



DID GOD REALLY SAY...MARRIAGE IS FOR ONE MAN AND ONE WOMAN? MARK 10:1-12

PASTOR COLIN RIEKE ~ AUGUST 3, 2014

Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them. ² Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" ³ "What did Moses command you?" he replied. ⁴ They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." ⁵ "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. ⁶ "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' ⁷ 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 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." ¹⁰ When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ¹¹ He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹² And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."



Grace, mercy and peace are yours through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

Do you remember those *Welches Grape Juice* commercials on TV. Those commercials just stuck out for me. In the first scene there's a father and son putting together a go-kart, the next picture shows the kid zooming past, but with the wheels falling off, because they didn't have all the parts. "You wouldn't settle for anything less than 100% of the go-kart, why settle for less with grape juice. *Welches*, 100% grape juice." It's an effective commercial, because I can remember it and remember the message behind the commercial all these years later.

But it's not just grape juice that we shop for. You can go into the grocery store and see rows and rows of different orange juices, cereals, cans of tuna and toilet paper. How does one stand out from the others. The big craze right now is to go organic. Not only would it be 100% orange juice, 100% natural ingredients, 100% recycled paper, it's even better to be organic. But let's face it, many of us don't always go with the top product or produce on the shelf. And there's some things that we can get away with buying an off-brand as opposed to a name brand. So we pick and choose. But I think for many of us, there are certain things where we will not settle for less than the best, less than a name brand. For me, I will pay a little bit more to get a good quality running shoe.

This same principle can be applied in other areas too, specifically religion. Don't settle for less. There is a difference between Biblical Christianity and the rest. Biblical Christianity stands out above the rest. It should come as no surprise then what the Bible has to say about different topics is far superior than what other opinions have to offer. The particular topic we take a look at this morning is marriage. DID GOD REALLY SAY MARRIAGE IS FOR ONE MAN AND ONE WOMAN? There is no substitute for God's answer, there's no compare. Not only is his marriage the original:

1. It's higher quality which therefore means
2. It's better for you

(1)

To see the plans God had in mind for marriage, we need to look no further than our first lesson for this morning from Genesis 2. There God set up the first marriage. It didn't take long for Adam to realize that none of the animals could provide the companionship that he needed and craved. So God caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep, and God created Eve from Adam's rib. This was no myth, it really happened that way. Adam recognized his suitable helper immediately when he said, "**This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.**" The special bond that God created in marriage is stated as follows, "**That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.**" They are no longer two but one, that is how closely God ties together husband and wife.

God had a perfect relationship in mind for marriage, one man, one woman, living harmoniously with one another. But when Satan threw a monkey wrench into the picture, that perfect relationship shattered. All Adam could think of doing was blaming Eve, and all Eve could think of doing was blaming Adam. And so it was from generation to generation with marriage becoming only an empty shell of what God had intended it to be. People forgot God's plan for marriage and polluted it as only humans know how.

The Israelites were certainly not immune to degrading the creator's marriage plan. We hear described the sorry state of marriages among the people of Israel as they spent time wandering around the desert. Apparently they had too much time on their hands. Husbands were not satisfied with their wives and so instead of "sinning" by getting divorced, they just cheated on them. *This is why* Moses regulated divorce the way he did by allowing an Israelite to get divorced by handing the spouse a certificate of divorce. This was certainly not God giving approval to the arrangement, but regulating the sinful behavior he found among his people.

It was this loop hole which the Pharisees had in mind when they approached Jesus in Mark 10. There were other times that Pharisees tried to do this, and I bet even the disciples soon caught on to the Pharisees and their tricks. They came up and asked him, "**Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?**" Had Jesus said it was not lawful to divorce, they would have accused him of going against Moses, the giver of the Law. Had Jesus said it was lawful to divorce, they would have accused him of being soft on divorce (and going against God's commands). For the Pharisees, they saw Jesus in a lose-lose situation.

But Jesus was too smart for these simple, legalistic Pharisees. He asked his own question that got to the heart of the matter. "**What did Moses say?**" The Pharisees parroted back the permission Moses gave them. Jesus then told them, "**It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,**" and then he took them back to the beginning and the origin that God had in mind for marriage. The beginning we read about in our first lesson. He took them back not to a man-made concession of what marriage became, but a marriage of a higher quality.

