

Matthew 19:1-12

The Sacred Union of Marriage

Introduction

Throughout history marriage has been an idea with many different meanings and applications. Many cultures have greatly valued marriage as sacred and other cultures marriage carried very little value. In the first century Roman Empire marriage had little value. History teaches us that the divorce rate was extremely high, even among the Jews. All types of marriage were accepted...homosexual marriage, polygamy and the like. If you remember, Herod had stolen his brother's wife and she had John the Baptist beheaded because he spoke against their actions.

With that as the backdrop...Jesus is taking the opportunity to teach on the sanctity of marriage. Which would have been very counter-culture. God has clearly taught us in His Word that marriage is not something that we take lightly or half-heartedly. Some basic truths about marriage from Scripture to keep in mind today:

- (1) Marriage was designed for one man and one woman.
- (2) Singleness is a blessing just like marriage is a blessing.
- (3) Marriage is not a magical institution that fixes your life.
- (4) Marriage takes work and commitment.
- (5) Marriage is the only relationship that sexual intimacy is acceptable before God.

Matthew 19:1-12 is not everything Jesus has to say about marriage. He was addressing a very specific issue about marriage that existed in the 1st century Roman Empire and in the nation of Israel. With that being said, I do believe that the 21st century American culture and the church are dealing with the same issue. What is that issue? The devaluing of marriage. Marriage is no longer treated as a sacred union between a man and a woman.

Section 1: 19:1-3 – Testing Will Come

When Jesus had finished saying these things, he departed from Galilee and went to the region of Judea across the Jordan. ²Large crowds followed him, and he healed them there. ³Some Pharisees approached him to test him. They asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife on any grounds?"

The Pharisees bring up the topic of marriage and divorce to trap Jesus. It's not that they had a love for marriage or wanted to know more about divorce. They wanted to discredit Jesus. The enemy will use and distort every institution commissioned by God.

Why is the enemy attacking marriage so much? Because marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:22-33 (CSB):

*²² Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord, ²³because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. He is the Savior of the body. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives are to submit to their husbands in everything. ²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her ²⁶to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. ²⁷He did this to present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless. ²⁸In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. ²⁹For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, ³⁰since we are members of his body. ³¹**For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.** ³²This mystery is profound, but I am talking about Christ and the church. ³³To sum up, each one of you is to love his wife as himself, and the wife is to respect her husband.*

Marriage is a type of parable (or a picture) that points us to the union of Christ and His church. As wives are to submit to their husbands...the church is to submit to Christ. As the husband is to love his wife...Christ loves the church. Anything that points us to Christ will be challenged by the enemy. The enemy desires to destroy all of Christ and His church. Take heart...Jesus has overcome!

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How important is it to understand the relationship between Christ and the church when trying to understand the importance of marriage?
- ❖ What is the wife's role in marriage? How does that teach you about your role as a member of the church?
- ❖ What is the husband's role in marriage? How does that teach us about how Christ relates to us as the church?

Section 2: 19:4-6 – Marriage Began in the Garden

*⁴ “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that he who created^[a] them in the beginning **made them male and female,**^[b] ⁵ and he also said, **‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?**^[c] ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.”*

Jesus quotes Genesis 1:27 and 2:24 because to understand marriage, we have to go back to the beginning. What did we learn from Genesis about marriage? First, marriage was specifically designed for one man and one woman. Second, marriage was designed to start a new family unit.

Marriage Designed for One Man and One Woman

Genesis 2:20-23 (CSB)

²⁰ The man gave names to all the livestock, to the birds of the sky, and to every wild animal; but for the man^[a] no helper was found corresponding to him. ²¹ So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to come over the man, and he slept. God took one of his ribs and closed the flesh at that place. ²² Then the Lord God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³ And the man said: This one, at last, is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; this one will be called “woman,” for she was taken from man.

Marriage may have a broad meaning in the world today, but that doesn't change God's Word. According to God, marriage was, is and will forever be between one man and one woman. We can't reason that away; we can't change Scripture to mean something else; and our personal feelings have no barring on that truth.

Marriage was Designed to Start a New Family Unit

Genesis 2:24 (CSB)

²⁴ This is why a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh.

When a man and a woman want to get married, several things must be in place. For example:

- They must be equally yoked...2 Corinthians 6:14-18.
- They must be able to provide for themselves...1 Timothy 5:8 & 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.
- They must be committed to one another...Exodus 20:14.

