



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
By Pastor Jody May 12/01/2024

Matthew 5:31-32 ESV

Divorce

³¹"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'³² But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

[READ THE TEXT]

Pastor – "People of God, this is the Word of God."

People – "Thanks be to God."

[PRAY]

[INTRO]

Thanksgiving for me has become a time for reflection & perhaps a little projection, let me explain. My parents have been deceased these past 20 years so when it comes to the holidays, when I look into the eyes of my children, I also always look back and try to remember what it was like when I was their age.

There was always football on the T.V. catching whoever was using the Orange Bowl that day for their game. There were always the morning phone calls to family and friends which were dialed by my father from the dining room table as if he was a stockbroker. It was one of the few times that my dad would use the phone but of which without fail on holidays and birthdays he always called the family to ring in the cheer. Who could ever forget the household staple beige push button Southern Bell Classic phone with the extra-long cord for freedom. There was always cornbread stuffing, Turkey, Cheese stuffed celery and don't forget the fresh iced tea. Most of the time it was just me, mom, and dad with the occasional visit from my brother or sister in town if work allowed them to be there. Then to wrap up the weekend I would take mom early on Friday to do all her Christmas shopping.



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
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As I sit around now at my own table, I see that picture of joy has grown some. I have been able to double that size of which I am thankful. I also look forward to the day where I get to welcome in spouses and next generations of the family while we create traditions and new memories for years to come.

This past holiday for us, much like the ones we have been reading about in the OT, are to not just create fondness for family gatherings they are to create in people a profound connection with their creator. Having these memories, these snapshots in your mind, are a blessing especially when they help generate deep down senses of gratitude from which, without self-manipulation, out of one's heart comes this robust thank you to God for just being Him. It is a thank you from the heart that sees God's hand bringing you to that moment of contentment in Him. That sense of not being alone, but having a family that pursues God together, is a wonderful and stabilizing feeling to have in this fallen world.

For God's people He loves to build families so He can build moments, that will help us persevere in our trials and tribulations. God determined to do this through one of His greatest gifts to man in the act of Creation in Genesis 2. He gives the woman to man and the two become one. That unity, that strength, that original plan is what makes the home strong during the year when we encounter things like sickness, disappointments, and angst. True biblical marriage/covenantal in nature, is what builds your gathering tables, traditions, and God-fearing descendants.

But according to modern traditions and worldly beliefs this is false truth and offensive to some. The nuclear family has been attacked by culture, sex without commitment has been pushed by feminism, and encouraged/allowed by the patriarchy. Therefore, it has been taught that you don't need strong families to have healthy and fulfilling lives. Yet, we are also in a world that is objectifiably getting crazier all the time.

- Anxiety and depression is becoming increasingly prevalent among young adults in the US, with both disorders increasing by as much as 63% from 2005 to 2017.



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
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- The expansion of media multitasking and high levels of academic and economic stress have led to increasing rates of anxiety and depression among American young adults, especially in the 12-25 age range.
- Rising levels of depression and anxiety have resulted in decreased performance in academic and professional settings, strained relationships, along with high levels of substance abuse, and suicide.^{1 2 3}

The good news is that same answer that God gave us in the garden is still the best answer for that mental health crisis we are experiencing today; **God ordained marriages that are instructing the next generation of believers how to love sacrificially and put hope in God above all, IS how we deal with the feelings of fear, helplessness, and loneliness.**

Some of you know all too well what it feels like when you see a marriage die. Let me state that I recognize this topic we are to talking about today may bring up some bad memories and feelings, that's ok because you are in the right place to deal with it.

- Perhaps you have gone through a divorce yourself due to some really nasty circumstances; there was something that was done to you, you didn't have a choice because the other spouse wanted it more than you did, or you may have even pulled that trigger too quickly and you are dealing with guilt.
- Perhaps you were a child that was forced to live through that experience; you were put into the middle of quarrelling parents, you were forced to choose sides, you became embittered with a parent(s) and the relationship has never been the same.
- Perhaps you were brought up in a blended family home, and it wasn't a pleasant time; you had a stepparent that didn't know how to parent or were even abusive, or you could never get along with step siblings.

