

Jesus on Divorce and Remarriage

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 March 2024

Preacher: Nathan Rambeck

[0 : 00] All right, let's do it. So open up your Bibles to the book of Mark. This is going to be a wild ride this morning. We're in Mark chapter 10. We're starting a new chapter. Of course, when the Bible was written, it didn't have chapters and verses like we have them today. But aren't you glad that we do have chapters and verses?

There's occasionally times where I think they get in the way of helping us understand things. There's a chapter division where it really doesn't seem to make sense. But for the most part, I think it really helps.

This actually chapter division is very helpful because it does indicate a transition in what's going on here with Jesus. But to give a quick overview of what we're going to talk about this morning, Jesus is tested again by the Pharisees. They ask him a question.

And really, they don't have, it seems, a pure heart in the question that they're asking. They're not looking to find out Jesus' opinion on something.

We'll talk more about that in a second. But they ask him a question about divorce. And at that time, the topic of divorce was highly controversial.

[1 : 13] Is that any different today? No, it's still a very highly controversial topic. And they wanted to embroil him in the controversy.

And so we're going to follow Jesus this morning into that controversy and talk about it. But it's an important question. It's not just some kind of esoteric debate, you know, that really doesn't impact people, right?

This is a concept, this is a topic that impacts a lot of people. So it's important that we discuss it. We don't want to avoid certain important subjects in the Bible just because they're controversial or they make us maybe feel uncomfortable.

I want to actually start, before we jump into the scriptures here, with what my view is. Because we're going to be talking about marriage, divorce, and remarriage after divorce.

And there's a whole spectrum of views out there. On one side of the spectrum is divorce is never allowed. There are no legitimate grounds for divorce for any reason.

[2 : 22] And you can also never get remarried if you do get divorced or separated for any reason. That's one end of the spectrum. On the opposite end of the spectrum is, well, you can get divorced and remarried as many times as you want for any reason that you want.

And, you know, A-okay. That's totally fine. I'm going to be offering a middle ground, a middle view. Now, sometimes when you have extreme views, one on this side and one on that side, it's best to take the middle ground. But is that always the best approach?

No, not at all. Sometimes taking the middle ground is not the right thing to do. Sometimes we do need to take the extreme side on one side or the other. But not always.

And so I'm going to try to make a case for a middle ground here. And we'll get into the details in a second. But the big idea is marriage was intended by God to be a permanent relationship for the life of the married couple.

[3 : 31] That's what it was intended for. But there are some circumstances in which divorce, the separation of that marriage, is legitimized.

And then kind of the third thing is remarriage. If that divorce is legitimized, there are legitimate grounds for that divorce, then remarriage after the divorce is legitimate as well.

So that's going to be the view that I offer this morning. But we'll find as we read through what Jesus teaches here, it's going to look like, well, Jesus doesn't seem to offer really any kind of exception to the rule that he gives.

But we'll talk more about that in a second. You know, it's important when we look at something like this, especially something like this that impacts, can impact our lives so deeply, that we interpret what Jesus or the other Bible authors have to say carefully.

It's so easy to just interpret the Bible based on our preference, right? How we would like things to be. And we should avoid that. We don't want to interpret the Bible based on how we prefer life to work or reality to work.

[4 : 56] And that's what really God's Word is all about, how reality works. We could take a more permissive view when it comes to this topic of divorce and remarriage because, well, I'll get along better with people because there's a lot of divorce in our world and I won't have conflict.

If you're the pastor of a church, maybe you can grow your church bigger, right? Because people will like your more permissive view. We don't want to make decisions about how we interpret the Bible based on that.

On the other end, we don't want to make decisions because, based on, well, I'm the most hardcore type of Christian that there is. And so we take a really strict view on divorce because, well, divorce is a bad thing.

It certainly is not a positive thing. It's a negative thing. So we want to be careful on this topic and make sure we do a thorough investigation of what the entire Bible has to say.

We're going to start by reading through this passage to kind of get our setting. And then we're going to go through and look at the individual details. So let's start reading Mark 10, verse 1.

[6 : 14] Then he arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to him again. And as he was accustomed, he taught them again.

The Pharisees came and asked him, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife, testing him? And he answered and said to them, What did Moses command you?

And they said, Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and to dismiss her. And Jesus answered and said to them, Because of the hardness of your heart, he wrote you this precept.

But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. 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 then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate. In the house, his disciples also asked him again about the same matter.

[7 : 19] And he said to them, Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.

Like I said, as we read the words of Jesus here, it seems like there's not really any wiggle room when it comes to this rule regarding divorce.

But we'll explore some other scriptures. Just to kind of prepare you, we're going to be going to other passages in the Bible. We're going to look at Matthew chapter 19, which is the parallel account. It's the same account, but just from a different witness. This time from Matthew. We're going to see a little bit of a difference or some additional information in the gospel of Matthew.