Starting a new family unit is a blessing and should be treasured.

Marriage is for a Lifetime

“...Therefore, what God has joined together, let no one separate.” Marriage should be treated as a major life decision. Major life decisions should not be made with your feelings...they should be made with wisdom from God.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How much time have you spent studying and meditating on the book of Genesis? Why is Genesis so important?
- ❖ Who makes up a marriage according to the Word of God?
- ❖ What role should commitment play in a marriage?

Section 3: 19:7-9 – Commitment

7 “Why then,” they asked him, “did Moses command us to give divorce papers and to send her away?”

8 He told them, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because of the hardness of your hearts, but it was not like that from the beginning. 9 I tell you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery.”^[d]

The Pharisees try to use Scripture to trap Jesus. The problem is that they misused and misquoted Scripture. They are referring to Deuteronomy 24:1 (CSB):

“If a man marries a woman, but she becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, he may write her a divorce certificate, hand it to her, and send her away from his house.

They conveniently left out the part about “indecent”. Which is a polite way to say sexual immorality. Our sinful nature will always challenge the Word of God, for example: Eve misquoted Scripture in the garden...Saul misused Scripture...Solomon ignored Scripture...the Pharisees abused Scripture.

In this encounter the Pharisees are misquoting Scripture for personal gain. They wanted to be able to bounce from wife to wife to wife. Jesus quickly corrects them and gets to the reason behind their actions: their hardness of heart. The Pharisees were not pliable when they read the Scriptures, as we should be. Their own personal desires and traditions had become more important and valuable to them than the Word of God.

It's easy to let our feelings guide us rather than the truth of God's Word. Not all feelings are bad, but we have to remember that our feelings can be extremely dangerous and destructive. We are to test all our feelings and make sure they are submitted to the Word of God. The Word of God is never to be submitted to our feelings.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Why do we (as people) always look for the easy way out?
- ❖ Why should we submit our feelings to the Word of God?
- ❖ Why is knowing and using Scripture the correct way so vital?

Section 4: 19:10-12 – Marriage is a Blessing and Being Single is a Blessing

10 His disciples said to him, “If the relationship of a man with his wife is like this, it's better not to marry.”

11 He responded, “Not everyone can accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given. 12 For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb, there are eunuchs who were made by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves that way because of the kingdom of heaven. The one who is able to accept it should accept it.”

We learn in these verses that while marriage and being single is a blessing...it is in different ways. The disciples are troubled by the amount of commitment required by God for a biblical marriage. Jesus gently explains that marriage isn't necessary for everyone. Marriage is not required to be blessed by God or to be satisfied in life. Singles can be

just as blessed and just as satisfied with life as married couples. Jesus clearly states this by saying that some are single for the kingdom of heaven.

While we are comparing marriage and singleness...here is some warnings and advice based upon biblical truths.

Warning/advice about marriage:

- Be equally yoked. Never enter a marriage with an unbeliever.
- If you already married an unbeliever...love and serve them. Share the gospel.
- Don't marry a nominal Christian. Make sure they are a growing believer.
- Don't rush into a marriage because you just want to be married.
- Don't ignore "red flags" (warnings that the person may not be the right person).
- Seek Godly advice and counsel. Before marriage and during marriage. Don't be afraid to ask for help.
- Don't marry a "project".
- Make sure they value your purity and you value theirs.

Warning/advice about being single:

- Don't consider yourself less than those married.
- Don't give sexual sin a place in your life.
- Use your free time for the church and God's glory.
- Never enter a "romantic" relationship with an unbeliever.
- Build a strong network of faithful, growing believers.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ How is marriage a blessing?
- ❖ How is being single a blessing?
- ❖ How can the married encourage singles?
- ❖ How can singles encourage the married?
- ❖ Why is seeking wisdom from God so important whether you're married or single?

Conclusion

Marriage is valuable to the church because it reminds us of the relationship between Christ and the church. That is also a challenge...does your marriage give people a clear picture of Christ and the church? Every wife is showing her husband, children, neighbors and friends how the church can faithfully follow Christ. Every husband is showing his wife, children, neighbors and friends how much Christ loves the church.

Seek to glorify God where you are today, whether married or single.