

## God's Design for Marriage

Good morning. My name is Andy, I'm one of the Pastors here at First Naples. **Pastor Alan is on vacation with his family, and I know that he is excited to be back with you next Sunday.** If today is your first time with us... **[Connection Card] Welcome,** we are so glad you have chosen to worship with us. **If you haven't before or if you want to connect deeper,** we'd love for you to **scan the code in the seat back** in front of you. We'd love to answer any **questions** you may have or lift up any **prayer requests** you'd be willing to share with us. **And for those watching online, welcome to you as well.**

**This morning we continue our journey through the book of Mark called Sent to Serve.** Today we are going to be jumping into some **difficult teaching in Mark 10.** This passage is well known for **Jesus' teaching on divorce.** **[ Thanks Alan! ]** And while we might not all be in a marriage, or not in a marriage that is struggling, **I believe this passage provides truths that we can all learn from, and live out.**

**There is no easy way to put it Divorce is complicated and painful.** And unfortunately in this room I would venture to say that **we have all had some kind of experience with divorce. Maybe like me it's your parents' marriage that ended in divorce,** maybe one of **your kids,** or a **close friend...** and we have all seen **the pain and destruction that come with it.**

I also realize that it's likely that **some in this room** feel like they are on the **brink of divorce,** or **recently divorced** and **just talking about this brings back a flood of emotions that are still raw.** And as I have prayed and prepared I have **been asking God** to allow me to approach this morning with a **sensitive heart while still presenting this truth.** **So, as we dive into a hard subject...** I want you to know that **I don't come to you judgmentally today.** I know that for many of you, **your divorce was one of the most painful times in your life,** and something you would have avoided if you could have... And you likely **understand better than most why God hates divorce.**

But no matter how you have been affected by divorce - We will see today that **It's not God's best. God hates divorce... BECAUSE he loves marriage... God loves marriage because it reflects Christ's love for the church... And that brings God glory.**

### [ PRAY ]

#### Mark 10:1-12

**1** And he left there and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan, and crowds gathered to him again. And again, as was his custom, he taught them.

**2** And Pharisees came up and in order to test him asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" **3** He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" **4** They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away." **5** And Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. **6** But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' **7** 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, **8** and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. **9** What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

**10** And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. **11** And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her, **12** and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

In these verses we see **Jesus continuing his journey to the cross.** And he arrives in the town where John the Baptist was beheaded for calling out **King Herod's unbiblical divorce and remarriage.** And along come the **Pharisees to test Him** and the first thing I want us to see is that there is a...

## 1. THE DANGER OF A HARD HEART

**Jesus sees right through the Pharisees.** He knows their hearts, and he knows what they want to talk about, so he gets right to it... "you want to talk about Moses, let's talk about Moses..."

**3** He answered them, "What did Moses command you?"

- I love that Jesus answers their question with a question. It's just a subtle way of saying... "Hey, in case you didn't know, I'm in control, and I'll be asking the questions."
- **4** Pharisees answer and say "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of divorce and to send her away."

I don't know how you hear the Pharisees in this conversation, but I hear them like one of my kids... **Moses said we could do it! What's the big deal? Everyone else is doing it...**

- And then Jesus, like a good parent, gets to the heart of the issue... *"It's not that simple... Moses didn't just say you could do it, he gave parameters because of your hard of heart."*
- Jesus identifies that divorce is a **heart issue not a law issue** *"Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment."*

### **Kent Hughes - in his commentary**

*"The reason God allowed divorce was that the hearts of the men of Israel were hard. This was a divine concession to human weakness, a concession to man's sinfulness, but it can not be taken as approval. **It was reluctant permission at best.**"*<sup>1</sup>

**So if we know the Pharisees had a heart issue, a HARD HEART, How do we make sure we aren't just like them? Let's take a little inventory...**

- Are we more often **justify sin...** or **confessing** it?
- Do we see how close we can get to **God's rules or laws...** or are we more concerned **how close we can get to Jesus?**
- Are we desperately **holding on to control...** or do we **trust God** even with hard truths?
- Do we turn to **worldly wisdom...** instead of **Godly counsel?**
- Do we settle for **convenience and comfort...** or are we **striving for God's Design?**

