

Divorce & Remarriage

How the Reckless Grace of God Changes Us

July 24, 2016 // Trevor Atwood // Matthew 19:1-12 // Friends & Family

We are nearing the end of a short series where we are talking about relationships...and the risks and rewards in them.

We've talked about Marriage, Parenting, Singleness...and we've talked about Racism and violence.

So, in case I haven't colossally offended you yet, perhaps today is the day.

Just so we all get a sense of who's in the room today...I'd like you to raise your hand if you have either been through a divorce yourself, or had someone you love very much go through one.

This is where we are. Divorce, to each of us, including me, is not a concept to sit back and simply think about as a mere concept. Its not just something that we develop a "position on"...and then move on from.

Divorce ...is about flesh and blood people....that we dearly love. Its husbands and wives. Its fathers and mothers. Its brothers and sisters. Its friends and church family. Its uncles, aunts, nephews and nieces...its grandchildren and grandparents.

So here's what I want us to do today.

I want us to see divorce the way Jesus sees it. I don't want us to first look at divorce through our personal experiences...or through the current cultural attitude toward divorce...

...but to see our experiences and our culture through Jesus' eyes...and listen...

Many of you are going to be tempted today to walk away today feeling condemned...like what Jesus says about divorce puts a big Red D on your back, and you are doomed for the rest of your life to live out of an identity as a "divorced" person.

But remember, this is the same Jesus that looked at a woman who had been divorced 5 times...and after a conversation with Jesus, she went away overjoyed. So condemnation is not the point of this sermon.

Or...you may walk away defensive or angry...toward me or toward God... but there is nothing that God is going to say to you through his word that is not intended for your ultimate good. Every challenging and even potentially hurtful thing Jesus says on any subject isn't there to make you feel bad...its meant to become a spring of living water bubbling up inside of you that leads to an eternal quality and quantity of life.

So, might Jesus today call you to do some challenging and scary things?...Well...I have no doubt about that. BUT When he calls us to bear a cross...when he calls us to come and die...he always promises a resurrection.

So walking out of here today, angry...or dejected because of what Jesus says is not my heart...and its not the heart of this Scripture.

BUT, walking out of here today knowing that there are hard decisions you need to make, sin you need to repent of, relationships that need forgiveness and restoration...peace that needs to made...and crosses to bear that will lead to beautiful life...well...that, I pray, is what happens. Don't be afraid.

Here we go.

Matthew 19:1-12

Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." They said to him, "Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" 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. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery." The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry." But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given. For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it."

Ok. Lets talk about what's going on here. First, I want you to see that...

1) Marriage is a lifelong covenant. Divorce is a concession.

There are 2 things you need to know about what's happening in that passage we just read. The first one is about a theological controversy that was happening in Jesus' day. In Deuteronomy 24, Moses wrote down God's laws concerning divorce...now if you go and read that passage you will find that God is not giving a command...In other words...he's not saying "Here are the grounds for divorce." He's assuming that it is already happening. So what you find in Deut 24 is what's called a concession. In other words, It is God looking at

a broken, sinful, hard-hearted people who are already divorcing...and he's putting laws in place that help keep things civil among his people... who are divorcing each other.

As Rabbis would look at the Old Testament, they would differentiate, and rightly so between what is a command...what God intends...and what is a concession...something God is allowing and regulating because of sin.

Ok, got it. Stay with me.

In Deuteronomy 24:1 there is this phrase that a husband divorces his wife because "he has found some indecency in her" that phrase was hotly debated.

That phrase is the Hebrew phrase "Erwat dabar". So there were 2 schools of thought about this phrase. One school was the conservatives who followed the Rabbi Shammai. They said Erwat dabar meant only sexual infidelity. You could only divorce for sexual infidelity.

Another school was the more liberal Rabbi Hillel. He said this meant anything a man found indecent about a woman he could divorce her for. So literally, he writes, if she burns the bread...ERWAT DEBAR!!!! This is the no fault divorce of the day.

Ok, you following me so far? That's the first piece of background info you need on this passage.

Here's the second piece that will help make this passage make more sense.