The other thing that we're going to look at is a passage in Deuteronomy 24. And then the last major section we'll look at is what Paul says on this topic in 1 Corinthians chapter 7.

[8 : 21] But just starting back from the beginning, making sure we go through verse by verse here. It says that he arose from there and he came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan.

Jesus has spent most of his ministry up in northern Israel. If you look at a map of Israel, both today and back then, there's the northern part and then there's the southern part.

In the south is the capital, Jerusalem. The center of the life of the nation. But Jesus spent most of his time in the north, which was really more rural, countryside.

We know that Jesus, his baptism and his time in the wilderness was in the south, near Jerusalem. In the, we would call it maybe a state or region.

Really, it's a tribe of Judea. Remember that Israel was divided into two kingdoms. And there was the north and the south. And two tribes made up the south.

[9 : 27] It was both Judea and the tribe of Judah and Benjamin, which ended up being called Judea. And then the other ten tribes were in the north.

So Jesus, as we've gone through here in these first nine chapters, the bulk of Jesus' ministry has been in the north, really centered around the Sea of Galilee and surrounding areas. But now, Jesus is down south in Judea.

Right between, by the way, between Galilee, the area of Galilee, and down here in Judea is this region called Samaria. And we read a few times of Jesus interacting as he's traveling between the two with the Samaritans, specifically the Samaritan woman.

And so the Samaria was mostly a mix of people who had intermarried, Jews who had intermarried with Gentiles, which they were not supposed to do.

But Jesus is heading down to, he's had some private time with his disciples, and he's heading down to Jerusalem to really have a conflict with the Jewish leaders.

[10:38] And this account right here is just one of those initial conflicts that he has with them. Verse 2 says, The Pharisees came and they asked him this question, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?

It says, testing him. When they're asking the question, is it lawful, what do they mean? Is it lawful? Well, the Jews had a law, called it the law of Moses.

And they spent a lot of time, especially the leaders, the scribes and the Pharisees, reading through the law and trying to understand it, which is certainly a noble thing to do. And so they're asking him this question about the law of Moses.

Does the law allow for this concept of divorce? Then it says that they said this, testing him. Now, what does that mean? Are they trying to see, oh, well, how much does this uneducated man really know about this scriptures?

Are they asking the question because they're really curious about his point of view? Well, I think that we can surmise from this and from other times where the Pharisees asked Jesus questions, testing him, that their motives were not pure.

[11:58] However, they're probably looking to embroil Jesus in a controversy that will cause a separation between him and the people. We just read that multitudes are coming to be taught by Jesus.

They want to hear what he has to say. He's really popular among the people, and the Pharisees are not too happy about that. So here's an idea. We have this controversial topic that we debate about, us Pharisees and the rest of the Jews.

And, you know, if you can get somebody to commit to one side or the other, you're going to at least, you know, split his popularity in half, right? Well, you're not on my side of this debate, so I'm not going to listen to you anymore.

They figured probably, I can imagine, because if you look at history, the most popular side of this debate, and we'll look at the debate that was going on during this time regarding divorce, the most popular view in this debate was not the one that Jesus took.

The most popular view was the more permissive view of divorce. And so here's the Pharisees thinking, well, we probably know what his view is, and we're going to ask him in public so that he has to state what his view is, and this will cause the people to turn away from him.

[13:23] And I actually see this happening today. Have you ever seen this on media talk shows? They'll have a Christian come on, somebody who's a known Christian, somebody who is especially public about their faith, whether it's a pastor or spiritual leader, or maybe just an actor who's very outspoken about their faith.

And they'll have them on, and they'll have a nice discussion, and then they'll ask them a question. Like, well, what do you think about same-sex marriage? And do you think that they're asking that question because they're really curious about their point of view, and they really want to get their perspective?

No, you really get the idea that the reason they're asking this question is because they want to expose this hateful bigot for who they really are. And I see really as this is what's going on with the Pharisees here.

There are two major views on divorce at this time. If you look at some of the history, you can actually read from some of the historians.

One of them is Josephus, and there are other writings about there. But it's actually well-known and well-documented that there were two views on divorce at this time, and they were identified by two different rabbis who were just one generation previous to Jesus.

[14:55] One rabbi, his name was Shammai, and so his views didn't just focus on divorce, but other things too.

And so Shammai, and then the other rabbi, his name was Hillel. And so people during that time would ask the question, for example, they're talking about the Bible or the scriptures, the Jewish scriptures, and they'll say, well, are you of the house of Shammai, or are you of the house of Hillel? We do this kind of thing today, right? We ask, well, how do you approach the Bible? And sometimes it's easier if we look at how a popular Bible teacher approaches the Bible, and we'll use that as kind of a summary of how we approach the Bible.

And so you say, well, are you a, do you like John MacArthur or, I don't know, who's somebody else out there? Who's the guy with the big megachurch? John Osteen?

