

We Will Remain Faithful Until Death

Message 4 of 4 in the series: "Tighten the Knot"

A. To tighten the knot, we need to embrace God's original intentions for marriage.

"Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: 'Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for just any reason?' **'Haven't you read the Scriptures?'** Jesus replied. 'They record that **from the beginning** "God made them male and female."' And he said, 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.' 'Then why did Moses say in the law that a man could give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away?' they asked. Jesus replied, 'Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but **it was not what God had originally intended.**'"

Matthew 19:3-8 (NLT)

1. The people asking Jesus this question weren't interested in what the Bible says or better marriages. They wanted to trap Jesus into making a statement they could use to divide his followers politically.

"If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds **something indecent about her**, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord. Do not bring sin upon the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance." Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (NIV)

- Rabbi Hillel taught that "something indecent" meant **any reason at all**.
- Rabbi Shammai taught that "something indecent" meant **only marital infidelity**.

Life Application: When we discuss cultural "hot-button" issues like marriage, we must be careful to seek wisdom and direction from God's Word.

"I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do. **Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth.** Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world." John 17:14-18 (NLT)

"This is what the LORD says: 'Stop at the crossroads and look around. Ask for the old, godly way, and walk in it. Travel its path, and you will find rest for your souls. But you reply, **"No, that's not the road we want!"**'" Jeremiah 6:16 (NLT)

2. Jesus reminded the Pharisees that God created us male and female, made us complementary, and created the institution of marriage so that a man and a woman could be joined together as **"one"**.

"Then the LORD God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. **I will make a helper who is just right for him.**' ...So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took out one of the man's ribs and closed up the opening. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man. 'At last!' the man exclaimed. **'This one is bone from my bone, and flesh from my flesh!** She will be called "woman," because she was taken from "man."' This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and **the two are united into one.**" Genesis 2:18-24 (NLT)

"...husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. **No one hates his own body but feeds and cares for it**, just as Christ cares for the church." Ephesians 5:28-29 (NLT)

Life Application: A man and a woman choosing to lay down their rights and **voluntarily become one** in every area of their lives is part of a life-long spiritual refining process.

"...now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the **proven genuineness of your faith**—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed." 1 Peter 1:6-7 (NIV)

3. Jesus reminded the Pharisees that marriage and singleness are gifts from God, divorce was never part of His original plan, and that God helps us do His will.

“And I tell you this, whoever divorces his wife and marries someone else commits adultery—unless his wife has been unfaithful.’ Jesus’ disciples then said to him, ‘If this is the case, it is better not to marry!’ ‘Not everyone can accept this statement,’ Jesus said. **‘Only those whom God helps.** Some are born as eunuchs, some have been made eunuchs by others, and some choose not to marry for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.’” Matthew 19:9-12 (NLT)

“...I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And **I will put my Spirit in you** so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations.” Ezekiel 36:26-27 (NLT)

B. Four ways we can respond to Jesus’ teaching on marriage and divorce:

1. We can proclaim God’s grace, forgiveness, and new life to everyone through Jesus Christ.

“We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are. For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. Yet **God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight.** He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.” Romans 3:22-24 (NLT)

2. We can restore those who’ve hurt others as well as those who’ve been hurt by others through divorce.

“Dear brothers and sisters, if another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. **Share each other’s burdens,** and in this way obey the law of Christ.” Galatians 6:1-2 (NLT)

3. We can strengthen marriages wherever we can.

“These older women must train the younger women to love their husbands and their children, to live wisely and be pure, to work in their homes, to do good, and to be submissive to their husbands... In the same way, encourage the young men to live wisely. And you yourself must **be an example to them** by doing good works of every kind.” Titus 2:4-7a (NLT)

4. We can guard our hearts.

“Didn’t the LORD make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are his. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So **guard your heart;** remain loyal to the wife of your youth. ‘For I hate divorce!’ says the LORD, the God of Israel. ‘To divorce your wife is to overwhelm her with cruelty,’ says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies. ‘So **guard your heart;** do not be unfaithful to your wife.’”

Malachi 2:15-16 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions:

Read Matthew 19:3-12 and come prepared to discuss the following questions with your group:

1. Who has the best marriage you know? What’s their secret?
2. Read Genesis 2:18-24. Why do you think God created marriage? (1 John 2:15) Why do you think most people in our culture deny this? What difference does it make?
3. When we discuss cultural “hot-button” issues like marriage, why is it important to seek wisdom and direction from God’s Word. (John 17:14-18, Jeremiah 6:16, 2 Timothy 4:3)
4. “I Groom, take you Bride, to be my wedded wife; to have and to hold from this day forward; for better, for worse; for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish until death separates us. This is my solemn vow.” Are these just words to be at wedding ceremonies, or should they mean more? (Ephesians 5:28-29)
5. Discuss the following four ways we can respond to Jesus’ teaching on marriage and divorce:
 - We can proclaim God’s grace, forgiveness, and new life to everyone through Jesus Christ. (Romans 3:22-24)
 - We can restore those who’ve hurt others as well as those who’ve been hurt by others through divorce. (Galatians 6:1-2; Romans 12:9, 10, & 15)
 - We can strengthen marriages wherever we can. (Titus 2:4-7)
 - We can guard our hearts. (Malachi 2:15-16, Ezekiel 36:26-27)

6. Meaningful quotations:

"Love as distinct from 'being in love' is not merely a feeling. It is a deep unity, maintained by the will and deliberately strengthened by habit; reinforced by the grace which both partners ask, and receive from God. They can have this love for each other even at those moments when they do not like each other; as you love yourself even when you do not like yourself." C.S. Lewis

"Men, you'll never be a good groom to your wife unless you're first a good bride to Jesus." Tim Keller

7. Spend some time praying for the marriages in our church, city, state, and nation.