

Mark 10:1-12

“The Divine Design For Marriage”

In the previous passage of scripture leading up to Ch 10 you recall that Jesus had been exhorting His disciples against contention and division. There was contention in the ranks regarding which one of them would be the greatest in the kingdom that they thought Jesus was preparing to establish. and Rather than *rebuke* them with regard to their desire to be great, He simply *refocused* them as to what true greatness was really all about and that if that’s what *you’re* about (greatness) here’s how to achieve it. By choosing willfully to become the last of all and the servant of all, even (and we might say especially) to those whom society might label as otherwise “insignificant.”

and In order to illustrate His point He grabbed a child (someone as socially insignificant as they came in Jesus’ day, even of less social status than a slave) and He said, “Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me.” “Whoever ministers *to*, shows hospitality *toward*, and shares the love of God *with* the least among you, the otherwise socially insignificant; ministers *to*, shows hospitality *toward*, shares the love of God *with* Me. (with Jesus)”

John said, “Speaking of doing things in Your name we saw a man casting out demons in Your name and we kept telling him to quit because he wasn’t in our group.” and Jesus said, “Don’t *discourage* him, *encourage* him, put away this denominational discord and division.” Just because someone isn’t in our group that doesn’t automatically place them in a category of doing things wrong. If they’re doing a work in Jesus name and God is blessing it we should be able to rejoice, because we’re all that body of Christ. Paul told the Corinthians, “*...if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.*” 1 Cor 12:26 and That’s the kind of mindset Jesus was seeking to arm His disciples with. You remember when Joshua was jealous for Moses’ sake, because Moses had appointed some leaders upon whom the Spirit came and they began to prophecy. But then there were a couple guys in the camp that Moses had appointed but didn’t make the meeting who began to prophesy as well. and Joshua was all, “Moses, my lord, forbid them!” and We read, “*Then Moses said to him, ‘Are you zealous for my sake? Oh, that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!’*” Num 11:29 It’s ok if people who aren’t in our circle have the Spirit of God poured out upon them and they do great things in the *name* of the Lord for the *glory* of the Lord. As a matter of fact our heart should be such that we wished *all* of God’s people were being used in radical ways to make an impact in the lives of the lost, and help solidify spiritually the saved.

J.B.’s disciples were hit with the same sense of jealousy when Jesus came on the scene. They said, “John, the One whom you testified of is beginning His own ministry now and everyone seems to be going to Him now, what are we going to do?” and John said, “Hey, this fulfills my joy because it’s not about me anyway, it’s about Him.” and He said, “*He must increase, but I must decrease.*” John 3:30 So this alarmist type reaction is nothing new to human nature, but Jesus is saying, “They don’t have to be in these 4 walls to be about *My*

business, don't get uptight, encourage one another and enjoy what the Lord is doing in people's lives."

and As Ch 9 comes to a close Jesus says, "Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another." Stay right with God and you'll enjoy a right relationship with each other. Get along; don't be involved in things that promote discord or division.

and It's with that, that Ch 10 begins. It's as though the Spirit of God led Mark to make the segue (transition) from the subject of getting along, and discouraging division into the incredibly sensitive subject of marriage and divorce.

It was an incredibly sensitive subject *then*, it's an incredibly sensitive subject *today*. Because if statistics bear any kind of substance than odds are that probably about ½ the people in this room (maybe more) have been directly impacted in some way due to divorce.

and Anytime you're dealing with something that has devastated so many people, or that so many people have taken part in for some reason or another, it gets real touchy. People's defenses come up. and I want you to know from the outset that God loves you, that I love you, that there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. However that doesn't in anyway take away from the reality of what God's word says on the subject and we do well to let our defenses down and just hear from the Lord on it. Could be (if this subject is relevant to you) that you have been completely/biblically justified in your course of action. Could be that what took place regarding marriage and divorce happened while you were in the world before you came to Christ. The bible is clear, "*...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.*" 2 Cor 5:17 Any sin you committed before you came to Christ is under the blood of Christ, it's not an issue you've been forgiven. It could be that you're in a 3rd category, you were in Christ when you got married, you had no grounds for divorce but you did it anyway. Well, the word of God to you is *repent*, divorce (contrary to popular opinion) isn't the unpardonable sin. But it is sin and shouldn't be swept under the "Well, I know God will forgive me so I'll just do it" rug. The bible is clear that we're not to use the grace of God as a cloak for sin in our lives.

