

"Divorce and God's Design"

Matthew 19:1-9

LEARN

Tracing God's Story: [God's Eternity, Part 2](#) (30:12) This study concludes with an overview of what the book of Revelation teaches about the last things and about what God's people can expect at the conclusion of God's big story. Supplemental books/workbooks can be purchased [here](#)

Video: "[How to deal with constant arguing in marriage](#)" by Paul David Tripp (6:39)

1. Read Matthew 19:1-9. What was one thing on your mind from the sermon coming into this meeting?
2. What does it reveal about our hearts when we approach marriage by asking, "Where is the line?" instead of, "What does faithfulness require?"
 - a. Questions like those expose our tendency to use Scripture to find permission rather than transformation. We can look for what we're allowed to get away with, how unhappy we have to be, or someone who will "bless" our decision. Jesus doesn't answer the Pharisees by giving them a better list of reasons to leave... He takes them back to God's design. The deeper issue is whether we want God's will or permission for our own will.
3. What is God's design for marriage, and why is God's design the foundation for understanding divorce and remarriage?
 - a. Marriage is designed by God, threatened by sin, sustained by grace, and meant to display Christ and His church; God has designed marriage to be between one man and one woman for life (Gen 2:24); Jesus begins with God's design in creation, not culture: "Have you not read" (Mat 19:4)
 - b. Marriage isn't man's invention to shape how he'd like. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24; Mat 19:5). "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate" (Mat 19:6).
 - c. Jesus reframes the divorce question around God's design question.
4. What did Jesus mean when He said, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so" (Mat 19:8)? What do we learn about God from this and what He has done?

- a. God designed marriage; human sin introduced divorce - Divorce exists because sin exists; Divorce, though not God's original design, is a merciful concession granted for life in a fallen world.
 - b. Jesus exposes what's at divorce's root: we don't simply need better marriages; we need new hearts; Hardness of heart says: "I will not change," "I deserve better," "I shouldn't have to live like this," and "my happiness matters more than the covenant."
 - c. We need Jesus - He saves from, redeems, changes hearts, and restores what sin seeks to destroy; We should resist the hardness of heart that produces divorce and fight faithfully for marital unity.
5. What wrong questions do we ask when we approach marriage and divorce, and what question should we be asking instead?
- a. "Can I get out of my marriage for any reason?" "What am I allowed to get away with?" "Where is the line till I divorce?" "What are my rights?" "How unhappy till that unhappiness is enough to act on?" "How much do I have to put up with?" "What can I do and still be saved?" We shouldn't ask for permission to pursue our desires and "just ask for forgiveness later."
 - b. We should instead ask: "What would glorifying God require of me?" The issue is not finding an escape from marriage but recovering God's original vision and trusting Him with our marriage.

PRACTICE

1. What does this truth mean for us as Christians in regard to how we live by faith when we don't have an "out"?
 - a. Don't pray for escape—pray for grace daily.
 - b. Pray for contentment.
 - c. Be who the Lord would have you to be as a husband or wife.
 - d. Don't try to force the hand of your spouse.
 - e. Glorify God and trust Him with the results.
 - f. Endure suffering - it will refine you in the best ways.
 - g. Ask, "What would glorifying God require of me?"
2. What needs to change in my life if I find myself thinking, "I will not change," "I deserve better," "I shouldn't have to live like this," or "my happiness matters more than the covenant"?
 - a. I need to recognize the hardness of heart at the root of those thoughts.

- b. I need Jesus—not merely a better marriage.
- c. I need to trust the finished work of Christ rather than believing that my happiness, comfort, or circumstances must change before I can obey God.
- d. I need to resist the hardness of heart that produces divorce.
- e. I need to fight faithfully for marital unity.
- f. I need to ask what would glorify God rather than what would make me happiest.
- g. I need to remember that Jesus saves from, redeems, changes hearts, and restores what sin seeks to destroy.

3. How does this teaching apply to you in your current stage of life?

- a. Singles/Young adults: Learn God's design for marriage before culture defines marriage for you; Don't approach marriage asking, "What am I allowed to get away with?" Build your understanding of marriage on God's design, not culture; Recognize that marriage is God's design and that your future marriage should be entered with a commitment to permanence; Don't enter marriage looking for an escape clause. Develop the kind of heart that says, "What would glorifying God require of me?"
- b. Married with young children: Recover God's original vision for your marriage; Remember that God joined you together; Fight faithfully for marital unity rather than allowing disappointment, unmet expectations, or selfish desires to become an "out." Consider the profound effect divorce can have on your family.
- c. Empty-nester/Retired: Continue to fight for and invest in the one-flesh union rather than allowing the departure of children to expose or create distance in the marriage; Don't allow "me time," unmet expectations, or changed feelings to become unbiblical exceptions; Continue to glorify God in your marriage rather than viewing this season primarily as an opportunity for personal comfort or independence. Trust God's providence: He joined you together.
- d. Elderly or home-bound: Faithfulness to Christ does not depend upon how active or physically capable you are; Pray for grace and contentment; Trust God with the results rather than seeking escape from difficult circumstances. Continue to consider, "What would glorifying God require of me?"

CHANGE

1. What needs to change about what I am believing about the finished work of Jesus Christ for my salvation and my ability to live faithfully in difficult circumstances?
 - a. I need to stop believing that I must escape difficult circumstances in order to be okay. By faith I need to trust that Jesus saves, redeems, changes hearts, and restores what sin seeks to destroy; I need to believe that Christ is sufficient to give me grace to obey Him even when obedience is difficult; I need to pray for grace daily rather than pray for escape; I need to trust God with the results rather than trying to control the outcome.
2. Where am I tempted to use Scripture the wrong way to justify what I already want to do? What needs to change?
 - a. "Making it say what we want."
 - b. "Using it to defend/support something it's not intending to defend/support."
 - c. Am I looking for a sermon, pastor, church, or someone else to "vouch for, stamp of approval, authorize, bless" what I have already decided?
 - d. Am I approaching Scripture asking what God requires of me, or am I searching for permission to do what I want?
 - e. I need to let God's Word define marriage, divorce, faithfulness, and obedience rather than using the Bible to support my desired outcome.
3. What selfish "soothings" am I using when I feel stuck, and what needs to change?
 - a. "Use divorce thoughts for comfort; imagine a different person or kind of relationship." "I'll uproot my Christian community and detach to reinvent myself somewhere else rather than continuing in the marriage." "I'm ok with a profound effect on my family to get what I want."
 - b. Instead of these forms of escape, I need to pray for grace and contentment: I need to be who the Lord would have me to be; I need to glorify God and trust Him with the results; I need to ask, "What would glorifying God require of me?"