

NORTHEAST HOUSTON COMMUNITY CHURCH

Sermon – The Inerrancy of The Bible, Pt 6

Is it Better Not to Marry?

Matthew 19:7–12

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Matthew 19:1–12 (NKJV) ¹ Now it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these sayings, *that* He departed from Galilee and came to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. ² And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there. ³ The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for *just any reason*?” ⁴ And He answered and said to them, “Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning ‘*made them male and female,*’ ⁵ and said, ‘*For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh*’ ? ⁶ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” ⁷ They said to Him, “Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?” ⁸ He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ 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.” ¹⁰ His disciples said to Him, “If such is the case of the man with *his* wife, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹ But He said to them, “All cannot accept this saying, but only *those* to whom it has been given: ¹² For there are eunuchs who were born thus from *their* mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept *it*, let him accept *it*.”

Today we will be talking about a topic that creates a lot of discussion. It deals with the most important relationship among humans, Holy Matrimony. Usually on the day of marriage both parties are full of joy and looking forward to spending the rest of their lives together. There is joy among the couple and a festive atmosphere among the guest in the celebration.

Eventually the honeymoon is over and the realities of life set in. The marriage has to deal with financial pressures, intimacy pressures, these two are overwhelmingly the two chief causes for divorce. Then there are career conflicts, children, in-laws¹ and I am sure you can think of a few more. Soon that high level of joy is replaced by worry and uncertainty.

God intends marriage to be a one-flesh commitment for life. Now the reason this is so is that it takes a lifetime to get marriage right. So many people say, “Well, I didn’t know this is what I was getting into.” Of course, you didn’t know. You weren’t married yet. ¹ We don’t just marry the other person but their whole family also.

Now in the time of Christ there were two schools if thought about divorce. A rabbi (teacher) named Shammai, taught that the only reason there was to justify a man divorcing his wife was if she was guilty of sexual immorality

The other Rabbi, Hillel, taught that a man could divorce his wife for any reason indiscriminately. It could be the if she didn't cook right, or look good any more or any reason he claimed to be displeasing.

The different teaching among these rabbinic schools caused a great divide among the people because of the confusion presented by them. Their differences were so deep that on occasion they cause death between the two followers.

¹ Evans, T. (1995). *Tony Evans Speaks Out on Divorce and Remarriage*. (22). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

In V3 we pick up a question by the Pharisees to Jesus in hopes of trapping him to take one side or the other. In doing so He would surely alienate those on the other side of the difference. With such bad blood between them they hoped that the enemies of Jesus would increase.

V³ And there came unto him Pharisees, trying him, and saying, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?

Notice how they framed the question. "Is it lawful *for a man* to put away his wife for every cause?" This was the teaching of the Hillelites who were in the majority, though the Shammaites were the more aggressive.

There lesson here for all of us in the way Jesus answers the question. He does not give His opinion or theory but refers them to the word of God. Biblical questions should be answered with biblical answers.

V⁴ And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made *them* at the beginning 'made them male and female,'⁵ and said, '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 often I have heard men try to philosophy and or justify a difficult Biblical question using their own intellect. Jesus asks them a question, "Have you not read". The interesting part of the response was to whom he was asking the question. On four occasions Jesus uses this phrase, three times to the Pharisees and once to the Sadducees. These were the top religious leaders who should have "read".

Jesus quotes to them *Gen 2:24*, pointing out that the two have become one flesh. Therefore, because it is God that joined them together, no man can overrule God and set them apart.

V⁶ So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate.

Now this goes directly back to the Rabbi teachers, in that Jesus is saying that their teachings are not justified in separating the couple. So, here Jesus did not take either side, but God's side.

"The great tragedy about marriage and divorce is that we listen to everybody else, but we do not read what God has said about it. We must read His Word on this critical subject, because marriage is God's idea. We're talking about a divine relationship, a divinely authored and ordained institution."² T. Evans

Their next question is a very practical one.

V⁷ They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

If man was not allowed to divorce then why did Moses give a certificate of divorcement?

What is a "Certificate of Divorcement?"

*Deuteronomy 24:1-3 (NKJV)*¹ "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,² when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife,³ 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 as his wife, ... Her former husband cannot remarry her.