So, you can see why it is very important to teach on the topic of divorce to prevent that from happening, to teach God's desire for families. As well, as

¹ <https://ballardbrief.byu.edu/issue-briefs/the-rise-of-anxiety-and-depression-among-young-adults-in-the-united-states#:~:text=Key%20Takeaways+,proven%20treatment%20to%20recover%20fully.>

² <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7441973/#:~:text=Results,increased%20consistently%20among%20sociodemographic%20groups.>

³ <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9483000/#:~:text=Increases%20in%20depression%20from%202015,%5BSE=0.52%5D%20and%202020>



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
By Pastor Jody May 12/01/2024

we focus on the theme of HOPE this morning, God can take those painful times and still use it to bring Him glory. By using your experiences to stop this tragedy from happening to others, you yourself can find a sense of contentment with it, that in your suffering God helps others and works those experiences into your sanctification.

In our text today, Jesus is correcting the world of His day on the topic of divorce because it was even very prevalent 2,000 years ago. It is not a modern invention created to help culture flourish but an ancient bane in society. Here's what I want you to see from our text today to help clarify this topic of divorce.

MP:

**Divorce is never the command of God but
it is a rare exception for a fallen world.**

There are three parts for us today to reteach this topic to make sure as we said this happens so very rarely. First, we will be **refuting the world's vision for marriage**, looking at it back then and comparing to what it looks like now. Second, we will **reclaim God's vision for marriage** by going back to His Word and His desires from the first. Thirdly, we will **recommit to displaying the Gospel in marriage**, learning how to view it as God views it. (**Refuting, Reclaiming, and Recommitting**)

1. Refuting the World's Vision for Marriage. (31)

³¹"It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'

Alright, Jesus goes back to that phrase, "it was also said" by now you know that means here's what the Pharisees have been teaching you by their oral traditions. This was Jesus' way as pitting Himself against the false teachers and trends of the day. So, what we have here is the recognized practice that divorce was a common practice 2K years ago, that it was controlled by men in those days, and along with the divorced wife went some type of written record. The Pharisees were not teaching in any way that one shouldn't



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
By Pastor Jody May 12/01/2024

divorce but that if you so decided to divorce then the **important part of the law is the certificate**, make sure you don't forget that. That's the **part that earns you the righteousness** points.

Jesus was not only battling the Pharisees and their traditions, but He was also battling the popularity of the law, that gave men a lot of power over their spouses. Imagine if you will if we followed this law today?

The Pharisees and scribes of Jesus' day were torn between two different schools of thoughts or teaching on divorce from two different rabbinic schools. The school of **Shammai** taught that sexual sin was the only permissible reason to end a marriage by divorce. The school of **Hillel** argued that anything a wife did that displeased her husband provided valid grounds for divorce. At this time the Pharisees took this to mean that a man 'should' divorce his wife 'if' he discovered her to be anything other than good for him. As you can imagine the Pharisees like the latter tradition, for it gave them a much broader path in the law to make themselves better off.

Now what law were these rabbinic schools working off?

Deuteronomy 24:1-4 ESV

24 "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, ²and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, ³and 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, ⁴then 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. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance.

The intent of the law for divorce was to ensure proper transparency between families of God, to ensure purity before marriage, and it was prohibitive in mistreating the woman.



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
By Pastor Jody May 12/01/2024

The Pharisees had taken the word **indecenty**⁴ and redefined it to mean anything that was not pleasing for a man, that did not promote his welfare. (See *Christ Centered Exposition* examples).⁵ As we can see from those examples a man's prestige, wealth, and lineage was to be protected above all costs.

Today with the enlightened culture we live in today, we don't need a reason at all to end a marriage by divorce, we just call it "**no-fault divorce**". Meaning, our reasoning is not even based on perceived slights in honesty that could tarnish a reputation, our reasoning is simply **I am not happy** at the present time. And I mean just that, people who get divorce almost never think it's going to change, **they never see that it can be better**. Decisions to get divorced are always based on the immediate justification of self wants and rarely take in the other members of the family and their level of fulfillment in the relationship. Both ancient world and present day have the same problem they are both selfish in their view of marriage; it is the right thing to do if you don't get out of it what you want.

Refuting the World's Vision for Marriage means Refuting the idea that marriage is about your immediate happiness.

