character.

I'll see if I can illustrate this to you. Basically, people today pursue romantic feelings. They...they pursue romantic emotions. There's a new book out, I saw it reviewed this last week, called Love and Limeration I think it's limeration, the word, it's coined a word limeration is suppose to be a word to describe the bells that ring when you go through that stupid, romantic feeling time, you know, where you're just in a stupor all the time and you're ... it's, you know, all that hearts and flowers, puppy love, infatuation, whatever you want to call it.

(Someone in the service says something loudly like "Loove.")

But ... (laughter)...now I want you to resist comment, folks, on this, till I get through. But the point is, as you go through life in our society, people look for one emotion after another emotion. They're pursuing ... they're pursuing romantic feeling, not...not real romance, in the true sense, that will always be there, but they're truly... they're pursuing romantic feeling and... and I want you to know that this book shows a series of sociologists did tests and all of that kind of thing, surveys, that all ... and they call it love ... I call it romantic feeling ... they call it love, all love dies, is the conclusion of their book. And by their definition, it does. All that giddy, romantic emotion dies. It all dies, it will always die. I mean, all of us who have been married for a long time realize that we no longer feel about our partner the way we did when we had that ... that euphoria of romantic emotion and feeling at the beginning. Now, from time to time, it recurs, I confess and it's wonderful that it does. It recurs a lot in my wife ... and I'm.... and I'm happy about that. But, but basically speaking, I think that's true romance, the fruit of love. But romantic feeling is that high euphoria and people make relationships on romanceand when they lose that feeling, they go to somebody else. So, everything is shortlived. You just hop from one feeling to another ... one romantic emotion to another. And you're with a person a while and the relation starts to settle and somebody else comes across your path, and something triggers in your mind and your heart and you find an attraction and you begin to think about that person and away those emotions go again, and so you dump this guy and you run over to that one because there's the new emotion and you go through life doing that until you've finally burned off every thing you ever could have had, emotionally, of genuine feeling and you end up alone. With nothing but emptiness.

But that's the way the world lives. And they won't come to

marriage with commitment because they see marriage as commitment. And it's got to be that. They won't see it that way so they go from one romance to another romance to another romance to another romance and the result of it is just what we see in our society today, the saddest result is we're

producing a generation of disoriented, unloved, lonely, isolated kids who are turning into criminals...and misfits. Because they don't have any meaningful longterm relationships to identify with ... really tragic.

Listen, if you get married for an emotional feeling, you're making a big, big mistake. Now, I'm not against that, there should be some of that there, but you better be able to see beyond that, to virtue, to character. You better be able to see beyond that to values and understand that you share common values, common spiritual values, common life values. And you better understand that you are making a life long, one man, one woman, strong bond, one flesh, Godmade, no divorce union. That's God's plan.

And people in our society, I mean, they don't even understand that. I heard a speaker yesterday, I was watching a little video tape and he was relating the story of a particular gentleman who had been in the ministry and been married for nearly 50 years, his sons are in the ministry, one of them is a seminary professor. And he was giving the story of the death of this man's wife, the mother of these sons. They had been married a long, long time and one morning... he, by the way, was giving this story at a woman's' lib meeting, to try to illustrate the difference between true love and true relationship and romance. And he said one morning, she came down, they were eating breakfast tog ether as they had done for years and years and years. She ate her breakfast and fell over on the table. And he scooped up her body and he ran...her sons were there ... he ran out the door, ran to his car without saying anything, put her body delicately in the car and floored it to the hospital and by the time he got there, she was dead.

Well, you have to be with somebody that you love for nearly 50 years to understand the emptiness. And they had the service and everyone was there, and the sons were there, and, of course, he knew she was with the Lord Jesus Christ and that's where his, of course, his devotion was as well. And after the service had taken place at the graveside, they got in the car and they were on their way home and he said to his sons, "Stop, I have to go back." And so, they stopped the car and they said, "Look, we don't want you to go back, Dad, it's too much for you, you don't need any more sorrow, we need to just go on." And he says, "No, I have to go back...I have to go back."

And so, trying to argue him out of it wasn't successful, they turned around, they went back and he went out to the grave and he walked out and he knelt down and he patted the grave and... stood there for a few moments. Then he went back and he said, "Now it's all right, we can go." They went back, got in the car and he said to his sons, he said, "This is a good day ... this is a wonderful day." And they said, "Well, what do you mean?" He said, "This is just the way I wanted it to be."

"Well, what do you mean?"

"Oh," he said, "I always wanted her to go first ... always. And so, this is a good day."