Jesus responds.

² Evans, T. (1995). *Tony Evans Speaks Out on Divorce and Remarriage*. (21). Chicago, IL: Moody Press.

V⁸ He said to them, “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives,

Now the first part of *Duet 24 1* says, "she finds no favor in his eyes...". On this partial verse, the teachings of Rabbi Hillel based his interpretation to mean for any reason "she finds no favor in her husband's eyes all determined by the husband.

Rabbi Shammai's views may be in the other part of passage which says "**because he has found some uncleanness in her**" commonly interpreted as sexual sins but could include ritual washing, eating unclean food and such.

There is something we need to understand here. There is the absolute will of God and there is the permissive will of God. Absolute will - thou shall have no other **gods (many)** before me. Permissive - God permitted Israel to have a king.

Because of the male dominated society if a man divorced a woman and put her out, she could not remarry even if someone else wanted her on pain of death for adultery. She was still the wife of her husband. So, in order to give the wife some protection a certificate of divorcement was given her to show that she was no longer married.

It was of the hardness of the heart of the man that God permitted divorce in a legal way as marriage was done in a legal way.

but from the beginning it was not so.

This was not God's original design. It is better to do what God thinks is best rather than to take advantage of His permission. When looking at it closer, the command was to the man and for the protection to the woman.

Since the subject was for what reason can a man divorce his wife, Jesus has already said that that was not God's design and He takes it further by taking away every reason save one.

⁹ And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marry commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.

In the Beatitudes of *Matt 5*, Jesus addresses the divorce question with the same answer.

Matthew 5:31–32 (NKJV) ³¹ "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' ³² But I say to you that 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.

Sexual immorality - (*1 Corinthians 6:9-11*) Although often translated to the word adultery it really implies all sorts of sexual sin, not subjective sexual sins.

Joseph could have caused Mary to be stoned to death, but instead he chose to divorce her thinking she had committed adultery.

Matthew 1:19 (NKJV) ¹⁹ Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

The immorality stigma for a woman could be before she meant the man, during the betrothal and after the marriage. This may be in part because of the importance of the genealogy in knowing who the father is. The father determined the tribe.

I think it leans more toward other sexual immorality than adultery because adultery had its own type of separation, death by stoning.

After hearing all this, the disciples were perplexed.

¹⁰ His disciples said to Him, “If such is the case of the man with *his* wife, it is better not to marry.”

I believe it was the fear of a bad marriage, even though some of them were married, and the fear of being guilty of the sin of adultery.

¹¹ But He said to them, “All cannot accept this saying, but only *those* to whom it has been given: ¹² For there are eunuchs who were born thus from *their* mother’s womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He who is able to accept *it*, let him accept *it*.”

The reply of Jesus is interesting. He does not tell them that they are wrong or try to justify His answer, but agrees that this is a hard saying that all cannot accept it. But those who have been given the gift of celibacy can accept it. Celibacy can be a choice or gift given to a man or a woman.

He uses the example of those that are eunuchs. A eunuch is a man that has lost physically the ability to engage in intimacy with a woman. Some were born that way, some were made that way by other men, and some have made themselves that way for the kingdom's sake.

Jesus is not encouraging physical mutilation but a level of service. To marry or not to marry is no different to the committed believer. Except in the freedom of service.

1 Corinthians 7:32–33 (NKJV) ³² But I want you to be without care. He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. ³³ But he who is married cares about the things of the world—how he may please his wife.

1 Corinthians 7:39–40 (NKJV) ³⁹ A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord. ⁴⁰ But she is happier if she remains as she is, according to my judgment—and I think I also have the Spirit of God.

Marriage is a very serious endeavor between believers. The uniting of two believers joined is called a Holy Matrimony". It is not to be taken lightly. God designed it to last a lifetime. I believe that a marriage will end right if it begins right.

It is a hard decision but whether you marry or not marry, do them both as unto the Lord. Although God has permitted divorce, God still hates divorce.

Malachi 2:16 (NKJV) ¹⁶ “For the LORD God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one’s garment with violence,” Says the LORD of hosts. Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously.”

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