

Ancient Truths for Modern Times – God’s Intent for Marriage and Divorce

Malachi 2:10-16

We’re well into our summer series . . . Looking at God’s intent for marriage and divorce
Decided to spare you all the statistics about marriage/divorce because messed up
marriages and ugly divorces have touched every one of us to some extent or another
Every one of you knows someone in a miserable marriage – you might be right now
Every one of you knows someone who has been divorced or is getting divorced – you?
Very few of you have to be convinced that marriage and divorce is a problem these days

Instead of convincing you of the problem, I want to encourage you to listen to the solution
God speaks to the problem just as clearly now as he did 2500 years ago through Mal
The question is – Are we listening? Will you listen?
Or put your fingers in your ears, close your eyes, stick out your tongue, and yell la-la-

Before we read the text in just a minute, I want to **pray** . . .

Allow you a quite moment to commit to God that you will *listen* to the truth of his
Word this morning, regarding marriage/divorce

If you don’t have a Bible . . . Mal 2:10-16

The message in this text is along the same lines as the previous paragraphs – God is
addressing another aspect in which we deny *him* by denying his design for our life
Read Mal 2:10-16

This passage goes back and forth between what God says/does, and what we say/do
And we’re going to start with . . .

God’s intent (for marriage and divorce) (**Ancient Truth #7**) . . .
Marry a believer, and stay that way for life (v10-11)

Mal starts off with some accusatory questions in v10

Have we not all one Father? – Of course we do

Has not one God created us? – Of course he has

We are God’s people aren’t we? Chosen and loved by him?

Why then are we faithless to one another, profaning the covenant of our fathers? –

If you’re God’s people, part of the same family, why do you fight like cats/dogs,
divorce/forsake each other, and make light of God’s intent/design?

Explains why he’s making such accusations in v11 –

You, God’s people, have been divorcing each other – *Judah has been faithless (11)*

Faithless refers to divorce (15b-16a)

And you’ve committed such an atrocity (*abomination*) in God’s land (*Israel*), even in
the city of his temple (*Jerusalem*) of all places

And you’ve treated what is holy, as common – *For Judah has profaned the sanctuary of
the Lord (11b)*

By marrying people who don’t know me, love me, or follow me

You have *married the daughter of a foreign god (11b)*

Through Mal, God is saying you bring shame to my name by marrying unbelievers

Through Paul, he says –

2 Cor 6:14-15 – *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has
righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What*

*accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an
unbeliever?*

God intends for us to marry believers . . . and stay that way for life –

Mk 10:7-9 – “‘*A man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and
they shall become one flesh.*’ What therefore God has joined together, let not man
separate.”

That’s what the Bible says about God’s intent for marriage and divorce

Here’s what our society is saying – **Article re Starter Marriages** (pre-marital class)

That’s the noise and rationalization of society that often drowns out God’s intent

You don’t live/think that way for long, without suffering the consequences . . .

Our consequences (v12-13,16) (for disobedience)

• **Struggle** (12)

Mal prays that God will *cut off from the tents of Jacob*, anyone who marries an
unbeliever or gets a divorce, and acts like it’s okay by continuing to worship (*brings
an offering*) with an unrepentant heart

If you were separated from the community of believers in that day, you had little or no
means of survival

At best, it was a brutal struggle for basic necessities

Not to mention suffering shame/shunning, because life was linked to community

The point is – God will not let the disobedience of marrying an unbeliever and remaining
unrepentant about it, go unpunished

It *will* result in struggle – material, financial, emotional, spiritual, relational, and
physical

• **Rejection** (13-14)

And this second thing you do (13) – not only do you marry unbelievers and continue to
worship like nothing has happened . . .

But you divorce your first wife – *you have been faithless to her (14)* – despite your
vows (*covenant*) with her before God as your *witness*

Because of that, God will reject your life of worship – *he no longer regards the offering
or accepts it with favor from your hand (13)* . . .

No matter how many tears you shed over it – *You cover the Lord’s altar with tears, with
weeping and groaning (13)*

You don’t snub your nose at God’s intent, and expect him to be okay with it

He will not listen to your prayers, accept your worship, or bless your life

Ps 66:18 – *If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.*

God’s rejection of your life of worship continues only as long as you . . .

Remain rebellious/unrepentant in your heart

Try to make it look less than the sin that it is/was

Reject the clear teaching of Scripture that it’s wrong/contrary to God’s design

Rationalize it away; Don’t admit your part in it

While that’s the case, God will reject your worship

But if you come to him in godly sorrow and repentance, he freely forgives

Rejection by God is the consequence for marring an unbeliever, divorcing unbiblically, and remaining unrepentant about it

- **Trouble** (16)

For the man who hates and divorces . . . covers his garment with violence –
You heap all kinds of trouble on yourself

Strong image – Just like the empty sacrifice of an animal was an act of violence that left an unnecessary spattering of blood on the garment . . .
So also does the sin of hatred/divorce leave its graphic mark of trouble/violence on a person
Trouble like loneliness, financial loss, emotional pain, weight loss/gain, lack of joy, depression, fatigue, indulgence in more sin, abuse of alcohol/drugs, attempted suicide

The person who hates and divorces wraps themselves in terrible trouble
Like two pieces of construction paper glued together, representing you and your spouse
And then trying to separate them (**glue/tear paper apart**) – it leaves your life in shreds

God's reasons (v10,14-15) (for his intent and our consequences)

God is so passionate about your marriage because . . .