And then this man who was speaking to this woman's' lib group, said, "Listen, anybody who knows the meaning of true love always wants the other person to go first because they don't want them to endure the pain and the sorrow and the anxiety of loneliness and the burial of the one they've loved." And he said, "I daresay that your romantic relationships are a far cry from that kind of feeling, and reality." And he was right. He was right.

But you see, people settle for a cheap substitute of the rich, deepening, profound, thrilling meaningful friendship that two souls knit together in love can experience as years go on. And the disciples needed to hear what people today need to hear, what you and I need to hear, and that is that marriage is a lifelong commitment and that is not reason to avoid it, my friend, that's reason to get in it. Because in the genuineness of that lifelong friendship, God will bless you in ways you'll never experience single. Never.

And let me go a step further and say this, I don't know what some of you people are looking for but it seems to me that some of you ought to be instead of retreating back from this, you ought to be looking to get into it and you ought to start having different criteria to evaluate the people. I mean, I look around here and I see all these lovely single people and I know there are some guys around here, I don't know what they're looking for. But I want them to know I'm getting a little upset with all of them.

Well, I guess that needed to be said. I mean, you better see beyond the advertisements and you better see beyond the Hollywood glamour stuff and you better be looking for character and when you find a godly person with whom you share common values in Jesus Christ and with whom you can build a deep, profound and meaningful companionship of life, then you better grab on to that opportunity. And I believe God will give you some emotions that will make you happy and thrill you, but there better be more than just that.

You see, the disciples missed the point like so many people today miss the point. I mean, you ought to rush to get in a lifelong relationship. But I'll tell you, they were right in this regard; you don't want to get in it with the wrong person, right? So, when you make that move, you better be sure you're looking for character and you better be sure you're looking for spiritual values and you better be sure you're getting involved with someone whose spiritual commitments are as deep and as far and as wide as yours are. And if you don't know that yet, then you better slow the process down. Or, otherwise, you may spend your whole life, one person trying to keep a relationship together. And that's tough ... that's very tough. So, on the one hand, I say find someone with like precious faith and like values who loves Jesus Christ and has a life goal the same asyou do and look, if God might not bring you together, but on the other hand, if you find someone you want to marry real fast and they don't have those values, you better back off. Marriage is a sacred thing. And it is the greatest gift that

God could ever give. I can only tell you that from my own experience as you can from yours. That when you have two people who love Jesus Christ and love each other and live a life together under God's leading and direction and in the power of the Spirit, it gets so good sometimes you have to pinch yourself to think it's real. And that's as God intended it.

So, instead of saying, "Hey, we're never going to get married if you get stuck with the same one your whole life." Don't say that. Say, now if that's the case, I want marriage because it is God's ordained plan, but I want it with the right person so I don't get stuck the rest of my life. And I want it with a person who has character, not just a person who makes me feel romantic emotions. Because, the truth of the matter is, if you get married for romantic emotions, your whole lifelong you're going to be a basket case, you're going to get more of them from other people coming across your path the rest of your life. And if that's all you've got going for you, you're dead in the water before you start ... and your marriage will never last. So, you didn't know all that was in verse 10, did you? Well, it is.

So, what happens? What does the Lord say? He says unto them in verse 11, "All men can't receive this saying," what saying? The saying, "If the case of the man be so with his wife, it's not good to marry." He says that's a nice idea, that's a nice sentiment, you'll just stay single, that way you won't get into something you can't get out of, you'll just stay single, but He says Look, not everybody can handle that. Not everybody can handle singleness except those to whom it is given. May I suggest to you that singleness is a gift of sorts, it is given to a person. That's what Jesus said. Unless you can handle singleness, singleness isn't going to be the best thing for you. You may say I don't want to get married cause I don't want to make a commitment and all you're going to do is be left with a rollercoaster of emotions and find yourself being tempted in and out of all kinds of illicit thoughts if not acts the rest of your life. And some people who ought to have been married long ago, are still single not because they shouldn't get married, not because there isn't somebody to marry, but because they're probably looking for the wrong person, they're looking for looks instead of character, in some cases. Or, maybe because they're not yet the right person and the other right person can't recognize them. But we ought to be looking for marriage. That's for most people. And that's what our Lord means, He said, "Not everybody can be single, only those to whom it's given." Not everybody can handle that.

By the way, the word receive there is kind of an interesting word. It basically means to have room or space for something. And the metaphorical use is to embrace something with heart and mind. Not everybody can handle that. Not everybody can handle being single. I've had people say to me, "You know, you would have probably been able to serve the Lord better if you were single, you'd have been free to go here and go there, you've got four kids to take care." That's right. There's a sense in which if I'd have been single, I'd have had more liberty to do things, but I'm not a kind of a person who can receive being single, and God knows that. And that's the way it is with most people. God has made us for marriage...and for the one that He has for us.

