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Mark 10:1 - 10:16



Gospel of Mark - Steve Gregg

In "Mark 10:1-16," Steve Gregg discusses a controversial topic of divorce and remarriage, and the church's changing stance on the matter. Jesus cites Genesis 1 and 2 to argue that divorce goes against God's original plan for marriage, where two become one flesh, and what God has joined together, let no man separate. While Jesus allows divorce only in cases of adultery and not for other reasons, he welcomes and blesses children, emphasizing their importance to God and the Kingdom of God. Children remain a core issue in society today, and every effort should be made to raise them correctly to remain in the Kingdom of God.

Transcript

Tonight, let's turn to Mark chapter 10, and the material in this chapter, unlike the material in some of the chapters in Mark, has parallels both in Matthew and in Luke, so that the stories as they're told in Mark can be supplemented from details given in those other parallel accounts. There's quite a variety of subject matter in this chapter. I'd like to begin by reading the first 12 verses.

And he answered and said to them, What did Moses command you? They said, Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and to dismiss her. And Jesus answered and said to them, Because of the hardness of your heart, he wrote you this precept. But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female.

For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. So then they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate.

And in the house, the disciples asked him again about the same matter. So he said to them, Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

Now, the parallel to this is found in Matthew 19, the first nine verses, I believe, and there is only a parallel in one verse in Luke, which is found in Chapter 16 of Luke. And this occasion was another one where the Pharisees, the religious leaders, wanted to trap

Jesus with it in an embarrassing statement. There will be more of these as we come to the Passion Week.

They will hit him one after another with statements that are intended to trap him. Now, you might say, what is the trap here? The question is, is it lawful to divorce your wife? Well, if you don't know how that's a trap, you've never had to give an answer to that to people. People often call me on the radio and ask me about divorce, and it's not easy to give an answer because many times the answer is not what people want to hear.

And you can definitely alienate people by telling them the truth, because there are so many people who are in violation of what the Bible says on this subject. And the violation often is such that if they were to go back and make restitution, it would be extremely costly and extremely painful for them. Nonetheless, people ask, and sometimes when people ask me on the air, I wish they would not, although it's one of my passionate subjects.

When people ask me about divorce, I always figure that they've hit one of my hot buttons, and they usually figure that out, too, because I have very strong feelings about this subject, and I did even before I was divorced. Before I ever had any reason to believe that I would be divorced, I considered that this is a very important matter, and one in which the Church is very much in violation to a large degree, just as the secular society around us is. In fact, it's one of those many areas where the Church began following the lead of the secular culture and then outstripped the secular culture, because the statistics I've heard most recently are that divorces in this country among Christians, people who claim to be evangelical Christians, actually outnumber the percentage of marriages in the general population and in divorce.

So quite obviously, the Church has gotten very enthusiastic about getting divorces. This is partly because some churches want to include everybody without judging anybody for what they're doing, and, of course, many people believe that since the gospel is the gospel of grace, it's important for us to extend grace to people who are in violation. But we have to remember that grace is extended to those who repent of their sins, not people who are continuing unrepentant in their sins.

The Bible does not indicate anywhere that God extends grace to the unrepentant, but he certainly grants grace to the repentant. However, in many cases, when people have divorced and remarried, repenting still leaves something left for them to do, but not in every case. It's a complex subject.

Jesus said in verse 11, whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. Now, if that's true, then his second marriage is adultery, not marriage. But it is against her.

Notice the importance of this is Christ's concern is the wrong done to the spouse.

Adultery, of course, like all sins, is a sin against God, but God's concerned about it because it is a sin against somebody else. It is a victimization of somebody who had been given cause to trust you.

When you get married, you promise that you will stay with somebody until you die or until they do that liberates them to give themselves wholly to you also so that they don't consider other options. They let years of their life go by in the marriage on the assumption that that's going to be for life. Other persons may come and go in their circle who would have made good mates to them, maybe even faithful mates, but they don't consider them because they have somebody who's promised to be there for them for life.

They even have children together, something they wouldn't do if they didn't expect that their spouse would be there for life. They become very vulnerable in this respect. They merge their families, their friends, all their friends merge together, the two groups of friends.

Eventually, the two people are so intertwined in so many ways that it'd be very damaging for them to separate. And yet, in many cases, there is a separation. In many cases, there is a divorce.

And what it is, is, of course, a violation of one's oath, violation of a vow. Now, some Christians believe, and this passage in Mark may give the impression, that divorce is never permitted. And when it occurs, remarriage is never permitted, because Jesus said, if a man or a woman, he gives both sides, divorces their spouse and marries another, they commit adultery against that spouse that they divorced.

And therefore, many Christians have taken the position that divorce and remarriage are always out of the question. And when I say many Christians, not as many these days as there used to be, because the early church felt that way. The early church, when the church fathers spoke about this, they believed that all remarriage was forbidden, all divorce was forbidden, as long as your spouse was alive.

And the words of Jesus here seem to help support that idea. Now, the Pharisees had two different opinions about this. And one opinion was held by a school under the leadership of a rabbi named Shammai.

Shammai was a rather strict rabbi. There are two schools of rabbis, and the Pharisees all followed one or another of these two schools. Shammai was the leader of one, S-H-A-M-M-A-I, Shammai.

And he was very strict, and he said that a person could not divorce their spouse unless it was for the cause of marital unfaithfulness, sexual impurity, sexual unfaithfulness to the spouse. That was the only thing that Shammai recognized as grounds for divorce. Hillel

was the other rabbi who headed up another school of thought.