1. He brought you together in the first place

Did he not make them one? (15) – As believers, God brought you together in the first place; He made you one flesh
And he expects unity between you (10)

2. You're accountable to him

The Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth (14)
Not only did he validate your union by witnessing it . . .
But in the ANE, a witness to a covenant ceremony was responsible to hold the parties accountable; they guaranteed the covenant promises
So as the witness to every single marriage carried out in his name, he is responsible to hold the two parties accountable for the terms of the covenant
To love, have, hold, honor, submit, respect, and serve til' death do you part

3. He continues to be a part of your marriage

With a portion of the Spirit in their union? (15) – God is a part of your marriage
He bound you together as one flesh, with *himself*
It's a 3-way deal, and he continues to be a part of it

4. He desires more followers

What was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. (15) –
More people who will follow and worship him
God sees an increased likelihood for children in Christian families to follow him
It's not a guarantee, but that's what God is seeking – *godly offspring*

In light of all this, God requires some commitments in marriage

Our commitments (v15-16) (in marriage)

- **Guard your heart**

Guard yourselves in your spirit (15b, 16b) –
Against a calloused or complacent attitude toward your spouse (Eph 5:22-33)

Against bitterness and hate toward them (Heb 12:15)
Against the lust of the flesh for someone else – real or imaginary (Mt 5:27-30)
Against rebellion toward God's design for marriage (Mal 2:10-16)
Against rationalizing divorce (Mt 19:3-9)
Against a hard heart (Heb 3:12-14)
Guard your heart by knowing what the Scriptures say

And guard your heart by securing the gates of your senses
Imagine a mansion surrounded by walls with gates that protect the outer courts/grounds
Only certain people and things are allowed in
Your eyes, ears, and touch are like the outer court gates that lead to the inner court of your heart
Guard them carefully so that nothing evil or immoral gets even close to your heart – your mind, the core of who you are

- **Stay married**

Let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth (15b, 16b) –
Don't leave them mentally, emotionally, and certainly not physically
Stay true to them and the commitment you made to God

You can keep your commitment to stay married strong, by *never* . . .
Allowing yourself to imagine being married to someone else
Talking about or threatening divorce
Comparing your marriage to that of others

And you can keep your commitment to stay married strong, by *always* . . .
Asking God to increase your love for one another
Finding things your spouse loves to do, and doing them with her
Cultivating romance in your relationship – dates, surprises, use your imagination
Reading a marriage book together (I have a list)
Attending a Christian marriage conference every now and then
Submitting yourself to the accountability of others in a SG

Though it is always God's intent that two people stay married, even if they are unequally yoked (1 Cor 7:12-13), he does allow for divorce in two cases; There are 2 exceptions . . .

God's exceptions . . . for staying married for life

1. Infidelity due to hardness of heart

Mt 19:9 – *Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.*

2. Abandonment by an unbeliever due to hardness of heart

1 Cor 7:15 – *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.*

These are the only reasons God allows for divorce; Which means . . .

Other than the death of a spouse, a biblical divorce is the only allowance God makes for remarriage

FAQ's

- What if I divorced someone for unbiblical reasons? What do I do now?
 - Confess/admit your sin to God, and ask forgiveness
 - Confess/admit your sin to your former spouse, and ask them to forgive you
 - If both of you are still unmarried, and both of you are believers, try to reconcile
 - Submit yourself in this process to the guidance and authority of your church leadership
 - Don't act apart from them; You are the least objective in the situation

- What if I divorced unbiblically and already remarried? Can I be forgiven?
 - Yes; Confess your sin to God, to your former spouse, and to your current spouse
 - Receive God's gracious forgiveness
 - Press on to give God glory in your current marriage

- What if I divorced someone for unbiblical reasons, and *want* to remarry?
 - In God's eyes, you can't, unless you . . .
 - Confess it to God; Confess it to them
 - Try to reconcile your first marriage if they too are a believer, and aren't yet remarried
 - Submit to the loving, biblical counsel of your church leaders, and allow for much time

Summary

I hope you've listened to the truth of God's Word re marriage and divorce

- Hope you see that God's intent is that we marry a believer and stay that way for life
- Hope you realize that the consequences are real, and that God's reasons are compelling
- Hope you understand the commitment that is required
- Hope you find God's exceptions comforting
- If you've done this all wrong, I hope you ask for God's gracious forgiveness