You see before moving on I want to caution us this morning, even in Christian culture we are always trying to move the needle more towards how to do it and get away with it. I have counseled with people and pastors that want to view disagreements and low personal connection as reasons to consider divorce. Friends not getting along just means that God is setting up the steps for your Sanctification and future glorification. Marriage is the Number 1 tool by which God works to conform His people into the image of Christ.

MP:

⁴ עֲרֻוָּה **ervâh**, er-vaw'; from [H6168](#); nudity, literally (especially the pudenda) or figuratively (disgrace, blemish):—nakedness, shame, unclean(-ness).

⁵ Akin, Daniel L. Akin, [Exalting Jesus in The Sermon on the Mount](#)/Christ-Centered Exposition (Brentwood, TN: B&H Publishing, 2019), 58-59.



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
By Pastor Jody May 12/01/2024

**Divorce is never the command of God but
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Checking out early except for the rare occasion of infidelity is prohibiting the God ordained 'good work' that He had prepared for us from the beginning (Eph 2:10). If you are thinking about divorce right now without the cause of adultery anywhere in the equation according to scripture you are in the wrong.

2. Reclaiming God's Vision for Marriage. (32)

³² But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

In case you are missing the immediate emergency of Jesus' words, if you divorce a person not for adultery you automatically condemn them to the sin of adultery, if they remarry in the future, and both parties are then at fault. Now in order to get to this idea Jesus goes beyond Deuteronomy and He goes way back to appeal to God's original intent for marriage.

Matthew 19:3-6 ESV

³And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" ⁴He answered, "Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, ⁵and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

Jesus is referring to God's original intent found in Genesis 2.

Genesis 2:20b-25 ESV

²⁰ But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. ²¹So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the Lord God had



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
By Pastor Jody May 12/01/2024

taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ Then the man said,
"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
she shall be called Woman,
because she was taken out of Man."

²⁴ Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. ²⁵ And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

Jesus, unbeknownst to them at the time, explains that His original desire when He brought Eve to Adam, that there should be no divorce, that the union was making the two into one. That means one desire, one work, one family, until death do they part, and let no man tear asunder what God has put together. Why, because it is God's will that the union last.

Matthew 19:7-9 ESV

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."

**Divorce is never the command of God but
it is a rare exception for a fallen world.**

God had allowed it because of the hardness of man's heart, that means his unforgiving nature, his inability to put wrong behind him. That in the OT times before a man's heart was changed by God's Spirit within Him this would definitely be a very hard task.

But friends there is good news today, there is HOPE, because Jesus, in His sermon on the mount, what sounds like an impossibility to the world, is an expectation for the person that calls themselves a Christian. These things described here by Christ are for the Christian that has gone through a heart



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
By Pastor Jody May 12/01/2024

change, that has the ability now to do what His master has done for Him, FORGIVE...

Again, how is a spouse changed? It is by being shown the uncompromising, unchanging, unending love that Christ had given them. Two Christians being married yes, can go through rough times but both have been equipped with the ability to love the other sacrificially, because they first have been loved the same way by Christ. They have been changed so they understand the hardness of heart, they have been forgiven so they understand the need to forgive those that trespass against them, and they have been loved into correction meaning **a spouses' tendency to be sanctified is influenced to the degree in which they are being loved**. You want to see your spouse change then you make the determination to love them better. Then in return you GAIN, watch your desire for self decrease, as you lose yourself in love for another.

Reclaiming God's Vision for Marriage means we must reclaim our need to unconditionally forgive each other.

Family, right now some of you may be doing some self-talk in your head right now, "Yeah but Pastor Jody you don't know how hard it is." First, that is a LARGE assumption on your part, the marriage I have with Heather has come through tears, pain, and brokenness; nothing worth having is easy to get. Secondly, I think we need to adjust our view of marriage and learn from God the importance of the picture it is to portray.

3. Recommitting to Displaying the Gospel in Marriage. (32)

Marriage is the main/prevalent tool that He gives His people to display His Grace and Mercy to this world so that the world may see His steadfast love. He uses the relationships of men and women, in thick and thin, to teach people the beauty of God's commitment to His people.

