

When We Said, “I Glue”

Mark 10:1-12 March 4, 2026

Interviews are a minefield of tricky questions. “What is your greatest weakness?” “Where do you see yourself in five years?” “Would you ever bend the rules to get the job done?” In many cases, the panel is more interested in how you deal with the pressure of the question than they are the specifics of your answer.

Our text tonight is a discussion on divorce, but it’s not *really* about divorce. Those asking don’t actually care about Jesus’ theology. And Jesus’ response *isn’t* to give us a handbook on how to end our marriages. He wants to talk about our hearts and God’s high ideal.

Divorce is always a sensitive and controversial subject. *That’s* why the Pharisees brought it up. Undoubtedly, many lives in this room have been touched by divorce in one way or another.

There are several passages in the Bible that touch on divorce. Some are prescriptive, some are narrative. The context weighs heavily on those passages. In 1 Corinthians, Paul tells believers to *not* divorce their unbelieving spouses, if the unbeliever is willing to stay together. Page over to Ezra, and you’ll see God’s people *commanded* to send away their pagan wives.

Before we jump in, let me give a few disclaimers. First, there is a spectrum of doctrinal interpretation on the issues of divorce and remarriage.

Second, the Bible gives two grounds for Christians to divorce: Sexual immorality and abandonment. Theologians debate what falls into those two categories, but those are specifically listed. But it is not *commanded* that you divorce if, for example, your spouse is unfaithful.

Third, no one should ever be pressured to remain in an abusive situation, especially by the Church. If you or your children are being abused, we urge you to remove yourself and call the police. If you need help, we will help you. You do not need to submit to abuse or any sort of criminal activity.

Finally, divorce is not the unpardonable sin. In many cases it *is* sin, and a grievous one by God’s standard, He *hates* it. If it happens for unbiblical reasons, God considers it to be *treason*.¹ But He is a God of grace, of forgiveness, a God Who cleanses us of our sins and makes us new. There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. But, if you are pursuing an unbiblical divorce in your marriage right now, God commands you to follow Him, trust Him, and be transformed by Him by choosing *His* way in your life, including in your marriage.

Mark 10:1-2 - 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. ² Some Pharisees came to test him, asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”

¹ Malachi 2:16 (see NET, NKJV, NLT)

The Pharisees are not on a fact-finding mission. They are in full-blown attack mode. If we understand the setting, it helps us understand just how tricky this question is.

First, Jesus is no longer in Galilee, He is in Judea - *in Herod's territory*.² The reason John the Baptist was killed was because he spoke out Herod's wife's divorce. So Jesus could potential face a similar reaction depending on His answer.

Second, while there were two different schools of thought about divorce among Jews, "most Jews took for granted that a man had an inalienable right to divorce his wife."³ Think about that for a minute. An *inalienable right*. "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights...Life, Liberty, the pursuit of Happiness...and for men to be able to divorce their wives!"

The two schools of thought divided *not* over whether divorce was allowed, but just *how* allowed it was. The liberal camp, represented by the Rabbi Hillel, said that a man could divorce his wife for almost any reason. And I mean *any* reason. He signed off on a man divorcing his wife because she overcooked his food.⁴ Another rabbi of this school of thought taught that a man could divorce his wife if he found another woman more beautiful.⁵

The *other* school of thought was the more conservative, represented by Rabbi Shammai. It said a man can only divorce his wife for sexual misconduct. That didn't *only* mean adultery, because after all, adultery was a capital crime. So in that situation, a divorce would not be necessary.

The Pharisees thought they had Jesus pinned. We see in Matthew that they specifically said, "Can a man divorce his wife for *any reason*?"⁶ They want to get Jesus in as much trouble as possible. Either with the people by being too conservative, or with Herod by being too vocal, or if He's too liberal, they could try to build a case that Jesus denied the Law of Moses. Lot of pressure!

Mark 10:3-4 - ³ He replied to them, "What did Moses command you?" ⁴ They said, "Moses permitted us to write divorce papers and send her away."

Jesus is never concerned with popular or political opinion. He immediately brings them back to Scripture and to the heart of the issue and the high ideals of heaven.

