

Matthew 19:1-9: Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. ² And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. ³ And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" ⁴ He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵ and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." ⁷ They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" ⁸ He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

Intro: WCF 24.2: Marriage [define here] was ordained for the mutual help of husband and wife, for the increase of mankind with legitimate issue, and of the Church with an holy seed; and for preventing of uncleanness.

John Piper: The deepest and highest meaning of marriage – not sexual intimacy, as good as that is, not friendship, as good as that is, not mutual helpfulness, as good as that is, not childbearing and childrearing, as good as that is, but **the flesh-and-blood display in the world of the covenant-keeping love between Christ and his church.**

1) We want to uphold God's Biblical standard concerning marriage. 2) We also want people who have failed in this area to know there is grace, mercy, & forgiveness for all who repent, trust in Jesus, & then, by the power of the Holy Spirit, seek to obey what Jesus teaches us in these verses about marriage and divorce.

We see Jesus confront false teachers, the Pharisees, by pointing them back to God's Word in Genesis which shows that divorce is against God's righteous command because marriage is God permanently joining one man and one woman in a one flesh union that should never be separated. Divorce is permitted in the case of sexual immorality.

1. Jesus Keeps Loving And Healing

2. The Pharisees Test Jesus By Asking Him About Divorce

3. Jesus Teaches That There Are Only Two Genders

4. Jesus Teaches That The Words Of Moses In Genesis Are The Words Of God

5. Jesus Teaches That Marriage Is Primary, Personal, And Permanent

6. The Pharisees Ask Jesus A Second Question About The Law Of Moses And Divorce

Matthew 19:7: They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?"

a. Moses did not command divorce: The Pharisees are just plain misinterpreting and misusing Deuteronomy 24!

Deuteronomy 24:1-4: When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, ² and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, ³ and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, ⁴ then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the LORD.

1) These verses do not command divorce but describe what men in Israel are doing. The verses actually command that if after a man divorces his wife for some indecency & if she marries another man, then if that new husband divorces her or dies, the first husband cannot take her back. It's actually a kind of warning/deterrent from divorce!

2) What is the "some indecency" in verse 1? Some kind of sexual sin. **D. A. Carson:** The best assumption is that the indecency was any lewd, immoral behavior, sometimes including, but not restricted to, adultery . . . homosexuality or sexual misconduct that fell short of intercourse.

Possibly adultery, but the penalty for adultery for both parties was death, according to God's law.

Deuteronomy 22:22: If a man is found lying with the wife of another man, both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman. So you shall purge the evil from Israel.

John MacArthur: If you knew in your society that adultery ended in death, you might do a lot of things but you generally would control yourself just short of adultery, true? I mean, you really wouldn't want to die. & so, apparently what happened was, there were people who were entering into shameless indecent, habitual indulgence in sexual sin or other sin, but coming just short of actually committing adultery, acts that stop just short of adultery. & that appears to be what happened in Deuteronomy 24. Here's a woman who is shameful, who is vile, & she stops short of adultery so the death penalty cannot be applied, but she commits these evil things & her husband just divorces her.

b. Adultery is a big deal to God – He warns us because He loves us: Proverbs 6:32: He who commits adultery lacks sense; he who does it destroys himself.

- **Proverbs 7:1-27:** My son, keep my words and treasure up my commandments with you; keep my commandments and live; keep my teaching as the apple of your eye; bind them on your fingers; write them on the tablet of your heart. Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and call insight your intimate friend, to keep you from the forbidden woman, from the adulteress with her smooth words. For at the window of my house I have looked out through my lattice, and I have seen among the simple, I have perceived among the youths, a young man lacking sense, passing along the street near her corner, taking the road to her house in the twilight, in the evening, at the time of night and darkness. And behold, the woman meets him, dressed as a prostitute, wily of heart. She is loud and wayward; her feet do not stay at home; now in the street, now in the market, and at every corner she lies in wait. She seizes him and kisses him, and with bold face she says to him, "I had to offer sacrifices, and today I have paid my vows; so now I have come out to meet you, to seek you eagerly, and I have found you. I have spread my couch with coverings, colored linens from Egyptian linen; I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes, and cinnamon. Come, let us take our fill of love till morning; let us delight ourselves with love. For my husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey; he took a bag of money with him; at full moon he will come home." With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him. All at once he follows her, as an ox goes to the slaughter, or as a stag is caught fast till an arrow pierces its liver; as a bird rushes into a snare; he does not know that it will cost him his life. And now, O sons, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth. Let not your heart turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths, for many a victim has she laid low, and all her slain are a mighty throng. Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.

