

Readings

Scripture

³¹ "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'
³² But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

- Matthew 5:31-32 (*English Standard Version*)

¹ Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. ² And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

³ And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" ⁴ He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."
⁷ They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" ⁸ He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed 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."

- Matthew 19:1-9 (*English Standard Version*)

Reflection

In any relationship, there will be frightening spells in which your feelings of love dry up. And when that happens you must remember that the essence of marriage is that it is a covenant, a commitment, a promise of future love. So what do you do? You do the acts of love, despite your lack of feeling. You may not feel tender, sympathetic, and eager to please, but in your actions you must BE tender, understanding, forgiving and helpful. And, if you do that, as time goes on you will not only get through the dry spells, but they will become less frequent and deep, and you will become more constant in your feelings. This is what can happen if you decide to love.

- Timothy Keller,

The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God (p. 111)

The idea taught by God's Word is not only that of the indissolubility of marriage, but that of the law of love and forgiveness. We must get rid of this legalistic approach which makes a man say, "She has spoiled my life, therefore I must divorce her." As unworthy and undeserving sinners we have all been forgiven by the grace of God, and that must enter into and control our view of everything that happens to us with respect to all other persons, and especially in the relationship of marriage.

- D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (p. 258)

The word of the LORD that came to Hosea, the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel. When the LORD first spoke through Hosea, the LORD said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of whoredom and have children of whoredom, for the land commits great whoredom by forsaking the LORD." So he went and took Gomer, the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

- Hosea 1:1-3 (*English Standard Version*)

Sermon Outline

Marriage and Divorce
Matthew 5:31-32; 19:1-9

And His Disciples Came to Him
Brad Anderson

God holds the marriage of one man and one woman in the highest regard.
(Matthew 19:4-6)

Several questions will help to describe the challenge of divorce:

What is marriage/divorce? (Matthew 19:5-6)

Why does God hold marriage in the highest regard? (Ephesians 5:31-32)

In what situations is divorce allowed? (Matthew 5:32; 19:9)

How is divorce an accommodation to our fallen human condition?
(Matthew 19:8)

What does divorce do? (Matthew 19:6)

Reflection Questions (taken in part from the Serendipity Study Bible for Groups)

- Can you remember the first time you heard about divorce? How old were you?
- Some rabbis allowed divorce for nearly any reason a husband wanted it. What was their casual attitude towards divorce promoting? How are they misusing Moses' allowance for divorce (See Deuteronomy 24:1-4)? What inner quality is Jesus seeking instead?
- What impact has divorce had on our culture and upon the families who have experienced divorce? No marriage begins with the planned outcome of divorce. What steps can you take for your own marriage or the marriages in your community to promote faithfulness?
- Although this standard is not a new law that we must attain before God will have mercy on us, what does this command suggest as the direction in which God wants us to grow after we have experienced his mercy?
- How does this deepened standard related to divorce impact you? Does it move you to hunger and thirst for righteousness? Does it move you to mourn? Does it move you to consider your own spiritual poverty? Does it move you toward greater humility?
- How does Jesus meet you in your need related to this command?