He was considerably more lax than Shammai in many of his teachings, and on the matter of divorce, he was very lax. He said that a man could divorce his wife for any cause he wished. That once a man had found something in his wife that he was displeased with, he could simply divorce her, and it didn't have to be anything serious at all.

And both of these rabbis were working from a statement in the Old Testament, in Deuteronomy 24, which is a bit vague, and that's why these two rabbis had different opinions as to its interpretation. But in Deuteronomy chapter 24, there is the only direct teaching on this subject, really at least the most complete teaching on it in the Old Testament, in the law. In the opening of Deuteronomy 24, verse 1 says, When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, when she has departed from his house and goes and becomes another man's wife, if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who divorced her, must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled.

For that is an abomination before the Lord, and you should not bring sin on the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance. Now, what is this law saying? Is this law saying it's okay to divorce? Well, it may be. However, it doesn't command anyone to divorce.

It says, when a man gets married and he then finds something that is said to be some uncleanness in his wife, okay, that uncleanness is very vague, and that's where the rabbis had differences of opinion. What constitutes uncleanness in this respect? It says, and if he gives her a certificate of divorce. It doesn't say, it doesn't command him to do it.

It's laying out a long scenario. If he finds something unclean, if he gives her a certificate of divorce, if he puts it in her hand, and if she goes and marries someone else, and if that man detests her, or if he dies, and if she finds herself single again, then, and the only command in this whole paragraph is, then the first husband can't take her back. So, the rabbis weren't sure what to do with this, because it does picture a case of a man divorcing his wife, giving her a certificate of divorce, but it doesn't necessarily say anything about that being a right or a wrong thing to do.

The only command in the thing is that after a second divorce, or a second marriage ends, the woman can't go back to her first husband who first divorced her. And the rationale for that has never been very clear. Why not? What's wrong with that? Presumably, she could go on to marry a third husband if her second husband died or

divorced her, but she can't go back to her first husband.

Why not? Well, it says that would defile the land. You see, this is a very vague teaching. It's not very clear.

What is uncleanness? Is it saying that writing a bill of divorce is the right thing to do? Or is it simply picturing a situation where someone has done this? It's not all that clear. But the rabbis understood this to mean that Moses was permitting a man to divorce his wife for some uncleanness and to give her a writing of divorce, and that the main law here was that a man would have to give her some written commitment of his divorce from her so that she could show anyone that she was not his wife anymore, and he could therefore never try to impose any legal rights over her again, because she had this document he gave her, a written writing of divorce. Now, in my opinion, although this law is not commanding to give such a writing, it is not at least forbidding it.

And so the rabbis had to decide what is the uncleanness that constitutes grounds for divorce. And so Shammai said only fornication or adultery on the part of a woman. And Hillel said, no, uncleanness is vague.

It could be anything. If she burns the food, he can divorce her, said Hillel. If she grows old and ugly and he meets a younger woman more interesting to him, that's uncleanness in her and he can divorce her for that.

Obviously, under Hillel's teaching, which the Pharisees favored for the most part, under Hillel's teaching, a woman would have no security in the marriage at all. You know, a commitment to get married represented no commitment at all on the man's part. And so they came to Jesus and asked his opinion.

Now, the Pharisees were divided on this. And so whichever way he answered would be alienating to somebody, some group of religious leaders who either followed Shammai or Hillel, depending on which side Jesus took. Now, perhaps they thought he would take the side of Hillel, the lenient side, because Jesus tended to be friendly toward people who were viewed as sinners.

Jesus appeared to be lenient. Probably he was friends with people who are prostitutes and who were tax collectors and who are otherwise notorious sinners. He was referred to as a friend of sinners.

And so it perhaps they thought he would take the light view of the matter. It's hard to say, but the way they word the question here in Mark, Chapter 10, is they simply say, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? In the parallel, in Matthew 19, they actually the question is a little longer than that. Just a few words longer, but in an important way.

The question they ask, according to Matthew 19 is, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason? That's Chapter 19, verse three of Matthew. Now, remember, Hillel

said a man can divorce his wife for any reason. And so they're asking Jesus, are you on that side of this? Can a man divorce his wife for any reason? If he said yes, then those who followed Shammai would be alienated from Jesus.

If he said no, then those who followed Hillel would be alienated from Jesus. Now, usually when his opponents try to put him on the horns of a dilemma where he'd be as it were damned if he does and damned if he doesn't. That is whether he says yes or no, he's in trouble.

Usually Jesus gave what was brilliant, but evasive answer. For example, when they asked him at a later time than this, is it lawful to pay tribute to Caesar or not? It's a similar kind of question, a very controversial one in that society. If Jesus said yes, it's lawful to pay tribute to Caesar, he would have alienated the Jews who didn't think so.

If he said no, it's not. He would have gotten the Romans upset with him and given them grounds to hunt him down. So if he said yes or no, he'd be in trouble.

So what did he say? He said, here's a coin, right? Is this the coin you're talking about? This is tribute money whose face is on the coin. They said Caesar. He said, well, why don't you give Caesar back what's his and give God what's his? Now, Jesus gave a brilliant answer, but it was kind of evasive.

But the point is, in this case, Jesus didn't give an evasive answer. He gave a very straightforward answer, although the answer he gave reads a little differently in Matthew's version than in Mark's and in Luke's. Now, looking at Mark chapter 10, which we just read, he answered and said to them, what did Moses command you? And they said Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and dismiss her.

That's, of course, from Deuteronomy 24, they're referring to. And Jesus answered and said to them, because of the hardness of your heart, he wrote you this precept. That is, it's not really reflecting what God wants from righteous people.