Mark 6:17-18

For it was Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." For it was Herod who had sent and seized John and bound him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

Herod, who is the Roman king of Judea, divorced his wife so he could marry his brother's wife. John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin and the prophet who stood out in the Judean wilderness at the Jordan River baptism people and telling them that Jesus was coming...had spoken out about this, saying to Herod that it was not lawful for him to marry his brother's wife. Because of that, Herod cut off the head of John the Baptist.

Where, pray tell, did we read that this encounter with the Pharisees happen? That's right. In Judea. In other words, right in Herod's backyard. This is a DANGEROUS place to make your views known about divorce.

... and that leads us to exactly why the Pharisees decided to have THIS CONVERSATION... at this time...in this place. They wanted Jesus DEAD...because he disturbed their way of

life. He called them to uncomfortable truths. So they wanted him OUT OF THE WAY.

Matthew 19:3

And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?”

So, understand that up front. This question in this context is not coming from hearts that want to be in line with God wants for them for marriage...this is pre-meditated hate.

The Pharisees dive in and ask, “So Jesus, How do you explain Erwat Dabar? Can we divorce for any indecency we find in our wives? Hoping that he will say something that will get back to Herod and then they'll have Herod to thank for getting 2 nasty prophets out of their way.

Matthew 19:4-6

He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let not man separate.”

Now, look at Jesus’ answer. He doesn’t go to Deuteronomy, which is what the Pharisees were expecting. He doesn’t go in and say, “Let’s take a close look at this concession.” Instead, he takes them to Creation. To God’s intent for marriage. For his ideal.

In other words, he takes them away from this concession and draws their attention back to the command.

He shows them that marriage is a covenant...and unconditional promise between a man and a woman to love each other for life...that’s what this quote from Genesis 2 is getting at. I told you a couple of weeks ago, that this leave and cleave is all covenantal language.

And he points to this idea of the husband and wife becoming one inseparable flesh. And that God seals this union together...therefore, man cannot and should not separate it.

Now, I want you to notice Jesus stops here. He doesn’t add a caveat. He doesn’t say... “Of course, there are certain situations where you are going to have to get a divorce.” Not at all. It’s a full stop. Here’s what God says about marriage. Period.

Well, the Pharisees were thinking, “OK, if we are going to get him in trouble with Herod, we need a little more of a definitive quote.”

Matthew 19:7

They said to him, “Why then did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?”

So they ask him, “Well why did Moses command one to give a certificate of divorce and send her away then?” If God is so much about marriage being permanent, why do we have this law?

Matthew 19:8-9

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

Jesus says back to them “That was a concession that God gave, not a commandment. That was because of your hard hearts. Its not what God intended from the beginning.”

And then he tells the Pharisees, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery.

There is no doubt from this passage that Jesus sees marriage as a lifelong covenant.

I explained to you a few weeks ago that this covenant is different than the way we culturally think about marriage.

Our cultures definition of marriage is a contract between 2 individuals that primarily is for personal happiness and satisfaction.

In other words, if I love you, and you love me...and we as 2 consenting adults decide we would happier together than apart, we enter into a contract together...and then as long as you keep me happy, and as long as I keep you happy...we stay married. You hold up your end of the deal to satisfy me....I'll hold up my end of the deal...and we can be married for a long time.

...and that's the way the Pharisees are coming at marriage. They're saying “What are the stipulations of the contract”...and Jesus says, “This isn't a contract. It's a lifelong covenant.”

See the covenant of marriage is an unconditional promise that a man and woman make to each other that isn't mainly about their personal happiness of satisfaction, rather its about the mission of God to good in the world and to better show off his character.

Think of the difference in a covenant and a contract like this: In a Contract, I make a promise and then constantly look at you to be sure you keep your end of the deal so that I am served. In a Covenant, I make a promise and then constantly look at ME to be sure I keep

my end of the deal so that YOU are served.

Here's what this means regarding divorce. Marriage is not to be entered into with an escape hatch. The point of marriage is not your happiness. It's not given to us mainly for personal satisfaction. The point of marriage is to mirror God's promise keeping with us....and to do good to our neighbor. Divorce is NOT God's command. It's not his plan. It's a concession that's given to broken, and hard-hearted people in a broken, hard hearted world.

