

**THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT SERIES**  
**“DIVORCE - FROM A HARDENED HEART”**  
**Text: Matthew 5:31–32**

**Key Word:** Divorce

**Key Thought:** Can There be Life After Divorce?

## INTRODUCTION

As we continue this preaching series of the Sermon on the Mount today, we are going to look at a subject that once again is not a very comfortable one to talk about. This subject is one that draws strong emotions in many people because of the way that they have been affected by it. Today’s subject was so important that Jesus included it in the wonderful Sermon on the Mount. It is the third of six areas in which our righteousness is to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

\*\*\* According to a 2001 study by George Barna of the Barna research institute; Overall, 33% of all born again individuals who have been married have gone through a divorce, which is statistically identical to the 34% incidence among non-born again adults. \*\*\*

George Barna

\*\*\* A stable, two-parent home has no equal in terms of its benefits to children. Over 80 percent of inmates in Colorado prisons come from homes where one or both parents were not around. Risks of teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse, incarceration, poor performance in school and many other indicators are multiples greater for children of divorce than for children of two-parent homes. The data are undeniable. Divorce has a life-long effect on children that, for many, is never overcome. \*\*\*

Dave Schultheis

*“2002 Children of Divorce Protection Act”*

What does God have to say about divorce? There are a variety of opinions offered as to how God feels from some saying it is an unpardonable sin to “God does not care.” Understanding what God says about the subject can help us to deal with the ever important question **“How is the church to deal with it and how can we help people who have and are going through it?”** It is my hope today that if you have been through this that you will gain comfort in knowing what God says about the subject. I also hope that this message may help you to see the seriousness of marriage. Lastly, I hope that we all realize that no matter what our situation that God loves us and that if we fall on the side that is contrary to God’s will, that there is forgiveness in Jesus.

Today in order for us to understand what Jesus is going to say about divorce, we will look at the original intent for marriage, the state of marriage during the days of Moses, the state of marriage during the time of Jesus and then God's true intent for marriage.

*"It has been said, 'Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.'  
32. But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery."*

*Matthew 5:31,32*

Jesus in the previous verses was saying that it was sinful to look too long at a woman and that if we looked at a woman who was not our spouse with lust in our heart, that we had committed adultery with her in our hearts.

"The lawyers and Pharisees who were listening to this may have rationalized that the Law allows for divorce and therefore a married man can obtain the woman that he is lusting after as his wife if he desires."

*Lightfoot  
"Commentary on Matthew"*

## **I. THE ORIGINAL INTENT FOR MARRIAGE (Genesis 2:20-24)**

*"God desired that man have a suitable helper so he took a rib from Adam and made Eve for him!"*

*Genesis 2:20*

Adam was excited with this new mate! Our English does not do the passage justice.  
**Adam was one happy man!**

*"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."*

*Genesis 2:24*

We see an early pattern set forth of **LEAVE-CLEAVE-BECOME**. God shows us that we are to make a new life together and during the course of that effort, we should become inseparable. God intended marriage to be a beautiful thing that makes each person's life better.

## I. THE ORIGINAL INTENT FOR MARRIAGE (Genesis 2:20-24) (Contd.)

God's original intent was for a male and female to come together and build a life together that was so focussed in purpose that they became one flesh. The words "*Cleave (united) to*" carries "*the idea of firm, permanent attachment, as in gluing.*"

"In marriage a man and woman are to be so closely joined that they become "*one flesh,*" which involves spiritual as well as physical oneness. In marriage God brings a husband and wife together in a unique physical and spiritual bond that reaches to the very depths of their souls. **As God designed it, marriage is to be the welding of two people together into one unit, the blending of two minds, two wills, two sets of emotions, two spirits.** It is a bond the Lord intends to be indissoluble as long as both partners are alive. The Lord created sex and procreation to be the fullest expression of that oneness, and the intimacies of marriage are not to be shared with any other human being."

