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Sermon Notes

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## **Jesus Teaches on Marriage and Divorce**

### **Matthew 19:1-12**

#### **I. A Sweet Blessing Gone Bad**

##### **A. Remember Your Wedding Day**

1. that day God gave you the greatest earthly gift He could give... another human being, to have and to hold, to love and to cherish, from that day on and forever, until death parted you
2. remember how happy you were, what hopes you had, what longings for the future
3. remember how beautiful you each looked... you never looked better in your lives... wearing special clothes for the most important act of your lives
4. how many pictures were taken that day, capturing your happy faces and the hopes in your hearts
5. and how is it now?

##### **B. Remember the First Wedding Day**

1. God had made a perfect world, we can scarcely imagine its radiant beauty
2. a perfectly blue sky, the radiant sun, the glowing vegetation—all the flowering plants and fruitful trees giving off their fragrance and boasting their succulent fruit—the Garden of Eden, a lush paradise of sights, sounds, smells, and sensory pleasures
3. the magnificent beasts, the creeping things, the soaring birds with their magnificent plumage
4. there God put the man He'd fashioned from the dust of the earth... a living and breathing man, now tasked with the responsibility of naming the animals and birds God brought to him
5. but Adam was alone—completely alone, no one to talk to, and a world to fill with the image of God... a task he could never have accomplished alone

6. Adam needed a helper suitable for him
7. so God caused him to fall into a deep sleep, and while Adam was sleeping, God took a rib from one of his sides and closed up the place with flesh
8. God wondrously crafted a woman from the rib and brought this magnificent gift, the last thing God ever created... a beautiful woman, perfectly suited for Adam
9. he responded the only way a man can when he sees the woman he's going to marry—with poetry

***Genesis 2:23 Then the man said, "This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."***

10. God had given Adam the greatest physical gift he would ever receive... Eve would be the mother of all the living in history
11. but sin soon entered the world through Adam's sinful negligence and rebellion, and we have been suffering ever since
12. divorce is part of that sin package, and is the sad focus of our time in the word this morning

### C. How Is It Now?

#### 1. the epidemic of divorce

Some years ago a journalist for a national news magazine asked a rhetorical question: "Are there any persons left in the land who have not had a friend or a child or a parent describe the agony of divorce?"

Statistics are shocking:

Annual divorce rate is 3.9/1000 people of population, equaling well over 1 million divorces per year

Sadly, the divorce rates among self-described Christians not very much different from those of non-Christians

With one million divorces, of course comes over two million newly divorced people, plus several million new children of divorce

Every single person involved in the process is hurt deeply, some say they are "wounded for life"

One commentator said, "Every divorce destroys a little world... a little society, with its own culture, and traditions, and history, and network of relationships... a miniature world has been crushed forever."

The tragedy is unspeakable:

Men and women feeling rejected to the very core of their being... ripped apart from inside... the most significant relationship of their lives ended forever

They remember all the moments with bitterness and sadness: a photo of the couple on their first date, a love letter tumbling from the pages of a book, a box of memorabilia from the wedding day... a video of the wedding itself, all the smiles, the kisses, the promises made, the hopes for the future, the honeymoon, their first home together, the start of their life together... and how tragic, the photos of their first child, coming home from the hospital, the three of them together at Christmas, smiling for the camera

Now all of it is destroyed... and to make matters far worse... far worse than if it had ended by a tragic auto accident or a terminal illness, this world has come to an end through each person's own choices, their own, foolishness, their own sin

We cannot calculate the agony that these one million divorces pumps into the national atmosphere...

## 2. divorce used to be rare... why??

a. In past years, the vast majority of marriages held secure and stable

b. Divorce was difficult and rare

c. What reasons can we give? John MacArthur lists these

i) The extended family was a powerful moral force: relationships to parents continued to exert tremendous pull long after marriage... married couples felt the pressure to work out their differences rather than bring shame on their parents by getting a divorce... so also there was a much stronger network of relationships extending to grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, etc. these relationships did not merely put pressure on people to save their marriages, but they offered resources the desperate couple needed to fight for their marriage—advice, prayer, moral example, money, a shoulder to cry on, etc. This network had become greatly weakened over the last number of decades... the fluidity of our society, and frankly, the multiplication of divorces for the last fifty years have shattered these networks... so also has the proliferation of anti-biblical ideologies, like moral permissiveness, feminism, humanism, and the proliferation of television, movies, internet, etc. have pumped out a viewpoint radically different from that of the Bible

ii) Community expectation: the surrounding community expected marriages to survive, and responded to divorce negatively; divorce laws were difficult, and community ethics stood in favor of maintaining a marriage and working out difficulties

