

Family Values
Mark 10:1 – 16

Proposition: By God's grace marriages can thrive, and children blessed.

Application: Grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus so that we can live our lives the way God designed us to live.

When we preach through books of the Bible, one of the great blessings is that sooner or later, we touch on every subject imaginable. But one draw back is that sooner or later we touch on every subject imaginable. We are forced to face topics that may trouble us and even be a source of great pain such as the topic before us today. This section of Scripture describes Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem. On His way, He taught on marriage and divorce, children and the kingdom, wealth and salvation which we will cover next week.

By God's grace marriages can thrive, and children are blessed.

I. The Value of Marriage (10:1 – 12)

The Pharisees and their Attack (10:1, 2): Jesus finished His work in Capernaum and left Galilee for the last time. From this point onward every step He took moved Him closer and closer to the cross. On His way to Jerusalem, Jesus faced intense opposition from religious leaders. The Pharisees approached Jesus, wanting to know His view on the burning question of the day – what are the valid reasons for divorce? The goal was to trap Jesus. They presumed He was opposed to divorce under any instance.

If so, Jesus would be at odds with Moses. It may seem hard to believe, divorce was more rampant in Jesus' day than in ours. For instance, a Roman man could have as many as 15 wives over a lifetime. Divorce rates among the Jewish people was not as high, but there were cases when divorce was granted. The Pharisees wanted to know if a man could divorce his wife for *any cause* (Matt 19:3). At the time, there were two schools of thought on divorce. The conservative *School of Shammai* allowed divorce only if a man's wife was found to not be a virgin at the time of marriage or if she had engaged in adultery while married. The liberal *School of Hillel* allowed a man to divorce his wife for almost any reason. He could even divorce his wife if he found a better-looking woman. Hillel's view was the main practice at the time. This may explain why the Pharisees asked Jesus if it was lawful to divorce for *any reason*.

Jesus' teaching on divorce was not liberal; it was not legalistic; it was Biblical. He did not summon Hillel or Shammai for answers. He went to Scripture. Jesus took the Pharisees to the very man they revered – Moses.

The Lord and His Answer (10:3): God's design for marriage is found in the Books of Moses – namely Genesis. Before we look at God's plan for marriage, let's deal with what Moses said about divorce (Deut 24:1 – 4). A husband could divorce his wife if he found something *indecent* in her. What would be deemed *indecent*? Shammai believed *indecency* meant the man's wife was not a virgin at marriage or she engaged in adultery while married. Hillel believed *indecency* was anything the wife did that displeased her husband.

The Torah did not sanction divorce, but it allowed for divorce under certain cases. We could say divorce was a concession not a commandment.

Moses and His Answer (10:4): Before the time of Moses, a man could divorce his wife by a mere word. To ensure a husband could not send his wife away out of anger, a delay was put in place. The husband had to take legal steps to get a bill of divorce.

Root Cause (10:5): Sometimes marriage is not what we hoped it would be. Why? Because we are sinners, married to sinners, raising children who are sinners. What lies behind divorce is hardness of heart. It could be the result of a husband's hardened heart, a wife's hardened heart or the hardened hearts of both. A hardened heart cannot fulfill God's design for marriage.

Acceptable Grounds for Divorce: What are the Biblical grounds for divorce and remarriage?

- The first is *adultery* (Matt 5:32a): Adultery disrupts the marriage bond. According to Torah, a person guilty of adultery was to be stoned to death (John 8:3 – 5; Lev 20:10). Rather than death, divorce became the preferred option. But divorce does not have to be the only option. Trust can be restored through forgiveness and reconciliation. If reconciliation cannot be attained, divorce is allowed and the innocent partner is free to remarry.
- The second valid reason for divorce is *abandonment* (1 Cor 7:12 – 15): Suppose two unbelievers marry and one later becomes a Christian. The couple are now unequally yoked. If the unbeliever decides he or she no longer desires to live with the believing spouse, the Christian is not obliged to remain married to the spouse who wishes to dissolve the marriage. Is the believer free to marry again? I believe so.
- The third valid reason for divorce is *mutual agreement* (1 Cor 7:10, 11): God's design is that marriage last *till death do us part*. In some cases, Christian couples cannot get along and may agree to separate, but they are not free to marry another person. They either remain apart or they reconcile. The good news is that there is more than enough grace to bring blessing even in troubled marriages.

The Pharisees wanted to talk about the grounds for divorce, Jesus wanted to talk about God's design for marriage. Having discussed the Biblical basis for divorce and remarriage, let's now explore God's plan for marriage.