Hard hearted people. Sometimes maybe it's better to let them out of their marriage. If people are wicked people, covenant breakers and so forth, might as well free the innocent party from there, let them divorce them and so forth.

But because of the hardness of people's hearts, God allowed divorce or this giving of a certificate of divorce and dismissing a wife. But Jesus said, but from the beginning of the creation, it was different. And Jesus then quotes from Genesis chapter two, where it says that God made them male and female.

Actually, that's from Genesis one. And then he quotes from chapter two, verse 24. For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife.

And the two should become one flesh. Now, notice Jesus was not asked about marriage.

He was asked about divorce.

Is it lawful to divorce? Well, that is not a subject that can be taken in a vacuum. Because divorce isn't a thing in itself. It's the destruction of a thing.

Divorce is the destruction of a marriage. And therefore, to know how to view divorce, one must know how they should view marriage. Jesus, instead of saying yes or no to the divorce question, he said, let's talk about what marriage is.

Now, Moses may indeed have permitted you to give a writing of divorce. And by the way, I should say this. Jesus seemed to agree that Moses words do permit that.

See, that's an important point, because when you read Deuteronomy 24, it's not clear if Moses is saying it's OK to give a writing of divorce or not, because it's all in those ifs, that lineup of if clauses. If this happens and this and this and this and if this and this and this and this and if this, then she cannot go back to her first husband. It's not clear in Deuteronomy whether Moses really was permitting the writing of a bill of divorce, but Jesus seems to indicate that it is correct to say that Moses did permit it because of the hardness of their hearts.

He permitted it. But he said, looking at the law, though it may be a good law, doesn't necessarily tell you what God's heart was that before people had hard hearts back before the fall, before there was sin, there was already marriage. God created it.

He created men and women. He brought them together to be married. He said the two will become one flesh.

That means he made them no more two but one. And therefore, that tells us something about God's desire for marriage. And Jesus said, what God has joined together.

Let not man separate. So it is a sin to separate a couple that God has joined together. Now, does this mean that divorce is forbidden? It sort of sounds like it.

But some people say that divorce can't happen because once God has joined two people, they're joined for life. And Jesus didn't seem to indicate that he indicated that God joins people in marriage and some people tear them apart. They undo that joining.

He said, don't do that. But he wouldn't have to say don't do it if it was impossible. Obviously, it is possible to separate what God has joined together.

It's sufficiently possible to warrant a warning not to do it. Don't let men do this. Why? Because they're working against God.

God intended for people who get married to be one flesh. And it is a wrong thing, not an impossible thing, but a wrong thing to separate them. Now, it would appear that Jesus didn't say any more than this to the Pharisees, although in Matthew's version, it sounds

as if everything he said on this occasion was to the Pharisees.

But Mark tells us that he said the rest of this after he and his disciples had gone to the house. So he spoke to the disciples about it. And you see in verse 11 and 12 that he indicates that divorce and remarriage is adultery.

He doesn't mention any exceptions. All right. Likewise, in Luke chapter 16, where we have his teaching about this, we do not read of exceptions there either.

In Luke 16 and verse 18. Jesus says whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. And instead of going on and saying what he said in the next verse in Mark, which was and if a woman divorces her husband, marries another, she commits adultery.

Jesus gives notice that whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery. So it sounds like divorce and remarriage is always wrong and always forbidden. But we have to consider Matthew's gospel, too.

After all, Matthew heard Jesus give these words. Matthew was there. Neither Mark nor Luke were, by the way.

But Matthew was there. And in Matthew 19, we read that the statement of Jesus is a little different because it says in verse nine, and it's given as if Jesus is still speaking to the Pharisees. The mark has now told us that this takes place privately to the disciples in the house.

He says, and I say to you, whoever divorces his wife. Except for sexual immorality and marries another commits adultery. And whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery, which is, again, what it says in Luke 16, 18.

Then verse 10, his disciples said to him, if such is the case between a man and his wife, it's better not to marry. Now, in other words, it sounds like Jesus was saying you can't get out of marriage very easily. But he said.

All this is true, except for the cause of sexual immorality. Now, what does that clause do to this whole teaching? It introduces an exception. And this is not the only time that Matthew records this teaching of Jesus.

Earlier in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapter five and verse 32, we find this. Actually, Matthew five verses 31 and 32 says, furthermore, it has been said, whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce. Of course, Matthew 24.

Now it's interesting. He says, but I say to you, whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery. Now you see that in Matthew, these statements are

exactly like the statements in Mark and Luke with one exception, and that is that they include an exception.

Mark and Luke do not give an exception. Mark and Luke's version of the statement of Jesus simply say, if a man divorces his wife and marries another, he commits adultery against her. If she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery against her husband.

And also that the man who marries the divorced woman in such a case also is committing adultery. Everybody involved is committing adultery. But Matthew says all that, but he adds, except in the case of sexual immorality.

In other words, the whole teaching is modified by the introduction of another factor. If the divorce has occurred because of sexual immorality, then the teaching, the whole, the whole, it's a game change. Now, first of all, we need to ask, is this exception really something that Jesus taught? And the reason we have to ask that is because Mark and Luke both record the statement without the exception, and therefore there has been controversy among Christians discussing the matter of divorce, whether Jesus ever really gave this exception.

Some say maybe Matthew added it, or maybe it was added by a copyist later on in the later manuscripts or something like that, because it's not found in Mark and Luke. However, all the manuscripts of Matthew, including the earliest ones, contain it. We don't have any Matthew manuscripts without the exception in both places, Matthew 532 and Matthew 99.

