

Ecclesiastes 9:9 Enjoy life with the wife you love all the days of your fleeting life, which has been given to you under the sun, all your fleeting days. For that is your portion in life and in your struggle under the sun.

The wife isn't the struggle- life is.

But because life *is* hard, too often, spouses- instead of battling life together- will battle each other
That's true in our day as it was when Solomon wrote this, and as it was in the days Jesus walked the Earth

Mark 10:1 He set out from there and went to the region of Judea and across the Jordan.
Then crowds converged on him again, and as was his custom he taught them again.

There is a tension, that's not so apparent at first, in this verse:

- Judea= King Herod's territory.....the same Herod who divorced his wife to marry his brother's wife, and whom John the Baptist confronted about it and was ultimately beheaded over it.

Mark 10:2 Some Pharisees came to test him, asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?"

Matthew's parallel clarifies the real question: "**on any grounds?**" (Matt 19:3)

Not "*is divorced allowed?*", but "*how easily is it allowed?*"

The Pharisees have the same posture many today share:

"What can I get away with? How close can I get to the line before it's sin?"

Mark 10:3-5 He replied to them, "What did Moses command you?"

⁴They said, "Moses permitted us to write divorce papers and send her away."

⁵But Jesus told them, "He wrote this command for you because of the hardness of your hearts.

Deuteronomy 24:1 "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.

Understand the cultural context:

Two competing schools of thoughts in Jesus' day:

- **Rabbi Shammai:** Conservative view– focused on the word '*indecent*' (sexual transgression)
- **Rabbi Hillel:** Lenient view – focused on the word '*something*' (for any reason- ex: she ruined dinner)

"He wrote this command for you because of the hardness of your hearts"- that's insightful!

- Moses wasn't *recommending* divorce, but since it was already a prevalent reality, the Law was *regulating* it
*it's the same idea with slavery

Since their hearts are hard and they're gonna do so anyway, here are guidelines to protect the vulnerable
(Deut. 24:2-4 lay those out- the man can't try to get her back)

Garland- "(Jesus) contends that what Moses commanded was only a compromise situation designed to reduce the fallout from men's hardness of heart. The legislation on divorce certificates protected wives from brutal abandonment. It freed the wife from the accusation of adultery when she, out of necessity, remarried; and it prevented the first husband from destroying her new marriage by trying to reclaim her. It deterred anything that might look like wife-swapping. The law was therefore intended to keep the social upheaval associated with divorce to a minimum."

Here's the principle that Jesus is getting at:

If the regulation for divorce had its roots in men's hardness of heart it cannot properly reflect God's will on the issue.

They start with the end of a marriage in mind; Jesus will take them to the creation of it-

Mark 10:6-9 But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. ⁷For this reason a man will leave his father and mother ⁸and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh.

⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

God's intentions for marriage are not found in Deut. 24, but in **Genesis 1-2** (what Jesus quotes)

They want to talk about divorce; Jesus wants to talk about marriage.

- **Marriage is a work and gift of God** (V6- 'God made')

tell your wives 'you're a gift'; tell your husbands 'you're a lot of work'

Work- **Genesis 2:22** Then the Lord God made the rib he had taken from the man into a woman and brought her to the man.

Gift- **Genesis 2:23** 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 by God's design is exclusive to one man for one woman** (V6- 'male and female')

- This speaks of **monogamy**- **Genesis 2:24** 'THEY will become one flesh'; **Mark 10:8** 'the TWO...'
Despite the polygamous practices of many, even in the bible, the scriptures never condone the practice and even show the harm and complications that would fall on such families.
- This speaks of **gender** – scripture does not recognize same sex marriages....therefore God doesn't
- This speaks of **maturity**- (man, not boy that thinks he's man)

- **Marriage forms a new family that takes precedence over the families of origin** (V7-8 'leave...become')

Your spouse comes first now

- **Marriage is intended to foster oneness between a husband and wife** (V8- 'no longer two, but one')

You are not one with your parents or even children- only with your spouse (not the same, but united)

- **Marriage is meant to be life-long** (V9- 'let no one separate')

It is the second most important decision of your life (wedding vows-until death do us part)

The pharisees saw marriage as a legal issue; Jesus grounds it as a spiritual one

Mark 10:10-12 When they were in the house again, the disciples questioned him about this matter.