- iii) Strongest of all: the church universally taught the biblical truth about marriage and divorce... all branches of Christianity—Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox—strongly supported healthy family life, and just as strongly opposed divorce
- d. But all of this has changed
- i) Especially in the church, more and more people feel compelled, in the name of Christian love and compassion, to change the clear biblical teaching on divorce
  - ii) A Christian entertainer gets a divorce, claiming that her husband stood in the way her career's advancement
  - iii) She said that she did not believe her divorce related to her religious views in any significant way... and that even if it did, God would forgive anything she did and loved her just as much in spite of it
  - iv) More and more Christian counseling has imbibed the general prevailing worldly perspective, and has turned to helping people through the divorce process with minimal pain, and helping them prepare for their future lives after divorce
- e. Some Christians, in the name of love, become hostile to anyone that teaches the biblical standard on marriage and divorce and calls it “legalism”; but other Christians, seeing what is happening in society in general, raise the standard beyond what the Bible says in a zeal to protect what the Bible does teach...

John MacArthur: “But that which is contrary to Scripture can never be either loving or spiritual. A human standard may be more lenient or more restrictive than Scripture; but it can never be better. When God’s word is ignored or perverted in any area, tragedy is always the consequence. The matter of marriage and divorce standards are no exception.”

### 3. deeper societal questions about marriage itself

- a. more and more confusion about what marriage is; gay “marriage”
- b. humorous piece about a clerk in a town hall issuing marriage licenses to an ever-stranger series of people... beginning with two men, then two women, then a man and a boy, then three people all at once, and ending up with a man who wanted to marry himself!!!
- c. It is actually impossible to define marriage apart from the absolute standard God gives in the Bible... we are heading toward weirder and weirder issues the further away from “Thus says the Lord...” we get

This morning, we are going to face this painful question together, as brothers and sisters in Christ

We are going to sit at Jesus' feet and allow Him to teach us about marriage and divorce

We are going to listen to Him to speak the truth to us, no matter how painful... and we are going to allow Him to heal the most painful spots in our souls

## II. The Pharisees Ask a Treacherous Question

### A. Context

***Matthew 19:1-2*** *When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went into the region of Judea to the other side of the Jordan. <sup>2</sup> Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.*

1. for about two years Jesus has been ministering almost exclusively in His home area of Galilee
2. for the last two months, He's been focusing almost exclusively on training the Twelve for their future responsibilities as leaders of His church
3. he now goes south to the most important appointment of His life... His arrest, condemnation, and execution for our sins... and His bodily resurrection on the third day
4. the region beyond the Jordan was part of the territory of Herod Antipas, the very man who had arrested John the Baptist for preaching that his marriage to Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, was unlawful
5. Now the Pharisees came seeking to get Jesus in the same trouble that John had experienced
6. in any case, the text says the Pharisees were asking a question in order to test, or trap him

### B. The Treacherous Question

***Matthew 19:3*** *Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?"*

1. they were not looking for information... they just HATED Jesus and wanted to have him killed
2. backdrop to their question: a long-standing debate among Jewish rabbis on the issue of divorce
  - a. every Jew believed a Jewish man had the right to divorce his wife based on the Law of Moses, Deuteronomy 24: it says a man who finds something "indecent" about his wife can write her a certificate of divorce... but if she marries another man, she can never return to her first husband

- b. the strict school of the rabbi Shammai felt that the “indecent thing” the first husband found had to be adultery
- c. the more lenient school of Hillel interpreted it more widely and said it referred to anything offensive to the husband... even spoiling the husband’s dinner
- d. the Pharisees tended to follow Hillel and allow divorce “for any and every reason”
- e. a later rabbi named Akiba interpreted the words of Moses “if she finds no favor in his eyes” to mean that, even if the husband simply found a prettier woman, one more pleasing to the eye, he could divorce the first wife
- f. feelings ran very high about this topic!!!!
- g. no matter what answer Jesus gave would antagonize somebody... maybe especially Herod Antipas, resulting in Jesus’ death
- h. so you see divorce was just as hot a topic back in Jesus’ day as it is in ours

### III. The Timeless Answer of Jesus

***Matthew 19:4-6 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'<sup>5</sup> and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?<sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."***