"Well, what if I divorced with out biblical grounds, but I've remarried? Should I leave my current spouse and try to reconcile with my previous spouse?" No, the bible is clear that we're to live as we're called, repent of your sin before the Lord and be the man or woman of God that God has called you to be presently, in your current relationship. (As you can see I'm diving into topics before diving into the text, so let's begin)

Vs1-12

We've made mention of the fact that Jesus is now on an intentional route to Jerusalem whereby He will lay down His life for the sin the world. So in Vs 1 we read where He arose from there (that is the house in Capernaum, in the region of Galilee) and came to the region of Judea (continuing southward toward Jerusalem). and We read that once again the multitudes gathered to Him and *as He was accustomed* He taught them *again*.

and This is something that I point out occasionally but I think it's worth mentioning because we can have a tendency to perceive Jesus as this guy who everywhere He went He was working miracles and wowing people with miraculous power. and I would never take away from that, the fact is He worked all kinds of miracles, and people were always wowed by the

miraculous power of the Holy Spirit in His life. But the bible is careful to place the emphasis of His earthly ministry *not* upon His *touching* people (physically) so much as it is His *teaching* people powerfully, spiritually, and personally. That was His *custom*, His *manner of ministry* was to teach people the word of God. He did what we're doing (only on a much grander scale, He was the greatest teacher to ever walk the face of the earth I'm but a shadow under the stature of millions throughout the ages). But the point here is that His general modus operandi was the teaching of the word of God.

and It underscores our need to be taught with consistency and regularity when it says there that He taught them *again*. Why did He teach them *again*? Because they needed taught *again*, we have a need to be taught, and taught again, and reminded of the truth of God's word with consistency and regularity until the day we see Him face to face. We have tendency to forget God's goodness.

His grace and provision for us in Christ, we need to be taught and then have those things underscored in our lives and in our hearts over and over and over again. Peter, after he shared some things in the 1st Ch of his 2nd epistle said this, *"For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease."* 2 Peter 1:12-15 We need God's word sown into our heart, into our life over and over and over again, as long as we're in these tents we need to be regularly washed by the water of the word.

Vs2

I think the last 2 words are important to note here, "testing Him." They didn't ask this question out of genuine desire for insight or understanding from the heart of God; they were trying to trap Jesus on the horns of a dilemma. Because this was as controversial and sensitive subject in *that* day as it is in *this* day. Not to mention He was being trapped and tested in the same providence that Herod ruled over and Herod had arrested J.B. and ultimately he was beheaded because of the fact that he spoke out against Herod's marrying of his brother Phillip's wife. So there's some political pressure here, there's personal pressure being applied, pressure from the public persuasion and how they'll react to what He's saying. Because the question of it being lawful for a man to divorce his wife is really not ultimately they're seeking to extract from Him. Matt's gospel supplies some additional details from this encounter. and We read there that they said, *"Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"* Matt 19:3 The question of divorce wasn't really in view, the *reason* for a *justifiable* divorce was.

There were 2 main schools of thought put forth by the 2 most prominent Rabbis of that day. Because the law was clear (and the Pharisees knew this), Deut 24:1 says, *"When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,"* (and then it goes on to give some instruction concerning the situation. The point being that the fact of divorce wasn't in question, its *justification* was. and The whole debate stemmed over those 2 words, "Some uncleanness," what is it that constitutes *some uncleanness*?

and Much like in our own culture there was a *conservative* point of view, and there was a *liberal* point of view. Rabbi Shammai said that what constituted uncleanness was sexual immorality, you marry a lady and discover she's not a virgin you've discovered uncleanness in her you are free to obtain a divorce and maintain a clean conscience before God. That was the conservative and otherwise unpopular view. Rabbi Hillel said that just about anything you didn't like about her could constitute uncleanness, if she speaks ill of your relatives with in your presence. If she spoke to a strange man on the street, if she was a brawler (meaning that you could hear her in the house next door if there was an argument), if she messed up your meal; another liberal Rabbi (Akiba) even went as far as to say that if you found another woman who was "fairer in your eyes than was your wife." Kind of the "out with the old model in with the new" school of thought; but basically anything you believed to be a discretion could be considered unclean therefore you could put her away. and These Pharisees were seeking to pit Jesus against one group or the other and perhaps have Him arrested in the process by offending Herod.

Vs3-4

Once again Jesus takes the heart of the matter to the matter of the heart. and He basically gets a confession from their own lips that Moses didn't *command* anything, there would be *permission* but nowhere *did* God or *does* God ever *command* divorce.

Let me repeat that, nowhere in His word *did* God or *does* God command divorce. This liberal Rabbi Hillel purported that if a man had a "bad wife" it was his religious duty to divorce her. Jesus goes against that; He says that divorce is a concession not a command. That God made a concession because of the hardness of the human heart, but He never commanded it. and When God made the concession it wasn't with the idea of making it easy, but rather placing some context around it, make some inconvenient procedures concerning and helping to protect the woman in the midst of it to try and discourage it. Because there's nothing *constructive* about divorce, it's *destructive*, it destroys and devastates people. The bible is clear that God hates divorce, He didn't ordain it, He didn't design it, it's the result of the hardness of the human heart.

