

PP The King and His Kingdom-The Conduct of a Disciple of Christ
Part 16-Matthew 5:31-32; 19:1-12 The Disciple's Marriage, Part 2 **6/3-4/2017**

PP 19th century socialist Robert Owen asserted that family, marriage and private property [have] 'cursed the world ever since the creation of man.' He argued that children ought to be transferred from parental to institutionalized care.¹

PP Lenin, the Russian dictator, once said *"Destroy the family and you destroy society."*

PP Linda Gordon once wrote, *"The nuclear family must be destroyed, and people must find better ways of living together...the break-up of families now is an objectively revolutionary process"*

The war on family and marriage has been happening since the dawn of creation

The first marriage, wedding day with wedding vows was recorded in Genesis 2

As we turn to Genesis 3, we find Satan tempting the woman to defy God, doubting His goodness. She ate the fruit of the tree that God prohibited, and gave some to her husband who was with her, having done nothing to intervene, protect and lead his wife into obedience.

Satan accomplished a double objective: draw them into sin, but to also sin in a particular way. Instead of Adam leading and protecting his wife, she would lead him into sin.

The results would lead to very particular consequences of their sin, captured in **Genesis 3:16**

PP ***"To the woman He said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."*** **Genesis 3:16**

This last part finds an identical saying in **Genesis 4:7**, but for pronoun changes: ***"Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it."***

Sin never has good intentions for us, and never seeks to work with us, but control us.

God said to her, *Your desire will be against your husband, but he will harshly rule over you.*

This is the beginning of the battle of the sexes, and the devious plan of Satan all along.

Satan had a war on marriage, and human history is littered with its destruction.

But there is good news: The power of the gospel of Jesus Christ restores marriage to God's intent. The evidence of this power was seen in the early church as marriage and family became radically different than the tattered destruction all around them.

Husbands were transformed to treat their wives as partners, not property, with love, not control.

The hearts of wives began to see their husbands as their God-given protectors as well as providers, learning to joyfully recognize and affirm their husbands' headship.

PP *"Christians were married in Roman civil ceremonies but believed that they were receiving a sacrament that bound them to each other in fidelity for all of their lives. In the words of Tertullian, Christian married couples are people 'who sustain one another in the way of the Lord, who pray together, who go together to God's table, and who face all their ordeals together'...Christian couples did not divorce or have sex before marriage because they believed that sexual intercourse was for marriage only, and that the unity of man and woman in marriage was sacred and indissoluble: It was a reflection of Christ's own unity with his bride the Church."²*

¹ http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2004/02/the_lefts_war_on_the_family.html

² <https://www.catholic.com/magazine/print-edition/how-the-first-christians-changed-the-world>

PP Christians, we must *‘shine as lights in the world’ ‘in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation’*, and strong, enduring and loving marriages are a major way we do this
God has designed biblical marriage to represent the relationship of Jesus and the church

PP *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’ This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”* **Ephesians 5:31-32**

In **Matthew 5**, more fully in **Matthew 19**, Jesus is rescuing marriage from the sin-wrecked place it had fallen, affirming its God-given joy and design

“And Pharisees came up to Him and tested Him by asking, ‘Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?’” **Matthew 19:3**

Recall that there was a controversy in that day among two schools of thought

One group taught that a man could divorce his wife for basically any reason, while the other school taught there was only one reason, the physical act of adultery

Jesus answered by quoting from both **Genesis 1** and **2**

It seems Jesus is aligning with the more strict school, but by appealing to the original ordinance of marriage, He elevates marriage to a state that God intended to be permanent, much greater than the allowance given for divorce in **Deuteronomy 24**

“So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.” **19:6**

PP *‘joined’* refers to a strong bonding together of objects and often was used to represent gluing or cementing, which is so strong that they cannot be pulled apart without damage

The one who joins a man and a woman in marriage is not the bride, groom, parents or pastor, but God...therefore let no man or woman separate (no definite article ‘the’)

PP *‘separate’* does not mean a temporary separation, but in the context of marriage, a divorce
The Pharisees persist, because conviction is settling in, *“Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?”* **19:7**

Jesus gives the reason to their question and it is as relevant today as it was then: *“Because of your hardness of heart...”* **19:8a**

A hardened heart in this context suggests a person who is guilty of ongoing marital unfaithfulness and is unrepentant

God gave, through Moses, the allowance to divorce, but it was never God’s plan, or desire

I believe God allowed divorce as a mercy to the one married to the hardened, unrepentant person

Jesus told them, *“And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.”* **19:9**

The message Jesus conveys to the divorce-for-any-reason Pharisees is, according to MacArthur,

PP *“illegitimate divorce followed by remarriage makes adulterers of everyone involved”*

We’ve seen that God created marriages to last until death

And that Satan has hated marriage from the beginning and his strategy is to ruin it

That the consequences of sin in marriage distort the roles of a husband and wife

Yet the gospel’s work is one of transformation: restoring husbands to be loving in headship, wives to be increasingly joyful in submission, and together, having marriages that shine like lights in this dark, sin-pervasive world

But this sermon is likely generating questions which I want to give some answers to

PP **What are the biblical allowances for a divorce?*

Jesus proclaims that divorce is allowed for one reason... sexual immorality

PP The Greek word for '**sexual immorality**', *porneia*, is a word that covers illicit sexual activity such as incest, homosexuality, but in the context of marriage, it refers to adultery

Mark and Luke's gospels omit this clause, likely due to the fact that no one really disputed adultery as a grounds for divorce, it was universally assumed by the Jews