A timeless answer from Jesus... its truths are still binding on us today, no matter how modern or postmodern we may think we are

He first lays four immovable foundation stones on which He bases His answer... then He gives His ruling

#### A. Foundation #1: The Sufficiency of Scripture

1. “Haven’t you read...”
  - a. Jesus begins this dispute by setting the ground rules
  - b. The answer will be found only by a right reading of Scripture
  - c. The Scripture is SUFFICIENT to answer the questions of marriage and divorce
    - i) This is the big flaw with much Christian counseling

- ii) They get more information about marriage from psychological studies and clinical research and the prevailing patterns of therapy in the field
- iii) True biblical counseling answers the problems of marriage the way Jesus does here: **Haven't you read...???**

2. "What my Scripture says I say..."

- a. the deepest issue here is the inspiration and authority of the Bible
- b. look carefully at Jesus' quotation of Genesis 2

*Matthew 19:4-5 "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'<sup>5</sup> and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?"*

- i) Jesus said the Creator (God) does TWO things in the Genesis account
- ii) First, He "made them male and female"
- iii) Second, He made a statement about them... **"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother...etc."**
- iv) But if you look at Genesis 2:24, you'll find that that statement is not made by the Lord God in the text, but is merely part of the narrative... Moses, who wrote the Genesis 2 account put it in there
- v) BUT TO Jesus, THAT DOESN'T MATTER
- vi) Everything in the Bible is God, the Creator speaking to man the creature

It's what Augustine meant when he put into God's mouth the words: "Indeed, O man, **what My Scripture says, I say**" (*Confessions*, 13.29; emphasis mine). J.I Packer says Scripture is thus the "transcript of divine speech" (Packer, *God Has Spoken*, 28)

God is speaking this to you today!!!

## B. Foundation #2: God's Original Intent

- 1. Haven't you read that **at the beginning**...
- 2. Jesus carries our minds back to God's original intention
- 3. What God did with Adam and Eve was intended to be a pattern for EVERY MARRIAGE THAT FOLLOWED

***...at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' and said 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh...'***

For this reason = this is a lasting principle for all time

Neither Adam nor Eve had a father or a mother... but every other man in history would have one... and their union would be the pattern for all other marriages

4. He calls God "the Creator"... and the Creator does everything for a purpose

5. He will argue that divorce was no part of God's original purpose

***Matthew 19:8 "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. BUT IT WAS NOT THIS WAY FROM THE BEGINNING."***

6. God's original purpose: one man (a male), one woman (a female), coming together in a complete physical union (one flesh) for the purpose of filling the earth with His image and His glory

***Genesis 1:27-28 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it."***

7. Essential to God's purpose is procreation... the birth of children... though it is not God's only purpose in marriage, yet this is why the GENDER (male, female) is mentioned here... this completely rules out so-called homosexual marriage

8. God wanted godly offspring... and children were to be born into a covenant marriage relationship with a male (father) and a female (mother) who would train them at least in part to get ready for their own future marriages

***Matthew 19:5 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'?***

9. This is the precise reason why God hates divorce... it violates his purpose and it is VIOLENT to the spouse

***Malachi 2:13-16 Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer pays attention to your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. <sup>14</sup> You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is acting as the witness between you and the wife of your youth, because you have broken faith with her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. <sup>15</sup> Has not the LORD made them one? In flesh and spirit they are his. And why one? Because he was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. <sup>16</sup> "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel, "and I hate a man's covering***

*himself with violence as well as with his garment," says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.*

10. At any rate, to understand marriage, we must go back to God's original intention as related in the Genesis account, and as commented on throughout Scripture

#### C. Foundation #3: God's Action in Marriage

1. Christ says that the Creator physically prepared them for marriage by making them male and female... their physical bodies well-suited for God's purposes in marriage
2. some ascetics within the Christian church history have written against any kind of sexual involvement as if it were intrinsically evil, because it is "fleshly"
3. but that anti-flesh bias comes more from Greek philosophy than from the Bible
4. The Creator made them male and female... and then brought them together so **the two would become one flesh**
5. Jesus goes beyond that to say that **God has joined them together**

*"what God has joined together..."*

#### D. Foundation #4: The Two Become One Flesh

1. this union is deep and real
2. it is not merely a "piece of paper" as some people who like to live together before marriage say
3. God does something very profound, very mystical... yes it is physical, the marital bed is pure and undefiled and physical
4. But God also creates a UNITY where there was none before
5. it is so profound that Paul likens it to Christ's unity with the church