Now when Jesus talks about the "hardness" of heart here, whose heart is in view. Is it the heart of the offender? That their heart would be so hard, so cold, so callused that they would violate the sanctity of the marriage union and so God made an allowance to remove yourself from that situation? Or is it a reference to the heart that's been offended, who can't find a place for forgiveness and reconciliation even though that's God's 1st desire in the given situation? I would suppose that there maybe both understandings, either/or in view.

But I love what Jesus does next here, because He makes a transition from the negative to the positive, from the discussion of divorce to the mind boggling concept of remaining married. Perhaps you've had a rough go at it, I have no real way of knowing who here has a wonderful relationship with their spouse and who here was discussing the possibility of divorce this past week. But here's something to consider; what about actually looking *into* the word of God, employing the principles *of* the word of God, forgiving one another and making it work to the *glory* of God? That's the heart of God. Listen to these words out of Malachi, "*Have we not all one Father? Has not one God created us? Why do we deal treacherously with one another...*" *Mal 2:10* and He says, "*And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of the Lord*

with tears, With weeping and crying; So He does not regard the offering anymore, Nor receive it with goodwill from your hands. Yet you say, 'For what reason?' Because the Lord has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant. But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth. 'For the Lord God of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence,'" Mal 2:13-16 I read a statistic that said that studies show that 85% of couples who are considering divorce, that stay married, in 5 years, they are "happy," 60% of divorced men and 73% of divorced women with children after one year of divorce feel like their divorce was a mistake. Which is to say that the people who reconcile are glad they did, and the people who don't regret it; why? Because God never intended divorce to enter in to the equation, the destruction of divorce is not the Divine ideal, notice.

Vs6-9

You see Jesus takes them from talking about divorce to God's intent for a man and a woman to remain married. It wasn't that they didn't understand God's word concerning divorce, they were *all too* familiar with that. The problem is that they didn't understand God's word, and God's heart concerning marriage. and Let me tell you that when it comes to having a fruitful and enduring message focusing on marriage rather than divorce is an essential element. It's as though Jesus said, "Why talk about what it takes to be divorced, let's talk about what it takes to be married." If you want to keep a marriage together than divorce can't enter the equation as an option when things become difficult, not *if* things become difficult, but *when* things become difficult, because they will.

Anytime you get to sinners together, there will be problems from time to time along the way. Someone has said that marriage is like a mirror, it reflects what we put into it. and As long as divorce is lingering in the back of your mind as a viable option, the odds of it becoming a reality are greatly increased.

and It's sort of shocking to us that Jesus takes us back to the beginning. We might have a tendency to think, "We live in a modern era, times have changed, we need contemporary input into our situation." Jesus says, "Forget about that, let's go back to God's original design, back to Gen Ch 1 and Ch 2 and see what God has to say about the marriage relationship."

(Which is the 1st thing we want to highlight by the way); the bible is clear that *God* made them male and female, that *God* ordained the marriage covenant, He's the One who established it, it's His rules that apply to it, we're *His* creation, like or not we're subject to *His* rules. Man may have his perspective, he may see things a certain way, that's irrelevant, man didn't institute the marriage union, God did, so what's important is what does *He* have to say and show concerning it.

and There are all sorts of things to be gleaned from this passage. and It's sorta sad but it's necessary 1st of all that we acknowledge the fact that pertaining to marriage God made them *male and female*. He did not make 2 males, He did not make 2 females, He made a man and a woman and brought them together. We also note that God didn't make them male and *females*, Adam didn't have a smorgasbord of ladies brought to him. God gave him one and that's God's design, one man with one woman for life.

There is to be a leaving, a forsaking of all others, and a cleaving to one another. “For this reason” the reason that God made them male and female, “a man shall leave his father and mother and be *joined* to his wife.” and You’ve probably heard before that the word “joined” carries with it the idea of being cemented together, glued, bonded together. Once a cement bond takes place, it doesn’t separate smoothly, it’s a busted up broken mess. The idea here is that of yoking 2 oxen together. There has to be a sense of unity and purpose about the relationship, if one ox decides to go one way and the other another way it doesn’t work. If one decides to rest while the other wants to work, it makes for a problem, you’ve got to become one in purpose, in your goals and objectives, you’ve got to work together.

and The unity is to be so tight, so overriding that its stronger than a blood bond, did you catch that? Your relationship to your spouse is to be closer nit and of higher priority than even that of your children. and We all know how our hearts go out to our children, yet that relationship changes. There’s to be a severance of that in time (with relationship to them starting their own lives with their own spouses) the point being that the forsaking of our mother and father (as tight as that relationship might be) should and will come before the forsaking of our own wife, or husband. We’re to love our wives as our own bodies, forsaking anyone and everything else before we forsake our wife. and Wives you’re to recognize the order of unity that God has established, your husband is to love you unselfishly, sacrificially, but you’re to realize and respect the fact that God holds him accountable for your relationship and in that you’re to submit to his authority accordingly. No one said that marriage was easy, that’s why we’re to count the cost and prayerfully and carefully consider these things before we say, “I do.”