¹¹He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her.

¹²Also, if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

We *will* cover the issue of divorce in a moment, but I want to point to Matthew's account of this, since Mark doesn't tell us what the disciples respond what Jesus just said-

Matthew 19:10 His disciples said to him, "If the relationship of a man with his wife is like this, it's better not to marry."

It's funny but sad, because some were married- perhaps their hearts too are still hard

Matthew 19:11-12 He responded, "Not everyone can accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given. ¹²For 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.**"

Not everyone is called to marriage- some people really have been given the gift of singleness

Some only for life.....and some for a time only

1 Corinthians 7:32-35 I want you to be without concerns. The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. ³³ But the married man is concerned about the things of the world—how he may please his wife— ³⁴ and his interests are divided. The unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But the married woman is concerned about the things of the world—how she may please her husband. ³⁵ I am saying this for your own benefit, not to put a restraint on you, but to promote what is proper and so that you may be devoted to the Lord without distraction.

Use your singleness to glorify God!

If your singleness feels like a burden, don't worry, it's probably not your perpetual gift!

1 Corinthians 7:8-9 I say to the unmarried and to widows: It is good for them if they remain as I am. ⁹ But if they do not have self-control, they should marry, since it is better to marry than to burn with desire.

Back to Mark 10:11-12. Let's talk about divorce-

Jesus takes not only *wrongful divorce* but *wrongful remarriage* seriously, as an act of rebellion against God-
Why? They are undoing what God blessed and making a new union which God did not bless

Pharisees ask: "*What can I get away with?*" ; Jesus essentially asks: "*What did God intend?*"

Jesus saw marriage as a covenant; They saw divorce as a convenience

The Bible and Divorce-

- **God warns against divorce**

Malachi 2:16 "If he hates and divorces his wife," says the Lord God of Israel, "he covers his garment with injustice," says the Lord of Armies. Therefore, watch yourselves carefully, and do not act treacherously.

- **God's desire for troubled marriages is reconciliation
(although temporary separation in some cases may be wise)**

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 To the married I give this command—not I, but the Lord—a wife is not to leave her husband. ¹¹ But if she does leave, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband—and a husband is not to divorce his wife.

The context of our passage in Mark 10 is monumentally important-

Jesus is not addressing a struggling couple seeking council and needing encouragement;
or a spouse who has been physically abused for years; or a spouse who fears for their children's safety;

Jesus is addressing hostile men seeking to trap Him so they may ultimately kill Him

Therefore, Mark doesn't lay out a full in-depth teaching on marriage & divorce

Is divorce ever permitted in the Bible?

I want to tread reverently in this next section-

- Some of you will be uncomfortable and disagree.....it is your responsibility to be a good 'Berean'
- Others of you may be all too eager to find any excuse to leave your marriage.....be careful

Let me lay some foundation to help answer the question looming over us-

The Bible recognizes hard realities and provides exemptions to rules for the sake of a greater principle

Ex: Rahab- lying is wrong; but allowing the Israelites spies to be caught & killed is worse

Again, not that divorce is ideal, but in some (very rare cases), it may be permissible

In most cases, divorce is NOT the answer

Divorce is never ideal but may be biblically permissible, for the welfare of the victim, in the case of:

1. Adultery/ Sexual Immorality

Matthew 19:19 I tell you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another commits adultery.”

sexual immorality (Greek not *moicheia*, but *porneia* - more general term than adultery)

2. Abandonment/ Desertion

1 Corinthians 7:15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave. A brother or a sister is not bound in such cases. God has called you to live in peace.

