

GOD'S DESIGN FOR MARRIAGE
MATTHEW 5:31-32

INTRO.:

1. Most people get married with high hopes.
 - a. They say “This is the one that God has brought into my life! This is the one I will love and cherish till death do us part! We’re going to be together forever! We’re going to have a wonderful life!”
 - b. But sometimes things happen that we do not expect.
 - 1) A husband comes home and says “I’ve been doing a lot of thinking. You and I haven’t been happy in a long time. I think we should just get a divorce.”
 - 2) Or a wife comes home from work and says, “I never planned on this happening. But I met someone at work. We’re in love. I want to move in with him. I want a divorce.”
 - 3) Or it may be like the troubled man came to his lawyer to seek a divorce.
 - a) The lawyer asked, "Do you have any Grounds? The man replied, "About three acres."
 - b) The lawyer tried again, "No, I mean do you have a Grudge? The man said, "No, but we have a carport."
 - c) The lawyer made one last effort: "Are you really sure you want a divorce?" The client replied, "No, I don't but my wife does. She says we can't communicate!"
 - c. The fact is that conversations like these happen every day.
 - d. Just last week, more than 30,000 people in this country got divorced.
2. Thus it is beyond time to start asking, “What does Jesus think about this? What does the Bible say about marriage and divorce and remarriage?”
3. As we continue our study of the Sermon on the Mount, we are going to look at a subject that once again is not a very comfortable one to talk about.
 - a. This subject is one that elicits strong emotions in many people because of the way that they have been affected by it.
 - b. But it is a subject that was so important that Jesus included it in the Sermon on the Mount.
 - c. It is the third of six areas in which Jesus said our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.
 - d. Today we are going to look at what Jesus had to say about divorce and marriage.
4. According to a 2001 study by George Barna of the Barna research institute 33% of all “born again” Christians who were married have gone through a divorce.
 - a. Statistically this figure is identical to the 34% of divorces among non-born again adults.
 - b. The fact is that even many of those who claim to have committed their lives to Christ have followed the same pattern as the world when it comes to the marriage relationship.
5. In addition to what divorce does to the couple, divorce has a tremendous influence on the children of that relationship.
 - a. In 2002, Colorado Representative Dave Schultheis who is the author of the 2002 Children of Divorce Protection Act, stated, “A stable, two-parent home has no equal in terms of its benefits to children. Over 80 percent of inmates in Colorado prisons come from homes where one or both parents were not around. Risks of teenage pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse, incarceration, poor performance in school and many other indicators are multiples greater for children of divorce than for children of two-parent homes. The data is undeniable. Divorce has a life-long effect on children that, for many, is never overcome.”
 - b. Simply, divorce is a plague that had tremendous ramifications for our society.
6. Thus we are led to ask, “What does God have to say about divorce?”
 - a. Men have offered a variety of opinions as to how God feels about divorce; all the way from some saying it is an unpardonable sin to “God does not care.”
 - b. But as we go back to the scriptures and try to understanding what God says about this subject it can help us to deal with the ever important question, “How is the church to deal with it and how can we help people who have and are going through it?”

7. My hope this AM is that if you have been through the struggles of a divorce that you will gain comfort in knowing what God says about the subject.
 - a. For the young people here today, I hope that this message may help you to see the absolute seriousness of marriage and that you will consider and choose very carefully your future spouse, knowing it is a lifetime commitment.
 - b. And lastly, I hope that we all realize that no matter what your situation is before God that He God loves you and that if you fall on the side that is contrary to God's will, that there is forgiveness in Jesus.
8. In our lesson today, in order for us to understand what Jesus is going to say about divorce, we will look at the original intent for marriage, the state of marriage during the days of Moses, the state of marriage during the time of Jesus and then God's true intent for marriage.
9. We will be looking at several passages, but I want to start with the text in Matthew 5:31-32.
 - a. Why would Jesus put this passage in this sermon about living a radically different lifestyle than the worlds?
 - b. What was it that lead up to His adding this part of the sermon?
 - 1) In the previous verses Jesus was teaching that it was sinful to look too long at a woman and that if you looked at a woman/man who was not your spouse with lust in your heart, that you had committed adultery with her in our hearts.
 - 2) The lawyers and Pharisees of Jesus day who were listening to this may have rationalized that the Law allows for divorce and therefore a married man can obtain the woman that he is lusting after as his wife if he desires.
 - c. So this AM let us go back and look at what both God and Jesus really said about this subject.