Joel Osteen. And if you say, well, I'm more with this guy or more with that guy, you know, I really like Joel Osteen, that really tells a lot about kind of where you're coming from.

[16:10] Another big one today is, are you a Calvinist or are you an Arminian? Anybody familiar with that debate? And that kind of gives you an idea where somebody's coming from. By the way, you don't have to be a Calvinist or an Arminian, just in case you didn't know that.

And the same thing with these two houses. But the house of Shammai was known, and there were actually many debates between the house of Shammai and the house of Hillel, but this divorce question was one of the big ones among them.

The house of Shammai had a more strict view on the permanence of marriage and what was justified for a divorce. So there were just a few specific reasons or grounds for divorce that the house of Shammai said made divorce allowable.

Whereas the house of Hillel had a much more permissive view when it comes to divorce. He's actually famous for teaching, you can find this in the writings, that if a wife burns or spoils her husband's meal, then that is grounds for divorce.

Wow, that's quite permissive, right? Whereas the house of Shammai said, no, no, no, no, no, no.

There are grounds for divorce, but it's a much, much higher bar, typically regarding things of sexual immorality, which we'll look at in a second.

[17:40] If we go to Matthew chapter 19, and if you got your finger there, you can turn to Matthew chapter 19. It's the same account.

We see it says the same thing, that Jesus is now in the region of Judea. He's near the Jordan River. Verse 2, Matthew 19, verse 2, and a great multitude follow him and he healed them there.

So not only did he teach, but he healed. And it says the same thing, the Pharisees also came to him, testing him, saying to him, is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?

And so I wanted to, for us to look at that, to add some more color to what the question is here. It's not just, is divorce allowed? But the question is, there's this debate.

Can, is divorce allowed? Can a man divorce his wife for just any reason? Or is there a much higher bar for when divorce is allowable?

[18:47] And that's the debate that Jesus is being asked to weigh in on. So here's Jesus' response. Mark 10, chapter 3. He answered and said to them, Well, what did Moses command you?

Now, why is he bringing up Moses? Well, Moses was a representative. Moses represented the law. It was Moses that brought those 10 commandments and the rest of the law down from Mount Sinai. And so, you'll find this throughout the whole Bible, is when people refer to the law, sometimes, in fact many times, they will actually refer to the law by referring to Moses, the one who gave them the law.

And so, Jesus is basically asking the question, what does the Bible say? And isn't that the right question to ask? The Bible, the scriptures, both the Old Testament and today the New Testament, is what God intended to be the authority for how we ought to live our lives.

And the Bible doesn't just have information about the spiritual aspects of life. The Bible is actually a very practical book that teaches about everything related to life.

[20:08] There's this doctrine that the Reformers defined called the purpose-cuity of Scripture. I think I'm getting that right. But the idea is that the Bible is relevant to every area of life.

It won't answer every detailed question, but the Bible provides enough wisdom for us to know how we ought to live our lives in every detail.

It speaks to every matter. And it speaks to this idea of marriage and divorce and remarriage.

Another thing about this, it's a common misconception that Jesus, when he taught in his earthly ministry, that he nullified or took the Jewish people or the people that he taught a different direction

from what the Old Testament law said or taught.

And so some people, when they read some of the things that Jesus said, they're, well, this contradicts the law. And so Jesus was teaching in contradiction to the law because, well, that's just passe, and here's a new thing.

But Jesus didn't actually do that. And we see here that he's specifically not doing it. He's saying, hey, well, what does the Bible say? You're asking me this question, but I'm just going to point you back to the Bible.

[21 : 33] Now, later on, Jesus does, and we'll talk about this more as well, he does abrogate the law when it comes to believer, Gentile believers specifically, but ultimately all believers in the age of grace.

There is a different relationship, a different application for the law, and we should be careful to recognize that. But during his earthly ministry, remember that Jesus said, do not think that I came to do away with the law.

No, I came to fulfill it, to uphold it. And so that was part of Jesus' ministry, was upholding the law. So, verse 4, here's how they responded.

They said, Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and to dismiss her. So they're just summarizing. This is what we see Moses teaching in the law.

Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and to dismiss her. Bam! There it is. Now, first of all, the question is, well, what passage are they talking about? What are they referencing?

[22 : 46] Interestingly enough, there are no real, and we actually see this a lot in the Bible, in the Old Testament specifically, in the law of Moses, any direct teachings.

There's not a whole section on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. And you just read that, and it just lists and stipulates, well, all the rules and regulations and do's and do not's.

It's just not organized in that way. And so, really, there aren't even a lot of references to the topic of divorce in the Old Testament.

There are just references to it, and then also prophetic sayings that address divorce, or at least speak of it.

And this really, I think, is part of the challenge and why this topic is so controversial and people have big debates about it is because of this lack of kind of an organized way of looking at things.

[23 : 45] But I will say, does Jesus give them an out? Does he say, oh, well, I understand this is really a hard topic to think about, and I understand why you would make your mistake?