**Jason Meyer** in his book on Mark says it this way: *"The problem with the Pharisees (as usual) is that they are **staring at the law** and **seeing the external issue** without stopping to consider the **underlying heart issue.**"*<sup>2</sup>

- The Pharisees' hearts were in the wrong place, they were just looking for the rules and how to follow them.
- **They came to the conversation wanting to satisfy their own desires:**
  - Whether it was justifying their **watered-down view** of the marriage covenant,
  - making Jesus **pick sides of the ongoing debate** on the parameters of divorce from **Deut. 24:1**,
  - trapping Jesus into a **fatal outcome just like John the Baptist.**
  - What we know is that the Pharisees **weren't coming to Jesus for more of Jesus.**

**And because of that, they were missing...**

## **2. THE BEAUTY OF GOD'S DESIGN**

**Jesus directs the Pharisees** back to the **creator, and sustainer of life**, and the **creator and sustainer of marriage**. He says, *"I know what Moses said, but that's not God's best. That's not God's ideal, Divorce is not God's design. The Beauty of God's design is so much better than a concession due to hard hearts."* In His response Jesus **gave an answer that was beyond the limits of two sides of a debate. Jesus points to God's ideal** and declares that any situation falling short of God's original design is not God's best and **always involves sin.**

**Let me remind you** of Jesus how directly quotes from the creation account in Genesis, Jesus says:

**6** But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' **7** 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, **8** and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. **9** What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

**Because God is the creator and sustainer of marriage, God defines marriage:** God authored it, designed it and therefore God alone defines it. It's not the government, or the court system, It's not the Pharisees, it's not even Moses. **So how does God define it?**

### **4 THINGS WE SEE HERE:**

- *Jesus is saying that **male and female are the fundamental** building blocks of marriage. Jesus is saying marriage by definition and design requires sexual difference.*
- **The marriage relationship now takes precedence** over every other relationship including your immediate family, your closest friends, or even your work relationship. After your relationship with God Marriage becomes the number 1 priority.
- **God is in the union of marriage.** God does what only God can do!
- **God defines the beginning and the end of marriage** - Let no man separate.

**Knowing God's definition:** maybe we approach marriage differently... What if we approach it with a Kingdom perspective?

<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes. *Preaching the Word: Mark*. pg 236

<sup>2</sup> Jason Meyer. *Mark for You*. pg 150

### Timothy Keller, *The Meaning of Marriage*

"Within this Christian vision of marriage, here's what it means to fall in love. It is to look at another person and get a glimpse of what God is creating, and to say, **"I see who God is making you, and it excites me! I want to be part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to his throne. And when we get there, I will look at your magnificence and say, 'I always knew you could be like this. I got glimpses of it on earth, but now look at you!"**<sup>3</sup>

So within God's plan and design Marriage is a beautiful thing.

**One of the best examples I have seen of a Godly marriage - Jodi's Grandparents.**

*Hold hands, kiss - affection, joke + tease - flirtatious.*

**What made their marriage great was that it was the covenant of Husband, Wife, and God.**

So if you are in the room and you are **not married but wish you were**. First of all your singleness can be a gift and can actually **be a benefit to the gospel going forth**. A single friend of mine in ministry said,

**"I think singles [idolize] marriage, while they could just serve and continue pursuing Christ better."**

**But if God does call you into a marriage**, use that quote as you baseline. *"I see who God is making you, and it excites me! I want to be part of that.*

- To answer the **Pharisees' question about the law**, Jesus answers by **drawing them back to God's design**.
- And then Jesus ends the conversation. Mic drop moment! He doesn't give the Pharisees any room for debate, no further discussion. And He doesn't answer the Pharisees' question the way they expected, **Jesus gave an answer that was beyond the limits of two sides of a debate, and** instead leads them to **God's Design**.
- What Jesus is saying is *"you've got the question wrong, it's not what is the law, what rule do we follow, can we justify our actions, how can I push the limits of sin but still look the part..."* Jesus says, *"the **BETTER** question is how can I experience God's best for my life?"* **Divorce is so far from that ideal that he doesn't even address it with them.**