3. Abuse/ Danger to Life

***God's Protection of Women- when abuse is worse than divorce by Herb Vander Lugt*

The Bible recognizes hard realities and provides exemptions to rules for the sake of a greater principle

- In **Matthew 12** the Pharisees confront Jesus- his disciples picked & ate some grain on the sabbath; Jesus brings up David who ate the showbread when on the run from Saul
What's Jesus getting at? Preserving life was the greater good and the lesser of two wrongs
- The book of **Acts** tells us to obey the government, & in the same book the disciples disobey to preach
How can that be? Because obeying God is a higher good to obeying the law of the land

Special Note: We need to be very careful about what we attribute as ‘abuse’

All marriages are guilty of abuse in some degree (harsh with our words, threw a plate @ wall)

I believe scripture allows for divorce when there is radical danger or harm of a person if they stay in that marriage

“Divorce was not approved, but it was instituted to protect the injured party in the midst of a bad situation.”

Final Thoughts: **(MEDIA TEAM- PLEASE MAKE EACH OF THESE A DIFFERENT SLIDE)**

- **If your marriage is struggling and troubled, don't give up, there's still hope**
- **Even if your spouse has given up on the relationship, God hasn't**
- **God hates divorce- but God does not hate the divorced person**
- **Where adultery or wrongful divorce has taken place, forgiveness is possible**

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

You think your marriage is struggling? Hosea & Gomer.....and that's how God loves us. You. Me.

Ephesians 5:31-32 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.

Marriage is a work of art, that depicts a greater scene

CALL UP WORSHIP TEAM

COMMUNION

The faithfulness Jesus calls us to in marriage is the very faithfulness He Himself lives out toward us

He didn't abandon His bride; He redeemed her- through the sacrifice of His body on a cross

Lay down your shame, guilt, regret, wounded heart;

Receive God's grace today

BULPEN-

****When Abuse is Worse Than Divorce PDF booklet download link:**

<https://hfhwdnloads.s3.amazonaws.com/gods-protection-of-women.pdf>

Article on the translation differences in Malachi 2:16 and which is most accurate:

<https://lifesavingdivorce.com/malachi/#:~:text=The%20Bibles%20of%20the%20first,to%20the%20ESV%20is%20preferable.&text=He%20knows%20that%20people%20will,%E2%80%9D>

John Calvin on Malachi 2- *“What else is this,” he says, “but to cover by a cloak your violence, or at least to excuse it? for ye do not openly manifest it: but God is not deceived, nor can his eye be dazzled by such a disguise: though then your iniquity is covered by a cloak, it is not yet hid from God; nay, it is thus doubled, because ye exercise your cruelty at home; for it would be better for robbers to remain in the wood and there to kill strangers, than to entice guests to their houses and to kill them there and to plunder them under the pretext of hospitality. This is the way in which you act; for ye destroy the bond of marriage, and ye afterwards deceive your miserable wives, and yet ye force them by your tyranny to continue at your houses, and thus ye torment your miserable wives, who might have enjoyed their freedom, if divorce had been granted them.”*

V1 though the crowds may have mixed motivations for flocking to Jesus, He still taught them
Their hearts did not deter His

It's important to remember they ask this in order to trap Jesus-

Whatever He responds He will not please everyone, and may even provoke Herod

V2- They are more interested in their rights, and are neglecting their responsibilities

Deuteronomy 24:2-4 If after leaving his house she goes and becomes another man's wife, ³ and the second man hates her, writes her a divorce certificate, hands it to her, and sends her away from his house or if he dies, ⁴ the first husband who sent her away may not marry her again after she has been defiled, because that would be detestable to the Lord. You must not bring guilt on the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.

is meant to deter divorce- it emphasizes the permanency of the consequences

the pharisees in that day, for the most part, followed the teaching of Hillel

*Slavery- Same with the commandments around slavery- it was regulation not recommendation, it was embedded in culture, so the law set regulations to protect the vulnerable

Malachi 2:13-15 This is another thing you do. You are covering the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning, because he no longer respects your offerings or receives them gladly from your hands. ¹⁴ And you ask, “Why?” **Because even though the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, you have acted treacherously against her.** She was your marriage partner and your wife by covenant. ¹⁵ Didn't God make them one and give them a portion of spirit? What is the one seeking? Godly offspring. So watch yourselves carefully, so that no one acts treacherously against the wife of his youth.

