

## DON'T DIVORCE THE LITTLE ONES

*God cares for the humble, dependent & vulnerable, for it is these who'll enter His kingdom.*

Covenant Presbyterian Church

**MARK 10:1-16**

10 February A.D. 2013

- PRINCIPLE** reflects or shows God's heart and desires about something; principled affections for Christ and his ways
- PRACTICAL** how we apply or act out God's heart, and what we do when we fail; practical wisdom drives the applications we make out of abiding principles
- PERSONAL** our experiences (our responses to events and circumstances) which can blind us and confuse us about God's ways or build in us godly character

**Mark 10:1 Context:** Jesus moves his closer to the center of conflict where he will be killed (Jerusalem).

- 1 Getting up, He went from there to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan; crowds gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more *began* to teach them.

Nearly one third of Luke (most of chapters 19-18) and much of John 7-10 occur within Mark 10:1.

**Mark 1:** intro of King & Kingdom; **Mark 2-7** Galilee; **Mark 7-9** withdrawal to N. & E.; Mark 10 teaching in Judea & Perea (divorce, children & kingdom, wealth & kingdom; ransom death & kingdom 10:45); Mark 11-16 Passion

This is the region where John the Baptizer ministered and where Herod Antipas and Herodias reigned.

Mal 4:4-5 <sup>NAS</sup> "Remember the law of Moses My servant, *even the* statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel. "Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD.

**Mark 10:2-9 Man's heart quickly turns to practical, self-interest; God's heart is always for the dependent and vulnerable.**

**Marriage is God-defined and given for the welfare and happiness of humankind.**

Compare Matthew 19:3-12

The Pharisees reflect the view that marriage is a disposable contractual arrangement. Twice they inquire about possible grounds of its dissolution (10:2, 4). Their attitude reminds us of a person who has just been granted a bank loan and then asks under what conditions he might be absolved from repaying it. <sup>1</sup>

Malachi's lone protest against divorce in the Old Testament — "I hate divorce," says the LORD God of Israel" (Mal. 2:16) — was turned on its head in the Aramaic translation in the *Targum Jonathan*, which reads, "If you hate her, divorce her." Garland, "The Question About Divorce (10:1 – 12)" In *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark*. By Garland, 378. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, © 1996.

The School of Shammai say: A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her, for it is written, "Because he hath found in her indecency in anything." And the School of Hillel say: [He may divorce her] even if she spoiled a dish for him, for it is written, "Because he hath found in her indecency in anything." R. Akiba says: Even if he found another fairer than she, for it is written, "And it shall be if she find no favour in his eyes." (*m. Git.* 9:10)

<sup>1</sup> Edwards, J. R. (2002). *The Gospel according to Mark*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary (301). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos.

Most obviously, it discouraged hasty divorces by requiring a man to stipulate a reason for divorce in writing, and also by prohibiting him from remarrying his divorced wife. The certificate of divorce guaranteed the divorcée at least a modicum of dignity and the right to remarry another man if she chose. It thus safeguarded the rights of the woman as much as possible in a patriarchal culture, although divorce did entail a stigma since a priest was forbidden from marrying a divorcée (Lev 21:7), and a second marriage “defiled” (Deut 24:4) a man’s first wife, thus making it impossible for him to remarry her. Thus, as originally intended Deut 24:1–4 did not encourage divorce but rather attempted to preserve an equitable ruling in the unfortunate event of divorce.

Despite the Mosaic authority of Deut 24:1–4, Jesus does not receive it as conclusive for the question of marriage and divorce. Deuteronomy 24 was given “because your hearts were hard,” says Jesus. It is, in other words, a text of concession, not a text of intention. You do not learn to fly an airplane by following the instructions for making a crash landing; you will not be successful in war if you train by the rules for beating a retreat. The same is true of marriage and divorce. The exceptional measures necessary when a marriage fails are of no help in discovering the meaning and intention of marriage..<sup>2</sup>

### **Mark 10:10-12    Jesus’ teaching elevates the equality and responsibility of women in marriage.**

In Judaism the divorcing husband would sin against the wife’s father; Jesus says he sins against her. Jesus acknowledges the wife too could be the one to leave, but she is under the same constraints as her husband.

*Some words from Tim Keller about marriage as a covenant relationship of companionship and trust:*

The only possible way for you to not be controlled by your past but to control your past is through forgiveness. The only way you can control your future and not be controlled by your future, and your hormones, and your genes, and your circumstances is a promise. The essence of marriage is a covenant.

In a wedding, in a covenant, you’re saying nothing about your feelings at the present. In a covenant, you are saying, “I promise to *be* tender, to *be* affectionate, to *be* faithful, to *be* serving from now on regardless of your condition or mine.” That’s what a covenant is.

Divorce is sometimes necessary and some people are awfully self-righteous about divorce and look down their nose at any divorced person, but Jeremiah 3:8, in that place, God says, “I divorced Israel.”...God has the audacity to call himself a divorced person. If you don’t want to have anything to do with divorced persons, you are in the unenviable position of not having anything to do with God.<sup>3</sup>

Marriage meets God’s purpose and man’s need: *it is not good for man to be alone*. In this aloneness was loneliness and inability and incompleteness. Marriage provides a unique companionship that is tied to fruitfulness and the ability to fill the earth with God’s image-bearing creatures. We are not sub-human when unmarried. To choose to be unmarried may be a good and deeply fruitful thing. But single and married alike must affirm marriage—and if you’ve been hurt it will require that you “control your past through forgiveness.”

### **Mark 10:13-16    God’s heart and call to salvation are for the humble, dependent and vulnerable.**

Jesus’ warns that we not cause little ones to stumble: Mark 9:42ff.

These children are being brought in faith that Jesus is the one who could bless them. He can and does.

The kingdom of God and the King’s forgiving, liberating love are a gift that cannot be earned.

Wilberforce’s concern for the slaves, Bonhoeffer’s concern for the Jews: these come from God opening hearts and eyes to see with his heart and eyes.

How will you/we make it easier for *little ones* to be received into Jesus’ arms and receive his blessing?

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<sup>2</sup> Edwards, J. R. (2002). *The Gospel according to Mark*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary (301-3). Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos.

<sup>3</sup> Keller, T. J. (2013). *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive*. New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church.