Verse 12 sort of delineates those who have singleness, or who have received it. "There are some eunuchs," eunuch meaning one who does not engage in sexual activity with the opposite sex, "and some were so born from their mother's womb." And we would say that that is congenital. There are some people who are born and the sexual area is underdeveloped, or undeveloped, or malformed or whatever, and they have no capability of functioning in that way, no desire to function in that way. They are some like that. They can handle being single.

"And then there were some eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men." And that's talking about castration. And there are people, you know, in the ... as you look into history, ancient period of time, you find there were people chosen out of society to work in the harems and they were castrated so that they would not go beyond the bounds of what they should do in a group of women in the harem of the king. There were religious pagans who felt that castration was a way to please God, or their gods. But there have been people who have done that to themselves and, of course, they can't function in marriage.

And then thirdly, He says: "There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs," and this is not by some kind of physical surgery, but this is by dedication and commitment, they've made themselves eunuchs "for the kingdom of heaven's sake." In other words, there are some people who are single for God's sake. Now it's very interesting to me that you just have those three categories. There are those who cannot marry and engage themselves in a normal physical union. There are those who cannot because of the fact of some accident or some deformity or whatever that's occurred in life at the hands of men, the hands of other than heredity. And then there are those, thirdly, who are single for the kingdom of heaven's sake. And you'll notice there's nobody there who's single just because they can't be bothered to make a commitment they can't get out of, cause that doesn't solve anything. That doesn't solve anything, that just leaves you in a state of singleness where you're faced with worse problems, trying to deal with your desires.

But notice that last group. They are single for the kingdom of heaven's sake. Paul talks about those in 1 Corinthians, where he talks about those who have received the gift, as it were, of singleness which is for the glory of God and the service of Christ. Now let me say this to you, single people. If you have singleness from God and you have it and you sense no need to marry, and you sense the Spirit of God leading you into service to Christ as a single person, that is good, that is very good. I think if you got Paul in a corner, he'd say that's better. Because you're free to give your life in service to Christ. But that's the only reason... beyond those of a physical factor.

So, we don't avoid marriage because it is commitment. Only if we can't marry, or only if we choose not to for the sake of the kingdom and the sake of serving Jesus Christ. And I've been on mission fields in remote parts of the world and I've seen those single people out there and I've seen them even in our church who have been gifted by the Spirit of God for single ministry to Jesus Christ and

they are uniquely gifted in wonderful benedictions and blessings upon the body of Jesus Christ and I wouldn't change it at all.

But if you're a single person just trying to overcome and deal with desires for marriage, then perhaps your singleness is not a gift from God and you ought to move toward a marriage and you ought to open your heart to one of likeprecious faith and common value.

Now, look at the end of verse 12. And the Lord says this, "...He that's able to receive it, let him receive it." Receive what? Well, receive all His teaching. About what, about singleness? Yes. About marriage? Yes. Everything. I mean, we have to hear all this. Married ... married for life ... no divorce ... and they say better to be singleno, He says not everybody can handle that, you can only handle that if you're physically disposed to handle that or if you're spiritually disposed to handle that and that's a gift from the Spirit of God given to those who are to serve Him in a unique way. But other than that, marriage is the norm and I want you to hear this and receive it.

I think this is a very important statement at the end of verse 12 because, you see, the Lord puts this in there knowing that most people aren't going to be able to hear this, right? I mean, if I go into the average situation with a bunch of pagan people, I mean, if I went down and spoke at the local Kiwanis club, for lack of a better illustration, or if I went into the local college classroom and I said, "Now, I want you to know, people, this is the law, here's what is God's standard: you will marry one person for the rest of your life and make a lifelong commitmentno divorce. Furthermore, if you are single, you remain single for the sake of the kingdom of God, not to play around." Now, how well would I be received? They'd say, "Who is this idiot? Where did you come from?"

You see, they are not able to receive that. I told you some years back, when I was invited to Cal State Northridge by a Rabbi Kramer to be in the class on philosophy. He asked me to speak on Christian sex ethics. And so, I went. Now, I knew no one was going to be interested in them, I knew that. I mean...I knew university campus students are not interested in biblical ethics when it comes to relationships between the sexes. So, I knew I had to plan my strategy fairly well. And so, I went in and I...after I was introduced very graciously, and he was a very gracious host, I said, "Now, to begin with I want to say this, none of you will accept what I say. None of you will be interested in behaving the way I say you should. None of you will want to live according to these rules of conduct. None of you will go out of here and say, 'That's the way I want my life to be.' It will go against the grain of everything you feel. And I accept that at the very beginning that you're not going to listen to what I say and accept it."