No. He talks later about the hardness of hearts, and I think he recognizes here that the reason for their interpretation is not because they've studied diligently and they just kind of made a mistake, but their hearts are in the wrong place.

So, Deuteronomy chapter 4. This is where basically everyone will point you to to what Jesus is referring to or to what the Pharisees here are referring to when they're saying, when they're talking about a certificate of divorce.

So, let's look at this passage. Deuteronomy chapter 24. Just four verses. By the way, this is what we refer to as case law.

A lot of the Old Testament law was not like we see today in a legal code where you have point A and B and C and sub point 1 and 2 and a very detailed terminology.

[24 : 54] what the law did most of the time was it had what's called case law. That's how we refer to it today where there would be specific cases, examples provided, and what you would do in that specific example.

And by using that case as an example, you could then use your own wisdom and judgment to apply that to other different examples. So, keep that in mind as we read here.

Deuteronomy chapter 24 and verse 1 says this, Now, as you read this, I see actually, I'm looking out and I'm seeing some scrunched up faces like, huh?

And, you know, I think that's a typical and expected reaction. There's some things going on here, some big questions. So, one question is, is the divorce being described here something that is approved of or that is recommended?

Or is this just part of the case law? Is this just one of the facts in the example? That's a question that people ask and that we should ask. What does finding uncleanness in her, what does that mean?

[27 : 00] And then another question, why would it be an abomination for the first husband to remarry her after she's divorced from the second husband?

Or even, it says, even if the second husband dies. And within Christian and Jewish circles, it's universally held, well, nothing is universal, but almost universally held that if one spouse dies, then you're completely free to remarry.

Almost no one disagrees with that. So here, it seems strange that why would, even if your second spouse die, why would you not be allowed to return back to the first spouse?

Well, we're not going to spend the time getting into trying to answer all these questions just because there's a lot to cover here. Plus, I'm probably just as confused as most of you are.

But I would like to offer at least one one recommended thought. Why, for this last question of why would it be forbidden to remarry after your husband, the second husband dies?

[28 : 22] I think what's going on here is that there's an example here of trying to skirt around, and Jesus will address this, and I think this is why he talks, speaks to this, but he's going to address this.

People will try to get around the law and the Ten Commandments of you shall not commit adultery. It's one of the Ten Commandments. It's a primary pillar in the Jewish law.

You shall not commit adultery. And here's what I imagine happened, both in the old times during the law and even at the time of Jesus. Well, you know, I'm married, I've been married for a few years, and here is this other woman, and she's caught my eye and my interest, and we've started talking, and we're really interested in each other, and we want to become romantic.

But the law says that we are not allowed to become romantic because that would be adultery. So, but, if I got a divorce, then I'd be allowed, that would be a separation of the first marriage, then I'd be allowed to go to this new woman and have a relationship with her.

But then, you know, I've kind of built a family with the first woman, so I just want this to be, you know, temporary. I just want to have a fling, you know. And so, the Bible doesn't really allow this, but, hey, all we have to do is take out a piece of paper and create a certificate, and I'll create a certificate of divorce, and I'll divorce my first wife, and then I'll go and I'll spend, I'll have a weekend fling with this other woman.

[30 : 11] And then after my weekend fling is over, I'll write her a certificate of divorce, and then I'll just go back to my family. And, can you imagine that people would be imaginative and creative enough to come up with such a thing?

Yeah, and so I think that's very likely what the law here is referring to. People trying to skirt around the law by doing something like that.

And so it was forbidden and even considered an abomination. So here's Jesus' response. Jesus answered and said to them, because of the hardness of your heart, he wrote you this precept.

Notice that Jesus doesn't say, well, Moses didn't know what he was talking about. He didn't even deny their interpretation. It seems here that the law did make allowance for, it legitimized certificates of divorce.

But he's trying to make a point that this was a response. This law regarding certificates of divorce was a response or only because of the hardness of hearts.

[31 : 28] But, if you just read this verse and you see, well, hey, here's, God says he's kind of okay with certificates of divorce. Here's what Jesus is going to do next.

he's about to point them to other verses. And this is what we ought to do as Christians. We need to compare scripture with scripture. Not just focus on one thing and ignore the rest, but take the Bible as a whole and put it all together.

And so, Jesus is about to point to another book, the book of Genesis, to help explain or bring more clarity to what's being taught or commanded in Deuteronomy chapter 4.

So, here's what he says, verse 6. But from the beginning of the creation, God made them male and female. 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 then, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate. Jesus is going back to the beginning, back to the created order, back before there was a Moses or a law, back to how God created things to be in the very beginning.

[32 : 49] And he says, in the beginning of the creation, which, by the way, just as a little side note, he's talking about the marriage between Adam and Eve at the beginning of creation.

It's actually pretty common today for people to deny that Adam and Eve were at the beginning of creation. There's some who teach that Adam and Eve came later, millions of years after God initially created.

