

The Story of Jesus

Part 25: Marriage, Divorce, and the heart of God [Why does God hate divorce?]

Mark 10:1-12 - [watch online](#)

Summary: What Jesus says about divorce points us to the very heart of God.

Main Ideas:

[01:04] Nothing ruins a life like a bad marriage.

[02:44] Marriage is a picture of God's love and faithfulness

[06:08] Just because we're following the rules doesn't mean we're being loving.

[08:37] Marriage is the bonding of two people into one new living family.

[09:12] God's design for marriage is a life-long commitment of self-sacrificial love

[09:57] Marriage is about showing the world God's love... together.

[13:20] If our hearts are transformed by Jesus then his commands about divorce will rarely be needed.

[13:53] Divorce is never "good" but it can be necessary.

[14:52] A broken marriage is a picture of our broken humanity.

[16:03] The relationship God offers us through Jesus is everything that is right with marriage and more.

[19:28] Jesus' commitment to us empowers us to be committed to each other.

Invitation:

[16:46] Accept God's unending commitment to you.

- Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

[17:25] Accept and acknowledge our brokenness.

[17:46] Allow God's Holy Spirit to work in you and transform you.

Discussion Questions:

1. Read through this week's main ideas. What stands out to you? Is there anything you disagree with or have questions about?
2. In your own words, how would you describe the purpose of marriage?
3. Reflecting on 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, what impact do you think experiencing such a profound love could have on your life and relationships?
4. What are some practical steps you can take to make your relationships pictures of God's love for the world?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

Transcript:

IN: Divorce.

When church people talk about divorce it usually comes with a lot of judgment, hypocrisy, and even rejection.

Why? "B/c Jesus said divorce is bad."

But maybe there's something else going on...

Maybe Jesus' teaching and critique about divorce had nothing to do with judging and rejecting...

Maybe Jesus was trying to show us how much he loves all of us, whether divorced or not...

So let's talk about it together.

IN PERSON- *So today we are going to talk about... DIVORCE.*

We are going through the Story of Jesus as seen in the book of Mark and the point in the story we find ourselves today just happens to be Jesus answering a question about divorce.

Picture yourself talking a walk through a field and someone a few 100 yards away yells to you... that field is full of landmines... better watch your step... That's how I feel today.

Just reading what Jesus says about marriage and divorce can cause a lot of turmoil, hurt, anger, questions.

And right now this topic is so personal, sensitive, almost impossible to be neutral about... as many of you know my parents are in the process of divorcing.

So there is a lot here and I hope what is said today is helpful, encouraging, and shows you the true love of Jesus.

WE: Marriage can be so wonderful. A source of joy, peace, security, comfort, companionship, family.

Marriage is amazing... except when it isn't.

Maybe you've experienced this, are experiencing this, saw your parents, siblings, friends experience this...

Nothing can suck the joy out of your life, give you more anxiety, make you feel unseen, unheard, nothing can make you more miserable than a horrible marriage.

Nothing ruins a life like a bad marriage.

Sometimes it can be so hard that we just want it to end... and so we file for divorce.

- But that brings its own pain, hurt, regret, complications.

What if there's another option?

And what if there is something we can do before we get to that point that can not only make our marriage survivable but an actual source of joy and love and peace?

And what if there is a way to move beyond a past divorce and have hope for our current or future marriage?

I think there is and I think it can revolutionize our marriages... it did mine.

3 Caveats:

Also, I'll say this later too, but we are not talking about marriages where abuse is present.

Despite what some former pastor or "xian" told you... God doesn't want you to keep being abused or exposing yourself or family to any type of abuse.

- Reach out. Find help. Get out.

Single/widowed... I think there is something here for you too.

- As we talk about marriage please remember not being married does not make you 'less than' in any way.
- Jesus was never married. Paul said it was better not to marry.

Not JF... completely off the hook. Don't have to do any of this.

- Still think you might discover something wonderful and beautiful about marriage and something that might help your marriage too.

B/c here's what I think all of us will discover... Marriage is a picture of God's love and faithfulness

GOD: So as Jesus was making his way to Jerusalem to declare himself king, be arrested, and executed.

He went through the region John the Baptist had taught and some of our old friends, the Pharisees, enter into the story again

V. 1-2 Trap him?

Divorce is the topic that got John arrested and ultimately executed.

- Herod Antipas/Herodias
- Whole family was divorcing and remarrying and executing each other all over the place.

AND/OR... they knew he had some extreme views, they hoped to set him against Mosaic law and lose his following.

- Wording is actually "is it lawful?"
- All scholars at the time agreed that divorce was permitted by law.