Well, of course, when you say that to college students, immediately they say, "Oh yeah?" So, then you have them right where you want them. And so, one guy said, "Why won't we? Why won't we? How do you know wewon't Why won't we accept what you say?" I said, "Because of one basic thing, the Bible has no authority in your life...because you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ and because

you do not love the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bible has no authority in your life. And so, what it says is meaningless to you unless you knew and loved the Lord Jesus Christ ... you cannot accept what I say."

And the same guy said to me, "Well, how do you do that then?"

And I was right where I wanted to be. And so, I presented the gospel of Jesus Christ. And the Rabbi said, "I think we better get on to the sex ethics."

You see, that's the whole point. God hasn't called me to straighten up the sexual antics of a pagan society; they're not interested in these principles, are they? You see, the Bible has no authority in the world. My message is not to the world, it's to the believers. But if you can receive it, then you better receive it. In other words, if you have the life of God in your soul and you find yourself loving the Lord Jesus Christ, and you find yourself under the authority of the Word of God, then you better receive this teaching and the teaching is you're married for life or you're single for the glory of God or for some other physical reason...not so you can just play around and not make commitment. Besides, you don't want to cheat yourself, do you?

You know, when you marry one person, and I've been married now, this is our twentieth year, it seems impossible, but we have ... I mean, it isn't like when we first got married, you know, where you just ... your heart beats and you just...you know, you drive too fast to go see each other and...you know, and all of this...and...you know how that ... now and then you get that back from time to time, you know, maybe when you're apart for a while, or whatever and something special sort of happens in your heart, but ... but basically it settles into a very deep meaningful friendship, a knitting together of two souls.

A guy called me the other day and wanted me to come and speak at his church and he said to me, "Are you going to bring your friend/wife?" Friendslashwife? And I thought, that's an interesting way to talk about your wife. And I went down, he gave me his new book he just wrote and it was dedicated to his friend/wife. And that's how it is ... friend/wife. A friendship that absolutely knows no limitations and no bounds, no inhibitions, the truest, purest kind of friendship that is the expression of the deepest, truest kind of love which is caring and sharing everything. And if you don't know that in life, you have cheated yourself and the cheap thrills that you look for on the shallow end of relationships will never buy you that ... never.

And so, as Christians, of all people, we should be hearing this and receiving it. So, when you enter into a marriage, understand, you're going into the thing for life and you better be marrying for something beyond just your feelings. Now that's a strong word, isn't it, verses 1 to 12? You say, "But boy, I got a lot of questions, John ... I got a lot of questions. What about if I'm divorced or if I'm married, or if I've been divorced or if I'm widowed or what ... ?" And you want to know something?

Those aren't answered in this text. But there is in the New Testament a commentary on the teaching of Jesus. And so, next Sunday morning, we're going to look at the commentary on Jesus' teaching, it is in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, don't turn to it now... but next Sunday morning, it's going to be our Mother's Day message ... we're going to look at Paul's commentary on Jesus' laws of marriage and divorce. And what Paul does is this, Jesus lays down the very strong clear divine pattern and Paul helps us deal with the mess we're in ... when we've already goofed that thing up. And we're going to get into that next time.

But to draw our close ... our time to a close today, let me just suggest what I think would be very, very helpful for you. I believe there are six reasons for marriage, all right? And I want to give them to you. Six reasons for marriage.

Reason number one, procreation...have babies. Reason number one, have babies. Genesis 1 brought a man and a woman together, married them, told them to...what? ... fill the earth, replenish, have babies, like arrows, blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. Children are a heritage from the Lord, as the Psalms say. So, there's marriage to have children...procreation. And I tell you, it just...you know, it grieved me when I was doing that CBS interview a couple of years ago and they told me that 35 percent of all marriageage, childbearing age couples today are permanently sterilized. People don't want kids intruding in their life. Why? Because they are in romantic love and they want to be able to flit from one relationship to another and kids become a longlasting problem, right? But God knows that kids become a binding too. Nothing is more clear that you two are one when you see yourselves in that one that's born of your union. Marriage is for procreation. And that also means you don't have your children and then shove them off somewhere. We have a place out by us, a big new sign on the wall, "Day Care Center," you know. I just ... it just does something to me to see that. Shove your kids in this room**;** we'll take care of them all day while you do whatever you do. Marriage is for procreation.