This is how we should think about our life circumstances. We have a situation, we have something going on, we're wondering what to do, the *first* question is not what we want or what we think is best, but what has *God* said. And, if God has not *specifically* addressed your problem, then what is His principle in the more general sense? How would His character react in your situation?

² James Brooks *The New American Commentary, Volume 23: Mark*

³ David Garland *The NIV Application Commentary: Mark*

⁴ Walter Wessel *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Volume 8: Matthew, Mark, Luke*

⁵ R. Kent Hughes *Mark: Jesus, Servant And Savior*

⁶ Matthew 19:3

The Christian way of life is to follow *God's* heart, not *our* hearts. We must concern ourselves with what *God* wills, not what we want.⁷

Here's what's interesting: Jesus says, "What did Moses *command* you?" They answer, "Well, Moses *permitted* us..." We'll find Jesus and the Pharisees are in totally different passages of Scripture. They quote Deuteronomy 24, but Jesus quotes Genesis 2. *That's* where the command was.

In Deuteronomy 24, God provided a stipulation *for the sake of women who were unloved and mistreated*. Remember, in these ancient societies, women couldn't just go and live on their own. If a wife was abandoned or thrown out, she would be left without help, without hope, and without prospects for a future marriage. So, God spoke through Moses to say, "Yeah, that's not ok. You need to have a lever of mercy and compassion for ladies in this situation."

To get the certificate of divorce, a man would have to get a Levite to write it and was *probably* required to pay back his wife's dowry.⁸ So, rather than just kick a lady out, it would take time, it would cost something, and the man would have to go and say before God and the priests, "Yeah, I don't want to provide for my wife anymore." One commentator writes, "The law obviously was an attempt to promote some order and restraint in the society to which it was first given."⁹ Moses didn't invent divorce. This was a regulation of something that was already going on.¹⁰ Now, let's hear Jesus' side of the issue.

Mark 10:5-9 - ⁵ But Jesus told them, "He wrote this command for you because of the hardness of your hearts. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation God made them male and female. ⁷ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother ⁸ and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

Because human hearts are hard, because of their obstinacy, because of our willful defiance toward God,¹¹ the Lord made this provision in the Law as a helpful *right* for women in a bad situation.¹²

This is not the only time God made a provision to address the sinfulness and rebellion of human hearts. *That's* why the guilt and trespass offerings exist. They're given not because God *wants* you to sin, but because sinners must be governed. The ideal is that they would *never* have to do it!

God *never* intended for marriage to end in divorce. It is *always* the result of sin. Either people sinning by divorcing outside of God's boundaries, or, when a spouse sins through abandonment or sexual immorality, which then clears the innocent spouse of the divorce in His eyes.

⁷ Morna Hooker *The Gospel According To Saint Mark*

⁸ Robert Utley *The Gospel According To Peter: Mark And I & II Peter*

⁹ Clifton Allen *Matthew-Mark*

¹⁰ R.T. France *The Gospel Of Mark*

¹¹ Garland

¹² William Lane *The Gospel Of Mark*

The *command* for marriage began in Genesis 2 and is then repeated multiple times throughout the Bible. Notice God's involvement in marriage: God created them and God joined them.

It's is *God's* decision who you marry, not yours. Now listen - if you're already married, whether you got married before you were a Christian or if you *were* a Christian, but married without God's input, you're *married* and God wants you to *stay* married. He wants to do a great, spiritual work in and through your marriage, and for you to grow together as a spiritually and physically joined entity.

But for those of you who are *not* married, please listen to what Jesus is saying. It is *God's* decision who you marry. There are some people He calls to a life of singleness, and if that's His will for your life, that's *great*. It's not more spiritual to be married, it's not more spiritual to be single. It's spiritual for you to follow His will for your life. And following *God's* will in the only way to real fulfillment.

But, for most of us, God's plan is marriage. And in that case you need to know He *created* you for someone and *created* someone for you. Joined here literally means "yoked together."¹³

Not only does God have a tailor-made individual for you, but that relationship is designed to be the closet human relationship, the most significant, the most stand-apart of your life. It's beyond the child-parent relationship. It's beyond the brother relationship. Beyond friendship. Beyond partner. Beyond any other bond or connection with any other human being on the planet. *That's* what God intends marriage to be. That's heaven's ideal. Two custom-made people, intended for each other by God Himself, *cleaving* to one another. Literally *glued* together.¹⁴

If we, as Christians, constantly focus on, "What are the allowable ways *out* of marriage," then I think we're failing to honor what God has designed and revealed for us.