Adultery in the OT was met with the death of the ones who committed it

The only thing that can break the glue of marriage is death, and though an adulterer is no longer killed, his or her actions are treated as if they were executed, and divorce is permitted

But it is not commanded, and how glorifying it is when Christian couples endure and find their way to a healthy, strong marriage despite it

I will never forget being in high school, my mom answering the phone in the kitchen, and being so overcome she had to lean on the counter to prevent falling down

My oldest sister had just come home with her two daughters, and discovered a note: her husband had left with her best friend whom he had gotten pregnant

After many tearful days they met with their pastor, and decided to try and keep their marriage

They both resigned from the ministry, moved a state away, started Christian counseling, and today, over 30 years later, have a beautiful marriage with 4 kids walking with God

Adultery is not to be, for the Christian an automatic divorce

However, if the unfaithful spouse refuses to repent, then it is a merciful allowance

The world sees Christ in a marriage that can endure by the grace of God, even adultery

PP **If a spouse is guilty of looking at pornography, does that allow for divorce?*

Jesus does not teach that every spouse whose partner lusts has a right to divorce

Virtually every spouse would then have the right to divorce

Every effort must be made to help the spouse find freedom from sexual sin

However, there is a difference between a spouse who fights against lust and periodically stumbles, and one who relentlessly pursues sexual sin

The destructive effects of that hardened heart can destroy every aspect of intimacy in a marriage

The suffering spouse must seek wisdom

Have I done everything I possibly can to help my spouse overcome this?

Meaning have I given time, prayed earnestly, kept my heart from unforgiven bitterness, conducted myself in purity and holiness with my spouse, sought counseling, come to my elders for help?

If so, and the offending spouse persists in unrepentance with a relentless, uncaring pursuit of lust, then I believe there are rare cases so severe, that they qualify as grounds for divorce

PP **What about spousal abuse? Isn't that grounds for divorce?*

There is a wide variety of marital abuse: physical, sexual, emotional and verbal

PP *"With his mouth the godless man would destroy his neighbor"* **Proverbs 11:9**

The clearest example of marriage to a difficult, likely abusive husband is Abigail, married to a man who *'was harsh and badly behaved'* **1 Samuel 25:3**

The man's own servants said of him, *'he is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him'*

He had spurned David's legitimate request for assistance, and David was about to kill him

This was Abigail's *out* of a terrible marriage...just step aside, or plead with David to spare the servants and have at his husband

Instead, she intervened, saved her husband's life, and when he came out of his hangover, he had a heart attack and died 10 days later

Ladies (for abuse victims are often women), if you are suffering criminal or physical abuse, there are 3 things I advise you to do: Pour out your heart to the Lord; Call the police (Romans 13); and call an Elder of your church to come and intervene

Romans 13 tells us the police are servants of God's justice...and the church elders are to protect the flock, and if we do not, we are not worthy of our position

But come for legitimate purposes, for we will surely investigate carefully

PP *"The one who states his case first seems right, until the other comes and examines him."*

Proverbs 18:17

It is not God's desire that anyone, husband or wife, is abused by a spouse

In an OT dowry situation of a father selling his daughter for marriage, and her owner marries

PP her, he was commanded to *'not diminish her food, her clothing, or her marital rights.'*

Exodus 21:10

In other words, he could not treat her as property, never mistreat her or send her out to fend for herself in a male-dominated world, he must care and provide for every need

If he failed to do this, she was to be legally freed, and returned to her family at once

If someone is being abused by her husband, she should come out from under the abuse, protected by family, or church, and give time for genuine repentance to occur as she follows biblical steps of reconciliation

If the abuser will not repent, **Matthew 18** tells us that the person is to be treated as a *'Gentile and a tax collector'*, or in other words, she should consider her husband both an unbeliever and one who has abandoned his responsibility to care for her

I would, at that time, having followed all the steps I've outlined above, counsel divorce

PP **Can a divorced person remarry?*

The bible is clear that widows are allowed to remarry, in the Lord, meaning to a proven believer Sexual immorality in marriage also allows for divorce and remarriage to a believer

But there is one more allowance in Scripture for remarriage after divorce as well as a prohibition to remarry, and they both are found in 1 Corinthians 7

PP *"To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife."* **1 Corinthians 7:10-11**

He is speaking of marriage between believers, and should divorce occur from either party- outside the grounds of adultery is the implication as Paul connects back to Christ's teaching-then remarriage is not allowed, unless it is with the previous spouse should that spouse have remained single

Paul, inspired by God, places great urgency on making sure marriages endure

But then he expands on a scenario that wasn't happening in Jesus' day or context

In a marriage of two unbelievers where one of them gets saved, should the believer divorce because they are unequally yoked?

Paul says, if the unbeliever is willing to stay married, then stay married

But if the unbeliever walks out on the marriage, Paul instructs the believing spouse to let it be so, that he or she is free to remarry, in the Lord, meaning only to a proven believer

Remarriage then is allowed in the scenario of desertion by an unbelieving spouse, but not with a believing spouse

Let me end by telling you two things: first is, if you have any questions on this subject, then please come see me, and let's discuss through them with scripture as our rule

But second, if you have divorced and remarried outside of the bounds of scripture, you are being called to truly repent, and move forward in holiness, honoring Christ!

Unlawful divorce & remarriage are terrible, and forgive-able sins...God is gracious to forgive
May we help each other to so love our spouses, that our marriages are unbreakably glorious!

Amen?

Pray