- **1 Corinthians 6:9-10:** Do you not know that the unrighteous¹ will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

- **Hebrews 13:4:** Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

7. Jesus Corrects The Pharisees And Teaches That Hard Hearts Are The Central Reason For Divorce

Matthew 19:8: He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so."

a. Divorce was never God's ideal way or plan: Any divorce, whether allowed by God's Word or not, is a result of hardness of heart: Divorce was never & never has been God's intention! That's why Jesus goes all the way back to Genesis & all the way back to a time when there was no sin! No sin, no hardness of heart! No hardness of heart, no divorce! Even no allowable divorce because no one would commit adultery! No one would abandon their spouse!

D. A. Carson: Both Matthew and Mark show that Jesus taught that Moses' concession reflected not the true creation ordinance but the hardness of men's hearts. Divorce is not part of the Creator's perfect design. If Moses permitted it, he did so because sin can be so vile that divorce is to be preferred to continued "indecency." This is

not to say that the person who, according to what Moses said, divorced his spouse was actually committing sin in so doing; but the fact that divorce could even be considered testified that there had already been sin in the marriage. Therefore, any view of divorce (taught in either testament) that sees the problem only in terms of what may or may not be done has already overlooked a basic fact: divorce is never to be thought of a God-ordained, morally neutral option but as evidence of sin, of hardness of heart. The fundamental attitude of the Pharisees to the question is wrong.

b. Jesus again points back to the beginning when there was no sin: V. 8: but from the beginning it was not so. **Matthew 19:4-6:** He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male & female, & said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father & his mother & hold fast to his wife, & they shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

8. Jesus Commands The Highest Standard Of Commitment In Marriage And Warns Against Adultery

Matthew 19:9: "And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."

a. This would apply to the wife in our modern day as well: whoever divorces her husband, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.

b. Jesus teaches that if you divorce your spouse & marry someone else, then you are committing adultery: If you wrongly divorce your spouse, in God's eyes you are still married, so to sleep with another person would be adultery.

Wayne Grudem: The implication of Jesus's statement is that divorce for reasons other than adultery does not actually dissolve a marriage in the eyes of God.

Jesus is again warning His people not to divorce! Divorce is bad! Divorce is wrong! And if you do divorce and remarry, then you are committing adultery.

c. Jesus does allow for divorce for sexual immorality: In the case of sexual sin, like adultery, you may choose to divorce. But you do not have to divorce. Some argue this needs to be continual, unrepentant adultery.

D. A. Carson: Jesus is then saying that divorce & remarriage always involve evil; but as Moses permitted it b/c of the hardness of human hearts, so also does he – but now on the sole grounds of porneia (sexual sin of any sort).

David Platt: The Pharisees were searching for circumstances in which it would be possible to end a marriage relationship, but Jesus says that we are not looking for reasons to divorce. The goal is not to look for a loophole in the law; instead, we are longing for reconciliation to occur. Remember that this teaching in Matthew 19 comes right on the heels of the parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18, where Jesus taught His disciples to forgive extravagantly. The implication is that we are to work and pray toward reconciliation and restoration, not because it's easy, but because Christ is in you. Divorce is possible, but because of the Gospel, it's not inevitable.

d. God divorced Israel for adultery against Him: Jeremiah 3:6-8: The LORD said to me in the days of King Josiah: "Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel, how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore? ⁷ And I thought, 'After she has done all this she will return to me,' but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. ⁸ She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore.

e. Paul also gives a Biblical reason for divorce – abandonment: 1 Corinthians 7:13-15: If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving

husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.¹⁵ But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.

Many would include physical abuse in this.

f. Each marriage/divorce case is different: This is why you should be eager to bring your situation before the elders of your church for counsel and direction.

g. After a divorce, the spouse who has been faithful in the marriage is free to remarry: If you did not do the cheating or committing adultery, if your spouse repeatedly cheats on you and has sex with others and does not repent, or if your spouse abandons you, then you are free to divorce your spouse and remarry. Because you have been faithful, but they has not, you are free to remarry, but the offending/sinning spouse is not free to remarry.

WCF Chapter 24, Of Marriage And Divorce: 5. Adultery or fornication committed after a contract, being detected before marriage, giveth just occasion to the innocent party to dissolve that contract, (Mat 1:18-20). In the case of adultery after marriage, it is lawful for the innocent party to sue out a divorce, (Mat 5:31-32): and, after the divorce, to marry another, as if the offending party were dead, (Mat 19:9; Rom 7:2-3).