There was once a prophet named [Hosea](#), a contemporary of Isaiah in the Northern Kingdom in the mid 700s BC. He was a good man, a Holy man, a man set aside for God's Work of calling His people to repent. It was just that, well



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
By Pastor Jody May 12/01/2024

God wanted to use the physical picture of marriage to show His people how their relationship was getting along. He tells Hosea to go and marry a promiscuous woman named Gomer, the language even leads you to believe she's a prostitute. He goes and marries her, they have a child together, and in Chp. 1 the language leads you to believe that the next two kids she has are from different men. Then chapter 2 she leaves him and goes back to her ways before he ever met her. Then in Chapter 3 we finally see, he files the papers for divorce, she has abused him, she has abandoned him, she has had children with different lovers. NO, that's not what happens, watch now as the Gospel once again goes and does an unexpected thing.

Hosea 3:1 ESV

3 And the Lord said to me, "**Go again**, love a woman who is loved by another man and is an adulteress, even as the Lord loves the children of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love cakes of raisins."

Hosea, go and show them the intent of the heart that is focused on love, on covenant, and bringing glory to God. The point I want to make here is that just because infidelity is a reason for divorce it doesn't mean it's an automatic ending of what God has put together. God did not treat His people this way, even though they left Him, He never gave up on them. Why, because it was about His great name, it was about the future generations, it was about the coming of the Messiah through the people, it was about all the kids He was going to have over the next 2K years, it wasn't about His immediate happiness, it was about the eternal joy we receive when our God is glorified, even when our behavior is awful.

Recommitting to displaying the Gospel in our marriages is recommitting to the idea that our marriage is a picture of God's covenantal love.

That is what marriage is for the Christian, it is more than just your path towards a life of contentment, it is about you portraying the Gospel to the world, it is about you showing the greater love of God that drives your commitment to your spouse, it is about the promise that God will work all things to the good of His people, it is about you showing the world the love of



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
By Pastor Jody May 12/01/2024

Jesus that overpowers your love of self, so that He may become the dominant picture in your life, not FB memories.

MP:

Divorce is never the command of God but it is a rare exception for a fallen world.

[CALL TO OBEY]

Psalm 19:14

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Family I call us to be obedient all the way down in our hearts which will be displayed in how we think and live out God's design for marriage.

Let us Refute the idea that marriage is about our immediate happiness.

Let us Reclaim our need to unconditionally forgive each other.

Let us Recommit to the idea that our marriage is a picture of God's covenantal love.

Family let us build a church and home together where we all can pass this down to the next generation, all for the glory of Jesus.

[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

Matthew 26:26-29 ESV

²⁶ Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." ²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
By Pastor Jody May 12/01/2024

fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Today when you eat of the bread remember the life of Jesus. How when He came for us we were already living idolatrous lives, remember how living out His promises to the Father is what saved us, remember even in our rebellion He still intercedes for us. Praise be to Him for His wonderful love.

Today when you drink the juice remember the cost of our sin displayed by His blood. We remember that adultery is a capital offense towards our God, and that offense was paid for by our most faithful and steadfast Lord. By His blood we have been justified, by His sacrifice we have been redeemed. Praise be to Him for His wonderful Love.

[CONFESSION OF FAITH]

* The Congregation will stand

Elder – "Christians, what do we believe?"

LBCF 1689 Chapter 15 Section 2

Believers Are Renewed Through Repentance

There is no person who does good and does not sin. Even the best may fall into great sins and offenses through the power and deceitfulness of the corruption living in them and the prevalency of temptation. In the covenant of grace, God has mercifully provided to these believers who fall into this sin renewal through repentance to salvation.

2. Ecclesiastes 7:20

3. Luke 22:31-32

[OFFERING+LAST SONG]

[BENEDICTION]



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
By Pastor Jody May 12/01/2024

Go in the name of the Father, that while we were still sinners sent His Son to rescue us from the consequences of that sin and deliver from death.

Go in the name of the Son, that through His Incarnation brought HOPE, that we could still be loved, redeemed, and made pure again.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that empowers us to love our spouses like Christ loved us, now go and share this good news with the world.



Sermon on the Mount
Wk.15 "Let us not TEAR asunder"
By Pastor Jody May 12/01/2024

Small Group Questions:

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