John MacArthur

*"New Testament Commentary Matthew"*

**It was not too long before sin perverted the marriage relationship in Genesis 3. Over time it got worse to the point that we get to the time of Moses.**

## II. THE STATE OF MARRIAGE DURING THE TIME OF MOSES (Deuteronomy 24:1-4)

During the time of Moses, man became increasingly sinful and that affected their marriage relationships. **Men began to add concubines (or literally "half-wives") to the marriage union.**

*"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, 2. and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, 3. and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, 4. then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.*

*Deuteronomy 24:1-4*

## II. THE STATE OF MARRIAGE DURING THE TIME OF MOSES (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) (Contd.)

Remember this passage when we get to Jesus' day because the religious leaders will use this passage as their reason for their views on divorce. **IN THIS PASSAGE MOSES NEITHER ENCOURAGES NOR COMMANDS DIVORCE.** Sending the wife away was becoming an increasing problem during the days of Moses. **God opened this door so that women would be protected and not accused of adultery which was punishable by death.**

**A man was permitted to have other women according to their interpretation of the law as long as that woman was not the wife of another. Because of the perversion of God's law and the hardness of men's hearts God allowed a certificate of divorce to be offered.**

*“I hate divorce’ says the LORD God of Israel, ‘and I hate a man’s covering himself with violence as well as with his garment,’ says the LORD Almighty. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith.”*

*Malachi 2:16*

God says that He hates divorce, but God allowed it. What that tells us is that even when something happens in which God would allow a divorce, **we should try to do all we can to make it work and only look at divorce as the last option.** We need to distinguish between THE **PERFECT AND PERMISSIVE WILL OF GOD**

## III. THE STATE OF MARRIAGE DURING THE TIME OF JESUS AND TODAY (Matthew 19:1-9)

*“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?”**”*

*4. “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.”*

*7. **“Why then,” they asked, “did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?”**”*

### III. THE STATE OF MARRIAGE DURING THE TIME OF JESUS AND TODAY (Matthew 19:1-9) (Contd.)

8. Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.
9. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.”
10. **The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.”**

Matthew 19:3-10

**There were two schools of thought regarding divorce during Jesus’ day, one said that divorce was only allowed in the case of adultery, the second said that you could divorce for any reason.**

The religious leaders that held to the divorce for any reason appealed to Deuteronomy 24. They focussed on the words “*finds no favour in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her*” **to mean that anything goes.** A man could divorce his wife if she burned dinner.

**Jewish historian Josephus** who lived around this time period with the utmost indifference said about divorcing his wife,

*“About this time I put away (divorced) my wife, who had borne me three children, not being pleased with her manners.”*

Men were quick to exercise this supposed right during Jesus time. Let us look at what Jesus says in Matthew 19:1-9 to see if these people were correctly understanding what God’s Word was saying.

Verse 3 reflected the practice of the day. In verses 4-6 Jesus goes right back to Genesis and then He corrects their misinterpretation of Moses by saying in verse 8 that Moses **PERMITTED DIVORCE, NOT COMMANDED IT BECAUSE OF THE HARDNESS OF THEIR HEARTS.** In verse 9 Jesus gives God’s view on divorce, later Paul will expand that a bit and we will look at that later.

#### IV. GOD'S TRUE INTENT FOR MARRIAGE (Matthew 5:31-32)

**God's original intention was that one man would have one woman until one of them dies. Jesus says that if a person divorces their spouse for any reason other than adultery, they themselves will be committing adultery when they consummate another marriage.**

Why does God make such a big deal out of this? Remember

*"WHAT GOD HAS JOINED TOGETHER, LET NO  
MAN SEPARATE!"*

*Matthew 19:6*

Marriage is a God ordained institution. **Later in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16 Paul tells us that if we are married to an unbeliever and they leave, then we are free to marry again.**

What about if we are in a bad marriage, wouldn't it be better for the kids to divorce?