And if Matthew made it up, well, what should we make of that? We either say that Matthew is unreliable as a reporter of the life of Jesus, or maybe that Matthew added it as an explanatory note. What if Jesus, in fact, didn't say it, but Matthew, the apostle, said he added this except for the cause of fornication? Well, then that has apostolic authority as a genuine interpretation of what Jesus meant to say. You see, Jesus may say an unmodified, unaccepted, absolute sounding statement and still not mean it.

Absolutely. You find a lot of these in Jesus teaching. For example, he says, if someone strikes you on one cheek, turn the other cheek.

Well, is that the only thing you can do is turn the other cheek? Or could you walk away? Is that OK? In one place, he said, if they persecute you in one city, flee to the next city, apparently running away from persecution is one option, too. He gives a command, but it's not necessarily an absolute command for every situation. In the same place, Jesus says, give to everyone who asks you.

Well, that sounds very absolute, but it certainly can't be thought to be without exception. Certainly, you can't give your children everything they ask for. Their teeth would fall out.

They would never sleep. You'd go broke. It's just not it's not reasonable to say yes to your children all the time.

There are probably beggars that you do better not to give them something better for them that you don't. In Second Thessalonians 3, Paul said, if a man does not work, neither shall he eat. Well, then giving him money for food would be a mistake, even though he asked for it.

Jesus said, give to everyone who asks you. Is that really without exception? Or is that a hyperbole? Is that basically saying in general? Not without exception, but in general, do this. Now, one reason I believe that Jesus sometimes says absolute sounding things when there are, in fact, exceptions is that we've encountered a case of this earlier in Mark in Mark chapter eight in Mark chapter eight, verses 11 and 12.

The Pharisees came out and began to dispute with Jesus, seeking from him a sign from heaven, testing him. And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation. No sign without exception will be given to this generation.

But we already observed when we were in Mark chapter eight that there is an exception. And Jesus gave it even on this occasion. It's just that Mark didn't mention it.

Mark apparently abbreviated Jesus statement, not mentioning the exception, because in Matthew 12 and verse thirty nine. Or thirty eight and thirty nine, then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying to the teacher, we want to see a sign from you. And he answered and said to them, an evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign and no sign will be given to it, except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

And he goes on to explain that Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a fish. So the son of man will be three days and nights in the heart of Europe. But notice no sign is going to be given to this generation except for one.

Mark has the no sign should be given, but doesn't have the except for this one. So we can see immediately that sometimes one gospel writer will leave out an exception from a seemingly absolute statement, but another gospel writer includes it. What are we to do with that? Should we assume that the exception is not legitimate? Generally speaking, when we have two accounts of the same story and one is fuller, we assume the fuller one supplements the less full one.

And in the case where an exception is given, the same teaching can be said without the exception and the exception could be implied. Matthew tells us that Jesus said anyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of sexual immorality and marries another commits adultery and causes his wife to commit adultery and so forth. In other words, if the marriage has not been broken by sexual immorality, it is not broken.

And even though a man may obtain a legal divorce, a writing of divorce or in our society, go to the courthouse in the court, grant you a, you know, a decree of divorce. Same thing as getting as a writing of divorce in biblical times, getting a court decree of divorce. Well, what of it? Jesus said the marriage is still intact.

Why would we say that? Because Jesus said in Mark chapter 10 and verse 11, the man who divorces his wife and marries another. Now, presumably he's got a legal divorce and a legal second marriage. But he commits adultery against his wife.

Now, you can't commit adultery against your wife if you don't have a wife. You can't commit adultery at all unless you're married to somebody that you're committing adultery against. You can't commit adultery against someone you are not married to.

Well, you know, if a man goes out and sleeps with a woman, he's not committing adultery against some woman that he's not married to. If he's married to someone else, he's committing adultery against his wife. That means Jesus is saying that even though the court grants the divorce and even grants the second marriage, God doesn't grant that divorce or the second marriage.

He sees the first marriage is still intact, and that's why he can call it adultery. Now, if he just wants to say it's a sexual sin to do it, he could call it fornication, but he calls it specifically adultery, which indicates that the first marriage is still intact. Now, in Matthew's version, it says, unless, of course, the divorce was sought on the grounds of sexual immorality.

That means that if a man or a woman divorced their spouse, marries another, the court has granted a divorce and a second marriage license, but God hasn't. God sees the first marriage is still intact, with the exception that if the man divorces his wife because she had committed adultery against him or the woman divorces her husband because he committed adultery, then that changes it. Then the marriage is broken.

Then a second marriage is not adultery because there is no first marriage left to violate. Adultery, by definition, is always the violation of a marriage, and therefore, Jesus says in this case it's adultery. He's saying there is a marriage there to violate, but it is not so if the first marriage has been broken, and we might say legitimately.

Legitimately is not really a term that really ever applies to a broken marriage because Jesus said what God has joined together, let not man separate. It's never legitimate to break up a marriage, but there are times when a person is freed from their obligation to marriage because the other party has broken up the marriage by adultery. When a spouse commits adultery, Jesus seems to imply that's different, that ends or that provides a legitimate end to the marriage.

When a man's wife commits adultery, then that man is in the position to do one of two

things. He can forgive his wife and try to keep the marriage going, or he can divorce her. That's what God was in the position to do.

When Israel made a golden calf, they had committed adultery against their husband, God. He was a jealous God, a jealous husband, and they committed adultery. He had an opportunity.