Now, I know what you're thinking. Jesus does give an exception doesn't he. Marital infidelity? Sexual immorality? So what gives. Is Jesus giving a reason to divorce?

Well, not exactly.

But before I address that let me talk to you dear brothers and sisters in the room who have been through this. I cannot imagine how angry, or hurt, or just sad you feel right now. Listening to me preach on God's ideal for marriage in the middle of your broken reality is something that has to be beyond difficult.

I want to remind you, right now, right in the middle of this message, that when the Samaritan woman at the well encountered Jesus...Jesus...who believed this about marriage...and knew that she had been divorced 5 times...that woman didn't walk away sad...or angry...or condemned...she walked away with great joy.

So hang with me. What Jesus has to say is not for your condemnation...its for your salvation. Its for your restoration. Its fresh, living, unending water in the middle of a dry and thirsty land. Don't check out.

So what do you do if your marriage is not the ideal. Well first, you have to keep something at the front of your heart and mind....That.

2) God's heart is for reckless grace & forgiveness.

We've talked in here A LOT about the way we tend to look at the Bible as a rule book...as a book of do's and don'ts...instead of a revelation of God. One whole book that goes from beginning to end. That's not mainly about me and you...but its mainly about God...his character...and his work to love and save humanity.

This makes a VAST difference in the way you understand what has famously been referred to as scholars and theologians "exception clause".

Matthew 19:9

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

Jesus, replies to the Pharisees: whoever divorces his wife (EXCEPT for sexual immorality) and remarries commits adultery.

Now, on one hand, I can take that verse at face value. I can say, "Well, here we go. Jesus gives this one exception allowing for divorce so if my spouse commits any sort of sexual immorality...then I have permission to divorce from Jesus."

Here's one of many problems with that.

Matthew 19:10

The disciples said to him, "If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry."

In the very next verse, the disciples look at Jesus and say, "WHOA, if that's the case, Jesus...why would anybody get married?" In other words...Jesus, you are taking a position that's even more conservative than what the conservative Rabbis say.

We haven't heard this yet.

Matthew 19:11

But he said to them, "Not everyone can receive this saying, but only those to whom it is given."

And Jesus comes back and says, "Not everybody can receive this...only some to whom it is given." And he goes on to explain how God calls many people to not marry...and that is perfectly good, God honoring legitimate way to live.

So what's going on here in v 9 with this exception clause? What exactly is Jesus saying? Well if you read the Bible as God intends as a revelation of who he is...and not as the Pharisees read it, as a list of rules and do's and don'ts...then you'll notice something.

Take a look at what comes just before this passage. It's a parable...a story Jesus tells to illustrate a point.

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times."

Jesus told this story to answer Peter's question "How often should I forgive someone if he keeps sinning against me?" And Jesus says...essentially...your forgiveness should never expire. That's what seventy times seven represents. Unending forgiveness.

Then he tells this story that communicates the idea if you understand how much God has forgiven you, it will become a sort of natural reflex to forgive others.

So Jesus roots our forgiveness of others...including our spouses...in God's forgiveness of us. In other words, I will be able to forgive others to the degree I realize exactly how much God has forgiven me.

Ok. You zoom out even more broadly...you find this story in the Bible about this God who, even though over and over and over and over his people hurt him...he keeps his promise to them. In fact, sin is compared to adultery all through the Bible.

In other words, when we decide that we get to live life the way we want to, instead of living life to show God's love and character,...when we decide to worship ourselves instead of worshipping God...we are committing adultery against God.

Yet God, knowing this...still chooses to forgive us.

In fact, I used this word "Reckless" grace on purpose. There's another story Jesus tells in Luke chapter 15 to illustrate, to these same Pharisees, just how far-reaching the grace of God is.

You may have heard of it. Its been referred to as the story of the "Prodigal" son. The word Prodigal means Reckless.

