

God and Marriage: God the Son and Marriage (Mark 10.1-12)

Warren Brosi

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Dominant Thought: What God joins man should not separate.

Objectives:

I want my listeners to understand the three ways Jesus helps marriages.

I want my listeners to feel encouraged by Jesus to live in faithful relationships.

I want my listeners to pursue oneness, not separation in marriage.

Focus question: How does Jesus help us in our marriages?

I remember hearing from a family member on the evening of the rehearsal. We walked through the wedding ceremony twice. Pausing a couple different times to see where everyone was to stand. We worked out the cues. I told everyone present at the start of the rehearsal, "This is [the wedding couple's names] wedding. If they want your opinion, then they will ask you for it." We had a good rehearsal. We prayed for the couple and their marriage. Somewhere between the rehearsal and the beginning of the ceremony, I remember these words. It may have been from the father of the bride. Maybe it was the grandpa. He said, "Tie that knot tight, preacher."

What was he saying? We want this marriage to last. We want it to endure. Today, we seek to answer the question, how does Jesus help us in our marriages? In Geoffrey Bromiley's book, *God and Marriage*, he highlights three ways Jesus helps us in our marriages.

First, Jesus helps marriages through His Life. Even before the consequence of marital strife entered the world in Genesis 3.16. God promises to send a child born of woman to crush the serpent in Genesis 3:15, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." Jesus fulfills that promise. He is fully God and fully man. Jesus was born to the virgin Mary. When Joseph found out Mary was pregnant

and he was not the father, he had in mind to divorce Mary. He planned to send her away quietly (Matthew 1.19). However, the angel told Joseph, “Don’t be afraid to take Mary home as your wife” (Matthew 1.20). Joseph set aside what he had in mind to follow the will of the Father.

Married couples, take comfort that even the parents of Jesus had a rocky start to their marriage.

Another observation from the life of Jesus is we have no record in Scripture of His marriage. We believed He lived a single life. He does call himself a bridegroom.

The first reference to Jesus going to the cross in the gospel of Mark occurs in Mark 2.18-20. People ask Jesus why His disciples do not fast like the Pharisees and the disciples of John the Baptist. Jesus says, in Mark 2:19–20, “And Jesus said to them, “Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day.” Jesus is the groom. He will be taken away and nailed to a cross. Then, they will fast.

His relationship with His heavenly Father took priority over every other relationship on the planet. Jesus prioritized His Father’s will. Bromiley writes, “Man and woman can never achieve marriage as God intended it if they have their priorities wrong” (*God and Marriage*, p. 38).

I illustrate marriage as a triangle. God is at the top point, and husband and wife are the other two points. As husband and wife grow closer to God, then they naturally grow closer to each other.

In the life of Jesus, we see a priority of loving God first and prioritizing His will and mission.

Second, Jesus helps marriages through His teaching. Many of the parables Jesus taught centered on marriage images. Jesus tells parables of a wedding banquet and wedding clothes (Matthew 22.1-14). “Many are invited, but few are chosen” (Matthew 22.14). He tells about 10 virgins waiting for the bridegroom (Matthew 25.1-13). Five were wise and had plenty of oil as they waited. Five were foolish and didn’t bring enough oil. The bridegroom comes while the foolish ones were away getting more oil. “Therefore, keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour” (Matthew 25.13).

Jesus in parables. He gave instructions about marriage and divorce in the sermon on the mount. And then, He answered a question about divorce in Mark 10. It has a parallel in Matthew 19.

Jesus taught us through His life and parables. He has relatively little to say about marriage and divorce. But He does address it. We need to acknowledge that He doesn't address every situation, but by looking at all God's Word we can get some clear guidance.

Read Mark 10.1-12.

In these verses, Jesus gives two clear lessons on marriage. *First, divorce was not part of God's original plan, but a result of hard hearts.*

To divorce means to send away or release. Sometimes, it describes releasing a prisoner like Barabbas (Mark 15.11). Sometimes it describes sending crowds away (Mark 6.45). And then, it means to send a spouse away. Jesus uses a second word, "separate" (Mark 10.9). Separate, to leave or sever. Divorce is a breaking of a marriage relationship.

Jesus answered the religious leaders with a question of his own. They ask, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" He asks, "What did Moses command you?"

The answer with a reference to Deuteronomy 24.1-4

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 NIV

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, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, 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, 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.

Jesus said, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment" (Mark 10.5). Hardness of heart is where we get our medical term "arteriosclerosis."

Divorce happens when hearts are hardened, when one or both spouses are not living with God's heart as their priority.