He could divorce them or forgive them and keep the marriage going. He threatened to divorce them, but when Moses interceded, God changed his mind, decided to keep the marriage going. The person who's been violated by their spouse in that way, that is their spouse has committed adultery outside the marriage, the innocent party, the violated one, can stay in the marriage or not.

Because if that person decides to not stay in the marriage, it is because that person's action of adultery has broken the bond, has broken the covenant. And therefore, the person leaving the marriage on those grounds is not leaving illegitimately. They're leaving innocently.

And therefore, the marriage is over. If the marriage is over, then you don't have a marriage. And remarriage, that is not adultery, because you can't commit adultery if you're not married.

Now, there's a lot of ways, a lot of angles of this. I don't want to go into all of them because Jesus doesn't bring them all up here. But I mainly want to point out that on the matter of divorce, Jesus was more stringent than many of the rabbis were.

He did not side with Hillel that you can divorce your wife for any reason. He seemed to side more with Shammai, which is unusual. Like when they put Jesus on some kind of test question, he usually doesn't come right out and side with one or the other.

Remember when they came to Jesus and said, by what authority do you do these things? They said, well, let me ask you a question. John's baptism, was it from God or from man? He put them on the horns of a dilemma. Either answer, they didn't like.

They didn't want to give either answer. And so they said, we can't answer. And he said, well, I can't answer you either.

I won't answer you if you're not going to answer me. Jesus often gave evasive answers when he wanted to, but he didn't want to be evasive this time. He wanted to make a statement, a moral statement.

And that is that divorce breaks up a marriage. And a marriage is two people who became one by God's decree. Marriage is not a man-made institution.

It's not that, you know, a species of apes evolved into intelligent, rational beings like

ourselves and decided we better make up some kind of institution to start a family. So we'll have this thing called marriage and it'll be based on this, this and this. And since man made it up, if the society wants to, they can change it.

We want it to be between two people of the same sex or between a man and two women or two women and, I mean, a woman and two men or between a man and his dog or whatever he wants. Because if man made up what marriage is, that man can change the definition anytime he wants to. In time, it's the consensus of society to do so.

But if God created marriage, if God is the one who made the male and female and said they become one flesh, and Jesus said, therefore, God has made them one flesh, therefore, don't let any man mess with it. Jesus made very clear that although many things were going to be changing from what the law taught, what was not going to be changing was marriage. And so in order to teach about marriage, about divorce, he has to teach about marriage.

Because anyone who is soft on the area of divorce does not understand what marriage is. Or else they do and they don't care and they're just rebellious against God. Neither is OK.

So Jesus makes it very clear that divorce and remarriage in most cases is adultery. Now, I want to just talk about one other aspect of this, because there's an awful lot of people today, good Christian people who are divorced. And in many cases, their divorce was not legitimate at the time.

And either they have remarried or have not remarried. And if they have not, they might not even feel like they're free to remarry or they might have remarried and feel like maybe I have to get out of this marriage because my divorce in the past was not legitimate. There are some cases where I believe that's exactly the position that Christians to take.

There are some cases where the divorce was not legitimate and they cannot legitimately, at least for the time being, cannot be legitimately in a new marriage. But there are cases where that's not so. Because, as I understand it, when a spouse becomes joined with another person, that provides grounds for ending the marriage, right? So in a sense, if Jesus said, you know, the wife who commits adultery gives her husband grounds for divorce.

Well, what if there's a divorce and there was no grounds, but then one of the spouses does go on and get involved in another relationship? Well, then that is that that breaks the first marriage. It seems to me, if I understand what Jesus is saying correctly, divorced people cannot remarry unless their spouse has also gone on into a new relationship. If they hadn't gotten married again, if even if the divorce originally was not on proper grounds, once the cheated spouse, the one that that was cheated by the person who's

now considering their own matter of freedom to marry or not.

Once the cheetahs have gone on and married someone else, they have basically renounced the covenant and the covenant doesn't exist anymore. And therefore, it seems to me like the wrong, the person who had done the wrong originally and now finds that their spouse has married someone else, that person can repent of the wrong they've done and go on with their life, including possibly remarriage. And I base this very largely on something, a couple of things in David's life.

David had more than one wife, so he is not the model of a married life for us. But there are some principles that David took for granted, which I think were understood marriage correctly. David had a wife named Michal, Saul's daughter.

And when David had to flee for his life from Saul, Saul took his daughter back from David. I granted her a divorce since he was the king and Saul was the king. He gave her a legal divorce at his whim and he gave her to be married to another man in Powfield.

And apparently for years, she and Powfield were married. David had never approved of this. And therefore, when David came to power after Saul died, he required Michal to come back to him, even leaving Powfield to whom she'd been married, maybe even happily married for years.

But she had not been legitimately taken from David. The divorce was not legitimate, so she wasn't free to remarry. Actually, Powfield should be considered happy that David didn't kill him for committing adultery with David's wife.

Under the law of Moses, adultery was punishable by death. And if it was the king's wife, once David became king, this man who had illegitimately married David's wife was actually sleeping with David's wife. That was something that David was gracious enough not to execute the man, but the marriage was not legitimate.

So David expected his wife to come back to him. Now, on the other hand, his marriage to Bathsheba was different than that. It was sinful.

The whole relationship was sinful. And when David married Bathsheba, it says the Lord was displeased that he'd done so. It was wrong for David to marry her.

The marriage was not legitimate. Why? Because it had begun when she was another man's wife and the other man had died only because David had gotten rid of him to get him out of the picture. David had done nasty stuff all the way through in this story, and he had to repent.

Now, when he did repent, you might think he should divorce Bathsheba. He should end that relationship because it was sinful from the beginning. But he didn't.