**This reminds me of a mission trip I took with students** - a few years ago I took a group of **30 students on a mission trip** to Nicaragua. On our day to explore we got to go see an **active volcano**. We went at night and you could actually see **lava glowing and feel the heat**. It was kinda scary. And to **keep you "safe" they had a guardrail up**. And rather than stay back from the rail, they got as **close to it as possible, pushed up against it**. I'm getting nervous (there is no good way to let a parent know their kid fell in a volcano). I finally shut it down when one of the students throws their leg over the rail and begins to **sit on top of it!!** I'm like **"that's it, it's over, let's go get dinner!"**

*That's the posture of the Pharisees. **Jesus, how close can we get to the rail? Can I get close to the rail? Can I get right up to the rail? Can I sit on the rail? And Jesus is like, what? You wanna talk about how close you can get to lava??** I've got a **Taco Feast** for you... **Come with me and let's get extra guac!***

And then as Jesus often does, he shares more, and **turns up the dial**, with those closest to him in private conversations. And when he is alone with the disciples, Jesus shares the...

## 3. THE PAIN OF DIVORCE

Let's look back verse 10

**10** And in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. **11** And he said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and **marries another commits adultery against her, 12** and if she divorces her husband and marries another, **she commits adultery.**"

**Divorce is not God's best**. I **don't think** these 2 verses **define every scenario of divorce** and whether each situation is permissible or not, and I **don't believe** that Jesus is talking to those who in spite of their best efforts have ended up in divorce because of **adultery, abuse, or lack of safety**. I believe Jesus has taken the discussion about marriage and divorce in the room with his closest followers and as he often does, **he takes the law and he turns up the dial**.

- **Matthew 5** in the fulfillment of the law "You have heard it said."

**21** "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' **22** But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother[ will be liable to judgment;

**27** "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' **28** But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

**43** "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' **44** But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

**Jesus has a habit of taking law issues and turning up the dial to heart issues.**

**Here He flat out says - If you get divorced for non-biblical reasons, and you remarry. That is adultery.** It's not easy, it's not culturally acceptable, it makes for difficult conversations about second or third or... marriages. But it is what Jesus says. **And so we must submit to His lordship in all things, not just the easy things.**

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Keller. *The Meaning of Marriage*. pg 121

I think Jesus gets in a room with his closest followers and **shares a hard truth to help them realize the severity of divorce.** "Hey guys, divorce is a big deal."

**But why? WHY IS IT A BIG DEAL FOR US TODAY?**

- Divorce ruins lives
- breaks hearts
- has generational IMPACTS
- reflects a broken view of Christ's commitment to his church
- It always stems from sin
- And Divorce is never God's design

**My mom and Dad were divorced when I was 3 years old.** And my parents either couldn't, or didn't want to raise me... I ended up being raised by my grandparents, and I remember waking up in the middle of the night crying to my grandma wondering if I would ever see my mom again. **[ Family Pictures: didn't know where I fit ] As a 12 year old boy, I didn't know where I fit, or where I belonged...**

**and I think that is where divorce leaves a lot of kids.**

Divorce is painful, it hurts, it breaks, it destroys. It undoes all the beauty, and oneness, and fullness that is meant to be experienced in God's design for marriage.

**Danny Akin** "...the Bible never condones divorce...it does recognize the reality of divorce."<sup>4</sup>

And I want to point out the 2 concessions for divorce we see in the bible.

- **ADULTERY: Matthew 19:9** *And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery."* Most scholars agree that the only reason Mark doesn't include this is because it would have been assumed to be true.  
Sex is the oath signing part of the covenant; if a spouse violates the one-flesh union it is grounds for divorce.

- **ABANDONMENT: 1 Cor. 7:8-15** *...if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved.*

If the unbelieving spouse leaves despite the love of the believing spouse then divorce is allowed.

**While these concessions exist, Neither of these are God's best. They are not God's design.**

**JD Greear** compares divorce to amputating a leg. **Rolled ankle**

Does it happen? yes, in extreme situations. If you came in with a rolled ankle and the doctor said "cut it off" you would run! While amputation happens, it is a radical last choice.