"This is probably the chief myth propagated by those unwilling to address divorce. Not only do the statistics show otherwise, but there are no data to support the myth. Moreover, how do we define a "bad marriage?" A 1997 book called A Generation at Risk by two Penn State sociologists, shows that less than a third of divorces result from marriages where abuse, neglect, or even high-octane fighting is the norm. In the other two-thirds of divorces, Mom and Dad simply grow apart. Easy divorce is a temptation many in this situation will give in to. Since most of these divorces involve children, these children will pay a much heavier price than Mom and Dad for the divorce. Rocky marriages can be saved and are not doomed to failure. Our kids stand to benefit immensely if we will simply make the effort."

Dave Schultheis

*"2002 Children of Divorce Protection Act"*

Some would wonder about being married to a person who is a substance abuser of physically abusive? WE should try to get help for the person, but there comes a point where that person has abandoned you for their substance, drugs or alcohol. The world tells us to cut our losses and run at the first sign of trouble, but some are seeing the wisdom of trying to work things out.

#### IV. GOD'S TRUE INTENT FOR MARRIAGE (Matthew 5:31-32) (Contd.)

"I originally thought that staying together in turmoil was more traumatic than making the break. I was wrong. . . . Divorce may be the only recourse in cases of drug and alcohol addiction, physical abuse, severe emotional cruelty or permanent abandonment. But on balance, people could spare themselves enormous suffering if they would stop their permissive acceptance of divorce and treat marriage as a lifelong commitment not to be entered into or wiggled out of lightly."

Diane Nedbed secular counsellor, psychologist  
*"The Case Against Divorce "*

If I just get tired of my wife or decide I need a younger model, and then decide to leave her and marry the other person, in God's eyes I am an adulterer. If you are having troubles at least seek Christian counselling before throwing in the towel.

Statistically, 86% of people who go for help already have a third person involved making it very difficult to fix things. 86% of problem marriages in which there is no third person involvement can be fixed and can go on and be happy and productive. The couple just has to be willing to put in the work needed to fix it, BOTH OF THEM.

God's plan is one man for one woman until death. God is sympathetic to us in cases of abandonment, adultery and abuse. But even in those terrible situations, we should still try to make divorce the last option.

#### CONCLUSION

In closing I want to say that God loves you and wants the best for you, that is why He laid out His will for us.

Young people, marriage is a serious thing that you need to think long and hard about before you jump in. Being cute or hot looking is not enough to build a solid marriage on. If you are a Christian, you need to marry a Christian. You need to do this because if Jesus is the center of your life and not the center of the life of your spouse, you will have problems.

There was no such thing as dating in the Bible. If you date, only date those you would be willing to marry. **If a person is abusive or a substance abuser when you are dating, don't think they will get better just because you put a ring on their finger.** God intended marriage to be one of the greatest things that two people can share, His plan is for the two to become one flesh. The grass is not greener on the other side. It still needs to be cut and fertilized. The weeds will still need to be pulled out.

\*\*\* Walter Davis 33 decided divorce was the best alternative for his marriage. A few months later he applied to a computer dating service. He filled out an exhaustive questionnaire, paid a hefty fee and waited for the results. Out of 30,000 prospects the computer picked out only four people who would be compatible with him. The first name on the list was his ex-wife. \*\*\*

Modified from “Jesus on Divorce” by Jeffery Anselmi

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Date: March 16/25

Place: FCA

Time: 10:30 Am

Song: I Surrender All - C



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George Barna

**How Is the Church to Deal with it and How Can We Help People Who Have and Are Going Through It?**

**I. THE ORIGINAL INTENT FOR MARRIAGE (Genesis 2:20-24)**

The words “*Cleave (united) to*” carries “*the idea of firm, permanent attachment, as in gluing.*”

**II. THE STATE OF MARRIAGE DURING THE TIME OF MOSES (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) - Malachi 2:16**

**III. THE STATE OF MARRIAGE DURING THE TIME OF JESUS AND TODAY (Matthew 19:1-9)**

**IV. GOD’S TRUE INTENT FOR MARRIAGE (Matthew 5:31-32) - Matthew 19:6; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16**