So in this story in Luke 15, he tells the Pharisees an absolute WORSE case scenario. He tells them about this kid, who dishonors his Father. He tells his Father, "Give me the inheritance I'd get if you were dead." So the Father gives this son his share of the inheritance and he takes the money and spends it Recklessly. He throws parties, he's wilin' out.

Well eventually the kid runs out of money...and he comes back to his Father. And at this point in the story, all the Pharisees...the guys who read the Bible like a list of rules...they know what should happen to this kid. He should be cut off. Disowned. He should get what's coming to him. He's RECKLESS. He's dishonorable. Look how he treated his father.

But instead, in the story, the Father shames himself...picks up his robes, and runs out to welcome the son home.

Then, he throws the kid a party. He puts a robe on him, shoes on his feet, and kills the best cow to get some prime cuts of meat.

This kid threw his Dad's honor and money away...and now the Dad is throwin' another shrimp on the Barbie for him.

See, the true prodigal in the story...the one who is really reckless is not the son...it's the Father.

The Pharisees hear this story and they are going to think one thing. "What a waste". Why would that Father waste his position, his money, his best cow on this deadbeat son who did nothing but hurt him?

See, Jesus was showing God's grace toward us. His forgiveness is reckless. To us, it seems wasteful. Why would a good father whose children betrayed and hurt him, why would he be so gracious? There is seemingly is NOTHING in it for him.

I could show you in about 100 other places in the Scripture where the character of God is always saving, always preserving, always keeping promises...even when it means reckless, wasteful GRACE.

Now, carry that into the exception clause. And let's not look at this like a Pharisee, but like Jesus. God's heart is for grace, forgiveness, and reconciliation. It's not to give you a reason to divorce.

Listen, there is no such thing as an innocent party in a marriage. We all want to be the victim. We all want to be declared not guilty and have our spouse be the one responsible to change. But listen, if your marriage is hurting...if it's on the brink...because of the covenant you have, your calling is not to look at your spouse and point out the things they need to do to keep you...that's a contract.

Instead, it's to lift your eyes to this recklessly gracious God, to see how he has forgiven you, and then in turn forgive your spouse and seek to reconcile.

Before I show you what this exception clause is...let's rule out what it's not.

Additionally, Jesus is not giving "permission" to divorce in every case of adultery at any time you choose.

It is crystal clear that God's heart is for grace, forgiveness and reconciliation. That's what the whole Bible is revealing.

So here's where we start to run into trouble if I look at what Jesus says in light of that character. When should I forgive? According to Jesus...always. Constantly. Seventy times seven. Ok, so when then should I divorce? If my spouse commits adultery, then do I get a get-out-of-marriage-free card that I'm allowed to play at any time I want? In other words, if up front I say, "I forgive you"...but then my spouse hurts me again in some other way...do I get to divorce and point to the exception clause and say, "He cheated on me...or she cheated on me."

No. That is, by definition NOT forgiveness. Forgiveness means that I don't hold an offense against you. I don't make you pay your debt to me.

If you forgive, it means that you are not willing to use that offense against the other person. So, to constantly hold adultery over the head of a spouse you have supposedly forgiven...is absolutely NOT forgiveness.

Listen carefully to me. Forgiveness and reconciliation are different. They are both God's character, but they happen in different ways. Forgiveness is something that I do. Reconciliation takes both parties. And it takes time. Forgiveness does not mean pretending like something never happened. You want a recipe for disaster?...then actually never talk about the affair that happened in your marriage. No, reconciliation, a rebuilding of trust and vulnerability takes time...and it takes both parties moving toward each other.

So don't hear me say, "You forgive and then everybody's good." Not at all. You forgive...and then two people work hard to rebuild a relationship based on a promise...not on good behavior.

Here's the thing though. Spouses who have been hurt and cheated on...Adultery should never give you "the upper hand". Don't use Jesus' words to manipulate...to look at your spouse and say, "You cheated on me, so I can divorce you whenever I want."

I can assure you, that is NOT what this is about.

So what does Jesus mean when he says this? Well...

3) Sin brings death to marriage sometimes.