So I take a young earth view because, well, it seems to me anyway that Jesus took a young earth view. That at the beginning of creation, when God created the heavens and the earth, that was when he created them male and female.

But that's just a little bunny trail. That one's for free. God made them so the first point he wants to make is, hey, this is God's design. God created boys and he created girls.

Aren't we glad that God created boys and girls? Distinct and different. Not the same. Wouldn't that be weird and boring if God just created everybody the same? Now, in the clown world in which we live, this is a disputed fact, right?

[34 : 06] Boys and girls. But God purposely designed two kinds of people. And then he says, for this reason. He goes back again to, so the first verse that he quotes is Genesis 1.27.

So God created man in his own image and in the image of God he created them. Male and female he created them. And then he goes to Genesis 2.24 which says this, therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and they shall become one flesh.

He designed these boys and girls who would grow up to become men and women to pair up. That's the idea. That they would pair up and they would become one unit.

What the Bible calls one flesh. That was the design. for two people coming from two different families to pair up and create one new family unit.

He specifically says and this is what it says in Genesis, they are no longer two but one flesh. They used to be two people but in marriage they become one flesh.

[35 : 20] Jesus here is pointing to the permanency of this union. it wasn't marriage or romance we'll call it.

It was not designed to just for people to pair up all over the place. It was designed so that two people would pair up and become one permanent unit.

And so he ends it with this, therefore what God has joined together. So based on the original design how God designed men and women to work his purpose for men and women.

Let not man separate. So men should not create a separation where God did not intend for there to be a separation. Marriage was designed to be permanent, to be life long.

This is what we say in our marriage vows, till death do us part. that is what marriage was designed for. Not moving around from one partner to another which is what we find so often in our culture.

[36 : 34] Not just our culture here in America, this is part of many cultures, but it causes so much pain and misery and destruction. We can call it hook up culture, finding one girlfriend and then moving on to the next girlfriend and then the next one.

Or maybe trying to do the same thing, but as I think was going on in this day, legitimize it through paperwork. We'll just add in a little bit of paperwork and we can do the same thing.

We can have a hook up culture. As a Jew, we just add a little paperwork to it and now I'm legitimized. And this is what was going on and what Jesus was addressing.

Adding paperwork to adultery does not make it right. Afterwards, they're in public, Jesus is teaching in public, but afterwards they go back to their house where they were staying and verse 10 here says, in the house his disciples also asked him again about the same matter.

He said, tell us more about this because we'd like to make sure we're very clear on this whole issue of divorce. So he said to them, whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.

[37 : 51] He makes it clear. You know, the Old Testament law of Moses does not address divorce directly. It only addresses it indirectly.

But what does the law of Moses address directly? Adultery. Very directly. So Jesus says, listen, that's what these guys are doing.

And anyone who would divorce his wife and then marry another person is committing adultery against his first wife.

The paperwork doesn't make it right. Then he actually says the opposite, right? Because you could imagine some people would say, well, for a man to do it or a woman to do it is wrong, but what about vice versa?

Cuts both ways. And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery. Now, during this time, it seemed, you know, typically men had more power in the marriage and a lot of times the discussion was around a man sending his wife away.

[39 : 01] But we actually know, in fact, going back to the Samaritan woman at the well, remember, she had five husbands and Jesus really pointed to her as having the blame for that.

It cut both ways during this time. Women would leave and divorce their husbands as well. So here's the question, because as we read this and what Jesus says, it doesn't seem that he really provides any exception to the rule.

He says, listen, if a man divorces his wife and he marries another woman, he's committing adultery. So we have to ask ourselves, well, if someone gets the divorce and they get remarried, is that adultery in all circumstances?

Let's go back to Matthew 19 because we'll see there also some additional words that Jesus says that will give us some additional insight here.

This is Matthew. chapter 19 and verse 9. Matthew chapter 19 verse 9.

[40 : 18] 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.

Notice here there's just this little extra phrase in the book of Matthew. And this is actually, Jesus teaches the same thing back during the Beatitudes in Matthew chapter 5. In fact, it's almost word for word the same teaching.

And he has that same exception clause except for sexual immorality. You see, in Mark, Jesus just mentions the overarching rule.

don't get divorced. And if you do and you get remarried, that's wrong. Don't do it. But in Matthew, he mentions that there is an exception.

Sexual immorality. And it sounds, there was some kind of reference to uncleanness, right, in Deuteronomy chapter 24, uncleanness.

[41 : 27] So it seems like Moses was probably talking about the same thing when it came to passing out a certificate of divorce. So I think in Mark, it's possible that the exemption, the exception was understood.

Regardless, when we put together both of these parallel accounts, we see that there is an exception that Jesus identified here when it comes to grounds for divorce, sexual immorality.

The term used here is actually a Greek word, pornea, which is where we get the term pornography today. And it was an umbrella term that was for any kind of sexual immorality.