In Vs 7-9 Jesus makes no less than 4 references to the unity of the marriage bond. and In Vs 9 He draws attention to the fact that marriage is not a social contract that can be dissolved by simply signing a piece of paper, it’s spiritually binding before God. Notice “God” has joined it together, therefore man has no right to terminate it.

Vs10-12

Now this is where it’s critical that we receive the whole counsel of the word of God. Because if this were the only time that Jesus spoke on divorce, or the only time the word of God addressed divorce we’d have to conclude that there’s never a time or a reason that justifies a divorce. However Jesus did speak on the subject, God’s word *does* address the subject. and The bible lays out 2 clear cut reasons whereby divorce *isn’t commanded* but understood and accepted by God with out the innocent party incurring any guilt.

The 1st we’ve touched on, sexual immorality. In Matt’s gospel we have those additional details. Jesus said, “*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.*” **Matt 19:9** The word translated “sexual immorality” there is the word “Porneia” from which we get our word “pornography” or “pornographic” it’s a pretty broad word and time forbids us to get into all the details and the painful scenarios that could stem to qualify under this banner. This isn’t an exhaustive teaching, but a general overview. There’s no way we could cover every scenario that would need to be prayerfully and carefully sought out in the word of God. Those are situations for personal pastoral type input, we can’t pretend to cover every painful angle on a Sunday morning. But the obvious implication is that if your spouse has been

with another person and has violated the sanctity of your marriage union. Then God doesn't command divorce, but concedes to the fact that if you can't find it in your heart to reconcile you're free to divorce and remarry in the Lord.

In 1st Cor Ch 7 Paul also lets us know that if you're married to an unbelieving spouse and they abandon you in that relationship, then you're free from that relationship and able to remarry. If they're willing to stay with you, you're to stay, they just might come to Christ through the witness in your life. But if they go (notice they initiate it not you) then you're to let them depart.

You should know that the bible doesn't qualify things like incompatibility, misery, irreconcilable differences, "we don't love each other anymore" as justifiable means for divorce. "What about brutality" again seek out pastoral input for your personal situation. There are things would obviously make for a necessary *separation*, but in that time we're not single, we're married, but separated. "Well what if while we're separated my spouse cheats on me?" Then they've violated the sanctity of the marriage union, you're free. But if not the reason adultery is committed when a person marries another is because God never acknowledged the divorce in the 1st place. The state may've, friends and family may've, but God didn't.

and I know you guys that studies like this can be hard to swallow, as a matter of fact in Matt's gospel the disciples said to Jesus, "Man, if that's how it is it'd be better not to marry at all!" and Jesus said, "Well, to those who can accept it, fine, but most people don't have the gift of singleness and they need to be married." But that's why it's so important to count the cost and seek the Lord *before* you get married, because once you've entered into that covenant before God and man, God holds you to it. and Because the marriage union is to demonstrate God's love for us, Christ's love for His church that's one of the reasons He hates divorce. Because when we abandon our spouse it destroys the picture because no matter how difficult we are, or self seeking we become or whatever...God will *never* abandon us, He will be faithful to us. and That's what I'd leave you with today. God hates divorce, but you need to know that God doesn't hate you.

Is divorce sin, or at least the result of sin? Yes, is it the unpardonable sin? No, what's important is that you respond to the word of God and the Spirit of God today, start fresh with the Lord, confess your sin, receive His forgiveness and honor Him from this point forward. Submit your life to Him as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable as your reasonable service to the glory of His name.

Prayer Points:

God we're so thankful that You are a gracious and merciful God. Yet we don't want to take advantage of Your grace to the benefit of our own sinful agendas. Help us to walk in holiness, consecrated *over* to you, dedicated to our spouse as *unto* You. and Father I want to pray for every marriage here, that you would bind together and sanctify the relationships. That You would teach true unity, and godly order in the marriage unions. and For those perhaps considering marriage that they wouldn't be driven by emotions, or passions and desires of the flesh, but rather that they would be led of Your Spirit to the one You've ordained for them till death do they part. Lord minister Your love and Your healing touch to each life here where each need may lie.

and Perhaps the need in your life is to know Jesus in the 1st place, you've never given your heart to Christ. and If you're married you need to know that your marriage is not what it could be and not what it should be with out placing Jesus in the center of it because God is the One who ordained the marriage union. But whether your married or your single, if you don't know Christ your primary need right now is the forgiveness of your sin and your reconciliation to God through the cross of Jesus Christ So if that's where you're at and God is dealing with you today, surrender to Him, let Him bring healing and wholeness to your life and forgive you of your sin.