And God didn't require him to. The reason is that Uriah, her first husband, was dead. If Uriah had still been living next door, faithful to his wife and waiting for her to come home from David's bed and come home to his own bed, then David, in repenting, would have to send the man's wife back to him.

David couldn't continue to cheat on his neighbor with the neighbor's wife. It was a sinful marriage. But once David and Bathsheba presumably both repented, there was no restitution could be made.

Bathsheba couldn't go back to her husband. He was now dead. And therefore, that ugly mess was just covered by the grace of God when they repented and there was no restitution.

So the marriage continued. In fact, it not only continued, it produced the next heir to the throne, Solomon, and the heir from whom Jesus Christ came of all of David's wives and children. God could have brought the Messiah through any one of them.

But God chose to bring the Messiah through this marriage to Bathsheba, which had begun so badly, so illegitimately. But apparently was viewed in the end as a legitimate marriage because of their repentance. So repentance seems to clear the slate as long as there's no unfinished business as we fixed up, no restitution to be made.

There was no restitution to be made in David's case with Bathsheba because there's no husband for her to go back to. But it seems obvious that had there been that just as Paltiel had to give Michael back to David, David would have to give Bathsheba back to her husband. But, you see, divorce is a muddled thing.

That's one good reason never to do it. And although God permitted it for people's hardness of heart, that's the only reason. And we're not supposed to be hard hearted.

Hardness of heart is a bad condition. We're supposed to be aiming at God's ideals, what God wants. And Jesus said, you know what God wants? It's what he made in the first place.

We don't live in an unfallen world. So not everything goes the way it would have if there had never been a fall. However, that should be our ideal.

Our ideal should be that we will, in our experience in marriage, duplicate as much as possible the ideal that God had before the fall wrecked things. And that means being faithful to one's spouse for life. Now, of course, I've been divorced.

And my first wife actually did commit adultery, and I did have grounds for divorce, but I didn't divorce her. I've never divorced and I would never divorce anybody for any cause. Now, didn't I just say that it's OK to divorce an adulterous spouse? Well, I don't know if the word OK is the right word.

I would say justifiable. But what is justifiable isn't always the highest road to take. And although I was only 21 years old at the time, I decided the high road to take would be to be faithful to my vows.

Even though my wife was a serial adulteress and unrepentant, she was still at least in the house. As long as she was under my roof, I was going to keep my vows. Eventually, she left and divorced me.

And there was no question in my mind or anyone else's I know that I was free to remarry, though I didn't for six years. And then I married a woman who was killed. But then I married again.

And after 20 years of marriage, that wife left. Now, there was no adultery in that case. I mean, she didn't commit adultery.

I certainly didn't. And she just left. And that was something that it was not clear to me for a while what my obligation was.

Since then, however, she remarried and redivorced. She divorced her second husband, too. But in such a case, she clearly committed adultery.

But she remarried. So there's no question about my position, I think. But there is with some people.

Because in Mark and in Luke, there's no exception given. And therefore, some say divorce, remarriage is always adultery, no matter what. But I think that when we add what Matthew has included and see the fuller picture of what Jesus was saying, what he's saying is if there is an existing marriage that is violated by a second marriage, then, of course, that second marriage is adultery because it's violating an existing marriage.

But if there has been fornication and that is the grounds for which the first marriage broke up, that break was real. He says man should not put asunder what God has joined together, but it unfortunately can be done and has been done by many people. And once it is done, it is done.

When somebody has committed adultery against their spouse and their spouse takes the option of divorce, it's done. That marriage is over. Remarriage cannot be adultery because there's no existing marriage to violate.

It may be the wrong thing to do in some cases because a Christian has to be concerned more, not just about legalism, not like, can I get away with this? And unfortunately, too many Christians think that way. Can I get away with this? But the Christian has got to be thinking, what is the most God-like thing I can do? What is the most Christ-like thing I can do? Is it possible to hold out and to forgive and to keep this marriage going from my side? Remember, Paul said in Romans chapter 12, if it is possible, as much as lies in you,

live at peace with everyone. That would include your spouse.

As much as it lies in you, that is, as much as you have the ability to continue living at peace with them, do it. Now, the statement itself suggests it won't always be possible because if it is possible. And it's not all on your side because for a marriage or any relationship or any friendship to last, both parties have to be willing to do it.

And so there are times when you would live at peace, but the other person would not. And then there's no possibility of maintaining that relationship, even though you want to. Anyway, I've always been reminded when talking about that particular subject of something David said or somebody said in Psalm 120.

We don't know, actually, who wrote this song, but in Psalm 120. Verses six and seven, the psalmist said, My soul has dwelt too long with one who hates peace. I am for peace, but when I speak, therefore, war, I want peace.

But the people I live with hate peace. I speak peaceably, but they want to fight. And sometimes you'll find yourself in those circumstances so that you end up being the victim of a relationship breakup that you didn't choose to break up.

And this is the one thing I'd leave you with before we move on from this subject in Matthew 10, and that is that. Christians almost never have a well thought out understanding of divorce and remarriage as an ethic, and they take the simple route, they either take the view it's never permissible or it's permissible for some reasons. But if it happens for any wrong reasons, we still allow people who remarry and who commit what Jesus calls adultery and remarriage, we still allow them to be in the church because after all, it's all about grace.

But see, if they're committing adultery in a second marriage, that's they're not repentant. Grace is not available for those who don't repent. Yes, the church should extend grace to repentance, but not to continuing violation.