*Ephesians 5:31-32 "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery-- but I am talking about Christ and the church.*

6. AND even more amazing, Christ's unity with the church is a picture of God the Father's unity with God the Son in the Trinity

*John 17:21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.*

#### E. The Timeless Answer

***Matthew 19:6 Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."***

1. Jesus' answer to the treacherous question, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?" is simply, clearly **ABSOLUTELY NOT!!!!**
2. We have no right to undo what God has joined... to rip it apart, separate it, cleave it apart...
3. Four-fold foundation to Christ's timeless command
  - a. Because Scripture is God's perfect word to you
  - b. And because in Scripture, God's original intention in marriage is made plain
  - c. And because God has acted directly in marriage from the very beginning and even now, personally involved in making marriages
  - d. And because the two become physically and mystically one,
  - e. Let man NOT separate what God has joined
4. There are more questions to ask... always more and more, but let's keep this clear teaching in front of us
5. We might say, "Of course, that is God's standard, and it would be best if we all followed it... but things happen. Will God still love me and forgive me and bless my life if I violate this standard?"
6. That's an entirely different question!! But in Jesus' worldview, it's like asking "How much poison can I drink and not die? How many times can I shoot myself and not bleed to death? Can I scoop fire in my lap and not be burned?"
7. Whenever we violate God's standards and go our own separate way, either as individuals or as pastors or as a church, there are deep, painful consequences
8. Is the grace of God sufficient to cover that river of sin?? Absolutely, and an infinitely greater river beside
9. but God's grace works BOTH TO PREVENT SIN as well as to HEAL THE EFFECTS OF SIN
10. too much of the discussion is spent on the after-effects of NOT living up to Christ's standard... God's grace also labors with us ahead of time to protect us from the pain of sin

#### IV. Two More Questions and Two More Answers

##### A. Question #1: Why Did Moses Command Divorce?

***Matthew 19:7 Why then," they asked, "did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?"***

1. notice that, despite the clear answer with its four-fold foundation doesn't quiet his enemies
2. it is important for Christians in particular to allow the clear teaching of the Bible to quiet their stream of questions at some point
3. are we here to argue with Jesus or to allow Him to speak authoritatively to us, even in the most controversial issues
4. Jesus' statement was so absolute that it left even those who followed the stricter school of Rabbi Shammai wondering if Jesus would permit any divorce at all
5. the Pharisees come back with Moses' command... which their hearts had twisted somewhat
6. remember that Moses was regulating not so much divorce as he was forbidding the remarriage of a twice-divorced woman to her original husband

##### B. Jesus' Answer: Hardness of Heart

***Matthew 19:8-9 Jesus replied, "Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. <sup>9</sup> I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery."***

1. clarification #1: Moses never COMMANDED anyone to get a divorce; he merely permitted you to divorce your wives
2. clarification #2: divorce is rooted in the hardness of heart all sinners depict... sin is always the root cause of divorce; I am not saying that there is not the "innocent party" in a divorce... there are some absolutely heart-wrenching cases in which a Christian husband or wife has been cruelly sinned against by some adulterous spouse, then struggles valiantly to save the marriage, but ends up losing that struggle
3. However, the permission Moses gave for divorce was not in God's original intention... it was **not this way from the beginning**
4. Jesus' strong pronouncement: if you divorce your wife for any reason other than sexual immorality on the part of your wife, and you marry another woman you commit adultery

5. clarification #3: divorce is sometimes permissible... there is a lawful way to get a divorce
  - a. this is the controversial “exception clause”
  - b. it is controversial because Jesus gives NO EXCEPTION in Luke and in Mark
  - c. however, if we accept all Scripture as God breathed, we must accept this statement as the inspired utterance of Almighty God on earth
  - d. a man who divorces his wife FOR SEXUAL IMMORALITY does so lawfully
    - i) that is the clear force of the Greek words translated “except”
    - ii) the “except” covers ONE CASE... other cases have been ruled out by Jesus’ earlier statement “What God has joined together let man not separate”
    - iii) what is “marital unfaithfulness” or “sexual immorality” The Greek word is *porneia*, and it is broader than merely adultery... it covers any kind of sexual immorality, including fornication and adultery
    - iv) again notice that Jesus is not commanding people to get a divorce even if there is *porneia*... even in those cases, forgiveness and grace can restore a damaged marriage
    - v) but there is an exception, and I believe since Jesus Himself is dealing with remarriage (**and marries another woman**) then the lawful divorce carries with it the right to remarry