Another big theme that you find running all through out the Bible is that our sin, our adultery against God breaks us...and It brings death to our relationship with God.

If you read the prophets Jeremiah & Ezekiel...this theme is strong in both of them.

It shows God as a faithful, loving husband & Israel as cheating bride. But not just cheating. Committed to cheating. Over and over and over....absolutely sold out to other lovers.

In fact, in Jeremiah 3:8a, the Lord says to Jeremiah, "... for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce."

So the picture that we get when we look at the big picture of God's character in Scripture is patience...forgiveness...reconciliation...and in the cases where God talks about his own divorce of his people, its in the context of letting them go to other lovers that they have over and over and over committed themselves to.

Now, let me show you one more passage in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul is writing a letter to a church in the city of Corinth. And this church is pretty messed up. I mean, at one point Paul has to tell them that its not OK for a guy to be sleeping with his step-mother. So, the moral compass is just a shade off of true North for this bunch.

That's the context he's writing toward. Take a look at what he says.

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

When he says "not I, but the Lord" he is saying, I'm telling you what Jesus said. In other words, Paul is looking back here on what we looked at in Matthew. And he says, Jesus told you, marriage is for life. Now look what he says next.

1 Corinthians 7:12-13

To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him.

Paul says, "Jesus didn't say this, but you need to understand this is true." If you are a Christian, and your spouse is not, stay married. Because as you faithfully love and worship God, he will use you to influence your spouse.

1 Corinthians 7:15

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.

Then he says, but, if you have a spouse who leaves you, who abandons you, you can let them go. And you are not enslaved. In other words, you are released as if that spouse has died.

You are free to remarry. But understand this. In the same part of this letter, Paul also says, "Its best not to remarry." He doesn't command it, but he gives this robust argument for remaining single. Some of which we talked about last week.

So, with all of that, I'm sure you're asking, "So Trev, what it in the world does all this mean?"

When is it OK to walk away from a marriage? First of all, its never "OK". It hurts. Its painful. It breaks you, it breaks the kids involved in a deep and profound way. Divorce is not like taking a broken TV back to Best Buy. Its more like the amputation of a limb. Even in cases where amputation is absolutely necessary, I don't think you ever want the Doctor to coldly look at you and say, "I think amputation is Ok." You want him to say, "This is going to be

difficult, and painful...but in this case, it seems like our only resort."

But in the interest of answering the question, "When is a person released by God in a marriage to divorce?" I'd say this.

First off, divorce is a last resort. Again. Divorce doesn't "fix" anything. It breaks. It hurts. Every effort on your part should be made to reconcile, forgive. Your grace toward your spouse should be looked at as RECKLESS.

But, in the event you have a spouse who is bent on giving themselves away sexually to other people...or who walks away from you...or constantly abuses you...and despite every effort to bring them to repentance...they resist...then I think you have something that fits into the exception clause from Matthew 19, or in Paul's reference to abandonment in 1 Corinthians 7.

In those cases, sin has killed the marriage. And I think you would be free to divorce and remarry.

Let me give you 2 reminders: As a Christian, you are a part of a church. The Bible gives absolutely no scenario in which a Christian should consider themselves a lone ranger. One of the reasons the church has been gifted you, is to help you discern difficult decisions like this. We all have tendency to see ourselves as the victim. And divorce can be a very tempting idol. It can look like a savior. Its not. Its an amputation. You are going to be tempted to look at your spouse and say "Erwat Dabar"....EVERYTHING IS A REASON TO DIVORCE YOU. But you need to talk this through with other close Christians. Talk with the elders of the church. Don't make this decision alone.

And listen, for those of you not married yet...GET PREMARITAL COUNSELING from your church. Don't EVER, EVER, EVER get married without the kind of premarital counseling that ON PURPOSE digs deep into your lives, your past and your present...and up front confronts your sin in a biblical way. When couples sit down with me for pre-marital counseling, I tell them, "I'm going to do everything I can to stir stuff up. Because I want you to know now how hard this is going to be. I want you to know on the front end how God is calling you to love this person...in all of their sin...and all the way they've been sinned against.

