

Theme: God intends marriage to be a lifelong, vital union between a man and a woman, and anything less is a distortion or rejection of God's will.

I. Intro - Political Debates

- A. Candidates answer question they wish had been asked!
- B. Often done to avoid difficult questions
- C. Jesus does something similar - but question was wrong!
- D. He drives to the real issue rather than superficial one
- E. What is marriage? What does it mean for us today?

II. The Background To Jesus' Teaching

- A. The debate in Judaism over marriage and divorce

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?**" Matthew 19:3

If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds **something indecent** about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, Deuteronomy 24:1

- 1. Major debate in Judaism in Jesus' time
- 2. Two main schools of thought
 - a. Shammai - indecent = sexual sin
 - b. Hillel - indecent = anything unpleasing
 - 1. Spoiled a dish - he can divorce her
 - 2. Akiba later said even if he found one more fair!
- 3. They are asking this to test and trap Jesus
- 4. School of Hillel was wrong - but Jesus goes deeper!

- B. Jesus' radical teaching on marriage (going to the root)

"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'⁵ 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'?⁶ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." Matthew 19:4-6

- 1. Jesus supersedes question going back to creation
- 2. A recognized principle in Jewish debate - earlier is foundational
- 3. They debated divorce; Jesus speaks to marriage
- 4. They turned the Mosaic law on its head so that instead of protecting women it was used to make them even more vulnerable
- 5. But Jesus quotes Genesis 1:27 where both male and female are the image of God - which the current practice undermined
- 6. Malachi had actually done the same thing in Malachi 2:14-16 to show why God hates divorce
 - a. Same reasoning Jesus gives here
 - b. Amazingly, Judaism almost never debated this text!
- 7. We often look for acceptable reasons to end a marriage, but Jesus' focus is on what marriage is, and how we can strengthen it.

III. Unpacking Jesus' Teaching On Marriage

A. Marriage is a Divine institution

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1. Jesus focuses on the work of the Creator
2. He attributes the words about marriage to God
3. In marriage God joins two people together
4. Marriage is created by God, and God is the One who joins people together in marriage

B. Marriage is between men and women

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1. God created humans as male and female
2. Existence as male & female is central to marriage
3. Note male & female terms throughout
4. I will speak more about this in After Hours this week

C. Marriage is between two people - a man and a woman
"Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'⁵ 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'?⁶ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate." Matthew 19:4–6

1. Note how Jesus specifies 'two' - twice!
2. Polygamy/polyandry not God's intent in marriage!
3. According to Jesus, marriage at its core is about the joining of one man and one woman in an exclusive, lifelong bond

D. Marriage should be the strongest bond in life

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1. Marriage bond is stronger than bond with parents
2. This was almost scandalous in the ancient world - but God's intent is clear
3. Ties with parents might be severed - but the marriage bond was never intended to be severed

- E. The goal is not avoiding divorce, but becoming one
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 Matthew 19:4–6
1. The reason for leaving is to become one
 2. This is the command - become one
 3. Avoiding divorce is not the goal of marriage - becoming totally united as one is God’s purpose.
 4. Divorce is simply the formal recognition that we have already disobeyed God’s ultimate purpose in marriage - the two becoming one.
 5. God hates divorce - but He also hates us refusing to do the hard work required to become one with our spouse.

IV. Applying the Word - Becoming One

- A. Am I separating what God has joined together?
1. Many ways to separate what God has joined
 - a. Words that undermine, disrespect, or dishonor
 - b. Anger
 - c. Withdrawal
 - d. Thoughts - negative; despair and hopelessness
 - e. Inappropriate emotional attachments to other people
 - f. Encouraging any of these in others who are married
- B. Am I working to maintain what God has joined?
1. In marriage, the two become one - but this is worked out over the remainder of life
 2. This is like our union with Christ - it is real and true, but is realized or denied by our daily actions
 3. Many ways to encourage the oneness of marriage
 - a. Growing together spiritually - prayer; Word; church; small group
 - b. Communication - spend time talking; dreaming; enjoying one another
 - c. Relational/social - date nights; fun together
 - d. Joining in common purpose - having common goals; dreaming and working together on big and small things - yoked together!
 - e. Hoping, thinking and speaking the best of one another - hope inspires the good to reveal itself!
 - f. Physical - the obvious literal meaning of one flesh (1 Cor 6:16) - and this flows from and reinforces all the others
 - g. Going to a marriage conference or reading a book together
 - h. Encouraging any of these in others in their marriage!
 4. If you need counseling, get it! God uses that to help restore and build oneness!
2. These all separate what God has joined together
 3. Divorce is most often the sad end of a long process comprised of these practices which separate spouses

C. The Gospel & marriage

1. Paul quotes the same verse in Ephesians 5 and says it is about Jesus and the church
2. Jesus has provided the model for how sacrificial love is enacted to build our marriages
3. Our marriage is a picture of the Gospel - which is why we dare not settle for less than oneness
4. Our marriage is fueled by the Gospel - it provides power and forgiveness for us to become one

D. A prayer for the marriages of BRCC

Marriage - When Two Become One

Matthew 19:4-6

February 12, 2017

Prayer

1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

Teaching keywords: marriage and family; creation; homosexuality

May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else, just as ours does for you. ¹³ May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones. 1 Thessalonians 3:12–13

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