It could be adultery, or that word is used for a man taking his father's wife in Corinthians when Paul was speaking about that issue to the Corinthians.

Fornication before marriage, that word is used. So it's an umbrella term for any kind of immorality of a sexual nature. Here's the other thing we're going to look at and we're going to try to tie all this together.

[42 : 49] We're going to look at what Paul taught on divorce and remarriage. And we'll ask the question, Paul is the apostle to the Gentiles. Did anything change from being under the law of Moses to being under the dispensation of the grace of God with Paul's ministry?

So 1 Corinthians chapter 7 is where Paul really addresses a bunch of things related to marriage and divorce and remarriage. And for sake of time, we're going to just focus on a couple of passages.

We're not going to be able to read the whole chapter to provide more context. But 1 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 10 says this, Now to the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord.

A wife is not to depart from her husband, but even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

Notice how does that compare compare to what Jesus taught. It's basic, I mean it sounds exactly the same. Don't divorce, but if you do separate, don't get remarried.

[44 : 06] You should not do that because it's wrong. As Jesus said, he called it adultery. And like Jesus did, Paul says it cuts both ways.

A man shouldn't divorce his wife, a wife shouldn't divorce her husband. One of the things that I want to point out here that we'll look at here in a second is notice what he says, yet not I but the Lord. Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord. Now what in the world is he talking about there? What does that mean? Well, let's continue on in verse 12.

But to the rest I, not the Lord, say. He's making this distinction between what the Lord says and what I say.

If any brother has a wife who does not believe and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let him not divorce her.

[45 : 10] For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart.

A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

So, Paul states the case in those first two verses, saying this is what the Lord teaches. And then he states another case.

He says, well, this is what I teach. And here's what I think, and it seems this is what's going on. Some people think, well, Paul is just providing his own personal interpretation, his own personal opinion, if you will. I don't think that's what's going on here as well. What Paul teaches is based on the authority that he has received from the Lord.

[46 : 17] What Paul is saying here is this is what the Lord taught, and when it comes to this other circumstance, I need you to know that I'm actually teaching something different from what the Lord would have taught.

And here's why. What's the subject matter? Paul is talking about being married as a Christian to an unbeliever. You know, this is early on in Christianity, so that the main example would be, well, you're married, you're both pagans, right?

Worshiping false gods, false idols, whatever. And one of you becomes a believer. The other one is not. They decided, ah, I'm not really interested. Now, under the law of Moses, which Jesus upheld, was a believer allowed to marry or be married to an unbeliever?

Under the law of Moses, no, that was not allowed. You are not allowed to marry as a Jew, a Gentile. We're not allowed to be married to a Gentile.

So you can imagine that when there's this change, there's this adjustment, and now God has, his people is not just the Jews, but now the Gentiles. It's all people.

[47 : 48] You might think, well, how do I take what was in the Old Testament law and apply it to my life as a Christian? Well, the Jews weren't supposed to marry unbelievers, so as a Christian, I'm not supposed to marry an unbeliever as well.

And so, maybe I should get a divorce. Maybe I should, you know, put her away or leave my husband because that's being unequally yoked, not not to be done.

And so, Paul is addressing this and saying, hey, under this dispensation of the grace of God, that God has made me the apostle to the Gentiles. And he has given me this ministry of the dispensation of grace.

I want to let you know how things work in this present age. If you are married to an unbeliever, that is a permanent situation. And God does not intend for you to divorce, to separate just because you're married to an unbeliever.

Interestingly enough, in Ezra chapter 10, where the Jews are returning back to Israel, they come to Ezra and they say, you know what, we married all these pagan women, a bunch of us married these pagan women when we were out in captivity, and we realized we were wrong, we shouldn't have done that.

[49 : 08] And so they made this commitment to Ezra and they said, you know what, we're going to put away our foreign wives, our pagan wives. And it says in that passage, they divorced them according to the law.

Wow. And so a new Christian, you know, in the age of grace might read that and think, well maybe that's what I should do. I should divorce my unbelieving husband or wife based on what the law of Moses says.

So I think that's what's going on there with Paul and specifically speaking to this situation and why he uses somewhat strange language when he says the Lord says this and I say this other thing.

So, but as we look at this, here's the principle I think involved because what Paul teaches is that divorce isn't okay if it's an unbeliever, but here's what he does say.

Sometimes when you have a different religion, somebody's worshipping Baal and you're now worshipping Christ, you're worshipping Jehovah, that somebody may decide the other person may decide, I don't want to have anything to do with this.

[50 : 23] I don't want to be married to you anymore. And so they abandon the marriage. And Paul says, listen, if the other person decides that they want to leave, then you don't have to feel bound to that marriage.

You are allowed to get a divorce. Don't initiate it, but don't think that you have to pretend like you're still married even though they have left or decided that they want to leave.

Don't feel like you have to be bound in that case. Today, people would call this the abandonment clause or the abandonment exception when it comes to divorce.