God's Design for Marriage (10:6): Only a few years ago, we did not have to spell out that marriage is between a man and a woman. It was a given that God made human beings as a biological binary – male and female. Some may psychologically feel that gender is on a spectrum, but the biological fact is that gender is specific. If we are male, every cell in our body will have an XY chromosome. If we are female, every cell will have an XX chromosome. That is our biology. Our psychology may not feel that way because sin can deceive our perception of self. Through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit our psychology can align with our biology.

Marriage is a good gift from a great God. His design for marriage is heterosexual, monogamous and permanent. In this text, Jesus describes three features of the marriage bond – *severance*, *permanence*, and *alliance*.

Severance (10:7): When a couple marries, old ties are severed, new ties are formed. Marriages can struggle if the husband or wife have a hard time pulling out from under their parents' authority. The relationship between husband and wife is closer than the relationship between child and parent. As parents we must equip our children to one day leave the home so they might begin their own family.

The first feature of the marriage bond is *severance*. The second is *permanence*.

Permanence (10:8; Matt 19:5): The phrase *be joined to his wife* means *to glue* one person to another. The Greek word is *prokallaw*. This describes the closest possible relationship between two people. Parent and child are not glued together, but husband and wife are. God glues a man and a woman together through sexual union. This is why it is a bad idea to have sexual partners before marriage. Every person we have sex with means we have been glued to that person (1 Cor 6:16).

A child is a picture of husband and wife joined together. My DNA and my wife's DNA are fused together in each of our children. Children are not only an expression of gluing two people together, they also reflect the permanence of that union. This proves that God's ideal for a marriage is permanence.

The first feature of the marriage bond is *severance* – we leave mom and dad. Then *permanence* – two bodies are bonded together through sexual intimacy. The third feature is *alliance*.

Alliance (10:9): In this verse the term *joined* differs from that in Matthew. The word is *suzeugnumi* – which means to unite spiritually. In marriage two wills, two minds, two hearts, two souls, are allied so the two can live and serve as one.

Let's condense God's plan for marriage: it is a monogamous, heterosexual union to be maintained as long as they live. The marriage relationship should reflect the love between Christ and His church (Eph 5:31, 32).

By God's grace marriages thrive, and children are blessed.

II. The Value of Children (10:13 – 16)

Concerned for the Spiritual Welfare of Children (10:13): It was a standard practice for parents to bring their children to rabbis for a blessing. Jewish parents cared about the spiritual state of their children such that they brought them to Rabbi Jesus. They knew His touch would have an impact. The twelve hindered the children from going to Jesus. They assumed He was too busy or too important to be bothered by little children. We too care about the spiritual state of our children. How do we make the spiritual well being of our children our highest priority? Give them the Gospel. Disciple them. Pray with them and for them.

Since the spiritual well being of children was important to the Lord, when He saw what the 12 were doing, He got very angry at them. We arouse the Lord's anger when we stand in the way of God's will for our children.

Children Hindered from Coming to Jesus Angers Him (10:14): This passage is often used by the Catholic church to defend the practice of infant baptism. When doing this they are reading into the text not drawing the meaning out of the text. There is not the slightest hint of infant baptism in this passage. There is not a drop of water in this verse.

Kingdom Received, Kingdom Entered (10:15, 16): The kingdom means to be ruled by the King. Notice the kingdom is to be received and to enter. To enter the kingdom, we must first receive the King! We receive the King Jesus now so we might enter His kingdom later. We receive the King into our hearts through repentance and faith. We enter the kingdom through death and resurrection. If we refuse to receive King Jesus into our hearts in this life, we will not enter the Kingdom in the life to come. And children are a great example of what it means to receive King Jesus into our lives. Keep in mind we are to be child-like not childish. Jesus does not say we receive the kingdom while a child He says we receive the kingdom like a child. Coming to Jesus like a child is not coming to Him with the innocence of a child but with the receptivity of a child. The dependence children have on parents is a picture of the dependence we should have on the Lord. We come to Jesus with empty hands. We come to Jesus with our needs. We come to Jesus

trusting Him for our well being. We come to Jesus in humility. We come to Jesus utterly dependent on Him. We come to Jesus because He alone gives life.

The Lord can help us live according to His design for marriage and for raising children. And when we fail to live up to God's design know that the Lord gives grace to help us in our time of need. The blessings of the King are available to those who come to Him in faith. As we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus, we can live in the way God designed us to live.