GET GOOD, Gospel saturated PRE-MARITAL Counseling! It won't guarantee that you don't divorce...but it will drastically put the odds in your favor.

Now, for those of you beautiful people, who have been through divorce...whether it was for reasons that fit the biblical grounds, or if it was an absolutely selfish abandonment of your spouse... I have something to say to you.

God loves you so much he died for you.

He absolutely has poured out his reckless grace for you, too.

And because he has forgiven you, you don't walk around with a scarlet letter, you do not have to live in some alternate Christian universe where you are a little less than everyone else.

Listen to me. If anyone is in Christ...They are a New Creation. BRAND NEW. See...

4) Jesus forgives you...and keeps calling you to repentance.

On the cross, Jesus took the penalty for our sin. Every sin. Past, present, and future. Jesus died for our adultery against God. He was separated, divorced, from his Father, so that we could become his...a part of the Bride of Christ.

He was amputated, so we could be made whole. In John chapter 8, these same Pharisees, ever trying to trap Jesus into saying or doing something to get him killed, threw before him a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery.

And they said, "Come on, Jesus. Moses said she deserves to die. So, what are you gonna do? You gonna stone her?" Jesus said, "Whoever is without sin, throw the first stone." And from the oldest to the youngest, they all drop their stones and walk away. And there sits this woman. She's cheated on her husband. She's guilty as charged. And there stands Jesus. The perfect son of God. In fact, by his definition, he's the only qualified to really kill her. To really throw a stone. He is the only one without sin. And looks at her and says,

John 8:10-11

"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more."

Do you see that? Jesus knows what she did. She is clearly in the wrong. But he forgives her. But notice...he doesn't say, "Carry on with life as you like".

He says, "Go and sin no more". Don't mix those 2 up. He doesn't say, "Once you go and sin no more, then I'll condemn you." He says, "I don't condemn you....now, out of knowing that, out seeing my reckless grace for you...go and sin no more."

See, God's reckless grace is not intended for us to accept and then do life like we want to. Its intended to change us.

And that means, as a Christian, once you see God's reckless grace for you...once you've been embraced by this prodigal father, by this longsuffering spouse...you are ready to live his way.

See, God's kindness, his reckless grace, leads to repentance. It doesn't lead us to sin more...but to daily, turn away from sin and choose Jesus.

See, Jesus could only forgive that woman...because he was going to take her death penalty. And then, on the third day, he would walk out of the grave, alive.

Jesus is a god of resurrection. Of New Life. And his reckless love and grace is the cure for the hardness of heart that leads to sin...and leads to divorce.

So, I tell you today. If you aren't yet married, enter into prayerfully and carefully...with a church. Be sure before you marry, that you understand who Jesus is, and what he's done. Because you are going to desperately need his grace and his Holy Spirit on a day to day basis to love your spouse like he loves us.

If you are married and your marriage is on the brink...if it seems to be dying, if you are about to walk away...desperately seek to forgive, to reconcile, to show reckless grace...but you won't be able to do that without first seeing that Christ has forgiven you before he ever asked you to stop cheating on him. So now, extend that grace to your spouse.

And don't keep the church out of your marriage. Talk to someone. And listen, if you are seeking counseling, be sure to see a counselor that brings the gospel into your counseling. It is the power you need to forgive.

Finally, if you are already divorced, I'd say this. Do you have bitterness, anger, unforgiveness? That's not godly. See Christ dying for you, and repent. Go and sin no more. That may mean really hard life altering decisions for some of you. It may mean if the two of you are still unmarried, it may mean going back and saying, "I shouldn't have left. I see what Christ did for me and I need to ask for your forgiveness now that I know that Jesus has forgiven me." If you are remarried, stay that way. But you are still called to repent of bitterness, anger and unforgiveness...If you are the child of a divorce, the same thing applies. There may be a parent you need to forgive. You need to begin treating differently. See Christ forgiving you, and do the same thing with your parents.

But I want you to hear this loud and clear. If you believe Christ died for your sin and rose from the dead to lead you into new life...you are forgiven. You are washed. You are clean. You are righteous...now, go and sin no more.