



NG Study Guide: Mark 10:1-12 “God-glorifying Marriage” [6.13.20]

Love God + know the Bible better:

1. Read the passage cited above and try to answer the questions below before your group meets.
2. *Leader note: Please review the brief instructions for leaders at the bottom.*

The Study

Thesis: God’s design for marriage is best for individuals, families, and society to flourish. God’s plan for marriage is unchanging. However, our culture is always adapting. Culture defines things differently depending on the generation we are in, or the events that surround us. While our culture may attempt to dictate what is right and wrong, that does not make it accurate or true. God’s plan for marriage is the best way to find contentment and joy in a life-long covenant.

1. The right heart [vs. 1-5]

Then He arose from there and came to the region of Judea by the other side of the Jordan. And multitudes gathered to Him again, and as He was accustomed, He taught them again. ² The Pharisees came and asked Him, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” testing Him. ³ And He answered and said to them, “What did Moses command you?” ⁴ They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce, and to dismiss her.” ⁵ And Jesus answered and said to them, “Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept. (Mark 10: 1-5)

The last reference that we have to where Jesus was doing ministry is found in Mark 9:33, where we are told that Jesus was in Capernaum, which is on the north side of the Sea of Galilee. But he arose from there and went south across the Jordan to Judea (vs 1). As was customary the multitudes gathered to hear Jesus teach (vs 1b). And while he was teaching, the pharisees sought to test him; this was also customary (vs 2). They ask the question: “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” (vs. 2). Jesus understands that this is a trap. The question is not necessarily based out of whether or not it is legal governmentally, but rather according to Scripture and what Moses said relating to divorce. Jesus’ reply, “what did Moses command you? (vs. 3)” and the Pharisees response are pulled directly from Deuteronomy 24:1, “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts *it* in her hand, and sends her out of his house.”

Here we see two phrases related to divorce that were key in the debate: “Because he has found some indecency in her,” and “If she finds no favor in his eyes.” These were two phrases in the Torah that were highly discussed and used to form strong opinions on the matters of marriage and justifying divorce.

At the time, there were two primary schools of Jewish thought:

Shammai: A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found her unfaithful, “because he hath found in her indecency in anything”

Hillel: A man may divorce his wife if he has found anything indecent in her, even if that was a spoiled or burnt dish of food.

The reason that this was a “test” for Jesus was because this is an incredibly divisive and polarizing issue and there would have been people there to hear him teach from both schools of thought. This is an incredibly loaded question. The Pharisees had hard hearts and were attempting to discredit Jesus in the front of the

multitudes. It's not that Jesus is afraid of speaking truth, He is simply trying to make a point that is far greater than answering what is permissible for divorce.

Jesus is intentional to avoid this unnecessary division and simply asks what Moses commanded. After they affirm that Moses "permitted" divorce (vs. 4), Jesus rebukes them for even asking the question: "Because of the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept" (vs. 5). The reason that they are even asking this question is because of the hardness of their heart. The reason that anyone may want a divorce is because their hearts have become hard towards God and hard towards their spouse. Jesus is addressing this loophole mentality that they are approaching the topic with. *A soft heart seeks to love God and love others in all they do. A hard heart seeks to do what is best for themselves.* Let's just put this into perspective here: The perfect creator of the universe creates an amazing blessing and gift for mankind called marriage, and the people he created begin asking how can they get out of it.

My encouragement to you, as challenging as it may be at times, is to keep your heart soft towards your spouse and towards the things of God. It is important for us, as followers of Jesus, to have the right heart.

2. The right plan [6-8]

⁶But from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female.' ⁷'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸and the two shall become one flesh'; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh.

Jesus continues in His response showing the pharisees and the multitude that the marriage covenant was something that God established from the beginning (vs. 6), and His design is what is best for us to flourish. Jesus intentionally takes the disciples back to the beginning, acknowledging that God created marriage, and that everything was perfect prior to the fall. Genesis 2:18-25 shows us that Eve was created to be comparable (Hebrew word: *Lemma*, of equivalent quality) and compatible with Adam. Creation (and man or Adam) was lacking without women. And we must acknowledge that Jesus takes us to the creative order, and acknowledges that "God made them male and female" (vs. 6). I understand that we live in a culture (which in many ways deals with the same issues that Jesus' culture dealt with) where the boundaries of marriage have extended beyond strictly male and female. Relationships that were not heterosexual existed at the time that Jesus was stating these things to the pharisees. So he is stating that a God-honoring marriage is one that is between a male and female. Prior to sin entering the world, the perfect picture that we have for human flourishing is a marriage between a male and female. This is the right plan.

Jesus continues to quote Gen. 2:24 and says "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife." What Jesus is stating is a reordering of relational priority. When Moses is given the 10 commandments (Exodus 20), we see that the first 4 commandments are all in connection to our relationship with God (Ex. 20:1-10). The next commandment, and the first commandment related to human relationship states, "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God is giving you" (Ex. 20:12). And what this demonstrates is that our relationship with God is to be the absolute priority in our lives, and our second priority in terms of relationship should be with our parents. That's why the command that "the man should leave his father and mother and be joined with his wife" (vs. 7) is so significant. It's demonstrating that in the covenant of marriage your relational priorities are rearranged. Now, God is first, spouse is second, family is third, and others are forth. In order for us experience the most enjoyment in marriage our spouse must be our highest priority in terms of human relationships, and only second behind our relationship with God.