Secondly, it's for pleasure. It's for pleasure. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Marriage is honorable all...in all and the bed is undefiled." The bed is undefiled. You can't do anything in that place that's defiling. Great liberation, I Corinthians 7 says, your body's not yours and her body's not hers, they belong to each other. And the Old Testament talks about the satisfaction of the physical relationship, the pleasure, God knows that.

Thirdly, it's for purity. It's for purity. In 1 Corinthians 7:2, the Bible says that to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife. It's for purity.

Fourthly, it's for provision. I love this. Ephesians 5 says that the man is to nourish, cherish, provide for, care for, be like a Savior to his wife. Marriage is to scoop all these women running around loose and provide for them...one at a time, however. But there's a ... that's what the Bible teaches, that ... that marriage is a provision of security, it's a provision of caring and nourishing, cherishing, providing

for. In fact, it says: "If a man doesn't provide for his own household, he's worse than an unbeliever." Marriage is a provision for the care of the weaker vessel and so that she may fulfill herself in childbearing and the companionship of marriage. So, marriage is for procreation pleasure, purity, provision ...

Five, it's for partnership. It's for partnership. When God made Eve, He said He made Adam a...what? ... a helper... a helper, somebody to come along side and help, so you don't do things alone, you do them together. There's strength in that fellowship, isn't there? And I confess to you that my wife is strong where I am weak and that I tend to be strong where she's weak, and that's the way it ought to be. And she helps me. She tells me when I need to be told and if she didn't she wouldn't be strength to my weakness. She has wonderful ways of reminding me of my weaknesses. In fact, I can hear the speech coming before she gives it. I know, speech number eight, you don't have to give it. But there's real partnership, isn't there? Real partnership. I mean, I go here and I work here and I study and I do the things I need to do and she's home providing all that the home needs, all that the children need, all that I need to be free to do what I do. It's real partnership. And I provide for her all the resources that she needs to do What God's ordained for her to do and so that's partnership.

And then finally, marriage is picture, it's picture. And what is it picture of? It is picture of Christ and His...what? ... church, Ephesians 5. It is a graphic demonstration in the face of the world that God loves and has an ongoing, unending relationship with the bride whom He loves and for whom He lives and dies. And I dare say that the whole metaphor of marriage as a symbol of Christ and His church has lost its punch because the church is so rife with divorce and fouled up marriages. It's sad because the marriage metaphor is such a marvelous way to illustrate God's relationship to His church and we have, I think, sort of fouled that metaphor up.

God ordained marriage ... for procreation, pleasure, purity, provision, partnership, and as a picture of His relationship to His church and God ordained that marriage should be life long and that it should be full of love and that it should be blessed and that it should be fulfilling and it should be the grace of life. And that's no reason to stay out of it, that's a reason to get in it, but when you get in, make sure you get in for the right reason with the right person, cause pretty soon you'll forget what you look like and you won't even hardly be able to tell, but you will know what each other is like in terms of character and values. That goes right on through to the end. And be single if God's made you that way, or if you're that way because of a gift for serving the Kingdom. And if you're able to hear this, hear it. And you're only able if Christ is in control of your life.

Some psychologist did a study and came up with a theory that you are what you are because you are adjusting to the most important person in your life. Whoever the most important person is in your life, that's the person you're trying to please. Very simple for the Christian, isn't it? Who's the most important person in our life? Christ. That settles the issue really, because now we can say I receive it, if you say it. That's God's order. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, do Your work in every heart. Thank You tha t You've given us the divine standard and now we know where we are. We can put our lives up against this standard, and we can see. We know that where we failed, You forgive us. Where we've fallen, You pick us up. Where we're battered and bruised, You restore us. And You know how to put together all the broken pieces of a misspent life. Father, help us, first of all, to affirm the standard and then as we go ahead next week to talk about how to deal with all of the difficulties, give us a clear understanding of the application of Your divine standard to us. And, Lord, I pray for the young people in this church who are contemplating marriage. Guide them to a right decision and a life long commitment. To those that are newly married, and maybe wondering why it doesn't always feel like it did, help them to build a deep and true and abiding love and make of them one who shares the grace of life. For those who are contemplating divorce or struggling with marriages coming apart, bring Your great strength and power to bear on that union and work Your will. For those who've sinned and are already wondering how to find their way back, we know you grant forgiveness and restoration. God, make of the marriages of this church marriages that can be a picture of Christ and His redeemed church. All this we pray for one reason and that is that Christ would be glorified whose we are and whom we serve. Amen.

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