Now, for the sake of time, we'll just kind of speak to a few things regarding abandonment.

And then we'll summarize and speak to some other issues. So, when it comes to abandonment, is this something that we should think only applies if an unbeliever departs?

[51 : 42] if you're married to an unbeliever and they walk away, Paul is saying, well, you're not obligated to stay married or to pretend like you're still married or to keep that commitment with them.

Well, what if it's a believer who walks away? Should we think that in those cases we ought to remain bound to a marriage when a believer or somebody who claims anyway to be a believer? Because that's not the kind of thing a believer ought to do, is just to abandon their marriage, right? And so, I think that we should take this principle and apply it in a more broader sense than the specific example that Paul gives and say, hey, listen, if your spouse abandons you, if they leave, it wasn't something that you did, it wasn't because of a justified cause on your part, but they just abandoned the marriage for whatever reason it might be, I think that as believers we are not bound to stay unmarried or to necessarily refuse the divorce, even though we might resist it because of that.

abandonment. So, the other thing to consider is, well, what does abandonment look like?

Here, the example given is they just say, well, I'm just going to leave because I don't want to be married anymore. But sometimes abandonment can look different.

[53 : 22] Well, the husband just stole \$2 million from his company and now he's in prison for the next 30 years.

Is that something that should be considered abandonment? Or, the husband decided that he's not going to, that he has an anger problem and he's going to take that out on his wife on a regular basis.

And she's put in a position where she has to either stay in the home or flee for her safety and the safety of her children. And so, many have made the case, and I think wisely, that there are times in which one party, typically the husband, but not always, can force an abandonment situation on their spouse through things like violence, abuse, criminal behavior, and effectively abandon their marriage because of their immoral behavior.

Now, did Paul add something, here's another question I want to ask, did Paul add something to what Jesus taught? Because Jesus really addressed sexual immorality. is this some kind of new ground that was just added by Paul?

I don't think so, because when you think about all the different issues involved, I would see abandonment as a form of sexual immorality.

[55 : 02] You see, in marriage, husband and wife have an obligation to one another. Paul says, actually here in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, that your body is not your own.

Your body belongs to one another. You have an obligation to provide marital rights, if you will, to one another. And if you force a separation, force an abandonment situation into the marriage, that is effectively a form of sexual immorality.

So I don't think this was anything necessarily new, but I think judgment is required to really discern what are the grounds and how far do they go.

Paul, later on here in chapter 7 of 1 Corinthians, says this, verse 26, I suppose, and he's talking about a different subject matter, but it's the same kind of stream of thought regarding marriage and all the different things that regard marriage.

He says this, I suppose, therefore, that this is good because of the present distress, that it is good for a man to remain as he is. He's talking about, he's promoting singleness. He talks about a

present distress.

[56 : 21] We won't get into what that means, but he's saying, hey, I recommend people stay unmarried. They stay single. But he says this, are you bound to a wife? Are you already married?

Do not seek to be loosed. Don't get divorced if you're already married. Hey, I'm suggesting singleness, but that doesn't mean you should get a divorce. Don't do that. That's wrong. Then he says this, are you loosed from a wife?

Loosed. That Greek word, loosed, is actually the same word for divorce. Have you been divorced from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

I recommend you stay single. But he says this, but even if you do marry, you have not sinned.

There's so many people out there that teach that, well, once you've been divorced, you can't get remarried, and if you do, you're sinning against the Lord.

And now, it may be the case that you are, but not always. So it seems a little bit confusing because if we go back to verse 11, Paul says you shouldn't remarry if you're divorced.

[57 : 28] divorced. But here, he seems to indicate that, well, if somebody is loosed or divorced from a wife, it's not wrong to get remarried. So what's going on? Seems like there's a contradiction.

But I think what's going on here is that in that first verse, in verse 11, he's assuming, the assumption is, he's talking about an illegitimate divorce. There were not grounds for a divorce.

It was illegitimate. And in the second case, he's assuming, I believe, a legitimate one. That there were proper grounds and it was done correctly.

It was done morally. So, to summarize, two grounds for divorce. And you'll find that a lot of people who teach on this talk about this.

Sexual morality and abandonment, I think, are proper grounds for divorce. Adultery, abuse, prison.

[58 : 31] Not when somebody's thrown in prison because they're preaching the gospel, right?

That's not proper grounds for divorce. But when somebody is in prison for the rest of their life, and I've actually heard of people where this is the case.

Their husband is in prison because they killed someone, and their church tells them, well, you have to stay married to him, and you're not allowed to get remarried. And they have kids. And that puts somebody in a very, very difficult position, and I think one that God did not intend or design for.

Illegitimate grounds for divorce. I'm not happy. We've grown apart. The magic is gone. Well, she just let herself go.

Oh, I'm not in love with them anymore. Or he doesn't meet my emotional needs. Or how about this one? This one I've heard directly from somebody's mouth.