6. Although the corruption of man be such as is apt to study arguments unduly to put asunder those whom God hath joined together in marriage: yet, nothing but adultery, or such willful desertion as can no way be remedied by the Church, or civil magistrate, is cause sufficient of dissolving the bond of marriage, (Mat 19:8-9; 1Co 7:15; Mat 19:6): wherein, a public and orderly course of proceeding is to be observed; and the persons concerned in it not left to their own wills, and discretion, in their own case, (Deu 24:1-4).

h. Practical applications: David Platt: 1) If you are married, love your spouse in a way that portrays the Gospel. 2) If you are considering divorce [Biblical grounds], remember the preciousness and power of the Gospel. 3) If you are divorced for a Biblical reason and single, rest in the Gospel in your singleness or possibly in a future marriage. 4) If you are divorced for an unbiblical reason and single, repent and rely on the Gospel to glorify God in your singleness. 5) If you are divorced for an unbiblical reason and married, repent and reflect the Gospel in your current marriage.

i. Remember God’s unfailing, never changing, lavish love: Article: One of the ways in which God assures His people of His love for them is to describe Himself as their husband. For example, the prophet says to Judah, “Your Maker is your husband—the LORD Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth” (Isaiah 54:5; cf. Jeremiah 3:14; 31:32). Israel often proved to be an unfaithful spouse, committing spiritual adultery by worshiping false gods and forsaking the Lord. In fact, it was due to idolatry that God spoke this word:

“I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries. . . . Because Israel’s immorality mattered so little to her, she defiled the land and committed adultery with stone and wood. In spite of all this, her unfaithful sister Judah did not return to me with all her heart, but only in pretense” (Jeremiah 3:8–10).

In this passage, God warns Judah against making the same mistakes that Israel, their neighbors to the north, had made. In their idolatry, Israel had polluted the land and broken their covenant with God. Due to the enormity of their sin, God punished Israel, and He illustrates that punishment like this: He “divorced” Israel and sent them away—a reference to the Assyrian invasion, which resulted in Israel’s removal from their homeland (see 2 Kings 17:5–7). Even given the example of Israel’s “divorce,” Judah remained unfaithful, as if daring God to mete out a similar punishment on them.

Having just cause, God, the faithful Husband, “divorced” Israel, His unfaithful wife. To make matters worse, God had asked, “If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again?” (Jeremiah 3:1). The answer, according to the Mosaic Law, was “no”; a man who had divorced his wife could not later remarry her (Deuteronomy 24:1–4). According to God’s metaphor, Israel seems to be in a hopeless situation: she has been divorced by God, and, according to the law, she can never be accepted back.

But then comes a surprising twist: God’s mercy intervenes: “‘Return, faithless Israel,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will frown on you no longer, for I am faithful,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will not be angry forever’” (Jeremiah 3:12).

In the same passage in which God sets up a scenario of hopelessness for Israel, He invites His people to “return” to Him and promises that His anger will end. Could it be that God’s love is stronger than His people’s rebellion? The Lord doubles down on His invitation:

“‘Return, faithless people,’ declares the Lord, ‘for I am your husband. I will choose you . . . and bring you to Zion’” (Jeremiah 3:14).

God used the shocking illustration of a “divorce” of Israel to stress their guilt before Him. But God never cut Israel off unilaterally for all time. He only asked that they return to Him and experience His goodness. In fact, after God says that He “divorced” Israel, He commands them three times to “return” (Jeremiah 3:11, 14, 23).

The apostle Paul explains, “Did God reject his people? By no means! . . . God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. . . . At the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace. . . . Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! . . . And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again” (Romans 11:1–6, 11, 23).

Another illustration of God’s amazing goodness is found in the story of the prophet Hosea. God actually commanded Hosea to marry a prostitute (Hosea 1:2). She did not remain faithful to Hosea. Then, while his wife was living in immorality, the Lord commanded Hosea to find her and buy her back. God’s purpose was to show the greatness of His grace: “Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods” (Hosea 3:1).

Hosea’s grace toward his unfaithful wife is a model of God’s grace toward His unfaithful people. Israel had been chosen and loved by God, yet they were unfaithful to Him by way of idolatry. In Jeremiah 3, God gives them a “bill of divorcement,” but then He pleads with them to come back. In Hosea, God pursues and redeems His estranged “wife” and seeks to continue His relationship with her. Both stories provide an unforgettable picture of God’s strong, unending love for His covenant people.

Once, the incredulous disciples asked Jesus, “Who can be saved?” Jesus assured them that salvation is based on God’s power and grace, not man’s efforts: “What is impossible with man is possible with God” (Luke 18:27).

Jesus was counted as the unfaithful spouse on that cross, & He was cursed & died for us! And He is risen!

We see Jesus confront false teachers, the Pharisees, by pointing them back to God’s Word in Genesis which shows that divorce is against God’s righteous command because marriage is God permanently joining one man and one woman in a one flesh union that should never be separated. Divorce is permitted in the case of sexual immorality.

Christ Jesus Came To Change Your Heart
Our Hardness Caused Marriages To Part
But This Was Not So From The Start
Yet Moses Couldn’t Change Your Heart
It’s Christ Who Made Our Sin Depart

He Died And Rose, Our Strong Rampart
Now New Soft Hearts He Does Impart
So We Stay Married, Not Apart
For We’re Christ’s Holy Work Of Art
Because He Loves And Won Your Heart!