**Mal 2:15-16** says that God hates divorce!

God Hates **divorce because it is always the result of sin.** Always... We live in an age of **no fault divorce.** You might say, no, no sin here, we just grew apart, preferences changed, it was a mutual decision and we are actually friends now.

**Great... it is still sin because it falls short of the glory of God.**

**NOW LET ME PAUSE FOR A MINUTE.** Because as much as God hates divorce, He still loves you. Because the reality is that in a room like this, many are dealing or have walked through the pain and difficulty of divorce - if not you, someone you love and care for. **The reality is we live in a fallen broken world where divorce exists,** and that doesn't exclude the church.

**With that reality in mind, as a pastoral staff, we are here for you. We love you,** when you come through those doors "You are loved, here..." It's on the signs in the parking lot, all over the TVs in the commons, it's on our invite cards, and is part of the First Naples culture... "you are loved here!" **And we mean that. Not just when life feels great and squeaky clean, we mean that in the reality and the messiness of life!!**

**We are here** to pray with you, to cry with you, to encourage you, to equip you, **to fight alongside you for God's best,** to answer your questions, to provide biblical truths, and to love you in and through your complex situation as we lead you to the truth of God's Word to **protect the sacredness and beauty of the marriage covenant.**

**I also want to say... If you're not safe. GET SAFE. Get Help.** Protect your kids. There is no shame in that, God is not calling you to stay in a physically abusive relationship. That doesn't mean that God can't restore that relationship or that there can't be victory and healing, but get help.

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<sup>4</sup> Danny Akin. *Christ-Centered Exposition, Exalting Christ in Mark.* pg 203

We have an amazing **counseling department** who can equip you with **tools** to use in difficult situations, **actions** to take as you seek healing and restoration, and provide **wisdom** from years of experience. **Pastor Steve and Dr. Ann** do an incredible job leading our counseling department and would love to be a resource for you. **firstnaples.org/counseling**  
**My wife and I have certainly benefited from their wisdom.**

And Honestly, there are way **more situations and scenarios**, more questions and concerns you may have that I'm not going to cover in a 30 minute sermon. So anything I don't touch on, **Pastor Alan would love to tackle those as well as any complaint you have about this message.**

**I'm kidding of course we are all here for you and love you.**

**God hates divorce... BECAUSE he loves marriage... God loves marriage because it reflects Christ's love for the church... And that brings God glory.**

And if that is true, then we have to **PURSUE GOD'S...**

#### **4. THE PURSUIT OF GOD'S BEST**

If God has a best for marriage and we know it isn't divorce - He hates divorce - **then what is God's best in marriage, and how do we pursue it?** [ Genesis ] **Let's quickly look at Ephesians 5**, and talk about some practical steps we can take to pursue God's best.

**24** Now as the **church submits to Christ**, so also **wives should submit** in everything to their husbands. **25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26** that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, **27** so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. **28** In the same way **husbands should love their wives as their own bodies...**

**33...let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.**

**Timothy Keller, in his book The Meaning of Marriage says:**

*"In Ephesians 5, Paul shows us that even on earth Jesus did not use his power to oppress us but sacrificed everything to bring us into union with him. And this takes us beyond the philosophical to the personal and the practical. If God had the gospel of Jesus's salvation in mind when he established marriage, then marriage only 'works' to the degree that it [reflects] the pattern of God's self-giving love in Christ."<sup>5</sup>*

**marriage only 'works' to the degree that it [reflects] the pattern of God's self-giving love in Christ."**

Listen, nobody in this room has ever **accidentally built a house**. You don't stumble over a pile of wood and turn around and have a spacious **4 bedroom 2.5 bath with a pool** behind you. It takes time, planning, investment, sacrifice, and a little bit of crazy.