God told me to leave them. No, that's not how this works. So, to summarize, for sake of time, here's kind of my view on this whole topic.

[59 : 51] And I believe it, because marriage is not something that was just for the Jewish people or just for Christians, right? Marriage is part of the created order. It's for everyone. And so I think these moral principles apply to everyone.

Christian, religious, atheist, Buddhist, doesn't matter. It applies to everyone from a moral perspective. Marriage is designed to be lifelong and permanent.

Not temporary. To be lifelong. Two, there are certain cases or certain grounds, legitimate grounds, for divorce.

One, we could describe as sexual morality. The second, as abandonment. The third point, if the divorce was justified, remarriage is always allowed.

If the divorce was justified, justified, then remarriage is also justified. And you shouldn't feel like you can't get remarried if you were the victim in that divorce.

[60 : 53] On the other hand, if the divorce was unjustified, remarriage is considered the same as adultery. And then the fourth point, I think marriage after an unjustified divorce should be lifelong and permanent.

covenant. So, even if you get remarried and you did it the wrong way, you were the one at fault. If you get married to somebody else, God doesn't, he actually recognizes that as a new marriage. You did it the wrong way. You shouldn't have done that. But it's done. And God intends for people to continue on in that marriage in a permanent way.

Wow. Marriage is the most wonderful thing in the world. It can also be one of the most painful things in the world.

Because of the intimacy of the marriage relationship which God designed it to be, it has the capacity to bring the most joy in our life, but also to bring the most pain.

[62 : 14] The closeness of that relationship just intensifies either the joy or pain. I can say personally, that of all the people I've hurt in the world through my sin, without a doubt, the person I've hurt the most is my own wife.

because of the closeness of our relationship. That pain is intensified when we hurt one another.

And it's easy for that pain to build up if we don't address it.

And sometimes it can seem like that pain is unbearable. And we could justify making a separation even though there really isn't a legitimate justification.

We should protect our marriage. We should prioritize protecting our marriage. We should work on our marriages regularly.

Check in. How are we doing? Are we doing okay? I don't know how many times I've asked that of my wife. And on my end, things seem to be going wonderful.

[63 : 32] Well, actually, just check in. How are we doing? Are we doing okay? Your friendships. Have you ever been around somebody and you hear them say, oh, did you hear what Tom said to Susie the other day?

She should just leave him. What a jerk. If you have a friend like that, run away. Get away from people like that. Because, you know, you'll have problems in your marriage, some difficulties, and are they going to be of help?

No. You want to surround yourself with people who are committed to God's design for marriage.

And then lastly, if you're having issues and you can't work through them yourselves, get help.

ask for help from somebody who is also committed to marriage, whether it be parents or friends or siblings or even the leaders in the church are there to be a help, to try to help with difficulties.

You don't want to wait until things are really, really, really bad and somebody already brought up the D word. address those things early and often.

[64 : 53] Now, with a subject matter like this, there are so many questions that can arise. Well, what about this situation? This scenario? And why would there be so many questions?

Well, I think it's because there are so many creative ways in which we can sin against one another.

Today, we have to deal with, well, my husband decided he wants to become a woman.

What do I do? Well, that's a new one. How many people thought going into marriage that they were going to have to deal with that one? Would you have a gambling addiction in which somebody, you'd lost the house because of a gambling addiction?

All these questions come up. And I think it takes wisdom to look through all of these. There are some resources that I'd like to recommend and then we'll finish up with a word of prayer. There's a book by a guy named Jay Adams called Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible.

I think it's a great, a lot of people point to that book. It's been around for 50 years or so. I think it does a good job of addressing all of these things and looking at what the Bible says.

[66 : 03] Not just somebody's opinion but what the Bible says. If you like to listen to things, there's a guy on YouTube. His name is Mike Winger. He's actually a very good Bible teacher.

He has a whole series. It's three and a half hours long on this topic. He looks at just about every scripture you can imagine on this topic and every single issue and question you could possibly come up with.

And I think he does a great job of doing it. And so just do a search for Mike Winger. Divorce and Remarriage and you'll find his video on that matter which I think will be helpful to you.

As you can see this is something that takes a while to really talk through but I thought it was important enough that we went over time a little bit. But if you do have other questions, specific things because this is again something we've all either has affected us directly or indirectly.

We all have somebody within our close circles. I imagine every single person in this room has been affected in some way by this topic of divorce and remarriage. And so we want to have a good right view and a scriptural foundation for that view.

[67 : 11] So let's pray. Father we love you. Thank you for your word and helping us. We ask you to help us to understand. We don't want to be ignorant. We want to understand what you have to say.

We want to help people who are going through difficulties. We want to help them in the right way and we need you to guide us into guiding both our own lives and helping with others and how we can counsel them on this issue.

And we thank you for your wisdom and your promise to guide us into all truth. Thank you for these things in Jesus' name. Amen.