And there are churches I have known of and heard many actually a number of instances like this where a man will leave his wife and children and shack up with his mistress and he'll still go to the church. So the wife and children are sitting on this side of the aisle and the man and his mistress is on the other side of the aisle. This is an outrage.

This should not ever be permitted, but the church is so well, we just want to be an expression of God's grace. Grace toward an unrepentant adulterer. There's no grace for an unrepentant adulterer.

Paul said fornicators, adulterers, idolaters, drunkards will not inherit the kingdom of God. Apparently, God doesn't give them grace if they want to inherit the kingdom of God. He'll give them grace if they repent.

But that's that's it. Sin is forgiven when we repent of it, not when we can persist in it. So anyway, the way to understand divorce is this.

Divorce is a crime. And as in all crimes, there's a perpetrator and a victim. The perpetrator should be viewed as a perpetrator.

The victim should be viewed as a victim. Unfortunately, the church is that are that treat divorce in a lax way. They don't treat either party as a perpetrator.

They're both just victims. They're victims of an unhappy marriage, and this is the way it's sorted out. Those that say divorce is not permissible often treat both parties as perpetrators.

One group doesn't count anyone to be a perpetrator. Everyone's just a victim of unhappiness. The other side, both are perpetrators because they're both divorced.

But you see, in reality, almost every divorce has one person who wants the divorce and the other person really doesn't. One person wants to keep the marriage, but the other person is giving up. The one who gives up on their vows is a perpetrator of a crime.

They're a committer of perjury. They made a vow before God. When they leave, they perjured themselves.

And that is a serious crime in the sight of God. And the church should treat it as such. So Jesus gives this teaching, though Mark doesn't give as much of it as Matthew does.

By the way, Mark doesn't give what follows that in Matthew, because in Matthew chapter 19, the disciples say in verse 10, well, if this is so, if the teaching about divorce is so restrictive as this, then it's better that a man doesn't marry, isn't it? And Jesus answer is not everyone can receive this word. Now, interestingly, the disciples say it's better for a man not to marry. Jesus said, well, I won't deny that, but not everyone can receive that.

Not everyone can stay single. He said only those to whom it has been given. Paul also talks in first Corinthians seven of those who have a gift of marriage and those who have a gift of singleness.

He's basing on what Jesus said in Matthew 19, because he said only those to whom it is given can really receive that business of not marrying. He says, for there are eunuchs. This is Matthew 19, 12.

There are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb. And there are eunuchs who are made eunuchs by men. And there are eunuchs who have been made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

He was able to accept it. Let him accept it. Now, the disciple says it's good to be single.

Good not to marry. Jesus, well, if you can accept that word, fine. Not everyone can accept that.

There are eunuchs, people who don't marry. Technically, eunuch is a man who's been castrated, but he's probably referring to not literal castration all the time. Although if a man is castrated, that certainly makes him a eunuch, made so by men.

But he says some people are born eunuchs. That doesn't mean they're born castrated. It means there's something in their birth condition that renders them unfit for marriage.

It may be that hermaphrodites who have organs of both sexes would fall in that category. Maybe. And I don't believe this is so.

I don't believe that people are born homosexual. But if that were ever proven to be so, we might say, well, maybe they're born to be eunuchs. But Jesus said some people make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake.

And if you can receive it, do it. That is, if you've got the gift, if you're one of those to whom it is given to be a eunuch for the kingdom's sake, go for it. And Paul also extols that as an option.

But Jesus and Paul both say that's not a gift that everyone has. And it doesn't work out for everyone that well. So Paul says it's good for a man not to touch a woman, but to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife and every woman have her own husband.

So there's permission either way. And but both Jesus and Paul indicated that being single is not a bad option if you've got that gift. Now, Mark 10, 13, then they brought young children to him that he might touch them.

But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus thought he was greatly displeased and said to them, let the little children come to me and do not forbid them. For of such is the kingdom of God.

Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. And he took them in his arms and he put his hands on them and blessed them. Now, the term that is used of young children is actually the word for instance.

So actually, the term literally means the great unable to speak. So children too young to talk were the age of these children. And people wanted Jesus to put his hands on them and bless them.

The laying on of hands with a patriarchal blessing has its roots going back to the Old Testament, when probably Jacob put his hands on Esau and Isaac probably put his hands

on Esau and Jacob. Jacob certainly put his hands on Manasseh and Ephraim and may have put his hands on his other sons when he blessed them, although that's not specified. But to impart a blessing often was through the laying on of hands.

And they wanted Jesus to bless their children in some way. I don't know if blessing them meant prophesy over them, because sometimes a patriarchal blessing was actually a prophecy about the destiny of the person being blessed. Or it was just a blessing of well-wishing and saying, may such and such happen to you because, you know, because I decree it that it should.

In any case, the disciples thought this would be a waste of Jesus time. He had more important people to attend to. Children, infants, what good are they? They can't they can't do anything for the movement.

They can't even do anything for themselves. Much less can they do anything for the kingdom. So let's not bother Jesus with all these babies and stuff.

And Jesus was angry at the disciples for taking that position. And he said, let them come to me. He wanted the children to come to him.

Now, reminds me of an argument that Charles Spurgeon had with a man who was, I think, a Presbyterian who believed in infant baptism. Because Spurgeon was a Baptist, and he believed in baptizing only believers. But he was arguing with somebody on theology about whether babies should be baptized.

And this Presbyterian believed they should be. Or it might have been an Anglican, but they believe in infant baptism, too. And Spurgeon said, well, can you show me a scripture that promotes infant baptism and I'll show you a scripture that forbids it.