Scot McKnight describes the covenant love for God and His people with three words: with, for, and unto. He says, "God covenants to be *with* us and to be *for* us *unto* full redemption—that is until we are in the kingdom, are Christlike, and becoming the holy and loving people of God" (McKnight, *The Sermon on the Mount*). He continues, "Marital love, then, is defined by God's love: our love for our spouse is to be *with* them, to be *for* them, and to be *unto* God's formative purpose for each of us. The three principles of love are thus presence (*with*), advocacy (*for*), and formation (*unto*)." (I have chosen the words: with, for and to for a simpler understanding).

At our wedding, Beth and I chose to wash one another's feet so we could declare to each other and our witnesses that our we would serve one another as Jesus served. It was a witness to be with, for, and unto.

Divorce happens when one or more of these key parts of the marriage covenant breaks down. If one spouse leaves, then they are not *with* their spouse. If a spouse is abusive, then they are not *for* their spouse.

When the disciples enter the house, they ask Jesus further about this topic. Jesus describes divorce and remarriage as adultery. Again, I think Jesus is drawing our attention to the original intent of God. Divorce was not part of God's original plan.

Second, God's original plan centers on oneness. Jesus quotes from Genesis 1:27, "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Then, Jesus quotes Genesis 2:24, "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."

For those who are married are you pursuing oneness with your spouse or isolation? Jesus reminds us God's definition for marriage is one man and one woman joined by God to become one.

Then, Jesus culminates His teaching in Mark 10:9, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." Preacher, tie that knot tight.

"We may only divorce when Christ divorces His church" (John Piper, *This Momentary Marriage*).

“As husband and wife, one of the things we commit to is helping the other become holy, not just happy” (From Justin Whitmel Earley, *Habits of the Household: Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms*, (p. 139). Zondervan. Kindle Edition).

Instead of going to bed angry or giving one another the silent treatment after an argument, what would it look like to come together and talk? Sure, you may need some time to calm down and let the temperature in the room come down. Talk about it. Ask questions. Seek forgiveness. Accept responsibility. Affirm your love to one another.

For those who have known the pain of divorce. Jesus loves you. You are not a failure. There are legitimate reasons for a divorce, but it was not God’s original plan.

An interesting note of context in Mark 10. After Jesus teaches about marriage and divorce, Mark shares stories about children and money. Children and money are two common strains for marriage relationships. Moms and Dads, the best gift you can give your children is a healthy marriage.

If you want to go further with a marriage study, we recommend the RightNow Media study by Tim and Kathy Keller. You can text “RNM” to our text number, 1-833-612-9972.

Jesus helps us in our marriages through His life, teaching, and third, His saving work.

Third, Jesus helps marriages through His Saving Work.

Geoffrey Bromiley in his book, *God and Marriage*, highlights two ways Jesus helps us in our marriages. First, He bears the cost of human unfaithfulness. Second, He breaks the power of sin.

First, He bears the cost of human unfaithfulness by dying for an unfaithful people. In our relationships with one another, specifically in marriages, remember Jesus bears the cost of human unfaithfulness. Throughout Scripture, the picture of sinning against God and others is described as unfaithfulness.

The apostle Paul reminds the church in Ephesians 4:32, “Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”

One chapter later, Paul writes in Ephesians 5:25–27, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.”

Second, Jesus breaks the power of sin. It’s one thing for Jesus to bear the cost for our unfaithfulness. It’s deeper to know He breaks the power of sin. The apostle Paul shares in Romans 6:6–7, “We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin.” Then, he continues in Romans 6:11–12 “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions.”

We will talk more next week with God the Holy Spirit in Marriage on how the Spirit helps us. Know that Jesus helps breaks the power of sin in our lives.

Covenant love is completely the opposite of love as a feeling. **Covenant love says, “I love you despite what it costs me.” This, of course, is the biblical story of love. God loves His bride, the Church, despite all our foolishness and adultery. “Though it may undo me,” he says in Jesus, “I will love you.”** This is love as an action, a commitment where individual freedom is surrendered so that love can flourish. This is why marriage vows say, “In sickness or in health, for richer or for poorer, for better or for worse, till death do us part.” (From Justin Whitmel Earley, *Habits of the Household: Practicing the Story of God in Everyday Family Rhythms*, (p. 135). Zondervan. Kindle Edition).

As we look back at the life of Jesus, we see one pursuing the relationship with the Father above all other relationships. In His teaching, we see divorce was not part of the original plan. God’s original plan has and continues to be oneness, a faithful loyal love. Through the saving work of Jesus, we see Jesus bearing the penalty and breaking the power of sin in

our lives. Through His love and sacrifice, we can love and sacrifice for our spouse, our family, and those near us.

I did my best that day for the couple on their wedding. “Tie that knot tight, preacher.” I led them in their marriage vows, the giving and receiving of their rings. He kissed his bride and I signed their license and sent it into county. Who tied the knot that day? If you are listening to Jesus, then you know the answer. He told you. What God has joined together, let not man separate.