Daniel Akin- *“Though the Bible never condones divorce, it does recognize the reality of divorce. The allowance of a divorce certificate provides regulations and is a concession for the protection and welfare of an innocent victim.”*

Mark 6:17-18 For Herod himself had given orders to arrest John and to chain him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because he had married her. ¹⁸ John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

Jesus doesn't align with rabbi Hillel or with Rabbi Shammai- He turns to God's saying on the matter
"Has God said anything about this matter, and if so, what?"

Mike Winger, *"It's not that Jesus is opposed to any and every possible divorce, it's rather that He is opposed to divorce for any and every possible reason."*

1 Corinthians 7:10-16 To the married I give this command—not I, but the Lord—a wife is not to leave her husband. ¹¹ But if she does leave, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband—and a husband is not to divorce his wife. ¹² But I (not the Lord) say to the rest: If any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. ¹³ Also, if any woman has an unbelieving husband and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce her husband. ¹⁴ For the unbelieving husband is made holy by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy by the husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy. ¹⁵ But if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave. A brother or a sister is not bound in such cases. God has called you to live in peace. ¹⁶ Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife.

V7 we are meant to break off every other relationship to be united to our spouse-
Marriage in God's heart is meant to be unbreakable

Jesus' reply presents God's will and design of marriage against those who want to impose their own designs on it

What is the overarching will of God in scripture on a matter?
Sabbath- made for men, not men for the sabbath;
Marriage was made to bless mankind, not mankind for marriage

Ancient culture viewed the wife as property- to them it was like getting rid of an old car to buy a newer one
Jesus highlights God's perspective regarding marriage- they are ONE
Genesis 2:23 bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh

Romans 7:1-3 Since I am speaking to those who know the law, brothers and sisters, don't you know that the law rules over someone as long as he lives? ² For example, a married woman is legally bound to her husband while he lives. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law regarding the husband. ³ So then, if she is married to another man while her husband is living, she will be called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law. Then, if she is married to another man, she is not an adulteress.

1 Corinthians 7:39-40 A wife is bound as long as her husband is living. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to anyone she wants—only in the Lord. ⁴⁰ But she is happier if she remains as she is, in my opinion. And I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

Mike Winger- Radical Danger or harm justifies separation and divorce

"While recognizing that marital permanence is God's ideal, Moses also recognized that there are hard-hearted conditions worse than divorce" - Herb Vander Lugt, 'God's protection of women, When abuse is worse than divorce'

Matthew 5:32 But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

To divorce one's spouse, without biblical reason, and marry another is to commit the sin of adultery

Mark 10:11-12

Matthew 12:3-8 He said to them, "Haven't you read what David did when he and those who were with him were hungry: ⁴how he entered the house of God, and they ate the bread of the Presence—which is not lawful for him or for those with him to eat, but only for the priests?

⁵Or haven't you read in the law that on Sabbath days the priests in the temple violate the Sabbath and are innocent? ⁶I tell you that something greater than the temple is here. ⁷If you had known what this means, I desire mercy and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the innocent. ⁸For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."

- Jesus brings up the law of the Sabbath in which no work is to be done, yet the priests work
"the priests in the temple violate the Sabbath and are innocent"

How's that work? It's here where He says, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice"

They then confront Him about working on the Sabbath

Matthew 12:11-12 He replied to them, "Who among you, if he had a sheep that fell into a pit on the Sabbath, wouldn't take hold of it and lift it out? ¹²A person is worth far more than a sheep; so it is lawful to do what is good on the Sabbath."

You can do good on the Sabbath- why? Because God desires mercy not sacrifice