God's marriage is the brand name marriage, it's the original, what we see around us in society today is the generic brand, the wannabe marriage. And this makes no difference if it's a plural marriage, a same-sex marriage, two people just living together or even a husband and wife's constant bickering and

degrading of one another. Any arrangement outside of the one man/one woman relationship God established in the Garden of Eden is a knock-off brand of marriage, no matter what the government or anyone else will say. God's marriage is of higher quality because of the standards he sets to marriage.

When Adam and Eve got together, they didn't have anyone else to cheat on, they were the only people for each other. But that is the way God wants it to be for all marriages. **"For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh."** This is the tight connection God intends for marriage. One husband, one wife, united to each other for the rest of their lives. And just in case you didn't get it the first time as to who brought these two people of a marriage together, **"Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."** God's marriage is higher quality.

But just like the Israelites before us, we have not always treated marriage in the way God intended either. For those of you who are married – can you really say you have held marriage up to the high calling that God made it? Have you always lived up to the promises you made on your wedding day – to put your spouse's interests and desires before your own? Have there been times when you have felt frustrated or constrained having to deal with another person's quirks? For those of you who are unmarried, you too can disrespect God's plan for marriage also. From teenager's raging hormones to a loose tongue spreading the juiciest affairs, to a tight lip when given an opportunity to stand up for God's design for marriage. Our own attitudes and actions both married and unmarried in and about marriage do not always reflect the ideal which God has planned.

It's no wonder then that the Bible describes the actions of the people of Israel, and believers as that of an unfaithful wife who has abandoned her husband. In the Old Testament he even had a prophet marry a prostitute as an object lesson. So it would not have been a surprise had God decided to abandon us. But **"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless."** This is the more perfect marriage Christians can look too. Our marriages are but a poor reflection of the perfect marriage – Christ and his church.

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"Who then can fully appreciate what this royal marriage means? Who can understand the riches of the glory of this grace? Here this rich and divine bridegroom Christ married this poor, wicked, harlot, redeems her from all her evil, and adorns her with all his goodness. Her sins cannot now destroy her, since they are laid upon Christ and swallowed up by him. And she has that righteousness in Christ, her husband, of which she may boast as of her own and which she can confidently display alongside her sins in the face of death and hell and say, 'If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned and all his is mine and all mine is his.' These are the descriptive words of Martin Luther describing the perfect marriage we have in Christ.

So while even Christians have marital problems, even Christians get divorces, even Christians commit sins against the 6th commandment in thought, word, and deed. All of that is covered in the blood of Christ. "All his is mine and all mine is his." Christ has done it already, there is nothing more that you need to do. There is no "do this" before you become the bride of Christ, you are. You are waiting for the

great wedding banquet in heaven described in Revelation, **“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.”**

St Augustine put it this way, “You have made us for yourself and our heart is restless until it rests in you.” Our hearts are restless because we see the disregard for God’s institution of marriage not only in society but also in ourselves both married and unmarried alike. A temptation might be to go on a crusade for marriage, renew our own marriages, tell our kids to practice abstinence. And while all of those are good and noble things, that doesn’t solve the marriage problem, only Christ does. Only remembering Christ’s marriage to us allows our hearts to rest and rejoice in proclaiming God’s best design for marriage.

Believers rejoice in proclaiming God’s design for marriage in a number of ways. A divorcee could proclaim God’s design for marriage either in remaining single, or faithfully enjoying God’s blessings of marriage with another. A husband and wife proclaims God’s design for marriage by selflessly loving each other. A single man or woman proclaims God’s design for marriage by honoring their own bodies. All believers rejoice in proclaiming God’s design for marriage by boldly and respectfully giving witness to God’s design.

We reflect Christ’s marriage to us on our own marriages. We confess this with all the saints on earth and hosts in heaven. I saw that bride of Christ last week at the worship conference. I see that bride of Christ as I look out on you today. And let me tell you what I see: That bride is beautiful. Beautiful not through our own efforts, but made beautiful by the robe of righteousness draped over us in rich abundance by Christ. This is what we model our earthly marriages after – one bride, one groom. And since God has decreed Christ’s marriage to his church, we can rest in his promise that **“what God has joined together, no one separate.”** Amen.