No matter where you are at in your marriage, newly married, happily married, struggling, or barely could walk in here together. **You aren't going to accidentally fix it. So the question is: Are you willing to lay your life, your hurts, your preferences, are you willing to Die to self and Will you fight for God's best?**

**So I want to share some practical steps you can take this week to pursue God's best for your life and for your marriage?**

- 1. Get your personal relationship with Christ right.** We have to start with the **vertical relationship** and let that flow into our **horizontal relationships** that are broken - especially marriage.
- 2. Be in community.** This is why we believe groups are so important. It gives you a community to encourage, support, care, and look out for one another; guarding and protecting each other's marriages.
- 3. Put in the time:**
  - a. Pray together** - recently discovered our need to carve out time. Jodi and I have wednesday morning.
  - b. Dialog Daily** (intentional eye to eye) **Date Weekly** (Intentional time together - Dinner, bike ride) **Depart** Annually (anniversary.. Can't afford to get away, but we can't afford not to)
- 4. Use the right tools:**
  - a. Read a book together:** I've quoted Meaning of marriage, Love and Respect was pivotal for Jodi and I to learn to love and respect each other unto Christ.
  - b. Listen to a marriage Podcast, Find biblical articles.**
  - c. Seek Wisdom** - Find a couple that is doing it well, that is further along, or gone through a similar situation, and ask them to walk with you.
  - d. Counseling** - Steve and Ann
  - e. QR code:** Some of these resources and more for others on our staff.

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<sup>5</sup> Timothy Keller. *The Meaning of Marriage*. pg 46

Here is why we want to equip you...

**God hates divorce... BECAUSE he loves marriage... God loves marriage because it reflects Christ's love for the church... And that brings God glory.**

**But what about your specific situation?** Maybe I didn't touch on what you are struggling with. What about your marriage that is **on thin ice**, what about the **divorce you already got**, what about the **second marriage you are in**. As we begin to close, Let me encourage with God's grace for someone who was caught in adultery...

**John 8:1-11** *The Pharisees bring this woman, not because they want what is best for her, but because they want to test Jesus. And they say: "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. 5 Now in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?"* And they do this **to test Jesus**, and eventually he says, **"whoever hasn't sinned, you throw the first stone."** And one by one they leave.

And then **it's just Jesus and the woman**, and **with COMPASSION Jesus says...**

Jesus stood up and said to her, **"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"** 11 She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, **"Neither do I condemn you; go, and...sin no more."**

**God will call out our sin, call us to repent and change our ways, and then cover us in His loving grace.**

And no matter what situation you are in today hear this:

**God's grace is big enough for any situation you are in.**

1. **If you are single:** use your singleness to serve God and advance the gospel. Let Christ be what satisfies your heart and mind.
2. **If you are married:** Don't be complacent, pursue your spouse to reflect Christ's love to the world. (Make your marriage the most important relationship outside of your relationship with God.)
3. **If you are in a bad marriage or separated:** Remember the forgiveness and power of the gospel. Pursue your spouse unto Christ, Seek restoration; not because they deserve it but because you received the ultimately love from Christ that you didn't deserve.
4. **If you are divorced:** Own what you need to own. Repent and seek forgiveness where needed.
5. **If you are remarried:** Again, Repent and seek forgiveness where needed. Use your new marriage to reflect the Gospel and serve the Lord.

One of the things that **Jodi and I try to do regularly is drink our coffee together** and read the bible in the morning. Last Saturday, **Jodi opened up to Psalm 103** and after we prayed through it together I thought "man that is good" I could just read that to close. And then on Monday at our all staff meeting, I look down and there is a sheet that just has Psalm 103 on it. [ thru wife ] **I started this message telling you that I prayed and asked God to give me the words to say and I believe he gave me His own words to wash over all of us.**

So no matter where you are at. **Let God's words about his grace, his forgiveness, and his Love wash over...** Because **God's grace is greater than any sin, any brokenness, any difficulty, any separation, any divorce, any adultery...**

### **Psalm 103**

**8** The LORD is **merciful and gracious,**  
**slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

**9** He will not always accuse,  
**nor will he keep his anger forever.**

**10** He does not deal with us according to our sins,  
**nor repay us according to our iniquities.**

**11** For as high as the heavens are above the earth,  
**so great is his steadfast love** toward those who fear him;

**12** as far as the east is from the west,  
so far does **he remove our transgressions** from us.

**13** As a father shows **compassion to his children,**  
**so the LORD shows compassion to those who fear him.**

**God hates divorce... because he loves marriage... God loves marriage because it reflects Christ's love for the church... And that brings God glory.**