Maybe trying do both to trap him

V. 3-4 What did Moses say... Duet 24... actually as a way for women not to be exploited.

The thinking at the time of Jesus was, men could divorce wives for any reason as long as they followed the law and gave her a certificate of divorce.

- Only men had the right to divorce. Unlawful for women to divorce.

From ancient sources you could divorce your wife...

- If she didn't accept your control
- If you didn't like her behavior
- If she spoiled a meal
- Or whatever cause... b/c you're the man and can do what you want.

So in this male dominated culture marriage had become a way to have control over wives.

Think of the leverage men had over wives.

- Oppressive / The constant stress / Walking on eggshells
- Don't ever speak your mind/look annoyed or angry or sad
- Do everything exactly the way the husband wants/says
- Or you could be replaced

Women were economically and socially reliant on their fathers and then their husbands...

A divorced woman who didn't find a new husband quickly could be in real danger.

- Incredibly vulnerable.
- Out on the streets... Begging... doing whatever necessary to survive.

But the husband didn't have to worry about any of that b/c he's "following the law."

Just b/c we're following the rules doesn't mean we're being loving.

And Jesus isn't going to let these guys get away with it...

V. 5 "Your hearts are so hard/dead to the true way of God that you created this situation..."

- Moses was just giving you a way to navigate it."

You've forgotten God's intention for marriage in the 1st place"

"Let's go back to the very beginning of humanity... the first book of Moses"

V. 6-9 Jesus: This is a much bigger deal than you think... goes to the very purpose of marriage and the heart of God.

- So he quotes the creation story from **Gen 1:27**

Just b/c you are men doesn't give you the right to treat your wives this way

All humans, regardless of gender, are EQUALLY and FULLY created in the image of God.

All of humanity was created to be loved by God and to love him and each other.

* And he created marriage to be a picture of this love and faithfulness *

Which is why...Jesus quotes Genesis again... "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife"

- What is this about?

In the cultural context in which this was written it was actually the other way around

- Sons didn't leave their homes especially in agrarian cultures
- The new wife would leave her family and live with her husband's family

- And the son would continue in the family business.

What is being described isn't a physical leaving but a leaving/transformation/realignment of family ties... kinship bonds.

These two people leave their former family ties and create a new family bond that is just as real/permanent and even supersedes their first family.

The original wording more like... the two will become one flesh.

- Two lives/people becoming one

Marriage is the bonding of two people into one new living family.

You can't break the bonds of your flesh and blood family...

- Your sister will always be your sister/father/mother/children

Since marriage creates an even stronger bond... divorce is same as disowning your parents/siblings/children.

Denying the commitments, responsibilities, even obligations families had to each other was an ultimate source of shame in that society...

And Jesus says from the beginning this is what marriage was designed to be... closer than even our family of origin

God's design for marriage is a life-long commitment of self-sacrificial love

So let no one split apart what God has joined together

- Join together = yoked together

Picture two horses pulling a cart together.

- Equal and mutual dependence
- Working together toward the same goal, walking the same road, carrying the same burdens

See marriage wasn't designed to simply be about mutual satisfaction but also about a shared purpose/ministry

- Raising children, guiding and loving grandchildren, caring for and loving family and friends and neighbors and the community at large.

Marriage isn't about fulfilling our own dreams... Marriage is about showing the world God's love... together.

As the scriptures progressed from Genesis and Moses into the later history of the Jewish people... God used this image of marriage to describe his relationship with the people of Israel.

The care he gave the people was like a spouse caring for the other.

The rebellion of the people and their worshiping of idols was like them cheating on him.

But he refused to let them go/disown them... he remained faithful. And kept accepting them back.

Marriage is designed to illustrate God's love and faithfulness

And Jesus says, "Once you enter into this relationship God joins you together."

Just b/c you say this union is over doesn't mean God, who made it, says it's over. That's not up to you.

So what God brings together, what God uses to show the world his love and faithfulness... no one should split apart.

Jesus says to these men... You've twisted this picture of God's love into an oppressive system of exploitation.

Stop being hardhearted toward God's will... be a picture of his faithfulness by being faithful to your spouse."

Now... If you find what Jesus said here difficult, or you have more questions b/c of it... you're in good company...

What Jesus was saying was so different from what any of the disciples had heard before... they needed some more clarification

V. 10-12 Notice he said the husband commits adultery against her/her against him... giving remarkable equality of the sexes for that time period

But picture these teenage guys... raised in this patriarchal culture... teenage guys are worse enough...

- Wait! We can't just divorce our wives when we want? We're the men. What we say goes.

And Jesus says... I'm bringing a different world... In the KoG things will be different.

And yeah, Jesus does seem extreme and even harsh here... but if he is commanding us to let go of our hardheartedness then he must offer a cure.