And so the Presbyterian said, Jesus said, suffer the little children to come unto me. And Spurgeon said, OK. There was a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job.

And the Presbyterian said, that doesn't say anything about baptism. And Spurgeon said, well, neither does your verse say anything about baptism. When Jesus said, let the children come to me, he didn't say let them come and be baptized.

And when he brought them to Jesus, he didn't baptize them. He prayed for them. He blessed them.

He laid his hand on them. That's not the same thing as baptism. He wasn't recommending infant baptism here, although this is one of the verses that is sometimes used to prove such a point.

One thing he did say of interest is that he said of these little children, of such is the kingdom of God. That means the kingdom of God is comprised of them and people like

them. Which seems to be a strong statement about infants being saved.

Not because they're baptized as the Roman Catholics and some others would say, but just by being infants. We have no reason to believe these infants have been baptized. That wasn't being practiced.

They were probably circumcised if they were males, but there'd be girls there too, probably. That had nothing to do with it. They were saved because they were infants.

They belong to the kingdom. Now, of course, they could outgrow that innocence. They could reach the point at some later age where they knowingly rebelled against God, in which case they would no longer belong to the kingdom.

But I believe that the Bible teaches there is an age of accountability, before which time a child is not held by God as responsible for their misdeeds. They have to reach an age where they know right from wrong. There is a scripture that mentions this age of accountability.

Though it doesn't use that term, it certainly describes it. And that is in Isaiah chapter 7. And it says in Isaiah chapter 7 about a child that will be born in verse 15 and 16. Says, curds and honey shall he eat that he may know to refuse the evil and choose the good.

For before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good. The land that you dread will be forsaken by both her kings. That is, this child will be born.

And before that child reaches the point where he can choose good and refuse evil. That is, before he has moral accountability, obviously. Something will happen.

Jesus, I mean, Isaiah doesn't say what age that is, but it presupposes there is an age of a child before which he cannot choose good and refuse evil. And therefore, of course, could not be accountable either. Another scripture that seems to indicate that children are by virtue of being little children already belong to God and are already saved is found in Matthew chapter 18 verse 10.

Matthew 18 10 says, take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I say to you that in heaven, their angels always see the face of my father who is in heaven. Now, this is one of the clearest statements in the Bible about guardian angels assigned to individuals.

Jesus said that these children have angels that answer to God for their care. That means they're important to God. Therefore, don't you despise them? Don't you think less of them than ordinary people? God doesn't.

God has assigned angels to them. That's how important they are to them to him. But what's interesting about that statement is that in Hebrews 1 14, it says that the angels

are ministering spirits who are sent forth to minister to those who are the heirs of salvation.

Hebrews 1:14 says that the angels are actually assigned to those who are saved. Guardian angels are never promised to those who are not saved. It's the heirs of salvation to whom the angels are assigned.

It says in Psalm 34, the angel of the Lord encamps about them who fear him and delivers them. God assigns angels to those who are counted to be his people. And children apparently are in that category because they have guardian angels.

No doubt the time comes in a child's life when if he rebels against God and ceases to be one of God's people, that those angels no longer are on assignment there. But there's a number of things that would suggest that children, though they are perhaps too young to be believers themselves, may belong to the kingdom of God and the statement Jesus makes here in Mark 10, verse 14, would seem to strongly suggest that.

Then he says in verse 15 and 16, assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it. And that doesn't mean you have to enter in childhood or you're not going to make it. It means that you have to be like a child in some respect in order to enter the kingdom.

And that respect apparently is humility, because in Matthew, it seems you said whoever does not humble himself like this little child cannot enter the kingdom. So if indeed a person needs to become like a child to enter the kingdom, well, a child is already like a child. The child already is in the kingdom, and those who are not little children have to become like them to get in.

So what Jesus is saying is, don't think that these children are of less value. As a matter of fact, if you want to come to kingdom, you have to become more like they are. Otherwise, you will not enter in.

And so he took them in his arms and put his hands on them and blessed them. And there will stop tonight. So we talk about marriage and children.

By the way, I am tempted, though I did not do it. The statement, let the little children come to me and do not forbid them. I wonder if it has any ramifications on the subject of birth control, because there's certainly no sure way to forbid a child from coming to Jesus than to artificially prevent it from coming into existence.

And let the children come. Now, I don't think the Bible actually speaks directly on the subject of birth control, and I've told you before, I think that I don't take the view that it's a sin. But it certainly would be something to ponder whether Jesus is saying not only shall the children who are already here be permitted to come to him, but maybe any children that God may wish to produce.

So, you know, the kingdom might be the more populated in any case. That's like I say, something I was tempted to get into, but I in saying that I would be raising a point that I don't necessarily believe. I don't believe it's wrong necessarily for people to prevent conception in certain cases.

But but it does indicate that children should be valued. And, you know, when when people used to ask my wife and me why we did not use birth control, it was because we couldn't imagine any reason why we'd want to try to interfere with God blessing us. Since the Bible said, blessed is the man who has his quiver full of children.

And our quiver was not yet full. We only had five. So why would we want to stop God from blessing us? It didn't make sense to me.

Still doesn't. So anyway, children are valuable. They're more valuable than any other possessions we'll ever own.

And they're so valuable, God doesn't even trust us to own them permanently, just to borrow them and to shape them and launch them. But in doing so, we need to permit and even influence the children to come to Christ because they do belong to the kingdom. And if they are raised correctly, I presume they will stay in the kingdom.

And so we have these ideas of Jesus about marriage and about children. And these are core issues of any society and every bit as contemporary issues today as they were in his own time.