"And the two shall become one flesh; so then they are no longer two, but one flesh" (vs. 8). We must notice the sequence of events. In order for us to flourish, to experience the maximum amount of enjoyment, and have the healthiest marriage, sexual intimacy is reserved for those who have made a lifelong covenant with one another. "The two become one" (vs. 8) is not the idea of 2 puzzle pieces fitting together that can easily come apart, but rather two pieces of glass being melded into one inseparable piece. This is so significant in the context of the line of questioning, because beauty of marriage is God's design is that within this covenant we are completely unified spiritually, emotionally, and physically in a way that is incapable of separation by simply terminating a contract.

3. The right commitment [9-12]

⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.” ¹⁰ In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. ¹¹ So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. ¹² And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

Verse 9 shows us that marriage, according to His plan and design, is something that He orchestrates. God is the one that joins the two together (vs. 9). That’s the beauty of the covenant of marriage! Sharing a life committed to someone who we’ve been joined with emotionally, spiritually, and physically is the best option for individuals, couples, and families to flourish! The covenant of marriage is not simply contractual. It’s not a matter of remaining in a governmental agreement until the day one or both pass away. It’s a commitment to keeping your heart soft towards your spouse and towards God, the one who unified you. There is a certain tension when one spouse is trying to keep a soft heart, while the other is not, but I can assure you that God’s “Plan A” for every marriage is reconciliation and flourishing. That’s the whole reason that Jesus elaborates to the disciples in the house (vs. 10) that divorce is not simply an easy way out of a contract, and we are not to be the one who separate that covenant (vs. 9). In verses 10-12 Jesus continues emphasizing his point that marriage was designed by God, a gift of God, and accomplished (joined) by God.

What does loving your spouse and God with a soft heart look like? In Eph. 5:22-33 we are given a picture: Paul draws us the comparison that the Christ is our head and husband and the Church (God’s people) are the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-23). And Paul extrapolates what the proper love of a spouse should entail, and the way that we should love our spouses is the way that Christ loves us.

And how did Christ, as husband, love His bride, the church? He left heaven, and entered His creation on earth. He became a man (Phil. 2:7), lived a perfect life (1 Pt. 2:22), took on the punishment that we deserved, and died a death on the cross. This was all so that we could be forgiven and live a life reconciled to God. The sacrifice He was willing to make for his bride is unparalleled. The covenant that He has made with us is one that He has promised never to break. He will never leave us or forsake us (Deut. 31:6; Heb. 13:5). Romans 8:38-39 “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This is the picture of commitment that is modeled for us.

Study Guide Qs

Q1. Our relationship with God should be our first priority and our spouse should be our second. What are some ways husbands and wives can keep God as their priority in their marriage?

Q2. Reconciliation can be challenging in marriage. What some of the benefits for those working through the challenges found within marriage?

Q3. What are some characteristics of God’s love for His people, that spouses can experience in marriages?

Q4. What are some ways Christians can intentionally soften their hearts (or keep their hearts soft) towards God? Towards their spouse?

“Digging Deeper” (optional or alternative study)

1. Here is a helpful resource explaining some of Mark 10:1-12: https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/archives/guzik_david/StudyGuide_Mar/Mar_10.cfm

2. Take some time to read *Fruitful Marriage* by Bruce Zachary, or *The Meaning of Marriage* by Tim Keller.

Love your neighbor *outside* the group better:

1. Who would like to share how they sought to befriend or build relationship with their neighbors where they live, work, study, or play this past week?
2. Are there some needs that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor outside the group?
3. Here is a neighboring idea(s) for us to consider for the week(s) ahead:

As summer is approaching and schedules are filling up, schedule intentional time to love your neighbors (i.e. dinner, coffee, or another function).

Love your neighbor *inside* the group better:

1. Are there some needs in our group that can provide us an opportunity to love our neighbor within the group?
2. What might we do about that need to help?

Prayer [Loving God and Neighbors better]:

Close the NG meeting with a time of group prayer. Encourage each participant to pray, but don't force anyone to pray. Encourage the group to keep their prayers brief so that each person can pray.

Leader Notes:

- 1. Seek to involve as many group participants as possible.** A good group discussion time allows people to get to know the passage and one another better.
- 2. Feel free to pre-select the discussion questions that you want to focus on** in case there isn't enough time to answer them all.
- 3. The "Digging Deeper" section provides some optional or alternative study and discussion activities.** As a group leader, you can choose to focus on the "Digging Deeper" section, include part of that section in your group meeting, or not use it at all. Try to give the group sufficient notice so they can be prepared for the meeting.
- 4. Every time you meet consider asking:**
 - a. What about this passage is particularly exciting, challenging, or confusing?** If a leader is uncertain about a question of doctrine or theology don't hesitate to follow-up with your coach during the week. Then revisit the issue(s) when the group gathers next time.