- Jesus: Moses gave you a concession for divorce b/c your hearts were hard... but now a time is coming when I will give you a new heart.
- The time promised through the prophet... **Ezekiel 36:26-27**

In the KoG he'll soften hearts, repair them to reflect the image of God, to make it possible for even marriage to be a picture of that image.

So Jesus says to the boys... follow my way, my kingdom, and I will soften your heart so this question of divorce won't even be necessary.

If our hearts are transformed by Jesus then his commands about divorce will rarely be needed.

Transition: But we aren't perfectly transformed yet and sometimes divorce does happen...

So what do we do with this?

God's will is that every marriage experiences his love/grace/transformation and becomes a mirror of that love to the rest of the world.

Yes, God hates divorce b/c divorce hurts people. And he loves people.

- Every divorce sends ripples of hurt and pain that we don't even know about

Divorce is never "good" but it can be necessary.

We cannot do with this passage what has been done to millions of women...

- Exert a husband's control over his wife...

For centuries men have used this passage to tell wives, "No matter what, you cannot divorce your husband."

- It doesn't matter what abuse you/kids have to endure
- You cannot split apart what God has joined together.
- "You have to stay with your husband or God is mad at you."

This has literally killed women and children in abusive families.

Jesus is not saying stay in a dangerous marriage with no hope of ever finding someone to become one flesh with again...

He is not giving us a list of rules and contingencies...

He is showing what marriage is designed to be, why it is such a big deal, and why divorce is so serious.

See, No matter what the circumstances, **a broken marriage is a picture of our broken humanity.**

But b/c of that brokenness sometimes divorce is necessary for safety and health.

Divorce, is the result of hard hearts and a refusal to love as we were created to love.

The abusive spouse has already broken that kinship/one-flesh bond

- That's not on you... they may not have left physically but they have chosen with their abuse to sever that family bond.

This passage has also been used to create guilt and shame on people who have been divorced...

So if you've been divorced, whether remarried or not, what should you do?

This is where the picture of marriage is such good news... b/c marriage was designed to reflect God's heart...

- When we look at marriage as designed by God, what do we see?
- Faithfulness, Love, acceptance, forgiveness, 2nd/3rd/4th chances, grace, patience, unending commitment.

Yes your marriage ended... b/c we are broken.

But that brokenness doesn't make God reject you... It makes him run to you

- Both parents say they've never experienced God's love more.
- Dad: Grief is a conduit for God's care and suffering is His tool for transformation.

The relationship God offers us through Jesus is everything that is right with marriage and more.

Where your marriage was broken Jesus offers you his love

- He offers to make you into his family now and forever.
- It's a bond he will never break.
- It's a bond so strong you can't even break it.

No matter how unfaithful we have been, he never lets go.

He is committed to us closer than any family member ever could be.

He is for you and for you becoming who you were always created to be...

He is there to support you, comfort you, give you joy, peace, forgiveness, and love.

YOU: So whether you are divorced, married, remarried, widowed, single...

3 ideas to navigate marriage, divorce, and remarriage...

Accept God's unending commitment to you.

- Read what has become the wedding passage... **1 Cor. 13:4-7.**
- This describes God's love for you and the love that he can create in us when we let him.

Then **Accept and acknowledge our brokenness.**

- We accept our role in breaking God's image of love in our marriage/relationships
- Maybe we go and ask forgiveness of our ex spouse if possible/appropriate.
- And if appropriate be willing to explore counseling/reconciliation

And then **Allow God's Holy Spirit to work in you and transform you**

- And transform our current or future marriage into the picture it was designed to be.

You can start now, where you are now, to reclaim that picture of God's love for the world.

It takes two to make a marriage work... but often that work starts with one

- Marriage was designed to show the world the love of God
- So the best way to do that is to ask... in this marriage, disagreement, moment... what does Jesus' love look like?
- Allowing Jesus to love them through you

And ask God to give you the strength, wisdom to assume the best of your spouse,

- to realize they are broken too

- and offer them the love, forgiveness, grace, support Jesus offers you...

Do that for every relationship and your life will change.

WE: Marriage was created to show the world God's love for them.

If JF... our role is to show the world who Jesus is with our lives and our love.

Marriage can be a billboard to the world of who Jesus really is.

- In the mundane daily and in the highest and lowest times.

Marriage can be a picture of what it means to serve, love, and lay our lives down for the good of someone else.

And in the process you will not only enjoy better more fulfilling relationships you will come to know even better how loved accepted and adored you are by your Heavenly Father

And when people look at you they will see his love for them as well.

Jesus' commitment to us empowers us to be committed to each other.