Note: Later, the apostle Paul will add another case, that of abandonment of a Christian by an unbelieving spouse, and I believe he is giving permission to that person also to a lawful divorce and subsequent remarriage. Other’s disagree and say no remarriage is ever in view... I respect that view but disagree with it

#### C. Question #2: Isn’t It Better Not to Marry?

1. this one comes from Jesus’ own disciples

***Matthew 19:10 The disciples said to him, "If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry."***

2. human nature, as usual, taking it TOO FAR!!!
  - a. The disciples have clearly overturned the original intention of marriage, which was that it was to be a BLESSING from the hand of God

b. God said of solitary Adam

***“It is not good for the man to be alone... I will make a helper suitable for him.”***

c. The disciples say

***“It is not good for a man to be married...”***

d. See how deeply in love with our freedom we are

- i) We are always looking to make the final pronouncement, to get the final word
- ii) We want an escape route, and God does not intend to give us one
- iii) In the Christian church, marriage is at least in part intended to serve God’s greater purpose in sanctifying each partner
- iv) Marriage gives a context for very hard issues and deep-rooted sin to float to the surface so it can be dealt with
- v) That process is so painful, if we had an easy escape route we would readily take it
- vi) So also the process of raising a family is very difficult, a daily challenge... many a man finds it too much for his natural abilities and inclinations...
- vii) He is looking for an easy escape... and God will not allow him one

Illus. There is a story commonly told about Spanish Conquistador Hernan Cortez, that when he and his small force of 700 men landed in Mexico in 1519, he burned his ships so that his men would be completely committed to the difficult conquest of the Aztec Empire. Whether the story is true or not, it illustrates this principle in marriage: God is not giving your sinful flesh an easy way out... He wants you to work out your salvation with fear and trembling and also to work out your marital difficulties the same way

D. Jesus’ Answer: It Depends on Your Gift

***Matthew 19:11-12 Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given. <sup>12</sup> For some are eunuchs because they were born that way; others were made that way by men; and others have renounced marriage because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who can accept this should accept it.”***

1. The disciples were saying it’s better to be single
2. Jesus accepts that, for some people it IS better to be single... He Himself is a prime example of that; so would be the Apostle Paul

3. But that it's a gift, and not everyone can ACCEPT it... the Greek word means "make room for" the concept "I'm going to be single the rest of my life"
4. He cites different cases: some are born "eunuchs" (i.e. those who will never marry)... they are born that way because of some physical or mental defect
5. Others are made that way by men: (referring perhaps to those who were forcibly made eunuchs in Gentile courts like those of Babylon and Persia)
6. Others have "made themselves eunuchs" for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven
  - a. This does not refer to some drastic act like Origen took of self-emasculation so that he wouldn't suffer from sexual temptation ever again
  - b. Rather this speaks of a voluntary renouncing of marriage for spiritual purposes
  - c. The Apostle Paul advocated this life in 1 Corinthians 7 and stated that it was his choice in 1 Corinthians 9
7. however, remember that Jesus said not everyone can accept it, but **only those to whom it has been given**
8. Paul put it in terms of GIFTS... one man will have the gift of singleness, another man the gift of a wife

***1 Corinthians 7:7 each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.***

9. so also Jesus finished that way

***Matthew 19:12 The one who can accept this should accept it.***

i.e. "the one who can accept permanent singleness for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven should do so!"

## V. Applications

### A. Celebrate the Gift of Marriage

1. think often of the goodness of God in giving us this gift of marriage
2. it is Satan who wants us to think hard thoughts of marriage in many different ways
  - a. to be the philosopher ascetic who says that all fleshly things are evil, forgetting that it is God who made the flesh, and a male and a female to become one flesh

- b. or on the other hand, to so delight in the physical sensations of the flesh that we forget the holy covenant of marriage that God established to protect it
  - c. so it is Satan that pushes young people to seize privileges that have not been given them yet because God has not yet made the two one by marriage
3. if you're married: thank God for marriage—for the wisdom and goodness of God in bringing you two together
  4. if someday you will be married, thank God for that blessed state and look forward to it with holy expectations... keep yourself sexually pure in mind and body... keep yourself completely pure for that day when you will stand before God with the partner of your youth God is giving you
  5. if you are a widow/widower, remember with sweetness the goodness of God in giving you the gift of marriage for as long as He did