LESSON:

- I. Let us begin my noticing God's original intent for marriage from Gen. 2:20-24: (Read).
 - A. Notice what these verses said:
 1. Vs. 20 states that God desired that man have a suitable helper so He took a rib from Adam and made Eve for him!
 - a. Adam was excited about his new mate!
 - b. Our English does not do the passage justice.
 - c. Adam was one happy man!
 - d. Adam was like the groom who is beaming from ear to ear as he comes down the steps with his new bride.
 2. In vs. 24 God said that because of this a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and that the two shall become one flesh.
 3. Here we see God's pattern for marriage is LEAVE-CLEAVE-BECOME.
 - a. God shows us that we are to make a new life together and during the course of that effort, we become one inseparable flesh.
 - b. God intended marriage to be a beautiful thing that makes each person's life better.
 - c. God's original intent was for a male and female to come together and build a life together that was so focused in purpose that they became one flesh.
 - B. "*Cleave to*" carries the idea of a firm, permanent attachment, such as in gluing two boards together.
 1. ILLUST.: Woodworkers guild – Contest for strongest joint – 1000 psi.
 2. In marriage a man and woman are so closely joined that they become "one flesh," which involves spiritual as well as physical oneness.
 3. In marriage God brings a husband and wife together in a unique physical and spiritual bond that reaches to the very depths of their souls binding them together.
 4. As God designed it, marriage is to be the welding of two people together into one unit, the blending of two minds, two wills, two sets of emotions, two spirits.
 5. It is a bond the Lord intends to be indissoluble as long as both partners are alive.
 6. It is to be a bond so strong that it can endure the pressures that life puts upon it.
 7. This is why the fullest expression of that oneness, and the intimacies of marriage are not to be shared with any other human being.

- C. Sadly, it was not very long after the fall before sin perverted this God-designed marriage relationship.
1. First there was multiple wives, and then various other forms of perversion.
 2. Over time it got worse to the point that we get to the time of Moses.

II. In Deut 24:1-4 we find the state of marriage in the time of Moses: (Read).

- A. During this time man became increasingly sinful and that affected their marriage relationships as well.
1. We had men with many wives and also concubines (or literally “half-wives”).
 2. In this passage Moses neither encourages nor commands divorce.
 - a. Moses was dealing with the increasing problem of his day of men sending their wife away.
 - b. In order to protect the women so they would not be accused of adultery which was punishable by death God opened this door.
 - c. In their society, much like in many 3rd world countries today, a divorced woman on her own would have had a very difficult time trying to survive.
 3. Also remember that according to their interpretation of the law a man was permitted to have other women as long as that woman was not the “legal” wife of another.
 4. Because of the perversion of God’s law and the hardness of men’s hearts God allowed a certificate of divorce to be offered.
 5. God allowed it, but we know that this was not something that God liked because in Malachi 2:16 it states that God hates divorce.
- B. Remember this passage when we get to Jesus’ day because the religious leaders will use this passage as their justification for their views on divorce.
1. What this passage tells us is that even when something happens in which God would allow a divorce; we should try to do all we can to make it work and only look at divorce as the last result.
 2. Divorce was not, and never has been a part of God’s original plan for marriage.

III. In Matt. 19:1-9 we find the state of marriage in Jesus’ time and even for today.

- A. There were two schools of thought regarding divorce during Jesus’ day, one said that divorce was only allowed in the case of adultery, the second said that you could divorce for any reason.
1. The religious leaders that held for divorce for any reason appealed to Deuteronomy 24.
 - a. They focused on the words “*finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her*” to mean that anything goes.
 - 1) A man could divorce his wife if she burned dinner.
 - 2) A man could divorce his wife if she put on a few extra pounds.
 - b. Josephus, a Jewish historian who lived around this time period, said about divorcing his wife, “I put away (divorced) my wife, who had borne me three children, not being pleased with her manners.”
 2. The point is that in Jesus time men were quick to exercise this supposed right to put away their wife so that they could marry someone else.
- B. But let us go back and look at what Jesus says in Matthew 19:1-9 to see if these people were reading God right on this: (Read).
1. Vs. 3 reflected the practice of Jesus’ day.
 2. In vs. 4-6 Jesus goes right back to Genesis and then He corrects their misinterpretation of Moses by saying in vs. 8 that Moses PERMITTED divorce because of the hardness of their hearts, but it was not commanded.
 3. In vs. 9 Jesus gives God’s view on divorce.
 4. Later in Rom. 7:2-3 Paul will expand what Jesus taught here: (Read).

IV. Now let us come back to our text in Matt. 5:31-32 and notice what God's true intent for marriage is.

- A. God's intention is for one man and one woman to be united for life, or until one of them dies.
 1. Look again at what Jesus said in vs. 31-32: (Read).
 2. Jesus said that if a person divorces their spouse for any reason other than adultery, they themselves will be committing adultery when they consummate another marriage.
 3. Some in reading this passage ask, "Why did Jesus (and God) make such a big deal out of this?"
 - a. The answer is found in Matthew 19:6: "*What God has joined together, let no man separate!*"
 - b. Marriage is a God ordained – God formed institution.
 - c. God will not idly stand by and overlook those who choose to destroy what He has ordained.