If a person says, "Well, I married the wrong person, I'm not happy, so I'm going to get a divorce." Ok, but they're admitting that they rebelled against God's plan and leading for their lives before and now they're going to rebel again to get into a new situation.

The question is always a heart issue. Are we Christians or are we not? Do we believe God or don't we? Do we trust Him or do we want to go our own way? Do we understand *God's* design?

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

Matthew explains that Jesus' answer was controversial, even to the disciples. They actually say to Jesus, "If the relationship of a man with his wife is like this, it's better not to marry."¹⁵ What??

¹³ Utley

¹⁴ Marvin Vincent *Word Studies In The New Testament*

¹⁵ Matthew 19:10

That attitude reveals how prone we are to withhold some part of life, some piece of our hearts from the Lord, even when His intention is to bless us with something as wonderful as Christian marriage. "Lord, You knit me together in my mother's womb, You loved me enough to send Your own Son to die in my place, You've created a spouse *just* for me, but Lord, I want to be able to reserve the right to reject Your ideas, reject your plan, because my emotions are that important to me."

Mark 10:11-12 - ¹¹ He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. ¹² Also, if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

Jesus blows their attitude out of the water even more here. In the rabbinical system, a woman could commit adultery against her husband, but a *man* could not commit adultery against his wife.¹⁶ It was a one-way issue. So here, Jesus elevates women to equal standing and responsibility.

Now remember: adultery was a capital offense under the Law. The term Jesus used for "adultery" is a general term for sexual sin - *porneia*. Let's use two examples that are absolutely pervasive in our culture and, frankly, often in the Church: Pornography and premarital sex. If you engage in these activities, you are in sin. You are sinning against your spouse and your own body. Your body is not meant for that sexual immorality, but for the Lord. You must flee it and there should not be a hint of it among God's people.¹⁷ It's not "too hard" to obey, unless your *heart* is hard.

God's design and ideal for marriage is hard-coded into His creation, His will, and His providence, since the Garden of Eden. If you want to know how to have a happy marriage that brings you *and* your spouse (and your family by extension) fulfillment and joy and growth, the answer is *never* in what you want, but on what God's will is. If you want marital happiness, it's not found in someone else. It's found in each of you *becoming* who God created you to be.

"Oh how happy is the person who delights in the Lord's instruction and walks the road of righteousness."¹⁸ "Happy is the person who fears the Lord and takes delight in His commands."¹⁹

The softer my heart is, the happier my marriage is - *even if my spouse doesn't cooperate*. That's the teaching of 1 Corinthians 7. Undoubtedly some of you have had to endure or are currently enduring a lot of very difficult days in a broken marriage relationship. Even the best Christian marriages have times of extreme stress and hurt. That's because we are imperfect people who *don't* always follow the Lord. And there are times when you need to get together in a room with someone and talk through issues and maybe offer rebuke or correction to one spouse or another.

But Jesus says, "Come to Me, I'll give you rest. My yoke is easy." *And* He says here, "For those of you who are called to marriage, *part* of that yoke is to be yoked with this person God made for you." That is a wonderful thing. We want to be people who have a growing regard for the wonder of

¹⁶ See Hooker, Allen

¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 6:13, 18, Ephesians 5:3

¹⁸ Psalm 1

¹⁹ Psalm 112:1

Christian marriage as designed by God. If there is sin, there are times when a divorce is permitted. If there is danger or harm or abuse, call the police, reach out to us so we can help you.

But in the meantime, in *regular* Christian circumstances, let *us* never work to unglue what God created to be cemented. Let's not focus on the technicalities of what God permits, but instead on the power of what He desires. And if we are doing things to pour solvent onto the marriage bond, we need to die to ourselves, trust the Lord, *obey* Him, and allow Him to do His incredible work of growth, blessing, and fulfillment in us and *for* us in this unique human relationship, by softening our hearts and serving our spouses, and functioning in this unique gift given to us by our loving Lord.