#### B. Glorify God in Your Marriage

1. if you are married, make your marriage a delightful display of the glory of God
2. understand that Satan wants to make your marriage a battleground... perhaps no one needs to remember this verse **Our struggle is NOT against flesh and blood**... than a married person
3. Your mentality should be that God brought you together primarily for the purpose of putting Himself on display... that His attributes might shine forth; both in how you treat each other, in the way you help sanctify each other, in the way you raise the next generation for His glory... **THAT GOD MAY BE GLORIFIED**... that is the reason you exist as husband and wife
4. so often divorce is essentially selfish: “she doesn't meet my needs” “He doesn't understand me” “irreconcilable differences”... it can all be so selfish
5. the best remedy to selfishness in marriage is to see your marriage as having been crafted by God for His own glory and pleasure

#### C. Think of Divorce as Unthinkable

1. theologically unthinkable:
  - a. because the Trinity is eternal... no person of the Trinity is ever going to seek to get out
  - b. because salvation is eternal: God has promised to never leave us or forsake us, so He expects us to make that same promise to each other
  - c. because heaven is eternal: “and so we will be with the Lord **forever**”

- d. for all these reasons, marriage must be permanent as defined by God
2. Practically unthinkable:
    - a. in this world of sin, the purpose of this standard that so shocked the disciples that they said “It’s better not to get married” is to protect the marriage from our sin natures... when two sinners come together to get married, their mutual sin habits will conspire to make life very challenging
    - b. if divorce is as easy as our sin natures would make it, we would be tempted to throw in the towel and not work things through
  3. Therefore: don’t mention divorce in angry moments... when you are having a conflict, do not bring it up as an option; when
  4. Obviously: I do not remove the exception clause Christ gave... divorce is permissible in the case of sexual immorality... but even then, there should be a deep desire at reconciliation

#### D. If You Are the Innocent Party

1. Perhaps your spouse abandoned you... perhaps he or she was unfaithful to you... perhaps you fought to save the marriage and they were determined to leave
2. I want you to know that God’s mercy is there for you... abundantly... His grace is sufficient for you
3. I know that doesn’t take away all the sting, but it is a sweet thing to reflect on verses like this:

***Isaiah 43:1-2 "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine. <sup>2</sup> When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.***

I also stand here and say it is my conviction that, if you are the innocent party in a divorce as Jesus describes here in Matthew 19 and in Matthew 5, or as Paul describes in 1 Corinthians 7, then I believe you are free to remarry

John MacArthur makes the point that, in the Old Testament era, an adulterer would have been stoned to death; that would have left his/her spouse free to remarry. Why should the innocent spouse be penalized because God graciously allowed the adulterer to live?

#### E. If You Have Sinned, Accept Christ’s Abundant Forgiveness

1. I am well aware—how could I not be?—of the fact that there are some listening to me today who have experienced divorce... and perhaps you are not the

innocent party; perhaps it was your own sexual unfaithfulness that destroyed your marriage; or perhaps, you did not understand God's standard on divorce and got divorced sinfully; and now, you have been remarried contrary to God's standards

2. I am well aware that those things can and do happen in the church
3. We have to realize that God sent His Son into the world to save sinners... unlawful divorce and remarriage is a sin, and Christ's blood is abundantly ample to cover all sin
4. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, murdered her husband, married her and settled into a perverse new life, God judged David by taking the life of the baby conceived... but then, when Bathsheba conceived again and bore David another son, Solomon, God sent word through the prophet Nathan that the baby would be called "Jedidiah", that is "Beloved by the Lord"... lesson: GOD MOVES ON... when you can't rectify your sin, God wants you to make the most of your new situation
5. therefore, though the remarriage should not have taken place, now that it has, God desires you to live honorably within that new situation

F. BUT Also... Tell the Truth About It

1. However, if that has happened to you, you can bless the church most by being honest scripturally about it if you are ever in a position to discuss it
2. for example, if you are discipling some young couple and the issue of your first marriage comes up, you can simply say "According to the Scriptural standard Christ has given us, I should never have gotten a divorce or been remarried. If I had to do it again, I would do it differently. But God has graciously forgiven my sins and now desires me to live godly in my present marriage."

G. Bottom Line: Marriage is a Delightful Blessing... freedom from divorce is one of the great blessings of a mature Christian marriage