- B. Accepting what the Bible teaches, some will still ask, "What about if you are in a bad marriage? What if you are married to a person who is a substance abuser or physically abusive? Would it not be better for the kids to divorce?"
 1. The world tells us to cut our losses and run at the first sign of trouble, but some are seeing the fallacy of this type of reasoning and the wisdom of trying to work things out.
 - a. Diane Nedbed, a secular counselor, psychologist and author of the book, *The Case Against Divorce* said, "I originally thought that staying together in turmoil was more traumatic than making the break. I was wrong.... Divorce may be the only recourse in cases of drug and alcohol addiction, physical abuse, severe emotional cruelty or permanent abandonment. But on balance - people could spare themselves enormous suffering if they would stop their permissive acceptance of divorce and treat marriage as a lifelong commitment not to be entered into or wiggled out of lightly."
 - b. In the book entitled, "A Generation at Risk" published in 1997 by two Penn State sociologists, they showed that less than a third of divorces result from marriages where abuse, neglect, or even high-octane fighting is the norm.
 - 1) In the other two-thirds of divorces, Mom and Dad simply grow apart.
 - 2) They concluded that easy divorce is a temptation that many in this situation will give in to.
 - 3) Since most of these divorces involve children, these children will pay a much heavier price than Mom and Dad for the divorce.
 - c. The point is that rocky marriages can be saved and are not doomed to failure.
 - 1) Our kids stand to benefit immensely if we will simply make the effort.
 - 2) Statistics show that unless a 3rd party is involved (another man or woman), 86% of problem marriages can be fixed and can go on and be happy and productive.
 - 3) The couple just has to be willing to put in the work needed to fix it – That is both of them must put fixing their marriage and staying together as a top priority in their lives.
 2. God's plan is for one man and one woman to be united in marriage until death.
 - a. God is sympathetic to us in cases of abandonment, adultery and abuse.
 - b. But even in those terrible situations, we should still try to make divorce the last option.

CONC.:

1. God loves us and wants the best for us and that is why He laid out His will for us.
2. Young people, let me take a moment to talk to you and to emphasize to you that marriage is serious business.
 - a. You need to think long and hard about it before you jump in.
 - b. Just because someone is cute or hot looking is not enough to build a solid marriage on.
 - c. If you are a Christian, you need to marry a Christian.
 - 1) You need to do this because if Jesus is the center of your life and not the center of the life of your spouse, you will have problems.
 - 2) When problems come, which they are sure to do, you will find yourselves pulling in opposite directions.

- d. So when you date, date only those you would be willing to marry.
 - 1) If a person is abusive or a substance abuser when you are dating, do not think they are going to change just because you put a ring on their finger.
 - 2) When you are dating, chose the person you are going out with wisely and prayerfully, as other than your decision to become a Christian, this will be the most important decision you will make in your life.
3. God intended marriage to be one of the greatest things that two people can share, His plan is for the two to become one flesh.
4. Kenny Rogers has a song I really like because it expresses what God wants for each of our marriages.
 - a. It is called "Through the Years."
 - b. Notice the lyrics of this song (Read).
 - c. That is what your marriage can be like if you listen to God and follow His will for your life and your marriage.
 - d. It all begins with your decision to put Christ first in your life.

“Through the Years.” By Kenny Rogers

I can't remember when you weren't there
 When I didn't care for anyone but you
 I swear we've been through everything there is
 Can't imagine anything we've missed
 Can't imagine anything the two of us can't do

Through the years
 You've never let me down
 You turned my life around
 The sweetest days I've found
 I've found with you
 Through the years
 I've never been afraid
 I've loved the life we've made
 And I'm so glad I've stayed
 Right here with you
 Through the years

I can't remember what I used to do
 Who I trusted whom, I listened to before
 I swear you've taught me everything I know
 Can't imagine needing someone so
 But through the years it seems to me
 I need you more and more

Through the years
 Through all the good and bad
 I knew how much we had
 I've always been so glad
 To be with you
 Through the years
 It's better everyday
 You've kissed my tears away
 As long as it's okay
 I'll stay with you
 Through the years

Through the years
 When everything went wrong
 Together we were strong
 I know that I belonged
 Right here with you
 Through the years
 I never had a doubt
 We'd always work things out
 I've learned what love's about
 By loving you
 Through the years

Through the years
 You've never let me down
 You've turned my life around
 The sweetest days I've found
 I've found with you
 Through the years
 It's better everyday
 You've kissed my tears away
 As long as it's okay
 I'll stay with you
 Through the years